

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Make It Your Own

In this week's *parasha*, the Torah recounts the death of one of our forefathers, Yitzchak. Of all the *avos*, it seems to be Yitzchak is the least talked about in the Torah. Although Yitzchok is featured in several incidents, the Torah does not delve into his life to the same extent as Avrohom and Yaakov. One might come to a very erroneous conclusion that perhaps Yitzchak wasn't as important as Avraham and Yaakov. However, this is patently false. The *Sifra* tells us that while the other *avos* require Hashem to remember them [the implication of which is that they are not in the forefront of Hashem's *hashgacha* (oversight) of the world], Yitzchak does not need to be "remembered" because his life and actions are always before Hashem, never relegated to the back of Hashem's mind, so to speak. Furthermore, Yitzchak died at the age of 180. The *Midrash* tells us that really all the *avos* should have lived to that age, but, for various differing reasons, Avraham and Yaakov's lifespans were shortened. So we see further that Yitzchak is the *only* one of the *avos* who lived his full life as was intended by Hashem, a testament to how unique he was. If Yitzchak's life was so cherished by Hashem, why then do we know not a lot about it? Is there not much we can gain from learning and hearing about Yitzchak's life, how he acted, and how he lived that is relevant to us? Why did Hashem deliberately omit this from the holy Torah?

Perhaps we can understand this with the following insight. When an individual is striving towards a goal, it's important to have something to point to that the person is working towards. For instance, if one is striving to succeed in business or learning, it's essential to have someone or something in mind, a picture from which to learn from and strive for. This applies to one's *middos* (character traits) as well - to have an individual to look at who excels in particular

middos. It is clear from the *Midrashim* that each of our *avos* personified and excelled in certain *middos* more than others. Avraham *Avinu's* was *chesed*, kindness, and Yaakov *Avinu's* was *emes*, truth. When a person is working on his *middah* of *chesed* or *emes*, the Torah provides a goal or apex of what a member of *Klal Yisroel* can accomplish. Avraham *Avinu's* *chesed* paralleled no other, as was Yaakov's *emes*. We look toward them for insights, encouragement, and markers as we work on ourselves. Yitzchak's *midda* was *avoda*, serving Hashem with our actions in our day-to-day lives, which Yitzchak *Avinu* excelled in. If the Torah had spoken more about Yitzchak's life, we would have no doubt tried to emulate him, as his *avoda* is the seeming apex we should be striving for. However, that would not be what Hashem wants. We all have our *avoda* in the world with which we were put here to excel at. Whether you are in kollel or working, teaching or a plumber, that is the *avoda* Hashem wants you to excel at. Yitzchak *Avinu* had his job, and it is true he excelled in it, but what he did was what Hashem wanted *him* to do and my particular life and set of circumstances are different than his, requiring a different type of *avoda*. It would be unfair for the Torah to elaborate on Yitzchak's life, as we would draw conclusions from it which are less relevant to ourselves and our own *avoda*. Hashem wants us to excel in our own personal *avoda*. He sent us here for, and it is up to each and every one of us to own and embrace it and serve Him in the ways that are best in our own lives! 🌟

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
RABBI ADI ROLAND

LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL
(CHOSHEN MISHPAT)

WITH
RABBI MEIR MINSTER

"... and he encamped before the city."
(Beraishis 33:18)

The Gemarah in *Shabbos* (33b) explains that this means that Yaakov graciously made improvements to the city of Shechem upon his arrival, setting up currency, commerce, or other benefits according to the various opinions stated there. The need for the free flow of currency and commerce is of great importance to a city and to society in general. The Maharal comments there, that understanding these needs and being able to address them requires a *chochom* (wise man), someone like Yaakov.

These same needs, the free flow of currency and commerce, are also offered as one of the reasons why *Beis Din* is permitted to operate today, even in the absence of judges with the no longer extant *semicha*. (This *semicha* had been passed down from Moshe, generation after generation, until the times just after the Mishna.) The question of *Beis Din's* ability to operate today is discussed in two separate sections of the Gemarah. In *Sanhedrin* (2b-3a), the Gemarah cites an enactment made "not to close the door before borrowers," which would ultimately choke all exchange in the marketplace, as the rationale for hearing cases involving loans without the requisite *semicha* judges. In *Baba Kama* (84a-b), the Gemarah offers a more expansive basis, saying courts today are acting as the agents of the earlier judges of ancient times who still had this *semicha*. This agency covers all cases that satisfy two criteria: they are common-place and they involve actual loss of money to one party.

