often FFBs - that's the whole point. But the point here is to point out (sorry about the excessive use of the word) that our three Avot were very different in the way they grew up - the way they were introduced to belief in G-d. Avraham discovered G-d on his own. Yitzchak had the enthusiastic Avraham to teach him. And Yaakov's experience must have been different still with a father that grew up in the house of Avraham Avinu and Sara Imeinu.

As similar as Avraham and Yitzchak were in the many examples we see in these sedras, there was a fundamental and very significant difference in how they were raised. And Yaakov's experience was different from his father's and grandfather's.

When it comes to Eretz Yisrael, the three Avot are, once again, very different from each other.

Avraham grew up in Chutz LaAretz and came on Aliya in his midlife. Yitzchak Avinu lived all 180 of his years in Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov was born in Eretz Yisrael, left for a significant period of time, returned, and then went down to Egypt where he died. He, as we know, was buried in Eretz Yisrael.

Again, three different types of experiences vis-a-vis Eretz Yisrael.

The message: MAASEI AVOT SIMAN L'BANIM - that which happened to our forefathers are signs to the descendants and are often precursors to our own experiences and behaviors. The beauty is, we have three different models to follow. Some of us were born into observant families whose observance was reinforced from one generation to the next. Some of us come from parents who were Baalei T'shuva later in life. Some families became religious together - parents and children. Some of us are converts. Some are the children of converts. There are many different origins that we come from - and each situation presents its own challenges. It is not a foregone conclusion that children from religious families will grew up too be religious, practicing Jews. Yitzchak had a Yaakov, but he also had an Eisav.

Some of us came on Aliya. Others are children of people who came on Aliya. We've all met 7th generation Israelis... etc.

Each situation as far as living in Israel is concerned has its own challenges.

Torah, Eretz Yisrael, everything...

The foundation stones upon which the Jewish nation is built are not identical to each other. They are different, but each one is strong and solid. And taken together to make that foundation, they are collectively stronger than each component.

continues on page 3 below
No Carbon Copies Here!

When one looks at the episodes of Yitzchak’s life in the Torah, one sees many similarities between Yitzchak and his father Avraham. It started with Yitzchak’s birth and his striking resemblance to his father. Yitzchak and his wife pose as brother and sister... as did Avraham and Sara. Famine - famine. Wells, wells. On and on, the Torah points to the similarities. And on many levels, it is true - and there are lessons to be learned from Yitzchak’s emulation of his father.

But if we take another look, from a different angle or two, we find striking and significant differences between Avraham and Yitzchak... and Yaakov too.

Avraham was born into an idol-worshiping family and society. If Avraham was the quintessential BT (Baal T’shuva), then Yitzchak was the first FFB (frum from birth). The children of BTs are most

The OU Israel Family extends a warm welcome to the Officers, Board Members, and Staff of the Orthodox Union and to the delegates to the OU National Convention in Jerusalem

cont. p.10
**Seymour J. Abrams • Orthodox Union • Jerusalem World Center**
OU Israel Center programs • Makom BaLev • Lev Yehudi Pearl & Harold M. Jacobs ZULA Center • Machon Maayan NESTO • The Jack Gindi Oraita Program • Mashiv HaRuach Beit Kharkov • OU Israel Communities • OU Kashrut Israel

**Yitzchak Fund, President, OU Israel**
Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Senior Vice President
Prof. Meni Koslowsky, Vice President
Rabbi Dovid Cohen, Vaad member
Stuart Hershkowitz, Vaad member
Moshe Kempinski, Vaad member
Sandy Kestenbaum, Vaad member
Zvi Sand, Vaad member
Harvey Wolinetz, Vaad member

**Rabbi Avi Berman, Director-General, OU Israel**
Menachem Persoff, Director of Programs, Israel Center
Phil Chemosky, Educational Director and TT editor

22 Keren HaYesod • POB 37015 • Jerusalem 91370
phone: (02) 560-9100 • fax: (02) 561-7432
email: office@ouisrael.org • website: www.ouisrael.org

Torah Tidbits and many of the projects of OU Israel are assisted by grants from The Jewish Agency for Israel.
If our Avot and Imahot had perfect lives without trials and tribulation, without disappointments, without sorrow... then they would be much in the Avot and Imahot department.

It is because of what they went through that they serve as our models. Because of what happened to them, we are able to face challenges in our lives and know that we are truly their children.

WORD of the MONTH  cont. from p.2

A weekly TT feature to help clarify practical and conceptual aspects of the Jewish Calendar, thereby enhancing our appreciation of G-d’s gift to us of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem...

for seven days after the molad to say KL will have their first op only on Motza'ei Shabbat, December 6th, the eve of the 10th of Kislev. On the one hand, Motza'Sh is a preferred time for KL. On the other hand, the later in the month one waits for KL - especially during the winter, the more likely it is to run into a series of cloudy/rainy nights and miss KL altogether. Therefore, one needs to determine if his waiting for seven days is as a halachic requirement or merely as a preference. There are opinions on the books (as they say) that distinguish between summer and winter and "allow" KL earlier in the month becuase of the concern mentioned above. Real, full 7-day people keep to that throughout the year. GR"A people: 3 days always (unless it's Leil Shabbat - then, Motza"Sh).

TO-L'DOT STATS

6th of the 54 sedras; 6th of 12 in B'reishit

Written on 172.7 lines in a Sefer Torah, ranks 36

4 Parshiyot; 2 open, 2 closed

106 p'sukim, ranks 29th (9th in B'reishit)
Tied with Vayigash and Bo, but shorter than both in words & letters and length

1432 words, ranks 34th (10th in B'reishit)
5426 letters, ranks 33rd (10th in B'reishit)
Its p'sukim are below average length

MITZVOT

none of the 613 mitzvot are in Toldot

Aliya-by-Aliya

Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya -
21 p'sukim - 25:19-26:5

[P> 25:19 (16)] This is the history of Yitzchak b. Avraham; Avraham fathered Yitzchak.

Rashi quotes the Gemara that tells that when Yitzchak was born, scoffers said that Avraham and Sara, who were
childless for so long, had found a baby and claimed it as their own. Avraham invited the leaders of the nations, their wives and infants, and Sara miraculously was able to wet-nurse all the babies. (The Gemara points to the plural "banim" in 21:7.) Then the scoffers accepted that Sara bore Yitzchak, but chided Avraham that Avimelech was the father (since Yitzchak's birth followed Sara's abduction). A miracle occurred and baby Yitzchak was the very image of his father Avraham, until the scoffers proclaimed, "Avraham fathered Yitzchak".

Earlier, the Torah tells us of the generations of Yishmael b. Avraham. That seems to be in balance with the beginning of this sedra, which speaks of Yitzchak, except: [1] the Torah makes a point that Yishmael is the son of Hagar the Egyptian, the maidservant of Sara. In other words, Yishmael was NOT the real To'loid of Avraham; and [2] To'loid (in the Yishmael context) is spelled without a VAV, implying that something was missing. To'loid of Yitzchak b. Avraham; it was Avraham who fathered Yitzchak. And the word To'loid is spelled with its VAV.

Yitzchak is 40 years old when he marries Rivka (3 years after the Akeida). The Torah emphasizes Rivka's family background.

After 20 years of childlessness (10 until Rivka was of child-bearing age plus an additional 10 years without a child), Yitzchak and Rivka pray to G-d. G-d hears their (actually his) prayer and Rivka becomes pregnant. She is having a "rough time" and goes to Shem b. No'ach (who outlived Avraham, by the way) who tells her G-d's message, that she will give birth to twins who will go in very different ways and become great adversarial nations.

Commentaries say that Rivka was unaware that she was carrying twins; she thought the turmoil within her existed in a single baby - THIS had her very upset; she was somewhat calmed by the Divine message of her carrying twins. Another commentator suggests that Rivka knew she'd have twins but did not see the benefit of bringing a Yaakov into this world if it meant also having an Eisav. Part of the reply to her question "why do I need this", is that her conclusion was wrong.

