

LAMPLIGHTER

28 Cheshvan
Parshas
Toldos
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Toldot, we read of how Isaac wanted to bless Esau but was prevented from doing so by Rivka, his wife. It was through her intervention that the blessings were bestowed upon Jacob instead.

A fundamental question is raised by this incident. How could Isaac have possibly preferred Esau over Jacob? True, our sages tell us that Esau repeatedly tried to deceive his elderly father into thinking he was G-d-fearing and observant, by pointedly asking questions about religious law, but it is still hard to imagine Isaac being fooled by Esau's ruse. In fact, when Jacob presented himself to receive his father's blessings, Isaac declared that "the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau," recognizing how unusual it was for Esau to address him in such a civil manner or even to bring G-d's name into the conversation. Isaac surely realized that something was amiss. But if Isaac was well aware of Esau's serious shortcomings, why did he nevertheless want to give the blessings only to him?

The truth is that Esau, the firstborn twin, possessed an extremely lofty soul capable of incredible spiritual accomplishments. In certain respects, Esau was on an even higher spiritual level than his brother Jacob. Jacob was born to be a "dweller in tents (of Torah)," protected from the outside world, enclosed within the four walls of the yeshiva. Esau, however, was "a man of the field," blessed with the spiritual strength to venture forth into the coarser material world to wage war against evil and impurity, bringing G-dliness and holiness down into the physical realm. It was Esau, therefore, who possessed the greater spiritual might.

This, then, explains Isaac's desire to bless Esau, despite his knowledge that his son was abusing these spiritual gifts: Isaac hoped his blessings would cause Esau's considerable talents to be brought out and revealed. Not only would Esau repent of his evil ways, but the entire world would benefit from his actions.

G-d, however, knew it was too late for Esau to repent and live up to his potential. Instead, the blessings were given to Jacob, and with them, the power to overcome evil and transform it into good, and to illuminate the world with the light of Torah.

Different Yet Identical

By Moshe Bryski

In introducing us to the patriarchal family of Isaac, son of Abraham, this week's Torah portion of Toldot begins: "And these are the offspring of Isaac, son of Abraham - Abraham begot Isaac." Since Torah is not given to redundancy, this opening passage raises the question: Once we're told that Isaac is the "son of Abraham," what is the point of then stating, "Abraham begot Isaac"?

The Midrash explains that the statement "Abraham begot Isaac" represents divine testimony that Isaac was indeed the biological son of Abraham. That in the face of ridiculers and rumor-mongers who sought to claim that Isaac had been fathered by the Philistine king Abimelech, G-d formed the physical features of Isaac in striking resemblance to those of Abraham, so that there would be no room for doubt that "Abraham begot Isaac."

Another Midrashic comment expands upon this point by saying that this physical resemblance between Abraham and Isaac was a reflection of their spiritual resemblance: the merits, the lofty pursuits, indeed the spiritual DNA, of father and son were likewise completely identical.

Now this declaration of spiritual similarity - let alone resemblance - is most curious.

We're taught that Abraham's primary mode of service was via the attribute of loving kindness (*chessed*). This was repeatedly and poignantly demonstrated by his incessant acts of hospitality, compassion and benevolence. He opened his home to hungry wayfarers. He reached out and taught others with delicate softness and patient sensitivity.

Isaac's primary service, on the other hand, was via the attribute of severity and restraint (*gevurah*). He was a much more demanding sort of fellow. This was demonstrated by his defiant and relentless digging of wells. Even as his enemies kept filling and destroying them, Isaac dug away the rocks and the dirt to uncover the waters beneath. With sharpness and strength, he dug away at the *shmutz*—the evil and the falseness that was seen on the surface—so as to unearth the reservoirs of goodness and truth buried deep within.

Indeed, everything we learn about Abraham and Isaac seems to cry out: Different! That if ever there were a father and son who seemed so unlike one another, it was these two highly individualized personalities. Yet the Midrash states that, in fact, Abraham and Isaac resembled one another—in every way!

Within this paradox, seen at the inception of the family of Israel, lies the true beauty of our people. Different situations require different solutions. In the days of Abraham—during which unawareness of a divine presence was rampant—the world needed an Abraham-like personality. In the days of Isaac—especially with hostilities looming on the horizon—the world needed an Isaac-like personality. Yet, these very different individuals, firmly embarked on their very different missions with their very different methods and characteristics, are deemed spiritually (and essentially) identical, because their ultimate focus and goals were one and the same. Their core principles, values and underlying devotion to G-d were completely indistinguishable from one another. They blazed different trails, but both trails led to the same place: toward making their environment a more holy and moral place to live.

