

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Toldot	30 Nov. 2019	2 Kislev 5780	Gen. 25:19-28:9	Mal. 1:1-2:7	Matt. 10:21-38

This week's Torah portion Toldot does not have positive or negative commandments.

It is written (v. 19), "And this is the genealogy of Yitzchak, Abraham's son. Abraham brought forth Yitzchak." The word "genealogy" in Hebrew is "Toldot" (תולדות). As the name applies, its concept is producing something new. During the days of creation, the world was created in its entirety, yet it was still lacking "a man to till the ground." (Gen. 2:5) A man was needed to "to work it and to guard it" (ibid, v. 15) to perfect it.

Now, there are two parashah in the Torah that begins with the "genealogy (toldot)." "These are the genealogy of Noah" (Gen. 6:9) and today's parsha "And this is the genealogy of Yitzchak" (Gen. 25:19). As explained above "genealogy," rather "generation" in Hebrew is "*toldot*." This week's parashat could have been called Parashat Yitzchak similar to Parashat Noah. Instead, it is called "*toldot*." So, what is the difference between Noah and Yitzchak? The sages explain: the focal point of this week's parashah is about "generations," that is, his descendants whereas Noah was about himself.

It is written (v. 20), "And Yitzchak was forty years old when he took Rivka as wife." The sages explain that this verse explains the delay of marriage to Rivka. Since Yitzchak did not have any ordained match, he remained unmarried until Rivka came to him.

"The daughter of Bethuel the Aramean, of Paddan-aram." We already know who and where she came from. So, here the Torah is not recapping her background. Rather, it is defending her from possible accusation in the next verse (v. 21) when Hashem listened to Yitzchak's prayer, but not Rivka even though she was a righteous woman. The sages explain that before stating that Hashem responded to Yitzchak, it first states that she was the daughter of Bethuel, thus it is conveying that it was for this reason Hashem responded to Yitzchak and not her. Because Yitzchak was a son of Abraham who was righteous while Rivka was a daughter of Bethuel who was wicked. Although she was righteous and worthy, her prayers were not effective due to the wickedness of her father.

Now, the word "Aramean" in Hebrew is הָאֲרָמִי (*ha-'a-ra-mi*). There is another word that has same letters, "הָרָמָא" (*ha-ra-ma*; the swindler). So, the word Paddan-aram means "anyone from Aram is Aramian," meaning the Aramians are swindlers. Therefore, the Torah is hinting us that like Bethuel, even though his name is mentioned only once, like Laban, he is wicked.

"The sister of Laban the Aramean." The Talmud¹ explains that the Torah makes a connection between Rivka and her brother for possibility of defaming her, as someone could say, "How is a righteous woman like Rivka have a son like Esav who is wicked?" They answer that most children are similar to their mother's brother, i.e., genetics, and this is why it was possible for the wicked Esav to emerge as he did, because he reflected the traits of his uncle, Laban.

The *pashat* (simple; literal) understanding for Rivka being barren contributes to Laban who blesses her, "Let our sister become the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and let your seed possess the gates of those who hate them." (Gen. 24:60) For this reason, she was barren until to the point that Yitzchak and Rivka needed special prayers to be granted children. Thus, the Torah is make clear to all that the pregnancy was the prayer of Yitzchak, and not the blessing of Laban, that caused Rivka to bear children.

It is written (v. 21), "And YHWH answered his prayer, and Rivka his wife conceived." Normally, when a husband and a wife consummate, and a wife becomes pregnant, the Torah uses the word "knew", for example: "Adam knew Chava his wife, and she conceived." (Gen. 4:1) "Elqanah knew Hannah his wife, and YHWH remembered her."

