



# AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

PARSHAT TOLDOT | NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 6, 2019 | CANDLE LIGHTING 4:11PM | HAVDALAH 5:14PM

## SHABBAT DAVENING

FRIDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 29	
CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:11PM
MINCHA:	4:15PM
SHABBAT, NOVEMBER 30	
HASHKAMA MINYAN	8:05AM
MAIN MINYAN	9:00AM
LAST KRIAT SHMA	9:23AM
MINCHA/SEUDAH	3:55PM
SHLISHIT:	
MAARIV/HAVDALAH:	5:14PM

**TISCH**

Join Rabbi Shestack for a special Tisch for college students with Z'merot & Divrei Torah!

Friday Night @ 8 PM  
November 29, 2019

Shestack Residence  
18-19 Saddle River Rd,  
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

## IN OUR FAMILY

Join Rabbi Shestack for a special **Tisch** for college students with zmirot & divrei Torah Friday night at 8pm at the **Shestack** home!

Our congregation and NCSY invite 8-12th grade girls and boys to **Friday Night Lights**. Davening at shul followed by dinner at the **Riskins**.

Congregation Ahavat Achim & NCSY invite  
8-12th grade boys & girls to  
**FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS**

Davening at Ahavat Achim @ 4:15 PM  
18-25 Saddle River Road

Dinner at the Riskin Home @ 5:15 PM  
38-43 D' Auria Drive

Friday Night, November 29, 2019

### Engagements

Mazel Tov to Melanie Kwestel and Mendi Kwestel on the engagement of Pauly to Dr Heidi Bernknopf

## ADULT EDUCATION

**Fundamentals of Jewish Thought:**  
Every Shabbat After Kiddush

**Beginners Gemarah Shiur:**

Mondays, 8:15 PM

(Hint: It's not just for beginners!)

## GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה YOUTH PROGRAM INFO

- Youth Chabura, 1st to 5th grade, meet Matthew Levine and Ben Greenbaum at the main minyan, 9:00AM
- Teen Mussaf minyan for 6th-12th grade boys and girls starting 10:15AM in the Beit Midrash.
- No learning with Andrew Wigod this week.
- Tot Shabbat, 10:30AM.
- Email ideas/suggestions for the Youth Program to [kira.batist.msw@gmail.com](mailto:kira.batist.msw@gmail.com)

## SAVE THE DATE

Friday, December 27

**CHANUKAH HAPPY HOUR**

*Latkes • Vodka • Dreidels • Snacks for the kids*

**AFTER KABBALAT SHABBAT**  
with ET Lustiger  
**FREE FOR THE ENTIRE SHUL**

BE SURE TO SIGN UP FOR THE CHANUKAH DINNER AFTER HAPPY HOUR!

## WEEKDAY DAVENING TIMES

	SUNDAY 12/01	MONDAY 12/02	TUESDAY 12/03	WEDNESDAY 12/04	THURSDAY 12/05	FRIDAY 12/06
SHACHARIT	8:15 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	4:15 PM					4:15 PM
MAARIV ONLY		8:00 PM	8:00 PM	8:00 PM	8:00 PM	





**FUTURE EVENTS**

- Dec. 7** - Yehuda Farajun Bar Mitzvah
- Dec. 7** - Seudah Shlishit is co-sponsored by Betsy & Marty Sonnenblick on the Yahrzeit of Betsy's mother Elaine Perlmutter<sup>ר"ע</sup>, Elka Shaindel bat Tzvi Hersch and Mimi and Barry Weinraub on the Yahrzeit of Barry's mother, שושנה בת מרדכי זיסל ז"ל
- Dec 13** - Oneg Shabbat, at the home of Joyce Heller, 14 Kershner Pl., 7:30PM
- Dec. 21** - Julia Brenenson Bat Mitzvah
- Dec. 21** - Teen Night Out for 6-12th grade boys and girls @ Humdingers
- Dec. 21** - Youth Movie night, 6 PM at the Jacob Home with dinner, sufganiyot, and a D'var Torah by Rabbi Shestack
- Dec. 27** - Latke and Vodka Happy Hour
- Dec. 27** - Chanukah Dinner



**KIDDUSH SPONSOR**

- To sponsor a Kiddush (\$1000/\$613/\$318, plus scotch) email [gplotnick@aol.com](mailto:gplotnick@aol.com).
- If you are around when the Rabbi says "על המחיה", your assistance in clean up would be appreciated.

**COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**Dec. 26** – Chanukah Party at BounceU (70 Eisenhower Dr, Paramus, NJ 07652). A hoppin' good time will be had by all! \$18 per child; \$40 per family max. Includes admission to Bounce U, 2 slices of pizza, and doughnut dessert. To register or sponsor, visit [dno.am/5780/chanukah](http://dno.am/5780/chanukah). A Darchei Noam event, Thursday night, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM.

**LOBBY MONITOR INFO**

We love celebrating weddings, bar/bat mitzvahs, births and other happy occasions on our lobby monitor. Send info and photos to Melanie Kwestel at [mkwestel@gmail.com](mailto:mkwestel@gmail.com).

