

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

PARASHAT TOLEDOT
Haftarah: Shemuel I 20:18-42
NOVEMBER 18-19, 2017 29 HESHVAN 5778

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EDITORS NOTES from the archives 5774

Heroes

It is difficult to find a Biblical figure more holy than our forefather Yishak Avinu, Isaac. After being bound on the alter, Isaac was imbued with an extra measure of holiness. This Kedusha made it impossible for him to leave the land of Israel. The Midrash goes further and tells us that Isaac actually lived in Gan Eden for two years following the Akeydah. This is not a man of this world. Furthermore, he has the quality of Gevurah – of strict justice – meaning that there is neither bending nor mercy.

So how is it conceivable for us to even imagine that Esav was able to pull the wool over his father's eyes? Is it even remotely possible that Isaac was completely fooled by his son over the course of sixty years?

I think not!

If that's the case, how can we possibly understand Isaac's desire to bless Esav?

Let's examine the blessing that Isaac later gives Jacob before he leaves home. "May G-d bless you... become a host of nations... give you and your seed the blessing of Avraham... inherit the land... which G-d gave Avraham".

Compare that with the physical blessing Isaac meant to give Esav. In that blessing Isaac speaks of, "Elokim giving from the dew of heaven and from the fat of the land and much grain and wine". One blessing pales in the face of the other. One seems to be a physical blessing while the other is a blessing to continue the job that Abraham began.

Rabbi Abittan z'sl explained that Isaac understood that Esav was a physically active man, a warrior, having possibly some of the qualities of his father

Abraham. While he, Isaac and Jacob might both be considered men of the study hall. Sometimes we aggrandize the qualities we imagine that others have and we believe we lack. Isaac hoped that his sons would form a partnership with Esav taking care of the physical while Jacob managed the spiritual. Esav would be the King while Jacob the scholar. This would be the true Yisachar and Zevulun bond.

This becomes evident when we see that Jacob waited for Joseph to be born before leaving his father in law Lavan and returning to the land. Joseph was a match for Esav. We know that Joseph becomes the ruler of the world per se and the one who provides physical sustenance to all. Joseph becomes what Esav could have been.

The Rabbis also compare King David with Esav. Both are red and ruddy. David is the warrior king. He is called my servant by G-d again and again. This is what Esav could have become.

It seems that Isaac was hoping what we all hope for. He wanted his boys to live and work in harmony. He was telling us that in society there must be room for two rulers. One who is king of the physical and who supports, protects and nourishes. The other is the king of the spiritual who studies, teaches and inspires.

Rashi uses the example of Antoninus (possibly Marcus Aurelius) and Rav Yehudah HaNasi when discussing the two nations in Rebecca's womb. Imagine a partnership between the emperor of Rome and the prince of the Sanhedrin and the Academy.

Throughout history, we have had both, for example Rabbi Akiva and Bar Kochva and we've had people who had the unique qualities of both like the Maccabees.

The state of Israel has had many heroes in its short history. Some are heroes of the spirit and some of the body. To mention just a few:

Haham Ovadia Yosef can certainly go down as one of our greatest heroes. Rav Ovadia became Sephardi Chief Rabbi in 1973. He is generally considered to have been one of the greatest rabbinical authorities in the modern Jewish world.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacoen Kook was often the bridge of communication between the various Jewish sectors, including the secular Jewish Zionist leadership, the Religious Zionists and non-Zionist Orthodox Jews.

Golda Meir is best known as the first, and only, female Prime Minister of Israel. She was a long-time leader of the Zionist movement in Israel after making Aliyah from America in 1921. Meir's life was so extraordinary that many Hollywood films have been made of her life.

Hannah Senesh became a symbol of idealism and self-sacrifice. She made Aliyah in 1939 and joined the Haganah. During World War Two she volunteered for the British army to be parachuted into Nazi held Europe to assist the war effort. Unfortunately, she was captured, beaten and tortured mercilessly. She was shot by a firing squad, but eventually her remains were transported to Israel. Her songs and poems became famous.

