

Parshat Toldot: Valuable Venison

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

Parshat Toldot records the event of Yitzchak blessing his sons and his request that Esau bring him delicacies so that his soul would confer blessing on him. The *Torah* relates that Rivka overheard that conversation and instructed Yaakov to bring her two goats to prepare for Yitzchak so that he could receive the blessings.

Why does Yitzchak need to eat to enable him to bless Esau? Further, why did Yitzchak instruct Esau on sharpening his equipment? Finally, how could Rivka's substitution of two kids deceive Yitzchak into believing that this was the food that he wanted?

The Seforno notes that Yaakov wanted Esau to merit receiving the blessing through the performance of a *mitzvah*, specifically, honoring his father through the preparation of this meal. Chayei Moshe comments that the preparation would infuse the food with the flavor and aroma of Gan Eden and would thus lift Yitzchak up spiritually so his blessing would be effective. This was the taste that Yitzchak "loved," and this was the aura through which Yaakov already lived his life in this world. By following his father's instructions, Esau would be meticulously observing *kibud av* for which we are promised long life and life in the next world.

According to Rabbi Schwab, *kibud av* was Esau's only *mitzvah*, and when he entered his father's presence with such a high degree of focus, always changing to his fine clothes even though his father was blind, he brought the taste of Eden into everything he prepared for him. This was the delicious food Yitzchak craved. Rivka understanding this point, wanted to show Yitzchak how easily he had

been deceived. She called to Yaakov demanding that he listen to her voice, that Yaakov honor his mother as Esau honored his father. When Esau returned with the food for his father, Yitzchak trembled greatly, for he realized how easily he was deceived of the bearer's total character, even if the food retained the spirit of sanctity.

Yitzchak wanted the blessings to come from his soul. To enable such a blessing, he wanted the food to come from the field of Har Hamoriah, the nexus of heaven and earth. When Yaakov entered, he achieved that same sense by wearing the special garments of Adam, infused with the aroma of Eden, writes the *Toras Zvi*. Interestingly, the word *ta'am* is also translated as purpose or reason. Yitzchak asked Esau to do this work for the purpose of *kibud Av*. But the lesson here was not just about food. It was about infusing all of our mundane acts with spiritual purpose. Yitzchak Avinu gave Esau such detailed instructions to teach him that even hunting and eating can become sanctified when it becomes part of a *mitzvah* writes Mipi Seforim Vesofrim.

Imrei Tal suggests that Yitzchak *midah* was *gevurah*/inner strength. Therefore, he needed a stimulant to move outward toward the other and offer a blessing. He wanted to get this stimulation from Esau to create a bond between them, adds Rabbi Wolbe. Eating Esau's food would create the initial physical connection that would enable the soul connection through the *tzelem Elohim*, explains Ben Melech. Yitzchak asked to touch the bearer of the meal so that he could deepen that connection. Bekorei Shemo and *Birkat Mordechai* both note the added details in Yitzchak's instructions to Esau were meant to

produce greater effort than just preparing a meal on Esau's part, so that Yitzchak would appreciate each step and be ever more grateful. That full sense of gratitude would engender even greater bonding between their souls and draw down greater blessings.

Yitzchak Avinu hoped that the blessing would be a catalyst for Esau's doing *teshuvah*, suggests Tiv Hatorah. As Rav Hirsch notes, if Esau would realize that his skill and love of hunting could be elevated to a sacred purpose, he could elevate all his actions and do *teshuvah*. Yiram Hayam points out that it was the night of Pesach, the night to free ourselves from our personal enslavements. Yitzchak recognized that Esau had within himself the characteristic of *gevurah*/strength. However, he gave free reign to impetuosity and passion, of moving swiftly to satisfy his desires. Yitzchak hoped that on this night of Pesach, Esau would realize that he could take that swiftness and channel it toward a passion and swiftness for *mitzvah* performance.

In this context, the taste of the goat and the deer were similar spiritually, not physically. The goat represents the Jews ability to break out of their nature and achieve spiritual freedom in Egypt. Likewise, Yitzchak wanted Esau to break out of his impetuous ways, and to channel them to the 'swiftness of the deer.' Yitzchak was alluding to Esau's going out into the field of hard work. Add the prayer to your work, bring Hashem in, and you will be successful.



Traveling the Journey of Life Tehilim 14 Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

In Tehilim, Chapter 15, David Hamelech lists eleven steps to achieve closeness to Hashem and merit the World to Come. The Maharal explains, when we try to stick two surfaces together, it needs to be clean so that there are no obstacles preventing the connection. So too, David Hamelech gives us the don'ts that would prevent us from achieving *deveikut*. This is stage one. It's not the ultimate level, which is why it's described as *ohel* and *l'gur*, it's a temporary situation. The next level are the actions -what we can do in a positive sense to grow our relationship with Hashem. This is described as climbing a mountain.

The Maharal explains the symbolism of numbers. Numbers one through ten are the basis of counting. From there on, it's combinations. The Maharal says number ten is *reshut hatachton*- the domain of the lower, physical world. Eleven symbolizes going beyond the limitations of nature and physical reality. The

spiritual world is endless. We can always get closer to Hashem. Chapter 15 gives us the 11 rungs of the ladder we can climb to reach that goal.

