



אור בישראל

A LIGHT FROM WITHIN ISRAEL

פרשת תולדות

כ"ט חשוון תשפ"ה 30.11.24

עם סיוון רהם-נארי

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1 This week's parsha is Parshat Toldot, the sixth parsha in the Book of Genesis. It describes the lives of our forefather Isaac and our matriarch Rebecca, and their two sons, the twins Jacob and Esau.

In the beginning, Isaac and Rebecca wait 20 years until they are blessed with children. Later in the parsha, there is conflict and tension between Jacob "the righteous" and Esau "the wicked". Note: The Book of Genesis describes many problems and challenges in life, and also teaches us how to cope with them and even how to grow from them.

2

Isaac seemingly had a simple mission - to continue his father Abraham's path. Parshat Toldot tells us how the Philistines blocked up all the wells that Abraham had already dug. Isaac had to re-dig these same wells and even give them the same names. This might sound boring, but without Isaac, without the ability to do the same things over and over again, Abraham's path would not have continued. We can learn much from our forefather Isaac about persistence and dedication to purpose. The story below can also teach us all about the power to continue and not despair.

4

After Shabbat, on Sunday and Monday - it's Rosh Chodesh Kislev! Shabbat Shalom and have a good month!

A STORY FOR SHABBAT

THREE FAILURES AND ONE SUCCESS!

In 2021 (5781), 17-year-old Gilad Abrahamoff of Netanya won the International Bible Contest (Chidon HaTanach). At first glance, it seemed like there was nothing special about his win. Like all other Chidon winners, he knew how to respond quickly to the most difficult questions in Tanach with his impressive knowledge.

But after he won, one of his relatives told me it would be worthwhile to phone Gilad to hear more of what had taken place "behind the scenes."

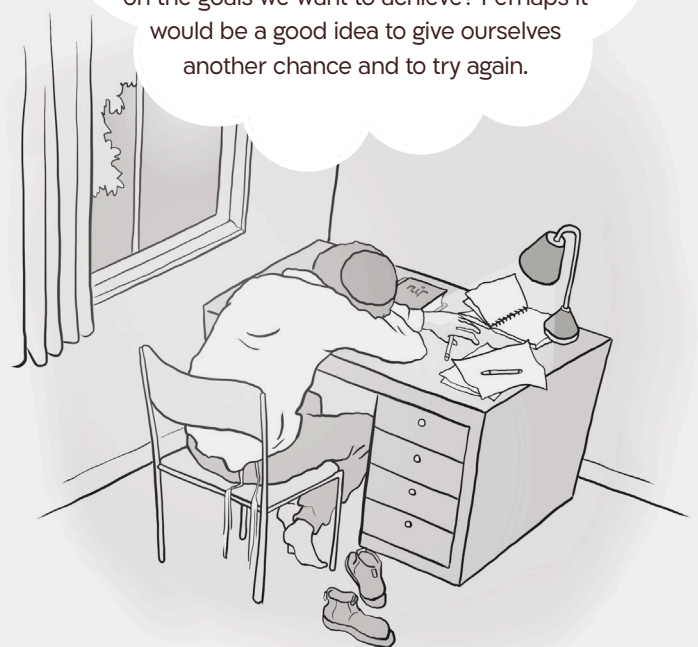
My conversation with Gilad revealed how unique his story was. He had first started to compete in bible contests in grade nine and was only able to achieve ninth place in the regional contest. In grade ten, he tried again and achieved better results, but his score was not high enough for him to be included in the next level of competition. The following year, the Covid epidemic broke out and the organizers of the contest decided to limit the number of participants and to hold a smaller contest, which raised the level even higher and left Gilad out of the running. Another year passed. Gilad, who had not achieved much success in previous contests, was worried. He thought that his chances of winning were smaller than anyone else's and he considered dropping out. In the end, he decided to rise to the challenge and try again for the fourth time. He studied for the contest day and night, excelled at all the stages of the contest, and won first place!

Gilad's story is almost as impressive as his knowledge of Tanach. There are children who are born with exceptional memories and consequently perform well in these types of contests. In contrast, Gilad had to work harder than anyone and to review the same chapters and verses again and again for four years! In the course of our conversation, Gilad told me that he identified very much with our patriarch Yitzchak, who had to

dig the same wells again, faced the same challenges as his father, but managed to succeed in the end. And the real prize, in his opinion, was not his new title. He said: "I recommend that everyone study Tanach, not so that they can earn the title of "Chatan HaTanach," but to achieve something even greater: a connection to eternity.

Food for Thought

Not everyone can be the winner of the International Bible Contest, but do we sometimes find ourselves giving up too quickly on the goals we want to achieve? Perhaps it would be a good idea to give ourselves another chance and to try again.





FROM THE DIARY OF A CHEMED STUDENT

Aquariums in Schools: Enhancing Education and Well-being

My name is Michael Avraham Hanoch. I study at Amit Hammer Rehovot.

We have special aquariums in our school that greatly enrich our environment. As a student, I feel the new aquariums in our school have made a big difference. At the entrance to the school, there's a large, colorful aquarium with lively fish and lush plants that greet everyone. There's also a smaller aquarium in the secretary's office, which adds a calm and peaceful touch to the room.

These aquariums are more than just decoration—they're both educational and relaxing. The large aquarium by the front door is fascinating to watch and teaches us about marine life and ecosystems in an engaging way. The smaller aquarium in the office provides a quiet, soothing space for visitors.

What I love most is how the aquariums make us feel. Watching the fish swim is calming and helps reduce stress. Many students look forward to seeing them each day because they're comforting and inspiring.



Some students even help take care of the aquariums. This teaches them responsibility and gives them a sense of pride. Overall, these aquariums make our school a more welcoming and livelier place while helping us learn and feel good.



FROM THE DIARY OF A SHALIACH

In the heart of Nebraska, far from any city, I discovered a moving story about faith and Jewish identity.

My name is Eitan Ziv, and my wife Noy and I are educational shlichim at the Friedel Jewish Academy in Omaha. We went on a special home visit to Ruth, an 83-year-old Jewish woman...

Ruth's farm is like a scene from a movie - endless fields stretching as far as the eye can see, so isolated that it takes an hour's walk to reach the nearest neighbor. When we arrived, Ruth warmly welcomed us and invited us on a tour of her home, which turned out to be a small and fascinating museum.

Among the impressive exhibits - antique vessels, golden cutlery, and an elegant plate collection - the Jewish items stood out: mezuzahs, kippot, and menorahs. On one of the walls hung an impressive painting of Rabbi Kook. But what truly moved us was a small notebook that Ruth proudly showed us. "This is my Hebrew notebook," she said, "I'm now learning to speak and write in Hebrew."

In the middle of nowhere in Nebraska, far from any Jewish community, lives a remarkable woman who chose to maintain her Jewish identity. Despite the physical distance and lack of a religious environment, Ruth continues to nurture her Judaism and her connection to the Hebrew language. Her story teaches us that roots and tradition are not dependent on location or circumstances - they stem from a deep internal choice and pride in our heritage.

