

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת תולדות

**ויתרצו הבנים בקרבה ותאמר אם כן למה זה אנכי ותלך לדרש את ה'  
“The children agitated within her, and she said: If so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of Hashem” (25:22)**

The simple explanation of the posuk is that Rivkah was distressed because her pregnancy was abnormally painful. When her thoughts troubled her, her immediate reaction was to seek out the counsel of Hashem through Shem, who was a prophet. The lesson we can learn from this is to always turn to Hashem in our times of need. Whether through prayer or by talking to a Torah leader, we should seek the counsel of Hashem and Torah to address the difficulties in our lives.

**ויגדלו הנערים ויהי עשו איש ידע ציד איש שדה ויעקב איש תם ישב אהלים  
“The lads grew up and Esav was one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man, dwelling in tents” (25:27)**

R' Moshe Feinstein, in his sefer Darash Moshe, notes that while Avraham had to undergo ten trials, Yaakov seems to have had a peaceful life while sitting in yeshiva. Nevertheless, Yaakov is referred to in the midrash as the "chosen one of the patriarchs." His lack of tests was not a detraction from the execution of his mission in life. Tests are not always necessary and are not the only means for personal growth. Yaakov had a peaceful life for 77 years until he went to Charan, but he still grew in this situation. In fact, we daven every day in Birchos Hashachar that we should not be faced with any tests. Inevitably, a person will be faced with challenges at some point but we should still try to shield our children from trying tests in their youth until they are equipped to handle them. For this reason, it is important to spend time in yeshiva before going out into the real world, just as Yaakov went to fortify himself in yeshiva before he went to Charan. Many times a student only begins to appreciate learning as he grows older and he should capitalize on that time and dedicate it to learning. Often, a person can gain even more from attending a yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael because there can be less distraction in Eretz Yisrael.

The Torah does not say that Esav went to the field and Yaakov went to the tents. Instead, it says that Esav was a man of the field and Yaakov was a man of perfection. Their character traits were not just hobbies and activities that they pursued. It personified them. Not only did they go their separate ways and frequent different places, they became completely different people. Esav and Yaakov absorbed the nature of their pursuits until it defined their essence and described who they were. We can learn from the personification of Yaakov as a man of perfection and Torah that Torah study should not just be an external pursuit. It should be incorporated into every fiber of a person's being. We should strive to reach the level of Yaakov in Torah study to the point that our Torah becomes a part of us. This is the ultimate purpose of Torah study. The Gemara in Kiddushin 32a asks why a Torah scholar is permitted to forgo his own honor. If the honor accorded to him is because of the Torah he has learned, is it not then the honor of Hashem, who gave us the Torah? How can he forgo Hashem's honor? The Gemara answers that when one learns Torah it becomes his because it is a part of him. A true Torah scholar absorbs his learning until it truly becomes his Torah.

Rashi explains that **איש תם** means that Yaakov was a man of truth who could not

tolerate falsehood. When a person reaches the level where he is a man of truth, he naturally finds Torah. One who seeks truth will grow in Torah because the Torah is the ultimate truth. We characterize Yaakov with this middah (אמת ליעקב). It is not a coincidence that Yaakov is the epitome of both truth and Torah because they go hand in hand.

The posuk mentions that Yaakov was a man of truth, that he had good character traits, before saying that he dedicated his life to Torah study. This is similar to the dictum in Pirkei Avos which states that derech eretz comes before Torah. Parents should train their children in middos and then their growth in Torah learning will follow. Those are the children for whom Torah will be easy and come naturally. Through their good character, they become receptacles for Torah. The Torah was given on Har Sinai, a mountain that was small and humble, because Torah is attracted to humility. The choice of Har Sinai for the giving of the Torah shows from the very outset that Torah can only be found where good middos are already present.

Rabbi Nissan Alpert asks: Why is “yosheiv” spelled without a “vov,” in a way that can be read as “yoshav,” “sat,” in the past tense? Rabbi Alpert answers that the deficient spelling indicates that something is missing. Yaakov always felt that he was imperfect and had a lot more to accomplish. One only becomes a complete person by feeling that he has not yet reached the top and not yet accomplished all that he is capable of. Esav is the exact opposite. The letters of the word Esav also spell “asu,” “complete.” Esav felt that he was complete, that he had nothing left to accomplish and had no more potential to grow.

An alternate explanation is based on a Rashi in Parshas Vayeira which points out the same deficient spelling that exists by Lot, where the word “yosheiv” is also spelled without a “vov” to show that Lot had only just been at the gate of Sodom and was not always there. Yaakov felt that he had just begun to sit in yeshiva and approached the learning with a freshness each day. We should not look at Torah as if it is old. We should enjoy it like one enjoys a new possession.

### **ויאמר עשו הנה אנכי הולך למות ולמה זה לי בכרה**

**“And Esav said: Look, I am going to die, so of what use is this birthright to me?” (25:32)**

Rashi explains that Esav did not want the job of the firstborn because it was too much for him to handle. R' Moshe Feinstein asks: If this is so, why is Esav criticized for this? He answers that when it comes to Hashem's honor, one cannot be afraid of great responsibility. He should accept the challenge and trust that Hashem will help him complete the task. Many times people are afraid of taking on responsibility because they feel that they cannot handle the job. This was Esav's mistake. The criticism of Esav is that one has to be willing to jump into a task that involves Hashem's honor and shoulder the burden. Responsibility is not a valid reason not to do something. One should take charge of what he needs to do and give it all he has.

**גור בארץ הזאת ואהיה עמך ואברכך כי לך ולזרעך אתן את כל הארצות האל והקמתי את השבעה אשר נשבעתי לאברהם אביך**

**“Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your offspring will I give all these lands, and establish the oath that I swore to Avraham your father” (26:3)**

Rashi explains that the word האל is the same as the word האלה and both mean "these." Nevertheless, it is still a strange word. Why is the alternative form used in this context? Rabbi

Friedman suggests that the Torah uses a word which can also be read as the name of Hashem in connection with Eretz Yisrael. By referring to Eretz Yisrael as הארצות האל, the posuk alludes to the fact that Eretz Yisrael is the land of Hashem. When a person lives in Eretz Yisrael, he is closer to Hashem. There are special laws that only apply in Eretz Yisrael. Accordingly, the events and status of the Land should be on our mind and the welfare of its inhabitants should always be our concern. The Torah connects Hashem's name with Eretz Yisrael to teach us to value the Land and how important it must be to us.

**ויהי לו מקנה צאן ומקנה בקר ועבדה רבה ויקנאו אתו פלשתים**  
**“He had acquired flocks and herds and many enterprises; and the Philistines envied him” (26:14)**

After Yitzchak became rich, the Pelishtim became envious of him and Avimelech asked him to leave the land because they could not take his presence anymore. This jealousy and expulsion, like many events that happened to our forefathers, was a sign for the future. We must be aware that if the gentiles are aware of our success, they can become very upset and jealous. We must be careful not to arouse the anger of the nations that are good to us and allow us to live peacefully in their lands. Throughout our nation's history, the deterioration of the relationship between Yitzchak and the Pelishtim has replayed itself many times. Even though Yitzchak's wealth was not flaunted, it was apparent and the Pelishtim could not tolerate this. How much more so are we to be cautious that we do not flaunt any success that we might have so as not to bring attention to ourselves.

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