

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
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Toldos





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## Parshas Toldos

## The Right Choice - Olam HaZeh or Olam HaBa

The Torah spells out several differences between Yaakov and Eisav (see 25:27 and Rashi on 25:22, and more), but we can say that a primary difference between Yaakov and Eisav is that Eisav focused on the sensations of the present, while Yaakov looked at the larger picture and chose what is truly good.

Eisav sold his birthright willingly and happily to Yaakov. As it states (25:34), ויבו עשו את הבכורה, “Eisav despised the birthright.” He also said, למה זה לי בכורה, “What do I need it for?”

Later on, he was upset that he sold the *bechorah*. He shouted (27:36), את בכורתי לקח, "He took the birthright away from me!" Didn't Eisav realize when he

sold the birthright that he would regret it one day?

Perhaps he did, but Eisav only thought about the present moment. At that time, he was hungry and tired, and Yaakov was making soup. He didn't need the *bechorah*, so he sold it willingly to Yaakov. Later he suffered the consequences.

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef *zt'l* (*Toldos* 1) says that their names show this fundamental difference between them. עקב from the word עקב, heel, means Yaakov would always think about the heel, the end result of everything he did. Whereas עשו means “to do.” It implies impulsiveness, immediate action without considering the consequences.<sup>1</sup>

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1. On the words (25:22), ותלך לדרוש את ה', Rashi explains that Rivkah wanted to know, ממה יהא בסופה, “What will be her end.” Because this is the focus of tzaddikim. They aren't only interested in the moment, they want to utilize the present for a better future.

One of Yaakov's and Eisav's debates was, who would inherit Olam HaZeh and who would inherit Olam HaBa (see *Rashi* 25:22). They reached an agreement: Yaakov gets Olam HaBa, Eisav gets Olam HaZeh. This decision was based on their world views. Eisav thought about the moment, so Olam HaZeh, the present reality, was more appealing to him. Yaakov chose the infinitely greater Olam HaBa. (We will soon see that Yaakov ended up earning both worlds. But if a choice had to be made, Yaakov would choose Olam HaBa over the mundane Olam HaZeh.)

Whether to focus on the present or to focus on what is truly good for you has many applications. For example,

some people eat whatever tastes good without considering whether it will make them ill in the future. The wise look at the larger picture, and recognize that it isn't worth partaking in some tasty food, a fleeting pleasure, if it will make them ill afterwards.<sup>2</sup> There are many other examples where one should ask himself, "What is the greater good?" This contemplation will help you make the right decision.

The *Chovas HaLevavos* (*Shaar Cheshbon HaNefesh* 3:25) writes, "One should make a *cheshbon hanefesh* and think about how he loves Olam HaZeh very much, and his love for the pleasures of Olam HaZeh are greater than his love for Olam HaBa. He should try to uproot the love

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2. Eisav said, הלעיטני נא מן האדום האדום הזה, "Pour this red, red thing into my mouth." He didn't take a moment to ask whether this food is animal feed or people's food, or whether it's healthy or not. He saw food and he wanted it. He is called Edom because this episode demonstrates his impulsive behavior. He saw something red, and without knowing what it is, requested that it be poured down his throat.

for this world from his heart, and to fill his heart instead with love for Olam HaBa. He accomplishes this by thinking about the end result of both worlds... A wise man said: 'Just as fire and water can't be together in the same vessel, similarly, the heart of the believer can't love Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa simultaneously. They also compared Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa to two *tzaros* (someone who has two wives). When he wants one, the other one becomes angry.'

A wealthy man wanted to build a luxury home on a frozen river.

On a map, he showed the mayor the part of the river he wants to buy for his luxury home. The mayor said, "Your plan is ridiculous. Soon it will be summer and your house will sink." But the wealthy person insisted he wanted to build a luxury home over there, and he was

willing to pay top dollar, so the mayor obliged.

The next step was to hire workers. They were shocked when they were brought to the construction site. How could they build a home on ice that will soon thaw? "He doesn't seem insane. Why does he want to do something so foolish?" They explained to him the futility of his plans, but he insisted that they should follow his orders, and they shouldn't offer him unsolicited advice. The workers obliged. After all, they were getting paid for the job.

People from neighboring cities came to the riverside to watch the bizarre scene. Who ever heard of building luxury home on a frozen river?

By the end February the house was finished. It was indeed luxurious. The four-story dream home was equipped with an elevator, carpeted floors, modern furniture, large

windows, good lighting, and it was properly heated, too.

A large crowd stood on the riverside with cameras as this wealthy person with his family moved into their new home on the ice. A representative of Guinness Book of World Records came too, because nothing like this ever happened before. The family skated over the river, and entered their new home. The crowd clapped and cheered.

The rich man loved his new home. It had an unusual view, and it granted him plenty of privacy. He laughed at all the people who mocked him. Who had a beautiful home like him?

But then spring came around, and the ice started melting. The house began to sink. Within three weeks, there was nothing left of the house.

Are we any different than this foolish man? He wasted a lot of money and effort to build something that won't last. Do we also spend our lives trying

to build a name for ourselves in this world, which won't last eternally? One day everything will disappear. Isn't it wiser to invest in matters that will last forever?

Let us follow in Yaakov Avinu's ways and always keep the future in mind. With that focus, we will invest and earn  
Olam HaBa.

**Klal Yisrael Earn Olam  
HaZeh Too**

When the Jewish nation uses this world to attain Olam HaBa, they can earn this world too. Thus, the Jewish nation can earn both worlds.

