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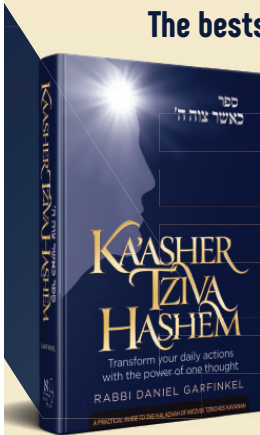
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פרשת תולדות

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Missed Opportunities

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Part I. The Sins That Weren't

Studying The Story

The story of the episode when Eisav transferred the *bechorah* to Yaakov is exceptional. If you look elsewhere in the Torah you see that so many *pratim*, so many details, are usually not given. Large portions of the lives of great men are not related to us at all. Avrohom's first seventy years, we know nothing about them. Of Moshe Rabeinu's first eighty years we know nothing. And here the Torah gives details and more details. And therefore we understand that we are expected to derive important information from the story here – stories in the Torah are not told to entertain us; they're told to teach us.

Now I am not the one who is capable of discovering the lessons. I'm sure there is a great deal that can be said on this subject; I imagine that entire *chiburim* could be composed on the transaction between the two

brothers. I'm not the one to take on that big job, but right now we are going to talk about one detail of the story that is a *chibur* in itself.

Tosfos' Stumper

First an introduction. The Chachomim say (Bava Basra 16b) that **הַמֶּשֶׁבַע יוֹם עָבַר עַל עֲשֵׂוֹ הַרְשָׁע בְּאוֹתוֹ יוֹם**, *on that day that Eisav sold the birthright he committed five sins*. The Gemara there enumerates five serious transgressions that we blame Eisav for – that's how he received that unfortunate title of *Eisav HaRasha*.

As an example, **בָּא עַל נַעֲרָה הַמְאָרְסָה**, *Eisav committed adultery with somebody who was already mekudeshes*. **הַמְאָרְסָה** means she has accepted *kiddushin* from another man, which means she is an *eishes ish*. The Torah law of a *na'arah hameurasah* is that both she and the adulterer deserve *sekilah*, and so that certainly is a serious accusation made against Eisav.

Now Tosfos there asks a *kasha* on this accusation: "How could that be?" he says. "There's no such thing as *kiddushin* before Matan Torah. Before the Torah was given a man didn't acquire a wife by a transaction, what we call a *kinyan*. Before Matan Torah a marriage could only happen if he took her as his wife and they were together as man and wife. That made her his wife. But *na'arah meurasah* means that there was nothing but an act of *kiddushin* – which meant nothing in those days. So what do you mean to say that Eisav committed adultery with a *na'arah meurasah*? It's impossible. That's Tosfos's *kasha*.

Upsetting The Stoliners

Now Tosfos is not interested in looking for *zechuyos* to defend Eisav, but what could he do? He's trying to understand the plain *peirush* of the words of our Sages and he knows that there's no such thing as *eurusin* by Ben Noach. And therefore Tosfos explains that it wasn't actually a *na'arah hameurasah*. It was a woman who had promised her troth to another man. She had given her word that she would go to marry another man. And then Eisav went ahead and he married her.

Imagine a boy from Lakewood met a girl who had already promised to marry a fellow, let's say, from Stolin. And he sees that she's a fine girl, a good catch, and so he tells her "Stolin?! Marry me and you'll be in Lakewood!" So she consented. She reconsidered and decided that Lakewood is where she wants to be and she marries the Lakewoder.

Would anybody say he was **בָּא עַל נַעֲרָה הַמְאָרְסָה**? Her commitment to the Stoliner was nothing! There was no *kiddushin*, nothing at all. Maybe it wasn't ethical to dissuade her from marrying the man she had committed

to but that's all it is. It could be the Stoliner Rebbe would have a *taynah*, but it's fair competition. After all, he didn't force her. She consented to give up the first one and take the second one. And so there's absolutely nothing at all resembling a sin of adultery. And yet for that same thing, Eisav is blamed.