Yonatan Netanyahu was a member of the Israel Defense Forces elite Sayeret Matkal unit. He was killed during Operation Thunderbolt, which successfully secured the release of hostages held by Palestinian and German terrorists in Entebbe, Uganda. The operation was later renamed Operation Yonatan and 'Yoni' became, and remains, a national hero.

Ariel Sharon was one of Israel's greatest war heroes. Sharon played a significant role in all of Israel's wars from 1948 through the Second Intifada. Perhaps his finest moment was in 1973 when he led the crossing of the Suez Canal helping to secure an Israeli victory in the war. In 2001, Sharon became Prime Minister, leading the fight against the rising Intifada.

Menachem Begin first gained notoriety as the head of the Zionist underground group the Irgun. Upon the founding of the State, he formed the Herut (Freedom) Party which became the main opposition party in Israeli politics for almost 30 years until his stunning victory in the 1977 elections. As Prime Minister in 1977, Begin signed a peace accord with Egypt which earned him the Nobel Peace Prize. He later approved the successful bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak in 1981.

This week, we were invited to a reading of a new play entitled Damascus Square. Damascus Square tells the story of Eli Cohen. The reading took place in the Safra Synagogue at the invitation of our dear friend, Rabbi Elie Abadie. The play / musical was co-written

by Shai Baitel, an expert in Middle Eastern politics and international affairs. He served at the United Nations and at the Israeli Ministry of Justice's Department of International Agreements and International Litigation in legal positions. The reading was led by Multi-Tony Award nominee Tovah Feldshuh, along with Richard Blake, Bradley Dean, as well as Etai BenShlomo and Natalie Ellis. The evening was sponsored by Joey Allaham's Prime Hospitality.

Ms. Feldshuh is an incredible actress. I recall how moved I was when she brought Golda Meir to life. Here she was reading as the Mosad handler of Eli Cohen. Although seeing the story as a musical and taking into account the artistic license allowed, when the reading/concert ended, it was evident that almost everyone there would go home and google Eli Cohen and try to learn as much about him as they could.

Realizing how little people know about modern Jewish history and that includes Jews, both secular and observant, the reading definitely strikes a chord deep down and encourages one to want to know more.

We wrote about Eli Cohen in the past. Very briefly from the play's website: Eli Cohen was an Israeli spy. He is best known for his work in Syria, where he developed close relationships with the political and military hierarchy and became the Chief Adviser to the Minister of Defense. He was eventually exposed and executed in Syria in 1965. The intelligence he gathered is claimed to have been an important factor in Israel's success in the Six Day War.

Cohen was born in Alexandria to a devout Orthodox Jewish family in 1924. After the creation of Israel his parents and three brothers left Egypt for Israel in 1949. However, in December 1957, Cohen was forced to leave Egypt and he immigrated to Israel. In 1957, Eli was recruited by Israeli Military Intelligence. He then left the military and found work as a filing clerk and married Nadia in 1959.

The Mossad recruited Eli when they started looking for an agent to infiltrate the Syrian government. He briefly moved to Argentina to establish his cover in 1961, then moved to Damascus, Syria in 1962 under the cover name of Kamel Amin Thaabet. He rapidly gained the confidence of senior government officials including Amin Al Hafiz who eventually became Prime Minister.

He toured the Golan Heights and expressed sympathy for the soldiers in the Sun. He famously recommended that Eucalyptus trees be planted at

every bunker location. Eventually, the Syrian government began to suspect the infiltration of a spy and using Soviet radio tracking equipment, they isolated Eli's transmissions to Israel. Eli was caught on January 24th, 1965. Despite a large attempt at gaining clemency for Eli, he was executed on May 18th, 1965. (Please see the sidebar for a timeline of Eli Cohen's life).

Our forefather Isaac saw both of his sons as potential heroes. He hoped that with encouragement, Esav might become the person he was certainly capable of becoming. Imagine the pain he felt when Esav came in and Isaac suddenly realized what his son would never become. It is impossible not to shudder ourselves when we read, "And Isaac trembled a great trembling" when Esav finally entered. Rashi quoting the Midrash explains that Isaac saw Gehinam opening under Esav and for the first time understood that this son was truly wicked and would not do teshuva.

