

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Toldot:*** **Genesis 26:15-35**
 Haftarah: **Malachi 1:9-12**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 9:8-9**

“So all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the time of his father Avraham the Ph’lishtim stopped up, filling them with earth.”

[Genesis 26:15]

Today’s Meditation is Psalm 107:15-20;

This Week’s Amidah prayer Focus is Petition # 3, *S'lach* [the Petition for Forgiveness]

At the end of yesterday’s aliyah something *dark and sinister* quietly slithered onto the pages of Torah. In the long run, this new dark and sinister force will be more dangerous than the wrath of Esav. And I have some *bad news* for you, Dear Reader – when we start our study today we will find that the sinister force that entered our sacred text in the closing phrase of yesterday’s aliyah has not only *survived* the intervening hours, but has *morphed into an evil that will have a tremendous effect on the lives of virtually every descendant of Avraham*, in every generation. Indeed the very seeds of the Holocaust – as well as the horrors of the world’s final conflict – can all be traced back in large measure to the dark force we first encountered yesterday for the first time.

How on earth did a force that evil and that powerful manage to creep into our Torah reading yesterday without us even noticing? Hmmm. It deserves a closer look. Let us pause for a moment and read verses 12-14 of Genesis 26 again. Those verses tell us:

Vayizra Yitzchak b'aretz hahi

Yitzchak planted crops in that land,

vayimtza b'shanah hahi me'ah she'arim

and the same reaped a hundred fold,

vayevarechehu Adonai

because he was blessed by the Holy One.

Vayigdal ha-ish vayelech haloch v'gadel

And the man became rich, and his wealth² continued to grow,

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ad ki-gadal me'od

until he became very wealthy/influential

Vayehi-lo mikneh-tzon umikneh vakar va'avudah rabah

He had many flocks and herds and servants;

b'yeqane'u oto Ph'lishtim

[and for that] the Ph'lishtim envied/were jealous of him.

The final phrase is the one on which we should focus our attention: ***b'yaqanei'u oto Ph'lishtim*** [i.e. *the Philistines envied/were jealous of him*].

The Darkest Form of Jealousy

The word our English Bibles translate as “envied” or ‘were jealous of’ in the last line above is a form of the Hebrew verb root ***qana***, (pronounced *kaw - naw*²). This verb pictures *conduct designed to provoke, or incite to anger, out of feelings of jealousy or envy*. In our modern English vernacular, considering the *source of*, the *target of*, and the *reason for*, the acts of provocation and incitement, we call this kind of malevolence ***anti-Semitism***.

Yitzchak’s father Avraham had not known this evil. It officially began during Yitzchak’s ‘watch’. It *continues to the present*. Most students of Biblical prophecy believe it is destined to be the source of the world’s final, determining conflict.

Let us look at this evil force and try to come to grips with it. In what is it based? Think about it. Yitzchak moved into the land of the Ph'lishtim because there was a famine. That was okay to the Ph'lishtim. They did not hate him yet. After all, they were his superiors; he *needed them*. He was *subject to them*. He was dependent upon their good will, and was thus *no threat to them at all*. His predicament even made them *feel a little better about themselves*.

But then Yitzchak did the unthinkable – he worked hard and prospered! Though Yitzchak was not even a farmer because all he has ever known is nomadic life with

² In Yitzchak’s day ‘wealth’ for someone other than a king or Pharaoh meant simply the capacity to generate enough revenue to assure their family could eat, have nice clothing to wear, and have adequate shelter. It was defined functionally, by the number and quality of servants and animals one possessed, the quantity and marketability of fruit and vegetables and other goods one’s household had produced, the amount and quality of grain the members of one’s household had stored, and the amount of silver, gold, and other currency of barter [i.e., goods] the member’s of one’s household had acquired. People did not have bank accounts, securities, retirement accounts. large [and multiple] houses, luxury or high performance automobiles, electronic gadgets, works of art, or other things our Twenty-first Century Western culture says we must have to be ‘wealthy’.

goats and sheep, he had the *audacity* to *plant grain* in the famine-stricken Ph'lishtim soil.

