DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

THE STOLEN ANSWER

Yibba Eshu, m'n heshdor, 'voam 'uyt.

“And Eisav came in from the field and he was tired” (Bereishis 25:29).

“Said Rabi Yochanan: That wicked man did five [capital] sins on that day” (Shabbos 16b).

It didn’t happen often, but there were some times and places scattered throughout our history in which we were respected and loved by the ruling government.

In one such country, the king was a wise man and a great philosopher. He enjoyed having deep discussions with his Jewish subjects—in fact, that is why he loved them so much! He found them to be well versed, intelligent, and articulate.

The king was especially fond of the rabbi of a local town. The Rabbi was an exceptionally wise man, and he understood many things beyond the Gemara. He was well versed in government, sociology, philosophy, and science. The king always found conversations with him to be endlessly enthralling and inspiring.

One day, the king was reading the Jewish writings, and he found a disturbing passage. He quickly sent a messenger to invite the Rabbi to come speak with him.

When the Rabbi entered his inner chamber, the king went right on the attack.

“I don’t think your scholars are fair,” he said. “The Bible doesn’t say that Eisav did anything wrong on the day he bought the red soup—all it says is that he was tired and rude. But the scholars say he did five

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>

PARSHAH RIDDLES

1 Which two people were called “Admoni”?

2 Which three people were called “tam” or “tamim”? Can you think of four meanings of the word “tam” or “tamim” in Chumash? Where do we find the word “תומם-tumam” in Chumash?

3 Can you find three separate uses and meanings of the (shoresh of the) word “eikev” in this week’s parshah?
The gang leader stomped off in the direction of the room in which Reb Beirish was learning so sweetly. Something irked him deeply about the sound. It wasn’t just the fact that someone was clearly in the inn, and it wasn’t the fact that that person seemed to be unafraid of his famous band of marauders. Something else bugged him about it.

He drew his sword as he marched down the corridor toward the source of the sound and whacked it against the wall in fury.

In the room at the end of the hallway, Reb Beirish continued learning the ancient, holy words of the Zohar, treasuring each like a diamond, oblivious to the heavy, thudding boots in the hall, the clanging sword, and the danger that stalked him.

The gang leader angrily stabbed his sword into the wall as he walked. He howled in fury and finally, upon reaching the door, plunged his sword through it. He wrenched the blade out and was about to chop off the doorknob when, through the hole he had made in the door, he caught sight of the man sitting on a chair in the room, head bent over a book.

The gang leader froze.

He peered closer. Could it be? Was it possible? For several moments, he stared at Reb Beirish, disbelief stamped on his features.

Suddenly, he whirled around and ran back down the hallway, letting out a bloodcurdling shriek as he went, and burst into the main room in which Zanvil and his family were tied up, his face twisted with emotion and his breath coming heavily.

The family looked at him in fear. What was going on?

The other thugs eyed their leader warily. What had happened in the other room to make him act this way?

The room was silent as they all stared at one another.

Then the leader let out a roar. “Untie them!”

The men didn’t move. They had never let anyone go before. They did not leave witnesses to their crimes; that was their leader’s policy.

“I said untie them!” the leader screamed. “Do it now, before I tie up all of you instead!”

One of the men ventured to speak. “Boss, are you sure? You always say, no witnesses, no prison…”

“I know what I say! And now I say untie them, do you hear?!” The leader waved his sword at the man who had dared to speak. “Do it!”

Grumbling, the men headed toward to captives.

But they were not quick enough. Swinging his sword wildly, the leader of the gang advanced on the captives himself, a wild, furious look in his eyes.

TO BE CONTINUED...
Parshah summary

Parshas Toldos is the only parshah that focuses on the life of Yitzchak Avinu. Yitzchak’s middah, the specific approach to avodas Hashem that he teaches the world, is gevurah, self-control and willpower. Certainly, Yitzchak was shalem (whole) in the middah of chessed (kindness) and all other middos as well, but his unique path in avodas Hashem was different from Avraham’s. He conducted himself primarily with austerity and was seen that way by his children. According to some sources, even Rivkah lived in awe of her husband, to the extent that she did not feel able to approach him about Eisav.

Today, gevurah within the family is not something we should be working toward. However, gevurah within our personal lives, in a way that does not affect or deprive others, is worth a week of exercise. The mitzvah of prishus, asceticism, discussed at length among the Rishonim and in Mesilas Yesharim, allows for one to exercise his willpower in safe areas, far from danger of sin.

1. At one meal per day this week, leave over some of a food you really enjoy. This is called “taanis haRaavad,” and it’s not easy! To pump up the challenge, leave over the best part! (You can give it to someone else if you feel that it is bal tashchis.)

2. One of the most difficult things we can do is admit we were wrong. Recall an argument, new or ancient, in which you may really have been wrong. In all earnestness, reach out to the person you opposed and say it: “I was wrong; you were right!”

Answers to the Riddles:

1. Eisav and Dovid Hamelech

2. Noach, Avraham, and Yaakov were called “tam”: נוֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים בְּדוֹרֹתָיו (Bereishis 6:9) and וְיַעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם (ibid. 25:27)

The word “tam” or “tamim” can mean:
- Finished (כִּי אִם תַּם הַכֶּסֶף—Bereishis 47:18)
- Wholesome, as in Noach and Avraham, or similarly without blemish, as in korbanos (שֶׂה תָּמִים זָכָר בֶּן שָׁנָה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם—Shemos 12:5)
- Paired, as in וְיַחְדָּו יִהְיוּ תַּמִּים עַל רֹאשׁוֹ (ibid. 26:24)
- Simpleton, as in מָעָלִים יִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנַי וֶהְיֵה תָּמִים (ibid. 17:1)
- Calm, such as a tam ox וְיָדוֹ אֹחֶזֶת בַּעֲקֵב עֵשָׂו (Bereishis 25:26); since: עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי (ibid. 26:5); fooled: וַיַּעֲקְבֵנִי זֶה פַעֲמַיִם (ibid. 27:36).

