

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT TOLDOT

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
TAL Founder & Director

## THE GREAT CRY OF EISAV AND THE GROOMS ATONEMENT

Picture this scenario: You ask a friend for a £3 cup of coffee, promising to repay him upon delivery. He graciously heads to the counter, purchases the coffee, and patiently waits. When he hands it over, you discover he has added some toxic waste to it, yet he still requests the £3.

How would you respond? Would you offer the money and perhaps even a blessing?

A parallel unfolds in this week's Parasha. Yitzchak, unknowingly, blesses Yaakov, thinking it's Eisav. The Midrash Tanchuma (11) reveals the reason for Eisav's delay; each animal he trapped was set free by angels. Frustrated, Eisav resorts to serving his father non-kosher dog meat (Targum Yonatan). When Eisav entered the room to receive the blessing from his father the Torah tells us that Yitzchak trembled. He felt the doors of Gehinnom opening. He understood something was not right here. He had sent Eisav for deer's meat but received a toxic substitute.

Eisav, realizing the consequences of his actions, pleads with his father, who eventually grants him a blessing.

The Sages are perplexed. Eisav wanted to trick his own father into sinning and eating dog meat. He was essentially bringing him coffee with poison. How is it that Yitzchak eventually gives him a Beracha?

The answer lies in one of the most potent sentences in the Torah. A sentence that we do not see again until the times of Mordechai.

Eisav lets out a great and bitter cry - ויצעק צעקה גדלה ומרה עד מאד

When Eisav realised what he had done, when he had a moment to think, he was able to sincerely do Teshuva. Even though the Teshuva didn't last, nevertheless Yitzchak felt it and was able to give him a blessing. That cry was so powerful its ramifications are felt until today.

We see this concept of slight Teshuva a few more times in Eisav's life.

When a groom gets married our sages tell us that he is absolved from all his previous sins (according to many, brides are also included).

This is learnt from our Parasha.

Eisav's respect for his father was well known. He had married at the age of 40 to mimic his father who had done the same. But alas his first two wives from among the daughters of Heth caused anguish and pain to his parents. According to the Sages, these women spent all their days in adultery and idolatry. His first wife Adah adorned herself with jewellery (Adayat) for harlotry. Eisav's second wife, Yudit the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, was an illegitimate child resulting from an adulterous union (Tanchuma, Vayeshev 1). Yudit was also named Oholibamah, a name she was given because she built places for idolatry. (Bamot).

Yitzchak and Rivka were not happy with these wives.

When Yitzchak commanded Yakov to go and find a wife, he made sure to ascertain that she should not be from the daughters of Canaan. Eisav seeing this decided to take on a third wife, this time one that would obey his father's command, someone not from Canaan, but rather from the

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immediate family. He married Machalat, the daughter of his uncle Yishmael. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Bikkurim 3:3) states that by merit of this marriage, the Holy One, blessed be He, forgave Eisav for all his sins. The name Machalat indicates that G-d pardoned (mahal) Eisav. It is from here that we learn that every groom that gets married merits to have his sins pardoned.

However, it seems that Eisav's repentance was short lived. In fact he had ulterior motives when marrying Machalat.

The Midrash Bereishit Rabbah (67:8) offers a fascinating insight:

Eisav said: 'If I kill him (Yaakov), there are Shem and Ever who will sit in judgment over me, and say to me: "Why did you kill your brother? Instead, I will go and marry into Yishmael's family, and he will come and dispute with him [Yaakov] over the birthright and kill him, and I will stand against him [Yishmael] as a blood redeemer and kill him, and I will be the heir of two families".'

Eisav wanted to marry into Yishmael's family to encourage Yishmael to kill Yaakov. Eisav would then kill Yishmael and inherit all the blessings. His plan was not fruitful. Our Sages

explain that soon after getting engaged to Machalat, Yishmael died. Now Eisav was left with Machalat but not for the reason he married her. Nevertheless he stayed with her and at the time of his wedding was forgiven for his sins.

