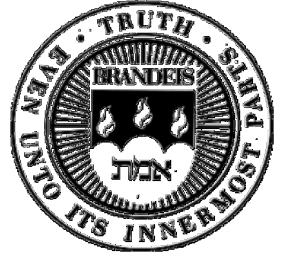




# תורת אמת



A Weekly Brandeis Orthodox Organization Publication

4 Kislev 5770 / 21 November 2009 Vol. XI Issue 13

## PARSHAT TOLDOT

Candle-lighting: 4:00 pm  
Shacharit: 9 am  
Sof Kriat Shema: **9:06** am  
Sof Zman Tefilla: 9:54 am  
Mincha 3:50 pm  
Shkia: 4:18 pm  
Motzei Shabbat: 5:04 pm

### Parsha in a Box

- Rivkah gets pregnant and feels like something is wrong so she goes to ask Hashem
- Hashem tells her that she is carrying two nations where the older one will serve the younger one
- Eisav and Yaakov are born
- Eisav sells Yaakov his birthright
- There is a famine in the land so Yitzchak goes to Grar, becomes very successful, and is asked to leave
- Yitzchak makes a treaty with Avimelech
- Yitzchak tells Eisav that he wants to bless him
- Rivkah overhears and tells Yaakov to dress up as Eisav and get the *bracha* from Yitzchak instead of Eisav
- Yaakov listens to his mother and gets a *bracha* from Eisav comes in after him and realizes itzchak
- what happened and begs Yitzchak for a *bracha* too
- Eisav hates Yaakov and wants to kill him so Rivkah tells Yaakov to run away to Lavan, Rivkah's brother
- Yitzchak blesses Yaakov and tells him to take a wife from the daughters of Lavan
- Yaakov runs away to Lavan

## Shabbat Shalom!

### Split Personalities

By Rabbi Kaplowitz

*Parshat Toldot* opens rather abruptly with the Torah telling us that Yitzchak prayed on behalf of his wife, Rivkah because she was barren. Hashem answers Yitzchak's prayers and Rivkah conceives. However, she experiences an abnormal pregnancy. We are told, **"But the children struggled in her womb, and she said, 'If so why do I exist?' She went to inquire of the Lord."** Any commentators explain that Rivkah asked other women if they had similar experiences during their pregnancies, to which they responded in the negative. Many of us are familiar with the *Midrash* quotes by Rashi. The *Midrash* notes that there is a linguistic similarity between the word "struggle" (*va-yitrotzetzu*) and the word for "run" (*rutz*). Rashi writes: "When she would pass by entrances of places of Torah of Shem and Ever, Jacob would run and toss about to go out of his mother's womb. When she would pass by entrances of places of idol worship, Esau would toss about to go out." Rivkah was concerned that the child she was carrying was displaying a split personality – how could one child be attracted to both places of Torah and places of idolatry?

This understanding explains how Hashem's answer is a comfort to Rivkah. Hashem tells her: **Two nations are in your womb, two separate peoples shall issue from your body; one people shall be mightier than the theother, and the older shall serve the younger.** Up until this point Rivkah assumed she was carrying one baby. There were no ultrasound machines for her to see inside her womb. She was thus greatly comforted to learn that she was carrying twins each with their own consistent personality rather than one child with split personalities.

Rivkah's desire for consistency is one that we can understand. In putting together our life narratives and developing our

(Rabbi Kaplowitz continued on page 2)

