



Ashreinu | אשרינו

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion



Complementary Combination

Rabbi Dovid Kimche

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Joseph Feldman (24')

Benny Keehn (22')

Naomi Reichenberg (22')

Hannah Markovich (24')

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק
בֶּן אֲבִרְהָם אֲבִרְהָם
הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק

(Bereishit 25:18)

Our parsha discusses the life and events of the second of our Avot, Yitzchak. Our Avot undergird three fundamen-

tal pillars in the *avodat Hashem* of Am Yisrael. All three of these great individuals, through a lifetime of working on themselves, embedded within themselves and in all future generations these qualities and values.

In our Amida, we begin by saying:

אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק, ואלקי יעקב

We mention them separately, each with their own *alokim* to emphasise each of the Avot as individuals, each with their own *avodat Hashem* and path to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Yitzchak was radically different than Avraham, yet

he was his legacy, his continuation. It is well known that Avraham embodied a life of absolute *chesed* -- giving, while Yitzchak lived a life of *gevurah* -- restraint and discipline. Avraham, *ahava*; Yitzchak, *yirah*. Avraham, the man of the people and the man of action; Yitzchak, the man acted upon (the Akeida), who preferred solitude (davening alone in the field).

Our parsha stresses that Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak. This emphasis comes to teach us the connection and continuation from one to the other, despite the fact that these two great men were far from alike. The middah of *yirah* personified by Yitzchak is NOT a counterweight to the *ahava* of Avraham. It is NOT a contradiction; it is a continuation. Avraham gives rise to Yitzchak. True *ahava* gives rise to *yirah*.

Rashi quotes Chazal, who explain that the Torah stresses that Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak to prove false those who mocked Avraham and questioned whether he was really the father. The Sfas Emes offers additional *p'nimiyut* to this idea, based on our introduction above. It was necessary for the Torah to stress that Avraham

gave rise to Yitzchak, that the *middah* of Yitzchak flows directly from Avraham. Not only is there no contradiction, but the complement of true *ahava* is the structure that *yirah* provides. *Ahava* MUST work in tandem with *yirah*. An *ahava* without any boundaries will ultimately be meaningless. If one loves everyone and everything then you stand for nothing. There must be definition to that which you love. In life, one has to differentiate between right and wrong, *tamei* and *tahor*, *assur* and *mutar*. Ideas need structure; a *neshama* needs a *guf*.

Ultimately, *ahava* and *yirah* are no contradiction. We need them both. Avraham and Yitzchak are no contradiction. They are very much a continuum.

The Best You

Joseph Feldman (24')

Parshat Toldot talks about Rivka and Yitzchak's journey of infertility. For 20 years after they were married, Rivka could not bear children, which caused them great sadness. However, in this week's parsha, their prayers were answered and Rivka became pregnant, essentially carrying the future of the Jewish people. Rivka's pregnancy was difficult.

The midrash tells us that as Rivka walked in front of a place of idol worship, Esav started kicking, trying to worship idols. When she walked in front of a Beit Midrash, Yaakov started kicking, wanting to learn Torah. However, at that point, Rivka did not know she was carrying twins, which caused her great confusion.

If all this commotion was coming from one baby, Rivka was worried about which path that child would choose. Ultimately, she got the news that she was having twins; one would be a holy man and the other an evil man.

Considering that Yaakov would be the future father of the Jewish people, why would Hashem want him to be raised alongside Esav, an idol worshipper? What possible benefit could there be for Yaakov growing up surrounded by Esav's evil influence?

People need to try to be their best selves and show

who they really are, even during difficult times. We can follow the example of the Avot, who had many tests and challenges but prevailed. Our Avot teach us how we can become our best selves, even when we are surrounded by so many negative influences in our world. Yaakov's test was to become great, even while Esav was worshipping idols in the next room. Our test is to become great while living in a world full of obstacles; our goal is to rise from the negativity of our world and create positivity. Just like Yaakov, may we prevail and become a great and mighty nation like Hashem promised Avraham thousands of years ago.

Good soup

Benny Keehn (22')

וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשֵׂה אֵלַי יַעֲקֹב הַלְעִיטֵנִי זָה מִן הָאֶדָם

And Esav said to Yaakov, pour me some of this very red soup, for I am faint; therefore his name was called Edom (Bereishit 25:30)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Toldot, Esav sells his birthright to Yaakov for a bowl of lentil soup. When asking his brother for the soup, Esav refers to it as "very red food". As a result, he is given the name "Edom", the Hebrew word for red. There seems to be something important going on here if Esav receives another name simply for describing the soup. Why does the Torah highlight Esav's reference to Yaakov's soup?

There are many different answers to this question. The Ramban states that the color of the soup wasn't important at all. The Torah does not include this to signify this incident, but rather to learn an important lesson about Esav. Esav wasn't fit to be Yitzchak's spiritual heir. He was totally absorbed in the material world. He cared about things in a physical sense and not spiritually. Esav did not recognize the spiritual significance of his birthright. He was hungry and only cared about his food, so he sold his birthright for the soup.

