

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

VOICE CONTROL

“With the skins of the goat-skins she covered his arms and his smooth-skinned neck.” (27:16)

When Yaakov appeared before his blind father Yitzchak and Yitzchak felt his arms and hands he

“Commitment is not a fair-weather affair. When the chips are down and the going gets tough — that’s when the tough get going.”

said *“The voice is the voice of Yaakov, but the hands are the hands of Eisav.”*

Why didn’t Yaakov also alter the tone of his voice and make it sound like Eisav’s?

In other words, if Yaakov took pains to conceal the physical differences between himself and Eisav, why didn’t he also disguise his voice?

Although everything is decreed in Heaven, Man is commanded to make efforts on his own behalf (*hishtadlus*).

However, this effort doesn’t mean he has to change his entire personality.

The voice is the essence of Yaakov. His hallmark is the voice of Torah, the voice of prayer. The voice defines *who Yaakov is*. Thus, he was not obliged to go to the extent of changing his essence in order to deceive Yitzchak.

• *Heard from Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram*

A SIMPLE MAN

“And Yaakov was a simple man.” (25:27)

A man needs to be able to control and dominate his character traits — to exercise the appropriate characteristic in the appropriate situation.

For there will be times when he will need to apply a “bad” trait for the right reason, as our Sages teach us “Anyone who is merciful when the situation demands hardness, will end up being hard when he should be merciful.” (*Koheles Rabba* Ch. 7)

That is why Yaakov is called a **simple man**. *Man* — implying that **he was able to control his character, rather than his character controlling him.**

Yaakov could apply his simplicity when appropriate, but when dealing with trickery and deceit, he could be as wily and cunning as he was simple...

• *HaRebbe HaKodosh M’Lublin in Mayana shel Torah*

I’M SO TIRED

“...and Eisav came in from the field and he was exhausted.”. (25:30)

If there’s one thing that can

destabilize a normal person and make him irritable and irrational — it’s being tired. We can all be saintly after a good night’s sleep. But what are we like after the baby has woken us up five times in the night?

The essence of the Jewish People is that they serve Hashem even when they are exhausted. Even when they have black rings under their eyes, they don’t give up and say — *“I’m too tired!”*

When Eisav is wearied, he immediately sells his birthright — the mantle of spiritual responsibility — without a second thought.

However, when the Jewish People are pursued by Amalek (the epitome of everything that stands against Hashem in this world), in spite of being *“tired and weary,”* they turn and fight.

“Why didn’t Yaakov also alter the tone of his voice and make it sound like Eisav’s?”

Commitment is not a fair-weather affair. When the chips are down and the going gets tough — that’s when the tough get going.

• *Heard from Rabbi Moshe Carlebach*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

After twenty years of marriage without children, Yitzchak's prayers to Hashem are answered and Rivka conceives twins, Eisav and Yaakov. The pregnancy is extremely painful. Hashem reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the world-wide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins — Rome and Israel. Eisav is born first, and then Yaakov, holding onto Eisav's heel. As they grow up, the contrast between the twins becomes apparent: Eisav is a hunter, a man of the field, of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah developing his soul. On the day of the funeral of their grandfather Avraham, Yaakov is cooking lentil soup, the traditional mourner's meal. Eisav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of soup, clearly demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of the firstborn. Yitzchak tries to escape to Egypt when a famine strikes Canaan, but Hashem reminds him that because of the *Akeida* (where he was offered up as a sacrifice) he has become holy and

must remain in the Holy Land. Instead he relocates to *Gerar* in the land of the *Plishtim*, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say that she is his sister. Yitzchak arouses jealousy when he becomes immensely wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave. Yitzchak re-digs three wells dug by his father, prophetically alluding to the three *Batei Mikdash* (Temples) which will be built in the future. Avimelech, seeing the blessings that Hashem has bestowed on Yitzchak, makes a treaty with him. When Yitzchak senses the end of his days approaching, he summons Eisav to give Eisav his blessings. Rivka, acting on a prophetic command that the blessings must go to Yaakov, arranges for Yaakov to impersonate his brother and receive the blessings. When Eisav in a rage of frustration complains to his father that his brother has bought his birthright, Yitzchak realizes that the birthright has been bestowed correctly on Yaakov who has valued its responsibilities rather than its privileges, and confirms the blessings he has given. Eisav vows to kill his brother, and so Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife.

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SING My SOUL INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

DROR YIKRA "HE SHALL PROCLAIM FREEDOM..."