The Righteous Murderer

Another example of Eisav's sins. Number two on the list is **הָרַג אֶת הַנָּפֶשׁ**. Eisav murdered somebody. But whom did Eisav kill? The Chachomim tell us that Eisav slew Nimrod. Nimrod! Nimrod had attempted to destroy Avrohom Avinu, Eisav's grandfather. Nimrod was a real *rasha*, the one who caused the world to get up in rebellion against Hakodosh Boruch Hu. So it was a *mitzvah* to get rid of him. **וּבְעֵרָתָ הָרַע מִקֶּרְבְּךָ**. We're obligated to rid the world of wickedness.

If somebody had killed Hitler and he had come let's say subsequently to America, he would receive an ovation. He would have received the Presidential Medal of Honor. That's not important today – today they'll give that award to every low fellow, to terrorists, but in the olden days you had to deserve an award like that. And he would have received a ticker-tape parade too. Thousands of people would line the streets to celebrate the death of Hitler. Not only from the masses in the street would this 'murderer' gain recognition. I'm sure all the *rabbonim* and all the *roshei yeshivah* would honor him for killing Hitler. A *mitzvah raboh!*

I remember when General Pershing came back. When Pershing came back from France after World War I, they showered him with flowers. They were so happy they didn't know what to do for him. And some of you younger fellows maybe remember Eisenhower when he returned after World War II. People went wild over him!

And so we are blaming Eisav for bloodshed, but actually he deserves medals. In our society Eisav would have gone down Broadway in an open limousine and he would have been showered with flowers for killing Nimrod, and here, poor Eisav, his reputation is blackened: **הָרַג אֶת הַנָּפֶשׁ**, as if he did some sin.

The Righteous Judge

But the answer is this: Hakodosh Boruch Hu judges a man by his motives. If Eisav had killed Nimrod purely out of the honor of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, that's one thing. But Eisav, when he was doing it, he was getting some satisfaction out of the act. He gained pleasure from bloodshed, and that's how Hakodosh Boruch Hu judged him.

Now to us, nowadays, who would stop to examine the motives? Let's say some mean fellow, even a convicted murderer would have sneaked into Germany and would have killed Hitler, we would forget all of his past. And if he did it because of a blood lust, so what? We would forgive everything!

But that's because we don't examine motives. But when it comes to great people, when it comes to a son of Yitzchok and Rivkah much more is expected and Hashem does examine. For a son of other parents there would have been nothing to criticize. But for a son of such great people, *nevi'im*, everything is expected and therefore Hakodosh Boruch Hu expected of Eisav very great perfection. And therefore, when Eisav is judged, it's only on the basis of his thoughts, not because of his acts. And the things that Eisav is criticized for, we wouldn't have found fault in him.

'Level'ing Criticism

Like it states elsewhere about certain kings, וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי הַשָּׁם – *he did what was evil in the Eyes of Hashem*. Not our eyes. We wouldn't have seen what to criticize but in the Eyes of Hashem there was something there. Whenever that's written it doesn't mean it was what we would consider bad at all. Only that a *melech* who was over the *Am Yisroel*, much more should have been achieved by him, much more *shleimus*, much greater perfection. And therefore what is said וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי הַשָּׁם is a rare kind of criticism. Of course it was a criticism that's approachable by us. Even we could understand it. Otherwise, it wouldn't have been written. But you must understand it's not what we would have criticized.

And what you just heard is a *klal gadol*, a great principle in understanding *Tanach*. These kings were not as bad as they are made to appear. And surely when the Chachomim report about terrible deeds that they did in private, you must understand that it's not *k'peshuto*. Whatever is said you have to understand it in a different sense. They're being criticized only according to what they should have been.

And the same thing is when they reported about Eisav being בָּא עַל הַמְּאֹרָה and הָרַג אֶת הַנֶּפֶשׁ, it's on an entirely different level that Eisav is being criticized; not on our level but on the level of a son of Yitzchok and Rivkah. And only according to the expectations was he criticized. And the other sins mentioned there too, we'll understand it the same way. If you look at the other accusations, whatever they are, we have to understand them all in the same sense of these criticisms.

Now that explains why these 'sins' are not written in the Torah at all. You might find a *remez* in *midrashim*, some hint, but in the Chumash such

a thing is not mentioned at all. And that's because the Torah would be untruthful in leveling such a criticism that people couldn't understand or would misunderstand. And although in the *Beis Din shel ma'alah* when Eisav is being judged so our Chachomim were allowed to take a look and see what went on and they reported to us that this was considered an accusation. But down below it's too much for people to be told and therefore it's not in the Torah.

