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10 years of Points to Ponder on Parashas Toldos

**וְאֵ֛לֶּה תּֽוֹלְדֹ֥ת יִצְחָ֖ק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָ֑ם** **This is the history of Yitzchak the son of Avraham (25:19) – Rashi** notes that the Letzanei HaDor used to make a big deal of rumoring that Yitzchak was Avimelech’s child. **The Griz** notes that the bigger Chiddush was not mentioned – that a 90 year old Sarah had a baby! **Rav Schachter**  once noted that the world likes to claim that Jewish miracles are a bluff, they could not deny that Sarah had the baby, so they turned their attention to the conception. The arguments though, were pure Leitzanus – designed to say that Jewish life is stranger than fiction.

**אַבְרָהָ֖ם הוֹלִ֥יד אֶת־יִצְחָֽק Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak (25:19)** - Much commentary has been written to highlight what exactly Yitzchak’s leadership was. **Rav Schachter**  would often remind us (I believe in the name of the **Brisker Rav**), that Yitzchak’s nuance was in the idea that he did not need to create a Chiddush in the world. Sometimes we think people need to make major changes in order to demonstrate leadership but Yitzchak’s Chiddush was in the lesson that one does not always need a Chiddush to lead. **Rav Medan**  notes that the Chiddush is in Kevishat HaYetzer to simply make Chiddushim.

**אַבְרָהָ֖ם הוֹלִ֥יד אֶת־יִצְחָֽק Avraham begat Yitzchak (25:19) – Rashi** comments that the Letzanei HaDor – the clowns would say that it was from Avimelech that Sarah became pregnant. Why are they called Leitzanei HaDor – the clowns and not Rishei HaDor – the evil ones? **The Beis HaLevi** explains that had the 90 year old Sarah given birth to Avimelech’s baby instead of Avraham’s, it would be no less miraculous. Moreover, it was nonsensical to assume that Avimelech whose taking of Sarah caused a national fertility difficulty, was all of a sudden responsible for the birth of Yitzchak. So the people merely joked about it. Lest anyone revisit this historically and decide that there was truth to the rumor, Avraham Holid Es Yitzchak – Hashem made them look the same.

**אַבְרָהָ֖ם הוֹלִ֥יד אֶת־יִצְחָֽק**  **Avraham birthed Yitzchak (25:19)**– Rashi notes that the clarification was necessary because the Leitzanei HaDor (the sarcastic ones of the generation) would mock the family and declare that Sarah had been impregnated by Avimelech. Therefore, Hashem changed Yitzchak face to appear almost exactly as Avraham’s so as to remove all doubt. **HaGaon Rav Aharon Leib Steinman**  seems puzzled as to why Hashem would even bother to pay attention to those who mock? He explains that although normally we ignore those who are merely Leitzim, here it was necessary to respond since Avraham inspired Emunah into people and this series of rumors could have detrimental effects on those who had bought in to Avraham’s system. It was for them that Hashem responded. (We find a similar thing by Dovid HaMelech with his son Kilav).

**וַיְהִ֤י יִצְחָק֙ בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִ֣ים שָׁנָ֔ה  Yitzchak was 40 years old when he married Rivka (25:20)**- When Yitzchak became 40, he entered the world of Binah. **Rav Gifter .** explains that this was time he wanted to be married. The goal of marriage is the continuity of generations. This is the concept of Davar Mitoch Davar. That is what Binah is all about.

**וַתַּ֖הַר רִבְקָ֥ה אִשְׁתּֽוֹ And Hashem answered his prayers and his wife Rivka became pregnant (25:21) – Rashi**explains that Hashem answered Yitzchak because he was a Tzaddik Ben Tzaddik as opposed to her. One would assume that he was able to channel the Zechus of his parents into the situation to assist his tefillah. **Rav Chaim Kamil** . suggests that it is harder to be a Tzaddik Ben Tzaddik than a Tzaddik Ben Rasha. The latter sees the ways of the parent and inherently knows not to act that way. The Tzaddik Ben Tzaddik needs to overcome the desire to be lazy and merely rely on Zechus Avos.  By Yitzchak using his own efforts, Hashem heard his tefillah since it came from a place that overcame complacency.

**וַיִּתְרֹֽצֲצ֤וּ הַבָּנִים֙ בְּקִרְבָּ֔הּ  And the children fought within her and she said if this is the case then why am I here? (25:22)** – Rashi cites a Midrash that notes that each time she passed either a Beis  Avodah  Zara or a Yeshiva, she felt “the baby” trying to jump out. She worried about the disparate interests of the child and, in desperation, sought out advice from Shem. Yet, when she was told that there were two children with two different natures, she was calm. Why? **Rav Shlomo Wolbe** . explains that although knowing that a child will be born with a difficult nature is a tough challenge, a child who is confused and drawn to multiple, opposing directions in life is an even greater challenge as it makes it more difficult for him/her to set a course and make choices for a future. Rivka noted that if she already saw in utero, that the child was opposingly directed, how would she be able to raise him and educate him properly?

**וַיִּתְרֹֽצֲצ֤וּ הַבָּנִים֙ בְּקִרְבָּ֔הּ They were struggling inside of her (25:22)-** The midrash notes that whenever she went past a home of Avoda Zara, Eisav tried to jump out. But how was that possible if the Yetzer HaRa only enters a person at birth? **The Maharal** explains that there is a difference between a Yetzer HaRa which does not enter the person to mess him up and the nature of a person which is there no matter what. Eisav had a bad nature. **Rav Schachter**  used to tell us that thisi s part of why there is a Halacha that Eisav Sonei L”Yaakov.

**וַיִּתְרֹֽצֲצ֤וּ הַבָּנִים֙ בְּקִרְבָּ֔הּ The children rumbled inside of her (25:22)** - Chazal tell us that when Yaakov was in Rivkah’s womb, he tried to escape every time Rivkah passed a beis medrash. Why would he want to escape when he was learning with a malach who was teaching him the entire Torah? **Rav Shimon Sofer** explained that  you can have the best teacher in the world, but if the person sitting next to you is a bad fit, it is difficult to learn and you might need to get out..