We are a nation of heroes and potential heroes. Let us remember all of our heroes. Let us read about them, talk about them and tell our children about them.

May we all be worthy to raise children and children who will follow in the steps of their forefathers and truly live up to their capabilities.

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

- Toldot - Yaacov receives the blessings**
- 1- Yaacov and Esav are born. Esav sells the bechor to Yaacov.**
 - 2- Yitshak moves to Gerar. Abimelech sees Yitshak with Rivkah**
 - 3- The Pelishtim close up Abraham's wells. Yitshak moves to the valley of Gerar and builds wells there.**
 - 4- Yitshak goes to Be'er Sheva. Hashem appears to him. Abimelech's people chase after Yitshak to make a peace treaty.**
 - 5- Yitshak gets old and prepares to bless Esav. Rivkah instructs Yaacov to present himself as Esav and get the beracha.**
 - 6- Yaacov receives the beracha. Rivkah tells Yaacov to run away to Laban's house.**
 - 7- Yaacov goes to Laban in Padan Aram. Esav takes another wife.**

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"But Jacob was a wholesome man abiding in tents." (Beresheet 25:27)

The Torah says that Ya'akob dwelled in the tents. Rashi explains: The tent of Shem and the tent of Eber. The time he spent in the yeshivah of Shem v'Eber is mentioned by Rashi at the end of the parashah. He spent fourteen years there after he left his father's house when he was running away from Esav as a result of receiving the berachot from Yitzhak instead of Esav. How do we know he spent fourteen years? Rashi makes a long calculation in the pasuk 28:9 based on the age of Yishmael when he died. The calculations left fourteen years of Ya'akob's life unaccounted for, thereby proving that he spent fourteen years studying Torah.

Rabbi Yitzchak Hellman, however, has a question. Although fourteen years of Ya'akob's life are unaccounted for, if the Torah doesn't tell us what he was doing during that period, how did the Sages know that he spent this time in the yeshivah of Shem v'Eber?

Rav Hellman suggests that the source of the Sages' statement is an explicit verse that we quoted above, that Ya'akob dwelled in the tent of Torah. The Torah is teaching us in this verse that Ya'akob's default state was to dwell in the tent of Torah study and any period of his life during which the Torah does not tell us that he was engaged in some other project or activity he automatically reverted to his natural status of "dwelling in the tents." So if we find fourteen years unaccounted for, it must mean he was studying Torah.

A true story is told about Hacham Ovadiah Yosef zt"l. One evening at the end of Yom Kippur in the year 5763 before the final arbit, Harav Ovadiah got up from his seat. He went over to his massive library to look into the Hidushe Haritba. As he read, his face lit up. After arbit when everyone was leaving to go home and eat, the Rabbi asked for a pen and paper and began writing at a very quick pace. He filled up page after page of the novel idea of Torah that came to him that was based on this Ritba. His son Rav Moshe brought him a drink and some light cakes to break his fast. Besides the long fast, Rav Ovadiah was very weak due to his old age.

The Rabbi paid no attention to the food and kept writing. Rav Moshe kept trying to hint to him to eat but got nowhere. Finally Hacham Ovadiah told him, "Now I am busy with the new Torah idea and I will not stop until I write down all that I have thought of now." The real food of the Rabbi was Torah.

As descendants of Ya'akob, we must strive to emulate his dedication to Torah study. Although we have family responsibilities, professional obligations, and numerous distractions throughout our daily lives,

as Ya'akob did as well, nevertheless we should endeavor to inculcate within ourselves a default state of "dwelling in the tent," and the moment our other duties and diversions cease we should immediately return to our primary commitment in the world. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**"And Yitzhak was extremely frightened"
(Beresheet 27:33)**

When Yitzhak realized that he gave the blessings to Ya'akob, instead of to Esav, he grew extremely frightened. He realized that his whole life he was under the impression that Esav needs the blessings and not Ya'akob, and all of a sudden he sees that he is grossly mistaken. Through Divine Providence, it was shown to him that Ya'akob should get the blessings. The Midrash says that Yitzhak was more frightened when he discovered who took the blessings than when he was lying on the altar, ready to be slaughtered! Can we imagine a person ready to die, waiting for the blade to fall, and yet this is more terrifying? The answer is that when a person lives his life one way and then realizes his whole life he was mistaken, that is a terrible shock, as great if not greater than facing death. To realize that his whole approach was not correct is a difficult test!

