

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

### Taking a Closer Look

“**T**hese are the legacies of Yitzchok, the son of Avraham, Avraham fathered Yitzchok” (Beraishis 25:19). The repetition in this verse is obvious, about as obvious as the explanation for it is famous: “Because the scoffers of the generation were saying that Sara became pregnant from Avimelech, for she was with Avraham for many years without getting pregnant. What did G-d do? He formed the appearance of Yitzchok’s face to be similar to Avraham’s, and all testified that Avraham fathered Yitzchok.”

One of the questions asked on Rashi (and the Midrashim he is based on) is why the Torah waited to tell us this. Yitzchok was 40 years old when he got married (25:20), and was 60 by the time his children were born (25:26); the physical resemblance between Yitzchok and his father must have been apparent for years. The Maharai is one of the commentators who explain that the way Eisav behaved led people to suspect that Avraham wasn’t really Yitzchok’s father. They knew that Sara and Avraham were both righteous; seeing the very unrighteous Eisav made them think that Yitzchok couldn’t be their son. If Yitzchok’s son was so wicked, his father couldn’t have been the righteous Avraham; it must have been the wicked Avimelech. Therefore, the Torah tells us here that, in order to dispel these rumors, G-d made it obvious that Avraham was Yitzchok’s father.

A few things puzzled me about this approach. First of all, did Yitzchok’s appearance change now, after Eisav started sinning? Rashi says that G-d “formed” Yitzchok’s appearance to be like Avraham’s, not that He changed it to be like Avraham’s. If Yitzchok resembled Avraham well before he got married and had children, how could these rumors start now? Didn’t everyone already realize that Avraham was Yitzchok’s father? Secondly, Eisav’s mother was Rivka, whose father was the wicked Besuel. Why would anyone say that Avraham couldn’t be the grandfather if Eisav’s wickedness could easily be attributed to his other grandfather? Additionally, Rashi told us (17:16 and 21:7) that people had doubted whether Yitzchok was really Avraham and Sara’s son decades earlier, saying that the elderly couple who couldn’t have children had taken in an abandoned child and called him their own, until they saw that Sara not only nursed Yitzchok, but

miraculously provided milk for many other children too. If everyone knew that Yitzchok’s birth was miraculous, how could they suspect that Avimelech was the father just because Avraham and Sara hadn’t had children for so many years? Especially since Avraham had already fathered a son with Hagar before Yitzchok was born, and had fathered six more children afterwards with Keturah (25:2), well before Eisav was born. If Avraham wasn’t the reason Sara was childless, and Sara’s milk proved that she was really the mother, how could anyone suspect that Yitzchok’s parents were anyone other than Avraham and Sara?

The doubts that surrounded Yitzchok’s birth are mentioned in numerous Midrashim, but not always presented the same way. It would be tempting to attribute the differences to different opinions, but almost all (if not all) of the differences are not mutually exclusive. By taking a closer look at these sources, an interesting picture emerges.

When did the rumors of Avraham not being the father start? Tanchuma (Toldos 1) says that when Sara became pregnant after being taken by Paro (Pharaoh) and then Avimelech, the nations of the world said that one of them must be the father (not Avraham), so G-d commanded the angel in charge of appearances to make Yitzchok look just like his father. Agadas Beraishis (37:5) says the same thing, adding a parable of a bird being chased by other birds and then landing on a nest of eggs. Everyone wondered what species of birds would hatch (since several species were involved in the ruckus), until one person told them to just wait until the eggs hatch; then you’ll see what kind of birds they are! Similarly, some were saying Paro was the father and some were saying Avimelech was the father, until G-d told them to just wait till the baby is born, and you’ll all see who the father is! These Midrashim (see also Beraishis Rabbah 53:6) are very clear that these rumors started as soon as Sara was expecting, and that Yitzchok was made to look like his father right away. It could be suggested that the similarity wasn’t as striking when Yitzchok was only an infant, and first became undeniable after he grew up (with the “hatching of the eggs” referring to Yitzchok getting older rather than to his birth), but the “genes” to do so were there before he was born.

Aside from our earlier question of how they thought Avraham was not the father if Yishmael’s birth proved that it was Sara that couldn’t have children, saying that Paro was the father seems rather ludicrous.