Nowadays in conjunction with this idea of forgiveness it's common for individuals to observe the tradition of fasting on their wedding day.

In fact, at many weddings, we enjoy singing the verse in Yeshayahu (62:5) 'Yasis alayich Elokayich kimsos Chatan al kalah'.

"...And like the rejoicing of a bridegroom over his bride shall your G-d rejoice over you".

Rimzei Harokeiach (Parashat Nitzavim) makes a fascinating insight into this: The word Chatan-groom has the numerical value of 458; the word AL-on= 100, and Kala-bride= 55. The total numerical value of the three is 613, to hint that because their sins are absolved, the bride and groom are considered to have fulfilled all 613 mitzvot.

Why does a groom receive atonement on his wedding day? The Eshel Avraham (Orech Chayim 573:1) explains (quoting the Pasuk in Mishlei 16:6 "With loving-kindness and truth will iniquity be expiated") that by committing to building a family, the

groom atones for his sins.

The Ktav Sofer (Vayishlach) writes that a woman is called a "Choma" – 'wall', because she saves her husband from sin and assists him. In improving his ways after his marriage, a man proves that the reason he sinned before his marriage was only because he was lacking a wife to assist him. Therefore, his sins are absolved.

Applying this perspective to Eisav's narrative, it becomes apparent that he too was presented with an opportunity to seek atonement for his past misdeeds through his marriages. Regrettably, he failed to fully grasp and capitalize on this chance, highlighting the importance of recognizing and utilising opportunities for spiritual growth and redemption.

Life often unfolds as a series of spiritual awakenings, each providing a chance to elevate ourselves and refine our character. The objective is to maintain a spiritual high and continually strive for self-improvement. By embracing these opportunities, whether through the support of a life partner or other means, we can navigate the journey of self-discovery and growth with resilience and purpose. In the game of spiritual elevation, the key lies in our commitment to perpetual improvement and the pursuit of higher ideals.



## RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

### PARSHAT TOLDOT

We are told that Yaakov was given his name because he held on to the Akef, the heel of his brother Esav, as they were born. The Torah makes a point of telling us that Yaakov tried to hold Esav back to be the firstborn. But he didn't succeed. So why would that moment be etched forever into his very name? Why would Yaakov, one of our greatest forefathers, carry a name that reminds us of what he didn't accomplish?

Because that is exactly what greatness looks like.

Yaakov didn't let go. He reached, he tried, he held on. It wasn't about winning or losing, it was about effort, about refusing to let the opportunity pass. The world might tell us that success is measured by results, but the Torah tells us that success is measured by effort, by commitment, by perseverance.

Later, of course, Hashem arranged that Yaakov would indeed become the firstborn through circumstances only Heaven could design. What Yaakov couldn't accomplish with his

hands, Hashem completed for him.

That's the story of every one of us. We are not expected to control outcomes. We are expected to try. To hold on, even when the outcome seems out of reach. When we do our part, Hashem takes over and finishes the story the way it's meant to be.

So, when life feels like a struggle and you're grasping for something just beyond your reach, remember Yaakov. Don't let go. Your effort is holy. Your determination is your greatness. And when you've done all you can, trust that Hashem will do what you cannot.



# HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Reciting "Ranenu Sadikim" and "Le'David Be'shanoto" on Shabbat Morning

The Halacha below was generated based on classes given by Rabbi Eli Mansour in the Beki'im B'Halacha series. The classes were previously orated on the date(s) shown below. Click the date(s) below to hear the full length original audio file or watch the video by Rabbi Eli Mansour.

Two of the chapters of Tehillim that we add to the morning prayer service on Shabbat, before Baruch She'amar, are "Ranenu Sadikim" and "Le'David Be'shanoto" (chapters 33 and 34 of Tehillim).