He Would Have Been Praised

However, of the five sins of which Eisav is accused one of them is written *befeirush* in the Torah. It's stated as openly as could be and it's written *ba'arichus*, at length, in detail. And that is **וְשָׂט אֶת הַבְּכוֹרָה**, he scorned the birthright. That's one of Eisav's five sins and the Torah says it openly: **וַיִּבֹז עֵשָׂו אֶת הַבְּכוֹרָה**. *Eisav scorned his birthright*. It couldn't be more open than that. And about this sin the Torah tells the story because it's the most important lesson for us.

Now, the truth is that even this *aveirah*, it's not so simple to discover what was so bad. So he scorned the *bechorah*, what about it? Actually if people in that time would have read this *parshah* and they wouldn't have seen the last sentence, they would have said, "Eisav, that's a *kadosh!* A man who runs away from glory, he gives up *kavod*. Don't we know Yehudah ben Tabai did the same thing (Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:5). When they wanted to make him the *nasi* so he ran away. They wanted to make him *av beis din* so he ran away to Mitzrayim. And it's considered a *shevach*. He's praised for that. And so Eisav would have been praised by the people.

Eisav's words would have been a model for us. **הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לְמוֹת** – *I'm going to die one day*. Those are words that *tzaddikim* say, "This world is only a temporary place. We're going to leave this world one day and so what does glory in this world mean anyhow?"

If people would have heard that, they would have admired Eisav no end; and I'm sure that Eisav admired himself to no end for that. I'm sure he always looked back and congratulated himself. He didn't say those words, **וַיִּבֹז עֵשָׂו אֶת הַבְּכוֹרָה**. He said everything up to that. Only that when Hakodosh Boruch Hu dictated the Torah to Moshe Rabeinu, He told him to add these words because that's the *maskanah*, the conclusion, of the whole story. He scorned the birthright – that's the punchline of the whole story.

Part II. The Sin That Was

The Allure Of Freedom

So the question is ‘*Mai ka mashma lon*’, what’s the purpose of telling us that? We don’t get the punchline! What’s the sin that we’re supposed to see over there? So what if he scorned the *bechorah*? It’s an important question, by the way, because the better we understand what the sin was, the better we’ll grab a practical lesson for ourselves from this Torah story.

Now you have to understand that the *bechorah* meant opportunity; it was opportunity to serve Hashem because in those days the firstborn officiated at the *mizbeach*, at the *bamah*. Every family had its *mizbeach* where they served Hashem and the *bechor* was the one who led the way. The *bechor* in those days became the teacher of the family. He was like the priest, the *kohen* of the family.

But Eisav was thinking, “Am I going to be tied down to a *mizbeach*?” A *mizbeach* requires a lot of things. You have to learn the practice of sacrifices on a *mizbeach*. They didn’t just kill animals; everything was done with certain time consuming procedures and Eisav didn’t want to tie himself down. “I want to be a free man.”

Sin Of Squander

I’m sure he made some good excuses for himself. “I’ll wander in the fields and hunt animals for my father, to bring him food to eat. *Kibud av!*” “I’ll look at the trees and the birds; I’ll see *niflaos haBorei*. *Shaar HaBechina!*” There’s never a shortage of excuses – especially when it comes to *avodas Hashem*. And therefore it didn’t bother his conscience. So Yaakov will be the *bechor*. What of it? As long as the *avodah* will continue I can go into the forests to hunt.

That’s the sin! To squander opportunities! Opportunities to serve Hashem! And even though it might require you to stay home because they’ll need you on the *mizbeach*; you won’t be able to go out on all the trips that your heart desires. You’ll have to stay at home and make something of yourself. Of course you always have your justifications. “It’s Niagara Falls, it’s *niflaos haBorei*.” Or, “It’s Eretz Yisroel” or this and that. But you’re squandering opportunity, that’s the real *terutz*.

The Real Kosel

Here’s a justification a man tells me why he needs to waste time traveling: “But it’s Eretz Yisroel; it’s the Kosel!” So you’re going to give up on your Torah learning in the evenings, your *chavrusahs*, *shiurim*, to go to

Eretz Yisroel and to stand at a wall that's just a *zeicher* of *yimei kedem*, a remembrance of our glorious past. It's something, I'm not saying no, but that's also included in this sin of squandering opportunity. To give up learning to go to the Kosel Ma'aravi?!

