



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Toldot 5783

### Religion by Relegation

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered November 27, 1965)

In an almost casual, offhand way, our Sidra tells us of a series of incidents in the life of Isaac that are apparently of no special significance, but in which our Rabbis have seen the greatest importance.

Isaac lived in the land of Canaan, which suffered from scarcity of water most of the year, and he therefore decided to dig a well. We are told of three wells which he and his entourage dug. The first two involved him in difficulties with the people of Gerar, a Philistine people. The first of these, Isaac called Esek, because it was the cause of much strife and contention. He was no more successful with the second well; after his servants dug the well, he incurred the hatred of the people about him. He therefore called the second well by the name Sitnah, meaning enmity. It is only when the third well was dug that happiness prevailed once again; and so he called the third well Rehovoth, meaning: room, freedom, scope, peace, or joy.

Of what importance can these apparently prosaic matters be to later generations, who search in the Torah for matters of timeless significance and are not particularly interested in economic clashes and riparian rivalry in ancient Canaan? Nachmanides, following the principle of the Rabbis that מעשה אבות סימן לבנים - that the deeds of the fathers anticipate the history of the children - has taught us that the three wells of Isaac recapitulate the stories of the three great Sanctuaries of the people of Israel. The first well is a symbol of the First Temple, which was destroyed because of Esek, because of the battles and wars waged on the Jewish people by the surrounding nations. The second well, that called Sitnah, represents the Second Temple, for this Temple was brought to ruins by the hatred and enmity that prevailed amongst the Children of Israel during that period. However, the third well, Rehovoth, is the symbol of the Sanctuary that has not yet been built - that of the great future. It represents the Beit Hamikdash which will one

day be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and which will last forever in a spirit of Rehovoth - freedom and peace and plenty.

However, the question remains: why, indeed, was Isaac successful with the third well, whilst he failed with the first two? In what was the third well, symbol of the third Temple, superior to the first two?

Permit me to commend to your attention an answer which has been suggested to me (by my uncle, Rabbi Joseph M. Baumol), which not only answers this question but also provides us with a powerful moral for our own lives. If we analyze carefully the three verses which tell of how these three wells were dug, we will discover one significant difference between the first two and the third. The first two were dug by Isaac's servants, his hired people. Of the first well we read: ויחפרו עבדי יצחק, and the servants of Isaac dug the well. With regard to the second well, we read ויחפרו באר אחרת, they dug another well. In both cases, Isaac relegated his duties and activities to others. Only with regard to the third well do we find the element of personal participation: ויחפר באר אחרת, and he dug another well. As long as Isaac was going to leave the performance of his duties to others, and not do them himself, there was bound to result in Esek and Sitnah, argumentation and hatred. It is only when Isaac, despite the many people ready to serve him, was willing to dig the well by himself, that he was able to achieve Rehovoth - the peace and plenty and freedom that he so very much desired. The third Temple, that which will last unto all eternity, will come about only when every Jew will take it upon himself to perform the ויחפר באר אחרת, the willingness to work by himself, to commit his own energies, talent, concern and participation to the sacred tasks which we have been assigned.

Actually, Isaac's career from the very beginning reveals this tension between relegation and participation. Throughout his life we find signs of his struggling to

learn this great principle of personal involvement. Even before he was convinced, the message came to his father Abraham that Sarah would bear the child, Isaac. However, the message came not from God Himself, as it were, but through an angel. And so, when Sarah heard it she laughed and ridiculed it – incurring Abraham’s annoyance and God’s irritation. Only afterwards do we read, “and the Lord said unto Abraham” – when God himself addressed Abraham, by Himself and not through an angel, Sarah began to believe in reverence and awe, and not doubt in mocking laughter, that she would be blessed with a child.

The great story of the Akedah also reveals this oscillation between relegation and participation. At first, Abraham decides to offer up Isaac himself. At the last moment, his hand is stayed and, instead, Abraham offers up a ram caught in the thicket nearby. The Torah puts it this way: And behold איל אחר נאחז בסבך, which we normally translate: “a ram was caught in the thicket behind them.” But this has also been interpreted in an equally valid fashion as: “and behold another ram was caught in the thicket” – that is, instead of Isaac, another sacrifice was discovered: the ram. Isaac’s life was saved and a “messenger” was offered up in his place, the ram!

His very marriage followed the same pattern. Isaac did not himself go to look for a wife. Instead, his father sent the servant Eliezer to look for a wife for Isaac. According to our tradition, Eliezer was legally a שליח קדושין, an agent to marry a woman for Isaac by proxy; no wonder, as the “Netziv” has pointed out, throughout their married lives Isaac and Rebecca suffered from a sense of distance and remoteness between them, a lack of complete communication and participation with each other. “Netziv” sees this symbolized in the event that occurred when Isaac and Rebecca first met. There we read: ותקח את הצעיר ותתכס, that at the moment she saw him, Rebecca took her veil and covered her face. This veil is a symbol of a domestic curtain, an obstruction that prevented them from communicating freely. If there is no direct personal participation, then there is a possibility of misunderstanding and even enmity.

So it is with the wells. It took two difficult diggings until Isaac learned that you must not send someone else to do your tasks. He then learned that only if “and he dug another well,” by himself and with his own effort, can he achieve Rehovoth, the peace and freedom and room that he needed for his full development.

This idea is especially important in contemporary

society. As civilization grows more complex, each man grows less whole and less integrated, for he is less involved in the tasks that require his attention and devotion. With the division of labor, and the progressive concentration of expertise in narrower and narrower fields, we begin to suffer alienation, a sense of distance between ourselves and our fellow man, a withdrawal from all of life to within ourselves. Especially in our cornered cities, this introversion and withdrawal takes place only as a means to protect what little precious privacy we have left for ourselves.

And of course, to some extent, we must limit our involvement in society and the lives of others. We need the mechanics of the delegation of duties and tasks in order for society to function. A good administrator is one who does not do everything for himself, but sees into it that others do their parts. We cannot and should not do everything by ourselves.

