

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Toldos



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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718.484.8136

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# Torah Wellsprings

## Toldos

### The Reward is According to the Struggle

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l wrote a sefer to give chizuk to soldiers drafted into the army (Macheneh Yisrael). The Chofetz Chaim writes, "Whenever you perform a mitzvah, even the smallest mitzvah, Hashem will be far happier with it than the greatest mitzvah that others perform without challenge." This is based on Avos d'Reb Noson, which states, "A single mitzvah, when hard to perform, is greater than one hundred mitzvos performed without difficulty."

The first Rashi of the parashah states, יעקב ועשו, האמורים בפרשה, which hints at the idea that there is an element of Yaakov and Eisav in each person, or in more familiar terms, everyone has a yetzer tov and a yetzer hara in him. Our job is האמורים בפרשה. One translation of פרשה is to divide, to separate (like פרשת דרכים, a fork in the road). We must separate the yetzer tov from the yetzer hara so that the yetzer tov is prominent within us. But we must know that we have a yetzer hara, and this battle makes our avodas Hashem precious.<sup>1</sup>

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1. One Simchas Torah, a kehillah that had only one sefer Torah, asked one of the *mispa'elim* to bring his personal sefer Torah to the shul for the *hakafos* so they could dance with it and read from it, and he agreed to do so.

During the *hakafos*, a person dancing accidentally dropped the private sefer Torah. The joy in everyone's heart quickly left them, and the person who dropped the sefer Torah became very

The Baal HaTanya's grandson, Reb Nochum, wore an expensive jacket with fur around the collar. He bought it around the time he got married. The Baal HaTanya didn't like the

style (apparently, it wasn't the way most Jews dressed at the time), and he told his grandson that he didn't want him to wear this jacket. His grandson answered that he couldn't stop wearing it.

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distraught. He left the beis medresh and went home to mope in bed.

Then *kriyas haTorah* began. They read וזאת הברכה from the shul's sefer Torah. Then they took out the borrowed sefer Torah to read בראשית. To their utter shock, they realized that the first three words בראשית ברא אלקים were missing from this sefer Torah! This meant it wasn't a real sefer Torah. It was like a Chumash because without the first three words, the sefer Torah was *pasul*. They immediately ran to inform the person moping at home that he could return to beis medresh; he didn't drop a sefer Torah.

The owner of that sefer Torah asked the sofer, "How did you make such a mistake and leave out the first three words?"

The sofer replied, "When you ordered the sefer Torah, I told you that some people have the custom to leave out the first three words, so they can honor respected rabbanim to fill in those words. I asked whether you wanted that, and you said you did..."

Every Yid is like a sefer Torah, as Chazal (*Shabbos* 105:) state, "Whoever is present when the soul departs from a person must tear his clothing, for it is akin to a sefer Torah being burned." When he falls from his spiritual level, he is sad; he feels like a sefer Torah fell.

Their disappointment is because they don't recognize their actual reality. We can tell him, "Why do you cry? You aren't a kosher sefer Torah like you thought you were." We forget that we have a yetzer hara that sometimes causes us to fall.

The Baal HaTanya said, "I'll buy you another jacket."

His grandson repeated that he couldn't change the jacket.

"I will give you money," the Baal HaTanya pleaded, but still he refused. He couldn't part from his coat.

"I'll learn with you." Once again, the grandson refused.

Finally, the Baal HaTanya told him, "If you take off this coat, you will be with me in Gan Eden." This time, the grandson accepted the offer. It was too good an offer to refuse.

People asked the Baal HaTanya how he could guarantee this great reward for his grandson. Perhaps he won't deserve it!

The Baal HaTanya replied, "You saw how hard

it was for him to remove the coat. It wasn't just the coat, and it wasn't just the style. A klipah, a tumah, was preventing him from agreeing to my offers. I understood that it was a great test for him. And if he passed this test, he deserves to be brought to a high place in Gan Eden for that merit alone."

We earn the greatest rewards when we overcome difficult tests.<sup>2</sup>

Rivkah didn't understand why she was having so much pain during her pregnancy, as it states (25:22) ויִתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ, "The children struggled within her." Rashi writes, "When she passed the doorways of Torah of Shem and Ever, Yaakov struggled to run and leave the womb, and when she passed the

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2. Yungerleit told the Chidushei HaRim zt'l that they suffer from the yetzer hara, and they wished they didn't have this struggle. The Chidushei HaRim replied, "If there is no fight or struggle, what purpose is there to your avodas Hashem?"

doorways of avodah zarah, Eisav struggled and tried to leave the womb."

Two questions arise from this episode:

1) Eisav was a rasha even before his birth. Already in the womb, he was rushing to go to avodah zarah. So, how can Eisav be punished for his bad ways? Evil was his nature, in his DNA, even before his birth!

