

**This week's Shabbat Package is sponsored by Mary & Jack Feldman
in loving memory of Mary's father, Baruch Horowitz ע"ה on his 2nd Yartzeit
ברוך בן יצחק הלוי ע"ה**



TOLDOT 5781

Last Shabbat I had the pleasure of delivering the opening Shiur in this year's series of Emunah Shiurim in honour of Rina Pushett z"l. The impressive crowd that gathered outdoors for the Shiur, while testing for my larynx, was a testament to Emunah's leadership, and the thirst for learning and desire to return to Shule among the women of our community. I am delighted to see that this week's Shiur to be given by Mrs Beruriah Tenenbaum has attracted another fantastic response, and I wish Emunah and all their important activities continued success.

While women have attended Shacharit, Mincha and Maariv daily at Mizrachi whenever we have been allowed to hold services this year, I am aware that under the current circumstances, some women (and men) have felt more comfortable than others to register for Tefillot. It is great to welcome each person back as they return, and I am truly looking forward to the day when nobody has to think twice about attending Shule. Until then, please know that everybody is welcome to register as soon as they feel confident about returning to Shule, and nobody should feel that they have to hold back. B'Ezrat Hashem the upcoming easing of restrictions will herald another significant step forward in welcoming more people back to Shule in person.

After numerous years of education, dedication and inspiration, Avital Seifman is stepping aside as the leader of our "12 Foundations" Bat Mitzva program. The curriculum Avital developed alongside Dr Michal Kaufman has been a consistent highlight for our Bnot Mitzva, who have enjoyed a program that has spoken to their hearts, minds, and sense of discovery and fun. Avital has been a first class role-model for our Bnot Mitzva, as I am sure she will continue to be in the years to come.

In (temporary) lieu of a Seudah Shlishit in Avital's honour, Avital is our guest contributor for this week's Seudah Shlishit slot. B'Ezrat Hashem it will not be too long before we will be able to acknowledge Avital's contribution in person, as we will hopefully be able to acknowledge the many Semachot and occasions we have been unable to mark as a community in person this year.

Shabbat Shalom

FOR THE SHABBAT TABLE



Rabbi Mirvis

"And Yitzchak loved Esav, because he ate of his venison, and Rivka loves Ya'akov" (Bereishit, 25:28).

In this week's Parsha, The Torah contrasts Yitzchak's love for Esav and Rivka's love for Ya'akov in two different ways: Firstly, Yitzchak loved Esav for a reason ("because he ate of his venison"), while no reason is given for Rivka's love for Ya'akov. Secondly, Yitzchak's affection is described in the past tense ("And Yitzchak loved Esav"), while Rivka's is in the present tense ("and Rivka loves Ya'akov").

Why was a reason given for Yitzchak's love for Esav, but not for Rivka's love for Ya'akov? Why was the first half of the verse written in the past tense and the second half of the verse in the present tense?

The Shelah (Shnei Luchot Habrit) explained that these two discrepancies are connected. Seeing as Yitzchak's love for Esav was based on material considerations, it was temporary and could easily dissipate - thus it is presented in the past tense. Rivka's love for Ya'akov, however, was the natural love a parent has for a child, which cannot be encapsulated in words. The spiritual bond between mother and son could never be destroyed - thus it is described in the present tense.

The Mishna in Avot presents this very message:

"Any love that depends on a specific cause, when that cause is gone, the love is gone. But if love does not depend on a specific cause, it will never cease" (Avot, 5:19).

