

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ואחרי כן יצא אחיו וידו אחות בעקב עשו ויקרא שמו יעקב ... (כה-כו)

As twins, Yaakov and Esav shared the same DNA, the same nature, and yet, they emerged radically different people. One became a patriarch of our people and the other a great villain of Jewish history, the progenitor of Edom, the exile in which we remain until this very day. Sharing the same “nature,” they bring contrasting attitudes toward their “nurture.” Esav is satisfied with who he is from the start while Yaakov feels entering the world is just the first of many steps and journeys to come. Indeed, while Esav is spiritually stagnant, Yaakov spends his life struggling, and thereby growing. He overcomes his shy nature to assert himself, first by obtaining the birthright and then collecting on it by going entirely against his nature and tricking his father into giving him a blessing. The shy, passive *yeshiva bochur* who is characterized as sitting, learning diligently in the tent, emerges the strong, dynamic, assertive patriarch and leader who is among the greatest role models of our people.

Born identical twins, Jack Yufe and Oskar Stohr shared the same DNA, the same nature, and yet, they emerged radically different people. Born in Trinidad in 1933, they were six months old when their parents divorced. Oskar went to Germany with his mother, while Jack stayed with his Romanian father. Oskar grew up as the Nazis rose to power, greeted the school principal with “Heil Hitler,” and later joined the Hitler Youth movement. Jack, meanwhile, always thought of himself as Jewish, but didn’t feel its significance until he was 15 years old and was sent to Venezuela to live with his aunt. A survivor of the Dachau concentration camp, she was the only person from his father’s side to make it out alive. After the war, Jack’s aunt encouraged him to move to Israel and so at 16, he made *aliyah* and joined the Israeli Navy, ultimately becoming an officer.

In 1954, Jack went to Germany to meet his identical twin. They were 21 when they met for the first time as adults. Psychologist Nancy Segal tells the story of that encounter in her book, “Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins.” Jack and Oskar examined one another as if they were looking at an alien, even though the other’s appearance should have been entirely familiar to them. Their cultural differences were as immediately apparent as their physical similarities. Casting a wary eye at Jack’s Israeli luggage tags, Oskar removed them and told his long-lost brother to tell others he was coming from America, not from Israel. Suffice it to say that first reunion did not go well. Two brothers - one raised a proud Jew who served in the Israeli Navy and the other raised a German Catholic who had risen in the Nazi Youth movement and been taught to hate Jews. Because of the language barrier they couldn’t communicate much. At the end of the visit, they shook hands like strangers and Jack set off to San Diego where he lived the remainder of his life.

In 1979, Jack read about a study being done on twins and the great debate between nature and nurture. He asked if he and his brother could participate in the study and thought after 25 years it might provide another opportunity for them to see one another and develop a relationship. They met at the Minneapolis airport and to their amazement discovered they were wearing the exact same thing: a white sports jacket, similar shirt and wire-rimmed glasses. During the study, they learned that they had so much in common. Both were stubborn and arrogant, both fiercely competitive. Both read books from back to front, both sneezed incredibly loudly, they walked in a similar fashion, and they both wore rubber bands around their wrists.

And yet, with all that “nature” gave them in common, “nurture” had made them different. Very different. In fact, too different for them to ever really become close brothers. They could never agree on issues about the State of Israel and her enemies, or who was responsible for World War II and the Nazi atrocities. Oskar’s repeated reference to German soldiers as “we” infuriated Jack. In an interview later, Jack described that they tried to like each other and enjoy each other’s company but there was always something in the background that they could not tolerate about one another. Jack died in 2015 at 82 years old. Oskar passed away in 1997. Jack and Oskar did not leave legacies based on the “natures” they shared in common like sneezing loudly or by the way they walked. Because of how they were nurtured. Jack left a legacy of having been an officer in the Israeli Navy while Oskar left a life-long legacy of having been an enthusiastic member of the Nazi youth.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

Hashem declares that he loves us unequivocally. Such a close relationship with the Creator of the World was never afforded to any other nation - only to *Klal Yisroel*. To what do we owe this incredible distinction? **R’ Shimon Sofer ז”ל (Michtav Sofer)** says that the simple understanding is that *Hashem* loves us because we are the only nation worthy of that love, but the question still remains. Why specifically us?

He explains that *Chazal (Chulin 89a)* tell us, “*Not because you are more in number than any other people did Hashem desire you and choose you...*” But the reason why *Hashem* desires *Bnei Yisroel* more than any other nation in the world is because even when the Almighty elevates us to great heights, and even when the Jewish people control the world’s

economy and have all nations subjugated under them - as in the times of *Shlomo HaMelech* - nevertheless, *Klal Yisroel* remains subservient to *Hashem*. They accredit their success to Him. They thank Him for their good fortune. And they create a *Kiddush Hashem* by showing the world what happens to a nation who follows in the ways of *Hashem*.

Says the *Michtav Sofer*, this elevation and affection that the Almighty has comes with a heavy responsibility for the Jewish people - for we represent the very image of *Hashem* on this world. All the nations of the world see *Hashem* through us and we must act accordingly. Due to the fact that we try to behave correspondingly, *Hashem* showers us with His love and helps us achieve success.

ויגש וישק לו וירא את ריח בגדיו ויברכהו ויאמר ראה ריח כני בריח שדה אשר ברכו ה' ... (כו-כז)

As a preface to *Yaakov Avinu’s* receipt of the coveted *berachos*, the *posuk* says that Yitzchok smelled the aroma of the clothing, commented on their pleasant, holy fragrance, and in the next *posuk* bentedched *Yaakov*. What is the connection between smelling and *bentching*?

