

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ויאמר הגשה לי ואכלה מציד בני למען תברכך נפשי ויגש לו ויאכל ויבא לו יין וישת ... (כו-כה)

One of the greatest *Halachic* arbiters in Jewish history was **R' Yoel Sirkis zt"l**, who wrote the *sefer Bayis Chadash*, and was subsequently known as the **Bach** (initials of his *sefer*). He was the chief rabbi in Brest-Litovsk, before settling in Krakow.

The Bach had a daughter named Rivkah, a young educated girl who knew *Tanach* inside and out. The *Bach*, delighted by his daughter's scholarship, once said to her with a smile, "My dear daughter, you are special like the moon." In his home at the time was his closest disciple, **R' Dovid Halevi Segal zt"l**, known as the **Taz** after the initials of his famous work, *Turei Zahav*. R' Dovid commented out loud, "If she is special like the moon, the time has come to sanctify (מקדש) the moon" (a play on words between the sanctification of the new moon and marriage (קידושין), which are designated by the same word). The *Bach*, who had his eye on R' Dovid for a long time, laughed at the joke but then took him as the husband for his daughter Rivkah. After the wedding, the couple left her father's house and settled in Krakow.

Prior to the wedding, the *Bach* agreed to support his son-in-law and daughter in full measure so that his son-in-law could expend his efforts in *Torah* study without material concerns. Indeed, the *Taz* learned *Torah* diligently day and night and those who knew him were certain that he was destined to be a future *Torah* leader.

After some time, R' Dovid noticed that some things had changed. The lavish, plentiful meals that he had been receiving in his father-in-law's home had dwindled to more meager fare. Gone were the generous portions of food and the meat turned into chicken. He felt that the difference in his diet was affecting his ability to study intensively for so many hours, and he had no choice but to approach his father-in-law and speak to him about the change.

"Yes, my dear son-in-law, I am aware of the decline in the food," replied R' Yoel. "You are justified in complaining about it, and I apologize. However, there is nothing that I can do. I did promise to provide for your needs so that you could concentrate on your learning without worry, and it was my greatest joy to assist you with the finest of everything as long as I was able to do so. Unfortunately, my income has declined recently, and I can no longer afford to support you at the same high standard as before. I hope with *Hashem's* help, things will soon improve!"

Unfortunately, things did not improve and the quality of the meals continued to depreciate. R' Dovid did not leave matters at that. He went to the local *beis din* and had R' Yoel summoned to a *din Torah*, stating that his father-in-law had promised to provide him with meat, and was not maintaining the high standard of his first years of marriage. He felt that the caliber of his learning was affected by the chicken he was now being served instead.

In his defense, the *Bach* explained that it was not his fault, but that circumstances had forced him to provide less than formerly. In fact, he informed them, he had originally promised to support his son-in-law with meat, but fowl could surely be considered a kind of meat. After considering the matter, *beis din* ruled in favor of the *Bach*.

When the townspeople heard about the case, they were taken aback by the audacity of the young man to take his father-in-law, a *Torah* scholar of such stature and the chief rabbi, to court over such a frivolous claim as the quality of the food! It was unheard of! One young man had the temerity to ask R' Dovid to explain his actions.

He replied, "I know that as long as my father-in-law was providing me with good, plentiful food, I was able to learn with great diligence and concentration. As soon as the standard of food declined, so did my stamina, and as a result, my learning suffered. I noticed the difference immediately! I could not concentrate as intently for long periods of time; I was not learning with my full potential. I was afraid that in Heaven my father-in-law would be held responsible for indirectly causing a decrease in my *Torah* study. Of course, I could not have this on my *cheshbon*. Therefore, I made up a claim in court, knowing that he would be vindicated - just as the *beis din* here had judged him innocent, so in Heaven they would do likewise."

הלוא אה עשו ליעקב נאם ה' ויחב את יעקב ... (מלאכי א' א-ב)

In the opening words of the *Haftorah*, *Malachi HaNavi* echoes *Hashem's* love for *Yaakov Avinu* while simultaneously extolling *Hashem's* deep hatred for Esav. Interestingly, *Malachi* seems to question this very notion and ask how is it that Esav who is a brother to Yaakov – the beloved one in the eyes of the Almighty – is so reviled and hated? One would think that *Hashem's* preference is sacrament and unchangeable. Why, then, is *Malachi* even entertaining such a thought?

R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson zt"l (Lubavitcher Rebbe) gives us a fundamental lesson in life. He explains that one can only make a true choice between two things when one entity has no obvious redeeming features over the

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other. Both entities must be completely equal on every level. This is because if any entity was better than the other – on any level – it would no longer be a choice of common sense. Rather, it would be the personal choice of a person's preference and everything about his choice now changes.

Malachi HaNavi fully understood this concept of choices. He further understood that Yaakov and Esav, who on the outside may have seemed equal since they were twins and raised in the same home, were anything but equal. As a result, although *Malachi* seemed to be asking a question, in truth he really was not. Rather, it was a statement highlighting the differences between Yaakov and Esav and how *Hashem* reviles Esav from the wicked path he chose.

