

Dvar Torah - Toldot

Did you know that on their wedding day, a bride and groom are forgiven for all their sins?

On their wedding day, a bride and groom are forgiven for all their sins. This astonishing teaching in the Talmud Yerushalmi is based on a passage in Parshat Toldot. The Torah tells us how Eisav, the twin brother of Yaakov, bought a lot of distress and upset to his parents Yitzchak and Rivka.

The key ways in which he upset them were his choice of wives. In an age when polygamy was the norm, he had already married twice. His wives had come from Hitite tribes and because they had come from a different culture, Eisav's parents were deeply concerned about the negative impact they might have on him and the children they would raise.

Mindful of this, Eisav wanted to find favour in the eyes of his parents. So the third time round he made a calculated move to marry his second cousin Machalat, the daughter of Yishmael. The Talmud highlights the fact that her name, 'Machalat', comes from the same root as 'M'chila' which means forgiveness, indicating that on his wedding day when marrying Machalat, Eisav sought to achieve forgiveness for his sins.

In this very spirit, brides and grooms treat their wedding day as a type of Yom Kippur, they fast and during the amida prayer they include the passage of viduy (confession) just like on Erev Yom Kippur just before the fast starts. It is only under the Chuppah, when they have a sip of wine, that they break their fast. This is a significant concept. What it means is that on their wedding day, bride and groom can put behind them their own personal private lives up to that point and from their Chuppah onwards they can face the future as one single combined entity starting off on a clean slate.

And where do we learn this from? None other than the 'rasha', that wicked man Eisav. Yet again the Torah comes to teach us how to appreciate every single person. In this spirit, the Ethics of the Fathers teaches us, "Do not despise any person. Who is wise? It is the one who learns from everyone. And also -Every person has his or her hour.

A bride and groom, on the most significant and joyous day of their lives, are reminded that every single Torah character is someone from whom we can learn an enormous amount.

Shabbat Shalom