

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



עניני ארץ

AL EY DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Coined Phrase

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן אֲבְרָהָם, אֲבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד
אֶת יִצְחָק

And these are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham – Avraham fathered Yitzchak. (Bereishis 25:19)

The Gemara (Bava Kama 97b) tells of the “coin of Avraham Avinu”: it showed an old man and woman on one side, and a young man and woman on the other. Rashi explains that the old couple

First, when Yitzchak married Rivkah, Sarah was no longer alive. If the coin depicted Yitzchak and Rivkah, it must have been minted when Sarah was no longer living. This seems odd, since coins typically depict the living.

Second, if indeed the coin represented these couples, why did it simply say, “old man and woman” and “young man and woman,” and not specify, “Avraham and Sarah” and “Yitzchak and Rivkah”?

Third, a coin usually portrays some triumph or celebration of glory for the leader depicted. What glory is conveyed by the expressions “old man and woman” and “young man and woman”?

Let us attempt to defend Rashi’s position, with an approach that will leave us with a lesson. The Midrash,¹ as well, references the coin of Avraham Avinu.

When Hashem commanded Avraham to go to Eretz Yisrael, He promised Avraham, וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְגוֹי גָדוֹל – *And I will make of you a great nation* (12:2). The Midrash explains, שִׁיבְאוּ מוֹנִיטִין שְׁלוֹ בְּעוֹלָם – *His coin would spread throughout the world.* The Midrash continues that Avraham’s coin had an old man and woman on one side, and a young man and woman on the other.

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Defining the Boundaries

וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה
אֲנֹכִי וַתִּלְוָה לְדַרְשׁ אֶת ה'

The children agitated within her, and she said, “If so, why am I thus?” And she went to inquire of Hashem. (Bereishis 25:22)

Rashi cites Chazal that while in their mother’s womb, Yaakov and Esav agitated and fought over the inheritance of both worlds.

This is difficult to understand. Yaakov, the *bechir haAvos* (the finest of the Avos), surely didn’t seek to inherit *Olam Hazeih*, so that should have been left uncontested for Esav. And as for *Olam Haba* – there are no shortcuts. Whoever works to uphold Hashem’s word in this world will inherit *Olam Haba*. What was there to fight over?

Furthermore, this account of Chazal seems to contradict another. The Midrash⁸ relates that when Yaakov and Esav were in their mother’s womb, Yaakov said to Esav, “My brother Esav: we are two sons to our father, and there are two worlds before us, *Olam Hazeih* and *Olam Haba*. In *Olam Hazeih* there is eating, drinking, business, marriage,

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This lesson about money – that it is only a tool and has no inherent benefit – is true of all this world’s pursuits and desires

represented Avraham and Sarah, and the young couple represented Yitzchak and Rivkah. *Tosafos* clarifies that it didn’t actually depict their images, but rather stated, “old man and woman” on one side and “young man and woman” on the other.

Toras Chaim challenges this understanding of the Gemara with multiple questions:

1 Bereishis Rabbah 39:11

8 Tanna D’Vei Eliyahu Zuta, 19

Coined Phrase

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When Rashi² explains Hashem's promises to Avraham in connection with לך לך, he includes, citing Chazal, שאודיע, טבעך בעולם – *I will make your nature known throughout the world.* Tiferes Shlomo explains that the nature of *resha'im* is to blindly follow their hearts and eyes and indulge every craving and pleasure. As Chazal say,³ הרשעים ברשות לבם – *The wicked are possessed by their hearts.* Avraham, however, introduced a new nature: taking possession of one's heart; controlling one's disposition and transcending it. Avraham's "nature" and Avraham's "coin" that Hashem promised to make known are one and the same: his way of life of rising above instinct and living by Hashem's will.

Avraham's "coin" didn't state the names of the *Avos* and *Imahos*, but rather "old man and woman" and "young man and woman," because Avraham's nature wasn't limited to the *Avos* and *Imahos*. Avraham imbued his nature in his progeny for all time, so that any Jewish man or woman, whether young or old, could transcend the natural way of the world and live true to the Torah.

Avraham's coin wasn't depicting someone no longer living, since its depiction was of Avraham's *koach* carrying forth through the generations, alive and well. And this was certainly a matter of glory for Avraham, worthy of being portrayed on his coin.

