

Mei Hashiloach - Vol I. Genesis - Bereishith - Toldoth

GOLD BUYS SILVER

The first Izbicy Torah talks about longing and desire. As has been taught previously, Abraham's entire life and career was an expression of his longing for God. Abraham wanted nothing more than to hear God's name on every lip and see God triumphant throughout the world. 'Only reveal Yourself,' Abraham pleaded with God, 'and I swear that every living soul will worship You and dedicate its life to Your glory.'

In the strictly self-referencing sense of kabbalistic aphorisms, Isaac is 'Feminine' and passive. He has access to *Binah*, and so is capable of moving backward through time to the source of things.

Although the left side of the Kabbalistic Tree is the side of *Gevurah* - Fear and is associated with the future, *Binah*, at the very top of the left side, is the past. Similarly, although the right side, *Chesed* - Love is associated with the past, *Chokhma*, at the top of the right side is the future. This mirrors the human brain where the left side governs the right of the body and the right hemisphere governs left.

Isaac inherits everything Abraham worked to acquire in this world. Abraham was so invested in his love and desire for God, he never found the time or opportunity to enjoy the fruits of his labors. Abraham never 'owned' anything; he never acquired a sense of ownership - everything felt temporary and transitory. Isaac, on the other hand, owns everything in his possession. As soon as Abraham received something he laid it aside while he looked to the future, because he was not satisfied by the gratification of his desires. Nothing could gratify his desires when all he wanted and dreamed of was God.

Isaac knew precisely what he owned and felt in possession of every last article. So much so, that when Isaac used something he had inherited he could taste his father's *kavana* and intention. When Isaac ate a spoonful of chicken soup he could sense his father's worshipful longing in the taste of the meat in his mouth. Whether he put on a shirt or walked into his tent, everything he used felt like the revelation of some previous act of dedication on his father's part. Isaac was to his father, Abraham, what Shabbes is to the six days - what the world-to-come is to this world. He was the interpretation of his father's dream, the unfolding of the blessing.

The Talmud says, Raban Gamliel sat and taught, 'In the future the Land of Israel will produce loaves of bread and ready-to-wear clothing.' (Shabbat 30b)

In Izbicy this Talmudic teaching was understood as the 'interpretation' of the dream of Shabbes in this world. For in *this* world, Shabbes is replete with restrictions and prohibitions; with 39 forbidden classes of labour, primarily concerned with the production of food and secondarily with the manufacture of clothing. Thus it is only proper that the interpretation of that dream should manifest as loaves of bread that grow on trees, and designer clothing sprouting overnight like mushrooms on the the field. The dream was the experience of Shabbes in this world as restricted and constrained. But in the final interpretation, Shabbes lived out in all sorts of *Tzimtzum* - Constriction becomes life in a state of total Shabbes in the world-to-come, where no work is necessary, because everything is taken care of.

Isaac lives in Abraham's world-to-come. Abraham has sought and Isaac has found.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

These are the chronicles of Isaac, son of Abraham. Abraham gave birth to Isaac.

We read, 'If you seek Him He will be found with you.' (II Chronicles 28:9)

Seeking refers to Abraham, while finding refers to Isaac. Abraham's lifelong quest is a craving and longing for Torah, and also that the awareness of God's sovereignty should spread into the world. This is [the Sefirah of *Chesed* - Loving-Kindness] the characteristic of Love.

אלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם אברהם הוליד את יצחק. כתיב [דברי הימים א' כ"ח, ט'] אם תדרשנו ימצא לך, הדרישה הוא אאע"ה והמציאה הוא יצחק, כי ענין אברהם אבינו היה שהיה משתוקק תמיד לד"ת מאד מאד ושיתפרסם בעולם כי הש"י מלך עליהם, וזאת הוא מדות האהבה.

The birth of Isaac is the fulfillment of Abraham's dream. Isaac is the revelation of God on Earth. Not quite what Abraham had imagined, perhaps, but the fulfillment, nonetheless. God's narrative for the world has a much lengthier and more complicated plot than anyone could have foreseen or imagined. Isaac is the Divine Presence, the Shechina, the Revelation of God in the world. But Isaac's divinity is an internal evolution, an ever-growing awareness that God is not 'out there' but 'in here'.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Isaac's characteristic is *Gevurah* - Fear. After Abraham's desire for God is proven to be completely pure and free of selfishness, God's sovereignty comes down and is revealed in the world, where it manifests as *Gevurah* - Fear, as we read in the Talmud, 'Thus did Moses hear from the Mouth of *Gevurah*.' (Megilla 31a)

Isaac was also a revelation God's of *Gevurah* in the world. This is what is meant by the phrase, 'These are the chronicles of Isaac, Abraham begat Isaac.'

The chronicles of Isaac are the revelation and promulgation of God in this world. But it was Abraham who gave birth to this revelation with his longing; since Longing as a characteristic belongs to Abraham.

