

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Scents of Sinners

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
 RABBI ADI ROLAND

"And he [Yitzchak] smelled the scent of his *begadim* (clothes) and blessed him..." Don't read it as *begadaiv* (his clothes) rather *bogedav* (his traitors, i.e. the future sinners of klal Yisroel) and [yet] he [still] blessed him.

The aforementioned Midrash addresses why the scent of Yaakov's clothing seems to directly cause Yitzchak to bless him. There are few things whose stench can compare to that of raw, unprocessed goat hair!? Rather, the Midrash states, it means that Yitzchak foresaw the future traitors, people who have lived a life of sin and evil (which is indicated by the powerful stench), and yet saw that they were deserving of blessing. The Midrash relates a fantastic story of one such individual:

When the Romans had finally conquered the Jews and infiltrated the *Beis Hamikdash* they wanted a Jew to go in there first and promised him that whatever he took out he could claim as his own. An apostate Jew by the name of Yosef Meshisa offered to go inside. He went in and took out the holy menorah with him. When the Romans saw the beauty of the menorah, they did not allow him to keep it, saying that such a beautiful vessel was not befitting to be in a simpleton's home. They said, rather, he should reenter and take something else out. Yosef Meshisa refused to reenter. The Romans fined him with three years' worth of taxes, but he still refused, saying that it was bad enough that he angered Hashem once already and he won't do it again. They then dragged his body through the streets with iron spikes, yet all the while he only screamed out, "Oy oy, I have angered my Creator" until his soul departed.

Let us think for a second who this individual was: he joined the Roman army as they were fighting, looting, and killing his Jewish brethren and didn't bat an eyelash. Not only did he enter the *Beis Hamikdash* with the enemy, a place

where an impure individual is subject to severe punishment, but he volunteered to do so(!), willing to steal the holy vessels to use for his own personal enjoyment. Yet after he entered, he had such a life-altering experience that he was willing to endure incredible pain and suffering to not go in again in order not to further anger Hashem! This is what Yitzchak foresaw and blessed Yaakov.

The Ponovezher Rov, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, points out that even though going into the *Beis Hamikdash* had such a profound effect on him, he still took the menorah out for personal use, indicating that he still had every intent to continue living a debased life. But why? Shouldn't his experience while *in* the *Beis Hamikdash* cause him to at least start changing his ways? He answers with a very powerful insight: being in the *Beis Hamikdash*, with all of its *kedusha* and close connection with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, wasn't the catalyst of change. Rather, only once he *left*, to reenter the life and world he was living in, did he realize what he had lost: he was confronted with the experience of being close to Hashem and then having it taken away from him. Human nature is such that we don't totally appreciate what we have, especially if we've had it our whole lives. Yet, once it is taken away, then one fully appreciates that what he has lost. That reality was too much to bear for Yosef Meshisa; he was simply unable to go back to the life he was previously living no matter what that decision entailed.

If nothing else, the world's pandemic has shown us what our lives are like when things are taken away: our shuls, kollelim, schools, family and community gatherings, and other human interactions. And as these are slowly coming back into our lives, taking a moment to think about this will truly give us an appreciation for what we have and change us for the better! 🙏

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
 RABBI DOVID SPETNER

This week's *parasha*:

Q) I'm confused by the beginning of the *parasha*. First we say "these are the offspring of Yitzchak" and then we say that Avraham fathered Yitzchak. Shouldn't we say those words before we begin to tell of Yitzchak's offspring?

A) Rashi addresses this. Once the Torah refers to Yitzchak as "the son of Avraham" it was necessary to interject that we should be assured that this was indeed the case. The "scoffers of that generation" (every generation has 'em) suggested that really Avimelech had fathered Yitzchak. After all, after years with Avraham, Sarah had no children, yet after being kidnapped by Avimelech she became pregnant with Yitzchak. To counter such claims, Hashem made Yitzchak look just like his father Avraham. This striking resemblance is alluded to by the words "Avraham fathered Yitzchak," indicating that it was an indisputable fact.

My father, a"h, enjoyed telling of how he once needed to change dollars to shekel while in Yerushalayim. His brother took him to an old Yerushalmi lady who changed money in her upstairs apartment and supported a kollel on the first floor with the proceeds. It was a kind of "member's only" business and my uncle's son was a regular but my uncle had never been there. My uncle began to explain who he was, but the woman merely banged on the table and recited the verse, "Avraham

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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holid es Yitzchak / Avraham fathered Yitzchak” alluding to the fact that my uncle and his son had a such a strong resemblance that she realized who he was. Only in Yerushalayim do the only elderly women expect you to know *Chumash* with Rashi!