The Halakhah has recognized this idea and incorporated it in the institution of שליחות, agency. We are permitted to make an agent to perform certain tasks, not only in financial law, but even with regard to such mitzvot as the giving of charity or the writing of a Sefer Torah. Nevertheless, the principle of שליחות is not valid for every occasion. For instance, I cannot make an agent to eat in the Sukkah for me, nor can I appoint someone to listen to the sound of the Shofar for me. If I do, I have failed to fulfill my religious obligations. How do I distinguish between those functions for which I can appoint a messenger, and those which I must perform myself? The author of the קצות החושן has put it this way: I may make an agent to perform any commandment save the מצוה שבגופו, that mitzvah which I am bidden to perform with my own body, my own self. Thus, charity can be given by anyone: the important consideration is the result, that the poor man be fed or housed. Anyone may write a Sefer Torah for me, provided that I commission it and possess it and use it. But when the commandment is that I eat in a Sukkah, or that I hear the Shofar -- that is a commandment relating to my body, to my person, and no one can take my place.

Thus, certain things cannot be delegated and relegated to others. Today, as we are threatened with the progressive depersonalization of life, we must emphasize as never before the מצוה שבגופו, the significance of the individual, of selfhood, of personal participation and responsibility. We must come to recognize that we are each of us not only a collection of assignable functions, but integrated, whole,

unique individuals, who must act by ourselves and as ourselves.

This sense of participation and wholeness is important not only for our individual development, but also for the integrity of family and home. A family is the kind of unit which cannot exist when the people in it conceive of themselves as little islands of humanity who refuse to be involved with each other. A home is a place of people who are concerned with each other, not introverted ciphers. How relevant, unfortunately, to our modern condition is that caustic insight contained in the sarcastic story of a woman who was approached by a real estate agent to buy a home. She refused, saying: what need do I have of a home? I was born in a maternity ward, raised in a nursery, cared for by baby-sitters, sent to kindergarten and then to a boarding school, spent my summers in a camp, lived in a college dormitory, moved to a hotel, I spend my vacations at resorts or cruises, when I am sick I am sent to a hospital, when I am old I will spend my time in a senior citizen's home and I will be buried from a funeral parlor. Who needs a home?

Indeed, if we spend our lives assigning our activities to others, simply giving all of society the power of attorney over our lives, "home" becomes impossible. Modern life encourages *עבדי יצחק* -- the appointing of others as agents to do our own work, and therefore this same modern life produces an inordinate amount of *Esek and Sitnah*, of strife and hatred. Judaism, contrariwise, emphasizes the home by stressing *אחרת*, the importance of personal participation and involvement — with the resulting *Rehovoth*, the sense of joy, release, and freedom.

(Saadia, in his major work, asks: why were not man and society created perfect so that there would be no need of Torah and mitzvot to help us on the road to perfection? He answers, because happiness and spiritual fulfillment require human work, personal effort, individual commitment and participation. If perfection is given to us by God without our endeavors, it is impersonal, and it cannot help us to attain the highest levels of spiritual satisfaction. It is only when we, by our own participation and effort, can achieve spiritual growth through the study of Torah and performance of mitzvot, that we can rightly be said to have enjoyed and deserved what we have called *Rehovoth*.)

This emphasis is indeed characteristic of Orthodox Judaism; it is indigenous to our whole faith. We believe that many religious duties cannot be delegated, and others

should not. Prayer must be performed by the individual, not sung by the choir and chanted by the cantor and ground out by the organ. Torah must be studied by every individual Jew, by himself and in lectures, not left to rabbis and seminary professors. Kaddish must be recited by the mourner himself, not assigned to the sexton or some hired individual. Kedushah must not be confined only to the synagogue; from the synagogue it must extend into the home, so that even the Jewish table becomes an altar. No, there must be no vicarious observance, no religion by relegation.

All the more astounding therefore to learn of a prominent Orthodox synagogue, with a distinguished membership, which lacks that personal commitment to public worship which will enable it to have a regular minyan of members. This, despite repeated requests by its rabbis, almost to the point of mutual embarrassment, who are now reluctantly forced to conclude that their people lack the sense of personal action, and are almost ready to hire religious Hessians, hired personnel, others to do the work that really ought to be considered *מצווה שבגופו*, a personal, non-transferable obligation.

This sense of involvement which we have been recommending is best symbolized by a rock, one that was placed into the coffin of the late, lamented Rabbi Maimion, ז"ל, the distinguished leader of religious Zionism and the first Minister of Religions of Israel. When he was a young man, he preached throughout the length and breadth of Europe on behalf of religious Zionism. Once, when he was speaking in a synagogue in the Galician town of Kolomea, an opponent of Zionism threw a rock at him, one that was so large that had it struck its mark it would have brought to an abrupt and tragic end what turned out to be a great and eminent career of a founder of the State of Israel. Rabbi Maimon cherished that rock as a symbol of his utter devotion to the Zionist ideals and he commanded in his will that upon his death, the rock be placed in his coffin as an eternal memento of his personal dedication and participation in the dream of Zionism based upon Torah.

May we too learn to apply our own efforts, energies, and personal talents to the great and sacred tasks at hand. May we dig hard and deep in the soil of Judaism and Jewish life. And may God grant that the wells of Torah open up, that they gush forth the living waters of Judaism and divine blessings, and that our lives become *Rehovoth*, possessed of new scope, new freedom, abiding joy and everlasting peace. Amen.

*Read more at [www.yu.edu/about/lamm-heritage](http://www.yu.edu/about/lamm-heritage).*

# The Lies of Leadership

Dr. Erica Brown

In the painting, “Rebecca Presents Jacob to Isaac” (1768), the artist Nicolas-Guy Brenet shows Isaac sitting up straight in his bed with one arm held high and his legs tangled in sheets. Isaac’s other arm is wrapped around Jacob’s shoulder, whose red tunic matches the ruddiness of his face. Rebecca stands in the background, holding up a tent curtain so she can quietly watch the scene from a distance. Isaac is old and blind but, the artist suggests, his body knows the truth and protests. Isaac’s silent movement registers deception. The son with the pelt collar designed to imitate the manliness of his older twin was not Esau.

This week’s Torah reading, Toldot, paints dishonesty with words rather than images. “‘Father,’ and he (Isaac) said, ‘Yes, which of my sons are you?’ Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau, your first-born; I have done as you told me. Pray sit up and eat of my game, that you may give me your innermost blessing’” (gen. 27:18-19). Jacob requested an innermost blessing while wearing an outer layer of betrayal. Jacob said, ‘I am Esau.’ The verse, by using names simply and lucidly, calls out the lie that would haunt Jacob for the rest of his life.