ומדות יצחק הוא מדות גבורה, היינו אחר שנתברר זאת וירד התגלות הש"י בעוה"ז, וזאת

יקרא גבורה כמו דאיתא בגמ' [מגילה ל"א:] כך שמע משה מפי הגבורה. ויצחק היה ג"כ נקרא גבורת הש"י בעולם. וזש"ה ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם אברהם הוליד את יצחק, היינו תולדות יצחק אבינו הוא פרסום התגלות הש"י בעוה"ז, אברהם הוליד את יצחק היינו ע"י תשוקת אברהם היתה זאת, כי התשוקה הוא מדות אברהם,

As was said in the introduction to the Izbicy on *Vayera*, the real meaning of 'Torah' is God giving Himself to us, begging us to take Him. According to Izbicy, God's 'appearance' to Abraham meant that Abraham was granted Torah of the utmost clarity.

If the definition of Torah is God giving Himself to us, then 'Torah of the utmost clarity' means God giving Himself to us so palpably that the Torah can be perceived with the human eye, not merely in words, sentences, text or writing, but the holy Torah itself. That's what Abraham lived for.

Isaac is the Torah you can see with the naked human eye. But Isaac only came into this world because of Abraham's tremendous powerful longing; he was brought here, purchased with his father's desire. Here the Izbicy uses the metaphors of silver and gold to illustrate this point. Isaac is Real Torah - Pure Gold. The Hebrew word for Silver is כסף *Kesef*. The word *Kesef* also translates as craving.

In the Mishna (Bava Metzia 4:1) we learn as follows. 'Gold buys silver, but silver doesn't buy gold.' In Jewish law every transaction has its legal moment of no-return. For example; you go into a grocery store and ask the shopkeeper for a bag of apples and he puts the apples on the counter, saying, 'That'll be two shekels, please.' In response you place two shekels on the counter for him to take. Neither of you has yet picked up the other's offering, so, halachically, either of you can change your mind about the transaction for any reason. Now, what happens if the shopkeeper picks up the money and you change your mind about the apples? According to the Mishna you can still change your mind and demand the shopkeeper give your money back. If, however, you pick up the merchandise, you acquire it. It's yours. You cannot change your mind and put it back on the counter, even if the shopkeeper has not touched the money you put down, once you pull the merchandise toward you it is yours and the transaction is complete.

Now, what happens if you buy money? Well, says the Mishna, money can be merchandise, too, if it comprises the sort of coins that do not readily pass from hand to hand - gold being the perfect example. In such a case, the gold coins would be considered merchandise while the silver coins are the payment. Hence, if you are the buyer and pick up the gold coins, they immediately become your property and you cannot undo the transaction. Whereas if the dealer picks up your silver coins in payment before you pick up your merchandise, you may still legally change your mind.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Real Torah can only be brought into the world though powerful desire, only after someone experiences tremendous longing for it. This is also the meaning of the Talmudic dictum; 'We were taught, in his youth Rabbi [Yehudah the Prince] taught his son R. Shimon that Silver buys Gold, while in his old age he taught, Gold buys Silver.'

What this means is that in one's youth a person has a strong desire for

Torah, hence silver can buy gold. Gold being the Torah, while Silver refers to the desire and longing.

וכן כל דברי תורה אמיתיים אין להם הולדה רק אחר גודל תשוקה שישתוקק האדם להם. וזה ג"כ ענין הגמ' [בבא מציעא מ"ד.] מתני ליה רבי לר"ש בריה בילדותיה, הכסף קונה את הזהב, ובזקנותיה הזהב קונה את הכסף. היינו כי הילדות של האדם יש גודל תשוקה וחמדה לד"ת ועי"ז קונה את הזהב היינו ד"ת לאמיתם יקראו בשם זהב, וכסף היינו תשוקה וכסיפה.

For all that thirst, hunger desire, craving, and longing are uncomfortable, they are precious sensations. They are a manifestation of the life-force; a God given proof of life. For as long as a person is capable of desire they are capable of acquiring new Torah. As the Izbicy write in the third Torah of the previous Sidra, Abraham never lost his powerful longing for new revelation.

This then is the meaning of the verse 'Abraham was old, getting on in years'. It means he came, finally, to the root of his life's source. He became a vessel to receive and remained prepared and full of desire to receive more life from God, always lusting for more and more.

Rabbi Yehudah the Prince also experienced the same sense of longing, but as he noticed it waning in his old age, he changed his thinking to reflect the new reality. While in his youth silver may have purchased gold, i.e. his young and ardent desire drew the Torah to him, in his old age when his desires were no longer so powerful, the Torah he already acquired became the medium of exchange. He relied on his Torah, i.e. his prayerful heart to beg for yet more desire for more Torah.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

In old age, however, one needs to pray that the longing for Torah not depart; in old age a person's powers of desire tend to weaken. That's why he [R. Yehudah] changed and began to pray to God that in the merit of the Torah he might be granted a heart endowed with desire and longing for new Torah

אבל בזקנה צריך האדם לבקש שלא יוסר ממנו החשק לד"ת, כי לעת הזקנה כל כחות התשוקה של האדם מתחלשין, ע"כ שינה לו הזהב קונה את הכסף, והוא תפלה שהתפלל לה' שע"י ד"ת יבא בלבו חשק להוספת עוד ד"ת,

A metaphor for this would be a man who has finished a good meal and is no longer hungry. Nonetheless, if a particularly tasty delicacy is placed in front of him he can 'work up an appetite' to eat more. So it is with the Torah. And this is what we pray for everyday when we ask: 'Sweeten, Oh God, the words of Your Torah in our mouths.'