How the Ph'lishtim must have snickered. And how they must have elbowed and winked at each other each day as they walked by his camp and saw this silly foreigner Yitzchak struggling to plow up the dry, dusty, desert sand. “What a *rookie* - a *tinhorn* - a *fool*” they must have thought.

The Mystery of the Material Aspect of the Blessing of the Covenant

But lo and behold, for no apparent reason, this *tinhorn's* crops grew like crazy - when ***those of the Ph'lishtim*** were pitiful. The Ph'lishtim reaped *rocks* and *dust* [after all, it is a time of famine] - while right “down the street” Yitzchak was reaping a *hundredfold* in his first year. What is more, even though Yitzchak spent his time working his fields instead of tending his animals, ***his*** flocks and herds nevertheless multiplied exponentially also.

It was the blessing of *the wealth of Avraham's household*. It was a sign of the faithfulness of the Holy One to His covenant with Avraham. But the *Ph'lishtim* did not have any frame of reference through which to filter or interpret that. The idea simply did not fit anywhere in their framework of givens or their network of prior experiences. All the *Ph'lishtim* saw was that, though they knew the land in which they live like the back of their hand, they were experiencing horrible famine with no end in sight, while this *new kid in town*, this Yitzchak character, was getting downright rich right in front of their eyes.

100-fold return? That was absolutely *unheard of* in Gerar. Even in years of plenteous rain in that region a 40- to 50-fold return was generally deemed to be all that one could hope for from this soil. But now this Yitzchak had come in – in a year of dramatic famine, no less – and had broken every record. He has literally made the desert burst into bloom. Before his hand the dry dust of the famine-struck land had become a fruitful plain. And now he was prospering mightily . . . while the Ph'lishtim *were* [in comparison at least] *suffering*. This, the Ph'lishtim decided, is *just not right*.

Here is a lesson, Dear Reader: **Any time a human being focuses more upon what someone else has that he/she does not than on what the Holy One is doing in the earth the effect is that human being's life takes on the toxic character of the **Serpent**. Focus on what others have that you do not have is ***death focus***. It is the product of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **It releases dark energy** – i.e. *serpent poison* – **into your heart**. It injects *tohu v'vochu v'chosech***

into your soul And if, as, when and to the extent you eat of it you will surely die [i.e. separate yourself/cut yourself off from the source of life and blessing and *shalom*]³.

And so it was with the Ph'lishtim. Seeing how rich Yitzchak was becoming, they did not ask what the Holy One was doing, or why he was so blessed. They embraced toxicity. They let evil thoughts run rampant through their minds. They let evil things pour forth from their mouths. They blamed Yitzchak – and his God - for their problems. They *envied* Yitzchak. They grew *jealous of his productivity*. They grew *furious at his prosperity*. They complained loudly among themselves that *what he* had should be theirs.

Wanting the Blessing Without Embracing the Covenant

But while the Ph'lishtim were extremely envious of the blessing they saw on Yitzchak's life they *did not want any part of the Covenant with the Creator of Heaven and Earth that constituted the fountain from which that blessing poured*. The Ph'lishtim had been more than happy to *take from* Yitzchak the Hebrew - *as long as they were the ones prospering and he was the one suffering*. When the tables turned however they were unwilling to accept him as Divinely blessed. They would rather *suffer in lack* and *vent their rage through jealousy* than open their hearts to the Hebrew God, embrace the Avrahamic Covenant, and *receive* the blessings the Holy One had promised to release through Avraham and his seed.

Like so many today the Ph'lishtim of Yitzchak's day wanted *their world* - their lives, their ways, their attitudes, their values, and their worldview all to *stay just like they were*. And so they called acts of violence toward the Hebrew in their midst 'justice'. They called words of hatred toward the Hebrew in their midst 'truth'. And they began to call Yitzchak's presence in their midst an 'illegal occupation' of the territory they themselves had taken over by force from the descendants of Kena'an. The *Ph'lishtim* labeled every evil thing they experienced – every single consequence of the venom of the spiritual disease of rage they had passionately embraced - 'the fault of the Hebrew'.