Take a look at Rashi. Two great nations - these are Antoninus and Rabbi (Yehuda HaNasi)... It can be suggested that the Divine message to Rivka, was that even though there will great tension and friction between the descendants of the twins she was carrying, Yaakov and Eisav, there will be an example of a Roman (from Eisav) and a Jew who will truly get along and that is the hope for the future when the nations of the world will all recognize Israel's role in the world and their special relationship with the One G-d Who will then be universally recognized.

Eisav and Yaakov are born, Yaakov clutching the heel of Eisav. The boys grow and develop different personalities - Eisav is the hunter and outdoorsman; Yaakov, the mild, studious "tent-dweller". Yitzchak loves Eisav; Rivka loves Yaakov.

There are many different commentaries on these relationships. Note that Yitzchak's love is based on Eisav's providing food for him. Rivka's love is unconditional. Pirkei Avot says that only an unconditional love will endure forever.
Yaakov is preparing a lentil stew for his father. (The Gemara tell us that this was the day of Avraham's death; Yaakov was preparing the traditional mourner's meal for Yitzchak.)

Eisav returns from the field in a state of exhaustion. He asks Yaakov for some of the food. In exchange for the food, Yaakov acquires the birthright, which is insignificant in Eisav's eyes, but meaningful to Yaakov.

[\textit{P}> 26:1} (33)] A famine hits the Land (like the one in Avraham's time - this is one of the many similarities between the lives of Avraham and Yitzchak) and Yitzchak goes to Avimelech in Gerar. G-d appears to Yitzchak and reminds him that he must not leave the Land. G-d also repeats his promises of the Land and of the large nation that will descend from him.

**Levi - Second Aliya - 7 p'sukim - 26:6-12**

Yitzchak dwells in Gerar. (This is one of the three-word p'sukim in the Torah. There are 13 or so such p'sukim, and they are occasionally a focus of attention.)

Yitzchak and Rivka pose as brother and sister (as did Avraham and Sara, and for the same two reasons). After a while, Avimelech discovers that they are actually husband and wife and complains to Yitzchak about the deception.

Avimelech orders his people to leave Yitzchak and Rivka alone. Yitzchak and family flourish in Gerar and G-d blesses them.

[S\textit{D}T]\textit{p}; In last week's \textit{TT} we referred to the dispute as to whether Sara and Avraham had a daughter or not. S'fat Emet suggests that something in this week's sedra seems to say that they had a daughter. Yitzchak and Rivka "pose" as brother and sister. Avraham was well known. Especially to the people and king of Gerar. He would know if Avraham had a daughter or not. Since Avimelech apparently accepted Yitzchak and Rivka as brother and sister, until he discovered otherwise, it seems reasonable to support the opinion that Avraham (and Sara) were indeed blessed with a daughter.

**TAKE A LOOK...** The first famine that drove Avraham and Sara to Egypt, when Par'o discovers their true relationship, he sends them away. The second time, when they went to Gerar and said they were brother and sister, and then they were "found out", Avimelech gives them many things and invites them to stay. (Par'o had given Avraham great wealth, but it was before he knew about their real relationship.) Yitzchak and Rivka also say they are siblings, but no one takes Rivka. When they are "found out", they stick around.

**Shlishi - Third Aliya - 10 p'sukim - 26:13-22**

Yitzchak thrives in Gerar, which creates jealousy among the locals who fill in the wells that Yitzchak has dug. (There is great symbolism
in the Torah's account of the wells, their names, their failures, and then their successes.) Yitzchak is driven away from Gerar. A new well that Yitzchak digs (Eisek) is taken over by the shepherds of Gerar, as is yet another well (Sitna). Only the third well (Rehovot) permits Yitzchak to live in relative peace.

(Some see this as a hidden reference to the 1st and 2nd Beit HaMikdash, which fell, and the 3rd which will stand forever. May we see it soon in our time.)

Brachot 56: Rabbi Chanina said, he who sees a well in a dream, he will see peace... Yitzchak's servants dug and found a live spring, B'EIR MAYIM CHAYIM. This is immediately followed by the peace treaty between Avimelech and Yitzchak. Rabbi Natan continues in the same Gemara. He who sees a well in his dream has found Torah, as it says in Mishlei: He who finds Me, finds life... an equation is made between G-d, Torah, and Life.

R' Yehoshua b. Levi adds that one should verbalize the words B'eir Mayim Chayim before he encounters the words from Yirmiyahu 6:7 - 'K'HAKIR BIYA MEI-MEHA... "As a well keeps its water fresh, so she keeps fresh her wickedness; violence and destruction, grief and wounds..." Verbalizing a dream's interpretation is considered significant; an unexpressed dream is often open to opposite meanings and what is expressed first gives the dream its substance and direction. This is the tip of the iceberg of Dream Interpretation as presented by the Torah T'mima. Don't read too much into the comment here - it is meant only as a brief comment (or SDT, if you will).
Yitzchak is old and blind and calls Eisav to prepare for him a special meal and then receive a special blessing. While Eisav is in the fields doing his father's bidding, Rivka prepares Yaakov to receive the blessing instead of Eisav. She tells Yaakov to bring her two goats and she would prepare the dishes that Yitzchak loved. Yaakov hesitates for fear that Yitzchak will feel his smooth skin and realize that Yaakov has come to deceive him. Rivka dresses Yaakov in Eisav's garments and places a goat-skin on his neck to give it a rough feel. She gives Yaakov the food to bring to his father.

It seems obvious that Yaakov was punished measure for measure for his deception of Yitzchak. The Brothers not only deceived Yaakov concerning the fate of Yosef, but they used a goat and a garment (exactly the two items that Yaakov used to deceive his father) to bring about their deception. If we accept the idea that Yaakov was supposed to get the bracha that Yitzchak was going to give to Eisav, that it was G-d's will, and even G-d's command according to Onkeles, to Rivka to "set it up", then why was Yaakov punished so severely?

An answer might be suggested in the form of an analogy. When one has to take drastic, life-saving treatments - "serious" medication, radiation, etc., what is done might be absolutely necessary, but there are often harsh side-effects.

Continuing the analogy, was there not a "safer" way for Yaakov to get the b'racha? Apparently not. If there is a medication that is effective and without side effects, why would a person take the medicine that has serious side effects? For whatever reason(s), the way it went is how it was meant to go.

When the Torah tells us that Yaakov gave his father wine to drink, the TROP note under the word LO (to him) is a MEIRCHA CH'FULA (double meircha). This rare note, suggests the Meshech Chochma, reminds us of the proper way to drink a cup of wine - not gulping it down in one shot, but rather finishing it in two "installments".

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 23 p'sukim - 27:28-28:4

The blessing invoked by Yitzchak upon Yaakov, for bountiful produce and respected status among nations, has been borrowed by us to be recited on Motzai Shabbat - V'YITEN L'CHA HA-ELOKIM...

As Yitzchak finishes blessing Yaakov, Eisav returns from the hunt. He prepares food for his father and presents it with a request (demand) of the blessing. Yitzchak trembles when he realizes that the bracha went to Yaakov. When Yitzchak explains to Eisav that Yaakov received (and rightly so) the blessing, Eisav bitterly cries out and asks his father for a blessing too. Yitzchak gives Eisav a blessing (not as exalted as Yaakov's). Eisav decides to kill Yaakov for this, the second time he has taken something away from him. Rivka hears
(how? Ru’ach HaKodesh, perhaps?) of Eisav's plans and encourages Yaakov to flee to Rivka's hometown until Eisav's wrath subsides. Rivka suggests to Yitzchak that he send Yaakov away to find a proper wife.

Note that Rivka did NOT tell Yitzchak that Eisav wanted to kill Yaakov. Perhaps she felt that it would pain him too much to learn of Eisav's true character. Perhaps, Yitzchak would have refused to believe that his Eisav would contemplate such a thing. Instead, Rivka expresses another concern (legitimate) as her reason for wanting Yitzchak to send Yaakov away.