ו**ַתֵּ֖לֶךְ לִדְר֥שׁ She went to ask Hashem (25:22)** - Rivka went to ask Shem. Why didn’t she ask Yitzchak? He was the Gadol Hador?! **Rav Yisrael Reisman**  suggested that you don’t need to tell someone something that is going to just cause him pain. Rivka thought that there was something terribly wrong with her child. Telling her husband would just cause him pain. That was unnecessary.

**שְׁנֵ֤י גוֹיִם֙**  **There are 2 nations inside of you (25:23)** – The Midrash comments that Eisav was proud of his reign while Yaakov was inspired by his world**.  Rav Shaul Yisraeli .** commented that  this is one of the fundamental differences between Eisav and Yaakov. Bnei Eisav focus on their own achievements – their bridges, their stadiums, their conquests wherein might makes right. Bnei Yisrael were the first nation to include the concept of unity in the world – that is, to establish an international system of functioning wherein individual strengths are brought to work for the greater goal of unity.

**שְׁנֵ֤י גוֹיִם֙**   **Two nations are inside your womb (25:23)** – Chazal Tell us that Rivka felt dual pushing inside her when she was pregnant – toward Avoda Zara and toward a life of spirituality. The uncertainty of what the future of her children held for her, led her to seek prophesy from Shem. **Rav Wolbe .** points out that  his response – about the 2 nations with 2 distinct missions – was not one of simultaneous domination but rather of numerous conflicts wherein while one rises the other will fall. Rav Wolbe adds that it is in our hands to determine the outcome of the struggle – for when the voice is the voice of Yaakov in earnest then the hands of Eisav have no potency.

**וַיְהִ֣י עֵשָׂ֗ו אִ֛ישׁ יֹדֵ֥עַ צַ֖יִד אִ֣ישׁ שָׂדֶ֑ה**  **Ish Saeh – A man of the field (25:27)** – What does it mean to be an Ish Sadeh? **Rav Soloveitchik .** Described the Ish Sadeh as the overestimation of the self and the excessive absorption with business, politics and things “outside”. Excessive Sadeh Education makes man an Ish Tzayid – a hunter totally uninterested in the plight of his prey.

**וַיְהִ֣י עֵשָׂ֗ו אִ֛ישׁ יֹדֵ֥עַ צַ֖יִד אִ֣ישׁ שָׂדֶ֑ה**  **Esav was a hunter,  a man of the field. (25:27)** – **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide . (Sam Derech**) explains that in life we can have many different ways of serving Hashem. We just need to recognize Hashem in each of the paths. Yitzchak thought that this was the case with Esav who would serve Hashem through hunting. However, Esav was an Ish Sadeh – all he knew and all he spoke about was hunting. His entire essence was the field. Nothing more.

**אִ֛ישׁ יֹדֵ֥עַ צַ֖יִד אִ֣ישׁ שָׂדֶ֑ה A man of the field (22:27)** - What is a man of the field**? Rav Soloveitchik .** explained that a man of the field has no boundaries in his life and no restraint. This style of growth, without any rules is problematic to us.

**כִּי־צַ֣יִד בְּפִ֑יו  Because he was a hunter in his words (25:28)** - **Rav Eliyahu Dessler** writes that Esav was an impressive spiritual leader: “Esav is the founder of the school of hypocrites that remains with us until today. It was Esav’s innovation to violate every commandment and yet appear, to all the world, as an honorable man, untouched by scandal. This so-called gentleman is a complete lie, and everything he does is meant to promote and protect his inauthentic life of lies.” **Sivan Rahav Meir** adds that we hear about such honorable and appealing, yet fake, people until today. It is for this reason that our parasha comes along to remind us to check if the  individual we see in front of us is all that s/he appears to be. We need to examine him/her to see what may be hidden beneath his/her personal charm and charisma, and not be blinded by external appearances.

**The deal between Esav and Yaakov (25:29-34)** – The gemara (Bava Basra 16b) castigates Esav for violating 5 prohibitions that day. It also highlights his inability to even ask for food by name but rather to refer to it as “the Red thing.” Why such negativity about a man who remembered to say “please?” **Rav Yosef Carmel**  explains that in Hebrew the word “Nah” can either refer to “Please” or to a state that means “now” or “raw”. When lentils are raw, they are red. When cooked properly, they turn green. This is the Torah’s hint toward Esav’s intent with the word “Nah” – he didn’t mean it nicely and diplomatically. He wanted his food and he wanted it NOW.

**הַלְעִיטֵ֤נִי נָא֙ מִן־הָֽאָדֹ֤ם הָֽאָדֹם֙ הַזֶּ֔ה Give me from this red stuff (25:30) - Rav Dovid Povarksky  .** noted that Yaakov seems to be swindling Eisav out of his Bechora. How could it be that growing up in Yitzchak’s home, Eisav would not understand the value of the Bechora? Rav Dovid . explains that this is the path of the Yetzer HaRa. First, it merely blocks one’s ability to see the positive benefits of his actions. This is what happened with Eisav. His desire to simply swallow life whole without taking the time to appreciate each aspect of life leads one to be like a Beheima and not to value anything. This leaves a person ripe for takeover by the Yetzer HaRa.

**הַלְעִיטֵ֤נִי נָא֙ מִן־הָֽאָדֹ֤ם הָֽאָדֹם֙ הַזֶּ֔ה Feed me from this red stuff since I am tired (25:30) – Rashi** notes that Eisav would not even eat on his own. He wanted it shoved into his mouth. Where is the benefit in that? And what kind of motivation is tiredness? We normally eat because we are hungry, not tired? **Rabbi Dr. Benny Lau**  suggested that there is a tiredness that is not physical but rather mental. It is the tiredness of someone who works constantly with no purpose. His tiredness is the lack of joy. (In psychological terms we call this burnout). Eisav lives focused on the present – the hunter feasts or famines in the moment. Yaakov sees a future and such wants the Bechora. Tiredness in the present becomes burnout if we do not see a purpose in the future.

