

ONEG!

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS TOLDOS

Avraham begat Yitzchak (Gen. 25:19). The Or Hachaim and R. Shlomo Kluger (Chochmas Hatorah, Toldos p. 3) explain that it was in Avraham's merit that G-d accepted Yitzchak's prayers and granted him offspring. Rashi (to Gen. 15:15, 25:30) explains that G-d had Avraham die five years earlier than he otherwise should have in order that Avraham would not see Yitzchak's son Esau stray from the proper path. I saw in the name of R. Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (Chochmas Chaim to Toldos) that if Yitzchak had not campaigned vigorously in prayer to father a child, G-d would have granted him children anyways after five years. So in which merit did Yitzchak father his children, in Avraham's merit or in the merit of his own prayers? Both are true: It was only in Avraham's merit that Yitzchak deserved to father Yaakov and Esau, but the fact that the twins were born earlier rather than later came in merit of Yitzchak's prayers. R. Sonnenfeld adds that the Torah's expression that denotes G-d heeding Yitzchak's prayers (ויעתר לו י-ה-ו-ה = 748) equals in *Gematria* the phrase five years (חמש שנים = 748). The above sefer records that when a grandson of R. Sonnenfeld shared this *Gematria* with R. Aharon Kotler, he was so taken aback that he exclaimed, "I am certain that this *Gematria* was revealed through *Ruach HaKodesh!*"

Yitzchak was forty years old when he took Rivkah—the daughter of Besuel the Aramite from Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Aramite—as a wife (Gen. 25:20).

R. Nosson Nota Shapiro in his work *Megaleh Amukos* explains that Yitzchak alludes to the Written Torah and Rivkah alludes to the Oral Torah. The first letters of Yitzchak's name (יצחק) is *yod* (=10) which symbolizes the Ten Commandments, each of which includes ten aspects, totaling 100 (which accounts for the last letter of his name *kuf* = 100). The middle two letters of Yitzchak's name *tzadi* and *ches* (=98) alludes to the intricacy of the Torah in that every case has 48 ways to purify the situation and 48 ways to pollute the situation (=98). When Yitzchak married Rivkah, he was forty years old, which corresponds to the forty years between when the Jews received the Written Torah (at Mount Sinai) and when they received the Oral Torah (in the form of Deuteronomy, which is called *Mishnah Torah* because it resembles the Mishnah in that it is somewhat considered like Oral Torah). This also accounts for the forty generations between Moses and R. Yehuda HaNasi (the final redactor of the Mishnah). This is also why the Mishnah/Oral Torah begins and ends with the letter *mem* (=40), as Brachos 1:1 begins מאימתי and Uktzin ends with the word בשלום.

... the daughter of Besuel the Aramite from Padan Aram... (Gen. 25:20). Rashi explains that the Torah mentions the name of Rivkah's father and his place of origin in order to stress the fact that Rivkah was raised by wicked people in a place of wicked people, yet she did not copy their deeds. *Likkutei Chaver ben Chaim* cites the *Toldos Yitzchak* that for this reason, the Torah says that "And Yitzchak pleaded to Hashem opposite his wife..." (Gen.

25:21), because if Yitzchak did not pray in front of his wife, then he would have had to say her father's name, because the Talmud (*Brachos* 34a) says that one need not say the name of a sick person that one is praying for. However, the *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 119:1) rules according to the Maharil that this is only if one prays for an ill person in front of that person, that one need not say their name, but if one prays for them outside of their presence, one must say their name in the prayers. For this reason, had Yitzchak not prayed opposite his wife, he would have had to mention in his prayers his wicked father-in-law. In order to avoid doing so, Yitzchak made sure to pray in his wife's presence. The *Chasam Sofer* (in *Toras Moshe Hashalem s.v. vayeetar*) explains that Yitzchak did not want to say Besuel's name because doing so in the context of prayer might arouse Divine judgement against himself (as opposed to mentioning his name in other contexts which is not as dangerous). See also the comments of *Chasam Sofer* to *Nedarim* 40 *s.v. viobavto*.

