

למודי משה

תולדות - גליון פ"ט

“The boys grew up, and Eisav became a skilful hunter, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents” (*Bereishis* 25:27).

Insights into Halachah

The unique *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* and *bas mitzvah* parties

One of the many wonderful things about being Jewish is, that there are always special *berachos* to recite at all sorts of different occasions. One such type of *berachah* is the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* (ברוך שפטרני). Like many other *berachos*, the crux of the *berachah* is an expression of gratitude to Hashem.

But unlike most *berachos* that relate to a person's own experience, physical pleasure, witnessing earthly phenomena, a life experience, the performance of *mitzvos*, and so on, the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* is related to a person's son. When one's son turns bar mitzvah, the age when he accepts personal responsibility for his own mitzvah performance, a father recites a *berachah* over his release from “his son's punishment.”

The primary source of this *berachah* is a Medrash in *Parshas Toldos*. The Torah describes how Yaakov and Eisav had very different character traits: “The boys grew up, and Eisav became a skilful hunter, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents” (*Bereishis* 25:27). Rashi explains that Yaakov turned to the path of serving Hashem in the “tent of Torah,” while Eisav turned to the path of idolatry.

The Medrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:14) comments on this: “For the first thirteen years of their lives, both went to school and both came from school. After thirteen years, this one went to the study halls, and this one to the houses of idolatry. Rabbi Elozor said: A person must take responsibility for his son until the age of thirteen. From then on, he needs to say: **Blessed is He who exempted me from this one's punishment.**”

Mekor [source] of the *berachah*

The wording of the Medrash, as cited above, is not conclusive as to the nature of *boruch shepotrani*. The words “from then on” seem to imply that from the age of thirteen and on, a person should feel grateful for his son's coming of age, but not necessarily to recite a *berachah* over a specific event. Yet, several early authorities interpret the Medrash as referring to a specific *berachah*.

One *mekor* for this is the *Orchos Chaim* (Rav Aharon of Lunil, *Berachos* 58), who writes that the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* should be made the first time the son is called up to read from the Torah. The *Orchos Chaim* brings that this is what Rabbi Yehudai Gaon did when his son was called up for the first time.

Rabbi Yechiel of Paris (23) cites the same halachah in the name of Rabbi Yehuda ben Baruch (it is possible that this is the same “Rabbi Yehudai” to whom the *Orchos Chaim* refers), adding that “this *berachah* is obligatory.”

From these sources it would seem that the *minhag* of reciting the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* is an ancient *minhag* Ashkenaz. Although the *berachah* is not mentioned by any of the major early *poskim* (such as the Rif, Rambam, Rosh, *Tur*, and *Shulchan Aruch*), it is mentioned by the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 225:2).

Should one say the *berachah* with *Shem* [the name of Hashem] and *Malchus* [mentioning the kingship of Hashem]?

The *mekoras* mentioned above suggest that the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* is recited the same as all other *berachos*, including *Shem* and *Malchus* (mentioning the kingship of Hashem). This likewise emerges from the *Minhoge'i Maharil*, who includes *Shem* and *Malchus* in the *berachah*. The *berachah* is also mentioned by the *Shu"t Tashbatz* (390), though he does not mention if one says the *Shem* and *Malchus*.

However, including the *Shem* and *Malchus* rendering it a full *berachah* seems to run against a halachic principle whereby only *berachos* originating from the Gemara are official and authoritative (see Rosh, *Kiddushin* 1:41). Due to this principle, the *Leket Yoshier* (p. 90) mentions the *berachah* in Aramaic, rather than in *loshon hakodesh*, so that the Name of Hashem is not mentioned in its Torah form (see also *Divrei Chamudos* on the Rosh, *Berachos* 9:5, no. 30).

After citing the *berachah* in the name of *Maharil*, the *Darkei Moshe* (*Orach Chaim* 225) also questions how a full *berachah* is recited for a *berachah* not mentioned in the Gemara. In keeping with the observation, the *Rema* (225:2) *paskens* that the *berachah* should be recited without the mention of *Shem* and *Malchus*.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (225:8) cites the Vilna Gaon (also mentioning the *Maharil*) that contrary to the ruling of the *Rema*, the *berachah* should be recited as a full *berachah*, with *Shem* and *Malchus*. Although it does not have a source in the Gemara, the *berachah* (as the *Mishnah Berurah* mentions) does have a source in the teachings of *Chazal* (the previously cited Medrash).

Many *poskim* agree to recite the *berachah* in full (see *Chayei Adam* 65:3; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 61:5; *Aruch HaShulchan* 225:4; *Siddur Baal Hatanya*), but others *pasken* like the *Rema* (see *Kaf HaChaim* 225:15; Chazon Ish, *Orchos Rabbeinu* 3 page 224; *Halichos Shlomo*, *Tefillah* 23, 40). The common *minhag* is to recite the *berachah* without mentioning the name of Hashem, and to simply state: ברוך שפטרני מעונשו של זה.