There is a *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* (37.) which says on this *posuk*, “אל תיקרי בגדיו אלא בודדיו”, even *Yidden* who rebel - sinners, possess a beautiful aroma. Perhaps this is the connection to the *beracha*. And we’ll elaborate.

Some *meforshim* ask; why in his *beracha* did Yitzchok reference טל and not גשם? The **Sefer Shem Mishmuel** answers as follows: One of the many differences between dew and rain is, that it’s not a given that we will be blessed with rain, (as we have seen in recent weeks). We must be deserving of it. Dew, on the other hand, is a constant blessing. *Yitzchok Avinu* felt that if he were to bless us with rain, the *beracha* would be contingent on us deserving it, which poses a risk. He instead, wisely chose טל, which will always come down; knowing that even if *Klal Yisroel* would חס ושלום not be worthy, they’d still be recipients of *Hashem’s* benevolence.

Accordingly, we can now understand the connection between the above *posukim*. When Yitzchok realized, by inhaling that smell, that even the *bogdav* - the sinners, contain a modicum of purity, and that “the *pintele yid*” in the deep recesses of the *neshama*, remains pure, untainted and holy, he understood that his children qualified to be blessed with the more constant *beracha* of טל. Maybe that’s the reason we say the *tefillah* of “ויתן לך ... מטל השמים” on *motzei Shabbos*. We are asking that even if we are not fully deservant of *parnassa*, *Hashem* should provide for us regardless; as the טל, the more constant blessing.

Yehi Ratzon that whether or not we are worthy, *Klal Yisroel* should be blessed with *refuos, yeshuos, nachas* and *besuros tovos!*

משל למה הדבר דומה

וידי עשו איש יודע ציד איש שדה ... (כה-כו)

משל: Two *meshulachim* were given a room to sleep in. For their privacy, a small curtain separated the two, each provided with the necessary provisions to give their souls a peaceful night from their “grueling” day of “work.”

One night, Yankel hears his roommate Berel crying out in anguish. “*Hashem*,” he wailed, “how much longer do I have to suffer, I can’t take this anymore ...” This continued for many hours, well into the wee hours of the night. Finally, Yankel, who hadn’t slept the whole night due to the noises that filled the room, waited for a quiet moment and then bellowed out in the deepest resonating voice he could: “My son, your prayers have been answered. You can now sleep in peace!”

Startled by the revelation, Berel calmed down a bit, but wasn’t about to let the opportunity pass so fast. “Oh merciful

Lord,” he began, “how much longer do I need to suffer?”

“Twelve months!” came the reply in a booming voice.

“And what will be after that, will I have a house? Will I be rich? How about my wife? My children?” he begged.

By now Yankel was getting annoyed, his ploy wasn’t working as well as planned. He switched back to his regular voice and blurted out: “Twelve months, and after that you’ll regulate to the soliciting routine - just like the rest of us did!”

נמשל: Esav lived his life with a constant “pursuit of happiness.” He spent his time doing various activities to quench his unsatiable thirst for pleasure. He was ready, and ultimately did, sell his entire heritage for a mere bowl of lentils. Even Yitzchok gave him a blessing of constant worldly pleasures. “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” is thus the way of Esav. Our task is to break that routine and replace it with the pursuit of *Hashem*

ויחדר יצחק חרדה גדולה עד מאד ויאמר מי מפניו הוא הצד ציד ויבא לי ואכל מכל (כו-לג)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

The *Torah* tells us that when Yitzchok realized that Yaakov had taken the *berachos* from Esav, “*Vayecherad charada gedola ad meod*,” he trembled a great and awesome trembling. **Rashi** says that he saw *Gehinom* open up beneath him. What was it that caused Yitzchok to tremble in this extreme way? The **Medrash Tanchuma** tells us that there was another time in Yitzchok’s life that he trembled. The *Medrash* explains that when Avraham lifted the knife over Yitzchok’s head at the *Akeida*, he trembled. Why did he tremble? Because he was afraid that he might move and invalidate himself as a *korban*. He was afraid that he would not be a perfectly fitting sacrifice for *Hashem*. The *Medrash* asks: Which trembling was greater? And the answer is that it was the trembling at the time of the giving of the *brachos*, as the *posuk* says, “*Charada gedola AD MEOD*.”

Explains the **Shevet Sofer**, *Yitzchok Avinu* was lying on the altar, and he was scared. He was afraid that his performance *bein adam l’Makom* might not be up to par, and so the *Medrash* tells us that he trembled - “*Vayecherad*.” However, in *Parshas Toldos*, when Esav came to Yitzchok to get his *beracha*, Yitzchok realized that he had already given it to Yaakov. He understood that now he might be causing pain and harm *bein adam l’chaveiro* - to Esav - even though the *berachos* were his to give to whomever he wanted. Esav was his own son and he gave the *berachos* to Yaakov unintentionally. It’s not the end of the world. Still, he trembled in a way that he had never trembled before. “*Vayecherad charada gedola AD MEOD*.” This would be a mistake that would have terrible ramifications on his *olam haze* and his *olam haba*. *Chazal* tell us “*Hizaharu B’chvod Chavreichem*” - Be careful with the honor of your friends. Playing with someone’s feelings is much more dangerous than playing with fire. Fire only burns in this world, but causing someone pain burns in this world and in the next.

The **Chazon Ish ז”ל** put it quite succinctly. “*The kuntz (the trick) of life is to get through this world without hurting others.*”