

Dvar Torah for Parshat Toldot

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Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Sefer Torah* 4:14–27

In brief, here is the story of why Esav was unfit to be part of the budding Jewish nation. Esav, the firstborn, has a busy morning committing murder, immorality and idolatry, and returns to the family tent exhausted. Avraham Avinu (our patriarch) has passed away and Yaakov Avinu—Esav's brother—is cooking red-lentil porridge for the post-funeral “mourning meal.” Esav insists on stuffing himself with “that red stuff.” Yaakov Avinu demands that Esav sell him the birthright, the privilege to serve people as a man of God. Esav responds, “I’m going to die. What do I need the birthright for?” and swaps his birthright for bread and porridge. After eating and drinking, Esav gets up and leaves, ridiculing the birthright. (Genesis 25:29–35).

If you’re keeping score, Esav committed the three cardinal sins, showed himself to be a genuine glutton and blasphemed God and Divine worship. Baaaad, very bad. But not incorrigible. After all, we all have moments of weakness. Who can say that he wouldn’t succumb at the worst possible moment? And how many of us can honestly say that he never stepped over the border from *essing* to *fressing* (eating to gorging)? Even bad-mouthing the birthright can be explained away as mere sour-grapes.

So what did Esav do that was so bad that it disqualified him? When he finished *fressing*, he walked out the door without kissing the mezuzah. You think I’m joking, right? Someone transgresses all the cardinal sins, etc., and we can find a defense for him, but not kissing the mezuzah does him in? C’mon! What’s that about? The answer is in the mezuzah.

The first *parsha*/paragraph of the mezuzah is a declaration of

belief in God and His unity. The second *parsha*, which concludes with a reminder about the primacy of Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel), declares belief in *hashgachah*/Divine providence. These beliefs are essential to Jewishness. Eretz Yisrael is the place with the greatest potential for gaining and developing such faith.

So every time we go through the door we should place our hand on the mezuzah (i.e., kiss it), and take (at least) a second to meditate/reflect on the holiness of the Holy Land, in order to draw its faith and holiness upon ourselves. Kissing the mezuzah on our way *in* helps to leave the negative influences of the outside world outside, and imbues our home with atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael. Kissing the mezuzah on our way *out* helps us to extend a measure of Eretz Yisrael's faith and holiness to the great wide-world* and to thereby shield us against faithlessness we may encounter in the street or market.

So, God forbid, for one who knows the message of mezuzah, intentionally not kissing it is tantamount to denying God, His unity and providence. It's a declaration that there is no Judge and no judgment, that Eretz Yisrael is no more special than *chutz l'aretz* (outside the Land). It's a proclamation that one is unfit to be a progenitor of God's "firstborn" (Exodus 4:22).

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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*Eretz Yisrael itself has ten levels of kedushah (sacredness). Yaakov Avinu is mezuzah. See *Yalkut Reuveinu, Parshat Toldot* to learn how this is so.