

Eat From The Fruits

...שכן בארץ... (כ"ו:ב)
...dwell in the land... (26:2)

The Roman emperor Hadrian once set out for a war in a distant land. On his way there, he and his soldiers travelled through *Eretz Yisroel* and came to a small village near Tiberius. There they noticed an old man working in his garden. The man was toiling with his spade, digging holes and planting young fig seedlings.

The emperor stopped to watch him. The man toiled tirelessly, ignoring the beads of sweat that rolled down his face and back. He looked at the working man's hands: how they were worn, full of calluses and yet the old man worked away steadily.

"Grandfather!" the emperor said. "Do you not think that you have toiled enough in your lifetime? Tell me, how old are you?"

The old man straightened up and exclaimed proudly, "I am one hundred years old, thank G-d!"

"One hundred years old and still planting trees?!" the emperor marvelled. "Why do you work so hard? Do you think that you will live to eat the figs from these little seedlings? Surely you will die before then and only others will enjoy the fruits!"

"That does not matter," replied the old man with a content smile. "If it were to be G-d's will that I die, then I will be happy that others enjoy the fruits. My sons and grandsons will benefit, just as I ate from the fruit of the trees which my own father and grandfather planted. That is life."

The emperor and his army continued along their

way and reached the front. The war was a long hard one. Finally, after three years, Hadrian scored a final victory and was able to return home. Again he passed through *Eretz Yisroel* and again he found himself by the orchard near Tiberius. The same old man was in his garden, tending his trees.

However the small seedlings of the three years before were now proud, fruit bearing trees! Large green leaves shed their protection over the juicy green and purple figs.

The old man saw the emperor and his soldiers approaching. He quickly took a basket and filled it with the biggest, juiciest fruit he could pluck. Then he rushed out to the road and up to the emperor, presenting him with the fruits of his labour. "Your majesty," he said, "If you recall, I am the same old man whom you met three years ago on your way to war. I was then planting fig seedlings. Today, you see me here, still alive, able to enjoy the fruits of my efforts. Here, your majesty. Eat and be refreshed."

The emperor was deeply impressed. "I see clearly that your G-d loves you indeed. If He respects you, I will do so too." He turned to his servants and told them to take out the figs and fill up the basket with gold coins.

The servants did as they were bid. In return for his gift of figs, the old man received a basket full of gold!

By Daniel Lefkowitz

(adapted from *Tales Of Tzaddikim*)

You can pick up your copy of the Living Torah in school, online or by email.

Visit hasmonean.co.uk/livingtorah, where you can view all past issues online or sign up for the weekly email.

Email us at:
livingtorah@hasmonean.co.uk

Editorial Team:
Aharon Goldwater
Daniel Lefkowitz
Asher Weisz
Shlomo Katz

Technical Editor: Uriel Goldberg

Contributor: Shimon Levy

Under the direction of: Rabbi D Meyer



No. 296

Toldos 5769 - תולדות תשס"ט

מס' רצ"ו

"It is I, Esav your firstborn..." 'How is it that you were so quick to find my son?' And he said 'Because Hashem your G-d arranged it for me.' And Yitzchok said to Ya'akov, 'Come close, if you please, so I can touch you, my son; are you, indeed my son Esav or not?' (Bereishis 27: 19-21)

In this week's sedrah we find the famous story of Ya'akov deceiving his father Yitzchok in order to receive the blessings. Yitzchok had sent him (he thought it was Esav) on a hunting errand and told him to prepare delicacies for him. When Ya'akov returned earlier than he expected, he asked him how he had managed to complete the task so quickly. Ya'akov replied that Hashem had helped him. Upon hearing this, Yitzchok requested that Ya'akov come close to him so that he could ascertain that it was indeed Esav. Rashi, based on the medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 65:19), explains that Yitzchok became suspicious because he knew that Esav never used the *Shem shomayim* (name of G-d), yet he employed it here!

The Ramban has a strong question on this explanation. It is evident that Yitzchok only became suspicious of Ya'akov after Ya'akov mentioned Hashem's name. It is well known that Yitzchok believed Esav to be a tzaddik but in that case, why was he so surprised that "Esav" mentioned Hashem. It strongly implies that Yitzchok knew Esav was not so great, so why did he love him so much?