Later, Laban, his father-in-law, tricked Jacob by switching brides; Jacob married Leah instead of the love of his life, Rachel. Jacob’s sons tricked him by giving him Joseph’s striped coat dipped in goat’s blood; Jacob naturally concluded that his favorite son had been killed by a wild animal. While Joseph did not trick his father outright, Joseph’s long disappearance in Egypt without contact overwhelmed Jacob with grief. We are told many times that Jacob’s hair greyed, and he was ready for death. Joseph rose to meteoric heights of leadership in Egypt while Jacob mourned him and languished in Canaan. All of this was the consequence of one lie.

In *Morality*, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes that, “Without moral commitment, the still small voice of truth is inaudible beneath the cacophony of lies, half-truths, obfuscations and evasions. Without truth, no trust; without trust, no society. Truth and trust create a world we can share.” Jacob was terribly aware of this break in trust and told his mother so directly: “But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am smooth-skinned. If my father touches me, I shall appear to him as a trickster and bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing.” Jacob and Esau were

different in every way. Jacob couldn’t imagine getting away with this lie nor did he want to. He didn’t want to be labeled a trickster forevermore.

Although Jacob was a necessary actor in the story, it was Rebecca who hatched this deception and carried it out in detail. She demanded that Jacob hunt for meat to make Isaac his favorite dish from his favorite son. “Rebecca then took the best clothes of her older son Esau, which were there in the house, and had her younger son Jacob put them on; and she covered his hands and the hairless part of his neck with the skins of the kids. Then she put in the hands of her son Jacob the dish and the bread that she had prepared.” Rebecca took the meat. She brought the coat. She put gloves on Jacob’s hands and placed the food in his arms. Jacob was an adult who could have dressed himself, but in his stiff, unyielding gestures, it is as if Jacob communicated he wanted no part in his mother’s plan. Why else would the Torah have gone into this level of detail to inform us what was happening backstage?

Behavioral economist Dan Ariely, in *The Honest Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone—Especially Ourselves* believes that the will to lie touches us all: “... our sense of our own morality is connected to the amount of cheating we feel comfortable with. Essentially, we cheat up to the level that allows us to retain our self-image as reasonably honest individuals”.

Jacob did not willingly participate in his mother’s plan because his own self-image was not as a deceiver. Rebecca, however, was comfortable with this lie because God told her while she was pregnant that her younger twin would be the rightful heir: “Two nations are in your womb. Two separate peoples shall issue from your body; one people shall be mightier than the other, and the older shall serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23). A few verses later, we read that, “Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game, but Rebecca favored Jacob” (Gen. 25:28). Commentators fill in the gaps trying to explain these loves. Ha-emek Davar suggests that Rebecca’s love was based on the higher vision she had for Jacob that God placed in her mind during her pregnancy.

We lie most often for personal benefit, what Ariely calls “rational economic motivation”. Sometimes we lie “to view ourselves as wonderful human beings” (this is

the psychological motivation). This explains many of the lies that leaders tell. They lie or fudge the truth to protect themselves or others, to maintain morale when it's low, or to facilitate a better bottom-line. Lies make life easier in the short-term but dissipate trust in the long-term. Jacob understood this all too well.

Rebecca's motivation, of course, was never for personal gain. After all, Esau was her son also. No matter how different children are, mothers want every child to thrive. Rebecca had a different agenda; she needed to make good on God's prediction. Yet every time I read this story, I wonder why Rebecca never reported to Isaac what God said about the fate of their twins. Perhaps the two could have found a way as parents to grow Jacob into his leadership role without having to snatch a birthright from

## What Went Wrong?

*Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l*

**T**he Torah, relating what occurred during the early years of Ya'akov and Eisav, tells us, "The lads grew up and Eisav became one who knows trapping, a man of the field; and Ya'akov was a complete man, a dweller of tents" (Bereishis 23:27). Rashi, citing the midrash, comments that as long as they were small, they were indistinguishable in their deeds, and no one could tell their different natures. Once they reached the age of thirteen, however, Ya'akov set out for the house of study, while Eisav set out for idolatry. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, in his Torah commentary, theorizes that the difference that developed between the two boys may have been less a function of their varied temperaments than of the education provided them by their parents Yitzchok and Rivkoh. Until the boys were thirteen, says Rabbi Hirsch, they received the same education, despite the difference in their natures. This educational approach ignored the principle, later taught by King Shlomo in his book of Mishlei, that one must educate the child according to his own unique 'derech,' or path in life. Had Yitzchok and Rivkoh taken notice of their different natures, then perhaps they could have harnessed Eisav's energy in a way that could be used to promote Torah, and thereby be able to work hand in hand with Ya'akov in spreading an awareness of God's word. Had they done this, history may have developed in a starkly different manner than it actually did. Instead, Eisav became an enemy of Ya'akov, and continually

Esau. It could have spared heartache for all four of them.

Trust could not be more critical now in leadership or more absent in our everyday discourse. "A world of truth is a world of trust," writes Rabbi Sacks in *Morality*, "In it, there is something larger than individuals seeking their own interest. Truth becomes the intellectual equivalent of a public space that we can all inhabit, whatever our desires and predilections." It's our responsibility to instill and restore trust so that it fills a public space we can all inhabit.

Think of a lie you could have told that would have made your life easier, but you didn't. Think of a lie that had long-term consequences. Consider a truth that hurt but was necessary. Each of us can erode trust through lies or build trust through truth. Our sedra reminds us that honesty is not only a characteristic. It's also a choice.

sought to destroy him.

Rabbi Hirsch's explanation reflects his own role as an educator of a new age of Jewish youth in nineteenth century Germany, and their unique needs. However, I do not believe that it captures the essence of what went wrong in the early development of Eisav, nor does it explain why he went 'off the derech,' straying from the values that were to characterize the emerging Jewish nation. The Torah, after all, tells us that when Rivkoh was pregnant she felt a struggle occurring within her, and she went to inquire what it signified. She was told, through a prophet, that two nations would emerge from her, one always trying to overcome the other. Although, according to Rabbi Naphtoli Tzvi Yehudoh Berlin in his commentary *Ha'amek Davar*, the relationship between Yitzchok and Rivkoh was such that Rivkoh never told Yitzchok about this prophecy, and this lack of communication was the causal factor in the very different development of the two children, I would argue that, more likely, she did tell her husband of the communication she had received, and that they had different approaches regarding how to respond to it.