We can understand why many people who are faced with this realization don't want to admit their mistakes. They would rather justify their previous behavior rather than confront the truth. We must ask ourselves if we are not guilty of this same human nature. Be it our misvah observance or our character development, or our total attitude towards life, are we avoiding change because we can't admit our past mistakes? We come from Yitzhak, who, although he was terrified by this prospect, nevertheless admitted that Ya'akob needed the blessings and he, Yitzhak, had not been correct in his perception. We also have this inner strength inside of our spiritual genes!
Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Why Worry?

Sometimes you just can't help it. You are in a position where the decision you are about to make – whether it is a choice of school, career, or mate – should have a great effect on your future. The greater the potential effect on your life, the more nervous and uncertain you might become as you ponder the possibilities and avoid the finality of decision.

Bitahon- trust in Hashem – is the remedy. You should always realize that your life and everything in it come from Hashem. Knowing that He only wants what is best for you will make it easier to accept whatever He dishes out. It will also make it easier for you to decide on what course of action to take at any of life's many crossroads. This feeling of trust will

make you feel safe, knowing that He is watching out for you.

When a big decision gives you the jitters, consider that worrying will not improve the situation. On the contrary, worrying sometimes makes you see things in a negative light. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, zt"l, said, "Smile: a smile causes the sun to shine." The glow will be felt by you and by those around you. (One Minute with Yourself – R' Raymond Beyda)

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR
In Praise of Ribka**

The Torah in beginning of Parashat Toledot introduces Ribka as "the daughter of Betuel the Aramean, from Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean." Rashi comments that the Torah refers to Ribka in this fashion in order to praise her for growing to be a righteous woman in spite of her upbringing. She was the daughter of a wicked man and the sister of a wicked man, and the townspeople among whom she lived were wicked, yet she grew to become a saintly Sadeket.

Why did the Torah point specifically to this particular quality of Ribka? Certainly, there are many qualities for which Ribka deserved praise. Why was this specific aspect of her greatness mentioned, and why is it mentioned in this context?

One explanation is that this praise for Ribka serves to introduce the events related in the subsequent verses, which tell of Ribka's difficult pregnancy. She experienced unusual pain after conceiving with Yaakob and Esav, and the Torah says that "she went to seek out G-d," meaning, she consulted with the great Sages of the time – Shem and Eber – to find the cause of her pains. Ribka had been raised in a society that was deeply entrenched in sorcery and witchcraft. Whenever a crisis or difficult situation presented itself, the people would consult with fortune-tellers and magicians for guidance. But despite growing up with this culture, Ribka knew to consult with Torah Sages for guidance in times of trouble. She had the wisdom to reject the beliefs and practices of her native land and look to the Hachamim for help. The Torah thus praises Ribka in this context for being righteous despite his pagan upbringing, as an introduction to the story of her consultation with Shem and Eber.

There is also an additional explanation. The very next Pasuk tells that Yishak prayed to Hashem for a child "Nochah Ishto" – while facing Ribka. This might mean that Yishak invoked Ribka's great merit in his prayer. He asked Hashem to grant them a child

specifically in the merit of Ribka, who was righteous despite her idolatrous background. Yishak understood that being a pious, G-d-fearing person in a sinful society is a source of great merit, and he sought to invoke this merit as he prayed for a child. And this is why the Torah makes mention of this quality of Ribka in this context – because it was this quality that rendered her worthy of having children. People born and raised in a corrupt, decadent culture can be expected to grow into corrupt, decadent people. It takes a great deal of strength and fortitude to resist this pressure and live a life of piety and virtue when one is surrounded by sin. Therefore, when Yishak turned to G-d in prayer to beg for a child, he pointed to Ribka, to her merit of opposing the culture in which she was raised. The story of Ribka thus shows us the great merit of this achievement, how those who succeed in resisting negative societal influences are deserving of G-d's blessings and rewards.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
ONE-HUNDRED YEARS OF COMMUNIST RULE**

1917 was a year of momentous events for the world and for the Jewish people. It was the year when the Balfour Declaration was issued by Great Britain and the year of America's entry into World War I. It was also the year that the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia and created the first Communist government and society in the world.