Attacking the Chosen - Stopping Up the Wellsprings of Life

So what face does this malevolent force called anti-Semitism wear in today's aliyah? What *pogrom* or *jihad* or *campaign of terror* is unleashed against Yitzchak when the insidious power of Ph'lishtim jealousy/envy was aroused? There was *an escalating spiral of violence* - as always.

³ That is why policies of socialism, communism and wealth redistribution, as well as class-warfare movements, though founded in what masquerades as lofty idealism and fly the false banners of 'fairness' and 'equality', inevitably lead to misery, violence, poverty, division, destruction, and death.

I told you at the beginning that this would be the *parsha of Violent Clashes of Opposing Worldviews*. Just as Ya'akov and Esav clashed throughout the time they shared the womb of Rivkah so now there is a violent clash between Yitzchak's household and the Ph'lishtim as they share the Western regions of central Kena'an.

First, according to verse 15 of our text it all began with *acts of sabotage* – out of pure spite the Ph'lishtim stopped up the wells which Yitzchak was using, and which his father Avraham had dug. We'll *fix him!* (they must have thought).

Notice that they did not strike all the wells that Yitzchak might try to use - but only at those which Yitzchak's father had passed down to Yitzchak (those which were part of Yitzchak's covenant-based inheritance). When this first step or harassment didn't succeed the Ph'lishtim got their government involved - and for perhaps the first time a Hebrew was expelled from a country. See verse 16. This, of course, would happen numerous times over history – in England, in France, in Spain, in Portugal, in Nazi Germany, and on and on. Alas, it is a typical response *of* those who do not want God to interfere in their way of life *to* the blessing of God on His people - a blessing He offers to everyone, but ON HIS TERMS).

Being expelled from one nation's borders did not end the anti-Semitism. Wherever Yitzchak went, it seems, the blessing of God upon his life excited the animosity of his neighbors. When Yitzchak tried to find a place to settle in the valley of Gerar, the local herdsmen first polluted, then claimed as their own, every well that Yitzchak or his servants dug.

Another God-ordained Life Experience to Deal With!

So, in the face of all this hostility, what was Yitzchak to do? How would he respond to his new status as **the target of intense hatred** and the **victim of continually escalating acts of violence**? How are we to respond to similar provocation today? Ah, that is the secret message of today's aliyah of Torah.

Keep in mind that when the Holy One told Yitzchak not to go down to Egypt, but to sojourn in the lands of Ph'lishtia for awhile, He *knew full well* what the residents of those areas would do to Yitzchak. I suspect that was one of the main reasons He wanted Yitzchak to stay there - *so that this early form of anti-Semitism could be unleashed, and Yitzchak could learn – and teach all his descendants – how to deal with it.*

Many years later our great Master and Rabbi taught us:

Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you

*and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.
Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven,
for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

[Matthew 5:11-12]

What were the secrets learned by ‘the prophets who were before us’ to which Y’shua was referring? And from what source did ‘the prophets who were before us’ learn such things?

Ah, Dear Reader, these are things we need to know. Can our ancestor Yitzchak help us in this regard? One of our stated goals for this week is to *connect with* our ancestor Yitzchak, and learn what made him ‘tick’. So, what can we learn from Yitzchak on the issue of dealing with anti-Semitic activity? Or, if you prefer, what can we learn from Yitzchak on the issue of *coping with persecution*.

Dealing With It

Let us consider first what Yitzchak did not do in response to the virulent but non-violent persecution he faced in Gerar. First of all, we should note that Yitzchak did not *get offended* and *play the role of the self-righteous victim* for all who would listen. He did not try to fight a war of words.

It appears that Yitzchak knew better than to expect – much less request – anyone of the *powers-that-be* of either the secular or religious world in which he lived to side with him or come to his aid in any meaningful manner.

Secondly, note that Yitzchak did not *strike back in kind*. He did not curse or accuse the *Ph’lish’itim*. He did not retaliate. He did not defend himself. He did not even *resist*. What on earth is up with that?