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Avraham and Sara went down to Egypt in their first year after moving to Canaan, Avraham didn't marry Hagar until they had lived in Canaan for 10 years, and Yishmael was born 13 years before Yitzchok was conceived. If more than 22 years had passed since Sara had been taken by Paro, how could anyone think he was the father? It is theoretically possible that since Hagar was Paro's daughter and he came to realize Avraham's greatness (see Rashi on 16:1), Paro made semi-regular visits, to consult with Avraham and to spend time with his daughter, visits that were misinterpreted by some to think he came to see Sara. Anaf/Eitz Yosef suggests that anyone who thought Paro could be the father just didn't have all the facts (often true when accusations are made, especially by scoffers). However, if there were competing theories as to whom the real father was, it is likely that those who claimed it was Avimelech would present these facts to those with a competing theory. What seems most likely, though, is that neither side were really interested in the facts; their main concern was discrediting Avraham, as this would make it easier to remain polytheistic despite the miracles he and Sara were experiencing to back up their rational arguments for monotheism.

The desperate attempts of polytheists to discredit Avraham and Sara continued when a party was made to celebrate Yitzchok being weaned (21:8), as despite Midrash Tanchuma having told us that they recognized that Sara was pregnant (just not that Avraham was the father), and that the baby resembled Avraham (although Sara being Avraham's half-niece could explain some resemblance), the Tanchuma also says (Toldos 3) that they accused Avraham and Sara of claiming that an abandoned child was their natural son. In order to test whether or not Sara was the baby's mother (and that she had actually nursed him and was first stopping now), the wives of the local royalty, who were invited to the party, purposely left their wet-nurses at home. When their children got hungry and started crying, they told Sara that they forgot to bring their nurses, and Sara fed them all, proving that Yitzchok was not adopted.

Although the Tanchuma indicates that passing this "test" proved that both Avraham and Sara were Yitzchok's natural parents, the Talmud (Bava Metziya 87a) says that even after Sara's milk "flowed like springs" they only accepted that Sara was the mother,

but not that Avraham was the father, Therefore, "immediately the appearance of Yitzchok's face changed so that he resembled Avraham," after which they admitted that Avraham was the father. (The Talmud continues that they looked so much alike that people confused the two, so Avraham asked Hashem to make him look old so that people could know which one they were talking to.) Pesikta Rabasi (43) says that some brought their children to the party in order for their children to merit being nursed by the righteous Sara, while others brought their infants in order to test her. It's possible that there were actually three groups; those who believed Sara was the mother (and Avraham the father) and wanted their children to be nursed by Sara, those who came to test Sara to see if the child was hers and, after she passed the test, were convinced that Avraham was the father too, and those who didn't accept Avraham as the father even after Sara had passed the test until Hashem changed Yitzchok's appearance so that he resembled Avraham.

Although some say explicitly that the Talmud, which says that Hashem "changed" Yitzchok's appearance, argues with the Midrashim that say Hashem formed him to look that way from the outset, it is possible that Yitzchok was formed to resemble Avraham, and was going to resemble him exactly when he reached adulthood. However, at the time he was weaned, Yitzchok hadn't yet resembled Avraham closely enough to convince those polytheists who were super resistant to the possibility that Avraham was the father. In order to prove it even to them, Hashem changed Yitzchok's face at the party so that it closely resembled Avraham's even at this young age.

Although Rashi avoids most of these issues by only mentioning Avimelech (not Paro), that Yitzchok's face was "formed" to resemble Avraham's (not "changed"), and that the scoffing had started "when Sara became pregnant," it seems likely that the only way anyone could still claim that Avraham wasn't the father, despite his having other children and Sara getting pregnant and then nursing so many children, is to be a "scoffer," i.e. someone trying hard to find a way not to believe in Avraham's monotheism (see Brisker Rav in the "stencil"). By the time Yitzchok became an adult, everybody who knew both Yitzchok and Avraham had no doubt that they were father and son. However, Avraham died before Eisav's wickedness became apparent (see Rashi on 25:30), so anybody who first questioned whether Avraham was Yitzchok's father based on Eisav's behavior had no way to compare Yitzchok's appearance with Avraham's. Because, in the past, the scoffers had claimed that Avraham wasn't the father, those seeing Eisav's wickedness wondered if perhaps there was any truth to the rumor. Yes, they could blame it on Eisav's maternal grandfather instead, but since there had been these rumblings about who Yitzchok's father was, these rumors started to resurface. What stopped these rumors from being

accepted? Anybody that had met Avraham could testify that Yitzchok was his son.

