

## Reactions to a Tragedy

RABBI TZVI FISHMAN

### A Matter of Perspective

MANY YEARS AGO, RABBI YITZCHAK ABU-hatzeira (Rabbi of Ramla, in Israel) was suddenly killed in a car accident. His brother, the Baba Sali, was broken-hearted, and he could not be comforted. Then, one night, while he was mourning and crying, his brother came to him in a dream and said, "I'm in Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden)—yet you are crying!"

It came to pass, when Yitzchak had become old and his eyes had grown dim of sight... (27:1)

When he was bound on the altar and his father wished to slaughter him... the heavens opened. The Ministering Angels saw, and they cried. Their tears came down and fell on [Yitzchak's] face. That's why his eyes were dimmed. (Rashi, quoting B'reishis Rabba 10)

Why does the Midrash get into so much detail? Wouldn't it have been sufficient to say that Yitzchak looked up and saw the angels crying?

Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum—the late Rosh Yeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva, in Brooklyn, who himself suffered the untimely losses of two sons—explained: From heaven's perspective, there is no

such thing as a tragedy, because all of Hashem's actions are understood to be for our good; therefore, there is no place for crying. It is only our limited view of this world that causes us to view situations as tragic and bad.

If so, why would the angels cry?

That's why the Midrash says that "the heavens opened." Suddenly, the angels saw Yitzchok's situation from a *human* perspective—and that caused them to weep.

A Jew once complained to the Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisroel Meir haKohein Kagan) about his misfortunes. The Chofetz Chaim responded with a parable.

"The image on a seal or a rubber stamp appears upside down or backwards. But after you see it leave its mark on something, everything becomes clear.

"To you," continued the Chofetz Chaim, "it seems like tribulation. But in heaven, they see it as the best thing possible for you."

"The voice is Yaakov's voice, but the hands are Eisav's hands." (27:22)

The Midrash says that when the voice of Yaakov is heard in the halls of Torah study, the hands of Eisav have no power. We can prevent "tragedies," by strengthening our learning and prayer.

May we see Hashem's redemption, speedily in our days. Good Shabbos! 

RABBI DONIEL SCHON, BASED ON A TALK BY RABBI ELIMELECH RESNIK

### What's Important to You?

Eisav said, "Behold, I am going to die—so of what use to me is the birthright?" (25:32)

RABBI ELIYAHU LOPIAN ASKS A QUESTION on this verse, based on a well-known Gemara.

Rabbi Levi bar Chama said in the name of Reish Lakish: A person should always agitate his Good Inclination to fight against his Evil Inclination... If he overcomes it, good. If not, he should learn Torah... If he overcomes it now, good. If not, he should recite the "Shema"... If now he overcomes it, good. If not, he should remind himself of the day of death. (Talmud, B'rachos 5a)

The Talmud clearly explains that a person's strongest weapon against the Evil Inclination is the contemplation of death. When a person realizes that, after his time on this world is up, many of the things he cares about won't have any value, it makes it easier for him to conquer his evil thoughts.

If so, Rabbi Lopian asks, why is it that with Eisav, the contemplation of death seems to have had the exact opposite effect? Eisav was willing to sell his

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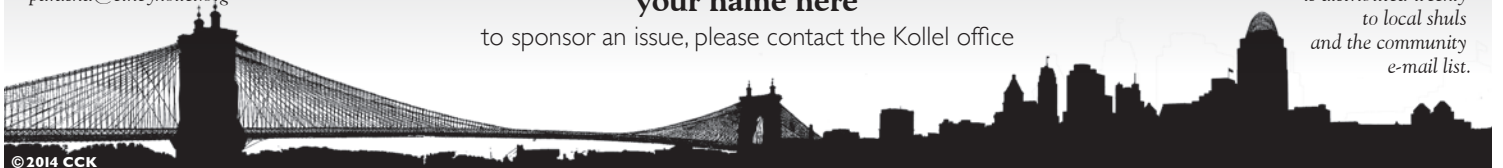
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# At the Kollel

## Every Day

### 👤👤 “Dirshu” Gemara Shiur

(Maseches Sota)

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....

Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM

Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

### 👤👤 Kollel Yisgaber K’ari

(amud-a-day of Mishnah B’rurah)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....

Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

### 👤👤 Kitzur Shuchan Aruch

Live video conference!

Rabbi Dani Schon.....

Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

### 👤 Daf Yomi

Rabbi Meir Minster.....

Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM

Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

### 👤👤 Nightly Halacha Chabura

Rabbis Dani Schon

& Binyamin Teitelbaum.....

Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

### Chavrusa Learning

(private & small groups).....times vary

## Sunday *Free brunch!*

### 👤👤 America Runs on Torah

(Jewish Law & Parasha)

Rabbis Dani Schon

and Yisroel Kaufman.....10 AM

*Grand Deluxe breakfast served*

## Tuesday

### 👤 Mishnah

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....8:10–9 PM

### 👤👤 Partners in Torah at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

### 👤👤 Around the Table

(Parasha & Pirkei Avos)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9 PM

## Wednesday

### 👤👤 Torah Treasures for Seniors at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....10:30–11:15 AM

### 👤👤 Downtown Lunch-n-Learn at Strauss & Troy

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....12–1 PM

## Thursday

### 👤👤 Halacha (based on the parasha)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM

*Homemade refreshments served.*

## Minyanim for Standard Time

### Shacharis

Sunday.....8:15 AM

*On Sundays when the Kollel is not*

*in session, Shacharis is at 8 AM*

Monday–Friday.....7:20 AM

### Mincha

Sunday.....1:15 PM

Mon.–Thurs. thru January.....2:30 PM

Sun.–Thurs., Feb.–Mar.....5:45 PM

Shabbos.....2:40 PM

### Ma’ariv

In the Beis Midrash:

Sunday–Wednesday.....9:45 PM

Thursday.....10 PM

**KEY:** 👤👤 Beginners

👤 Intermediate

👤 Advanced

👤👤 for men and women

**Looking for a chavrusa?** See Coordinator Rabbi Chaim Heinemann!

Chavrusos are available noon–1 PM on weekdays, and 8–9:45 PM Sun.–Thurs.

## What’s Important to You? CONT’D

birthright, which included the service of the firstborn in the Beis Hamikdash (the Holy Temple), for a bowl of soup—“because I am going to die!” The thought of death did not cause Eisav to appreciate spirituality more; quite the contrary, it caused to him to value a bowl of lentils over the firstborn’s right of service in the Beis Hamikdash!

Rabbi Lopian answers that, with a deeper understanding of that Gemara, we can understand how contemplating death can have entirely different results for different people. He explains that thoughts of death don’t automatically bring one closer to G-d and lead him to do *t’shuva* (repent). Rather, they urge a person to focus and accomplish in his

lifetime the things which are truly important *to him*, since he may not have all the time in the world to get them done.

Therefore, a person who truly values the spiritual, when reminded about his limited time on earth, will gird himself to work diligently on spiritual matters. However, to a person who only appreciates the physical, this isn’t even remotely an option. He *will* remind himself that he only has limited time, but he will then work on attaining physical pleasures—because that is all that he values in this world.

Now it is quite understandable why the thought of death not only didn’t bring Eisav to *t’shuva*, but actually caused him to discount spirituality even

further, for the sake of physicality.

In eulogizing Rabbi Moshe Twersky (a saintly rabbi who was butchered in this past week’s terrorist attack), Rabbi Shmuel Auerbach said that Rabbi Twersky had served as a *korban* (a sacrifice) to atone for the entire Jewish nation. However, Rabbi Auerbach also pointed out that, just as one only receives atonement by bringing a sacrifice in the Temple if he repents before he makes his offering, only Jews who use the horrible event of this past week as a catalyst for *t’shuva* will receive an atonement through it.

If you knew that you only had a limited time left, what would you do?

Now go do it! 🕐