The Torah Spring

בס"ד

Volume 41, No. 6
4 Kislev 5787
November 14, 2026

המעין

Toldot תולדות

In this week's *Parashah*, Yitzchak blesses both of his sons. Yaakov is blessed (27:28), "And may *Elokim* give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth, and abundant grain and wine." *Rashi z"l* comments: "May He give you and give you repeatedly." Esav is blessed (27:39), "Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling and of the dew of the heavens from above."

R' Mordechai Ilan *z"l* (1915-1981; *Av Bet Din* / Chief Justice of the Tel Aviv Rabbinical Court) notes a crucial distinction between these two blessings: Yaakov's blessing speaks of a connection with a Giver, while Esav's blessing makes no such mention. Commentaries famously ask why it is considered a curse that the *Nachash* / "snake" that persuaded Chava to eat from the *Etz Ha'da'at* will consume dust all the days of his life (see *Bereishit* 3:14). They answer that because dust, the *Nachash*'s food, is readily available, the *Nachash* has no need for a relationship with *Hashem*, and that is a curse. Yaakov was not only blessed with "dew of the heavens," "fatness of the earth," and "abundant grain and wine," he also was blessed with a relationship with *Hashem*. *Hashem* gives and gives to Yaakov repeatedly, in good times and in not-so-good times. Not so Esav. Esav has the "fatness of the earth" and the "dew of the heavens," but it is constant and dependable; he has no need for a relationship with G-d, and G-d does not want a relationship with him. (*Mikdash Melech*)

Shabbat

"On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised." (*Vayikra* 12:3)

"When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain under its mother for seven days, and from the eighth day on, it is acceptable for an offering to *Hashem*." (*Vayikra* 22:27)

Midrash Rabbah comments: These laws may be understood through a parable about a king who enters a city and declares, "Let no one appear before me unless he has appeared before the queen first." Similarly, says the *Midrash*, *Hashem* declares, "Let no animal be brought as a *Korban* / offering, and let no baby have a *Milah* / circumcision, unless he has first lived through a *Shabbat*." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Avraham Mordechai Alter *shlita* (*Chassidic Mashpia* in Yerushalayim) asks: If the point is to have lived though a *Shabbat*, why is every animal not fit to be brought as a *Korban* on the first Sunday of its life? Likewise, why is every *Milah* not performed on the first Sunday of the boy's life?

He explains: In reality, the newborn must live through an entire cycle of seven days before it is fit to become a *Korban* or he is ready to have a *Milah*, as the case may be. "Seven" is the number of building blocks everything in the world is made of, which is why there were Seven Days of Creation. This is also why the number of days it takes to become purified from certain *Tum'ot* / ritual impurities is seven, and why marriage is celebrated with seven days of *Sheva Berachot*. It is not by chance that the world was created in seven days. Rather, if we were perceptive, we would understand that each day has a unique character, and the things created on each day derive their character from that day. (R' Alter compares this to construction of a building, which involves many materials, each of which has a unique character and serves a specific purpose.) The newborn must experience every day of the week before being ready for the next step.

– Continued in box inside –

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623
Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com
Donate online: https://thetorahspring.org/donate
Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.



Sponsored by
Dr. Irving Katz and family
on the first yahrzeit of wife and mother, Arline Katz
(Chana Sura bat Moshe Aharon a"h)

"The shepherds of Gerar quarreled with Yitzchak's shepherds, saying, 'The water is ours' . . ." (26:20)

R' Yisrael Loonstein *shlita* (Amsterdam, Netherlands) writes: The *Trop*/ cantillation on the word "quarreled" is an "*Azla-Geres*," which, he asserts, always indicates an expression of wonder. Here, the reader wonders: How could the *Plishtim* claim with a straight face that the water in the spring that Yitzchak had uncovered was theirs? More generally, one wonders: Why have gentiles always claimed that Jews took what is theirs?! (*Ta'amei Yisrael*)

"When Esav heard his father's words, he cried out an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and he said to his father, 'Bless me too, my Father!'" (27:34)

R' Eliyahu Capsali *z"l* (1483-1555; Chief Rabbi of Candia, Crete) writes: A child should always try to please his parents so they will love him and will bless him before they pass away, for parents' blessings never go unanswered. We read, for example, that Noach blessed his sons Shem and Yefet (*Bereishit* 9:26-27), and those blessings were fulfilled.

