

EXILING YOURSELF TO A PLACE OF TORAH GUARANTEES THE TORAH'S EXISTENCE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "The children struggled together within her, and she said: 'If so, why am I thus?' And she went to inquire of the L-RD" (Genesis 25:22). Rashi cites our Sages in stating, "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." Where did she go? The Sages say, "Surely she went only to the academy of Shem and Eber" (Bereshith Rabba 63:6) in order to learn of her fate. This is surprising for several reasons: (1) Why was it only when she passed synagogues and places of idolatry that this struggle occurred? 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 emerge when Rebecca was there so he could learn Torah? (2) Why did Rebecca go to the Beit Midrash of Shem and Eber instead of visiting Abraham, a great prophet and tzaddik, to ask him for advice?

We are familiar with what the Sages have said in the Mishnah: "Exile yourself to a place of Torah" (Perkei Avoth 4:14). This means that a person will only retain the Torah that he studied when he went far away, to the yeshiva, and studied under difficult circumstances. This is not the case when a person studies at home, where he lacks neither material or spiritual comforts. In that case it becomes difficult for him to acquire Torah. Such is the path that our fathers conquered for the entire Jewish people: Exiling oneself to a place of Torah. We find an example of this with Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, who did not want to exile himself with his friends to a place of Torah, but instead went to a pleasant area where he could study Torah in peace and tranquilly. 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 say, "Do not rely on your own understanding" (Perkei Avoth 4:14), meaning that we should not rely on our abilities, thinking that we will do better by learning at home. Instead, we must leave for a place of Torah.

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. Hence it was precisely when Rebecca passed the academy of Shem and Eber that Jacob struggled to emerge, for he wanted to exile himself there to learn Torah and grow spiritually. However the wicked Esau had no intention of exiling himself to a place of Torah, and he only wanted to emerge near a place of idolatry. 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). From within his mother's womb, Jacob decided to exile himself to a place of Torah, not to live in peace. So why change course later on in life?

Furthermore, from the time that 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, which is also an exile. He therefore realized that he could fulfill the purpose of living in 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 a 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 kills himself for the Torah by exiling himself to a place of Torah, toiling in its study under difficult circumstances.

This is why we merited, in exchange for the two exiles that our father Jacob endured, only two destructions, that of the First and Second Temples. The Third Temple, however, will never be destroyed. Similarly, every yeshiva is like a miniature Temple (see Megillah 29a), and the Torah will never cease from Israel, all because everyone will exile himself to a place of Torah. Even if that place has been destroyed, the Torah will certainly shine elsewhere because of a tzaddik who exiled himself there, a place where he opened a Torah center, a place where the Torah can shine.

We have already heard of towns that were completely devoid of Torah, yet due to the merit of a tzaddik who exiled himself there, its residents were brought back to Torah. This may be what our Sages meant when they said, "Exile yourself to a place of Torah." That is, exile yourself in order to bring people closer to Torah and repentance. Or perhaps they simply meant that we should exile ourselves to a place of Torah, where we can elevate ourselves to an even greater extent.

Esau's path was completely different. He did not struggle to leave his mother's womb when she was at home, for it was a place of Torah. This is also why he did not struggle to leave when she was in the Beit Midrash of Shem and Eber. He wanted nothing to do with places of Torah. He simply wanted to be a hunter, as it is written: "Esau was a man familiar with hunting, a man of the field" (Genesis 25:27). He therefore did not struggle to leave his mother's womb when she was in Abraham's home, for he wanted nothing to do with Abraham's Torah. He simply wanted to emerge near places of idolatry. In reflecting upon this, we see that Esau's path was more difficult for Rebecca to bear than Jacob's. In fact Jacob was studying Torah while in his mother's womb, as the Sages have said concerning every baby (Niddah 30b). Therefore Jacob only tried to emerge when his mother was near a Beit Midrash. He wanted to exile himself to a place of Torah, not remain at home in peace. This was in contrast to the wicked Esau, who always wanted to leave and commit sins. Hence the pain that he caused his mother was much greater.

Rebecca was told that the child who struggled to emerge near places of idolatry was wicked, whereas the other child was righteous, wanting to emerge and exile himself to a place of Torah. From here we see that one who exiles himself to a place of Torah – like the young men who leave home and travel to a distant yeshiva – resemble Jacob, "an upright man, abiding in tents." It is on account of these men that the world endures. Hence we must exile ourselves to a place of Torah, for then we will be able to completely establish the Torah throughout the world.



