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**The Issur of Making Money on Shabbos and the Danger of Combining Fish And Meat**

**By Daniel Keren**

Rabbi Yosef Kushner, Dayan of the Bais HaVaad of Lakewood and author of the sefer “Commerce and Shabbos” delivered a lecture at the recent Veterans Day Yarchei Kallah at the Agudath Israel of Madison in Flatbush on the topic of “Contemporary Situations in Hilchos Shabbos.”



He spoke of a person who was running a kosher kitchen and imagines after 10 years that he never had a shailah (question about the kashrus of the food cooked in his kitchen.) Either he is a mumcha (an expert) in the laws of kashrus or he doesn’t know what a shailah is.

It is important to know that you and only you can be the mashgiach (supervisor) for your kitchen or business. A person not knowing that something he is doing is forbidden is not excused.

Rabbi Kushner spoke about the prohibition from Chazal to make a profit on Shabbos. No selling or purchase is allowed on Shabbos. The rental earnings for a month is permitted because the Shabbos days and chol (regular) days are chavlah (mixed) and one is not getting specific income for Shabbos.

Reichman of Olympia York was noted for the fact that on Shabbos, the company did not collect any money from the cars that were parked on its properties.

What about a waiter who serves meals at a sheva brocho on Shabbos? He must either come before or stay after Shabbos and do legitimate work for which he would otherwise be paid in order to be paid for the work that he is doing on Shabbos.

A person who has non-religious Jewish workers must not allow them to do work for him on Shabbos. Otherwise, one would be guilty of lifnei ever, putting a stumbling block before another Jew, even if that individual is not concerned because he is not a frum Jew.

Rabbi Dovid Waldman, member of Kollel L’Hora’ah, Yeshiva Torah Voda’as and Rav of the Niles Place Shul in Staten Island also lectured at the recent Flatbush Hakhel Veterans Day Yarchei Kallah and also spoke of the topic of Practical Halachos of Sakana (Dangers).

Rabbi Waldman said that some of the takanas (rabbinical decrees or ordinances) from Chazal (our Sages of blessed memory) [who compiled the Oral Torah] can be divided into two categories: (1) those that can be understood naturally and (2) those that are of a more spiritual and concealed nature.

For example there is a takanah that drinks left uncovered and that were not watched should not be consumed. Why? Chazal explained that a snake may have sipped from the uncovered drink and inserted a deadly amount of poison that could be fatal if drunk by a Jew.

Some companies today make a Worcestershire sauce with a flavor that tastes like fish but is not from a fish. Yet, because of a legal approach or honesty in advertising, the company would add a small insignificant amount of fish in an amount that is bitul bi’shishim (nullified as less than one part in sixty). Does that very small amount of fish transform the sauce into an item that when put on steak or other meat is not a sakanah (physical danger)?

The mekor (source) to not eat fish and meat cooked together can be found in the Gemara (Pesachim 76b) where Chazal taught that fish should not be roasted or cooked together with meat because it can result in bad breath and leprosy. More recently, Rabbi Yosef Caro (author of the Shulchan Aruch) said one should not eat fish and meat cooked together because it is a sakanah (danger to one’s health.)

Rabbi Waldman noted that both Rav Shmuel Wosner and Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky say that according to the Magen Avrohom, there is no issur (prohibition) in our modern times in cases where the fish in the Worcester sauce is nullified bi’shishim.

Rabbi Waldman noted that some people have the custom of cooking fish in a special pot that is not used for cooking meat. This is a nice minhag (custom), but no halachic (legal) obligation. Rav Avrohom Pam said that there is no need to have a special pot, so long as the fish and meat are not cooked together in the pot.

*Reprinted from the November 22, 2019 edition of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**As Rockets Rain Down on Our Brothers and Sisters in Eretz Yisroel (Part 1)**

**By** [**Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**](https://www.jewishpress.com/author/rabbi-moshe-meir-weiss/)



All of us aspire to acquire somewhat the Keser Torah, the crown of Torah. We must know that Torah is vastly different than any other branch of knowledge. If you want to master calculus or physics for example, you need to have a certain amount of intelligence, a good teacher, and disciplined study habits. This is not sufficient when it comes to Torah.