### Eisav: Good or Evil?

By Jules Levenson '10

One of main themes of this week's parsha of *Toldos* is Eisav's selling of his birthright to Ya'akov, who then receives a *brocha* from their father Yitzchok. In the aftermath of this Eisav plans to kill Ya'akov who then has to run away. The *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 27:41) relates that Eisav said, *"yikrivu yimei eivel avi, vaahargah es Ya'akov achi"* – the days of my father's mourning are approaching and then I will kill my brother Ya'akov. This implies that Eisav would only consider killing Ya'akov once Yitzchok died, not while he was still alive. Indeed, Rashi explains that Eisav's reason for waiting was so as not to pain his father in his old age. This can be seen as a manifestation of the *Kibud Av* – honoring of one's father – that Eisav displayed toward Yitzchok, despite the other negative tendencies that Eisav demonstrated. From the Torah's inclusion of this positive trait, it is possible to learn a valuable lesson. Even though Eisav was a bad person in general, it would be erroneous to forgo the opportunity to learn the good characteristics that he did have. Thus, this is included so that we too may benefit from the one good example – however slight – that Eisav showed us. Furthermore, it also reminds us that even the worst people often have a good side and this should be recognized and acknowledged.

The preceding explanation of the *pasuk* is not the only one, however. The Kli Yakar posits that the important words are *"eivel avi"* – the mourning of my Father, and the word *eivel* in particular. He points out that a mourner is prohibited from studying Torah because the words of Torah are described as being *"mesamchei lev"* – gladdening the heart. As mourners are required to curtail enjoyable activities, their Torah learning must be limited. The corollary of this, according to the Kli Yakar, is that the study of Torah provides a protection against harm. Indeed, Torah is described as *chayeinu v'orech yameinu* – our life

(Jules Levenson continued on page 2)

# Lessons from Avimelech and Yitzchak

By Eitan Mosenkis '13

In the third *aliyah* of *parshat Toldot*, Yitzchak flourishes and grows, with large flocks and many servants. The Philistines living around him grow jealous and cover up all the wells dug by Avraham's servants and fill them with dirt. Then Avimelech, king of the Philistines, tells Yitzchak to leave, because he has become too great. Yitzchak moves to the valley of Garar and digs again all the wells from Avraham's time which the Philistines had covered and gives the wells the same names Avraham had given them. Yitzchak's servants dig in the valley and find a well of living water. The shepherds of Garar fight with Yitzchak's shepherds over the well and they dig another well, which they also fight over. They leave that place and dig a third well, and finally, do not fight over it, and Yitzchak names it Rechovot.

The word well, בְּרִיאַת, is found thirty times in Chumash. Of those, eight are in *parshat Toldot* (six in *shlishi*). Further, the verb חָפַר, to dig (a well), is used seven times in *parshat Toldot* (again, six in *shlishi*) and only five times in the rest of *Chumash*. Why is this story so important? What is the reason for this sudden emphasis on wells and water?

Ramban, the Toldot Yitzchak, and Menorat HaMa'or all say (according to the Kli Yakar) that this story about the wells is foreshadowing the future of the three Temples. Just as the first two wells were fought over, the first two Temples were fought over until they were destroyed, and just as the third well remained undisputed, the third Temple, when it is built, will stand in peace. The Kli Yakar continues with his own metaphor based on the last *pasuk*, "He departed from there and dug another well and they did not fight over it. He called its name Rechovot and said, 'For now Hashem has broadened for

us and we have multiplied in the land.'" He says that this does not foreshadow our fights with the Babylonian and Roman empires, which destroyed the Temples, but rather our internal strife. When we fight amongst ourselves, even when Hashem grants us much land to spread out in, it will not be enough and we will be forced out, as in the second

Temple, which, the Talmud teaches, was destroyed because of baseless hatred among the Jews. However, when we create harmony amongst ourselves, even though we are many people with little space, the space that we have will be sufficient for us and we will not have to remain in exile.

A third interpretation of the episode of the wells comes from a different angle, based on the last few uses of the words חָפַר and בְּרִיאַת in the *parsha*. In *revi'i* and *chamishi*, Hashem blesses Yitzchak and his servants dig another well. Then, in a strange twist, Avimelech, who had previously made Yitzchak leave his land, comes to Yitzchak in

order to make a covenant with him, because he sees that Hashem is with him. On that day, Yitzchak's servants come to him and tell him that they have found water in the well.