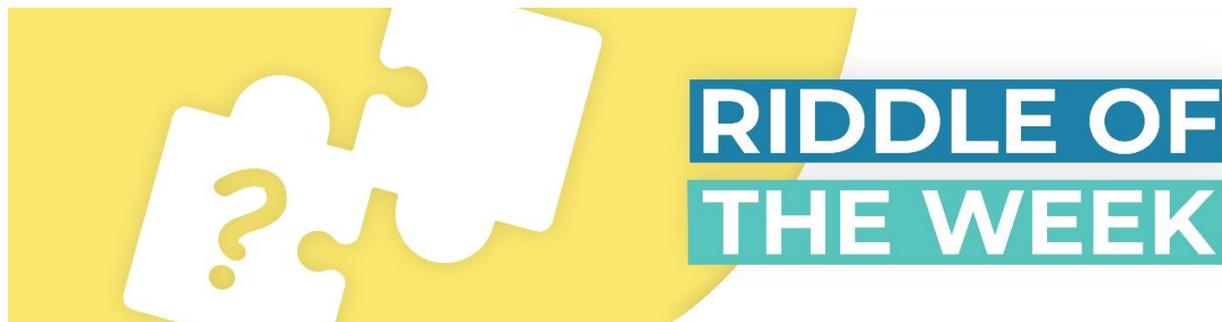
Love is a beautiful and important human emotion, yet we must be wary to identify the true source of our love. Sometimes, love is not based on pure unconditional feeling, but based on what the lover aims to get out of the relationship. Though this love may blossom in the short term, once the selfish considerations dissipate, so will the love.

The story is told that around a dinner table, someone once remarked to Reb Yisrael Salanter, "Mmm, I really love fish!" Reb Yisrael responded, "If you really loved fish, you would not agree to people catching them, and you would not be eating them. You actually love yourself".

The Kozhnutzer Maggid would use the Mishna above to explain our relationship with Hashem. When one fulfills "And you shall love Hashem your Go-d" as a result of Hashem's

kindness towards us, the bond is tenuous and could, under strain, collapse. However if one has causeless love for Hashem, even the greatest trials could not shake one's enduring faith and abiding Ahavat HaBoreh - love for our Creator.

With so many parts of the world wrought with growing tension and "Sinat Chinam" – causeless hatred, our aim should be to combat the trend with Ahavat Chinam – unconditional love – for each other and for Hashem.



R' Leor Broh

Riddle for Toldot:

Both of us have our father's name and our brother's name appearing in the Parsha, but no mention of our mother's name. We do not come from the same family. Who are we?

Answer to Last Week's Riddle (Chaye Sara):

Find three words that have initials spelling the name of עשו in reverse order.

ויקם שדה עפרון (כג: י"ז)

And the field of Efron became (23:17) (lit: rose up).

The Baal HaTurim explains that the Torah hints to the episode in which Esav rose up to protest the burial of Yaakov in the Cave of Machpela.



Rabbi Kennard

With the parasha of Toldot, the second patriarch, Yitzhak, takes centre stage. This new phase of Jewish history is introduced with the verse:

This is the history of the generations of Yitzhak, the son of Avraham. Avraham fathered Yitzhak. (Bereishit 25:19)

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם אֲבִרְהֵם הַזֶּה
אֵת יִצְחָק. (בראשית כה:יט)

The question is obvious. If Yitzhak is explicitly described as Avraham's son, why does the verse continue to state that Avraham was the father of Yitzhak?

Rashi (11th century France) answers as follows:

Because Scripture wrote, "Yitzhak, son of Avraham" it was compelled to say "Avraham fathered Yitzhak", because the cynics of that generation said, "Sarah became pregnant by Avimelech (King of Gerar, where Avraham and Sarah had previously resided) because for many years she waited with Avraham and did not become pregnant by him". What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He shaped Yitzhak's facial features exactly similar to those of Avraham's, so that everyone confirmed that Avraham fathered Yitzhak. This is what is written here: that Yitzhak was the son of Avraham, for there is evidence that Avraham fathered Yitzhak (from Midrash Tanchuma, Toldot 1).

ע"י שכתב הכתוב יצחק בן אברהם הוזקק
לומר אברהם הוליד את יצחק לפי שהיו ליצני
הדור אומרים מאבימלך נתעברה שרה שהרי
כמה שנים שהתה עם אברהם ולא נתעברה
הימנו

מה עשה הקב"ה צר קלסתר פניו של יצחק
דומה לאברהם והעידו הכל אברהם הוליד את
יצחק וזהו שכתב כאן יצחק בן אברהם היה
שהרי עדות יש שאברהם הוליד את יצחק:

According to this midrash, the "cynics" were not disputing that a miracle had been granted to Sarah, who gave birth at the age of 90, and even though they knew that Avraham had already fathered a child (Yishmael), they still refused to believe that he was the father of Yitzhak.