Communism was messianic vision incarnate. It was the ultimate utopian dream realized. It promised prosperity for all, the abolition of war and bigotry, and the end of the exploitation of the working class, and a society where no one would own anything privately but everyone would own everything collectively.

Its "bible" consisted of the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels with an overlay of commentary and dicta by Lenin. A small group of hardened violent revolutionaries hijacked a country of over one-hundred million and immediately began killing those who it suspected of not being true believers in the Communist dream.

Lenin famously said: "One cannot make a successful revolution without a firing squad," and he was a man

of his word. The violence used in enforcing Communist rule created a civil war that lasted for years and consumed hundreds of thousands of lives. But the Communists eventually prevailed and the Soviet Union, as Russia was now to be called, became the workers' paradise and the wave of the future for humankind generally.

Communism was never intended to be limited to Russia alone but rather it was an international movement that promised to remove all nationalistic territorial borders and all religious differences since there would only be enforced atheism in the Communist new world.

The toll of human lives over the past century in countries under Communist rule has been horrendous. Between Lenin, Stalin, Chairman Mao, Pol Pat, Fidel Castro, etc. it easily surpasses one-hundred million. In spite of this tremendous cost, the longed for paradise never quite arrived. The main Communist states, Russia and China, have long since abandoned the nonsense of Marxian economic theory in order to survive. All states that clung to Marxist theology have failed and failed miserably.

Communism became and to a great extent still remains the engine of anti-Israel and anti-Semitism on the world, especially in academia and other befuddled islands of Leftist belief. What makes this so ironic and troublesome is the fact that a great many Jews in past generations believed in Marxist theory and marched militantly under the red banner.

Many Jews were seduced by the messianic aspect of Communism and its pronounced aim of ending bigotry amongst human societies. But reality intervened and reengineering human nature proved to be much more difficult than the Communist theoreticians ever imagined. So, more terror had to be invoked to reach the unreachable goal of utopianism. The system collapsed in a welter of poverty, inefficiency and state sponsored murder. A century later we are able to look back and wonder how a world could have gone so mad for so long and ignored the realities and followed the false prophets.

History is a brutal teacher. It does not support false doctrines and eventually exposes all of the weaknesses that are part of any and all human propositions. But history is too late to restore the lives and fortunes of those ruined by Communism over the past century. The professors in the Western world's universities who continue to spew the Communist line of thought do a great disservice to their mostly naïve students.

The history of Communism as it really existed over the past century should be enough to make any rational thinking person understand its failure and falsehood. Instead it is often presented as a truth whose time will yet come and its utopian dream is simply waiting around the corner of human experience to be realized. This is especially important regarding the Jewish left that has become increasingly and belligerently anti-Israel and anti-Jewish traditional values and life style.

Marx is not Moses and fads and changing mores do not place one on the path of eternity. In an age of rampant paganism and hedonism the prophet Yirmiyahu told the Jewish people to look back at their path in life and see where that path led to. After a century of Communist rule and unparalleled human destruction, an honest and hard look backwards at the history of Communism over the past century is certainly in order. There are over one hundred-million lives and souls that demand at least this from us.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Truth emerges from disagreement and debate

Coming in to Broadcasting House this morning I saw for the first time the statue unveiled this week, of George Orwell, with its inscription on the wall behind, "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." How badly we need that truth today.

I've been deeply troubled by what seems to me to be the assault on free speech taking place in British universities in the name of "safe space," "trigger warnings," and "micro-aggressions," meaning any remark that someone might find offensive even if no offence is meant. So far has this gone that a month ago, students at an Oxford College banned the presence of a representative of the Christian Union on the grounds that some might find their presence alienating and offensive. Luckily the protest that followed led to the ban being swiftly overturned. But still ...