The Kedushas Levi (*Vayishlach*) teaches, "The Baal HaTurim states that Yaakov took the next world and Eisav took this world. Although there are wealthy Yidden [who seem to have received Olam HaZeh], they are full of distress and agony. [So despite their wealth, they didn't actually receive Olam HaZeh.] But there are exceptions. They are wealthy

Yidden who use their wealth to serve Hashem. They can enjoy their wealth, because Yaakov took the Olam HaZeh that's related to Olam HaBa..."

The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* described what the division of the worlds between Yaakov and Eisav probably looked like:

One Shabbos, Eisav came into Yaakov's tent and saw Yaakov seated at the table with his students, enjoying a five-course meal of fish, meat, wine and other good foods. Eisav shouted, "We have an agreement! Olam HaZeh is mine! You don't have a right to all of this!"

Yaakov explained to him that Shabbos is *מעין עולם הבא*, one 60th of Olam HaBa, and therefore he has a right to it.

On Sunday, Eisav returned to Yaakov's tent and found Yaakov and his students enjoying a hearty meal once again. "What happened today?"

Is it Shabbos again?"

"Today is *rosh chodesh* when

everyone receives a *רוח יהירה*, an additional spirit from Olam HaBa. So it's also like Olam HaBa..."

Thursday Eisav returned a third time to Yaakov's tent, and he sees Yaakov and his students eating a wonderful meal. "What's today? "

"Today we are celebrating a *siyum* for *masechta Bava Kama*. If you want, join us tomorrow. We're beginning Bava Metzia. When we finish it there will be another *siyum*."

The next morning, Eisav came to Yaakov's tent and tried to learn Bava Metzia with them. They were discussing *שנים אורחין* *בטלית*, and he quickly understood what he would have to put up with in the *beis medresh*, so he ran away.

Eisav ran to his uncle Yishmael and asked, "What should I do with my brother, Yaakov? We made a deal that I get Olam HaZeh and he gets Olam HaBa, but I see that he's taking both worlds! Why does he get both worlds while I only get one?"

Yishmael replied, "Tell Yaakov that because you know you won't be getting Olam HaBa this causes you to lose enjoyment in Olam HaZeh. You can't enjoy this world, knowing you will soon lack Olam HaBa. So ultimately, you aren't getting this world, either."

Eisav told that to Yaakov, and Yaakov replied, "Don't worry about it. After you die, you will get Olam HaBa too."

Eisav was very happy with this answer. He can enjoy Olam HaZeh and earn Olam HaBa too.

When Eisav died, the *malachim* wanted to bring him to Gehinom. "No! No! No! I made a deal with Yaakov, and I get Olam HaBa too."

The *malachim* told him, "He told you that so you could enjoy Olam HaZeh. Now that you've fully enjoyed Olam HaZeh, you received your portion. You don't have a right to Olam HaBa," and they took him to Gehinom.

### The Best Olam HaZeh

Eisav received Olam HaZeh, but that really isn't much at all. As it states in *Pirkei Avos* (4), "One moment of pleasure in Olam HaBa is better than the entire Olam HaZeh."

Even in Olam HaZeh, Yaakov has a much better portion. As it states (ibid.) "*Teshuvah* and good deeds in this world are better than the entire Olam HaBa..." Eisav may have wealth, pleasures, honor, but that doesn't compare to a moment of Torah and *teshuvah* that the children of Yaakov enjoy in Olam HaZeh.

As the Or HaChaim (*Devarim* 26:8) writes, "The true good is Torah. If people tasted the sweetness and the goodness of Torah, they would be crazy over it, and they would be passionately running after it. A house filled with gold and silver will be like nothing to them, because the Torah has in it all the goodness of the world."

Those who enjoy studying Torah (and those who enjoy tefillah and mitzvos) are the people who have the most beautiful and enjoyable world. No other lifestyle compares to it. Fortunate are those who have it, and may our portion be with them.

A wealthy businessman told me that he is jealous when he sees *kollel yungerleit* learning Torah and enjoying its holy words. He would give anything to change places with them.

He told me, “As a *bachur*, I wasn’t learning well. The *mashgiach* of my yeshiva told me, ‘How can you have a good life in this world without Torah? If you want a good life, study Torah.’ I couldn’t understand what he was telling me, and I laughed at him in my heart. My father is wealthy, and I was going to enter his business. It seemed to me that I would have Olam HaZeh. But now, twenty years

later, I know the *mashgiach* was correct. Even in this world, life is so much better when there is Torah...”

A renowned *rosh yeshiva* was once speaking with the wealthy supporters of his yeshiva about the great *zechus* they have to support Torah. The *rosh yeshiva* told them, “In Gan Eden, you will receive an equal reward together with the scholars of the yeshiva. There won’t be any difference between you...”

He told them the Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 25:2) which states, “In Gan Eden, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will place the canopies (צל והופה) of *baalei tzedakah* next to the canopies of Torah scholars,” which means the reward will be the same.

One of the wealthy *baalebatim* spoke up (with a mixture of humor and chutzpah): “Why doesn’t the *rosh yeshiva* do business like

us? You will earn wealth, have Olam HaZeh, and you will have Olam HaBa, too, because you will support Torah scholars. You'll get the best of both worlds."

The *rosh yeshiva* replied, "I don't retract my words. It's true; if I do business and support Torah, I will earn the same Olam HaBa as the scholars. But then I wouldn't have Olam HaZeh! The best Olam HaZeh is to be immersed in Torah study!"

So, although Eisav took Olam HaZeh, he didn't realize that when Yaakov chose Olam HaBa, he gets a better Olam HaZeh too.

