

# The Narrow Bridge

## גשר צר מאוד

### PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

#### Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Toldos

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רפואה שלמה פעסל בת גאלדא / לזכות חילינו

#### **DIVINE SOUL**

##### **Baal Shem Tov**

*"These are the descendants of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham: Avraham begot Yitzchak..." (25:19)*

True, Yitzchak's birth was greatly superior, because Yishmael was born before Avraham received the commandment of circumcision that brought him the marvelous quality of perfect faith, whereas Yitzchak was born after Avraham had become physically perfect through circumcision. Nevertheless, we could have erred by assuming that Yitzchak, like Yishmael, was no more than a biological son of Avraham.

Therefore, G-d set the record straight: Yitzchak's pedigree is beyond being "the son of Avraham." He has the exclusive privilege of "Avraham begot Yitzchak." For our Sages explain this phrase to imply that Avraham's facial appearance was replicated only in Yitzchak. This special pedigree was subsequently transmitted by Yitzchak exclusively to Yaakov, who transmitted it as an eternal inheritance to each subsequent Jew.

You can now appreciate the value of the Jewish souls, as expressed in the verse (Devarim 14:1), "You are sons to the L-rd, your G-d." You, the Jewish nation, have the exclusive pedigree of being a part of G-d's Infinite Essence.

#### **DESIRE BREEDS AWE**

##### **Reb Noson of Nemirov**

*"These are the descendants of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham: Avraham begot Yitzchak..." (25:19)*

Yitzchak represents awe and fear of G-d. Avraham was the first to seek G-d; he is the father of all converts. Avraham had not received the Torah, just a burning desire to serve G-d. His desire, longing and love brought about the revelation of G-d and the ability to fear Him and stand in awe of Him. Thus, Yitzchak is the son of Avraham. (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 234)

#### **DISCIPLINE WITH KINDNESS**

##### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"These are the descendants of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham: Avraham begot Yitzchak..." (25:19)*

In Kabbalah, Avraham was the embodiment of kindness (chesed), while Yitzchak embodied severity (gevurah). The wording of this verse alludes to an important lesson both in educating young children as well as in how we are to conduct our personal interactions. The second mention of Avraham's name in this verse occurs immediately after the first, whereas the two mentions of Yitzchak's name in this verse are separated by several words.

This teaches us that although it may occasionally be necessary to employ disciplinary measures, we should never do so twice in succession. There must always be an interval of kindness between every two such occasions.

In fact, Yitzchak's name never appears twice in succession throughout the entire Torah, in contrast to the names of Avraham (signifying kindness) and Yaakov (signifying tiferet, "harmony"), which do. (Likutei Levi Yitzchak on Zohar 1:11)

#### **PURE KINDNESS**

##### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"These are the descendants of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham: Avraham begot Yitzchak..." (25:19)*

Even though it is written, "Yitzchak, the son of Avraham," it was necessary to state that "Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak" because cynics of that generation were claiming that Sarah had become pregnant by Avimelech. She and Avraham had been together for many years, and she had not conceived by him. Therefore, G-d made Yitzchak's facial features so similar to Avraham's that everyone had to admit that "Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak." (Rashi)

The sefirah of Chesed precedes the sefirah of Gevurah. When a person's acts of kindness (chesed) are pure, then the judgments (gevurot) that may issue forth afterwards are holy and serve to direct him towards G-d.

But if his acts of kindness are impure, then the judgments that follow are tainted as well, and bring suffering that distances him from G-d.

Avraham represents the sefirah of Chesed, and Yitzchak, the sefirah of Gevurah. Holy and pure Chesed leads to holy and pure Gevurah. Because Avraham was a holy source, Yitzchak too, was holy, and even sacrificed himself completely for G-d's sake. This could not have happened had Yitzchak come from a blemished source such as Avimelech. (See Likutey Moharan I, 74)

## **THE FINAL BLOW**

### **Reb Simchah Bunim of Pshischa**

*"And the boys agitated within her... and she went to inquire of Hashem." (25:22)*

That He would tell her what would happen in the end. (Rashi)

We are told that whenever Rivkah passed a Jewish house of study, Yaakov would move convulsively in an effort to emerge; however, whenever she passed a pagan temple, Eisav would strain to emerge.

Rivkah thought that she was bearing only one child, and therefore she assumed that the convulsive movements she felt within her when she passed houses of study and heathen temples were indicative of a struggle between the good impulse and the evil impulse in the child she was to have. Sometimes, she thought, the evil urge won the day and the child wanted to rush out to worship idols. At other times, the good inclination would gain the upper hand so that the child wanted to emerge to go to yeshivah to study Torah.

Naturally, Rivkah was anxious to discover "what would happen in the end"; she wanted to discover the outcome of the inner struggle that she thought was taking place within her child. Good or evil - which of the two would strike the final blow and emerge as the victor?

Throughout our lives, a war against our evil inclination is waged. Sometimes we will win; at other times the evil within us will gain the upper hand. Regardless of temporary reverses, we should see to it that we will be able to strike the final blow and emerge as the victor in the struggle.

## **TOILING IN TORAH**

### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

*"And the boys agitated within her..." (25:22)*

Rashi notes that the root of the word "agitate" in this verse stems from the word "run." As such, we are being told that when Rivkah - who was pregnant with Yaakov and Esav - passed by a place of Torah, Yaakov would "run" to try to go there, and when she passed a place of idol worship, Eisav would "run" to try to go there.

The Gemara (Niddah 30b) says that in the womb, a fetus is taught all of the Torah by an angel. If so, why would Yaakov run to leave the womb to learn Torah; surely, he had access to the entire Torah where he was?

Rav Chaim Shmuelevits answered this question when he was once asked why we do not stand up for a pregnant lady despite the fact that the child she is carrying knows the entire Torah? Rav Chaim answered that Torah knowledge without Torah study may be impressive, but it is not praiseworthy. Only through hard work and dedication can one truly be praised for knowing Torah.

For this reason, explained Rav Chaim, Yaakov was desperate to leave the womb and learn Torah, for although he may have gained more Torah knowledge where he was, he understood that that Torah's true value only comes through hard work.