The *Gemara* teaches us (*Bava Kama* 82a) that water is a metaphor for Torah. Following this idea, in the beginning, the Philistines, envious of Yitzchak's success, reject the Torah that his father Avraham had taught them, then kick Yitzchak out of their land. In Garar, Yitzchak tries to create a place of Torah, but is twice rebuffed by the people who lived there and is only able to establish a place of Torah once he has moved elsewhere. Hashem sees the lengths to which Yitzchak has gone for the sake of Torah and blesses him, which leads to even more Torah. Meanwhile, Avimelech and the Philistines realize

the mistake they made in destroying the Torah in their midst and go after Yitzchak to reconcile with him (and perhaps sip from the well of

Torah that Yitzchak has created).

We can look at this from two different angles. From Avimelech's perspective, Yitzchak came into his land and began teaching, but it was hard to accept because Yitzchak was far above the people around him. Still, he found the humility to correct his mistake and was, in the end, able to learn from Yitzchak. From Yitzchak's perspective, he began by trying to spread the word of Hashem directly, bringing it to the Philistines and the people of Garar, but was rejected by both. Only when he moved out and kept the Torah to himself did Avimelech come to admire and respect him and desire what he had to offer.

We students at Brandeis can learn from Avimelech and from Yitzchak. From Avimelech, we can learn the importance of learning from those who are around us, even when we may feel they are beyond our own level, or even when they act as though they are better than us. We can also learn how important it is to learn from those who teach only by example. From Yitzchak we can learn how to teach others. We may try to teach directly, by going to others and bringing Torah to them, but sometimes we will be more successful at influencing others by working on ourselves. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

*Eitan was very emotionally invested in BOO Cake Off.*

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*(Rabbi Kaplowitz continued from page 1)*

personal philosophies and outlooks we desire consistency. No one likes to think of themselves as being a hypocrite or showing inconsistencies in what we do. We like to think that the way that we act is a direct reflection of our philosophy and outlook on life. This is especially true for the Modern Orthodox community which intentionally interacts with many worlds. We operate in the world of Torah with a rigorous commitment to *halachah* and Torah study. We also participate fully in broader society. Our challenge in living a life of *Torah u-Madah* is to maintain consistency in our Torah observance and our worldview. To ensure that everything we do – whether we are learning in the Beit Midrash, conducting experiments in the lab, studying philosophy or volunteering in the broader community – is informed by our core commitment to Torah.

*Rabbi Kaplowitz Fun Fact: Rabbi Kaplowitz attended Yeshivas Toras Emes. It exists—look it up.*

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*(Jules Levenson continued from page 1)*

and the length of our days. As Ya'akov would be unable to do this while mourning, Eisav would be able to undertake his plans without Ya'akov being protected by the Torah. What emerges, therefore, is a picture of Eisav's waiting that is completely different than that which is shown by Rashi. He is not delaying his plan of action for a positive reason – just the opposite! – he is planning to attack at the moment when Ya'akov is the most vulnerable, having just lost his father.

While these two explanations are seemingly unconnected – in the first Eisav has a redeeming quality and in the second he does not – this is not necessarily the case. Each of these two understandings of the *pasuk* is important not only individually, but also combined. We can learn from the explanations of this *pasuk* both how to look at ourselves, as well as dealing with others. When dealing internally, we must concentrate on learning the Torah and the truth it provides and strengthen ourselves through this. At the same time, however, when dealing with other people we must look for the good – even if it is only slight – and learn from this. Through each of these we will be able to increase our goodness and *mitzvos* attempt to come closer to Hashem.

*Jules, next time please write in Hebrew. We don't understand your Ashkenaz gibberish.*

