



---

Parashat Toldot 5771

Ask Rav Aviner: [mororly@bezeqint.net](mailto:mororly@bezeqint.net)

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

Visit our blog: [www.ravaviner.com](http://www.ravaviner.com)

---

## On the Parashah... Wearing Two Hats

[Tal Chermon]

### **Esav the Wicked**

Yitzchak believed in Esav's ability to manage the material world morally and thus wanted to give him his blessing. Rivkah, however, knew the stark truth. Esav in his present state was not capable of advancing the world, since he himself for the moment was incorrigibly depraved. Hopefully after several thousand years of improvement when the End of Days arrives, he would eventually be fit for the task. He possessed strength but it was the strength of wickedness which would be used for the destruction of the world. Yitzchak saw the overall picture of the ideal and absolute truth in which Esav's strength must and will be employed at the End of Days for the world's benefit. Rivkah, however, saw the world in its realistic, present state where Esav was a source of evil. At present he is a murderer as he said, "May the days of the mourning of my father come soon so that then I will be able to kill my brother" (Bereshit 27:41). It is true that he was upset because his blessing was taken from him, but there are limits even to an angry response. He even wanted to hasten the death of his father. It was a bit too much for him to do that personally, so he requested it of his dear uncle Yishmael, who certainly would willingly comply (Midrash Ha-Gadol, Bereshit 28:9). These murderous inclinations were not created overnight because of a one-time event but are indications of his deep-rooted corrupt nature (Rav Charlop in Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'a). Rivkah knew Esav's present state better and thus decided that in the meantime Yaakov would have to fulfill both his and Esav's tasks.

[Sarah had acted similarly a generation earlier when she decided to banish Yishmael from the home because of the negative influence of his corrupt behavior. Avraham was shocked. This went against the grain, which was the ideal of absolute kindness. It is true but it was essential for practical considerations. Hashem confirmed Sarah's approach: "Do everything that Sarah tells you" (Bereshit 21:12). They should ideally live together, but it was not possible at the present time. "The events that occurred to our forefathers are indications of what will befall their descendants!" (This concept first appears in the Midrash Tanchuma, Parashat Lech Lecha, section 9. This exact expression of the idea first appears in the Shela Ha-Kadosh in Torah She-Bichtav, end of Parashat Vayishlach).]

### **The Transfer of Esav's Blessing to Yaakov**

Rivkah instructed Yaakov, "Now, my son, listen to me and do what I command you. Go...take...and bring it to your father so that he will bless you before he dies" (Bereshit 27:8)." Yaakov tried to get out of it by saying: "Maybe my father will feel me...and I will bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing" (ibid. 27:12). Rivkah responded: "Let any curse be upon me, my son. But listen to me and go and bring what I asked" (ibid. 27:13). In other words, "Do what you're told! I know better than you and that's an order!" Yitzchak sensed that something was wrong when Yaakov came: "The voice is the voice of Yaakov but the hands are the hands of Esav" (ibid. 27:22). The voice expresses thought and the spiritual world, while the hands represent the realm of action" (ibid. 27:27)."

Question: Since Yaakov was disguised as Esav, doesn't this show that this task was not compatible with his character.

Answer: When there is no choice, we even have to do things that do not suit us. If Esav cannot fulfill his task then Yaakov is forced to take over, despite the fact that Yaakov's natural expertise is not for worldly matters but for spiritual ones. There are nations who in their own fields are more adept than Israel. It is true that Israel contains all human talents in the same way that human beings possess all talents that animals have, but individual nations may surpass us in a particular characteristic that is its specialty. We share the materialistic aspects of life with the non-Jews, but that is their area of specialization, not ours. Attempts to take over other people's tasks lead to disaster. The non-Jew's meddling in spirituality led to the birth of Christianity and Islam, while our degeneration into pre-occupation with material matters led to the neglect of the spirit. At this juncture, Israel also had to perform Esav's worldly mission. Yaakov was therefore given a blessing for material success using honest and upright tactics. "May Hashem give you of the dew of the heaven and the fatness of the earth...Nations will serve you...be a lord to your kinsmen...may they that bless you be blessed" (ibid. 27:28). The physical world was now in the righteous hands of Yaakov Avinu who would manage it in holiness, according to Hashem's will.

