

Parshas Toldos

For the week ending 29 Cheshvan 5758
28 & 29 November 1997

Overview

After twenty years of marriage without children, Yitzchak's prayers to Hashem are answered and Rivka conceives twins, Esav and Yaakov. The pregnancy is extremely painful.

Hashem reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the world-wide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins — Rome and Israel. Esav is born first, and then Yaakov, holding onto Esav's heel. As they grow, the contrast between the twins becomes apparent: Esav is a hunter, a man of the field, of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah developing his soul. On the day of the funeral of their grandfather Avraham, Yaakov is cooking lentil soup, the traditional mourner's meal. Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of soup, clearly demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of the firstborn.

Yitzchak tries to escape to Egypt when a famine strikes Canaan, but Hashem reminds him that because of the *Akeida* (where he was offered as a sacrifice) he has become holy and must remain in the Holy Land. Instead he relocates to *Gerar* in the land of the *Pliishtim*, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say that she is his sister. Yitzchak arouses jealousy when he becomes immensely wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave. Yitzchak re-digs three wells dug by his father, prophetically alluding to the three *Batei Mikdash* (Temples) which will be built in the future.

Avimelech, seeing the blessings that Hashem has bestowed on Yitzchak, makes a treaty with him. When Yitzchak senses the end of his days approaching, he summons Esav to give Esav his blessings. Rivka, acting on a prophetic command that the blessings must go to Yaakov, arranges for Yaakov to impersonate his brother and receive the blessings. When Esav in a rage of frustration complains to his father that his brother has bought his birthright, Yitzchak realizes that the birthright has been bestowed correctly on Yaakov who has valued its responsibilities rather than its privileges, and confirms the blessings he has given. Esav vows to kill his brother, and so Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife.

Insights

THE SECRET OF WELL-BEING

“Yitzchak’s servants dug in the valley and found there a well of fresh water. The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Yitzchak’s herdsman saying, ‘The water is ours,’ so he called the name of that well Esek, because they involved themselves with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also; so he called it Sitnah. He relocated from there and dug another well...” (26:19-22)

It's tough being fabulously wealthy.

It takes so much time and worry and effort to protect and embellish your riches. You have to inspect your factories, lunch with lawyers, account with accountants. The Internal Revenue Service has you in its sights. You hardly have time to put out the cat.

By our standards, the Avos — Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov — were multi-billionaires. A tycoon's portfolio would pale in comparison. And yet, in spite of all their wealth, they never lost sight for a moment of the purpose of their wealth.

Oil may be called “black gold,” but when you live in the desert your entire wherewithal is dependent on “white gold” — Water. Without water, you have nothing. When there was an argument over water rights, did Yitzchak become litigious? No. He let it go. He walked away and dug another well. Whenever there's a fight over something, it's going to eat up my time and peace of mind. What will I gain? Money? Status? Is it really worth it? It's going to knock me off the spiritual path, *so I walk away.*

Nothing is equal to the worth of my spirituality. That is my only lasting possession.

Yitzchak dug another well, “*Sitnah*,” whose name is derived from the word “*to oppose*.”

If the Philistines are trying to oppose my spirituality, to try to drag me down, I walk away. I build another well.

In the secular world they say that time is money.

We say “Money is time.”

All you ever have in life is time. You can spend your life with your lawyers, or you can spend it talking and listening to your Creator. It's up to you.

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel
©1997 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

☎ 972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

✉ ohr@virtual.co.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

☎ 1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

✉ RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

☎ 1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

✉ Somayach@MSN.com

Dedication opportunities are available for Torah Weekly — Please contact us for details.

Parshas Toldos — 29 Cheshvan 5758, 28 & 29 November 1997

Production Design: Lev Seltzer

A TENDER TRAP

“And Yitzchak love Esav, for trapping was in his mouth, but Rivka loved Yaakov.” (24:28)

In the celestial courtroom drama which will take place at the end of history, Hashem will turn to each of the Avos and say “Your sons have sinned.” Avraham and Yaakov will say to Hashem that if their offspring have sinned, they should be brought to punishment, for Hashem’s name is sanctified when those who sin are punished.

Yitzchak, however, will defend his children claiming that their sins were petty and insignificant. He will do his best to get them “off the hook.” Why, specifically, should it be Yitzchak who will go to greater lengths than the other Avos to seek clemency and leniency for his children? Especially as he himself is the embodiment of the fear of Heaven and its awe.

Yitzchak had a winning claim against Hashem. He could say to Hashem: “I also had a son who sinned — Esav. And in spite of my being only flesh and blood, I loved him and forgave and pardoned him.”

“You, Master of the Universe, You who are the essence of forgiveness, how much more so should You exonerate and forgive Your children, even though they have sinned against You!”

