

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 2 Kislev 5779,

TORAH DIALOGUE  
(p. 93 Hz) (p. 140 S) (p. 121 Hi) (p. 124 AS)  
TOLDOT הולדה

Genesis 25:19

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED), Rabbi Emeritus,  
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1. In the introductory sentence of this Sidrah, the Torah states that "Avraham begot Yitzchak." Rashi comments that the Torah was concerned that people would say that Avimelech fathered Yitzchak when he was with Sarah. Therefore Hashem made Yitzchak look like Avraham to remove all doubt. But the expression means much more than they looked like each other. Avraham taught a Torah way of life to Yitzchak, and he role-modeled a different world outlook to his son, the intellectual and spiritual heir to Avraham's "fortune." And Yitzchak followed suit. He also established a (small) Yeshiva like his father. He was dedicated to Eretz Yisrael. Of all the three Patriarchs, the Midrash states that Yitzchak was the holiest of the three because he was the only one who never left Eretz Yisrael in his lifetime. In his travels in the Land, Yitzchak also passed his wife off as his sister. He re-opened the same wells that his father had dug and established. He truly was his father's son. (RED)

2. And Hashem answered Yitzchak's prayer (that he and Rivkah be blessed with children) and not Rivkah's. Rashi quotes the Talmud in stating that "the prayer of a righteous man whose father was righteous is not like the prayer of a righteous man whose father was a sinner." The Oznam LaTorah quotes the Talmud (Taanit 23a,b): when Abba Chilkiya and his wife prayed for rain, it came because of his wife's prayer. Abba Chilkiya explained that while his wife gave the poor food which they could eat immediately, he could give only money, since he was not at home. How did Abba Chilkiya know that Hashem responded to his wife's prayer and not his? Maybe we are incorrectly making the comparison between these two cases. One is a case for the general welfare of the community, but our case is a personal individual matter of a family having children. In those days the education of the children was in the hands of the father, not the mother. And that is why Yitzchak's prayer was favored by Hashem. And maybe Avraham, who was alive at the time, was praying on behalf of the childless couple! (By the way Abba Chilkiya had ancestral merit, for he was the grandson of Chani HaMe'agel.)

3. Rivkah's pregnancy was difficult, and she therefore "went to inquire of Hashem." (25:22). Rashi comments that she went to the Beit Midrash of Shem to inquire what would happen at the end of her pregnancy. The Gur Aryeh asks the obvious question: why didn't she go to her husband Yitzchak or her father-in-law Avraham? He answers that she kept her predicament from them for fear that they would say that her difficult pregnancy was a sign that she had sinned. I would

think the opposite: that she did go to Yitzchak and Avraham. As prophets they could reveal only what Hashem tells them, and Hashem did not reveal to them what would happen in the future. This is implied in the Torah's statement that Rivkah went to inquire of Hashem, that she went to more than one person. Hashem did not reveal the future to Yitzchak and Avraham because it would change their attitude to Esav; they might dislike Esav from birth, and Esav would not receive the same education that Yaakov would receive as a child. You always give the best education available to your child ...and never give up hope. (RED)

4. Esav sells the Birthright for a bowl of lentil stew. One could claim that the sale was conducted under duress. After all, Esav was in a compromising predicament. He was exhausted and famished. But the last line of this chapter clarifies the issue: "Esav spurned (despised) the Birthright." (25:34). The Birthright did not mean anything to Esav. The Birthright was the spiritual leadership of the family, and Esav did not appreciate that or have any interest in it. He probably thought he got more than it was worth when he received a bowl of lentil stew. Yaakov, on the other hand, valued the Birthright; it meant the world to him. So what was the fair value of the Birthright in question? To one party it was worthless; to the other party it was worth a great amount. The proper sale price is determined by the two parties involved. The key factor here in this case was that Esav despised the Birthright. It signified to Esav all that he abhorred and rejected in his father's life. The fact that Esav rejected that life was the determining factor in this discussion. (RED)