Another reason Yaakov's Olam HaZeh is better than Eisav's is because Yaakov has *emunah*, and with *emunah* life is always good.

It states (at the beginning of the *parashah*), אברהם הוליד את יצחק. Reb Aharon Yosef Luria

*zt'l* (*Avodas Pnim*) says these words can mean "Emunah gives birth to joy" (because Avraham represents *emunah*, and יצחק means happiness). Those who have *emunah* are happy because they know everything is for the good, and they trust that Hashem will bring them their salvations.

Those who don't have *emunah* don't know how to comfort themselves when they are going through hard times.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* teaches:

"When one lives without problems, he will be disgusted with his life. A true story that happened in our times demonstrates this: Someone committed suicide. On his farewell note he explained that he has wealth and all the pleasures of the world and this made him disgusted with his life, so he committed suicide.

"Hashem created the world in a way that there are always

problems. Sometimes people earn money and sometimes they lose money; they have ups and downs; they buy, they sell; they have good days and bad days; people are restless; always tired; they work hard. These matters give people *chiyus*, life, vigor."

Yitzchak blessed Eisav, על חרבך, תחיה, "You will live by the sword." The Chasam Sofer explains that חרבך, sword, represents the hardships of life. "The *pasuk* is saying that Eisav's life will always be filled with struggles — and that will give him life. Otherwise, he would live in the fat land of Italy (see *Rashi*, 27:39), and be disgusted with his life, like a fattened cow being brought to the slaughter. Therefore, he was blessed על חרבך, תחיה, with your struggles, תחיה, you will live.

"But this is all solely for the nations of the world. The Jewish nation receives their *chiyus* from toiling in Hashem's service. As it states,

כי הוא חייך, 'Torah is your life.' And it states, ובחרת בחיים, 'Choose life.' Therefore, Yaakov was blessed, ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם והשיג לכם דיש את בציר... וחרב לא תעבור בארצכם. This means the Jewish nation will have wealth and success, and the sword — which represents the struggles and hardships of this world — won't pass through his land. They don't need those struggles and hardships because they get their *chiyus* from *avodas Hashem*. Only Eisav needs the troubles of life. But the Jewish nation gets their *chiyus* from Torah and from serving Hashem."

In conclusion, Eisav needs suffering so his life will feel fulfilled and purposeful, but the Jewish nation feel fulfilled with Torah and mitzvos. Therefore, they can be exempted from the suffering of this world.

So, we see that even in Olam HaZeh, Yaakov received a better portion. How fortunate is our lot!

## B'ezras Hashem - Hashem's Name Always on our Lips

Yaakov Avinu pretended he was Eisav to receive the *brachos*, but even then, he spoke like a tzaddik. Yitzchak asked him how he brought the meat so quickly, and Yaakov replied, (27:20), **כִּי הִקְרָה ה' אֵלַיךְ**, לפני, "Hashem your G-d prepared it for me."

Rashi writes, "Yitzchak thought, 'It isn't Eisav's way to say Hashem's name, and this person is saying that Hashem prepared it for him!'"

Yitzchak asked, **הֲאִתָּה זֶה בְּנִי עִשָׂו**, **אִם לֹא**, "Are you my son Eisav, or aren't you?"

And Yitzchak said, **הַקּוֹל קוֹל**, **יַעֲקֹב וְהַיָּדִים יְדֵי עִשָׂו**, "He speaks like Yaakov but his hands feel like Eisav's."

Before coming to Yitzchak, Yaakov expressed his fear that Yitzchak might recognize that he was Yaakov. He told his mother (27:12), **אֲוִי יִמְשְׁנֵי אָבִי**, **וְהִיִּיתִי בְעֵינָיו כַּמִּתְעַתֵּעַ וְהִבֵּאתִי עָלַי קִלְלָה**, **וְלֹא בְרַכָּה**, "Perhaps my father will touch me, recognize the

charade, and curse me instead of blessing me." So why did he say Hashem's name?

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* answers, Yaakov thought: "I'm willing to dress up in Eisav's clothing, and I'm willing to take up other precautions, but I refuse to abstain from saying Hashem's name! I might not receive the *brachos* and I'm at risk of being cursed, but I won't bring myself into a situation where I withhold from saying Hashem's name."

Hashem's name should always be on our lips. As the Shlah (*Behalascha, Derech Chaim*) teaches: We should say **אִם יִרְצֶה ה'** "if Hashem wills it" when we are planning to do something, and we should say **בְּעֻזַּת ה'** "With Hashem's help," when we succeeded, because "in this manner, Hashem's name will always be on your lips."

It states (*Bamidbar* 23:21), **לֹא הֵבִיט אֹן בְּעַקֵּב**, Hashem doesn't

look at the sins of the Jewish nation, because ה' אלקינו עמו, Hashem's name is always on their lips.

It is also common sense that we should repeatedly be saying Hashem's name, asking for His help, and praising Him for our successes, because it is true that we can't do anything without Hashem's help.

The Chofetz Chaim ז"ל once said goodbye to his community, because he was leaving for Eretz Yisrael. He spoke about this one Shabbos in his *drashos*. After he finished, one of the listeners came over to him and said, "Why didn't you say *im yirtzeh Hashem*?" Indeed, it was an oversight; the Chofetz Chaim forgot to say it. That week, the Chofetz Chaim's *rebbetzin* took ill, and he couldn't travel to Eretz Yisrael.

The Chida tells the following story (from *sefer Eliyahu HaNavi*):

There was once a wealthy person who owned many fields and needed to buy oxen to plow the fields. He placed some money into his money belt and set off to the marketplace to buy the oxen. On the way he met Eliyahu Hanavi ז"ל.