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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Not Even for the Love of Truth

Devorah told her friends of a good and courageous deed that she had supposedly done. Dina, who heard this, knew that a large part of the story was untrue, and that Devorah only wanted to make herself look good in front of her friends. Although the flame of truth burned within Dina, and despite the fact that she had a powerful desire to tell people that Devorah was a liar, she is forbidden to do so. She is also forbidden to tell them that the facts of the story, as Devorah related them, were incorrect. If it serves no constructive purpose to say that Dina wasn't speaking the truth, then doing so is considered Lashon Harah.

It is also forbidden to say that someone has failed to perform a mitzvah. For example, it is forbidden to say that a wealthy man does not spend as much as he should for Shabbat, even if we are motivated by a love for truth.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Where Should We Focus our Efforts?

It is written, “He called Esau, his older son” (Genesis 27:1).

The Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh explains that Isaac wanted to bless Esau because he believed that through these blessings, Esau would begin to change his ways and improve himself.

Isaac understood the power of blessings, and he also knew just how evil Esau was. However he wanted to do all that he could to bring him closer to his Creator. He believed that in order to draw Esau to the right path, he had to bless him. Rebecca apparently did not agree with him, and Hashem sided with her in this respect, since He granted her success.

Despite all this, from here we learn that we must invest all our energies into our children's education.

It is worthwhile citing a statement found in Alenu Leshabeach concerning a certain Torah scholar: Immediately after his wife gave birth for the first time, he and his wife took it upon themselves to put all their energies and talents into educating their children. This would constitute the fulfillment of their task on earth, as well as a sign of their tremendous gratitude to G-d for having given them offspring.

As soon as they had children, they invested all their energies into raising them. They gave up many things for themselves, and they shunned excess. They also decided to do all they could to influence their children for the best. Above all, the father took it upon himself to invest a great deal of his time into studying with them, reviewing their studies, and preparing their lessons. He believed that if his children arrived in class already prepared, they would understand even more. This in turn would make them want to spend more time learning with their father. Eventually, he began to see the fruits of his labor. He and his wife did all this without exerting pressure on their children. When they didn't feel like it, they were never forced to study. However the father gave them the impression that he wanted to study with them, and as soon as they “wanted” to study, he was happy to see them learning by the shtender. Careful attention was paid to ensuring that they learned with an eager mind and an open heart. As early as those first years, the parents began to see their investment paying off.

However one of their children was not very gifted, and learning did not interest him. He was gently guided, being taught that Hashem does not make difficult demands of His creations, nor was he being asked for more than he could provide. His father took him for a walk every day, and when his heart opened he was shown that only studying Torah could make him an upright Jew. Although he was the weakest in his class (so weak, in fact, that he was placed in a lower grade), everything was done to convince him of the importance of learning Torah, and his parents' efforts eventually paid off. Today that boy is studying in one of the best yeshivot in the world, and his teachers admire his diligence in learning and his pious outlook. The education of children requires a great deal of effort on our part. Yet when someone focuses his energies in this area, Hashem will certainly make him succeed in the end. We must never forget, however, that the good of the child is our main goal. Hence we must always act calmly and gently with our children, ensuring that learning is enjoyable for them.

A Pearl From the Rav

It is written, “The children struggled together within her” (Genesis 25:22).

Rashi states, “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.” Hence it is written that Rebecca went to inquire of Hashem, meaning that she went to the Beit Midrash of Shem so he could explain what was happening to her. She was told, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated from your innards” (v.23). In his book Pahad David, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks, “Since Rebecca

felt that passing next to places of idolatry made Esau try to emerge, why didn't she avoid such places?”

The Rav explains that Rebecca was a great tzaddeket, a woman who possessed Ruach HaKodesh. Therefore she certainly knew that she was carrying two completely different kinds of children, one being a tzaddik and the other a rasha. Because of that realization, she suspected that the wicked child she was carrying had already chosen the path of idolatry, a path dedicated solely to useless material pursuits. This meant that he could have a disastrous influence on the other child she was carrying, the tzaddik. In fact she reasoned that if such was the case when they were together in the womb, it would be far worse after they were born, for who knew what the rasha was liable to do? All she wanted was to prevent him from disturbing his righteous brother, as well as to separate the two as much as possible.

