



**Partners In Torah
San Diego-Los Angeles-Ventura
Take home Dvar Torah**

5786 Parshat Toldot

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Hello, Welcome!

**Partners In Torah is a community-wide,
independent and inclusive adult education
program**

**focusing on understanding Jewish
relevancy to our lives by studying text
most interesting to each participant.**

**Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour
each week, friendships are forged between
mentors and mentees.**

***Partners in Torah
has proven to be effective at reclaiming the
rich
legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and
guidance
for many who have, until now, lacked
access.***

Thank you for joining us!

**Please encourage friends to join you in
participating so that we may grow
together as
a community.**

23. *And Hashem said to her - "Two nations are in your womb; two regimes from your insides shall be separated; the might shall pass from one regime to the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."*

Knowing that there were twins within her resolved her concern about a mixed-up conflicted child. There were two different children in there, very opposite in their natures. But what were they fighting about?

Rashi quoting the Midrash explains.

מתרוצצים זה עם זה ומריבים בנחלת שני עולמות

They were wrestling with one another and arguing about inheriting the two worlds.

The Midrash gives us a detailed description of their dialogue.

תנא דבי אליהו זוטא - פרק יט

אמרו רבותינו בעוד כשהיו יעקב ועשו במעי אמן אמר יעקב לעשו. עשו אחי, שני אחים אנחנו לאבינו ושני עולמות יש לפנינו העולם הזה והעולם הבא. העולם הזה יש בו אכילה ושתיה ומשא מתן ולשאת אשה ולהוליד בנים ובנות אבל העולם הבא אינו כן בכל המדות הללו. ואם הוא רצונך טול אתה העוה"ז ואני אטול העוה"ב. ומנין שכך הוא שנאמר (בראשית בה) ויאמר יעקב מכרה כיום את בכורתך לי כשם שהיינו אומרים בבטן. באותה שעה נטל עשו בחלקו העוה"ז ויעקב נטל בחלקו העוה"ב.

Our Sages taught. While Yaakov and Esav were still in utero, Yaakov said to Esav, "Esav my brother. We are two brothers to our father and there are two worlds to be had, this world and the World to Come. This world has eating and drinking, business, and women to marry and have children with, but the World to Come has none of this. Perhaps you would like to have this world, and I will take the World to Come..." At that

moment, Esav took his portion in this world and Yaakov took his portion in the World to Come.

Growing up, until the age of 13, both Yaakov and Esav fulfilled all of their religious obligations, such that it was hard to tell that they were complete opposites. Yaakov kept them sincerely whereas Esav was a faker and did what he wanted on the sly. The Torah informs us that Esav was a master at deception and succeeded in deceiving even his holy father Yitzchak. This all changed the day that Avraham Avinu died at the age of 175 when the twins were 15 years old.

It says (v. 29).

(כט) וַיֵּזֶד יַעֲקֹב בְּזֵיד וַיָּבֵא עֶשָׂו מִן הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא עָיֵף

29) Jacob simmered a stew, and Esav came from the field, and he was exhausted.

There is much behind the scenes here. Our Sages teach us that Avraham Avinu had just passed, and Yitzchak began mourning for his father. The law is that a mourner is not permitted to eat his first meal in mourning from his own food. Therefore, Yaakov cooked the meal from his food. It was customary then to cook lentil soup, and that is what Yaakov was cooking, red lentil soup.

Today, the custom is to give the mourners a hard-boiled egg in a piece of bread. The idea is to give the mourner something round like a lentil or an egg. This symbolizes the cycle of life; the elderly pass on making way for the new generation. A new generation is born, and as that generation ages, they too pass on making way for the next generation. Death is not something to get all bent out of shape for; it's the natural course of life.

The verse tells us, *and Esav came from the field, and he was exhausted.*

Looks innocent enough, right? However, our Sages derive from the exact wording of the verse that Esav had transgressed five cardinal sins on that day. He killed two people, raped a married woman, worshipped an idol and denied Hashem's existence and the existence of the World to Come. Esav sees the red lentil stew that Yaakov had prepared and says to him (v.30).

(ל) וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל יַעֲקֹב הֲלֵעִיטֵנִי נָא מִן הָאֲדָמִים הָאֵדֶם הַזֶּה כִּי עֵינַי אֲנֹכִי עַל בֶּן
קָרָא שְׁמוֹ אֲדָוִם

30) Esav said to Yaakov, "Pour into me, now, some of that very red stuff for I am exhausted." (He therefore called his name Edom – red).

