

Parshat Toldot: Attitude Aversion

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

While Yaakov Avinu was cooking lentil soup for his father, Esau came in famished, demanding food. Yaakov Avinu made a deal with him to sell him the birthright in return for the soup and Esau ate and drank and spurned the birthright. Rashi notes that on this day Esau also transgressed the sins of adultery, murder, denial of God, and denial of resurrection. Why was shaming the birthright seen as the defining factor of Esau's evilness?

At the core of *bizayon* (shaming) is the unwillingness to draw a line between the holy and the profane, explains Rabbi Wachtfogel z"l. All creation is predicated on honor, for God created the world for His glory. While one may choose not to act for fear of acting disrespectfully and engendering consequences, contempt and mockery undermine the very foundation of creation and is an early step in the direction of evil.

The contemptuous person approaches everything with the question of, "What's in it for me now?" Evil people don't consider tomorrow. Rabbi Sternbach notes that Esau actually believed in Hashem, but he never contemplated the future. At the sale, Esau was very happy. Only later, when his father was old and Esau realized he would not benefit from the firstborn's inheritance did he regret his earlier decision.

The Yalkut Lekach Tov notes that red is the

color of passion and physical hunger. Although the food Yaakov Avinu served him at this time was indeed red lentils, this name was also a representation of Esau's character, instant gratification and glitz over substance and the future.

One may ascribe Esau's motivation to a realization of the difficulty in performing the work necessary for the sacrifices, writes Rabbi Ezrachi. Esau felt it was not worth the effort, and in this way, he spurned it. Unfortunately, this too is often a malady of our generation.

We're often unwilling to put in the necessary effort to earn what we believe is important. In contrast, notes Rabbi Wolbez"l, Yaakov Avinu dedicated fourteen years of his life to studying in the *Beit Medrash* of Shem and Ever. If we are to incorporate the beauty and sanctity of *Shabbos*, for example, we must invest in preparing our homes and ourselves to receive and be surrounded by the special energy of the *Sabbath* environment.

How much effort do we put into our spiritual lives so that we can earn a front row seat in *Gan Eden*, closest to Hashem? How many of us are jealous of the gentiles for their easier life? Does your bucket list consist totally of worldly pleasures, or does it include activities that will help you grow spiritually? Do we retain the effects of the *Yom Kippur* service after that final *shofar* blast, or do we go back to our daily routines without a second thought?

The Heorat Derech paints for us a picture

related in the Talmud Yerushalmi. In the future, Esau will be sitting among the righteous in *Gan Eden*, and Hashem will come to drag him out. Esau truly believed himself to be righteous, that he served Hashem out of fear by refusing the birthright. But the *Torah* itself testifies that he made a mockery of service to Hashem. In fact, there were sparks of holiness within Esau, but like a hunter who may have the game in his mouth/*tzayid be'fiv* but doesn't swallow it, Esau never digested the holy sparks that were within him.

Contrast this with Yaakov Avinu who was an *ish tam*/complete, integrated man, whose mouth and heart were merged. The righteous in *Gan Eden* could not recognize the disconnect between heart, mind and action that Esau represented. Only Hashem could discern the difference between Esau's appearance and his true character. Therefore, only Hashem could drag him out of Gan Eden. And therefore also, Esau's righteous mind/head was buried in *Meorat Hamachpelah* while the rest of his body and his heart were not.

If one is really to honor the *Torah*, one must consider it more than just another field of knowledge, writes the Halekach Vehalebuv. He must move it into his heart as well. Otherwise, "...The unfortunate man's wisdom is *bezuyah*/despised, and his words are not heard." (Kohelet 9:16) May Hashem grant us the strength and wisdom to live integrated, whole, spiritually fulfilling lives.

Introduction to Prayer Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The third element of prayer is thankfulness. When there is no gratitude, there is no joy. Hashem created a world for us to be able to experience genuine delight. Some people live their whole life on automatic pilot. They have so much and they don't see it. They doom themselves to a life of unhappiness. Hashem wants us to live lives of joy. What gives us the greatest happiness? Some people might say good relationships. What we like about people are their souls and their souls are an aspect of Hashem. So in truth, what we are spending our whole lives seeking is the joy of interact-

ing with Hashem which we experience through our interaction with people. If you want gratitude to be a real part of your life, then say *Modim* with mindfulness. The greatest gift of all is connection, meaning, and achievement, which have spiritual components and for which we must be grateful.

The structure of prayer often holds people back. Why do we need it? Anything important must have structure. It's how we take the raw material of life and make it work. If you want a relationship with someone you can't make

random sounds at him, you have to talk to him. Every word delineates a feeling. With *tefilah*, there is structure related to time, place, the actual words, and tone of voice.

