

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXILING YOURSELF TO A PLACE OF TORAH

Our parsha states, “The children struggled together within her, and she said: ‘If so, why am I thus?’” (Genesis 25:22). Rashi cites our Sages in explaining the nature of this struggle: “When she passed the doorways of Torah study of Shem and Eber, Jacob would run and struggle to come out. When she passed the doorway of idolatry, Esau would run and struggle to come out.” The verse continues by stating, “She went to inquire of the L-RD.” Where did she go? The Sages say, “Surely she went only to the academy of Shem and Eber” (Bereshith Rabba 63:6), going there in order to learn of her fate. This is surprising, for why would Rebecca’s unborn children, especially Jacob, not struggle while she was in the home of Abraham and Isaac? Why did Jacob not want to get out when Rebecca was there, for there he could study Torah? We are familiar with what the Sages said in the Mishnah: “Exile yourself to a place of Torah” (Perkei Avoth 4:14), which means that a person only retains the Torah he studies by going elsewhere, to a yeshiva, and learning there under difficult circumstances. Such is not the case when a person studies at home, in peace and tranquility, with all the material comforts of home. In that case it becomes difficult for him to acquire Torah. Such is the path that our fathers transmitted to the entire Jewish people: Exiling oneself to a place of Torah. We find something similar regarding Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, who did not want to exile himself with his friends to a place of Torah, but instead went to a place that was pleasant to live in. The result was that his learning vanished, for when he was called upon to read from the Torah, he erred by misreading every word (Shabbat 147b). In fact the Sages have said, “Do not rely on your own understanding” (Perkei Avoth 4:14), meaning that we should not think that we will do better by learning at home. Instead, we must leave for a place of Torah.

Assuming this to be correct, we can understand the story concerning Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma. He was asked by someone to come and live in his town, and as a reward he would be given a million golden dinars, precious stones, and pearls. Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma refused, however, saying: “Even if you were to give me all the silver and gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would dwell nowhere but in a place of Torah” (Perkei Avoth 6:9). This means that if he had been asked to go and live in a place of Torah, and to open a yeshiva and houses of study, mikvaot and Torah institutions, then perhaps he would have agreed. However he would not go and live in a place where the inhabitants only wanted the honor of saying that a great Torah figure lived among them, without acquiring Torah and the fear of Heaven from him. In that case their intention would only be to glorify themselves or exalt the fame of the wealthy individual who brought the tzaddik to them. He would not live in such a place, for that would not constitute an exile to a place of Torah. In fact nothing good would come of it, and it fuel a neglect of Torah, even more so if an abundance of wealth were involved. It is impossible to buy a great Torah figure with money.

Since we have reached this point, we can understand the matter of Rebecca’s two children struggling within her. Jacob did not want to emerge in the house of Isaac, his own home, because he wanted to fulfill the teaching, “Exile yourself to a place of Torah.” That is, he did not want to study in his own home in peace and tranquility. This is why it was precisely when Rebecca passed by the academy of Shem and Eber that Jacob struggled

to emerge, for he wanted to exile himself there to learn Torah and elevate himself. [The Midrash states: “Jacob wished to live at ease in this world, whereupon he was attacked by Joseph’s Satan [i.e., by troubles concerning Joseph]” (Bereshith Rabba 84:3). Actually, it was in his mother’s womb that Jacob decided to exile himself to a place of Torah, not to live in peace. So why change course?]

Furthermore, from the time he was in his mother’s womb, Jacob understood the meaning of the soul’s exile from the supernal world by living in this world. This also constitutes an exile. He therefore realized that he could fulfill the primary aspect of exile by leaving his home and going to study in a yeshiva. Hence he struggled to emerge in order to fulfill both exiles: The exile from the supernal world to this world, and the exile from home to study in yeshiva. It is not without reason that the Torah says, “Jacob was a tam [upright] man, abiding in tents” (Genesis 25:27), for the letters of the word tam are the same as those of met (“dead”). That is, he was constantly like one who killed himself for the Torah by exiling himself to a place of Torah, toiling in its study with great effort.

We have already heard of cities that were devoid of Torah, yet by the merit of a tzaddik who exiled himself there, opened Torah institutions, and led people to repentance, many became Torah observant. This is perhaps what the Sages meant by saying, “Exile yourself to a place of Torah,” That is, exile yourself there and teach people Torah in order to lead them to repentance, that everyone should become Torah observant. Or they may have simply meant that we must exile ourselves to a place of Torah, for there we will have an opportunity to elevate ourselves even more.