The *Ohel Moed* and *Bet Hamikdash* are stages in achieving closeness to Hashem, but they are temporary. Ultimately the third *Bet Hamikdash* will enable us to achieve the complete goal. The Zohar tells us that the rungs mentioned here correspond to the Ten Commandments. The Ibn Ezra shows how all the *mitzvot* are included in the Ten Commandments. Still the question remains, why were 10 singled out of 613? What does it mean that, "David came and established for us 11 statutes?" The verb used is *v'hemedo*- he made them stand on 11; he made the 613 *mitzvot* lean on the foundation of 11. He told us that if we would do these 11 *mitzvot* they would be gateways that would bring us to the rest of Torah. So too, the Ten Commandments

have the power to open the gates to the 613 *mitzvot*. The Maharal explains that the Ten Commandments create a closeness to Hashem that helps us grow in our relationship. Each of the 11 points David Hamelech mentions in this chapter correspond to one of the Ten Commandments.

R' Yosef ibn Shueta, a 13th century *Torah* sage who lived in Spain, adds a dimension here. The consolation in this chapter is that it's still possible for us to dwell in the spiritual reality of the *Bet Hamikdash*. Even in exile when we don't have the ability to perform all the *mitzvot*, we can still reach perfection by learning and internalizing the essence of the *mitzvot*. We are light years away from the generation that received the *Torah*, but we have before us the same ladder with the identical ten rungs that we can climb. And if we do it with the proper intention and in the right way, we can get there.

Practical Applications of Kotev

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The Gemara in *Gittin* indicates that when it comes to a get one needs bonafide *ketiva*. The Gemara then brings two *Beraisot* that contradict each other. One *Beraisa* indicates that when you do *chakika*, (engrave) a get, it's considered *kotev*. The second *Beraisa* says it's not considered *kotev*. The Gemara resolves the contradiction by telling us that there are two different ways to engrave. When you engrave or etch the letter itself, that's considered *kotev*. However, when you just depress the background so that the letter protrudes forward, that's not considered *kotev* when it comes to a get. Yet when it comes to *Shabbat* it is considered *kotev*.

The Rashba and the Ran offer two different approaches. The Rashba sought to integrate both sugyot. The same definitional parameters exist when it comes to *kotev* in *Gittin* as in *Shabbat*. The Ran says there is a fundamental difference between *Shabbat* and the rest of *Torah*. When it comes to *kol haTorah* you need a formal *ketiva*. If you don't write a letter properly, you just operate on the background, it's not considered *kotev*. However, with *hilchot Shabbat*, if one has intention to create a letter, it doesn't matter how it's created. The focus is on the results not the process.

The Avnei Nezer suggests a possible approach to resolve the contradiction in *Gittin* and *Shabbat* based on the question of whether there is a concept of *toldot* in the rest of *Torah* as we have in *hilchot Shabbat*. This is a disagreement between the Rishonim and Acharonim. The Avnei Nezer suggests that engraving is not an *av melacha* but rather a *toldah*. If you're operating on the letter itself even without ink, that's bonafide writing and considered an *av melacha*. The next level, depressing on the background so that a letter is formed is a *toldah* in regard to *Shabbat*. However, says the Avnei Nezer, when it comes to writing a get, depressing on the background is not considered *kotev* because there's no concept of *toldot* when it comes to the rest of *Torah*.

Is there an *issur* of *kotev* on a *d'royasa* level if one writes in a language other than Hebrew? The Mishna seems to say very clearly that if you write two letters using one's stronger hand (if a righty uses his left hand it would be considered a *shinui* and would be an *issur d'rabanan*), one would be *chayiv kotev d'oraysa*. Rashi clarifies that this refers to any language. This seems to flout a simple reading of the Gemara in *Gittin* that if you buy land in

Suria it's no different than buying land in the suburbs of Yerushalayim. The Gemara points out that this is telling us a *chiddush*; one can draft real estate documents, in this case even on *Shabbat*, if one wants to fulfill the *mitzva* of *Yishuv Eretz Yisrael*. Rava explains, one can ask a gentile to draft the documents although it would normally be an *issur d'rabanan*. However, because of the significance of the *mitzva* of settling the land, *chazal* permitted *amira l'akum* in this case.

How far do we take this? Is the Gemara telling us that for any *mitzva*, *amira l'akum* would be permitted? The *Ohr Zarua* in *Hilchot Shabbat* points to the *Mishna* in *Perek Haboneh* which tells us that if one writes in any language on *Shabbat*, one violates an *issur d'oraysa*. He then quotes the view of Rabbenu Yoel that what qualifies as 'any language' recognized by the *Torah* is *loshon hakodesh* and Greek. Writing in other languages would not be an *issur d'oraysa* but rather an *issur d'rabanan*. Asking a non-Jew to draft a contract to fulfill the *mitzva* of *Yishuv Eretz Yisrael* would be a *shvus d'shvus b'makom mitzva*, a double *d'rabanan*, two steps away from a *din d'oraysa*, which would be permitted according to the *Ohr Zarua*.