

O H R N E T

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לענ ר' דוד בן שמואל רפאל ז"ל ח' כסלו תשנ"ה
ת.ג.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

LITE

"And these are the offspring of Yitzchak." (25:19)

At some point in the recent history of spelling, the word "light" became too heavy, weighing in as it does at five letters, and was thus "lightened" to a mere four letters and became "lite."

We live in a world where everything has to be lite. Heavy has become, almost exclusively, a pejorative term. "Don't be so heavy! Lighten up! (Sorry, that should read "Liten up!")"

Lite is what we want from our drinks and our foods. Lite is what we want from our bathroom scales. Lite is what we want from our relationships.

We are so involved with being lite that we are in danger of taking off and floating away.

In Hebrew, the word for heavy is *kaveid* and comes from the same root as the word *kavod* which means honor or respect. We don't like "heavy." Respect. Honor. These are "heavy" words. Difficult words in our times.

Each of the forefathers of the Jewish People represents a certain force, a certain aspect in Creation. The aspect that Avraham personifies is *chesed* — kindness. The nature of kindness is that it requires a recipient. And thus it was that Avraham's tent was always open on all sides to receive guests. Avraham's nature was expansive. He went out to the world. He wanted to be close to others.

Yitzchak is the antithesis of his father Avraham. Yitzchak represents limitation, staying within one's own

borders. Yitzchak's quality is the quality of fear. Fear of making a spiritual error, an error which might blemish the entire universe.

Fear is about as un-PC now as possible. But we all need a healthy dose of fear in order to live. A world without fear looks something like a natural history film of lemmings on holiday in Alaska.

And Yaakov is the synthesis of his father, Yitzchak, and his grandfather Avraham. What do you get when you synthesize expansiveness that desires to be close, the quality of Avraham, with a fear of being too close, the quality of Yaakov?

You get honor. You get respect. You get *kavod*.

Being worthy of true *kavod* is something almost completely lost from the world in our pursuit of "lite." My teacher says the only time he saw genuine *kavod* in his life was when he looked at his Rabbi.

When we wish to give *kavod* to someone, we feel an equal feeling of a desire to be close to that person and a fear of being close. My very love for that person

whom I wish to honor and give respect is coupled with a fear of being too close, of making an error in his eyes. The very reason that I love them — their greatness — is the reason that I am afraid of them. This is the essence of respect, of honor. Love and fear in equal doses.

It is for this reason that Yaakov is the personification of honor, of respect, of *kavod*, because he is a synthesis of Avraham and Yitzchak. This is why Yaakov personifies Torah, because true honor is the honor of Torah.

It's heavy, man.

“Love and fear in equal doses. This is the essence of honor and respect.”

After 20 years of marriage, Yitzchak's prayers are answered and Rivka conceives twins. The pregnancy is extremely painful. Hashem reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the world-wide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins — Rome and Israel. Esav is born, and then Yaakov, holding on to Esav's heel. They grow, and Esav becomes a hunter, a man of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah developing his soul. On the day of their grandfather Avraham's funeral, Yaakov is cooking lentils, the traditional mourner's meal. Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of lentils, demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of firstborn. A famine strikes Canaan and Yitzchak thinks to escape to Egypt; but Hashem tells him that because he was bound as a sacrifice, he has become holy and must remain in the Holy

Land. He relocates to Gerar in the land of the Plishtim, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say she is his sister. The Plishtim grow jealous of Yitzchak when he becomes immensely wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave. Yitzchak re-digs three wells dug by his father, prophetically alluding to the three future Temples. Avimelech, seeing that Yitzchak is blessed by G-d, makes a treaty with him. When Yitzchak senses his end approaching, he summons Esav to give him his blessings. Rivka, acting on a prophetic command that the blessings must go to Yaakov, arranges for Yaakov to impersonate Esav and receive the blessings. When Esav in frustration reveals to his father that Yaakov has bought the birthright, Yitzchak realizes that the birthright has been bestowed correctly on Yaakov and confirms the blessings he has given Yaakov. Esav vows to kill Yaakov, so Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife.