**מִן־הָֽאָדֹ֤ם הָֽאָדֹם֙ הַזֶּ֔ה This red stuff (25:30)** - Chazal tell us, that the נזיד עדשים was a meal of אבילות. **The Beis Halevi** says the reason that עשו referred to the lentil soup as האדום האדום הזה – this “red stuff” is because he didn’t want to make it seem that he was as callous as he really was to the mourning that was going on. He made himself look like he had no idea what the food in front of him was so as not to be susceptible to the claim that “everyone is mourning – and all you can think about is food!”  However, the ruse couldn’t last for long.  He knew that as soon as he would take the first spoonful, he would taste the lentils, and realize that this was a mourner’s meal and his game would be up.  Instead of giving up and acceding to the requirement to join in the family אבילות, he simply thought up another layer of seeming self-deception by asking that יעקב pour it down his throat so that he would get it all at once and never need to look like he knew what he was eating and what the symbolism behind it was. According to the בית הלוי’s interpretation, what was going on here was layer upon layer of self-deception, all in order to find some way to ignore the unpleasant parts of life. There is a famous adage – Ignorance is bliss, yet we are taught – יוסף דעת יוסף מכאוב, sometimes knowledge is painful. Esav made a choice.  He picked the bliss of ignorance over the pain of knowledge so he could say “it’s not my problem.”

**מִכְרָ֥ה כַיּ֛וֹם Sell me the Bechora “as today” (25:31) – Rav Shlomo Berman** . one of the Roshei Yeshiva of Ponovezh once explained why Yaakov wanted the sale to be clear as day. He explained that Eisav too, must have had an ideology, wherein as one who was Ish Sadeh, he went to work. Thus, he felt he was deserving of the Bechora since he too, worked hard for it.  However, on the day he sold the Bechora, the Gemara tells us (Bava Basra 16b) that he committed 5 separate serious Aveiros. On that day it was evident that he did not deserve the Bechora  or the work that it entailed. Thus Yaakov tells him to sell it to someone more deserving.

**הִנֵּ֛ה אָֽנֹכִ֥י הוֹלֵ֖ךְ לָמ֑וּת וְלָֽמָּה־זֶּ֥ה לִ֖י בְּכֹרָֽה: I am going to die, what good is the Bechora for me? (25:32) – Rashi** explains that Eisav asked Yaakov to explain the responsibilities of being a Bechor to him. When he heard of all of the rules and warnings including those punishable by death, he said if I am only going to die, why should I do it? **Rav Moshe Feinstein .** noted that based on this Rashi, we understand why Eisav hated the Bechora. However, his Hashkafa was all wrong. We don’t enter the realm of being Ovdei Hashem because of the responsibilities and we do not serve Hashem out of the fear of punishment. We serve Hashem because we desire to stick to Him and his will. One who chooses not to do so is showing that s/he despises the Torah as Eisav did. (This has strong impact on the mindset of Perfectionists).

**הִנֵּ֛ה אָֽנֹכִ֥י הוֹלֵ֖ךְ לָמ֑וּת וְלָֽמָּה־זֶּ֥ה לִ֖י בְּכֹרָֽה Here I am going to die, why do I need a Bechora (25:32) – Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm**  contrasted the approach of Eisav to death with that of Yitzchak. The former sees death as the ultimate end – worthy of the final fling before it hits. For the latter, it is the chance to leave a legacy and attach wayward souls back to their sources and try to make things right. Which approach to the future does a Jew choose?

**הִשָּׁ֤בְעָה לִּי֙ כַּיּ֔וֹם Swear to me today (25:33)** - **The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh** asks why Yaakov needed an oath if Eisav had already agreed to the sale? He answers that the oath referred to the honor and majesty that came along with the Bechora which the Kinyan and sale would not cover given the small price. **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon**  added that when a person values eternity, the price of eternity is priceless but to Eisav, it was nominal.

**וַיְהִ֤י רָעָב֙ בָּאָ֔רֶץ There was a famine in the land in addition to the one that took place in the days of Avraham (26:1) –** **Rav Schachter**  pointed out to us on many occasions that Yitzchak was the forefather who followed his father fully. Therefore, he wanted to go to Mitzrayim like his father did. But sometimes the circumstances are different for the son than for the father. Keeping the tradition sometimes does not mean blind following. Similarly, the Gemara notes that Yehoshua did the same by making a Cheirem on the spoils of Yericho. He thought he had done the same as Moshe did. However, the Maharsha says that the circumstances are different – after the Jews crossed the Yarden the principle of Arvus applied. **Rav Teitz**  often notes that we cannot always be in the shoes of our parents and Rabbonim but we can certainly walk in their footsteps.

**אַל־תֵּרֵ֣ד מִצְרָ֑יְמָה שְׁכֹ֣ן בָּאָ֔רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֖ר אֹמַ֥ר אֵלֶֽיךָ: Don’t go down to Mitzrayim (26:2) - The Brisker Rav** notes that Yitzchak Aveinu’s avodah was that he followed in his father’s footsteps. However, when it came to going down to Mitzrayim as his father did, Hashem told him not to go. Why? **Rav Schachter**  would often remind us that when we think we are doing exactly as our parents did, despite circumstances being different, we are, indeed, differing from our parental practice. Yitzchak was not the same as Avraham. He was an Olah Temimah and was not allowed to leave Mitzrayim. Following his father would have been wrong. Similarly, we too, need to realize that when we follow our forefathers in Europe when the indication is that the practices today are dangerous, is also actually going against their example. Consider the example of Metzizah B’Peh where the doctors of their time were convinced that Metzizah was an ideal and Metzizah B’Peh was the way to do it. But today, where the best knowledge of medical indication is that Metzizah B’Peh breeds infection, we should follow our forefathers direction of being AHEAD of the world and specifically not create the Sakana by doing Metzizah B’Peh in the same way Metzizah was established in order to prevent Sakana.

**כִּֽי־לְךָ֣ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ**֗ **Because to you and your children I shall give these lands (26:3)** – In the next possuk Hashem tells Yitzchak that the land was given to the children. Why the change**? Rav Schachter**  noted that the answer is based on the gemara in Shabbos (55a) which notes that Zechus Avos has ended. Rabbeinu Tam comments in Tosafos that Zechus Avos may have ended but Bris Avos is still alive. The difference, explained Rav Schachter, is that Zechus Avos is based on love. Love for the people has an end point when the children do not act like the parents. Bris Avos refers to a pact which led certain traits to be found in the children that were in the parents. Those Middos are the children’s and thus, the Bris Avos remains. The Torah is letting us know that our right to Eretz Yisrael is based on two rights, originally Zechus Avos but today, Bris Avos as well.

