

תורה מציון Torah MiTzion

RELIGIOUS ZIONIST KOLLELS כוללים ציוניים בתפוצות

Shabbat Shalom from Torah MiTzion

Issue 117: Parshat Toldot

2-3 December 2005, 2 Kislev 5766

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Therefore He Was Called Edom

By Rav Dror Brama, former Rosh Kollel, London

In this week's Torah portion, the Torah tells us about the origin of Esau's name, Edom (Red). Esau returns from the field thirsty (the expression *ayef* in Scripture refers both to exhaustion and thirst). Jacob cooks soup and Esau requests, "Give me some of that red stuff (*ha'adom, ha'adom hazeh*)." Therefore, the Torah says, he was called Edom.

This is puzzling. Just because Esau once rashly demanded a drink, why should he have acquired a name for life? If he had asked Jacob for cola, would his name have become Cola? Furthermore, an earlier verse attests about Esau that "the firstborn came out red (*admoni*)." So why was his name tied to this specific event?

The question becomes even stronger when we examine Chazal's approach to other stories about Esau. We will quote a few examples from Rashi, whose exegesis follows theirs.

"The children fought inside her." -- When she (Rebecca) passed by a place of idol worship, Esau wished to come out.

"Red (*admoni*)" -- This indicates that he would be a murderer.

"A man of the field" -- A man who is idle and who hunts animals and birds.

This holds true for all the later sections as well. Whenever the Torah writes something neutral about Esau, Chazal work hard to interpret it negatively.

Why? What happened to judging the world favorably? Why should we read Esau's seemingly normal and innocent activities in light of the evil he would later do?

The answer is grounded in Chazal's equating Edom with Rome. One of the harshest criticisms Chazal had of Christian Rome and Byzantium was directed at their hypocrisy. This was a culture which spoke impressively, but often did not put into practice the exalted ideals which it preached. Rome created a political culture in which rhetoric, public presentation, and persuasion were more important than the actualization of values. Christianity spoke often of kindness and mercy, but frequently these words did not stand the test of reality.

Chazal viewed as extremely problematic a culture in which presentation is primary and not deed, and in which forgiveness and indulgences can be received without true correction of actions. The evil inclination goes about its business; without an uncompromising demand to correct one's actions and live a halakhic life, there is the risk that man will dedicate his efforts to making it look like he has improved, rather than actually improving.

Take a look at what enables people to run for office in certain places. It is not their deeds, characters, and achievements, but rather their image consultants, who work on creating a presentation which will please the electorate.

Therefore, on the verse, "Esau was forty," Rashi comments:

He was compared to a pig . . . When a pig lies down, it does so with its hoofs facing outward, as if to announce, "I am kosher." So too, [the leaders of Esau] steal and rob but present themselves as kosher. For forty years, Esau would hunt married women and violate them. But when he was forty, he said, "Father got married at forty, and so will I."

The pig is the most repulsive of the non-kosher animals because its split hooves make it look externally like a kosher animal. It is lacking only the internal sign, chewing the cud, which is why it is forbidden. External purity combined with internal impurity is the root of disgusting hypocrisy.

Esau's choice of momentary gratification, his preferring the red soup to the birthright, was not coincidental. "Esau despised the birthright" (*Genesis* 25:35). Responsibility and foresight are not compatible with a person or culture driven by desires. When ideals and fine words serve as a cover instead of a demand, as marketing instead of content, ultimately the culture will drown in rivers of blood. Under the cover of clever packaging and external correctness, every criminal can do whatever he feels like, and can employ image consultants to whitewash his deeds with words and campaigns.

Chazal judged such a culture unfavorably because they were disinclined to accept the "innocent" deeds of someone who is motivated fundamentally by his desires and not his values. Accordingly, this is their explanation (*Genesis Rabbah* 67:27) of the only verse where Esau's evil plans are explicit:

"Esau said in his heart" (*Genesis* 27:41) -- Wicked people are controlled by their hearts, as it says, "The scoundrel said in his heart" (*Psalms* 14:1); "Jeroboam said in his heart" (*I Kings* 12:26); "Haman said in his heart" (*Esther* 6:6). But the righteous control their hearts, as it says, "Chanah spoke to her heart" (*I Samuel* 1:13); "David spoke to his heart" (*I Samuel* 27:1); "Daniel took it to his heart" (*Daniel* 1:8). The righteous are similar to their Creator, about whom it says, "God spoke to His heart" (*Genesis* 8:21).

Whatever the wicked do, it is because at that moment their hearts so desire. If the action

itself is not evil, that is just coincidental, since one who is wicked has no moral restraints. He is at the mercy of his heart. The righteous, similar to the Creator of the world, suppress their desires when they conflict with their values.

The prophet requests, "Give truth to Jacob" (*Mikvah* 7:20). So too, we request today that God help us to correct what needs correction and to "purify our hearts to serve you truly" (*Siddur*).

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The Blessing on Olives and Olive Products Rav Moshe Spetter, former Rosh Kollel, Washington

The Mishnah in *Masekhet Berakhot* (6:1) states: "One makes the blessing '*borei pri ha'etz* (who created fruits of the tree)' on fruits that grow on a tree." The olive is no exception, even though it is not sweet as most fruits.

The blessing on fruits or vegetables which are generally eaten either raw or cooked, is *borei pri ha'etz*, no matter how they are eaten. However, if a fruit or vegetable is normally eaten only when it has been cooked, then someone who eats it raw makes the *shehakol* blessing, since this is not the way that most people eat this food. The normal way to eat olives is pickled, so one eating pickled olives says *borei pri ha'etz* and one eating them in any other way says *shehakol*.

