



Parashat Toldot



English version

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BIG-PICTURE THINKING

Life coaching is simply asking a bunch of not simple questions. In life, if you just focus on the smallest details, you never get the big picture right. The job of the life coach is to bring about bigger picture thinking, and to get the big picture right.

Thinking "big picture" is thinking like the Gedolim, the Jewish Leaders. It is the way that the Rishonim, the commentators on Shas, analyze the Talmud and come up with a deeper truth. By bringing in other seemingly contradictory pieces of Talmud and putting it all together, they find a deeper truth that is not recognized at first. If you focus only on the piece of Talmud you are learning at the present, you can never get down to the truth. Because, like the Aron Hakodesh that is symbolic of the Torah, Torah knowledge is a blend of width, length and depth.

If you want to live a life of truth, you cannot focus on the present, alone. When making big picture decisions in life, we need to bring in the future and all the possibilities that it may bring. We need to look at the past and how that might affect the future. Big picture thinking is something we can learn from our Forefather, Yaakov.

וַיְהִי יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ יָדַע צֹדֵד אִישׁ שָׂדֵה וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ חָם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים
And Esav was a man who knew hunting, a man of the field, while Yaakov was a simple man, who sat in the tents (of Shem and Ever). Of the Four Sons in the Haggadah, the *Tam* is just a simpleton. On the other hand, Yaakov is described with the virtue of being an *Ish Tam*, a simple man. In which way is simplicity a virtue? And how can we learn from it? Also, if Yaakov was known for being the Man

of Truth, תָּתֵן אֶמֶת לַיַּעֲקֹב, why then was he titled *Ish Tam*, a simple man, and not *Ish Emet*, a man of truth? And why was Yaakov known as the man of truth? Wasn't he dishonest to his blind father Yitzhak when he presented himself as Esav while taking the Berachot, even if they were rightfully his?

Rabbeinu Bachye explains that there is a level of truth greater than that of being honest. And that is the level of being *Tam*, an "all-inclusive truth". *Tam* is a *Machriah*, a blend and underlying truth between two opposing truisms. (See Alei Shur B; Emet) How so?

In our holy Seforim it is written that there are seven Middot of G-d, and that Avraham personified the Middah of חסד: that even if you are not deserving of something, G-d will, in any case, give it to you. Yitzhak personified the Middah of גְּבוּרָה, that G-d will give you only what you deserve. But Yaakov personified G-d's Middah of תַּפְאָרֶת, or a blend between his father's and grandfather's personification. A blend between גְּבוּרָה, strict judgment and, חֶסֶד, endless kindness. That sometimes, even if the truth is that you do not deserve kindness in the present, nevertheless, it could be that something in the past or future has made or will make you deserving of kindness or mercy. This big-picture-truth was the truth of Yaakov. *Tam* is not just honesty. *Tam* is finding the all-inclusive, *underlying* truth.

It is true, in the present, Yaakov was dishonest. But in the big picture, when we figure in both the past and the future in the equation, Yaakov was Emet.



For in the past, Esav had sold his rights of the firstborn to Yaakov, and in the future, Esav was not competent to accept the Priesthood and its responsibilities. Esav not only sold the firstborn rights to Yaakov. He scorned them, by selling them for lentils.

The Talmud teaches us that the difference between *אמת* and *שקר* is that *אמת* has “legs” to stand firmly on, while the *שקר* has just one-legged letters. (Shabbat 104a) In order for you to access the underlying truth, you can’t get stuck on one point, on one leg. You need a broader knowledge and awareness, like the two-legged letters of *אמת*. Big-picture thinking is the way G-d runs His truth in His world of optical illusions. The Chafetz Chaim explains why the signature of G-d is Truth. Because when you look at the letters *אמת* on a signet ring, they appear to be backward. Only after the letters are stamped can we see the message that is intended. The same is with recognizing the truth of G-d in the world: we need big-picture thinking. In the present, when we are looking at the letters of *Emet* on the signet ring, it does not look like *Emet*, for in the present, the world looks like it is full of *Sheker*. But only when one is able to see the bigger picture of past, present, future can one see the *Emet*, the truth that G-d is really in charge. Real truth, eternal truth, is always a blend of past, present, and future. When we get locked into the present, we cause ourselves unnecessary stress, aggravation and frustration. As an Egged bus driver once said, *No one ever misses a bus. They just got early for the next bus.*