Judaism, and the Torah way of life, celebrates individuality. We are each endowed with our own gifts and talents, our own passions and modes of expression. In terms of personality and character, none of us are truly alike. This is the way G-d created us, for it is only through the diverse expression of the multitudes that His true intent in creating this world can be realized.

Each and every Jewish man, woman and child plays his or her own special instrument within the symphony that is Judaism. Within the context and framework of halachah and tradition are endless means and modes of service of the Almighty. From the intellectual to the emotional, from the ritualistic to the artistic, we are called upon to experience it all, even as we shine in some areas more than others. What inspires, stimulates and intrigues some may not do the same for others. Yet, at the pinnacle of it all, is that special place in which we are, and must remain, identical. Within the essential goals of living and being true to the principles of our holy Torah is where there is a beautiful resemblance among all of the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Let each instrument of the orchestra contribute its own special notes, with its own special sound and rhythm. Yet let us make certain that we are playing the same piece of music—as guided by that one and only Conductor—so that rather than a cacophony of disjointed noise, we have a beautiful symphony of harmonious diversity.

Slice of LIFE

A Soul at Sinai: From a Life in Germany to a Life in Israel

By Rachel Kaufman, as told to her by Miriam

The Talmud (in Shevuot 39a) teaches us that the souls of future converts were present at Mount Sinai, when G-d gave the Jews the Torah. Indeed, many converts have described an inexplicable feeling of connection with Jews from a very young age. I would like to share my story with you.

I was born as Lizel Bender in a small rural village in Germany. My family owned a large farm that had belonged to them for generations, and I grew up there with my older brother and two sisters. The village numbered only 25 people, spread out over five farmhouses far from each other and surrounded by thick green forests. Our family owned horses and cows, and grew potatoes and corn. The work was hard, but rewarding.

I remember once when I was very young, I heard about someone called Miriam. "Why didn't you call me Miriam?" I asked my mother. For some reason, I felt an affinity to the name. I also remember myself talking a strange language during my make-believe games. It wasn't German, Spanish, French or anything like that. It was something different entirely.

Our family was Catholic, and my mother was deeply religious. She taught me to talk to G-d, to ask Him for my needs and to thank Him for everything. Yet when I joined my mother for weekly visits to the church, I felt that something wasn't right. If there is a G-d whom one can turn to and pray for his needs, why did I need to pray to any "subordinates"—those lifeless figures in the church?

One day I discovered a Bible translated to German in my brother's school bag. I started reading it and couldn't put it down. I read about the Creation, about Moses (whom I considered to be the greatest of all leaders) and about the commandments. I cannot explain my fascination with the Bible stories, but still, I didn't connect at all to the New Testament.

Thus, I grew up full of conflicting thoughts with no one to share them with.

After high school, I decided to study hospitality management and moved

Dusseldorf, a tourist city filled with hotels and coffeehouses. It was here that the turning point of my life took place. I had to phone the owner of a certain hotel in connection with my work. A girl answered the phone in English—a language I had learned to speak in school—saying he wasn't home. She asked my name, and I replied "Lizel."

I had arranged to meet a friend in a coffee shop later that day. While sitting there waiting for her, a girl asked if I spoke English. "That's strange," I thought. "Twice in one day!" The girl turned to me and asked: "Your name is Lizel?" I was taken aback. How did she know my name? "I spoke to you on the phone earlier," she said. It turned out that she was on holiday from America visiting her uncle (the hotel owner I had been calling) and for some reason decided to approach me. We began to talk. I discovered that her name was Aviva, and that she was Jewish.

I often marvel at the hashgacha pratit (Divine Providence)—that out of all the coffeehouses in Dusseldorf and all the girls in that city, Aviva discovered me, and my whole life subsequently changed. I was overwhelmed with excitement to meet a real Jew. I flooded her with questions: "Who says you are really the people of the Bible? And how do you keep the commandments nowadays in the 20th century?"

Aviva herself was born in Israel to a Tunisian family and educated in a religious school, but later moved to Florida and became less observant. She answered my questions as best she could, and I was delighted. We spent two weeks together touring and talking, becoming fast friends. I felt a close kinship with her, but when her vacation ended and she returned to Miami, I went back to my job trying to ignore my internal confusion.

