

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.  
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך,  
יום השביעי שבת לה'

# SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

PARASHAT TOLDOT

5<sup>TH</sup> KISLEV 5781

20<sup>TH</sup> & 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

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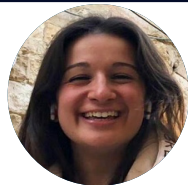
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בס"ד



This week's edition of Shabbat Lashem is dedicated *lilui nishmat HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Arielev, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt'l. May his family be comforted among all the mourners of Zion.*



## TORAH U'MITZVOT B'ARETZ GEMMA DENBY SHEVET TZION

The following Dvar Torah is based on an idea I read in Rabbi Moshe Lichtman's "Eretz Yisrael in the Parasha".

In the beginning of this week's Sedra we read:

וְהַרְבִּיתִי אֶת-יִרְעֵךְ כְּכֹכְבֵי שָׁמַיִם וְנָתַתִּי לְיִרְעֵךְ אֶת-כָּל-הָאֲרָצוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְיִרְעֵךְ כָּל-גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ: עֲקֵב אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמַר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי מִצְוֹתַי הַקּוֹטִי וְתוֹרֹתַי: "And I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and I will give your seed all these lands, and all the nations of the earth will bless themselves by your seed, Because Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My instructions." (Bereishit 26:4-5)

How could it be that Avraham kept G-d's "commandments", "statutes" and "instructions" when the Torah has not even been given yet?! Rashi, quoting Midrash Rabbah explains that Avraham kept the whole Torah before it was given. Chazal go further by saying that all of our forefathers kept the Torah before Matan Torah on Mount Sinai. Somehow, through observing the world around them, with their extraordinary spiritual perception they were able to determine God's will. Or, perhaps they learnt the Torah through Ruach HaKodesh.

Ever since Matan Torah on Mt. Sinai, Bnei Yisrael have been obligated to keep the Mitzvot under all circumstances (apart from when a person's life is in danger). We cannot just decide to ignore the Mitzvot and pretend that they haven't been put in place for us. However, our forefathers did not have an obligation to keep the Torah at this point, they voluntarily chose to. Therefore, if they felt that there was a good enough reason

for them to violate, to not comply with the mitzvot then they would.

The Ramban asks a famous, somewhat daunting question- If the forefathers supposedly observed the Torah even before it was given, how did Ya'akov build an altar and marry two sisters? Ramban also lists various other sins that our forefathers committed before the Torah was given. The Ramban's answer is particularly eye opening and certainly gives some food for thought for those who are content with their Judaism in Chutz l'Aretz as it reveals one of the fundamental differences between Eretz Yisrael and Chutz l'Aretz.

The Ramban explains that our forefathers would only meddle with the mitzvot for positive reasons in Chutz l'Aretz, however in Eretz Yisrael the Torah was kept thoroughly and completely, as if it was an obligation. Why? Because the forefathers knew that Eretz Yisrael was where the mitzvot are meant to be kept, where the mitzvot are truly at home. Ya'akov was married to two sisters in Chutz l'Aretz, G-d didn't want Ya'akov to remain married to two sisters inside Eretz Yisrael and therefore Rachel died shortly after entering the land.

In Vayikra, Ramban elaborates on this theme and says "The main fulfilment of all the mitzvot is for those who dwell in the Land of Hashem". This concept is not just the opinion of the Ramban, it is also mentioned by numerous other sources.

One of the main lessons that we can take away from this week's Parasha is that an individual's Torah and mitzvot observance are undoubtedly on a higher level in Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, a Jew in the Diaspora who is looking to improve their divine service would perhaps consider making Eretz Yisrael, G-d's land their permanent dwelling place.

## GEMMA WAS A MADRICHA ON GIMMEL-ISRAEL MACHANE 5780.

London In: 15:49 Out: 16:59

Manchester In: 15:49 Out: 17:02

Cambridge In: 15:42 Out: 16:56

Oxford In: 15:49 Out: 17:03

Bristol In: 15:56 Out: 17:09

Birmingham In: 15:49 Out: 17:04

Leeds In: 15:42 Out: 16:59

Liverpool In: 15:49 Out: 17:05

Jerusalem In: 16:02 Out: 17:16

# A TASTE FROM THE ARCHIVES: KOL ISHA

RAV ARI FAUST

We hold our forefathers in great regard for their unprecedented righteousness, piety and superior morality. Despite this, we do not regard the Avot and Imahot – patriarchs and matriarchs – as superhuman; like all human beings, they were subject to failure.

There were several morally controversial decisions our forefathers made. These decisions ultimately changed the course of history. First, Adam ate the fruit from the forbidden tree. Next, Avraham banished Hagar and Ishmael from his home. Finally, in our parasha, Ya'acov blatantly lied to his father Yitzchak, and stole the blessing from Esav. In all these cases there was one catalyst to the crime: The influence of women.