We are praying that the Torah always be sweet and alluring enough to awaken fresh appetite in us; that we long for them more and more.

והוא למשל לאדם ששבע מאכילה ואעפ"כ אם בא לפניו מאכל טוב המאכל הזה ממשיך לו תאוה וחשק לאכול יותר, וכן הוא הענין בד"ת. וזה שאנו מתפללין בכל יום, והערב נא ה' אלקינו את דברי תורתך בפינו, היינו שימתקו לנו הד"ת, שהיה לנו בכל פעם תשוקה יותר אליהם.

This is the meaning of the verse, 'You will eat and eat with satisfaction.' (Joel 2:26)

The repetition to 'eat and eat' alludes to the idea we have just mentioned. Through eating you will develop an appetite; similar to the way in which the Torah creates a craving for more Torah.

וזה פי' הפסוק [יואל ב', כ"ו] ואכלתם אכול ושבע וכפילת הלשון מורה על זה, דע"י האכילה יבא לך חמדה יותר והוא למשל לד"ת כמו שנתבאר.

THE MEANING OF A JEW

The second Torah begins with the Mei Hashiloach painting the radically different characters of Esau and Jacob with a few broad strokes.

Esau has decided, 'There's no such thing as bad publicity. As long as my father pays close attention to me I can come to no harm, because he will pray that I find favor in God's eyes, and God can make everything I do turn out right.'

Hence Esau does everything in his power to remain constantly in his father's view, as far as pretending to be so strict in his obedience to the halacha as to need guidance about tithing salt and straw; neither of which actually require tithing.

Here we come face to face with a corollary or unexpected consequence of the Izbicy world view. Human behaviors are not intrinsically good or bad, preferable or undesirable. Esau is artful; a man of action and a hunter, while Jacob is artless; a tent dweller and scholar. Modern Jewish culture values Torah study above everything else; a soldier/warrior is not the equal of a rabbi, nor is a ploughman the equal of a high priest. But Izbicy maintains that if this is so, it is not because one is *superior* to the other, but because God chose to favor one over the other. And the reason God chose to sanction and approve one way of life over the other is also not because God considers one behavior superior but because God favors one person over another. Even more baffling is this; the reason one person finds favor over another in God's eyes, is completely arbitrary and unpredictable. As the Mei Hashiloach states explicitly,

'Do not say to yourself, "The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness." No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you. It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land;

but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.' (Deut. 9:4-6)

The opening of the above quoted text indicates that it is not because of the wickedness of the nations that we inherit their land. However, from the end of the text it would appear that the wickedness of the nations *is* responsible for our inheriting their land. The meaning is this: God actually chose Israel regardless of their deeds, as it is written (Mal. 1:2), 'For Esau and Jacob were brothers, and I loved Jacob and I hated Esau.' Likewise in Egypt that accusation was made against Israel, as we learn in the Midrash 'The angels complained, "These are pagans and these are pagans."' (Leviticus Rabbah 23:2) Nevertheless God chose Israel because they are a portion of God above, in their deepest depths and at their source. As we read, 'Because God's portion is His people.' (Deut. 32:9)

Thus we find an obvious contradiction: God tells us He hates nations who are cruel, ruthless and barbaric, while God Himself commanded us to destroy the seven nations who dwelt in the Land of Canaan, apparently a cruel, ruthless and barbaric act, God forbid. It would appear, therefore, that the very act for which the nations are abhorred is considered a Mitzvah for a Jew, but this is only because God bears witness about everything we do that it is His desire for us to act so.

This is the meaning of the phrase, 'For it is because of the wickedness of the nations'. With the very behavior for which I condemn them as wicked and evil, with this very same thing do I call you My people, 'The people who do my will'. And, as the text continues, the proof of this is that 'It is not with your righteousness, and not with the wickedness of the nations, does God bring you there.' Rather, without any reason, God desires you. Because even when you do the same deeds as they do, God still desires you. That explains the second part; 'But because of the wickedness of the nations'. The word 'because' is used to mean 'Precisely! This is the reason! Because you are God's portion and whatever you do, God sanctions and makes it good.' (Mei Hashiloach - Eikev)

It against this background that the Mei Hashiloach opens the subject of Esau and Jacob vying for Isaac's blessing. The situation is fluid in the sense that whoever receives God's seal of approval will turn out, in retrospect, to have done no wrong. Neither brother has established primacy, it could go either way. But Isaac favors Esau, thinking, 'God can clarify every deed of Esau's and make it good. Esau is my firstborn and, by law, entitled to inherit the entire spiritual estate, the mantle of leadership and the priesthood. I follow the letter of the law, it is not my job or in my character to bend or make allowances for Jacob's superior moral stance. Let God do whatever sorting needs to be done, I will follow the correct protocol.'