The **Brisker Rov** (20th century Israel) suggests that this shows the absurdity of those who felt threatened (and those who feel threatened today) by Avraham and his mission to publicise Hashem's name in the world. They can accept miracles happened to Sarah, but because of their irrational antipathy to Avraham and the ideals for which he stands, they cannot accept even lesser miracles happened to him.

Why was it so important for the cynics, as described in the Midrash, to challenge Avraham's paternity of Yitzhak? Perhaps because in this way they were convincing themselves that Hashem's promise had not been, and would not be, fulfilled.

When Hashem first appeared to Avraham He declared:

Hashem said to Avram, "Get out of your country, and from your birthplace, and

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ
וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָרְאָךְ.

from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation... (Bereishit 12:1-2).

וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל ... (בראשית יב:א-ב)

As soon as Avraham arrived in the land, we read:

Hashem appeared to Avram and said, "I will give this land to your seed." ... (Bereishit 12:7).

וַיֵּרָא ה' אֶל אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר לְזַרְעֲךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת... (בראשית יב:ז)

The belief that this promise would be fulfilled, that he would have children, and through them become the ancestor of a nation, was a fixed point throughout Avraham's life. His patience during the long years of waiting for the promise to be realised demonstrated to the world how one could have true faith in Hashem. It was this faith that the cynics wished to undermine with their claim that Yitzhak was fathered by another.

Rashi's approach is predicated on the words "אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק" meaning "Avraham was the father of Yitzhak" and hence repeating what has already been taught by the words "יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם". But an alternative approach obviates this problem.

The **Ibn Ezra** (12th century Spain) writes

There are those who say that the meaning of הוֹלִיד is "nurtured" and "raised", as in (the great-grandchildren of Yosef) "were raised (יולדו) on Yosef's knees." (Bereishit 50:23)

ויש אומרים: כי טעם הוליד – גידל וריבה, כמו: יולדו על ברכי יוסף (בראשית נ:כג).

Yosef was obviously not the father of his great-grandchildren and so that verse (50:23) is testifying that he raised them. Our verse is similarly declaring that not only was Yitzhak the biological son of Avraham, Avraham also ensured that Yitzchak would be nurtured as a son, imbibing his father's values and walking in his ways.

Some commentators add that the attention to Yitzchak's upbringing is presented in contrast to that of Avraham's first son, Yishmael, who was forced out of the household so as not to be a negative influence on Yitzhak (see Bereishit 21:10), and in contrast to the children that Avraham with Ketura, who were also sent away (Bereishit 25:1-6). Thus "אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק" is to be read as "Yitzchak was the son that Avraham raised".

This interpretation contrasts with Rashi's, yet the two together present the totality of what constitutes parenting. Yitzchak was indeed Avraham's son in the biological sense, as Rashi stresses, but that was not enough. He was also his father's ideological son, and spiritual heir. Hashem Himself taught the same lesson. Immediately after sending angels to tell Avraham and Sarah that they will have a son within a year, He praised Avraham by saying:

he will command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Hashem, to do righteousness and justice (Bereishit 18:19)

יְצַוֵּה אֶת בְּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶרֶךְ
יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הִבְיֵא יְהוָה
עַל אַבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר עָלָיו. (בראשית
יח:יט)

The message is clear. Avraham will establish a nation not just by fathering a child, but by imbuing his descendants with values such as righteousness and truth.

In one of his addresses to the Mizrahi leadership, Rav Soloveitchik (20th century America) applies the message of Rashi's midrash to our contemporary challenge. Then, as now, there were cynics who did not believe that Avraham could father a child, and nor would he be able to transmit his values and mission to the next generation. Then, as now, the cynics were proved wrong.