### **Yaakov's Spiritual Blessing**

At the end of this Torah portion, Yaakov was given his original blessing as the firstborn who was to manage the world's spirituality. He received this blessing comfortably since this was originally designed for him. "May Hashem make you an assembly of peoples. May He give you and your descendants the blessing of Avraham so that you take possession of the Land that G-d gave to Avraham, where you lived previously only as a foreigner" (Bereshit 28:3). Yaakov was the spiritual successor of Avraham and was thus in charge of building up the inner essence of the world. After the original change of tasks, there was a further modification when Yaakov adopted both functions. Yaakov now wore two hats simultaneously: the supervision of the world's material advancement and the guide for the world's spiritual improvement.

## **Rav Aviner on... Playing with Matches**

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Chayei Sarah 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: When a boy and girl go out many times, sometimes they are interested in going out with another couple to see how the prospective spouse interacts in company. Obviously, the

aim is not to create a social gathering in which they “have a ball”, but to allow their relationship to develop and flow from a different direction. Is this permissible?

Answer: Absolutely not, for three reasons, any one of which would provide enough reason to reject it.

1. It’s going too far. 2. It won’t help. 3. It’s forbidden.

1. It’s going too far. What do you care how the girl functions in company? The main thing is how she functions with you. Is she in line to be a public relations man?! And if we say that she doesn’t behave properly to others, then that means she has a fault, but you’re not looking for an angel without shortcomings. And even if you look for that, you won’t find it. And even if you find it, she won’t marry you, because you, yourself, are no angel. After all, you’ve got a shortcoming that you’re examining her too closely.

This brings to mind Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein’s response regarding a boy who wanted his prospective match to cook for him to make sure that she didn’t burn her food. Rav Feinstein rejected this (Shut Igrot Moshe). One has to hope that with G-d’s help the couple will come to an equitable agreement in the kitchen.

Likewise, even if it becomes clear that she does not behave properly towards others, one must hope that with the help of your blessed influence she will improve. After all, couples continue to advance ethically through mutual assistance and mutual love.

2. It won’t help. You can’t put someone under a microscope using a chance, fleeting test. One has to keep an ongoing watch, and especially to check on his or her behavior in situations of tension and crisis. After all, in most situations we are all sweetness and light. The test comes in crisis. Will you initiate a crisis?!

Yet there’s a much better, alternate solution. That is to ask others who know the candidate inside-out, like teachers or dormitory friends.

That constitutes an immeasurably more objective gauge than what you will see in some joint activity. And anyway, one shouldn’t go out with a girl before first finding out all one can from those who know her. Will you go out with a girl, and after you start to like her, suddenly remember to check out several points and then decide that it’s out of the question? Why cause senseless pain? Why do something wicked?

3. It’s forbidden. True, the intent is not to have fun, but going out with a girl for fun is forbidden, even if that is not the intent. True, Rambam wrote that one should not marry a woman until he sees her, to ensure that he likes her. Yet one cannot go beyond that for the purpose of having pleasure. And even Rambam’s permitting one to see her did not make Ra’avad particularly happy. True, the couple have to talk together to get to know one another and to resolve disagreements, and sometimes long talks are necessary.

But there’s a limit! Dating is not a halachic excuse for having fun.

Moreover, we’re talking here about one unmarried couple going out with another. What license is there to having fun with your friend’s wife or date? That’s already too much!

As far as wanting things to “flow freely”, that’s part of a plague that began recently, i.e., 250-300 years ago, that people became slaves of “flowing freely”.

One is reminded of the story of the philosopher Schopenhauer about the man who went to a masked ball and met a very interesting woman with whom he talked until the middle of the night. Afterwards he said to himself, “Finally I’ve met a woman with whom I can flow freely, a woman with whom I can have deep, personal conversations – not like the morose sourpuss I’m married to.” Yet at midnight, when everyone took their masks off, he saw that it was his wife...

In other words, it’s easy to flow freely. Marriage is about something else.

Responsibility, seriousness, morality, self-sacrifice.

