



THE CHEVRA

Young Israel of Fair Lawn
The Morris J. Kraut z'l Torah Center

Joe Smith - President

This Shabbat:

Parashat Toldot

4 Kislev, 5767

November 24, 25 - 2006

The Haftorah is read from Malachi
1:1-2:7.

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| <u>Friday</u> | |
| Candle Lighting | 4:13 PM |
| Mincha | 4:15 PM |
| <u>Shabbat</u> | |
| Chevra Mishnayos Shiur | 8:00 AM |
| Shacharit | 9:00 AM |
| Sof Zman Keriat Shema: | 9:19 AM (Gra"h) |

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Mincha | 4:10 PM |
| Maariv and Havdala | 5:16 PM |

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| Sunday Shacharit | 8:00 AM |
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Next Shabbat:

Parashat Vayetzei

11 Kislev, 5767

December 1, 2 - 2006

The Haftorah is read from Hosea:
12:13-14:10.

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|------------------------|-----------------|
| <u>Friday</u> | |
| Candle Lighting | 4:11 PM |
| Mincha | 4:15 PM |
| <u>Shabbat</u> | |
| Chevra Mishnayos Shiur | 8:00 AM |
| Shacharit | 9:00 AM |
| Sof Zman Keriat Shema: | 9:24 AM (Gra"h) |

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| Mincha | 4:10 PM |
| Maariv and Havdala | 5:14 PM |

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| Sunday Shacharit | 8:00 AM |
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Torah Insights – Harav Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Toldot

Genesis 25:19-28:9

By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – The memory which
plagues Jacob-Israel throughout
his life, the seminal act which
defines much of what happens to
him through his manifold
experiences as a son and sibling at
home in Israel as a young husband
in Laban-land with a wily and
grasping uncle – employer, as a
father and pater-familias of the
nascent and emerging twelve
tribes back in Israel, and as an
elderly patriarch in the Egyptian
exile, was the moment in which he
put on the garb of Esau and
deceived his father in order to
receive the blessings. Our Torah
reading describes every word of
that fateful meeting between
Father Isaac and son Jacob: when
Jacob brings his father the venison
stew prepared by his mother, his
blind father asks, "Who are you,
my son," and Jacob responds –
seemingly without missing a beat –
"I am Esau your first born son."
(Gen 27: 19).

This is the defining moment of
Jacob's life: it justifies his name,
which from then on will not merely
refer to the physical moment of
birth when the younger Jacob
leaves his mother's womb holding
onto the heel of the elder, Esau,
but will rather refer to the non –

literal nuance of the verb *la'akov*, to get around through the back door, to take the circuitous route in order to get there first, to be a deceiver. (Everett Fox, ingenious translator of the Bible into English in accordance with the German translation of the 20th Century philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, takes the word to mean "heel – sneak"). His deception leads to his exile from his parents' house, to his having been deceived by Laban, who gives him the elder rather than his beloved younger daughter, to his having been deceived by his sons when they tell him that Joseph was torn apart by a wild beast, and to his having been deceived even by his beloved Joseph who poses as Grand Vizier, under whose royal garb he conceals his true identity as Jacob and Rachel's eldest son.

But the real question which begs to be asked: Jacob is described in the opening of our Biblical portion as "a whole-hearted (Hebrew *tam*, also means naïve) person, a (studious) dweller in tents" (Gen. 25:27). How can such a disingenuous personality declare to his old blind father, "I am Esau, your first-born son" – and for what appears to be in order to gain material blessings?! The classical commentary Rashi, attempting to ameliorate the force of the blatant lie which emerged from Jacob's lips, suggests that Jacob responded to his father's query as to who was standing before him with the words, "It is I", Esau is your first-born son" (27:19, apparently drawing for support from the cantillation - trope. Clearly this is a rather forced interpretation of the words, emanating from the inconsistency of the deception with Jacob's character as the Bible has just described it.

I believe that between the words and lines of the Bible, we are being

taught here a most profound lesson concerning fathers and sons, parents and children. The character and identity of the individual is forged by his/her genetic make-up and environment, nature and nurture. It is crucial that each of us attempt to recognize, understand and accept the inner core of our essential being, be true to ourselves and express who we are with all of the integrity we can muster. (As Shakespeare's Polonius declared, "But this above all else: to thine own self be true"). And this is the fundamental meaning of the central commandment in the Bible, "You must love your neighbor like (you love) yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), the obvious corollary being that everyone must first develop and love him/herself before he/she can reach out to love the other.

But how do we learn to love ourselves? From the very fact that those who are most important to us from our very birth – our mothers and fathers – show that they love us, that they consider us loveable, worthy of being loved. This feeling of affection that we receive unconditionally from our parents creates within us a bank account of love from which we can draw to give to others. Woe unto that individual who has not received such love deposits from parents during his/her most formative years; it will be difficult at best for such a person to truly develop him/herself and to give love to others.