Yitzchak calls for Yaakov and gives him another blessing and sends him off to Padan Aram to find a wife from Rivka's family. He gives Yaakov "the blessing of Avraham", thus providing for the continuity of the Chain that becomes The Jewish People.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 5 p'sukim - 28:5-9

Yitzchak sends Yaakov off to Padan Aram to Lavan b. B'tu'el, the brother of Rivka who is the mother of Yaakov and Eisav. (Unusual ID.) Eisav sees that their father has sent Yaakov to find a wife, because he does not want him to take a Canaanite wife. Yaakov goes on his way and Eisav takes as another wife, the daughter of Yishmael. And Eisav takes Machalat b. Yishmael...

Talmud Yerushalmi exclaims that this is Bos'mat, and asks why her name was changed. The astonishing answer is that all Eisav's sins were forgiven when he took a wife intended to please his parents. The Talmud generalizes and gives this as the source that the sins of a CHATAN (and KALLA) are forgiven when they marry. Strange source for a significant concept.

The final 3 p’sukim are reread for the Maftir.


There is speculation as to whether Mal'achi is the name of an individual, or a description of "My messenger". Some say that Mal'achi was Ezra. Mal'achi is known as the last of the prophets. Mal'achi brings G-d's message to the people that He loves Yaakov (and his descendants), and hates Eisav, even though Yaakov and Eisav are brothers. Thus, the Haftara echoes the rivalry and relationship between the two brothers that is the substance of the sedra To'l'dot. The haftara refers to the respect a son has for his father. In this regard, Eisav was exemplary.

Mal'achi criticizes the kohanim of the time for not being careful in the offering of korbanot. We can see this as a preparation for the building of the new Beit HaMikdash in the hopes that it will function properly and be a true honor to G-d.
In the first 450 lessons we discussed Torah and Rabbinic Civil law. With this lesson and for the next series of lessons we shall discuss Torah criminal law. The order shall be: the laws of theft; the laws of robbery; the laws of wounding and damaging; the laws of murder; and the preservation of life.

The Torah states: "You shall not steal" (Vayikra 19:11). If one does steal he is not punished by flogging although he has violated a Torah command. To a person who realizes that he must face his Maker some day, many would probably prefer to be punished in this world by being flogged and not have to face their Maker in the next world with this transgression on their record. There is no flogging since the thief has to make restitution. The obligation of the thief is to restore the stolen item or, if it is not extant, to repay the value of the theft to the victim of the theft.

The thief has not transgressed unless the thing stolen was worth at least a peruta (the smallest coin used at that time, perhaps the equivalent of a penny or maybe 5 agorot - our smallest coin in use). The prohibition against stealing applies even if the thing stolen is worth less than a peruta, he still transgresses. It makes no difference if one steals the property of a Jew or non-Jew, or whether one steals from an adult or a minor - he has transgressed. Furthermore, one may not steal even with the intention of returning the item stolen or if he wants to be able to pass money onto the victim by stealing and then paying him back the stolen item and the accompanying penalty; or if he steals to perplex the victim, or he steals in jest. One may not steal! All these practices are forbidden so that the thief should not get into the practice of stealing.

We can define a thief as a person who takes the property of another without the owner's knowledge that the thief is stealing from him. The act of theft is done secretly. An example would be if the thief put his hand into the victim's pocket and steals something from the pocket and the victim is not aware of it. A bookkeeper who make false entries into the account books of the victim and steals money that way is a thief. However, if one takes something openly and by employing force or the threat of force, he is not a thief but rather he is a robber and the laws of robbery will be set forth IYH in some future lessons. An armed robber is not a thief.

If credible, eligible witnesses testify in the lawsuit brought by the victim against the thief to recover his money and/or property, the thief will be required to pay the victim double the value of the stolen property. This is known as KEIFEL, double the value of the thing stolen. This includes the original value plus 100% penalty. Thus if one has stolen $100 he repays $200; if he stole an automobile worth $10,000, he repays $20,000. The thief will lose an amount equal to the

In the first 450 lessons we discussed Torah and Rabbinic Civil law. With this lesson and for the next series of lessons we shall discuss Torah criminal law. The order shall be: the laws of theft; the laws of robbery; the laws of wounding and damaging; the laws of murder; and the preservation of life.

The Torah states: "You shall not steal" (Vayikra 19:11). If one does steal he is not punished by flogging although he has violated a Torah command. To a person who realizes that he must face his Maker some day, many would probably prefer to be punished in this world by being flogged and not have to face their Maker in the next world with this transgression on their record. There is no flogging since the thief has to make restitution. The obligation of the thief is to restore the stolen item or, if it is not extant, to repay the value of the theft to the victim of the theft.

The thief has not transgressed unless the thing stolen was worth at least a peruta (the smallest coin used at that time, perhaps the equivalent of a penny or maybe 5 agorot - our smallest coin in use). The prohibition against stealing applies even if the thing stolen is worth less than a peruta, he still transgresses. It makes no difference if one steals the property of a Jew or non-Jew, or whether one steals from an adult or a minor - he has transgressed. Furthermore, one may not steal even with the intention of returning the item stolen or if he wants to be able to pass money onto the victim by stealing and then paying him back the stolen item and the accompanying penalty; or if he steals to perplex the victim, or he steals in jest. One may not steal! All these practices are forbidden so that the thief should not get into the practice of stealing.

We can define a thief as a person who takes the property of another without the owner's knowledge that the thief is stealing from him. The act of theft is done secretly. An example would be if the thief put his hand into the victim's pocket and steals something from the pocket and the victim is not aware of it. A bookkeeper who make false entries into the account books of the victim and steals money that way is a thief. However, if one takes something openly and by employing force or the threat of force, he is not a thief but rather he is a robber and the laws of robbery will be set forth IYH in some future lessons. An armed robber is not a thief.

If credible, eligible witnesses testify in the lawsuit brought by the victim against the thief to recover his money and/or property, the thief will be required to pay the victim double the value of the stolen property. This is known as KEIFEL, double the value of the thing stolen. This includes the original value plus 100% penalty. Thus if one has stolen $100 he repays $200; if he stole an automobile worth $10,000, he repays $20,000. The thief will lose an amount equal to the
amount that he wanted to deprive the victim of the theft.

In halacha, there is the concept that if one confesses to a deed that carries with it a penalty, he is relieved of paying the penalty. Thus if the thief confesses of his own accord that he stole the money or the object, he returns the thing stolen or its value and does not pay the double penalty. This is true in all situations where there is an admission that the penalty is waived.

The double penalty applies to all items with two notable exceptions as set forth in the Torah. If one steals an ox and sells it or slaughters it, he pays five times the value of the stolen ox. If one steals a sheep and he sells it or slaughters it he pays the owner four times the value of the stolen sheep.

These double payments or fourfold or fivefold payments are to be paid whether the thief is a woman or man. However, if the thief is a married woman without money of her own to pay the double penalty, the double amount becomes a debt until she is divorced or her husband dies, when the Beit Din will collect it from her.

If the theft is committed by a minor (a girl under twelve years and a boy under 13 years of age), the thief need not pay the double penalty. The minor however must restore the object if it is still in his possession. If he no longer has the object, he need not repay the value of the object even when he reaches adulthood. Beit Din has wide discretion in flogging minor thieves so that they should not get into the habit of stealing.

If the stolen object is in the possession of the thief he must restore the stolen object to the victim of the theft. If one steals from a thief he is not obligated to pay the double penalty.

If there is appreciation in the value of the stolen object the thief need return only the value of the object at the time it was stolen.

If one steals from a heathen he is not obligated to pay him the double penalty. (The same applies if one stole sacred property when the Beit HaMikdash was in existence. We pray that the Beit HaMikdash should be rebuilt speedily.)

It is prohibited to purchase stolen property from a thief. If one does so, he is guilty of a major sin since it encourages criminals and the thief will see that it is profitable to steal and he will continue to steal. If a thief does not find purchasers he will not steal. In support of this statement, we find in Mishlei: "Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own soul." (29:24)

If one steals an object and sells it and the owner has not abandoned hope of recovering the item, and then the thief is discovered, the article is restored to the owner but the owner must pay the purchaser the price he paid to the thief. The owner may now sue the thief for the value of the object. If, however, the purchaser knew the thief to be a thief then the owner need not pay the purchaser what he paid and the owner gets the item back without making any payment. Of course, the purchaser may sue the thief to recover the moneys that he paid for the item.