What does the *berachah* mean?

What does the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* actually mean? For what are we expressing gratitude to Hashem? The *Magen Avraham* (225:5) offers two different interpretations of the *berachah*.

The first explanation he gives is that until the age of bar mitzvah a father is responsible for the misdeeds of his son, since he is charged with his upbringing. This means that the father is also held accountable for the son's misdeeds. After bar mitzvah, the father is no longer liable to punishment on account of his son, because: מחיב הוא להתחזק בעצמו למצות השם יתברך - "he is obligated to strengthen his own self in Torah and *mitzvos*" (*Mishnah Berurah* 7). Upon his release from responsibility and accountability, the father makes the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani*.

The *Mishnah Berurah* adds that the father retains a degree of responsibility for his son: "Know, that although he is no longer responsible for his *chinuch*, the father remains obligated to chastise his son whenever necessary, and if he fails to do this he is held responsible." Yet, this responsibility is not unique with respect to a person's children, but applies to anybody under our direct influence. The *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* is therefore made upon a father's release from his special responsibility towards his child.

A second interpretation, which the *Magen Avraham* cites from the *Levush*, is that until now the son was liable to be punished for the misdeeds of his father. After his bar mitzvah he becomes an independent entity, and is no longer punished on his father's account.

According to this second interpretation, it seems that the son, rather than the father, should be the one to make the *berachah*. Indeed, *Shu"t Shoalim Vedorshim* (5) cites the *Shach* (a disciple of the Arizal, *Parshas Lech Lecha*) that upon reaching his bar mitzvah, the son recites the *berachah*.

However, according to the Medrash and the above *poskim*, it is clear that the father, and not the son, recites the *berachah*, raising the difficulty of how the above interpretation can apply. The *Divrei Chamudos* (commentary to Rosh, *Berachos* 9:5, no. 30) explains that if the son is punished on account of his father's sins, it follows that the punishment will "rebound" onto the father, too, and it is therefore fitting for the father to recite the *berachah*. He concludes that this interpretation is somewhat strained.

Should one say the *berachah* for a daughter?

Based on the two interpretations mentioned by the *Magen Avraham*, there is room to investigate whether the *berachah* is recited for a daughter who reaches the age of twelve (*bas mitzvah*), or whether it is limited, as the wording of the Medrash suggests, to sons reaching the age of thirteen.

The *Pri Megodim* (225, *Eishel Avraham* 5) explains that the question of reciting the *berachah* for daughters is related to one of the two interpretations above.

If the rationale behind the *berachah* is that the father is no longer responsible for the upbringing of his son, it can be argued that the *berachah* does not apply to daughters. This reasoning is based on one opinion that is cited by the *Magen Avraham* (343:1), according to which a father is not obligated to bring up his daughters. If, however, the rationale is that the son is no longer punished for his father's sins, the same idea will seemingly apply to daughters. This explanation is not very satisfactory since most *poskim* maintain that a father is obligated to educate his daughters.

Based on the wording of the Medrash, the *Radal* explains that the *berachah* is recited for sons alone because it is specifically related to the obligation of teaching one's son Torah. For daughters, the obligation of teaching Torah is limited to the parts of Torah of practical relevance to them, and the full responsibility of teaching a child Torah applies only to boys.

The *Kaf HaChaim* (225:15) maintains that the *berachah* is recited for sons alone, explaining how this is true according to both interpretations of the *Magen Avraham*.

Rav Ovadiah Yosef (*Yabia Omer*, *Orach Chaim* 6:29) after bringing the *Magen Avraham* writes that most *rishonim* opine that a person is obligated in the upbringing of his daughters, and it therefore follows that the *berachah* should be made even for daughters who reach *bas mitzvah*. Based on this approach both interpretations of the *Magen Avraham* will agree to the recitation of the *berachah* even upon daughters.

Rav Ovadiah Yosef in fact concludes that the *berachah* should be recited for daughters without *Shem* and *Malchus*. However, the *minhag* amongst Ashkenazic communities is not to recite the *berachah* at all for a girl who becomes *bas mitzvah*. We will explain below, that another possible reason why the *berachah* is not recited for daughters is that daughters are not called up to the Torah.

Bas mitzvah parties

Based on his aforementioned analysis, Rav Ovadiah Yosef adds that there is room to argue in favour of celebrating a *bas mitzvah*. A father experiences joy upon being released from responsibility for his daughter, and this is sufficient cause for a *seudas mitzvah*. He supports this position from *Shu"t Yaskil Avdi*, and even from the Ben Ish Chai.