The path that Esau took was diametrically opposed to Jacob’s. Esau did not struggle to emerge from his mother’s womb when she was at home precisely because it was a house of Torah, for he did not want to live in one. Thus even when his mother passed by the academy of Shem and Eber, Esau did not struggle to emerge. He only wanted to be a hunter, as it is written: “Esau was a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field” (Genesis 25:27). Hence even in the home of Abraham, Esau did not struggle to emerge from his mother’s womb, for he did not want the Torah of Abraham. He only yearned to emerge near places of idolatry.

At this point we can say that the main reason Rebecca went to consult Shem and Eber was to ask them about her destiny. She had no difficulties with regards to Jacob, for he did not make her suffer much. On the contrary, she rejoiced in the pains that came from her unborn child struggling to emerge near a yeshiva, proving that he was a tzaddik and desired to exile himself to a place of Torah, not to live in comfort. In fact there is no greater satisfaction for parents than to see their sons becoming Torah scholars, yearning to acquire Torah in a yeshiva by working for it, as the Sages have said: “The more sitting down [to study], the more wisdom” (Perkei Avoth 2:7). Thus in self-annulment and scarcity they take upon themselves the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.

From here we learn just how important it is to exile ourselves to a place of Torah. When we go elsewhere to learn, the heart becomes more open to the Torah, and in turn the Torah becomes easier to attain. May Hashem help us in opening our eyes to the Torah and to serve Him with all our hearts. Amen, may it be so.

The Path To Follow Toldot

160

November 25th 06

4 Kislev 5767

Publication
HEVRAT PINTO
Under Aegis of
RABBI DAVID HANANIA
PINTO CHLITA
11, rue du plateau
75019 PARIS
Tel: +331 42 08 25 40
Fax +331 42 08 50 85
www.hevratpinto.org
Responsible of publication
Hanania Soussan

Guard Your Tongue!

Increasing Peace in the World

There is something great and holy that results from guarding one’s tongue, namely peace.

One who distances himself from jealousy – to the point that everyone likes him, entrusts their secrets to him, and refrains from talking behind his back – also brings peace to the world. We know, as the Sages have said (Derech Eretz Zutah 89a), that peace is so great that if the Jewish people live in peace with one another, yet practice idolatry (G-d forbid), Hashem would prevent the Satan from harming them. Thus besides the great intrinsic value of a person controlling what he says, such a deed also increases peace in the world

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Let the Wicked One Forsake His Way

It is written, “[Esau] took Mahalat the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth in addition to his wives” (Genesis 28:9).

This teaches us that Esau actually wanted to rectify his deeds. When he realized that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father, he married Ishmael’s daughter Mahalat. Still, the verse underlines that he took her “in addition” to the wives he already had, meaning that he did not relinquish his Canaanite wives. Our Sages stated, “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: He made up his mind to become converted. ‘Mahalat’ because the Holy One, blessed be He, mahal [forgave] his sins, while ‘Basemat’ [another wife of Esau] indicates that his mind was now nitbasma [satisfied]. Rabbi Leazar said: Had he divorced his first wives, you would have spoken well. However ‘in addition to his wives’ [means] adding grief to grief” (Bereshith Rabba 67:13). In his book Zichron Meir, Rabbi Meir Rubman derives from here the importance of repentance and perfecting oneself. When a person undertakes to better himself and begins doing good deeds, there may sometimes be no change in his spiritual state. This is because he did not completely uproot all the evil from his deeds and character traits. Such a person follows the way of Esau, who married Mahalat the daughter of Ishmael without relinquishing his other wives. The masters of Mussar provide us with a parable to illustrate this: Someone climbed aboard a train in the middle of the country with the intention of traveling north. During the ride, however, he realized that he had mistakenly taken a train that was traveling south. What did he do? He got up and began running within the train, from car to car, towards the north! That was obviously a foolish thing to do, for how could he end up going north while the whole train was moving south? What he should have done is to disembark at the nearest station and get on a train going in the opposite direction.

