YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**student summaries of Sichot of the Roshei Yeshiva**

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**In loving memory of Rabbi Dr. Barrett (Chaim Dov) Broyde zt"l**

**הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים וּפֹעֵל צֶדֶק וְדֹבֵר אֱמֶת בִּלְבָבוֹ**

**Steven Weiner & Lisa Wise**

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**Parashat ToldoT**

**sicha of HarAV Yaakov Medan**

**Love Instead of Jealousy**

Translated by David Strauss

### Esav's hatred of Yaakov

*Chazal* attribute several exceedingly severe sins to Esav, including the three sins regarding which a person must allow himself to be killed rather than transgress, but according to the plain sense of the text, Esav manifests no wicked behavior, with the exception of two places: his contempt for the birthright at the beginning of the *parasha;* and his anger at Yaakov at the end of the *parasha*, which expresses itself in his intention to kill him:

And Esav said in his heart: “Let the days of mourning for my father be at hand; then will I slay my brother Yaakov.” (*Bereishit* 27:41)

In a certain sense, however, we can understand Esav: all his life he works hard to honor his father, giving him to eat and drink. Finally, Esav reaches the point at which Yitzchak is prepared to bless him — and in one moment, Yaakov comes and steals his life project, the *berakha*. He loses the blessing of "Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and let your mother's sons bow down to you" (*Bereishit* 27:29), instead being promised: "And by your sword shall you live, and you shall serve your brother" (ibid. v. 40). The one escape-hatch left to him is: "And it shall come to pass when you shall break loose, that you shall shake his yoke from off your neck" (ibid.). Even if we cannot justify his response, we can certainly understand it.

### What is Love?

Perhaps we can understand the matter in light of the story read as the *haftara* on a Shabbat that falls on Erev Rosh Chodesh, *"Machar Chodesh*," which deals with the relationship between David and Yonatan (*I Shemuel* 20:18-42). After the latter’s death, David says about him:

I am distressed for you, my brother Yonatan; very pleasant have you been unto me; wonderful was your love to me, passing the love of women.  (*II* *Shemuel* 1:26)

There are fools who have confused love with sexual desire, despite the fact that the bond of love between a man and his wife, which inspired their interpretation, is comprised of additional elements besides passion. I wonder what they would say about the verse in our *parasha*:

Now Yitzchak loved Esav, because he did eat of his venison; and Rivka loved Yaakov. (*Bereishit* 28:28)

For our purposes, if we want to understand the profound meaning of David's eulogy for Yonatan, we must examine women's love of David in relation to Yonatan's love for him.

First, we find the women who go out to dance when David returns after having beaten the Pelishti:

And the women sang one to another in their play, and said: “Shaul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands!”

As a result of this song:

And Shaul eyed David from that day and forward. (I *Shemuel* 18:9)

Afterwards, it is related about Mikhal, the daughter of Shaul, that she loves David,[[1]](#footnote-1) and she expresses this love by helping David escape in the middle of the night from Shaul's emissaries who came to kill him. But she, too, does not contribute to Shaul's sympathy for David:

And Shaul said unto Mikhal: “Why have you deceived me thus, and let my enemy go, that he is escaped?”

And Mikhal answered Shaul: “He said unto me: ‘Let me go; why should I kill you?’” (I *Shemuel* 19:17)

It is probably this lie that causes Shaul later to hand Mikhal over to Palti ben Layish,[[2]](#footnote-2) because he thinks that her marriage to David was a mistake: Should the king's daughter be married to one who threatens her life?

### Love that does not depend upon anything else

In contrast, Yonatan tries to connect David to Shaul. He is not willing to waive his loyalty to either one of them, and therefore he tries to appease Shaul and bring him to show David compassion:

Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he has not sinned against you, and because his work has been very good towards you. (I *Shemuel* 19:4; and see there vv. 6-7)

In the *haftara*, Yonatan puts his life in jeopardy when Shaul casts his spear at him to smite him — and we have already seen, at the Battle of Mikhmas,[[3]](#footnote-3) that Shaul is ready to kill Yonatan for his principles — and yet Yonatan remains faithful to him in order to connect David to Shaul. However, it is specifically with Shaul that we find Yonatan's readiness to sacrifice his life for him, when he dies in the Battle of Gilboa: "Shaul and Yonatan, the loved and the pleasant in their lives — even in their death they were not divided" (II *Shemuel* 1:23).

Yonatan finds himself in a situation similar to that of Esav: he goes down from heir to the throne to viceroy. What magnanimity is required to give up that status!

At one of the Bible Contests, the deputy prime minister — a man with political ambitions — offered to the second-place finisher a difficult statement: "Who better than me can understand the hearts of runner-ups?" As one who aspired for first place, it was hard for him to accept the fact that he had been bypassed.

Nevertheless, Yonatan shows us that it is possible to withstand the test, in recognition of the role and talent of the person chosen over him to lead — all this while maintaining the two loyalties to which he is committed.

This is what *Chazal* are referring to when they speak of love that does not depend on anything.[[4]](#footnote-4) Moreover, it is not strong and persevering only because of its pure motives, but also because of its background, which naturally invites hatred. Yonatan teaches us how to waive honor, and how to love and give one's soul for his fellow who is better than him. This is the meaning of: "Wonderful was your love to me, passing the love of women." For the women who loved David caused him to be hated by Shaul, whereas Yonatan in his love for him was ready to give his life for him.

Unfortunately, it seems that sometimes when we find ourselves in a similar situation, we respond in a manner closer to that of Esav than to that of Yonatan, and we choose jealousy over love.

### Love that does not depend on anything never ceases

It is not by chance that the love of David and Yonatan grows on the battlefield, following the victory over Golyat the Pelishti:

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Shaul, that the soul of Yonatan was knit with the soul of David, and Yonatan loved him as his own soul. (I *Shemuel* 18:1)

The reality of a person's dependency on his fellow leads to strong bonds of commitment and loyalty that nothing can separate.

In the words of *Chazal,* we find in several places that they liken the *beit midrash* to a field of battle:

[Rabban Gamliel said to him:] "Wait till the champions (lit., the shield-bearers) enter the study hall.” (*Berakhot* 27b).

“The shield-bearers” — These are the scholars who battle each other in Halakha. (Rashi, ad loc.)

What is meant by “For they speak with their enemies at the gate” (*Tehillim* 127:5)? Said Rabbi Chiya bar Abba: even father and son, master and disciple, who study Torah at the same gate become enemies of each other. Nevertheless, they do not leave that place until they come to love each other, as it is written (*Bamidbar* 21:14), “Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord: ‘Love is *be*-*sufa’”*—read it not *be-sufa*, but rather *be-sofah*, at its end. (*Kiddushin* 30b).

"Love is *be*-*sufa” —* This is how it is expounded: “The Book of the Wars,” i.e. warfare over the Book has love at its end.(Rashi, ad loc.)

In the *beit midrash* as well, each student must recognize his dependence on his fellow, and thus make room for the uncompromising love that we learn from David and Yonatan.

(This *sicha* was delivered at *Seuda Shelishit* on *Shabbat Parashat Toldot* 5772 [2011].)

1. I *Shemuel* 18:20. This is the only place in *Tanakh* where it is stated that a woman loves her husband. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I *Shemuel* 25:44. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I *Shemuel* 25:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Avot* 5:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)