If you want to go to the Kosel then you should know that the Shas Bavli is your Kosel Ma'aravi. Make the *seforim shrank* with the Shas Bavli in it your Kosel Ma'aravi. That's your success.

The success of life is the transferring the contents of the Shas into your mind. So stand in front of that Shas on the shelf in your living room and make that your Kosel Ma'aravi. After you close your Gemara for the night and you put it back on the shelf you can stand there and put *kvitlach*, prayer notes, in between the Gemaras and pray to Hashem. The Shas is our everything! There's nothing in the world more *kadosh*, more special, to Hakodosh Boruch Hu than the *daled amos shel halacha*. Since the *churban Beis haMikdash* He has nothing in the world that is more important than the Shas and our Torah *seforim*. So what are you thinking? To forego learning Torah for a cheap substitute?!

Missing And Sinning

Now, when people hear such examples, so they take me for an extremist. But that's because we don't understand the gravity of that sin of giving up opportunities. If we're going to realize how serious an accusation, how serious a sin it is, we'll have to spend a little time first on understanding what the word *cheit* means.

We spend a lot of time in our *tefillos* saying to Hashem חָטָאנוּ – We sinned. Again and again, in our *tefillos*, סָלַח לָנוּ אֱבִינוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ, we say. And so it makes sense that we should investigate the meaning of that word. I know people think they know but most are mistaken. Listen now because you're going to hear a *chiddush* now. *Cheit* doesn't mean what we think, to go and do a sin. It doesn't mean a positive misstep, a positive sin. What it means is the lack of achieving. That's what a *cheit* really means. *Chatanu* doesn't mean "we rebelled;" it means "We missed out."

The Sinless Slingers

How do we know that? In the Book of Shoftim (20:16) it's describing the slingshot shooters of the Shevet Binyamin and it states about them that קָלַע בְּאַבְנֵי אֵל הַשַּׁעֲרָה וְלֹא יָחָטָא – they could aim at the hairsbreadth, וְלֹא יָחָטָא – and wouldn't miss. That's how expert they were. They were able to take the slingshots and sling the stones and hit the target right in the middle. לֹא יָחָטָא, They would never miss the target.

Now, there was no sin there, no *aveirah*. It was just a question of missing the target. **לֹא יִחָטֵא** means they wouldn't miss. So we see that *cheit*, sin, actually means "to miss."

The Sinless Successor

Another example. You remember when Dovid Hamelech was on his deathbed, so his wife Bas-Sheva came to him and said, "Look, you told me that you decided that Shlomo would be your successor, that he should be the next king, and here is Adoniyahu ben Chagis, one of your other sons, and he's right now proclaiming himself the future king. He made a great assembly of people and he's scheming to announce himself king. **יְהִי אֲנִי וְכִנִּי שְׁלֹמֹה הַחֲטָאִים** – *And now if you don't take quick action then Shlomo and I will be the chato'im.*" (Melochim I, 1:21).

What does *chato'im* there mean? Not sinners; what does sinners have to do with it? It means "the losers." Shlomo and I will be the ones who *miss out* if you don't deal with it now. You promised me that my son would be king and if you don't stop Adoniyahu now, he will be king "and I and my son will be the *chato'im*, the losers."

So we're discovering now the original meaning of *cheit*. It's something new to us but it's the truth: *cheit* means to lose out, to miss out. It's not the doing wrong; it's the missed opportunity to do good.

The Sinless Trucker

I always give one *mashal*. I'll say it again for the tenth time, the same *mashal*. You hired a man with a truck to go to Los Angeles to pick up merchandise to bring it back. So he went across the country with your truck and now he finally came back. So you ask him, "How was it?"

He said, "The trip was excellent." He had no accidents. "I didn't get a single traffic ticket. Everything was wonderful. No flat tires, nothing. An excellent trip."

So you say, "What about the merchandise that you were supposed to pick up?"

"Oh, I forgot to pick up the merchandise," he says.

"Oh no! What is that worth for me? I sent you to Los Angeles merely to avoid traffic tickets, to avoid accidents?"

