

In last week's portion, Chayei Sarah, we learned of the wedding of Abraham's son Issac to Rebecca. Our Sages say that Rebecca was only three years old when she was consecrated to marry Isaac.

Aliyah #1

For twenty years after Isaac and Rebecca were married, Rebbecca had trouble conceiving a child. They used to stand at opposite ends of the room and pray to G-d for children. In this week's portion, Rebbecca becomes pregnant. She has a very difficult pregnancy. She eventually gives birth to twin boys: a hairy, reddish boy named Esau, and a second boy, holding on to the first one's heel, named Jacob.

Esau becomes a hunter, while Jacob dwells in schools of Torah. One day, Esau comes in hungry and exhausted from the field, sees his brother Jacob cooking lentils, and begs Jacob for some of the food. Jacob agrees to give it to him if Esau will sell him his birthright as firstborn. Esau agrees. (Our sages say that this took place on the day Abraham passed away and the food Jacob was cooking was to feed his bereaved father Isaac.)

Aliyah #2

There is a famine in the land, and Isaac is tempted to go down to Egypt, where his father, Abraham, had gone under similar circumstances. But G-d tells Isaac since he was sanctified as an offering to G-d when he was brought to the akaida, he is therefore not fit to leave

the holy land of Israel.

Issac settles near King Abimelech, and, like his father Abraham, he lets the men of the town think that his wife is really his sister. King Abimelech notices that Rebecca is actually his wife and issues a decree that no one touch them. The Torah says that while in this place, Isaac harvested a hundred times what he planted because G-d had blessed him.

Aliyah #3

Isaac becomes extremely wealthy and great in the land of the Philistines, and they ask him to leave. He moves a distance away, and again digs some of the wells that his father Abraham had dug, but which were filled in by the Philistines. His servants dig new wells but the Philistines fight with them over these wells also. He finally moves somewhat further and finds peace.

Aliyah #4

G-d blesses Isaac that he should not have fear, and know that G-d is with him and will bless him and multiply his seed. After that Abimelech comes after Isaac and says that he recognizes that G-d is with him, and wants to make a peace treaty with him. Isaac prepares a feast for him and his men, and they part peacefully.

Aliyah #5

In this aliyah we find the famous story of Isaac, now old and nearly blind, attempting to bless his firstborn son. Isaac asks his son Esau, to fetch some meat and cook

it nicely, and Isaac will bless him. But Rebecca hears all this and wants Jacob, the younger twin, to get the blessing. So she prepares some meat the way Isaac likes it, gives it to Jacob to take to his father, and dresses Jacob in Esau's clothes.

Jacob goes to his father, and when his father asks him if he is truly Esau, he says that he is. Isaac asks to touch Jacob; he is confused. "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are Esau's hands." Finally, he is convinced that it is Esau who has come to him, and he prepares to bless him.

Aliyah #6

Isaac gives the blessing of the firstborn to Jacob. Just as the blessing ends and Jacob leaves and Esau comes in. Esau announces to his father that he is back with the food he requested and has come to collect his blessing. Isaac wonders out loud, "Who was that whom I just blessed?" Esau gets very angry, and Rebecca sends Jacob away to Charan, both to be safe from his brother's rage, and to look for a wife. (They want Jacob to marry a girl from Rebecca's brother Laban's family and not marry a Hittite woman, as Esau has done.)

Aliyah #7

Esau, who already has two Hittite wives, takes another wife, this time, a daughter of Ishmael. Rashi says that after Jacob departed from his father and mother he went straight to the Yeshiva of Aiver, the great-grandson of Shem (one of the three sons of Noah), and studied Torah for 14 years.🕎



The Game of Chess

by Rabbi Simon Jacobson

Just as a tiny seed awakens the infinite power of life hidden within the earth, so a mitzvah buried quietly in the ground can ignite an explosion of infinite light. Charged with that power, all the world is changed.

From the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Chess is a battle waged by an army of soldiers. At the center stands the King, around whom the game revolves. The King is indispensable, and the first and overriding priority of all the soldiers is to protect the King, expand his dominion over the chessboard, and overcome his adversaries. With rare exceptions, the King himself does not enter the fray of battle. The King can move in any direction, one step at a time befitting his limited involvement in the actual battle.

At the King's side stands the versatile Queen who can move in all directions. Flanking the King and Queen are three levels of "officers," each with its own mode of movement and conquest. Their power and reach is less than that of the Queen, but they, too, can move in several directions and advance more than one step at a time.

In the forefront stand the "foot-soldiers" or "pawns." Inferior to the officers, the foot soldiers advance forward only one step at a time.

But the lowly foot soldier possesses a unique power and quality that is far greater than his superiors. An officer can never change his rank: he remains the

same throughout the game. But when a foot soldier succeeds in advancing, step by step, to the end of the board, he is elevated to the level of Queen. He cannot, however, become a King, for truly, there is only one King.

Life is a battle and a game, a competition that pits us against the challenges that arouse and reveal our potential. Chess is a metaphor for the various components of this battle, its methods of combat, and its aims.

