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פרשת תולדות
Parshat Toldot

Ashreinu אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

TURNING A NEW LEAF

RABBI PERETZ LAINE

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The Torah relates that Yitzchak was displeased with Esav's Canaanite wives, and when Esav recognized his father's displeasure, he married Yishmael's daughter Machlat—the granddaughter of Avraham Avinu—in addition to his previous two wives (Bereishit, 28:8–9). Chazal relate that Machlat was a virtuous woman (see Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi in Breishit Rabbah 67:13; Lekutei Sichot vol. 35 p.131 [explaining that Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi's opinion implies that Machlat was virtuous].) Yet, Rashi comments about Esav's marriage to Machlat explaining that, "Esav added wickedness to his previous wickedness because he did not divorce his first two wives" (Bereishit 28:9).

Why does Rashi consider Esav's marrying Machlat—a virtuous woman—a wickedness? Rashi's explanation, "because Esav did not divorce his first two wives," does not seem sufficient. Even if being married to his Canaanite wives was a "wickedness", why does Rashi consider Esav's marrying a virtuous woman as "adding a wickedness"? One could imagine Rashi saying this comment if Esav's third wife was as evil as his first two wives, but why does he say it when Esav's wife was purportedly virtuous? Do previous bad actions negate good actions? If one is not ready to change his entire lifestyle, are the small steps that he takes in the right direction "wicked"?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the "previous wickedness" to which Esav was adding was not the fact that he married two Canaanite women. Instead, marrying Machlat was adding to Esav's inherent wickedness—his deceitfulness (Lekutei Sichot Vol. 35 pp. 131–36).

Chazal address Esav's inherent deceitfulness by comparing Esav to a pig (Bereishit Rabbah 65:1). Just as a pig, which has one of the two kosher signs—split hooves—flaunts it as if to show he is kosher, similarly, Esav, would do the same (See Rashi, Bereishit 26:34).

For example, Esav was a man who was involved in the worst sins—murder, adultery, and idolatry. Yet, to convince his father, Yitzchak, of his piety, Esav would ask his father obscure halachic questions like "what is the method of tithing salt and straw?" In addition, Esav married his first two wives at 40 so that he could compare himself to his father, Yitzchak, who married at 40. Yet, Esav was nothing like his father even in this regard because, as mentioned above, Esav was committing adultery prior to marrying. Thus, Rashi explains that his marriage to Machlat was just another effort to further his deceitfulness.

How does Rashi know that Esav was not actually turning a new leaf? Rashi explains: "because he did not divorce his first two wives"—he did not remove the building blocks from his general pig-like deceitfulness, namely the women that he married at 40 to falsely compare himself with his father. What are we to learn from this? Why is it important to know of Esav's inherent deceptive character?

We currently find ourselves in *Galut Edom*—Esav's Galut (Edom descends from Esav, and is similarly compared to a pig). This is a *galut* in which we can be deceived into mistaking wicked for good. This is a galut in which we must be extremely vigilant and diligent in probing our actions to ensure that they are sincere and not just a justification and a cover-up for an unholy agenda.

That is the "*sur may'ra*" message of this pasuk and Rashi, but there is also a message of "v'aseh tov". Those of us who are deceptive and do things merely to give a perception of piety are not lost causes. In fact, deceitfulness is really a bad expression of an inherent want to be good. If someone did not inherently want to be good and would not recognize being good as a virtue, he would not waste time with a show. It is just that it is often easier to put up a perception of piety than going through the grind of truly refining our ways. Thus, the lesson we must take from this is to tap into the source behind deceitfulness—the wanting to be good—and to utilize it as a drive to truly refine our ways. This also explains why the pig will be kosher when Mashiach comes. This is because its bad exterior—deception—will be stripped away, and its inner source—the inherent want to be good—will be revealed.

May we merit to the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days.

LONG TERM GOALS

ARIELLA GREENBERG ('22)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Toldot, the sale of lentils alters the course of our history as a nation. Esav willingly trades the *bechora* for a pot of lentil soup. This peculiar trade begs the question of why Esav would sacrifice his birthright for food. Was he just that hungry, or was the bechora that insignificant to him? The pasuk says:

וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת וְלָמָּה זֶּה לִי בְּכֹרָה

"And Esav said, 'Behold, I am going to die; so why do I need this birthright?'" (Bereishit 25:32).

Esav's logic is that he is going to die anyway, so why would the bechora matter to him? The approach that Esav takes is one that many of us can be easily tempted into taking as well. Esav's attitude towards life was that it would end one day, and therefore nothing mattered. When we view life with this attitude, nothing seems important. Even the tremendous merit of the bechora seems irrelevant to Esav. The desire for instant gratification at the cost of long-term happiness is a common phenomenon. Esav's inability to look past his immediate desire cost him his birthright.