**וְהִתְבָּֽרֲכ֣וּ בְזַרְעֲךָ֔ כֹּ֖ל גּוֹיֵ֥י הָאָֽרֶץ Because of your children the nations of the land will be blessed (26:4**) - Why do Avraham and Yaakov get included in the Beracha but only Yitzchak’s children get the actual Beracha? **Rav Aharon Soloveitchik .** offered the comments of **Rabbeinu Bachaya** who noted that Yitzchak didn’t get swayed by frustration even when the Plishtim stuffed up his wells. Rav Aharon added that instead of reacting, Yitzchak rebuilt the wells and then added on to them. Rav Aharon noted that when one builds on opposing strengths (his gevurah versus Avraham’s Chessed) the grandchildren get twice the benefit -- hence Tiferet.

**וַיְהִ֗י כִּ֣י אָֽרְכוּ־ל֥וֹ שָׁם֙ הַיָּמִ֔ים וַיַּשְׁקֵ֗ף אֲבִימֶ֨לֶךְ֙ מֶ֣לֶךְ פְּלִשְׁתִּ֔ים בְּעַ֖ד הַֽחַלּ֑וֹן As the days went on Avimelech looked out the window (26:8)**– **Rav Shlomo Bloch** would often note in the name of the **Alter of Novorhodok** who explained that we learn about the thoughts of a Rasha. Despite being rebuffed by Rivka for such a long time, he did not allow his desire to abate.

**וַיִּמְצָ֛א בַּשָּׁנָ֥ה הַהִ֖וא מֵאָ֣ה שְׁעָרִ֑ים וַיְבָֽרֲכֵ֖הוּ And Hashem blessed him (26:12) - Sforno** notes that the blessing was found in the high market prices he received for his crop. And, adds Sforno, this was a direct result of the tithing.  In fact, the Gemara (Taanis 8b) notes that in regard to giving Tzedaka, this is the only area where one is allowed to test Hashem (See **Rabbeinu Yona** that this applies to Maaser Kesafim just like other Maaseros -- see also Rema YD 247:4 but see Pischei Teshuva there for those who argue...) **Rav Schachter**  noted that this is a source of disagreement between the commentaries as to whether Maaser Kesafim is the same as Maaser Tevuah and is based on whether Yitzchak innovated the giving of Maaser or whether Avraham did so with Malkitzedek (or perhaps Avraham’s “maaser” was just tzedaka). **Rav Yonasan Sacks**  noted the comments of the Or HaChaim Hakadosh (Shemos 22:24) that say that any extra that one has after taking care of the Tzorchei HaBayis is really there for the purpose of giving Tzedaka. **Rav Moshe Feinstein** . explains that giving Tzedaka is a Nachas Ruach for Hashem because in that moment, a person is doing that which Hashem himself does and is supposed to do, and as a result, Hashem receives Nachas Ruach in the process.

**וְכָל־הַבְּאֵרֹ֗ת אֲשֶׁ֤ר חָֽפְרוּ֙ עַבְדֵ֣י אָבִ֔יו בִּימֵ֖י אַבְרָהָ֣ם אָבִ֑יו And all the wells that the servants of Avimelech had dug during Avraham’s life , the Philistines had filled in with dirt (26:15)** – **Rav Moshe Wolfson**  examines why the Torah includes the well story and explains that there are many parts to the job of bringing the sense of Hakadosh Baruch Hu into this world. Those who say that there is no point – merely throw dirt on the efforts to build a Beis HaMikdash in this world and need to see the power of their own destructive nature.

**וְכָל־הַבְּאֵרֹ֗ת אֲשֶׁ֤ר חָֽפְרוּ֙ עַבְדֵ֣י אָבִ֔יו בִּימֵ֖י אַבְרָהָ֣ם אָבִ֑יו All of the wells that were dug in the days of his father Avraham (26:15) - Rav Adin Steinzaltz .** explained that the difficulty with everyone who grew up in a religious home is the routine. Whoever gets to dig new wells lives in the world of awakening and of being uplifted. But for those like Yitzchak it is difficult. The wells were already dug, why dig again? Beginnings are hard but continuations are hard as well. Hence, Avraham creates Yitzchak but Yitzchak creates Avraham too. Without Yitzchak where would Avraham be? Yitzchak is the who gives validity and perpetual existence to Avraham.

וְכָל־הַבְּאֵרֹ֗ת אֲשֶׁ֤ר חָֽפְרוּ֙ עַבְדֵ֣י אָבִ֔יו בִּימֵ֖י אַבְרָהָ֣ם אָבִ֑יו  **All of the wells that Avraham dug, the Plishtim covered up and filled with dirt (26:15) - Sivan Rahav Meir** quoted **Rav Yitzchak Kotlarsky**  -- one of the main Chabad leaders speaking at a Shluchim conference who noted that this is the lesson that Jews have had to learn throughout many generations -- wherever others step in to try to close us in and throw dirt on us, we find a new and different way to bring the waters of Torah life forward.

**וַיַּחְפֹּ֣ר | אֶת־בְּאֵרֹ֣ת הַמַּ֗יִם אֲשֶׁ֤ר חָֽפְרוּ֙ בִּימֵי֙ אַבְרָהָ֣ם אָבִ֔יו וַיְסַתְּמ֣וּם פְּלִשְׁתִּ֔ים אַֽחֲרֵ֖י מ֣וֹת אַבְרָהָ֑ם וַיִּקְרָ֤א לָהֶן֙ שֵׁמ֔וֹת כַּשֵּׁמֹ֕ת אֲשֶׁר־קָרָ֥א לָהֶ֖ן אָבִֽיו: He dug wells that were dug in the days of his father Avraham and the Philisitines filled them in (26:18)**– The Midrash explains that the 7 wells that Yitzchak dug parallel the 7 Havolim mentioned in Koheles**. Rav Gifter .** explained that Hevel is something useless and purposeless. Everywhere Yitzchak went he tried to create purpose – and kedusha. However, the environment did not always allow his attempts to be successful – causing fights about who owned the “rights”.