Yet, many *poskim* disagree. Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim* 1:104, 2:97) writes emphatically that the *seudah* for a girl does not have the status of a *seudas mitzvah*, and strongly criticizes the practice of holding the festive meal in *shul*. He concludes: "if a father wishes to have a celebratory meal at home, he can do so, but there is no reason whatsoever to consider this meal a *seudas mitzvah*, and it is no more than a birthday celebration."

Rav Moshe adds an explanation for why girls should be different from boys: surely girls enter the yoke of *mitzvos* at twelve, just as boys do at thirteen?

The explanation he offers is that unlike the public expressions of a boy's coming of age, such as his joining a *minyan* and wearing *tefillin*, there are no public expressions for a girl becoming *bas mitzvah*. The celebration of a *bar mitzvah* comes on account of the practical demonstrations of the boy's coming of age, and there is therefore no corresponding celebration of a *bas mitzvah*.

Should mothers recite the *berachah*?

Do mothers recite the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani*, or is it limited to fathers?

Based on the first interpretation offered by the *Magen Avraham*, the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* is related to the obligation of *chinuch* [upbringing] of a parent vis-à-vis his children. The question of if a mother has a *chiyuv* of *chinuch* is a *machlokes rishonim* in *Nozir* (29b) and *machlokes haposkim*, as cited by the *Magen Avraham* (343:1) and the *Mishnah Berurah* (616:5; 640:5). A mother's recitation of the *berachah* will depend on these opinions.

Yet, the common *minhag* is that mothers do not recite the *berachah*. Three possible reasons can be suggested for this:

1) The husband recites for his wife

One possible reason for why mothers do not recite the *berachah* is that her husband recites the *berachah* on her behalf, in a similar manner to the *berachah* of *hatov vеха-meitiv* recited upon the birth of a baby boy. After her husband has recited the *berachah*, there is no longer cause for the mother to recite her own *berachah*. However, based on this reasoning it seems that a widow, or a mother whose husband is absent, will recite the *berachah* herself.

2) Being called up to the Torah

Another possible reason why mothers do not recite the *berachah* is because the basic form of the *berachah* is related to the child's being called up to the Torah (as noted above from *rishonim*, who write that the *berachah* is made upon the son's being called up for the first time). The connection with being called up is explained by *Shu"t Divrei Malkiel* (*Orach Chaim* 4), who writes that the *berachah* was instituted in a manner resembling *birchas ha-gomel*, which requires the presence of ten men, and which is normally (it is not required) recited in conjunction with the reading of the Torah.

The *Divrei Malkiel* concludes that the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* "must therefore be recited at the time of the Torah reading" (see also *Zeh HaShulchan* 2:225, who disputes the assertion that the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* requires a *minyan*, and *Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer* 7:23 who upholds it). Based on this, we can understand why mothers, who are not practically involved in the Torah reading, do not recite the *berachah*, whose form involves being called up to the Torah.

A similar principle is outlined by Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim* 5:14) concerning saying *boruch shepotrani* for daughters. Rav Moshe relates to *birchas ha-gomel*, explaining that the *berachah* is preferably recited upon being called up to the Torah, or immediately after the Torah reading where this is not possible. He then adds that the same principles apply to the *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani*, explaining that the *berachah* is not recited upon a girl's coming of age because she is not called up to the Torah.

This explanation will aid us in understanding both why the *berachah* is not made for girls, and why mothers do not recite the *berachah*.

3) The mothers *chiyuv* of *chinuch*

The primary source for the obligation of *chinuch* on mothers is the Gemara in *Succah* (2a,b) referring to Hilani HaMalka. While this Gemara seems to imply that women are obligated in the *chinuch* of their children, the Gemara in *Nozir* (29b) indicates that they are not obligated in *chinuch*, and that this obligation falls only on the father.

A possible solution to this seeming contradiction is that although women are obligated in *chinuch* for specific *mitzvos*, the overall responsibility (and therefore accountability) for the *chinuch* of a child rests on the father alone. Due to this distinction, only the father recites the *berachah*.

Summary and some additional *halachos*

The *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* is made when a son reaches the age of *bar mitzvah*. The *berachah* is usually recited in *shul*, in front of ten men, on the occasion of the child's first being called up to the Torah after reaching the age of thirteen. It seems that if the first opportunity is missed, the *berachah* can be recited up to thirty days later (based on the comparison the *poskim* make with *birchas ha-gomel*).

The common *minhag* is to recite the *berachah* without *Shem* and *Malchus*.

Two interpretations are given for the *berachah*, 1. The father is released from responsibility for his son's misdeeds; 2. The son is no longer punished for his father's sins.