I'm sure this entire movement has been undertaken for the highest of motives, to protect the feelings of the vulnerable, which I applaud, but you don't achieve that by silencing dissenting views. A safe space is the exact opposite: a place where you give a respectful hearing to views opposed to your own, knowing that your views too will be listened to respectfully. That's academic freedom and it's essential to a free society.

And it's what I learned at university. My doctoral supervisor, the late Sir Bernard Williams, was an atheist. I was a passionate religious believer. But he always listened respectfully to my views, which gave me the confidence to face those who disagree with everything I stand for. That's safety in an unsafe world.

And it's at the very heart of my faith, because Judaism is a tradition all of whose canonical texts are anthologies of arguments. In the Bible, Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah and Job argue with God. The rabbinic literature is an almost endless series of Rabbi X says this and Rabbi Y says that, and when one rabbi had the chance of asking God who was right, God replied, they're both right. "How can they both be right?" asked the rabbi, to which God's apocryphal reply was: "You're also right." The rabbis called this, "argument for the sake of heaven."

Why does it matter? Because truth emerges from disagreement and debate. Because tolerance means making space for difference. Because justice involves Audi alteram partem, listening to the other side. And because, in Orwell's words, liberty means "the right to tell people what they do not want to hear."

Rav Kook on the Perasha Harnessing the Power of Esau

We know little about the birth of most Biblical personalities. Yet, the Torah describes in detail the birth of Jacob and Esau and their respective naming.

"The first one came out reddish, hairy all over like a fur coat. They named him Esau. His brother then came out, his hand grasping Esau's heel. He named him Jacob." (Gen. 25:25-26)

The name Esau means "made" or "completed." From day one, Esau was full of strength and energy. The name Jacob (Ya'akov) refers to the fact that he was holding on to Esau's heel (ekev). Later on, Jacob is named a second time; here too, his name refers to his relationship with his brother Esau. The night before meeting up with Esau, he struggles with a mysterious stranger. This stranger — according to some, Esau's guardian angel — informs him:

"Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel. You have struggled with angels and men, and you have prevailed" (Gen. 32:29).

What is the inner meaning of Jacob's names? What is the significance of his grasping on to Esau's heel?

Why does he have two names?

Restraint versus Control

Just as there are both positive and negative forces in the world, so too, every person is a composite of positive and negative traits. We need these negative forces, however; without their power and vitality, many goals and aspirations would lack the energy necessary to be realized.

Esau represents the raw, base forces in the world. His reddish complexion indicated the violent and brutal nature of his personality. Jacob did not prevent Esau from coming into the world; after all, the world needs Esau and his raw power. Rather, Jacob held on to Esau's heel, holding him back. The name Jacob refers to this aspect of restraint, reigning in the fierce forces.

Ultimately, however, our goal is not to simply hold back these negative forces. We aspire to gain control over them and utilize them, like a hydroelectric dam that harnesses the vast energy of a raging waterfall for the production of electricity. For example, the Talmud tells us that a person with blood-thirsty tendencies should become a shochet (ritual slaughterer) or a mohel, thus sublimating his violent nature for noble purposes. This higher aspiration is represented by Jacob's second name, Israel, which comes from the root-word sar, meaning "to rule."

The name Jacob is appropriate when the Jews are in the Diaspora. There, they serve as a moral conscience to partially restrict the wild and violent forces in the world. But when redeemed and living in their own land, the Jewish people are able to attain the higher level of Israel. Then they have the opportunity to demonstrate how a nation may utilize its material capabilities for constructive and ethical goals. (Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 58-59. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 68)

Yishaq: Continuing The Legacy Rabbi Meyer Laniado

Yishaq, → although unique as a person, has a life very similar to that of his father Abraham[1]. Yishaq's wife Ribqa is barren, just like his mother Sarah who has trouble conceiving. He has two sons, the younger of which is chosen to continue the family legacy. Abraham and Yishaq both deal with a famine in Canaan, worry about being killed because others desire their wife, have wells stolen from them, and have King Abimelekh and his army general seek out

a peace treaty with them. While all of these events are similar, Yishaq is not a carbon copy of his father; he is known as one who represents the trait of gebura, strength, while his father represents hessed, graciousness. The midrash working with these and other similarities makes the point that we should pay attention to the events of our past as a sign for us and future generations. The phrase made famous by the Ramban is ma'ase abot siman lebanim, "everything that occurred to our forefathers is a sign for the children[2]."