**וַיִּקְרָ֤א לָהֶן֙ שֵׁמ֔וֹת כַּשֵּׁמֹ֕ת אֲשֶׁר־קָרָ֥א לָהֶ֖ן אָבִֽיו Like the names that his father called them (26:18)** -  Why does it say like the names and not the actual names? Perhaps the answer is that this is a story of legacy. His digging of the wells was a continuation of the Avraham’s legacy. However, the Torah says that it was like those names because it was a different time. **Rav Hershel Schachter** explained that the mesorah always stays the same, but it needs to be applied differently in every generation. We don’t ask what Moshe Rabbeinu did but what Moshe Rabbeinu would do now.

**וַיְסַתְּמ֣וּם פְּלִשְׁתִּ֔ים אַֽחֲרֵ֖י מ֣וֹת אַבְרָהָ֑ם וַיִּקְרָ֤א לָהֶן֙ שֵׁמ֔וֹת כַּשֵּׁמֹ֕ת אֲשֶׁר־קָרָ֥א לָהֶ֖ן אָבִֽיו Yitzchak dug the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Avraham and filled in by the Philistines and he named them with the names his father had used (26:18-19)** – The Midrash explains that the seven wells correspond to the seven Havalim mentioned in Koheles. Hevel refers to something purposeless. **Rav Gifter** . explains that wherever Yitzchak went, he tried to influence a sense of Kedusha but the environment didn’t allow it and sought to stuff it up and silence him. Thus, his response was recalling the names. A name is a label that creates something everlasting – something you turn to in the future. Yitzchak called the wells by name to demonstrate that his efforts were not purposeless but that they would yield fruit.

**וַיַּחְפֹּר֙ בְּאֵ֣ר אַחֶ֔רֶת וְלֹ֥א רָב֖וּ עָלֶ֑יהָ And he dug another well (26:22)** – Why was it that the first two wells had arguments about them and this third one had no arguments over its ownership? **Rabbi Lamm**  quoted his uncle who noted that in the first 2 cases Yitzchak left the digging of the wells in the hands of others and as a result the wells led to Eisek and Sitna – hatred and arguments. Once he did the job himself, the well he dug led to Rechovot – to a willingness to work by himself to expand the world by committing his own energies, talents concern and participation to the task. The same is true for each of us who commit ourselves to the mission in life that each of us is assigned to.

**וַֽאֲבִימֶ֕לֶךְ הָלַ֥ךְ אֵלָ֖יו מִגְּרָ֑ר And Avimelech came to him from Gerar (26:26) - Sforno** explains that after he went to call in the name of Hashem, the servants of Yitzchak discovered another well, this time without any arguments. Avimelech came at that point to set the terms of the peace pact. **Rav Leib Chasman .** Notes that even an Olah Temimah like Yitzchak needed to commit to serve Hashem before he had success. We see from here that to have success in life, one must call in the name of Hashem at which time all challenges will leave him.

**וַיְהִ֤י עֵשָׂו֙ בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִ֣ים שָׁנָ֔ה וַיִּקַּ֤ח אִשָּׁה֙ אֶת־יְהוּדִ֔ית בַּת־בְּאֵרִ֖י הַֽחִתִּ֑י וְאֶת־בָּ֣שְׂמַ֔ת בַּת־אֵילֹ֖ן הַֽחִתִּֽי: And Eisav took Yehudis Bas Be’eri the Chittie and Basmas Bas Eilon HaChittie as wives (26:34)**– **Rav Yosef Carmel**  noted the ironic “frum” sounding names of thee 2 women . Rav Carmel even explains that perhaps due to their Chittie upbringing which was close to Avraham Aveinu that they adopted an outward expression of piety – hence the names that are often associated with good smells and spirituality. However, sometimes we need to remember not only to look at outward expression but also at that which is inside – and this caused a bitterness of spirit for Yitzchak and Rivka.

**וַיִּקַּ֤ח אִשָּׁה֙ אֶת־יְהוּדִ֔ית בַּת־בְּאֵרִ֖י הַֽחִתִּ֑י וְאֶת־בָּ֣שְׂמַ֔ת בַּת־אֵילֹ֖ן הַֽחִתִּֽי:  Esav’s wives (26:34)** – Here they are referred to as Yehudit Bas Be’Eri and Basmas Bas Eilon HaChivi. Later, they are referred to as Adah Bas Eilon and Alalivah Bas Anah Bas Tzivon  (P. VaYishlach). How did their names change so dramatically? **HaGaon HaRav Chaim Kanievsky**  explains that Esav saw that they did not provide a good relationship for the in laws. As a result, he thought that be changing their names, it would change their relationship with Yitzchak and Rivka (of course, a change of a name does not mean much…)

**בַּֽעֲב֛וּר תְּבָֽרֶכְךָ֥ נַפְשִׁ֖י So that I can bless you (27:4)** - Why did Yitzchak want to give the Berachos to Eisav? Why does Eisav care when he loses them? **Rav Aharon Kotler .** explained that the Bechora was a spiritual idea. Eisav was not an overtly spiritual person -- preferring the here and now instead. Yitzchak wanted to bless him to build a bridge from the now into a future.

**עֲשֵׂה־לִ֨י מַטְעַמִּ֜ים כַּֽאֲשֶׁ֥ר אָהַ֛בְתִּי Bring me the delicacies such as I love and bring them to me and I will eat so that my soul may bless you** **before I die (27:4) –** What was Yitzchak thinking? Why would he want to give a Beracha to that Rasha? **Rav Noach Weinberg .** suggested that Yitzchak envisioned a partnership between Eisav and Yaakov to combine inner strengths in order to perfect the world. Material abundance and political domination to Eisav and Torah and spiritual destiny to Yaakov**. Sforno** notes that if this had worked, Eisav would have ruled Gashmiyus and Yaakov, Ruchniyos. The problem, Rav Weinberg explained, was how Yaakov was to get Eisav to get over his Rishus. Yitzchak thought merely being with Yaakov would inspire Eisav to righteousness. Rivka knew that you do not give a reward to a rasha before it is earned. Still, he adds, Yaakov is at fault for not doing what he could to prompt Eisav’s Teshuvah. Reaching out to the wayward, is an obligation on each of us.

