



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Toldot 5774

### Another Covenant?

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

In an episode strikingly similar to an earlier event in Avraham's time, Yitzchak is approached by Avimelech, king of the Philistines, for the purpose of contracting a covenant of non-belligerence. After throwing a celebratory party, Yitzchak apparently agrees and the two camps part in peace.

#### Questions

How are we to explain Yitzchak's strange behavior? Confronted with the request for a peace treaty with the Philistines, he abruptly ends the conversation and throws a party which lasts through the night.

Why are the rabbis openly critical of Avraham's treaty with Avimelech (see Vayeira 4, Approaches c), yet strangely silent when it comes to Yitzchak's agreement with the same king?

Is it possible that these two episodes, which seem so similar, actually differ in significant ways?

#### Approaches

A: As is often the case, a straightforward reading of the pashut pshat of the text before us is extremely revealing. Such a reading brings to light a subliminal dialogue between Yitzchak and Avimelech within this passage, a dialogue that explains the patriarch's seemingly strange behavior and carries tremendous relevance for our own times.

B: As soon as Yitzchak sees Avimelech and his entourage approach, he raises the following objection: "Why have you come to me? [It is obvious that] you hate me, for you exiled me from among you."

Avimelech responds by insisting that he has come to contract a covenant with the patriarch: "That you shall not do evil to us, just as we did not harm you, and as we did only good to you, for we sent you away in peace."

It is important to note that there is no disagreement between Yitzchak and Avimelech about the facts. They both

acknowledge that during their past interaction Yitzchak was exiled from the territory of the Philistines. What they disagree about is, in fact, a much deeper issue. They are arguing about the definition of "peace."

To paraphrase the subliminal dialogue taking place between the patriarch and the king:

Yitzchak opens the conversation with the following objection: How can you possibly suggest that we enact a peace treaty? Your intentions until now have been anything but peaceful. Did you not revile me and exile me from your land?

Avimelech responds: How can you say that we hate you? If we hated you, we would have killed you. Our intentions were obviously peaceful because all we did was send you away.

The patriarch and the king are, in effect, living in two different worlds.

Avimelech defines "peace" as the absence of war and physical violence. As long as the two parties are not killing each other, in the king's eyes, they are living in peace.

To Yitzchak, however, "peace" means much more. For true peace to exist there must be both an absence of hostility and an effort towards cooperation. Anything less might be defined as mutual coexistence but cannot be considered true peace.

C: At first glance what the patriarch does next seems abundantly strange. Instead of responding to Avimelech's interpretation of past events, Yitzchak abruptly ends the conversation. Without another word, suddenly, Yitzchak "made for them a party, and they ate and they drank."

Armed with our understanding of the verbal interchange until this point, however, we can begin to understand Yitzchak's unfolding strategy in his continued dealings with Avimelech.

The patriarch recognizes that further conversation with Avimelech would be futile. You can negotiate with someone when you share the same reality and when the terms that you use are mutually understood. An unbridgeable chasm, however, separates Yitzchak from the Philistine king. When they each speak about “peace,” they are talking about two very different concepts. If you can’t agree upon the definition of peace, you certainly cannot contract a peace treaty.

Yitzchak, therefore, ends the conversation. As a smokescreen, he throws a celebratory party that lasts through the night.

Upon awakening the next morning, Yitzchak and Avimelech exchange promises with each other. The text, however, conspicuously fails to mention a brit, “covenant.” Unlike his father, Avraham, Yitzchak does not contract a full treaty with the Philistines. He recognizes that temporary agreements with Avimelech are possible, but a lasting covenant cannot be drawn.

D: Then, finally, Yitzchak executes the coup de grace. With brilliant irony, the text states: “He [Yitzchak] sent them away; and they went from him in peace.”

Yitzchak turns the tables on Avimelech. In effect he says: I will operate with you according to your definition of peace. Just as you sent me away “in peace,” I now send you away from me “in peace.”