Scripture tells us, “Let the wicked one forsake his way and the iniquitous man his thoughts” (Isaiah 55:7). In regards to this, Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky Zatzal noted that it is not written that the wicked should forsake “his sin,” but rather “his way.” It is simply not enough for him to forsake his sin; he must look at what led him to sin. For example, it may have been due to a close friendship he had with certain people, because he frequented a certain place, or other such reasons. However by forsaking “his way,” this will constitute a fundamental decision ensuring that he will never return to his sin.

Taking Things Out of Context

It is written, “These are the generations of Isaac, the son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac” (Genesis 25:19).

Rashi explains: “Since Scripture wrote, ‘Isaac the son of Abraham,’ it had to say, ‘Abraham begot Isaac’ because the scorners of the generation were claiming that Sarah had conceived from Abimelech, for she had lived with Abraham for many years and had not conceived from him.” We need to understand what this mockery consisted of. If people were simply saying that Sarah had conceived by Abimelech, it would not have been mockery, but malice. In that case, where would the mockery lie? The Chiddushei HaRim and Chatam Sofer (as well as the Beit Halevi to a certain degree) explain this in the following way: When Abimelech the king of Gerar took Sarah, Hashem punished him by closing every orifice in his house, meaning that no children were born to him. Hashem then came to Abimelech in a dream and told him to return Sarah to Abraham, as well as to use the opportunity to ask Abraham to pray for him and his house. That is precisely what happened, for Abraham prayed for Abimelech and his house in order for their orifices to reopen. The result was that Abimelech’s women could once again bear children. Now we know that whoever prays for others regarding something that he himself needs, such a person is answered first. Hence this is what the mockers of the time were saying, namely that Sarah gave birth by Abimelech! In other words, due

to Abraham’s prayer for Abimelech, Sarah had a child! They said this in jest, much like we would say, “So and so built a house from butter,” concerning a person who built his home from money earned through selling butter. However if this is the correct interpretation, then why did Hashem need to make Isaac resemble Abraham to such a great degree? The Beit Halevi explains that there was reason to believe that people would eventually forget the true nature of the mockery that took place, meaning that they would understand things in a literal sense. Hashem therefore made Isaac greatly resemble Abraham.

In the Presence of His Wife

It is written, “Isaac entreated the L-RD opposite his wife” (Genesis 25:21).

Why does the text say “opposite his wife”? The Maharil Diskin writes that if Isaac had prayed outside of Rebecca’s presence, he would have had to mention her name and that of her father, Bethuel. The Halachah states that when praying for the sick in their presence, we do not need to mention their name. Therefore since Isaac did not want to mention Bethuel’s name, he decided to pray by her side. Certain authorities, however, hold that if we are well acquainted with the sick, we do not need to mention their name when praying outside their presence. According to this view, we must provide another reason for why Isaac prayed in the presence of his wife. Now Isaac knew that he would have children, for Hashem had promised Abraham: “I will greatly increase your offspring” (Genesis 22:17). Hashem also promised to give the land to Abraham’s offspring, and it was through Isaac that Abraham’s offspring were counted. Thus Isaac knew that he would have children, and he wanted them to be Rebecca’s. He therefore implored Hashem in the presence of his wife, for he did not want children by another woman.

Techumim Became Tavshilin

It is written, “Eikev [Because] Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws” (Genesis 26:5).

Rashi states, “ ‘Because Abraham obeyed My voice’ when I tested him; ‘and kept My charge,’ decrees to stay far from transgressing the warnings in the Torah, such as second-degree relations” (see Yebamot 21a). The Sages explain that Abraham observed even the law of eruvei tavshilin (Yoma 28b). The Vilna Gaon asks how the Sages deduced such a thing from this verse. He replies that it originated from a copying error in the Talmud. The term in question was abbreviated as ayin tav, and the copyists believed it meant eruvei tavshilin. In fact it really meant eruvei techumim, this being deduced from the expression, “Eikev [Because] Abraham obeyed My voice.” The word eikev (which can also mean “heel”) alludes to walking, hence a reference to the permitted walking distance on Shabbat (eruvei techumim).