### *Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #16*

[adapted for middle-schoolers by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner's three-volume commentary on the siddur "Tefilat Amecha"]

As part of our morning davening, we learn about the Korbanot (sacrifices) in the Beit Ha-Mikdash. The Korbanot have many details as to how they are to be offered and even what we must be thinking when we offer them. These are not just technical details. Everything has great meaning, even though it is hard to understand the meaning behind every detail. Yet, we try to do the best that we can. The Korbanot are considered The Avodah - the primary service of Hashem. Therefore, everything we do today in order to serve Hashem parallels an aspect of what was done in the Beit Ha-Mikdash.

The Korban Tamid was offered in the Beit Ha-Mikdash twice daily - in the morning and at Minchah time. When Hashem gives this mitzvah to Moshe Rabbenu, he says "Tzav et Bnei Yisrael"- Command the Children of Israel. When Torah uses the command form Tzav it is emphasizing ziruz - being particularly dedicated to the mitzvah and doing it properly. This is particularly important here as there could have been a temptation not to be careful about a Korban that is offered daily. After all, we did it yesterday and will do it tomorrow. Yet the Torah is teaching us that even with things done constantly we have to be careful. These things that are constant have a great impact on our daily lives. Therefore, even though they may not seem as "exciting" as a mitzvah we do rarely, we need to be careful with them as they set our pattern for how we serve Hashem.

The word Korban comes from the word to come close. The whole idea was to come closer to Hashem. This is what we have to do in all aspect of our lives - come closer to Hashem. Today, our Tefilot substitute for the Korbanot. And sometimes we get so used to davening that we forget how special and important it is. We have the opportunity to come closer to Hashem. The Korban Tamid is a reminder to us that we cannot let that happen.

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### "Price Tag"

Question: Should we punish Arabs for the trouble the Army does to the Settlers?

Answer: It is forbidden to punish an Arab for a transgression he did not commit. Furthermore, punishment must be meted out by the Nation and not an individual. It is therefore forbidden, and also causes damage.

## Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample:

Rabbi who Foretells the Future

Q: People say that a certain Rabbi knows everything about you. Is it permissible to visit him to learn what will happen in the future?

A: Certainly not. "You shall be wholesome with Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 18:13).

Mock Wedding

Q: A boy said to a girl: "You are betrothed to me..." (Harei At Mekudeshet Li...) and gave her an object. What is the law?

A: It is possible that she is betrothed. Turn to a Beit Din.

Music for a Mourner

Q: When a family is traveling in a car, and one of them is a mourner, is it permissible to listen to music?

A: Yes, the other members of the family are not mourners. Even if the mourner hears the music, he should not actively listen to it (Pesachim 25).

#### Tevilat Kelim

Q: Do we immerse a glass platter if we do not whether it was produce by Jews or non-Jews?

A: It should be immersed without a blessing.

#### Havdalah Candle

Q: Is it true that a Havdalah candle is Treif and it is forbidden to extinguish it in the wine?

A: Today, the candles are made of synthetic, non-Treif material.

#### Happy with One's Lot

Q: How is it possible to be happy with one's lot when it is relatively small to what other's have?

A: If this is what Hashem gave, it is a sign that it is exactly what one needs.

#### Shaking Hands with a Man

Q: If a man puts out his hand to shake mine in public, can I shake his hand so he is not embarrassed?

A: No, just as if a man asks you to eat treif which he cooked, or to help him violate Shabbat. or even publicly proposes marriage and if you refuse, he will be embarrassed.

#### Picture of Rabbis

Q: Do pictures of Rabbis require being placed in a Geniza?

A: No, but it is a good thing to do.

#### Modesty

Q: My wife is very modest, too much so in my opinion. I want her to fancy herself up and to wear a tight skirt, which is the shortest allowed, like other religious women I see. Am I normal?

A: You are certainly normal. Every person has an evil inclination. But you need to overcome it and add purity. Read a lot of Mesilat Yesharim.

Special thank you to Fred Casden for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parshah Sheet



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim P.O.B. 1076 Jerusalem 91009 Tel.02-6284101 Fax.02-6261528

[www.ateret.org.il](http://www.ateret.org.il) To subscribe, send e-mail to: [mororly@bezeqint.net](mailto:mororly@bezeqint.net)