So Hashem says, "I sent you to this world merely to avoid *aveiros*?" Certainly you have to avoid *aveiros*. When you're driving a truck absolutely you must beware of smash ups. But when you come back to the boss and you forgot to deliver the goods so the whole trip was wasted. That's what Hashem says, "Where is the merchandise you were supposed to bring

back? לְהָשִׁיב אֲמָרִים לְשֵׁלֶחֶיךָ – to bring back the emes to the one who sends you (Mishlei 22:21)! All the mitzvos, the accomplishments! Where are they?” Naturally if you’re going to get your truck into traffic accidents, you won’t be able to deliver the goods either, but we don’t come to this world merely to avoid sins.

The Next World

And why is that? It’s because if a person did *aveiros*, the worst that can happen to him is he goes to Gehenom. Now Gehenom is not a pleasure, it’s not a resort, but usually if he’s a *ma’amin*, if he believes in Hakodosh Boruch Hu and he believes in *Matan Torah*, so when he goes to Gehenom, he is purified. It’s a painful process. They use detergents there; it hurts terribly but finally he is cleansed of all of his sins.

“The punishment for the wicked Jews in Gehenom is twelve months and that’s all” (Eduyos 2:10). After that, he comes out and now he’s ready for the great happiness of *Olam Habo*, to enjoy his *mitzvos*, his achievements. And the reward for *mitzvos* is not for twelve months. For his *mitzvos*, his Torah, his perfection of character, he’s rewarded forever and ever and ever. For *aveiros*, there’s punishment, terrible punishment, but the time comes when the punishment is finished and now he starts the happy existence in the Gan Eden where he’ll be rewarded forever and ever.

Lost Opportunities

Now suppose that when he gets to Gan Eden he finds that he gave up opportunities. “Oh, I remember that day when I got a letter in the mail from a *talmid chochom* in Yerushalayim, a *tzadik* who sits and learns all day long, and he was marrying off his tenth daughter. I threw it in the wastebasket. I lost out; a *chotei*.”

Or, “I remember now when the rabbi was giving a lecture in the evening and I convinced myself that I was too busy to go.” It’s a terrible thing! Learning Torah is one of the great forms of utilizing life.

You know what an opportunity it is to learn just one line of Gemara, to learn one line and know it well. You’re saying the words of the *Chazal*, the words of the greatest people who came after the *Nevi’im*, and you’re saying it and able to repeat it and sometimes you even know more or less the whole idea. If you say two lines, three lines, whoooo! You know a whole page of Gemara? You’re a millionaire.

Kinyan haMasechta

If you learn just one *amud* Gemara and go over it again and again until you can run through it like *ashrei*, even if you don't know the *pshat* well, you just translate the words more or less and run through it like *ashrei*, it's an achievement. People keep on learning a new *blatt* every day and the old Gemara was always too weakly learned so it becomes eradicated quickly from the mind. No, that's not the way to learn, that's not how you use the opportunity of life. You should sit and *chazer* the same *amud* again four times. And then if you want it to be even better, talk over *ba'al peh* the whole *shakla vatarya*, not every word. Talk it over *ba'al peh*.

And so if you have five minutes to learn, two minutes to learn, it's a tremendous opportunity! Two minutes of Torah! You'll never make it up again! And even though you'll learn hours and hours later, you'll learn for days and weeks, but those five minutes are lost. That's *chatos*! You missed out!

And in Gan Eden, you'll break your hands with weeping, "Why did I lose those five minutes?" But no *teshuva* will help and no Gehenom will help. *Teshuva* and Gehenom can't accomplish for you. It can clean you for the sin of not accomplishing but it will never accomplish for you the opportunities you scorned. You missed it and you'll never get it back.

Part III. Avoiding That Sin

Scorned Opportunity

That's what we learn from Eisav. He made the biggest *cheit* a person could make, the most tragic mistake of his life. וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ - he picked himself up and walked away from an opportunity, וַיִּבֹז עֵשָׂו אֶת הַבְּכוֹרָה - Eisav scorned the *bechorah*.

What does it mean he scorned the *bechorah*? In one word he scorned *opportunity*. That was the big sin, the big *chatos*. He threw away a tremendous opportunity to utilize this life for accomplishing in *avodas Hashem*.