"He shall proclaim freedom for man and woman"

Inscribed on the famous Liberty Bell in Philadelphia's Independence Hall is the passage from the Torah (*Vayikra* 25:10): "You shall proclaim freedom ("dror") throughout the land and to all its inhabitants." The deeper meaning of the word "dror" in this command to free slaves in the Jubilee Year is explained by our Sages (*Rosh Hashana* 9b) as the freedom of choosing the locale he wishes to be in, a

privilege denied to a slave who is restricted to the domicile of his master.

The freedom which a Jew enjoys on Shabbos is not only his vacation from the weekday labor imposed upon him by his circumstances but also the privilege of remaining in his home rather than being in the field, the office or the market place. So let your imagination allow you to hear the liberty bell chiming in to accompany your soul singing this song of freedom.

לע"י
ר' דוד בן ר' שמואל רפאל ז"ל
נלב"י ע"י ח' נסלו תשנ"ה
תג.ג.ג.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Who did Yitzchak resemble?
2. How old was Yitzchak at the time of the *akeida* (binding)?
3. Why does the Torah stress that Rivka was the daughter of Besuel and the sister of Lavan?
4. Whom did Rivka consult concerning her difficult pregnancy?
5. What are the two differences between Tamar's pregnancy and Rivka's pregnancy?
6. Yaakov was born grasping Eisav's heel. What does this symbolize?
7. Who gave Yaakov his name?
8. How did Eisav deceive his father?
9. In which tents did Yaakov dwell?
10. Why did Hashem cause Avraham to die prematurely?
11. Why are lentils a food for mourners?
12. What was the birth right that Yaakov bought from Eisav?
13. Why was Yitzchak not permitted to go to Egypt to escape the famine?
14. Why did the Philistines plug up the wells?
15. To which animal is Eisav compared?
16. What caused Yitzchak to lose his sight?
17. What did Yaakov do with the second goat that Rivka prepared for him?
18. From whom did Eisav receive his special garments?
19. Why did Eisav leave his special garments with Rivka rather than keep them at home?
20. What made Yitzchak suspect that it wasn't Eisav bringing him food?
21. What fragrance did Yitzchak detect on the garments of Yaakov?
22. When will Eisav be released from his subjugation to Yaakov?
23. What inspired Eisav to marry the daughter of Yishmael?
24. Why does the Torah state that Eisav married the sister of Nevayos?
25. How long did Yaakov learn in the Yeshiva of Ever before going to Lavan's house?

BONUS QUESTION?

“And he called it ‘Shiva.’ Therefore the name of the city is ‘Be’er Sheva’ till this very day. (26:33)” When Yitzchak named his seventh well ‘Shiva,’ the city became known as “Be’er Sheva.” But hadn't Avraham already named that place ‘Beer Sheva’ for a different reason as it says **“Therefore, he called that place Be’er Shava, because they both took an oath there.”** (21:31)?

• S'forno

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“On the face of all his brethren he (Yishmael) fell... And these are the offspring of Yitzchak...” (25:18,19) This hints that when Yishmael will fall in the end of days, then Mashiach Ben David who is an offspring of Yitzchak will flourish.

• Ba'al Haturim

HAFTORAH: MALACHI 1,2

QUIRK OF HISTORY?

When forced to examine the curious history of the Jewish People, historians have always found themselves at a loss, for there is no logical reason why a small tribe from a land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea should have survived and prospered through two thousand years of oppression and assimilation.

No historical theory can explain why the Jewish People have outlived the Persian, the Babylonian, the Greek and the Roman empires. As Mark Twain once wrote *“The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and he is today what he was then... Everyone is mortal in this world, except the Jew... What is the secret of his eternity?”*

The Jewish People can answer this question with the words of this week's Haftorah *“They may build, but I shall tear down... Your eyes shall see and you shall say ‘Hashem is great beyond the boundary of Israel.’”*

However invincible Edom/Rome, and the other spiritual heirs of Eisav may seem, they will not prosper eternally. Eventually Eisav will fall and Yaakov will take his rightful place — *“I loved you, said Hashem... But I hated Eisav and I made his mountains a desolation, and his heritage for the desert serpents.”*

FAVORED-NATION STATUS

“‘I loved you’ said Hashem, and you said, ‘How have you loved us?’ Was not Eisav a brother to Yaakov — the word of Hashem — yet I loved Yaakov. But I hated Eisav and I made his mountains a desolation....” (1:2-4)

When a servant faithfully performs the bidding of his master in every way, humbling himself before his master, one cannot discern the love that the master has for him. After all, why shouldn't he love him — he is the perfect servant.

However, when the servant disobeys the will of his master, and yet the master still loves him, then the master's love for his servant becomes apparent to all.