The recitation of these chapters on Shabbat is especially significant, and offers many benefits. One must recite these chapters very carefully, for omitting or misreading even a single word can result in the forfeit of the great benefits that this recitation offers us.

Each of these chapters contains 22 verses, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This itself indicates that these chapters are special, as they incorporate all the letters with which the Torah was written.

Moreover, the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1900) observes that each of these two chapters contains 161 letters, a number associated with the Name of Hashem spelled Alef, Heh, Yod and Heh – the highest of all the Names. The Gematria of the word "Alef" is 111; the Gematria of "Heh" is 15; the Gematria of "Yod" is 20; and the Gematria of the second "Heh" is again 15 – for a total of 161. By properly

reciting these chapters, then, we connect to this very exalted Name of G-d.

The chapter of "Le'David Be'shanoto" does not only contain 22 verses, but actually follows the sequence of the Hebrew alphabet. After the introductory verse, which tells us the context of the writing of this chapter, David exclaims, "Abarecha Et Hashem Be'chol Et" ("I shall bless G-d at all times") – which begins with the letter Alef. The next verse begins with the second letter, Bet – "B'Hashem Tit'halal Nafshi"; the third begins with Gimal – "Gadelu L'Hashem lti"; and so on. The jarring exception is the letter Vav, which is skipped, as the chapter proceeds directly from the letter Heh ("Habitu Elav Ve'naharu...") to Zayin ("Zeh Ani Kara..."). Additionally, at the end of this chapter, after the letter Tav ("Temotet Rasha Ra'a..."), the chapter concludes with a verse that begins with the letter Peh ("Podeh Hashem Nefesh Abadav..."). The Kabbalists teach that according to the "At Bash" system, whereby each letter is associated with the corresponding letter at the opposite end of the alphabet (e.g. Alef is connected to Tav, Bet to Shin, Gimal to Resh, etc.), the letters Vav and Peh are interchangeable. Hence, the final verse of this chapter, which begins with Peh, serves as the substitute, so-to-speak, for the "missing" Vav.

The Kabbalists explain why this was done based on the context of this chapter, as stated in the introductory verse – "Le'David Be'shanoto Et Ta'amo Lifneh Abimelech, Va'yegareshehu Va'yelach." This refers to the story told

in the Book of Shemuel I (chapter 21) where David fled to the Philistine city of Gat to escape from King Shaul. The Philistines were enemies of Beneh Yisrael, and David had killed Golyat, the general of the Philistines, and so David knew that the king of Gat, Achish, would seek to have him killed. David devised a plan whereby he feigned insanity, such that Achish did not view him as a threat. This is what this introductory verse means – that David "changed his conduct" ("Be'shanoto Et Ta'amo") in the presence of the king. Achish is called here Abimelech – which means "my father is king" – as a sign of respect, as Achish spared David's life and let him leave the area unharmed. According to tradition, it was on Shabbat when David was granted permission to leave, and so we read this chapter on Shabbat. Another explanation is that the name "Abimelech" refers to our Father and King – Hashem. In this introductory verse, David is teaching us that just as he changed his image in the presence of Achish, we must change our behavior and our appearance on Shabbat, dressing in our finest clothing and conducting ourselves in an especially refined, elevated and dignified manner. In any event, as this verse is associated with Shabbat, David skipped the letter Vav, which equals six and thus alludes to the six days of the workweek. The missing letter was "replaced" in a sense with the final verse, which, as discussed, begins with the letter Peh.

Hashem's Name appears 13 times in this chapter, corresponding to the thirteen attributes of compassion.



## WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Toldot

After 20 years of marriage, Yitzchak's prayers are answered and Rivka conceives twins. The pregnancy is extremely painful. Hashem reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the worldwide

conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins, Rome and Israel. Esav is born, and then Yaakov, holding on to Esav's heel. They grow, and Esav becomes a hunter, a man of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah,

developing his soul.