Some deduce from the wording של זה מעונשו - "this one's punishment" that one must recite the *berachah* in the presence of the son. However, if this is not possible, the *berachah* can be recited in the absence of the son (*Shu"t Betzel HaChochma* 5:132).

The *berachah* of *boruch shepotrani* is not recited for daughters. Likewise, mothers do not recite the *berachah*.

Shemittah

Shemittah and the otzits she'anoiy nokuv (plant pot without a hole in):

(In response to a fiery letter written by R' Chaim Kanievsky that was read out at the recent Mir dinner about the importance of setting aside some time to learn *Hilchos Shemittah* during *shemittah*, I decided that I am going to start dedicating part of my weekly *gilyon* to discuss some *halachos* to do with *shemittah*.)

In regards to most *dinim* in the Torah - *terumas u'maasros*, *kilayim*, *kinyonim* etc. something which grows in an *otzits nokuv* (plant pot with a hole in), is treated like it is growing on the ground, and something which grows in a *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* is treated like something which isn't growing on the ground. *Chazal* said however, that *mi'de'rabonon* we have to treat something which grows in a *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* the same as something which grows in a *otzits nokuv*, in order that people don't get mixed up between the two.

Shemittah

Although we said that in regards to most *dinim* we treat an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* like something which isn't growing on the ground, and is only obligated in *terumas u'maasros*, *kilayim* etc. *mi'de'rabonon*, it's not clear what the halachah is by *shemitta* and if *Chazal* made a *gezeirah* on an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* in regards to *shemittah* as well or not.

The Chazon Ish (*Sheviis* 22:1) brings a *Radvaz* (*Hilchos Shemittah* 1:6) who learns that even in regards to *shemittah* *Chazal* made an *issur de'rabonon* to plant in a *otzits she'anoiy nokuv*. However, the Chazon Ish writes: there is no *mekor* for this in the Gemara and we don't find that *Chazal* made such a *gezeirah*. Although he says there is no *mekor* he doesn't explain why *shemitta* should be different to all other *dinim*.

Gemara in Menachos (70a)

The Gemara in *Menachos* says that it's forbidden to plant *kilayim* in a *otzits she'anoiy nokuv*. The Gemara asks, what is the *chiddush* and answers, the *chiddush* is, that *mi'de'rabonon* it's considered planting. The Gemara then asks: תנינא תרם משאינו נקוב על הנקוב ויחזור ויתרום – "it was already taught: if one separates *terumah* from an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* for an *otzits nokuv*, the *terumah* is *terumah* and one should separate again". Rashi explains: אלמא מדחייל עליה שם תרומה זריעה היא מדרבנן – "We see from the fact that *terumah* takes effect, that something which grows in an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* is considered *zeriah* [planted] *mi'de'rabonon*."

If it is true that *Chazal* never made a *gezeirah* on an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* in regards to *shemittah*, then the Gemara needs to teach us that in regards to *kilayim* they did and that *kilayim* is different from *shemittah*. According to the Chazon Ish that there is no *gezeirah* on an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* by *shemittah*, how can the Gemara ask what the *chiddush* is by *kilayim*? It would seem from here that in all areas *Chazal* made a *gezeirah* on an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* even in regard to *shemittah*.

Why shemittah is different?

The Chazon Ish (*Sheviis* 26:4) in fact asks the above question and he says: דאין ראייה מהא דיליף כלאים מתרו"מ דה"נ בשביעית יהיה איסור בעציץ שא"נ – "Just because the *dinim* of *kilayim* can be learnt out from *terumas u'maasros* doesn't mean that the *dinim* of *shemittah* can, perhaps in regards to *shemittah* they were more lenient because of *chayei nefesh* (people need to have what to eat). By *kilayim* however, why should it more lenient than *terumas u'maasros*".

Does shemittah apply inside a house?

Although the Chazon Ish seems to be lenient in regards to planting in an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* during *shemittah* he is only lenient if one plants in the *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* inside a house. When it's inside a house then the Chazon Ish says one has what to rely on.

The Yerushalmi (*Orlah* 1:2) asks if *shemittah* applies on something which grows inside a house. On the one hand the *pasuk* says: שדך לא תזרע – "a field you shall not sow", which would imply in a field one shouldn't sow, but in a house it's allowed. On the other hand the *pasuk* says: ושבתה הארץ – "the land shall rest, it should be a Shabbos to Hashem", which would imply *shemittah* applies everywhere.

The *Pe'as HaShulchon* (end of *perek* 1) maintains, since *shemittah* nowadays is only *mi'de'rabonon* one can be lenient with the *sofek* [doubt] of the Yerushalmi as *sofek de'rabonon lekulah* [a doubt in a *de'rabonon* we rule leniently]. The Chazon Ish writes: דמאחר שכבר הורה זקן הפאה"ש להקל אף – "since the *Pe'as HaShulchon* is lenient even in regards to planting inside a house, one who plants inside an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* inside a house has what to rely on."

