Fascinating INSIGHTS

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<u>Hungry for the Homeland</u>

Many great people throughout history yearned to come to Eretz Yisrael but were unable to for various reasons. However, in the past, coming to Eretz Yisrael was fraught with hardship and significant danger. It was a long risky trip under arduous and sometimes disturbing conditions. Many times the ships were dilapidated and it was always dangerous. Shipwrecks, with the loss of all those on board, were not uncommon. When R' Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk (1730-1788) headed an Aliya of chassidim in 1777, one of the ships in his group sank during their voyage, in which 30 Jews died. There were cruel captains that robbed their passengers and subjected them to cruelty and not infrequently pirates raided the vessels, robbing and murdering the travelers or selling them into slavery. Roads were in poor condition. Travelers could expect to be confronted by bandits, robbers and murderous gangsters, and it wasn't unusual to be beaten and robbed of all one's possessions. For observant Jews, food and lodging for the lengthy journey presented additional problems. Birchas

Hagomel was recited with passion and intense kavana by any Jew fortunate enough to reach Eretz Yisrael.

The Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) attempted to move to Eretz Yisrael. He intended to first go there himself and then to send for his family. However, his trip was beset by difficulties and upon getting as far as Amsterdam, he was compelled to turn back. The Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) tried to move to Eretz Yisrael in 1742. After many tribulations which included being robbed of all his possessions, he reached as far as Constantinple before heading back. R' Yaakov Emden (1697-1776) also tried to reach Eretz Yisrael but was forced to end his journey before attaining his goal because of personal travails and health problems.

The Chazon Ish who was in contact with the Chafetz Chaim (1838-1933) mentions that the Chafetz Chaim deeply yearned to move to Eretz Yisrael.¹ In fact, he planned to settle in Eretz Yisrael, deciding to move to Petach Tikva. Indeed, to prepare for his arrival, the municipality built a spacious home for the Chafetz Chaim along with public bathrooms, in the expectation that his presence would attract a large number of people to visit.² But it was not to be, as events prevented him from coming to Israel.

R' Yechiel Michel Tucazinsky (1871–1955), author of the Gesher Hachaim, recounts in his sefer Eretz Yisrael,³ first published in 1950, the unbelievable obstacles that Jews had to overcome in order to make their way to Eretz Yisrael and their exceptional sacrifices in settling the land. He concludes: "And what about today? How easy is it to get to Eretz Yisrael! A flight by air from America is just 36 hours (this was written in the late 1940s), and by luxury liner, only two weeks. It is only an hour's car ride from Yaffo to Yerushalayim. All the roads are paved, there's no shortage of water or basic food, or of electricity or fuel enroute. The [Jewish] government is the master of the land, the gates are open to all. There... is no longer the necessity to pay bribes to the Turkish overlords or to conduct other shady dealings with them. So what is lacking today? The strong desire that beat so strongly in the hearts of loyal Jews of earlier generations who lived in Chutz La'aretz."

Soul Purpose

Rashi tells us that Yaakov and Esav were fighting over the two worlds, עולם הבא how is this an argument? If there is a cake and one child wants the piece from the end and the other wants a piece from the middle, they are not arguing. They are really agreeing!

When one loses himself to a bigger reality, he becomes part of that reality. To illustrate: if one is driving to a distant destination, he realizes that the car is secondary to the destination which is the primary focus of the trip. If he stresses the importance of the type of car he is driving, he may never get to his destination since he is making the secondary primary. The same applies to life as the only way to function is to have correct priorities—keep the primary primary and the secondary secondary.

A right handed surgeon performing a complicated surgery with his left hand will surely be unsuccessful. It is only when the left hand is subservient to the right and works in sync,

¹ Igros Chazon Ish 1:175.

² She'al Avicha V'ya'geidcha, volume 2, p. 89.

³ p. 99.

⁴ Breishis 25:22, Rashi.

that he will be successful. This is just as a peel is secondary to the fruit in that it protects it.