The Mishna in the Sixth Perek of Pirkei Avos informs us that there are 48 tools necessary for the true acquisition of Torah. One of those tools is nosei b’ol im chaveiro, the ability to empathize with another person. I’d like to zoom-in on this vital trait as it pertains to current events, namely, in the past month, Israel was attacked by over 400 rockets from Gaza. There were also rockets from Hamas and from Syria.

The empathetic person should reflect on how parents by the tens of thousands have to wake up their children in the middle of the night and rush them to the miklat, to shelters and safe rooms. How elderly people have to be brought with walkers and wheelchairs to safety. How people have to be shaken and roused out of sleep after taking sleeping pills.

How countless people have to keep heart medicine and inhalers in the safe rooms in case they are needed. How modest women go to sleep fully dressed so that they don’t have to run out in bed clothes in an emergency. How families keep a bucket, tissues, and an umbrella in the safe room: the bucket to improvise as a makeshift toilet and the umbrella for a privacy screen. How, when 400 rockets rained down on Sederot and Ashkelon and many other cities, one million Israeli children were out of school.

As Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt”l, zy”a, once explained, this makes us very vulnerable for we are taught, “Ein ha’olom mikayem ela bishvil hevel tinokes shel beis raban – The world only survives because of the Torah study of school children.”

Do we consider how hard it is for children to go to sleep when they are worrying about being attacked by a large missile? Do we reflect on how hard it is for a person to go to work the next day after having their sleep interrupted repeatedly by sirens? Do we ponder the thought of just how scary it is to go about your day knowing that at any minute a rocket could plow through your living room?

So what should we do with these ponderings? The answer is unequivocally that our response should be to pray for our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisroel. As the verse says in Tehillim , “Eileh varechev v’eileh va’susim, va’anachnu b’sheim Hashem Elokeinu nazkir – They come with their chariots and they come with their steeds, but we come with the mentioning of Hashem, our G-d.”

Therefore, when we say in Maariv, “Hashkivenu Hashem Elokeinu l’shalom – Hashem, help us go to sleep peacefully,” besides praying that we shouldn’t toss and turn in bed, and besides asking Hashem that we should get along in the nighttime with our spouse, and besides beseeching Hashem that we should be safe from such nighttime dangers and thieves, fire, and carbon monoxide, we should now also pray that our brethren in Eretz Yisroel should be able to go to sleep serenely, without worry of being terrorized.

When we say the berachah of laMalshinim in the Shemone Esrei, we should say the stanza of “V’hazeidim meheirah s’akeir u’s’shabeir u’s’mageir u’s’chaleim v’sashpileim v’sachni’eim bimheirah v’yameinu – Those who are willful [which of course includes all the terrorists] should be quickly uprooted and broken and pulverized and brought low and humiliated, speedily in our days,” with much greater intensity during these troubled times.

When we say Y’kum Purkan on Shabbos and we say the stitch, “V’yisparkun v’yishteizvun min kol aka u’min kol marin bishin – We should be redeemed and saved from any trouble and any evil happenstance,” we should focus on our Israeli brethren’s plight.

This should be front and center in our minds when we say, “Racheim nah, Hashem Elokeinu, al Yisroel amecha – Please have mercy, our G-d, on Yisroel your children,” in our bentching,. We should suggest to our children that they take out a Tehillim and say a kapital for the scared children in Eretz Yisroel. And our children should see us saying Tehillim as well. This is how we teach empathy, achdus, and love of Eretz Yisroel.

In the merit of our heartfelt collective prayers, may Hashem protect our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisroel and give them the tranquility and protection that they so richly deserve, and for caring for our brethren may Hashem bless us with long life, good health, and everything wonderful.

To be continued…

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5780 email of The Jewish Vues.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Olam Habah for Goyim**

**QUESTION:** If gentiles don’t have *Olam Habah*, then how can we criticize them for being interested in the *gashmiyus* and *ta‘avos* of this world?

**ANSWER:** *Olam Habah* has more than one meaning. We have to know there’s such a thing as gentiles in the World to Come - there will be gentiles. But it doesn’t mean that they are going to be in the status of the צדיקים יושבים ועטרותיהם בראשיהם, *tzaddikim* who sit with the crowns on their heads.

*Tzaddikim* who wore hats, who wore yarmulkas, who wore black hats, who wore *shtreimlach*, women with their heads covered, so Hashem is going to give them a crown on their heads: עתיד הקב"ה להיות עטרה בראש כל צדיק וצדיק – All the people who kept the Torah and were loyal, Hashem will give them a crown on their heads, a crown of glory, and they will sit with this crown and they’ll be נהנים מזיו השכינה – they’ll be enjoying the splendor of the *Shechina*.