The Torah teaches us that Yitzchok resembled Avraham here precisely because the old rumors started to resurface. Why had these rumors existed? Rashi lays it out for us: "Because the scoffers of the generation," not necessarily this generation, but the previous one, who had been around when Sara first became pregnant, "said that Sara was impregnated by Avimelech." What did Hashem do to stop those rumors then, and create a body of evidence that could be referenced in the future? "He formed the appearance of Yitzchok's face to resemble Avraham, so that all could testify," even after Avraham had died and the rumors could start again, "that Avraham fathered Yitzchok."

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### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**T**his week's portion tells of Yitzchak's (Isaac) special love for Esav (Esau) and Rivka's (Rebecca) special love for Yaakov (Jacob). (Genesis 25:28) One wonders how Yitzchak could have been so naive to prefer his eldest son Esav more than the younger Yaakov. After all, Esav was merely a hunter while Yaakov was a student of Torah.

Perhaps it can be suggested that Yitzchak knew that Esav was physically strong. Having just experienced the Akedah (the binding of Isaac), that moment when a knife was literally on his neck, Yitzchak favored this trait. He sensed that throughout Jewish history we would be similarly bound with a knife on our neck-facing near death. Physical strength would be needed.

What the Jewish people needed, Yitzchak thought, was a two headed leadership. Esav would be the physical heir. He would defend the Jewish people against all attacks. Yaakov on the other hand, would be the spiritual heir who would teach Torah and soulful principles to his people. Yitzchak was not fooled by Yaakov's disguise and therefore blessed Yaakov, with blessings that were physical in nature. "May G-d give you your due of heaven and plenty of corn and wine." (Genesis 27:28) The blessings Yitzchak gives to Yaakov just before Yaakov leaves home were the covenantal blessings. "May the Lord give you the blessings of Avraham (Abraham) and may you inherit the land of your sojournings." (Genesis 28:4)

Rivka did not see things that way. She insisted that there could only be one heir. The body and the soul should not be separated. Rivka understood that we are not human beings who are disjointed. The body and soul must work in harmony. The soul needs the body to exist in this world and the body needs the soul to give meaning and direction to its existence. For Rivka, the pathway to spirituality is not to separate it from the body, to denigrate the body but rather to sanctify it. She

therefore insisted that Jacob, the Jew of the spirit, the student of Torah, could learn to be physically strong as well.

Thus, as my Rebbe the saintly Rav Ahron Soloveitchik of blessed memory points out, Rivka pushes Yaakov to have courage by insisting that he challenge Esav by taking the blessing from him and putting his life on the line. We know that Yaakov eventually learns this lesson for later in his life he successfully wrestles with a mysterious man, (Genesis 32:25) and is given an additional name-Yisrael which means one who is able to fight and be strong.

The body-soul issue is one that has been debated and discussed for many centuries and in many religions and cultures. It is certainly present in the modern State of Israel. Many Yeshivot refuse to allow their students to fight in the army. They insist that they are protecting Israel spiritually through their learning and physical protection should be taken care of by others.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, however, thought differently. He was the father of Yeshivot Hesder whose students enlist in the army and fight; gun in one hand, and Talmud in the other. In tune with Rivka's thinking, they become almost like two children of the third patriarch, Yaakov, the student of Torah, and Yisrael, the strong fighter, for they integrate both body and soul in the service of G-d. © 2010 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

### RABBI BEREL WEIN

## Wein Online

**T**he Torah emphasizes to us the importance of the continuity of generations in this week's parsha. The name alone by which the parsha is called - "toldot" - generations, testifies to the stress that the Torah places on this vision in Jewish life. My wise old Talmud teacher said to his class: "Boys, if your grandparents and your grandchildren are both proud of you and your achievements, then probably Heaven is also satisfied with you."

Sixty years later I fully comprehend at last the import of his words. Midrash teaches us that Abraham died earlier than the destined amount of the years of his life so that he would not have to witness the betrayal of his life style and value system by his grandson Esau.

I believe that there is nothing more shattering to family life and personal serenity than the fracturing of familial tradition. Jewish life always prided itself on the continuity of generations. It was the cement that bound the small, persecuted people of Israel together in all of the lands of its dispersion. It also was, and is, its dissolution that heralded the breakup of the Jewish home and the wave of assimilation and intermarriage that has now engulfed much of Jewish society.

The pressures of modern life, of mobility and geographical distance have contributed to this fraying of generational continuity. Basically, it is the weakening of individual commitment to family and generational continuity that has contributed to this situation. Family generational continuity somehow is no longer the priority that it once was in many Jewish homes and societies.