Yaakov on the other hand, lived for the purpose of achieving *shleimus*, and any opportunity that came his way. That was his *hashkafas hachaim*: "Yaaakov," he was always telling himself, "There's so much more you could accomplish in life!"

Now to study everything that Yaakov Avinu did with his life according to this *hashkafah*, this attitude that life is a precious string of opportunities, that's impossible. I'm not able to explain to you the greatness of Yaakov Avinu. It's like an ant trying to measure the height of men. I wouldn't even presume to try it. I'm not capable.

But our Sages, they were capable and they tell us right away about one of Yaakov Avinu's great accomplishments. He got busy making use of the opportunity to build a family, to create a nation. Neither Avrohom Avinu nor Yitzchok Avinu had that *zechus*.

Opportunity Of Family

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 19b) quotes a possuk about Yaakov: **כֹּה אָמַר הַשֵּׁם אֶל בֵּית יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר פָּדָה אֶת אַבְרָהָם** – So said Hashem about the house of Yaakov, the one who redeemed Avrohom (Yeshayah 29:22). Fregt the Gemara, **הֵיכַן מָצִינוּ בְּיַעֲקֹב שֶׁפָּדָא לְאַבְרָהָם** – Where did you find that Yaakov redeemed Avrohom? What does that mean?

And the Gemara answers, **אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה שֶׁפָּדָאוּ מִצַּעַר גְּדוּל בָּנִים** – Yaakov redeemed Avrohom from the difficulties of raising children. You know that for almost a hundred years Avrohom was free from raising children. Why was that? Don't think it was an accident, a tragedy. Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted Avrohom to be a man of leisure so that he'd have the time to think. That was Avrohom's special opportunity – not to raise children but to raise himself.

Now pay attention. What do we need children for? Are we little girls that we need baby dolls, something to play with? It's irrational. And it's selfish. That's what children are for?

The answer is that children are given to us by Hashem as an opportunity, a responsibility – we're raising the Am Hashem. And we have no right to dodge it. Certainly you have to marry young and have as many as you can because that's Hakodosh Boruch Hu's command. **פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ**. You must do that.

Go Crazy!

And as they come and you're going crazy from even two of them, so go crazy from ten. It's a big mistake; women think if they don't have more they won't go crazy. I've seen women who claim they are crazy from one baby. So you might as well go crazy over a lot.

But suppose Hakodosh Boruch Hu didn't give; so it's silly for a person to waste his life in sadness. No question, it's sad, but if that's what Hashem gave you, don't be overwhelmed by sadness. On the contrary, breathe a

sigh of relief, and be grateful; now you can go ahead and do the great things in life. The Chovos Halevovos says that. You hear such a thing?! You should be grateful that He absolved you from the obligation of children.

A woman can become very great now just because she has no children. How many women have time to read a Kuzari or to read the Chovos Halevovos? You can read it in translation too. You know how much you can transform yourself by reading Mesillas Yesharim ten times? You know what it means to learn Chumash and Mishlei and Koheles? It's life-changing! No question, you won't be the same woman anymore.

Different Opportunities

Now, mothers of families **תְּבוּאָה עֲלֵיהֶם בְּרִכָּה** – *blessed should they be* with all their chores; certainly Hakodosh Boruch Hu will reward them. But the Chovos Halevovos says that if Hashem has exonerated you from those obligations so now you can do a lot of things that people with children cannot do.

And if you waste your life mourning, that shows that you don't understand the purpose of life. The purpose of life is to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu. How do you serve Him? In whatever manner He requires of you. So if he deposits children on your doorstep, so that's what's required of you. And if He doesn't, so He requires other things. There are so many requirements in life that there's never any spare time.

The most important attitude is not to scorn whatever opportunity comes your way. Whether it's raising children or raising somebody else's children or by raising money for people to have children or by raising your mind to heights of *avodas Hashem* by creating a mind filled with all the attitudes and ideals of the Torah.

Creating A Mind

That's what Avrohom did. He was thinking through and developing all the *yesodos*, all of the Torah-truths; he was creating a Torah mind that was going to be the foundation of the ideology of the Torah nation. Because he was redeemed by Yaakov from raising the nation, so his mind was at leisure to discern the Hand of Hashem in nature. He saw the wonders of nature and he studied how everything has plan and purpose and how it is all for kindness, for the benefit of mankind. By means of utilizing the opportunity, Avrohom became very, very great in *hakarah* of Hakodosh Baruch Hu as a source of *chessed* in the world.