The Gemara in *Berakhot* (35b) records the opinion of Rabbi Yochanan that the blessing on olive oil is *borei pri ha'etz*. The Gemara clarifies under what conditions one makes this blessing over olive oil, and concludes that drinking olive oil on its own is dangerous so one shouldn't make a blessing over it at all. When the oil is mixed with another liquid, it depends on whether the oil is the main component or not. If it is, then one says *borei pri ha'etz* on the mixture. If it is not, then one says *shehakol*. Rav Mordechai Eliyahu rules that since olive oil today is pure and there is no danger in drinking it, one who drinks straight olive oil should say *ha'etz*.

The olive is one of the seven species (*Devarim* 8:8), and therefore the afterblessing is *al ha'etz v'al pri haetz . . . al ha'aretz v'al peiroteha*.

One must separate *terumot* and *ma'asrot* (tithes) from olives as one does from all fruits and vegetables. If one did not separate them before squeezing the olives, one should separate them afterwards, from the oil.

(Based on *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 202 and 208, and its commentaries.)

Family Learning: Parashat Toldot Bluma Zalcman

- 1) What is the prophecy (nevu'a), that Rivka is told about the children she was carrying?
- 2) What is the deal that Ya'akov makes with Eisav?
- 3) Where did Eisav get his hunting clothes that Rivka gave to Ya'akov? (Rashi; 27:15)
- 4) How does Rashi explain "Anochi Eisav Bachurecha"? (27:19)
- 5) 28:1- Yitzchak blesses Ya'akov again. What is the meaning of this blessing?

Answers follow below

Looking Back: Yehuda Leib (Leon) Pinsker

Y. L. Pinsker (1821-1891) was a physician, a Zionist activist, and the founder and leader of the Hovevei Zion movement.

Born Yehudah Leib Pinsker in Tomaszow, Poland, he had strong a Jewish identity inherited from his father, Simcha Pinsker, who was a Hebrew language writer, talmid chacham and a teacher. Pinsker attended his father's private school in Odessa and was one of the first Jews that attended the Odessa University, and there he studied law. Later, he realized that, being a Jew, he had no chance of becoming a lawyer due to the heavy restrictions put on Jewish professionals, so he chose instead the career of a physician.

Pinsker believed that the "Jewish problem" would be solved if the Jews would receive equal rights from the countries that they were residing in. In his earlier years, Pinsker favored the assimilation path and helped found a Russian language Jewish weekly.

The pogrom in Odessa in 1871 moved Pinsker to become an active public figure. In 1881, a bigger wave of anti-Jewish activities plagued southern Russia, some allegedly sponsored by the state and continued until 1884. This caused Pinsker to change his views radically, and he no longer believed that mere enlightenment would defeat anti-Semitism.

He visited Western Europe which inspired him to write his pamphlet "Autoemancipation". It was published anonymously in German, January 1st, 1882. In his pamphlet he urged the Jews to strive for independence. The book raised strong responses.

Being a physician, Pinsker preferred the medical term "Judeophobia" to a newer term "anti-Semitism". Pinsker knew that a combination of mutually exclusive assertions is a characteristic of a psychological disorder and was convinced that pathological, irrational phobia may explain this ancient hatred:

His analysis of the roots of this ancient hatred led him to call for the establishment of a Jewish National Homeland, either in Palestine or elsewhere. Eventually Pinsker came to agree with Moshe Lilienblum that hatred of Jews was rooted in the fact that they were stranger everywhere except their original homeland, the Land of Israel. He became one of the founders and a chairman of the Hovevei Zion movement, which was backed by Baron Edmond James de Rothschild.

However, numerous disagreements between various Jewish religious and secular movements added to internal movement crisis and the ban by the Ottoman Empire of the Jewish immigration in the 1890s caused Pinsker to doubt whether Eretz Yisrael would ever become the solution.

Pinsker died in Odessa in 1891. His remains were brought to Jerusalem in 1934 and reburied in Nicanor's Cave next to Har Hatzofim. The town of Nahalat Yehudah near Rishon LeZion is named after him, as well as streets in several towns in Israel.

Torah MiTzion establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel.

The Kollels, led by a Rosh Kollel, are comprised of Israeli shlichim (emissaries) - married men and their wives, and single young men, graduates of Yeshivot Hesder in Israel - who serve in the communities for a period of one-three years.

Torah MiTzion is also proud to be a partner of the "**Jewish Learning Initiative**" program on college campuses.

www.jli.co.il

The Head Office in Jerusalem:

Beit Meir, 54 King George Street

PO Box 71109

Jerusalem, 91710

Israel

Tel: +972-2-620-9020

Email: office@torahmitzion.org

Look for us on the web: www.TorahMiTzion.org

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Answers:Family Learning

- 1) That both of her children will be forefathers of great nations but they will not be able to be great at the same time and ultimately the younger will be greater.
- 2) He will give Eisav the lentil soup if Eisav gives him the rights of the firstborn.
- 3) He got them from Nimrod whom he murdered. (Nimrod got them from Adam who got them from Hashem)
- 4) Ya'akov did not want to lie to his father so Rashi says you should read it like this: Anochi; Eisav Bechurecha = It is me; Eisav is your firstborn.
- 5) It shows everyone that he was ok with the fact that Ya'akov got the firstborn blessing, because if he weren't then he wouldn't bless him again.