(In fact, it is precisely for this reason that a baby forgets the Torah he has learned once he leaves the womb, for if not for the toil in Torah, he would not gain any reward.)

## **OPPOSING FORCES**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"G-d told her, 'Two nations are in your womb; two powers will diverge from within you. Rulership will pass from one power to the other.'" (25:23)*

When one ascends, the other descends. (Rashi)

Rashi explains the phrase "Rulership will pass from one power to the other" to mean that Yaakov and Eisav would battle constantly, and that the ascent of one would result in the descent of the other.

This dynamic applies to every individual's life as well.

A person cannot seek spirituality while at the same time indulging in materialism, for the ascent of one must mean the descent of the other.

A person must exert himself to engage in spiritual endeavors, for only in this way can he maintain and intensify his connection to G-d. (See Likutey Moharan I, 1:2)

## **MUCH TO BE DONE**

### **The Stretiner Rebbe**

*"G-d told her, 'Two nations are in your womb; two powers will diverge from within you... and the elder will serve the younger.'" (25:23)*

The verse states "V'rav ya'avod ta'ir - And the elder shall serve the younger." The word rav, generally translated as "elder," can also mean "much."

This is to indicate that there is rav (much) work in the service of Hashem. To be a ta'ir - to remain young and fresh - one must reach the category of humility.

## **GETTING AN EARLY START**

### **Reb Mordechai of Nadburna**

*"G-d told her, 'Two nations are in your womb... and the elder will serve the younger.'" (25:23)*

The verse states "V'rav ya'avod ta'ir - And the elder shall serve the younger." The word rav can be translated as "much."

This is to indicate that there is rav (much) work in the service of Hashem. One who wishes to gain in Torah knowledge and good deeds must begin to study and work in the service of Hashem while he is still young.

## **INCREASING LIGHT**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"G-d told her, 'Two nations are in your womb; two powers will diverge from within you. Rulership will pass from one power to the other.'" (25:23)*

Metaphorically, Yaakov and Eisav represent the two souls (and their opposing drives) that exist within each of us. We each possess an inner Yaakov - i.e., our Divine soul with its G-dly drives, and also an inner Eisav - i.e., our animating soul with its selfish drives. When our Divine soul asserts itself, it weakens the materialistic tendencies of the animating soul.

The Divine soul overcomes the animating soul in the same way that light overcomes darkness. Light does not have to actively exert itself to dispel darkness - darkness simply ceases to exist in the presence of light.

Similarly, as soon as we let the holiness and goodness of our Divine souls shine by studying the Torah and observing the commandments, the selfishness of the animating soul disappears. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5691, p. 328)

## **THE CHOICE IS YOURS**

### **Rabbi Elimelech Biderman**

*"And her days to give birth were completed, and behold, there were twins..." (25:24)*

Some people think that that they can't study Torah or serve Hashem properly because they didn't have an upbringing as good as the next person, or because their mazal (zodiac) influences them to behave a in certain way.

It is for this reason, explains the Ritva, that Hashem arranged that Yaakov and Eisav were born as twins. They had the same parents and were born under the same mazal, but led two very different paths; because no matter how challenging your nature or environment is, it's your desire to serve Hashem and the choices you make that will have the biggest impact on whether you are a "Yaakov" or an "Eisav."

## **INCREASED RECOGNITION**

### **Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky**

*"And her days to give birth were completed, and behold, there were twins..." (25:24)*

If the purpose of the angel learning inside the mother's womb with the unborn child is to lay the foundation of Torah within the child, so that he may succeed in understanding Torah later in life, how can a ger (convert) ever succeed in Torah?

The answer is that a ger, one who truly recognizes the truth of the Torah, is provided with a special siyata d'Shmaya (Heavenly assistance) in order to succeed. He doesn't need the extra foundation of a typical Jew, because Hashem provides him with a greater recognition and understanding.

## **THE FEW, THE PROUD**

### **Degel Machaneh Efraim**

*"The first one came out red... and they called him Eisav." (25:25)*

Everyone called him thus. (Rashi)

Eisav represents falsehood and deceit, while Yaakov personified truth. Of Eisav we are told "and they called his name Eisav" - in plural, because he had many followers.

Of Yaakov, however, the Torah states "and his name was called Yaakov." The singular form of that statement indicates that Yaakov had fewer followers than Eisav because unfortunately truth has a much smaller number of adherents than falsehood.

## **LEADING BY EXAMPLE**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*"The first one came out red... and they called him Eisav. After that, his brother emerged... and he called his name Yaakov." (25:25-26)*

The Degel Machaneh Efraim asks why the Torah writes the word vayikriu - "and they called him," in plural form, when naming Eisav. Yet, the Torah writes vayikra - "and he called him, in singular form, when naming Yaakov?"

The Degel Machaneh Efraim explains, based on the Medrash, that Eisav's name represents sheker - falsehood, and the name Yaakov represents emes - truth. Unfortunately, the majority of the world is enticed by deception and lacks integrity and honesty which is why the Torah uses the word vayikriu - "and they called him," in the plural form, when naming Eisav. Yaakov on the other hand, who represents truth and transparency, is named using the word vayikra - "and he called him," in the singular form, because this trait is not common within the world at large.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim is teaching us that as descendants of Yaakov it is our responsibility to serve as the example for the rest of the world of what honesty looks like. Like Yaakov, we are small in number, but we must serve as a light unto the nations in how we act and behave with uncompromised integrity. With this approach in mind, we are sure to make a profound impact on the world around us!

## **GOOD WILL OVERCOME EVIL**

### **Reb Noson of Nemirov**

*"After that, his brother emerged, his hand grasping onto Eisav's heel. He named him Yaakov, and he called his name Yaakov." (25:26)*

Yaakov will never let Eisav be victorious and trap forever the souls waiting for rectification. He will grab hold of Eisav and eventually remove those souls from his grip. Thus, he is called Yaakov (יעקב), alluding to the Eikev (עקב, heel); he is also called Yisrael (ישראל), which has the same letters as Ly Rosh (לירוש, I have a head - i.e., intellect), indicating that all souls will eventually be elevated to the highest levels. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 450)

## **A LIFE OF TRUTH**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*"Yaakov was a wholesome man..." (25:27)*

You shall give truth to Yaakov and kindness to Avraham. (Micha 7:20)

Each one of our Avos is identified with a different character trait. As the above pasuk mentions, Avraham is known for chesed, Yitzchak is recognized for his gevurah, and Yaakov is described with emes.