It turns out therefore, that through Yitzchak’s love for Esav, he had a substantial and well-founded defense for the Jewish People.

This is what the above verse means when it says that Yitzchak loved Esav “because trapping was in his mouth.” Yitzchak loved Esav so that when Hashem would accuse the Jewish People, Yitzchak would have a ready-made defense to, as it were, “trap” Hashem into forgiving them.

SONS AND FATHERS

“And these are the offspring of Yitzchak the son of Avraham — Avraham begot Yitzchak.” (25:19)

Yitzchak always considered that his only merit was that he was “the son of Avraham,” and Avraham thought that his only merit was that he “begot Yitzchak.” That is the way of the righteous: They never see themselves as sufficient in their own eyes; rather they see their only merit as being the son or the father of a righteous person.

THE VOICE

“The voice is the voice of Yaakov, and the hands are the hands of Esav” (26:22)

The Voice is given to Yaakov. And the Hands, to Esav. The Voice is the internal power which emanates from the heart. The Hands are the external power of action.

But these Hands, the hands of Esav, are not satisfied just to dominate the physical world. They strive constantly to subjugate the Voice. The

hands of Esav thrust themselves deep into the insides of Yaakov; coarse Hands delving into the depths of the soul; setting up an idol in the inner sanctuary of the Jewish soul; superficiality swelling up and suffusing the innermost chambers of the heart.

The Hands strangling the Voice; the Voice of prayer without the feeling of the heart; a mitzvah done mechanically — the Hands are working. And the Voice grows quieter and quieter.

But in spite of this, the Voice is *the voice of Yaakov*: destined to rise up, to dominate and elevate the Hands, to purify them and make them holy. When Yitzchak said that the voice was “*the voice of Yaakov and the hands, the hands of Esav*” he thought that it was Esav who was in front of him and that Esav had acquired the voice of Yaakov — that the Voice had sanctified and elevated Esav. The truth of the matter was that Esav had remained unchanged in his evil, while it was Yaakov who stood before him, garbed in the goatskin hides of Esav.

For the Voice — the voice of Yaakov — will ultimately permeate to the outermost layer of the skin, even to the very end of the material world.

Haftorah: I Shmuel 20:18-42

This Haftorah has been selected to be read on the Shabbat whose morrow is *Rosh Chodesh*. It begins with the words “Tomorrow is the Chodesh” which Yonatan, the son of King Saul, said to David at the outset of his plan. King Saul had demonstrated hostility towards David, whom he viewed as a potential competitor for his throne, and there was serious doubt as to whether it was safe for David to remain a part of the royal entourage. Out of his great affection for David, Yonatan assumed responsibility for alarming David if the tense situation ever reached a danger point.

In order to avoid detection by the king’s agents, Yonatan devised a secret method to inform David of King Saul’s reaction to David’s absence from the *Rosh Chodesh* feast in the palace. The Haftorah ends with David’s flight from Saul’s anger, and the covenant David and Yonatan reiterate which will forever bind them and their posterity. David and Yonatan’s mutual affection is cited by our Sages as the model of selfless love between two people.

Sources:

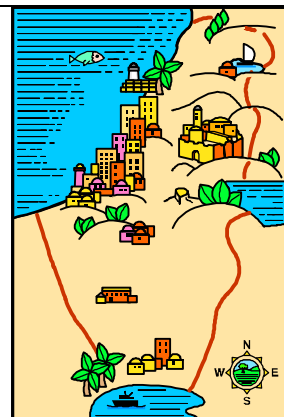
The Secret of Well-being - Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam as heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer.

A Tender Trap - Shelah HaKadosh in *Mayana Shel Torah Sons and Fathers* - Admor Rabbi Yechiel m’Alexander in *Iturei Torah*

The Voice - Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in *I’Torah u’l’Moadim*

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



SAGE ON THE BRIDGE

When Rabbi Zeira finally realized his dream of reaching *Eretz Yisrael*, only a river separated him from his goal. Rather than wait for the next ferry to take him across, he decided to use a primitive bridge consisting of a log spanning the river, which he walked upon while holding on to an overhead rope to ensure that he wouldn’t fall.

A heathen observer of this rickety crossing cried out to him: “Impulsive people that you are, who put your mouths before your ears (when they said “we will do” before they said “we will hear” in accepting the Torah without knowing what it required of them), you are still acting impulsively. Why don’t you wait for the ferry in order to make a safer and more comfortable crossing.”

To this Rabbi Zeira sighed: “A land which Moshe and Aharon did not merit to enter — who knows if I wait any longer that I will have the privilege of entering it!”

(Kesuvos 112a)

Parshas Toldos

For the week ending 29 Cheshvan 5758, 28 & 29 November 1997

Torah Weekly is available from several sources:

- World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il>
- Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America . Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details.
- E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message “sub weekly (your full name)” to lstproc@virtual.co.il

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.