In the first instance, Adam was encouraged to eat from the tree by Chava. In the second case, Avraham exiled Hagar and Ishmael at Sarah's command. Finally, Ya'acov performed his treacherous act against his own will, on his mother's order. It seems that Adam should have been justified in pointing an accusing finger at Chava, charging, "it is the woman you gave with me" (Bereishit 3:12). Why are the avot so obedient to their wives command?

In our parasha, why is Ya'acov so compliant in performing this terrible act of duplicity? Why is he so convinced his mother is correct?

Time again, there is a catch-phrase Rivka repeats that may be the key to Ya'acov's trust (27:8, 13): "Hearken to my voice." This phrase is notable, as it is used in the context of one of the earlier aforementioned cases, when Avraham banished Hagar and Ishmael. Avraham is deeply challenged by the notion that he should exile someone from his home: Avraham and Sarah are the epitome of lovingkindness, and their doors are open to anyone and everyone. How could Avraham suddenly shun his own child?! Hashem intervened to convince Avraham to perform the deed (21:12): "... In all that Sarah says to you, hearken to her voice..." This is not to say that Avraham is not to have an opinion, but it is indicative the seriousness and reverence

he must ascribe to Sarah's words. As Rashi comments: "From here we learn the Avraham was secondary to Sarah in prophecy."

Rashi in our case explains in similar vein: Generally, if a parent commands their child to sin, he must (respectfully) refuse. However, when a prophet commands to override a mitzvah as a one-off, it is an obligation to obey. Ya'acov heeded Rivka's words not because she was his mother, but rather because she had received prophecy on the matter. In this case, like Avraham and Sarah, Rivka's degree of prophecy superseded that of Ya'acov.

The lofty intuitive level of our matriarchs' prophecy is a gift given to us in order to guide humanity in making its most crucial decisions.

Thus, Adam is criticized for placing the blame on Chava (Avodah Zarah 5b): Chava was meant to be an ezer – an assistant – to Adam, and he was ungrateful for this.

Adam was meant to cultivate the revelation of G-dliness in the world (to "work" and "safeguard" the garden of Eden). For Chava to be a "helper" to Adam, this means that Chava had an advantage over him in this field. From the onset, woman is created with an upper hand in manifesting G-dliness in the world; she is made with an innate and intuitive capability to achieve this. It is as such that the prophecy of the matriarchs was higher than that of the patriarchs.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (Olat Ra'aya page 71-72), commenting on the woman's morning bracha of "שְׁעֵנִי כְרֵצוֹנִי" – "Blessed be You ... Who has made me as Your desire" – writes that man is by definition incomplete; man seeks to act, evolve, conquer and become. Woman, on the other hand, can declare that she is as G-d wants – perfect, complete.

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**THE LOFTY INTUITIVE LEVEL  
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# THE FUTILITY OF DECEIT

## IZZY PASSE | SHEVET HINEINI



Was Yaakov right to take Esav's blessing in disguise? Was he right to deceive his father and to take his brother's blessing? Was Rivka right in coming up with this plan in the first place? Rabbi Sacks zt'l, in one of his *divrei Torah*, explains that the answers to these questions help us not only to understand

the Parasha, but to understand how we should live our lives in a moral manner.

One way of describing the story is that Rivka was right to propose the idea, and Yaakov was right for carrying it out. We know from the birth of Yaakov and Esav that the two nations "will be separated; one will be stronger than the other and the elder will serve the younger". Rivka knew that in order for this to be true, Yaakov should've been the one to receive the blessing and the continue the covenant of Avraham.

Additionally, this decision would have been obvious when watching Yaakov and Esav in their present and in their past. Not only was Esav a hunter, a violent man, he also seemed to have no interest in his birth-right since he sold it to Yaakov for just a bowl of soup. Therefore, why should something so important, so critical for the continuation of the Jewish People be rested on the shoulders of one who is completely indifferent, when someone entirely suitable for the role is right there next to him? If Yitzchak didn't understand the true nature of his sons, if he was "blind" not only physically but also psychologically, surely deceiving him would be a necessity? Therefore, a conclusion could be made that the story of events was correct, the only way to fully abide to Hashem's wishes.

However, this is not the only way to understand this story. Reading through Parashat Toldot, it can be hard not to feel sympathy towards Esav, who although he was not a learned man, embodied the mitzvah of *Kibbud Av* – loving one's father and was so heartlessly deceived by his own mother and brother.

It can also be seen that perhaps Yaakov was wrong to deceive his father and brother. This is seen through the consequences of these actions in Yaakov's future. Not only was he forced to leave his home for more than twenty years out of fear for his life, he was also deceived by Lavan with the reply to this question "it is not done in our place to place the younger before the elder" – the irony here is staggering. Additionally, Yaakov was also deceived by his children when they brought him Yosef's bloodstained clothes and claimed that he was dead. Yaakov was deprived of his favourite son's company for over twenty years, just like Yitzchak before him.