**וַֽעֲשֵׂה־לִ֨י מַטְעַמִּ֜ים Prepare good food for me (27:4)** - Yitzchak tells Eisav to prepare delicious food for him so that he can give him the Berachos. What is the connection? It seems that one needs to be in good spirits when offering Berachos. **Rav Schachter**  would remind us that this is the reason that the Maharam of Rothenberg held that Kohanim can only offer the Birkas Kohanim on Yom Tov because one needs to be in a state of Simcha when giving Berachos. His source is our source here too. Rav Schachter added that this is why an Avel does not ascend the Duchan**.**

**לָצ֥וּד צַ֖יִד לְהָבִֽיא To hunt food in order to bring (27:5) – Targum Yonasan** notes that Eisav was prepared to steal the food if necessary in order to fulfill his father’s request**. Rav Volch**  noted the odd way of fulfilling Kibbud Av this intention declared. He noted that this was the limitation of an Eisav existence – it was good intention and constraints that kept the intention from being actualized.

ו**ְעַתָּ֥ה בְנִ֖י שְׁמַ֣ע בְּקֹלִ֑י Now my son listen to me (27:8)** - How could Rivka command Yaakov to lie? How could Yaakov listen? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky .** explained that Yaakov was going to be tested in the very middah that he had -- truth. Just like his grandfather was tested in his Chessed, Yaakov was tested in truth. **Rav Simcha Zisel Broide**  added that Yaakov was told to act in accord with the words of a Neviah. **Rav Pincus**  suggested that there are 2 types of truth -- Emes V’Yatziv and Emes V’Emunah. Here, Yaakov was working on Emes V’Emunah insofar that Yaakov worked to see to it that Hashem would finish the job and his words would be the truth.

**וַתִּקַּ֣ח רִ֠בְקָ֠ה אֶת־בִּגְדֵ֨י עֵשָׂ֜ו בְּנָ֤הּ הַגָּדֹל֙ הַֽחֲמֻדֹ֔ת אֲשֶׁ֥ר אִתָּ֖הּ בַּבָּ֑יִת: She took the clothes of Eisav her big son which were with her in the home (27:15**) – Why is Eisav he “Big” son? He was only born a few moments before Yaakov!? **Rav Shimon Schwab** . notes that in regard to the Mitzva of Kibbud Av, Eisav was much BIGGER than Yaakov. He even wore special clothes to serve Yitzchak. Thus, the Torah highlights the fact that this was his big Mitzva. After all, in the end, all of Eisav’s control over all of us throughout the generations has been because of this Mitzva.

**וַתִּקַּ֣ח רִ֠בְקָ֠ה אֶת־בִּגְדֵ֨י עֵשָׂ֜ו בְּנָ֤הּ הַגָּדֹל֙ הַֽחֲמֻדֹ֔ת  Eisav’s special clothes that were with her at home (27:15)** - Why didn’t Eisav put on these clothes in order to make his job easier? **Rav Volch** explains that Eisav had good intentions -- he followed his father’s directions to take his hunting implements to hunt. However, when he went to hunt to bring, **Targum Yonasan** explains that he brought his father food that was stolen . He set out with initial good intentions and poor follow through.

**אָֽנֹכִי֙ עֵשָׂ֣ו בְּכֹרֶ֔ךָ I am Eisav your firstborn (27:19) - Rav Yechiel Perr** suggested that Yaakov needed to utter this seeming falsehood in order to need to go to the biggest liar in his day – Lavan – in order to experience the Tahara purification process. This process would help his children have a role model to look to in the times of their greatest challenge when living with host countries in times of foreign exile.

**גְּשָׁה־נָּ֥א וַֽאֲמֻֽשְׁךָ֖ בְּנִ֑י הַֽאַתָּ֥ה זֶ֛ה בְּנִ֥י עֵשָׂ֖ו אִם־לֹֽא Come close, if you please, so I can touch you, my son; are you indeed my son Esav or not?(27:21)** - What prompted Yitzchak to sense something strange in the behavior of the person in front of him suggesting he was not Eisav? **Rashi** explains that it was because Eisav was not accustomed to using the name of Hashem in his conversation. Why then didn’t Yaakov play the role and drop the name of Hashem too? **Rabbi JJ Schacter** explained that while we might at times adopt the dress of the nations of the world in order to be able to exist within their countries, one thing we can never change is that no matter how great our desire to achieve these blessings, we can never eliminate or deny God’s name, never at the expense of the shem Shamayim.

**הַקֹּל֙ ק֣וֹל יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב The voice is the voice of Yaakov (27:22) – Ramban** suggests that Yaakov even disguised his voice but could not speak the crude style of Eisav. Why not? **Rav Pam** . explains in the name of **Rav Moshe Sternbuch**  that there were certain steps that Yaakov just would not take. To speak crudely like Eisav was out of the question and Yaakov would rather be found out than speak to his father crudely. Rav Pam added that we see how important the manner of speech is for each person – for that defines who and how we carry ourselves our entire lives.

**הַקֹּל֙ ק֣וֹל יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב The voice is the voice of Yaakov (27:22)** – The well known midrash notes that when Yaakov’s voice is heard in the Shuls and Battei Midrash, the hands of Eisav cannot rule them. The questions begs, that the hands and the voice both ruled in the same person standing before Yitzchak. How then could he bless the man who really was Yaakov – if both hand and voice were equally potent? **Rav Yoel Schwartz of Poltova .** explains that when the voice of Yaakov is dominant, the hands of Eisav are not even a consideration. The same is true when the hands and voice re found in two different peoples in the future.

**הַקֹּל֙ ק֣וֹל יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב The voice is the voice of Yaakov** **(27:22)** – There is a Yirushalmi (Nedarim 8:3) that notes that according to Rav Acha B’shem Rav Chuna, Esav will dress up and wrap himself in a Tallis in the future and sit with the Tzaddikim in Gan Eden. Hashem will come and remove him. **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi**  asks how Esav will be able to get that far with the Tzaddikim. Why will HASHEM have to kick him out? He answers that Yaakov is not the only one who can put on a disguise. The difference is that Yaakov can look like Esav but not be like Esav. Esav on the other hand, can look like Yaakov but it will have an effect on him – enough to get him into Gan Eden. However, Hashem is able to see  past disguises and will ultimately punish Esav by kicking him out of the garden.