HAFTORAH

(p. 102 Hz) (p. 159 S) (p. 831 Hi) (p. 1137 AS)  
MALACHI מלאכי 1:1

In Jewish literature, Esav is identified with Rome, although there probably is no blood lineage between the two. Esav is perceived as the person who desires everything from this world, to possess materially all that it is possible; this is the connection to Esav. This worship of force and plans to conquer the world is what provokes the prophet to state "Esav I hated." The Jewish view is supposed to be based on rules of justice and love, of being committed to doing for others. This is the highest goal for the Jew in this world. Esav seeks permanent fame and riches. The Epicurean motto of eat, drink, and be merry, is Esav's as well. Yaakov cannot accept this attitude. Yaakov will see himself scattered and without power. The world will seem quite cruel to him, but he stands firm in the belief that God reserves the greater reward for him. Among the Jewish people individuals rose who embraced more of the Esav tradition than that of Yaakov. Nevertheless, the nation as a whole has stood the test of time with good numbers of its people continuing to dedicate their lives with Torah values.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT TOLDOT 5779  
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

- I. From the Text
  1. Which Matriarchs were barren, unable to have children?
  2. What was the difference in the pursuits of Esav and Yaakov? (25:27)
  3. For what did Esav sell his birthright to Yaakov? (25:34)
  4. How did Rivkah disguise Yaakov to appear as Esav in Yitzchak's presence? (27:15-16)
  5. How did Yitzchak bless Yaakov? (27:28-29)
- II. From Rashi
  6. What proof did Hashem arrange to prove that Yitzchak was Abraham's son and not Avimelech's? (25:19)
  7. Why does the Torah repeat the fact that Rivkah is the daughter of Betuel? (25:20)
  8. To whom did Rivkah go to inquire about the significance of her difficult pregnancy? (25:22)
  9. Why did the Plishtim stop up the wells that Avraham had dug? (26:15)
  10. When did Rivkah's unintentional prophecy of losing both sons on the same day come true? (27:45)
- III. From the Rabbis
  11. What prophetic significance was there to the three wells that Yitzchak dug? (Ramban)
  12. Yitzchak blessed both sons with physical gifts. Where would the two sons blossom? (Ramban)
  13. Yaakov left home for Lavan's home in Padan Aram. When would Rivkah see her son Yaakov again?
- IV. From the Haftarah : Mal'achi
  14. Who will be the teachers of Israel and bring us up to a high level of Torah morality?
- V. Relationships
  - a) Yitzchak-Yosef
  - b) Rivkah-Esav
  - c) Rivkah-Yehudit
  - d) Yitzchak-Basmat
  - e) Nevayot-Machalat

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ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT TOLDOT 5779

1. Sarah, Rivkah, and Rachel.
  2. Esav was a hunter; Yaakov was a student (he was always in the tent, studying).
  3. A pot of porridge.
  4. She dressed him in Esau's clothing and put animal skins on his arms to appear hairy.
  5. Yaakov will be blessed spiritually and physically, and his brother will serve him.
  6. Yitzchak looked like Avraham.
  7. To praise Rivkah. Even though she was from an evil idolatrous home, she was righteous.
  8. To Shem, the son of Noach.
  9. The Plishtim considered those wells a menace, supplying water to invading armies.
  10. Esav would die on the day of Yaakov's burial. So they figuratively died on the same day.
  11. The three wells signify the three Holy Temples. The first two were destroyed by our enemies. The third will last forever.
  12. Yaakov will prosper in Eretz Yisrael; Esav will prosper in another land.
  13. She would never see him again.
  14. The Kohanim
- Relationships
- a) Grandfather Yitzchak
  - b) Mother Rivkah
  - c) Mother-in-Law Rivkah
  - d) Father-in-Law Yitzchak
  - e) Brother-Sister (both were children of Yishmael)