Our mother Rebecca recognized that her eldest son Esau was a danger to the generational continuity which is the foundation upon which a Jewish nation is founded. Unfortunately, as every school teacher can testify, the survival of educational progress relies on a system of triage. Not everyone can and should be entitled to attend graduate school or become a brain surgeon.

The same is true in the spiritual world. Not everyone is entitled to proclaim one's self a kabbalist, a halachic decisor, or a holy person. Not everyone is cut out to spend an entire day studying Talmud, as admirable and necessary as such an occupation is. Because Joseph was so beloved by their father, the brothers feared that the disagreement with Joseph, which was based on the triage that eliminated Yishmael and Esau from Abraham's and Isaac's family, would also eliminate them.

They were well aware of the process of triage that seemingly dominates Jewish generational continuity. Perhaps this is one of the causes of the low numbers in the Jewish population. And, therefore, the problem of generational continuity is a touchy, delicate and mostly painful process. And it changes from place to place, time to time, and generation to generation.

That is why the Torah always portrays our future as an uncertain one - with barren mothers, fathers threatened by outside enemies who covet their wives and assets, and the difficulties of raising children in an unwholesome environment. And that is why "toldot" somehow remains the key to Jewish survival and success. © 2010 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

“**T**hese are the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham; Abraham begat Isaac" (Gen 25:19).

The Bible describes the miraculous conception of Isaac, leaving no room for confusion about his parentage, so why does it now inform us twice in the space of one verse that Isaac was the son of Abraham? What is it teaching us about the lives of the patriarchs?

Family can be a source of support and comfort, but it can also be a source of terrible jealousy, fostering a lifetime of enmity. This is as true of the Biblical

families as it is of our own. Perhaps we get an indication of that from the opening verse of this week's portion, which describes Esau and Jacob as "the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham." These boys will battle against each other from their mother's womb and "the events of the patriarchs will foreshadow the experiences of their descendants," leading to an ongoing conflict between their descendants throughout the generations. But what is the source of this sibling enmity? Perhaps the end of our verse hints that the answer lies in the complex relationship between the first patriarch and his son: "Abraham begat Isaac."

Abraham is a world leader of great stature. He is a successful businessman with plenty of land and livestock, a fearless warrior. He is a pioneering philosopher and the founder of ethical monotheism. Most important of all, he is chosen by G-d to bring blessing to all the nations of the world.

Isaac is born into this household of awe-inspiring royalty. He knows that as the only son of Sarah whose birth was foretold by the angels, he is Divinely destined to be Abraham's heir. This is a heavy responsibility and a difficult role. So perhaps Isaac felt overwhelmed by the duty to replicate his father's accomplishments, which may explain why he sometimes acted like the passive son of a creative and determined father. But Isaac's challenges do not end here. He also lives in the shadow of his elder half-brother Ishmael, a much more aggressive "wild ass of a man, whose hands are on everything and everyone" (Gen 16:12). Isaac is deeply troubled by this boy whom Abraham had wished to maintain as part of the household, requesting of G-d that "Ishmael live before Him," even at the expense of Sarah's miraculous conception.

Isaac may even have feared that Ishmael was the more likely heir, suspecting that their father had subconsciously interpreted G-d's instructions at the Akeda as "sacrifice" your son rather than merely "dedicate" him; he thought that perhaps his father had wished to remove him from the family, leaving Ishmael ascendant.

Perhaps this is what led to the apparent estrangement between father and son after the Akeda. You will note that Isaac is missing from his mother's funeral and from the familial home, constantly wandering to and from Be'er Lehai Roi. Apparently Isaac is obsessed by the place in which G-d revealed himself to Ishmael and bestowed upon Ishmael great blessings.

Perhaps this also explains why, when Isaac bestows the mantle of the firstborn, he favors the more aggressive hunter, Esau, to the more passive "dweller of tents," Jacob. Maybe this is what led Jacob to imitate the more extrovert and aggressive characteristics of his brother Esau, deceptively masquerading as his older brother in order to gain Isaac's love and acceptance, so

that the next heir apparent will resemble the initial path-breaker Abraham rather than the quieter Isaac.

At the end of this three-generational sequence, Jacob finally becomes Israel. He understands that the truest and most worthy heir to Abraham's legacy must express compassionate righteousness and moral justice rather than duplicitous deceptiveness and aggressive entrapment (Gen 18:19). This marks his victory over the "spirit" of Esau, enabling him to return to his brother the blessing that he gained by deception (Gen 33:11).

