

# תולדות

## TOLDOT/GENERATIONS Bereshith/Genesis 25:19-28:9

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We are often confronted with **questions** and **dilemmas** as we **study the Torah** and this week will be no different. In our parasha, **twin brothers** enter the picture and **before** they're even **born**, it is clear that **יהוה** has a **favorite**:

*Malachi 1:2 "I have loved you," says יהוה. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esav Ya'acov's brother?" Says יהוה. "Yet Ya'acov I have loved;<sup>3</sup> But Esav I have hated...*

*Romans 9:11 (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of Yah according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),<sup>12</sup> it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."<sup>13</sup> As it is written, "Ya'acov I have loved, but Esav I have hated."*

Scripture tells us that **character traits** and **purpose** can be set even **before birth**:

*Psalms 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.*

*Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."*

So **why** does **Yitzchak** “love Esav”? **Why** did the **aged Yitzchak** seem to **want to bless Esav over Ya'acov** when **יהוה** “hated Esav”? To attempt to **understand** these **complicated relationships**, we will **begin** with **Rivkah's barrenness** and her **subsequent pregnancy**:

*Bereshith 25:21 Now Yitzchak pleaded with יהוה for his wife, because she was barren; and יהוה granted his plea, and Rivkah his wife conceived.<sup>22</sup> But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of יהוה (אֶת-יְהוָה לְדַרְשׁ) (לְדַרְשׁ אֶת-יְהוָה)*

After **twenty years of marriage**, Yitzchak's prayers are answered and **Rivkah conceives twins**. However during her **pregnancy**, so **painful** was her **condition** and so **unsettled** was her **womb** that she decided to “**inquire of יהוה**”. To “**inquire of יהוה**” is an expression which, in similar contexts, refers to an **appeal to a prophet to explain the future**. As an example, “**Huldah the prophetess**” responded to the request of **King Josiah** concerning **future impending disaster**:

*2 Kings 22:14 ... went to Huldah the prophetess... And they spoke with her.<sup>15</sup> Then she said to them, "Thus says יהוה Elohim of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me,<sup>16</sup> "Thus says יהוה: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants -- all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read --<sup>17</sup> 'because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore **My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.**' " '18 "But as for the king of Judah,*

who sent you to inquire of יהוה (לְדַרְשׁ אֶת-יְהוָה) in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says יהוה Elohim of Israel: "Concerning the words which you have heard --<sup>19</sup> "because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before יהוה when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says יהוה.<sup>20</sup> "Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place." ' ' So they brought back word to the king.

יהוה's answer to Rivkah is indeed a prophecy of the distant future:

*Bereshith 25:23 And יהוה said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."*

The thrashing about within her womb was not simply physiology of a typical twin birth; but rather was to be regarded as the start of a great future struggle, of hostility and confrontation between two nations. The one nation would build up its greatness based on spirit and morals, while the other nation would seek its greatness through worldly strength and violence. Spirit and violence, manifesting themselves in Ya'acov and Esav, from birth onwards and in diametric opposition to each other. Future nations would be built based on these ideologies which CANNOT EXIST IN ONENESS! To quote Rav Hirsch:

“The whole of world history is nothing else than a struggle as to whether spirit or sword has the upper hand.”

Now, can you imagine the expectant Rivkah receiving this revelation of the future struggle that is beginning in her very own womb?!! On another level of teaching, Rav David Milston comments that this is in fact a story that each of us lives every day. He says, referring to the worldly versus spiritual struggle, that the agenda of the body (flesh) is diametrically opposed to that of the soul, and visa versa. Here is more of Rav David Milston's quote (emphasis mine):

“Just as we believe that Esav should be subservient to Ya'acov, so our bodies should be subservient to our souls. Just as Esav physically preceded Ya'acov, so the body precedes the soul. Just as at the start of their relationship Esav had the upper hand over Ya'acov, so too, at the start of life, our physical power seems to rule over our spirituality. Just as at the end of days Ya'acov will finally rule over Esav, so too our aim is that by the end of our lives our soul will control our bodies and not visa versa.”

Compare that with what Rav Sha'ul (Paul) had to say in Romans:

*Romans 7:14 For we know that the Torah is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold under sin.<sup>15</sup> For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.<sup>16</sup> If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the Torah that it is good.<sup>17</sup> But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.<sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing*

*good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.<sup>19</sup> For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.<sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.<sup>21</sup> I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.<sup>22</sup> For I delight in the Torah of Yah according to the inward man.<sup>23</sup> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.<sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?<sup>25</sup> I thank Yah -- through Yeshua the Messiah our Adonai! So then, with the mind I myself serve the Torah of Yah, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

To continue with the Sage's comments:

**“If Ya’acov is to overcome Esav, this will be a life long struggle, it will involve planning and strategy, it will involve constant awareness of every situation, and a need to foresee how that situation will develop. If we succeed then we become worthy of the name ‘Yisrael’. As human beings, each and every one of us was born into this reality. Each one of us is on our own personal front line. Our bodies have genuine needs, as do our souls. Our objective is categorically not to destroy ‘Esav’, it is to control ‘Esav’. We are commanded to live in this world, to actively involve ourselves in the physical reality of the world, yet our physical behavior, must be under the direction of our souls. To succeed in this mission of life requires constant effort and ongoing strategy. We cannot live ‘in both worlds’ and succeed. If the body is in control then the soul will be subservient, if the soul is in control then the body will be subservient.”**