There are many laws regarding thieves who cannot make restitution. Many of
those laws have lapsed, such as selling
the thief as a slave to recapture the
amount due to the victim of the theft. The
moneys fetched by selling the thief will
be given to the owner of the stolen object.
Since most of the laws dealing with
slaves lapsed many years ago, long
before President Abraham Lincoln freed
the slaves, I will not set forth these laws
here. But the halacha did make provisions
to see that the victims of the theft were
properly protected. To be continued
IYH

The subject matter of this lesson is more fully
discussed in A Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law by
E. Quint. Copies of all volumes can be purchased at
local Judaica bookstores. Questions to quint@inter.net.il

Spiritual and Ethical Issues in the Bamidbar Stories by Dr. Meir Tamari
"... and I shall bless them." [1]

The Kohanim standing in front of the Aron Kodesh with their heads and hands
covered with tallitot, blessing the congregation, is a familiar part of our ritual,
every day in Israel but only on chagim in the galut. Despite this familiarity or
perhaps because of it, the spiritual issues that our commentators deal with are
often ignored. Such problems relate both the act of the Kohanim itself, as well
as to the correct understanding of b'rachot, in general, in Judaism.

At the outset it is instructive to look at the b'rachot that the Avot and Moshe
gave.

In the very first revelation to Avraham, G-d did not say "be blessed" but rather
"be a blessing". We can understand this to mean G-d blessed Avraham with
everything (Midrash Hagadol); alternatively we can understand this as being a
promise that Avraham and Israel would always bring blessings to the world (S.
R. Hirsch). Irrespective, Avraham, the first of the Patriarchs, himself never gave
a bracha to his son Yitschak.

The question of the birthright, the blessings by Yitschak and the twin sons,
Yaakov and Eisav, are probably the most famous of all blessings, and probably
the most instructive. The crux of their story is that there were actually two
blessings involved, radically different from each other regarding content and
also for whom they were destined. When Yitschak blessed the one whom he
thought to be Eisav, he says: "G-d give to you of the dew of heaven and of the
fat places of the land, and plenty of grain and wine. Let people serve you and
nations bow down to you" (B'reishit 27: 28-29). This blessing to Eisav is purely
a materialistic blessing of prosperity, power and material wealth, yet even here
there is a spiritual undertone. The blessing of dew took into account Eisav's
shortcomings since dew is a gift from G-d, an undeserved chesed. In contrast,
rain is given by G-d only as a reward for observing His Torah, and is withheld
as a punishment for desecrating it (second passage of the Sh'ma and repeated
throughout the Torah). However, when Yitschak blesses Yaakov knowing
full-well who he is, he says: "And G-d bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you that you may be a congregation of peoples; and give you the blessing of Avraham that you and your descendants may inherit the Land which G-d gave to Avraham" (B'reishit 28:3-4). This blessing destined for Yaakov was not of material things, not a promise of prosperity and not a future of political power, rather a blessing that he would inherit G-d's promise to Avraham of the Land and of the Chosen People. It was a spiritual role to be fulfilled in the future only after exile and slavery, a role that Eisav rejected when he despised his birthright.

The history of separation and choice that marks the Book of B'reishit also marks the blessing that Yaakov gives to his sons. Of the sons of No'ach, Shem was chosen; and of the descendants of Shem, Avraham was chosen. Avraham's spiritual inheritance goes to Yitschak and not to Lot or Eliezer the disciple or Yishmael, the son of Hagar. From Yitschak it went to Yaakov, but not to Eisav. Now when Yaakov comes to bless his sons the process continues. His blessings contain no promise of economic prosperity or material goods; rather there is a glimpse into each of the Tribes future based on their past behavior and their individual characteristics. There is a moral judgment in which Reuven is displaced of the attributes of the firstborn; Kingship goes to Yehuda, Kehuna to Levi, and the double portion of the Promised Land to the sons of Yosef.

"V'Zot Ha'B'racha, this is the blessing that Moshe the man of G-d blessed Israel before his death" (D'varim 33:1). Prior to that, in his last discourses of Nitzavim, Vayeilech, and Ha'azinu Moshe revealed the broad outlines of the nation's future to the people. Here, he does the same for each of the 12 Tribes separately. In neither, does he promise material benefits of any kind nor does he pray to G-d to give any of them to Israel. Instead, he first warns them of the consequences of their collective behavior and then blesses each tribe; that is, he enumerates their tribal spiritual strengths and the ideological roles that they will play in the nation's future. This is particularly noteworthy, in the b'rachot of Shimon and Levi. However, we may understand the curse of Shimon and Levi by Yaakov, Moshe literally sings the praises of Levi and his role as Kohanim and Leviyim, whereas not only does he not apply to Shimon, but that tribe does not even appear in the blessing of Moshe. The tribe of Levi did T'shuva as witnessed by their actions during Cheit HaEigel (Sin of the Golden Calf) whereas Simon persisted, as witnessed by the acts of Zimri their leader with the daughters of Moav.

"Introducing the tribal blessings, Moshe says, "Vayhi Bishurun Melech, the Torah became king and through the reign of the Torah, Israel was to be Yeshurun, to realize its moral calling. In the assembly of the heads of the nations to the Torah, the tribes of Israel find their union, and in this participation of everybody in the highest national possession, everybody receives his
completely equal position. So, although Reuven had lost the leadership which would have been his, and although he is the only tribe that has no special material, spiritual, or political distinction in Moshe's blessing, still by virtue of the study and observance of the Torah in which all Israel have an equal share, even a Reuven lives" (S. R. Hirsch, D'varim33:4-6).

Echoing the religious perspective of generations, the Ba'al HaTanya, founder of Chabad, taught that it is not the task of a Rebbe to give advice or guidance in material matters but rather to solely be a spiritual guide and a religious mentor. In this light, the b'rachot of the Avot and of Moshe may serve us to understand the spiritual and ideological motives in the blessings of the Kohanim and to appreciate the underlying message of all b'rachot.

MISC section - contents:
[1] Vebbe Rebbe
[2] Candle by Day
[5] Parsha Points to Ponder
[6] Portion from the Portion
[8] Who was Eisav
[9] From Machon Puah
[10] Divrei Menachem

[1] From the virtual desk of the OU

VEBBE REBBE

The Orthodox Union – via its website – fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and the Israel Center. The following is a Q&A from Eretz Hemdah...

Q In my yeshiva, someone sells baked goods in the following manner: The proprietor leaves the products in a box accompanied by a price list and a sign-up sheet. Students are trusted to take, write down their names and a tally of their purchases, and pay periodically. Is it permitted to take things on Shabbat and write down the purchase after Shabbat?

A As you are apparently aware, it is forbidden to buy things on Shabbat and Yom Tov, either because commerce could lead to writing or because the NAVI warns against "looking for your interests and speaking matters on Shabbat" (Beitza 37a with Rashi). On the other hand, the Mishna (see Beitza 29a,b) permits acquiring items even from a professional proprietor on Yom Tov and (almost unanimously - see Beit Yosef, Orach Chayim 323) on Shabbat. This is permitted if the product is to be used on the holy day and the acquisition is done in a way that avoids classic signs of commerce (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 29:17).

What must one be careful about? One of the issues, measuring quantities or perhaps even using a measuring utensil without actually measuring, does not apply,
assuming the baked goods are sold by unit and are not weighed. However, it is a problem to mention the purchased item's price when discussing its acquisition (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 323:4). One also should not mention the term "buy" but something like "receive" (Mishna B'ura 323:1). Here, there is obviously no explicit mention of a price. After all, as one acquires (buys?) the object on the honor system, there is no one with whom one needs to interact. On the other hand, one can argue that since the price is listed and the buyer is acquiring the food in the same basic manner it is done during the week (see Beitza 29a) it may still be considered a forbidden sale by price.