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Isaac loved Esau because the hunt was in his mouth.

The Midrash (Genesis Rabba 63:10) explains the verse to mean that Esau trapped his father, asking him, 'How does one tithe salt; how does one tithe straw?'

ויאהב יצחק את עשו כי ציד בפיו. ונתפרש [בראשית רבה ס"ג י'] שהיה צד את אביו האיק
מעשרין את המלח ואת התבן.

Neither brother has any problem lying to obtain his objective, which always remains the same: to obtain their father's blessing. What distinguishes them is Jacob's insight that the habitual liar may forget the original truth. Esau capers and prances in his father's presence to ensure he's never far from Isaac's thoughts. He does everything he can to grab his father's attention so that, when the moment comes for Isaac to bestow the blessing, he, Esau, will be first in line.

Isaac does not pretend to know what God's will or plan for the long term may be. All he has to go by are the rules governing the laws of inheritance. He sees Esau's behavior clearly and knows it for what it is, but understands enough about the way God governs the world to resist trying to impose his personal ethic.

And this is where the Izbicy stands out in stark relief against the entire panoply of Jewish ethicists and mussarists. Esau is a murderer, adulterer, thief and liar, but none of those disqualify him in Isaac's eyes from receiving the blessing. Only God can decide whether Jacob's pious morality is preferable to Esau's rapacious debauchery, Isaac's job is not to weigh them against one another. He's not qualified to do so because he is not God.

Virtually all Jewish scholarship since the Talmud takes the same stance; Esau is a bad man while Jacob is good - Esau uses his hands as a solution to every problem, while Jacob uses his voice. Esau should never even have been considered for the blessings which so obviously belong to Jacob, etc.

The Izbicy saw this moralizing as unjustifiable and incompatible with Judaism, and rejected it in the same way as we today would reject the mid-19th century American expansionism touted as Manifest Destiny, which basically boiled down to this, 1.) a conviction that the American people and their institutions are virtuous; 2.) they are imbued with a mission to spread these institutions, thereby redeeming and remaking the world in the image of the United States.; and 3.) they are destined by God to do this work.

The Izbicy rebbe sees through delusions.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Don't think for a moment that things were as simple as they sound at first. Obviously our patriarch Isaac would not have been fooled by Esau, had Esau been an out and out fraud. The fact is that to begin with both Jacob and Esau were great people. It was Esau's idea, though, to try and make himself look good in his father's eyes so that his father might favor him, and pray to God for him, that he be endowed with wisdom.

והנה אין לחשוב את הדבר כפשוטו כי בטח לא טעה יצחק אבינו בו, באם היה רמאי מפורש. אך שמתחילה היו שניהם אנשים גדולים, ורק שדעת עשו היה ליפות את עצמו לפני אביו כדי שישא חן בעיניו למען יתפלל עבורו להש"י שיתן חכמה בלבו,

Jacob refuses to enter into the fray. Not because he is offended by Esau or Isaac's reading of the narrative. Jacob has no illusions whatsoever. He understands the situation perfectly. If God favors Esau then Esau's path is the correct one. But Jacob puts his faith in God before his faith in Isaac; he trusts the narrative will weave itself regardless of the machinations of Isaac or Esau. And he sneers at the idea that by popping up and down in Isaac's purview he will somehow tip the balance in his own favor. He also understands that Isaac himself is just another player in God's narrative, that the desire to pray is also a gift from God. That one's *Kavvanot* and intentions are also directed from above because God is in charge of everything, so Isaac who represented the Shechina on Earth would not be making a single autonomous move or choice.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Jacob in his path of simplicity, asks himself, 'Why bother? If God considers me the proper one He will put it into my father's heart to pray for me.'

Jacob did not agree with Esau's way of doing things. Esau's way requires clarifying, for who can guarantee that a motive is 100% pure? Perhaps the fraud Esau was perpetrating, pretending to be pious and strictly conscientious in all matters, was not intended to bring him the spiritual blessings Isaac could bestow, perhaps he just wanted his father's approval, and [thought] that required pretending to be who he was not?

Jacob's policy was to avoid any type of dubious behavior; his way was to trust to God with all his heart.

ויעקב הלך בתומו ואמר למה לי זאת, אם אני הגון בעיני הש"י יתן בלב אבי יצחק שיתפלל אלי, ולא היה ישר בעיניו דרכו של עשו כי דרך זה צריך בירר כי מי יאמר שכוונתו רצויה פן הוא רק לרמאות. וביען כי יעקב אבינו הפריש את עצמו מכל ספק ורק בה' לבדו בטח לבו,

So, Jacob has decided not to follow Esau down the path of pretence and do whatever it takes to catch his father's attention and bedazzle him. The question is this; why does Isaac go along with the fraud, why doesn't he object to Esau's incessant trickery and call it for what it is, a sham and humbug?