And G-d heeded him (Gen. 25:21). Rashi infers that G-d heeded "him" meaning Yitzchak, but did not heed Rivkah's prayers because the prayers of the righteous, son of the righteous (Yitzchak, son of Avraham) are not comparable to the prayers of the righteous, son of the wicked (Rivkah, daughter of Besuel). Rashi's wording requires some further analysis, because if his intent is to laud the prayers of the righteous, son of the righteous, then he should have said that the prayers of the righteous, son of the wicked do not compare to the prayers of the righteous, son of the righteous. Yet, almost counter-intuitively, Rashi mentions the righteous, son of the righteous first as if to say that his prayers do not compare to those of the righteous, son of the wicked. What does Rashi actually mean? Perhaps what Rashi wants to show is that actually, the prayers of a righteous person whose parents were wicked is actually superior. Why? Because the righteous person with righteous ancestors is answered by Hashem more quickly, as we see happened for Yitzchak. And yet, despite that, the righteous one with wicked parents prays still, even though he or she knows that their prayers are less likely to be answered. The value of prayer uttered sincerely, despite it being less likely to be answered makes it much more impressive! Thus Rashi says, Hashem answered Yitzchak. This shows us how remarkably special the prayer of Rivkah was! R. Chaim Weinfeld of Brooklyn (cited in his brother, Rabbi Yechezkel Weinfeld's *Chachmei Lev* vol. 6 p. 925), explains something similar to this. He explains that our sages tell us that the Avos and Imahos were barren and couldn't have children because Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous. He wanted them to pray to him. This means that if Hashem answered Yitzchak, but not Rivkah, he had had enough of Yitzchak's prayers, but not of Rivkah's prayer. Meaning – Hashem values the prayers of a righteous person whose parents were

ONEG!

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PARSHAS TOLDOS

wicked, like Rivkah even more than the righteous one whose parents were righteous, like Yitzchak!¹

And the children were running inside her... (Gen. 25:22). Rashi (to Ps. 18:4) writes that the wicked become “strangers” to Hashem when they are still in their mother’s womb, just as Esav was already inclined towards evil when still inside his mother. However, this is difficult to accept, because the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 91b) famously relates: Antonius asked Rebbi, “from when does the Evil Inclination rule over a person, from conception or from birth?” Rebbi answered, “from the time of conception”. Antonius then asked, “if so [that evil people are already evil before birth], then [we should expect that evil people would kick the insides of their mother and exit]”. Rather, argued Antonius, evil people get their Evil Inclination at the time of birth, not conception. Afterwards, Rebbi said that this is one thing that Antonius taught him, but in truth there is Scriptural support for this idea, when Hashem told Cain said “sin crouches at the entrance” (Gen. 4:7), which seems to recall the entrance of the womb. According to this conclusion, how can we say that Esav was already a wicked person while still in his mother’s womb? The Maharsha (there) asks this question, but does not provide an answer. R. Chanoch Zundel of Bialystok (*Anaf Yosef* to *Ein Yaakov* there) answers that because after a gestation period of seven months, a fetus is technically able to exit the womb, and he suggests that it gets its Evil Inclination then. In other words, a person has his Evil Inclination before he is born, but he only gets that Evil Inclination once he is technically ready to be born, even if he has not yet been born. According to this, it would also seem that unborn children also stop learning Torah in utero after seven months, because otherwise it would be difficult to say that they can already get their Evil Inclination then. We can offer another answer based on Rav Chaim Vital (*Etz HaDaas Tov*, vol. 2, *os* 80). Antonius was a descendant of Esav, and even though Esav hated Yaakov and his descendants have generally hates Jewish people as well, this rule is not absolute. In other words, Esav might have a natural predisposition towards hating Yaakov, but this does not mean Esav *must* hate Yaakov, because Esav’s descendant Antonius became a very close confidant of Rebbi (a descendant of Yaakov).² Rather, the friendship³ between Antonius and

¹ See Ohev Yisrael to Toldos where he wonders why Rashi ended with the words “lifkach, lo vilo lah”. According to the approach presented here, this is no longer troubling.

² Rebbi is also called Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi (רבי יהודה הנשיא). The Arizal (cited by R. Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin in *Pri Tzadk, Seudas Pidyon HaBen §1, Balak §13* and *Sdei Chemed* vol. 4, Principle, *Maareches REISH* and *Megaleh Amukos* (§83–84), and *Seder Hadoros* vol. 2 s.v. רבי יהודה הנשיא) finds an allusion to a connection between Rebbi and Yaakov in the appellation applied to Rebbi: נשיא (literally, “prince”) is an acronym for ניצוץ

ONEG!