Although in the English the translation reads *“the older shall serve the younger”*, this is stated rather ambiguously in the Hebrew. If we were certain of the phrase being interpreted *“the older shall serve the younger”*, the Hebrew should be written like this:

וְרַב יַעֲבֹד אֶת־צָעִיר

Instead, the Hebrew appears without the אֶת־ in Torah scrolls:

וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר

The purpose of the אֶת־ (et) would be to introduce the object, without a doubt making the “older” the subject and the “younger” the object of the phrase. However, in the absence of “אֶת־”, one may just as easily interpret the phrase to say *“the older shall be served by the younger”*! In Biblical Hebrew it is typically the subject that is mentioned first in such a statement, however, there are also places where they are reversed. Could we say that the deliberate vagueness is there to emphasize the oscillating nature of the relationship between the two nations? Therefore we see that the purpose of Rivkah’s painful pregnancy is to announce the emergence of two nations that will be in perpetual discord and disagreement....until eventually, the “younger” (Ya’acov/Israel) will win out.

The twin boys are born and grow up to display their differing personalities:

*Bereshith 25:27 So the boys grew. And Esav was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Ya’acov was a perfect man, dwelling in tents.*

It makes sense that the **spiritual Yitzchak** would **prefer Ya'acov**, but the **Torah** seems to **tell us otherwise**:

*Bereshith 25:28 And Yitzchak loved Esav because he ate of his game, but Rivkah loved Ya'acov.*

**Yitzchak's love** was **connected** to **Esav's game**, a very **perplexing reason** for **stating love**. Could there be **more** to the story? We are **very familiar** with the story of how **Ya'acov slyly** gained the following **blessing from his father**, **intended** for **Esav**:

*Bereshith 27:28 Therefore may Elohim give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine.<sup>29</sup> Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"*

The **blessing specifically** is in reference to **worldly wealth** and **power**. It is **not a spiritual blessing**. Notice **when Esav comes** to his **father** and **begs** for a **blessing** it seems that **Yitzchak has no more blessings**:

*Bereshith 27:35 But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing."*

However, **later** in the story **when Ya'acov is leaving home**, **Yitzchak DOES** have **another blessing** to hand out:

*Bereshith 28:3 "May El Shaddai bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples;<sup>4</sup> And give you the blessing of Avraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, Which Elohim gave to Avraham."*

**Yitzchak** is **blessing Ya'acov** with the "**blessing of Avraham**"...the **covenantal, spiritual blessing** he had **always intended** to give **him**. It was the "**power blessing**" that **Yitzchak** was **attempting to give Esav**. Apparently **Yitzchak** felt that his **spiritual son** needed **only spiritual blessings**, while his **physical son** needed the **physical blessing**. Did **Yitzchak** believe that maybe "**the older shall serve the younger**" meant **Esav** should **protect** his **younger brother** as **Ya'acov** did his part in **pursuing the Word**? However, because **Rivkah** had a **different understanding** of the **future prophecy** given to her concerning the **boys**, her **intervention** caused **Ya'acov** to **inherit both**.

The **ancient Sages** point to a **deeper meaning** of the text. When **Ya'acov** stood before his father to receive "**Esav's blessing**", **Yitzchak** had some **interesting words** to say:

*Bereshith 27:27 And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "See (ra'ah - רָאָה), the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which הריח has blessed.*

Have you thought about **what Yitzchak "smelled"**? We know that in order to **conceal his identity**, **Rivkah** had **placed goat skins** on **Ya'acov's arms** and around his **neck**. There could be **no worse scent** than the **stench** of the **goat hides** he was wearing. Yet he refers to the "**smell of a field which**

יִצְחָק has blessed'. We saw last week that part of Yitzchak's identity was related to a "field" in which he was praying...that "field" was part of the land that Avraham bought in Hebron to bury his wife Sarah and which also was likely the burial spot of Adam and Chavah (Eve):

*Bereshith 24:63 And Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field in the evening...*

It was specifically from a "field" that Yitzchak searched for the Almighty. What was he trying to find in the "field"? The answer lies in the scent of the Garden of Eden, which permeated Paradise prior to the sin of Adam, at a time before man was relegated to work the cursed ground.

So in our current parasha, when Ya'acov entered, Yitzchak smelled the aroma of the "field" of the Garden of Eden. He believed that his aggressive son, Esav, had succeeded in returning the scent of Paradise to the world. He believed that the physical (Esav) had somehow acquired spirituality. Of course, when the real Esav entered, "Yitzchak trembles" and sadly realizes his error:

*Bereshith 27:33 Then Yitzchak trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him -- and indeed he shall be blessed."*

In reality, it turned out to be Ya'acov, the one who sat and learned in the tents, and not Esav, the hunter, who radiated the scent of Paradise.