Here the Mei Hashiloach lays down one of the rules of his world-view that makes it such an exciting one to study and practise. Life is always a gamble. By sticking to the safe, true, tried and tested path one gains nothing because one risks nothing. Following sheeplike in the footsteps of others, guarantees sheepish results. Sheepism is not life, because life is, by definition, a gamble, and hey, even sheep will abandon the flock and risk losing sight of the shepherd if they sense greener pastures elsewhere.

Isaac loves Esau because Esau is a gambler, not because he is fooled by him, even for a moment. And Isaac interprets Esau's behavior as a risky gambit to obtain the blessings by any means necessary, even by deceit, if that's what it takes. Isaac approves wholeheartedly, because he knows that no one is entitled to spiritual treasure if they are not willing to take spiritual risks.

That is how Isaac perceives Jacob: unwilling to take risks,

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

The truth is that wherever a person enters into dubious behavior in the service of God, he is much greater than one who avoids areas of doubt.

ובאמת בכל מקום שהאדם מכניס את עצמו בספיקות בעבודת הש"י אז הוא גדול ממני
שסילק עצמו מספיקות,

Now the Izbicy flips the Torah on its head once again. That God can and does reweave and reinterpret the narrative of someone's life in order to make it congruent with His will, is perfectly true. Isaac is not wrong about that, and were it God's will, Esau the murderer and rapist could indeed have his narrative rewritten to become lily-white and pristine Torah. But God doesn't do it for Esau, He only does it for the seed of Jacob!

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

This, however, only happens with the seed of Jacob because they have total confidence that God clarifies their every act for the good. That's why the seed of Jacob are permitted to put their safety in jeopardy by entering those grey areas. But whoever does not have that total confidence, must avoid doubtful situations.

רק זאת היא בזרע יעקב לפי שיש להם מבטח עוז בהש"י שיברר הכל לטוב זה מותר לו
להכניס עצמו בספק. אבל מי שאינן לו מבטח עוז אסור להכניס עצמו בספק,

In case it occurs to you, dear reader, that this Izbicy world-view is a licence to anyone of the seed of Jacob to do whatever they want, in the full confidence that God will reinterpret every act for the good, I would remind you of the following: the Izbicy rebbe would often that the holy Ba'al Shem Tov would say of himself, "If only I knew for sure that I am of the seed of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, that, at my root source I am begotten of holy seed and remain forever connected to the holy, I would walk with my hat tipped to the side like someone rejoicing in complete and utter self-confidence. I would forever feel safe and secure with nothing at all to fear."

So, if you feel confident you are of the seed of Jacob, by all means, go ahead and do whatever you think is right, for God will make it so. In fact the rebbe alludes to this idea in his interpretation of the verse:

'And it shall be our *Tzedaka* - Charity, because we are careful to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.' Deut. (6:25)

Onkelos' Targum translates the word *Tzedaka* (charity) as *Zakuthah* (merit). The verse is

thus commonly understood to mean, 'We will have merit and be considered righteous, since we are careful to do all these commandments, etc.'

But the word *Zakuthah* does not just mean merit. It means crystal clarity and flawless purity. The verse now means that God will testify that all our deeds stem from the deepest place in the heart. As the Talmud says, 'The pagan who gives charity only on condition that his son recover, is considered evil. But if a Jew gives charity saying, "I give this on condition my son recover," he is considered a *Tzaddik*.' (Rosh Hashanah, 4a)

This is only because God bears witness that in the deepest depths of their hearts, Jewish people are as pure as His will. (Mei Hashiloach - Va'etchanan)

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

As Esau discovered when it became clear that all his risky behavior had been a poor choice, God only clarifies and reinterprets the actions of Israel this way. As is explained in reference to the verse, 'And it shall be our *Tzedaka*'.

So, those not of the seed of Jacob had better constrain themselves with all types of restriction, as has been discussed in regard to converts to Judaism, who must not take risks or put themselves in jeopardy.

כמו שעשו הכניס עצמו בדברים שנתבררו אח"כ שהיו רעים, כי לא מברר הקב"ה לטוב רק את ישראל, כמו שנתבאר בפסוק וצדקה תהיה לנו [פרשת ואתחנן] וכל מי שאינו מזרע יעקב טוב לפניו לצמצם את עצמו בכל מיני צמצומים כמו שנתבאר בענין גרים שאסורים להכניס עצמם בספיקות, [חלק ב' יתרו ד"ה וישמע]

Next the Izbicy interprets Isaac's reading of the situation. Of course Isaac never saw into the deepest depths of Esau's soul, no one could. All Isaac could see was the behavior, and as much of Esau's intentions as Esau himself was aware of. Isaac decided to promote Esau on the basis of his assessment of the risks and benefits, because God can reinterpret everything, even the worst behaviors, for good, and the gambler deserves to win over the stolid plodder who risks nothing.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

This is why Isaac, upon seeing Esau taking risks, said to himself, 'If this one is successfully reinterpreted and clarified, post facto, he will be greater than Jacob.'

But God bore witness against Esau that he never meant anything for the

sake of heaven.

ולפיכך יצחק כאשר ראה שעשו מכניס עצמו בדברים כאלו אמר אם יתברר זה יהיה גדול
מיעקב, אך הש"י העיד עליו אח"כ שלא היתה כוונתו לשם שמים.