The second patriarch learns from his father’s mistakes. Whereas Avraham was comfortable contracting a full covenant with Avimelech and continued to live in the territory of the Philistines “for many days,” Yitzchak understands the dangers of such an agreement and insists on

physical separation. He recognizes that the Philistines can only be trusted in minimal fashion and, even then, only from afar. The rabbis are, therefore, silent concerning Yitzchak’s agreement with Avimelech although they had been critical of a similar agreement contracted by Avraham, a generation before (Vayeira 4, Approaches c). Their silence reflects acknowledgement of the lessons well learned by the second patriarch.

### Points to Ponder

Once again, the Torah text speaks to us in eerily relevant fashion as we recognize that human experience has not changed much over the centuries. The definition of peace, which lay at the core of Yitzchak’s interchange with Avimelech, continues to be at issue today as the State of Israel struggles to live in harmony with its neighbors.

The failure of the “peace process” in the Middle East is directly traceable to the limited and hypocritical definition of “peace” in the Arab world. True peace cannot take root in countries where children are raised in hate and where the daily rhetoric lauds murderers and spews venom upon the Jewish nation.

Even those Arab countries that have treaties with Israel, such as Egypt and Jordan, fall frighteningly short in their definition of what those agreements should mean. Like Avimelech, they maintain that peace is defined by the current absence of war. Cooperation, support and mutual understanding remain far from their reality.

We pray for the day when the world will embrace Yitzchak’s vision of true peace.

## The Divergent Paths of Yaakov and Esau

Rabbi Dr. David Horwitz

When I was growing up, in the early 1970’s, I heard a song played on the radio called “Family Affair.” The lyrics began as follows:

*One child grows up to be, Somebody that just loves to learn, And another child grows up to be, Somebody you’d just love to burn, Mom loves the both of them, You see it’s in the blood, Both kids are good to Mom ‘Blood’s thicker than mud’*

This “Different Strokes for Different Folks” attitude is definitely not the one that the Torah has regarding the family of Isaac, and his two sons Jacob and Esau.

Genealogy alone is not sufficient to attain entry into the rank of the patriarchs of the Jewish nation. Moreover, our

tradition states that it was not simply an arbitrary, capricious “will of God” that determined that Jacob and not Esau should receive the blessings. Moral uprightness is also a sine qua non for entry into the ranks of the Avot.

That is why Rebecca, who perceived the moral superiority of Jacob, did not love them both. She ensured that Jacob, and not Esau, would be the recipient of the blessings of Isaac.

At what point in their lives did the paths of the two twins Jacob and Esau diverge? Alternatively, one may ask this question in the following manner: When did Esau begin to turn out so badly? There are different views in Midrashim and rishonim on this score. (R, Menachem Mendel Kasher,

zatzal, in his magisterial Torah Shelemah, quotes quite a number of them.) The most famous view is that of Rashi, following Bereshit Rabbah, who writes that even in the womb, when Rebecca passed a house of idle worship, Esau started to “kick.” For his part, Don Isaac Abravanel, in his commentary to Chapter 25 of Genesis, writes that God preordained that instead of having twin boys that were similar in character traits, Isaac and Rebecca would have two children who were polar opposites, in the moral/religious sense as well as in the physical sense. Why did the hashgahah ha-elyonah decree that this should be the case, asks Abravanel? Quoting R. Judah Ha-Levi’s Kuzari, who notes that children often resemble (both physically and morally) their grandparents and not their parents (Kuzari claims that an example of this is Abraham, who did not inherit the defective nature of his father Terah but the good nature of his ancestor Eber), Abravanel notes that Rebecca’s father Bethuel was indeed a wicked person. Thus, there was a mixture of good and bad in the genetic makeup of Isaac and Rebecca’s children. (Of course, Abravanel did not have the modern understanding of genetics, but the point is clear.) On the one hand there was Abraham, who was not only the first monotheist, but who also possessed a sterling, refined, upright nature. On the other side, there was the defective, deceitful and devious nature of Bethuel, who was an idolater to boot (Abravanel adds that these traits certainly expressed itself in Laban’s flawed character). God did not want that the offspring of Isaac and Rebecca should be two morally intermediate children. He did not want the patriarchs to be benonim- average, mediocre figures. Hence, God manipulated the genetic material to ensure that all the good qualities should be encapsulated in only one of the twins, namely, Jacob. Consequently, Jacob possessed a pure nature similar to that of his father and paternal grandfather. Esau, on the other hands, turned out like his maternal uncle and grandfather. Thus, the purity of the patriarchal line was preserved in the person of Jacob. The upshot of his remarkable view, of course, is that Esau was fated to be bad. The entire lives of Jacob and Esau were merely the instantiation of a drama that had already been preordained. This view, of course, rejects the Maimonidean notion of free will or free choice that asserts that one chooses his or her moral destiny. On the other hand, the view that Esau became wicked only after the death of his grandfather Abraham, when he and Jacob were fifteen, implies that he was not fated to do so. Esau’s descent into wickedness was his own fateful choice.