2) Yaakov Avinu was *kadosh* from the womb. When his mother passed the *Beis medresh*, he wanted to go there. Here, we are faced with the same question. Why should Yaakov be rewarded for his good deeds? It was natural for him to be good!

Before we quote the Yismach Moshe's answer to these questions, we bring another two questions that the Yismach Moshe asks:

It states (25:26) ואחריו בן יצא אחיו וידו אחזת בעקב עשו ויקרא שמו יעקב, "After [Eisav was born], his brother emerged. His

hand grasped Eisav's heel, and he named him Yaakov." One explanation in Rashi is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu named him Yaakov. We ask two questions:

(1) Why was Yaakov holding onto Eisav's ankle? Eisav was already born. Did he think he could draw him back into the womb?

(2) It seems strange that Yaakov was named for holding onto Eisav's heel, and it was Hakadosh Baruch Hu Who named him! Why was this episode so important that Yaakov is named for it?

The Yismach Moshe gives one answer that answers all the questions. He explains what a special moment it was when Yaakov grabbed onto Eisav's heel. It created a transfer of tendencies between Yaakov and Eisav. By grabbing onto Eisav's heel, Eisav received a drop of Yaakov Avinu's good, and Yaakov received a drop of the bad in Eisav. This created a test for both.

Yaakov would have to overcome the tendencies he received from Eisav, and Eisav had to increase the good he received from Yaakov.

With this information, all the questions are resolved. Holding onto the heel was a critical moment for both of them because this is what gave them free choice and created the battle.

Why did Yitzchak Avinu want to give the *brachos* to Eisav and not Yaakov? Yitzchak knew that the greatest avodas Hashem is performed through challenge. Such a service generates the greatest nachas ruach for Hashem. Therefore, Yitzchak considered Eisav's potential greater than Yaakov's because Eisav would need to struggle very hard with his yetzer hara, and his avodas Hashem would create a pleasure to Hashem. Among the *segulos* and benefits of Yitzchak Avinu's brachos was that the person who received the *brachos* had the strength to

win the battle against the yetzer hara. This is why he preferred giving the brachah to Eisav rather than Yaakov.

Yaakov Avinu said to his father (27:19) *אני עשו בכרך*, "I am Eisav, your firstborn." Yaakov said, "I also have an element of Eisav in me. I also have a *yetzer hara*. Things are not perfect for me. I also need these *brachos*."

Yitzchok replied (27:22) *הקול קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו*, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov, but the hands are the hands of Eisav." Yitzchak was saying that although Yaakov studies Torah (*הקול קול יעקב*), he still has an element of Eisav in him (*הידים ידי עשו*), therefore he also needs the brachos.

Eisav shouted (27:36) *הכי קרא שמו יעקב ויעקבני זה פעמים את*, *בכרתי לקח והנה עתה לקח ברכתי*, "Is it for this reason he was named Yaakov? For he has deceived me twice (*יעקבני פעמיים*). He took my birthright, and behold, now he has taken my brachos."

Rashi writes that when Yitzchak heard Eisav say this, he was relieved and declared, גם ברוך תהיה, that the brachos should remain with Yaakov.<sup>3</sup>

We can explain that when he heard that Yaakov had deceived Eisav, he discovered that Yaakov Avinu also had negative attributes, which means that Yaakov will also struggle in his avodas Hashem. Therefore, Yaakov should receive the brachos.<sup>4</sup>

### The Joy of the Battle

The Baal HaTanya zt'l asked a soldier why he goes willingly to war. It is a great

question. The soldiers know there is a chance they won't survive. So, why do so many soldiers willingly take the risk?

The soldier replied, "The enjoyment of victory is greater than our desire to live."

It is called תאוות הנצחון, the pleasure of winning.

The Baal HaTanya taught that we should use this attitude for avodas Hashem. There is a battle within us, but when we put up a fight, it is the greatest joy. Chazal (Brachos 5.) say, לעולם ירגיז אדם יצר, "A person should always have the yetzer tov battle with the

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3. Rashi explains that it is proper to give the brachos to the bechor, the oldest son, and Yitzchak was worried that perhaps he acted incorrectly by blessing Yaakov. When Eisav told him that he sold the bechora to Yaakov, Yitzchak was happy because he understood that he had blessed the correct son.

4. People were praising a certain person before the Chazon Ish zt'l. They said, "He doesn't have a yetzer hara!" The Chazon Ish replied, "Then you have made him a *baal mum* (an imperfect person)." There should be a yetzer hara, which makes our avodas Hashem precious to Hashem.

yetzer hara." There should always be a fight, and that is our greatest joy.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* teaches, "Without problems, one will become disgusted with his life. It has happened that someone committed suicide and left a note with the reason for his act. It was because he had everything, and he saw no point in living... People are constantly worried and upset; sometimes they earn money, sometimes they lose money; they have ups and downs; they buy and sell; they have good and bad days; people are restless, always tired, and working hard. This is how Hashem created man, and from all these struggles, one receives *chiyus*, life, vigor." It is a new concept, but the Chasam Sofer reveals it to us. We enjoy the struggles of life. They give us a reason to awaken in the morning and something to accomplish during the day.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* said that this is hinted in the

*Chazal* (*Avos* 4:24) that says, על כרחך אתה חי, "You live against your will." *Bederech tzachus*, this means, your joy in life comes from those matters that come to you against your will. (No one wants problems in life. They come to a person against his will. Yet, it is because of those problems that one feels alive.) If it weren't for those matters, boredom would cause insanity (see *Kesubos* 59:).

