

Parsha Press

Parshat Toldot

TUG-OF-WAR Jaelyn Ramras

In this week's parsha, Toldot, we learn about Esav and Yaakov who both have a struggle whether to listen to their *yetzer hatov* or *yetzer hara*. Yaakov chose to listen to his *yetzer hatov* while Esav chose to listen to his *yetzer hara*. G-d instilled in each of us the two conflicting urges of bad and good. It is up to us to decide which of the two voices we will listen to. This is very similar to a tug-of-war. Many times it is so easy to go with the bad urge, the *yetzer hara*. But it is important during the shabbaton not to be pulled by your *yetzer hara*. It is important to make people feel good and not to leave anyone out. If we see a fellow classmate without a room or standing by themselves and not dancing we should pull them in and make them feel wanted. It is much easier to room and dance with our best friends than to be with someone with whom we are not so friendly. During the shabbaton, we should make sure that no one feels left out and lonely. We have to remember that G-d wants us to succeed and to choose good but He also knows it isn't always going to be easy.



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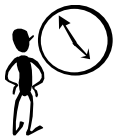
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To Be A Leader Batya Matla Herzberg

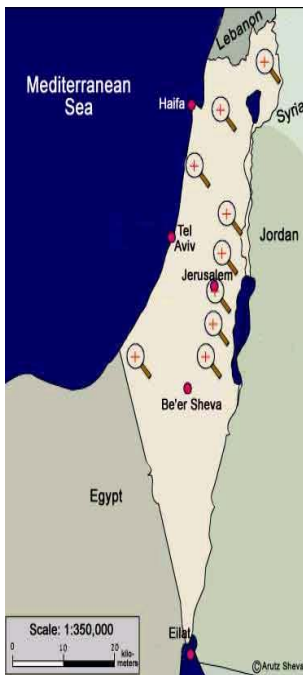
There is an interesting *dvar Rashi* in the beginning of *Parshat Toldot* that explains the repetition of Rivka's lineage. *Rashi* there explains why we have to hear again that she was the daughter of Betuel, the sister of Lavan, and had originated from *Padan Aram*. They tell of her praise, that she was the daughter of a wicked person, a sister of a wicked person, and came from a place of wickedness, yet she remained a steadfast *tzadeket* and did not learn from this inappropriate behavior. We learn of her family's less-than-perfect track record in the previous *parsha*.



Shabbat Starts:
4:22

News From Israel

Arafat is officially Dead and there is talk as mentioned in a previous Parsha Press, of Him being burried in the Gaza strip.



We learn of Lavan's interest in money (24:29) when he ran out to greet Eliezer. There, *Rashi* says that he thought Eliezer was rich and was interested in getting some money from him. We know that their house was one of *avoda zara* because *Rashi* says (24:31), that this is what Lavan cleared the house of when he said "I have cleared the house." Then, (24:50), *Rashi* explains how wicked Lavan was, jumping in to answer before his father. Later (24:55), he comments that Betuel wanted to prevent Rivka from going with Eliezer so an angel had to come and kill him. These incidents represent a not-too-ideal environment, the very place where Rivka spent her childhood years. Yet, these negative influences seemed not to have influenced her character or conduct. We see that she had the qualities of *tzniut*, *chessed*, and *tefilla* from the *pesukim*. We see her becoming like the righteous Sarah in the eyes of Yitzchak. She demonstrates wisdom and prudence in obtaining the *bracha* for her son, Yaakov. She later advises him to flee from his furious brother. Basically, throughout the Torah's description of the many events that occurred, Rivka consistently appears to be a woman of sterling character, understanding, and of a kind and giving nature. Her acts are all the more extraordinary considering her background and evil family. This is reminiscent of a *mishna* in *avot* (2:6) "*Hu haya omer...uvimkom she'ain anashim, hishtadel l'hiyot ish.*" ... And in a place where there are no leaders, strive to be a leader. Rivka's background consisted of anything but leaders. Yet, she rose to this challenge and became a mother of all Israel.

Other characters in Tanach exhibited similar characteristics. In *Melachim 2 prakim 21-23*, descriptions of various kings are provided. Yoshiahu, the king of Yehuda, descended from the wicked Menashe and Ammon (with an *aleph*). Menashe was one of the most nefarious personalities in all of Tanach – he killed his own grandfather, made murder seem benign, put *avoda zara* in the *heichal*, and rebuilt all the *avoda zara* that his father, Chizkiyahu, had destroyed. Ammon, his son, also committed the sins of *avoda zara*. He left Hashem and followed in the ways of his father. However, Yoshiyahu was the antithesis of his forbearers. He reestablished Torah in the nation, destroyed the *avoda zara*, and facilitated the *teshuva* of *Bnei Yisrael*. He, like Rivka, lived as a *tzadik*. He overcame the tremendous challenge of his roots and paved a different path, a path of Torah.