There is a form of *kinyan* (acquisition) known as *chalipin*. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 45b) states that *chalipin* cannot be performed with a coin, since its image can become nullified. Rashi explains that a king occasionally cancels and replaces his currency.

Of course, nothing in this world exists forever. The Gemara means that this is especially notable with regard to coins, since a person may spend a vast sum to acquire a certain coin, only for it to become worthless in a moment, in the event that its image is invalidated.

Let us explain on a deeper level. The Maharsha⁴ relates a parable of a money-hungry person who begged Hashem that everything he touches should turn to silver. Lo and behold, Hashem fulfilled his request. When mealtime came, this man reached out to take his food – but it turned to silver! He had nothing to eat.

This lesson about money – that it is only a tool and has no inherent benefit – is true of all this world's pursuits and desires. There is nothing real about them at all. This is the Gemara's message: *chalipin* cannot be done with a coin because it is representative of the vanity of this world, in that it "can become nullified" – it contains no intrinsic significance.

Avraham's coin was different. Avraham taught the world and ingrained in his offspring that everything the world has to offer is meant for a higher purpose. His coin would not become nullified; it and its message are eternal.

When a person transfers the *kedushah* of produce of *ma'aser sheini* onto a coin, it must be done with a coin that has an image.⁵ This seems counterintuitive; as we have seen, an imaged coin is at risk of losing all its value at any time.

The purpose of transferring *ma'aser sheini* onto a coin is to enable a person to buy new food and eat it in Yerushalayim as *ma'aser sheini*. Why must *ma'aser sheini*

be eaten in Yerushalayim? למען תלמד ליראה? אַתְּ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ – *so that you will learn to fear Hashem, your G-d* (Devarim 14:23). This is the reason one must use a coin with an image: to teach a lesson in *yiras Shamayim*, that all matter of this world "can become nullified," and will not last forever. In this manner, a person may learn to keep his life's priorities in order.

The Gemara (Pesachim 104a) describes a certain class of Jews known as בְּנֵי שָׁל – *sons of holy ones*, who would never gaze at the image of a coin. The simple reason was out of scrupulousness toward avoiding *avodah zarah*; the images on a coin could be idolatrous.⁶ But on a deeper level, with this behavior they were showing that they shunned the falsity of this world's externalities and attractions. They were בְּנֵי שָׁל קְדוּשִׁים because they followed in the ways of the *Avos hakedoshim*, who recognized the true purpose of life on this world.

How can a person rise to this level and repudiate all the world seems to offer him? When a person becomes conscious of Hashem's unconditional love for Klal Yisrael, which is not bound by reason or *cheshbon*, then he will in turn love Hashem in this manner. The concept of כַּמַּיִם הַפְּנִיִּים – *As water reflects a face back to a face, so one's heart is reflected back to him by another* (Mishlei 27:19), applies to our relationship with Hashem, as well.⁷ Once a person achieves *ahavas Hashem* without calculations, he can rise above his nature and cast aside the enticements of this world, even as they appear to glitter before his eyes.

(תולדות תשכ"ג – ס"ג מאמר ב)

2 12:1
3 Bereishis Rabbah 34:1
4 Bava Basra 25b s.v. Lo
5 Ma'aser Sheini 1:2
6 See *Tosafos*, Avodah Zarah 50a
7 See Rashi, Devarim 1:27, citing Sifri

Defining the Boundaries

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and bearing of children. In *Olam Haba* there are none of these. If you want, you can take *Olam Hazeah*, and I will take *Olam Haba*.” That is what they did: Esav took *Olam Hazeah* as his portion, and Yaakov took *Olam Haba* as his.

According to this narrative, Yaakov and Esav divided the worlds between themselves, fair and square. If so, what basis was there for a dispute?

A Yid is allowed to have an enjoyable stay in this world, so long as he keeps in mind the proper manner he is to engage *Olam Hazeah*

In next week's *parshah*, the Torah describes a meeting between Yaakov and Esav later in life, after Yaakov left the house of Lavan. וישא את עיניו וירא את הנשים ואת הילדים ויאמר מי אלה לך, ויאמר הילדים אשר חנן אלקים את עבדך – He (*Esav*) raised his eyes and saw the women and children, and he asked, “Who are these to you?” He (*Yaakov*) answered, “The children whom G-d has graciously given your servant.” (33:5)

The *mefarshim* point out that while Esav questioned Yaakov about his wives

and his children, Yaakov's response only addressed his children. Why?