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PARSHAS TOLDOS

Rebbi teaches that Esav's natural predisposition towards hating Yaakov is something which can be overcome. By the same token, it was specifically Antonius who taught Rebbi that a child only receives his Evil Inclination at birth, but not beforehand. Some "evil" children might have a certain disposition towards evil even before their birth, but that is something which can be overcome. This is comparable to what the Talmud (*Shabbos* 156a) says about somebody born under the planetary influence of Mars, the Red Planet. Such a person, says the Talmud will be associated with blood—whether that means he will become a murderer or armed bandit, a *shochet* or a *mohel* depends on what choices one makes given his astrological predisposition towards blood. In fact, Esav himself was also of a red disposition, but then again so was King David (see *Baal haTurim* to Gen. 25:25, and *Dvash le-Fi, Maareches Dalet* 14). Esav actually had the potential to become like King David, but he gave up that opportunity in pursuit of other things. According to this, Esav was actually not destined from the womb to become the wicked person that he was—that was actually his own making.⁴

And the children were moving inside her... (Gen. 25:22). *Peirush HaTur HaAruch* explains that according to a plain meaning of the text, the reason why she felt movement

של יעקב אבינו (literally, "a spark of our father Yaakov"), as Rebbi's soul was a "spark" of Yaakov's. R. Shlomo Wolbe (*Shiurei Chumash* to *Vayechi*) writes that just as the Talmud (*Sotah* 14b) says that Yaakov never died, so was it said about Rebbi that after his "death", he would return on Friday nights to make *Kiddush* for his family.

³ The Talmud says that Rebbi and Antonius were connected from a very early age. Since circumcision was prohibited, when Rebbi's mother needed to show the inspectors that her son was not circumcised, she was in quite a predicament. So she and Antoninus's mother switched sons for the inspection. Baby Antoninus began to cry and Rebbi's mother nursed him. This had a great impact on him later (see *Tosafos* to *Avodah Zarah* 10b and *Seder HaDoros*). *Seder Hadoros* adds that Rebbi was actually nursed by Antonius's mother. *Shvilei Pinchas* (vol. 2) explains the significance of this. Taking the Oral Torah and committing it to writing is forbidden under normal circumstances and yet Rebbi who authored the Mishna decided that things had changed and it was time. This took a great deal of ability to go against the grain. In fact, the irreverence and lack of obedience needed to make such a revolutionary move was fundamentally against Rebbi's natural inclinations. However, since Rebbi nursed from the milk of Antonius's mother, he got a bit of the trait of brazenness and irreverence. Because of this "flaw" Rebbi was able to do something which is otherwise prohibited. For no character trait is a "flaw" at all, but rather something that can be used, in the right situation for holiness!

⁴ See also Maharal's *Gur Aryeh* (to Gen. 8:21) who writes something similar to this. See also *Beer Sheva* (to *Sanhedrin* there) by R. Yissachar Ber Eilenberg who differentiates between an Evil Inclination in the domain of thought and an Evil Inclination in the domain of action.

Much of the material presented in Oneg! has been translated from Rabbi Elchanan Shoff's weekly Aalefcha Chochma parsha sheet in Hebrew by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein. To sign up to the Oneg! weekly email list, or to sponsor a week of Oneg! send an email to BKLAshul@gmail.com

inside her was that because Esav was very hairy, his hair tickled Yaakov and caused him to fidget about inside his mother, which felt like he was “running”.

And the children were running inside her, and she said, ‘if so, why me’... (Gen. 25:22). According to many authorities (See Rema Orach Chaim 156) there is a difference between the Halachic definition of idolatry for a non-Jew and for a Jew. A Jew is enjoined against worshipping Hashem in a “partnership” with other gods, while a non-Jew is allowed to worship other gods, as long as they are somehow perceived to be in a “partnership” with Hashem. That a Jew may not do this is derived from the first of the Ten Commandments: “I (אֱנִי) am Hashem your God...” (Ex. 20:2). Based on this, the Malbim explains why Rivkah used the word אֱנִי when asking why she deserved the warring children inside her. Before she sought out Hashem and prophetically found out that she was to deliver twins, Rivkah thought that there was only one child inside her. This particularly disturbed her because she noticed that this one child would kick her as though attempting to exit the womb whenever she passed a Synagogue (to go pray to Hashem) and whenever she passed a place of idolatry (to worship other gods). She figured that her unborn child was going to be a person who worshipped Hashem in tandem with other gods. For this reason, she asked “if so, why me, as if to say: “if so, why [did Hashem begin the Ten Commandments with the word] Me [to forbid worshipping idolatry in a ‘partnership’]?” She feared more than anything bringing a child into the world who would combine belief in Hashem with belief in other powers and values.