Now, the gentiles won’t have that; there will be *goyim,*only that they won’t be included in this great happiness. But they’ll have an existence; certainly it’s possible for them to exist. If a *goy* does what’s right, he certainly will be rewarded to some extent.



**Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l**

Now, I am not able to tell you exactly what will be his *matzav* in *nitzchiyus*, his exact situation there, but אין הקב"ה מקפח שכר כל בריה – Hashem will not hold back reward of anybody. If a person lived with decency in this world, with righteousness, so Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not going to deny him a certain reward. He’s not promised what’s promised to the children of Avraham Avinu: אל תירא אברם שכרך הרבה מאד – Your reward is very great; that means *Olam Habah* for you and your children forever and ever. But anybody else who does good things, even a gentile, you should know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu will remember them and He will give them a reward according to what they deserve to get.

*Reprinted from the November 20, 2019 email of Toras Avigdor adapted from Tape #967.*

**G-d’s Promise of the Land of Israel to the Jewish People**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



"And Yaakov (Jacob) left Beersheva and went toward Charan," relates this week's Torah portion, Vayeitzei.

When darkness fell, Yaakov had traveled as far as Mount Moriah. Placing a stone under his head for a pillow, he lay down and fell asleep. That night G-d revealed himself to Yaakov in a dream.

"The land on which you are lying I will give to you and your seed," G-d said, promising Yaakov the land of Israel as the inheritance of the Jewish people forever.

To demonstrate just how effortlessly the land would be conquered by Yaakov's descendants, "G-d 'folded' up the entire land of Israel and placed it beneath him, alluding to the ease with which it would be acquired," comments Rashi, the great Torah commentator, citing the explanation given in the Talmud.

Generations before, a similar promise was made by G-d to Avraham (Abraham). "Arise, walk through the land in its length and breadth, for I will give it to you."

According to the Talmud, this commandment was given to Avraham to facilitate his descendants' subsequent conquest of Israel. Avraham's sojourn through the land demonstrated his Divine claim on the territory and paved the way for his descendants years later.

It is interesting to note that whereas Avraham was commanded by G-d to perform an actual physical action ("walk through the land"), Yaakov was not. Lying on the holy ground of Israel was sufficient for G-d to reveal Himself and promise it to his descendants.

Furthermore, G-d "'folded' up" the land of Israel beneath Yaakov to emphasize that not only would it be easy for the Jewish people to conquer, as already alluded to Avraham, but its acquisition would require no more exertion than merely lying on the ground.

The land of Israel would be given over into their hands without effort, without their having to perform any special feats or extraordinary actions.

In effect, G-d granted the Jewish people the ability to conquer the land of Israel without having to wage war. The Jewish claim on Israel was fixed as incontrovertible in the consciousness of all mankind forever and ever, as Divine right. This potential could have been achieved immediately with Joshua's conquest had the Jewish people possessed sufficient merit. Because of the sin of the spies, however, this merit was taken away, and the Jews were forced to fight to acquire what would have otherwise become their possession immediately.

When Moshiach comes and ushers in the Final Redemption, this potential will be fully realized. The land of Israel will, at long last, be secured by the Jewish people for eternity, without their having taken the slightest overt action whatsoever.

Even now, before the Redemption, may it occur speedily in our days, when Jews stand firm in their Divine claim to the Holy Land, unequivocally and unashamedly declaring their G-d-given right to Israel, all the arguments of the Gentiles against the Jewish people are nullified, and the arrival of Moshiach and the Redemption is thereby hastened.

*Reprinted from the Issue #342 of L’Chaim Weekly (Parashat Vayetzei 5755/1994)*

**Rabbi Berel Wein**

**On Vayeitzei**

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Rashi quotes the well-known Rabbinic observation that the departure of a righteous person from a society is an indelible loss to the community. Now I do not want to sound like a heretic, God forbid, but for many years I was troubled by this statement. From my personal experience and observation of life, I did not always find this to be realistic and accurate.

I have lived in many communities and when a great man from that community passed away or left to live in a different area, life in that original community seemed to go on as usual. Everyone certainly missed the presence of that great person but after a few days no one’s life seemed to be truly altered or affected by that person’s absence. The bitter truth of life is that out of sight is out of mind. Therefore, I have always struggled to understand the deep meaning of what Rashi quotes.