Moreover, history and theology is much kinder to Isaac than he may have been to himself. Managing and maintaining a successful company requires very different skills to the risk-taking and often-impetuous conduct necessary to found the company. So it is with religious movements as well. For Judaism to take root, the heir to the pioneering path-breaker could not be a carbon copy of his father; he had to be a consistent continuer. Thus, Isaac opened the very same wells which his father had dug and Avimelekh had stopped up, and he worked and tilled the same sacred soil which his father had received from G-d.

Isaac became the symbol of a tradition, a handing down from generation to generation without which Abraham's traditions could never have endured.

Parents must not attempt to clone their children in their image, and children must not strive to be clones of their parents. Each must have his or her own identity, "taste" and "texture." In the differences between the generations lie the unique contributions of each. Ultimately, so long as one's central mission remains compassionate righteousness, moral justice and obedience to G-d's laws, "to thine own self be true."

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**CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

## Covenant & Conversation

**E**ven before they were born, Jacob and Esau struggled in the womb. They were destined, it seems, to be eternal adversaries. Not only were they were different in character and appearance. They also held different places in their parents' affections: "The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob." (Gen. 25:27-28)

We know why Rebekah loved Jacob. Before the twins were born, the pains Rebekah felt were so great that "she went to inquire of the Lord." This is what she was told: "Two nations are in your womb, / and two peoples from within you will be separated; / one people will be stronger than the other, / and the older will serve the younger." (Gen. 25:23) It seemed as if G-d were saying that the younger would prevail and carry forward

the burden of history, so it was the younger, Jacob, whom she loved.

But why, in that case, did Isaac love Esau? Did he not know about Rebekah's oracle? Had she not told him about it? Besides, did he not know that Esau was wild and impetuous? Can we really take literally the proposition that Isaac loved Esau because "he had a taste for wild game," as if his affections were determined by his stomach, by the fact that his elder son brought him food he loved? Surely not, when the very future of the covenant was at stake.

The classic answer, given by Rashi, listens closely to the literal text. Esau, says the Torah, "knew how to trap [yode'a tzayid]." Isaac loved him "because entrapment was in his mouth [ki tzayid be'fiv]." Esau, says Rashi, trapped Isaac by his mouth. Here is Rashi's comment on the phrase "knew how to trap": "He knew how to trap and deceive his father with his mouth. He would ask him, 'Father, how should one tithe salt and straw?' Consequently his father believed him to be strict in observing the commands." (Rashi to 25:27)

Esau knew full well that salt and straw do not require tithes, but he asked so as to give the impression that he was strictly religious. And here it is Rashi's comment on the phrase that Isaac loved him "because entrapment was in his mouth": "The midrashic explanation is that there was entrapment in the mouth of Esau, who trapped his father and deceived him by his words." (Rashi to 25:28)

The Maggid of Dubnow adds a perceptive comment as to why Isaac, but not Rebekah, was deceived. Rebekah grew up with the wily Laban. She knew deception when she saw it. Isaac, by contrast, had grown up with Abraham and Sarah. He only knew total honesty and was thus easily deceived. (Bertrand Russell once commented on the philosopher G. E. Moore, that he only once heard Moore tell a lie, when he asked Moore if he had ever told a lie, and Moore replied, "Yes").

So the classic answer is that Isaac loved Esau because he simply did not know who or what Esau was. But there is another possible answer: that Isaac loved Esau precisely because he did know what Esau was.

In the early twentieth century someone brought to the great Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of pre-state Israel, the following dilemma. He had given his son a good Jewish education. He had always kept the commands at home. Now however the son had drifted far from Judaism. He no longer kept the commandments. He did not even identify as a Jew. What should the father do?

"Did you love him when he was religious?" asked Rav Kook. "Of course," replied the father. "Well then," Rav Kook replied, "Now love him even more."

Sometimes love can do what rebuke cannot. It may be that the Torah is telling us that Isaac was anything but blind as to his elder son's true nature. But if you have two children, one well behaved, the other

liable to turn out badly, to whom should you devote greater attention? With whom should you spend more time?

It may be that Isaac loved Esau not blindly but with open eyes, knowing that there would be times when his elder son would give him grief, but knowing too that the moral responsibility of parenthood demands that we do not despair of or disown a wayward son.

Did Isaac's love have an effect on Esau? Yes and no. It is clear that there was a special bond of connection between Esau and Isaac. This was recognised by the sages: Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: No man ever honoured his father as I honoured my father, but I found that Esau honoured his father even more. (Devarim Rabbah 1:15)

Rabbi Shimon derives this from the fact that usually people serve their parents wearing ordinary clothes while they reserve their best for going out. Esau, however, had kept his best clothes in readiness to serve his father the food he had gone out to hunt. That is why Jacob was able to wear them while Esau was still out hunting (27:14).

