Points to Ponder

Toldos 5779

**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 ztl.** 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).

**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 Shlita** 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 Eretz Yisrael. 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.

**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.

**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 ztl.** 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”.

**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 Shlita** noted the ironic “frum” sounding names of these 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.

**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 ztl**. 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.

**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 ztl**. 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.

**Haftorah: בֵּ֛ן יְכַבֵּ֥ד אָ֖ב וְעֶ֣בֶד אֲדֹנָ֑יו A son will honor his father and a servant his master (Malachi 1:6)** – How did the Possuk begin with a Kavod and end with Mora? We know that a son has the obligation of Mora as well as Kavod. Servants too, have the obligatory actions of Kavod but they do them as Yirah. **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** notes that there is a difference between Kibbud and Kivod. The former is active – references the activities that must be done even if motivated by Yirah. The latter is a reference to motivation – kulchem chayavim b’Chivodee.