

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
TOLDOS

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
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## HELP YOURSELF

**P**arshas Toldos brings us the story of Eisav selling his birthright to Yaakov for a bowl of lentils. Eisav comes home from hunting, tired and hungry, and finds Yaakov standing over a pot of soup. Famished, he demands a portion. Before giving him any, Yaakov states that he will trade for Eisav's claim to the birthright. Without a moment's hesitation, Eisav signs away any right or privilege that he has, and takes possession of the lentils.<sup>1</sup>

Lost in this story is a simple question — why was Yaakov cooking lentils? Rashi<sup>2</sup> states that Avraham had passed away on that day, and it is customary for mourners to eat round foods. However, this doesn't explain why Yaakov was cooking the lentils. Yitzchak and Rivkah were fabulously wealthy, with a household full of servants and maids. No doubt Yaakov could have found someone to cook this pot of soup instead of himself. And, no doubt, Yaakov had more important things to do than to cook a pot of soup. So why was Yaakov the one to wear the chef's hat?

The *Medrash HaGadol*<sup>3</sup> explains that Yaakov had spent all day learning, returning home late at night for dinner. When he arrived home, he found that the household had already retired to bed. Instead of waking someone up, he took the matter into his own hands, and prepared his own meal. This, despite the fact that it was the job of the servants to attend to matters of the household.

This is not a surprising or heroic act by the third of our forefathers. Yet, it serves to illustrate how we should act in our own dealings. There may be people in our life who we expect to come through and help us in some way or another. We may even be paying them for the service! However, inconveniencing others is not the proper way to go about our lives, and when it comes down to it, it is often better for us to be inconvenienced than to disturb others.

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

How does one work on caring for others? It's the same advice our mothers have told us — to see things from the other perspective.

Imagine if we were sleeping and someone made noise and woke us up? If we were feeling charitable, we would roll over and go back to sleep. If we were feeling irritable, we would say something hurtful. But either way, we wouldn't want to be woken up!

Yet, when it comes to waking others, we then feel, "What's the big deal?"

This is not just true by sleeping, but it applies to many other areas as well. Inviting friends over for a party, sharing a toy, saying a biting comment, and so on.

When we take that moment to think, "What would I feel if this were done to me," not only will we cease to be hypocritical when it comes to our attitudes to others, but we will be taking a gigantic step in the direction of truly caring for those around us.

1 Bereishis 25:29-34

2 Bereishis 25:30 s.v. מן האדם האדם

3 Bereishis 25:29 s.v. ויזד יעקב ניד

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**The workshop of Mussar is thought. Man's powers of reflection and observation are powerful tools in the campaign against his tendencies.**

- Alter of Kelm, R' Simcha Zissel Ziv zt"l,  
Sparks of Mussar pg.64

# A REASON TO CELEBRATE

A joyous atmosphere pervaded the Fisher\* household. The eldest child, Sarah, was engaged! After years of nervousness, doubt, and discouragement, the day had finally arrived. Sarah, and her *choson* Yosef, were all smiles as they sat in the Fisher house, discussing plans for the wedding.

As the evening wound down, Sarah's younger brother, Tzvi, walked over to his keyboard and turned it on. At thirteen years of age Tzvi was quite proficient with the keyboard, having played piano and keyboard for the past five years.

Though he was not a professional musician, he was adept enough to entertain a small party, such as the people who were present.

Tzvi sat down and played a compilation of wedding songs and the most recent Jewish hits. Finally the evening was over.

Friends who had come to wish Mazel Tov had left, and only the Fishers were left in their house. Before retiring to bed, Mrs. Fisher turned to Tzvi with a puzzled expression.

"You played very nicely earlier, but you seemed to be distracted. Also, it didn't really sound like you, almost a bit rusty in fact. Tired?"

Tzvi shook his head. "Actually, not really. But you are right, I am a bit rusty. I practice a lot, but I haven't played those songs in a while."

"Why not?"

"Well, Sarah has been trying to get married for some time. She would come home disappointed for so long. I didn't want to play wedding music, as I was afraid that she would hear it and it would hurt her. So I didn't!"

Mrs. Fisher smiled, happy that she asked. Had she not, she never would have known how thoughtful her son had been.

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

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## DID YOU KNOW?

- Refraining from troubling your peers is the basis for the entire Torah.<sup>1</sup>
- Descendants of *Avraham Avinu* do *chessed* to the fullest degree.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Shabbos* 31a

<sup>2</sup> *Tiv Hachessed* pg. 152