Perhaps the polar opposite of Abravanel’s view can

be found in a work of the Hasidic master Reb Chaim of Tchernovitz (1760-1817), who was a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch and of Rabbi Yechezkel Michel of Zlotchov. He authored Be’er Mayim Chayim (“Well of Living Waters”), a commentary on the Torah. (One should not confuse this Hasidic figure with Professor Chaim Tchernowitz

(1871-1949). This latter figure was known as Rav Tza’ir and was the author of Toledot Ha-Posekim.) The Be’er Mayim Chayim suggested that the moral collapse of Esau, which legitimated the divine rejection of Esau in favor of Yaakov, occurred only on the very day that Jacob bought the birthright from him. Moreover, it was exclusively due to Esau’s illegitimate sexual relations with a betrothed woman on that day. The corollary of this view, of course, is that up until that day, it was indeed in the power of Esau to change his ways and to indeed be a legitimate descendant of Abraham and Isaac, and perhaps even to be considered a patriarch. Esau’s fate was not “sealed in stone.” He, through his own reprehensible behavior, caused his own downfall.

Maimonides’ words in Hilkhot Teshuvah seem appropriate to a consideration of the approach of the Be’er Mayim Chayim.

Free Will is bestowed on every human being. If one desires to turn towards the good way and be righteous, he has the power to do so. If one wishes to turn towards the evil and be wicked, he is at liberty to do so. And thus it is written in the Torah, “Behold, the man is become as

one of us, to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22) - there being no other species like it in the following respect, namely, that man, of himself, and by the exercise of his own intelligence and reason, knows what is good and what is evil, and there is none who can prevent him from doing that which is good or that which is evil. And since this is so (there is reason to fear) “lest he put forth his hand etc. (ibid.)”

Let not the notion, expressed by foolish Gentiles and most of the senseless folk among Israelites, pass through your mind that at the beginning of a person’s existence, the Almighty decrees that he is to be either righteous or wicked. This is not so. Every human being may become righteous like Moses, our teacher, or wicked like Jeroboam, wise or foolish, merciful or cruel, niggardly or generous, and so with all other qualities. (Hilkhot Teshuvah 5:1-2)

And in light of the above discussion, we can add the following: good like our forefather Jacob, or bad like Esau the wicked. May we always have the wisdom and foresight to choose the good.

# A Grain of Salt

Rabbi Josh Hoffman

**T**he Torah tells us that when Ya'akov and Eisav grew up, Eisav became an "ish yodeya tzayid" – a man who knew trapping, while Ya'akov became an "ish tam, yoshev ohalim" – a complete man who abided in tents. "And Yitzchak loved Eisav, because trapping was in his mouth, and Rivkah loved Ya'akov" (Bereishis 25:27-28). The difference between Yitzchak and Rivkah in their respective love for their children appears, at first blush, to be disturbing, and needs to be understood.

Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam explains that Yitzchak loved Eisav because he provided him with food, as the Targum explains. R. Avraham adds that some midrashim explain "ki tzayid befiv" ("because trapping was in his mouth") to mean that Eisav trapped Yitzchak with his mouth by saying things that deceived Yitzchak and led him to believe he was careful about keeping mitzvos. This midrash clarifies the flow of the passuk: Yitzchak was able to retain his natural love for Eisav (despite his general deviation from God's path) because Eisav had been representing himself as being observant of the mitzvos. Even according to the midrash, however, Yitzchak's love came as a natural result of the physical benefit that he derived from him. Rivkah, however, loved Ya'akov beyond the natural love of a parent, because he spent more time at home, being a dweller of tents, and she therefore simply saw him more than she saw Eisav.

Rashi first cites the explanation of the Targum, just as R. Avraham does. He then cites the midrash, but he seems to understand it differently. Whereas R. Avraham finds a way to reconcile the midrash with the simple meaning of the verse, Rashi seems to understand it as being in contradiction to its simple meaning. Eisav, says the midrash, asked his father how one tithes straw and salt. In point of fact, only things which grow from the ground need to be tithed, and, so, Yitzchak was impressed by Eisav's scrupulousness in trying to fulfill the mitzvos. Rashi's apparent understanding of the midrash, explaining it to mean that Eisav deliberately fooled Yitzchak, is very difficult because it is in conflict with his approach to other midrashim about Eisav, as reflected in his commentary later in the parsha.

When Eisav discovered that Ya'akov deprived him of their father's blessings, he said in his heart: "The days of mourning for my father will draw near, then I will kill my brother Ya'akov" (Bereishis 27:41). Rashi there writes that this is

to be understood 'as it sounds,' meaning, in its literal sense, that Eisav did not want to cause his father pain. Therefore, he would wait to kill Ya'akov until after his father's death. Rashi then points out that there are aggadic midrashim which explain the verse in several ways.

Nechama Leibovitz, in a seminal essay on Rashi's approach to citing midrashim, points out that there are often many midrashim to any particular verse, but Rashi very seldom tells us this. When he does, he means to reject those midrashim as not being in conformity to the simple meaning of the verse. In this particular instance, the other midrashim view Eisav as representing an additional stage in the development of evil in the world. Why did Eisav wish to wait until after his father's death to kill Ya'akov? Eisav thought that when Kayin killed his brother Hevel, he made a mistake in not waiting until their father had passed away and could not further divide his estate. Therefore, Eisav decided to wait until after Yitzchak died, and then kill Ya'akov, so he would not lose his inheritance.

Rashi disagrees in that this view of Eisav represents him solely in a negative light, as a symbol of evil. Rashi maintains that Eisav, in fact, had a variegated personality, as he really did care for and honor his father. Therefore, Rashi felt that the midrash, while important for the message it conveyed, did not reflect the simple meaning of the Torah, which presents people as human beings, with all of their complexities.

In light of Nechama Leibovitz's insight, it seems very difficult to understand why Rashi in the beginning of the parsha would cite a midrash that seems to contradict the simple meaning of the verse, and, moreover, calls into question the love Eisav had for his father.

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz answers that, in reality, Eisav was sincere in his questions. Indeed, both Rabbi Yosef Rosen (the Rogatchover Gaon) and Rabbi Chaim Kanyevski point out that Eisav's questions were valid: there are situations in which one must, in fact, tithe straw or salt. One could add that Eisav specifically asked his father detailed questions about tithing because this was a mitzvah that Yitzchak took special care to keep, as pointed out by the Rambam in his Laws of Kings. Eisav, then, was not consciously trying to fool his father. However, one cannot ignore the fact that his scrupulousness in performing the mitzvos of honoring his father and tithing his crop were exceptions in his general demeanor.