Yaakov then said to Esav (v. 31).

(לא) וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב מְכַרְהָ כִּיּוֹם אֶת בְּכֻרְתְּךָ לִי

"Sell, as this day, your birthright to me."

The Midrash cited above tells us that at this point Yaakov reminded Esav of their agreement in the womb.

ומנין שכך הוא שנאמר (בראשית בה) ויאמר יעקב מכרה כיום את בכורתך לי
כשם שהיינו אומרים בבטן.

And how do we know that they made this deal? Because it says, And Yaakov said, "Sell me your birthright just as we discussed in the womb."

Here is the rest of the story.

(לב) וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לְמוֹת וְלָמָּה זֶה לִי בְּכֻרָה
(לג) וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב הַשְּׂבֻעָה לִי כִּיּוֹם וַיִּשְׂבַּע לוֹ וַיִּמְכַּר אֶת בְּכֻרְתוֹ לַיַּעֲקֹב

(לד) וַיַּעֲקֹב נָתַן לְעֵשָׂו לֶחֶם וַיִּזְיַד עִדְשִׁים וַיֵּאָכֵל וַיִּשְׂתֶּה וַיִּקַּם וַיִּלֶךְ וַיִּבֶז עֵשָׂו אֶת הַבְּכֹרָה

32) *And Esav said, “Look, I am going to die, so of what use to me is a birthright?”*

33) *Jacob said, “Swear to me as this day”; he swore to him and sold his birthright to Yaakov.*

34) *Yaakov gave Esav bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, got up and left; thus, Esav spurned the birthright.*

This brief negotiation and sale between Yaakov, who sees his purpose in this world as a proving ground for the World to Come, and Esav, who sees this world as the purpose for his existence, comprises in a nutshell, our situation as Jews in the world, versus the gentile world that surrounds us.

Esav comes home spent and exhausted from a day of murder and sin. Avraham Avinu his holy grandfather has just died, and the house is enveloped in intense mourning. Yaakov is preparing the first meal for his father Yitzchak, and all Esav is concerned about is getting some of that red stuff down his throat.

On Yaakov’s words “sell me your birthright” the Seforno comments: (לא) מברה כיום. כי בהיות היום כל מגמת פניך אל מלאכתך באופן שאתה כ"כ עיף שאינך מכיר הנזיד אין ספק שלא תוכל להתעסק בעניני הבכורה לשרת לקל ית' ולעשו' את הראוי לבכור

I see that you are so immersed in your material existence that you didn't even recognize the soup for what it is, (You just called it red stuff) there is no doubt that you don't have what it takes to be a firstborn, whose job it is to serve Hashem and act appropriately.

Harav Eliyahu Lopian ל"צ says that here Esav is modeling for us the mistake that so many make. Instead of seeing their vocation as a

necessary, but secondary component in life, they see it as their primary purpose in life. Pursuing a career and amassing a fortune becomes their obsession to the exclusion of all spiritual interests. The world around us looks so glamorous and enticing; I just gotta have it. I must have a large, beautiful modern home, a shiny brand-new, top model car, etc. This leaves them no time to think about spiritual matters and what will happen to them when they leave this world. They tell themselves, "It will all work out."

Yaakov, on the other hand, sees this as an opportunity to expand his role as Hashem's servant in this world, and to receive great reward in the World to Come.

The question is asked. How did Yaakov, a holy man, take advantage of the poor starving and famished Esav? He struck the deal at a time when Esav was vulnerable, and disadvantaged. How did he pay a pittance for such a valuable item?

The following true story cited in many holy books provides us with the answer.

A wealthy man with a daughter to marry off, lost all his wealth. He went to the Apter Rav to ask for a blessing and advice on how to obtain the money that he needed to pay for the wedding. The Rav asked him, "How much money do you need to pay for the wedding and how much do you have?" He answered, "The wedding will cost me one thousand rubles, and I have only one ruble." The Rebbe told him, "Use your last remaining ruble to buy the first merchandise offered to you. That purchase will be a source of blessing, and you will have the money you need for the wedding." He wondered to himself, "What could I possibly buy with one ruble?" But he trusted the Rebbe and set out to find his fortune.