The King in chess represents the "King of kings" - G-d. The Queen represents *malchut d'atzilut* - the common source of all souls, which is in a state of "marriage" and unity with G-d. The three levels of officers correspond to the three classes of angels in three (of the four) spiritual worlds, *Beria*, *Yetzira* and spiritual *Asiya*. The lowly "foot soldier" is the finite human being in a confined world.

Challenging this army is a pseudo-army, a virtual battalion equipped with everything from pawns to a "king." For "this opposite the other, G-d created." Every positive creation has its negative counterpart; every spiritual force has its malevolent counter-force; every ray of divine light has its obscuring shadow.

G-d's sovereignty is contrasted by the deification of the material and

the temporal. The mission of G-d's army is to overcome its opponent, to reveal the fallacy of its pseudo-truths, to dethrone its god.

The front-line soldiers in this battle are the "foot-soldiers," souls invested in bodies. With their limited powers, they advance painstakingly across the battlefield, defending the King's place in the world, the G-dliness within their own souls (the "queen"), and the spiritual supply lines (the "officers") to the battlefield.

The officers - with their greater power and range - provide the spiritual fortitude to help vanquish the foe. The King remains, for the most part, aloof from the battle, for this is a challenge. He desires that we succeed on our own; but in times of extreme crisis, He is not above lending a decisive, though limited, aid to the battle, even if it means exposing Himself to the line of fire, so to speak.

The "foot soldier" bears the brunt of the battle. Fighting with limited resources, his advance is slow and impeded by the narrow horizons of his world. But when his steady determination advances him to his goal, he reveals the Queen within himself and wins the battle.🕎

Adapted from a public talk by the Rebbe when Shmuel Reshevsky, a world-class chess master, was in attendance. Reprinted with permission of www.meaningfullife.com

Candle Lighting

Ottawa

28 November 2003 at 4:05pm

Shabbat ends

Sat. at 5:13pm

Torah Portion: Toldos



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Levi Yitzchok Berger
in honour of his *hanachos tefillin*
by his family

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"We hope you enjoyed reading this as much as we enjoyed writing it."

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Thinking Jewish

Insights into the weekly Torah portion,
adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

In this week's Torah portion, *Toldot*, we read of how Isaac wanted to bless Esau but was prevented from doing so by Rebecca, his wife. It was through her intervention that the blessings were bestowed upon Jacob instead.

A fundamental question is raised by this incident. How could Isaac have possibly preferred Esau over Jacob? True, our sages tell us that Esau repeatedly tried to deceive his elderly father into thinking he was G-d-fearing and observant, by pointedly asking questions about religious law, but it is still hard to imagine Isaac being fooled by Esau's ruse. In fact, when Jacob presented himself to receive his father's blessings, Isaac declared that "the

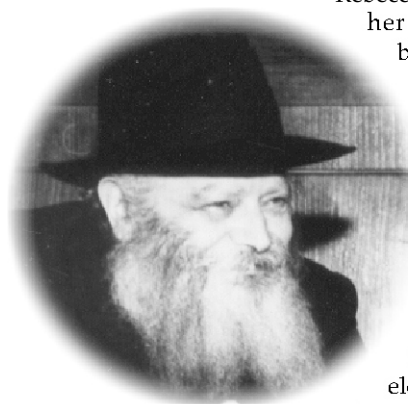
voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau," recognizing how unusual it was for Esau to address him in such a civil manner or even to bring G-d's name into the conversation. Isaac surely realized that something was amiss. But if Isaac was well aware of Esau's serious shortcomings, why did he nevertheless want to give the blessings only to him?

The truth is that Esau, the firstborn twin, possessed an extremely lofty soul capable of incredible spiritual accomplishments. In certain respects, Esau was on an even higher spiritual level than his brother Jacob. Jacob was born to be a "dweller in tents (of Torah)," protected from the outside world, enclosed within the four walls of the yeshiva. Esau, however, was "a man of the field," blessed with the spiritual strength to venture

forth into the coarser material world to wage war against evil and impurity, bringing G-dliness and holiness down into the physical realm. It was Esau, therefore, who possessed the greater spiritual might.

This, then, explains Isaac's desire to bless Esau, despite his knowledge that his son was abusing these spiritual gifts: Isaac hoped his blessings would cause Esau's considerable talents to be brought out and revealed. Not only would Esau repent of his evil ways, but, the entire world would benefit from his actions.

G-d, however, knew it was too late for Esau to repent and live up to his potential. Instead, the blessings were given to Jacob, and with them, the power to overcome evil and transform it into good, and to illuminate the world with the light of Torah.🕯



Ask the Rabbi

Dear Rabbi Berger,

Why aren't women and men treated the same in Judaism?

Richard F.
received via email

Dear Richard,

To answer your question, it would only be proper if we looked at Judaism itself. The Talmud relates (Kiddushin 29a): Women are obliged to do all the *mitzvot*, except positive commandments that are time related.