As I have aged, hopefully gracefully, I am beginning to gain a glimmer of understanding into those words and an insight into that sublime message. A certain community had a distinct problem and for various reasons contacted me to hear my opinion as to how it should handle the situation. That community had a great and wise person whom I knew personally, living there for half a century. While that person was alive, the community had no need to call upon any outside person for advice or counsel.

But now that the person was no longer present and this problem had arisen and threatened to cause irreparable harm to the fabric of the community, they and I agreed that though this wise person would have been able to solve the problem equitably and peacefully, they needed to turn to outside sources for help. At that moment, they felt the absence of this great man and even though no one human being is indispensable, so too no human being is ever replaceable either.

When Yaakov left Be’er Sheva, I imagine that not everyone took notice of his absence. Everyone in Be’er Sheva got up the next morning and went about their usual daily tasks. However, it is obvious that in the twenty-two years of Yaakov’s absence from that community, problems and issues arose that had he been present he would have been consulted on and would have helped solve. It was at these moments that the full realization of Yaakov’s absence became apparent. As was observed by Rashi, about the absence of a good and wise person, it is at these times that it becomes real and evident to all.

Such is the nature of life, that much greatness and goodness is not appreciated until somehow it – in the form of a human being – is no longer present within that society. We always see things much more clearly in retrospect than we do in the present. This is an important lesson that is worthy of our consideration.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Rabbiwein.co*

**Moshe Holtzberg**

**Celebrates His Bar Mitzvah**

**By Marcy Oster**

Moshe Holtzberg, whose parents were killed in the 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai when he was 2, was called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah.

Holtzberg was called to the Torah on Saturday in his home town of Afula in northern Israel, Chabad.org reported. A party was held on Sunday night in Kfar Chabad.

“As you make this important transition and cross a significant landmark in the journey of your life, the courage of [nanny] Sandra and prayers of the people of India will continue to bless you for a long, healthy and successful life,” Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote in a letter to Moshe, COLLive reported. “Your story continues to inspire everyone. It is one of miracle and hope overcoming tragedy and immeasurable loss.”

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu also sent a note of congratulations: “We know that there is life amidst this tragedy. There is revival and there is hope. You come now with the love of the entire Jewish people, all citizens of Israel and very many outside Israel.”



**Moshe Holtzberg celebrates his bar mitzvah (Photo by Haim Twito)**

Holtzberg also received a letter from President Donald Trump.

"Mazal tov on becoming a bar mitzvah," Trump wrote. "We join your family and friends in celebrating this joyous occasion and send our best wishes as you mark this significant milestone. May your faith continue to guide, strengthen, and comfort you throughout your life."

Moshe’s parents Rabbi Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg were the directors of the Nariman Chabad House when it was attacked on Nov. 26, 2008. Four other Israeli and American visitors to the house also were killed.

The Chabad House was among 12 targeted locations in coordinated attacks by Lashkar-e-Taiba, an Islamic terrorist organization based in Pakistan.

The child was dubbed “Baby Moshe” when a photo of his terrified-looking nanny running from the besieged Chabad House clutching the little boy was splashed on the front pages of newspapers around the world.

In January, 2018, Moshe returned to Mumbai, accompanying Netanyahu on a state visit.

In September, Moshe celebrated the ceremony of Hanachat Tefilin, or putting on the tefillin for the first time, during a ceremony in Stony Point, New York, and visited the grave of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

*Reprinted from the December 1, 2019 dispatch of the JTA (Jewish Telegraphic Agency)*

**End and Means**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**



We read in Parashat Vayeseh of Yaakob’s famous dream, in which G-d appeared to him as he made his way to Haran, promising that he would care for him, bring him back to Eretz Yisrael, and produce a great nation from his offspring.  Upon awakening, Yaakob exclaimed, “Indeed, there is G-d in this place, yet I did not know!” (28:16).

Rashi explains that Yaakov would never have slept at that spot if he had known what a sacred place it was.  He went to sleep at that place along the road without thinking there was anything special about that particular location.  But then he had a dream of a ladder extending from his head to the heavens, and G-d spoke to him.

It was now clear to Yaakob that this place was special and unique, as he proceeds to say, “This is only the House of G-d; this is the gate to the heavens.”  Yaakob thus regretted sleeping there, as it is inappropriate to sleep at such a sacred spot.