Esau’s Concept of Honoring Parents

The Sages say that Esau greatly honored his father, even wearing special garments to serve him. However what about honoring his mother? Did Esau not have a mother, or can we say that everything is permitted toward one’s mother? We must conclude that Esau’s honoring of his father stemmed from self-interest, for he wanted to receive his father’s blessings. In Esau’s mind, that made it worth the effort of honoring his father. How do we know this? First of all, we know it from the fact that he didn’t honor his mother! Furthermore, we can see it in the last verse in our parsha: “[Esau] took Mahalat the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth in addition to his wives” (Genesis 28:9). Esau the “tzaddik” suddenly noticed that his father did not care for his Canaanite wives, and he hurried to take the daughter of Ishmael? What happened?

The Midrash states: “ ‘Esau said in his heart’ [Genesis 27:41]. The wicked stand in subjection to their heart. Thus, ‘The fool has said in his heart’ [Psalms 14:1]. ...The Rabbis said, [Esau reasoned]: If I kill him myself, then Shem and Eber will sit in Judgment upon me. Therefore better for me to go and marry Ishmael’s daughter so he will come and dispute the birthright and kill

him, whereupon I will arise against him as a blood kinsman and slay him, and I will become the heir of two families.' Thus it is written, 'Because you said, "These two nations and these two lands shall be mine, and we shall inherit them" – but the L-RD was there' [Ezekiel 35:10]. Who said that he [Esau] spoke this way? Rabbi Yudan said, 'It was the Holy One, blessed be He, for "the L-RD was there." ' Rabbi Berekiah said: 'Esau denied it, maintaining, "I did not say this." ' However G-d rebuked him, saying: "Do you not know that I probe hearts," as it is written: "I the L-RD search the heart" [Jeremiah 17:10]' " (Bereshith Rabba 67:8).

The Sages highlighted Esau's honor for his father because he fulfilled this mitzvah so well by his actions, though his intentions were contemptible. Now who is wise? He who learns from everyone, even from the wicked. Hence we must learn from Esau's deeds, not his intentions.

What Does the Day of Death Recall?

It is written, "Esau said, 'Look, I am going to die, so of what use is a birthright to me?'" (Genesis 25:32).

When the righteous are reminded of the day of death, they immediately repent. However when the wicked hear of it, they immediately say, "Feed me!" The Gemara says that if the evil inclination attacks a person, he should study Torah, and if that doesn't work he should recite the Shema. "If he subdues it, well and good. If not, let him remind himself of the day of death" (Berachot 5a). Why should a person not remind himself of the day of death right away? The answer is that if he recalls the day of death before having studied Torah, and before having recited the Shema, then the evil inclination will tell him, "Perfect! Since we end up dying in any case, we should take advantage of the fleeting time and use it for seeking pleasure: 'Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' [Isaiah 22:13]." To know what we must do with our time and how to use it as effectively as possible, we must first study Torah and recite the Shema. Thus when we remind ourselves of the day of death, we will be able to conquer the evil inclination and escape sin. For example, what is the behavior of a person who is devoid of Torah when he thinks about dying? We can illustrate this with a story told by the Ben Ish Hai, Rabbi Yosef Haim Zatzal: A woman was very ill, and since she knew that her final hour was approaching, she requested that a former friend be brought to her bedside so she could make peace with her. The woman's family hastened to carry out her wishes, and they went to find this former friend. They told her that their relative was on her deathbed, and that she wanted to make amends before passing on. They explained that she couldn't come to see her in person because she was too weak, unable to even lift her head off a pillow. Her former friend listened to their request and quickly returned with them. When she made her way into the room, the woman was happy to see her. Though she was lying on her bed, she extended her arms to her former friend in order to embrace her. When she approached, a painful shriek pierced the air, and those present immediately separated the two women. It was then that they realized what had happened: The dying woman had gathered all her remaining strength and bit her former friend on the nose, ripping half of it off. The woman, bleeding profusely from her face, fainted and was brought to the hospital. As for her attacker, she screamed with joy: "Now I can die content!" A few moments later, she gave up her soul.

Overview of the Parsha

Our parsha recounts the main events in the life of Isaac, from the birth of his sons until their departure from home. The parsha gives an account of Rebecca's pregnancy and her birth to twin boys, as well as their early years. It describes Isaac's departure during a famine to Gerar, where he dug wells and entered into a pact with Abimelech. We are also told that in his advance years, Isaac gave his blessings to Jacob and Esau, following which Jacob was sent on his parents' orders to find a wife from Laban's home. Isaac's blessing to Jacob included the fact that he would inherit the land where he lived, which had been given to Abraham.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

A Sale Made in Error?