After reading through the episode involving Yaakov's deception of Yitzchak in order to receive Eisav's brachah, emes is not the trait that would come to mind when speaking about Yaakov. How is Yaakov identified as a man of truth when he behaves in a manner that does not seem to suggest that?

Rav Eliyahu Dessler (Michtav M'Eliyahu) explains that the word emes is commonly understood to mean stating the facts as they occurred and the word sheker refers to telling falsehoods. However, Rav Dessler corrects this misunderstanding by suggesting that emes means living a life that conforms to the expectations of Hashem. Sometimes that means telling the facts as they are, but sometimes, it may warrant concealing the truth and perhaps even deceiving someone. For example, everyone would agree that while one who speaks lashon hara may be speaking truths, that person is nevertheless not following the rules of the Torah, thereby not living a life of emes. Living a life of emes means observing the Torah in the manner in which Hashem instructs us to do so.

We can now understand how Yaakov is identified as a man of emes.

The seemingly deceitful manner in which he attained the brachah was instructed by Rivkah, who knew through prophecy that he was to receive the brachos.

Therefore, Yaakov was in fact demonstrating emes by bringing to fruition that which Hashem intended.

This insight from Rav Dessler serves as a powerful reminder of how we are to live our lives.

As we progress through our lives, we are to constantly ask ourselves: "Is this what Hashem would want me to do? Am I living a life of emes?"

If these questions are regularly brought into focus, we are sure to conduct ourselves in a manner which will allow the Shechinah to dwell amongst us.

## **ADMIRABLE HONESTY**

### **Shelah HaKadosh**

*"Yaakov was a wholesome man..." (25:27)*

You shall give truth to Yaakov and kindness to Avraham. (Micha 7:20)

Of all the superior character traits possessed by our ancestor Yaakov, the Torah chooses "an honest man" as the highest praise, to teach us that nothing is more worthy of our respect and admiration than a life lived with honesty and righteousness.

## **COMPLETE WISDOM**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"Yaakov was a wholesome man, dwelling in tents." (25:27)*

"Yaakov" alludes to intellect and wisdom.

One who seeks true wisdom - the knowledge of the Divine - is said to be tamim (whole and complete). (See Likutey Moharan I:end)

## **MERCY FOR ALL**

### **Reb Meir Premishlaner**

*"Yitzchak loved Eisav..." (25:28)*

Yitzchak recognized Eisav for who he was but loved him nonetheless in order to have what to say later on.

For should Hashem ever seek to punish Klal Yisrael, chas v'shalom, for neglecting the Torah, Yitzchak could say, "Merciful G-d, I also had a rebellious son to whom I, of flesh and blood, showed love and compassion. Surely, You can do the same!"



## **SEEING PAST THE FACADE**

### **Reb Naftali of Ropshitz**

*"And Rivkah loved Yaakov." (25:28)*

This statement teaches us that innocence alone is not necessarily a good quality. Yitzchak was very innocent and naive so that when Esav asked how to give tithes from salt and straw, he thought that it was an honest request. But Rivkah, coming from a home where deceit was prevalent, understood why Esav asked that question. She knew that there was a possibility that one could ask questions as if one were very careful in observance and yet be a wicked person. That is why it is written, "And Rivkah loved Yaakov" - for Rivkah saw the truth.

## **BEING MINDFUL OF OTHERS**

### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

*"And Yaakov boiled a stew..." (25:29)*

It seems strange that Yaakov would be making his own stew. After all, he was raised amidst phenomenal wealth, with an abundance of servants. And more importantly, Yaakov was completely immersed in Torah studies. Is this, therefore, an appropriate way to spend his precious time when he could have been learning?

The Medrash Hagadol answers that Yaakov was only making his own food because he had just returned from the beis medrash and found all the servants asleep. So, demonstrating great humility and care for others, he decided to make the food himself - even though he was certainly entitled to wake them, and even though it would take away time from his Torah studies!

There are many times when we are entitled to the assistance of others, whether as a child, parent, spouse, or employer: Yet we see from here that just because we can use their services, it does not mean that we always should. Therefore, even when it may cause us discomfort or extra time, we should always consider whether we really need to "bother" other people to get what we want done.

This message was illustrated by Rav Yisrael Salanter when he was invited by one of his students to Shabbos dinner. He told his student that he would only agree to go after hearing exactly how the meal was going to be run. His student told him proudly that the food is the highest standard of kashrus, and the kitchen is run by the widowed wife of a great Torah scholar - someone very hardworking and trustworthy. He described the beautiful songs that would be sung during the meal and the lengthy Torah discussions they were planning to have.

Rav Yisrael agreed to come on condition that the meal lasted no more than two hours.

Of course, his student agreed but did not dare ask what important task Rav Yisrael had to rush off to do after the meal.

By the end of the meal the student could not contain his curiosity. "Rebbe, what errand is so important on Friday night that we had to rush the Shabbos meal?"

Instead of answering directly, Rav Israel summoned the widow who had done the cooking and serving. He turned to her and said, "Please forgive me for rushing you so much this evening. I know you are accustomed to having a nice, long break between each course."

"May Hashem bless you, and may you be a guest here every Shabbos!" she answered. "The meal usually goes extremely late, and after a full day's work, I can hardly stand on my feet! Tonight, thanks to you, the meal moved very quickly, and I'm now free to go home and rest."

Rav Yisrael turned to his student and explained that while his regular Shabbos routine is incredibly uplifting, it should not come at the expense of others.