Eliyahu asked him, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to buy oxen."

"Say you are going to buy oxen אִם יִרְצֶה ה', 'if Hashem wills it.'"

"Why should I say that? I have money in my belt. If I didn't have money, I would say *im yirtzeh Hashem*. But I have money, and I'm going to the marketplace, so I'll certainly buy oxen..." He refused to say *im yirtzeh Hashem*.

He lost his money belt before he reached the marketplace.

He returned home, got some more money, and set off to the marketplace. Once again, he met up with Eliyahu HaNavi. Eliyahu HaNavi said, "Say that you are buying oxen *im*

*yirtzeh Hashem*," but the man wouldn't say it. He lost his money again.

After this happened a few times, he realized that Eliyahu HaNavi is correct; one can't do anything without Hashem's help. Even when one has

money in his pocket, he needs Hashem's help to buy things.

He made a *kabalah* to say, "*im yirtzeh Hashem*," and this time, he succeeded to buy oxen. Then, Eliyahu HaNavi gave him back all the money pouches he lost.<sup>3</sup>

### Boundaries – the effect of the outside world

Yaakov was a *ישב אהלים*, sat in tents, while Eisav was an *איש שדה*, an outdoorsman (25:27). The difference between a tent and the outdoors is that the outdoors doesn't have any walls and boundaries. The Yeitav Lev said that this describes the

difference between Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov makes walls and boundaries for himself to keep himself inside the realm of holiness, while Eisav lives without any boundaries or limits. Everything is permitted to him.

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3. The Yismach Moshe *zt'l* once went through a very difficult financial situation. He thought to himself, "If I would have ten thousand coins, I would invest them with a businessman, he would do business with the money and give me the profits. I would be able to study Torah without worries. But now I don't even have that amount to invest..." As he was thinking these thoughts, he fell asleep on the Gemara that was opened before him.

In his dream, he saw the Arizal who told him, "*Yungerman*, if you have ten thousand coins to invest, you won't need Hashem to help you?"

The Arizal was telling him that in all situations one has to come on to Hashem. One should never think, "If I have money, I can manage on my own," because in all situations one's success is only *im yirtzeh Hashem*, if Hashem grants him success.

(The Yeitav Leiv said this in his *hesped* for the Maharam Shik *zt'l*, saying that the Maharam Shik followed in Yaakov's footsteps, and didn't breach any boundaries of tradition.)

The *roshei teivos* of ישראל is: יש  
שישים רבוא אותיות לתורה, “There are 600,000 letters in the Torah.” Each member of בני ישראל is represented by one letter of the Torah. The halachah is that the letters of a *sefer Torah* must be surrounded with white parchment (מוקף גויל). This white boundary around each letter hints to the boundaries, borders, and precautions the Jewish nation accept on themselves, so they will remain within the realm of *kedushah*, without falling out, *chalilah*.

Yaakov Avinu said (27:19) אנכי עשו בכורך, “I am Eisav your firstborn.” The commentaries ask: How could Yaakov – the pillar of truth – say this lie?

Some explain that Yaakov was wearing Eisav's clothing at the time, and the clothes one wears has an effect on who he is. As he wore Eisav's clothing, he was (in a way) Eisav, and therefore it wasn't a lie.

A similar lesson is said about the time Amalek attacked the Jewish nation in the desert. Rashi (*Bamidbar* 21:1) writes, "Amalek changed their language to speak Canaanite, so the Yidden would pray to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that He give the Canaanites into their hands, and they weren't Canaanites. Bnei Yisrael noticed that they were dressed like Amalek and their speech was like Canaan. So they said: We will pray ambiguously 'Hashem give this nation into our hands'" whichever nation it was.

The commentaries ask, why didn't Amalek also wear Canaanite clothing, to convince the Jewish nation

that they were Canaanites? The answer is, if they dress like Canaan and speak like Canaan, they become Canaan. When the Jewish nation would pray to win the war against the Canaanites, their tefillah would be effective, because for all purposes, if they dress

and speak like Canaan, they became Canaan.

We repeat this to remind us that the clothing one wears has an effect on who he is. Thus, when Yaakov was wearing Eisav's clothing and he said he was Eisav, it wasn't a lie.

### *Teshuvah*

Reb Yechezkel of Kozhmir *zt'l* (in *Divrei Yisrael*) explains that Rivkah thought she was carrying only one child, and this child wanted to go at times to the beis medresh and at times to *avodah zarah*. (As there is a saying: "Sometimes a malach and sometimes a galach, priest.") She asked, *מה תהא בסופה*, what will the end be? Because when one is wavering back in forth between *kedushah* and *tumah*, the main thing is that the end should be good. As people say, "If the end is good, everything is good."

It states (25:17), *ואלה שני חיי ישמעאל*, "These are the years of the life of Yishmael." Similar words are written about Sarah, *שני חיי שרה*, and Rashi writes *כולן שוין לטובה*, that all her years were good. How can we say about Yishmael that his entire life was good when we know that he had many sinful years? The Baalei HaTosfos answer that Yishmael did *teshuvah* towards the end of his life. *Teshuvah* turns sins into mitzvos. Thus, it could be said about Yishmael that his entire life was good.

### **Avodas Hashem – The struggle with the Yetzer HaRa**

The Yismach Moshe writes, "I heard the following in a dream:

"Yaakov was purely good. This is seen by the fact that whenever Rivkah passed a

beis medresh, Yaakov wanted to leave the womb to go there. Eisav was totally bad. Therefore, when Rivkah passed a house of avodah zarah, Eisav tried to leave the womb to go there. If so, how did they have free will? [By their make up, they seemed compelled to act either in a righteous or the opposite manner.] The answer is, they were together in their mother's womb... Eisav with his negative tendencies influenced Yaakov, and Yaakov goodness influenced Eisav. Therefore, they had free will. I heard this in a dream...