Now we learn about the differences between the various Tribes of Israel; not all operate by the same rules. They are not all constrained by the same exigencies. The Izbicy discusses the story of Dinah, Simeon and Levi, children of Jacob.

In the Midrashic retelling of the Book of Genesis we read how when Dinah was seduced and raped by Shechem, son of Chamor ruler of the city of Shechem, Simeon and Levi, her two older brothers waged war to rescue her from Shechem. After killing all her captors they tried to free her, but she refused their help unless one of them agreed to marry her, forthwith. She was both pregnant with Shechem's child, and defiled by the rape, so her status was severely compromised. Her only hope of redemption and reintegration into the family of Israel was to be married to one of Jacob's sons.

In terms of risk and dubiousity, the Izbicy could not have provided a sterner example. All the ingredients of tragedy are abundantly present. Dinah's character has a fatal flaw; she 'goes out', and for a young woman to go out of the house unaccompanied, something must be seriously wrong with her. Her mother, Leah, did the same when she 'went out' to intercept Jacob on his way to Rachel's tent. That night, Leah and Jacob became soul-mates, and the Tribe of Issachar was conceived with God's implicit involvement. But who can predict what will come of Dinah's outre behavior? She too meets a man; but what a man. An uncircumcised gentile, a violent possessive taker. Who can predict the nature of the fruits of such a union?

Now Dinah wants to be reintegrated into the bosom of her family, the Tribes of Israel, as though she were never guilty of the unforgivable, as though she were not pregnant with Shechem's seed. To cap it all, she demands her blood bother take her to wife or else, she threatens, she will not return to her father's house.

Such brazenness, such outrageous chutzpah! Instead of paying her rescuers with gratitude and cooperation she charges them with an impossible task, to treat her as though she had never had any kind of sexual relationship with Shechem.

Levi knows that he is incapable of fulfilling the terms of her contract. He is ready to abandon her there in Shechem to the mercies of anyone who survived the massacre.

Simeon does not hesitate for an instant. 'Of course I will marry you,' he promises her, faithfully, and rescues her from her predicament.

Simeon takes a huge gamble, this is his posterity, his place in the tribal array of Israel, the inheritance of the Land, this is now his new narrative.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Even among the Jewish People there are those who should take risks in uncertain areas, while others should not, although both are the seed of Jacob. As we find in the case of Simeon and Dinah: Levi refused to marry her, fearing for his soul lest his intention not be one hundred percent purely for the sake of heaven.

וכן גם בישראל נמצאו נפשות שמותרים להכניס עצמם יותר בספיקות מנפשות אחרות אף

שאלו ואלו מזרע יעקב, כמו בענין של שמעון ודינה, כי לוי לא חפץ לקחתה כי ירא לנפשו
פן איך כוונתו בעומק לש"ש,

Levi refused to marry Dinah because he was afraid for his soul. The choice was as simple and stark as that. What was his big fear? He was afraid of his own intentions, then and in the future. How will he think and feel tomorrow about being married to his real sister, daughter of the same father and mother, when he has to take her to bed? What will his *kavanot* - intentions be? How free will his mind be of Shechem when the time comes to make new babies - what sort of souls will he be able to bring down into this world?

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

The tribe of Levi is always in tremendous fear; they always flee at the prospect of entering a dubious place. As it is written, 'I gave them to him in fear, and he feared Me, and was afraid of My name.' (Mal. 2:5)

This is why Levi gives birth to the High Priests who enter into the very inside of the holy of holies. And that is why their lives are the first to be tested and clarified, as will be explained in another place, at the story of the staves.

כי כל שבט לוי הם ביראה והסתלקות מספק אצלם כמ"ש אצלם [מאלכי ב',ה'] ואתנם לו
מורא ויראני ומפני שמי נחת הוא וכו' ועי"ז יצאו מאתם כהנים שנכנסים לפני ולפנים,
וע"כ נתברר החיים שלהם מיד כמו שיתבאר בפ' קרח בהמטות [ד"ה ויאמר ה']

Levi is a very bold man, unafraid to grab a sword and kill his own parent, if need be. Levi's dedication to God is a given, as Moses, Aaron and Miriam are merely the first in a long line of illustrious Levites. But Simeon is made of even sterner stuff. He is bold in new and hitherto unimagined ways. He jumps in where Levi fears to tread, without a moment's self doubt.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Simeon on the other hand leapt into the dubious act saying, 'God forbid I should judge myself as a common sexual deviant.' He married his sister Dinah and thus entered upon a path that would require much testing, sorting and reinterpretation. But he was sure God would clarify his every act for the good, and show that his intention had always been for the sake of heaven.

It is because of this that the tribe of Simeon has to go through a process of

testing and assaying in such matters, as we find with Zimri, prince of the tribe of Simeon, who also said the same thing, that his intention is purely for the sake of heaven, as will be explained in its place.

In the future, when the process is finished and the clarification is done, it will be found that Simeon is greater than Levi.