Rivkoh was told, by the prophet, that "two nations are in your womb" (Bereishis 25:23). Rashi notes, based on a midrash, that the word for 'nations' - *goyim* - is spelled in a way that it can be read as 'geyim,' or proud ones, and is thus a veiled reference to the fact that, in the future, Rabbi Yehudoh and Antoninus would emerge from Ya'akov

and Eisav. These two figures shared a unique friendship, which, in its time, facilitated the spread of Torah. Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, in his commentary Meshech Chochmoh, explains that the message given to Rivkoh was meant to ease her mind about the impending birth. Since she felt movement both when she walked past a study house and when she walked past a house of idolatry, she felt that there was a bad side as well as a good side that would emerge from the birth. In this way she felt she would be unlike Sarah, who chose a good portion when she evicted Hagar. This is what bothered Rivkoh. The message she received from the prophet was that even within the bad side of the birth, there would be a positive element, as well, since Antoninus would eventually emerge from it. Rav Meir Simcha's comment can be better understood in light of an explanation that Rabbi Yochanan Zweig, Rosh Yeshiva in Miami Beach, Florida, once gave to another rabbinic statement. The Talmud tells us that the descendants of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Brak. Rabbi Zweig explained that since Haman's attempt to destroy the Jewish nation brought about their collective repentance, there must have been a spark of good hidden somewhere at the core of the plan. Similarly, according to Rav Meir Simcha, the fact that an Antoninus would eventually emerge from Eisav indicated that there was something good at Eisav's core, as well.

Based on Rav Meir Simcha's explanation of the

midrash, we can better understand the different approaches that Yitzchok and Rivkoh took towards Ya'akov and Eisav. Yitzchok, knowing that, at some point in history, a working relationship between Ya'akov and Eisav would emerge, believed that this future development indicated something basically good about Eisav, which, if nurtured properly, could be used in the service of God. Rivkoh, on the other hand, believed that the two children were too different to be able to work together, and, therefore, in a sense rejected Eisav, in favor of Ya'akov. Following Rabbi Hirsch's approach that Yitzchok and Rivkoh erred in raising their two sons, but arguing with his explanation of the actual mistake they made, I would argue that what went wrong is that they gave mixed messages to their children, each taking a different approach to how they should be raised. To paraphrase the character 'Jimbo' (aka James Dean) in the classic 1950s film about troubled, rebellious teenagers, "Rebel Without a Cause," Eisav must have felt that he was being torn apart by his parents, each pulling him in a different direction. As Faranak Margolese, in her recent book on deviant religious behavior among Jewish youth, *Off the Derech*, writes, when a child receives mixed messages from his two parents he is very likely to react in a way that does not reflect either of their values. Apparently, this is what happened in regard to Eisav, as well, thus paving the way for a history of conflict between the descendants of the two brothers.

## Partners in Success

*Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur presented at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on November 20, 2014)*

There is an interesting letter in this week's Parsha. When Yitzchak gives over a berachah to Yaakov, he first says: *Hinei re'ach beni ke-re'ach sadeh asher berach Hashem*. That's who he is. Then he gives him the berachah: *Ve-yiten lecha ha-Elokim*. And Hashem should give you *mi-tal ha-shomayim u-mi-shmanei ha-aretz ve-rov dagan ve-tirosh*, etc. So Rashi points out that ordinarily, you don't start a bracha with And. Just say: *Yiten lecha ha-Elokim*. What reason did the Torah have to add the extra letter vav?

Kli Yakar gives three different pshatim. One pshat is that it is simply a continuation of the earlier pasuk: *Hinei re'ach beni ke-re'ach sadeh asher berach Hashem*. Rashi says that Yitzchak told his son that he smells like Gan Eiden. Gan

Eiden is Olam ha-Bo. And what Yitzchak meant was that he would get Olam ha-Bo. And the next pasuk continues with *Va-yiten lecha*, etc. Meaning: And Hashem will also give you bracha in Olam ha-Zeh.

His second pshat, based on Rashi, says: The extra vav is there to imply *Yitein [Hashem lecha]*, *ve-yachzor ve-yitein*. Hashem will give you, and not only once. He will give and give! So Kli Yakar asks: What do you mean that He will give you and He will give you again? It's obvious. Hashem will give *Mi-tal ha-shomayim u-mi-shmanei ha-aretz*. Is He going to grant you copious dew one day and not another? Will He give you nice fruits only once and no more? Obviously, the bracha means He will keep giving for the long term. Why do you need a remez for *ve-yitein*

*ve-yachzor ve-yitein*—that He will give you again? So Klei Yakar says: There is Mussar here. The first *ve-yitein* tells you that if Hashem gives you something, don't think that now you will have it forever. That's the meaning of *ve-yachzor ve-yitein*. He must decide to give it to you again. If Hashem gave you something, don't take it for granted and think that you have it forever, that it's coming to you, and that you don't have to worry for the rest of your life. *Ve-yachzor ve-yitein* teaches that you must, *kaveyachol*, convince Hashem that you deserve Him giving it to you again. If Hashem gave you something, you should use it to serve Him the best you can. You should appreciate the gift, and not take it for granted. You should make sure that you deserve *yachzor ve-yiten*—that He should continue giving it to you. And just because you have it now doesn't mean you will also have it tomorrow. You must live up to it and earn it.

Klei Yakar's third pshat fascinatingly says: *Yiten* tells you Hashem will give you. *Ve-yitein* means that Hashem will also give you. Who else is there besides Hashem? Does Hashem need help running the World? No. *Ve-yiten lecha ha-Elokim* means: Don't sit back and say I will sit here in my easy chair, and Hashem will give me whatever I need.

## A Friend Turned Foe

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Something had changed. Yitzchak had every reason to expect that Avimelech, the king of the Philistines and his father's close ally would continue his support. Avimelech had befriended Avraham, hosted him, and had even formed strategic alliances with him. They were so close that Chazal even place Avimelech as one of the dignitaries attending Yitzchak's second birthday party, in celebration of his weaning. The relationship between Avraham and Avimelech started out contentiously, but ultimately blossomed into a long-lasting friendship.

Yet, something changed, and Avimelech's attitude toward Yitzchak soured. His men were jealous of Yitzchak's success, constantly harassing Yitzchak by wrecking his wells. This relentless squabbling frustrated Yitzchak, who only secures peace and quiet after five attempts to excavate wells. What went wrong with this relationship? How did a close friend suddenly snub Avraham's child and spurn his legacy?