Yitzchak blessed Eisav by saying על חרבך תחיה, "You will live by the sword." The Chasam Sofer writes, "This isn't referring to the sword of war, rather, it's saying that Eisav's life will always be filled with battles and struggles, which will give him life. Otherwise, he will live in the fat land of Italy (see *Rashi*, 27:39), and he will be disgusted with his life, like a fattened cow being brought to the slaughter. So, he was blessed על חרבך, with your struggles, תחיה, you will live."

The Chasam Sofer concludes, "But this is all

solely for the nations of the world. For the Jewish nation, they receive their *chiyus* from toil in Hashem's service. As it states, *כי הוא חיך*, "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*. The pasuk is saying that the Jewish nation will have wealth and success, and the sword – the struggles of this world – won't pass through his land. They don't need the battles of the war to feel alive because they receive their *chiyus* from *avodas Hashem*. Only Eisav needs the troubles of life. But the Jewish nation receives their *chiyus* from Torah and from serving Hashem.

The Chasam Sofer teaches the same lesson by *birkas kohanim*. *יברכך ה' וישמרך*, Hashem will bless you with wealth. *וישם לך שלום*, and Hashem will give you peace, and everything will be perfect in your life. The Chasam Sofer writes, "This

*brachah* is like a great curse," because when everything is so wonderful, there is no challenge and no reason to awaken in the morning. The pasuk concludes, *ושמו את שמי על בני ישראל*, that the Jewish nation places themselves in the battle and pursuit of serving Hashem. That is their joy; they don't need everyday struggles and problems to bring them purpose.

### Hashem Chooses the Tests

Reb Nota Zenwirth zt'l once came to the beis medresh with a broom and announced that he was waving a lulav.

They looked at him queerly. Why was he calling a broom a lulav?

He explained, "I took a lulav on Succos because it was Hashem's will. Now, it is Hashem's will that I take a broom and clean up the beis medresh." (Dirt in the beis medresh made it impermissible to daven there.)

This is because we don't always choose our avodas Hashem. It is what Hashem wants it to be. People have ideas of what their avodas Hashem should be, and if it isn't as planned, they feel that they can't serve Hashem. Actually, Hashem gives us the tests and circumstances, and we must pass the tests, no matter what is thrown our way.

Someone admired and loved the king of his country. One day, he told the king that he wanted to serve him and would do whatever the king asked.

The king replied, "I have all the mayors and officials I need for my kingdom. The only thing I need is someone to stand guard in the sewer outside the palace."

The man backed out. That wasn't the type of service he had in mind.

The nimshal is when we say the Shema in the morning, we pronounce Hashem king and proclaim

that we are prepared to serve Him. But then Hashem sends us a test, a situation, and we might say, "This isn't the type of avodas Hashem that I planned on." But it isn't up to us to decide. We do Hashem's will with loyalty and with devotion.

Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli and Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l were once in prison, and there was a toilet in the room, preventing them from davening and learning. Rebbe Elimelech was very upset about that. It was hard enough being in jail, and now they couldn't even daven or learn there! Rebbe Zusha explained to his brother that there was no reason to be upset. "We can now perform the mitzvah of not learning Torah and not davening when there is something impure in the room."

Rebbe Elimelech agreed, and they danced joyously around the toilet bucket. They were happy they could do Hashem's will.

The guard heard the singing and dancing and ran to see what was happening. He said, "Oh, so it is the bucket you are so happy about," and he took it away. Now, they were able to learn and daven, as well.

On the night of the Seder, a young grandson of Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna zt'l found a bottle of beer (it was stored away and sold for Pesach). The boy took the beer and brought it into the room where the Seder was being held. The family was horrified. "Chametz in our home, at the Seder?!"

Rebbe Yochanan saw things differently. He told his grandson, "Chazal say that when one finds chametz in his home on Pesach, he should cover it with a utensil. Thank you, my dear grandson, for giving me the opportunity to fulfill this statement of Chazal once in my life."

It wasn't the type of service that most people want on Pesach, but if this is

Hashem's will, we perform it joyfully.

Why were Yaakov and Eisav twins? The Ritvah (Hagadah shel Pesach) explains that when you ask someone, "Why don't you serve Hashem as that person does? Don't you see he serves Hashem much better than you do?!" The person will generally respond, "How can you compare us? Do you know who his parents are? If I were born to his parents, I would also be like him."