R' Berel Wein was once invited to speak in Pittsburgh. Upon arrival, a man named Yaakov came to pick him up and drive him to his hotel. However, they walked to where Yaakov's white car (a Honda Civic to be precise) was parked—row three, stall four-and it was nowhere to be found. Yaakov was about to call for a taxi for R' Wein to drive him to the hotel when suddenly someone in a passing car said he couldn't find a parking spot and would gladly drive them to their car so he could take their spot. When R' Wein explained the problem, the man asked to see the parking ticket of where the car was parked. The man realized the issue immediately. The car was parked in the long-term parking lot, and they were looking in the short-term parking lot. He then drove them to the longterm parking lot and the car was in row three, stall four. R Wein noted a great lesson learned from this episode. Most people look for their happiness, fulfillment and future in the short-term parking lot. However, it's parked in the long-term parking lot. We must realize that we are parked in the short-term lot and realize the long-term consequence of our behaviors, actions and attitudes.

Having correct priorities is necessary in all that we do. We must observe that which we do and ask ourselves why we do it. We should busy ourselves in matters of primary importance—that of eternity—and not the fleeting pleasures of the world. Even when we do those primary matters we should ask if we do it for selfish or altruistic reasons. An example of this is when we engage in an act of kindness. Is it done to receive something in return from the person? We each have a soul (primary) and a body (secondary). Many people make their body primary by being consumed with the need to indulge in the best foods,⁵ drive the fanciest car, to obtain wealth and the like. We need to make the body subservient⁶ to the soul.⁷

This concept is shown to us throughout the Torah. Here are two examples:

A) The Mishna⁸ tells us if one carries less than a vessel, he is exempt even on the vessel. Why? Because the vessel becomes secondary to the primary (food).

B) If a small amount of forbidden food is mixed with a permitted one such as dairy in a meat dish, the dish is still kosher provided that the prohibited item is only one sixtieth of the total. This is known as target nullified in 60.⁹

⁶ This can be compared to the driver and passenger of a car as the passenger just comes along for the ride. Likewise, how is it by us? Is the soul or the body the passenger?

⁷ See עו את עצמך, 1:1. We may climb a ladder but if we are on the wrong wall then each step gets us closer to the wrong place quicker.
⁸ Shabbos 93b.

⁹ Soap had conventionally been produced with animal fats and therefore posed a potential problem for the kosher consumer (That is, at least *l'chatchila*. Because it is processed with a strong alkali such as sodium hydroxide, the finished product should be rendered *pagum*). This changed in the mid-1800s, when Israel Rokeach of Kovno opened the first factory that mass produced kosher soap, derived from coconut oil instead of animal fat. He developed a method of imprinting the Hebrew word "kosher" in blue or red dye penetrating through each bar of soap, thereby enabling the designation of separate bars of soap for meat and dairy. The prominent and great R' Yitzchak Elchonon Spector granted kosher certification to Rokeach's soaps (Rokeach eventually immigrated to the United States and opened a a kosher soap factory in New York City.). Although the halacha (Yoreh Deah 89:4; see Rema, The focus of priorities was the difference between Yaakov and Esav and was reflected by the argument in their mother's stomach. They both desired אולם הבא Dha עולם הדא. However, Esav wanted this world to be the primary focus and Yaakov wanted the next world to be the primary focus. Yaakov is one who learns Torah as it states world to be the primary focus. Yaakov is one who learns Torah as it states world to be the primary focus. Yaakov is one who learns Torah as it states "איש תם "¹⁰ Esav wanted this status and therefore asked how do you take Maaser on straw and salt." These questions show the essence of Esav. Straw is something that protects wheat making it secondary to the wheat. Similarly, salt is used only to enhance the flavors of foods secondary to the primary.¹² Any coincidence that <u>n</u> are the initials of <u>n</u> and <u>n</u><u>a</u>, salt and straw and salt.