When asked by Pharaoh how old he was, Yaakov replied, "Few and evil have been the years of my life". Poetic statements such as this in the Torah are rare and it is hard not to read the text as a precise statement of the principle of measure for measure: as you have done to others, so will others do to you.

Another opinion is that Yitzchak fully understood the nature of his two sons. He loved Esav but this did not blind him to the fact that Yaakov would be the one to carry the covenant. Therefore Yitzchak prepared two sets of blessings, one for Esav, the other for Yaakov. He blessed Esav with the gifts he felt he would appreciate: wealth and power: "May G-d give you heaven's dew and earth's richness – an abundance of grain and new wine". "May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you". These are not the covenantal blessings.

**FOR EACH OF US THERE IS A BLESSING AND A PATH THAT IS OURS, THE MORAL COULD NOT BE MORE CLEAR. NEVER SEEK ANOTHER'S BLESSING. BE CONTENT WITH YOUR OWN.**

The blessing given to Yaakov was: "May G-d Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples". "May He give you and your descendants the blessing given to Avraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land G-d gave to Avraham."

This was the blessing Yitzchak had intended for Yaakov all along. There was no need for deceit and disguise.

Yaakov finally understood this and sought to return these blessings to Esav in their meeting after their estrangement. The massive gift of sheep, cattle and other livestock represented "heaven's dew and earth's richness". The fact that Yaakov bowed down seven times to Esav was his way of fulfilling the words, "May the sons of your mother bow down to you". Yaakov gave the blessing back explicitly. He said to Esav: "Please accept the blessing that was brought to you, for G-d has been gracious to me and I have all I need". Therefore, this means that although Yaakov and Rivka's actions had negative consequences, these were forgivable and, in the end, it was forgiven.

This is a good message for life, although it is easy to make decisions without considering the effects on others, it is important that we can ask for forgiveness, understand the situation and move on. That is how life is. We learn by growing. We live life moving forward, but we understand it only looking back. For each of us there is a blessing and a path that is ours, the moral could not be more clear. Never seek another's blessing. Be content with your own.

**IZZY IS A MADRICHAT WOODSIDE PARK  
SIVVA 5781.**

# WHAT'S GOING ON?

- We are excited to bring you exciting virtual activities over Lockdown. Keep an eye out for details on the Bnei Akiva social media pages.

- **Svivot are continuing over lockdown!** Look out for updates and virtual events from your local sviva or **visit [www.bauk.org/svivot](http://www.bauk.org/svivot)**.

- **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Coronavirus has hit Bnei Akiva hard, costing us over £150,000. Over the last six months our Mazkirut and Bogrim have been working tirelessly to put on a range of fantastic programming for our youth, from Machane Aviv in the Spring, to a celebration of Israel like no other on Yom Ha'atzmaut, and now a packed summer of programming for over 400 children. Please support our **Yad Achim Campaign**. Visit **[bauk.org/yad-achim](http://bauk.org/yad-achim)** for more information and to donate.

- Applications are open for **Winter Machane 5781!** Join us from **21st-28th December** and enjoy a fantastic Bnei Akiva experience full of fun, friends and Ruach! **NEW THIS YEAR: Machane Seenai for Year 11!** Sign up today at **[bauk.org/camps](http://bauk.org/camps)** or email **[camps@bauk.org](mailto:camps@bauk.org)** for more information.

- **Winter Machane Tafkidim** have opened! Sign up at **[www.bauk.org/camps](http://www.bauk.org/camps)**.

- **SBM is back!** Look out for updates on social media of the different chaburot being given on a

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- Visit **[bauk.org/feedback](http://bauk.org/feedback)** for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

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## Food for thought:

1. Why could Yitzchak not imagine Esav to be a sinner? (See **Chizkuni 25:22**)

2. Avimelech asked Yitzchak to leave his land due to his superior wealth. What more recent phenomenon did this foreshadow? (See **Haameek Davar 26:16**)

3. Despite the pshat suggesting that Yitzchak trembled with anger after realising he hadn't blessed Esav, how else can his trembling be understood? (See **Rashi 27:33**)

4. We know from the Pesach Seder that Lavan was wicked. Why then does Yitzchak instruct Ya'akov to marry one of Lavan's daughters? (See **Rav Hirsch 28:2**)

## SHABBAT SHALOM!!!

A purple graphic with a jagged, torn-paper edge. The text is white and bold. At the bottom, there is a small logo of a menorah with the Hebrew letters 'ת' and 'ש' on either side, and the words 'בני אכיו' below it.

**Winter  
Machane  
5781**

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A photograph of a group of young people sitting around a table, engaged in conversation. The photo is overlaid with text and graphics.

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**WINTER MACHANE 5781**

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