**וְלֹ֣א הִכִּיר֔וֹ And he did not recognize him…and he blessed him (27:23) – Abarbanel** is troubled as to why Yitzchak decided to bless Eisav in the firstplace? His own father and teachers had not done so. And why does he connect the Beracha to food**? Rav Avraham Rivlin**  suggests that Yitzchak recognized Eisav for who he was. He knew Eisav was not a spiritual individual and sought to bless him in order to set a plan for him in the service of Hashem. He assumed that if Yaakov served Hashem as he himself did, then someone would need to sustain Yaakov. Thus, if Eisav could be blessed (and directed) with the ability to produce Matamim then this would be his path in the service of Hashem. However, Rivka thought that it was here that he erred. The ability to engage in Chessed is predicated on the idea of containing an inner yearning to serve Hashem coupled with an ability to actuate it. Eisav would have the ability of doing the service but not the desire to do so. Rivka saw this and thwarted the plan.

**רְאֵה֙ רֵ֣יחַ בְּנִ֔י כְּרֵ֣יחַ שָׂדֶ֔ה  See the scent of my son it is like the scent of the field (27:27)  - Rav Gedaliah Schorr** notes that scents are reminiscent of Korbanos. The ideal Beracha comes to someone who has the capacity to properly utilize the Beracha. Hence the comparison to the scent. He notes in the name of **Rav Leibele Eiger** that in order to benefit from the scent of spices, the spices need to be ground up. The same is true for man. When man performs Avodas Hashem, he too, needs to bend down and break down his hubris and middos in order to make room for the Kedusha of Hashem. Nowhere is this more apparent than in regard to the Reiach Nichoach which is the ultimate purpose of the Korban.

**יִתֶּן־לְךָ֙ And Hashem will give (27:28) – Rashi** notes that the Beracha begins with a Vav in order to show that he should return and give it again. The **Eish Kodesh of Piacetzna** asks where it comes back to be given again? He explains that like the one who loses an object who constantly looks out after it, Hashem too looks for us – not only when we are in plain sight but even when we appear lost – he turns around and seeks us.

**וְיִתֶּן־לְךָ֙ And Hashem should give to you (27:28)-  Rashi** cites the Midrash that Hashem should give and return to give again. **Rav Shmuel Rozovsky .** explained that if Hashem had given everything all at once, then the connection to Him would ultimately be broken and strained. Since we need more from Him each day we strengthen the Kesher with him in the process.

**וְיִתֶּן־לְךָ֙ הָֽאֱלֹהִ֔ים מִטַּ֨ל הַשָּׁמַ֔יִם וּמִשְׁמַנֵּ֖י הָאָ֑רֶץ וְרֹ֥ב דָּגָ֖ן וְתִירֽשׁ: May Hashem give you from the dew of the heavens and the fat of the land (27:28)** – Chazal already tell us that the dew of the heavens refers to Mikra and the fat of the land refers to Mishna and the grain to Talmud and the wine to aggada. Now, at this point Yitzchak thought he was giving a Beracha to Eisav. Why does Eisav need Mikra, Mishna, Talmud and Aggada**? Rav Simcha Wasserman** . explained that the possuk and the beracha refers also to material things as the simple interpretation of the Possuk clearly implies. However, the spiritual source of dew is mikra, of fat of the land is Mishna etc. Eisav only wanted to understand this on the surface level – but Yaakov wanted the reason behind things and thus deserved the Shoresh as well. We can look at this world on a very surface level or we can understand and appreciate the tremendous spiritual value of the things behind what we see and gain even more from the world around us.

**יְהִ֗י אַ֣ךְ יָצֹ֤א יָצָא֙ יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב מֵאֵ֥ת פְּנֵ֖י יִצְחָ֣ק אָבִ֑יו וְעֵשָׂ֣ו אָחִ֔יו בָּ֖א  As Yaakov left his father Yitzchak, Eisav came from his hunt (27:30) - The Kotzker Rebbe** noted that when and where there is a vacuum of Kedusha, Tumah finds a way to fill the void.

**וַיֶּֽחֱרַ֨ד יִצְחָ֣ק חֲרָדָה֘ גְּדֹלָ֣ה עַד־מְאֹד֒ And Yitzchak was greatly terrified (27:33)** – What was Yitzchak’s great fear? **Rav Haim Sabato**  suggests that Yitzchak’s desire was to connect to both his children and keep them close so that he could place them both under the wing of the Shechina. However, Hashem showed him that the son who was so callous that he sold the Bechora for a mere bowl of lentils is one who does not get the power of the Berachos nor the responsibilities from the world to uphold their uniqueness. Thus, terrified that he was almost mistaken, he noted that Gam Baruch Yihiyeh.

**בָּ֥א אָחִ֖יךָ בְּמִרְמָ֑ה My brother came in deceit (27:35)** - The Yirushalmi (Nedarim 8:3) notes that in the future, Eisav will wrap in a Tallis and try to sit with the Tzaddikim in Gan Eden. How will he get in undetected by the Tzaddikim? **Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi**  answered that just as Yaakov can dress up as Eisav, Eisav can try to dress up like Yaakov. But while Yaakov dresses as Eisav and does not become Eisav. Eisav is affected by the change on the outside which is how he gets into Gan Eden. However Hahem understands the insides of a person and will remove Eisav.

**הֵ֣ן גְּבִ֞יר שַׂמְתִּ֥יו לָךְ֙**   **“I already made him the Gvir” (28:37**) – One cannot assume that Yitzchak intended to give the Berachos to Esav. After all, the Berachos included rulership over Kedushat HaAretz, something that could not go to someone who was unable to fathom it. Rather, explains **Maran HaRav Schachter** , Esav was destined to receive a Beracha on the extras – the financial wealth of the world. When Yaakov received THAT blessing, Esav asked him for a Beracha left for him – implying that he wanted the Birkas Avraham. Yitzchak told him that Birkas Avraham was not any old Blessing.  The Beracha for wealth can be shared – but Birkas Avraham was to be reserved for he who deserved it – Yaakov.

**בָּֽרֲכֵ֥נִי גַם־אָ֖נִי אָבִ֑י  Bless me as well my father (27:38)** – Why doesn’t Eisav ever ask Yitzchak to taste his food? **Rav Nebenzahl**  explains that **Rashi** notes that the day was Pesach and that when Yaakov fed Yitzchak, he partook of the Chagigah and then the Korban Pesach. We hold Ein Maftirin Achar HaPesach Afikoman. **Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld .** added that the gematria of B’Mirma is afikomen. Hence Yitzchak couldn’t eat.