Could Yitzchak perhaps have been modeling the kind of ‘turn the other cheek’ approach to conflict that Y’shua of Natzret would later teach to Yitzchak’s descendants? Of course, those who have studied history know that Y’shua’s ‘*turn the other cheek*’ teachings were announced not to a sovereign nation experiencing the blessing of God, but to *subjects of the Roman empire who were very clearly under the judgment of the Holy One* for the sins of assimilation, hypocrisy, and sectarianism. If, you see, as Y’shua knew, the Jewish people of Y’shua’s time were facing Roman rule because of *the Holy One’s judgment*, it made no sense to resist or fight back against Rome. In that context, Rome was actually the Holy One’s *assigned agent of judgment* – so to fight back against Rome would be to fight against God. If Israel had been sovereign, and if Torah had been the prevailing code however Y’shua’s the ‘turn the other cheek’ teaching would clearly have made no sense.

Similarly, since Yitzchak was just a sojourner in a land controlled by others *it made no sense for him to assert property rights that he could not enforce*. Hence he assessed the situation and, realizing he had nothing of lasting value to gain from a fight under the circumstances with which he was confronted, he packed up and moved on to another place.

I do not believe that means that Yitzchak was a pacifist. I believe it means he was a *pragmatist* – that he had the wisdom to know what battles are [a] *winnable* and/or [b] *worth fighting for the sake of Heaven . . .* and what battles *are neither*.

Please understand that I am not justifying the actions of the anti-Semites of the world. Nor am I suggesting that they be appeased. I am simply saying that the point of today's aliyah – and our mission on planet earth - is neither to condemn nor confront anti-Semitism. I believe, you see, that they *condemn themselves*.

If we follow our ancestor Yitzchak's example we will not respond to either the angry rants of Palestinians, of Wahhabi Jihadist groups like *Al-Qaida, Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad*, the *Muslim Brotherhood* etc. or of the Neo-Nazi skinheads of the world, or for that matter of *the secular-humanist new world order politicians* by any of the means the propagandists employ.

If we follow Yitzchak's example we will not respond by crying 'fowl' to all who will listen. If we follow in Yitzchak's footsteps we will not respond by wallowing in self-pity, or by whining to the world about how bad we are being treated, or by seeking either resolutions from the UN or military action by the US on our behalf. If we walk with the Holy One as Yitzchak did and follow the pathway established by our ancestor Yitzchak, we will take a walk and meditate [in Hebrew *suwach*]. We will then plead with the Holy One for the people who are barren [in Hebrew, *atar*], determine what the Holy One is calling for us to do, and then, whatever that happens to be, we will *just do it*.

As we discussed in the introductory study this week that is the main thing that defines the ***Yitzchak Identity***. That said, I believe Yitzchak's response to this particular persecution taught us at least two more things we should always be prepared to do.

Never Surrender!

First of all, Yitzchak taught us that *we don't quit*. We suffer if we must, and we die if it comes down to that, but we *never surrender*.

We wave only one standard – the standard of the Kingdom of Heaven – and that standard *is not* and *will never be* a white flag of surrender. We do not for one moment, whatever the provocation, let our enemies make us give up being who we were created to be, living as we were created to live, and doing what we were created to do.

We do not *give in* and *try to fit in with everyone else* hoping they'll quit hating on us so much, blaming us for all their problems, slandering us, blowing up our babies, and cutting off our heads. We do not give up our Covenant-calling. We do not give up our love of and devotion to the Holy One and His Ways.

We do not quit reading, studying, and adjusting our lives to the wonderful Torah. We do not quit commemorating the 7th-day Sabbath, the Covenant sign of our special relationship with the Creator of the Universe. We do not stop counting our days and planning our lives according to the calendar our Covenant Partner in Heaven has given us to mark the times and seasons.

We do not change the definition of 'food' the Holy One has given to us to make it conform with the insatiable appetite of our lawless neighbors for the flesh of the swine, the carcasses of the bottom-feeders of the lakes and seas, or the pungent flavor of the garbage disposals and predators of the earth. We do not stop praying. We do not stop walking in the fear of the Holy One, or loving Him with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength, or teaching our children the way of the Holy One, to do righteousness and justice.

If there is no recourse from the persecution of the anti-Semites of the world in the legal system of the land in which we live, and the Holy One does not call us to war, we *pack up everything we have and move rather than surrender*. We leave behind the "stuff" of life, private property, personal friends, and whatever else it takes rather than surrender who we are and the wonderful inheritance the Holy One has prepared for us.