The Torah gives Esav a name that recalls this incident to teach us a lesson. While the color isn't important, Edom is the perfect name to remember what happened. Esav traded something so special, just for a bowl of soup. He focused on describing the soup, rather than thinking the decision through or keeping the birthright. The Torah is teaching us to remember our priorities: don't be like Esav. Prioritize your spirituality over your physicality, which is what matters in the long run.

Have a wonderful Shabbat!

Break Bread

Naomi Reichenberg (22')

In this week's parsha, Parshat Toldot, we are told of a quarrel between Yitzchak and the people of Gerar. Yitzchak digs a well and the people seem to think that it belongs to them, and when he digs another one, they quarrel with him again and claim it as their own. Yitzchak moves away and digs another well and, finally, the people of Gerar do not quarrel with him over it.

A few pesukim later, Hashem comes to Yitzchak and tells him:

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִרְהָם
אֲבִירְךָ אֵל תִּירָא כִּי אֶתְּךָ אֲנֹכִי וּבְרַכְתִּיךָ וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶת
”זָרְעֶךָ בְּעֵבֹר אֲבִרְהָם עֶבְדִּי”

“I am the God of your father Avraham. Fear not, for I am with you, and I will bless you and increase your offspring for the sake of My servant Avraham” (Bereishit 26:24).

Yitzchak pitches his tent where he is and begins to order his servants to dig another well because now he is confident that Hashem is with him and everything will be fine, even if he has to encounter the people of Gerar again.

The pesukim then tell us that Avimelech comes from Gerar to meet Yitzchak, with Achuzzat, his councilor, and Phichol, chief of his troops. Upon seeing them Yitzchak inquires of them: “why have you come to see me since you kicked me out of Gerar?!” Avimelech goes on to tell Yitzchak that they see now that Hashem has been with him this entire time and that they do not want any trouble and want peace between each other. The pasuk right after this goes on to say:

וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתָּה וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ

“Then he (Yitzchak) made for them a feast, and they ate and drank” (Bereishit 26:30).

This pasuk seems so confusing. How could it be that Yitzchak just forgives Avimelech so quickly and not only forgives him, but also has a friendly meal with him? He and his people just gave Yitzchak so many problems and fought with him over and over again. How could it be that they are breaking bread suddenly and just become best buds in the span of what feels like thirty seconds?

The Ha'amek Davar comments on this pasuk and gives a *gevaldik* answer to this *shailah*. The Ha'amek Davar says it is the way of tzadikim to be easily appeased and want peace. This answer seems so simple but can really teach us volumes. Yitzchak does not want to quarrel or have rifts with other nations. All he wants is to live in the ways of his father and point people towards HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Even though these people wronged him and gave him so many problems, he does not care. It means nothing to him. Not only is he willing to make up with them, he makes them a meal and they eat together like a family. Tzaddikim, like Yitzchak Avinu, run away from conflict and only seek good.

We should all be zoche to follow the ways of Yitzchak by steering away from conflict and only yearning for peace, because that is the way of tzaddikim and we all have the potential to be just as great by only wanting the best for others and Am Yisrael.

Gut Shabbos!

Making a Connection

Hannah Markovich (24')

In this week's parsha, the Torah tells us that Yitzchak loved Esav:

וַיֶּאֱהָב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו כִּי צִיד בָּפִיו וּרְבִקָּה אֶהָבֶת אֶת יַעֲקֹב

“Yitzchak loved Esav because he hunted (food) in his mouth, and Rivka loved Yaakov” (Bereishit 25:28).

This pasuk makes Yitzchak's family seem a little dysfunctional, as each parent favored a different child. Another concerning aspect of this pasuk is that Yitzchak's love seems to be conditional, and no parent's love should ever require an explanation. It seems odd that the Torah needs to give the detailed reasoning of WHY Yitzchak loves Esav, and it is even

stranger that this love is based on food.

However, a deeper reading can give some insight into this very special father-son relationship. Earlier, the Torah describes the differences between the twin boys:

וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדָע צֹדֵד אִישׁ שָׂדֶה
וַיֵּעָקֵב אִישׁ תָּם יוֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים

“When the boys grew up, Esav became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors, and Yaakov was a mild man who stayed in camp” (Bereishit 26:27).

We know that Yitzchak is a calm intellectual, so Esav’s wild hunting must not have resonated with him. However, Yitzchak made a conscious effort to share in Esav’s enthusiasm and praise him for his skill, even if this is not what Yitzchak would have chosen as his son’s profession. Yitzchak was attentive to and valued his son’s interests, which becomes even clearer later in the parsha, when he says:

וַעֲתָה שָׂא נָא כְלִיךָ תִּלְיָךְ וְקִשְׁתְּךָ
וְצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה וְצוּדָה לִי צֹדֵד

“Take your gear, your bow and arrow, and go out to the field and hunt me some game” (Bereishit 27:3).

By commanding his son to hunt, Yitzchak reconstructs Esav’s pastime into a commandment, turning something mundane into the holy mitzvah of *kibud av*. Yitzchak knew how to connect with his son’s unique personality and figured out how to use Esav’s personal inclinations for positive actions.

May we all be able to learn from Yitzchak’s special gift of adapting to everyone’s unique personalities and his ability to turn mundane actions into holy deeds.

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