This is why Rebecca constantly passed next to places of idolatry, for when the wicked Esau tried to emerge, he would stop bothering his righteous brother for a few moments. Similarly, she passed the Beit Midrash so that Jacob could renew his spiritual strength. In this way he could push his wicked brother away and prevent him from bothering him. She also did this to see if Jacob was still a tzaddik, meaning if he still wanted to study Torah. Thus Rebecca loved Jacob, for just as he was a tzaddik within the womb, he was an even greater tzaddik once he emerged from it.

The Secret of the Blessing

It is written, “The man became great and kept becoming greater, until he was very great” (Genesis 26:13).

Rashi states: “They would say, ‘Better the manure of Isaac's mules than Abimelech's silver and gold.’”

Some believe that this statement is connected to the previous verse, where it is written: “Isaac sowed in that land, and in that year he reaped a hundredfold, and the L-RD blessed him” (v.12). The Philistines were idol worshippers, and when they saw this “agricultural miracle” – a harvest that produced a hundredfold increase – they were certain that Isaac possessed a special kind of manure that contained some secret ingredient. They were sure that this manure was responsible for the phenomenal growth they witnessed, which is why they said, “Better the manure of Isaac's mules than Abimelech's silver and gold.” This of course was laughable, for there was no secret ingredient in his mules' manure. Yet those Gentiles were not far from the truth, for there was something special, something very special, in that manure. If we examine what Isaac's mules were doing, we would see that they dug wells and cisterns, and it was in this way that the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, was sanctified, as our Sages have said.

These mules served as a vessel that contained blessings, and therefore their manure was also, so to speak, blessed. This was not on account of some secret agricultural ingredient or special genetic makeup. Instead, it was due to the power of Hashem's blessings.

The Boy's Reply

It is written, “The children struggled together within her” (Genesis 25:22).

Here Rashi comments: “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.” When the gaon Rabbi Aryeh Leibush Zatzal was six years old, people were already seeing signs of his perceptiveness. One day a Torah scholar asked him why, when Rebecca passed near places of Idolatry, Esau did not emerge. There was nothing to prevent him from leaving, since he was placed in front.

The boy replied that Esau was actually doing all he could to escape. He was afraid, however, that if he emerged near a place of idolatry, it would give Jacob the freedom to then emerge near a place of Torah, for nothing would prevent him in that case. Therefore to prevent Jacob from emerging and going to the Beit Midrash, Esau decided to stay in his mother's womb.

– Torat HaParasha

Two Peoples

It is written, “The children struggled together within her, and she said: ‘If so, why am I thus?’ And she went to inquire of the L-RD. The L-RD said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb’ ” (Genesis 25:22-23).

Rashi states, “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.” It seems reasonable to ask what possibly could have calmed Rebecca and eased the pain of her pregnancy in the reply that she received. The answer is that at first, Rebecca believed that she was carrying only one child, an impulsive individual who would swing from one opinion to the other, doing whatever it wanted. His “yes” would not mean yes, and his “no” would not mean no. Rebecca therefore asked, “If so, why am I thus?” In other words: What am I, an innocent and upright woman, to do with someone who is impulsive? Therefore when she was told, “Two nations are in your womb,” her mind was put at ease. She said, “Better two nations than one impulsive person.”

I Will Bless You Before Hashem

It is written, “I heard your father speaking to Esau your brother saying, ‘...I will bless you before the L-RD’ ” (Genesis 27:6-7).

The Sages express surprise at Rebecca, who when speaking to Jacob seemed to modify what Isaac said to Esau. After all, Isaac never told Esau, “I will bless you before the L-RD.”

The Maggid of Kozhnitz explains:

In the Torah we read that Isaac told Esau *vetzudah li tzeidah* (“and hunt for me venison” [v.3]). In this expression the letter *hei* appears twice more than necessary: Once in the word *tzeidah* (in the *keri*, the vocalized text, the word is *tza'id*, without a redundant *hei* at the end), and again at the end of the word *vetzudah*. Therefore in the expression *vetzudah li tzeidah*, Rebecca “heard” the Tetragrammaton, which is why she told Jacob that his father had said, “before the L-RD.”

It is the habit of *tzaddikim* to allude to the names of the Holy One, blessed be He, in their remarks.

One of the disciples of Rav Chaim of Volozhin said that he was once speaking of mundane matters with his teacher, only to realize afterwards that he had, in his remarks, alluded to principles of Kabbalah.

Rebecca's Allusion

It is written, “But his mother said to him, ‘Alay [Upon me] be your curse, my son’ ” (Genesis 27:13).