Communication is about response. When the morning star rises and a new day dawns, we respond by davening *Shachrit*. In the afternoon when most people are at work, it's easy to fall into the trap of secondary causality. My job, house, profession, are my life. But in fact all of these are secondary. You need your mind, heart, and body, to give expression to

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your capacities and we do that by stopping to pray. We must pray in the afternoon, not in spite of things happening, but to express are gratitude for it. When night falls we may be tired and feel uninspired to pray. The *Maariv* prayer declares that Hashem is there even when it's dark and uninspiring.

Avraham became a giver because he became aware of Hashem's giving. When a new day dawned, he asked himself, "Will I say nothing about it?" So he instituted the morning prayers. Yitzchak who understood that night is full of challenges and in order to reveal the light, one must peel away the darkness, instituted *Mincha*. Yaakov, a man of truth and faith, saw the whole picture very vividly and instituted *Maariv*.

The word *Torah* is related to the word *horaah*-instruction. Structure gives us direction to achieve the goal we want. The *Torah* tells us how to put the pieces of reality together. It requires us to offer two prayers a day, which in earlier times was accompanied by

sacrifices. The *kohen* was chosen to represent the Jewish people and offer *korbonot* twice a day. Representatives of the Jewish people prayed as the *kohen* offered the sacrifices. The night prayers were left as an optional because *Maariv* symbolizes faith and ordering faith is tricky.

There are individual, family, ethnic, and Jewish customs. The combination of who you are on the inside and outside, both determined by Hashem, causes you to adapt to the customs of your given community. By and large the *halacha* says, stick with your community and don't mix things up because it was Hashem's determination to put you where you are. There are customs developed by the Jewish nation that works for us as a people. It's the collective communication of the Jewish people, our voice to Hashem. Hashem is not demanding that we have enough faith to pray at night. We're saying we have enough faith, even when its dark, we can do it. *Maariv* is only a custom for men. Women never accepted it as their lives are more multifaceted, although there are women

who do pray.

The area that you pray should be defined and clean. It's highly desirable for men to pray with a quorum in a synagogue with a *sefer Torah*. Women aren't required to do so as their lives are more multidimensional.

Initially there was no structure to prayer. It was just praise, request, and thanks and people said them however they saw fit. Then the Jews were expelled from Israel and exiled to Babylon and came back with the Babylonian mentality. For that reason, prayer changed. We couldn't express ourselves the way people who were only exposed to our own society could. The Men of the Great Assembly wrote the *siddur* to change us and move us away from the self-expression that became the real self in Babylon.

So when you pray from a *siddur* know that it's meant to change you, not just to express yourself.

Muktza: Part 8 Basis Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

For a base not to become a *basis*, the permitted item must be of greater importance than the forbidden item. This is dependent on the owner. If the permitted item is more important to him, the base will not become a *basis*. A needed item on *Shabbat*, even if it's less valuable, is considered more important. For example, if you your primary pair of glasses and \$500 in cash are on the table, the table would not become a *basis* as the glasses are more important to you. If you have no intention of using either item, for example, you have a spare pair of glasses and another *muktza* item on the table, then whatever is more valuable is considered more important.

An item used for a *mitzva* inherently has greater importance than a more expensive item. For example, if you light *Shabbat*

candles on the table and you want to remove the candelabra on *Shabbat* day, putting your diamond ring on the tray before *bein hashemot* (twilight) can prevent it from becoming a *basis* as the ring has greater value. Some *poskim* question this practice but others permit it.

There can be multiple tiers of *basis l'basis*, for example, the candelabra, the candles, and the tray. A base doesn't become a *basis* unless the *muktza* is placed on the main part of the item. For example, if someone places a *muktza* item on the footrest of a shtender it would not make it a *basis*.

If you put money in your shirt pocket before *Shabbat*, can you shake the money out and wear the shirt on *Shabbat*? The Rambam and the Rema indicate that a pocket is not

considered the main part of a shirt. Therefore the pocket would be *muktza* but not the shirt. If the money can be shaken out, one can wear the shirt. Later *poskim* differentiate between a shirt and pants pocket. Pants pockets are like a pouch which is not the main part of the garment and would not make the pants a *basis*. However shirt pockets are designed in a way that the back of the pocket is the shirt itself. Perhaps one can suggest that the shirt is part of the pocket. Therefore some *poskim* rule that the entire shirt would become a *basis*. Today pants and skirts are almost always designed with pockets and not having them makes one sense as if there is something missing in the garment. Therefore Rav Aurebach ruled that perhaps even pants pockets would be considered a *basis*.