



Volume IV Issue 7

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Parshas VaYeitzei, 13 Kislev, 5784

November 25, 2023

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On the Parsha

“And Yaakov left Be’er Sheva and he went to Charan.”(Bereishis 28:10)

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 68:7) cites Rabbi Brachya who says that when Yaakov left Be’er Sheva he left the wellspring of blessings. Yaakov Avinu said to himself, “I should leave [Be’er Sheva] so that Eisav will not confront me and say to me, ‘This is how you deceived me!’ and [by intimidating me] he will take away my blessings [by forcing me to recant the blessings and transfer them to him]. [By giving away the blessings], I will have squandered all of the efforts that my mother expended on my behalf [to obtain them.]”

Certainly, Yaakov knew the truth that on account of Eisav’s very serious sins and character flaws, he should not be the one to receive the blessings and with it, the privilege and obligation to be the flag bearer of Torah for generations to come. He knew that if the Torah would be placed in his and his descendants’ hands, there would have been devastating consequences. He surely knew what the Sefer Chassidim says that if someone unworthy has obtained a Sefer Torah it is fully justifiable to resort to other means to rescue the Torah from its unworthy owner. Yaakov also fully appreciated the value of the blessings and cherished the role that the one who receives them would get to play in representing and transmitting the Torah to one’s descendants. Therefore, Yaakov should have been concerned with losing the blessings to Eisav because of the aforementioned reasons. Instead, the Midrash above appears to say that his only concern about having Eisav wrest the blessings from him was due to the potentially wasted efforts of his mother that she expended in obtaining the blessings for him?

The answer is that the Midrash does not mean to say that Yaakov was not concerned about losing the blessings for all of the important considerations mentioned above – he obviously was. However, the Midrash means to say that he felt that even with those considerations, he still felt that it might be too much of a challenge for him to stand up to a hostile Eisav if he were to be confronted. To strengthen his ability to withstand any challenges from Eisav and hold firm to his convictions that he knew to be true – that he was the fitting and proper flag bearer of the Torah, he was honest with himself enough to know that he still needed to focus on an additional consideration in order to withstand a challenge from Eisav. That additional consideration was the vision of his loving mother’s efforts in cooking the food that Yaakov was to give to Yitzchak, risking Eisav’s wrath by taking his clothing without his knowledge to dress Yaakov, and her careful orchestration of events to ensure that Yaakov would receive the blessings instead of Eisav.

We may face a situation where we are hesitant to take a course of action that we know to be right, even if there are obvious and clear rationales to support that course of action. To ensure that we do the right thing, we need to do as Yaakov did, and seek out additional, less obvious rationales that resonate with us to help us overcome our hesitancy.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I have been reading the Emes Parsha Sheet for a while now and it has really had an impact on my way of thinking. As Chanukah is approaching, I have been rethinking my intention to use pure olive oil to light my Chanukah candles with. Permit me to explain. It seems that the price of olive oil has skyrocketed recently,

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which does not seem right. Further, a few years ago, there was an investigation into the constitution of the olive oil being sold that identified many instances where on the bottle, it said that the contents were, "100% olive oil" however, testing showed that the olive oil was mixed with other oil (typically safflower oil). I want to perform the Mitzva of lighting the candles in the most optimal way (Mehudar) and use 100% olive oil. However, is it proper for me to support an industry that is rife with fraud? Perhaps it is better to avoid the matter and light the Chanukah candles with something less Mehudar?

ANSWER: If there is a significant concern of fraud within the industry, then it would appear that your instincts are correct and it is better to light with something that is considered less Mehudar. I would say that if you believe that 10% or more of the olive oil sellers are diluting their "100% olive oil" with other oils, that would constitute an industry that is rife with fraud and it would be proper to use something less Mehudar (this is the Mishkenos Yaakov's guideline). However, if the olive oil is certified as "Kosher for Passover", there is less of a concern of dilution with other oil, and you may use it to fulfill your Mitzvah in the Mehudar fashion. This certification means that there was closer Rabbinical supervision due to the stringencies involved in Passover (e.g. ensuring that there was no corn oil mixed with the olive oil) and therefore, it is less likely that there would be other oils present.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Laizer Yudel Finkel ZT"l was the last Rosh Yeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Poland. The vast majority of the students of the Mirrer Yeshiva escaped Nazi-occupied Europe to Kobe, Japan and then to Shanghai. The Rosh Yeshiva eventually re-established the Mirrer Yeshiva in Jerusalem and a large percentage of the students that were in Shanghai rejoined him, including his son-in-law, Rav Chaim Shmulevitz ZT"l, who eventually succeeded him.

Since the founding of the State of Israel, fixed-term military service has been compulsory for its citizens. Those learning Torah in Yeshivas have often received exemptions from mandatory military service through a

special government arrangement organized by Israel's founding prime minister, David Ben-Gurion. To obtain this "learning Torah is his profession" exemption (Toraso Umanuso), a statement attesting to that fact needed to be signed by the Rosh Yeshiva of each Yeshiva institution. Rav Laizer Yudel, with tears in his eyes, would tell each student that asked for his signature on the statement that "Torah is his profession" the following: "I have never told a falsehood in my life. I am signing that your profession is to study Torah. Please learn diligently and commit yourself to it, so that I am not a liar."

Mussar - Introspection

We continue with our translation of the sixth chapter of the Chofetz Chaim's Sefas Tamim.

"Apart from all of this, whoever possesses this evil character trait (of being a liar) is a 'shameful person and is degraded by all of society' (Tehillim 22:7) since his lies will inevitably become known. This person acquires a reputation for being a liar and nothing that comes out of his mouth is correct. In contrast, whoever speaks truthfully acquires for himself a good name. If on occasion he changes a story for the sake of maintaining peace, or for a comparable (permissible) reason, people will believe him.

It is a Mitzvah to constantly caution even small children not to lie and to stay far away from a lie. As it says, 'Teach your child according to his level of understanding.' (Mishlei 22:6) Chazal have since warned us that one should not tell a child that one will do something for him or buy him something without any intention of keeping his word, in order not to teach the child to lie (Sukkah 46b). Rather, if a promise is made to the child, it must be kept. The child will then see this person as trustworthy and that he is careful to do what he says. Then, he too will do the same. One must guard over them (children) constantly in order that no lie or deceit will come out of their mouths and instruct the child about the severity of the sin of lying to the point where the children will be afraid to lie, and they will be very careful in what they say. Over time, not lying will become second nature to them."