We have much to learn from Yaakob’s response to his dream.  From his perspective, it would have been preferable to forego on this extraordinary experience, on beholding a prophetic vision, in order to avoid violating one Halachic detail.

Yaakob did not feel it was worth neglecting a Halachic technicality to experience this vision; he was committed to abiding by each and every Halachic nuance even if this meant forfeiting something as significant as a prophetic message from G-d!  As far as he was concerned, the ends do not justify the means – even if the “end” is prophecy and the “means” involve the violation of a “minor” Halachic technicality.

Unfortunately, many of us are too flippant when it comes to Halachic technicalities, and prepared to compromise Halachic standards for the sake of important goals.  For example, there are those who, for the sake of helping their children find marriage partners, compromise modesty standards by running inappropriate social events.

Yaakob Abinu’s reaction to his dream should remind us of the paramount importance of Halachic details.  We cannot simply dismiss Halachic restrictions because we are pursuing noble and worthwhile goals. Our job is to observe Hashem’s laws, and if this observance hampers our ability to achieve certain important goals, we must trust that He will find a way for those goals to be achieved without the need for illegitimate Halachic compromises.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of the Edmond J Safra Synagogue of Brooklyn website.*

**Thoughts that Count**

*And he reached a certain place* (Gen. 28:11)

Our Sages relate that as soon as Yaakov decided to return, a miracle occurred and he was immediately transported on his way. We learn from this that whenever a person sincerely decides to do teshuva, to return to G-d with a humble heart, he is immediately assisted from Above. "Open up for Me a breach the size of a needle's eye, and I will open for you an opening the size of a great hall." *(Michtav Me'Eliahu)*

*And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven* (Gen. 28:12)

The numerical value of the Hebrew word "sulam" (ladder) is the equivalent of both "mamon" (wealth) and "oni" (poverty), to teach us that a person's financial status is likened to a ladder, enabling one to experience both ups and downs in life : G-d "humbles the proud and raises the humble." *(Baal Shem Tov)*

*Reprinted from the Issue #342 of L’Chaim Weekly (Parashat Vayetzei 5755/1994)*

**The Shmuz onParshas Vayeitzei**

**The Influence of Society**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheShmuz.com**



“*And I will return in peace to my father’s house, and HASHEM will be to me G-d*.” – Bereishis 28:21

When Yaakov Avinu was told that his brother Aysav was plotting to kill him, he ran from his father’s home and prepared for an extended stay in exile. Along the way, he davened and asked HASHEM for a number of things, including: “I should return to my father’s house in peace.”

Rashi assumes that this can’t be referring to HASHEM protecting him physical harm because Yaakov already asked for that. Rather, says Rashi, it means that, “I should arrive safe from sin,” – that HASHEM should protect him learning from devious ways of his future father-in-law, Lavan.

This is very difficult to understand. Why would Yaakov have a fear of learning deciet from Lavan? Each of the Avos “specialized” in a particular trait. Yaakov was the Ish Tam – honest and straightforward, integrity was his hallmark, and the mainstay of his avodas HASHEM.

While this was a trait that he worked on extensively, it was also something that he was predisposed towards. On some level, it was part of his nature. Of all people, why would he be afraid of learning to cheat?

What makes this question even more difficult to understand is that at this time, Yaakov was seventy-seven years old. He had just completed a long period of uninterrupted Torah study. For the previous fourteen years, he had been learning in the yeshiva that Shem had established. During that time, he never lay down to sleep at nights because he was constantly toiling in Torah. Surely, such a holy person in that state of kedusha wouldn’t be affected by being in the presence of a thief. So what was Yaakov’s great fear?

The answer to this question can best be understood with a moshol.

**An Eye in the Sky**

A nanosecond is a very small segment of time. One second split into a thousand parts is measured in milliseconds. One millisecond split it into a thousand parts is measured in microseconds. And one microsecond, (a millionth of a second) split it into thousandths is measured in nanoseconds. A nanosecond is a billionth of a second – not a very long splice of time.

You may wonder: What need is there to measure such infinitely small intervals of time? One application is in one of the wonders of the modern world, the GPS. The Global Positioning Satellite system operates by measuring a signal that travels from a satellite in the sky to the ground-based monitor.