And Yitzchak, by the way, added to that. It says in the Medrash that Yitzchak added even more than Avrohom Avinu. **כְּנָנִים עַל גְּבֵי עֵינָיו**, *like a dwarf*

sitting on the shoulder of a giant. Avrohom was the giant but when the dwarf sits on the giant's shoulders, the dwarf is higher than the giant. And so Yitzchak had even more knowledge of these great ideas than Avrohom Avinu. You have to know that Avrohom and Yitzchok became giants in *avodas Hashem*.

And now Yaakov came along and he inherited all of that from them. He inherited all the philosophy, all the Torah, all the wisdom that Avrohom Avinu was *mechadesh* and now Hashem said to him, "Since the two Avos discovered all the great secrets of life and you're standing on their shoulders already worked out all the great truths of life, now you get busy raising children. Take all of that ideology and make a nation from it!"

Bringing Up Children

And so Yaakov got busy with children. What a job it was! Don't say, "Well, he just had twelve boys and one girl. Eisav had a lot of children too." There's a big difference. Eisav had children, yes, but he didn't bring them up. They grew up. Like bushes grow up wild, that's how they grew up. Maybe he taught them some things, I don't know but he had already scorned the opportunity and now it was too late for him.

Yaakov, on the other hand, grabbed the opportunity. Yaakov Avinu was raising a nation and therefore every detail mattered and so he put his life into the boys.

Now, I say 'Yaakov' but of course I mean, Beis Yaakov, the House of Yaakov, like the *possuk* says. The Imahos too, Rochel and Leah, just as much. When a couple has children, and they dedicate their lives to raising them *al pi Torah*, it's such a tremendous achievement. And every child will someday be a grandfather of a big family. Just think what happens. If you raise up the child in the right way, he's going to be an *oved Hashem*. He's going to teach his children the *derech Hashem*. They'll continue all the traditions that we have from the *kadmonim*.

And therefore for a mother to raise up children, she feeds them and she has all kinds of difficulties, illnesses and sometimes trouble and she brings them up, she's raising them not to be Italians or Puerto Ricans — she's raising them to be the Am Hashem! It's a tremendous *zechus*. It's an achievement that's unequalled. Nothing could be better!

Defunding the Police

And the more the better. That's one of the reasons I love Williamsburg. In Williamsburg they know what it means not to scorn the opportunity to create a nation. All the houses are bursting at the seams. That's why last

year when a homeless man beat up a Jew and ran away, so the Williamsburg Jews are not fools. They couldn't appeal to the police; the police wouldn't do anything anyhow. So one or two *chassidim* began to run after him and they called to their neighbors for help. "*Chaptzem! Catch him! Chaptzem!*"

All of a sudden the windows and doors of the apartment buildings open up and there are *chassidim* pouring out from everywhere into the streets. Troops of Jews! Grown men, little men, fat men, skinny men, children; they're climbing down the fire escapes. They're closing their suspenders while they're climbing down.

Now, such a thing wouldn't happen in East Orange or someplace where they're busy practicing birth control. Even if they'd open the windows in East Orange there's nobody to come out. One forty-five year old bachelor is living at home by himself. Where are the troops?! Nothing doing. They were never brought into the world. It was an opportunity scorned. Plain and simple, birth control means *ויבזו את הבכורה*.

Silly Girls

It's so silly what some girls are doing today; to give up a career of being a mother and say, "I'll be in Manhattan. I'll have my own apartment. I'll be working in an office. I'll be an important personality on my own."

It's a big *rachmonus*. What are you accomplishing? At the end of your days you'll look back and see you were just one more cog in the industrial machine. You wasted your life. Where are all the children you could have produced? Children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Think of all the families that would have come from you, that would have been your merit. You could have raised them *leshem Shomayim*. You would have lived a life of productivity in *avodas Hashem*. You scorned the opportunity to add even greater numbers to the Am Yisroel, to strengthen us and to bring more Shechinah down.