HAFTARAH

MALACHI 1:1 - 2:7

THE DEAL

Yaakov's destiny has been formed. His descendants must uphold the entire Torah — all 613 *mitzvot*. They must live their lives as G-d's holy nation, subjugating their own will to that of their Creator. This is an opportunity to reach the most sublime spiritual heights, but opportunity is always accompanied by responsibility. "Become My holy nation," says G-d, "and all of the reward of this world and the next world will be yours; deviate from this path and

I will 'turn away My face' from you."

The prophet Malachi relates this message to the Jewish people: It is precisely because G-d loves you that He has given you this deal. Opportunity and responsibility — there are great rewards for you to earn but only if you answer to your calling.

JUST WORDS?

The Torah is replete with lessons about the power of speech. Indeed, many of the *mitzvot* are performed solely by speaking. For example, the Torah commands a person to make a declaration of thanks when bringing the first fruits to the Temple. This declaration is a separate *mitzvah* with equal status to the actual "action-*mitzvah*" of bringing the fruit to the Temple.

We tend to think that actions speak louder than words, but in reality the mouth is the loudspeaker of the mind. The mouth expresses a person's deepest thoughts and feelings. Therefore, words are often just as powerful as actions. The prophet Malachi warns parents and community leaders that a few derisive words about the Temple service pollute the minds of the young and impressionable.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"On the face of all his brethren he (Yishmael) fell.... And these are the offspring of Yitzchak...." (25:18,19)

This hints that when Yishmael will fall in the end of days, then *Mashiach Ben David* — who is an offspring of Yitzchak — will flourish.

• *Ba'al Haturim*

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A SINGLE HAIR

The *nazir* must shave all the hair from his head when he reaches the conclusion of his *nezirut* period. He must shave as well when he purifies himself at the end of the period of ritual impurity resulting from contact with the dead which interrupts his *nezirut* period. While the *nazir* uses a razor to shave only his head, two other cases mentioned in the Torah require that all bodily hair be thus removed. One is the *metzora* who must do so in his purification process (*Vayikra* 14:9). The other is that of the Levites when they were first inducted into the Sanctuary service (*Bamidbar* 8:7).

In all cases, the *mitzva* is not completed if two hairs are left unshaven. In the case of the *nazir*, this insistence on totality is deduced from the repetition, in a single passage, of the command to shave his head (*Bamidbar* 6:9). This led Rabbi Acha, the son of Rabbi Ikka, to the conclusion that Torah Law considered the majority as being equivalent to the whole. Since the Torah found it necessary to use a double phrase to communicate that shaving most of the *nazir's* hair is not considered a total shaving, we conclude that this is the exception to the general rule that “most equals all.”

[This has ramifications in regard to how much of the trachea and esophagus must be severed in the process of *shechita* (*Mesechta Chullin* 19a), what constitutes birth to make a woman ritually impure (*Mesechta Nidah* 29a), and a variety of other halachic areas.]

Why did Rabbi Acha have to prove this rule from *nazir* rather than rely on the general principle throughout the Talmud that in all matters of doubt we rely on the indication of majority? The explanation given by the commentaries is that this is *not* similar to the classic case of finding meat whose *kashrut* status is uncertain and determining that it is kosher since there are more shops selling kosher meat than there are selling non-kosher. There, we follow the “majority-rules” guideline which the Torah gave for deciding judgment in cases of a split-panel of judges, and we determine the status of the meat accordingly. We do not affect the minority, however, as we wish to do in the case of the *nazir's* hair by declaring that it is *all* shaven, or in the case of *shechita* where we rule that even the unsevered portion is considered as if it too had been severed. To establish this principle, Rabbi Acha was compelled to deduce it from the Torah making an exception of the *nazir*.

But, we may ask, if the Torah insisted on totality regarding the *nazir*, why will leaving even a single hair not be considered non-fulfillment? The answer is that the Torah mentions hair in regard to a sign of impurity in a *metzora* (*Vayikra* 13:3) and the totality of color of the “red heifer” (*Bamidbar* 19:2). In both cases, we have a tradition from Moshe that hair means two hairs. It can therefore be assumed that a single hair has no status at all and does not stand in the way of total fulfillment.

• *Nazir* 42a

MYSTERY OF THE MISSING OIL

Although both the *nazir* and the *kohen* are forbidden to come into contact with the dead under normal circumstances, they are obligated to bury a “*met mitzvah*” — a dead Jew whom they come across in a place where there is no one else available to take care of the burial. What if a *kohen gadol* and a *nazir* together came upon such a corpse — which of them should abandon his sacred status to bury it?