The family tragedy, the split between the twin brothers which resulted in Jacob's having to flee for his very life, began with the boldly stated reality, "And Isaac loved Esau since his hunt (Esau's venison meant) was in his mouth; and Rebecca loves Jacob" (25:28). This is stated – and probably felt by the main players in the story –

after their respective basic character traits are delineated. Esau the man who knows how to trap (animals, and perhaps also people, the former with weapons, the latter with smooth, sweet talk), the man of the fields, and Jacob the whole-hearted man, the dweller in tents.

Especially in the Biblical patriarchal society, every son yearns for his father's love and acceptance – a gift which was given to Esau but withheld from Jacob. And the very next verse following the description of parental love and lack thereof seems to be a non sequiter: "And Jacob potted up a pot (of red lentil pottage)" which he agrees to sell to tired hungry Esau in exchange for their father's birthright (25:29-34). The holy Ohr HaHaim (R. Haim Ibn Attar, 19th century, ad loc) suggests that Jacob cooked the pottage for his father; once he saw that Esau earned his father's love by preparing red venison meat for him, Jacob imitates Esau in the best way he is able: by making a red pottage soup for the patriarch. The Bible is thereby reporting that Father Isaac's rebuff made Jacob want desperately to be Esau-like, to re-make his identity from that of a naïve introspective student to that of a more sophisticated and aggressive purveyor of goods and sources. Perhaps such a metamorphous would enable him to finally feel his father's favor.

Once we understand this, Rebecca's suggestion that Jacob dress in Esau's garb, bring his father Esau's venison, declare himself to be Esau is precisely what Jacob yearns to do and who Jacob yearns to be: he wants to be Esau. The birthright is almost secondary, it serves as the tangible expression of the paternal love he so lacks but which he so desires. Of course Jacob resolutely responds, "I am Esau your first-

born". He is now seeking to repress his rejected, whole-hearted, studious identity and to assume a new, out-doors and aggressive Esau – like identity. No wonder he answers his father's query without batting an eyelash.

And indeed, this new Jacob out-Esau's Esau during his tenure in Laban-land. It takes two decades for him to realize that Esau is not his true self, that he must find the inner strength to re-discover and re-activate the persona that he really is, with or without paternal love and acceptance – and at that point he will exorcize the false Esau-ism from his being and emerge as Israel. But all of this is profoundly described between the words and the lives of the Biblical portions to come.

Shabbat Shalom
Shlomo Riskin
Chancellor Ohr Torah Stone
Chief Rabbi - Efrat Israel

The Month of Kislev

The name "Kislev" is of Babylonian origin.

In the Tanach (Bible), Kislev is referred to as the ninth month, as it is the ninth month after Nissan. Although most famous for having [Chanukah](#) within it, Kislev is also a month with significant Biblical happenings.

The first rainbow, observed after the Flood, was seen in Kislev. "And God said: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I set between Me, and yourselves, and between every living being that is with you, unto eternal generations. I have placed my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of a

covenant between Me and the Earth.' " "This is the sign of the covenant" - God showed Noah the bow and said to Him: "This is the sign of which I spoke" (Bereishit 9).

Rosh Chodesh Kislev, which refers to the transition day or days between months, consists at times of one day, and at times of two. The preceding month of Cheshvan sometimes consists of twenty nine days, and sometimes of thirty days. In the former instance Rosh Chodesh Kislev consists of one day, which is the first of Kislev; in the latter, of two, with the first day of Rosh Chodesh counting also as the 30th day of Cheshvan, and the second day of Rosh Chodesh counting as the first day of Kislev.

From the days of the Hasmoneans, as long as the Beit Din, also known as the Sanhedrin, or Jewish Supreme Court, sanctified the month through the testimony of witnesses, who testified as to when they had seen the New Moon, where in the sky they had seen the New Moon, and exactly what it looked like, messengers of the Beit Din went out to places distant from Yerushalayim, to make known when the new month had been sanctified.

The Beit Din needed to do this only during months in which festivals occurred, so that people knew on which day to observe the festival. Therefore, when the month of Kislev was sanctified, messengers were sent out, so that people living far from Yerushalayim would know when Chanukah was to begin. Chanukah has the status of a festival, although it is Rabbinic in origin, and not directly mentioned in the Torah.

This Day in Jewish History

1 Kislev: The beginning of winter in Israel, according to Rabbi Yehuda (Bava Metia) (boils).

2 Kislev: Jews of New York were allowed to swear without reference to Christianity, 1727.

3 Kislev: First Nazi mass-murder of Warsaw Jews, 1939. .

5 Kislev: Portuguese Jews had to leave by this date in 1497 (the decree of expulsion was earlier, but there was a grace period). .

7 Kislev: King Yehoyakim burned a Sefer Torah, 603 b.c.e. - day was made a fast day.

9 Kislev: Jews of Paris expelled (again) by Charles VI, 1394. (Rabbi Bloch z"l points out that English, French, and Spanish Jewry were expelled roughly at 100 year intervals - 1290, 1394, 1492.)

10 Kislev: 27,000 Jews of the Riga ghetto taken for execution, 1941.

14 Kislev: First plane of Operation Magic Carpet bringing Yemenite Jews to Israel, 1948.

15 Kislev: A pagan altar was set up in the Beit Hamikdash, 167 B.C.E.

SHABBAT SHALOM