**PARSHA POINTS TO PONDER**

(1st aliyah) - Yaakov and Esav are each described via a characteristic and a typical behavior. Which is first for Yaakov and which is first for Esav? What might the implications be of that distinction?

(3rd aliyah) What does the Torah tell us about the wells that Yitzchak digs in this aliyah? What might the implications be of that distinction?

(5th aliyah) Discussion question: Who is the most challenging figure in this aliyah (the story of Yaakov stealing the Brachot): Yaakov or Yitzchak? Why? What is your best justification for their actions?

(6th aliyah) Yaakov receives to brachot in this aliyah, one through deception and one in earnest. What is the content of each of the blessings?

*Answers to Points To Ponder*

(1st) Esav's behavior comes first, Yaakov character comes first. Perhaps this distinction emphasizes how they approached the world - from either a character development or task-oriented perspective.

(3rd) They were initially dug by Avraham. That Yitzchak's mission is continuity rather than ingenuity.

(6th) Deception: May Hashem give you from the dew of the sky and the fat of the land. Earnest: May you be fruitful and multiply and receive the blessing of Avraham to inherit that land that Hashem gave Avraham

**ZEMANIM**

	SUNDAY 12/01	MONDAY 12/02	TUESDAY 12/03	WEDNESDAY 12/04	THURSDAY 12/05	FRIDAY 12/06
Earliest Talit	6:02 AM	6:03 AM	6:04 AM	6:05 AM	6:06 AM	6:07 AM
Gedolah	12:09 PM	12:09 PM	12:10 PM	12:10 PM	12:10 PM	12:11 PM
Shkia	4:29 PM	4:29 PM	4:29 PM	4:29 PM	4:28 PM	
Tzait	5:14 PM	5:14 PM	5:14 PM	5:14 PM	5:13 PM	5:13 PM



# COVENANT & CONVERSATION

FINDING FAITH IN THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SACKS



*"With thanks to **The Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation** for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist. Vivienne was a woman of the deepest humility. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving."*

## Isaac and Esau

It's a haunting question. Why did Isaac love Esau? The verse says so explicitly: "Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28). Whichever way we read this verse, it is perplexing. If we read it literally, it suggests that Isaac's affections were governed by no more than a taste in a particular kind of food. Surely that is not the way love is earned or given in the Torah.

Rashi, citing a Midrash, suggests that the phrase translated as, "who had a taste for wild game," and referring to Isaac, in fact refers to Esau, and should be read "there was hunting in his mouth," meaning that he used to entrap and deceive his father by his words. Esau deceived Isaac into thinking that he was more pious and spiritual than in fact he was.

Bolstering this interpretation, some suggest that Isaac, having grown up in the household of Abraham and Sarah, had never encountered deception before, and was thus, in his innocence, misled by his son. Rebecca, who had grown up in the company of Laban, recognised it very well, which is why she favoured Jacob, and why she was later so opposed to Isaac's blessing going to Esau.

Yet the text suggests undeniably that there was a genuine bond of love between Esau and Isaac. The Zohar says that no-one in the world honoured his father as Esau honoured Isaac.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Isaac's love for Esau is evident in his desire to bless him. Note that Abraham did not bless Isaac. Only on his deathbed, did Jacob bless his children. Moses blessed the Israelites on the last day of his life. When Isaac sought to bless Esau, he was old and blind, but not yet on his deathbed: "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death" (Gen. 27:2). This was an act of love.

Isaac, who loved Esau, was not deceived as to the nature of his elder son. He knew what he was and what he wasn't. He knew he was a man of the field, a hunter, mercurial in temperament, a

<sup>1</sup> Zohar 146b.

man who could easily give way to violence, quickly aroused to anger, but equally quickly, capable of being distracted and forgetting.

He also knew that Esau was not the child to continue the covenant. That is manifest in the difference between the blessing Isaac gave Jacob in Genesis 27 (believing him to be Esau), and the blessing in Genesis 28 that he gave Jacob, knowing him to be Jacob.

The first blessing, intended for Esau, is about *wealth* – “May God give you of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth” – and *power*, “Let peoples serve you, and nations bow to you.” The second blessing, intended for Jacob as he was leaving home, is about *children* – “May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples” – and a *land* – “May He give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of ... the land God gave to Abraham.” The patriarchal blessings are not about wealth and power; they are about children and the land. *So Isaac knew all along that the covenant would be continued by Jacob; he was not deceived by Esau. Why then did he love him, encourage him, wish to bless him?*

The answer, I believe, lies in three extraordinary silences. The most pointed one can be found in the question, *What happened to Isaac after the binding?* Look at the text in Genesis 22 and you will see that as soon as the angel has stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son, Isaac drops out of the picture completely. The text tells us that Abraham returned to the two servants who accompanied them on the way, but there is no mention of Isaac.