On this point there is a dispute in the *mishna* between Rabbi Eliezer and the other sages. In regard to other situations of comparative holiness, the *gemara* offers a consensus as to who must do the burying. One of these cases, however, presents a mystery as to the circumstances involved.

A *kohen gadol*, from Aharon on, entered into his position by being anointed with the special oil prepared by Moshe at the command of Hashem (*Shemot* 30:30). After the vial containing this oil was concealed along with the Holy Ark by King Yoshiyahu in anticipation of the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*, the *kohen gadol* entered into his position simply by dressing himself in the four additional priestly garments which distinguished him from a regular *kohen*.

Our case deals with such a *kohen gadol* coming upon a *met mitzvah*, while accompanied by a *kohen gadol* who had been anointed with that special oil and had served on Yom Kippur as a substitute for the *kohen gadol* who had become ritually impure. This substitute, says the *gemara* (*Mesechta Yoma* 12b), cannot serve in the capacity of a *kohen gadol* after the man he replaced returns to his service, for this will create a feeling of animosity. Neither can he function as a regular *kohen* because this would be a comedown from his temporary status as *kohen gadol*. Since he is effectively unable to function as a *kohen*, it is he who must defile himself with burying the *met mitzvah* despite the fact that he was anointed.

The simple reading of the case is that this non-functionary *ex-kohen gadol* had served as a substitute for the non-anointed *kohen gadol* now accompanying him. But this is impossible, Tosefot points out, because if the one *kohen gadol* was not anointed because the oil had already been concealed, it would have been impossible for his substitute to be thus anointed. Tosefot solves the problem by presenting the following scenario:

An anointed *kohen gadol* from the pre-concealment period became impure on Yom Kippur and was temporarily replaced by another anointed *kohen gadol*. The original *kohen gadol* then returned to his position but eventually went into Babylonian exile with the first group of exiles, years before the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*. His anointed substitute could not be appointed in his place because of the animosity consideration that is relevant as long as the first *kohen gadol* is alive. The *kohen gadol* appointed to replace the first *kohen gadol* could not be anointed because the oil was already concealed. These two — the anointed temporary substitute and the non-anointed successor — are now together when they come upon the *met mitzvah*.

• *Nazir* 47b

PARSHA Q&A?

1. Why was it important that Yitzchak look like Avraham?
2. Why does the Torah stress that Rivka was Betuel's daughter and Lavan's sister?
3. What are the two differences between Tamar's pregnancy and Rivka's pregnancy?
4. Why was Esav named Esav?
5. Who gave Yaakov his name?
6. How did Esav deceive his father?
7. Why was Esav faint when he returned from the field?
8. Why are lentils a food for mourners?
9. What was the birthright that Yaakov bought from Esav?
10. Why was Yitzchak not permitted to go to Egypt?
11. Why did the Philistines plug up the wells?
12. Why did Yitzchak lose his sight? (three reasons)
13. At what age should one anticipate his own death?
14. Why did Rivka ask Yaakov to bring two kid goats?
15. Why did Esav leave his special garments with Rivka?
16. What fragrance did Yitzchak detect on Yaakov's garments?
17. What was the "fat of the land" promised to Esav?
18. When will Esav be freed from subjugation to Yaakov?
19. What inspired Esav to marry the daughter of Yishmael?
20. Knowing that Machalat was Yishmael's daughter, it's self-evident that she was the sister of Nevayot. Why, then, does the Torah state that Esav married "Yishmael's daughter, the sister of Nevayot?"

