

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Toldot	18 Nov 2017	29 Chesvan 5778	Gen. 25:19-28:9	1Sam. 20:18-42	Matt 10:21-38

Genesis 25:19-28:9

Genesis 25

Two *parashat* ago, in Vayeira, we learned of Isaac willing to sacrifice himself for Hashem. Even though, he lived longest of all Patriarchs, Isaac was the subject of only one parashat compared to Abraham and Sarah's three, and Jacob to six parashot. The Torah does not mention him teaching the Way of Hashem, nor involved in any battles, nor to expand his family lines. The only thing that he did active was digging wells.

Yet, the Torah does not criticize him for his passiveness. the Torah only describes him as a well-digger, a husband to one wife, two children, and did not mingle with politics, nor leaves the confines of the Holy Land. Nor does the Torah gives any hint of dissatisfaction against Isaac.

The Sages tell us that Isaac understood as well as Abraham that his father's work of monotheism and the limitation of disseminating Divine purpose to everyone. Abraham, to reach the widest people, he made no demands on his listeners because the world was not yet interested in what he had to say. Its result was limited influence to his listeners and did not affect any permanent change in them other than his family.

Isaac understood that to continue his father's work, he had to encourage and lay spiritual foundations to the audience for them to grow. Whereas Abraham's approach can be conceived of bringing Divine presence "down" to the lowest rungs of humanity, Isaac's approach can be conceived of elevating people so they can integrate increasingly higher levels of Divine consciousness into their lives.¹

If Abraham's message to the world was: "Come revive your jaded, insensate minds with the refreshing water of Divine consciousness," Isaac's message was: "Now that you have been revived, look for your own source of water. Dig away all the dirt, rid yourself of all the filth encumbering your life, and you will reveal within yourself a wellspring of Divine awareness that will serve to quench your spiritual thirst your whole lifetime."²

The Midrash interprets in verse 19 that Isaac took pride being Abraham's son, and Abraham to Isaac. Also, in this verse, we see the name of Abraham mentioned twice in a quick sequence, whereas Isaac's name is mentioned later.

We learned Abraham embodies kindness (*chesed*), while Isaac embodies severity (*gevurah*). The Sages teaches that when discipline is taken, we should never do so twice in succession. That there has be a gap in kindness between every two occasions.

This is why Isaac's name never appears twice in a consecutive manner throughout the entire Torah. Whereas Abraham (kindness) and Jacob (harmony) do appear consecutively. Similarly, the Name

¹ Torah, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 169

² Ibid, p. 169

of Hashem that indicates His severity (Elokim) never appears twice in succession in the Torah, whereas the Names that indicate His kindness (Havayah³ and Keil⁴) do.⁵

Verse 22: “Struggle did the children” –When Rebecca would pass by academy of Shem and Eber, Jacob would struggle to get out; and when she passed a temple of idol worship, Esau would struggle to get out.

Verse 25: “The first one emerged red.” – As we have studied, Esau’s skin was ruddy which portrays him to be a shedder of blood, and he was full of hair all over like a coat, so everyone present at his birth called him Esau (*Asui* – “completed”). His name is also a metaphor for our animating soul. Like Esau, our instinct is revealed first before our Divine soul manifests.

Both boys grew up under Abraham’s tutelage and positive influence. However, when they turned 13, Jacob stayed with Abraham while Esau chose life of the world. Esau became an expert in trapping people with clever questions, i.e. salt and straw for tithing, should their worth be assessed according to its value or the value when it was used for its best advantage. Isaac loved Esau, for the game he provided and he was deceived by Esau’s cunning words. Now, “game” speaking metaphorically, refers to the sublime “sparks” of holiness that Esau possessed. His greatest asset is symbolized by his head, while his wicked, lowly behavior is symbolized by his body.⁶ For this reason, Esau’s severed head was buried in Isaac’s bosom once separated from the wicked body. Whereas Jacob was a guileless man and went to live with Shem and Ever to continue to study the Torah. Thus Rebecca loved Jacob.

In the year 2123, when Esau was 15 years old, he was eager to start his immoral lifestyle openly. The Sages say that it was the intention of Hashem for Abraham to live 180 years. But because He did not want Esau’s lifestyle seen by Abraham, He shortened 5 years of Abraham’s life.

On the day that his grandfather died, Jacob was cooking a stew of red lentils to serve his father as the customary first meal of mourners (the round meal represents that mourning is part of the cycle of life). Esau came in from the field, exhausted from running and hiding from the soldiers of Nimrod when he killed him.

The Torah says, “[Esau] ate, drank, got up and left.” If he sold the birthright under duress, we would expect some regret after he ate. But we hear none of that. Did he not deserve the birthright? Here are some answers.

