בס"ד



Parshas Toldot

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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The Essence of Eisav Being Kofer B'ikur

Parshas Toldos
Rabbi Yissocher Frand

We all know the story: Eisav came in from the field exhausted while Yaakov was cooking lentil soup. Eisav wanted the lentil soup. Yaakov sold it to him in exchange for the "*bechora*" (the first-born rights).

The Gemara (Bava Basra 16b) states that this event took place on the day Avraham Avinu died, while Yaakov was preparing the customary mourner's food (i.e., lentil soup) to comfort his father Yitzchak. The Gemara further states that on this very day, the wicked Eisav transgressed five major *aveiros* (sins): He violated a *na'arah ha'meorosa* (betrothed young bride); he murdered someone; he was *kofer b'ikur* (denied the existence of the *Ribono shel Olam*); he denied the resurrection of the dead; and he shamed the status of being a firstborn.

The Gemara, in its classic style, cites proofs that each of these *aveiros* was committed:

How do we know he violated a *na'arah ha'meorosa*? It says here, "and Eisav came in from *ha**sadeh*** (the field)" (Bereshis

25:29), and it says there (by a case of rape), "*ba**sadeh***" (for he found her in the field) (Devorim 22:27).
How do we know he murdered someone? It says here "***ayef***" (exhausted) (Bereshis 25:29), and it says there (by a case of murder), "*ki **ayefah** nafshi l'horgim*" (my soul has been exhausted by the killers) (Yirmiyah 4:31).
How do we know he was *kofer b'ikur*? Here it says "*Lamah **zeh** li bechora*?" (What use do I have for the birthright?) (Bereshis 25:32) and there (by the *shiras hayam*), it says "***Zeh** Keli v'anveihu*" (Shemos 15:2).
How do we know he denied the resurrection of the dead? It says, "Behold I am going to die." (Bereshis 25:32).
How do we know he belittled the *bechora*? It says, "And Eisav belittled the *bechora*" (Bereshis 25:34).
The truth is that each of these five *aveiros* needs a more elaborate proof. We will focus on just one of these five *aveiros* – the fact that he was *kofer b'ikur*. The Gemara in Bava Basra makes a *gezeira shava* linking the word "***zeh***" in our parsha (*lamah **zeh** li bechora*) with the word "***zeh***" by *Krias Yam Suf* (***Zeh** Keli v'anveihu*).
The current Tolna Rebbe has a very interesting take on this: How do we see the connection between these two *pesukim*? Many of us are familiar with the *chazal* that says — based on the pasuk "*Zeh keli v'anveihu*" — that at the time of the splitting of the Yam Suf, a mere handmaiden saw the *Ribono shel Olam* with more clarity than Yechezkel and the other great prophets in their prophetic visions. At Krias Yam Suf, they were actually able to point to Him and say – ***Zeh** Keli*: **This** is my G-d!

This is an amazing phenomenon because less than a week earlier, at Krias Yam Suf, this very same handmaiden and this very same *Klal Yisrael*were on the edge of the spiritual abyss – on the "forty-ninth level of the gates of impurity," and were indistinguishable in their practice of idolatry from the Egyptians. ("These worship idols, and these worship idols" (Medrash Tehillim Shochar Tov 15:5.)) Now, less than a week later, they surpassed Yechezkel and the other great prophets in their prophetic clarity! Based on the Rambam's description of how a *navi* must prepare to receive Divine Prophecy, this "instant *nevuah*" seems incomprehensible! It is the equivalent of accelerating from zero to sixty in three seconds!

How did that happen? It happened because the *Ribono shel Olam* gives us this power of renewal. No matter how far a person has fallen, or how low he has gone, the *Ribono shel Olam* gives every person the capacity to do *teshuva* and to rise above his past. That is how this could happen. The *Ribono shel Olam* implanted this *koach* into all of us!

The Gemara records (Kiddushin 49b) that if a person tells a woman "Behold I am betrothed to you on condition that I am a complete *tzadik,*" even if he is a completely wicked person, there exists a doubt nevertheless that the *kiddushin* may be valid because "perhaps he has had thoughts of repentance in his heart." Every one of us has the possibility of making a change in attitude or a change in perspective that places us on a path of *teshuva*. The *Ribono shel Olam* gave us the ability to change and even to change overnight.

When Eisav said the words "*Lamah zeh li bechorah*?" he was in effect saying: I have no use for the birthright. I am too far

gone. I just violated a betrothed young girl. I just murdered someone. Now you want to give me the *avodah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* (Divine Temple service), which is what the *bechora* is all about? Give me a break! I am too far gone. It is impossible that I will ever come back.