The Chazon Ish joins the fact that there is a *sofek* if *Chazal* were *goizer shemittah* on an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* and that there is a *sofek* if there is an *issur* to plant inside a house even if one would do it in a *otzits nokuv*, and says, if one plants in an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* inside a house he certainly has what to rely on.

The Chazon Ish (26:4) concludes however: אף בעציץ שאינו נקוב בבית הדעת נוטה להחמיר אלא מי שסומך על הפאה"ש בעציץ שאינו נקוב בבית אין לנו כח – "in regards to planting in house using an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv*, one should be stringent, however, if one relies on the *Pe'as HaShulchon* and plants in a *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* inside a house, one shouldn't protest as he has what to rely on. Since the *din* is not clear in the Gemara, the *poskim* often say this can be used to rule leniently."

Planting in hothouses on top of plastic sheets during *shemittah*

Based on the above Chazon Ish some want to allow growing vegetables (primarily lettuce) inside hothouses during *shemittah* on top of special plastic sheets, and they argue that this is comparable to planting inside an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv* inside a house. The hothouse is like a house, and growing on top of special plastic sheets is like growing something inside a *otzits she'anoiy nokuv*.

However the above argument is heavily flawed and is no comparison to the *sofek* of the Yerushalmi, regarding if *shemittah* applies inside a house. The Chazon Ish (20:6) explains, that the reason why planting inside a house is more lenient, is because planting inside a house is not an ideal place for planting, as it restricts the plant from sunlight, rain etc., in such a case the Yerushalmi entertained that perhaps there is no *issur* to plant inside a house. In a case where the house is only constructive for growth, such as a hothouse which is specially designed to help plants grow then certainly there is an *issur* to plant inside them during *shemittah*.

R' Nissim Karelitz (*Chut Shoni*) goes at great length to prove the above and brings many proofs (perhaps next week we will bring some of his *rayas*).

The *Tzion Halachah* (1:6) brings from R' Elyashiv: בעציו לעבוד ולעבוד בעציו – “since they were built with the intention to grow plants inside them, and it’s the normal thing to grow things inside them, it’s not considered like a house, and it’s forbidden to plant inside them, even in an *otzits she'anoiy nokuv*”. (Perhaps we can now understand a bit why there is a shortage of lettuce with a reliable *hechsher* in Eretz Yisroel).

Divrei Torah for the Shabbos Table

The difference between a ‘double-life’ and a broad life

Towards the beginning of this week’s *sedra*, the *pasuk* says: ויהי עשו איש יודע ציד איש שדה ויעקב איש תם יושב אהלים - “...And Eisav was a man who knew how to hunt, a man of the field; and Yaakov was a pure and straight person who dwelt in tents” (*Bereshis* 25:27). Eisav and Yaakov are described as two brothers with very different personalities. There is an inference that jumps out at us from this *pasuk*. When speaking about Eisav, the Torah describes him twice as an ‘*ish*’ (man). That means there were two distinct aspects of his personality: 1. He knew how to hunt, and 2. He was a man of the field. Yaakov Avinu is also described in two ways: 1. He was a “*tam*” - a very pure, innocent, and straightforward type of person, and 2. He was also a “*yoshev oiholim*” - he dwelt in tents. However, in reference to Yaakov, the Torah only uses the word ‘*ish*’ once. What is the reason for this discrepancy?

I saw an amazing answer to this question from R' Chaim Kaufman brought down in his *sefer Mishchas Shemen*. In the 1950s, there was already talk about the possibility of putting a man on the moon. R' Chaim Kaufman asked the Shotzer Rebbe, “Will they ever put a man on the moon?” The Rebbe responded with a definitive “No!” He buttressed his answer by quoting the *pasuk*: והארץ נתן לבני אדם - “The Heaven belongs to Hashem and the Earth belongs to mankind” (*Tehillim* 115:16).

As we all know, President Kennedy pledged early in his brief presidency that by the end of the decade of the 1960s, America would put a man on the moon, and so it was—on July 20, 1969, a man walked on the moon!

Now R' Chaim Kaufman had a strong question on the definitive answer given to him years earlier by the Shotzer Rebbe. This Rebbe was no longer alive by that time, so he went to the Biala Rebbe and told him about his previous conversation with the Shotzer Rebbe. The Biala Rebbe did not say, that the moon landing was all a fake—it took place in a Hollywood studio (as some claimed at the time). But he did say that the event that occurred was not a contradiction to the cited *pasuk*. Even though America indeed placed a man on the moon, but Neil Armstrong could not survive on his own in the atmosphere of the moon. He had to bring oxygen from earth, he had to wear a space suit to protect him from the moon’s environment. His lifeline was still the *oretz* (earth). He may have physically been on the moon, but since he still needed all the earthly elements to exist, he was still considered an ‘earthling’ – not a ‘moonling.’ The eternal truth of the *pasuk* והארץ נתן לבני אדם remains. Neil Armstrong still remained a human being who belonged to the earth, his source of life.