The Ramban answers that Yitzchok judged Esav favourably. He knew that Esav spent many hours in the field and was probably very dirty, so out of *Yiroh* – fear, he wouldn't mention Hashem's name because he would often find himself in impure places and would probably lack the appropriate *Kavonoh* when uttering His name. This is quite a logical assumption for Yitzchok to have made as he thought Esav was following in his footsteps. In *Veyeitzei* we are told of

"Pachad Yitzchok" – "the dread of Yitzchok" – Yitzchok also served Hashem out of fear. The Maharal adds that a key sign of a G-d fearing person is that he will not say Hashem's name. Indeed, throughout the whole of Tanach, we do not find the phrase "Yiras Hashem", rather it will say "Yiras Shomayim". This shows that Yiroh does not go together with Hashem's name. Ya'akov on the other hand served Hashem "*Me'Ahavoh*" – from love, and would therefore mention Hashem's name as often as possible, just like we always quote and mention people we love.

The Ramban concludes that the simple explanation is that Yitzchok became suspicious simply due to hearing Ya'akov's voice. Everyone has a different nature of voice so Yitzchok could tell that it was Ya'akov. The Maharal disagrees. He says that if that was true, then Yitzchok would have become wary as soon as Ya'akov said "It is I, Esav your firstborn". Instead, he waited until Ya'akov used Hashem's name. The obvious question arises according to the Maharal; why did he not notice immediately? The Maharal answers that Yitzchok was not concerned that Ya'akov would pretend to be someone else. He states that there is a rule that we do not expect people to imitate others and pretend to be them. Therefore, although from his knowledge of their voices he had a *chazokoh* that it was Ya'akov, he also had a *chazokoh* that a person does not pretend to be someone else, so at that stage, he had no reason to assume that it was not Esav. However, when Ya'akov mentioned Hashem's name, he received a second proof that it was indeed Ya'akov and he now had only one proof against this understanding. Thus, he then asked the mystery person to approach him so that he could find out who he really was.

By Shimon Levy

Times for Shabbos - זמני שבת

In: 3:39

Out: 4:53

Should Reward be a motivation?

ועשה לי מטעמים כאשר אהבתי והביאה לי ואכלה בעבור תברכך נפשי בטרם אסמות (כ"ז:ד')

Make me tasty foods such as I love and bring it to me, that I may eat, and in order that my soul may bless you before I die (27:4)

The Parsha of Yitzchak wishing to bless Esav and Rivka's scheme to have Yaacov blessed instead is rather mystifying. Firstly are we supposed to believe that Yitzchak was fooled so easily by Esav's tricks and that he really preferred him to the pious Yaacov. Secondly when Yitzchak discovered the plot, "He trembled exceedingly" (27:33), which Rashi explains that he saw hell open up beneath him. What could have been so frightening or evil that brought about this reaction of the opening up of hell. Furthermore, why couldn't he have blessed both Yaacov and Esav?

To answer these questions let us assume that Yitzchak was not misled in the slightest by the sly Esav. Yitzchak knew that Yaacov was "A perfect man, duelling in tents" (25:27),

which Rashi explains to mean that he was a scholar in the tents of the spiritual luminaries, Shem and Ever. Yitzchak knew that the promise made to Avraham to build a great nation was going to be fulfilled through Yaacov. However he also knew that Esav had abandoned the teachings of Avraham and was a man of his sword. Yet Yitzchak had hopes that even Esav could be brought back into the fold for after all he was a descendant of Avraham.

Yitzchak knew that there was no use in approaching Esav with spiritual concepts and explaining that he must live a pure and ethical life because it is the right life. This is because Esav was not on the level to appreciate this. However, perhaps Esav might comprehend that good behaviour is rewarded and thereby be motivated to decency.

The concept of doing good for the sake of reward is juvenile. Yitzchak tried this approach as a last

resort. He said, "If you will bring me food, and do the mitzvah of honouring your father, I will give you a valuable blessing. Let this be an example, that whenever you do good deeds, you will gain merits and rewards".

Rivka, on the other hand, had little hope that Esav could be helped and felt that giving him the blessings would be a waste. Therefore she reasoned that the blessings should go to Yaacov. When Yitzchak discovered that it was Yaacov who had come for the blessings, without knowing that his mother had forced him to against his will, he was shattered. How could Yaacov, the only son he truly believed was sincerely devoted to doing the will of Hashem, how could he lower himself to look for rewards and for personal gain! He was so bitterly disillusioned. Who was to establish the great nation that was promised to be derived from Avraham and himself?