G-d desired the woman to be master over her household. To ensure that the home is kept in coherence with His commandments, and children are given the proper care. Therefore, He did not require the women to do his precepts that are of time constraint. Imagine, you come home from after a long day in the office and your wife says to you, "Sorry no food today, I had to put on *Tefillin* before it became dark!"

In addition, the wives of the Sages had a greater spiritual sensitivity than the Sages themselves and daughters greater than their sons. So it was with Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. This is because these righteous persons, in their personal lives, were already tasting of the

World to Come.

In the world the rest of us live in, however, women continue to get the short end of the stick. Whatever women's emancipation gains on one hand seems to get taken away from the other. There are currently about four million female slaves worldwide -- 400,000 were sold last year in the U.S. One of the largest sectors of American society living beneath the poverty line is single mothers and their families. Working mothers almost always do more work at home than their working husbands. And when was the last time you heard a man ask someone to accompany him home at night for protection? It goes on and on.

This perception extends itself to our understanding of male and female roles in mitzvahs: Masculine performance is oriented to action and public performance, whereas the feminine role in Torah is an inner and pervasive one. Again, the highly tangible and visible male role is more valued in the current consciousness.

Why is our world this way? This is not just another injustice. It is a stage in humanity's development, a reflection of the state of the general human consciousness: We -- both men and women -- are stuck within the perception of the masculine role as superior and the feminine as inferior. Our behavior only reflects our perception.

Have a wonderful Shabbos,

Rabbi M. Berger🕯

Next week's question: Why does the Jewish day start at sundown?

Send us your questions: info@theluminary.com

A Jewish Experience

What Goes Around Comes Around

You know, he almost didn't see the elderly lady, stranded on the side of the road. But even in the dim light of day, he could see she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out. His Pontiac was sputtering for the last hour or so. Was he going to hurt her? He didn't look safe, he looked poor and hungry.

He could see that she was frightened, standing out there in the cold. He knew how she felt. It was that chill which only fear can put in you. He said, "I'm here to help you ma'am. Why don't you wait in the car where it is warm?"

By the way my name is Brian. Well, all she had was a flat tire, but for an elderly lady, that was bad enough. Brian crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack, skinning his knuckles once or twice. Soon he was able to change the tire. But he had to get dirty and he hurt his hands. As he was tightening up the lug nuts, she rolled down the window and began to talk to him. She told him that she was from Shain Louis and was only passing through.

She couldn't thank him enough for coming to her aid. Brian just smiled and closed her trunk. She asked him how much she owed him. Any amount would have been alright with her. She had

already imagined all the awful things that could have happened to her had he not stopped. Brian never thought twice about the money. This was not a job to him. This was a case of helping someone in need, and G-d knows there were plenty who had given him a hand in the past...He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way.

It was a cold and depressing day, but he felt good as he headed home, disappearing into the twilight. A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe. She went in to grab a bite to eat, and take the chill off before she made the last leg of her trip home.

It was a dingy looking restaurant. Outside were two gas pumps. The whole scene was unfamiliar to her. The cash register was like the telephone of an out of work actor - it didn't ring much. Her waitress came over and brought a clean towel to wipe her wet hair. She had a sweet smile, one that even being on her feet for the whole day she couldn't hold back. The lady noticed that the waitress was nearly eight months pregnant, but that she didn't let the strain and aches change her attitude.

The old lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so giving to a

stranger. Then she remembered Brian. After the lady finished her meal, and the waitress went to change her hundred dollar bill, the lady slipped right out the door. She was gone by the time the waitress came back. She wondered where the lady could be, then she noticed something written on the napkin under which was 4 \$100 bills.

There were tears in her eyes when she read what the lady had wrote. It said: "You don't owe me anything. I have been there too. Somebody once helped me out the way I am helping you. If you really want to pay me back, here is what you do: Do not let this chain of love end with you."

Well, there were tables to clear, sugar bowls to fill, and people to serve, but the waitress made it through another day. That night when she got home from work, she was thinking about the money and what the lady had written. How could the lady have known how much her and her husband needed it? With the baby due next month, it was going to be hard.

She knew how worried her husband was, and as he lay sleeping, she whispered softly and low, "Everything is gonna be all right; I love you, Brian."🕯

-author unknown

Everyone Needs to Laugh Sometimes

A teenager had just gotten his driving permit. He asked his father, who was a Rabbi, if they could discuss the use of the car. His father took him to his study and said to him, "I'll make a deal with you. You bring your grades up, study a little torah, and get a hair cut, then we'll talk about it."

After about a month the boy came back and again asked his father if they could discuss use of the car. They again went to the father's study where his father said, "Son, I've been real proud of you. You have brought your grades up, you've studied

diligently, but you didn't get your hair cut!"

The young man waited a moment and replied, "You know Dad, I've been thinking about that. You know, Samson had long hair, Abraham had long hair, Noah had long hair, and even Moses had long hair..."

To which the Rabbi replied... "Yes, and they WALKED everywhere they went!"🕯

Are your jokes better than ours? send them to us: info@theluminary.com