## **PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE**

### **Reb Noson of Nemirov**

*"Eisav said to Yaakov, 'Feed me some of that red, red stuff, for I am exhausted.' Therefore, he was called Edom." (25:30)*

Eisav's eating is gluttonous: "Feed me." In contrast, a Jew must practice patience in his eating habits. First he arises in the morning and recites his prayers. Then he washes his hands and recites the blessing over food. Only then can he begin to eat. Likewise, before partaking of meat, he must slaughter the ox, remove its blood and fats, and so on. All of these preliminaries teach patience, helping us ascend beyond the level of Eisav, the level of "Feed me." (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 15a)

## **SEEKING WISDOM**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"Yaakov said, 'Sell, as the day, your birthright to me.'" (25:31)*

One must always seek the hidden wisdom in everything in order to find the G-dliness within it. Doing so constitutes true wisdom, which is compared to sunlight - a light that illumines a person's path so that he may know the way to travel. As the verse states: "A man's wisdom illumines his face" (Ecclesiastes 8:1). Indeed, "Wisdom gives life" (ibid., 7:12). One who does not seek the G-dliness in everything has closed his mind to wisdom and to life. And whether or not a person applies his mind to this wisdom represents the principal battle between his good and evil inclinations.

This idea is reflected in Yaakov and Eisav's battle for the birthright. The birthright is generally intended for the "firstborn," which connotes wisdom, as in the verse "The first is wisdom" (Tehillim 111:10). The name Yaakov (יעקב) also connotes wisdom, as in the phrase vaya'akveini (ויעקבני, he outwitted me) (Bereishis 27:36).

Yaakov sought the birthright of wisdom and so spent his days in the “tents of study” (Rashi on Bereishis 25:27). Eisav, on the other hand, sought material gratification and despised the birthright of wisdom and the knowledge of G-d.

When we seek the spiritual root within everything and study Torah, as Yaakov did, we draw close to G-d. (See Likutey Moharan I, 1:2)

## **RIGHTFUL EARNINGS**

### **Avnei Ezel**

*“...and [Eisav] ate and drank, and rose up and went his way, and Eisav degraded the birthright.” (25:34)*

This is Eisav's way. He and those like him are ready to give away their most sacred trust for a little food. When they are hungry they care little for even their birthright or for worship, because their entire being is dominated by a powerful craving for food and drink. This is unlike Yaakov and others similar to him. Their senses are not ruled by the quest for food and drink. They acquire their birthright by industry and toil, and thus gain predominance in matters of the spirit. At that point Eisav becomes angry and claims that Yaakov has deceived him. “He has outwitted me these two times...” (Bereishis 27:36).

But we say to him: “Remember, wicked Eisav, that you cast away your birthright by your own indolence and base cravings. Yaakov earned the birthright by means of honest toil. He gained the birthright not through deceit, but through moderation in all the physical pleasures, including eating and drinking.”

## **OWNING OUR MISTAKES**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*“...and [Eisav] ate and drank, and rose up and went his way, and Eisav degraded the birthright.” (25:34)*

One can't help but ask why the Torah feels the need to tell us that Eisav humiliated the birthright. It is fairly obvious that he mocked the birthright, he sold it for a mere bowl of lentil soup. What does the Torah add when it states that Eisav degraded the birthright?

Rav Yehudah Leib Chasman (Ohr Yahel) explains that not only initially did Eisav have no qualms about selling the birthright for a bowl of lentil soup, but even after the fact he had no regrets, even when it was clear to the rest of the world that it was a poor decision with far reaching consequences. This is what the Torah means when it says that Eisav embarrassed the birthright.

There are two ways that a person can reflect on a mistake which he or she has made. The first way is to acknowledge the wrongdoing, but then attempt to learn and grow from it in order to become a better person. The second way is to not only commit the error initially, but then after the fact, when confronted, justify why it was ok to have done so.

As human beings, we are going to make mistakes. The question is: How will we respond? Will we learn from them to become better, or will we rationalize our behavior even after the fact and continue to be flawed in our conduct? Let us learn from Eisav how not to act so that we can continue to grow as Jews and as people.

## **HAPPINESS VS DEPRESSION**

### **Reb Noson of Nemirov**

*“Yaakov gave Eisav bread and lentil stew, and [Eisav] ate and drank, and rose up and went his way, and Eisav degraded the birthright.” (25:34)*

The main conflict between Yaakov and Eisav centers on joy versus depression. Originally, the sacrifices in the Temple - which represent joy, as in “You will rejoice before G-d [when you bring your sacrifices]” (Devarim 12:12) - were to be brought by the firstborn sons, such as Eisav. By partaking of the sacrifices and eating in holiness, a person could attain true joy.

However, the type of eating that interested Eisav was “Feed me some of that red, red stuff.” He ate like a glutton, not in a state of holiness - a type of eating which represents depression. Thus, Eisav despised the birthright and the service of G-d, while Yaakov merited both the birthright and the blessings, because he sought true joy. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 146a)

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The birthright refers to intellect. Desiring this world, Eisav was willing to sell even his birthright, his intellect, for porridge - for materialism. Yaakov took advantage of Eisav's gross lusts and gluttony to persuade him to sell the birthright. Thus, Yaakov, who subdued his material desires, acquired the intellect, and left Eisav the material world. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 290)

## **NOT AT THEIR EXPENSE**

### **Rabbi Efreim Goldberg**

*“...inasmuch as Avraham obeyed Me and kept My charge: My commandments, My laws, and My teachings.” (26:5)*

Later in the parsha, G-d reaffirms to Yitzchak the promises He had made to Avraham and assures him that He would fulfill those promises because Avraham strictly obeyed all of G-d's laws. Chazal derive from this pasuk that Avraham - as well as Yitzchak and Yaakov - observed all the Torah's laws, even though the Torah was not given until many years later.

The Ramban, commenting on this pasuk, raises the famous question of how Yaakov married two sisters - Rachel and Leah - if he observed the Torah's laws. The Torah strictly forbids marrying sisters, so how was Yaakov allowed to marry both Rachel and Leah? The Ramban answers this question by positing that the avos observed the mitzvos only in Eretz Yisrael, but not outside the land, and Yaakov was in Charan when he married his wives.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, in Emes L'Yaakov, makes an important comment about the Ramban's discussion. He writes that the Ramban was not addressing the question of how Yaakov was permitted to marry Rachel after Lavan deceived him and gave him Leah. There can be no doubt, Rav Kamenetsky asserts, that Yaakov was dutybound to fulfill his commitment to Rachel and marry her despite the Torah prohibition against marrying two sisters. Before the Torah was given, the avos observed the Torah's laws not out of obligation, but as a measure of special piety. And Yaakov clearly had no right to adhere to this voluntary stringency at somebody else's expense. His admirable decision to obey the Torah's laws before they became obligatory was not allowed to get in the way of the commitment he had made to Rachel. Therefore, Rav Kamenetsky writes, the Ramban's comments must be understood as addressing the question of why Hashem arranged that Yaakov would end up marrying two sisters, against Torah law. But Yaakov's marriage to Rachel after having been deceived into marrying her sister requires no explanation at all.