His first stop was a local hotel where diamond merchants conducted their business. He approached the table of merchants and began studying the diamonds for sale arranged on the table. One of the merchants asked him, "What are you looking at? Are you interested in buying some diamonds?" "Yes!" he replied. "How much money do you have to spend?" "One ruble." Came the reply. The diamond merchants burst out in laughter. "What do you expect to buy here for one ruble?" they said mockingly. Then one of the merchants piped up and said, "I'll tell you what you can buy for one ruble. You can buy my place in the World to Come!" Remembering that the Rebbe told him to take the first sale offered to him, he immediately said, "I'll take it, but on the condition that you write up a legal document to guarantee the sale." The merchant quickly drew up a contract and wrote that he's selling his place in the World to Come for one ruble. He signed the document and gave it to the fellow who gave him his last ruble. After receiving the document, he took a gemara out of his knapsack and started to learn in a corner.

While the merchants were still ridiculing the fool who gave up his last ruble for something that didn't exist, the wife of the seller entered the hotel. Her husband was the biggest merchant there, but his wealth was from his wife's inheritance. When she inquired about the laughter, they recounted the details of the transaction that her husband had just made. Upon hearing that her husband sold his share in the World to Come, she was horrified. "Maybe you did have a portion in the world to come," she said, "but now you are like a complete gentile! I won't live with a complete gentile! Let's go to the Rabbi right now and get a divorce!" The merchant began mumbling, "It was just a joke!" But she would not accept it and insisted that either he buy back his portion, or she will divorce him.

They found the fellow learning in the corner and brought him to the merchant who said, "I hope you realize that our transaction was just a joke, here's your ruble back and give me back the paper I gave you." "No dice!" said the man. "A deal is a deal. I wasn't joking." "Okay," said the merchant. "I'll give you a profit on your ruble and give me the paper back." "Not one ruble less than a thousand!" he answered. "What are you crazy? I sold it for one ruble and you now want a thousand for it? I'll give you a hundred for it." In the meantime, his wife was saying, "Even if he asks for five thousand you had better give it to him." The purchaser then said, "You should know that I am not the fool you think I am. I was also a wealthy merchant, but I lost my money, and the Holy Apter Rav advised me to take the first deal that comes my way, and since I need a thousand rubles for my daughter's wedding, I will not sell it back to you for one ruble less than a thousand." After more attempts to bargain him down, the merchant saw that he had no choice, and he paid the fellow the thousand rubles and retrieved his document.

When the merchant's wife realized the impact of what had happened, she went to the fellow and said to him, "Where is the justice? How could you sell something you bought for one ruble for a thousand? I want to speak to your Rebbe and see if he agrees with this."

When she posed the question to the Rebbe, he responded. "When your husband sold his portion in the World to Come it was worth only one ruble to him. But after he became aware of how terrible it is to be without a place in the World to Come, and that such a thing is impossible for a Jew, his place in the World to Come went up in value. An item's value is only what it is worth to you."

The Torah informs us that Esav had no value for the birthright. At that moment, he felt that he got the better end of the deal. Therefore, Yaakov did not swindle Esav. It was a fair deal based on Esav's evaluation of the birthright.

Here lies another pitfall that we encounter in our everyday lives. We do not place the correct value on our Jewish heritage and way of life. We tend to see it as old and antiquated with little relevance to modern day life. Therefore, we are prepared to "sell it" or exchange it for a pittance, or less. In the free style world around us, everyone looks like they're having so much fun doing anything they want to do, while we are stuck performing mandatory rituals and customs.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Performing the Mitzvot and living a Torah lifestyle are the most rewarding and fulfilling way of life. The Torah provides clear and sound values upon which to build a moral, upstanding life. No one who lived a Torah true life, ever regretted the way he lived his life, at the end of his life.

Rabbi Yisroel Yaakov Kanievsky ל"צ, takes a different approach to the sale.

At the time of the sale, Esav thought that he was tricking Yaakov into the purchase. Here he was giving Yaakov a worthless thing, and in return he was getting a free nutritious meal. The Midrash relates that Esav had with him a group of hooligans who joined him for the meal and took advantage of the sale. They all ridiculed Yaakov for making such a ridiculous purchase.

This was all before the purchase, but afterwards, Esav had a hole in his heart for having sold the birthright. After all, he grew up in Yitzchak's house, and deep down he understood that the birthright had real value.

