

Bringing the Farbrengen Home

SHOULD'VE BEEN A BAAL TESHUVAH

by Tzipah Wertheimer

The twin brothers in this week's Parsha. They could not be more different than one another.

Yaakov dwelled in tents – he lived in the world of ideas and spent the bulk of his time in the study hall.

He worked on refining his character and developing a relationship with the creator. Eisav was a man of the field – he hunted animals, had many wives and lived a generally unrefined life.

From the time that their mother Rivka was pregnant, it was obvious that she was carrying such different souls. When she passed by the study hall, one fetus would jump and when she passed by the temples of idol worship the other fetus would get excited.

Until the age of Bar Mitzvah the twins were identical in appearance and deed. Upon becoming an adult, Eisav chose a life devoid of spirituality and is referred to as "a man of the field." From the womb, Eisav was attracted to idol worship. His natural inclination was for unholy and impure things. How can one judge? He was born that way.

Yitzchak and Rivka were the greatest parents; they modeled humility, piety, leadership and the absolute best traits. Avraham Avinu was the boys' personal tutor.



They learned about the world from a man who spoke to G-d. What went wrong? How could such a stellar upbringing produce an uncouth, blood-thirsty hunter who was willing to sell his birthright for a measly bowl of lentils?

Eisav was born with a challenge that Yaakov did not have. Eisav was very much a product of his father.

He was imbued with an enormous strength just like his father. The father needed his strength for numerous challenges and Eisav could have summoned that same inner power to overcome his personal challenges, but he did not! Instead, he chose to live a life that psychologists today would call drive reduction which is the pursuit of feeling good over all else. As such he eagerly filled his stomach with lentils when hungry. Eisav did not live up to his full potential.

Eisav could have become the paradigm of the baal teshuvah – the one who mends his ways and becomes greater for having endured the test. He did not.

Yaakov also had challenges that required inner strength. He struggled with running for his life away from his brother, working for Lavan and other difficulties. Yaakov did not struggle with his desire to do good. ☯

Hashem created both types: the perfect Tzadik and the one whom repents known as a Baal Teshuvah. Eisav could have or should have become the Baal Teshuvah. His free will interfered.

Evil is not created on its own – it's the absence of good. It results from denying that there is more to the world than what meets the eye, from denying that there is greater good and a larger sense of purpose to our being.

Of course it would be better if bad things never happened. It's true that bad things never should happen. But for some reason the Creator willed it to be that we must CHOOSE to do good and bring more light into the world.

Just Me A Question

Q: May I remove the mezuzos when I move out of my apartment?

A: One is not supposed to remove mezuzos when moving out of an apartment if the next tenant is Jewish.

There is an opinion that permits it, provided that the next tenant will affix mezuzot immediately.

Source: Chovas HaDar 1:12, note 53

Q: Regarding tzitzis, we say in the Shema that "you should see them." So is a blind person exempt from wearing tzitzis, because he can't see them?

A: A blind man is required to wear tzitzis (and recites a blessing on doing so). Even though he does not see them, others see him wearing them.

Source: Rambam Hilchos Tzitzis 3:7; Shulchan Aruch 17:1 & Mishnah Berurah 17:1

Prepare me some delicacies

Sweet &/or Sour?

by Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer

I enjoy learning different genres of commentary on the same passage in the Torah. In that vein, I would like to share a few interpretations to one of the verses in this week's parsha, Toldos.

Yitzchak, who has become blind later in life, calls Eisav to his side and says, "Prepare me some delicacies to my liking, and bring them to me so that I may eat, so that I may grant you my soul's blessing before I die" (27:4).

Why doesn't Yitzchak just give the blessing? Why must he first request that Eisav prepare delicious food?

Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno (Italy, 1475-1550): Even though Yitzchak did not recognize the extent of Eisav's wickedness, he knew that he was not worthy of the tremendous blessing that he had in mind for him. Thus, he gave Eisav the opportunity to prepare food for him, thereby fulfilling the commandment of "Honor your father." If Eisav would do this mitzvah, he could become worthy of the intended blessing.

Rabbeinu Bechaye (Spain, 1255-1340): When Isaac requested that delicacies be brought before him, he did not merely intend to have an enjoyable culinary experience. Rather, he desired to strengthen his body, thereby enabling his soul to be in a full state of simcha and open to a prophetic experience.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (Russia, 1745-1812): Why did Isaac request delicacies (in the plural)? On a deeper level, this statement represents the Divine



Presence speaking to the Jewish people, and it refers to two types of spiritual enjoyment ("nachas") that G-d derives from our activity.

There are two types of food: One is naturally sweet and delicious (like an apple). Other foods, however, require a transformative process in order to be edible (such as olives) – yet it is this very transformative process that can make such a dish even more delicious. So too, spiritually speaking; some people are "naturally sweet" (Tzaddik), while others face formidable challenges and work hard to overcome them.

The food which started bitter and underwent a transformative experience is a greater delicacy than that which was naturally tasty; so too, one who overcomes an inner struggle causes a greater nachas to Hashem. ☯

Hayom Yom

1 Kislev

There were periods of time when R. Yekusiel Liepler, a chassid of the Alter Rebbe, davened Shacharit, Mincha and Maariv one right after the other; there was no time for intervals.

שבת שלום ומבורך

Chassidic Story

(Continued from last week) last week: Nosson the merchant tried to help a Jew whose horse & wagon got stuck in the mud. He was unable to help but got covered in mud, ruined his clothes and ended up coming late to Shul.

Meanwhile, Nosson's coachman, Peisha had also gotten ready for Shabbos, when he heard about the coach that was stuck in the mud, he figured someone else would surely help.

Piesha came to the bais medresh quite early and met many of the poor wandering Jews who were also spending Shabbos in the village. Suddenly he realized that since he was unknown in these parts he would get the opportunity to host these poor & needy Jews for the Shabbos meals. This was normally a privilege that only the wealthy enjoyed. Normally the richer members of the community would cast lots to see who merited hosting guests - a poor driver like himself never got a chance.

This week Peisha took all the guests, much to the disappointment of everyone else. He hosted the meal at the inn but had barely enough food for everyone. The wandering Jews were a bit upset as they had been looking forward to a proper meal. Meanwhile the wealthy Nosson sat, miserable and tired, alone in his room.

After 120 years when both of these souls made their final journey to Shamayim the Heavenly Court declared that they were misguided souls! Nosson should have hosted the guests while Piesha should have dug out the wagon. Each did what the other should have done and nobody benefited. It was decided that these two souls must descend back into the world again and each would be tasked with doing his own unique duties. ☯

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