Thus it is with the Jewish People and Hashem. For even if we are a *“brother to Eisav”* — i.e., our sins are comparable to his — Hashem still shows his love for us and forgives us. He treats us as a master treats a loved but errant servant, forgiving us, even though our behavior would warrant a harsh response if done by someone else.

• Adapted from the Chasam Sofer

WEEKLY DAF

CHULLIN 82 - 88

SELL AND TELL

The Torah prohibits slaughtering an animal and her offspring on the same day. One who purchases an animal for slaughter need not, however, be concerned that perhaps its mother or child was slaughtered that very day. Neither is it incumbent on one who sells an animal for slaughter to inform the next customer that he today sold its mother or child, because he has no reason to assume that the first customer intends to slaughter the animal he bought on the day of purchase.

There are, nevertheless, four days in the year when it is customary for Jews to slaughter animals for meat, and the seller must therefore inform the second customer that there is a strong probability that the mother or child of the animal he purchased is being slaughtered that day by the first customer. These days are: 1) Erev Rosh Hashana; 2) Erev Pesach; 3) Erev Shavuos; and 4) Erev Shmini Atzeres. On these days Jews slaughter animals in order to celebrate the upcoming holiday by eating meat.

Conspicuously missing from the list are two other days preceding holidays — the one before the Seventh of Pesach and the one before the first day of Sukkos.

Why?

The Seventh of Pesach is merely an extension of the Pesach Festival which has already been amply celebrated, while Shmini Atzeres at the end of Sukkos is considered a separate holiday, and is therefore a cause for greater celebration. As regards the first day of Sukkos, Tosefos points out that Jews are so preoccupied with preparing the *sukkos* they are going to inhabit and the *lulav* and *esrog* they are going to shake, that they simply don't have time to slaughter animals on the day before the Festival.

• *Chullin 83a*

DUST AND ASHES

In the merit of Avraham expressing such extreme humility in his statement (*Bereishis* 18:27) that "I am but dust and ashes" his descendants were given the benefit of two *mitzvos* connected with those lowly elements — the ashes of the Red Heifer which restore purity to one who has been spiritually contaminated by contact with the dead, and the dust used in the potion for miraculously proving the innocence of a married woman suspected of infidelity.

As the commentaries point out, this does not mean that if Avraham

had not made that statement there would not have been an opportunity for Jews to restore their purity, or that a man would go on living with a suspected adulteress. Certainly Hashem would have enabled a Jew who had contact with the dead to regain his purity and reenter the *Beis Hamikdash* just as He prescribed purification for other forms of ritual impurity. But the severity of this form of impurity would have required much more elaborate means to achieve the necessary cure. It was Avraham's humility which won for his descendants the opportunity of achieving this cure with something as comparatively simple as ashes.

In regard to the suspected adulteress, had not Avraham made his self-effacing comparison to dust the rule might have been that wherever a strong suspicion of infidelity existed the marriage would be dissolved, as is the rule today when we have no *Beis Hamikdash*. It was as a reward for Avraham comparing himself to dust that his children were given an opportunity during the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* to save the marriage by proving the innocence of the suspected wife through her drinking of a potion containing dust from the Sanctuary floor.

• *Chullin 88b*

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TOMBSTONE, COSTA RICA

Gabriel Dalfin

<dalfin@sol.racsa.co.cr> wrote:

Hi. The custom in my country is that when a person dies, the inscription on the matzeiva (grave stone) is written in Hebrew and Spanish. I've heard that you can only write in Hebrew on a matzeiva. Should we follow the custom of our country, or only write in Hebrew?

Dear Gabriel,

The universal custom of building a *matzeiva* over a grave dates back at least as far as Jacob: "And Jacob erected a monument on her grave; this is Rachel's Tomb, a monument till today." (Genesis 35:20) Another famous *matzeiva* is Absalom's Pillar, which we here in Jerusalem can see from the window of the bus on the way to the Western Wall.

To answer your question, we need to understand some of the reasons for a *matzeiva*:

To show that someone is buried there, so people will avoid passing over the grave and becoming spiritually impure. This was especially important in Temple times, when purity and impurity had many halachic applications in everyday life. Some authorities maintain that for this reason, a *matzeiva* is virtually a Biblical command.

To show respect for the departed, especially a parent. Kabbalistically, it benefits the soul, giving it a place — an address, so to speak.

To glorify the name of the deceased and perpetuate it.

Concerning the lettering, one should use Hebrew only. Hebrew is the Holy Language. It's the language of the Torah and the language with which the world was created.

Since the *matzeiva* shows respect for the soul of the departed, it's proper to use Hebrew, since it has this spiritual component.