Here we have Eisav and Yaakov. They were born to the same set of parents and at the same time, so they had the same mazal, and yet Yaakov became Yaakov Avinu and Eisav became Eisav *harasha*. It isn't the situations that make you great, but rather your choices. When you pass the tests that Hashem gives you, you will reach the highest levels.

### To Stand in Battle

The Baal HaTurim writes that עש is the same gematriya as שלום, peace.

Eisav is peace?! He is the exact opposite of peace! What is the Baal HaTurim telling us?

We can explain that Eisav made peace with the yetzer hara. He decided that instead of living a life full of inner conflict, he would make peace with the yetzer hara and let the yetzer hara have his way.

If you don't fight the yetzer hara, you will always remain the same. There is no growth for you. And this

is the reason Eisav was born looking like an adult, to indicate that he will never change. He is who he is and doesn't want to change and grow. He doesn't even want to eat with a bowl and spoon; it is too much work. He told Yaakov הֲלֵעִשָׂי נָא, pour the soup into his mouth. He was אִישׁ יוֹדֵעַ צִיד אִישׁ שְׂדֵה, and Rashi writes that אִישׁ שְׂדֵה means "An idler who hunts beats and birds with his bow." Rashi writes, אָדָם בְּטֵל, Eisav was a person who does nothing—a *leidigeir*.

Yaakov, on the other hand, was יוֹשֵׁב אֱהָלִים, constantly seeking to grow higher.<sup>5</sup>

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5. When Rivkah passed the doorway of the beis medresh of Shem and Ever, Yaakov tried to leave the womb. Why did he want to leave the womb? Chazal tell us that a child studies with a malach in the womb, so why was he anxious to leave?

The answer is that he wanted to learn Torah with yegiah, to toil in Torah. He didn't want to receive the Torah on a silver platter. It's the struggle and toil that is the primary praise of tzaddikim.

Others answer that even learning Torah from a malach isn't worthwhile if it is done in the company of Eisav.

### Try

Success isn't the goal. The goal is to do the best we can.

One night, there was no water in my grandfather's home. That night, the children (including my father) went to sleep without preparing *negel vasser* water near their beds because there was no water.

Their father, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai, rebuked them. "If there is no water, put the empty cup near your bed." In other words, do as much as you can, even if you can't do the complete deed.

Yaakov Avinu was born holding onto Eisav's ankle. Did he really think he was able to stop Eisav from being born? Once again, my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai, replied that our

job is to do. It doesn't necessarily need to succeed. We must try to do the most we can.<sup>6</sup>

In parashas Vayeitzei, Yaakov saw shepherds standing near the well, and they weren't taking out the water to give their sheep. Yaakov asked them why, and they replied that a heavy stone was on top of the well. They were waiting for all the shepherds to come so they could remove the heavy rock off the top of the well.

The Imrei Emes zt'l asks that Yaakov Avinu certainly saw the stone over the well. Why didn't he understand on his own that they were waiting for a large crowd to gather so they could push off the heavy stone?

Yaakov was telling them, "I understand the stone is

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6. Thirteen years later, Eisav foolishly sold the *bechora* for a bowl of soup. We see that Hashem will help if you desire and try. Yaakov tried to be the *bechor*, and in the end, he got it.

heavy, but why don't you at least try?"

Parashas Vayeira begins with Avraham Avinu's hachnosas orchim and concludes with the Akeidah. Rebbe Tzadok HaKohen says these great deeds were about "trying" and not actually about doing. Avraham didn't actually perform hachnosas orchim because malachim don't need to eat. Hachnasas

orchim is to help people, but Avraham didn't help the malachim when he gave them food. He also didn't perform the akeidah because Hashem told him to stop and take Yitzchak off the *mizbeiach*. And yet, these two deeds are so praised, and we gained so many *zechusim* from these mitzvos until this very day. And that is because our job in avodas Hashem is to try, not necessarily succeed.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Yitzchak's servants dug wells, and there were quarrels over them, as is discussed in (26:20-21). The local shepherds claimed ownership of the wells. Therefore, they named one well עַסְקָ, and the other one שְׁטִיחָ, representing the hardships and the fights that they had over the wells.

But the Torah doesn't tell us who won the argument and ultimately received the wells.

This is hinting at our fight with the yetzer hara. When one fights with the yetzer hara, the goal isn't necessarily to win. It is to stand firm and try.

Yaakov's name became Yisrael, as it states (32:29) כִּי שָׂרִית עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַם אֱנָשִׁים וְתוֹכַל, "Because you have battled with a malach and with people and you have prevailed."

He wasn't named תּוֹכַל, for winning the war. He is יִשְׂרָאֵל because of כִּי שָׂרִית, for fighting the war. Once again, this is because to stand in battle is the ultimate praise.