# M O D A O T

- **Shabbat United with Chabad and Hillel at Brandeis** Friday Night November 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM in Sherman Function Hall Chabad at Brandeis and Hillel at Brandeis invite you to join together with your friends for our first ever Shabbat United dinner. The menu and room arrangement will be unique while the warmth, spirit and community will surely make it a memorable evening. Delicious menu includes teriyaki salmon, coleslaw, beef brisket, sweet potato kugel, and more!
  - **Important Announcement from your Beit Midrash Coordinator**  
Fact #1: You love Zours. Fact #2: We love providing you with a clean, organized Beit Midrash in which to learn. Fact #3: The Beit Midrash Coordinator and volunteer community members are the ones who clean up the Beis when it gets messy. Lately, the Beit Midrash has been looking less than its usual sparkling self. Please remember that it is a shared space and a place of Torah learning. Please, make sure to clean up after yourself- by
  - putting away your sefarim, throwing away your garbage, and cleaning up any spills! And we will continue ensuring your Beit Midrash is as enjoyable (and delicious) as it can be.
  - **Sponsor Kiddush!** Speak to Mimi Cooper if you, a group of your friends, or even better - your parents would like to sponsor kiddush in honor of someone's birthday or another special occasion. Special requests for food and decor will be considered.
  - **Shabbat Shalom!**
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## *Opportunities*

By Shira Kelin '11

*Parshat Toldot* presents a fascinating comparison between Rivkah's and Eisav's perspectives on life. At the beginning of the *parsha*, Rivkah became pregnant and the *pasuk* explains that the children struggled in her womb. Rivkah reacted saying, "*Lama zeh li*," loosely translated as "why do I exist?" The interpretation of this clause is debated, though Ramban contends that Rivkah is asking why she came to be the mother of two great nations. Rivkah asks the questions: Why me? What is my goal in life, and what role do I play in the creation of these two nations? When granted the role of mothering two nations, Rivkah seriously considered her responsibilities and accepted this opportunity as a central facet of her life.

Later in the *parsha*, Rivkah expressed her resolute opinion regarding a marriage between Yaakov and a Hittite woman, stating that if Yaakov marries a Hittite woman, "*Lama li chayim*," "what good will life be to me?" Rivkah was persistent in fulfilling her mission of mothering these nations, and anticipated that if Yaakov married a Hittite woman, the marriage would obstruct this goal from coming to fruition. Her values and ambitions are so integral to the structure of her existence that precluding the completion of such goals would render her life meaningless.

Eisav language in the *parsha* mimics that of Rivka's when he questioned the worth of his rightful birthright. He explained that he is at the point of death, "*v'lama ze li bechorah*," translated as "so of what use is my birthright to me?" Eisav was presented with the privilege of receiving the birthright, but, unable to see its significance, yielded it to his brother. When presented with an opportunity to take the birthright, he sold it, failing to recognize its possible value in his life. Rather than question how he can best take advantage of such an opportunity, Eisav instead saw it as worthless.

Rivkah and Eisav exhibited two drastically different approaches to relating to opportunities. It may be tempting to disregard certain options and overlook their potential to influence our lives, as did Eisav. However, Rivkah's viewpoint underscores the incredible power embedded in many opportunities to add meaning and purpose to an individual's life, if the potential of such circumstances is recognized.

*Shira loves doing her Macro homework on time and at a normal hour of the day.*

# SHORT VORTS

## *Jewish Education in the Parsha*

By Dan Shimansky '12

*Parshat Toldot*, this week's *Parsha*, might well be the Torah's first great lesson in educational theory. The twins Jacob and Eisav are the main characters in today's *Parsha*. They are presented as polar opposites: Jacob is the good twin who studies Torah and follows everything his father and teachers tell him, while Eisav is the bad twin who is not interested in learning and would rather sneak out of Yeshiva to hunt animals.

This raises an important question:

Why does Eisav get such a bad rap? Is it fair to portray him as evil? Was the bad behavior all his fault? More importantly, could it have been prevented?

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch offers an insightful commentary to these questions. He suggests that although Jacob and Eisav did have very different natures, the problems with Eisav may actually have been caused by mistakes in their upbringing.

In other words, no serious attention was paid to the big differences in their natures. Both were given exactly the same teaching and educational treatment. How could twins raised in the same home and who were given the same schooling turn out so differently?

Rav Hirsch explains that such a development was simply the logical outcome of the lack of attention and importance paid to the significant differences in the natures of Jacob and Eisav.

In Proverbs, 22:6, King Solomon offers sound educational advice when he says, "Educate every youth according to his need." King Solomon understood that when children's different learning strengths and styles are ignored, they will be bored, and discipline problems will increase.