That's the sin of Eisav; scorning opportunity. If you were born a girl, don't scorn that glorious birthright. Don't allow anybody to come and persuade you there's something that's just as good, that in the offices in Manhattan you'll find bigger and better. *Sheker v'chazav!* There's nothing as good as being a Jewish mother; there's nothing greater than raising a big frum family; nothing better.

A woman who is busy raising children should know that she's living in a form of *avodas Hashem* even better than a *rosh yeshivah*. She's making the *bnei Torah*. She's producing them and she's raising them up and feeding them.

Your Birthright

And that's the great lesson of וַיִּכְזֶה אֶת הַבְּכֹרָה – *And he scorned the birthright.* That was the great sin of Eisav! He killed Nimrod? Ok, it's not so bad. He convinced a girl who had already committed to someone else? Ok, it's not praiseworthy maybe but it's not the biggest sin. But to give up opportunity?! To scorn opportunities to serve Hashem? Nothing could be worse than that!

The Torah is warning us, don't allow anybody – yourself included – to cheat you out of the birthright. You were born a Jew? בְּנֵי בְכוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל! Hashem says, “*You, the Am Yisroel, are My firstborn.*” Don't allow anybody to come and persuade you that your success you'll find elsewhere. Your success is in being a *frum* Jew. Your success, your greatness, is in the *beis medrash* and the synagogue, in the house raising children, in Shabbos and Yomim Tovim, in *chesed* and *mitzvos*, in Shas and the Chumash and the *mussar seforim*.

Nothing is as good as being a Jew, an *oved Hashem* who accomplish in this world. That's your birthright! That's your *bechorah!* That's where all of our opportunities can be found and we should never squander any bit of that – no matter how many pots of red lentils the outside world entices us with!

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

A Life of Opportunities

Yaakov Avinu was chosen over Eisav because he cherished opportunity rather than scorning it. This week I will train myself to walk in the footsteps of Yaakov Avinu to grab as many opportunities as possible to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu. As a reminder, every day when I *daven shemonah esrei*, I will *bli neder* pause for a moment at the words “Elokei Yaakov” and remember that we say those words and not “Elokei Eisav” because Yaakov was one who delighted in opportunities. And I will accept upon myself to grab whatever opportunity in *avodas Hashem* may present itself, and I will reflect on whether I missed out on any opportunities between this prayer and the last one.

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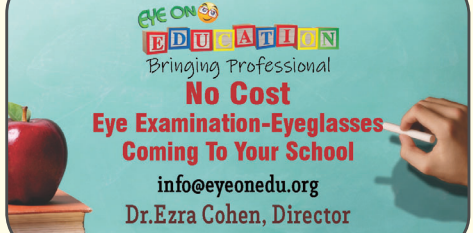
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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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Q:

What does it mean to give Hashem *nachas*?

A:

You have to understand that Hashem is so high above us that He cannot be affected by our deeds at all. Our deeds have no effect on Him at all! But still, we have to act according to the teachings of the Torah. And the Torah tells us that Hashem does have *nachas* from our deeds. “*Yismach Hashem b’maasav.*” And therefore, we have to act that way. It’s very important to act with this in mind. So when you do something, you should say, “I’m doing this to make a *nachas ruach* for my Creator.”

This is a very important function of our lives. And therefore, whenever you do something, if you can, you should say, “I’m doing this to make Hakodosh Boruch Hu happy.” And don’t rely on just thinking it because then it won’t happen. Say with your mouth, “I’m doing this to make Hashem happy.” And Hakodosh Boruch Hu is happy! “*Yismach Hashem b’maasav.*” Hashem is happy with us when we do His will.

Now, the Rambam asks, “What is “*kavod Hashem*?” And he says that thinking about Hashem – that’s *kavod Hashem*. The more you think about Hashem, the more you are honoring Hashem. A person must train himself to think about Hashem all the time. And when you think about Hashem and honor Him “*Yehi chevod Hashem l’olam*”, then “*yismach Hashem b’maasav.*”

And this is how we have to live our lives. We have to live with the teachings of the Torah. Not with the teachings of the Philosophers. Although with Philosophy we would say that Hashem is too sublime to be affected by our deeds, we live by the words of the Torah always, and we feel a *hargasha*, an actual feeling, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is rejoicing when He sees His children doing the things that they are supposed to be doing.

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