Accepting chumros - halachic stringencies and religious practices that are not strictly required - is certainly laudable, but only if we adopt them for ourselves, without imposing them on others. The observance of a chumra must never come at our fellow's expense. If we choose to make sacrifices for the sake of a worthwhile chumra, then this is admirable - but not if this forces others to make sacrifices, as well, as this is something which we have no right to do.

## **HEALTHY BALANCE**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"Yitzchak settled in Gerar." (26:6)*

Yitzchak assumed that the famine was meant to induce him to journey outside the Land of Israel in order to disseminate Divine teachings there just as his father Avraham had (Bereishis 12:10). But G-d told Yitzchak not to leave the land, thereby affirming that his particular mode of bringing Divine awareness to the world differed from Avraham's. Avraham travelled to his audiences, tailoring his message to his listeners' ability to grasp it. Yitzchak, in contrast, was to focus on intensifying his own Divine consciousness and the Divine consciousness of his immediate surroundings. The force, clarity, and vigor of Yitzchak's spirituality would give him a magnetic charisma that would draw the outside world to him and make them aspire to learn from him.

Avraham personifies those who sanctify the world from within it; Yitzchak personifies those who sanctify the world from "outside" it, ensconced within synagogues and centers of Torah study. Since we are all descendants of both Avraham and Yitzchak, each of us must embody both their approaches. Full-time students of the Torah must take time off from their studies to teach and help others, whereas those who are engaged in the material world must take time off from their jobs and other pursuits to study the Torah.

## **PURPOSE OF WEALTH**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"Yitzchak sowed grain in that region that year. He reaped a hundredfold, for G-d had blessed him." (26:12)*

It is clear from a close reading of the Torah's narrative that the patriarchs were astute businessmen. Nonetheless, it is also clear that they engaged in material pursuits solely with the objective of fulfilling G-d's will. In this case, Yitzchak's true goal in sowing grain was to be able to give charity to the poor, which the Torah stipulates can only be performed with one's own produce.

Like our patriarchs, when our involvement in the pursuit of a livelihood and wealth is similarly motivated, we are blessed with overwhelming success. (Mishneh Torah, Ma'aser 2:2; Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, p. 74, based on Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer 33)

## **HUMBLE WEALTH**

### **Reb Yitzchak of Torchiv**

*"And the man (Yitzchak) became rich, and gained more and more, until he became very wealthy." (26:13)*

It often happens that the wealthier a person gets, the smaller his essential "humanity" and regard for his fellow man becomes. Yitzchak, however, not only retained his quality of being a "man" the wealthier he grew, but continued his rise to perfection as an empathetic human being.

## **UNCOVERING GOODNESS**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"Yitzchak dug anew the wells which had been dug in the days of his father Avraham and which the Pilishtim had stopped up after Avraham's death." (26:18)*

Allegorically, the Pilishtim represent uncontrolled materialism, and the wells that Avraham and Yitzchak dug represent our inner wellsprings of goodness. Avraham was not really a "well digger": although he did inspire others, this inspiration was not enough to uncover their inner wellsprings of goodness, which would have improved their character permanently. Therefore, the Pilishtim were able to block up Avraham's wells.

In contrast, Yitzchak's holy charisma forced people to confront their psychological obstacles to living a Divine life. He changed them by making them uncover their own hidden goodness. Therefore, the Pilishtim could not block up his wells.

Similarly, by praying and meditating, we clear away the mental "dirt" that has blocked up our wellsprings of inspiration. But if we revel in our inspiration rather than focusing on correcting a particular character flaw, our wellsprings can become blocked again by our ingrained obsession for material satisfaction once we re-enter the world of our mundane affairs.

In contrast, when we focus on improving a specific character trait while praying, we change ourselves, enabling us to retain our inspiration. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5698, pp. 147-153; Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, pp. 194. See Torah Ohr 17a-c; Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 27-29)

## **MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*"Yitzchak dug anew the wells which had been dug in the days of his father Avraham and which the Philistim had stopped up after Avraham's death." (26:18)*

The Torah shares that Yitzchak re-dug the wells that Avraham, his father; had dug earlier but were filled in by the Philistim.

A question to consider is: Why did the Avos care so much about their wells? They were never interested in materialistic ventures or real estate; what about the wells was so important to them?

The Sefas Emes explains that the wells were symbolic of the mission statement of the Avos. Avraham was the first person to discover and publicize the belief in One G-d. Avraham revealed to the world that we can't view our existence on a surface level. Rather, we must realize that there is so much more than what meets the eye. There is a Creator Who works behind the scenes to make the world go round. Yitzchak, as a loyal student and child, looked to perpetuate that very same message as a link in the chain of our tradition.

To an observer, a well looks like a pile of rocks. Only when one comes close and lowers the bucket, does one discover the water that lies beneath the surface. A well represents everything that the Avos believed in. It is the symbol of looking beyond the superficial, and that is what the Avos were looking to promote.

As the descendants of Avraham and Yitzchak, we must ensure that we model that very same approach with our children, students and colleagues. If we want our families to internalize this message, then we need to display it by constantly highlighting Hashem's prominent role in our everyday lives, by speaking about Him and by crediting Him for the miracles that we all experience on a daily basis.

## **THE WILL TO DIG**

### **Sefas Emes**

*"Yitzchak's servants dug in the valley and found a well of fresh spring water there." (26:19)*

The Torah is called "water" and is therefore found everywhere. As is true with seeking water, it depends on how deep one wishes to dig and how sincerely one wants to have Torah. Just as water is the elixir of life, so is the Torah.

## **MAKING A LASTING IMPRESSION**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"Yitzchak's servants dug in the valley and found a well of fresh spring water there." (26:19)*

Although digging wells certainly served to further the advance of civilization wherever they were dug, they more importantly exemplified Yitzchak's message to the world.