We can learn a valuable lesson from the actions of Esav. Often, when faced with two choices, we will opt for whichever provides satisfaction in the present. It is difficult to resist and to live with a

long-term perspective in mind. Yaakov was the opposite of Esav in this way. Esav spent his time hunting, which is an activity that provides an instant reward: food. On the other hand, Yaakov was a Torah scholar. He spent his days investing in the long term goal of closeness. As a result of this distinction in their characters, Yaakov and Esav had differing approaches to the situation that arose with the sale of the bechora. While Esav focused on the immediate goal of satiating his hunger and took a "YOLO" (You Only Live Once) approach, Yaakov kept his eyes on the future. He was able to recognize that in the long term, the bechora is more important than a pot of lentils. We can all learn from Yaakov's wisdom, which allowed him to look beyond instant gratification and seek to emanate the quality of seeing the bigger picture in life.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

DO THE RIGHT THING

BENNY KEEHN ('22)

In this week's parsha, we learn about the story of Esav selling his birthright to Yaakov for a bowl of soup. Why would Esav sell his birthright, something so important spiritually, for soup? Esav comments that it was because one day he would pass away.

We see this same mentality when it comes to doing bad behaviors. Smokers justify their behavior the same way Esav did: "I'm going to die one day, so I might as well enjoy myself." You can go a bit further and say, why not live your entire lives recklessly? Eat unhealthily and drink whenever you want because your life will end either way!

The problem with this is that there is a tomorrow and how you live today will determine your tomorrow. Esav only cared about what he wanted now. He was not thinking about tomorrow.

We feel so much better when we sacrifice short-term pleasure for our future and when we do what is right. Sacrificing what's right for instant pleasure makes us feel bad in the long run. If you do what's right you'll be happier, today and tomorrow.

TRUST IN HASHEM

OLIVIA KAHANE ('23)

This week's parsha, Toldot, is all about the birth and lives of Esav and Yaakov. The Torah tells us how Yaakov was a simple man who learned Torah all day, while Esav was a hunter. Esav was the older twin, however, Yaakov wanted the *bechora*. One day while Yaakov was cooking stew, Esav came in and claimed to be starving. Yaakov then sold the stew to his older brother for the rights of the older child, the *bechora*. When the time came for Yitzchak to bless the older child the pasuk states,

וַיְהִי כִּי זָקֵן יִצְחָק וַתִּכְהֶיָן עֵינָיו מֵרְאֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֶת עֵשָׂו בְּנוֹ הַגָּדֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּנִי

"When Yitzchak was old and his eyes were too dim to see, he called his older son Esav and said to him, 'My son'. He answered, 'Here I am'" (Bereishit 27:1).

What does it mean that Yitzchak's eyes were too dim to see? Rashi offers three ideas as to why his eyes were too dim to even see which son he was looking at. The first answer that Rashi shares is that Yitzchak's eyes were dimmed because of the smoke raised by Esav's wives who were offering incense to idols. Another answer is that when Yitzchak was on the altar during Akeidat Yitzchak and Avraham was about to slaughter his son, at that moment the heavens opened up and the angels that saw the scene cried. Rashi tells us how the tears of the angels dripped into Yitzchack's eyes, and this is the reason his eyes were dimmed. Lastly, Rashi shares the idea that the reason his eyes were dimmed was simply so that Yaakov could get the bechora. This answer shows how this was all Hashem's plan.

Later in the parsha, Rivkah does something controversial by telling Yaakov to trick his father. However, from Rashi's last answer we learn that ultimately everything is because of Hashem. Even if Rivkah told Yaakov to trick Yitzchak, ultimately

it is Hashem's plan that Yitzchak be unable to see which child is standing in front of him. From this parsha, we can learn to trust in Hashem and that He has a plan for the future.

AWARENESS

MAX FROHLICH (21')

In this week's parsha, Parshat Toldot, Yitzchak struggles to find food as another famine occurs. Hashem tells him not to worry about the famine as Hashem would help him through food insecurity and any future adversity. Hashem repeats his promise to Yitzchak that He made to Avraham that He would increase the offspring of Avraham like the stars of the heavens. The next pasuk states:

עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקּוֹתַי וְתוֹרֹתָי

"Because Avraham listened to My voice, and guarded my laws, My commandments, My statutes, and My instructions" (Bereishit 26:5)

Hashem is stating that the promise will be fulfilled because Avraham (and now also Yitzchak) listened to His voice and guarded His laws and Torah. Avraham Avinu is the forefather of the Jews. As Hashem stated, Avraham followed the Torah and all the rules and stringencies. Avraham was able to do so despite growing up in a home where idols were worshipped.

How was Avraham able to discover God and how old was he when doing so? The Gemara Nedarim (32b) explains that the *gematria* of the world עֵקֶב is 172, meaning Avraham was aware of Hashem's existence for 172 years. Knowing Avraham lived for 175 years, subtracting 172 from 175, we can assume that Avraham became cognizant of God when he was three years old. Avraham was clearly one of the greatest *tzadikim* ever. Understanding that he became aware of God and followed Him since he was three despite his family's worshipping of idols makes Avraham even greater. We should aspire to be like Avraham by looking for the light amongst all the darkness even when those around us may seem older, more wise, and more mature. Have a great Shabbos!



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