With that in mind, R' Chaim explains why Yaakov Avinu is called an *איש תם יושב אהלים* and Eisav is called an *איש יודע ציד איש שדה*.

Yaakov Avinu, no matter where he went, no matter what he did, and no matter what environment he found himself in, his life line and his life blood was still from the “tent” - the *mokam* Torah which reflected his “home base”. His sustenance always came from that holy place, no matter what he did with the rest of his life. His lived a unified existence. All dimensions of his life had a singularity to them that all stemmed back to *ohalei* Torah.

True, he became a shepherd, engaged in commerce and became a wealthy man. But even while he was in the field shepherding, he was still a “*yoshev oiholim*.” Just like the man on the moon may have been far away from “his base”, but his oxygen was still brought from his home planet and he is still called an earthling. That is the source of his life.

On the other hand, Eisav lived a double life. The Torah testifies that he knew how to hunt. *Chazal* say that this means he knew how to put on a good act and trick people. He even knew how to fool his father. He would ask Yitzchok all his “*frum shailos*”—how does a person take *maaser* from salt? He was an *ish tzayid*, a cunning person. Beyond that, he was an *ish sodeh*. He was a different person than the person he pretended to be. He led a double life. He talked the talk of a pious person (through his cunningness as a *yodeah tzayid*), but he walked the walk of a man of the field.

R' Yissocher Frand connects the above with a famous letter written by Rav Hutner. In Rav Hutner’s *sefer, Igros U’Michtovim* he publishes correspondence he had with various *talmidim*. One of these letters (#94) is a response to a former *talmid* who engaged in a secular career. The *talmid* complained to his former Rosh Yeshiva that he felt he was living a “double life.” On the one hand, he was a ben Torah, a Yeshiva graduate; on the other hand, he spent the majority of his day in a very secular environment. He felt that he was being hypocritical by leading this contradictory life.

Rav Hutner wrote back to him that his assumption that engaging in a career means that one has to live a secular life is not true. Having a secular career does not mean you are leading a “double life.” Rav Hutner compares this to a person who has a multi-room house where different rooms are

used for different activities. This does not imply he is leading a “double life”. It means he is living a broad life. He writes that it is not a contradiction for a person to be in the secular world and yet be a full-fledged ben Torah and an *ehrliche Yid* (a Jew with integrity). As long as one derives his *chiyus* [sustenance] from the “*ohel* of Torah” then regardless of how he spends the rest of his day, he is still in the *beis hamedrash*.

Rav Hutner writes that he remembers once visiting the Shaarei Tzedek Hospital founded by Dr. (Moshe) Wallach. He noticed that when Dr. Wallach would visit a patient who was about to go into surgery, he asked him for his mother’s name so that he could daven for him before his operation. Rav Hutner writes, “When I told over this story to one of the *gedolim* in Yerushalayim, he commented, ‘How much a person must be jealous of such a Jew as Dr. Wallach, who uses his professional career as a vessel to promote the Honor of Heaven.’ This is not a double life; it is a broad life. It is not a contradiction. A person can be an *איש תם יושב אהלים* —grounded in the *beis hamedrash*, in the tents of Torah-no matter where he may find himself during considerable portions of his day. The way to test if one is grounded in the *beis hamedrash* is by looking at what one does in his spare time.

If at first you don’t succeed try and try again

ויחפרו עבדי יצחק בנחל וימצאו שם באר מים חיים ויריבו רעי גרר עם רעי יצחק לאמר לנו המים ויקרא שם הבאר עשק כי התעשקו עמו ויחפרו באר אחרת ויריבו גם - עליה ויקרא שמה שטנה ויעתק משם ויחפר באר אחרת ולא רבו עליה ויקרא שמה רחבות ויאמר כי עתה הרחיב ד' לנו ופרינו בארץ quarrelled with Yitzchok’s herdsman saying, ‘the water is ours’, so he called the name of the well Esek because they vied with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarrelled over it also; so he called its name Sitnah. He relocated from there and dig another well; and they did not quarrel over it, so he called its name Rechovois, and said, ‘for now Hashem has granted us ample space, and we will be fruitful in the land’ (*Bereishis* 26:19-22).

The Torah relates in what seems to be excruciating detail the story of the various wells dug by Yitzchok and his servants, the names they were called, and how their jealous neighbours repeatedly fought with them to challenge their ownership. As we know that every word in the Torah is carefully measured and is excluded unless absolutely necessary, why does the Torah spend numerous *pasukim* relating what seems to be such a mundane and inconsequential event?