אבל שמעון הכניס עצמו בספק ואמר ח"ו שאני מחזיק עצמי לנואף, ונשא את דינה והכניס את עצמו בדבר הצריך בירר, כי אמר שהוא בטוח בה' שיבררו לטוב שכוונתו לא היתה רק לשם שמים, וע"כ היה צריך כל שבט שמעון לברורין בדברים כאלה, כגון זמרי שהיה אומר ג"כ שכוונתו טוב כמו שיתבאר במקומו [פרשת בלק ד"ה והנה] ולעתיד כשיתברר שבט שמעון יהיה מעלתו גדול משל לוי.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

The reason Isaac wanted to bless Esau even after seeing that his deeds were not correct, and that his wives' behavior reflected his, was that Isaac was sure no evil soul could come out of him. This is the meaning of the question, how does one tithe salt? Salt is a metaphor for (*Gevurah*) Fear. Fertile ground suggests longing and desire for a person to receive produce. Salt flats suggest fear, as is explained in the writings of the Arizal (R. Isaac Luria). This is the tithe of salt referred to in the Midrash.

[והנה ענין יצחק שרצה לברך את עשו אחרי רואו כי מעשיו אינם ישרים וכן מעשי נשיו שהם בירורי האדם, אכן כי חשב כי ממנו לא יצא נפש רע, וזה ענין איך מעשרין את המלח, כי מלח הוא יראה כי מארץ הפרי יתחייב תשוקה לאדם לקבל אוכל ומארץ מליחה יתחייב יראה וכמבואר בכתבי האריז"ל וזה ענין מעשרין את המלח,

There are times when even the path of fear requires assaying, testing, grading. When a person does something wrong quite by accident, something appearing to be the opposite of God's will. When later God signs His name to the act and shows it was His will, that assays the act and proves the fear was pure and wholly for the sake of heaven without any bias to one side or another.

כי לפעמים צריך האדם לברר את היראה גם כן, והיא כי כשיאונה לפניו מעשה שלא מדעת שיתראה היפך מרצון הש"י ואח"כ יסכים השי"ת עליה וזה בירור על היראה שהיא שלימה מבלי נטיה לשום צד,

But no one should ever put himself directly into such a test, except by accident and unavoidable circumstance. This then was the situation facing Isaac. Isaac thought that Esau's fate was to be the assaying point of this characteristic. Isaac really saw who Esau was and yet still wanted to bless him.

אבל האדם אסור להכניס עצמו לזה בלתי כשיאונה לפניו מעשה שלא מדעתו וזה היה דעת יצחק כי עשו מברר את זאת, כי באמת ראה כל מעשיו ורצה לברכו,

But because Esau's actions looked bad Isaac instructed him to bring him to a state of *Hester* -

Confusion, so that when he blesses him all his actions would become good.

ולפי שעל הלבוש לא היו מעשיו מפוארים לכן צוה שיכניסו להסתר וממילא כאשר יברכו אז יהיה כל מעשיו טובים,

All this was brought about by God who wanted Jacob to receive precisely that blessing. Because if Isaac had blessed Jacob with forethought he would never have given him such a blessing. Now, as a result, whenever a Jew does something by accident, it is also good.

וזה היה ברצון השי"ת שבזה הכונה יברך את יעקב כי באם היה מברך את יעקב בדעת לא היה מברכו בדעת הזאת, אבל עתה כאשר יאונה מעשה לישראל שלא מדעת הוא גם כן טובה. גליון]

The Third Torah

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Isaac's servants dug a well.

The meaning of Isaac's wells is this. Isaac sought to establish a way of distinguishing his worship; that there be an obvious and unmistakable distinction between him and the nations of the world. This is the meaning of the metaphor of well-digging. The first well is that of Torah. Isaac wanted to show that Torah and the awareness of God is a unique to him and does not belong to the Gentiles.

But the shepherds of Gerar argued, saying, it is our water.

The shepherds of Gerar argued that they too have an awareness of God; that they too have the seven Noahide laws.

ויכרו שם עבדי יצחק באר. ענין הבארות של יצחק אבינו, כי יצחק השתדל לבחור במדה שעל ידה יהיה הפרש והבדל בינו לבין אומות העולם, וע"ז מרמז חפירות הבארות. הבאר הראשון היה ד"ת שבחר בד"ת והכרה שיש בורא ולא לו אין שייכת לאומות, ויריבו רועי גרר לאמור לנו המים, היינו שאמרו שגם להם יש שייכת באלו כי גם להם יש הכרה בה' וגם שבע מצוות שנצטוו.

The second well is Isaac choosing the worship of God through sacrificial service. But they said that they too know about sacrificial modes of worship. Is it not true that we accept oath and gift offerings from the gentiles into our Temple?

והבאר השני היינו שבחר בעבודה היינו קרבנות ואמרו שגם להם יש שייכת בזה כי נדרים ונדבות מקבלים מהם.