By way of allusion, Rebecca revealed to her son the three misfortunes that would come upon him. These are contained in the word *alay*, formed by the initials of Esau, Laban, Joseph. Thus when Jacob's sons wanted to bring Benjamin with them when they returned to Egypt, Jacob said *alay hayu chulana* (“all these things are against me” [Genesis 42:36]). By this he meant that all the misfortunes that his mother had warned him of had already occurred. Therefore why should he look for more?

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 to Gerar during a famine, where he dug wells and entered into a pact with Abimelech. At the age of 40, Esau married women who were displeasing to Isaac and Rebecca. We are also told that in his old age, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, and afterwards Jacob was ordered by his parents to go and find a wife from Laban's family. Through the blessing that he received, Jacob inherited the land that had been given to Abraham.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

One Who Prays For Others

It is written, “Isaac prayed to the L-RD before his wife...and the L-RD accepted his prayer” (Genesis 25:21).

Although Isaac was standing before the Creator, he did not pray for himself or even for the anguish he felt on account of being childless. He did not mention himself at all in his prayer, for the anguish he experienced came primarily from his wife's pain. This is the meaning of, “Isaac prayed to the L-RD before his wife.” When the Holy One, blessed be He, saw his intentions and how he shared in the pain of another – neglecting himself and praying solely for his wife – He fulfilled in Isaac the teaching, “Whoever prays for another, yet needs the very same thing himself, is answered first.” Hence “the L-RD answered his prayer.”

An *avrech* from the Israeli town of Migdal HaEmek knocked at the door of a great Rav who lived in town. The *avrech* had come to weep over the stern decree that Heaven had pronounced against him, for many years had passed since his marriage, and he was still childless.

The *avrech* wept in abundance, describing the pain of his wife as well. He begged the Rav to tell him what to do, when suddenly the Rav got up from his seat, took hold of the *avrech*'s hands, and told him with deep emotion: “Don't you realize that there's another Jew in town who is childless? I have an idea that, G-d willing, can help both of you. Here's what I suggest you do: Go to this Jew and tell him what the Sages have taught: ‘Whoever prays for another, yet needs the very same thing himself, is answered first.’ Then tell him that both of you should enter into a written agreement stipulating that each of you will pray exclusively for the other.” The *avrech* didn't hesitate for a moment to carry out this plan. Despite the late hour, he went to see this Jew and came away with a written agreement. Within a year, a son was born to each family. Rav Zilberstein explained that the mechanism behind this process is quite simple. To what can it be compared? It is like a vegetable garden that needs to be watered. How do we get water to the garden? With a hose. And when water passes through a hose, it automatically gets wet inside, even before the water it carries makes it to the garden.

This is what happens when a person prays for another, thereby serving as a “hose” to transmit blessings to him. Whether he wants it or not, these blessings cleave to him and he benefits from them first. This applies even if his reasons in praying for another person aren't completely selfless. Actually, there's no way for a hose not to get wet when carrying water.

EISHET CHAYIL

The Reward For a Single Gesture

The wife of the Vilna Gaon and another woman from Vilna used to collect money for *tzeddakah*. The two women agreed that whoever left this world first would come to the other in a dream and describe what happens in the judgment.

The friend of the Vilna Gaon's wife died first, and she came to her in a dream and said, “I am not allowed to tell you what happens in Heaven, but since I made a promise to you, I have been allowed to reveal one thing.

“Do you remember when we were once collecting money for *tzeddakah*, and we were looking for a donation from a certain woman, but she was walking on the other side of the street? Do you remember what you did? You raised your finger and said, ‘There she is, walking on the other side of the street.’

“Understand that collecting money for *tzeddakah* and everyone else associated with the *mitzvah* is recorded in Heaven to the merit of us both. Yet in addition to this – and to your merit, and your merit alone – is the fact that you raised your hand and pointed to that woman, which drew my attention to her, for no deed is ever forgotten.”

– Shimusha Shel Torah

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap of Jerusalem

The gaon Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap Zatzal was among the leading figures of Jerusalem on high. He was born in 5642 to Rabbi Zevulun, a Dayan in the Beit Din of the gaon Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin Zatzal. Rabbi Yaakov Moshe emulated his father, being known for his sharp mind and impressive scholarship. He prayed with fervent emotion as he poured out his soul, and he was constantly filled with a longing for Hashem and His Torah.