"Hashem made it this way for an important reason. It is essential that the foundation of the Jewish nation be totally pure. But then there won't be free will, which is also not good. Therefore, Eisav was born with him..."

Yaakov was born holding on

to Eisav's heel. This formation reflected the influence the brothers had on each other in the womb. Hashem chose the name יעקב, which means heel (see *Rashi* 25:26). Yaakov wasn't named for his perfection and holiness, rather for the struggles he would have, because the struggles and the battle against the *yetzer hara* is the entire purpose.

Eisav doesn't want to battle with the *yetzer hara*. Therefore, the translation of his name, עש, is "fully made" (see *Rashi* 25:25). He was called so, because Eisav wants to live like he is perfect, and he doesn't have to work hard to battle with the *yetzer hara* or to fix his *middos*.<sup>4</sup>

The Baal HaTurim (25:25) says that עשו is *gematriya* שלום. Perhaps it's because he wanted

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4. Eisav was lazy. He said הלעיטני נא, "Pour the soup into my mouth." He didn't want to use a spoon, or to pour the soup into his mouth by himself. He wanted Yaakov to do it for him. That's how lazy he was.

peace for himself. He didn't want to exert any effort at all against the *yetzer hara*.

Yaakov, in contrast, wanted to toil in *avodas Hashem*. As it states (32:29), *כי שרית עם אלקים*, “Yaakov fought wars against the *malach* – the *yetzer hara*...and succeeded.”

A sign of Yaakov Avinu's desire for toil is that he wanted to leave his mother's womb when she passed the *beis medresh* of Shem and Ever. One may ask: He was learning Torah in his mother's womb with a *malach*. Why did he want to leave? The answer is, in the womb it was Torah without toil, and he desired toil with Torah.

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l* said that we don't stand up for a pregnant woman although the child in her womb knows the entire Torah. This is because that is Torah without toil. And the primary praise is Torah attained through toil.

The *parashah* begins, *אלה*

*יצחק*, and Rashi writes, *יעקב ועשו האמורים בפרשה*. Rebbe Hershel of Ziditchov *zt'l* explains, *יעקב ועשו* represents the *yetzer tov* and the *yetzer hara*. This battle brings joy and purpose to life. Therefore, it states *אלה תולדות יצחק*, what brings joy? *יעקב ועשו האמורים בפרשה*, the *yetzer tov*'s fight with the *yetzer hara*.

It is possible that Eisav didn't want to toil in *avodas Hashem*, because he was relying on his very special *yichus* (for he was Yitzchak's son and a grandson of Avraham, etc.). Therefore, he thought he was perfect, and he doesn't have to work on himself.

It states (26:18), *וישב יצחק ויחפר את בארות המים אשר חפרו בימי אברהם אביו ויסתמום פלישתים*, “Yitzchak...dug up the water wells, which were dug in Avraham's time and the Pelishtim closed them.”

The Sfas Emes (תרל"ו) explains:

“Chazal say that there are only three *avos*: Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. The question is, let Avraham alone be the father of the nation, since he was the first one. [And if we count more, why do we stop by Yaakov?] The answer is, each tzaddik is supported by the merits of his ancestors. But each of the three *avos* was a tzaddik in his own right. As it states (*Vayikra* 26:42), וזכרתי את בריתי וזכרתי את בריתי יעקוב ואף את בריתי יצחק ואף את בריתי אברהם ‘I will remember my covenant with Yaakov, and also my covenant with Yitzchak, and also my covenant with Avraham’ and the Midrash explains, כל אחד כדאי לעצמו, ‘Each one is worthy in his own right.’ [Each one became a tzaddik on their own, without needing to come onto the righteousness of their forefathers.] Therefore, the *pasuk* says here, וישב יצחק ויהפר את בארות המים אשר חפרו בימי אברהם פלישתים, this means that all the בארות, lights of holiness (אורות) that his father,

Avraham, perceived, were closed up and concealed, and Yitzchak had to dig them anew. He had to choose a path for himself... If Avraham’s path wasn’t concealed, Yitzchok wouldn’t seek a new path. But now that it was concealed... Yitzchak had to find a new path. He chose the path of fear of Hashem and גבורה [while his father’s path was to love Hashem and *chesed*]...”

Yaakov too, didn’t want to rely on his *yichus*. He served Hashem with all his might as though he was the first one in the lineage.

One of the descriptions of Yaakov and Eisav is, כשזה קם זה נופל, “When one gets up the other falls” (see *Rashi* 25:23). Reb Mordechai Chaim of Slonim זt’l said that these words hint to a person’s battle against the *yetzer hara*. If he will strengthen himself against the *yetzer hara*, the *yetzer hara* will fall. So it is never too late to begin. Even if the

*yetzer hara* succeeded to control you for many years, you can begin now. Pick yourself up, fight the *yetzer hara*, and the *yetzer hara* will be defeated.

### One needs to be optimistic

To win the battle against the *yetzer hara*, one needs optimism. If he thinks he will fail, that will be the outcome.

Therefore, it is recommended that one should forget about the many failures he had in the past and to focus on the present, and. Forge ahead, battle the *yetzer hara* with energy and optimism, and you will win.

This is hinted at in *Shemonah Esrei*: **הסר ממנו יגון ואנחה**, “Remove from us agony and distress...” The *roshei teivos* spell **היום**, “today.” If you will focus on today, and ignore the **יגון ואנחה**, disappointments of the past, you will succeed.