In truth, though, the fact that a price is found in writing need not be a problem. In fact, the Rama (OC 323:4) uses the existence of a known set price as an alleviating factor. In discussing what one should not say, the gemara mentions the idea of s'chum, which usually means a total. The Rishonim dispute whether it is permitted to mention only the measure of the specific item one is acquiring without adding it to previous purchases to arrive at a sum total. The Rif seems to go as far as to say that one can ask for a certain object at a certain price as long as he doesn't add up various obligations (see Beit Yosef, ibid.). The Rama accepts this opinion, on provision that the price is a known one. In that case, the mention of the price is viewed not as a commercial discussion but as a means of identifying the amount of product that one wants (see Mishna Berura 323:19). Although the poskim question whether we should rely on this leniency (ibid.:20; Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 29:19), we see at least that the fact that a price is clearly known does not render the transaction forbidden. Even the Shulchan Aruch (ad loc., whose stringent opinion is accepted by Sefardim (Yalkut Yosef 323:1)), who says that a single price should not be mentioned, does not object to an object's price being clearly known when agreeing to the transfer.

One thing one must avoid is studying the price list, as detailed written accounts of transactions are known as "shitrei hedyotot" and are forbidden to be read (see Mishna B'ura, ibid.). In that context, the Mishna B'ura also points out that one should not put pins next to the name and amount of money that corresponds to the details of the transaction. (It is possible that the pin or similar system can be used for mitzva purposes such as recording pledges at an appeal (ibid.), but that is beyond our present scope).

Although issues of Shabbat do not prevent taking the baked goods on credit, one should make sure that he is allowed to take them without immediately writing down his debt. It is possible that the seller may trust him not to lie but not to remember to update the account after Shabbat.

Ask the Rabbi Q&A is part of Hemdat Yamim, the weekly parsha sheet published by Eretz Hemdah. You can read this section or the entire Hemdat Yamim at www.ou.org or www.eretzhemdah.org. And/or you can receive Hemdat Yamim by email weekly, by sending an email to info@eretzhemdah.org with the message:

Subscribe/English (for the English version) or Subscribe/Hebrew (for the hebrew version).

Please leave the subject blank. Ask the Vebbe Rebbe is partially funded by the Jewish Agency for Israel.
Don't wait for the sun to shine; it's always shining. Just brush the clouds away.

From "A Candle by Day" by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein

This is not a coincidence. It is the absolute, unchanging nature of Yitzchak's relationship with G-d, beyond the possibly effecting influence of outside circumstance (a relationship epitomized in his role at the Akeida as a burnt-offering dedicated in his entirety to G-d) which gives Yitzchak that "gevura" - the power to overcome all potential obstacles - which enables him to bring the Divine bounty to expression even at the most material level: in the soil.

In our day as well, the Land of Israel can be conquered only through "gevura" born of our rediscovering the unshakable relationship which G-d bequeathed to us as a People by Yitzchak AvINU.

Rabbi Jonathan Blass, Neve Tzuf

R' Akiva Eiger is known throughout the Torah world as one of the giants of the past few centuries. Less, though, is known of his work with the sick.

In spite of a very hectic schedule, including answering hundreds of questions in halacha addressed to him yearly, whenever R' Akiva traveled, he would always find time to visit the local hospital. He would visit every patient, ascertain how the person was feeling, offer encouragement, and see what might be down to help him. He would also bring along treats, to lend some cheer to the patients' lives. When he felt it necessary, he would even arrange for a specialist to see a specific patient. In addition, he would pray to Hashem for each and every person that he visited.
Each hospital that he visited had a set of guidelines and procedures. When he found a new guidelines that had not been instituted in his own local hospital, he would write it down and then suggest that the local hospital adopt it. Similarly, when he visited another hospital, he would offer suggestions for improvements based on the other facilities he had visited.

Often, when a patient needed someone to remain with him throughout the night and there was no one available to do so, R' Akiva would volunteer to stay with him.

In his own town, R' Akiva asked to be appointed to the governing board of the hospital, and his request was gladly granted. Thus, he was able to assist in furthering the welfare of the hospital and its patients.

When he became old and was physically unable to visit the sick, R' Akiva hired two men, at his own expense, to do the rounds for him and to offer treats to the patients, along with words of encouragement. He had the men report to him each day with details of the condition of each patient. They would also bring him the names of all the patients, so that he could pray for them.

Shmuel Himelstein has written a wonderful series for ArtScroll: Words of Wisdom, Words of Wit; A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit; and "Wisdom and Wit" — available at your local Jewish bookstore (or should be). Excerpted with the permission of the copyright holder

**Parsha Points to Ponder**

**TO-L'DOT**

1) G-D tells Yitzchak not to travel to Egypt when famine strikes Canaan (26:2). If Egypt was Yitzchak's destination why does the Torah record that Yitzchak went to the land of Avimelech, in Grar, upon the outbreak of famine (26:1)?

2) G-D appears to Yitzchak and tells him not to go to Egypt but to DWELL IN THE LAND WHICH I WILL TELL TO YOU (26:2). In the very next verse G-d tells Yitzchak to LIVE IN THIS LAND, referring to Israel. Why did G-D bother saying that first phrase that Yitzchak should live where G-D tells him to go if right away He tells Yitzchak where that place is?

3) Why does the Torah mention that Yitzchak was Eisav's father (27:39), a fact which is quite obvious from the entire story until this point?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS...**

Ponder the questions first, then read here

1) The S'forno teaches that Yitzchak was on his way to Egypt but he felt it was the right thing to ask permission from the king before leaving his country. So, he went to see Avimelech before departing. This demonstrates the tremendous respect which our forefather had for the ruler of the land in which he lived.

2) The Kli Yakar answers that the words WHICH I WILL TELL YOU in the first verse actually mean WHICH I CAN SPEAK TO YOU. G-D was telling Yitzchak that he should make sure to live in a place where G-D could speak to him at any moment because of the holiness and Divine presence in that place. Where is that place? The next verse continues and explains that the only place for that kind of connection is right there in Israel and, therefore, Yitzchak should not leave.

3) The Ohr HaChayim teaches that Yitzchak had no plans to give Eisav a blessing at this point. However, upon hearing Eisav cry (27:38), Yitzchak's compassion for his son emerged and he
decided to bless him. The words HIS FATHER explain why Yitzchak chose to give this blessing to Eisav.

Parsha Points to Ponder is prepared by Rabbi Dov Lipman, who teaches at Reishit Yerushalayim and Machon Maayan in Beit Shemesh and is the author of "DISCOVER: Answers for Teenagers (and adults) to Questions about the Jewish Faith" (Feldheim) and "TIMEOUT: Sports Stories as a Game Plan for Spiritual Success" just released by Devora Publishing. pp@ouisrael.org

by Rakel Berenbaum
FEEDback to berenbau@gmail.com

Choose a Girl from Padan Aram

My daughter Tova got engaged this week, which means that, please G-d, soon I will be joining the club of mothers-in-law. In the family they have already started calling me "shviger" and are sharing all the mother-in-law jokes around. So of course this week I gravitated to the verses dealing with in-laws and parents attitudes to their children's choice of a life partner.

In the portion we hear (26:34) that at age 40 Eisav finally decided to settle down and get married. He chose two Hittite women, Yehudit bat Be'eri and Bos'mat bat Ilan. Unfortunately his parents were not so happy with this shiduch (:35) "His wives became a source of spiritual bitterness to Yitzchak and Rivka".

Although we see in the portion that Rivka and Yitzchak did not agree on everything - Yaakov favored their son Eisav and Rivka favored Yaakov; when it came to the daughters-in-law, they both agreed. They both didn't like them. Was this merely thoughts held by in-laws that "no one is good enough for my son or daughter", or was this based on something real. The Midrash says the wives were idol worshipers.