### Embracing Avraham's revolution

Avraham revolutionized the world's religious

We must work for what we want. If you want something, go to work, do your hishtadlus and try to get it. *Ve-yiten* tells you that once you do your hishtadlus, when you go out and work, Hashem will give you success. But don't think Hashem will send you the produce truck to your doorstep. Go to the farm—plow, sow, weed, and water. And then Hashem will fill in the rest, make your hishtadlus succeed, and give you everything you need. Klei Yakar quotes another pasuk which reinforces this message and adds a caveat: *Emes me-eretz titzmach, ve-tzedek mi-shomayim nishkaf, gam Hashem yiten hatov*. You start on your own—*me-eretz titzmach*, and Hashem will fill in the rest—*mi-shomayim*. But *Emes me-eretz titzmach* means that you should do things *emesdik*—in the right way. If you try to cut corners in business, don't expect *ve-yiten* and *ke-reyach sadeh asher beracho Hashem*. Don't expect Hashem to come through. If you do things as you are supposed to, with honesty and integrity—in a proper way for an Eved Hashem—then *ve-yiten lecha ha-Elokim*. If you do your part, He will do His part and give you the rewards that you have coming to you. Shabbat Shalom.

consciousness by depicting one G-d, responsible for all creation, who also cared for human welfare. His ideas were roundly embraced, in particular by Avimelech, a coastal king who first met Avraham under strained conditions.

Initially, this monarch had hosted Avraham, but immediately fell ill, due to his attempted rape of Sarah. As Avraham prayed for the ailing king's recovery, Avimelech witnessed, firsthand, the power of tefillah, while also discovering that Hashem was compassionate rather than vengeful. Avraham was invited to remain in Avimelech's kingdom indefinitely, allowing his revolutionary values to continue their spread.

Eventually, this friendship developed into a full-blown treaty. Acknowledging that *אליקים עמך בכל אשר אתה עושה*, that Hashem managed Avraham's affairs, Avimelech craved to be part of Avraham's divinely supervised world. He eagerly signed treaties with this man of G-d and was happy to continue "hosting" him in their joint city aptly

named Be'er Sheva, for the reciprocal oaths which braced their peace treaty.

Avraham shuttles back and forth between his friend Mamre near Chevron and his ally Avimelech along the coast who welcomed him - as long as he didn't legally purchase land in Israel.

### **Jewish Expansionism**

By the time Yitzchak digs his wells, Avraham had already acquired his first parcel of land in Israel, and the dynamics of the relationship begin to change. As long as Avraham was an itinerant preacher roaming the countryside and spreading his religious gospel, Avimelech was magnanimous. Once Avraham and his children settle the chosen land, Avimelech turns hostile. Yitzchak's digging and entrenchment provokes Avimelech's anger and incites aggressive efforts to blunt Jewish expansionism. It is one thing to be inspired by Avraham's ideas, but quite another to allow the chosen people to settle in the land of Hashem.

### **The dual narrative**

The modern world has embraced the Jewish nation and its religious and cultural influence upon society. We are the founders of monotheism, and, thankfully, much of the modern religious world has adopted our fundamental belief in a non-physical, unitary and exclusive G-d.

In addition to our religious impact, we have also driven human progress. Hashem cares for His creatures and especially for his masterpiece known as homo sapien. The advance of the human condition is the will of Hashem, and therefore, for a Jew, progress is driven by a religious impulse. Religiously inspired to improve and enhance our world, we have spearheaded human advance in science, technology, culture, economics, psychology, politics, and social welfare. Humanity has eagerly embraced the Jewish people, conferring upon us close to 25% of the Nobel prizes awarded over the past century. After thousands of years of disparagement and vilification, we have been showered with broad admiration. This is part of the road to redemption.

Though our "influence" has been embraced, our desire to return to our homeland has been resisted. Subconsciously, humanity realizes that Israel is the land of G-d, the epicenter of history, and the terminus of redemption. Knowing this, any Jewish efforts to settle their ancient homeland must be blunted. When Jews return to Israel the world trembles with a redemptive shudder and rises to combat this history-altering event.

This dual and conflicting narrative began in the days of Avimelech and Yitzchak. Our ideas and values are

warmly adopted but our desire to live in our land is hotly contested. History shows us its patterns.

### **When miracles fade**

There is a second reason that Avimelech supported Avraham but opposed Yitzchak. Avraham's dramatic arrival in Israel was accompanied by commotion and by historical shifts. In the aftermath of Avraham's arrival in Israel, a major famine occurred, a world war erupted, and five large cities were decimated in a fiery flash. Additionally, this man of heaven drew heavenly angels into the region. It was evident that history was in flux and that this man of G-d was the root cause of all the excitement and spectacle. In this atmosphere of supernaturalism, granting residence to Avraham was a no-brainer. The locals of Chevron recognize that Avraham is a נשיא אלקים אתה בתוכינו or a prince of G-d, and grant his purchase. Avimelech, having personally witnessed divine intervention, reads the tea leaves, and concedes space for the man of G-d. Amidst the fanfare of Avraham's career, it was obvious that this discoverer of G-d deserved a presence in the land of G-d.

A generation later the drama had worn off and life returned to normal. Yitzchak's "boring" life contained no overt miracles, no wars, and no angels, as the world settled back into its normal routine. Yitzchak lives a sedentary life in his homestead at Gerar, barely traveling and never departing the land. Under these pedestrian conditions, divine destiny was less obvious, and the local residents became more stingy about granting land to outsiders. In the absence of supernatural miracles natural opposition to our presence surges and our settlement of Israel becomes more complicated than it was for the man of G-d who arrived in this land escorted by angels.

### **Historical tumult and historical stability**

In 1948 the world was also in flux. Within 30 years, two bloody world wars were fought, maps were drawn and redrawn, monarchies fell, communism arose, and we suffered an unimaginable genocidal nightmare. These events disclosed a palpable divine presence and an unspoken sense of historical shift. The planet was, once again, inhabited by angels and devils and the world responded by granting the descendants of Avraham a return ticket to their homeland. On a rational plane, the UN vote was driven by diplomatic, political and regional considerations. However, subconsciously, events were driven by the prevailing sense that Hashem had descended into history. Sometimes His presence is overt and other



times it is felt subliminally. In the historical moment of 1948, Hashem's presence compelled a UN majority supporting Jewish return to Israel.