The text tells us that [Isaac] **broke camp and moved elsewhere, digging in another place.** the meaning of this third well is that Isaac chose suffering and forbearance. That is, Isaac said I will agree to suffer for the sake of the sanctification of God's worship, as we learn in the Midrash, (Genesis Rabba 69:8) Isaac invented pain. **No one fought with him over this.** As soon as he dug this well they all disappeared, for they despise this path.

ואח"כ נאמר ויעתק משם ויחפור, וענין הבאר הזה היינו שבחר בסבלנות ויסורין, רצונו לומר לסבול עבור עבודת הש"י כדאיתא במדרש [בראשית רבא פרשה ס"ט, ח'] יצחק חידש יסורין, ולא רבו עליה כי מיד שחפר הבאר הזאת ברחו הכל כי הם בעטו בזה,

This is the meaning of his comment about this well, **For now God has broadened our way.** He was praying that he not, God forbid, be tried and tested with heavy pain, rather with the sort of pain described in the Talmud (Archin 16b) in the phrase: He put a hand in his pocket for a gold dinar and came out with a silver dinar.

וזה שאמר בזה הבאר כי עתה הרחיב לנו ה', היינו שבקש שלא יבוא ח"ו ליסורין גדולים רק תכלית יסורין כמו שמבואר בגמ' [ערכין ט"ז:] בקש לעלות דינר זהב ועלה בידו דינר כסף.

And we will multiply in the land.

Meaning that God will repay us for any suffering we endured with a multiple of goodness. This is why he named the fourth well Be'er Sheva. Hinting at the future, as is well known. Because, in the future God will recompense everyone who suffered pain for the sake of the Holiness of God's Name.

ופרינו בארץ היינו שהש"י יחזיר לנו את כל מה שסבלנו טובה מרובה על זה, וזהו שקרא שם הבאר הרביעי שבעה רומז על העתיד כידוע, היינו כי לעתיד יחזיר הקב"ה לכל מי שסבל יסורין בעבור קדושת שמו ית'.

This explains the Midrash (Genesis Rabba 64:10) It is written, The servants of Isaac came... they said, we have found water. Now, we don't know whether they they found water. But, since the previous verses state that they dug and found living water, one may extrapolate that here they also found water.

What this Midrash means is as follows. We don't know from reading the text whether the water they found was living water. However, since it is written at the digging of the first well that they found a well of living water, how much more so must it be obvious that the fourth well they dug - which hints at all the goodness set aside for the future - may one assume they found living water.

וזה פי' המדרש [בראשית רבא פרשה ס"ד, י'] ויבואו עבדי יצחק אין אנו יודעים אם מצאו מים אם לא מצאו, כשהוא אומר וימצאו שם באר מים חיים הוי שמצאו מים חיים, פירוש שאינו ידוע אם מצאו מים חיים, כשהוא אומר בבאר הראשון וימצאו באר מים חיים כ"ש בבאר הרביעי שרומז על טוב הצפון לעתיד,

And this is why they said, Because God has broadened our way, and we will multiply in the land, at the digging of the third well.

וע"ז גם בבאר השלישי אמר כי הרחיב ה' לנו ופרינו בארץ.

When Isaac grew old his eyes were dimmed.

Isaac is the opposite of Moses. Isaac was forbidden from leaving the land but his vision was taken away. Moses was not permitted to enter the land but retained his eyesight and was encouraged to look at it.

ויהי כי זקן יצחק ותכהין עיניו מראות. ענין יצחק אבינו היה היפך ממשה רבינו ע"ה כי יצחק לא הורשה לצאת מהארץ אך כח הראות ניטל ממנו, ומרע"ה לא הורשה להיות בארץ אבל נאמר וראה בעיניך.

[Because Isaac was unwittingly being led by God in everything he did. As with the blessing he gave Jacob, and with which he succeeded in fulfilling God's most profound desire. While everything he attempted to do of his own planning required further assaying. Moses was just the opposite. His main path of worship was with the purest use of his wisdom. It was only when he acted without due thought that he did things requiring assaying; and that's what vision is.] Appendix.

[כי ענין יצחק ע"ה היה עיקר במה שהנהיגו השי"ת שלא מדעת, כמו הברכות שברך את יעקב ובזה כוון לעומק רצון השי"ת. ובכל מקום שעשה בדעת היה צריך לבירורים וענין משה היה היפך מזה, כי עיקר התנהגותו בלתי בחכמה והמקום שעשה שלא מדעת היה צריך לבירורים, וזהו כח הראות. גליון]

See my son's aroma is the aroma of the field blessed by God.

Field hints at expansion into desires. That's why Esau is referred to as a man of the field, for he had no boundaries in matters of his desires and lusts. Jacob however had the same expansive nature in a holy way. This is the meaning of the phrase, Like a field blessed by God. It refers to the Field of Holy Apples

ראה ריח בני כריח השדה אשר ברכו ה'. שדה רומז על התפשטות בתשוקות, ע"כ עשו נקרא איש שדה לפי שהתפשט בכל מיני חמדות ותאות רעות, אך יעקב אבינו היה לו התפשטות בקדושה, וזה כריח השדה אשר ברכו ה' היינו חקל תפוחין קדישין.
