



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Toldos

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A Taste of Torah Lentils, Lines, and Lawbreaking

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

“Read between the lines” is a solid piece of advice that ought to be employed in one’s quest for understanding any given situation. Indeed, statements from our Sages are replete with examples of “between the lines” interpretations for many halachos, as well as for many of the events recorded in the Torah and Books of the Prophets.

In this week’s parsha, Eisav famously asks for some of “that red stuff,” the lentils that Yaakov was cooking for Yitzchak as a mourner’s meal, and agrees to exchange the lentils for his firstborn birthright. The Torah records this story in a derogatory light; by selling the birthright, which would determine who would lead the spiritual functions of the children of Yitzchak, for mere food, Eisav showed disrespect and a lack of appreciation toward the firstborn status and the special service of Hashem that it stood for.

Chazal (the Mishnaic and Talmudic Sages), with their keen ability to read between the lines by means of the *medrashic* (exegetical) tools passed down to them from Mt. Sinai, understand the Torah’s recounting of the above episode as detailing a great more deal of foul play than simply degrading the firstborn status. For instance, the Talmud (Bava Basra 16b) cites the verse “and Eisav came from the field and he was tired (Bereishis 26:29),” and deduces from the particular word used to express “tired,” which appears elsewhere in the context of murder, that Eisav committed murder on that day. In fact, the Talmud (Bava Basra *ibid.*),

based on additional interpretations of the verses in the Torah, teach that on the day that Eisav sold the birthright, he committed five sins: He violated a betrothed woman, committed murder, denied the power of the Almighty, denied the Resurrection of the Dead, and degraded the birthright. Leave it to Chazal to shed proper light on the between the lines happenings of the parsha!

The obvious question is, why did the Torah leave such grave sins on the sidelines and only detail the sin of degrading the firstborn status, whose severity seems to pale in comparison to murder, violating a betrothed woman, and denying the basic precepts of Judaism? Additionally, it would seem that an event or idea described between the lines, albeit via *medrashic* means, should have some inference from the event or idea described within the lines. What implication does degrading the firstborn status contain regarding the performance of the above grave sins?

Rabbi Aharon Kotler (1891-1962) explains that the Torah is teaching us the source and harbinger of Eisav’s most serious infractions. The source of Eisav’s violation of some very severe sins lies in the seemingly less-significant act of degrading the birthright. Rabbi Kotler explains that the determining factor of how a person will live his life lies in his appreciation or lack of appreciation for all things spiritual. A person who recognizes that every mitzvah performed and every word of Torah learned means eternal spiritual reward and connection to G-d will make every

Stories for the Soul

Time for Truth

The Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz; 1878-1953) held a daily *minyan* for *mincha* in his home early in the afternoon. One day, only nine people had arrived at the scheduled time, and it took some time until the tenth person arrived.

As the tenth person entered, another individual present approached the Chazon Ish with a question. He explained that he had scheduled a meeting with someone based upon the anticipated time for *mincha* to begin. Because things were running late, staying for *mincha* now meant he’d be late for his meeting. Should he stay so there would be a *minyan*, asked the man, or should he leave so as to arrive on time for the meeting?

The Chazon Ish replied, “For those who are committed to *emes* (truth), this is not a question.” The man left, and the Chazon Ish did not have a *minyan* in his home that day.

Yaakov was a man of truth. Even in situations that required him to act with guile, such as getting the blessings that were rightfully his, he did his utmost to speak and act as truthfully as he possibly could.

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Kollel Happenings

THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION ON ZOOM

The Story of Creation is one of the most cryptic parts of the Torah – yet it is also the very beginning of the Torah! Join Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky on Monday nights, 7:10-7:55 pm, for a seven-part Zoom series focused on achieving a deeper perspective of the Seven Days of Creation. These classes, based on the teachings of the brilliant Torah scholar and teacher Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, will allow you to get re-acquainted with some of the fundamentals of Torah in a deeper fashion. Visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org for more info.

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

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Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: What do breadcrumbs have to do with poverty?

Answer: The Gemara (Chullin 105b) states that one should gather breadcrumbs after eating, as leaving them in a place where they will be stepped upon brings poverty. This is

codified in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 180:4). One should therefore sweep up crumbs that have fallen from a bread meal (see Vivos Habrachta 5761 ed. Ch. 2 Kavod Hapas 3 [pg. 18]).

This week's question: When is it problematic to leave bread hanging?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part IV

Many Jews were attracted to the Karaite movement, in no small part because it had become attractive for rich, cultured Jews living in Moslem lands. This led young Rav Saadia to launch a battle that would stem the influence and spread of the Karaites. This was no small feat and took great courage, as many wealthy, influential Jews were part of the Karaite communities, and would likely become enraged at the attacks levelled against their belief system.

Besides publishing a book against the Karaite movement, Rav Saadia wrote letters and proclamations against their ideas, debated them, and spoke

sharply against those who identified with the Karaites. It wasn't long before he faced significant backlash from the Karaite Jews in Egypt, and he soon faced serious persecution from those who sought to silence his successful campaign against their belief system.

The danger Rav Saadia faced in Egypt forced him to leave Egypt at around the age of thirty, and he relocated to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he apparently lived in the city of Teveria (Tiberias) until the year 921. Undeterred by his experiences in Egypt, Saadia continued his relentless battle against the Karaites during his time in Teveria.

A Taste of Torah

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effort possible to do those mitzvos and learn that Torah which will lead the way to such amazing reward and connection to G-d. Similarly, the same person realizes that every infraction of the Torah means losing out on eternal reward and connection to G-d, and will stay ever so far away from any such an infraction, however minor. However, a person who lacks this appreciation will find it all the more difficult to perform the mitzvos and abstain from sin, since he lacks the perspective of the eternal loss failing to do mitzvos and sinning can cause. It is such a person who can come to violate the gravest of sins. Thus, it is truly appropriate that the

main sin listed, which boils down to a lack of regard of what it means to be the firstborn and the privileges of serving Hashem and opportunities for spiritual achievement that come with it, is the one that led to the rest of the more egregious acts perpetrated by Eisav. The other sins that Eisav perpetrated can indeed be linked to the events that are detailed "inside of the lines."

Let us endeavor to truly appreciate the power and worth of the mitzvos we do and the Torah we learn, which ultimately will prove to be the greatest asset in our quests to living Torah true lives!

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