

# THE REAL RIVALRY

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Vayera

## The Real Rivalry

**Volume 21, No. 4**  
**20 Marcheshvan 5767**  
**November 11, 2006**

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Today's Learning:

Ketubot 7:10-8:1

O.C. 658:6-8

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Beitzah 15

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Shabbat 9

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This week's parashah introduces us to the rivalry between Yitzchak and his half-brother Yishmael. R' Yehuda Halevi z"l (Spain; 11th century) writes: "The rivalry between Yitzchak and Yishmael was over Eretz Yisrael. Yitzchak was the chosen one, while Yishmael was discarded like the peel of a fruit. True, Yishmael was blessed (in last week's parashah-17:20), 'Regarding Yishmael I have heard you; I have blessed him, will make him fruitful, and will increase him most exceedingly; he will beget twelve princes and I will make him into a great nation.' However, that was only a material blessing. In contrast, Hashem said about Yitzchak (17:21), 'But I will maintain my covenant through Yitzchak, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.' The 'covenant' refers to a spiritual connection leading to goodness in the World-to-Come. There is no covenant with Yishmael, nor with other successful kingdoms such as Persia." (Kuzari II:14)

In his commentary to the Kuzari entitled Otzar Nechmad, R' Yisrael Halevi z"l (Zamosc, Poland; died 1772) elaborates: Sarah said in our parashah (21:10), "Drive out this slave-woman [Hagar] with her son [Yishmael], for the son of the slave-woman shall not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak." And, Hashem commanded Avraham to obey Sarah. Surely all this "fuss" by both G-d and Sarah could not have been over a monetary inheritance. In fact, Yishmael was very successful financially. Rather, the real rivalry was over the relationship with Hashem and Eretz Yisrael.

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*"Wash your feet, and recline beneath the tree."* (18:4)

R' Moshe Yechiel Halevi Epstein z"l (1890-1971; the Ozhorover Rebbe) writes: Look at the wonders of the Torah! Our Sages say that Avraham wanted the visitors to wash their feet because he was afraid that they belonged to a tribe that worshipped dust. In effect he told them, "Leave your idolatry and accept G-d." How did the Sages know this? It is alluded to in our verse.

First, "Wash your feet" ("v'rachatzu ragleichem"), has a gematria of exactly 613, alluding to the mitzvot. Also, in the passage, "... your feet, and recline beneath the tree" ("rachatzu ragleichem ve'hishanu tachat ha'etz"), the initial Hebrew letters are the letters of the word "Torah," while the final Hebrew letters are the letters of the word "mitzvot." This is why the Zohar (I 102b) says that "recline beneath the tree" means, "Recline in the shade of the Holy One, and reject idolatry."

(Be'er Moshe)

From the Haftarah . . .

*"He said, 'Why are you going to him today? It is not a Chodesh nor a Shabbat!'"* (Melachim I 4:23)

In this verse, the husband of the Shunamite woman asks her why she is going to visit the prophet Elisha when it is neither "Chodesh" nor "Shabbat." The Gemara (Sukkah 27b) states: From here we learn that a man must visit his rebbe on Yom Tov.

Many commentaries ask: Where is Yom Tov mentioned in our verse? Seemingly, only Rosh Chodesh (the New Moon) and Shabbat are mentioned! Below we offer several answers.

(1) R' Yaakov Ba'al Ha'turim (Spain; 14th century) cites a midrash that Rosh Chodesh was given to women as a holiday. R' Yaakov quotes his brother who explains that each of the three pilgrimage festivals parallels one of the Patriarchs. The 12 New Moons parallel the 12 sons of Yaakov. However, when the Jewish males sinned with the Golden Calf, they forfeited these twelve holidays, and the holidays were given to their wives, who did not sin.

R' Gedaliah Schor z"l (rosh yeshiva of Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn NY; died 1979) explains further that each festival corresponds to a Heavenly Gate that opens to release a particular spiritual light. As a result of the sin of the Golden Calf, men cannot receive the light corresponding to Rosh Chodesh. However, women can.

In the future, on the other hand, it will not be so. All people will then be able to receive the light of Rosh Chodesh, as the verse says (in the haftarah for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh-Yishayah 66:23), "And it shall be that, from New Moon to New Moon, and from Shabbat to Shabbat, all flesh shall come to prostrate themselves before Me, said Hashem." (Ohr Gedalyahu: Chodesh Iyar No.1)

In light of this explanation, the Gemara's statement is readily understood. As a holiday for women, Rosh Chodesh is spiritually (though not legally) on par with Yom Tov. Thus, from the husband's question, "Why are you going to him today? It is not [Rosh] Chodesh . . .," one can infer that a man must visit his rebbe on Yom Tov.

