

From the High School

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them.” (*Bereishit* 26:18) Other incidents are recorded in a similar vein, occurring in the life of Yitzchak just as they did during the life of his father Avraham. We know and understand that to be one of the founders of our nation, these patriarchs had to have been really holy and special. That being so, why isn't there more about the life of Yitzchak recorded in the Torah, or at least something unique and original about the way he lived that can inspire us?

The answer, explains Rabbi Chaim Mintz, my personal rabbi, lies within the question. Avraham was an original thinker. He did not think like the pagan society that made up just about the entire civilized world in his days. Rather he went against the tide – a mighty strong one, at that – and introduced the concepts of what it meant to be what would later be called the Jew. He led his life on principle, and tried teaching as many people as possible how to connect to the Creator. The only way for these teachings to be transmitted to the next generations was to follow the lessons learned from the previous generation. That is exactly what Yitzchak did. No doubt Yitzchok led a life full of piety, and there were surely many incidents that could have evidenced that. However, the main attribute that Yitzchak contributed to the founding of the Jewish nation was the concept of *mesorah* - tradition. Following in your parent's footsteps. Passing on the way a Jew lives his or her life. This is truly the most valued and sacred tool that we possess, for it is through tradition that each succeeding generation keeps the flame of Judaism burning strong.

- Rabbi Mayer Erps — HS, Judaic Faculty

Answers to questions on page 1

- (1) Red
- (2) His birthright
- (3) Goat Skin
- (4) He was blind
- (5) Lavan's

Parshat Toldot

Friday, November 9, 2018

א כסלו תשע"ט

From the Lower School

1. What color was Eisav's skin when he was born?
2. What did Eisav give to Yaakov in exchange for stew?
3. What did Yaakov put on his arms and neck so that he could trick Yitzchak?
4. Why couldn't Yitzchak tell it was Yaakov?
5. To whose house did Yaakov run away?

— Rabbi Aron Srolovitz — JKHA Assistant Principal

Answers can be found on the last page.

From the Middle School

What's in a Name?

When Eisav was born the Torah says *vayikriu shimo* Eisav, "THEY called him Eisav". However, when Yaakov was born it says, *Vayikra shemo* Yaakov, "HE called his name Yaakov". Why for Eisav does it say in plural, "They" named him while for Yaakov it says in singular, "He"?

The word Eisav comes from the root of the word Eisav which means made. Eisav was born "fully made." He physically looked like a man, *ish tzadeh*, with full facial and body hair. Not only was he physically "made" but also he was spiritually "made", stuck in his ways without any change. We don't read about any character development or evolution of self throughout Eisav's

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From the Middle School

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life. Rashi explains that the reason it says "THEY called him Eisav", in plural, is because EVERYONE saw Eisav as this pre-grown, "already made" ,"stuck" man who did not spiritually or physically progress at all in his life. He was told that he can't change and convinced himself that he can no longer achieve spiritual greatness in this world, never allowing himself to break free out of his confined character.

"Yaakov," comes from the root of the word *eikev*, which means heel. Yaakov was always taking steps forward in his life. Amazingly, he changed so much that Hashem decided to give him a new name, Yisrael. Nothing stopped him from continuously finding ways to connect to Hashem, despite suffering most of life.

In our lives, we should strive to be like Yaakov and move forward and change. We should not let other people put us into a "box" or give us a certain stigma of character like "they" did with Eisav. All it takes is to move our heels and strive for more.

- Rabbi Yosef Sharbat — MS, Judaic Faculty

From the High School

The Depth in the Details

In this week's Torah portion, Eisav comes home and sees that Yaakov is making a soup. Eisav is hungry so he says, can I have some of that very red food? Yaakov agrees under the condition that Eisav gives him his birthright. Eisav does not care for it so he gives it up and has the soup. The Torah talks about how this is how Eisav became known as Edom. There are a couple of questions we may ask about this. Number one, why is the aspect of this incident so crucial? And number two, why did the Torah see fit to say what Eisav called the soup?

The answer to these questions is given by the Ramban. He explains that Eisav calling the soup red was less important rather

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than the idea it represents. Rabbi Bernie Fox uses the Ramban to explain, "Eisav was not fit to be Yitzchak's spiritual heir. He was completely absorbed in the material world. He was instinctively motivated. This caused him to sell his birthright for a bowl of soup. In order to accomplish this objective, the Torah gives Eisav a name that recalls this incident. The name, Edom, accomplishes this goal. Esav referred to the soup as 'very red food.' The name Edom is derived from Esav's reference." Basically, the color was not important but the color provided a basis for his name to show what he really was because this story tells us about Eisav's true character.

- Avi Grad is a Freshman at RYKHS

The Founder of Tradition

There are rituals that you may observe being performed by fellow Jews and wonder, "Why are they doing that?" If asked, some may respond by simply saying, "Tradition!" In all likelihood, there's probably more to it than that, but it definitely starts from tradition. Indeed, throughout the ages, tradition is what has preserved the Jewish people from generation to generation. How did this come to be? Who was the "founder" of tradition?

The answer lies in a phenomenon found in the *parshiyot* that we are presently reading. The focus of these *parshiyot* is the life and times of our avot. It is interesting to note that much attention is given to describing incidents related to the lives of Avraham and Yaakov. Yitzchak, however, doesn't seem to play such a prominent role in the Torah, for not much is recorded about his life. What is even more perplexing is that the little attention that is allotted to telling us about Yitzchak seems to describe experiences much like those of his father Avraham, as the *pasuk* in this week's *parsha* states, "And Yitzchok... dug the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Avraham...and he called them by the same names that his father had called

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