In the past 70 years history has steadied, becoming far less tumultuous and turbulent. Even though intermittent violence flares, wars have been largely regional and limited to particular areas. The world, at least on the surface, has become more politically and economically stable than it was during the tempestuous first half of the 20th century. In our more stable reality, it is more difficult to detect the divine presence or to perceive the changing tides of history,

## Only With Love

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In this week's parsha, Parshas Toldos, after twenty years of marriage and a difficult pregnancy, Yitzchak and Rivka are blessed with twin boys. וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ, לֵלְדוֹת; וַיֵּצֵא הָרִאשׁוֹן אֶדְמוֹנִי, כָּלוֹ כְּאֶדְרֵת שַׁעַר; וַיִּקְרָאוּ עָשׂוּ וְאֶחָרֵי-כֵן יָצָא אַחִיו, וַיְדֹד; וְאַחֲרָיו כֵּן יָצָא אַחֲרָיו, וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, עֵשָׂו וַיִּגְרַס עָשׂוּ אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-עֵקֶב עַתָּה, וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, יַעֲקֹב - *When her term to bear grew full, behold! twins in her womb; and the first one came out, red, entirely like a hairy mantle, and they called his name Eisav; and after that his brother came out, and his hand was grasping onto the heel of Eisav, and he called his name Yaakov* (Bereishis 25:24-26).

As the boys grow up, they go their divergent ways - וַיִּגְדְּלוּ, וַיִּהְיֶה עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדַע צֹיָד, אִישׁ שֹׂדֵד; וַיֵּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תֵּם, יוֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים, וַיִּנְעָרִים, וַיִּהְיֶה עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדַע צֹיָד, אִישׁ שֹׂדֵד; וַיֵּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תֵּם, יוֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים, *and the boys grew up and Eisav became a man who knows trapping, a man of the field, but Yaakov was a wholesome man, dwelling in tents* (v.27). While Eisav spends his days hunting and trapping, Yaakov spends his days in the tents of Torah.

The disparity between them was already foreshadowed while they were in utero. Of Rivka's pregnancy, the pasuk tells us: וַיִּתְרָצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ - *and the children jostled within her* (v.22). Rashi explains: כְּשֶׁהֵיטָה עוֹבְרֵת עַל פְּתַח תּוֹרָה שָׁל עֵשָׂו וְעַבְרָת יַעֲקֹב רָץ וּמִפְּרֶס לְצִאתָ, עוֹבְרֵת עַל פְּתַח תּוֹרָה שָׁל עֵשָׂו וְעַבְרָת יַעֲקֹב רָץ וּמִפְּרֶס לְצִאתָ - *When she passed by entrances of Torah study of Shem v'Ever, Yaakov would run and toss about to go out, and when she passed by entrances of idol worship, Eisav would toss to go out* (ibid).

Eisav grows to become the quintessential rasha, and Yaakov, the be'chir she'ba'Avos and man of Torah. What is the inherent difference between these two personalities that resulted in two men, diametrically opposed to one another?

and therefore the world is less amicable about "making way" for the people of G-d returning to the land of G-d.

Settlement of Israel appears to have become bogged down in politics diplomacy, boycotts and aggressive opposition. The Avimelech syndrome has returned. Countries, that in the past were favorable to us have now turned against us. This isn't new. Avimelech is alive. Jewish history cycles through patterns. What happened before will happen again. This is the final cycle. And we know how it all ends.

Ha'Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt'l (1943-2011, Rosh Yeshiva Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim) explains, "Eisav, who was formed as a complete entity, lacked aspirations to advance. One who does not yearn for more, who does not strive to move ahead, will not get anywhere in life. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt'l (1902-1979) expressed the idea that he 'abhorred' complacent people who lack aspirations and ambitions to grow.

"Yaakov symbolized the diametric opposite. From the moment of his emergence into the world, he was already grasping onto Eisav's heel, demonstrating his desire to constantly attain more in life. The name Yaakov derives from the word 'eikev, heel,' for one who perceives himself as a heel - the lowest part of the body, which we step on constantly - regards himself as incomplete and is constantly endeavoring to reach higher. This is what inspired Yaakov to become a 'yoshev ohalim' - a mevakesh Hashem who seeks Him out at every opportunity...

"Eisav's essence was one of completion and complacency. He lacked spiritual aspirations, and his interests and desires focused on the pleasures of olam ha'zeh (this world). Ironically, a spiritually complacent person is never satisfied with his lot, because even the sweetest of material indulgences dissipates quickly.

"Yaakov, on the other hand, epitomized the incomplete person who is constantly lacking, yearning, and 'grasping onto his brother's heel,' in order to further advance. He thirsted for spiritual attainments, which filled him with joy and left him craving for more, yearning to ascend even higher. There is no one happier than a person like this, for he experiences gratification that fills every fiber

of his being and imbues him with zest, and this motivates him to strive for more. As he matures, his inner joy and satisfaction grow, due to the spiritual wealth that he has amassed through learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvos” (Rav Nosson Tzvi Speaks, Artsroll, p.48-49).

Eisav rish’us, his wickedness, was rooted in his arrogant and false assessment of self. He believed he was ‘finished’ and complete, and did not require any work to improve himself or advance in life. In fact, the name Eisav itself - עִשָּׂו - is from the word ‘asuy’ complete, whole, finished. As the Rashbam teaches, שמו עשו: אדם עשוי ונגמר שהיה בעל שער - his name was Eisav: a person who is fully mature/made, complete, for he was covered with hair. Eisav’s essence was “I am done.”

Yaakov Avinu, on the other hand, recognizes that he is never done, and no matter how much one has learned and accomplished in life, there is always so much more to do! Whether in limud ha’Torah, asias ha’mitzvos, chessed and massim tovim, or tikkun ha’middos, the avodah of an eved Hashem is never complete.

This difference between Yaakov and Eisav is actually alluded to in Rashi (quoted above) regarding their time in utero. Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel points out a beautiful chiddush: “... Based on this, we can appreciate a subtle difference in Rashi’s portrayal of Yaakov and Eisav in their mother’s womb. Rashi comments that when Rivka passed by places of Torah study: יַעֲקֹב רָץ וּמִפְּרֶכֶס לְצֵאתָּ, Yaakov

would run and toss about to leave the womb, whereas when she passed temples of idol worship: עִשָּׂו מִפְּרֶכֶס לְצֵאתָּ, Eisav would toss about to leave the womb. Rashi uses the word רָץ, ran, only in regard to Yaakov, who embodied passion and determination to serve Hashem. Eisav, in contrast, was never in a rush to advance in any way, thinking he was already perfectly complete” (Rav Nosson Tzvi Speaks, Artsroll, p.50).