There is great debate among the *Rishonim*

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LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (BASAR B'CHALAV II)

CONTINUED

and *Achronim*, early commentators, whether these two reasons are actually parts of one enactment or two different enactments and, in particular, what is the nature of this idea of agency. Among the many opinions we find Tosofos, who clearly learns that this is all one enactment, and Rashi, who understands that one followed the other. First, the need for judges with *semicha* was waived, and only later, when it became necessary, did they expand the role of these judges by making them agents of the earlier courts. In contrast, the Levush Mordechai advances a fascinating idea that the idea of agency means that our courts are not acting as judges at all, but rather as *shotrim* (officers of the court). The Torah empowers the establishment of both (see *Devarim* 18:1), and the Gemarah means that our courts were made into the *shotrim* of those earlier Torah-sanctioned courts.

Rabbi Naftoli Trop sees a significant difference implied by these various approaches: Would the other disqualifications for judges, besides the lack of *semicha*, still apply today? If our current courts are just *shotrim*, or even if we maintain that the entire enactment was based on agency, it would seem that all the requirements for judges should also not apply. However, if, like Rashi, it was first decided that judges, only lacking the *semicha*, were allowed, then those judges were further empowered with agency. All other requirements for judges, however, remain in place. He strongly sides with this understanding of Rashi. 🕍

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Yoel was having his home painted and was showing the painter what had been suggested by some of his friends around his home. The painter, who seemed clearly to not be Jewish, saw a picture of the Bobover Rebbe on the wall. "Is that your Rabbi?" inquired the painter. "No." "Why not?" asked the painter. "Why not?" echoed Yoel, "what do you mean why not? Just because someone has a long beard doesn't mean they have to be your Rabbi." "Well he's my Rabbi," said the painter, and proceeded to take a picture of the Bobover Rebbe out of his wallet. Yoel looked at the painter with puzzlement written across his face. "You are Jewish?" Yoel asked. "Not at all." "What do you mean he's your Rabbi!?" "I once was hired to paint his house, and I showed up bright and early one morning to get started. I hadn't hardly put my roller in the paint when he asked if I had eaten breakfast yet. I couldn't believe it. When I answered that I had grabbed something on my out the door that morning, he insisted that he feed me breakfast. While I was eating, he said he wanted to tell me something. I assumed that he was going to give me a speech about how

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A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

Rashi quotes the *Midrash* in the beginning of the *parasha* that tells us that hidden within the words of Yaakov to Eisav, "*im Lavan garti*" – "I have lived with Lavan," was the message "*taryag mitzvos shamarti*" – "I have observed all 613 mitzvos!" Even around the bad influence of Lavan, Yaakov remained unchanged. Then why did Yaakov avoid battle with Eisav? This, says Ba'al Haturim, can be answered with a hint found in the next words of Yaakov, "*va'eichar ad atah*" – "and I have lingered until now," which could homiletically mean, I will have to wait until "*atah*," spelled in Hebrew, *ayin, tav, hey*. The numerical value of these letters are, *ayin* = 70, *tav* = 400, *hey* = five, which correspond to the seventy years of the Babylonian exile, the 400 years of the Egyptian exile, and the five millennia which will transpire before the time period of Mashiach. Only once these have passed will be the time of Yaakov waging the ultimate and decisive war against Eisav. 🕍

careful I need to be and how nice things would need to look. But he didn't. Instead, he asked me if I had ever heard that the Jewish people once had a temple. He told me that when the Temple stood there was perfection in the world, but now that it has been destroyed, we can only do our best but nothing will ever be perfect." Looking up at Yoel while putting the Rebbe's picture back in his wallet, "yup," the painter declared, "he's my Rabbi." 🕍



THE LEGENDARY GOLEM OF PRAGUE (PART VII)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

In recent years evidence has surfaced that *Niflaos Maharal* was unquestionably a creation of Rabbi Yudl Rosenberg. Rabbi Dr. Shnayer Leiman relates that a dinner took place in Montreal in honor of Rabbi Yudl Rosenberg's 70th birthday. A short journal was prepared and presented to all the guests. The journal contained a biographical sketch of Rabbi Yudl Rosenberg's life as well as a list of all the seforim which he wrote. These seforim were divided into three categories, one of them being folk literature. And the very first publication listed under the category of folk literature is none other than *Niflaos Maharal*!

Why did Rabbi Yudl Rosenberg write folk literature? Rabbi Rosenberg's intention, similar to that of Rabbi Marcus Lehmann in Germany, was to provide the Polish Jew with reading material that was befitting for a religious Jew. It remains a mystery why Rabbi Rosenberg attempted to pass off *Niflaos Maharal* as an authentic worked authored by Maharal's son-in-law. Perhaps he felt that the book would sell more copies if it was assumed to have originated from the Maharal's son-in-law, a first-hand witness to the incredible events which the book tells.

If *Niflaos Maharal* was just a volume of fiction that we must re-ask our original question: Did Maharal of Prague ever create a *golem*? The answer is highly unlikely although the absolute truth still remains a mystery.

Stay tuned for the next topic of the Jewish History Column 🕍

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