In deference to local custom, however, you can write something in Spanish, too. I suggest that the Hebrew inscription be more prominent than the Spanish. If at all possible, use only the Jewish date of death (and birth, if included), and not the secular date.

In any case, the *matzeiva* should not be gaudy or ostentatious. Rather, it should conform to the average *matzeiva* in the community. The Chafetz Chaim writes that rather than buying an elaborate monument, children wishing to perpetuate their parents' names and benefit their souls would do much better donating the extra money to a charity which helps people do *mitzvot* and study Torah.

Sources:

- *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 348:2, 364:1*
- *Rama ad loc. Geshet Hachaim 2:25*
- *Tractate Kiddushin 32a*
- *Iggrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah III:154.3*
- *Kol Bo Aveilut Ahavat Chesed 11:15 - footnote ad loc.*

PICKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF CLARIFICATION

In 'Ask the Rabbi' for Parshat Noach we asked this YIDDLE RIDDLE:

"On Tisha B'Av morning, we sit on the floor as a sign of mourning. However, one person in every synagogue publicly sits down on a chair. Who is this person?"

Our answer: *The person honored with 'hagbah' — lifting the Torah after it is read. This person lifts the Torah from the 'bima' and sits with it in a chair.*

As pointed out by **David Adatto**

<aj563@lafn.org> and others, this is true only in Ashkenazic synagogues. According to the widespread Sefardic custom, nobody sits down with the Torah; rather, the Torah scroll remains on the *bima*.

True Story: A certain person claimed that his father's departed soul returned to this world every Shabbat, and attended synagogue services. Week after week, he would call his father to the Torah, listening attentively to what he claimed was the faint sound of his father's blessing.

When word of this reached the ears of Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, *zatzal*, he smiled and said, "Next week, tell him to give his father *hagbah*."

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Which weekly *Parsha* is never read (*outside of Israel*) on Shabbat afternoon?

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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

- 25:19 - Avraham.
- 25:20 - 37 years old.
- 25:20 - To proclaim her praise, that even though her family was evil she was righteous.
- 25:23 - Shem the son of Noach.
- 25:24 - Rivka gave birth at full term to two children, one righteous and one wicked. Tamar gave birth after seven months to two righteous children.
- 25:26 - That Yaakov would eventually rise to rule over Eisav.
- 25:26 - Hashem.
- 25:27 - Eisav deceived Yitzchak by asking questions that suggested that he was very strict in *mitzvah* observance.
- 25:27 - In the tents of Shem and Ever.
- 25:30 - Avraham died five years prematurely, at 175, so that he should not see his grandson become wicked.
- 25:30 - They are round like a wheel and mourning is like a revolving wheel that eventually touches everyone.
- 25:31 - The right to bring *korbanos* (sacrifices).
- 26:2 - Through the *akeida* he had attained the status of a *korban* and was forbidden to leave *Eretz Canaan*.
- 26:15. They felt that either marauders would attack to capture the wells, or if attacking for other reasons, they would use the wells as a water supply.
- 26:34 - The pig. Just as the pig appears to be kosher but lacks the internal sign, so too Eisav appeared righteous but internally is evil.
- 27:1 - The smoke from the incense offered by Eisav's wives to their idols.
- 27:9 - He offered it as a *Korban Pesach*.
- 27:15 - From Nimrod.
- 27:15 - He suspected that his wives might steal them.
- 27:21 - Yaakov mentioned the name of Hashem too readily.
- 27:27 - The scent of *Gan Eden*.
- 27:40 - When the Jewish People transgress the Torah.
- 28:7 - When he saw that his father despised his current wives, he resolved to take a wife from his father's family.
- 28:9 - To indicate that Yishmael died before the wedding and that it was Nevayos who gave his sister in marriage to Eisav.
- 28:9 - Fourteen years.

BONUS ANSWER!

In the time of Avraham, the place was named only for the oath (*shevuah*) between Avraham and Avimelech. Therefore, it was called *Be'er Shava* (spelled with a *kamatz*). In the time of Yitzchak, the name gained new significance, signifying not only the oath of Avraham, but also Yitzchak's seventh (*shiva*) well. Therefore, its name was changed to *Be'er Sheva* (spelled with a *segol*), signifying both the oath and the number seven.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

25:23 Two Nations
26:1 Yitzchak in Exile
26:5 The Avos and Mitzvah Observance

26:20 The Wells and the Future
27:4 Rivka's Secret
27:33 Why Yitzchak Trembled

SFORNO

25:24 Eisav's Name
25:26 Yaakov's Name
27:1 Yitzchak's Blindness
27:29 Yaakov's Portion

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