When the Torah tells us *תָּמִים תְּהִיָּה עִם יְקֻנָּה אֲלֵהֶיךָ* Rashi explains this – Do not inquire (through unnatural means) after the future, and accept whatever G-d brings upon you. How did Rashi understand that the word *Tamim* means to accept the present, or accept the future? Because being *Tam* is thinking bigger picture, not getting stuck on something you do not understand.

The month of *Kislev* is a month in which we are to accept that the reason why we sometimes have difficulty accepting G-d’s decisions is because we are behaving like the *Ksil*. The fool. How so?

אִישׁ-בָּעַר לֹא יֵדַע וְכֹסֵל לֹא יִבִּין אֶת-זֹאת *A simpleton will not know, and a fool will not understand this.* The problem with the fool is that he sees a whole airplane, but he walks over to one specific screw and asks, “Why is *this* screw here?” *זֹאת*. I want to understand this one little screw; why is it here?! Fool! First understand the whole plane, and then you will be able to understand the reason and place of that screw! But we think that we have better questions than that fool. *I want to understand why I did not catch this bus. I want to understand why people are not being nice to me* (most of the time, they themselves don’t know). *I want to understand why I do not understand why...*

In the big picture, when we bring in past and future, we have a lot to be humble about. All haughtiness is a lie, for it is focusing on one moment. This was the key to our forefather Avraham’s humility, especially when he was praying to G-d for G-d to change His decision about Sodom. *וְאָנֹכִי עֹפָר וְאֵפֶר* *And I am like dust and ashes.* Why dust and ashes? Because Ashes are something that may have had a glorious past before you burnt them, but now, they are only ashes. Dust may have had no past, but it has potential for a glorious future. Avraham said to G-d, *My greatest feeling of humility comes from looking at my past and my future. Then I realize how humble I need to be. I realize that You have reasons that human beings are not capable of understanding, when they focus on the details of the present.* One of the names the Torah uses for the word “grave”, is the word *שאול*, pronounced as *Sheol*. Doesn’t that word mean loan? Why do we call a grave, a loan? As Amin Adjmi once told me, *All that we own in life is a loan, except for our own souls...*

Many times in life, we don’t want to face the truth, because the truth may be too hard to accept, too humbling. And our ego is sometimes more precious to us than our ability to get on in life. So then the sad thing happens: we lie to ourselves again. And a lie told often enough eventually seems to us to be the truth. All this makes life complicated. But Yaakov was a simple man. He was the man of truth. He was the other extreme of his twin brother, who was loved by Yitzhak *כִּי-יָצַד* *because he had game in his mouth.* What does that mean? A hunter’s trade is to fool its prey into

thinking that the coast is clear, while actually, the trap has been set. The greatest danger is when someone fools himself. Like the enticing appearance of prey, as it looks in the present, but in the big picture, when we bring in the future, the person is just setting himself up for a trap. Esav was so good at fooling his father, he even fooled himself. Yaakov was the opposite of fooling himself; he totally accepted himself, as he was.

THE FULLY CHARGED LIFE

Everyone who walks the ארץ, the land, has a רצון, a will. Ask anyone you meet what would be the greatest thing that he could achieve over the next 5 years. You will always get some sort of answer, of some sort of dream, hope, or aspiration. When someone has a clear, laser-beam Ratzon, then he is רץ, he runs! Because he is living the “Charged” Life, a life full of energy, motivation, alacrity, excitement, etc.

But there are two types of "C" lifes that all the rest of the people in the world fall under. There is the Caged Life. The life where people are manipulated by fear, or are “stuck”. *I wish I could achieve x, but this person, or that circumstance, or some other manipulation or excuse, is stopping me from reaching my dreams.*

The third life is the Comfortable life, where people give up their dreams, their hopes, their destiny, because they prefer the comfortable lifestyle they are in. Their comfort zone is too precious. They talk the talk - they talk about what is important, they talk about what would be amazing in life. But they don't walk the walk - they don't want to pay the price for the lifestyle they wish for, they don't want to get out of their comfort zones, they don't want to take responsibility. The lifestyle they live is diametrically opposed to the life of their dreams. They are not willing to get uncomfortable for the sake of their ambitions.