Red (Gen. 25:25). Rabbeinu Chaim Paltiel writes that Esav was red because he destroyed his mother’s uterus and become dirtied with blood.

Entirely like a cloak of hair (Gen. 25:25). The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:8) explains that when it comes to the tribes of Esau, anybody is fitting to wear the “cloak” of royalty. R. Chanoch Zundel of Bialystok (*Eitz Yosef* there) explains that this refers to what that Midrash writes that the Roman Emperor Diocletian originally served as a swineherd watching pigs, and then eventually became Emperor of Rome. This understanding to the Midrash is also found in *Likutei Chaver ben Chaim*. The fact that anybody can become king is seen as a manifestation of how “disgraced” the descendants of Esav are. Indeed, the Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 10b) expounds on the words of the prophet Ovadiah who said about Esav, “I have given you over to be the smallest amongst the nations, you are very disgraced” that this refers to the fact that the descendants of Esav did not generally appoint a king’s son as his heir, but rather chose an outside person as a deceased king’s successor. Maharsha explains that the Gemara refers to the Roman Empire. He further clarifies that even though Ovadiah’s prophecies were said about the Nation of Edom, they also include the Romans

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Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS TOLDOS

because Rome's first king was Tzfo, son of Eliphaz, son of Esav (as recounted by Nachmanides to Gen. 49:31 in the name of *Yossipon* and as is recorded by *Sefer HaYashar*). The *Chazon Ish* (*Even HaEzer* 5:8) proves from this that the core of Roman society were descendants of Esav. This is also implied from the Talmudic passage (*Avodah Zarah* 8b) in which the Romans apply to themselves Gen. 33:12 which was said about Esav travelling together with Yaakov. This is also hinted to in the Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 11a) which say that when Rivkah was told "there are two nations in your stomach", the word nations (גוים) is spelled גו"ג, which can be read as "proud ones" (גו"ג), a reference to Rebbi and Antoninus. Rashi explains that Antoninus, the Roman Emperor, was a descendant of Esav. This provides further evidence to the notion that the Roman gentry were comprised of descendants of Esav. R. Yaakov Emden in *Hagabos Yaavetz* (there) writes that the same rules were followed in his times, and the Holy Roman Emperor was not automatically the previous emperor's son, but that a presbytery of land-owning electors would appoint the new emperor. Based on this, R. Yosef Engel (*Gilyonei HaShas* there) explains why the Nation of Esav is called "small". The Gemara (*Yevamos* 47a) defines a person as "small" if he has not borne children. Accordingly, a king whose children will not become king is considered "small". R. Yaakov Reischer explains why Hashem set up such an arrangement amongst the Nations of Esav. He explains that Esav's ability to thrive is tied to the Jewish People's lack of adherence to the Torah. When the Jews are not following the Torah, then the Nations of Esav can grow and be successful, but if the Jews continue to do the right thing, Esav's descendants have no legitimate claim to success. Because Esav's descendants are tied in reverse relation to the success of the Jewish People, there is no straight continuum amongst their kings, rather in each generation their hegemony is established anew (or not established). R. Dovid Cohen writes in *Ohel Dovid* that this was referring to the election of the pope, whose office is not inherited by the previous pope's son, but is voted on by the College of Cardinals. This is, of course, because the Popes remain celibate, and thus the "disgrace" that the Sages saw in this way of behavior was also a disdain for their ideological position.

And he called his name Yaakov (Gen. 25:26). Rashi explains that the "he" in this sentence is G-d, as He gave Yaakov his name. R. Wolf Lipman (d. 1686) in *Nachalas Binyamin* (cited in *Seder Hadoros*) writes that if G-d would have called the names of every entity in Creation, then they would never be destroyed but would last forever. For this reason, Yaakov—whom G-d did give his name—was said to have not died (*Taanis* 5a).

