

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Toldot	10 Nov 2018	2 Kislev 5779	Gen. 25:19-28:9	Mal. 1:1-2:7	Matt 10:21-38

Our parashat begins with “And these are the generations of Yitzchak, Avraham’s son: Avraham begat Yitzchak.” (Gen. 25:19) “The generations” in Hebrew is “*toldot*” (תולדות). The sages explain the people were saying to each other that Yitzchak was not a biological son of Avraham. Their basis of conclusion came from Sarah when she was taken by Avimelech and impregnated by him. How did they derive such conclusion? Avraham who was so righteous could have a son like Esav who was wicked and evil.

The Torah refutes by reemphasizing that Yitzchak is a son of Avraham. The Midrash explains that Hashem wanted to quell thoughts of other people by making Yitzchak look same as Avraham. Thus Yitzchak was exact duplicate of Avraham when he was younger.

The Zohar¹ opens with R’ Hiyya by quoting from Psalms 106:2, “Who can express the mighty acts of YHWH, or make all His praise to be heard?” He is explaining the birth of Yitzchak using this verse, but first he praises the Torah. When Hashem desired to create the world, the Will came in front of Him.

Before we do anything, there has to be a *ratzon* (רצון, will; desire). So, a *ratzon* comes before the thought. When we do something, there has to be a *ratzon* and it has to come before thoughts. When Hashem wanted to create the lower world, the *ratzon* came first. Then, it came into His thought, that is all the actions of what will happen in the world below to the end of generation. Why?

Everything is revealed to Hashem even before it was created. So, even before He created the world, He already saw everything in detail before it existed. So far, everything was in theory and He liked what He saw, and brought it from potential into the physical world to action.

Hashem went and looked into the Torah. And with the power of Torah, He was able to create the entire world. What does it mean He looked into the Torah? He looked at the 22 letters of the Torah. What came out of these 22 letters of the Torah? 10 speeches. This is the secret of Sefer Yetzirah (the Book of Formation.) Hashem created the world with 32 paths of Wisdom. Thus, Elochim (Sefirah Gevurah of Hashem) is mentioned 32 times in the beginning of Genesis.

Hashem created something by taking each letter and combining them together. As it is written, “Then I was by Him, as a nursling (וְאֶהְיֶה אֵצֶלָּו, אֶמֶן) *va-’eh-yeh etz-lo, a-mon.*”) Do not read *amon* as nursling, but rather *umman* (as artisan. Torah says, “I was the artistic tool of the blessed Holy One.”

When Hashem was about to create Man, Torah says, “If a man is created and he sins, and You punish him and he cannot endure Your judgment. So, why should the work of Your hands be in vain?” Hashem replied, “I made a loophole. I have already prepared *teshuvah* (returning; repentance) before creating the world.”

Isaiah 45:12 says, “I, even I, have made the earth, and created man upon it.” Everything in this world exists for our sake. The Torah calls out to us “to engage in her, to strive for her, but no one bends an ear.”² When we engage in the Torah, we sustain the world.

¹ The Zohar, 134b

² The Zohar, 135a

The nations around Yitzchak wondered, how could there be such a wicked person as Esav from a righteous man as Yitzchak. Rashi said that the land got curses after the sin of Adam. We know that when Adam sinned, he received 10 curses as well as to Chava, and the snake. But why did the land get 9 curses? He answered that man came from the earth. That is the reason the land was cursed. For this reason, there are 39 prohibitions of labor that we are not to do to during Shabbat to rectify these curses.

We can understand that Abraham had Yishmael because he came out from Charan as well as Sarah. But for Esav to be born from the tzadik (righteous) man like Yitzchak and Rivkah? How is this possible? Esav was not just wicked. But he is the symbol of evil. We see a hint in verse 19 when the Torah says, "And these are the generations of Yitzchak, Avraham begat Yitzchak."

The nations were mocking at Yitzchak that he could not be the son of Abraham who was 100 years old when Yitzchak was born. Now, Yitzchak was 60 years old when Esav was born. The sages explain that only after a generation, when they saw what came out of Yitzchak, then they were saying that Yitzchak could not have come from Avraham. After all Yitzchak was a righteous person.

So, in the beginning when Yitzchak was born, everybody believed that Yitzchak was Avraham's son. However, some 70 plus years later, when the people saw the behavior of Esav, they said Yitzchak could not be the son of Abraham. They were questioning how could such a wicked person could come out of a *tzadik*? Therefore, Yitzchak must be a son of Avimelech. For this reason, the Torah is clarifying the *toldot* of Yitzchak.

The Talmud says that the success and the failure of their children are dependent on the behavior of their parents. For example, if a child is placed in a bad neighborhood or friends, then the child will be influenced by their behavior. When the Talmud makes a statement, it is always backed by two stories. Here, once in Avot and the other in Succah.

To understand who Esav was, we first need to read the funeral procession of Yosef in the Book of Yashar. The Talmud says that Esav had utmost respect for his father. He would always put on his best clothes to see his father. (Gen. 27:15) In verse 27, Yitzchak "smelled the smell of his [Esav] clothing." Again, the Book of Yashar explains how Esav got such clothing.

Now, let us look at the pregnancy of Rivkah. In verse 22, the Torah describes difficult pregnancy. She said, "If it be so, wherefore do I live?" In Hebrew, "*lam-mah zeh a-no-chi*" (לָמָּה זֶה אֲנִי חַיָּה) (I want to die). After twenty years, she wanted to die? Rashi said that she already knew that one of her child was going to be an idol worshipper. The Midrash and the Talmud explains that when Rivkah passed by idol worship place, Esav wanted to go there by kicking and moving about vigorously. When she was passing by Shem and Ever *yeshivah* (place of learning), Ya'akov wanted to walk over there. Thus, "Struggle did the children."