Yishaq experiences many of the same events as his father. This is similar to the way we have and will experience similar situations to those our parents and grandparents have experienced. Learning from their actions in these circumstances can guide our behavior. This concept is well known in the business world, and is why aspiring businessmen seek out mentors and read biographies and case studies about successful businesses and leaders.

Our tradition values learning from the past and instructs us to ask our fathers so they can relate their experiences and our elders so they can inform us,[3] sha'al abikha veyagedkha, zeqenekha veyomeru lakh. The book of Mishle opens with this idea as well: shema' beni mussar abikha, ve'al titosh torah imekha. Ki livyat hen hem lerosheikha, veanaqim legargerotekha. "Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the instruction of your mother. For they are a wreath of grace for your head and a necklace for your neck[4]." Many of the past generation will vividly remember the direction given by their mothers, many of them not educated in the texts of the Torah, but grounded in its values. It is this direction and guidance that Mishle is referring to.

The stories our parents and grandparents tell us about their lives relate the lessons they have received and learned throughout their life. Their goal is to help their children grow beyond them. Society progresses when children look to previous generations for insights, experience, and wisdom. This knowledge can then be used to develop further insights and avoid pitfalls.

The lessons may not pertain to you directly, but may be helpful to your children or grandchildren. The midrash expresses this when it states that some of the events of Abraham's life symbolize what will happen generations later[5]. For example, the encounter of Ya'aqob with Esav is one we still reference when dealing with our enemies[6]. Note the Ramban on Ya'aqob's meeting with Esav:

Another concept alluded to is that all that occurred to

our forefather with Esau will repeat itself with us and Esau's descendants. It is therefore appropriate for us to emulate the efforts of Ya'aqob who initiated three strategies for his encounter with Esau; prayer, presents, and war[7].

This is only one example of how the midrash, Ramban and others learn from the actions of our abot. We should also view the life stories of Abraham, Yishaq, and Ya'aqob as models to gain insight from. These lessons will teach us how to behave in similar scenarios that life places before us. Having the values of kibud ab vaem, respecting our father and mother, and respecting the previous generations is how we progress. Their life experiences and lessons should be viewed as sign posts to guide us along our life's journey.

[1] Note Rashi quoting the midrash that Isaac physically looked like Abraham.