Eisav says (25:32), **הנני הולך למות**, “I am going to die...” This is Eisav’s negative attitude towards life. He feels like a failure, certain he will fail. In contrast, the Jewish nation says, **שבועה יפול צדיק וקם**, even if he falls seven times, he will pick himself up again, with joy and enthusiasm, and try again.<sup>5</sup>

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5. The Rebbe of Ruzhin *zt'l* once saw someone studying Torah with all his strength until he fell asleep on the *sefer*. Soon he woke up and he told himself, “Life is short. I’ll die soon. I have to make use of my time...” and he began learning again. Then he fell asleep again. Once again he rebuked himself that he would soon die, so he better learn Torah. This happened a few times that night. The Ruzhiner told him, “Don’t say you are going to die soon, because that is how Eisav talks: **הנה אנכי הולך למות**. Rather, say, ‘I’m alive, and this is called living?! I should put in more effort, more strength in Torah study...’”

The Kotzker *zt'l* said, “I have the ability to be **מחיה מתים**, to bring life to the dead. But I prefer to be **מחיה חיים** to blow a spirit of renewal into people, so those who are alive should improve their ways, with renewed energy.

The Gemara (*Eirachin* 24.) says, אין להקדש אלא מקומו ושעתו and the Chofetz Chaim zt'l explains, "Holiness is at this place and at this time." Don't say, "If I were in a different place, I would be more successful," and don't say, "The time isn't right for Hashem's service." You should know that this time and this place is the most ideal for your success in Hashem's service.

The Ritva (end of *Pesachim*, *Hagadah shel Pesach* ד"ה ואתן (ליצחק) explains that when people see people who are better than they are, they blame it on their life, which may have not been as rosy as other's. They say, "It's true, others learn better than I do, daven better than I do, have more *yiras shamayim* than me, but they were probably born with a better mazal than me, or they were brought up in a better place than me, or they had better parents,. I can't compare myself to them." To prove this claim is

a farce, Hashem made Yaakov and Eisav have the same parents, the same mazal, and come to this world in the same place, yet one became Yaakov Avinu and the other Eisav HaRasha. So, we know that it isn't the place, time, or parents, rather one's choices, and one's *avodah*.

### Starting Over with Renewed Vigor

Hashem wants us to start over and improve our ways.

Everyone has their routine: their daily schedule, the extent of *kavanah* they have in their *tefillos*, the amount they learn each day, etc. Hashem desires that each individual should say, "I will begin again, and start all over. I will renew the way I daven and learn, etc."

Eisav, the *yetzer hara*, doesn't like when we renew ourselves. This is hinted in the words (25:34), ויבו עשו את הבכורה, "Eisav despised the first-born" (because when one starts over, it is considered as though he was just born).

What should a person do if he tried to become better, but then returned to his old ways?

He should try again.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* (*Al HaTorah*) writes that we can learn that attitude from Yitzchak Avinu. The Chofetz Chaim writes, “The wells of water that Yitzchak dug teach us that a person should never stop an endeavor he began. Despair and failure shouldn’t stop him. If Yitzchak dug a well and he didn’t find water, he dug another well. And if people fought over the well and claimed it was theirs, he dug another well. Yitzchak continued digging until he finally found a well, they didn’t argue over, and he called it Rechovos. We should do the same regarding all our endeavors – spiritual or material, business, or learning Torah. If a person is studying Torah and is unsuccessful, he shouldn’t stop studying Torah, because in the end he will succeed. Even if he failed to

understand at first, eventually he will understand well.” Similarly, if we failed to make the spiritual changes we hoped for, we should pick ourselves up and start again, until we succeed.

### Opposition and Challenges

According to the simple reading of the *Chumash*, Rivkah didn’t know, at first, that she was carrying twins. She wanted to know why whenever she passed a beis medresh the child that was in her wanted to come out, and when she passed a house of *avodah zarah* the child also wanted to come out. Shem told her that she has two children in her womb. They would be rivals, and competing nationalities.

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* takes another approach to explain what happened. He says that Rivkah knew from the onset that she was carrying twins, because Hashem told Avraham (*Bereishis* 21:12), כִּי בְיַצְחָק יִקְרָא לְךָ זֶרַע, which means

Yitzchak would have two children, and only one of them would be counted as Avraham's genuine descendant. She also knew she was carrying a *rasha* in her womb, because whenever she passed a house of *avodah zarah* this child wanted to go out. Rivkah's question was, why was it destined for her to carry a *rasha* in her womb? She figured that after praying for children, she should only beget righteous children.

Shem told her, **לְאוּם מְלוּאִים יֵאֱמָן**. These words can mean **לְאוּם**, Yaakov's nation, **יֵאֱמָן** will become stronger, **מְלוּאִים** due to Eisav's nation's oppression. From the oppression, and from the challenges that come our way, we become stronger and better.

The Midrash states, "Nimrod died the day Avraham was

*niftar*. Eisav died the day Yaakov was *niftar*..." Similarly, Moshe was *niftar* about the time Bilaam died. <sup>6</sup>

The explanation is, the *rasha* came to the world to present a challenge for the tzaddik. When the tzaddik is *niftar*, the *rasha* can leave the world, too.

Yaakov was born together with Eisav so that from the beginning of his life until his *petirah* he would be tested by Eisav. Even in the womb they were battling over the inheritance of the two worlds, and over the firstborn rights. Years later, Eisav wanted to kill Yaakov, and Yaakov had to run away from his father's home. Yaakov endured several other tests due to his adversary, Eisav. And from all those challenges, Yaakov became even greater.