Yitzchak tried to dig a well, but the people of G'ror took it away.

And if you can't try, at least, yearn and pine to do good. The Zohar states, "When a person tries and yearns to know Torah, even if he isn't successful, everyone praises him." The Divrei Yisrael zt'l explains, "A person works in his store, he has a lot of work to do, he can't leave, but he yearns to study Torah.

The Yesod HaAvodah (vol.2, 6) writes in a letter, "Years ago, a general received a letter that said the enemy army was winning the war and had broken through their military strongholds. The general became very down, and he told his wife about the letter.

"She replied, 'I also received a letter. It came just

this minute. It tells of a greater loss than what you told me.'

'Really! What does it say?'

'It says that in addition to losing that fort, you lost your enthusiasm and spirit, which is the greatest loss.'

We shouldn't lose hope. We should keep on trying, and that is what counts.

### **Chessed**

Hashem promised Yitzchak that a large nation would come from him and that this nation would inherit Eretz Yisrael (26:5) אשר שמע אברהם בקלי וישמר משמרתו מצותי חקותי ותורתו "because Avraham obeyed my voice, and performed My mission,

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So, Yitzchak went somewhere else and tried again. He didn't stop trying until he succeeded. The Chofetz Chaim ztl teaches that this tells us, "If at first you don't succeed, try again and again," and in the end, you will succeed.

The same is true with gashmiyus pursuits. Don't give up. Keep trying, and Hashem will help.

My commandments, My *chukim*, and My Torah."

On the word חוקים, the Ramban explains that this means Yitzchak will bear children, and they will inherit Eretz Yisrael because of the deeds of chessed that Avraham performed. We quote the Ramban:

"חוקתי means that Avraham went in Hashem's ways to be kind and compassionate to all and to do tzedakah and judgment, and he commanded his family to follow in that path."

Reb Shimon Shwab zt'l asks that a *chok* always refers

to a mitzvah for which we don't know the reason. But to do chessed and to be kind to others is logical and humane. Why are such deeds called חקותי in this pasuk?

Reb Shimon Shwab answers that there are people about whom you think there is no mitzvah to help them. You focus on their faults and feel that they aren't the type of people you are obligated to help. The Torah says that Avraham did chessed with all, even when it was like a *chok*, and logically, he didn't understand why he should be compassionate towards these people.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Some people once insulted Reb Gedalyah Moshe of Zvhil zt'l, and Reb Gedalyah's gabaim wanted to rebuke them, to stick up for their Rebbe's honor. Reb Gedalyah told them to let it pass and not to make an issue of it. He explained, "My father, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l, was a rebbe because he was great tzaddik, but my only strength is that I am silent and don't respond when there is a machlokes. If you take that away from me, I have nothing."

Once, Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe davened Mussaf quickly. The reason was that when he was about to go to the amud to daven for mussaf, he heard two children say, "Oh no! The rebbe is going

The Siforno (26:5) says that Avraham's deeds of chessed are alluded to from the words וישמר משמרתִי, "[Avraham] performed My mission." The Siforno explains that it is Hashem's mission and will to do kindness to people. Avraham was occupied in chessed, and it was like he was performing the chessed that Hashem would have done.

The Siforno writes, עשה תמיד המשמרת המיוחדת לי שהיא לגמול חסד, "Avraham always

performed the service that is Mine, and that is to do kindness..."

The Siforno proves that it is Hashem's way to do chessed from the pasuk (Tehillim 25:10) כל אורחות ה' חסד וואמת, "All the ways of Hashem are kindness and truth..."

The greatest kindness you can do for a person is to teach him emunah.

If you help someone attain emunah, you did him

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to daven mussaf. Davening will be very long." He didn't want to cause distress to those children.

When his first great-grandchild was born, he didn't tell anyone. Shabbos morning, people heard that the rebbe had a great-granddaughter and asked him, "Why didn't you tell us? We would have prepared a kiddush."

For shalashudes, the gabbai arranged extra food in honor of the simchah.

Reb Gedalya Moshe explained that one of his gabaim didn't have children. He didn't want to celebrate the simchah so as not to cause tzaar to this gabbai.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l never put a grandchild on his lap because some of his children never had children. He didn't want them to suffer watching him enjoy his grandchildren from his other children.

a great favor in the next world because he will earn Olam HaBa. But you also gave him goodness in this world because no one is happier in this world than someone who believes in Hashem. The believer knows that everything is for the good; he can speak with Hashem whenever he has a need, and he can become close to Hashem by performing the mitzvos.<sup>9</sup>