A GPS unit can determine your exact location, and then guide you along to your destination by measuring the time it takes for that signal to travel. But the precision is excruciatingly demanding. One nanosecond off, and the GPS will be off by one foot. A mere millionth of a second off, and the readings will be off by a thousand feet, making it almost useless.

And if it is miscalibrated by as much as a hundredth of a second off, you might as well toss the thing in the garbage. When you are measuring against objects at a vast distance, precision is vital. Even miniscule errors will show themselves in very real results.

**The Greatness of the Avos**

This seems to be a very apt moshol to our situation. It is very difficult for us mere mortals to even perceive the greatness and level of perfection that the Avos attained. Every action, every nuance, and every thought was weighed and measured with extraordinary precision. The result of living a life with such attention to detail was greatness of unparalleled proportions. And the Avos were very aware of human tendencies.

Yaakov Avinu wasn’t afraid that he would learn to steal because of Lavan; he was afraid that his image of what is considered normal behavior might be affected. He was afraid that by living in the house of a thief, his standard of what is considered acceptable conduct might be affected. While this wouldn’t directly change his actions, he would now be measuring from a very different standard, and that distinction might show itself many years down the line in an ever so small deviation from honesty.

This concept is very applicable to us. The Rambam (Hilchos Dayos, Perek 6) says: “It is the nature of man to be pulled after his friends and acquaintances, and act in the manner of his neighbors.” The reality is that we are shaped by our experiences and the times that we live in.

We live in wondrous times, and we have opportunities that Jews of previous generations couldn’t imagine. However, it has been a very long and bitter exile, and unfortunately we have adopted much from the people amongst whom we live. When we recognize how much the society shapes our understanding of what is normal, we can protect ourselves from the dangers of those changes.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the [Shmuz on the Parsha book](https://theshmuz.com/product/shmuz-on-the-parsha-book/).*

**Identical Twins: One a**

**Nazi, the Other a**

**Member of the Israeli Navy**

**By**[**Rabbi Efrem Goldberg**](https://www.aish.com/authors/141405293.html)

As twins, Jack and Oskar shared the same DNA, the same nature, and yet, they emerged radically different people. Born in Trinidad in 1933, they were six months old when their parents divorced. Oskar went to Germany with his Catholic mother, while Jack stayed with his Romanian Jewish father. Oskar grew up as the Nazis rose to power, greeted the school principal with “Heil Hitler,” and later joined the Hitler Youth movement.

Jack, meanwhile, always thought of himself as Jewish, but didn’t feel its significance until he was 15 years old and was sent to Venezuela to live with his aunt. A survivor of Dachau, she was the only person from his father’s side to make it out alive.

After the war, Jack’s aunt encouraged him to move to Israel and so at 16, he made Aliyah and joined the Israeli Navy, ultimately becoming an officer. In 1954, Jack went to Germany to meet his identical twin. They were 21 when they met for the first time as adults.

Psychologist Nancy Segal tells the story of that encounter in her book “Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins.” Jack and Oskar examined one another as if they were looking at an alien, even though the other’s appearance should have been entirely familiar to them. Their cultural differences were as immediately apparent as their physical similarities. Casting a wary eye at Jack’s Israeli luggage tags, Oskar removed them and told his long-lost brother to tell others he was coming from America, not from Israel.



*Our nature predisposes us, but through the way we nurture our lives, we can choose who we are and the legacy we leave.*

Suffice it to say that first reunion did not go well. Two brothers – one raised a proud Jew who served in the Israeli Navy and the other raised a German Catholic who had risen in the Nazi Youth movement and been taught to hate Jews. Because of the language barrier they couldn’t communicate much. At the end of the visit, they shook hands like strangers and Jack set off to San Diego where he lived the remainder of his life.

In 1979, Jack read about a study being done on twins and the great debate between nature and nurture. He asked if he and his brother could participate and thought after 25 years it might provide another opportunity for them to see one another and develop a relationship.

They met at the Minneapolis airport and to their amazement discovered they were wearing the exact same thing – a white sports jacket, similar shirt and wire- rimmed glasses. During the study, they learned that they had so much in common. Both were stubborn and arrogant, both fiercely competitive. Both read books from back to front, both sneezed incredibly loudly, they walked in a similar fashion, and they both wore rubber bands around their wrists.