The Talmud says: R’ Yochanan said: That wicked man [Esau] committed five sins on that day. He dishonored a betrothed maiden, he committed a murder, he denied HaShem, he denied the resurrection of the dead, and he spurned the birthright.

- [We know that] he dishonored a betrothed maiden, because it is written here, “And Esau came in from the field,” (25:29) and it is written in another place [in connection with the betrothed maiden], “He found her in the field.” (Deut. 22:27)

³ Exodus 34:6

⁴ Psalms 22:2

⁵ Zohar, 1:11

⁶ Torah, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 169

- [We know that] he committed murder, because it is written here [that he was] faint, and it is written [in Jeremiah], “Woe is me now, for my soul faints before the murderers.” (Jer. 4:31)
- [We know that] he denied HaShem, because it is written here, “What benefit is this to me?”, and it is written in [Exodus], “This is my HaShem and I will make him an habitation.” (Exod. 15:2)
- [We know that] he denied the resurrection of the dead because he said, “Behold, I am going to die [sooner or later]”.
- [We also know that] he spurned the birthright, because it is written, “So Esau despised his birthright.” (Bava Batra 16b)

There are many discussions as to why Esau behaved in such grievous manner in the Talmud, Zohar, and Genesis Rabbah. One thing is certain that Esau sold his birthright willingly for a bowl of soup Jacob made. Chizkuni, from 13th-century France, argues that Esau was not fundamentally evil, but lived only for the moment, a slave to his physical desires.

In conclusion, Esau probably sold the birthright to Jacob for a fair price. Esau was willing to sell because the monetary value of the birthright was low anyway, and it carried responsibilities, religious and non-religious which were not interest to him.

Genesis 26

Verse 5: “Because Abraham obeyed My voice”- The word ‘because’ in Hebrew is ‘akiev’ (ayin, kuf, bav) which means ‘heel,’ and the word for ‘heeded’ is shema (shin, mem, ayin) which means ‘heard’. This sentence can be translated as, ‘Abraham heard (shema) My voice down to his heel (akiev).’

There are two types of hearing: 1. A listener hears the message, but does not absorb the message. 2. A listener hears the message, and absorbs to understand the message to act upon.

“My commandments” are laws that we can understand and follow.

“My decrees” are laws which we cannot explain through our reasoning, only Hashem understands.

“My teachings” are the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. The latter includes rules and interpretations transmitted to Moses at Sinai.

At first, Isaac wanted to go down to Egypt when famine started. For this reason, Hashem appeared and told him not to go to Egypt and to go to a place where He showed him which is Gerar. Now Abimelech (son of Abimelech) had covenant with Abraham. Other than asking who was Rivkah, Abimelech did not attempt take her. Instead, he was upset when he saw Isaac ‘playing with Rivkah’ a year later. When Isaac was confronted by Abimelech and he confessed to the identity of Rivkah and the reason for it. Abimelech declared any man who causes harm to Isaac and his wife would be put to death.

Now, the Torah describes disputes between Abimelech’s people and Isaac in detail. The commentators note that there must be reasons why the Torah relates the seemingly trivial incidents

of the wells in such detail.⁷ The first well, names *Esek*, or *contention*, alludes to the First Temple, which fell because of the strife of between the House of Israel and the House of Judah. The second well, *Sitnah*, or *enmity* alludes to the Second Temple period caused by jealousy and the hatred toward Israel by her enemies. The third well, *Rehoboth*, or *spaciousness*, alludes to the future Temple when strife and enmity will be things of the past (Ramban).

From verse 26-33, we read Abimelech chasing after Isaac. When Isaac left Gerar, the land belonging to Abimelech, the wells dried up and the trees bore no fruit. Abimelech concluded that the cause for famine was because they had driven him away. So Abimelech went to Isaac to extend the treaties not only from Abraham's time, but between them, in the hope of saving his kingdom.

In verses 34-35, we read that Esau marrying Hittite women at the age of 40 like his father did in the year of 2148. However, the women he married were idolatrous and constant thorn to Isaac and Rivkah. Rashi comments that Esau's first wife's name was Aholivamah the daughter of Anah.⁸ But Esau names her Judith [Yehudit – a woman who acknowledges that idolatry is false]⁹ to trick Isaac that she was righteous. And he called her 'the daughter of Beerli the Hittite', but she was from Hivite.

The second wife, Adah was the daughter of Eilon whom the people called as "Basemat" which means 'spice woman' for she offered incense to idols regularly. Again, he tricked Isaac that her deeds were righteous and pleasing as the fragrance of spices. Thus, Rashi cites the Midrash: Esau is compared to a swine that, when it lies down, stretches out its cloven hooves, as if to say, "See, I am a kosher animal!"