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6. Moshe was *niftar* immediately after the battle against Midyan [see *Bamidbar* 31:2], and Bilaam was killed in that war.

### *Ahavas Yisrael* – Mutual Feelings

Once,<sup>7</sup> an egg merchant, covered with eggs and egg shells, came to the rav of his city, and told the shocked rav what happened to him:

“Like every day, I bought a basket of eggs in a nearby village and I was bringing them to sell in our town. Mr. So-and-so met me as I was carrying the eggs and he asked me to deliver some eggs to his home. I said that I first need payment. He became very angry and hit my basket with his stick. All the eggs broke. I demand a *din Torah!*”

The rav called his *shamesh* and told him to summon that person for a *din Torah*. The *shamesh* was afraid to do so because that person was a *moser* — someone who tattled on the Jewish community to the local government. Everyone was afraid of him.

But the rav told him to have no fear and to carry out his mission.

The *shamesh* courageously went to the *moser's* home. "The rav summons you to the *beis din*."

The *moser* ridiculed the *shamesh* and said that he refuses to go. The *shamesh* relayed the *moser's* chutzpahdig response to the rav.

The rav said, "Go to his home and summon him once again. This time, warn him that if he doesn't come, he will be in *niduy*, excommunication."

The *shamesh* gave over the message. The *moser* slapped the *shamesh* across his face, and refused to come to court.

That Shabbos, the *moser* was called up for an *aliyah*. The rav quickly rushed to the *bimah* and said in front of

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7. This story was told by Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l*, who heard it from Reb Zalman Chaim Rivlin *zt'l*, who heard it from Reb Nachum of Shadik *zt'l*.

everyone, "*Rasha!* You are in *niduy* because you didn't come to *beis din*, and you even hit the *shamesh* when he summoned you. You may not have an *aliyah*."

The *moser* stepped down, ashamed. Under his breath, but loud enough so people could hear, the *moser* said, "I will take revenge on the rav."

A few days later, the rav traveled to a neighboring village to be *sandek* at a bris. His student, Reb Nachum Shadik *zt'l* and others were with him. From the distance, the students saw the *moser*. "We are in great danger," they told the rav. "The *moser* is chasing after us, and he will soon catch up to us."

The rav became deep in thought. Soon, the *moser* arrived. The *moser* came over to the rav, and in a humble voice, said, "I want to hit your *talmidim*. Please, let me hit them."

"No!" the rav reprimanded him. "You may not touch them."

"Then let me spit on them?"

"Also not."

"Forgive me for all the trouble I caused you."

"If you will ask the egg merchant's forgiveness and pay for the eggs you broke, I will forgive you."

The *moser* gave the rav ten rubles and said, "Give it to the egg merchant. It will cover the cost of the eggs. And the extra money is to appease him so he will forgive me."

The rav took the money, and said, "I will give over the money. I am certain he will forgive you. And I also forgive you." They parted in friendly terms.

The students were shocked. Reb Nachum Shadik asked the rav how it happened.

The rav replied, "My teachers taught me that the solution to every problem is written in the Torah. When the *moser* was pursuing us, I thought of the *pasuk*, כמים פנים לפנים כן לב האדם, לאדם. This *pasuk* teaches that people are like mirrors. If you

love your fellow man, you can be certain he loves you too. If you hate someone, this is a sign that he hates you. I realized that if the *moser* hates me, it must be that I hate him as well. And if I love him, he will love me back. I began searching for his qualities and sought ways to judge him favorably. I realized that he was probably raised without a proper *chinuch* and he therefore doesn't know how to act properly. I thought about such ideas until I loved him. This spurred him to think positively towards me. He didn't want to be against me anymore."

Reb Nachum asked, "Why did he want to hit us and to spit on us?"

"Apparently he hates you because you hate him. If you will love him, he will feel positively towards you as well."

These ideas can be found in this week's *parashah*.

Rivkah told Yaakov (27:44-45), וישבת עמו ימים אחדים,

עד אשר תשוב חמת אחיך עד שוב אף אחיך ממך, "Stay with Lavan a few days, until your brother's anger ceases. Until your brother's anger ceases from you..." Why are the final words repeated twice?

Reb Yitzchak of Volozhin *zt'l* quotes his father, Reb Chaim of Volozhin *zt'l* who said, "It is tried and proven: If people hate you, convince yourself that they are *tzaddikim*, judge them favorably, and they will immediately begin to love you."

Reb Yitzchak Volozhiner *zt'l* says that it also works in the opposite direction. If you want to know whether someone still hates, check what your feelings are towards him. If you have positive feelings towards him, that's a sign he has positive feelings towards you.

Rivkah told Yaakov that he should live in Charan with her brother Lavan עד אשר תשוב חמת אחיך until Eisav's hatred

subsides. How will Yaakov know when Eisav's anger subsided? Rivkah replied, **שוב אף אחיך ממך**, when you no longer hate him, you will know that he no longer hates you.

### **Chesed – it's Privileges**

The Ponovezher Rav *zt'l* opened two large institutions in Bnei Brak: Yeshivas Ponovezh and an orphanage for children survivors of the war. There wasn't enough money for both institutions. His son asked him, "Decide which institution is more important for you, and keep that one and close the other one, because we can't afford to keep them both open."