We find, much later in the Torah, that G-d forbids the Israelites to wage war against Esau's descendants. He tells Moses: "Give the people these orders: 'You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own.'" (Deut. 2:4-5)

And later still Moses commands the Israelites: "Do not abhor an Edomite [i.e. a descendant of Esau], for he is your brother." (Deut. 23:8) The sages saw these provisions as an enduring reward to Esau for the way he honoured his father.

So, was Isaac right or wrong to love Esau? Esau reciprocated the love, but remained Esau, the hunter, the man of the field, not the man to carry forward the demanding covenant with the invisible G-d and the spiritual sacrifices it called for. Not all children follow the path of their parents. If it was Isaac's intent that Esau should do so, he failed. But there are some failures that are honourable. Loving your children, whatever they become, is one, for surely that is how G-d loves us. © 2010 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

**RABBI DOVID SIEGEL**

## Haftorah

**T**his week we read a special Haftorah portion in light of the fact that this Shabbos is Erev Rosh Chodesh. This particular segment deals with the heartbreaking separation of Yonason from his dearest and most beloved friend Dovid and Dovid's secret escape from the threatening wrath of Shaul Hamelech. Shaul, then acting as king over Israel, had the mistaken

impression that Dovid was a threat to his reign and viewed him as a rebel who deserved, according to Torah law, to be executed. Yonasan the king's son, maintained an entirely different outlook on the matter and idolized Dovid's accomplishments to the point of yearning for Dovid to assume the mantle of leadership over Israel. These diametrically opposing views finally came to a head when the king publicly denounced his son for his disgraceful attitude. Yonasan read his father's message efficiently and secretly informed Dovid to flee for his life. After an emotional scene of departure, Yonasan sent Dovid away in peace and reinstated their vow that nothing would ever separate the two families from each other.

The timely reading of this particular segment and the occurrence of its events around Rosh Chodesh suggest a corollary between the reign of Dovid Hamelech and Rosh Chodesh. Indeed we find many customs related to the new moon that reinforce this association. Our Chazal in Sanhedrin 42a instituted that we recite a blessing over the new moon each month. The nature of this Mitzvah is to recognize the orbit of the moon and its exact and affixed progression and digression beginning from a small crescent, extending to a full moon and then decreasing and disappearing. Yet, in the midst of the recital we say with excitement, "Dovid, King over Israel is alive and enduring". This peculiar practice suggests that the moon and King Dovid's reign have much in common. Chazal (Pesikta Rabasi 15) tell us that in actuality, King Dovid's reign was patterned exactly according to the moon. The moon comes to its fullest appearance on the fifteenth day, and then begins its gradual decline until it totally disappears. Once the moon is completely out of sight, it then begins its gradual reappearance. Chazal explain that the reign of the House of Dovid resembled the appearance and disappearance of the moon. Likened to the moon, the glory of Israel's reign slowly began to appear in the time of Avrohom Avinu and developed to its fullest maturity fifteen generations later in the era of Shlomo Hamelech, Dovid's son. From that point onwards the monarchy, like the moon, began its gradual descent until its total disappearance fifteen kings later during the era of Tzidkiyahu Hamelech. The Maharsha (Sanhedrin38a) develops this thought and cites that even within the actual dynasty of King Dovid there were thirty figureheads. In fact, the household of Dovid enjoyed fifteen kings until its downfall during the reign of Tzidkiyahu Hamelech. But even after that point there existed a structure of rulership from the House of Dovid for many generations later. The Midrash concludes that when the reign of Dovid will totally disappear, the time will be ripe for the gradual appearance of Moshiach.

We conclude the prayers over the new moon with a special request that Hashem restore the moon to its perfect brilliance and then we recite the following passage "And the Jewish People will seek Hashem and their King Dovid". Once again we discover King Dovid

as an integral part of our Rosh Chodesh service. Our Chazal (see Rashi Breishis 1:15) teach us that the moon was originally created with the same brilliance as that of the sun. However, the light of the moon was decreased and will remain that way until the era of Moshiach. In this prayer the brilliance of the moon is likened to the glorious reign of Dovid Hamelech. We entreat Hashem to restore the moon to its original brilliance and likewise to restore the reign of Dovid Hamelech to its original splendor. The insightful words of the Maharsha are quoted in completion of this thought that the numerical value of the above cited phrase "Dovid, King over Israel..." equals the exact value of the words "Rosh Chodesh".