In 5667 he was named as a teacher in the famous Etz Chaim yeshiva. Many students came to his lectures, and his reputation began to spread far and wide. He was then named as a Rav and Dayan in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood, and people from around the world addressed Halachic questions to him. He was not only occupied in preparing responsa, for the doors of his home were open to everyone. On Shabbat and holidays, many would gather around him to hear his words of Torah. The high point occurred on the seventh day of Passover, when thousands of people would gather around him to recite Shirat Hayam together, for then his face would shine like a diamond.

Although people knew that he was ill for many years, his illness did not prevent him from teaching scholars and non-scholars alike. He is particularly well-known for his dynamic activism in trying to exempt yeshiva students from army duty because they wanted to study Torah. He is also known for his book Beit Zevul.

Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap left this world on Kislev 7, 5712 in his 70th year. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.

A TRUE STORY

A Malfunction that Brought About a Blessing

It is written, "The man became great and kept becoming greater, until he was very great" (Genesis 26:13).

Following a near-bankruptcy, the directors of the Niyar Yerushalayim 2000 paper factory decided to name Reb Eli Shimon as their new president. His first decision was to close the factory on Shabbat, and from then on the company began to turn a profit. In fact it is a thriving business today. What follows is a story relating to the factory's success:

A key resource used in the production of paper is water, which also plays a large part in the operating costs of the factory. Reb Eli Shimon managed to find a way to considerably reduce the factory's use of water, which translated into enormous cost savings for the company. How did he come up with this idea? As it turned out, a malfunction in the water delivery system forced the factory to shut down. The workers became frantic when this happened, for when a shutdown affects such a large factory, which normally operates 24 hours a day, it can turn into a real disaster. The workers complained that the president had recently closed the factory on Shabbat, and now this economic disaster was liable to force all of them out of work!

The only person who remained calm was the president, who eased everyone's nerves by saying: "It's impossible for us to incur losses because we observe Shabbat. You'll see, we'll all come out of this as winners."

At the same time, the president came up with an idea on how to reduce the amount of water that the factory used. Of course, he would never have had the idea if the water delivery system hadn't malfunctioned in the first place, causing the factory to shut down.

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

The Teachers of Children

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: The name of that man, Yehoshua ben Gamala, should indeed be blessed, for otherwise the Torah would have been forgotten from Israel. Up to that time, if a child had a father, his father taught him. And if he had no father, he did not learn at all. By what did they guide themselves? By the verse, "And you shall teach them to your children," laying the emphasis upon the word "you." Then they made an ordinance that teachers of children should be appointed in Jerusalem. By what verse did they guide themselves? By the verse, "For from Zion shall the Torah go forth" [Isaiah 2:3]. Even so, if a child had a father, the father would take him up to Jerusalem and have him taught there. If not, he did not go up to learn there. Hence they ordained that teachers should be appointed in each district, and that boys should enter school at the age of 16 or 17. If a teacher punished them, they would rebel and leave school. Finally Yehoshua ben Gamala came and ordained that teachers of young children should be appointed in each district and town, and that children enter school at the age of six or seven.

– Bava Batra 21a

In a Beraita it was taught: "They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament" [Daniel 12:3]. This applies to a judge who gives a true verdict on true evidence, and to collectors of charity. "They that turn many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever" [ibid.]. This applies to the teachers of young children. Such as who, for instance? Said Rav: "To such as Rabbi Shemuel bar Shilat." Rav once found Rabbi Shemuel bar Shilat in a garden, whereupon he said to him, "Have you deserted your post?" He replied, "I have not seen this garden for 13 years, and even now my thoughts are with the children."

– Bava Batra 8b

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Why Does He Hate Us?

It is written, "I hated Esau" (Malachi 1:3).

The Midrash recounts that Turnus Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva, "Why does G-d hate us, such that He said: 'I hated Esau'?" Rabbi Akiva replied, "I will answer you tomorrow." On the next day Turnus Rufus asked him, "What did you dream of last night and what did you see?" [He said this because Rabbi Akiva waited a day before replying.] Rabbi Akiva said, "I dreamed of two dogs: One named Rufus and the other Rufina."

Turnus Rufus became incensed and said, "You call your dogs by my name and the name of my wife! You certainly deserve to die for such insolence!"

Rabbi Akiva replied, "What difference is there between you and them? You eat and drink, and they eat and drink. You produce offspring, and they produce offspring. You die, and they die. Because I gave them your names, you get angry? Just imagine G-d's anger with you. G-d created the heavens and the earth, and yet you take a stick or a stone and call it G-d? Isn't that a valid reason for Him to hate you? This is why the passage states, 'I hated Esau.'"

– Midrash Tanhuma, Terumah