On the day of their grandfather Avraham's funeral, Yaakov is cooking lentils, the traditional mourner's meal. Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for

a bowl of lentils, demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of firstborn.

A famine strikes Canaan and Yitzchak thinks of escaping to Egypt, but Hashem tells him that because he was bound as a sacrifice, he has become holy and must remain in the Holy Land. He relocates to Gerar in the land of the Philistines, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say she is his sister. The Philistines grow jealous of Yitzchak when he becomes immensely

wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave. Yitzchak re-digs three wells that were dug by his father, prophetically alluding to the three future Temples. Avimelech, seeing that Yitzchak is blessed by Hashem, makes a treaty with him.

When Yitzchak senses his end approaching, he summons Esav to give him his blessings. Rivka, acting on a prophetic command that the blessings must go to

Yaakov, arranges for Yaakov to impersonate Esav and receive the blessings. When Esav in frustration reveals to his father that Yaakov has bought the birthright, Yitzchak realizes that the birthright has been bestowed correctly on Yaakov and confirms the blessings he has given Yaakov. Esav vows to kill Yaakov, and so Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he could find a suitable wife.

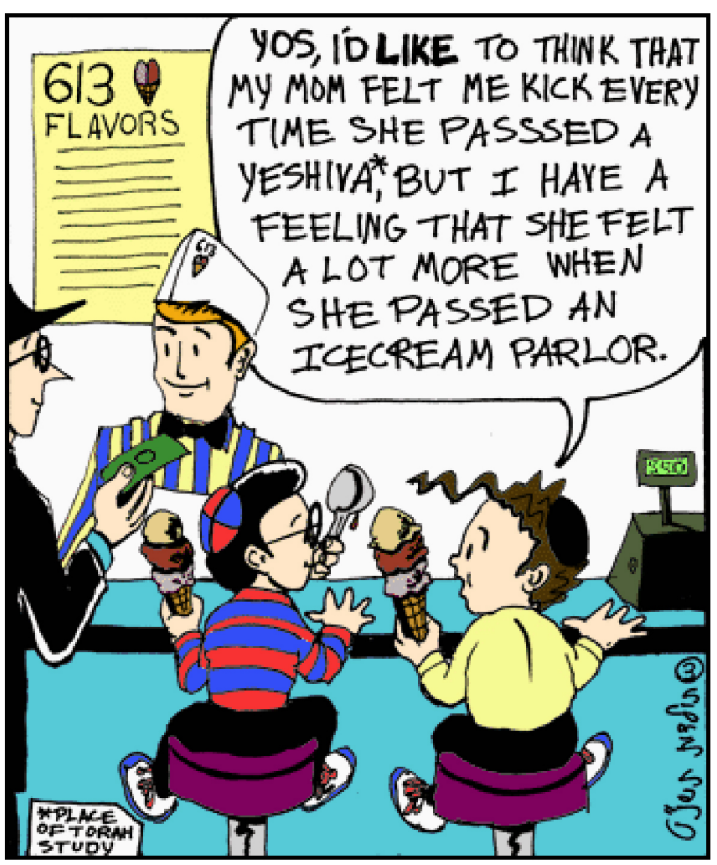
**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
Seasonsofthemoon.com

**Q**

1. Why was it important that Yitzchak look like Avraham?
2. Why does the Torah stress that Rivka was Betuel's daughter and Lavan's sister?
3. What are the two differences between Tamar's pregnancy and Rivka's pregnancy?
4. Why was Esav named Esav?
5. Who gave Yaakov his name?

**A**

1. 25:19 - So everyone would agree that Avraham was indeed his father.
2. 25:20 - To praise her, that even though her family was evil she was righteous.
3. 25:24 - Rivka gave birth at full term to two children, one righteous and one wicked. Tamar gave birth after seven months to two righteous children.
4. 25:25 - He was born fully developed. The name Esav is based on the Hebrew word for "made".
5. 25:26 - G-d.



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