As opposed to filling a pit with water brought from elsewhere, digging a well reveals an already-existing source of water concealed beneath layers of earth.

Thus, whereas Avraham's message to the world was: "Let me revive you with the refreshing water of Divine consciousness," Yitzchak's message was: "Now that you have been revived, look for your inner source of water. Dig away all the dirt encumbering your life, and you will reveal within yourself a wellspring of Divine awareness. This awareness will quench your spiritual thirst throughout your whole life."

Yitzchak's well-digging teaches us that our flashes of insight or inspiration must be followed up with self-improvement and self-refinement in order for them to make lasting changes. (Torah Ohr 17c; Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 27-29, vol. 5, pp. 71-72, vol. 15, pp. 194-195, vol. 25, pp. 123-130)

## **MAKING ROOM FOR PEACE**

### **Ramban**

*"[Yitzchak] moved away from there, and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. And he called it Rechovos, for he said: 'For now Hashem has made room for us...'" (26:22)*

The two wells (Esek and Sitnah) dug by Yitzchak's servants - which became objects of contention between the herdsmen of Gerar and those of Yitzchak may be taken allegorically to represent the two Temples destroyed by warring nations.

The third well, Rechovos - which did not become an object of contention - symbolizes the Third Bais Hamikdash that will be built in the future and that will never be attacked by enemy powers.

When the Third Bais Hamikdash rises in Jerusalem, the Jews will live in "a broad expanse" and in tranquility and no nation will dare molest them.

## **CONNECTING TO THE PATRIARCHS**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"Yitzchak's servants dug a well there." (26:25)*

There are three recommended steps we can take to prepare ourselves spiritually for prayer:



- Giving charity inspires G-d to act charitably toward us and to answer our prayers.
- Immersing ourselves in a natural body of water or mikveh purifies us from the spiritual defilement of negativity. This frees us to feel the joy that should accompany our prayers.
- Studying the inspirational teachings of the Torah puts us in the mood to commune with G-d.

These three types of preparation are derived from the parallel characteristic behavior of each of the patriarchs:

- Charity is alluded to by Avraham's deeds of kindness.
- Immersion in water is alluded to by Yitzchak's efforts in digging wells.
- Inspirational Torah study is alluded to by Yaakov's devotion to the study of the Torah.

Thus, by following the above-mentioned three types of preparation for prayer, we connect with the patriarchs and elicit their merit to aid us in our meditations. (Reshimot 20)

## HOLY PERSEVERANCE

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"[The king of Philistia and his entourage] said [to Yitzchak], 'We have seen that G-d has been with you, so we said: Let there now be a solemn oath between us, and let us make a covenant with you.'" (26:28)*

At first, the Pilshtim seized the wells that Yitzchak dug, but in the end they actively sought him out to make peace with him. Similarly, even our most well-intentioned efforts or spiritual labors can sometimes boomerang, actually strengthening the forces that oppose holiness. However, we learn from Yitzchak to not be discouraged in the face of such unexpected setbacks. Rather, we should continue our endeavors, which are certain to eventually succeed. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 29-31)

## THIS TOO SHALL PASS

### Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

*"If you harm us, while we did you no harm..." (26:29)*

It appears that we can explain this as follows: It is known what the Baal HaTurim wrote about this verse, namely, that Avimelech had intended to harm Yitzchak, but G-d reversed his plan, forcing Avimelech to treat him well.

Indeed, G-d reverses all harmful intentions, transforming them to favorable ones. See the Baal HaTurim there for further elaboration.

This is what Avimelech meant when he said, "that you do not harm us," meaning, "If your intention is to harm us, then certainly those evil intentions will be reversed by G-d to good outcomes, the proof being that we did you no harm. We indeed intended to do you harm, but G-d reversed our plan, and [as the verse continues,] we

treated you only with kindness. Since G-d's way is to bestow goodness, if you seek to harm us, your evil intention will likewise be changed by G-d into a good outcome. Therefore, act friendly toward us at the outset, since ultimately it will turn out to be good no matter what your intentions." Understand this.

## A CONVEYOR OF BLESSINGS

### Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

*"If you harm us, while we did you no harm... Now, you are blessed by G-d." (26:29)*

It seems that Avimelech's argument was that Yitzchak should act favorably toward him just as he had acted favorably toward Yitzchak, not having harmed him in the least. But this cannot really be Avimelech's argument, for it seems that Yitzchak should not be obligated to bestow any goodness upon Avimelech in recompense for Avimelech having bestowed goodness upon him, since it was only because G-d was with Yitzchak that Avimelech was afraid to harm Yitzchak - in order not to bring evil upon himself. As we find regarding all the Avos, G-d stretched forth His hand to confound (Devarim 2:15) and destroy anyone who attempted to harm them.

Nonetheless, even though Avimelech's behavior was prompted by self-interest, the good that Avimelech did to him did please Yitzchak. For had Avimelech harmed Yitzchak, G-d would have been compelled to destroy him, and the righteous have no desire to see the destruction of anything, on account of their possessing something of the benevolent nature of their Maker.

By the same token, whoever shows goodness to the righteous brings goodness upon themselves, and this pleases the righteous, i.e., that they should be the instrument through which G-d's blessings come into the world.

This, then, is what Avimelech meant when he said, "Let us make a covenant with you that you not harm us, just as we did you no harm, and we treated you only with kindness... Now, you are blessed by G-d." The meaning of his words is, "Just as we did you no harm, you too, should confer goodness on us and not evil. You should not assume that we were compelled to act favorably toward you, meaning that we were afraid of being 'scorched by your coals'" (reference to Mishlei 6:28).

To forestall such reasoning on Yitzchak's part, Avimelech concluded, "You are blessed by G-d," meaning, "Regardless of our motive, you are surely pleased that we bestowed goodness upon you, rather than evil - because now you are called blessed by G-d; meaning that you receive only blessings from G-d to relay to the world and receive no evil from Above with which to punish anyone on account of some harm they did to you. For it is the way of the righteous to prefer that blessings rather than punishment come into the world on their account. For this reason itself, it is fitting for you to favor us."

