



Parashat Toldot 5772 - #211

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On the Parashah... Esav the Wicked

[Tal Chermon]

Yitzchak believed in Esav and his ability to manage the material world morally and therefore 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 was incorrigibly depraved. Hopefully - after several thousand years of improvement - when the End of Days arrives, he will 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 himself 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 help from his dear uncle Yishmael, who would certainly comply (Midrash Ha-Gadol, Bereshit 28:9). These murderous inclinations were not created overnight because of a one-time event but were indications of his deep-rooted corrupt nature (Ha-Rav Charlop in Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'a). Rivkah knew Esav's present state better than Yitzchak 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 his grain, which was the ideal of absolute kindness. But it was essential for practical considerations. Ideally they should have been able to live together, but it was not possible at that 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. It is explicitly stated in the Shela Ha-Kadosh, Torah She-Biichtav, end of Parashat Vayishlach).

Rav Aviner on... The Great Sigd Holiday

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Chayei Sarah 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Sigd, a holiday of Jewish immigrants from the Ethiopian Diaspora, falls out each year on the 29th of Cheshvan. This year, since it falls on Shabbat, it is pushed forward to Thursday. True, this is a holiday of Ethiopian Jewry, but its content applies to the entire Jewish people. Sigd includes the seven foundations of faith to which every Jew must cling.

1. **Torah.** The Torah is our life. We love it. It is the most pure thing in our life, and the most lofty. Therefore, for the Sigd holiday, Jews ascend a pure, lofty mountain, a sort of Mount Sinai. They climb the mountain together with the "Orit", i.e., the Oraita, the Torah, in song and praise, as a sign of the yearly renewal of the giving of the Torah. Let us derive strength from the Torah.

2. **Repentance.** Ideally one must keep the Torah, but there is no man on earth who only does good and never sins. Therefore, after the Torah comes repentance. Fifty days after Yom Kippur comes Sigd. It is a day of fasting and repentance, because it is not enough to only repent on Yom Kippur. We have to repent all the time, every day and every moment. And just as we count fifty days from Pesach to Shavuot, so do we count fifty days from Yom Kippur to Sigd, which is a sort of "Mini Shavuot". Let us derive strength from the Mitzvot.

3. **Covenant.** God forged an everlasting covenant with His people. Even when we sin and fall, we are still God's people. Every year we must renew the covenant. As the book of Nechemiah teaches:

"On the 24th day of this month, the Israelites assembled, fasting, in sackcloth, and with earth upon them. Those of the stock of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the inequities of their fathers. Standing in their places, they read from the scroll of the teaching of Hashem their G-d for one quarter of the day, and for another quarter they confessed and prostrated themselves before Hashem their G-d" (Nechemiah 9:1-3).

With the return to the Land of Israel, the covenant was renewed between God and His Nation. Likewise, down through the generations, every year there is the Sigd holiday which represents the renewal of the covenant between the Jewish People and G-d, the "Amana" ceremony, a day of prayer for the sake of Israel's redemption. In our own day, we see that all the prayers recited about redemption and about Jerusalem spoke the truth, and now the vision is being fulfilled before our eyes.

4. **Unity.** All of us, all of the Ethiopians, climb the mountain together. We are united. And now, not just Ethiopians, but the entire Jewish People. Once more we are seeing the fulfillment of "who is like your nation Israel, a united nation in the Land" (Shmuel 2 7:23).

The process of reunification is no simple task. It contains many difficulties, but we are moving forward.

5. **Rejection of Christianity.** In the year 4085, about 1700 years ago, the Habashite Empire was proclaimed by the king as a Christian country. Then began a civil war between Habashite Christians and Jews, whom the regime called "Beta Yisrael". The Ethiopian Jews, headed by Phineas, established a Jewish state, the kingdom of Beta Yisrael. The wars came to an end in about 4400, and King Gideon established the Sigd holiday as a means of saying thank you to G-d for His miracles. This Jewish kingdom existed for about 1300 years, until it was

conquered by the Ethiopian empire. Certainly, that whole magnificent country and all of those wars so full of bravery, were born on the foundation of opposition to Christianity.

6. **Valor.** As noted, a Jewish kingdom existed in strength and valor for 1300 years, and now, such valor is returning to the Jewish people. We have excellent soldiers and officers – including many Ethiopians.

7. **The Service of God.** The purpose of all life is to serve God. Such is the meaning of the word “Sigd”, like Hebrew “*lisgod*”, to worship G-d, to bow down to G-d. That is the most important thing in life.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Conversion Performed by Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren

Q: I heard that the conversion performed by Ha-Rav Goren (called the "Brother and Sister") was not according to Halachah.

A: Lies and deceit. His responsum was published and you can learn it (After Ha-Rav Goren's ruling in this matter, a broadside containing terrible vilifications was written against him. Our Rabbi Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah asked that the responsum be brought to him. He looked at it and sent it to Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira. He did not ask whether he agreed with it or not, but whether it was well-built, like a serious halachic responsum. When Ha-Rav Shapira responded in the affirmative, our Rabbi proclaimed: "May the hands of those who perform evil be cut off." When he was asked: But aren't there great Rabbis among those who signed the broadside? He responded: "There are differences," i.e. not everyone criticized in an evil way. Iturei Yerushalayim #20.

And Ha-Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, leading Posek in America before Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein, never supported the ruling itself since he was blind at the time and was unable to learn it. He was adamant, however, that it was forbidden to argue with Ha-Rav Goren since he was a "Gadol Ha-Dor" (one of the great Rabbis of the generation). And he brushed off all claims against him. When Ha-Rav Henkin was told that some claimed that Ha-Rav Goren was in the category of one who takes a bride, he answered forcibly: "This is politics, not Halachah." And although he received much pressure from other Rabbis, he did not change his mind. Shut Bnei Banim vol. 2, p. 210).

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet



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