The Rambam (*Avodah Zarah* 1:3) writes, "As soon as this strong one (Avraham) was weaned, his mind began to search. He was young, and he was thinking day and night. He wondered, 'How can it be that the sun is always moving, and no one is turning it...? He didn't have anyone to teach him. He lived in Ur Kasdim among stupid idol worshippers (בין עובדי כוכבים הטפשים). His father, his mother, and

the entire nation worshiped the stars, and he worshiped the stars together with them. But his heart was searching... until he perceived the true path... He knew that there is one G-d; He directs the sun; He created everything; and there is no G-d other than Him. He knew that everyone in the world was mistaken. He was forty years old when he recognized his Creator. Avraham began...debating with the people of Ur Kasdim. He told them, 'You aren't on the right path.' He broke their idols and told them that one should serve solely the Creator of the world... Avraham brought many proofs, and the king wanted to kill Avraham. A miracle happened [and his life was spared]... Avraham announced to everyone... that there is only one G-d, and we should serve Him alone... Tens of thousands

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9. On the words וישמר משמרתו, Ramban writes, "This means Avraham guarded the emunah in his heart, he fought with idol worshippers, and he called out Hashem's name to draw many people to His service."

followed Avraham, and he planted in their hearts this great truth. He wrote *sefarim* and taught it to his son, Yitzchak."

Avraham taught people about Hashem, and that is the greatest chessed. Avraham's calling out in Hashem's name is written at the beginning of Lech Lecha (Bereishis 12:8), ויבן שם מזבה לה', ויקרא בשם ה' "He built there a *mizbeiach* to Hashem and called out in Hashem's name."

The Ramban on that pasuk writes, "Unkelos explains that ויקרא בשם ה' means that Avraham davened there... But the correct translation is that Avraham called out Hashem's name in a loud voice before the *mizbeiach*, and he taught people about Hashem. He would do so [when he lived] in Ur Kasdim as well, but then people didn't want to listen to him. But now that he came to this land that he

was promised ואברהם מברכך, that he would be blessed, he was now able to teach and to reveal Hashem to people."

The Ramban continues, "When Yitzchak went to Gror...it states ויקרא בשם ה', that Yitzchak called out and taught people about Hashem. This is because he came to a new place, and they didn't hear about Hashem... Yitzchak revealed Hashem's honor to the nations. Regarding Yaakov, it doesn't say he called out in Hashem's name. This is because Yaakov had many children, all of them were Hashem's servants...and the emunah in Hashem was revealed through them... Furthermore, everyone in Eretz Canaan already knew Hashem from the work of his father and grandfather. As it states in the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 39:16), 'Avraham had every creation call out in Hakadosh Baruch Hu's name, as it states (Bereishis 121:8) <sup>10</sup>"ויקרא בשם ה'".

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10. The Siforno writes that Yaakov did teach people about Hashem.

The Siforno writes that when Yitzchak began calling out in Hashem's name and teaching people emunah, he no longer had any troubles in his life. Previously, he suffered from people's jealousy and theft, but when he began teaching people about Hashem, his life became better. "After he called out Hashem's name, Avimelech said to him (26:28-29) ראה ראינו כי היה ה' עמך... אתה עתה ברוך ה' 'We have seen that Hashem is with you... you are now the blessed of Hashem.'"

### "Hashem Prepared It..."

We can assume that when Yaakov and Eisav were young, everyone predicted that Eisav would succeed in life and Yaakov wouldn't. Eisav had a glib tongue, and always knew how to get his way. He was

a hunter, working for his parnassah. On the other hand, Yaakov Avinu was an honest person, an איש תם. Rashi writes, "A person who is not astute at deceiving is called תם." He was a יושב אהלים, which means he sat in beis medresh and learned Torah all day long. People thought that, financially, nothing would become of him.

However, Yaakov became extraordinarily wealthy and received Yitzchak's brachos for success in this world and the next world.

The Or Pnei Moshe zt'l says that we learn from this that parnassah comes from Hashem's blessings, and parnassah isn't the product of "the strength of my hand."

Rashi (27:9) writes that Rivkah had a right to take

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He writes, "In his youth, Yaakov was יושב אהלים, sat and learned in the tents of Torah, teaching people about Hashem. Especially since he was in the tents of Shem and Ever, without doubt, everyone who sought Hashem went there."

two goats from Yitzchak daily. This right was written in her kesubah. She told Yaakov to take two goats and she prepared them for Yitzchak.

Yitzchak asked Yaakov how he brought the meat so quickly. Yaakov replied (27:20) *כי הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני*, "Hashem, your G-d, prepared it before me." The Zera Shimshon explains that Yaakov didn't lie, *chas v'shalom*, when he said Hashem prepared it for him. Yaakov didn't take anything for granted. If he had two goats, Hashem prepared them for him.

The Zera Shimshon writes, "We learn from this a lesson of mussar: Every person must recognize that everything is Hashem's wonders... When he earns money, he shouldn't attribute it to his hishtadlus but to Hashem's chessed."

### **Hishtadlus**

After World War Two, the Germans offered to give

money to Jewish people, called reparations, to atone for what they did and to express their regret.