And Yaakov was a wholesome man, a tent-dweller (Gen. 25:27). *Avos deRabbi Nosson* (2:5) says that Yaakov was born already circumcised. R. Efrayim Lunshitz, the *Kli Yakar* explains that this means that Yaakov was fortified against sexual impropriety. As a tent-

ONEG!

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Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS TOLDOS

dweller he clung to his own wife, and to no other women (see *Shabbos* 87a in which one's tent refers to one's wife). This loyalty was part of Yaakov's character even many years before he actually got married. See *Zohar* (vol. 3, 111b) which says that Yaakov rectified Adam's sexual misdeeds. The Gemara (*Kesuvos* 104a) says: When R. Yehuda HaNasi died, he lifted his ten fingers to the Heavens and declared, "Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that I toiled with my ten fingers in Torah and did not enjoy [from This World] even with my little finger. May it be Your will that I shall have peace in my resting place". A Heavenly voice called out: "May peace arrive, placed on your resting place." The Maggid of Mezritch explains that the "finger" to which R. Yehuda HaNasi referred was a euphemistic reference to his male organ (see *Pesachim* 112b, *Niddah* 66a which refers to that organ as a "finger"). Indeed, the Kabbalists write that R. Yehuda HaNasi's soul was a spark from the soul of Yaakov,⁵ and as we mentioned Yaakov rectified Adam's sexual misdeeds, and he did not experience any seminal emissions until the conception of his firstborn Reuben. In light of this, we can understand how R. Yehuda HaNasi was Yaakov's spiritual successor⁶ and he too achieved an advanced level of holiness, such that he was said to have never lowered his hand below his torso. Moreover, the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 38a) relates that when certain angels protested G-d creating mankind, He extended His allegorical little finger and burnt those angels. Why did G-d use specifically a "little finger"? *Likutei Basar Likutei* explains that He wished to teach these angels that humans are better than they, because when angels were sent to the earth with a chance to behave like humans, they strayed after their "little finger", i.e., sexual misdeeds (see Gen. 6:2-4), but humans maintain the capacity to curb their sexual desires and overcome such temptations.

For a trap was in his mouth (Gen. 25:28). *Peirusb HaTur HaAruch* (to Gen. 27:3) explains that Esav knew how to say certain incantation which would charm wild animals and birds, and he would use that to trap them. A similar thing is written in *Moshav Zekanim* which says that Esav was a warlock and carried witcheries under his thigh, which he used to capture birds. See also *Sanhedrin* 55a and Rashi (there), as well as the *Shulchan Aruch* (Yoreh Deah 179:5) which explains that the prohibition of "charming" (Deut. 18:11) refers to one who uses incantations to catch wild animals, or snakes, scorpions, and other insects.

⁵ The Arizal teaches that Nasi (נשיא) is an abbreviation for: ניצוץ של יעקב אבינו (a spark of Yaakov, our Forefather).

⁶ As we mentioned above, Yaakov was said to have not died. R. Shlomo Wolbe () similarly explains that R. Yehuda HaNasi also "cheated death", as sources tell us that even after he died, he would return on Friday Night to make *Kiddush* for his family.

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

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PARSHAS TOLDOS

And Esav came from the field and he was tired (Gen. 25:29). The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 16b) teaches: Rabbi Yochanan said that that evil man violated five prohibitions on that day: ¹He fornicated with a betrothed maiden ²He killed a person ³He denied the primacy of Hashem ⁴He denied the concept of *Techiyas HaMeisim* and finally ⁵He disparaged the firstborn rights. The Rabbi Yosef Teomim (*Pri Megadim Mishbetzos Zahav* to *Orach Chaim* 476:3) writes in the name of the sefer *Yad Yosef* (which was written by Rabbi Yosef HaTzarfati, who died in 1640) a fascinating explanation to what it means that Esav fornicated with a betrothed maiden. He explains that it was not that he literally did that act. According to Chazal (see footnote),⁷ the day that Esav came tired and hungry from the field was the same day that Avraham Aveinu died and was actually the day before Pesach. When he returned home, he encountered Yaakov Aveinu cooking up lentils and baking *matzos* to serve to later serve to his father Yitzchak. When Esav demanded to eat whatever Yaakov was preparing, this did not just refer to the lentils which he was cooking, but also to the *Matzos* which he was baking for his father to eat on Pesach. By eating those *Matzos* on Erev Pesach, Esav violated the Talmudic prohibition of eating *Matza* on Erev Pesach, as the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Pesachim* 10:1) says: “He who eats Matza on Erev Pesach is tantamount to one who fornicates with his fiancée in his father-in-law’s house”. Meaning, that just as a person who eats Matza on Erev Pesach is seen as impatient because he sought to satisfy himself