And as we take our leave we cling tighter than ever to our God and the heritage He has given us. We can do without 'stuff'. We can do without every thing that any king or person or culture that hates our God or rejects His ways can offer, but we cannot quit *begin who we are*. We cannot abandon our God, or His ways, or His Plan, for any bowl of porridge the world around us offers to sell us for our birthright.

Understand, Dear Reader, that those who surrender, compromise, assimilate, and stay behind lose much - much more than we who move on with the Holy One, looking for the land He has promised us, ever will!

Speak Creative, Prophetic Words!

Secondly, we learn from Yitzchak to *release the Holy One's creative Word each time an Anti-Semite inflicts his wounds*. When the herdsmen of Gerar took over the wells Yitzchak dug Yitzchak responded by doing a strange thing as he withdrew - he "*named*" the wells.

The first well Yitzchak named "**Esek**" [*ayin, sin, kuf, pronounced ay'sek*]. This means "*contention*" or "*strife*". The second well Yitzchak named "**Sitnah**" [*sin, tet, nun, hey, pronounced sit-naw'*], meaning *adversary/opponent/enemy*. It is from the same verb root from which is drawn the name/title *Satan*.

Why would Yitzchak name these wells even as he was abandoning them and moving on? Because to a Hebrew the act of *naming* something is a release of the Holy One's creative Word. In Genesis 2:19 we are told that Adam's first task, the first step toward taking dominion over the earth as the Holy One had instructed him, was to **name** all creatures of the earth. This he did in conjunction and cooperation with the Holy One. Adam didn't just say the first thing which popped into his head - as he studied each creature, he and the Holy One discussed it, and when he had learned from the Holy One the essence and purpose of the creature, he expressed that essence in a name.

The very act of naming something, is, therefore - or at least should be - an act of interaction and cooperation with God - of recognition of Him as sovereign, and as the source of the namer's understanding of the thing named. Naming should follow, and flow out of, the **suwach**-ing and **atar**-ing lifestyle we learned from Yitzchak.

By naming the wells he abandoned Yitzchak acknowledged that those wells belonged, and were being abandoned by him, **not** to the anti-Semitic herdsmen of Gerar but to the Holy One alone. Yitzchak was surrendering the wells to the Holy One, trusting Him to preserve the water in them for whomever He chose to give them. And this was *not a problem* for Yitzchak - after all, the Holy One had promised that He would give all the land on which those wells were located - to Yitzchak's descendants. Yitzchak's giving of Hebrew names to these wells as he withdrew was therefore an act of faith - an expression of confident assurance that the Holy One would indeed do all He had promised.

And note what Yitzchak named the wells. Torah tells us “*he gave them the same names his father had given them.*” **Genesis 26:18.** Yitzchak was not claiming a new and improved revelation or covenant. He was not on a crusade. The wells he opened he was not opening in his own name or for his own glory. Nowhere in all the land he traveled was there ever a well called “Yitzchak’s” well.

Yitzchak, you see, knew where the water came from. Everything good in his life flowed not from his own efforts – but from the covenant the Holy One had made with Avraham. And Yitzchak was ‘okay’ with that. Are you, Dear Reader?

Developing Intimacy With the Creator of Heaven and Earth: Yitzchak’s Second God-encounter

The response of Yitzchak to the harassment and hatred of the people around him was a necessary part of his development of intimacy with the Holy One. And, likewise, it is a necessary part of ours. May we learn the lessons of Yitzchak’s walk with the Holy One and not surrender to outrage, anger, resentment, and hatred. May we never lower ourselves to become like those who know not God just because others do us wrong.

