Points to Ponder

Toldos 5783

**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..

**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.

**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.”

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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**  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.