Rabbi Levovitz says that this is the meaning of the words “ki tzayid befv” – Eisav’s mouth and his heart were not consistent. When speaking to his father and tending to his needs, he did and said all the right things. However, in his heart, he did not have an overall dedication to God. Ya’akov, on the other hand, is described as an “ish tam,” a complete

man, in that everything he did was fitting and consistent with his overall demeanor. Ya’akov, unlike his brother Eisav, did not adopt stringencies in one area of divine service and completely neglect other areas; rather, he was a complete and integrated person, and thereby merited to be the one to carry on the tradition to future generations.

## Spiritual Continuity

*Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb*

**V**élele toldos Yitzchok ben Avraham, Avraham holid es Yitzchok,” these are the offspring of Yitzchok, son of Avraham; Avraham begot Yitzchok (Bereishis 25:19).

The opening of Parshas Toldos appears redundant. After all, once the verse states that that Yitzchok is the son of Avraham nothing further is added by repeating that “Avraham begot Yitzchok.” What is gained by this seemingly unnecessary conclusion?

Rashi, in answering this question, cites a remarkable teaching of the Midrash, which recounts that when Yitzchok was born the “leitzanei ha-dor,” the cynics of the generation, claimed that Yitzchok was not Avraham’s son, but rather was the illegitimate child resulting from Avimelech’s abduction of Sarah (ch. 20). To “prove” their claim the cynics pointed out that Avraham and Sarah had been married for many years without children and it was only now – after her time spent with Avimelech – that Sarah finally conceived. To counter this contemptuous slander Hashem ensured that Yitzchok and Avraham shared an uncanny physical resemblance, to the extent that it was clear and undeniable that Yitzchok was in fact Avraham’s son. And this is the reason, concludes the Midrash, that the verse reiterates that “Avraham holid es Yitzchok,” to stress Avraham’s biological connection to Yitzchok.

Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik (The Rav Speaks 2:6) is perplexed by these comments of the Midrash and Rashi. Since when, he asks, is the Torah concerned about malicious gossip and innuendo spread by idolaters? Moreover, this slander was patently absurd: Everyone knew that Avraham was fertile because he had already fathered Yishmael. Any issues of infertility were obviously Sarah’s and, therefore, now that she had conceived why was it so hard to believe that Avraham was the father?

R. Soloveitchik (3:3) explains that the real issue wasn’t fertility or genealogy, rather it was ideology. Even though

Avraham was successful at disseminating his beliefs, dispelling the pagan myths of his time, and drawing scores of people towards monotheism, there were nevertheless many who assumed that Avraham was just a “flash in the pan.” True Avraham accomplished a lot, but he was a unique personality with tremendous charisma. But – they assumed – this success would continue only as long as Avraham remained alive. It was just a passing fad, the cynics claimed; it will never last. There is no way that Yitzchok, or others from his generation, would be interested in accepting Avraham’s vision, speaking his language, or following his laws.

It was in this vein, explained R. Soloveitchik, that they argued that it was impossible that “Avraham begot Yitzchak,” namely, that it was inconceivable that Avraham had a son who would continue his work and perpetuate his legacy. Rather, Yitzchok must be the son of Avimelech, in the sense that he will undoubtedly follow the popular trends of the time rather than retain his commitment to the “outdated” ideals of Avraham.

R. Soloveitchik adds that this is the underlying theme, as well, of Yitzchak’s quarrels with the Philistines. The Torah (26:18) relates that after Avraham’s death the Philistines stopped up his wells and that, in response, Yitzchok defiantly re-dug those same wells and reiterated that the wells would be called by the same names that his father Avraham had called them.

R. Soloveitchik explains that, symbolically, this clash also related to the cynicism surrounding Avraham’s legacy. After Avraham died the Philistines expected that they would finally be able to rid themselves of Avraham’s ideas and that they could finally return to the good old days of unrestrained idol worship. They assumed that no one – including Yitzchok – would be interested in these wells or in continuing Avraham’s “work” and perpetuating Avraham’s spiritual approach.