A few weeks later, I received a phone call from Aviva, who had managed to find my number. Despite the expense of transatlantic calls in those days, we continued to chat on the phone. One day, she invited me to visit her in Florida.

It was in Aviva's house that I became exposed firsthand to Jewish laws and customs, to Shabbat and the holidays. She explained to me that in a kosher kitchen, meat and milk are kept separate. "Why?" I asked. "Because the Torah commanded us," she replied. My vacation ended, and Aviva begged me to stay in America. But I had worked hard to complete my studies in Germany and had a certificate that would enable me to get a good hotel job. Why

should I give it up to become an immigrant in America? On the other hand, I felt as if a new world had opened up for me there. In the end, I decided to return to Germany.

There was an old sour-faced lady, Mary, who would come to visit the spa in the hotel where I worked. She greeted me on my return. "Where were you? I missed you!" I told her the whole story and shared my misgivings. To my surprise, she encouraged me to follow my heart.

"If it's good for you, don't hesitate. Do you know what happened to me? When I was young, I was hesitant and unsure. I once had an opportunity to move to Italy and establish myself there, but I was afraid of leaving familiar ground. You see me today? I'm an old, bitter, bad-tempered maiden. I missed the opportunity of my life. Do you want to be like me?"

Her words helped me reach the crucial decision: to return to America.

Over the course of the next few years that I lived with Aviva, we studied Judaism together. When Yom Kippur came, she told me that I didn't have to fast. But I insisted on fasting the whole day. Likewise, I lit Chanukah candles and kept the mitzvot, even though I was still a gentile. When I decided to convert, I met Rabbi Feivish Dalfin, the Chabad emissary of North Bay Village, Fla., and his dear wife, Chaya Sara, who kindly took me under their wing, taught me all I needed to know and accompanied me through the conversion process before the beth din (rabbinical court). Of course, I chose the name Miriam—a name I'd always dreamed of having.

A short time after becoming Jewish, I married a close member of Aviva's family. I prayed to G-d to bless me with children. My son was born two years after our wedding on exactly the same date that I joined the Jewish nation. Eight months later, we made aliyah and settled in Ashdod, a growing city on Israel's Mediterranean coast.

What attracted me to Judaism? I was impressed with the logic, with clear answers to every question I raised. But sometimes I wonder if I wasn't born with a Jewish soul—maybe as a reincarnation of a Jew who embraced Christianity. In any case, I could have lived my life on a German farm, busy taking care of the horses or working in a hotel. But G-d's Providence led me, step by step, to discover Judaism, and I merited to join the Chosen People, and live a life of Torah and mitzvot.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Can Torah Truth Be Compromised?

By the Grace of G-d
22nd of Adar I, 5725 [February 24, 1965]
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Greeting and Blessing:

After not hearing from you a long time, I was pleased to receive your letter of February 16th, in which you write about your various activities, as well as future prospects.

May G-d grant that each and every one of us, in the midst of all our people, should utilize all capacities and opportunities for the spreading of Torah-true Yiddishkeit to the fullest extent of one's influence. The emphasis must always be on Torah-true Yiddishkeit, in accordance with Toras Emes, for truth denies any compromise. Even if a compromise is "partly true," it is not the whole truth, and therefore it is not true at all, for truth must be whole and perfect. Where this kind of effort is made with the appropriate determination and perseverance, success is assured.

With regard to the question whether it is proper to maintain a certain position in a certain organization, this, like other questions in Halachah, should be addressed to a Rav Moreh Horo'ah, and then act according to his instructions.

Generally speaking, it is well known that it is necessary to make a distinction between individuals and movements. For, as an individual Jew, even if he sins, he is a Jew, and it is necessary to do everything be'ahavah to help him back on the right path (see Tanya, Chapter 32, "Lev"). On the other hand, movements and ideologies which are against the Torah must be opposed and exposed. As to which movements and ideologies are opposed to the Torah, this is easy to determine in the light of the psak of the Rambam to the effect that to deny even one letter of the Torah is tantamount to denying the whole Torah min hashamayim (Hilchos Teshuvah 3:9).

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

Is a Self-Hating Jew Still a Jew?

Question: I recently saw a "Jewish" professor speaking at an anti-Israel rally. I'll spare you the details of what he said, but you can see some of his statements on Youtube to get the sense of his sentiments toward Jewish people and Israel. When I voiced my disgust to a friend who knew him as a child, I learned that his parents converted to Catholicism back in Europe, he never had a circumcision or a bar mitzvah, and he is married to a non-Jewish woman. He claims in his speeches that he is a Jewish son of a Holocaust survivor. He may be the son of a survivor, but can we say once and for all that he is not Jewish?