¹ Bava Batra 110a

(1Sam. 1:19) Or HaChaim explains that the Torah does not say “knew” because Rivka’s pregnancy was due to Divine intervention. The Talmud² explains that during the first three days one may pray that his seed should not spoil as there is a possibility of one’s wife conceiving from that union, and thus it is appropriate for a person to pray during that time that his wife should conceive. Accordingly, Yitzchak prayed “and YHWH answered his prayer” since his cohabitation had already taken place and his prayers were for his wife to conceive. Thus, Hashem “answered, and Rivka his wife conceived.”

It is written (v. 22), “And within her the children struggled together, and she said, “If all is right, why am I this way?” So she went to ask YHWH.” The children in Rivka’s womb were pressing against each other greatly to the point that if they continue to struggle against each other that they would be crushed and would not survive in her womb. Thus, she is pointing at her pregnancy and says, “Why am I this way?”, which indicates the babies will soon be born.

Since there is a chance that she might lose a child, “she went to ask YHWH.” As explained previously, Rivka was barren and she knew her pregnancy was caused by the Divine intervention. So, she understood that Hashem would not perform His miracle just so she should miscarry. Therefore, when her pregnancy appeared threatened she wondered about it, and sought the word of Hashem to find out what she could do to avoid the loss.

It is written (v. 23), “And YHWH said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated from your body. And one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older serve the younger.”” Hashem responds to her request in verse 22. He is explaining to Rivka that her pregnancy was different from all other pregnancies since “two nations are in your womb,” meaning they themselves are the kings of their distinct nations, and their separate regimes will endure through their descendants until the End of Days which is all the more reason they cannot peacefully coexist. Therefore, their separation, from the pregnancy is different in characters and looks.

“And one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older serve the younger.” It conveys that there was yet another issue that deepened the twins’ inability to coexist peacefully. Rashi³ cites from the Talmud, Tyre, a city of Esav’s descendants was filled with success only from the ruins of Yehrushalayim. Meaning, one nation will become great through his fellow’s downfall, the fallen nation will also have to become subservient to the one who became great on his account, causing greater rift with hatred between two brothers.

It is written (v. 26), “So his name was called Ya’akov.” It indicates that the name “Ya’akov” was given by Hashem as it was followed by “Yitzchak was sixty years old when she bore them.”

It is written (v. 28), “And Yitzchak loved Esav because he ate of his wild game, but Rivka loved Ya’akov.” This does not mean that Esav would trick his father with words for he was not concerned about the *mitzvah* of honoring one’s parents. Rather, Esav acted in this manner because he was afraid of being cursed by Yitzchak, and because he hoped to receive the blessings of Abraham. This did not apply to Rivka, for she did not control the blessings of Abraham. Therefore, Esav was not concerned about Rivka’s perception of him and did not try to trick her into thinking he was pious. This is supported when Esav said (Gen. 27:41), “The days of mourning for my father draw near, then I am going to kill my brother Ya’akov.” Notice that Esav did not include his mother when he declared these words. Esav decided to wait until his father died before killing Ya’akov, so that his father would not become aware of his true nature. Because he did not care whether his mother was still alive at that time because he was unconcerned with what she thought of him.

It is written (v. 29), “And Ya’akov cooked a stew, and Esav came in from the field, and he was weary.” The sages teach that Ya’akov was cooking stew because Abraham returned at this time, and Ya’akov was cooking a lentil soup to feed the guests who were present during the mourning of Abraham. “Esav came in from the field, and he was weary,” because on this day he killed Nimrod and was evading from the soldiers of Nimrod after he was discovered.

² Berachos 60a

³ Megillah 6a

It is written (v. 30), “And Esav said to Ya’akov, “Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.” That is why his name was called Edom.” The literal translation is “Please pour into me, now, some of that very red stuff, for I am exhausted.” This means that Esav named himself “Edom” after the food, not because the stew was red.

It is written (v. 33), “Swear to me today.” Ya’akov was dealing a business transaction that is airtight as his grandfather, Abram dealt with the purchase of the cave of Machpelah. Therefore, Ya’akov was not just buying the birthright, but as well as the obligation of the duties of the firstborn.