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 25:19 - So everyone would agree that Avraham was indeed his father.
2. 25:20 - To praise her, that even though her family was evil she was righteous.
3. 25:24 - Rivka gave birth at full term to two children, one righteous and one wicked. Tamar gave birth after seven months to two righteous children.
4. 25:25 - He was born fully developed. The name Esav is based on the Hebrew word for "made."
5. 25:26 - Hashem.
6. 25:27 - Esav deceived Yitzchak by asking questions that suggested that he was very strict in *mitzvah* observance.
7. 25:29 - From having murdered.
8. 25:30 - They are round like a wheel and mourning is like a revolving wheel that eventually touches everyone.
9. 25:31 - The right to bring sacrifices.
10. 26:2 - Through the *akeida* he had attained the status of a *korban* and was forbidden to leave *Eretz Canaan*.
11. 26:15 - They felt that either marauders would attack to capture the wells, or if attacking for other reasons, they would use the wells as a water supply.
12. 27:1 - a) From the smoke of the incense offered by Esav's wives to their idols; b) From the angel's tears which fell into Yitzchak's eyes at the time of the *akeida*; c) In order for Yaakov to receive the blessings.
13. 27:2 - When he reaches five years from the age his parents were when they passed away, until five years after.
14. 27:9 - One for Yitzchak and the other to offer as a *korban Pesach*.
15. 27:15 - He suspected that his wives might steal them.
16. 27:27 - The scent of *Gan Eden*.
17. 27:36 - Italy.
18. 27:40 - When the Jewish People transgress the Torah.
19. 28:7 - Seeing that his father despised his current wives, he resolved to take a wife from his father's family.
20. 28:9 - To indicate that Yishmael died between her betrothal and her wedding, and that it was Nevayot who gave his sister in marriage to Esav. Knowing the date of Yishmael's death, we can determine the date of Esav's marriage and thus Yaakov's age, 63, at the time of his flight from Esav.

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

How would you answer this question on the Parsha?

"And he called it 'Shiva.' Therefore the name of the city is 'Be'er Sheva' till this very day. (26:33)"

When Yitzchak named his seventh well "Shiva," the city became known as "Be'er Sheva." But hadn't Avraham already named that place "Be'er Sheva" for a different reason — as it says "Therefore, he called that place Be'er Shava, because they both took an oath there" (21:31)?

Answer:

In the time of Avraham, the place was named only for the oath (*shevuah*) between Avraham and Avimelech. Therefore, it was called *Be'er Shava* (spelled with the vowel "kamatz"). In the time of Yitzchak, the name gained new significance, signifying not only the oath of Avraham, but also Yitzchak's seventh (*sheva*) well. Therefore, its name was changed to *Be'er Sheva* (spelled with the vowel "segol"), signifying both the oath and the number seven.

• *Sforno*

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!

NON-KOSHER ANIMALS

From: Anonymous in New York
<withheld@aol.com>

Dear Rabbi,

I can think of good reasons why we keep kosher. (First and foremost because G-d said to, and also for reasons of purity and separation), but I have no idea how to explain to a 10 year old public school student, whom I tutor, why G-d created both kosher and nonkosher animals. Please help! Thank you!!

Dear Anonymous,

I think that you should give him/her a prize! The Sages of the Talmud ask the same question! They answer that every animal has a task to perform in the world, and there's something we can learn from them.

For example, say our Sages, we can learn modesty from a cat, and honesty and industriousness from an ant. Cats are basically shy animals and are discreet about taking care of their personal needs. Ants are hard-working, and they are "honest" in that they don't steal from each other.

King David tried to fathom the meaning behind each animal and he succeeded — with two exceptions! One was the spider and the other was the wasp. So, G-d showed King David very clearly the need for those two animals as well:

When running for his life from King Saul, David hid in a cave. King Saul and his soldiers were searching everywhere. G-d sent a spider to spin a web over the opening of the cave in which David was hiding. When the soldiers came to his cave and saw it was covered with a spider's web, they moved straight past, it not imagining that the web was freshly made!

On another occasion David entered secretly into King Saul's military camp at night. King Saul's general, Avner, turned over in his sleep and, unknowingly, trapped David with his legs. A wasp came and stung Avner, causing him to open his legs, allowing David to escape!

Another answer is that G-d made unkosher animals in order to reward us for following the commandment not to eat them.

Sources:

- Eiruvin 100b
- Otzar Midrashim 47
- Ma'akot 23b

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Isaac's Name Change (Ohrnet Lech Lecha):

In *Parshat Lech Lecha* you asked why Avraham and Yackov had their names changed, but Yitzchak did not. This question is asked by the Mattersdorf Rebbi in his *Sefer B'nei Yisrael*. He points out that sometimes Yitzchak's name is spelled *Yischak* with a "sin" and not a "tzaddi." (For example, *Tehillim 105:9*.) Why? He answers that originally Yitzchak was to be called *Yischak*, but because G-d saw that his merit would allow the Jews not to serve the complete 400 years of slavery in Egypt, G-d changed his name to *Yitzchak*.