But they were wrong. Yitzchak continued digging his father’s wells. He committed himself to following his father’s

teachings and to ensuring that his father's legacy would continue into the future. In the fullest sense, "Avraham holid es Yitzchok," Avraham was Yitzchok's biological and spiritual father.

Just as the scoffers of Avraham's day set a precedent which has repeated itself innumerable times ever since, so too has Yitzchok's response has echoed loudly throughout the generations of Jewish history.

Whenever people have predicted that the younger generation would finally shake itself free from its ancestry and Jewish tradition, we see, time after time, that "Avrohom holid es Yitzchok," the youth choose to continue following in the ways of their parents and grandparents.

R. Soloveitchik describes witnessing the same phenomenon in his own time, as the Jewish people transitioned from the shtetel and ghetto of Europe to the new world in America and even in Israel. The leitzanim, the cynics, assumed that modern people, educated in the ways of science and technology, would have no interest in or use

for the language and legacy of the past. But once again, they were wrong, "Avraham holid es Yitzchok." As R. Soloveitchik reflects, with pride:

Who could have foreseen that the young, modern Yitzchok ... would demand a kosher kitchen and fight for religious education and the like! Who could have guessed that he would speak with the same language that old Avraham spoke, as the author of the Shulchan Aruch, as the Rema, as the Gaon of Vilna, as Rav Chayim of Volozhin?

"Ve'eleh toldos Yitzchok ben Avraham, Avraham holid es Yitzchok" – Yitzchok was not only the son of Avraham, but also his spiritual heir. It wasn't merely an issue of yerusha but of morasha as well; not just lineage, but legacy. And just like Yitzchok many years before them, generations and generations of Jews have remained faithful to the mesorah of their forefathers despite changing and often difficult circumstances. This loyalty confounded the cynics in Yitzchok's time and it remains a mystery to many. But it is the secret of our continuity.

## Learning How to Daven: Yitzchak, Rivka, and our Children

*Rabbi Chaim Eisenstein*

**T**he Torah writes: "Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife" (Bereishit 25:21). Rashi observes that the Torah emphasized that Hashem specifically accept Yitzchak's prayer despite the fact that both he and Rivka had prayed. Rashi explains that the prayer of the tzaddik child of a tzaddik is greater than the prayer of a tzaddik child of a rasha.

I always found Rashi's comment perplexing. Why should Hashem discriminate against Rivka's prayer and prefer Yitzchak's simply because Rivka's father was a rasha?

There are two basic components to tefilla. It is referred to as avodah shebalev - service of the heart. On the one hand the most important part of tefilla is the connection of our heart with Hashem. Without the awareness transcendental in our heart that we are standing in front of G-d, our prayer is nothing at all.

At the same time, the expression of the heart is also referred to as an avodah - a G-dly labor. Tefilla is not simply an emotional expression but also a service that requires years of work and direction from those who have attained meaning and closeness in their encounter with G-d.

The Chassam Sofer (Responsa) writes that praying at kivrei tzaddikim is a great virtue, however praying with a

living tzaddik is even greater. I believe that this notion is not only a kabbalistic one but also a reflection of the reality that tefilla is not only a spontaneous expression of closeness to G-d but a learned avodah that one is constantly growing in. Being surrounded by someone who has become great in his avodah shebalev is an important component in growing in our avodah shebalev.

This may be an important reason why Yitzchak's prayer was "greater" than Rivka's. Yitzchak was exposed to the serious prayer of Avraham Avinu which improved his own prayer. In contrast, Rivka was exposed to avodah of avodah zara. Of course, our tefilla does not come close to Rivka's, but Yitzchak due to his exposure to Avraham had the opportunity to spend more time working on this avodah.

This can be an important lesson in teaching our children about tefilla. Over the years, my heart has broken as I have watched from a distance while fathers "forced" their children (either physically or verbally) to daven. On the one hand, tefilla is not only a voluntary emotional expression but is also an avodah. At the same time, the best way to learn the avodah is to simply be exposed to people who excel in this avodah. The modeling is a perfect form of education while coercion is almost always counterproductive.