**יִקְרְבוּ֙ יְמֵי֙ אֵ֣בֶל אָבִ֔י וְאַֽהַרְגָ֖ה אֶת־יַֽעֲקֹ֥ב אָחִֽי: When the days of mourning for my father are over, I shall kill Yaakov my brother(27:41)** - Why did Eisav say that he would wait for the end of the Shiva? **Klei Yakar** explains that this is because Eisav needed Yaakov not to be on top. On top for Yaakov meant to be a leader because of Torah superiority. Torah is not studied by an Avel so Eisav thought he would reign supreme at the time Yaakov was just past Aveilus. **Rav Zilberstein**  quotes the **Beis Yisrael of Gur** who asks why Eisav did not consider the study of the sections of Torah an Avel **IS** allowed to study? He answers that Torah study without Simcha lacks the ability to serve to protect. It merely helps to subsist. Eisav knew that and realized that this would be his ideal time to attack.

**עַתָּ֥ה בְנִ֖י שְׁמַ֣ע בְּקֹלִ֑י Listen to my voice (27:43) – Rashi** explains that Rivka learned of Eisav’s intentions against Yaakov through Ruach HaKodesh. Still, she never revealed this to Yitzchak when she explained why she wanted Yaakov sent away. Why**? Rav Shlomo Wolbe .** explained that we learned the Tzniyus of Rivka in her choice of actions. He added that she used different reasoning because she wanted to explain more of her thinking as needed. Sometimes the full reasoning for a decision need not be explained when it comes to Talmidei Chachamim.

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֣ע יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב אֶל־אָבִ֖יו וְאֶל־אִמּ֑וֹ  And Yaakov listened to his father and mother and he went to Padan Aram (28:7)** – **Rashi** notes that this section connects to the previous one and that Yaakov went to seek a wife because his parents despised the girls of Canaan. Eisav added a wife at that time as well. Why did Eisav wait until Yaakov left in order to seek the additional wife. Once he heard that Yitzchak did not like the Canaanite women, he should have gone off on his own and taken the lead for himself? **Rav Moshe Feinstein .** explains that it does not suffice for a teacher to teach the proper way in life, s/he must actually live this way in order to best influence their children and students. Yaakov’s demonstration that he walked the walk and did not simply talk the talk inspired Eisav to act too.

**וַיִּקַּ֡ח אֶת־מָֽחֲלַ֣ת | בַּת־יִשְׁמָעֵ֨אל בֶּן־אַבְרָהָ֜ם  Eisav took Machalas Bas Yishmael (28:9) –** Later she is referred to as Basmas. **Rashi** explains that we learn from here that one who gets married achieves a Mechilas Avonos. Why is Eisav the one who teaches us this lesson? **Rav Pam .** explained that when Eisav got married a thought of teshuva passed through his mind. Even a wicked person has the ability to do Teshuvah. Therefore it is from him that we learn that a Chosson can do Teshuva.

**וַיִּקַּ֡ח אֶת־מָֽחֲלַ֣ת | בַּת־יִשְׁמָעֵ֨אל בֶּן־אַבְרָהָ֜ם  And Eisav took Machalas Bas Yishmael (28:9)** – Rashi notes that we learn that when he married her, he got a Mechilas Avonos. Alternatively, he added a Rishus by marrying this woman. How do we understand these disparate explanations and lessons? **Rav Hershel  Schachter**  explains that the difference comes down to an understanding of Teshuva. If one does Teshuva then the Kappara can be achieved on the day of the wedding. If he doesn’t do Teshuva, then the issue is an addition of evil.

**Haftara:**

- **מַשָּׂ֥א דְבַר־ה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל Masa (Malachi 1:1) - Rav Schachter**  noted that Rashi explained that the opening of a Nevuah with the word “Masa” implies that this is a Nevuah that the Novi was holding onto for many days. The reason, Rav Schachter explained, is that all of the Neviim got their Nevuah from Har Sinai. This is why the **Mabit** explains that it was possible for Moshe to use the Possuk “Poseiach Es Yadecha” when he wrote the first Beracha of Bentching -- because those words were apparent to him at Har Sinai.

**אָהַ֚בְתִּי אֶתְכֶם֙ I love you (Malachi 1:2 ) - Rav Gideon Weitzman**  noted that despite all of the talk of unconditional love from parent to child, Hashem expects us to reciprocate the relationship of love that he shares with us. A religion without personal obligation is not service of Hashem, it is service to oneself.

**אֶת־עֵשָׂ֖ו שָׂנֵ֑אתִי  I love Yaakov…and I hate Eisav (Malachi 1:2, 3)** – Why is there a need to highlight the fact that Hashem loves Yaakov and hates Eisav at the same time? Could the choice be any different? **Rav Moshe Lichtenstein**  explains that  the haftara opens with love, but ends with fear, for love without fear is not a legitimate possibility, because it diminishes the glory of heaven and the meaning of love. It is not by chance that the Rambam joined them together (Hilkhot Yesodei haTorah 2:1-2) as a single essence and an interwoven experience, and refused to separate between them (despite the fact that he counted them as two separate mitzvot in the count of the mitzvot). However, the actions of Israel, who express their astonishment over the absence of God's love, reveal that they do not really understand the essence of fear. After finishing with the rebuke of Israel, the haftara turns to the priests and guides them to give glory to His name, speaking about the covenant based on the fear of God: My covenant was with him for life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear with which he feared Me, and was afraid of My name. (2:5) It should, however, be added and emphasized that the proper foundation of fear will allow love to find its place, and then it will be possible to fulfill the prayer of the psalmist: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Tehilim 2:11).

**בֵּ֛ן יְכַבֵּ֥ד אָ֖ב וְעֶ֣בֶד אֲדֹנָ֑יו A son shall honor his father...and if I am a master, where is my awe? (Malachi 1:6)** - We open the section with Kavod and end with Mora. Why the change? **Rav Yaakov Kaemenetzy** . noted that when one has a Yirah from love, it is a Yiras HaRomeimus and is part of Ahava/Kavod. Hence, he cautions, one needs to differentiate between Kivod and Keebud. The idea of Kivod Somayim is that it is the source of the relationship and can also include Yirah. Keebud is based on the positive actions one does that demonstrate honor -- as opposed to others that demonstrate Yirah.