Answers to last week’s riddles:


2. When the Torah says Hashem blessed Avraham בְּכָל, what does the word בְּכָל mean? Chazal give five explanations.
   1) Avraham had a daughter; 2) he did not have a daughter; 3) he had a daughter named Bakol; 4) he had a special stone called Bakol that healed any sick person who looked at it (see Bava Basra 16b); and 5) he kept the mitzvah of sukkah (see Sefer Divrei Eliyahu).

3. Which two words in the Torah mean “maybe?” פָּן and אֶפְיָא. What is the difference between them? פָּן refers to something you are hoping will not happen; אֶפְיָא refers to something you are hoping will happen.

4. Who was a gilgul of Lavan? Bilam and Naval.

5. What is the longest perek in Sefer Bereishis? Perek 24, Eliezer’s mission (67 pesukim). Shortest? Perek 16, Hagar’s mission (16 pesukim). Which three perakim are over 50 pesukim long? 67, 31 (Lavan chasing Yaakov), and 41 (Pharaoh’s dream).
The headlines

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HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

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Since the snack was stale, the sale is void and Aaron cannot demand that Yossi accept a replacement. Therefore, Aaron has to give Yossi his money back.

**EXPLANATION:**

When a sale takes place, it is assumed that the product does not have a significant defect or is in some way significantly damaged. When the product is found to be defective—in this case, the chips are inedible—the original sale is void (Choshen Mishpat 232:6). In some instances the seller may be able to provide the customer with a replacement product (for example, if he said he was selling chips but did not specify “this bag of chips”), but in this case, since Yossi wanted the chips that day and Aaron cannot supply another bag that day, Aaron must refund the money.
4 Kislev (Friday) is mentioned in Sefer Zechariah (7:8) as a day in which Zechariah said nevuah to Darius, king of Persia. According to Rashi in Yoma 21b, this was the final nevuah ever said with ruach hakodesh.

5 Kislev is the yahrzeit of the Maharsha (d. 5392), Rav Shmuel Aidel’s (his mother-in-law’s name was Aidel). The Maharsha wrote peirushim on Shas, and his commentaries are printed in the back of Gemaras. He was rav in Kelm, Tiktin, Lublin, and Ostrov. He was a cousin of the Maharal of Prague and a descendant of Rav Yehudah Hachassid.

The Maharsha opened a yeshivah in Posen. His mother-in-law, a widow named Aidel Lifshitz, supported the yeshivah for over 20 years. In appreciation, the Maharsha added her name to his own.

"Since (עֵקֶב) Avraham listened to My Voice" (ibid. 26:5).

Avraham was 175 when he passed away. He had recognized Hashem at age three. That leaves 172 years during which he listened to Hashem. That is the meaning of the pasuk: "עֵקֶב (gematria 172) [years], Avraham listened to My Voice."

“עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי,” (ibid. 26:5).

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The Prohibition

One who causes harm to another by lying violates the issur d’Oraysa of “m’dvar sheker tirchak”—distance yourself from falsehood” according to all opinions, even outside of beis din. Many hold that this is true even when the lie is for the sake of a mitzvah or to preserve peace. The Rishonim discuss whether the issur includes untruths that have no effect on anyone. According to Rabbeinu Yonah, such inconsequential falsehoods are generally prohibited, but are permitted for a valid purpose, such as to achieve a mitzvah or to preserve peace between friends or husband and wife.

What is the Truth?

The determination of the “truth” and “falsehood” of a statement depends on what is being communicated to the listener, not the technical meaning of the words being said. Therefore, if someone misleads another person with words that technically can be considered accurate, he has still lied. Conversely, if he uses common exaggerations, inaccuracies, or terms that most people use and understand the intent of, he has told the truth. Using a title that is commonly used, even if technically untrue, is an expression of truth; skipping it could lend a false impression. For example, the term “harav hagaon” is used in some communities to refer to anyone with elementary scholarship. Using such titles in those communities is truth; leaving them out would give a false negative impression.

Lying to a Liar

It is permitted, or even proper, to lie to or mislead someone trying to cheat or steal from you. This is why Yaakov was allowed to lie in order to get the brachos away from Eisav and to save his sheep from Lavan. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky explains that this is proper because one is in fact ensuring that justice prevails. There are several conditions to this dispensation: 1. one may not do this in beis din; 2. the lie may not trip up an honest man to wrongfully admit guilt; 3. children may not do this, because the distinction between this lie and others will be lost on them and they will get into the habit of lying (adults who will fall into the same error should not do this either); 4. this may not be done on a regular basis—it is to be used rarely and only when necessary; and 5. even when lying to defeat a cheat, one should use words that can technically be understood as honest, to avoid “training his tongue to speak falsehood.” This is why Yaakov said “Anochi...Eisav bechorecha—I am[] Eisav [is] your firstborn.”

The Last Word

“Greater is the vision of the eyes of faith than that of the eyes of the head.”

—Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

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