

PARSHAS VAYEITZEI

תשפ"ו

Yaakov Ovinu leaves Yitzchok and Rivka to find a wife. He is not exactly a youngster at this point. Similarly, Yitzchok was forty years old when he got married to Rivka at three years old.

Rashi makes a whole cheshbon to prove that Yaakov first went off to Yeshivas Shem V'ever before going to Choron to get married – even though he was already 63! Why did he need this extra time in a yeshiva? He grew up in a very frum home of Yitzchok and Rivka – spending his days and nights learning full-time. But still, he is not ready. Why?

He needs to prepare to be in a house of sheker, geneivoh and avodo zoro for the next 20 years. To do that, he needed to seclude himself in Yeshivas Shem V'Ever.

Yitzchok Ovinu also took time to learn in Yeshivas Shem V'Ever after the akeidoh. Why? Because the home of Avrohom Ovinu was an open home where all kinds of people were walking in. He needed a secluded environment to intensify his middos and solidify his madreigoh.

When Avrohom went to war to save Lot, he took his talmidim who were learning in his yeshiva. What did they learn in Avrohom's yeshiva? Before Hashem destroyed S'dom, He said that Avrohom would found a great nation because he taught his family and followers to uphold the Derech Hashem, doing tzedoko and mishpot.

The Rambam says all good middos are included under the mitzvah of imitating the ways of Hashem. One middoh is chessed. But it is a certain quality of chessed that is balanced by mishpot. Liberal leftist philosophy fails so badly in trying to adopt it – they know no limits and it leads to absolute absurdities.

The middoh of emes is also poorly adopted by non-Jewish philosophers like Emanuel Kant who argued that emes requires not to lie even to save a life. Again, they go to the absurd extreme with no balance and no proportion.

We have the middos of chessed and emes that Hashem modeled for us. It is not some abstract, ethical imperative. Imitating the middos of Hashem creates our fundamental connection to Hashem.

Moshe asked Hashem to show him Hashem's derech to know how to properly imitate it and teach it to others. Hashem responded with the 13 middos of rachamim.

Avrohom Ovinu personified chessed to the extreme, and this produced Yishmoel.

Yitzchok Ovinu was gevuroh to the extreme, and this produced Eisov who was vicious and cruel. The emes can sometimes be very cruel.

Yaakov excelled in Torah – this is the way we can balance these two middos of chessed and gevuroh in their proper proportions.

The posuk says Yaakov placed stones around him at night and they merged into one by the morning. The midrash brings a few shitos about how many stones Yaakov placed. One says he took two stones – symbolizing chessed and gevuroh. He said if these stones merge into one, then I'll know that I've successfully balanced these two middos through my Torah – which is 'tiferes'.

The reason we do chessed and emes is because they are aspects of the Derech Hashem, and this is how we connect to Hashem. They are middos of Hashem. There is a major machlokes between the Rambam and the Ramban. One says the mitzvah is to acquire the middos of chessed and emes and then you express those parts of your personality

in action. And the way you acquire those middos is by exercising those behaviors until they become natural.

Yaakov says, when I can blend these two middos perfectly, then I can have a family of shevotim which will become the entire nation of Klal Yisroel, with no children like Yishmoel or Eisov.

Let us explore the midas ho'emes of Yaakov Ovinu.

Did he steal the brochos, or did they really belong to him? One the one hand, Rivka Imeinu was told during her pregnancy that Yaakov would be the bechor. Then, as teenagers, Eisov sold the bechorah outright to Yaakov. When Yaakov went in to Yitzchok to get the brochos, he did not utter any falsehood. He employed gneivas daas, but the gemara explained how it was justified.

Emes has to be balanced by other middos. It is not absolute. The gemara says there are three times a talmid chochom is allowed to lie. Hashem Himself altered Soroh's words when He reported them to Avrohom for the sake of sholom. We follow Hashem's middoh of emes, and Hashem shows us when it does and does not apply.

Lovon is the ultimate swindler and deceiver. Yaakov lives in his household for 20 years. When Yosef is born, Yaakov wants to leave, but Lovon says he wants Yaakov to stay. Why? Because Lovon knows Yaakov brought him so much wealth. Before Yaakov came on the scene, Lovon was a pauper. Why else would his own young daughter have to become a shepherd? Lovon tells Yaakov to state his wage. Yaakov says I want my wages to be in colored or speckled sheep. Why? So that when I leave, it will be clear to everyone that they belong to me and there is no way to doubt it.

Lovon knows that you can only have colored or speckled sheep if one of the parents are colored. So he took away all the colored sheep. Yaakov invents some kind of technique with peeled sticks to induce the sheep to have colored offspring regardless. Hashem tells Yaakov that it wasn't your sticks which made the offspring colored. It was a miracle that brought colored male sheep over to your flock to impregnate the females.

Yaakov runs away from Lovon and Lovon chases him down.

Chazal illustrate the incredible middas ho'emes of Yaakov Ovinu. Lovon accuses Yaakov of taking his idols, and Yaakov challenges him to search all his belongings to see if he took anything of Lovon's. Lovon searches and searches and can't find anything that is his! Chazal tell us to just try to imagine what that means! Yaakov has little children and slaves who have been living together with Lovon for many years – and they didn't take a single spoon or fork? Nothing? Such a thing is only possible if you have trained your entire family about how important the middoh of emes is.

The Rambam writes in Hilchos Sechirus that we learn many detailed halachos about an employee not stealing from his employer from how dedicated 'Yaakov Hatzaddik' was to taking care of Lovon's sheep. We learn another important thing from Yaakov – it is the middas ho'emes which made him wealthy. Don't think the reward for brutal honesty is only in olom haboh. Emes – how the Torah defines it – is also rewarded in this world.

There are two basic middos we take together – chessed and emes – which make up the core of the Derech Hashem. They are the foundations of Klal Yisroel. This is what Eliezer tested Rivka about, to

see if she is worthy to be one of the Imahos.

This is why the Torah tells us the nations of Ammon and Moav cannot marry into Klal Yisroel. It is purely because of their lack of middos. It is a powerful lesson – not just in theory but in practice.

Emes is a middoh that you have to strive to acquire.

People often live double lives – they manage to deceive everybody around them about who they really are. And if they do it long enough, they ultimately become unable to forge basic trusting relationships with other people – even their own family members. It is truly tragic.