The following amazing (and true) story will help us appreciate the answer to this question. Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein tells of a now-happily-married couple whose dating period couldn’t have gone worse. As the boy was returning home from their first date, he was lightly injured in a minor car accident. After he recovered, they went out again. On their second date, the house they were meeting in caught on fire and the girl was taken to the hospital for treatment. Still unfazed, they went out a third time. On that date, they were walking on the sidewalk when a flame which was coming out from a store caught on the girl’s dress. By this point, the boy had had enough and was ready to accept the Divine “hints” about the potential match. He decided that he didn’t want to go out with this girl again. However, his highly rational parents wouldn’t accept his decision and convinced him to go out one more time. On the fourth date, the car that they were in was involved in an accident, and both of them were hurt.

Although everything about the couple’s interactions seemed quite compatible, the boy was shaken and adamant in his refusal to proceed. His father approached Rav Chaim Kanievsky to solicit his opinion about the entire episode. After hearing the incredible story, Rav Chaim said that he did not see any rational reason to decline the otherwise compatible match, although he did advise that the couple go out one more time. Out of respect for Rav Chaim’s opinion, the boy agreed to a fifth date, which was indeed incident-free and marked the beginning of a beautiful life together for the happy young couple.

In light of this story, we can now answer our original question about the wells. Rav Aharon Bakst suggests that the Torah relates this episode to teach us the valuable lesson that in spiritual matters, “If at first you don’t succeed, try and try again.” We hear so many miraculous stories of pious Rabbis that we might erroneously assume that if a person is attempting to perform a mitzvah, everything will work out on his initial attempt without any unforeseen delays or obstacles. If it doesn’t, we may despondently conclude that it is a heavenly sign that this endeavour hasn’t found favour with Hashem and should be abandoned. To counter this mistaken understanding, the Torah recounts the great lengths to which Yitzchok had to go to successfully locate an uncontested source of fresh water.

The Gemara in *Bava Kamma* (82a) teaches that water is a metaphor for Torah. The lesson we can take from here is that there is no room for superstitious despair. If our projects of spiritual growth don’t go the way we would have hoped, we should re-examine them. If they still make sense on their own rational merits, we shouldn’t read ominous signs into an unexpected turn of events, but rather we should redouble our efforts until we succeed. (R’ Ozer Alport)

Two types of cooking

(The following dvar Torah is quite long, in order to fully appreciate it, I would advise trying to read it in one go.)

In this week’s sedra the Torah tells us about Eisav’s sale of his birth right to Yaakov. The *pasuk* says: *וידד יעקב נזיד ויבא עשו מן השדה* – “and Yaakov was cooking a dish, and Eisav came in from the field and he was tired” (*Bereishis* 25:29). Rashi comments: *לשון ידד - לישון* – “Was cooking – a term that connotes cooking, as Onkelus translates it.”

There are several questions that arise from this *pasuk*. Foremost, the classic word in Loshon HaKodesh for cooking is *bishul* (בישול), as we find that the Torah uses the word *bishul* in other places when it mentions cooking, such as when the Torah mentions the *issur* of cooking the korban Pesach, where the *pasuk* says: *ובשל מבושל במים* – “cooked in water” (*Shemos* 12:9). In addition, from the fact that Rashi felt it necessary to tell us that ‘*vayozed*’ means ‘cooking’, shows that he felt that there was a deviation from the linguistic norm in the *pasuk*. We must therefore ask why the Torah used the word ‘*vayozed*’ in this *parshah*, and as every word in Loshon HaKodesh has a unique meaning, we must also attempt to understand in what way the word ‘*vayozed*’ differs in its implications from the more common word, ‘*bishul*’?

Additionally, it is noteworthy that initially the *pasukim* merely mention that Yaakov was cooking ‘a dish’, and it is only later when he served Eisav that the *pasuk* specifies what food he had cooked as it says: *ויעקב נתן לעשו לחם ונזיד עדשים* – “and Yaakov gave Eisav

bread and a dish of lentils.” If the Torah felt it relevant to mention what dish Yaakov had cooked, why did it keep it a secret and not specify it at the beginning of the episode?

We must also ask, why was Yaakov the one who was cooking altogether – did Yitzchok Avinu not have enough staff to work in the kitchen? The Medrash HaGodal tells us, that when Yaakov came home from *yeshiva* he found all of the servants sleeping, and rather than waking them, he chose to do the cooking himself. Rashi on the next *pasuk* tells us that Yaakov was preparing a *סעודת הבראה* – the first meal that is customarily served to mourners, in order to serve it to his father Yitzchok, who was sitting *shivah* after Avrohom Avinu’s passing. The fact that all of Yitzchak’s servants were sleeping at the time when they should have been preparing the meal for their master, on the first day that he was sitting *shiva* must have been as a result of special Divine intervention in order that Yaakov himself would prepare this *seudah* for his father. What could the reason for this possibly be?