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

ויאמר ה' לה שני גרים בכמנך ושני לאמים ממעך יפרדו ולאם מלאם יאמץ ורב יעבד צעיר ... (בר-סד)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"L

מחשבת הלב

Rivkah was told by *Hashem* via a *nevuah* from Shem, the reason for her unusual and erratic pregnancy. She would be having twins, she was told, different as day and night - Yaakov and Esav, a *tzaddik* and a *rasha*. And yet we don't find anywhere that she ever informed her husband, *Yitzchok Avinu*, of their children's destinies. Why not?

I saw in a newly released *sefer* written by Rabbi Goodman, who cites a *pshat* he heard from a venerable *Rosh Yeshivah* in *Yerushalayim*. Although, as the *posukim* tell us, Rivkah favored Yaakov over her other son, she was still Esav's mother. And had she revealed to Yitzchok what Esav was going to be, she feared that he might banish Esav entirely instead of investing effort in him. Thus, she refrained from telling him what she knew. Thus, *Yitzchok Avinu*, as one might imagine, did indeed pour his energy into Esav, his first-born son, and focused on inculcating him with a *Yiddishe taam*. Although she knew what he would become, she never told her husband about it. The unbelievable *koach* and mercy of a *Yiddishe Mama!*

Based on the above, we can understand why Esav stored his precious hunting coat with Rivkah. No matter who he was and what his relationship was with his mother, he always felt his mother's compassion and trusted her.

The *posuk* at the end of the *parsha* describes Rivkah as "אם יעקב ועשר". **Rashi** comments there that he doesn't know what the implication is. The **Mahari't** says a few short words: "Because she had mercy on both of them." In light of the above, we see starkly the mercy that she had, the concern Rivkah displayed even for her wayward son, Esav, as she tried her utmost to ensure that he would receive the proper *chinuch*. As parents and teachers, we must internalize this message: to never, ever give up on a child! No matter what he or she is, we must try, *daven* and hope for their success, *v'chein yehi ratzon*.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ועתה יצחק לה' לנכה אשתו ... ועתה לה' וגו' (כה-כא)

משל: Before he passed away, **R' Elimelech** of **Lizhensk zt"l (Noam Elimelech)** told the members of his household that he was *davening* that his children should not become rich. Wealth, he said, is a path that leads to corruption.

One of his sons complained: "Tatte, this could cause people to doubt your righteousness. The *Gemara* (ברכות ז) states that if a *tzaddik* is well off, it is a sign that his father was also a *tzaddik*. But if a *tzaddik* is poor, it is a sign that his father was wicked. Therefore, if we are poor, people might doubt that you were a *tzaddik*."

R' Elimelech smiled and said that he now understood a *Medrash* on the words, "Yitzchok pleaded with Hashem." The *Medrash* says that Yitzchok "poured out his prayer for riches." Now, we know that he *davened* for children. Why would Yitzchok also pray to be wealthy? It must be that after

ויהרר יצחק חרדה גדלה עד מאד ויאמר מי אפוא הוא הצד ציד ויבא לי ואכל מכל (כו-לג)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

The *Torah* tells us that when Yitzchok realized that Yaakov had taken the *berachos* from Esav, "Vayecherad charada gedola ad meod," he trembled a great and awesome trembling. **Rashi** says that he saw *Gehinom* open up beneath him. What was it that caused Yitzchok to tremble in this extreme way? The **Medrash Tanchuma** tells us that there was another time in Yitzchok's life that he trembled. The *Medrash* explains that when Avraham lifted the knife over Yitzchok's head at the *Akeida*, he trembled. Why did he tremble? Because he was afraid that he might move and invalidate himself as a *korban*. He was afraid that he would not be a perfectly fitting sacrifice for *Hashem*. The *Medrash* asks: Which trembling was greater? And the answer is that it was the trembling at the time of the giving of the *brachos*, as the *posuk* says, "Charada gedola AD MEOD."

Explains the **Shevet Sofer**, *Yitzchok Avinu* was lying on the altar, and he was scared. He was afraid that his performance *bein adam l'Makom* might not be up to par, and so the *Medrash* tells us that he trembled - "Vayecherad." However, in *Parshas Toldos*, when Esav came to Yitzchok to get his *beracha*, Yitzchok realized that he had already given it to Yaakov. He understood that now he might be causing pain and harm *bein adam l'chaveiro* - to Esav - even though the *berachos* were his to give to whomever he wanted. Esav was his own son and he gave the *berachos* to Yaakov unintentionally. It's not the end of the world. Still, he trembled in a way that he had never trembled before. "Vayecherad charada gedola AD MEOD." This would be a mistake that would have terrible ramifications on his *olam haze* and his *olam haba*. *Chazal* tell us "Hizaharu B'chvod Chavreichem" - Be careful with the honor of your friends. Playing with someone's feelings is much more dangerous than playing with fire. Fire only burns in this world, but causing someone pain burns in this world and in the next.

The **Chazon Ish** put it quite succinctly. "The kuntz (the trick) of life is to get through this world without hurting others."