## **HUMBLED BY GREATNESS**

### **Rabbi Simchah Bunim of Pshischa**

*"...and they [Avimelech, Achuzzas and Phicol] departed from him [Yitzchak] in peace." (26:31)*

An alternative rendering of this passage is: "...and they departed from Yitzchak at peace."

Only heathens like Avimelech and his companions would be capable of that. Here they had been with Yitzchak; they had even been privileged to break bread with this righteous man. Then they departed, completely at peace with themselves. Jews who spend time with righteous people are not at peace with themselves because their association with the righteous has made them painfully aware of their own shortcomings, and they are humbled.

## **ROAD TOWARDS PEACE**

### **Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook**

*"...and they [Avimelech, Achuzzas and Phicol] departed from him [Yitzchak] in peace." (26:31)*

When one says "Lech b'shalom - go in peace" like Avimelech did to Yitzchak, one gives his friend the illusion that the road before him will be easy, that he is already in a state of peace. This is not the case, as life is full of spiritual and material stumbling blocks. A person who believes that the road of life is easy will be unprepared for its pitfalls and will come to harm.

Rather, one should say "Lech l'shalom - go to peace." Peace can be attained eventually, but one must go to it and work to attain it. It is not an easy road.

## **AVOIDING NEGATIVE SPEECH**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"When Yitzchak was old, his eyesight went dim." (27:1)*

Instead of waiting for Yitzchak to become blind so that Rivkah could maneuver him into blessing Yaakov instead of Esav, G-d could have simply revealed Eisav's wickedness and unworthiness to Yitzchak. G-d would not have been divulging anything to Yitzchak that he did not already suspect. Yitzchak already knew that Eisav's wives were idolaters and that he paid G-d so little notice that he hardly ever mentioned Him (see Bereishis 27:21). Yet G-d was reluctant to speak ill of Esav.

Similarly, many years later, G-d refused to divulge to Yehoshua the identity of the person who had stolen some of the spoils that had been dedicated to G-d after the conquest of Yericho. This lone individual's embezzlement had caused G-d's protection to be removed from the entire Jewish army, exposing them to defeat. Yet when Yehoshua asked G-d to name the culprit, He responded, "Am I to be a talebearer to you?" (Yehoshua 7; Sanhedrin 11a)

All this teaches us an important lesson: If G-d Himself avoided speaking negatively about these wicked people, how much more must we take extreme care not to speak negatively of others, even if they are not of sterling character. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, pp. 215-216)

## **BLESSED AT EVERY LEVEL**

### **Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorka**

*"[Yitzchak said to Eisav,] 'Prepare for me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me... that my soul may bless you before I die.'" (27:4)*

Before he died, Yaakov blessed all his sons, not just his firstborn. Why, then, did Yitzchak want to bless only his firstborn? Such was Heaven's decree. Had Yitzchak provided a separate blessing for Yaakov, later generations would have argued that the Jewish people were worthy of these blessings only as long as they were on the same high moral level as Yaakov had been. Accordingly, G-d ordained that Yitzchak should intend to give the blessing to Eisav alone. Then it would be understood that the blessing would be applicable to the Jewish people at all times, even when they sank quite low indeed, for they could never become more evil than Eisav.

## **LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"[Yitzchak said to Eisav,] 'Prepare for me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me... that my soul may bless you before I die.'" (27:4)*

Yitzchak wanted to name Eisav his successor because he recognized Eisav's potential to become a fearless, G-dly warrior, dedicated to combating evil. Although Yitzchak had seen Eisav give in to the very temptations he should have battled, Yitzchak felt that if he would bless Eisav, Eisav would take up the cause of goodness and righteousness. With his superior power, sophistication, and skill, Eisav would then be able to accomplish G-d's purposes on earth far better than Yaakov could.

Rivkah realized Yitzchak's error. It was true that Yaakov was not the cunning, wild warrior that Eisav was. But the keen perception that Yaakov had developed by devoting himself to the study of the Torah could well provide him with the cunning necessary to overcome evil when confronted with it. Moreover, Yaakov's devotion to the Torah gave him a much stronger drive to make the world into G-d's home than Eisav could ever have.

From Rivkah's wisdom, we learn that possessing skill and power cannot on its own make us reliable leaders. We can best develop our own leadership qualities by studying the Torah devotedly, and we should consider scholars of the Torah the ones whom we look to for leadership. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 20, p. 114)

## **SPIRITUAL OVER MATERIAL**

### **Reb Noson of Nemirov**

*"You will bring it to your father, and he will eat, so that he may bless you before his death." (27:10)*

There is a body, there is a soul. There is matter, there is form. There is death, there is life. The first of each of these pairs are all one concept, as are the latter. One must strive to subjugate the material to the spiritual. (See Likutey Moharan I, 37:2)

Yaakov sought a spiritual life. Eisav sought a material life. Yitzchak thought that Eisav, too, desired a spiritual life, so he wanted to bless him with material blessings that would support the spiritual. But Rivkah knew that Eisav wanted only the material. She sent Yaakov to get the blessings in order that the material - Eisav - would be subjugated to the spiritual - Yaakov. (Likutey Halakhot V, p. 302-152a)

## **WAITING OUT THE STORM**

### **Rabbi Chaim Kramer**

*"Yaakov said to his mother Rivkah, 'But my brother Eisav is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man.'" (27:11)*

Sa'ir (שער, hairy) is similar to Se'arah (שערה, storm wind). (Likutey Moharan I, 8:3)

Just as a storm wind is momentary, so too, the influence of Eisav, the evil inclination, is fleeting. If one has patience and can wait him out, he can attain all the physical and spiritual blessings.

## **POWER OF PRAYER**

### **Reb Noson of Nemirov**

*"Perhaps my father will feel me. I will be like a mocker in his eyes, and I will bring upon myself a curse rather than a blessing." (27:12)*

"My father" is Yitzchak, the attribute of judgment. Yaakov was worthy of receiving the blessings, but because he had to obtain them in a stealthy manner, he was afraid that the attribute of judgment might "feel" him and detect a minor flaw that would make him unworthy.