Of course, the Holy One did not in any regard leave Yitzchak alone during this time. The Holy One was there with Yitzchak all along. He was with him as the Ph’lishtim plugged the wells of Avraham. He was with him as Avimelech issued the decree expelling him from his country. And he was with him each time the herdsmen of Gerar attacked and stole that which rightfully belonged to him and to his descendants. But although the Holy One was *present with* Yitzchak [quietly, invisibly, undetected] all along He did not *manifest His Presence* until Yitzchak had successfully completed “the test”. At that point, the Holy One appeared to Yitzchak again - the second “God encounter” of Yitzchak’s life. And this is what the Creator of the Universe said to Avraham’s son:

Anochi Elohei Avraham avicha

“I am the God of your father Avraham.

al-tira ki-itecha anochi

Do not be afraid, for I am with you;

uverachticha v’hirbeyti et-zar’acha

I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants

ba’avur Avraham avdi

for the sake of my servant Avraham.”

[Genesis 26:24]

Why at this critical juncture, after Yitzchak has successfully navigated through a horrible “mine field” his father never had to deal with, does the Holy One make a point to remind Yitzchak of Avraham, and of the covenant He made with Avraham? Consider the following. In parsha *Vayera*, when the Holy One was explaining why He was willing to reveal to Avraham the approaching fate of S’dom and G’morrah, He said:

*“Avraham will surely become a great and powerful nation,
and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.
For I have chosen him,
so that he will teach his children and his household after him
to keep [Hebrew sh’mar, meaning to guard, to treasure,
to highly esteem and to carefully watch over and observe]
the way [Hebrew derech, meaning path, lifestyle, footsteps] of the Holy One
by doing what is right and just,
so that the Holy One will bring about for Avraham what He has promised him.
[Genesis 18:18-19]*

The Holy One thus explained that the purpose for which He called Avraham the Hebrew (and all other Hebrews) to “cross over” from death to life was:

*“so that [they] will teach [their] children
and [their] household after [them],
to sh’mar the derech of the Holy One,
by doing what is right and just*

The question is this: whatever Avraham accomplished in his life - obtaining wealth, rescuing Lot, and becoming a “prince in the land” of Israel, highly respected by the Ph’lishtim and the Kena’anim - *did he do “the one thing” for which he was specifically called and chosen - did he “teach his children . . . to sh’mar the derech of the Holy One - by doing (not just by “believing”). . . ?* Yes, we discover in today’s aliyah, he did.

So What About Us?

And so the question becomes *what about us?* Are we children of the promise of Avraham? Whatever else we accomplish, our essential purpose in life - the reason we have been called out of darkness - is no different than the call of Avraham. There are many life experiences that are within the Holy One’s will for us - but there is *one principal and over-riding destiny*, which is the barometer by which we are to tell if a man or woman (and let’s focus on ourselves, and not others) is truly walking as a child of Avraham.

The defining factor is not what doctrines one professes [his or her ‘doctrinal statement’ or ‘creed’] nor what ministries one heads, nor even what miracles one performs. It is

not what positions one holds - be they secular or religious. What really matters is not what amount of time one spends in public worship, nor is it what amount of passion one releases in private prayer. What determines whether one has fulfilled his or her destiny is not how many religious meetings one attends or leads, or even how many “souls” one wins.

The ultimate barometer of a person’s participation in the covenant of Avraham is simply this: whether that person teaches his or her children and household to *sh’mar* [to guard, to treasure, to highly esteem and to carefully watch over and observe] the *derech* [the footsteps, pathway, and lifestyle] of the Holy One - by **doing what is right and just**. The latter is what it means to “cross over” - to be a Hebrew.

Being a child of Avraham according to the Promise means to teach your children to *cross over* as well. And all who *cross over* will *stand apart*. And *that* is the idea.

Avraham was a *good teacher*. And just as importantly, Yitzchak was a *good student*. Go thou, and do likewise.

Questions For Today’s Study

1. Today’s passage focuses on some of the trials and difficulties Yitzchak and Rivkah experienced in their lives. The first set of trials/difficulties had to do with a dispute with neighbors brought about by envy; the second set of trials/difficulties revolved around a *wayward son*.

[A] When had the Ph’lishtim [Philistines] stopped up the wells that Avraham’s servants had dug?

[B] What purpose does a well serve?

[C] What reason could the Ph’lishtim have had for stopping up wells?

[D] To whom did the stopped-up wells belong?

[E] In Strong’s Concordance and Gesenius’ Lexicon look up the words translated as “quarrel” and “enmity” in verses 20 and 21. Write the Hebrew words and their definitions.