The Torah mentions Yaakov's name first in the verse referring to their dislike of Eisav's wives. Does that mean he was more upset then Rivka by Eisav's choices? The Oznayim LaTorah says this could be because he hadn't known that Eisav was an idol worshiper before - he thought it was just because of his new wives, but Rivka knew that Eisav himself was wicked. She didn't like the wives, but knew they weren't the only reason for Eisav's poor behavior. But both parents were not happy with Eisav's lifestyle and his choice of life partners.

Rivka even says "I am disgusted with my life because of those Hittite women" (27:46). On this topic Yitzchak agrees with Rivka and instructs Yaakov not to choose a wife from the girls of Canaan. He sends him back to Padan Aram, where his ancestors were from, to choose a wife. Yaakov listened to his parents and went to Padan Aram. Eisav understood that his parents did not approve of the women of Canaan for their sons. That much he understood - so he went to Yishmael and married Machalat, Yishmael's daughter in addition to his other wives. He added more pain to his parents.

And what is so special about the people of Padan Aram? Weren't they also idol worshipers? But, as we saw
last week in Eliezer’s choice of Rivka - the people in Avraham’s family had good MIDOT. They had good character traits. This is what is most important in choosing a shidduch. If someone doesn’t have the “good midot gene”, it is very hard for them to acquire it. I am happy to say that my daughter also saw the importance of good midot and brought us home someone who Rivka and Yaakov would approve of and who we can be proud of.

I had this dessert the last two weeks at my mother-in-law’s house and it was delicious. She cooks and bakes without a recipe, so this is improvised.

MY MOTHER-IN-LAW’S BAKED FRUIT DESSERT

1 cup sugar
1 cup oat meal
½ tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. oil or margarine
2 cups fresh fruit, cut up
½ tsp. vanilla
½ cup dried fruit of choice
½ cup ground nuts
½ cup pineapple chunks (optional)
1 Tbsp. Bran

Mix all ingredients. Bake 20 to 30 minutes until fruit is soft at 375°F (190°C). Cool and serve.

The yellow of the egg is the yolk = CHELMON HABEITZA
and the white of the egg is the glair(ε) = CHELBON HABEITZA

[8] Who was Eisav?
The following comments about Eisav from the Talmud and Midrash are taken from the book ISHEI HATANACH by Yisrael Yitzchak Chasida

• The Midrash says that Eisav greatly resembled Yitzchak physically.

Eisav cont. from p.10

• The Gemara says that Eisav did not rebel during Avraham’s lifetime (which was cut short by 5 years - 175 and not the 180 that Yizchak reached so that Avraham would not see Eisav’s wickedness).

• Targum Yonatan says that Eisav killed Nimrod (and took his special garment - some say it was the leather garment made by G-d for Adam & Chava - and the one that Rivka put on Yaakov when he went to his father "in disguise").

• The Midrash says that Eisav encouraged his grandson Amalek to take revenge against the children of Yaakov, since he did not succeed in vanquishing Yaakov.

• The Zohar says that there was never a person who so honored his father as did Eisav. This earned him domination in this world. Targum Yonatan adds that Eisav’s honoring of Yitzchak is what caused Yaakov to fear him, especially since he (Yaakov) spent so many years away from his father.

• The Zohar says that Eisav’s tears at losing the bracha caused Bnei Yisrael to go into Galut.

Bilingual microUlpan:
Egg = BEITZA
Hard-boiled egg = BEITZA KASHA
The Gemara says that he lived with two righteous individuals and didn’t learn from their deeds.

The Midrash says that Eisav's male offspring were circumcised during Yitzchak's lifetime, but afterwards they stopped observing Mila.

[9] From Machon Puah

Innovations in Fertility

This column has been somewhat idle in the last few weeks, as I was at the annual meeting of the American Society of Reproductive Medicine in San Francisco. It was attended by medical experts, social workers, psychologists and many others, and was a successful meeting. There were several thousand people in attendance and the meeting was thriving with people from all over the world who came to hear about the latest developments in the field and to meet each other and discuss a wide variety of issues.

In the next few weeks we shall look at some of the innovative treatments that were presented and that are currently available to help couples or will become available in the future.

One of the areas that has developed greatly recently and continues to be an exciting field is the area of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, known as PGD. This is a procedure in which after an IVF (in vitro fertilization) has been performed and we have embryos in the lab, one or more cells can be removed. The DNA which is the map that guides the formation of the cells and organism can then be amplified in several different ways. This then enables us to analyze each embryo and to see the genetic makeup, from simple things like the gender of the embryos to much more complex things such as a translocation, an area of the DNA that is formed upside down and can cause serious birth defects.

After the PGD has been performed, the affected embryos can be discarded and only the desired embryos can be reimplanted in the uterus, which can then grow and we can have healthy children.

This technology is invaluable in cases where both husband and wife are carriers of a genetic disease. We would promote testing prior to getting married to ensure that such matches are not made. However, sometimes the couple are carriers of a disease that was not tested for, or a rare disease that is not commonly looked for. Sometimes the wife is a carrier of a disease that affects only one sex, such as only males, as in the case of hemophilia, a disease in which males have the inability to produce blood platelets and thus can bleed to death from even a simple cut.

Sometimes couples come who did not test before marriage and both are carriers. Maybe the most famous Jewish genetic disease is Tay Sachs, where the body cannot break down fats. This is always fatal at a young age and can be devastating for the parents.

Being a carrier of a genetic disease usually has no affect on the carrier at all, they are not ill, and so may well not know that they have such a condition unless a family member is found to be a carrier and they get tested. If two carriers marry each other then they have a chance of giving birth to a child who is sick. Subsequent testing reveals that they both husband and wife are carriers.

Until recently in such a case the couple had few options, they could decide to have no children, they could have children who would be ill, or they had to enter difficult halachic questions regarding prenatal testing and terminating a pregnancy.

With the onset of PGD we can now offer a
better solution. Such a couple can have healthy children using this new technology and this has enabled many children to be born worldwide to couples who otherwise would not have had children. More on this next week.

The Puah Institute for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha is based in Jerusalem and helps couples from all over the world who are experiencing fertility problems. Puah offers free counseling in five languages, halachic supervision, and educational programs. Puah has offices in New York, Los Angeles and Paris. To contact the Puah Institute please call 1-800-071111 in Israel or in the US 718-336-0603. Visit our website: www.puahonline.org

[10] Divrei Menachem

From parshat Toldot, we learn much about empathy and the power of prayer. We learn that Yitzchak entreated (Vaye'tar) G-d, 'opposite his wife,' because she was barren (B'reishit 25:20-21). His wife was Rivka the daughter of "Betu'el, the Aramean, sister of Laban the Aramean," clearly from a not so righteous lineage.

We induce from the text that Yitzchak and his wife were both praying to Hashem at the same time in the same place, perhaps literally facing each other. However, from the flow of the text and the use of the same Hebrew expression, "Vayei'ater Lo", we see that G-d responded, but singularly to the petition of Yitzchak.

Interestingly, in the case of Hagar and Yishmael's respective prayers - after they were banished from Avraham's house - we recall that Hashem specifically answered the prayer of the ailing lad (cf. Breishit 21:9-21). Yet here, it is Yitzchak's prayer that is preferred over Rivka's whose pain was surely greater than that of Yitzchak.

Rashi explains that the prayers of the progeny of a Tzadik are favored over those of the children of the wicked. Nevertheless, the Netivot Shalom taught that Yitzchak was so modest that he prayed in his wife's presence so that his entreaties should be accepted in her merit. No wonder, then, that due to this exceptional level of identification and deference to his wife that the same term "Vaye'tar" is attributed to Hashem, as if to say that He too (now) identified with Rivka's anguish.

Shabbat Shalom, Menachem Persoff

Towards better Davening and Torah Learning

The case of the disputed SH'VA

SH'VAs come in two flavors: NA, giving the letter under which it is a very short vowel sound and which attaches its letter to the following syllable - and - NACH, the resing SH'VA that has no vowel sound and which closes off a syllable. Take the word NAFSH'CHEM in the Sh'ma. Under the FEI is a SH'VA NACH. The first syllable of the word is NAF. The NUN has a vowel sound but the FEI does not. The FEI closes the syllable. Under the SHIN is a SH'VA NA. The SHIN has a very short vowel sound - not substantial enough to be its own syllable, but there is a vowel sound to it. The SHIN/SH'VA is attached to the following syllable CHEM. Technically, the word has two syllables: NAF and SH'CHEM.