Yaakov wanted the Bechor sold to him as it says מכרה מכרה מכרה מררה לקבל שנרם אמרה לקבל שנרם ¹⁶ The Gemara says גייום לעשותם למחר לקבל שנרם ¹⁷ today (this world) do the Mitzvos and tomorrow (next world) receive the reward.¹⁸ This is what Yaakov meant when he said ביום יכיום today you have to work and tomorrow you get the reward. This is in contrast to Esav who follows you get the reward. This is in contrast to Esav who follows you get the reward. This is in contrast to Esav who follows you get the reward. This is in contrast to Esav who follows you get the reward. This is in contrast to Esav who follows you get the reward. This is the deeper meaning in the words of Esav source die ²⁰. This is the deeper meaning in the words of Esav and thus I don't need this Bechora.²² Now we can understand ²³ and thus I don't need this Bechora.²² Now we can understand ²⁴ as we see by Esav.

ESAV. Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of three books including the recently released Extraordinary Insights, in addition to being the host of The Fascinating Insights Podcast. His writings, some of which have been translated into Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for zo years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

Levush and others) requires noticeably different designated cutlery and placemats and the like for meat and dairy, Rokeach's color-coded soaps are credited with launching the widespread "practice" of using specifically blue for dairy and red for meat on everything food related, from labels to dishtowels.

¹⁰ Indeed, מצות are initials **ת**ורה and מצות.

¹² Shem Mishmuel, Toldos, תרעא, s.v. ויאהב.

¹⁴ Breishis 25:30.

¹⁵ Shlomo Hamelech tells us אוב ללכת אל בית אבל...והחי יתן אל לבו better to go to the house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting for that is the end of all man, and the living should take it to heart (Koheles 7:2).
¹⁶ Breishis 25:31.

¹⁷ Eruvin 22a.

¹⁸ The Daas Zekanim (Devarim 11:27-8) brings a Midrash that gives the analogy of one who has two paths in front of him. One starts with thorns but then is smooth whereas the other path begins smooth and then has thorns—תחלתו קוצים וסופו מישור. Those who travel there instruct the man to take the path that has thorns first since the other path starts smooth but soon after has thorns continuing for the remainder of the path. Even though a little toil is required in the beginning, but after that he can go in peace. If the other path is taken, he will stumble in the end. So too, one who transgresses in this world, when he dies goes to Gehinom, which is all thorns. But one who toils in this world with Torah and Mitzvos inherits the next world (See Breishis 27:29, Rashi s.v. ידיא). In this light we can grag are the first letters of Hashem will prevail (Mishlei 19:21), as many are the first letters of analysis.

¹⁹ Yeshaya 22:13. "If standard of living is your major objective, quality of life almost never improves. But if quality of life is your number one objective, your standard of living almost always improves."

²⁰ In a similar vein, we have the 6 days of the week followed by Shabbos whereas the non-Jews have Sunday (their holiday) followed by the week.

²¹ Breishis 25:32.

²² On the day Avraham died, Yaakov gets the message to take advantage of life, spirituality. This is in contrast to Esav who says האדם הוה קלעיטני נא מן האדם, pour into me now from this red stuff (Breishis 25:30).
²³ Devarim 11:26.

⁵ In this way we can grasp עולם הפוך ראיתי עליונים למטה ותהתונים למעלה (Baba Basra 10b): I saw an inverted world as many make the physical the priority. They indulge (עליונים) in physicality (למטה) and limit themselves (למטה) with spirituality (למעלה). Rashi (25:26) tells us that the birth of Yaakov and Esav is like a tube whose opening is narrow. If two stones are put in one after the other, the one that enters first will emerge last and the one that enters last will emerge first. So, Esav who was formed last came out first and Yaakov who was formed first came out last. A deeper way to understand this is that in the upper world, Yaakov (spirituality) takes precedence over Esav (physicality) who is secondary. But in this world it appears that the physical (Esav) is the focus whereas the spiritual (Yaakov) is secondary.

¹¹ Breishis Rabba 63:10.

¹³ Breishis 25:27.