[F] How did Yitzchak deal with the quarreling and enmity of the Ph’lishtim?

[G] What did Yitzchak call the third well that his servants dug.

[H] In Strong’s and Gesenius look up the name Yitzchak gave to the third well, and write the Hebrew word and its definitions.

2. Upon reaching *Be’er-Sheva* Yitzchak had a second dramatic and life-changing encounter with the Holy One. This was the second God-encounter of Yitzchak’s life. Here is how Torah describes it:

*He went up from there to Be'er-Sheva.
The Holy One appeared to him the same night, and said,
"I am the God of Avraham your father.
Don't be afraid, for I am with you, and will bless you,
and multiply your seed for my servant Avraham's sake."*

*He built an altar there,
and called on the name of the Holy One, and pitched his tent there.
Yitzchak's servants dug a well.
[Genesis 26:23-25]*

[A] Take out a sheet of paper and write on it the words the Holy One spoke to Yitzchak [in Hebrew and in English]. List separately each promise contained in those words, and identify the operative Hebrew verb contained in each promise.

[B] How does this word differ from the word spoken by at the time of the first encounter [see Genesis 26:2-4]?

[C] What do you think was the Holy One's purpose in this second encounter?

[D] What four things did Yitzchak do after this encounter? From this passage, at least, in what order would you rank Yitzchak's priorities, using the following list: "business", "home life", "worship", and "prayer".

3. Immediately after Yitzchak settled in Be'er-Sheva Avimelech brought his military commander, and probably a large contingent of his army, out to meet Yitzchak. This was a challenge that Yitzchak would have to meet. He chose to make a covenant with Avimelech as his father Avraham had done. Some believe this covenant is *prophetic* of the end-time covenant that Yitzchak's descendants will enter into with the Evil One. Read our text carefully and see if you can see any modern or prophetic parallels.

*Then Avimelekh went to him from Gerar, and Achuzzat his friend,
and Pikhol the captain of his host.
Yitzchak said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me,
and have sent me away from you?"

They said, "We saw plainly that the Holy One was with you.
We said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, even between us and you,
and let us make a covenant with you,
that you will do us no harm, as we have not touched you,
and as we have done to you nothing but good,
and have sent you away in shalom.'
You are now the blessed of the Holy One."

He made them a feast, and they ate and drink.
They rose up some time in the morning, and swore one to another.
Yitzchak sent them away, and they departed from him in shalom.*

[A] What were the terms of the treaty Yitzchak made with the Ph'lishtim?

[B] Did the Ph'lishtim truthfully describe the history of enmity leading to the treaty? List the inaccuracies in the way Avimelech described the history leading up to the treaty.

[C] What did the Ph'lishtim agree to as part of this peace treaty?

[D] Go back to Genesis 21 and read verses 22-34. What differences do you see in the treaty made by Avraham and Avimelech at Be'er-Sheva from the treaty made by Yitzchak and Avimelech at Be'er-Sheva?

4. Looking back over chapter 26, in what ways can you see Yitzchak claiming the 'birthright' of the son of Avraham?

5. What was the source of Yitzchak's trouble with *Esav* [Esau] the wayward son? Why was this a problem?

6. In today's Haftarah reading the Holy One's messenger Malachi prophesies to the priests of his day who did not honor the Holy One either as sons nor reverence him as servants, yet continue the ritual of public worship for their own purposes.

What the Holy One says in reply may shock some of you. He does not pull any punches. Read it for yourselves.

*"Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors,
that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain!
I have no pleasure in you," says the Holy One of hosts,
"neither will I accept an offering at your hand.*

*For from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same
my name will be great among the nations,
and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering:
for my name is great among the nations," says the Holy One of Hosts.*

*"But you profane it, in that you say, 'The Holy One's table is polluted,
and its fruit, even its food, is contemptible.'*

[A] What according to the prophetic words of Malachi does the Holy One say He wishes someone would do concerning the religious meetings that were going on? Why?