There are various rules (and exceptions to them) that determine which flavor a SH'VA is. For this column, we are looking at one situation only - a SH'VAed letter that follows a conjunctive VAV, in which
case the VAV loses its SH'VA and becomes like a SHURUK. E.g. end of Aleinu, SH'MO, His name; and His name - not V'SH'MO but U SH'MO (ECHAD). In SH'MO, the SH'VA under the SHIN is NA. But in USH-MO, it becomes NACH. Not U'SH'MO, but USH-MO. B'RACHA, UV-RACHA, etc.

Now look at B'reishit 27:26 (in Tol'dot) and find an unusual (in some Chumashim) word: ושֶׁפֶל לָךְ, Yitzchak says to his son: Please approach (or approach now) and kiss me. The SHIN has a CHATAF-PATACH which is not unique, but rare, since SHIN is not one of the usual letters that get a CHATAF-vowel. In fact, some sources say that the letter should be pronounced like a SH'VA; others say to pronounce it like a short version of the CHATAFvowel. Some distinguish between different cases and sometimes pronounce it this way and sometimes the other. Even this is not for now.

What is for now is the fact that some Chumashim have the vowel as indicated back on page 38, and some - maybe most, and certainly the ones with the reputation for being accurate and authoritative - have only a SH'VA - שפֶל.

We’re almost there. With a CHATAF-PATACH in some Chumashim and a SH'VA in others, we would expect that the SH'VA would at least be NA. This is so, because a CHATAF-vowel is really a form of a SH'VA NA, let’s say, an exaggerated SH'VA NA.

Fact is, however, that there are very serious and respected DIKDUK sources (including, but not exclusively, the Radak and the Minchat Shai) that say that a SH'VA after an initial VAV that became SHURUK-like (notice, we didn’t say a SHURUK), is always NACH - even when there is a METEG under the VAV. A real SHURUK is a strong enough vowel to stand by itself and "make" the SH'VA under the letter that follows it a NA. But not the VAV that became U. It is too weak not to capture the SH'VA and NACH it.

And so, in some Chumashim, the word in question is U'Sh'AKA-LI, and in others - the accurate ones (not really a fair term), the word is USH-KA, two syllables: USH (rhymes with swoosh), and KA.

Train of thought... in the Sh'ma we have: UV-LECH-T'CHA VADERECH, UV-SHAbwCH-B'CHA, UV-KU-ME-CHA. UK-SHAR-TAM... UCH-TAV-TAM - all of which start with a VAV turned SHURUK and a letter with a SH'VA. All SH'VAS are NACH and close the first syllable of their respective words: UV, UV, UV, UK, UCH - even though under the VAV of UV-KUMeCHA there is a METEG.

(Loose ends.)

LOOSE ENDS

Two weeks ago, in the Towards Better Daveneing and Torah Reading column, we presented the difference in pronunciation of "the blessing of" and the "blessings of". We wrote then that the singular s'michut form of B'RACHA is BIRKAT and the plural s'michut form of B'RACHOT is BIRCHOT. Thanks to a clarification on the matter by YL, we made that first statement, and we still stand by it. When challenged by a veteran TTreader, we searched through Tanach (via computer AND old-fashioned Concordance - you remember, book covers with pages between them, etc. - not as efficient as a computer search, but useful for Shabbat), and found 11 occurrences of the word BIRKAT; none of birchat (but a number of
BIRCHOT). So, we repeat:

Birkat HaMazon, Birkat HaChama (IY"H this coming Erev Pesach), Birkat Kohanim, Birkat HaBanim (v'haBanot). Birchot HaTorah, Birchot HaShachar. Hmm, maybe we should say Birchot HaMazon, since there are 3+1...

Top-left is Yaakov with his lentil stew.

Next to him is one of Yitzchak's workers on a break from digging wells. Or, perhaps, it is Eisav coming in from the field exhausted.

Continuing across the top, we come to a Seder plate. Rashi tells us that it was the first night of (the future) Pesach that Yaakov presented himself to Yitzchak for the bracha. Rivka told Yaakov to bring her two goats. Just to feed Yitzchak, you need two goats? Rashi answers that one was for the main dish and the other for Korban Pesach. Similarly, commentaries mention the wine that Yaakov gave to Yitzchak as being part of a "Seder", and that his cleverness (mentioned in Rashi) was feeding Yitzchak Korban Pesach, so he could not eat Eisav's food also. Realize that these ideas exist on a different level of Torah from the P'SHAT, the plain meaning.

Upper-right is a king on his father's back. The hand is pointing to the father, who would be AVIMELECH. This is not the only pun in this week's ParshaPix, as you will see.

The rain cloud is part of the bracha that Yaakov received.

The sword is part of the bracha to Eisav.

The lion cub on the map of Israel is another pun - GUR BAARETZ HAZOT. Actually, live in this Land...

The tow truck is another pun - Yitzchak lived in GERAR.

The passport is for Yaakov who is being sent abroad by both Yitzchak and Rivka. Yitzchak never needed a passport, but Yaakov did.

The teddy bear is holding aloft the number 7 in one paw and an upraised hand in the other. There are two meanings to the name Be'er Sheva. One is from the seven sheep that Avraham gave Avimelech as a token of the covenant between them, and the other is for the oath(s) that were taken in that agreement. SHEVA has both connotations.

Lower-right is the Davka Judaica Graphic of Yaakov, the studious ISH TAM, dweller in the tent of Torah study, and Eisav, the ISH SADEH, the man of the field, the hunter.

Straus and Keren HaYesod are the streets on which the Israel Center was and is. They are Rechovot, as in the name of third well that Yitzchak dug and the one that was not contested by Avimelech's crowd.

C is 100 in Roman numerals. With
a gate inside the C, you get ME'AH SHE'ARIM.

II Above the truck is the emblem of NAHAL, a part of IDF. Combined with the truck it reads NACHAL GERAR, the place where Yitzchak settled after Avimelech kicked him out of Gerar.

II From the back of the tow truck is an arrow pointing to the computer icon for a DOS prompt. Together it gives the Ashkenazit pronunciation of the sedra, TOW-L' (as in "to", that's the arrow) DOS.

II The emblem of Ben Gurion University stands Be'er Sheva, the city in which it is located.

II Next to it is the emblem of the city of Rehovot - with microscope, book, and orange - is for the well of the same name.

II To its right is a photo of a hand holding a Pygmy Marmoset, the smallest of all monkeys... represents the small KUF (monkey is KOF - KUF/KOF, get it?) in the word kATZTI, that Rivka said in expressing her disgust if Yaakov were to marry a local K'naanit.

II At the bottom of the PP is a secretary bird, a large African raptor (Sagittarius serpentarius), the only living bird of prey that hunts on foot. Its Latin name suggests Kislev.

TTTRIDDLES... are Torah Tidbits-style riddles on Parshat HaShavua (sometimes on the calendar). They are found in the hard-copy of TT scattered throughout, usually at the bottom of different columns. In the electronic versions of TT, they are found all together at the end of the ParshaPix-TTtriddles section. The best solution set submitted each week (there isn't always a best) wins a double prize a CD from Noam Productions and/or a gift (game, puzzle, book, etc.) from Big Deal.

TTtriddles are scattered through the hard copy of Torah Tidbits and are listed in the email and web versions. They are in the order in which they are found in the hard copy, but not necessarily in the order in which they were originally conceived. In the wild, they are sometimes overlooked. If you are interested, go page by page and keep your eyes peeled.

