BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE OF NORTH BEVERLY HILLS

Tefilla Notebook

exam is not?

2 Kislev • Parshat Toldot

November 5-6 2021

בס"

extended kiddush in memory of Lois Hirt, Aliza bat Gershon a"h, whose first yahrtzeit is on the 2nd of Kisley.



Mazel Tov

Jennifer and Michael Smith on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Kaitlin Elle Smith. Mazal Tov to grandparents Annie Baum & **Barry Novack**

rather uncomfortable. Even stranger is the fact that Jacob is the patriarch most associated with truth, evident in the famous verse: הַתַּן אֲמֶת לְיָעֵהָב "truth is given to Jacob" (Michah 7:20). According to this prophetic pronouncement, Jacob was the standard-bearer of truth. But how is that possible? How could such a conman be a standard-bearer of truth? And this wasn't the only occasion when Jacob deceived someone. In Parshat Vayeitzei, Jacob cheated again, this time targeting his wily uncle Laban. We might reasonably justify his behavior, but how do we simultaneously associate Jacob with truth and integrity? To get to the bottom of this puzzle, we need to understand why Isaac was so keen to bless Esau. It turns out that Esau was the greatest and most accomplished comman of his day. While he rampaged through ancient Canaan – philandering, thieving and murdering – he presented himself to his father as a paradigm of virtue. And in many respects, he was a wonderful son. He fed and clothed his father, and also looked after him in every respect. So it is hardly surprising that Isaac imagined Esau to be worthy of the loftiest blessings – even more than his brother Jacob.

how do you think these exam cheats got caught? The answer is simple – through a well-organized sting. And – although, I hardly need to tell you – every sting involves deception. So how is it that a deception to expose an exam cheat is legitimate, but a deception when taking the

The greatest deception in early Jewish history takes place in Parshat Toldot. Jacob cheats his

father Isaac, and obtains the blessings meant for Esau. A dark cloud hangs over this incident. Obtained through duplicity, these valuable blessings were received under false pretenses. Let's face it: Isaac was cheated; Jacob was a cheat; and Rebecca was a criminal mastermind. It is all

Can you imagine if Esau had learned that Jacob had received the blessings via ordinary means? If, after all of Esau's trickery, Isaac had nonetheless decided to give the blessings via ordinary means? I after all of Esau's trickery, Isaac had nonetheless decided to give the blessings to Jacob? I think Esau might have been disappointed, but, after all was said and done, he would still have known that Jacob deserved the blessings more than him. If the story had happened that way, while it might have been upsetting, it would not have been totally devastating. So why was Esau so upset? Because he was outsmarted at his own game. That was what was so utterly devastating.

When people like Lonnegan, or exam cheats, or Esau, or Laban, lose, what is so thrilling is not the fact that these criminals have been denuded of their prize. It is that they have been denuded of their prize by honest people who played them at their own game. You think you're a crook? Let me show you how you can be outcrooked by the people you intended to cheat. Jacob was the paradigm of truth and virtue. He had never done anything in his life that was remotely crooked, and Esau felt totally safe from him. Esau thought he had the whole thing worked out. Having convinced bis father he was the righteous brother he sincerely bis of the sincerely bis convinced his father he was the righteous brother, he sincerely believed that his slow-witted brother would never manage to outplay him. In the final analysis, it wasn't the fact that Jacob got the blessings that upset him so much. Rather, it was the fact that he proved to be – when he wanted to be - a much better conman than Esau could have ever hoped to be. And then he went back to being Jacob. We have an expression for that in English. Poetic justice. Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom and a great week ahead, Rabbi Pini Dunner



November

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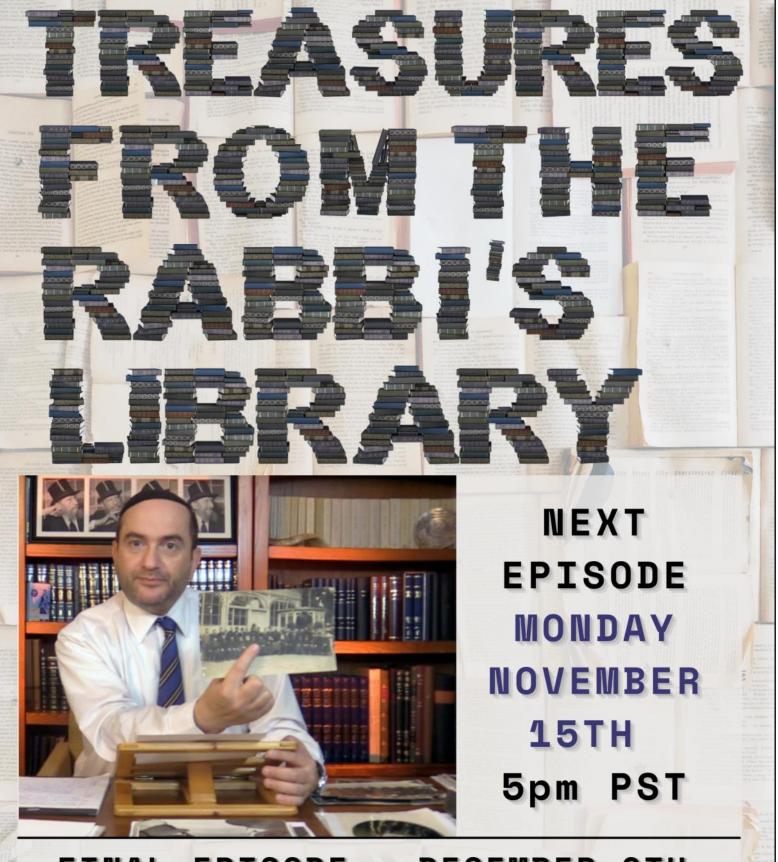
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