## Eisav's Scent

Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

In the parasha of the blessings, the Torah tells us that Yitzchak requested that Eisav prepare matamim (delicacies) for him before he blessed him. The matamim are repeated six times in this short parasha. Why are these matamim so significant that the Torah repeats them again and again?

Additionally, when Yaakov stands disguised before Yitzchak, Yitzchak asks his son to approach him and kiss him. As Yaakov does this, Yitzchak smells his clothing, blesses him, and says, “See, the scent of my son is like the scent of a field blessed by Hashem” (Bereishit 27:27). The Rishonim challenge this, asking why Yitzchak refers to this as the scent of his son when it is really the scent of his son’s clothing. The Chizkuni explains that the passuk should be read as if it was written as follows: “See, my son, the scent of these clothes is like the scent of a field blessed by Hashem.” However, in the course of things, we will try to understand the passuk as it is actually written, explaining what Yitzchak really meant by mentioning “the scent of my son” rather than “the scent of my son’s clothing.”

The passuk describing the scent of Yaakov’s clothing is problematic in another way as well. After Yitzchak smells Yaakov’s clothing, the Torah says: “And he blessed him and said, ‘See, the scent of my son is like the scent of a field blessed by Hashem.’” The very next passuk quotes the actual blessing: “May Hashem give you the dew of the heavens...” Seemingly, the phrase “and he blessed him” is in the wrong place! It should appear immediately before the actual blessing, not before Yitzchak describes his son’s scent!

The answer to these three questions is as follows: Yitzchak knew exactly who his children were. Before the blessings, the Torah tells us how disappointed Yitzchak was when Eisav married two Hittite women (26:34-5). Before he died, Yitzchak wanted to inspire Eisav to do teshuvah. Yitzchak hoped that after Eisav prepared the matamim—turning raw, bloody meat from an animal in the field into sumptuous meat—and brought them before his father, Yitzchak would be able to ask him why he couldn’t analogously improve the quality of his own life, inspiring him to do teshuvah. The matamim take up such a great role because they were meant to be the tool through which Yitzchak wished to illustrate for Eisav what he needed to do to himself. What Yitzchak didn’t realize, however, was that it was impossible for Eisav

to add quality to his life, since he lacked reiach (scent). Reiach represents pnimiut. (The gemara says that reiach is something only the neshama benefits from.)

When Yitzchak smells Yaakov, however, he detects not only the smell of Yaakov’s clothing, but of Yaakov himself. Yitzchak is able to see that the reiach of his son, not his clothing—his pnimiut, not his chitzoniut—is like the reiach of Gan Eden. This declaration is part of the blessing as well. “And he blessed him” does not refer only to the material blessing of the dew of the heavens and the fat of the land, but to the spiritual blessing that Yaakov would always retain his pnimiut, to guide his actions and protect him.

The sense of pnimiut is exactly what the nachash wanted to harm in Adam and Chava, but, baruch Hashem, he did failed to do so. He succeeded in damaging four of the five senses: sight – “And the woman saw that the tree was good for food” (3:6); sound – Chava listened to the nachash, and Adam listened to her; touch – Chava touched the Eitz haDa’at; and taste – Adam and Chava ate of the fruit. However, he could not touch their sense of smell, their reiach, their pnimiut. This enabled them to go on to build the world despite their sin.

Yosef understood a similar lesson about pnimiut on his descent to Mitzrayim. The Yishmaelim who brought him down with them, who normally transported bad-smelling kerosene, happened to be transporting spices on this trip. Yosef understood from this sweet reiach that his mission would be to protect his own sweet reiach, his pnimiut, under all circumstances. This would give him the power to survive in Mitzrayim and eventually lead Am Yisrael in Mitzrayim.