ה"בקה רמא, רמא הבר היעשוה יבר משב סחנפ יבר: אמוחנת שרדמ[2] בותכש המ לכ אצומ תא. רינב ינפל ררדה תא שובכו אצ וניבא מהרבאל (תישארב) ביתכ לארשיב, קראב בער יהיו ביתכ מהרבאב, וינבב בותכ מהרבאב המירצמ סרבא דריו ביתכ מהרבאב, קראב ברקב בערה פיתנש הז יכ (ה"מ ביתכ מהרבאב, המירצמ וניתובא ודריו (כ' רבדמב) ביתכ לארשיב, מש רוגל ביתכ מהרבאב... ונאב קראב רוגל (ז"מ תישארב) ביתכ לארשיב, מש רוגל הרואיה דוליה נבה לכ (א' תומש) ביתכ לארשיב, ויחי רתואו יתוא וגרהו (דוע שש הארו, ח מ תישארב)... והוכילשת המ לכש, מהרבאל ה"בקה ול ותנ נמיס וינכסד עשוהי יבר רמא: אמוחנת שרדמ 'ה אוה התא רמאנש, ויבא תיב לכמ מהרבאב רחב, דציכ, וינבל עריא ול עריאש וינבב רחבו, (ט' הימחנ) 'וגו מידשכ רואמ תאצוהו סרבאב תרחב רשא סיקלאה וניהל ריקלא 'ה רחב רבו ריקלא 'הל התא שודק עכ יכ רמאנש, תומוא סיעבשמ רמאנ וינבלו, רל רל רמאנ מהרבאל, (ד"י סירבד) סימעה לכמ הלוגס מעל ול רמאנ מהרבאל, (ג' תומש) 'וגו יתחהו יענכה קרא לא סירצמ ינעמ סכתא הלאה מהרבאל. 'ה רכרבי (א' רבדמב) רמאנ וינבלו, הכרב יהיו רמש הלידגאו רכרבאו דרישכ מהרבא... לודג יוג ימו (ד' סירבד) רמאנ וינבלו, לודג יוגל רשעאו רמאנ (תומש) וינבל פא, דאמ איה הפי יכ השאה תא סירצמה אריו, סירצמה ול וגוודזנ פא, סיכלמ העברא ול וגוודזנ מהרבא, 'וגו הברי נפ ול המכחנת הבה (א' ושגר המל (ב' סילהת) רמאנש, שהילע שגרתהל סיכלמה לכ וידיעת לארשיל לעו 'ה לע דחי ודסונ סינזורו קרא יכלמ ונציתי רמואו, קיר וגהי סימאלו סיוג ריעה ימ (א"מ היעשי) רמאנש, ויאנושב מחלנו ה"בקה אצי מהרבא המ, וחישמ שקב וברח רפעכ ותי, דרי סיכלמו סיוג וינפל ותי, ולגרל והארקי קדצ חרזממ 'ה אצוי (ד"י היכז) רמאנש, וינבל תושעל ה"בקה דיתע רכ פא, ותשק פדנ (ט רל רל). ברק סויב ומחלה סויכ מהה סיוגב מחלנו

[3] Debarim 32:7

[4] Mishle 1:8

[5] See footnote 1

[6] Ramban 32:9

[7] Ramban 32:5

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“And Isaac trembled a very great trembling” (27:33)

“And he (Esav) cried out a great and exceedingly bitter outcry” (27:34)

Here we have the case where two men were subject to the most awesome alarm. When Yitzchak Abenu

realized that he had been in error for so many years, “And Isaac trembled a very great trembling”. He was a Prophet and surely he knew both of his sons well. And yet he was tricked for many years and almost gave the Blessings to the wrong son. Isaac suddenly understood that he had committed an error of such magnitude that would have altered the entire history of the great nation which was expected to rise up to become the people of Hashem. Chazal tell us that he saw Gehenom open up before him and he trembled exceedingly. The Midrash tells us that Isaac was even greater than Abraham in wisdom, since he possessed his father's wisdom and also had progressed on his own. And yet, still he was fooled by Esav.

The same applies to Esav as well, since they both “cried out with a most exceeding outcry”. Since by Isaac this meant that he was completely fooled, then by Esav it also means that he was completely fooled. Esav thought he was honestly entitled to the Blessings. If he had realized that he was inferior to Jacob his brother, then even though he might have been disappointed when Jacob received the Blessings, he wouldn't have made such an outcry. But his cry proves that he really thought he deserved the Blessings.

Thus both Isaac and his son Esav cried; one for the many years of error and his almost fatal mistake, and the other for not getting what he thought he deserved. In Slabodka Yeshiva we were constantly taught: A person must always examine his motivations. A person always gives himself the benefit of the doubt and rarely acknowledges his faults. Even when he suspects certain flaws in his character, he never has any idea how serious they are. He can only improve if someone else points them out to him, for example your father, mother, spouse, boss, Rabbi or teacher etc. A person must be a Listener, “And Jacob listened to his father and mother” (28:7). Jacob who sat in the tent was the one who knew his own faults. He listened and obeyed his great parents.

Even when you do listen you have to listen and hear things many times. It takes 40 years before you fully understand its meaning. “The ear that hears the admonition of life will always abide in the midst of the wise” (Mishle 15:31).

Adapted from “Shabbat Morning Talks” by R' Miller ZT'L