Answer: I share your disgust. But I also have to marvel at such a person. He is a vivid illustration of the destructibility of the Jewish soul.

Here is a guy who could easily identify as a non-Jew, and has every reason to. His parents converted to another religion, he married out, he reviles everything Jewish, and he sides with the enemy of the Jewish people.

So why doesn't he just drop the whole Jewish thing altogether?

Because he can't. Being Jewish can't be dropped. It is a Jew's deepest identity.

Whether you love it or hate it, it will always be there. No conversion can change that.

And so, in a twisted way, he expresses his Jewishness by being the anti-Jewish Jew.

Yes, he is using his Jewishness as a weapon against Jews.

No, he should not be invited to speak at any Jewish event.

But yes, he is a Jew.

People like that can do a huge amount of damage. But the biggest damage is to themselves. Here is a Jewish soul yearning to connect to Jewishness, who has blocked his own path. Here is someone whose primary preoccupation, whose main claim to fame, is his Jewishness, but a tormented Jewishness. Rather than embrace it, he fights it. He is an accomplice in his own persecution.

A WORD

from the Director

On the holiday of Shemini Atzeret in 1977, the Lubavitcher Rebbe suffered a serious heart attack. For the next five weeks, the Rebbe remained at Lubavitch World Headquarters, 770 Eastern Parkway, where he received top medical care for his condition. On the first day of the Jewish month of Kislev, the Rebbe returned to his home on President Street in Brooklyn for the first time since his heart attack.

This year, dear readers, we celebrate 40 years from this miraculous recovery!

Kislev 1 is celebrated amongst the Rebbe's Chassidim as a day when the Rebbe returned to full health and it is thus, an opportune time to share a few thoughts of the Rebbe on this topic.

The day after the Rebbe's heart attack, the Rebbe insisted on teaching at a public gathering (farbrengen) as he had done on that particular day for the previous 38 years.

The doctor warned the Rebbe not to exert himself thus, saying, "You must take care of your health. If not, there is a 25% chance of a relapse." The doctor then asked if the Rebbe understood what he had said.

The Rebbe smiled and nodded his head, "You said that even if I don't take care of my health - which, I assure you, I will - there is a 75% chance that there won't be a relapse."

A positive outlook can do wonders! So can increasing in mitzvot observance when we are in need of Divine assistance. The Rebbe advised a person who was not well: "As you may know, in order to receive G-d's blessings it is necessary to prepare receptacles. It would have been impossible for us to know the receptacles, but for G-d's mercy and infinite kindness, having given us the Torah and having revealed to us that Torah and mitzvos are the proper receptacles for us to receive His blessings... The important thing is to do better then at present in the religious observances, which will surely bring an improvement in your condition."

May we all merit in this month of Kislev to return to full health, with the coming of Moshiach and the end to all illness, NOW!

J. I. Gutterman

A Story From Our Past

Challahs from Heaven

A man was travelling through the desert, hungry, thirsty and tired, when he came upon a tree bearing luscious fruit and affording plenty of shade, underneath which ran a spring of water. He ate of the fruit, drank of the water and rested beneath the shade.

When he was about to leave, he turned to the tree and said: "Tree, O tree, with what should I bless you?"

"Should I bless you that your fruit be sweet? Your fruit is already sweet.

"Should I bless you that your shade be plentiful? Your shade is plentiful. That a spring of water should run beneath you? A spring of water runs beneath you.

"There is one thing with which I can bless you: May it be G-d's will that all the trees planted from your seeds should be like you . . ."

The Tree

[An oven] that was cut into parts and sand was placed between the parts, Rabbi Eliezer maintained that it is pure (i.e., not susceptible to ritual impurity). The other sages said that it is susceptible to ritual impurity....

On that day, Rabbi Eliezer brought them all sorts of proofs, but they were rejected. Said he to them: "If the law is as I say, may the carob tree prove it." The carob tree was uprooted from its place a distance of 100 cubits. Others say, 400 cubits. Said they to him: "One cannot prove anything from a carob tree."

Said [Rabbi Eliezer] to them: "If the law is as I say, may the aqueduct prove it." The water in the aqueduct began to flow backwards. Said they to him: "One cannot prove anything from an aqueduct."