That, says the Tolner Rebbe, is Eisav's *aveira* of being "*kofer b'ikur.*" Eisav did not make a proclamation: "I don't believe in G-d. There is no such thing as G-d." No! Rather, Eisav denied the *Ribono shel Olam* by denying that the *Ribono shel Olam* gave everyone the power of *teshuva*. Saying "I can't change. I can't do *teshuva*. I can't become a better person" is a denial of the power the *Ribono shel Olam* gave everyone, which is in effect denying the *Ribono shel Olam*. That is the "*kofer b'ikur*" aspect of "*Lamah zeh li bechora*?"

This idea relates to a teaching of the Kotzker Rebbe (Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk 1787-1859). The Kotzker examines the special connotation of Eisav's request "*hal'iteinee nah min ha'adom ha'adom hazeh.*" The word *hal'iteinee* appears in a Mishna in Maseches Shabbos (155b) that talks about how to feed an animal – what you are allowed to do and what you are not allowed to do: "One may not stuff a camel (*ayn ovsin*); nor may he cram it (*v'lo dorsin*); but he may put food down its throat (*aval mal'itin*)" The exact translation of these three verbs may be imprecise, but the expression "*hal'iteinee*" (the third one we mentioned) is something that someone does to an animal. That is how an animal eats.

Eisav was in effect saying, "I am an animal." People don't use the expression "*hal'iteinee*." Eisav viewed himself as an animal. Animals cannot change, as the Gemara (Bava Kama 65b) states

“a one-day old ox is called an ox; a one-day-old ram is called a ram.” That is how Eisav viewed himself – incapable of change, no different than an animal. Therefore, of what use is the birthright to me? That was his “*kofer b’ikur*.”

Rivka Was a Bit Less Sensitive to Eisav’s Wives Than Yitzchok

Towards the end of the parsha, when Eisav was forty years old, he married two Chitite women, who caused great *moras ruach* (aggravation) to Yitzchak and to Rivka. The Yalkut Shimoni notes that the *pasuk* first mentions the *moras ruach* caused to Yitzchak and seems to imply that Rivka’s *moras ruach* came a bit later. Somehow, Yitzchak’s visceral negative reaction to his daughters-in-law came much earlier than that of Rivka. Why was that?

The Yalkut explains that since Rivka grew up in a home of idol worshippers, she was not as offended by the actions of Eisav’s wives as was her husband, who grew up in the home of Avraham and Sora. Yitzchak was repulsed by *Avodah Zarah from* birth. That is why he immediately could not stand the wives of his son, Eisav. Rivka, says the Medrash, did not have that same level of initial reaction.

What is the point of this Medrash? Does it want to emphasize that Yitzchak was better than Rivka? I don’t think so. The point of this Medrash is that even though Rivka was a *tzadekes* and she had now been removed from her childhood home for so many decades, the fact that early on in her life she was exposed to *Avodah Zarah* caused her to be somewhat less sensitive to the *Avodah Zarah,* and therefore it just did not

elicit the same reaction from her as it did from Yitzchak. A person can become inured to it. Exposure to things that should be repulsive inevitably causes a loss of the visceral reaction that a person should have to such matters.

This is very prevalent in our day and age. I recently had a related discussion with someone. Baruch Hashem, my children are grown, and one of the advantages of being in my current stage of life is that I do not need to drive carpool anymore. But I served my time, and I drove carpool for many years. When I would drive carpool, I would turn on the radio in the morning to listen to the news. We are going back almost forty years now.

However, I don't think people can listen to the radio nowadays with children in the car! How do people deal with all the corruption and depravity of our political leaders and candidates for office? How do people deal with all that they hear on the radio? Now the question becomes – if this "news" is so corrupting for our children, why don't we shut the radio off right away even when only **we** hear such stories? The answer is that we have been hearing such lurid stories for so long that we have lost our sensitivity to them. We have lost our sensitivity to what is reported, and we have lost our sensitivity to bad language.

"My sin I recall today" (Bereshis 41:9). I once went to Brooklyn College for a short time. I had a psychology professor who was a *menuval* (disgusting person). But whenever he would ever utter foul language, he would excuse himself and say "I am sorry to say this in front of the women." This means at least that he maintained a sensitivity that a person should not use

curse words in front of women. But today, women curse as much as anyone else! Outrageous language is used, and inappropriate subject matters are discussed even on what is considered “family programming.” I would not consider NPR (National Public Radio) “R-Rated” or “X-Rated”. They are typically just reporting the news, but the news is outrageous. This is what *chazal* are teaching about Rivka’s habituation with *Avodah Zarah from* her childhood home. After a while, it becomes just water off a duck’s back. That is not the way it should be. Even Rivka the *tzadekes,* because of her exposure when she was three years old, did not have the same reaction as Yitchak Avinu to Eisav’s wives’ behavior.