There was a hot machlokes among gedolei Yisrael about whether Yidden should accept the money. Some gedolim said, "Take as much money as you can from them." Others were saying that they shouldn't think that money can atone for the atrocities they committed.

The Chazon Ish zt'l didn't give an opinion about whether people should take money, but he said, "It isn't a lack in hishtadlus if one doesn't sign up to receive the reparation money."

The Tchebiner Rav zt'l said the same thing. A person is obligated to do hishtadlus, but if he wishes, he can avoid doing this particular hishtadlus.

In the same vein, if a person doesn't do hishtadlus for *parnassah* at the time that he designated for Torah

study or tefillah, that won't be viewed as being negligent in his obligation to do hishtadlus, and he will receive the money that is due to him.

The same applies to speaking during davening. If you meet someone in shul with whom you must talk about some business, and you refrain because it is in the middle of the tefillah, you won't lose money because of that. You don't have an obligation of hishtadlus at such a time.

Someone asked the Chazon Ish to describe how much hishtadlus one must do. The Chazon Ish answered that it is like knocking a nail into the wall. When the nail becomes crooked, you stop hammering on it and throw it away. The same is true with hishtadlus. When things become crooked, you know that you should stop.

Crooked means dishonest business, and crooked also means when one thinks he has to work during the times he set for Torah and tefillah.<sup>11</sup>

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**11.** Someone needed a thousand dollars, so he wrote a letter to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and he put the letter in the post office box. The mailman saw the unusual letter addressed to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and he didn't know where to deliver it, so he opened the letter and read what it said. "Dear Ribono Shel Olam," it began, "Send me one thousand dollars so I can pay my expenses..."

The mailman had rachmanus on the man who sent the letter, so he put five hundred dollars into the envelope and returned it to the sender.

The man needed another thousand dollars sometime later, so he wrote another letter to Hakadosh Baruch. The mailman opened the letter to see what it said this time. He read, "Thank you, Ribono Shel Olam, for your kindness and sending me the money I asked for. Now I need another thousand dollars. But please don't send the money with the post office because it seems that someone at

The Divrei Shmuel zt'l writes that when the Or HaChaim zt'l lived in Morocco, he advised his community that it was sufficient to work on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday and spend the rest of the week studying Torah. He assured them that they wouldn't lose parnassah due to this arrangement.

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They followed the Or HaChaim's counsel and saw they weren't losing money. Their parnassah was the same as before. The Or HaChaim moved to Yerushalayim, and the people in Morocco gradually went back to working the entire week. Even so, they testified that they weren't earning any more money

the post office opens the letters and takes out half of the money."

This man believed that whatever he got came from Hashem, and on that point, he was correct. However, we also must believe that when we lack money, that is also from Hashem. When someone takes away our money or part of our money, ultimately, that was also part of Hashem's plan.

Motel Kapolowitz was a Slonimer chasid who lived in Baranovitz. He worked as a plumber, but he was poor. There was a time when he didn't have work for a couple of weeks and didn't have food for Shabbos. Thursday night, he sat in beis medresh for some hours, hoping that someone would invite his family over for Shabbos, but no one invited him. Midnight came, and he moaned and said, "Ribono shel Olam! If it is Your will that my wife, six children, and myself should be hungry this Shabbos, I accept your decree and am happy with it." Then he fell asleep. In the morning, someone woke him up and said, "The main pipe of the mikvah broke. Please fix it."

He was paid well for this job and had parnassah for Shabbos and the next two weeks.

The Nesivos Shalom zt'l repeated this story and added that Reb Motel Kapolovitz's krechitz could break the pipes in Baranovitz!

than before, when they had worked half a week.

### Torah wins Wars

It states (Tehillim 122:3) עומדות היו רגלינו בשעריך ירושלים, "Our feet were standing within your gates, O Yerushalayim."

The Gemara (Makos 10.) explains that we should read the pasuk in two parts. The first part of the pasuk says that our feet stood in war, and we were victorious and weren't harmed. The second half of the pasuk reveals the merit through which we were saved in battle. It is because of שעריך ירושלים, because of the Yidden who study Torah in the gates of Yerushalayim.

The merit of studying Torah protects and saves us. Wars are won in the merit of Torah study.

Sometimes, there is something you don't understand in Torah, and after toiling you come to an understanding. Rebbe

Pinchas of Koritz zt'l (Imrei Pinchas, Shaar HaTorah 17) said this process saves us. He said, "When a Yid answers a question in Torah, a goy who has a downfall (mapalah).

The Rosh (Hilchos Sefer Torah 1) says that in this generation, the mitzvah of writing a sefer Torah is accomplished by buying printed sefarim. It is known that when the *aron kodesh* is opened to take out the sefer Torah, it is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah. The Pnei Menachem zt'l added that whenever you take out a Gemara (or another sefer) to study from it, it is an *eis ratzon* for your *tefillos* to be answered.