[B] Our text says that the Holy One has no "pleasure" in the ministry of the priests of the time of Malachi. In Strong's Concordance and Gesenius' Lexicon look up the word our English Bibles translate as "pleasure" [It is Strong's Hebrew word #2656, transliterated as *chephetz*, and pronounced *khay'-fetz*]. Write the word in Hebrew letters, with vowel markings. Then search out the verb root of this word, and describe the Hebraic word picture it presents.

[C] Our text also distinguishes the way the Holy One is (or will be) revered by "the nations" verses the way He is dishonored by the kohanim

(priests). In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the word our English Bibles translate as "nations" [It is Strong's Hebrew word # 1471, transliterated as *goy*, and pronounced **go'-ee**]. Write this word in Hebrew letters, with vowel markings. Then search out the verb root of this word, and describe the Hebraic word picture it presents.

[D] Based upon what you discovered in regard to the preceding question and in the context of the passage we are studying, do you think that "the nations" means "Gentiles" [i.e. non-Jews]? Or is it merely a term distinguishing the faithful remnant of Avraham's descendants from the members of the unfaithful order of priests?

[E] What do you think it means that the priests considered "the Holy One's *table* to be "polluted", and His "*fruit*" to be "contemptible"? If you have a study partner, engage in a yeshiva-type discussion of this issue, and share your questions and insights.

7. In today's reading in the letter to the Romans Shaul of Tarsus distinguishes between "***children of/after the flesh***" on the one hand and "***children of/after the promise***" on the other hand. The reason this distinction has to be made is because the birth of Yitzchak, who inherited and passed on Avraham's characteristics and inheritance, was not *natural* [according to the "*flesh*"], but *supernatural* [according to the *promise*].

The point is this: What the Holy One *gave* by the promise, He *preserves*, and *passes down*, from generation to generation, by the Promise – not by the *flesh*. Each generation of natural children in the lineage of Avraham through Yitzchak has an "opt out" option (*theirs*, not the Holy One's).

Esav chose – and thousands like him in later centuries have chosen, and are still choosing - to "opt out" in favor of porridge, pork chops, peer pressure, and political correctness. Birthright rejected, abandoned, forsaken.

It should also be pointed out that, just as every generation of natural children have an "opt out" option, each generation of *strangers* to the covenant has an "opt in" option.

Whether one be a natural descendant of Yitzchak or a foreigner, the key is making a proper response to the *promise* and the Promissor – not the genes or chromosomes of the flesh. As Shaul puts it in today's aliyah:

*... it is not the **children of the flesh** who are children of the Holy One,
but the **children of the promise** are counted as a seed.
For this is a word of promise,
"At the appointed time I will come, and Sarah will have a son."*

[A] What is it according to Shaul that makes one a true son of Avraham, for purposes of the Divine Inheritance?

[B] There are some words in these two verses that have significant Hebraic meanings. In Strong's, look up the Hebrew words our English Bibles translate as "children", "flesh", "promise", and "seed" [for purposes of this exercise, ignore the Greek words]. If you have a Richard's or Vine's Expository Dictionary of Bible Words you may wish to consult such a source as well. Write the Hebrew words you have found. Then search the verb roots of these words out in Gesenius. Finally, write, for each of the words, a description of the Hebraic word picture it presents. If you have study partners available, have a "yeshiva" discussion on the meaning and application of the B'rit Chadasha verses written above, and what they mean to you.

[C] The last phrase of today's B'rit Chadasha reading is a quote from Genesis. From what chapter and verse does this quotation come?

[D] Describe the Biblical *context* from which the quotation is taken – that is, what was going on when those words were said, who said them, to whom were they said, and why did the speaker say them?

*May your life be blessed by the Holy One,
and may the obstacles and hatred you encounter as the result of that blessing
draw you deeper into the loving arms of God.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 107:15-20

*Let them praise the Holy One for his lovingkindness,
For his wonderful works to the children of men!
For he has broken the gates of brass, and cut through bars of iron.*

*Fools are afflicted because of their disobedience,
And because of their iniquities.
Their soul abhors all kinds of food.
They draw near to the gates of death.*

*Then they cry to the Holy One in their trouble,
He saves them out of their distresses.
He sends his word, and heals them, and delivers them from their graves.*