People laughed at the event. They did not believe that Yitzhak would inherit Avraham. That he, a young lad of the new generation, would continue to carry Avraham's visions and laws, and that he also would engage in building altars and calling on the name of God. They laughed at Avraham's dreams that his son would give his life for Torah and fight for the sanctity of Avraham's house.

The scoffers said "Sarah conceived from Avimelech". Others claimed, "They bought themselves a foundling from the marketplace". It is impossible to pass on Avraham's outlook, the mitzvot of Avraham, his statutes and laws, to the modern generation, to young Yitzhak who fights with a rifle, works in laboratories and thinks in modern categories of thought.

When Avraham dies, people said, his entire philosophy will perish, his altars will be dismantled, his Shulchan Aruch will be eaten by moths and all trace of his life will vanish. . .

Years passed by and those who will want to laugh at Yitzhak and the hopes that Avraham pinned on him, suddenly began to query and ask: Is Yitzhak really sincere in his efforts to resuscitate Avraham's work? What is going on? They rubbed their eyes. Yitzhak was indeed continuing with Avraham's enterprises. He was fighting for the same ideals, doing the same things that his father had done, the same Gemara the same Shulchan Aruch, the same Shabbat and the same laws of divorce. Who could have foreseen that the young, modern Yitzhak would . . . demand a kosher kitchen and fight for religious education and the like! Who would have guessed that he would speak with the same language that old Avraham spoke, as the author of the Shulchan Aruch, as the Rema, as the Gaon of Vilna, as Rav Chaim of Voloshin?"

("The Rav Speaks" - Five Droshot p. 108-9)

Avraham was indeed the father of Yitzchak. He did indeed raise Yitzchak to be a true son of Avraham. May our generation continue to be blessed with success as we face the same eternal challenge.



Avital Seifman

Reflections of a Bat- Mitzvah Teacher

Six years ago, Dr Michal Kaufman and I were approached by some mothers in the community who asked a simple question: What can we do to prepare our daughters for their Bat Mitzvah? The result was the development of the 12 Foundations program, a program which we have been proud to offer at Mizrahi to all girls approaching their Bat Mitzvah.

For the past five years I have had the great fortune to coordinate and teach the Mizrahi Bat Mitzvah Program. Following from that initial seed having been planted in our minds, Dr Michal Kaufman and I created a curriculum that would reflect the key themes which are integral to Jewish identity and specifically, to Jewish womanhood. We sought to delve into concepts including: giving and receiving respect, *tzniyut*, being created in *Hashem's* image, *Tikun Olam*, *hachnassat orchim*, Zionism, *tefilla*, *Shabbat* and others. These topics were identified as key building blocks upon which our identities as individual Jews and members of the Jewish nation stand, separating us from other nations. These are the values which are not only intertwined in the composition of our Jewish identity within the modern world, but are those upon which we fall back in times of uncertainty. These are the values which we see embodied by our ancestors, which are embedded in our traditions, and which we use to guide our decisions.

Notwithstanding the curriculum being the same for each group of girls, my aim as teacher was to provide the girls with a safe, accepting space in which they could enquire, challenge and learn. The late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ^{ZT"l}, wrote of education: "Education is not indoctrination. It is teaching a child to be curious, to wonder, reflect, enquire. The child who asks becomes a partner in the learning process. He or she is no longer a passive recipient but an active participant. To ask is to grow." The primary goal was for our girls to become actively involved in their life decisions, to question and meet each challenge armed with knowledge. Becoming a Bat Mitzvah entails becoming an active participant in our community, and with this newfound identity, contributing to our community's growth.

I have certainly been challenged by the participants of this program over the last five years. They have, at times, forced me to consider their questions and the motives behind those questions, to reflect upon my identity in the Mizrahi and wider Jewish community, and to deepen my appreciation of these values. I have gained as much, if not more, than I gave, and am grateful for the opportunity to have coordinated this program from its inception. Thank you to Dr Michal Kaufman for allowing me to teach the program that we created together. I have truly been blessed as a teacher to be guided by you. My wish is that the program goes from strength to strength, and encourage the girls participating in coming years to question, understand and grow, as they enter this important stage of life, becoming Bat Mitzvah.