(2) R' Reuven Margalioth z"l (died 1971) quotes R' Eliyahu z"l (the Vilna Gaon; 1720-1797) who answers our question based on an anomaly in another verse quoted above. Why does Yishayah (66:23) state, "And it shall be that, from New Moon to New Moon, and from Shabbat to Shabbat . . ." Since Shabbat is more frequent than the New Moon, Shabbat should have been listed first. We must conclude, therefore, that the term "Shabbat" does not refer to the seventh day of the week, but rather it refers to Yom Tov (as in Vayikra 23:11). Here, too, writes the Vilna Gaon, when the husband said, "Why are you going to him today? It is not a Chodesh nor a Shabbat!" the word "Shabbat" meant "Yom Tov." (Olelot p.33)

(3) After quoting the Vilna Gaon's explanation, R' Reuven Margalioth offers his own answer to our

question. It was customary in Talmudic times, and maybe in the times of the Prophets as well, that those who were able would leave their homes and jobs for a month before Pesach and a month before Sukkot to rejoin a yeshiva. This was known as a "Yerach Kallah" ("yerach" being a synonym for "chodesh" / "month"). Some could not take off an entire month but came for a week, known as "Shabta de'rigla" / "the Shabbat / week of the festival." Those who could not manage even this came on the holiday itself.

Thus, when the husband said to the Shunamite woman, "Why are you going to him today? It is not a Chodesh nor a Shabbat!" he meant: It is neither the month before the holiday, nor the week before the holiday, and certainly not the holiday itself. Why then are you going? From this the Gemara infers that, had it been a holiday, one would have been obligated to go. (Olelot p.33)

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## 100th Anniversary of the Mishnah Berurah

"I have completed it through the kindness of Hashem, may He be blessed, on the 19th of the month of Cheshvan 5667." So wrote the author, R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (better known as the "Chafetz Chaim"), at the end of the sixth and final volume of the Mishnah Berurah. Since its completion 100 years ago this week, the Mishnah Berurah has become one of the most definitive sources of halachah in those areas which it covers-primarily the daily prayers and the laws of Shabbat and the holidays.

The Chafetz Chaim's son, R' Aryeh Leib Hakohen z"l, was an active participant in the writing and publication of some parts of the Mishnah Berurah. In his short biography of his father, he recorded some of his memories of that time, as follows:

In 5644 [1884], my father published his work, Mishnah Berurah volume 1, which covered up to the laws of the Priestly Blessing. During the printing process, he remained in Warsaw, and every day he was in and out of the printing shop to ensure that there would be no errors. He did not trust anyone else in this matter, unlike other authors who hand over the printing to an expert and do not supervise the work themselves. He explained that because this is a work of halachah / law, it is particularly important for it to be error free. Even more, he worried about transgressing the sin of stealing if a volume would have unclear print or missing lines. Because of this, he refrained even from his regular Torah studies for several months. Such was his practice with each volume as it was printed. I recall that after I settled in Warsaw in 5666 [1906], my father generally relied on me regarding the printing of his works. It happened once that a purchaser of the Mishnah Berurah wrote to him complaining that his set contained a signature [i.e., a unit of pages used in printing] with pages out of order. I then received a letter from my father which said, "What have you done to me, my son? My entire life I worried about avoiding even the appearance of stealing ('avak gezel'), but I never imagined that I would one day commit actual theft!" Because of you, I have been entrapped into stealing." My father commanded me to immediately print a new signature and to advertise in the newspapers that

anyone who has a volume with pages out of order should contact me for a correction. And so I did.

My father was careful his entire life never to sell a book that had not been checked. He spent a great deal of money on proofreaders to ensure that no pages or signatures were reversed in the binding process or were unclear, as occurs in printing. Every book sold had the word "mugah" ("checked") written in it, and he was insistent about this.

He placed his name on the title page of the Mishnah Berurah [unlike on some of his other works] because he said, "It is a work of halachah. Maybe somebody will disagree with a conclusion of mine and they will know to contact me, if I am still living. Then I will reply to them to defend my view or, if in fact the law is not as I wrote, I will correct it in future editions." In fact, some changes were made to the first volume in the second printing, but I do not know whether this was inspired by an outsider or if my father changed his mind on his own. (Kitzur Toldot He'Chafetz Chaim in Kol Kitvei Chafetz Chaim Vol.I)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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