

שבת

תולדות

Our *Parashah* opens: "And these are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham--Avraham fathered Yitzchak." *Midrash Tanchuma* explains the message of the latter phrase: The cynics of that time said, "Sarah became pregnant from Avimelech! See how many years she lived with Avraham without becoming pregnant!" Therefore, *Hashem* made Yitzchak's facial features exactly like Avraham's, so that everyone admitted that "Avraham fathered Yitzchak."

R' Yaakov Sakly z"l (Spain; 14th century) applies to this *Midrash* the verse (*Mishlei* 20:5), "*Eitzah* / counsel is like deep waters in the heart of man, and the man of understanding will draw them forth." He writes: While Avraham believed *Hashem's* promise that he would have a son, he worried deep in his heart: What will the cynics of the generation say? The "man" of understanding refers to *Hashem*, who saw Avraham's fears and instructed the angel overseeing Sarah's pregnancy to form Yitzchak in Avraham's image.

On a *Peshat* level, R' Sakly explains the quoted verse in *Mishlei* as follows: "*Eitzah*" / "counsel" refers to wisdom, as we read (*Mishlei* 13:10), "Wisdom is with those who take counsel." Wisdom exists within a person in potential, but one must study and engage in scholarship to bring it out. In this way, wisdom is like "deep waters"; they exists underground, but one cannot enjoy them unless he digs a well and builds a retaining wall to keep the well from collapsing. Just as a man of understanding will succeed in drawing water out of the ground, so he will succeed in finding wisdom. (*Torat Ha'minchah*)

Shabbat

"Seekers of *Hashem*, seed of Avraham His beloved, who delay departing from the *Shabbat* and rush to enter . . ."

(From the Friday night *Zemer Kol Mekadesh*)

The *Zemer* is referring to the *Mitzvah* of *Tosefet Shabbat* / adding a few minutes to *Shabbat* both when it enters and when it departs. Many ask: Why does the *Zemer* mention "departing from the *Shabbat*" before it mentions entering the *Shabbat*, when the latter actually happens first?

R' Gershon Stern z"l (1863-1936; rabbi of Marosludus, Romania) writes: Some answer that, according to Tradition, the Torah was given on *Shabbat*--presumably including the *Mitzvah* of *Tosefet Shabbat*. As such, the Jewish People first delayed in departing from *Shabbat*--i.e., at the end of the day the Torah was given. Only a week later did they enter *Shabbat* early. However, R' Stern writes, this answer is not satisfactory, because the *Mitzvah* of observing *Shabbat* was given when *Bnei Yisrael* camped at Marah, weeks before they received the rest of the Torah, and commentaries say that the commandment at Marah included the *Mitzvah* of *Tosefet Shabbat*.

R' Stern continues: The reason the *Zemer* mentions "departing from the *Shabbat*" before it mentions entering the *Shabbat* is because an (erroneous) argument could be made that *Tosefet Shabbat* at the end of *Shabbat* is a stricter requirement than at the beginning; even so, says the *Zemer*, not only do the Jewish People delay departing from *Shabbat*, they even enter it early.

R' Stern elaborates: The basis for the argument to which the *Zemer* alludes is the concept of *Chazakah* / a *Halachic* presumption that a status quo is presumed to continue until we know otherwise. Here, the argument would go, we are unsure whether or not it is *Shabbat* during the time of day known as *Bein Hashmashot*--loosely translated, "twilight." In case of doubt, the concept of *Chazakah* instructs us to continue the status quo. During *Bein Hashmashot* on Friday entering *Shabbat*, *Chazakah* would say that it is not yet *Shabbat*, for that was the status quo. In contrast, during *Bein Hashmashot* on *Shabbat* entering *Motzai Shabbat*, *Chazakah* would dictate that it is still *Shabbat*. As such, adding additional time at the end of *Shabbat*, when it is already *Shabbat*, seemingly is a stronger imperative. – **Continued in box inside** –

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“May Elokim give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth, and abundant grain and wine.” (27:28)

Rashi z”l writes: The Divine Name “Elokim” signifies G-d’s Attribute of Justice. Yitzchak was saying to Yaakov: May He act with justice! If you are worthy, may He give you dew, etc.; if not, let Him not give it to you.

Rashi continues: In contrast, Yitzchak said to Esav (27:39), “Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth and of the dew of the heavens from above.” Yitzchak did not refer to justice; he said, in effect: Whether you, Esav, are righteous or wicked, Hashem will give this to you. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ David Cohen *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) asks: Are we to understand that Yitzchak’s blessing to Yaakov was limited and that it was less than his blessing to Esav? Surely not!