The *Bnei Yisrael* keenly points out that the difference between the numerical value of the letter "sin" (300) and the letter "tzaddi" (90) is 210, which is the number of years the

Jews actually spent in Egypt. So we see that in fact Yitzchak did have a name change!

• Dov David (Bernie) May
<mayb60@hotmail.com>

Re: Last Word on First Jews (Ohrnet Bereishet):

Regarding recent postings about the first Jews in North America, let's not forget the attested fact that a couple of the sons of the Rama"k (a well known kabbalist of the time) were hired as part of Columbus's crew as navigators (due to their thorough knowledge of astronomy). They are certainly the first recorded Jews to walk on the land of this hemisphere.

• Scott Rafkin <scrafk@yahoo.com>

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last Week We Asked: What Torah *mitzvah* (*mitzvah d'oraita*) is it that, if done one way, one blessing is said, and if done another way a different blessing is said (according to Ashkenazic custom)?

Answer: The *mitzvah* of *tzitzit*. The Torah commands that if we wear a four-cornered garment (*tallit*) we must attach *tzitzit*, fringes, to each corner. When donning a large *tallit*, the type worn for prayer, the blessing is "Blessed are You, G-d... who commanded us to enwrap ourselves in *tzitzit*" (*l'hitatef ba'tzitzit*). But when donning a small *tallit* (the type which is generally worn under the shirt) the blessing said (according to

Ashkenazic custom) is "Blessed are You...who commanded us regarding the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit*" (*al mitzvat tzitzit*).

According to Sefardic custom, *l'hitatef* may be said on the small *tallit* as well.

Alternative answer: The blessing on *brit mila* is "Blessed are You...who commanded us regarding circumcision" (*al hamila*). But if the father of the child performs the *brit* himself, then according to Rambam the blessing is "...Who commanded us to circumcise the son" (*Lamul et haben*).

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 8:5,6
- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 265:1,2
- See also Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 305:10

Radioactivity is invisible but deadly. Negative judgements, like radioactivity, can be deadly in the spiritually sense. The following story, illustrating how easy it is to misjudge, is called...

RADIO ACTIVITY

The wedding gown *g'mach* (free lending project) opened only at 8:30 p.m., and only one evening a week. At 8:20 there was already a crowd in front of the door. We all seemed to be in a hurry, and were knocking on the door, ringing the bell, etc.

We heard the radio playing inside, and we all pictured the strict lady inside the house, resting on the sofa, enjoying the radio program and refusing to budge until exactly 8:30.

Some of the women in the crowd started complaining: "Come on, can't she just let us in, we'll be quiet until her radio program is over!" said one. "Boy, she's a real stickler for time," said another. "I think it's quite rude of her not to answer the door."

We were already thinking of calling her from one of our cellular phones, when suddenly, a lady came running up the stairs. She said, "I'm so sorry to have kept you all waiting, they kept me late at work." As she reached the door, she heard the radio playing inside and said, "Oh, that must be my radio alarm clock that went off at the wrong time."

Needless to say, we all walked in feeling pretty ashamed of ourselves for having wrongfully judged this kind lady.

• Anonymous, via the Internet

Send your stories about judging others favorably to info@ohr.org.il

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

ALONEI MAMREI

This Biblical area in Hebron is where Avraham built an altar in gratitude for the Heavenly gift of Eretz Yisrael. It was here too that he welcomed his three angelic visitors who informed him that his wife



Sarah would bear him a son. These "plains of Mamrei" derive their name from that of Abraham's ally who encouraged him to go through with his circumcision without fear from his opponents.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

- 25:23 Two Nations
- 26:1 Yitzchak in Exile
- 26:5 The Avot and Mitzvah Observance
- 26:20 The Wells and the Future
- 27:4 Rivka's Secret
- 27:33 Why Yitzchak Trembled

SFORNO

- 25:24 Esav's Name
- 25:26 Yaakov's Name
- 27:1 Yitzchak's Blindness
- 27:29 Yaakov's Portion

שאלו שלום ירושלים
 "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem..."

Psalms 122