⁷ The source to this is *Bava Basra* 16b which says that this story happened on the day that Avraham Aveinu died. See *Leket Yosher* (vol. 1, p. 86) who maintains that Avraham Aveinu died on the night of Pesach. See *Seder HaDoros* (Year 2123) who cites R. Shimshon of Ostrpoli (in his commentary *Dan Yadin* to *Sefer Karnayim* Maamar #6) and *Yalkut Reuveni* (*Lech Lecha*) that Avraham Aveinu died in he month of Teves. They find an allusion to this in Hashem’s words to Avraham (Gen. 15:15) “you will be buried with good age” (תקבר בשיבה טובה); the first letters of each of these three words spells out the Teves (טבת). However, R. Yaakov Emden (*Siddur Yaavetz, Teves*) questions this explanation in light of the fact that the Talmud (*Rosh HaShanah* 11a) records a dispute between R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua over whether the forefathers died in Nissan or in Tishrei, but both opinions seemingly agree that they did not die in Teves! Instead, R. Yaakov Emden rejects this explanation put forth by R. Shimon of Ostrpoli. R. Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, the author of the *Ben Ish Chai* writes in his sefer *Ben Yehoyada* (to *Rosh HaShanah* 10a) that the *Sefer HaKarnayim* itself explains that the month of Nissan includes in it all the months of the year, as each day in the month of Nissan corresponds to a certain month of the calendar. Accordingly, he explains that Avraham Aveinu really died in the month of Nissan as R. Yehoshua in the Talmud says, but he is said to have died in the month of Teves because he died on a day in Nissan which corresponded to the month of Teves. To further illuminate this idea, we mention what R. Tzvi Elimelech Shapiro writes in *Aggra de-Kallah* (*Parshas Pekuday*) that that first twelve days of Nissan correspond to the twelve months of the year, and it was during those twelve days that the Twelve Princes of the the Twelve Tribes brought their inaugural sacrifices to the Mishkan.

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS TOLDOS

with that which could be a Mitzvah if only he waited a little longer, such is a person who illicitly fornicates with his fiancée, instead of waiting until they are married. He sharpens the comparison by pointing out that just as one getting married makes seven *Brachos* (colloquially called *Sheva Brachos*) before he is allowed to consummate his marriage, so does one make seven blessing at the Pesach Seder before he eats the Matza (the seven blessings are: the three blessing in *Kiddush*, the *Borei Pri HaAdamah* on *Karpas*, the *Borei Pri HaGafen* on the second cup of wine, and finally the *Hamotzei* and *Al Achilas Matzah* on the *Matza* itself⁸). Interestingly, the *Pri Megadim* mentions that because Avraham Aveinu died on *Erev Pesach* there is a custom to eat eggs on Passover Night, because eggs are the food of mourners (see *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 378:9) and we mourn the death of Avraham Aveinu. In truth, we should also eat lentils on Passover Night to commemorate the loss of Avraham Aveinu and that Yaakov prepared lentils to eat that night, but because Ashkenazim do not eat legumes (*kitniyos*), in line with the Rema's ruling (*Orach Chaim* §453:1), we do not do so. Thus, explains the *Pri Megadim*, Esav ate matza on Erev Pesach, and this is described as if he had relations with a betrothed maiden.

this red red (Gen. 25:30). Rashi explains that they were eating red lentils to mark the passing of Avraham. G-d shortened Avraham's lie by five years so that he would not see Esau straying from the proper path. It is interesting to point out that Esau sold his firstborn-rights in exchange for food from the mourning of Avraham, because the entire character of Esau served to oppose everything that Avraham stood for. Esau purposely tried to detach himself in every way from Avraham's legacy, and destroy everything which Avraham had built. For this reason, he gladly sold his firstborn-rights in exchange for that which he really desired--a very pleasurable meal marking Avraham's demise.