It is written (v. 34), “Thus Esav despised his birthright.” Meaning, he did not think too highly of his birthright for he sold it for a bowl of soup. Thus, he viewed “his birthright” as something of little value. So, the Torah is informing us that even without the duress of hunger, he was willing to sell his birthright without any value.

Now, there are two kinds of inclinations which is *yetzer tov* and *yetzer ra* (good inclination and evil inclination.) The *yetzer ra* has two inclinations, natural and external. They work together as a husband and a wife. For example, let’s say there are two children. One is chubby and the other is skinny. When they see food, they act differently. The chubby one eyes the food as if it is the last thing on the earth and gorges himself while the skinny one’s mind is on other things rather than the food in front of him.

When Hashem designed the people, He places inclinations to all of them. For example, one might have stronger pull toward food while the other doesn’t. So, the inclination we all have is not chosen at random. Rather, it all depended upon how that soul died in a previous life. If a person died hungry in the past life, he is born desiring food. This is natural evil inclination, his focus on his life is about food. He may be generous in charity, have good relations with others. But when it comes to food, he is like a hungry animal.

The external evil inclination appears to himself as same, but not same as to others. For example, let’s say there is a bowl of Chinese food. One looks at the food and ready to devour it, but others might think if such food is kosher or not. One attacks the food despite he has a doubt whether the food contains prohibited ingredients. Such behavior is mixed with “natural” that is desiring food, and “external” that despite doubting the food being kosher, he eats it. For this reason, the “natural” and “external” evil inclination works together hand in hand.

Our Torah portion “Toldot” (Generations) is in plural. Ya’akov is described as “a simple man, dwelling in the tent,” while Esav is described as “a cunning hunter, a man of the field.” Thus, we are to combine these two characteristics in this physical world while we are still alive. “A simple man, dwelling in the tent” means that we sit and learn the wisdom of Hashem without an excuse to be “a simple man”. Afterwards, we are to go out to the “field” and there “hunt” the quarry of worldly matters, making from them return to Hashem. Only then do we receive the blessings of Yitzchak.

Being “a simple man dwelling in the tent” is not sufficient. We are also to perform the service of Esav, “a cunning hunter, a man of the field,” into the world, to those places which are in reality a fraud and adopt its ways to elevate that place. Now, one can say that one does not wish to associate in any way with a person who is not walking the Way of Hashem. But then, nothing will ever be done. If one is filled with His Shekinah, then there is nothing that can influence him as he is already fulfilled Torah and mitzvot (deeds). It is not enough to keep Torah alone and mitzvot, one must also transform the world into holiness as Moshe has done, “Go out, fight with Amalek.” (Exo. 17:9) to elevate the sparks found therein.

This does not mean that we should all “go out” and be uncontrolled. Rather, we are to conduct ourselves as mentioned in the Torah by following His commandments and share with them the Will of Hashem. Chanukah has as its etymological root word “Chinuch” (Education). It is customarily to give charity to the needy during Chanukah. As such, parents have a tremendous responsibility to educate their children as their membership in the Army of Hashem. The children have a tremendous merit and responsibility to be a member of the Army of Hashem by conducting appropriately to redeem themselves, their parents, and all Yisrael from exile.

So, we cannot make any excuses anymore. There are no valid excuses as to quibble over our children's education, nor educating ourselves as the Torah enables us to learn ourselves. Nor could we say, "I know the truth, and I only share with the people who are willing to listen." Deep down, this is also an excuse. The reason we study the Torah is so that we can emulate Hashem, of His thoughts, His actions as our Messiah, Yehushua has shown to us. We are to influence others by means of emulating Yehushua as He has done for His father. Only then, we can be in the Army of Hashem and obtain the ability to share His wisdom so that they also join in the Army of Hashem. Let the light of ancestors brighten our lights burn brighter in the darkness as Chanukah approaches soon, so is our Messiah.