Now we can begin to understand Rashi's explanation that hell opened up beneath him when Yitzchak found out that Yaacov had stolen the blessings, If Yitzchak was not the scholar he had thought him to be, he was left with nothing.

This episode teaches us at least two things.

(1) Never lose hope of reclaiming a Jewish soul and it may be necessary to approach each individual according to whatever his capacity may be.

(2) Living correctly is its own reward. Being motivated by external rewards is at best juvenile, something which should repel a mature, thoughtful person.

By Asher Weisz

(Adapted from Rabbi Twerski, 'Living Each Week')

מלאכה of the week

Hotza'ah - Transferring (transporting) from domain to domain (carrying)

Hotza'ah is the general term for the last of the thirty-nine *Avot Melachot of Shabbat*. The Torah prohibits one to transfer (i.e., carry, throw, push, etc.) an object from a "*reshut hayachid*", a private domain, into "*reshut harabim*" - a public domain and vice versa.

In order to transgress the Torah prohibition of *Hotza'ah*, certain conditions must be met. An *Akirah* (initiation of movement) and a *Hanachah* (putting the object to rest) must be performed on the object by the same person. If one person does the *Akirah* (i.e. drags the object) and another does the *Hanachah*, only a Rabbinical prohibition is involved.

the blessings should go to Yaacov. When Yitzchak discovered that it was Yaacov who had come for the blessings, without knowing that his mother had forced him to against his will, he was shattered. How could Yaacov, the only son he truly believed was sincerely devoted to doing the will of Hashem, how could he lower himself to look for rewards and for personal gain! He was

Just Shoot Me Once More!

ויחפרו באר אחרת... (כ"ו:א)

Then they dug another well... (26:21)

We have spent the last three weeks Torah portions discussing Avroham Avinu. We will spend the next two week's portions focussing on Yaakov. However, Yitzchak only gets a small section of this week's Torah reading. Why?

There is an interesting answer that I have heard. It was not Yitzchak's job to do anything new, Yitzchak was a vital link in the chain and his role was to be a complete Jew and to maintain what Avroham had begun.

This can be seen in the short section of this week's portion which speaks of Yitzchak. Yitzchak repeatedly attempts to dig a well and something goes wrong each time. However, instead of giving up or arguing, Yitzchak just finds a new spot and tries again. Here we see Yitzchak's midah of perseverance and continuity.

There is a Breslov story told about a man called Berel who had been working for many years in a far off town. Finally he was able to return home to bring the hard earned money to his family. Unfortunately, on his way home he was held up at gun point by a highwayman. Berel had no choice but to hand over all his belongings. As the highwayman was about to leave, Berel spoke up. "Please, before you go, if I return home with nothing, my family will think I was wasting my time. Do me a favour and shoot a bullet in my hat so that I can prove I was robbed."

Berel removed his hat and with a playful smile the robber shot a hole in the hat. Berel then spoke again, "that could just be a tear, please shoot it again" and again the robber shot. "Wow, good shot how about you try again from a distance" with that Berel stepped back and yet again the robber shot.

This continued for a while, when finally the robber said "Alright, that was fun but I have run out of bullets, so I will be off now."

Berel then reached out, punched the robber right in the face, took back all his belongings and completed his journey home.

This story is a parable to teach us that when being mocked; reacting is not the best response. Keep calm and do not respond to the insults (allow them to "shoot all their bullets"). Eventually they will run out of nasty things to say and you will be able to tell them exactly how you really feel. They will then have no valid response.

We can learn from here that if we take things in our stride, like our forefather Yitzchak and just keep on persevering and strive to be a complete Jew, the troubles of this world will not be able to affect us.

Submitted anonymously

Riddle of the Week

When is a non-*kohen* called first to the Torah in the presence of *Kohanim*?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer to Last Week's Riddle

When mixing two edible items, their status of Kashrus reverses; where one becomes permissible to eat and the other becomes forbidden to eat. What are the items?

Answer: Salt and un-salted meat.

Congratulations to all those who answered correctly!!!

Prizes have been sponsored by various local Jewish shops to be raffled off to those who successfully answer the weekly general knowledge question!!! Everyone is welcome to submit an answer by emailing us at LIVINGTORAH@HASMONEAN.CO.UK