

Points to Ponder
Toldos 5778

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 ztl.** 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.

There was a famine in the land in addition to the one that took place in the days of Avraham (26:1) – **Rav Schachter Shlita** 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 Shlita** often notes that we cannot always be in the shoes of our parents and Rabbonim but we can certainly walk in their footsteps.

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 ztl.** 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.

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 Shlita** 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.

Rivka took the special clothes of her Gadol Son Eisav (27:15) – He was a few moments older and he gets the title HaGadol? Why? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** explained that in regard to his stellar achievement and performance of the Mitzva of Kibbud Av, how he ran to fulfill the desire of Yitzchak and how he rushed to dress to properly serve him. For that he was a "Gadol" until he identified as a Rasha.

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 first place? His own father and teachers had not done so. And why does he connect the Beracha to food? **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** 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.

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 ztl.** 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.

Haftorah – Machar Chodesh (I Shmuel Perek 20:5) – On the surface, the only connection between the Perek and Rosh Chodesh is the words 'machar chodesh'. Is that the only connection? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** noted that each Rosh Chodesh we daven that the Beis HaMikdash be returned as it is the Zman Kappara. However, it is the Sinas Chinam that prevents us from being able to experience it. Shaul's wonderment as to why Dovid did not show to the meal was also based on Shaul's hatred of Dovid. By beginning the Haftorah with this section, we are reminding ourselves as to why we do not have the Beis Hamikdash today. Why has 'Ben Yishai [i.e. the Moshiach] not come?' Because of baseless hatred. And once we know what the problem is we can begin working on the solution; ahavas chinam. That's the lesson of this perek.