It is written, "He sold his birthright to Jacob" (Genesis 25:33).

The commentators ponder the validity of this transaction, since it appears to have been "a sale made in error" (see Bava Batra 69b), hence invalid. That is, how could Esau have sold his birthright, which rewarded him with the offering of sacrifices, for a plate of lentils? Regarding this subject, the story is told of a Jew who experienced a great deal of suffering in life. One day he went to the Chafetz Chaim and asked him, "Why has the Holy One, blessed be He, not rewarded me in this world for just one of the mitzvot I've performed? What would happen if I were to be rewarded in life for just a single mitzvah, so I could once and for all be rid of my troubles?" The Chafetz Chaim replied, "That would be like a person who wanted to purchase some candy with a thousand-dollar bill! The merchant would laugh at him. He would not want to hear of such a transaction, for how could he give him change for such a purchase, one costing but a few cents? Such is the reward for each mitzvah that you want to receive in this world, and even more so. When you arrive in the World to Come and see just how much you will receive for a single mitzvah, you will then realize that it is really like purchasing a piece of candy with a thousand-dollar bill." The Chafetz Chaim continued with his analogy, asking a rhetorical question: "That being the case, how is it possible to reward the wicked in this world for the mitzvot that they perform? If the reward is so great, how can the wicked be repaid for whatever good they did in their lives?" The Chafetz Chaim answered as follows: "The Holy One, blessed be He, rewards each person for the mitzvot he performs in relation to the importance he attaches to them. Thus the tzaddikim and those who fear Heaven – people who perform mitzvot with respect to their greatness and recompense – truly merit a tremendous reward. Yet the wicked, who view mitzvot as having no importance whatsoever (since they do not perform them), will have a reward commensurate with such a view."

This is what happened during the sale of Esau's birthright, for in his eyes it was worth no more than a plate of lentils. It is for this reason that the transaction was valid, containing no element whatsoever of "a sale made in error."

EISHET CHAYIL

Being Content With Your Lot

We are familiar with the statement of the Baal Shem Tov: "The Torah does not describe sadness as a prohibition, nor does it describe joy as a positive mitzvah. However the spiritual damage that sadness can cause is even greater than a sin, and the spiritual elevation that joy can cause is even greater than a mitzvah." The book Reshith Chochma states that what leads a person to happiness and joy is the ability to be content with little: "Realize that joy contains all things. In fact a person who worries about this world will not experience peace during his entire life, for he is always trying to think of ways to earn money. He is never satisfied with what Hashem has given him. However one who is happy with his lot is rich because he rejoices in Hashem, Who is his heritage."

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Aharon Kotler – The Rosh Yeshiva of Kletzk and Lakewood

Rabbi Aharon Kotler was among the most famous gaonim of our times. Born on Tevet 20, 5652 to the gaon Rabbi Shneur Zalman (the Rav of Sislovitch), Rabbi Aharon was known in his youth as a shining star in the firmament of Torah. He even entered yeshiva at the age of 11, becoming famous as a great illui (genius). He went on to study in the Slabodka yeshiva under the direction of the gaon Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Epstein.

Upon reaching the age of marriage, Rabbi Aharon Kotler married the daughter of the gaon Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer Zatzal. From then on they began teaching Torah together, instructing hundreds and even thousands of students. Rabbi Aharon was named as the Rosh Yeshiva of Slutzk at the age of 22, but he was forced to flee with his yeshiva to the Polish town of Kletzk when the Russian revolution began. It was in Poland that he continued to teach, as many students came to him in the hope of gaining from his lectures and words of Torah that he uttered in abundance. When the Second World War began, Rabbi Aharon fled to Lithuania, then to Japan and finally to Shanghai, where he continued to teach Torah to the public. After the war, Rabbi Aharon founded his great Lakewood Torah center in the United States, where he succeeded in making the Torah reign in all its splendor.

Rabbi Aharon was among the members of Agudath Israel, being the leader of Agudath Israel of America. He also traveled to Israel several times. Rabbi Aharon Kotler passed away in the United States on Kislev 2, and three days later his body was flown to Israel for burial. The memory of the tzaddik is truly a blessing.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Be Merciful to Us!