R' Capsali continues: We can also learn the value one should attach to a parent's blessing from Yaakov, who worked very hard, in cooperation with his mother Rivka, to obtain his father's blessings. Even the wicked Esav understood this, and he therefore was distraught when he did not receive a blessing. (*Me'ah She'arim, Sha'ar* 17)

R' Eliezer Papo *z"l* (1785-1827; rabbi of Silistra, Bulgaria) writes: A person should always try to receive blessings from his parents. Even if he does not eat at their table and lives far from them, he should walk to their house every Friday night, *Shabbat* day, and festival (if they live close enough that it is *Halachically* permitted to do so) to kiss their hands and receive their blessings. Aside from the fact that their blessings are likely to be fulfilled, they are worth receiving because they are given whole-heartedly, for parents always love their children. Moreover, seeking a parent's blessing is itself a form of honoring parents, and it will be counted as a *Mitzvah* for the child. Indeed, *Midrash Rabbah* teaches that all of the success that Esav's descendants have had throughout history is a reward for Esav's valuing his father's blessing, as we read in our verse. (*Pele Yo'etz: Berachot*)

– Continued from back page –

Why, then, does the *Midrash* single out living through *Shabbat*? R' Alter explains: Through our time with the *Shabbat* Queen, we gain the *Emunah*/ faith and the spiritual perspective to recognize that the seven days have a "secret." This, in turn, will lead us to search for the meaning of every day, and to give meaning to every day, thereby ensuring that we do not waste any of the "blocks" that we should be using to build ourselves.

(*Divrei Emet-Pri Ha'aretz: Bereishit* p.77)

"*V'rav ya'avod tza'ir*." (25:23)

R' Eliyahu *z"l* (1720-1797; the *Vilna Gaon*) writes: The Hebrew phrase, "*V'rav ya'avod tza'ir*" can be translated, "The elder will serve the younger" or "The elder--the younger will serve him." Both readings are accurate, the *Vilna Gaon* writes. When the younger (Yaakov) is deserving, the elder (Esav) will serve him. But, when Yaakov is not deserving, then he will serve Esav ("The elder--the younger will serve him").

The same type of double meaning is found in the verse (*Mishlei* 15:33), "Fear of *Hashem* is the discipline of wisdom," writes the *Vilna Gaon*. This could be interpreted as supporting our Sages teaching, *"Yir'ah* / fear or awe leads to wisdom," or the Sages' opposite teaching, "Wisdom leads to *Yir'ah*." In fact, both are true, says the *Vilna Gaon*. *Yir'at ha'onesh* / fear of punishment leads to wisdom, and that, in turn, leads to *Yir'at ha'romemut*/ awe of G-d's loftiness.

(*Be'ur Ha'GRA Al Mishlei*)

"The lads grew up and Esav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field, and Yaakov was a wholesome man, dwelling in tents. Yitzchak loved Esav, for game was in his mouth, and Rivka loved Yaakov." (25:27-28)

Yitzchak and Rivka's behavior in our *Parashah*, their relationships with their children, and the absence of any hint that Rivka spoke to her husband about their wayward son raise many questions. R' Tzvi Hersh Mendlowitz *z"l* (Silver Spring, Maryland. and Yerushalayim; he passed away this week) offers the following explanation:

Surely Yitzchak noticed that his two sons, Yaakov and Esav, were different. Nevertheless, as *Rashi z"l* comments on our verses, Esav fooled Yitzchak into believing that he (Esav) was righteous. As a result, Yitzchak thought that Esav and Yaakov could form a so-called "Yissachar-Zevulun partnership," in which one brother (Yaakov) would study Torah and the other brother (Esav) would support him. Surely, a "righteous" man like Esav would want to support his brother's Torah learning!

Rivka, in contrast, having grown up in the home of the deceitful Betuel and Lavan, recognized Esav for what he was. Perhaps, writes R' Mendlowitz, Rivka never told Yitzchak the truth about Esav because she hoped that Yitzchak's outpouring of love for Esav would change him. But, when it came time for Yitzchak to bless one of his children, Rivka had to reveal the truth. And to make her point, Rivka chose to show Yitzchak how easily his children could deceive him. When Yitzchak saw that even Yaakov--the wholesome, innocent son--could fool him, he would surely believe that Esav had been deceiving him!

R' Mendlowitz adds: At the end of the *Parashah*, we read (28:5), "Yitzchak sent away Yaakov and he went toward Paddan-Aram, to Lavan the son of Betuel the Aramean, brother of Rivka, mother of Yaakov and Esav." What does the phrase, "mother of Yaakov and Esav," add? Even when Rivka heard that Esav was planning to kill Yaakov, she did not drive Esav out. Rather, her instinct as a mother was to keep Esav nearby, still hoping that Yitzchak's love would influence him. Instead, she sent Yaakov away for safety. (*Ha'noten Imrei Shefer*)