Clothing Alone Do Not Make the Man

Parshas Toldos

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

This week’s parsha contains the story of Yakov and Eisav, the two brothers who went their different ways. Yakov was righteous, and Eisav was wicked.

The Rabbis teach that although Eisav was wicked, there was one thing that he did extremely well. His performance of the command to honor parents was exemplary. He was a ‘chosid’ at performing this mitzvah.

The Medrash Rabbah records that the Tanna, Rabban Shimeon ben Gamliel, bemoaned that although he served his father his entire life, his actions did not measure up to even one percent of what Eisav did for his father, Yitzchak.

“When I served my father, I served him in my regular, dirty clothes; but when I went out in public, I would wear clean (e.g., distinguished) clothing. However, Eisav would only serve his father wearing royal clothing as if he was serving a king…”
Rav Shimeon ben Gamliel was bemoaning his inability to serve his father properly. The Succas Dovid asks a simple question: there was an easy solution — Rav Shimeon ben Gamliel should have simply worn his good clothing when he served his father!
The answer is that Rav Shimeon ben Gamliel was not bemoaning his inability to wear good clothing. He was bemoaning the attitude difference between Eisav and himself. He certainly could have worn good clothing, but that would have been a hollow act. Eisav wore royal clothing for his father because he sensed that he was dealing with a king when he dealt with his father. Rav Shimeon ben Gamliel was not bemoaning the fact that he was missing the clothing — he was bemoaning the fact that he was missing the sensitivity and emotion that Eisav felt for Yitzchak.
We can, in fact, interpret the Talmud in Yoma [47a] in the same way. The Talmud records that Kimchas had 7 sons who all became High Priests. She attributed this merit to the fact that “all my life, the rafters of my house never saw my hair”. She was so modest that even in the confines of her own home, she never removed her hair covering.
The Talmud comments, “Many women attempted to imitate Kimchas, but they did not have her success”. Why? The answer is the same.
It was not covering her hair per se that produced High Priests. Modesty is a reaction to an inner feeling that “I am in the

Presence of G-d". If a [married] woman would feel that she is always in the Presence of the Master of the World, then she would naturally never uncover her hair. But the act of simply covering the hair in the total privacy of one's home, when it is not because of the feeling of "I have set Hashem before me always..." [Tehillim 16:8] is merely a hollow act which will not produce High Priests.
This is a concept that we must contemplate. Sometimes there are things that we do that cause us to feel good and right and religious. Yet, we must ask ourselves — are we just doing the act, or are we doing that which is behind the act? It is not good enough to merely wear clothes or to do things that perhaps make us look more religious or feel more religious. We need the emotions and the feelings behind those acts to be the inspiration for the feeling of religiosity.

Glossary
chosid — exceptionally pious
Tanna — Rabbinical personality from the time of the Mishneh.
Brochos — Blessings

TRUE VALUE

Written by SHIMON KAPLIN

עשו sold the בכורה for a pot of lentils. The question is very obvious: How can יעקב buy "רוחניות "for a pot of soup?! A איד came before the חיים חפץ saying, "I'm so poor. I haven't got any money. Maybe God can reward me in this world with the reward of wearing תפילין for one day?" The

חיים חפץ responded with the following משל : You go into a little shop with a 10,000 ruble banknote (in our currency a £100,000 banknote) to buy a box of matches which costs 30p! Maybe with a ten pound note you might get change. But with a £100,000 note you can't buy a box of matches! Said the ליכא עלמא בהאי מצוה שכר: "חיים חפץ – You can't receive reward for a מצוה in this world! It's impossible currency. It's too big." Accordingly, how can יעקב buy רוחניות in this world with a pot of lentil soup?!

On the other hand, we see in רשעים : דרך השם receive הצלחה in this world to be paid for their few מצוות . Clearly, we see it is possible to receive reward for a מצוה in this world? Do מצוות have a currency in this world or not? A man came to his Rebbe crying, "I haven't got any money. I need money desperately." The Rebbe gave the poor fellow a ruble and exclaimed, "The next offer you are offered to buy with a ruble, buy it immediately." On his way home, he stops over at an inn. He sits down in the bar and in come three merchants. The three merchants notice the poor man in the corner with his tattered clothes and begin to ridicule him. As the night goes on, they drink more and become more drunk. Then they say to him, "We have real סחורה .Do you want to buy anything from us?! How much have you got?" Embarrassed and ashamed, the poor man replies, "1 ruble!" They all snap up in laughter, saying, "We don't even own anything worth one ruble!" Then, one of them jumps up and remarks, "Actually, I do have something worth 1 ruble which I am willing to sell you. I will sell you my הבא עולם for 1 ruble." "Fine," said the Jew, "I will go ahead with the deal. But I want a שטר .I want it written clearly." They write a clear שטר and the other two merchants sign their names. He had succeeded with what the Rebbe told him. Half drunk, the merchant goes upstairs and tells his wife about the recent deal he just made with a ruble! Not only was his wife not impressed, she exclaimed, "Listen here. I'm not living with a man who has no הבא עולם. Why should I live with a hopeless man?! Go now and buy it back!" He tumbles back down the stairs and asks the Jew to return his הבא עולם . The איד is firm and does not give in so easily, because after