The Ponovezher Rav replied, "My primary institution is the yeshiva, where Torah is studied. However, the success of the yeshiva is dependent on the other institution. Because there can't be success in Torah without *chesed*. As Chazal (*Sotah* 14.) say, "*Torah begins and ends with gemilus chasadim.*"

Reb Mordechai Benet *zt'l* wouldn't eat breakfast before

giving *tzedakah*. He explained this according to the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 12) that says, "Before a person eats, he has two hearts. After one eats, he has one heart." The simple meaning is that before one eats, he doesn't have *yishuv hadaas*, and it is hard for him to make decisions. After one eats, he has one, settled heart, and he can think clearer.

Reb Mordechai Benet explained the Gemara as follows: Before one eats, he has two hearts, because he has in mind the needs and the hearts of others. After one eats, one thinks solely about himself. So he gave *tzedakah* before he ate, when he still had other people's needs in mind.

Hashem promised Yitzchak that he will have many offspring, and they will inherit

Eretz Yisrael. Hashem told him that he will merit this in his father's, Avraham's, merit, (26:5), עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקלי, וישמר משמרת מצותי חקותי ותורתי, "because Avraham listened to my voice and kept my mitzvos..."

The Ramban explains the four expressions of mitzvos stated in this *pasuk*: משמרת, מצותי, חקותי, תורת.

משמרת: "This is that Avraham believed in Hashem...and combated all idol worshippers. He called out Hashem's name and brought many people to Hashem's service.

מצותי: "Whatever I commanded him, [he kept]. Such as to leave his father's home to come to Eretz Yisrael, to sacrifice his son by the *akeidah*, and to banish from his home the maidservant with her son, Yishmael.

חקותי: "[Avraham] followed Hashem's ways, to be compassionate, to give *tzedakah*, and to do justice,

and he commanded his family to follow in these ways.

ותורת: This is referring to *bris milah*, for he circumcised himself, his sons, and his slaves, and he kept all the Noahite laws, which is their Torah."

Let us focus on חקותי, which the Ramban explains is referring to doing *tzedakah* and *chesed*. Why is this called חק. A חק is a mitzvah that we don't know the reason for it, and we wouldn't think of it on our own (see *Rashi*). *Chesed* and *tzedakah* are mitzvos that are logical, and we can understand on our own.

Reb Shimon Schwab (מעין בית) (השו"ב) *zt'l* answers that Avraham did *chesed* and gave *tzedakah* also to those who didn't deserve it. This is a חק, something that logic doesn't grasp. This attitude was among Avraham's good deeds, for which his son, Yitzchak, was awarded a large nation and Eretz Yisrael.

According to the Seforno, the words, *וישמר משמרתו* refer to Avraham's deeds of *tzedakah* and *chesed*. As the Seforno writes, "Avraham did the deeds that are My occupation, which is to do *chesed*. As it states (*Tehillim* 25:10), *כל אורחות ה' חסד ואמת*, Hashem's ways are *chesed* and

truth.' And he would show sinners the correct path."<sup>8</sup>

The Midrash (*Rus Rabba* 5:4) states, "See the reward of those who do *tzedakah* and *chesed*. They aren't in the shadow...of *malachim*... They are under Hashem's shadow. As it states (*Tehillim* 36:8), *מה,*

8. The Seforno elaborates that Avraham Avinu devoted his life to teach people about Hashem, and so did Yaakov Avinu, and therefore Hashem granted them kindness and goodness in their own merit. Yitzchak began the practice of teaching people about Hashem later in his life. Until then, Yitzchak earned kindness in Avraham Avinu's merit, but not in his own merit.

As the Seforno writes, "In this location [when Hashem promised Yitzchak that he would have many descendants, and that they will inherit Eretz Yisrael] Hashem granted these goods to Yitzchak in Avraham's merit. Also, (26:24) it states, *וברכתיך והרבית את זרעך בעבור אברהם עבדי*, 'I will bless you and increase your offspring because of my servant, Avraham' [and he didn't grant this good to Yitzchak in his own merit]. This isn't how Hashem spoke with Yaakov, and certainly not how Hashem spoke with Avraham. But this was before Yitzchak began spreading Hashem's name. [As it states in the next *pasuk* (26:25)], *ויבן שם מזבח ויקרא בשם ה'*, 'He build a *mizbeaich* and called out in Hashem's name.' After Yitzchak was calling in Hashem's name, it states (26:26-28), *ויאמרו אליו מגרר... וראינו כי היה ה' עמך*, 'Avimelech came to him... 'We saw that Hashem is with you.' From then onwards, nothing bad happened to Yitzchak, for he was calling out in Hashem's name. But for Yaakov, he never received in other's merits, because he was a member of the beis medresh since his youth, learning and teaching people Torah. Especially when he learned in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, because all people who were searching for Hashem would go there."

יקר הסודך אלקים ובני אדם בצל כנפיד  
 יחסיון, “How precious is You  
 kindness Hashem. Mankind  
 resides under the shadow of  
 Your wings.”

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*  
 (*Ahavas Chesed* 2:4) explains  
 that to be under Hashem’s  
 wings means Hashem Himself  
 will judge him. People who do  
*chesed* earn that privilege.

For it states, אל תבטחו בגדיבים,  
 don’t trust the *malachim* (who  
 are called גדיבים) because even

the compassionate *malachim*  
 also have an element of *din*  
 and they may judge you  
 harshly. אשרי שא-ל יעקב בעורו  
 fortunate is the one who trusts  
 in Hashem, and is judged  
 under Hashem’s wings.

How does one merit being  
 judged by Hashem? The  
 answer is, מה יקר הסודך,  
 when one does *chesed*, בצל כנפיד יחסיון,  
 he will be judged under  
 Hashem’s wings, and be  
 judged favorably (Chofetz  
 Chaim).