It is written, “I have loved you, says the L-RD, but you say, ‘How have You loved us?’ Was Esau not the brother of Jacob – the word of the L-RD – yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau” (Malachi 1:2-3).

There are times when the Jewish people find themselves in a poor spiritual state. Thus when they returned from their exile during the time of Ezra, they were not at a lofty spiritual level. Yet even though their deeds did not make them particularly lovable at the time, in comparison to Esau they were like tzaddikim, worthy of Hashem’s love.

This is what the verse tells us: “I have loved you, says the L-RD.” The Holy One, blessed be He, told Israel, “I have loved you.” The community of Israel replied, “How have You loved us,” for we are aware of our spiritual state, our wicked deeds having made us unworthy of Your love! To this Hashem replied, “Was Esau not the brother of Jacob,” and when I look at the deeds of your brother Esau, then “I loved Jacob and I hated Esau.” You are good in comparison to him, and I am compelled to love you.

Similarly, in the Musaf prayer of Rosh Hashanah we recite: “You also remembered Noah with love.” We say this in order to arouse Hashem’s love for Israel, for just as Noah was a tzaddik with respect to his generation (according to one opinion), and just as Hashem saved him from the flood, so too should He be merciful to us!

A MATTER OF EDUCATION

Love Commensurate with Effort; Appreciation Commensurate with Result

It is written, “Isaac loved Esau because venison was in his mouth, but Rebecca loved Jacob” (Genesis 25:28).

Further on in the parsha, when Isaac wanted to bless Esau, Rebecca redirected his blessing so that Jacob received it. Nevertheless, in the end Isaac confirmed his blessing to Jacob, meaning that he was not opposed to Jacob in the same way that Rebecca was opposed to Esau. Torah scholars in every generation have reflected upon this complex situation, wondering how it was possible for Isaac, who adhered to the attribute of strict justice, to have preferred the wicked Esau over the righteous Jacob. Actually, there was a difference between Isaac’s love for Esau and Rebecca’s love for Jacob. Concerning the former, the verse tells us that it stemmed from the fact that “venison was in his mouth,” even though the previous verse identifies Esau as a skilled hunter. As for Rebecca’s love for Jacob, no reason is given for it in the text. However we are left with the statement from the previous verse, which identifies Jacob as an upright man who lived in tents. Now Scripture tells us, “Man looks on the outward appearance, but the L-RD looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). For a simple human being, to whom it has not been given to probe the heart and mind, it is easier to judge others by the result of their actions than by the effort they put into them. If an inflexible person (one who adheres to strict justice) cannot perceive the greatness of another person’s effort, he is still careful not to discourage them if there is reason to believe that they did make an effort, especially if their effort produced some result. For Esau, whom the Sages describe as being predisposed to evil (contrary to Jacob, who was predisposed to good), it may be that just being a skilled hunter represented a greater achievement for him than Jacob being an upright man who lived in tents. It was therefore appropriate to highlight Isaac’s love for Esau “because venison was in his mouth,” a special reason indeed. However to understand Rebecca’s love for Jacob, there was no need to mention the fact that Jacob “was an upright man, living in tents,” since it was natural for him to be loved for that reason. As a result, Isaac’s love for Esau stemmed entirely from the attribute of strict justice, for who could know what Esau’s reward should be, vis-à-vis Jacob, for the effort he made? Nevertheless, what testified to Jacob’s greatness was the fact that Hashem arranged matters such that it was Jacob, not Esau, who received Isaac’s blessing. Hence it was obvious that Isaac could not object to it.

A TRUE STORY

Busy Ascending

It is written, “The boys grew and Esau was a skillful hunter...but Jacob was an upright man, living in tents” (Genesis 25:27).

Rashi states, “As long as they were small, they were not recognizable through their deeds, and no one scrutinized them to determine their characters. As soon as they became thirteen years old, this one parted to the houses of study, and that one parted to idol worship.”

The Beit Halevi was once visited by a simple man who said that he was a childhood friend. The Rav warmly welcomed his visitor, even though it was immediately clear that he was completely uneducated and incapable of discussing matters of Torah. During their conversation, the Rav’s guest suddenly asked him, “Do you remember when, as children, we would go sliding together on the snow down the mountain behind our village?” The Rav replied with a smile: “Of course I do! I clearly remember that as I was busy ascending, you were busy descending.”