Genesis 27

Now, Isaac was 123 years old when his eyes were dim. The Sages tell us that this was due to a curse placed upon Sarah when she went to Gerar after leaving Egypt. R' Yitzhaq said: The curse of an ordinary man should never be considered a trifling matter in your eyes, for when Abimelech called a curse upon Sarah, it was fulfilled in her son, as it says in the Torah, "Behold, he is to you a covering of the eyes" (Gen. 20:16) which means: "Since you have covered the truth from me and not disclosed that Abraham was your husband, and have thus caused me all this trouble, let it be the will of Heaven that there shall be to you a covering of the eyes." And this was actually fulfilled in her seed, as it is written: "And it came to pass that when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see."¹⁰

The Talmud makes a similar argument for blessings: Both blessings and curses are effective, no matter who pronounces them. The verbal call for good or bad things to happen to a person carries with it the power to make them happen. So deeply rooted is this belief that the Torah prohibits cursing outright:

- He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.¹¹
- You shall not curse the ruler of your people.¹²

⁷ Chumash, The Schottenstein Edition

⁸ Genesis 36:2

⁹ Torah, The Lubavitcher Rebbe

¹⁰ Genesis 27:1; Bava Kamma 93a; Megillah 15a

¹¹ Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9

¹² Exodus 22:27

- You shall not curse (even) the deaf.¹³ The implication is that this is not just a psychological phenomenon, because the deaf can't hear you. It is real: Your curse will come to pass.

The prayer book also addresses curses. After the Amidah, we say: My Elohim, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully. And to those who curse me, let my soul be silent, and let my soul be [humble] like dust to everyone.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe said there is no reason to be afraid of curses. To bring Hashem's blessings, increase your study of Torah and your observance of commandments. Go to a synagogue where the priestly blessing, the Birkat Kohanim is recited, because Hashem's blessings are far more powerful than any person's curses.

It is also interesting to note that there was no blessing given to his or her children in the Torah until now. Even Abraham did not bless Isaac. Nor did Adam bless Seth. This chapter is also the beginning of blessings from father to his sons. That being said, Isaac's blessing was not equally balanced.

Verse 1-4: At the age of 123, Isaac calls Esau and tells him he was going to bless Esau before his death. As the firstborn, Esau had the presumptive right to the blessings, and Isaac would not have had the right to deny them to him unless there was compelling cause. The Gemara tells a story of Esau that when he came to his father he would dress properly. Esau would wear a garment made by Hashem for Adam to wear. Since such garment was holy, he would always wear it before appearing in front of Isaac.

Esau was always cordial and respectful to his father. He would follow the command of his father to the letter. Now, Isaac knew the *kalipha* of Esau. But his minds were very spiritual. For this reason, Isaac took upon himself to change the way of life Esau has chosen.

The Torah says that before Jacob died, he called his sons and told them that he wished to be buried in Machpelah. After his death, his sons followed his father's last wish and took his body to Machpelah. Upon their arrival, they saw Esau blocking an entry to the cave and demanded the ownership of it. Esau, being the firstborn had as much rights as Jacob did since the cave contained the bodies of Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, and Leah. Thus, there is only one spot for burial in the cave and Esau wanted to be the one buried there.

Naphtali runs back to Egypt to bring back the ownership paper. Meanwhile, there was a young man whose name is Chushim the son of Dan was dumb and deaf was guarding the bier and did not know Esau. All he knew was that a man was blocking the path for his grandfather's gravesite. So, he took the knife and killed Esau. Esau's head rolled toward the grave just outside the grave where Isaac was buried. Thus, the Gemara tells us that Esau was proper that he took care of his father, Isaac, but the *kalipha* of his body stayed outside the grave.

After 85 years of marriage, Rebecca instigates Jacob to lie so that he can receive the blessing from Isaac. After such long marriage, wouldn't it be possible for Rebecca to go to her husband and say Esau is not who says he is and the rightful owner of the blessing should go to Jacob? So, the Torah

¹³ Leviticus 19:14

is teaching us that there are times when some values are more important than the truth. Because the Torah does not allow lashon hara.

We now have to go back to Rebecca's pregnancy to understand the reason of her scheme. While she was pregnant, when she would pass by the schools of Shem and Eber, a baby would kick trying to get out. When she would pass by idol worship place, a baby would kick trying to get out. She did not know what was going on, so she went to Shem and Eber to ask them about her pregnancy. They told her that she has a twin, and one is righteous and the other is wicked. Also, they told her that the older would serve the younger. And she holds on to the secret for 64 years. Why did she not go directly to Isaac and tell him about the prophecy? Because it will demean the status of Isaac. She knew that by telling the prophecy to Isaac, the discussion of Shem and Eber would reduce the status of righteousness in Isaac.