Our nation is called after the third patriarch, Yaakov/ Yisrael, as we are Am Yisrael. While Avraham founded the nation, and Yitzchak was the bridge between the masorah of the past and the destiny of the future, Yaakov/ Yisrael represents a tenacity of spirit that can never be extinguished. No matter how many travails Yaakov faced in life (and they were many), he never stopped growing, doing, being and yearning, always molding himself to become closer to Hashem. As the Bnei Yisrael - the sons of Yaakov - it behooves us to learn from his ways and always yearn to learn more, do more and grow more, irrespective of our accomplishments of the past.

LZ”N my dear friend, Mrs. Alice Marks a’h, who was never satisfied with her spiritual level and who never stopped learning, in order to advance higher and higher in all areas of avodas Hashem. Her sincere and pure quest for Torah and mitzvos was a tremendous inspiration to all. May her memory be for a blessing.

## Rivkah and G-d

*Rabbi Jonathan Ziring*

**A**nd the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Bereishit 25:22-23, Koren tr.)

While Sarah, Rivkah, and Rachel all face barrenness, the Torah records only Rivkah as being challenged more by her pregnancy than her inability to conceive. What scared Rivkah so, and what did she seek when she “inquired of God”?

Several commentaries (Ri Kara, Bechor Shor, Chizkuni) assume that Rivkah was afraid that the movement she felt in her womb indicated that she was going to miscarry.

According to some, her exclamation of “why am I thus?” means that she wondered why she should have become pregnant if it was only going to end in miscarriage. Ibn Ezra understands similarly, that she asked other women if they experienced the same movement in their pregnancy. When she discovered that they did not, she panicked that her pregnancy was different. Thus, her fear was specifically that her pregnancy would not succeed.

Rashi, on the other hand, suggests that Rivkah was not worried about the pregnancy. Rather, she saw indications that the child (she did not yet know about the twins) would be problematic, as the fetus moved both when she passed the Beit Midrash and houses of idol worship. Amazingly, for Rashi, despite Rivkah’s struggle to become pregnant, it was not enough for her to have a child. She

wanted to ensure that her child would follow the proper path as well.

Whatever her concern, what did Rivkah do to alleviate her fears? According to many commentaries (Rashi, Bechor Shor, Radak), she went to ask God through a prophet. Ramban, on the other hand, understands that she prayed. According to the former interpretation, Rivkah sought out an answer from God and received it. Per Ramban, however, she did not necessarily expect a response. She prayed that her child would survive, but she expected the conversation to be onedirectional. Thus, for Ramban, this part of the story is quite dramatic. God does not merely answer her prayer but speaks to her directly. Indeed, according to the former explanation, God does not speak directly to Rivkah. According to Ramban, as there is no intermediary in the story, He does.

Perhaps, according to Rashi, the comfort Rivkah receives is simply clarification of her situation. However, according to Ramban, the comfort is the fact that Rivkah has now transformed her relationship with God. Rivkah starts by praying, but ends by having God engage her in conversation. Knowing that God is directly engaged in

one's life transforms the way one experiences life, including the troubles therein.

Rav Saadia Gaon (Commentary to the Torah, Zucker ed.) suggests a more extensive approach. He notes that “seeking God” can mean: 1) asking prophets 2) praying 3) making a commitment to religion (often in the context of forging a covenant) or 4) repenting. Thus, Rivkah realized that to deal with struggles, there are many ways to approach God. One can try to figure out what the future holds, one can pray that the future be better, and one can take actions to ensure that they deserve that brighter future. According to this broader explanation, one can suggest that it was specifically because Rivkah understood the many ways in which one can improve one's religious life in response to uncertainty and/or tragedy that she merited God's response.

While we may not have prophecy, we can recognize the many ways in which we can respond to hardship and work on our relationship with God. And, as with Rivkah, we can hope that we find comfort in feeling that God is there for us during our struggles.

## The Struggles of the “FFB”

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

**T**he Torah tells that Yitzchak and Rivka were unable to have children for many years, until *ויעתר ה' לו* – *God answered Yitzchak's tefilos*, and Rivka conceived (25:21).

Rashi finds it significant that the Torah emphasizes *ויעתר לו* – that Hashem answered specifically Yitzchak's prayers, implying that God granted him a child in response to his prayers, but not in response to Rivka's prayers. The reason, as Rashi explains based on the Gemara (Yevamos 64a), is because *אין דומה תפילת צדיק בן רשע לתפילת צדיק בן צדיק* – “the prayer of a righteous person who is the child of a wicked person is not the same as the prayer of a righteous person who is the child of a righteous person.” The prayers recited by Yitzchak – a tzadik who was raised by righteous parents – were more powerful, and hence more effective, than the prayers recited by Rivka – a tzadekes who was raised by sinful parents.

Intuitively, we would have assumed that to the contrary, Rivka's merits would exceed those of Yitzchak, because of her background. Unlike Yitzchak, who was raised by

Avraham and Sara, Rivka was raised by corrupt idolaters. She had to struggle against her upbringing in order to be kind, generous and God-fearing. Shouldn't her merit be greater, and thus her tefilos more powerful?

Rav Yosef Sorotzkin, in *Meged Yosef*, explains that in a certain sense, the challenge of those who were raised with Torah observance (“FFB” – “frum from birth”) exceeds the challenge of ba'alei teshuva, those who embraced Torah observance later in life. For the person who made the decision to join the community of Torah-devoted Jews, every tefila, every mitzva, every page of Gemara, is new and exciting. They are brimming with excitement and enthusiasm. They are thrilled to prepare each week for Shabbos, to prepare each year for Pesach, to put on tefillin each day, and so on. Those who were raised with Torah observance, however, can fall into boredom and lethargy, and see the routine of mitzvos as a burdensome chore, as opposed to precious opportunities for growth and closeness with Hashem.

The Torah describes Yitzchak as davening *לנוכח אשתו*

– literally, “facing his wife.” Rav Sorotzkin explains that Yitzchak davened with the same enthusiasm and passion as Rivka. Although he was a צדיק בן צדיק, someone who grew up with the belief in Hashem and with the concept of tefila, he never lost his emotion or his love for prayer. This is

what made his tefila so special, even more than Rivka’s.

