

PARSHAS TOLDOS

By HARAV YAAKOV FEITMAN, KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

Yaakov Avinu is not depicted in our Parshah at first as a man of action. In fact, he is called *ish tam yosheiv ohalim* (25:27) which Chazal interpret as one who sat and learned in the Yeshivos of the day. All of a sudden, at the urging of his mother Rivkah Imeinu, he becomes a wheeler-dealer who pulls off the deal of the century or even the millennium. He buys the *bechorah* – the eternal rights to the firstborn – for a bit of lentil soup. What caused this cataclysmic change in Yaakov Avinu? The *Ran* (Derashos #2) explains that Yaakov was motivated to snatch the *bechorah* from Esav when he realized what a *rasha* he was. He did not shed a tear over the death of his distinguished grandfather, Avrohom Avinu, who was being mourned by the entire world (Bava Basra 91a) and did not even console his own father over the death of *his* father. Yaakov then became horrified at the thought that Esav would inherit the mantle of leadership of the family and knew that he had to act, as his mother advised. Rabbeinu Yonah (Derashos on the Torah) adds that Yaakov also saw Esav's terrible midos when he entered famished from his illicit activities in the field (Bava Basra 16b). He demanded food immediately, not caring what was in the pot. His focus was totally upon fulfilling his earthly desires, with no interest at all in the next world. All of this compelled the righteous Yaakov to act precipitously to save the future of Klal Yisrael.

We have just come off Rosh Chodesh Kislev, which traditionally leads us to thoughts of Chanukah. The Medrash tells us that Matisyahu, too, did not act against the Greeks until someone sacrificed a *traif korban* upon the *mizbeach*. Rav Nosson Wachtfogel zt"l (Leket Reshimos, Chanukah) explains that good people are gentle and avoid battles and bloodshed. However, they are also sensitive to the needs of Klal Yisrael and crises which beset our nation. Matisyahu and the Chashmonaim decided to fight the most powerful empire of the time with minimal soldiers and almost no weapons. The acid test of greatness is when one crosses the threshold of moral unacceptability and acts accordingly. All of our leaders were actually of this nature. They were quiet modest people who would rather have stayed in the Bais Hamedrash. However, when confronted by intolerable evil, they became men and women of action. We have just commemorated the Yohrzeit of Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l who was just such a person. A gentle scholar, he became a lion for his people, eventually heading not just Bais Medrash Govoha of Lakewood but Agudas Yisrael, Tashbar, Chinuch Atzmai, Torah Umesorah and countless other organizations upon his frail shoulders.

We are living in a time when anyone and everyone can become a hero. There are unfortunately so many challenges for Klal Yisrael to face that simultaneously many people can play leadership roles. Indeed, just as Sarah Shnierer stepped into the shoes of innovation, founding the Bais Yaakov movement, many women build institutions for the community, such as schools, Mikvaos and incredible chesed organizations. This week's look at the modest Rivkah's initiative in saving Klal Yisrael from Esav gives us a tremendous insight into what one man or woman can accomplish when faced by the threat of evil. May we all have the courage and foresight to do the same when called upon.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS

HALACHA OF THE WEEK 5779

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KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

With the beginning of the month of Kislev, we will follow the tradition of beginning the laws of Chanukah

Question: Can one be yotzei the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah with the lighting in Shul?

Answer: No. According to the Gemara, the Mitzvah is upon each Jewish *home*. These days, especially outside of Eretz Yisrael, where we generally do not light outdoors, a special *perumei nisa* – spreading word of the miracle – is fulfilled by lighting in Shul. However, this absolves the tzibur of its obligation and mirrors the lighting in the Bais Hamikdash, but does not absolve us as individuals from lighting the Menorah (Shulchan Aruch 671:7)

Question: Why do some Shuls, including our own, relight the Menorah in the morning without a bracha?

Answer: Some Poskim (Binyan Shlomo 38; Shevilei David 671; Levushei Mordechai 2:63) suggest that this is to fulfill the opinion of the Rambam that in the Bais Hamikdash, the neiros were rekindled every morning. As to exactly when to do this relighting, some Sephardim in Eretz Yisrael do so before Mizmor Shir Chanukas Habayis before Boruch She'amar. Spinka Chassidim light before Hallel and many others follow the custom of the Rebbe of Radoshitz to light before the davening even begins.

Question: What exactly is the obligation of women in lighting the Menorah?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (675:3) rules that women are obligated to light because they too were part of the miracle. However, Poskim (Eliyah Rabbah 671:3) rule that a married man and his wife are one entity (*ishto kegufo*) and therefore the wife is yotzei with her husband. The Chasam Sofer (Shabbos 21b) writes that since the original mitzvah was to light outdoors and in ancient times women simply did not go out in public, women were not obligated to light. Interestingly, the Mishmeres Shalom (48) writes that if a woman lives alone with her daughters, all should light. Since there is no *ishto kegufo*, no one has a greater obligation than anyone else and therefore each adult woman in the house should light.

Question: Where should boys living in a dormitory light?

Answer: Some Poskim (see Nitey Gavriel, page 72) say that they should light in the dining room. Others (Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, quoted ibid and see Igros Moshe Yoreh Deah 3:14) say that they should light in their rooms. Still others (Rav Vozner zt"l Shevet Halevi 3:83) say that they should light in the Bais Hamedrash where they spend most of their time. In any case, Rav Moshe warns that for the sake of safety someone must always guard all the menorahs until they burn out.

Question: If a man is not going to be home during the entire time for lighting, can he ask his wife or child over Bar Mitzvah to light for him?

Answer: Yes, although it is preferable for him to be home every night for the lighting (Bach and Mogen Avrohom 677:70)

Question: How long should a wife wait for her husband to return to light?

Answer: Until midnight, unless there are small children who must go to sleep earlier (Birchas Habayis 54:6)

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