So, what can be done? Perhaps the best education is one that values every student equally and offers each one the opportunity to develop his or her unique strengths and talents and to develop to the best of our potential.

But what does this have to do with Jacob and Eisav?

The message is clear. Each child must be raised in accordance with the path in life to which his unique abilities will be likely to lead him. Rav Hirsch tells us that to attempt to educate a Jacob and an Eisav in the same classroom, and in the same manner, to raise both of them for a life of study will inevitably lead to the ruin of one of them. And this is exactly what happened.

We can only imagine how different Jewish history might have been had Eisav been praised for his talents and strength in the fields and directed to develop these skills to serve society. He perhaps might have ended up as a "*schochet*", or butcher, instead of a murderer. When the prophet Shmuel was told by G-d to anoint David as King, he was afraid and thought that because David had the same ruddy complexion as Eisav, that he too would be a murderer. But David learned to subdue his passions and use his inborn traits positively in the service of Hashem. Even though a person may be born with a hot temper, he can be taught to use this tendency in a way that will serve both Hashem and society.

It is time for school administrators to pay careful attention to this lesson in education from the Jacob - Eisav story, to apply it to our classrooms so that each student can develop to the best of his/her potential.

*Dan likes Mussar. He also has a really great voice.  
Just sayin'...*

## *Yaakov—A Man of Truth?*

By Tali Puterman '13

"ויעקב איש תם יושב אוהלים" And Yaakov was a simple man, a dweller of tents" From this exposition it appears that Yaakov is merely a naïve under-achieving scholar, who tries to stay out of the lime light. It would explain why his father, Yitzchak, preferred his other son Eisav over him. However this could not be a more inaccurate perception of Yaakov's nature. Yaakov is a man of business, practicality and brilliant manipulation (all in the name of Hashem, of course).

“תתן אמת ליעקב חסד לאברהם אשר נשבעת לאבותינו מימי קדם” Grant truth to Jacob, kindness to Abraham, as You swore to our forefathers from ancient times.” Grant truth to Yaakov? Really? Is this the same Yaakov who we've been reading about; is this the same Yaakov who wore his brother Eisav's clothes and covered his skin with animal fur to appear hairier in order to deceive his father into giving him the blessing? Is this the Yaakov who waited for his tired brother, who after returning from the field would do **anything** for some food that he was even willing to give up his birthright? These were not the only moments of trickery that appeared in Yaakov's life. He managed to successfully trick Lavan into getting all of his stronger flock, thus making a lot of money, and then escape from him with his daughters and grandchildren "without giving Lavan a chance to kiss them goodbye". Yaakov is known as the man of truth, we declare this everyday in our prayers, yet his whole life seems to be a chase of one deception after another.

The Hebrew word אמת, truth, begins with the first letter of the aleph bet א, ends with the last letter ת, connected by a מ which is the exact middle letter of the aleph bet. Although it appears that Yaakov's life is one filled with trickery and deceit, this is only if you look at each story as an individual one. However, the true meaning of emet is to look at a story as a whole and not judge without looking at the bigger picture. Yaakov's mother, Rivkah, was a prophetess and she saw Yaakov to be the righteous son destined for the blessings as opposed to her other son, Eisav. She helped Yaakov deceive Yitzchak into giving him the blessings, however this was not a malicious deceit, this was done in order for the truth to come out. Yaakov was to be the true leader of Israel, his second name, Yisrael, proves that he was the rightful leader, as it could be broken down to 'yashar E-l' – straight with G-d. Yaakov was constantly thinking of the greater good of his descendants, while Eisav was busy worrying about his appetite. As the letters of emet show us, we cannot look at things with narrow eyes and see only the end result; we must look at the aleph, mem and taf, the whole story, to get truth. As a torah of emet, truth, we need to learn to see the ultimate truth in Hashem's plans in order for us to genuinely merit our nation's name, Yisrael.

*We love Tali's accent. Lauren read this article in her voice.*

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