Rivkah, who represents prayer, assured Yaakov that with prayer, one can overcome even the strictest judgment. Thus, she was willing to accept upon herself any curse that Yitzchak might pronounce. (Likutey Halakhot VIII, p. 34b)

## **DOMINATING VOICE**

### **Vilna Gaon**

*"...and [Yaakov] said: 'The voice is Yaakov's voice, but the hands are the hands of Eisav.'" (27:22)*

As long as Yaakov's voice is heard in synagogues and places of study, Eisav's hand will not be able to rule over them. (Midrash)

The question is asked: The verse does not state: "but the hands are not Eisav's hands," rather "but the hands are the hands of Eisav," which implies that even when Yaakov's voice is heard, Eisav's hands will rule. So what does the Midrash mean?

Note that the word ha'kol ("the voice") is spelled in Hebrew without the vav, and may therefore be read as ha'kal, meaning "light" or "faint." Hence, the verse can be rendered: "If Yaakov's voice is faint, the hands will be Eisav's hands." This is to teach us that whenever the voice of righteousness - as symbolized by Yaakov - becomes faint, evil - as embodied by Eisav's hands - will gain control. But when Yaakov's voice gains full strength, (when kal becomes kol through the addition of the vav), Eisav's hands will no longer be in control.

## **SLEIGHT OF HANDS**

### **Mishmeres Itmar**

*"...and [Yaakov] said... the hands are the hands of Eisav.'" (27:22)*

Eisav used two hands. One he used to befriend and to manipulate. The other hand he used for the kill.

## **THE BEST HAS YET TO COME**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"[Yitzchak blessed Yaakov,] 'May G-d grant you of the dew of heaven and the fat of the land, and an abundance of grain and wine.'" (27:28)*

There are both spiritual and material rewards for fulfilling G-d's commandments. The spiritual rewards are the sublime levels of Divine consciousness that we would not be able to attain on our own. The physical rewards are the various aspects of our material prosperity.

Until the world is refined sufficiently to enable us to experience our full spiritual reward, all we can receive is a glimmer of inspiration. And since the spiritual and material facets of reality are intertwined, our full material reward is also being delayed; in the meantime, all we can receive is an occasional trickle of it.

When Mashiach comes, however, the physicality of the world will be totally refined, and we will receive both our full spiritual and material rewards for having fulfilled G-d's commandments. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 58-59)

## **FUTURE BLESSINGS**

### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*"He, too, shall be blessed." (27:33)*

The allegorical explanation of this verse would seem to be as follows: It is known that Yitzchak blessed Yaakov twice: once when Yaakov came to him disguised as Eisav and brought him the delicacies that Yitzchak had asked for, and a second time right before Yaakov fled from his brother Eisav.

The first time he blessed Yaakov, Yitzchak (thinking he was blessing Eisav) blessed him with great material abundance and dominion over the rest of humanity (27:28-29). The second time he blessed Yaakov, Yitzchak blessed him with abundant progeny and the Land of Israel (28:1-4).

Now, the first blessing was the greater one, whereas the second blessing was the lesser one. We are receiving the lesser blessing in this world, whereas the greater blessing is being safeguarded for us for the future.

When Mashiach arrives - speedily, in our days - this first blessing will be fulfilled.

## **CLEVER PURSUITS**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"[Yitzchak told Eisav,] 'Your brother came with guile and took your blessing.'" (27:35)*

The blessings Yitzchak bestowed upon Yaakov were for material prosperity. The fact that Yaakov obtained these blessings through cleverness teaches us how we should engage in our own material pursuits.

When eating or conducting business, for example, we can appear to be merely tending to our physical needs, similar to the materialistic Eisav. But behind this facade, we should really be thinking like Yaakov; our true purposes should be spiritual.

We should eat in order to have the strength to do good deeds, study the Torah, and observe G-d's commandments. We should earn our livelihood in order to have the financial means with which to do all these things, and so on.

This is the sort of "duplicity" that we are meant to employ in our interactions with the material world. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 3, p. 796)

## **COUNTERACTING TEARS**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"Eisav said to his father, 'Do you have only one blessing, Father? Bless me, too, Father!' Eisav lifted his voice and cried." (27:38)*

Eisav's ability to harm the Jewish people comes from the tears he shed when he lost the blessing. We, in turn, must cry to negate the power of those tears. (See Likutey Moharan II, 30)

## **HIDDEN OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"Yitzchak sent forth Yaakov... to Lavan, son of Besuel the Aramean." (28:5)*

Yaakov had to shepherd Lavan's flocks for 14 years in order to get him to agree to let Yaakov marry Lavan's daughters. During these years, Lavan oppressed Yaakov cruelly, and when Yaakov eventually fled Lavan's house to return home, Lavan viciously pursued him.

On the spiritual plane, Yaakov was liberating the sparks of holiness that were trapped within Lavan's possessions by working for him. And subconsciously, when Lavan pursued Yaakov, he did so in order to present Yaakov with the sparks of holiness that Yaakov had failed to liberate on his own!

This reflects the truth that all challenges to fulfilling our Divine mission are purposeful and designed to aid us. Once we realize this, we awaken within the apparent obstacle its latent awareness of its Divine purpose, enabling it to aid us in our task of transforming the world into G-d's home. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, p. 80)

## **REFINED SPEECH**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"Eisav went to Yishmael and married Machalat, the daughter of Avraham's son Yishmael." (28:9)*

Eisav's respect for his father was exemplary. He waited on his father dressed in special garments. When he decided to kill Yaakov, he refrained from doing so despite his raging anger in order not to pain his father. As soon as he heard that his Canaanite wives displeased his parents, he lost no time in marrying his cousin.

Nevertheless, Eisav's reverence for his father did not prevent him from speaking to Yitzchak disrespectfully, saying, "My father, arise"; in contrast, his brother Yaakov courteously asked Yitzchak to "Please arise." Similarly, Eisav later referred to his father's death harshly, saying, "The days of mourning for my father will soon be here."

We can learn from Eisav's coarse behavior that an essential facet of doing what is right is doing it in a kind and considerate way. For example, the words we speak should not only be meaningful and free of any prohibited types of talk (falsehood, gossip, slander, etc.); they should also be refined and delicate, as were Yaakov's. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5697, p. 232)

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