We can now appreciate the lesson of this week's haftorah and its encouraging theme. From the view of an outsider the events of the haftorah are terribly disheartening. Dovid had continuously demonstrated remarkable strengths and leadership qualities throughout his faithful years serving as Shaul Hamelech's general. Although Yonasan had been destined to be Shaul's successor, Dovid's superb qualities convinced even Yonasan to step aside and allow Dovid to rise to power. Now, because of King Shaul's grave misunderstanding, all must be forfeited and Dovid's glorious career must come to an abrupt end. Yet, Yonasan remains steadfast and is totally convinced that justice will prevail and Dovid will eventually rise to his well deserved position of authority. The moon seems to be disappearing, but Yonasan knows that it will reappear in its proper time. He, therefore reinstates his pact with Dovid (see Malbim 20:13,14) that when he rises to his position of leadership never to forget the household of Yonasan and his father. We draw our faith from these words and, as we look towards the moon, we express our total faith in Hashem. We recognize that the disappearance of the Kingdom of Israel, like the moon, is a guaranteed indication of its reappearance and we entreat Hashem to restore the Kingdom of Dovid to its original glory and splendor, speedily in our days. © 2010 Rabbi D. Siegel and torah.org

**RABBI YISROEL CINER**

## Parsha Insights

**T**his week we read the parsha of Toldos. "V'aileh Toldos Yitzchak ben Avrohom {And these are the generations of Yitzchak the son of Avrohom}. [25:19]" The parsha tells us about the birth of Yaakov and Esav, their development and the blessings that Yitzchak gave his sons.

Rivkah had been told through prophecy that the elder son would be subservient to the younger. She understood that the blessing had to go to Yaakov. She therefore sent in Yaakov, disguised as Esav, in order that the prophecy would be fulfilled and he would receive the blessings.

"And Yitzchak, his father, said to him: 'Come close and give me to drink, my son.' And he (Yaakov) drew close and gave him to drink and he (Yitzchak) smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him. [27:26-7]" Rashi quotes the Medrash that teaches that the raiach {scent} of Gan Eden {the Garden of Eden} entered along with Yaakov.

Rav Yerucham zt"l in his Daas Torah explains this raiach {scent} in the following manner. Chaza"l teach that Eliyahu Hanavi {the prophet} was once walking along with another person. They passed a corpse that had deteriorated and was emitting a very foul odor. This person covered his nose commenting about the smell while Eliyahu commented how white the teeth were. When they later passed a sinner, Eliyahu now covered his nose from the stench that was coming from that person while the person accompanying him noticed nothing at all.

Rav Yerucham explains that there is a spiritual reality that is actually quite tangible. Mitzvos and good deeds give off an actual smell! A remarkable fragrance that affects the whole surrounding area. Similarly, sins actually emit an odor that individuals of high spiritual stature can actually sense.

When Yaakov came before his father, Yitzchak, for the blessing, Yitzchak was somewhat unsure of his true identity. However, once he smelled the scent of Gan Eden that accompanied him, he was confident that this person truly deserved the blessing.

This spiritual reality can even be detected in our generation. At an early stage of their commitment to mitzvos, a number of boys from my yeshiva went to the Steipler Gaon, zt"l, to ask for a blessing. Although his vision was so weak that he had to hold a note literally in front of his eyes in order to read it, the moment these boys entered, he called from across the room asking why they weren't wearing tzitzis. One of the boys called back that it was already night (and as such, there is no obligation). The Steipler quickly countered, "You don't wear during the day either..."

Another time, three friends of mine went for a blessing from the Baba Sali, zt"l. The accepted custom was to immerse oneself in a mikveh {ritual bath} before going to see him. At the bathhouse, two of the boys immersed themselves while the third simply wet his hair under a sink. They then went to his house and waited their turn to see him. The moment they entered his room, he pointed to the boy who had wet his hair instead of immersing himself and said, "Faker, get OUT of here!"

Rav Eliyahu Lopian, zt"l, was once sharing a Shabbos meal with the administrator of the yeshiva. At his urging, Rav Eliyahu relayed an incident that had occurred many years before.

"When I was still a young man, my wife had gotten so ill, all of the doctors said that there was nothing to be done. The whole family was crying by her bed and I was in the adjacent room when the door

suddenly opened. A man walked in and asked why everyone was crying. When I explained the situation he instructed me to go to a certain place, pluck the vegetable that grows there, cook it and give it to her to drink. I did that and she immediately started to get better. I'm sure that it was Eliyahu Hanavi who had come in the merit of my righteous wife."