The unique challenge of the “FFB” is to remain charged, to remain passionate, to be able to invest emotion and energy into each and every mitzva, despite having performed mitzvos his or her entire life.

## The Deeds of the Fathers are Signposts for the Children

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

In this week’s parasha, parashat Toledot, we read, for the third time, the story of our Patriarchs going to Egypt or to Gerar on account of famine.

In Genesis 26:1, we read, מִלְבַּד הָרָעֵב הָרְאִשׁוֹן, וַיְהִי רָעֵב בְּאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בְיַמֵּי אַבְרָהָם, וַיֵּלֶךְ יִצְחָק אֶל אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ פְּלִשְׁתִּים, גְּרָרָה. *There was a famine in the land, aside from the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Avimelech, the King of the Philistines to Gerar.*

G-d instructs Isaac not to follow his father’s footsteps and go to Egypt to wait out the famine, but rather to remain in the land of Canaan, so that the promise that Isaac will inherit the land of Canaan will be fulfilled. According to tradition, (cited in Rashi Genesis 26:2), because Isaac was prepared to give up his life for G-d at the Akeidah on Mt. Moriah, he was now considered an *Olah Temimah*, a pure and holy offering, and was consequently forbidden to leave the land of Israel.

Isaac heeds G-d’s words, does not leave Canaan, and instead goes to Gerar. There the people ask about his wife, and, like his father, Abraham, before him, Isaac says that his wife, Rebecca, is his sister. In Genesis 26:7, scripture explains Isaac’s actions: כִּי יֵרָא לְאִמֹר, אִשְׁתִּי, פֶּן יַהַרְגֵנִי אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם עַל רֵבָקָה, כִּי טוֹבַת מֵרְאָה הִוא. *for he was afraid to say: “My wife,” lest the men of the place kill me because of Rebecca, for she was fair to look upon.*

After dwelling in Gerar for a while, King Avimelech, looks out his window, (Genesis 26:8), and sees Isaac, מְצַחֵק, “sporting” with Rebecca, his wife. Angrily, Avimelech summons Isaac and demands to know why Isaac claimed that Rebecca was his sister. After all, says Avimelech, I could have been killed on account of her, had I taken her as a concubine.

There is no recorded response by Isaac to this charge. Instead, Avimelech announces to his people that Isaac and his wife are protected sojourners, and anyone who harms Isaac shall surely die. While Isaac is allowed to remain in Gerar, Avimelech does not shower him with gifts as he did

Abraham. Instead, Isaac independently plants מאה שְׁעָרִים, a hundred measures, and becomes enormously wealthy. His economic success leads to disputes between Isaac’s servants and Avimelech’s servants, and ultimately Isaac leaves Gerar, and moves his family to Beersheva.

With only a few subtle differences, this story is virtually identical to the story of Avram recorded in Genesis 12:10 concerning the famine in Canaan. Avram and Sari go down to Egypt. Avram instructs Sari to say that she’s his sister. Pharaoh discovers the deception and expels Avram and Sari from Egypt.

In Genesis 20, scripture reports that Avraham and Sarah once again go down on account of the famine—this time to Gerar. Abraham himself announces to all that Sarah is his sister. King Avimelech sends for Sarah, but before he has a chance to violate her, he’s warned away by G-d. After the incident, Avimelech gives Abraham gifts and allows him to remain in Gerar.

Our rabbis have much difficulty, not only with the fact that our patriarchs engage in “deception” by stating that their wives are their sisters, but also with the effects of the deception which place the women in danger. Only, in Genesis 20:11-12 is any reason given to explain why the patriarchs do this. Abraham informs Avimelech that the reason that he said that Sarah was his sister was because he saw that there was no fear of G-d in this place (Gerar), and that he (Abraham) was afraid that they would kill him because of his wife. In Genesis 20:12, Abraham expounds further, stating explicitly that, in truth, Sarah was his sister, the daughter of his father but not the daughter of his mother. Rashi states that by this Abraham means that Sarah was his brother’s daughter. And thus, in a figurative sense, Sarah could be considered his sister.

Some commentators maintain that the Egyptians and the Gerarites had a most perverted sense of morality. They were careful not to violate the prohibition of adultery, but they would not hesitate to murder a husband, so that the

woman would no longer be married. Hence, the patriarchs were justified in their fear that they would be killed, and the women spared.

Other commentators suggest that this was the patriarch's way to stall until the famine had passed. By stating that their wives were their sisters, Abraham and Isaac would be in a position to demand exorbitant dowery for the woman's hand. As no dowery would ever be sufficient, they would be able to remain in the country until the famine passed and then depart safely. Unfortunately, they did not anticipate that the king himself would simply take the wives without any dowery. In stark contrast to the mainstream commentators, the Ramban maintains, (Genesis 12:10), that "Abraham sinned grievously" by putting Sarah in jeopardy in order to save his own skin.

The real question however remains: Why does this story repeat three times, albeit, on each occasion in a slightly different manner? Umberto Cassuto, in his brilliant analysis of these sections, asserts that the narrative is repeated in order to underscore the fact that this story is history in the making, and that from this particular repeating story we learn that the deeds of the fathers are surely signposts for the children.

Cassuto explains: G-d had already predicted to Abraham in the *בְּרִית בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים*—the Covenant between the Pieces, (Genesis 15:13): *וְיָדַעְתָּ תְּדַע כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרָעֲךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם*, *You shall surely know that your children will be strangers in a land that is not theirs*. In this covenant, the prophecy of exile, servitude and persecution is pronounced, predicting the exile from Canaan to Egypt, the slavery and persecution, and the eventual triumphant salvation. This, maintains Cassuto, is exactly what is predicted by the repetition of the stories. There will be a famine, the families of Abraham and Isaac will be exiled from their homes and go either to Egypt or to Gerar. In exile, the men will be threatened with death, but the women will be allowed to live. Eventually the people will go out with great wealth.

Once again, we see that there is nothing casual about the Bible. Textual repetition is not mere coincidence. Emphasis in scripture is never accidental, but rather comes to underscore profound messages for subsequent generations. As stated in Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers 5:21: *וְהִפְךָ בָּהּ, וְהִפְךָ בָּהּ, וְהִפְךָ בָּהּ*, *repeat your study of the Torah again and again, because everything is in it*.

In 1905, the famed philosopher, George Santayana, said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Our sages said it first, and said it better. How

crucial it is for all of us to see those signposts, to heed them, and to learn from them.