We find the concept of "smell" in relation to another who carried the scent of Paradise ...the Messiah of Israel. The prophet Isaiah speaks of Him:

*Isaiah 11:1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. <sup>2</sup> The Spirit of יִצְחָק shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of יִצְחָק. <sup>3</sup> His sense of smell is in the fear of יִצְחָק, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears*

His characteristic feature is His sense of "smell". How will He pass judgment without "seeing" or "hearing"? It appears that His sense of "smell" will allow Him to judge. The Messiah has the ability to judge one by his internal reality, and not solely on what can be seen or heard on the outside. Scent is that presence that is concealed and hidden from the eye's view. When Ya'acov stands before Yitzchak wearing the clothes of his brother Esav, he is unable to "see" him because of his failing vision. Yitzchak is not completely able to discern identity by voice, nor is he able to tell by touch. Even the kiss yields nothing. Instead, Yitzchak is able to detect one sure thing. He "smells" on the one before him, the scent of the Garden of Eden. From this alone, he is happy to bless the one who stands before him who he believes to be Esav.

Thus we gain more insight from Yitzchak's words in Bereshith 27:27... "See the smell of my son!" What is true on the inside cannot be totally concealed. The "smell" is what Yitzchak "saw".

**Sacrifices** were pictures of the **Messiah** that sent up “*sweet aromas*” to the **Almighty**:

*Shemot 29:41* "And the other **lamb** you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to יהוה.

As **believers** in the **Messiah of Israel**, do we carry the “*smell*” of the “**Messiah**”, the same which was present in the **Garden of Eden**?

*2 Corinthians 2:14* Now thanks be to Yah who always leads us in triumph in Messiah, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.<sup>15</sup> For we are to Yah the fragrance of Messiah among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.<sup>16</sup> To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life...

**Rav Sha’ul** also informs us that we are “**Yah’s field**” and as such we should **not display** “*fleshly*” tendencies:

*1 Corinthians 3:3* for you are still fleshly. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not fleshly and behaving like mere men?<sup>4</sup> For when one says, "I am of Sha’ul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not fleshly?<sup>5</sup> Who then is Sha’ul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as Adonai gave to each one?<sup>6</sup> **I planted, Apollos watered, but Yah gave the increase.**<sup>7</sup> So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but Yah who gives the increase.<sup>8</sup> Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.<sup>9</sup> For we are Yah’s fellow workers; you are Yah’s field...

And one more verse...the **prophet Amos** speaks to how יהוה feels about those who are putting in the motions without a sincere heart. Hmmm...bad smell...:

*Amos 5:21* "I hate, I despise your feast days, And I will not smell your sacred assemblies.

As a **result** of receiving **Esav’s** intended blessing, **Ya’acov** will be forced to leave “*his tent*” and become a **man of the “field**”. Not surprisingly, it is in a “*field*” where he finds a “*well*” and where he first meets his beloved wife, **Rachel**:

*Bereshith 29:2* And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone was on the well's mouth.<sup>3</sup> Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well's mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth.<sup>4</sup> And Ya’acov said to them, "My brethren, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran."<sup>5</sup> Then he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him."<sup>6</sup> So he said to them, "Is he well?" And they said, "He is well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep."

It is in a “*field*” where **Ya’acov** develops **shepherding skills**:

*Bereshith 31:4* So Ya’acov sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock,

**Ya'acov**, the “*complete*” and **spiritual man** of the **tents**, has now **added on** the **responsibilities** of the **physical world** (*the field*). Did **Yitzchak** understand that **some day** there would be a **perfect merging** together of the **physical with the spiritual**? Did **Yitzchak** see things from his **own particular vantage point**, **from the top of an altar high upon a holy mountain**? **Yitzchak's “eyes” no longer saw clearly**, and perhaps he had a **blurred understanding** that **caused him to want to bless his fleshly son, Esav** in the **hopes** that he would **come alongside to support his spiritual son, Ya'acov**. We have the **advantage of history** to show us how this **idea of merging together** would actually **happen**:

*John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*

**Yitzchak understood something** of the **future**. He saw the way things **SHOULD be**, although he went **outside** of the **Almighty's plan** in his **attempt** to bring these **things about**. It is interesting that **Yitzchak's name** means “*will laugh*”, implying the **future tense**. **Yeshua** tells us:

*Luke 6:21 ...Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh.*

In a **Messianic Scripture** we read:

*Psalms 126:2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter. And our tongue with singing...*

When will those “*who weep*” begin to “*laugh*”? **When Messiah comes!** Then **along with Sarah**, we will **declare** with **pure joy** in our **hearts**:

*Bereshith 21:6 And Sarah said, "Elohim has made me laugh, and all who hear (shema) will laugh with me."*

I believe **Yitzchak** had a **vague understanding** of the **future realities** of the **Messiah whose life** he **shadowed**. Like his **mother before him**, he **attempted to hurry along the Divine Plan**. But as always the **Almighty is able to give us wonderful lessons from Yitzchak's life** as “*all things work together for good to those who love Yah, to those who are called according to His purposes*.”

**Shabbat Shalom!**

***Ardelle***