all the Rebbe assured him that the next deal worth a ruble will be worthwhile! “I’ll give 10 ruble… 100 ruble’s!!” said the merchant. The איד did not hear of it. A deal is a deal. “How much do you want?” asked the merchant. “1000 rubles,” replied the איד. “Are you mad?” screamed the merchant, “I’m not paying such a big amount of money!” The next day they went to the Rov and the Rov פסקנד that the merchant must give 1000 rubles if he wants his הבא עולם back. “Rebbe! I don’t understand,” cried the merchant, “last night my הבא עולם was worth 1 ruble, and now suddenly it’s worth 1000?!” The Rebbe explained: “When you sold it, you weren’t מחשיב the רוחניות. הבא עולם has a value according to how much you are מחשיב it. You weren’t מחשיב it, so it was taka worth 1 ruble! Later, once you *chapped* what a fool you were, you began to be מחשיב your הבא עולם; taka, it’s now worth 1000 rubles.” Once your wife knocked some sense into you, it’s taka worth a large amount of money. “ויבז עשו את הבכורה– “He disgraced the בכרה .He was מבזה it. He didn’t care. He made it worth nothing. Taka: it was then worth nothing; all it was worth was a pot of lentils! רוחניות is worth according to how you value it.

Despise is a strong word!!!

Written by Rafi Jager

Esav came home from the fields hungry, and his brother Yaakov was preparing food. Esav asked for some food and Yaakov agreed on condition that he give over his birthright to him. Esav readily agreed to this, feeling that he did not need it. After eating, the Torah tells us that Esav “ate and drank, got up and left” and then it
adds: VAYIVEZ ESAV ET HABECHORA, “and Esav despised the birthright”.(Gen, 25,34)

The Dubnow Maggid poses a question. Why do we believe that Esav despised the birthright? Maybe we can justify his selling the birthright. After all, he came home starved, and perhaps he felt that unless he ate

something immediately he would starve to death. He was prepared to give away anything in exchange for food. To him it was a matter of PIKU'ACH NEFESH, of saving his life.
To this the Dubnow Maggid answers, if this were really so, that he was so starved that he sold his birthright to save his life, then after he finished eating and felt better, he should have said, what did I do? He should have protested. He should have argued with Yaakov that he only sold it to save himself, but he wants it back.
Since he did not protest but merely got up and left, then he obviously did not value it. He did, indeed, despise the birthright. Many times, we may do wrong things in the spur of the moment in desperation.
However, when we calm down, we should rethink our actions and take steps to rectify our mistakes. Good Shabbos

Live and kickin'... but no freechoice?

Written by D Fine

Rivkah is extremely puzzled at the start of Toldos. She has twins inside her stomache, and (as Rashi quotes on 25;22) one kicks to get out whenever they pass a house of idol worship, whilst the other kicks to get out when she passes the yeshiva of Shem v'Ever..and Rivkah doesn't necessarily know she is having twins! So, she seeks prophetic advice, and is told that she's having twins who will head two opposite nations.
The question is this: It is a basic axiom that to be able to be punished or rewarded, one must have free will. But if Esav was already kicking out to avodah zarah when still unborn, where was his free will? What hope did he have for later on in life?
The answer is (as the Ramchal points out in Derech Hashem 1;3;8) that free will does not mean that one has no urges. It could still be that one has a 90% pull to do an aveira, yet the fact that there is 10% fighting that urge (or even less) means that it is no longer inevitable that you must sin. And that's where your free will kicks in – you must decide whether

you will go with the 90 or the 10. So too here, Esav had a strong urge to do avodah zarah even in the womb, but when he grew older he had the tools to fight that urge.
The lesson for us is that it is perfectly natural to have urges to do things which are not 100% correct; are we going to give in or fight them? [or better still to use those same urges for good.eg gemarra shabbes 156a says that if someone has an urge for shedding blood, he should channel that urge by being a mohel].

Humor

- Why did the twins bring a ladder? To take their relationship to the next level.
- We're not clones—we're upgrades.
- Being a twin means spending your life arguing about who is the original and who is the remix.
- What do you call sheep that are identical twins? Double ewes.
- We don’t argue—we synchronize.
- Two peas, one very confused pod.
- Confucius knew the answers to all of life's questions, which is more than can be said of his twin brother, Confusion.
- Having a twin means always having someone to blame.
- What was Rapunzel’s ugly twin sister named? Repugnant.