Yeshayah haNavi tells us that one of the unique qualities Moshiach will have will be his ability to smell yirat shamayim. “He will smell fear of G-d; he will not judge by the vision of his eyes or rebuke according to what he hears with his ears” (11:3). Moshiach will be able to smell our pnimiut and judge us based on this.

The importance of reiach is highlighted by Yechezkel haNavi, who says that the future geulah will take place in the merit of the reiach of the ketoret. This is because the ketoret combines sweet-smelling perfumes with chelbenah, a very bitter-smelling spice. The lesson is

that even those who are far from Hashem have a reiach of some sort, have some sort of pnimiut. We must not judge them solely on the basis of their externalities. When we understand how to connect with even those

who are far from us, we are essentially bringing together reiach and ta'am (taste, quality). This will merit the reiach and ta'am of the geulah, speedily in our days.

## Letting Others Know We are Praying for Them

*Rabbi Zvi Shiloni*

One of the opening psukim in this week's parsha is: "vayetar Yitzchak laHashem lenochach ishto ki akara hee" "Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren" (Bereishis 24:21). Rashi comments that they prayed together, each standing in a different corner.

My father Shlit"z offers an additional explanation, as there are shivim panim laTorah, seventy faces to the Torah, I would like to share it with you. Interestingly, the posuk does not explicitly state that Rivka pray. Of course we can safely assume that she did but it is not spelled out for us. We are told, however that Yitzchak poured his heart out to Hashem. The Torah writes that Yitzchak prayed lenochach ishto which Rashi interprets to mean opposite his wife. However, says my father, the word nochach can also be interpreted to mean "in front of". Rivka was able to see Yitzchak praying. He did not want her to feel that he did not share her pain - on the contrary, he felt it strongly, and he prayed, for both of them.

## How a Tzaddik Lies

*Rabbi Shlomo Einhorn*

Our tradition teaches us that even the שיחת חולין (casual conversations) of the righteous are rich with life lessons. When it comes to Yaakov, we can go further and suggest that even when he must lie, there are valuable lessons to be learned. In order to procure the coveted birth right from his father Yitzchak, Rivkah (Yaakov's mother) and Yaakov develop a plan to deceive Yitzchak. Leave aside the age-old question as to how Yaakov could lie to his father. Suffice it to say that Yaakov knew what his destiny needed and went for it. Rivkah councils Yaakov and tells him: (27:6) "And Rivkah says to Yaakov her son 'saying', behold I have heard your father speaking to Esav your brother 'saying.' "The Opta Rebbe asks why does it use

In Parshat Lech Lecha we read of Sarah becoming angry at Avraham following the birth of Yishmael - "Sarai said to Avraham: 'the outrage against me is due to you!'" (Bereishis 16:5). Was it not Sarah who suggested Avraham's marriage to Hagar? Rashi explains that Sarah's complaint to Avraham was: "When you prayed for children, you prayed only for yourself. You did not pray for the two of us."

Perhaps it was with this in mind that Yitzchak chose to pray in this manner - lenochach ishto - in front of his wife. In this manner she would be able to see him praying.

There is an important lesson here. We must feel our friend's pain and beseech Hashem to help our friend. This sounds beautiful, but this is not sufficient - much more is required. We must make sure that our friend knows that we are praying for him and that we share in his pain. In addition to the value of tefillah, this is very comforting. This is our obligation of sharing the pain of others.

the word "leymor" (saying) twice? The speech of Yaakov was always gentle. As we say in Koheles (Ecclesiastes) - (9:14) - "Divrei Chachamim benachas nishmain", "The words of the righteous are heard while gentle." Yitzchak knew this. In order not to get tricked, he asked Esav to speak when he comes to him in a soft voice because in all likelihood Yaakov is going to try to sound like Esav. But Rivka knew of this secret plan and therefore she told Yaakov to keep his voice as is. That's the explanation of the second "leymor", I heard your father teaching Esav how to speak. This whole ruse hinges upon the accepted premise that Yaakov would always speak gently.