Reb Yonoson Chever Shlita, the son-in-law of the *mashgiach* Reb Dov Yafo zt'l, related that one Shabbos morning, he was saying *pesukei d'zimra* in a room near the beis medresh, and he overheard the conversation of two young children, who were pretending to learn Gemara. They were seated in front of large *Gemaros* and were

singing the Gemara tune (although they couldn't yet read the words).

One child sang, אסור אסור אסור. The second child asked, אסור אסור אסור? And the other boy replied, more forcefully this time, אסור אסור אסור! "Forbidden! Forbidden! Forbidden!"

That week, Reb Yonoson Chever ate the Shabbos *seudah* at his father-in-law's home, Reb Dov Yafo, and he repeated this episode. He thought it was a cute story of two young children.

However, Reb Dov Yafo became visibly upset. He stood up and said, "I must speak to their father now."

The Rebbetzin and the family tried to explain to Reb Yafo that it was just two

children playing, but Reb Yafo wasn't placated.

The Rebbetzin said, " But if you go to him now, while he is eating his *seudah*, he will be startled. If you must speak to him, push it off for later."

Reb Yafo accepted her advice.

Later in the day, Reb Yafo spoke to the father and explained that a child mustn't think of Yiddishkeit as אסור אסור אסור, that everything is forbidden. He should think about Yiddishkeit to be joyous and sweet.

The father didn't take Reb Dov Yafo's warning seriously. Eventually, both children went off the *derech r"l*.<sup>12</sup>

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**12.** A rosh yeshiva said he saw a sefer on hilchos Shabbos for children. It taught the 39 malachos, everything that is prohibited on Shabbos. This rosh yeshiva commented that he would have preferred that the first few pages of the sefer describe the mitzvah of oneg Shabbos and our pleasure on Shabbos. Children shouldn't view Shabbos as a day of restrictions but instead as a day of pleasure and joy. And then they should study the restrictions.

A *mashal* is told about a small town that had only one grocery. Sometimes, the owner would become angry at the customers and shout at them. Eventually, another grocery store opened, competing with his store. Now, he was careful to speak respectfully to all customers because he knew they had another place to go if they felt slighted or insulted.

The *nimshal* is, in our generation, children have where to go. If parents don't show them love and instead shout and belittle them, the children might decide to find solace elsewhere, outside the house. So, we need to be cautious to demonstrate to our children that they are always loved, wanted, and respected for who they are.

### **Olam HaBa**

On the pasuk ויתרוצצו הבנים בקרבה, Rashi explains that Yaakov and Eisav were fighting in the womb about

who will inherit the two worlds, Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa.

The Baal HaTurim says that they came to a compromise. Yaakov will receive Olam HaBa, and Eisav will get Olam HaZeh.

The Kedushas Levi (*Vayishlach*) teaches, "The Baal HaTurim states that Yaakov took Olam HaBa and Eisav took Olam HaZeh. Although there are wealthy Yidden, they have a lot of distress and agony [so they don't really enjoy Olam HaZeh]. There are some exceptions. These are the wealthy Yidden who use their wealth to serve Hashem. They can enjoy their wealth because Yaakov took the Olam HaZeh related to Olam HaBa."

So, Yaakov inherited Olam HaBa and all of Olam HaZeh when needed to attain Olam HaBa.

*Bederech tzachus*, the Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* described what the division

of the worlds between Yaakov and Eisav probably looked like:

One Shabbos, Eisav entered Yaakov's tent and saw Yaakov seated at the table with his students, enjoying a large meal with fish, meat, and other good foods. Eisav said, "We agreed that Olam HaZeh is mine! You don't have a right to all of this."

Yaakov explained to him that Shabbos is מעין עולם הבא, an experience 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 meal again. "What happened today?"

"Today is *rosh chodesh*, and it is also like Olam HaBa..."

Thursday, Eisav returned to Yaakov's tent, and he saw Yaakov and his students eating another excellent meal. "What right do you

have to this meal?" Eisav asked.

"We just finished *masechta Bava Kama*, and this is a *seudas siyum*. Come tomorrow to the beis medresh. 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. They were discussing שנים ארוזין בטלית, and he quickly understood what he would have to put up with in the beis medresh for the next few months, so he ran away and went to Yishmael.

"What should I do with my brother, Yaakov?" Eisav asked Yishmael. "We made a deal that I inherit Olam HaZeh, and he inherits Olam HaBa, but he's taking both worlds!"

Yishmael replied, "Tell Yaakov that your knowledge that you won't receive Olam HaBa causes you to lose enjoyment in Olam HaZeh.

So ultimately, you aren't getting either world."

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

Eisav was very happy with this answer. He can enjoy Olam HaZeh and earn Olam HaBa too. He is now equal with his brother because they will both get two worlds.

When Eisav died, the *malachim* brought 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 will go to Gehinom. You don't have a right to Olam HaBa," and they whisked him off to Gehinom.