R’ Cohen explains: The true subject of Yitzchak’s blessing is not dew, fatness of the earth, grain, or wine. Rather, the subject of the blessing is closeness to *Hashem*. Yitzchak blessed Yaakov, in effect: “May Elokim pay attention to you. May your deeds be important to Him and have the power to influence Him.” The consequence of *Hashem*’s noticing our deeds is that, if we are worthy, He provides dew and other material blessings, and if we are not worthy, He does not provide those things. In short, *Hashem* conducts the world based on our good deeds or, G-d forbid, our misdeeds. That is a blessing! It means that we have a relationship with *Hashem*.

In contrast, Esav was blessed with wealth and comfort in this world, regardless of his behavior. Esav’s lot, and the lot of the nations that comes from him, is wealth and comfort accompanied by the silent treatment from *Hashem*. That is a curse; those nations do not matter. (Of course, the people of wicked nations will be punished for their sins at some future time, but that punishment is personal; the deeds of those nations do not influence how *Hashem* runs the world as a whole.) (Zman Simchateinu 4:10)

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R’ Stern continues: Although the author of the *Zemer* effectively acknowledges that there are those who make this argument (and he praises the Jewish People for accepting *Shabbat* early despite an argument that it might not be required), the argument itself is erroneous. This is because *Chazakah* applies only to determining the status of one item; for example, is a particular object *Tahor* / ritually pure or *Tamei* / impure. If we are in doubt, the item’s most recent status (*Tahor* or *Tamei*) is relevant. In contrast, just because one minute ago was or was not *Shabbat* has nothing to do with whether it is now *Shabbat*! Here, *Chazakah* is irrelevant. (Peninei Yalkut Ha’Gershoni: Zemirot p.130)

“The lads grew up, and Esav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man, dwelling in tents.” (25:27)

Rashi z”l writes: So long as they were young, they could not be distinguished by their deeds, and no one paid much attention to their characters. But when they reached the age of thirteen, one--Yaakov--went to the house of learning, while the other--Esav--went to temples of idolatry. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Don Segal *shlita* (Yerushalayim and Brooklyn, N.Y.; a leading contemporary teacher of *Mussar*) asks: How is it possible that Yaakov and Esav suddenly turned in such drastically different directions? He answers: This is what *Rashi* is explaining—it happened because “so long as they were young, ... no one paid much attention to their characters.” When a child speaks *Lashon Ha’ra*, for example, and adults say, “So what if he speaks *Lashon Ha’ra*? He’s only a child!”--the effects become evident when that child grows up.

Of course, R’ Segal continues, children must be educated on their own level, but educated they must be! Children are very receptive, like a blank slate, he adds. When King Shlomo says (*Mishlei* 1:8), “Do not forsake the teaching of your mother,” he is alluding to the powerful impression created by whatever a mother teaches her children when they are young.

(Chovat Ha’adam Al Iggeret Ha’Ramban p.8)

“Yaakov simmered a stew, and Esav came in from the field, and he was exhausted.” (25:29)

Midrash Rabbah records that Esav committed three serious sins that day: murder, adultery, and theft. *Hashem* said, “I promised Avraham (*Bereishit* 15:15), ‘As for you--you shall come to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in good old age.’ Is it ‘good old age’ to see a grandson like this (Esav)? It is better that Avraham should die prematurely.” This, says the *Midrash*, is why Avraham lived only 175 years, in contrast to his son Yitzchak’s 180 years. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R’ Moshe Yirmiyahu Narol Hakohen z”l (rabbi in Narol, Poland and Metz, France; died 1659) writes: When Yitzchak first planned to bless Esav, he did not know about Esav’s sins or his true nature. But where did Yitzchak get the ability to give blessings? He inherited it from Avraham, as *Midrash Rabbah* comments on the verse (*Bereishit* 12:2), “You shall be a blessing”: “Blessings are entrusted to you.” Thus, Yitzchak later said to Yaakov (28:4), “May He grant the blessing of Avraham to you.” Would it have been right for Esav to inherit the “blessing of Avraham” when Esav was the cause of Avraham’s premature death? Surely not! What did *Hashem* do to reassure Yitzchak after he mistakenly blessed Yaakov? *Hashem* caused Esav to hint to Yitzchak about his three sins by saying, three times (27:31, 34, 38), “Avi” / “my father.” The Hebrew letters of *Avi* (*Aleph-Bet-Yud*) allude to three phrases in the Torah whose initial letters are *Aleph-Bet-Yud* and which hint to the three sins Esav committed (see *Shmot* 21:31--two phrases; *Shmot* 22:1). (Birkat Tov)