Said he to them: "If the law is as I say, then may the walls of the house of study prove it." The walls of the house of study began to cave in. Rabbi Joshua rebuked them, "If Torah scholars are debating a point of Jewish law, what are your qualifications to intervene?" The walls did not fall, in deference to Rabbi Joshua, nor did they straighten up, in deference to Rabbi Eliezer. They still stand there at a slant.

Said he to them: "If the law is as I say, may it be proven from heaven!" There then issued a heavenly voice which proclaimed: "What do you want of Rabbi Eliezer -- the law is as he says..."

Rabbi Joshua stood on his feet and said: "'The Torah is not in heaven!' 1" ... We take no notice of heavenly voices, since You, G-d, have already, at Sinai, written in the Torah to 'follow the majority.'" 2

Rabbi Nathan subsequently met Elijah the Prophet and asked him: "What did G-d do at that moment?" [Elijah] replied: "He smiled and said: 'My children have triumphed over Me, My children have triumphed over Me.'"

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 17 - 18 November	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:54	8:57
Adelaide	7:43	8:44
Brisbane	6:00	6:57
Darwin	6:35	7:27
Gold Coast	6:00	6:57
Perth	6:38	7:37
Sydney	7:20	8:21
Canberra	7:32	8:33
Launceston	7:54	9:01
Auckland	7:53	8:55
Wellington	8:03	9:10
Hobart	7:58	9:06
Byron Bay	7:00	7:57

The Caving Walls of the Study Hall

Once, the wicked government [of Rome] decreed that the Jewish people were forbidden to study Torah. Pappus ben Judah saw Rabbi Akiva convening gatherings in public and studying Torah [with them]. Said he to him: "Akiva, are you not afraid of the government?"

Said [Rabbi Akiva] to him: "I'll give you a parable.

"A fox was walking along a river and saw fish rushing to and fro. Said he to them: 'What are you fleeing?'

"Said they to him: 'The nets that the humans spread for us.'

"Said he to them: 'Why don't you come out onto the dry land? We'll live together, as my ancestors lived with your ancestors.'

"Said they to him: 'Are you the one of whom it is said that you are the wisest of animals? You're not wise, but foolish! If, in our environment of life we have cause for fear, how much more so in the environment of our death!'

"The same applies to us. If now, when we sit and study the Torah, of which it is said (Deuteronomy 30:20), 'For it is your life and the lengthening of your days,' such is our situation, how much more so if we neglect it . . ."

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Isaac and Rebecca endure twenty childless years, until their prayers are answered and Rebecca conceives. She experiences a difficult pregnancy as the "children struggle inside her"; G-d tells her that "there are two nations in your womb," and that the younger will prevail over the elder.

Esau emerges first; Jacob is born clutching Esau's heel. Esau grows up to be "a cunning hunter, a man of the field"; Jacob is "a wholesome man," a dweller in the tents of learning. Isaac favors Esau; Rebecca loves Jacob. Returning exhausted and hungry from the hunt one day, Esau sells his birthright (his rights as the firstborn) to Jacob for a pot of red lentil stew.

In Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, Isaac presents Rebecca as his sister, out of fear that he will be killed by someone coveting her beauty. He farms the land, reopens the wells dug by his father Abraham, and digs a series of his own wells: over the first two there is strife with the Philistines, but the waters of the third well are enjoyed in tranquility.

Esau marries two Hittite women. Isaac grows old and blind, and expresses his desire to bless Esau before he dies. While Esau goes off to hunt for his father's favorite food, Rebecca dresses Jacob in Esau's clothes, covers his arms and neck with goatskins to simulate the feel of his hairier brother, prepares a similar dish, and sends Jacob to his father. Jacob receives his father's blessings for "the dew of the heaven and the fat of the land" and mastery over his brother. When Esau returns and the deception is revealed, all Isaac can do for his weeping son is to predict that he will live by his sword, and that when Jacob falters, the younger brother will forfeit his supremacy over the elder.

Jacob leaves home for Charan to flee Esau's wrath and to find a wife in the family of his mother's brother, Laban. Esau marries a third wife—Machalath, the daughter of Ishmael.

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS TOLDOS • 28 CHESHVAN • 17 NOVEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA:	8.00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.30 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	TEHILIM:	8.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.29 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MOLAD WILL BE:	SUNDAY 12.57 AM
	FARBRENGEN AFTER DAVENING	
	MINCHA:	7.55 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	7.55 PM
	MAARIV:	8.40 PM