Last issue's (CHAYEI SARA) TTtriddles:

[1] Simonson's namesake's claim to fame
Simonson could be the family name for sons of Shimon. They are Y'mu'el, Yamin, Ohad, Yachin, Tzochar, and Shaul ben HaK'naani (who probably would have a different last name). Among the other five brothers, this TTtriddle refers to TZOCHAR. His namesake in Parshat Chayei Sara is the father of Efron, from whom Avraham Avinu purchased Chevron and Me'arat HaMachpeila. BTW, these two TZOCHARs have another namesake in Tanach - a descendant of Yehuda, mentioned in Divrei HaYamim.

[2] Avraham, Yehoshua x 2, David
The sedra tells us that Avraham reached an old age, that he was ZAKEIN, BA BAYAMIM (old and advanced in years). This phrase occurs four times in Tanach: once in the sedra (Chayei Sara) concerning Avraham Avinu, once in the haftara referring to David HaMelech, and twice in the book of Yehoshua, referring to Yehoshua. In Yehoshua's case, the occurrences are 10 chapters apart - we would expect it at the end of the Book, but the earlier reference is noteworthy.

[3] 10 sons of 8, 2 daughters of 8, pieces of 8
The number 8 is associated with the 8th letter of the ALEF-BET, CHEIT. True, we call it CHET or CHES, but its official name is CHEIT, making it a sound-
alike of the nation among whom Avraham was living at the time of Sara's death. 10 sons of 8 refers to the ten times it says in the Torah B'NEI CHEIT, in context of Avraham's purchase of Chevron. Twice in the Torah we find B'NOT CHEIT, in reference to the local girls that Rivka definitely did not want Yaakov to marry. Pieces of 8 (made famous by the squawking of Long John Silver's parrot in Treasure Island (by Robert Louis Stevenson). According to Answers.com (highly recommended to go to their website and download and use their program - best first look-up of anything you want to know, ANYTHING. If it can’t answer your query, it begins your internet search for you.), pieces of eight are "Spanish silver coins of eight reals (eight bits)...a.k.a. pesos and Spanish dollars... Here, they represent the silver coins that Avraham paid to Efron for the land and burial cave he purchased. [BTW, the 8 bits being a dollar, makes the well-known "2 bits" equal to a quarter. This slang expression for 25 survived long after the currency that gave it to us ceased to be used. 2-bit also has the connotation of "cheap".]

[4] Yaakov gave what Yitzchak established
One opinion in the Gemara (from a B'raita) is that the three davenings a day were established by the Avot, or established corresponding to the Avot. We say (from Parshat Chayei Sara) that YITZCHAK TIKEIN T'FILAT MINCHA, Yitzchak established Mincha. In Parshat Vayishlach, Yaakov prepares for his "reunion" with his long-lost brother Eisav by preparing gifts of animals for him. The term used in the Torah for these gifts is MINCHA.

[5] not sum, difference, or quotient
Remember these terms that many of us had to learn in elementary school math? Do kids today still learn them? The numbers you add together are addends and the result of adding them is a sum. Subtraction is probably the tough one of the four operations to remember. The subtrahend is subtracted from the minuend to give you the difference between the two numbers. If you are the first in your family reading this, try testing the others and your guests. You'll probably hear a lot of fingersnapping, see knitted brows, and after they give up and you tell them the answers, they're bound to say, Oh, yeah - I knew it was something like that. Whereas addition only added addends together, multiplication was performed between a multiplicand and a multiplier, which resulted in a product. And a dividend was divided by a divisor to result in a quotient. So much for the arithmetic review. The one total left out of the TTriddle is the product, because in Hebrew it is the MACHPEILA, as in the cave of the same name that features so prominently in the beginning of Parshat Chayei Sara.

[6] Mixed upcoming election advice
In B'reishit 24:3, Avraham administers an oath to his servant (Eliezer) not to take a local Canaanite girl for Yitzchak. In the next pasuk, Avraham tells Eliezer to take a woman for his son Yitzchak from his family back in the old country. The words LO TIKACH ISHA LIVNI and V'LAKACHTA ISHA LIVNI can be interpreted in a TTriddle way as Don't take the woman (Tzipi) Livni and you shall take the woman Livni - conflicting advice for the upcoming election. (Perhaps if the OU would not have a policy of being apolitical, we might have suggested following the pronouncement of the non-enunciating version of the mascot of the ParshaPix solutions. - yes, this is a new TTriddle.)

[7] he, his father, his prophet are?
This TTriddle refers to the haftara. The HE is DAVID HaMelech. His father was YISHAI. And his prophet - also mentioned in the haftara (Yishai is not) was NATAN. DAVID, YISHAI, and NATAN in Hebrew (Natan in English as well) are PALINDROMES - words that read the same forwards and backwards.

[8] Clint ben Yishma'el?
This was a weird one - not that the others are all not weird. One of Yishmael's sons was KEIDMA. The name also means towards the east or EASTWARD. Eastward - especially if it is pronounced by a Brooklynite, sound very much like EASTWOOD,
whose first name is CLINT. Hence, Clint b. Yishma’el.

[9] The MazalPic

Once upon a time, the MazalPic each month was the Zodiac symbol for the Mazal. Then we switched to some cryptic, graphic representation of the Mazal and the MazalPic became a visual TTriddle. This month, Kislev, which begins on Friday, was announced and blessed last Shabbat. Our tradition is to start the new MazalPic in the Torah Tidbits of Shabbat M’vorchim. This one was meant to stump even H(S)M. So far (as of this writing), he has not presented the solution (but there are still a few more days - if he or anyone else does solve it, we’ll write it up elsewhere in this issue (or next week).

The circular item on the right is a one cent coin from teh USA, a.k.a. a penny. On the left, also circular is a negation circle over a plus or minus symbol. Taken together, it means "not a penny more, not a penny less. That is the name of the first novel (1974) of the British author, Jeffrey Archer. The Mazal of Kislev is Sagittarius, the Archer. Voila

[10] ParshaPix Unexplaineds

We have two week’s worth of Unexplaineds to explain.

Two week’s ago, for Parshat Vayeira, TT 835, there was the logo for Terem lying on its side. It stood for the phrase in the sedra: TEREM VISKAVU... before Lot and his guests had a chance to lie down to sleep for the night, the people of S’dom gathered at Lot’s door and demanded that the guests be turned over to them. But in TTriddle language, it means TEREM lying down.

That was the easier of the two. The other was a mortar and pestle. One of its uses is to grind down a tablet or medicine pill to powder. That would be like performing the Melacha of DASH (really T’CHINA, but DASH works for this visual TTriddle - and even the English word DASH fits a little too) on a pill, making the mortar and pestle a PILL-DASH or PILDASH, as in one of the eight sons of NACHOR and MILKA, mentioned at the end of the sedra.

Last week - TT 836 for Chayei Sara, had three Unexplaineds.

In the lower right corner was a branch and leaves of the ash tree. Of course, only a botanist was expected to recognize what tree was being represented, and maybe not all botanists either. So it was a lame pic, standing for EIFER (Hebrew for the other kind of ash, that is produced when one burns this kind of ash). EIFER was a son of MIDYAN who was a son of K’TURA, making EIFER a biological grandson of Avraham. Note that Avraham described himself earlier as dust and ash, AFAR VA’EIFER.

To the left of the Terem logo (upright, this time) is the US army insignia of a corporal. It, and similar insignias, is known as a CHEVRON, which is how we might transliterate the holy city of HEBRON.

And finally, there is Harry Potter. One TTreader felt Harry would be good for this week, Toldot, as a play on words for HAIRY, as in EISAV. Same guy suggested the Harry Potter’s glasses suggest Yitzchak's poor eyesight (or blindness) also from Toldot. But in context of Chayei Sara, we go from potter to the Hebrew KADAR to the same letters - different vowels KEIDAR, a son of Yishmael.

This week's TTriddles:

[1] Adam & Chava, Yaakov*, Yosef, Aharon, Elazar

[2] There isn't always a connection between the MicroUlpan corner and the sedra, but sometimes...

[3] plenty of he and she - this is the only they

[4] Eisav & Yaakov and S'guv


[6] You can too, by hopping on a #1 bus...

[7] Could be the poster boy of the month

[8] TAKEAWAY DREAM

RETURNHOME HITROCK