Baruch Hashem, we live in a time where there are so many yeshivot, seminaries, Shuls, organizations, etc. Ken Yirbu. Unfortunately, though, so many people in our Frum system have some sort of spiritual aspiration, but very little motivation. Low battery. This is because they are living either the Caged life, or the Comfortable life. They don't

Everything was clear, thought out - past, present, future. Yaakov never, ever, fooled himself.

A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes. Because for the truth, we need to decelerate making the final analysis. Not to jump to conclusions. To be “simple”, not to assess the present without factoring in the past and future.

want to pay the price of being more spiritual. Of taking that responsibility of bringing G-d into their everyday lives, as much as possible.

Esav sold his rights as a firstborn to Yaakov for nothing more than a bowl of lentils. The word the Torah uses is יָבַח עָשָׂו אֶת הַבְּכוֹרָה And Esav scorned the rights to the firstborn. R Wolbe asks, How can a person either buy or sell the rights of a firstborn? Isn't that something spiritual? R Wolbe explains how Esav sold his spirituality, his firstborn rights. Spirituality *can* be sold, according to how much you don't value it. And on the flip side, spirituality can be “bought” according to how much you are willing to give up for it. Spirituality is something that is not tangible, so its price, whatever you are willing to invest in it or risk for it, is its value. This explains how the deal of the firstborn sale went through...Don't we have a rule of הונאה יותר משתות that something cannot be sold for a price that is much greater, or much lower, than its real value? How, then, could the sale of the firstborn rights go through for such a low price? The answer is that spirituality is worth whatever you are willing to barter for it. For a hungry Esav, the bowl of lentils had the same worth as the firstborn birthrights, which were of inestimable value to Ya'akov.

This can also explain why it is considered that Esav “scorned” his firstborn rights, by selling them. Didn't Rashi mention earlier that Esav was afraid to keep his firstborn rights, because of the responsibilities they entailed? Esav was afraid that if he would retain those firstborn rights, he would have the status, legally, of a Kohen. That was the law in his times. Being a Kohen meant being the one to serve G-d, bring sacrifices, be G-d's representative to the people of the world, and

representative of the people to G-d. Esav was ready to give up the privileges that come along with the responsibility, not because he belittled being the Firstborn, but because he was afraid of the punishments he would receive for not keeping the strict laws that only the Kohen needs to keep! If he wanted to be absolved of them because of fear of the responsibilities, because he did not want to take any chances, why does the Torah call that “scorning”?

The answer is that to acquire a level of greatness, you need to “pay” - to accept the responsibilities that go along with it. That is its “uncomfortable” price tag. If you do not want to pay the price, *it means that you do not want that level of greatness.* It means you are not ready to sacrifice, to make your effort to reach that level. It means that you do not really value, what you are not willing to take responsibility for.

This is such a simple, black and white, belief. If you don't want to practice shooting baskets in the dark, you don't want to play basketball like Michael Jordan. If you don't want to learn something again, and again, and again, then you do not want the memory of R' Ovadia Yosef. If you

don't want to take the chance of losing a game, you are not ready to win. If you are not willing to get “no”s, you are not ready to make a sale. If you are not ready to learn mussar and look your mistakes in the face, you are not ready to become the great person you can become. It means that these goals are not important enough to you. If your holiness is important, you are willing to give up more internet access, a cooler phone, a better deal, and a more exotic vacation. But, if to save a couple of dollars, you go to places where you see unholy sites, that means that all your holiness is worth to you is a couple of dollars.

What value in life that you live by, will cause you to live a fully charged life? Are you living a charged life, a caged life, or a comfortable life? What comfortable habits or lifestyles are causing you to stay away from that awesome life you truly deserve? How much are you willing to pay, what are you willing to give up in order for you to achieve the life of your dreams?

The more we ask ourselves these questions, the more passionate, real, and charged, our lives will be.

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