⁸ The problem with this calculation is that there another two *brachos* which we say at the Pesach Seder that he did not take into account: *Asher Gealnu* (at the end of *Maggid*) and *Al Netilas Yadayim* (when washing for the *Matzah*). See Mahari Weil (§193) who counts the 7 *brachos* sans the *Shehechyanu* of *Kiddush* (which is not inherently part of the Seder, but could even be recited as one walks in the marketplace as long as Yom Tov has already begun) and without the bracha on *Karpas* (because *Karpas* is also not inherently part of the Seder but is just a means to arouse the childrens' curiosity at the peculiar things we do that night). See *Chok Yaakov (Orach Chaim* 471:6) who organizes the different opinions in how to count the 7 blessings. Interestingly, the *Sefer HaMichtam* (to *Pesachim* 49a) cites this Yerushalmi as saying that just as one makes *nine* *brachos* before marrying a woman—including the *Borei Pri HaGafen* and *Birkas Erusin* recited at the time of *Kiddushin*—so does one make *nine* *brachos* before eating Matzo on Pesach. This, of course, is a bit difficult because the Talmud clearly compares eating Matzah with fornicating with one's betrothed fiancée with whom one has already done *Erusin* and only needs the seven *brachos* of *Nisuin*.

And Esau said, 'behold! I am going to die. Why should I have this firstborn-rights' (Gen. 25:32). The *Ketzos HaChoshen (Choshen Mishpat §278:13)* writes that even though normally a man cannot sell that which has not yet entered the World, nonetheless he can “remove” himself from the rights to something which is due to him. He offers a proof to this from the fact that Esau sold the firstborn-rights to Yaakov, even though those rights entail entitlements which did not yet exist. According to his understanding, Yaakov did not actually buy the firstborn rights from Esau, rather Esau excused himself from those rights, and by default they went to his only brother Yaakov. R. Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenberg () similarly understands that Yaakov did not actually *buy* the rights directly from Esau, rather Esau declared them ownerless and Yaakov acquired them from that state. These two understandings are belied by rabbinic tradition (*Sotah* 13a) which refers to a “bill of sale” that Yaakov had in his possession. The *Ketzos* also entertains the position of the responsa *Rivash* (328) that before the Sinaitic Revelation, one *could* sell something which did not yet exist because the rules were different⁹. In his *Peirush HaTur HaAruch* (to Gen. 25:31), R. Yaakov Baal HaTurim suggests that selling something which does not yet exist can be effectuated by bolstering the legality of the sale through an oath.

And he [Yaakov] brought him [Yitzchak] wine, and he [Yitzchak] drank (Gen. 27:25). We do not find that Yitzchak commanded Yaakov to bring wine. According to tradition as we have mentioned earlier, that night was the Passover Seder. Both R. Nosson Nota Shapiro and R. Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin explain that the wine that Yitzchak drank corresponded to the four cups of wine which we drink at the Passover Seder. R. Avraham Schor (*Hagada Shel Pesach, HaLekach VebaLibav* 5768) adds that Yaakov corresponds to the Oral Torah, which is the source of the Mitzvah of the Four Cups at the Passover Seder (that commandment does not appear explicitly in the Bible). Therefore, Yaakov specifically had to bring wine to his father Yitzchak (who corresponds to the Written Torah, as the Yitzchak is associated with the trait of *Gevurah* which is, in turn, associated with the Written Torah).

Your brother came with mirmah (מרמה) and he took your blessing (Gen. 27:35). Rashi and Onkelos explains that *mirmah* means “wisdom”. Given that Rashi also mentions that this story happened in Pesach, R. Chaim Kanievsky cites in the name of R. Yosef Chaim

⁹ Incidentally, this position may help us understand why the Rambam (Hilchos Arachin Vcharamim 6:31) writes *yeraeh li* (it appears to me) to explain a matter in the laws of Nedarim, even though as Raavad points out in support of him (6:33 there) there is an explicit verse in the Torah about Yaakov Avinu, and thus it ought to be deduced directly from the verse and not from “*yiraeh li*”. Perhaps the scriptural support suggested by the Raavad is not a satisfactory source for Rambam, who like Rivash, would not learn something out from before the giving of the Torah.

ONEG!

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS TOLDOS

Sonnenfeld that *b'mirmah* (במרמה = 287) equals *afikomen* (אפיקומן = 287), because Yaakov used his wisdom to realize that if he fed his father the *afikomen*, then his father would not be allowed to later eat from whatever game Esau would serve him and give Esau a blessing.