

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Vayishlach

November 23, 2018

A Taste of Torah

A Second Chance

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman

When discussing Eisav, we tend to imagine someone with bad character traits, an individual who disgraces G-d and His commandments. In fact, it is not uncommon for schools, when teaching young children the verse (Bereishis 25:34) "And Yaakov gave Eisav bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and he got up and left; and Eisav disgraced the first-born birthright," to explain as follows: "[Eisav] ate and drank" - without a blessing beforehand; "and he got up" - without reciting *Birchas Hamazon* (Grace after Meals); "and left" - without kissing the mezuzah; "and Eisav disgraced the birthright."

This is a very elementary understanding of Eisav and this verse, however. Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky (1891-1986) once pointed out that although the Talmud (Shabbos 21b) praises the learning of one's youth, one should not remain with only the immature, youthful view of Torah. Rather, one should examine and reexamine his understanding of every aspect of the Torah.

In our parsha, we find two interesting observations which indicate that the childish perception of Eisav is incomplete. In the beginning of this week's parsha, when Yaakov and his family meet Eisav, Yaakov addresses Eisav as master. While Yaakov was certainly trying to keep Eisav happy so that he not attack him, referring to him as "my master" seems a bit extreme. Why would Yaakov accord Eisav such great respect?

Another puzzling item in this week's parsha is that Yaakov was taken to task for hiding his daughter Dina

from Eisav. Yaakov feared Eisav would take her as a wife, but was held accountable due to Dina's potential to return Eisav to virtuous conduct. If Eisav was such a wicked person, why would Yaakov be punished from holding Dina back from him?

Rabbi Kamenetzky explains based on a Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim; 1809-1879), who compares Yaakov and Eisav to Yissochor and Zevulun, the two tribes who created a partnership wherein the members of Yissochor studied Torah and were supported financially by the members of Zevulun, who engaged in business and trade. A similar plan was in place for Yaakov and Eisav. The birthright was originally supposed to be given to Eisav, who would engage the world and support his brother Yaakov, who would devote his life to Torah study.

However, Eisav did not agree to this partnership and rejected the birthright. Now, when Yaakov was set to meet up with Eisav, he wanted to see if Eisav was willing to reconsider and accept this partnership. Yaakov therefore greeted Eisav in an honorable way as a means of opening him up to the possibility. We can now also understand why Yaakov was punished for withholding Dina from Eisav, as she could have helped Eisav achieve his mission in life.

When dealing with people, especially difficult people, we would do well to remember not to judge a book by its cover. There is a purpose and reason for everyone's existence, and we should try to encourage people to use their talents to achieve their goals and missions in life.

Stories for the Soul

Perfectly Normal

A man who had a child after many years of marriage boasted that Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (1899-1985; known as the Steipler) had promised him a son and that this promise had been fulfilled.

Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach (1899-2001) visited the Steipler to verify the man's claim. When it was confirmed, Rabbi Shach, who came from a Lithuanian (non-Chassidic) background, told the Steipler, "It is not our practice to perform miracles."

"Let me tell you what happened," responded Rabbi Kanievsky. "This man pleaded with me for a child, and I gave him a blessing. He said he was not satisfied with a blessing; he wanted a promise that he'd have a child. I told him there was no way I could promise him anything. But he was insistent and would not leave. I wanted to get back to my Torah learning, but I could not convince the man to leave, so I finally said 'Alright, I promise you a child.'

"Afterward, I thought, 'How could I have done such a thing, to make such a promise?' So I said Tehillim (Psalms) for him."

Rabbi Shach replied, "Oh, so you said Tehillim? That's not performing a miracle."

In this week's parsha, along with sending a hefty gift to his brother Eisav and preparing for a possible battle, Yaakov engages in prayer, asking G-d to save him. The power of prayer is of equal importance to one's material efforts toward success, and should never be underestimated.

Kollel Happenings

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CAUSING A FIRE AT DEC. 5 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Matisyahu Rosen, former manager at Eli's Electrical, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they discuss this hot topic. September 5th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

RABANIT MIZRACHI AT THREE LOCATIONS!

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel presents a video class for women by Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi, *Kislev - Month of Rededication*. Three locations! **Sunday**, Nov. 25 at the Fine home, 1664 Wolff St.; **Monday**, Nov. 26, at the Stern home, 391 S. Leyden St.; **Monday**, Nov. 26, at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.. Doors open at 7:45 pm, presentation at 8 pm. No charge, suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

JEWISH COMMUNITY EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25TH

Join the Kollel and JOI for family fun at the annual Jewish Community Extravaganza on Tuesday, Dec. 25th, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: 7.50/adult, \$15/child. Admission includes access to Lollipop Park, ice skating, and other attractions. To register, visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: How many times each Shabbos is there a requirement of *lechem mishna* (using two loaves)?

A: The minimum is twice, as some do not require the third Shabbos meal to have bread. As for the maximum amount of times; there is no maximum! If one eats extra non-

required meals on Shabbos or Yom Tov, two challahs should still be used for each meal (Sources: Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 291:4 and 5.) **This week's question:** What is generally prohibited on Shabbos, but is permitted to do while learning about the prohibition?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Moshe Sofer, Chasam Sofer Part XXI

These yeshivos would send their top students to the main yeshiva in Pressburg, thus ensuring a continuous cycle of developing the top talent of Torah scholarship while simultaneously educating one and all in traditional Torah Judaism.

The Chasam Sofer's greatness in Torah made him one of the preeminent halachic authorities of his era. Questions in halacha came to him from across Europe and the world. Some 1,370 responsa were published following his passing.

Rabbi Moshe Sofer passed away on October 3, 1839; 25 Tishrei, 5600 on the Jewish calendar, after the Sukkos holiday. It is said that during his final days, he commented, "I made it through Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, but I didn't make it through Hoshana Rabbah." (Hoshana Rabbah, the seventh day of Sukkos, is regarded as the final phase of the Days of Judgement that began with Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.)

The story of the burial place of the Chasam Sofer is also quite fascinating. He was buried in a cemetery in Bratislava; many of his family members are buried there, as well. In 1943, the cemetery was seized for the construction of a roadway. Negotiations with the wartime regime led to the preservation of the part

of the cemetery that contained the Chasam Sofer's grave as well as 23 other graves surrounding it, consisting mostly of other prominent rabbinical personalities. This area was encased in a concrete enclosure beneath the roadway. (The other graves in the cemetery were exhumed and reburied elsewhere.)

There are various reasons given as to why the anti-Semitic WWII government of Hungary agreed to this arrangement. Some say a hefty bribe was paid. Others claim there was considerable foreign pressure, while yet others posit that there was fear of a curse that would befall those involved in defiling and desecrating the grave of the great Chasam Sofer, whose reputation was known even to the gentile society.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence by Slovakia in 1992, great efforts were made to restore access to the graves. An organization called the International Committee for Preservation of Gravesites of Ge'onai Pressburg was created to manage the work of relocating tram tracks that ran over the cemetery and to create a mausoleum for the graves. With the support of the Bratislava municipality, the restoration process was completed in 2002, and the graves are now accessible.