Last week's *parasha*:

Q) When Avraham went to the Hittites to request a burial place for Sarah he said he is a sojourner and a resident, which Rashi explains to mean that either you give me a plot as a favor or I will take one by right because G-d promised me the land. What happened to what we said in *parshas Lech Lecha* where the fight between the shepherds of Lot and Avraham was explained as whether Avraham had a right to the land now or not?

A) Just after Lot left, Hashem told Avraham to walk the length and breadth of Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara in *Bava Basra* (100a) brings Avraham's walking the length and breadth of the land at Hashem's command as the source for Rabbi Eliezer's opinion that one can acquire certain real estate by walking on it. If so, the incident with Lot's shepherds was before Avraham's acquisition of the land and the purchase of the cave was after. (Although the *Chachamim* disagree with Rabbi Eliezer's position regarding acquisition through mere walking, some understand that

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Roma Chencinski's will to live was growing dimmer and dimmer. The endless cycle of grueling labor, torturous roll calls, and all the rest of the barbaric treatment at Maideneck, the Nazi death camp, was sapping her of her resolve. One night they were ripped from their beds to stand on the parade grounds where they were informed that because of the misbehavior of one of their bunkmates they were going to be standing there until morning roll call. The entire group were crying to themselves. Roma wondered how she would ever survive the night until she overheard another woman mutter to herself, "Friday night, of all nights for this to happen!" Roma was hit with a flash of inspiration. "It is Friday night and you are all invited to my Shabbos meal," she called out. Roma then began to describe the scene of her parent's home when Shabbos would arrive. With vivid imagery she described the candle lighting, the scent of the Shabbos foods, the beautiful Shabbos table and the ambiance of Shabbos that permeated the home. In that vein she continued her "Shabbos meal" until their ordeal was over. A woman approached her later in the day and said to her, "You

Hashem did give it to him at that time, just not through the walking.) 🕊️

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincykollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

The Torah relates that Eisav went to the fields to catch game to feed his father. The words used are "*Latzud Tzayid L'havee*," literally "to catch game to bring." The numerical value of "*latzud*" is the same as "*Min Gazel*" which means "from something stolen" and "*L'havee*" is the same numerical value as "*Big'zailo*" – "in his thievery." This indicates that although Yitzchak directed Eisav to hunt ownerless animals, Eisav had every intention of stealing an animal to feed his father. 🕊️

Yaakov ben Asher, known as the *Ba'al Haturim*, was a scholar and biblical commentator who lived most of his life in Spain from approximately 1275 to approximately 1340. His classic commentary is printed in many editions of the *Chumash*.

have a gift for sharing a story. Promise me you will use it tell the next generation what these beasts did to us! Promise me!" Roma promised the woman she would. From then on, no matter how miserable she was, she held on. "I must keep my promise!" she would say to herself. And she has! 🕊️



THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

MOSES II

Early rabbinic sources compare and contrast the Jewish nation's first redeemer – Moshe *Rabbeinu*, with its final redeemer – *Moshiach* ben Dovid. Interestingly, the *Zohar* maintains that Moshe *Rabbeinu* himself will be the Messiah.

The year is 4208, and in the city of Sura, the heart of Jewish civilization in Babylon, the Sages of the Talmud are in the process of editing and finalizing the prized book of Jewish literature – the Talmud *Bavli*. However, the scene is quite different on the remote Greek island of Crete where the majority of its Jewish population is entranced by a cunning elderly looking fellow. He claims to be none other than a reincarnation of Moshe *Rabbeinu* who has been divinely appointed to redeem the Jewish nation. He convinces his followers that he has been instructed to transport the Jews back to *Eretz Yisrael* under one condition: on the appointed day everyone must leap into the sea just as Nachshon ben Ami-Nadav did when the Jews left Egypt. The old man assures that a grand miracle will occur and everyone present will be wondrously transported to *Eretz Yisrael* without any sea vessels. On the designated date, "Moshe" and his followers marched to the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. Upon "Moshe's" signal, the group leapt forward into the Mediterranean waters, but nothing happened. A number of Jews tragically met their death in the sea, while some were rescued by a group of gentile fishermen who had compassion on the drowning Jews. "Moshe's" prophetic claims were crushed, but the Sages in Babylon continued their holy efforts in completing the Talmud *Bavli*. 🕊️