And yet, with all that nature gave them in common, nurture had made them different. They could never agree on issues about Israel and her enemies or who was responsible for World War II. Oskar’s repeated reference to German soldiers as ‘we’ infuriated Jack. In a BBC documentary about the twins, Jack describes that they tried to like each other and enjoy each other’s company but there was always something in the background that they could not tolerate about one another. Jack died a few years ago at 82 years old. Oskar passed away in 1997.

As twins, Esav and Yaakov shared the same DNA, the same nature, and yet, they emerged radically different people. One became a patriarch of our people and the other a great villain of Jewish history, the progenitor of Edom, the exile in which we remain until this very day.

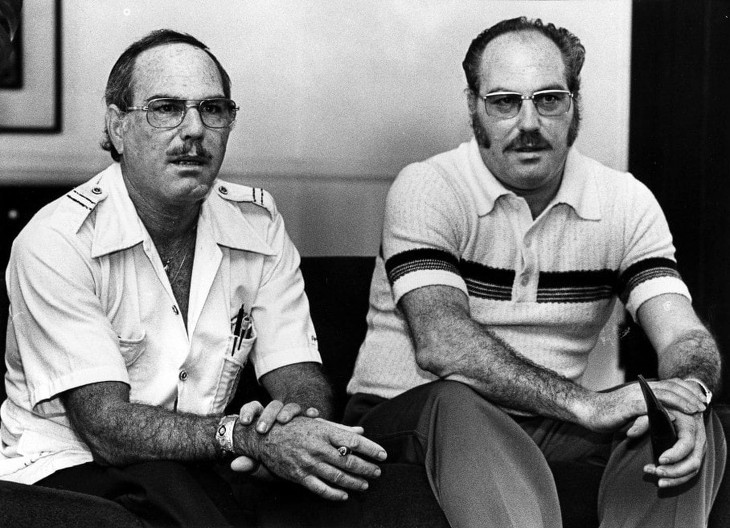
The name Esav comes from the Hebrew word "*asui*" which means complete, or finished product. The simple way to understand this is as a superficial description of Esav’s appearance. He was physically mature, covered in hair and appeared complete, fully grown as an adult.

But Esav’s name is not just about his physique; more importantly it is about his spirit and approach to life. Esav sees himself from the start as a finished product. What you see is what you get. He had no interest or ambition to grow, change, or improve. He was already made, complete from the start. Therefore the Torah describes Esav as a “man who knows hunting, a man of the field.” He remains a primitive, boorish man who spent his days among the animals, doing what animals do – hunting in the field.

Yaakov’s name reflects the exact opposite quality, the insatiable appetite for growth and improvement. The root of Yaakov’s name is “*akeiv*,” or “heel.” When we walk, the heel is the first part of the foot that touches the ground. It represents the beginning, the first step, with much to follow. *Akeiv* means the beginning of a process with much greater things to come as in the expression, “*ikvesa de-Meshicha,* heel of the Messianic Era.”

Esav and Yaakov are twins who enter the world with the same DNA, the same “nature,” but who bring contrasting attitudes towards their “nurture.” Esav is satisfied with who he is from the start while Yaakov feels entering the world is just the first of many steps and journeys to come.

Indeed, while Esav is spiritually stagnant, remains immature and undeveloped, Yaakov spends his life struggling, wrestling and thereby growing. He overcomes his shy nature to assert himself, first by obtaining the birthright and then collecting on it by going entirely against his nature and tricking his father into giving him a blessing. Later, before his reunion with Esav, we will read of his encounter with the angel with whom he wrestles the entire evening and triumphs. The shy, passive *yeshiva bochur* who is characterized as sitting learning diligently in the tent, emerges the strong, dynamic, assertive patriarch and leader who is among the greatest role models of our people.

**

*Jack Yufe and Oskar Stohr*

Esav chooses to remain "complete" – stagnant, but Yaakov puts one foot in front of the other, walks, jogs and ultimately runs to his destiny as Yisrael. No matter what our nature, we are not finished products. We can nurture ourselves to grow, improve, and change in all areas of our lives.

Jack and Oskar did not leave legacies based on the “natures” they shared in common like sneezing loudly or by the way they walked. Because of how they were nurtured, Jack left a legacy of having been an officer in the Israeli Navy while Oskar left of a legacy of having been an enthusiastic member of the Nazi youth.

We all have natures that predispose us, but through the way we nurture our lives, ultimately, we can choose who we are and the legacy we leave.

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