There are 3 circumstances where we are permitted to lie: 1. me and another person – so it will not cause embarrassment to another; 2. between me and pagans - to get out of situations for me to survive; and 3. allowed to lie to fix the world – sometimes wearing the garment of Esau.

In Genesis chapter 25, verses 27-28 says that Isaac loved Esau because he was a hunter and Rebecca loved Jacob, but it does not explain why. The Sages point out that Esau was not just a hunter who goes out and kills a game. Rather, he was very cunning. Esau would go to the class and would learn the headlines for the day, then he would go out and do whatever he wanted. He would then return to his father and would tell him what he learned from the school, whereas Jacob stayed and studied.

After the blessing was given to Jacob, and Isaac was told how Jacob received the blessing, is it not normal for him to get angry? Instead, we read in verse 33, "Isaac trembled violently" that the blessing went to unknown person. But when he learned, the blessing went to Jacob, Isaac did not get angry with him. Rambam said Isaac, then he understood Jacob was supposed to get the blessing and that is the reason he did not get angry with Jacob.

The rivalry between the brothers intensified when Esau determined to kill Jacob after their father's death. And it still continues to this day. However, Esau's filial devotion to his father continued because he did not want to cause him grief. Nevertheless, Rebecca feared for Jacob's life, even while Isaac was still alive. Although Esau implied that he would not carry out his intention until Isaac died, Rebecca could not be sure when that would happen, so she ordered Jacob to flee before it was too late (Or HaChaim).

Genesis 28

Isaac blesses Jacob before sending him away to Paddan-Aram to marry a girl from there, and not to take a wife from Canaan. When Esau heard how much his father hated the Canaanite women, he marries again for the third time with his cousin, Machalat, daughter of Ishmael to show he was following his father's wishes.

Shortly after Machalat became engaged to Esau, her father dies, making her an orphan bride. Thus, when she married Esau, she did so only as the sister of her brother Nevayot, who was handling the marriage in place of his father.

Machalat's given name was Basemat (not to be confused with Basemat, daughter of Eilon, the Hittite.) She was nickname Machalat which means "The Forgiven One" on her wedding day, because she repented of all her past sins on the wedding day as Hashem forgives all a person's past sins on their wedding day if they repent properly.¹⁴ Esau wanted to show his father that he repented of his sin as Machalat was now a righteous woman because of her repentance. The Torah shows that Esau's repentance was a sham, for it says "in addition to the wives he already had" in verse 9.

Haftarah

This week's haftarah falls within Rosh Chodesh. Therefore, we read from First Samuel 20:18-42. The haftarah we normally read is Malaki 1:1-2:7 which evokes the ancient rivalry between Jacob and Esau, as it focuses on the ongoing historical strife between their descendants – Israel and Edom.

Matt 10:21-38

Verse 28: "Be afraid of the One" – Rather, "have fear" of YHWH. The Fear of YHWH is one of the Seven Spirits of YHWH mentioned in Isaiah 11:2-4. They are the Ruach of wisdom (זִיּוּן) and understanding (חָכְמָה), the Ruach of counsel (מוֹדָר) and might (זֶכֶד), the Ruach of da'at (דַּא'ת) and the fear (פֶּחַד) of YHWH, and His Righteousness (צְדָקָה). Yeshua is contrasting the fear of man (religion) with the Fear of Elohim (truth). When the "fear" of YHWH became theologically changed into "reverence", the authority of men in ministry "Reverends" began to command fear unto themselves that is intended solely unto the Mosh High. The Fear of YHWH empowers Yeshua's followers to uphold the Word of YHWH, regardless of consequences. (Romans 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:11; 7:1; Ephesians 5:21; Revelation 15:4)

Verse 36: refers to Micah 7:6

Verse 37: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." – Compare the phraseology to Luke 14:26 "he who comes to me and does not hate his father or mother is not worthy of me." Matthew's version is literal while Luke's version is *remez* (אָמֵר). To enter into the Kingdom of Heaven we must love Mashiyach Yeshua more than anything or anyone else. This does not mean that we fail to love and honor our parents. Rather, it means that however much love is lavished upon one's parents; more should be given to Yeshua. Our love for the Kingdom of Heaven brings eternal life to both ourselves and potentially to your family members. By comparison, earthly love "looks" like hatred. YHWH is the Author of love, as we devote our love to Him, and give Him our time to worship Him and study Him and His Word, only then are we better able to love ourselves and those around us.

Verse 38: "Anyone who does not take the staff" – Take up your staff and follow means to exercise your personal authority. A staff is a symbol of authority that is used for mobility and protection (Numbers 17:1-10). Christian version inserts "cross" here which does not appear in either Aramaic or Greek texts.

¹⁴ Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, p. 170