May we be zoche to rise up to the occasion, as did these role models, to be "*anashim*" in places where leaders are scarce. We see from Rivka, our matriarch, and Yoshiyahu, a righteous king of Israel, that it is possible to change even if one's background is not exactly perfect. Have a wonderful Shabbat.

A Reddish Complexion... Aviva Schiffmiller

In Perek *chaf hei*, pasuk *chaf hei*, the Torah states: "*vayetze harishon admoni kulo k'aderet se'ar vayikr'u shmo Aisav,*" "And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Aisav." Due to Aisav becoming an extremely sadistic person later in his life, reddish

complexions resembling Aisav's came to be associated with wildness and aggressiveness. The *Beraishit Rabbah* relates that when Shmuel went to anoint David HaMelech, he became nervous upon seeing David's reddish skin, fearing that David too would take pleasure in bloodshed. However, Hashem soon allayed Shmuel's fears, informing him that while Aisev may have murdered innocent people, David would only kill those sentenced to death by Sanhendrin. Despite the same tendency towards spilling blood, David and Shmuel utilized their desires in very different ways.

A crucial life lesson can be learned from this idea. While Hashem may give us certain inclinations, which seem glaringly negative at face value, upon closer inspection it becomes evident that these traits can be used in a positive fashion. Everyone posses the ability to direct his or her strengths and weaknesses to serve Hashem The Vilna Gaon expounds on this theme, writing that people should never attempt to go against their natures entirely, since it is an impossible feat. Rather, people should use their natures in a proper way, such as becoming a *mohel* or a *shochet* if one is attracted to blood. Let us all gain hope and inspiration from this crucial message and better ourselves by discovering the positive potential of our characters.

-Based on an article from *Growth Through Torah*: Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

"Quote of the Week"

"A real leader faces the music even when he doesn't like the tune."

SHMIRAT HALASHON

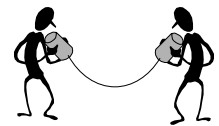
The tongue is an awesome weapon. It can destroy people's lives and reputations. It can create divisions between people and their apparent communities.

Chofetz Chaim:
A Daily Companion

Story of a Gadol

R' Moshe of Pshevark was a great scholar, but his real stringth lay in his greatness in prayer. And yet R' Moshe would often say, "I find it easier to give ten complicated lectures in succession than to recite one prayer." R' Moshe once lodged at an inn where a leading *misnaged* was staying. The next morning, the *misnaged* said his morning prayers and then sat down to study *Mishna* and *Gemara*. R' Moshe, however, made extensive preparations before prayer. He had not even begun when the other guests had long since finished. The *misnaged* looked at him askance and asked, "Can you tell me why you need so much preparation before prayers?" R' Moshe replied, "The truth is that I envy your being able to pray on time and then sit down to study. But what can I do? I begin my day with *Modeh Ani* and a flood of thoughts sweeps over me. First, I ask myself, who am 'I,' *ani*, and who is the living and enduring king, '*melech chai v'kayam*'? And what is my 'soul'...These thoughts lead me to inspect my deeds and ask myself if the 'I' is worthy of approaching the 'living and enduring king,' and if I merit the return of my 'soul,' day after day. These thoughts pinch my heart and conscience and gnaw away at my brain until I am unable to continue the very first prayer. Small wonder that it takes me so long to begin praying."

-A story a day: G. Sofer



FAST FACTS on BIRKAT HARE'ACH Batya Matla Herzberg

- ✓ The *mitzva* is derived from the *passuk*, “*kol ha'neshama t'hallel ka*” because the *neshama* receives pleasure from special scents
- ✓ One may not obtain pleasure from a pleasant smell until he has made a *bracha*
- ✓ There are five *brachot hare'ach*: on pleasant smelling substances that come from trees, from grasses, on fruit (like an *etrog*), on scents that are not from trees or grasses (*borei minei b'samim*), and on a special type of oil.
- ✓ One should not make a *bracha* on the scent of the fruit if his/her intention is to eat it alone.
- ✓ If one is planning on immediately making a *bracha* on taste (*ta'am*) and immediately making a *bracha* to smell something different, he/she should first make the *bracha* on the food.
- ✓ One should avoid specifically smelling the *etrog* during *sukkot* because there is a *machloket* whether or not a *bracha* is recited upon it.
- ✓ On *Motzei Shabbat*, one should use the text of “*borei minei bsamim*” on any type of *bsamim* that he is using.

-Based on *Torah Lada'at* by Rabbi Matis Bloom

Happy Birthday



November 14
Alison Lavner
Evie Smulevitz

November 16
Megan Thomas

November 17
Aviva Schiffmiller

November 18
Devorah Hagler

MAZEL TOV



To Becky Steinmetz on the engagement of her brother Sean to Shana Wachsmann

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