The Midrash⁹ tells that when Esav met Yaakov at this juncture, Esav beheld Yaakov's children, servants and maidservants. Esav said, “My brother! Didn't you tell me that you would take *Olam Haba*? So where are all these possessions from? You are benefiting from *Olam Hazeah* just as much as I am!” Yaakov responded, “Hashem has given me these possessions for my use in *Olam Hazeah*.” As the pasuk says, הילדים אשר חנן אלקים את עבדך.

What did Yaakov's response mean? How did it address Esav's complaint?

The answer is that Yaakov meant to convey a message: *My singular goal in life is raising generations of loyal servants to Hashem. Everything else – the servants, maidservants and money – are only means to this end. If so, these possessions aren't considered gashmiyus, but ruchniyus. They are not a piece of Olam Hazeah, but of Olam Haba. Therefore, Esav, they fit squarely into my half of our deal: Olam Haba.*

Yaakov's response only made mention of his children, but it explained everything else, as well: it was all part of his heavenly work of establishing faithful *doros of avdei Hashem*.¹⁰

We may now understand Yaakov and Esav's dispute over the two worlds. They

weren't fighting over which they would each inherit, because that was already settled. It was something more wide-ranging, a most fundamental question: What belongs to *Olam Hazeah*, and what to *Olam Haba*? What is *gashmiyus*, and what is *ruchniyus*? All the amenities of this world are seen by Esav as ways of fulfilling of his base desires – most certainly *gashmiyus*. But Yaakov sees them as vehicles for elevation, for serving Hashem in the purest fashion. This was why they “agitated and fought over the inheritance of both worlds.”

We say in davening, וְהָיָה מְעוֹלָם וְעַד מְעוֹלָם – *But the kindness of Hashem is forever and ever upon those who fear Him* (Tehillim 130:17). Targum explains מְעוֹלָם וְעַד מְעוֹלָם as “from this world until the next world.”

This is the inheritance of Yaakov: “From this world until the next world”; Hashem showers him with goodness in both this world and the next. A Yid is allowed to have an enjoyable stay in this world, so long as he keeps in mind the proper manner he is to engage *Olam Hazeah*. A Yid's life in this world must be with a feeling of מְעוֹלָם וְעַד מְעוֹלָם – that he lives in this world toward *Olam Haba*. His life must be about elevating *gashmiyus* to *ruchniyus*, about connecting matters of *Olam Hazeah* to a greater purpose. In this way, his life in this world will earn him a place in the next.

(בנאות דשא – תולדות תשפ"ג)

9 Ibid

10 See *Ba'al HaTurim*, ad loc.

Letting Go

וַיִּמְכַר אֶת בְּכֹרְתוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב

And he sold his birthright to Yaakov.

(Bereishis 25:33)

The *Rishonim* point out a difficulty. The halachah is that a son cannot sell his right to his father's inheritance during the father's lifetime, because it is a *davar shelo ba la'olam*, a thing that does not yet exist.¹¹ If so, how could Esav sell his *bechorah*?

*Ketzos Hachoshen*¹² explains that Esav wasn't giving his rights to the inheritance, but rather was releasing his right to it, which enabled Yaakov to take it for himself.¹³ Although one cannot transfer ownership of a *davar shelo ba la'olam*, one can enable its reappropriation by relinquishing one's own rights to it.

At the surface, this understanding appears at odds with the pesukim. Yaakov told Esav (25:31), – *Sell today your birthright to me*, and the pasuk relates (25:33), – *וַיִּמְכַר אֶת בְּכֹרְתוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב* – *And he sold his birthright to Yaakov*. Following *Ketzos Hachoshen's* approach, it wouldn't seem proper to term it a sale; Esav simply relinquished his rights. Apparently, *Ketzos Hachoshen* maintains that since Esav relinquished his rights in exchange for payment, it was considered a sale.