### **“What happened to Isaac after the binding?”**

This is a glaring mystery, tantalising the commentators. Some go so far as to say that Isaac actually died at the Binding and was brought back to life. Ibn Ezra quotes this interpretation and dismisses it.<sup>2</sup> Shalom Spiegel’s *The Last Trial* is a book-length treatment of this idea.<sup>3</sup> Where was Isaac after the trial of the Binding?

The second silence follows the death of Sarah. We read that Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and weep for her. But the primary mourner in Judaism is the child. It should have been Isaac leading the mourning. Yet he is not mentioned in the entirety of chapter 23, when the Torah relates Sarah’s death and its consequences.

The third strange silence is in the narrative of Abraham instructing his servant to find a wife for his son. *There is no record in the text that Abraham consulted with Isaac his son, or even informed him.* Abraham knew that a wife was being sought for Isaac; Abraham’s servant knew too;

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<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ezra, Commentary to Gen. 22:19.

<sup>3</sup> Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, Schocken, 1969.

but we have no idea as to whether Isaac knew, and whether he had any thoughts on the subject. Did he want to get married? Did he have any particular preference as to what his wife should be like? The text is silent. Only when the servant returns with his wife-to-be, Rebecca, does Isaac enter the narrative at all.

Another detail in the text itself is significant at this point: “Isaac had come from Be’er Lahai Roi.” What was this place? We have encountered it only once before. It is where the angel appeared to Hagar when, pregnant, she fled from Sarah who was treating her harshly (Gen. 16:14). An ingenious Midrash says that when Isaac heard that Abraham had sent his servant to find a wife for him, he said to himself, “Can I live with a wife while my father lives alone? I will go and return Hagar to him.”<sup>4</sup> A later text tells us that “After Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Be’er Lahai Roi” (Gen. 25:11). On this, the Midrash says that even after his father’s death, Isaac lived near Hagar and treated her with respect.<sup>5</sup>

**“Even an arrested sacrifice has a victim.”**

What does all this mean? We can only speculate. But if the silences mean something, they suggest that *even an arrested sacrifice still has a victim*. Isaac may not have died physically, but the text seems to make him disappear, literarily, through three scenes in which his presence was central. He should have been there to greet and be greeted by the two servants on his safe return from Mount Moriah. He should have been there to mourn his departed mother Sarah. He should have been there to at least discuss, with his father and his father’s servant, his future wife. Isaac did not die on the mountain, but it seems as if something in him did perish, only to be revived when he married. The text tells us that Rebecca “became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

That seems to be the message of the silences. The significance of Be’er Lahai Roi seems to be that Isaac never forgot how Hagar and her son – his half-brother Ishmael - had been sent away. The Midrash says that Isaac reunited Hagar with Abraham after Sarah’s death. The biblical text tells us that Isaac and Ishmael stood together at Abraham’s grave (Gen. 25:9). Somehow the divided family was reunited, seemingly at the instigation of Isaac.

If this is so, then Isaac’s love for Esau is simply explained. It is as if Isaac had said: I know what Esau is. He is strong, wild, unpredictable, possibly violent. It is impossible that he should be the person entrusted with the covenant and its spiritual demands. *But this is my child*. I refuse to sacrifice him, as my father almost sacrificed me. I refuse to send him away, as my parents sent Hagar and Ishmael away. My love for my son is unconditional. I do not ignore who or what he is. But I will

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<sup>4</sup> Midrash Hagadol to Gen. 24:62.

<sup>5</sup> Midrash Aggadah and Bereishit Rabbati ad loc.

love him anyway, even if I do not love everything he does – because that is how God loves us, unconditionally, even if He does not love everything we do. I will bless him. I will hold him close. And I believe that one day that love may make him a better person than he might otherwise have been.

In this one act of loving Esau, Isaac redeemed the pain of two of the most difficult moments in his father Abraham's life: the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael and the binding of Isaac.

**I believe that love helps heal both the lover and the loved.**

Shabbat Shalom

Jonathan Sacks

### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE

**COVENANT AND CONVERSATION**  
*Family Edition*

The **Family Edition of Covenant & Conversation** is an accompanying resource available to download each week from [www.RabbiSacks.org/CCFamilyEdition](http://www.RabbiSacks.org/CCFamilyEdition) (or via the main Covenant & Conversation email). It helps parents take Rabbi Sacks' ideas from this essay and make them more accessible to teenagers. Each week, we will include three key questions from the Family Edition to inspire discussion around your Shabbat table. For more educational content as well as discussion pointers when answering these questions, please see the Family Edition!

- 1. Do you think Isaac and Rebecca were good parents?**
- 2. What was the source of Isaac's pain? How did love help to heal him?**
- 3. Do you think Isaac was being critical of his father by parenting differently?**

Jonathan Sacks  
The Office of Rabbi Sacks

[www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org)     @rabbisacks

The Office of Rabbi Sacks, PO Box 72007, London, NW6 6RW  
+44 (0)20 7286 6391 • [info@rabbisacks.org](mailto:info@rabbisacks.org)

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