The Gemara in *Sotah* (11a) makes an interesting *drosha* based upon the word ‘*vayozed*’. The Gemara discusses the punishment of the Egyptians who drowned in the Yam Suf because they had drowned the Jewish babies, and says: *א"ר אלעזר מאי דכתיב כי בדבר אשר זדו עליהם בקדירה שבישלו בה נתבשלו מאי משמע דהאי זדו לישנא דקדירה הוא דכתיב ויזד יעקב נזיד* – “R’ Elozor said, what is the meaning of the *pasuk*, ‘for with the things with which they schemed against them’, (figuratively speaking it means that) in the pot in which they cooked (i.e. drowning the children), they themselves were cooked (drowned in the Yam Suf). R’ Elozor said, from where do we see that the word ‘*zodu*’ which usually means (schemed) can also mean (to cook in) a pot? As it says, ‘and Yaakov cooked a dish.’” The fact that the Torah used the word ‘*zodu*’ and it therefore enabled this *drosha* to be made was not simply a play on words – rather it reveals a fundamental connection between the two words that we must attempt to understand. What is this connection?

From the fact that this Gemara phrased its question as, “from where do we see that the word ‘*zodu*’ means [to cook in] a pot?” we can deduce that the definition of ‘*zodu*’ specifically refers to cooking in a pot as opposed to any other culinary equipment. This however raises the additional question of why the Gemara mentioned this seemingly unimportant detail in its question?

The *Malbim* (*Mishlei* 11:2 and to *Sanhedrin* 69a) reveals a profound connection between the word ‘*zodoin*’ (זדון) which refers to a wanton and planned sin, and the word ‘*zodu*’ (זדו), which means cooking. He explains that ‘*zodoin*’ does not refer to a sin that is transgressed in the heat of passion, but rather a sin that has been contrived, in his words it is the product of, *בישול רעיונים*, literally, cooking up thoughts. We see from this that when one refers to cooking as ‘*hizid*’ (הזיד) it emphasizes the preparatory actions that go into preparing food so that it can be eaten, as opposed to the fact that cooking brings the end result of having cooked food.

Generally, there are two approaches to cooking. Some people view cooking as a means to an end- because they are unable to eat their food raw, they have no choice but to cook it first. For those people the cooking process is a necessary evil that they must go through, and if they could afford it they would gladly skip it entirely and pay someone else to cook for them or buy their food pre-cooked.

There are other people however, who enjoy the process of cooking itself, and they would usually not pass up on the opportunity to cook their own food, even if they have someone else who could do it for them. The second group, albeit the minority, appreciate that the act of preparing food is a fundamental aspect of creation and take great pleasure and pride in perfecting and beautifying their culinary creations. This is the approach to cooking that the Torah refers to when using the word ‘*zodu*’ as it emphasizes the act of cooking for its own sake as opposed to it just being a means to an end.

For this reason, when the Torah refers to the ‘measure for measure’ element of the punishment of the Egyptians it uses the word ‘*zodu*’ with its linguistic connection to cooking because it emphasizes the fact that they were punished through the same vehicle with which they had schemed, and used against the Jewish people, as they had prepared a plan to drown them in water and they themselves were drowned. The word ‘*zodu*’ emphasizes the ‘cooking up’ of their scheme, as opposed to simply using water as a means to reach an outcome.

We can now understand that the Gemara included the fact that the cooking is done in a pot in the definition of ‘*zodu*’ because when one is focusing on the cooking as a means to an end then the pot is not important, as it is merely the container in which the food, which is the main point, is prepared. If however one views the cooking as the important act unto itself then the pot has much more significance as it is the tool with which one cooks, and on the contrary the food that is being cooked inside the pot, could nearly be considered that which is unimportant, as it is only an opportunity to use one’s pots and cook!

We can now explain that Yaakov Avinu troubled himself to cook the food for his father’s *סעודת הבראה*, because he understood that there was a fundamental difference between the way that he would approach the task and the way that the kitchen staff would have approached it. Yaakov appreciated that cooking the food for his father was a *mitzvah*, and as such the preparatory stages were important and would need to be done with the proper intent in order to infuse the *mitzvah* with maximum holiness. The kitchen slaves, however, who lacked the appreciation of the importance of preparation for doing a *mitzvah*, would have viewed it as simply another meal that they had to serve.

It was therefore Divinely arranged that Yaakov should find all of the kitchen staff sleeping so that he himself would have the opportunity to fulfil the *mitzvah* in its fullest with all the necessary intentions.