But there is another, more basic problem. Granted, Esav did not give over a non-existent thing – but Yaakov acquired one. Although R. Shlomo Eiger¹⁴ maintains that *davar shelo ba la'olam* pertains only to the giver and not to the taker, that is only where the transaction occurs between a giver and a

taker. Where there is no giver, such as with an item of *hefker*, one cannot take possession of a *davar shelo ba la'olam*.¹⁵ The same is true here: according to *Ketzos Hachoshen*, Esav didn't give the *bechorah* to Yaakov; Yaakov simply took it after Esav forfeited his rights to it. Since there was no giver, Yaakov's acquisition of the not-yet-existent *bechorah* should have been invalid.¹⁶

Perhaps we may explain based on an opinion of *Nesivos Hamishpat*,¹⁷ who says that a *bechor's* extra portion of inheritance is given to him not by his father, but by his brothers. The brothers (involuntarily) take from their portions and add to the *bechor's*. Accordingly, it is reasonable that if a *bechor* would relinquish his rights to a double portion, the extra inheritance would remain in the brothers' possession. If so, when Esav forfeited the *bechorah*, it automatically returned to Yaakov's possession. Clearly, *davar shelo ba la'olam* would not be an issue.

But this leaves us with a problem. Picture a scenario of two brothers, one of whom is a *bechor*. Their father dies and leaves three hundred dollars. The *bechor* gets two hundred, and the other brother one hundred. If the *bechor* would give up his extra hundred, it seems clear that it would not go entirely to his brother, but would be split evenly between them. So why did Yaakov receive Esav's entire *bechorah*? It should have been split evenly, essentially dividing Yitzchak's inheritance in half.

In truth, however, this is not simple. The Gemara (Bava Basra 124a) states that just as a *bechor* receives a double portion, so he

must pay doubly toward his father's debts. If he chooses to relinquish both his rights to a double portion and his obligation to pay double, he may do so. R. Akiva Eiger¹⁸ considers: if a *bechor* does this, does he receive only one-third of the inheritance, while his brother (assuming he has one brother) receives two-thirds; or is the whole inheritance split evenly? Accordingly, perhaps *Ketzos Hachoshen* maintains that the first option is true, and thus, Yaakov received the full portion of *bechorah*, while Esav remained with only a third of the inheritance.

But this position remains difficult to understand. Why should Yaakov get two-thirds? Since Esav relinquished his right to the third portion, it should have returned to the 'pot' and been divided between them.¹⁹

The halachah is that a person cannot remove himself from his father's inheritance. Nonetheless, the Chiddushei HaRim writes²⁰ that with regard to brothers, a brother may forfeit his portion and leave it to his brother. The reason for this is that essentially, each son inherits the entire estate; only that where he has brothers, they too take a share. Accordingly, where one son forfeits his portion, the remaining sons automatically receive his share.²¹

We may now understand that when Esav gave up his extra portion, it was not added to the sum of the inheritance, to be divided evenly. Since Esav relinquished his right to it, Yaakov was seen as the sole inheritor of it and received it in its entirety.

(בנאות דשא – תולדות תשפ"ג)

11 See *She'elos u'Teshuvos Rivash*, 328

12 278:13

13 *Ketzos Hachoshen* bases this understanding on Esav's exclamation of *לָמָּה זֶה לִי בְכֹרְתִי* – *what use to me is a birthright?* (25:32).

14 *Sefer Ha'Ikkarim*, beginning of *Ikkar* וְשֵׁם אִיִּן אָדָם מִקְנֵהוּ דְשֵׁם אִיִּן; *She'elos u'Teshuvos*, C.M. 15, וְעַל יְסוּד

15 For example, one cannot acquire a *ger's* inheritance during his lifetime.

16 Additionally, R. Shlomo Eiger's position is not universal; *She'elos u'Teshuvos Zayis Ra'anana* (vol. 2 63:3) maintains that *davar shelo ba la'olam* pertains to the taker.

17 278:9

18 See *She'elos u'Teshuvos R. Shlomo Eiger*, vol. 2, *Kesavim* 63; cited in *Chiddushei R. Akiva Eiger HaMelukat*, Bava Basra 124a

19 This point is made by R. Shlomo Eiger.

20 C.M. 75:19

21 Although it seems the *Rishonim* do not agree with this, they would likely agree regarding the extra portion of a *bechor*, since the halachah is clear that he may relinquish this share.