But it was too late, it was gone. At this point, Esav felt that Yaakov cheated him! He expressed this later when Yaakov took his blessing. He added this transaction to his accusations against Yaakov for swindling him. In reality, it was a valid sale. Yaakov knew exactly what he was getting, and at that moment, Esav willingly sold the birthright to Yaakov for the bowl of soup.

Rabbeinu BeChai writes that this is a metaphor for all of us, and how we also sell our portion in the World to Come for a pittance, and later regret having done so. Sometimes, a person may forgo an opportunity to do a mitzvah or learn Torah in exchange for acquiring the fleeting material pleasures of this world, which look to him at that time, as the best thing that could ever happen to him. While partaking of the forbidden fruits he feels so lucky and good about himself that he has come upon this delicious pleasure. A person does an illegal business deal and earns a million dollars, feels like a million bucks!

Just like Esav, in the heat of the moment, nothing else is important. He must have that soup (pleasure)! But after the soup is in his stomach, and he can see things clearly, he realizes it wasn't worth it, and he is filled with regret. Harav Kanievsky says that the main place where one screams in regret is in the World to Come, the world of truth. There one sees clearly how instead of spending his life on Torah and Mitzvot, the currency of the World to Come, he spent it amassing material assets, which have no value there.

There is yet another important lesson from this exchange, which may help us achieve the proper perspective on life going forward.

Esav said, "**Look, I am going to die,**" What did he mean by this? What did this have to do with his decision to sell the birthright?

At that particular moment, Esav was feeling that he wasn't going to live very long. Here he had just killed two people and raped a married woman, and their relatives were furious at him. They were planning to get rid of him as soon as they could get their hands on him. Moreover, he was constantly putting his life in danger when hunting ferocious animals. The likelihood is that at some point, one of them will get the better of him and eat him for dinner. Therefore, he will never get to use the birthright.

Our Sages teach us that there is a deeper meaning to Esav's words. The birthright entitled one to be the designated servant of Hashem. This was the original Divine plan, that the first-born work in the Holy Temple. However, when all the first-born men sinned at the golden calf, they lost the job to the tribe of Levy who didn't.

Esav denied that there was a World to Come, so what need was there for spiritual gifts for a future life? There is no future life, so they are a waste of time.

There is yet another layer of depth in Esav's declaration, "I'm going to die." Since I have only a short time to live, I had might as well avail myself of as much pleasure as I can while I am here!" As the expression goes, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die!"

It is remarkable to note that our Sages teach us (Berachot 5a) that if a person is having a particularly difficult time overcoming his evil inclination about something, he should mention "the day of death" to his evil inclination, and that will carry the day.

אמר רבי לוי בר חמא אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש לעולם ירגיז אדם יצר טוב על
יצר הרע שנאמר רגזו ואל תחטאו אם נצחו מוטב ואם לאו יעסוק בתורה שנאמר
אמרו בלבבכם אם נצחו מוטב ואם לאו יקרא קריאת שמע שנאמר על משכבכם אם
נצחו מוטב ואם לאו יזכור לו יום המיתה שנאמר ודומו סלה

Rabbi Levi bar Chama said in the name of Reish Lakish. A person must always fight against his evil inclination... If he defeats him on his own, fine, but if he can't, he should learn Torah... If that helps, fine, but if it doesn't, he should read the Shema...and if even that doesn't help, he should mention his day of death ...

Mentioning one's death day is the final blow to the evil inclination. This will knock him right out! How? Because, if a person realizes that all the illegal deals and pleasures that he executes in this world are only going to do him in in the World to Come, he will sober up and refrain from doing it.

So, here we have the very same idea, "I am going to die!" In the hands of one who sees his place in this world as a conduit to the World to Come, it serves as the greatest motivation to refrain from evil and to accomplish as much Torah and Mitzvot as possible. However, in the hands of one who sees this world as his reason for existence; to experience the various available pleasures, it serves as the motivation to be selfish, immoral and hedonistic.

And this, perhaps, is the central charge of Toldot for us today. Each of us stands at a crossroads, holding our bowl of lentil soup in one hand and our portion in the World to Come in the other. The challenge is, not to be drawn in by the engaging color of "that red stuff," but to remember what has true and lasting value. When we pause and choose the birthright of a Torah-true life, we elevate ourselves and all who are connected to us. May Hashem grant us the wisdom to choose well and to cherish the precious life He has entrusted to us.