When the administrator said that he had heard that there was more to the story, Rav Eliyahu remained silent. He then asked if he could relay what he had heard and Rav Eliyahu would let him know if it was correct.

The administrator then said: "A few years later you (Rav Eliyahu) went to the Sfas Emes, zt"l, {one of the great Chassidic Masters of Gur} for a blessing. The Sfas Emes said to you, 'Someone who merited a revelation of Eliyahu Hanavi doesn't need a blessing from me!' You responded, 'If the Rebbe on his own knows what happened, then I'm definitely interested in a blessing!'" The administrator then asked Rav Eliyahu if it was correct. Rav Eliyahu didn't answer. When he asked him again, Rav Eliyahu responded, "Those great Chassidic Masters had a real sense of smell..." © 2010 *Rabbi Y. Ciner & torah.org*

#### MACHON ZOMET

## Shabbat B'Shabbato

by *Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg*  
Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

“**A**vraham established Shacharit (in the morning), Yitzchak established Mincha (in the afternoon), and Yaacov established Maariv (at night)" [Berachot 26b].

The fate of each of the Patriarchs corresponds to a different time of day. Avraham can be viewed in terms of the coming of day, when the light of dawn grows stronger and stronger. He was told, "You are a prince of G-d among us" [Bereishit 23:6]. The light of Yitzchak, on the other hand, is beginning to decrease, corresponding to Mincha, which is recited in the afternoon. Even though Yitzchak had a respectable position among his neighbors, they were jealous-"And the Pelishtim were jealous of him" [26:14]... "Go away from us, for you have become much more powerful than we are" [26:16]. Yitzchak responds to them in a similar way: "You hate me" [26:27]. The jealousy and hatred prove that they realized how important Yitzchak was. And Yaacov's status among his neighbors was even lower, reminiscent of the time of Maariv. He goes out in exile, he is pursued and afraid, and he is exploited like a slave in the hands of his master. Most of his life is a series of calamities and tests.

"The events of the ancestors are a sign for the descendents" [see: Ramban Bereishit 12:6]. The fate of the Patriarchs is a precursor of what will happen to the Jewish nation in the time of exile-a slow descent from light to darkness.

The return from exile to redemption will also be a gradual one, and that is the meaning of the Divine promise, "I will remember my Yaacov covenant and also my Yitzchak covenant, and I will also remember my Avraham covenant" [Vayikra 26:42]. Rabbi Hirsh points out that the verse does not mention the covenant "with" Avraham, and so on. Rather, in each case it is referring to a different type of covenant. The beginning of the redemption will take place with a "Yaacov" type of covenant. G-d promises to remain with the people during the long night of exile and to keep them in existence even though they are pursued and treated as slaves. "And also my Yitzchak covenant"-When the people begin to wake up from the exile and stand upright, the nations of the world will recognize them as a nation with their own rights. But they will still suffer from jealousy and hatred. In the end, the Avraham covenant will be fulfilled, and the other nations will recognize the value of the Jewish nation and show them respect. Even the angel of Eisav will agree with the blessings and the status of the birthright, as is clear from the comment of the sages in the Midrash on the verse, "And he blessed him there" [Bereishit 32:30]. This will be followed by the fourth stage of the promise, "and I will remember the land" [Vayikra 26:42]. The Jews will return to the land, with full recognition by the other nations of the link between the land and the people, with a showing of respect and admiration.

Ten years after Lord Balfour made his historic declaration he gave a speech where he said that he would not have been so enthusiastic about this issue if he had seen it merely as a matter of improving the lot of the Jews and establishing a refuge for them in Eretz Yisrael. "I hope that this very talented nation, which has done so much for western civilization... will be able to accomplish much more if it is given the opportunity to live in the land which is the source of its inspiration..."

#### RABBI CHAIM FLOM

## Short Vorts

“**W**ow!! That was so-o-o-o inspiring!!"  
"I thought it was refreshing. I slept through the whole thing."

"And Eisav said 'I am going to die-why do I need this birthright?!'" (Biraishis 25:32) The Chofetz Chaim explains that the birthright was of great spiritual value. It was our ticket to getting the Torah. For many people, death causes great spiritual introspection, for others it causes great spiritual rejection. (The way we live our lives will have an affect which group we are in.)

For parents, teachers, Rabbis, speakers, internet/email writers, and anyone with interpersonal relationships: Different people react differently to the same messages!! © 2007 *Rabbi C. Flom*

