

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 5 Kislev 5781. Tonight we may say Kiddush Levanah, if we can gain benefit from the light of the moon.

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

TOLDOT תולדות

Genesis 25:19

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED),
Rabbi Emeritus and Sephardic Minyan Rabbi
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. After years of praying, Rivkah became pregnant. Due to the unusual pains of the pregnancy, she went to Shem, the son of Noach, to gain prophetic insight about her pregnancy. Why did she not consult with her husband or father-in-law, who were both prominent recognized prophets in their own right? The Paneach Raza wrote that perhaps Rivkah did not want her husband or father-in-law to see her suffering so much. And perhaps they would conclude that her suffering was due to her sinfulness. I would point out that a prophet could only know what Hashem tells them. A prophet would not necessarily know everything. The Rambam pointed out in his Code that there were different levels of prophets; each could know only what Hashem divulges to them. Rivkah felt more comfortable going outside the family. According to Rashi, she went to consult with Shem, who did reveal a great deal to her about the future.

2. According to the Akeidat Yitzchak, (Rabbi Yitzchak Arama, 1420 Spain - 1494 Italy), Esav kept all the Mitzvot while his father Yitzchak was alive. I find that hard to believe. It does not jive with the narrative at all. The Midrash leads us to believe that Esav observed Mitzvot until his Bar Mitzvah. This opinion is much more acceptable. The take away is that there are many influences in a child's life. Parents and grandparents have a definite strong influence, but so does the environment. A child's teachers also exert a tremendous amount of influence. But there is no way to predict how a child will turn out. As parents, we must be careful and especially aware of how we conduct ourselves, for what we do in life can sway our children in many areas. Yet there are no guarantees. We need to maximize our best behavior and pray for Mazel. I define Mazel as those influences which are beyond our control. So pray for the best and hang in there. As it says in Proverbs, "Yeish Tikvah." There is always hope.

3. The Midrash is intent on painting a relationship between Esav and Nimrod. They were attractive and popular people, who attracted many followers. Esav somehow possessed Nimrod's famous hunting garment. With all of his immoral faults, Esav nevertheless always wanted to be liked by his father. Like his father, Esav married at the age of forty. He asked his father Halachic questions in order to mislead his father into believing that Esav was observing Mitzvot. The Midrash compared Esav to a pig, who would recline and thrust his feet forward as if showing everyone his split hooves. The pig would say: See, I am kosher! Our Sages would identify Rome as being descendants of Esav, even though there is no historical data to support that idea. Rome was a perverse society, and like the pig showing his split

hooves, would tell the world that it was a just society, exerting justice and establishing a court system for its society. Rome was an immoral society which was cruel, like Esav. (RED)

4. When Esav was fresh from the hunt, he was hungry, and he ended up selling his Birthright to Yaakov. We could complain that the sale was improper; it was made under duress. Why would Esav want the Birthright? The Birthright was a religious responsibility, enabling that son to be the Kohen Gadol of the family. The only reason for Esav to want the Birthright was to deny it to his brother Yaakov. The whole narrative is justified by the last line in that paragraph: "And Esav despised the Birthright." The truth has now been stated. (The Midrash informs us that Yaakov was cooking lentils because Avraham had just died. He was preparing the Seudat Havra'ah, incorrectly translated as the Meal of Condolences. It ought to be translated as the Meal of Good Health. The mourner has just returned from the cemetery and needs to eat. Not eating would lead to depression.)

5. The Torah tells in detail the events of the Philistines contesting Yitzchak's wells. The story is neither important nor relevant or useful. The Ramban realized this problem and introduced a novel interpretation. He stated that the entire episode alluded to the future. Each well alludes to the Holy Temple. The first well was called Eisek, a Challenge. It refers to the First Temple, built by King Solomon in 832 BCE and destroyed by the Babylonian King Nevuchadnezzar in 422 BCE. Its destruction presented a great "challenge" to the Jewish people. The second well referred to the Second Temple, built by Ezra in 352 BCE and destroyed by the Romans in 68 CE, which according to the Talmud, was due to the sin of baseless hatred; hence the well was called Sitnah, hatred. The third well alludes to the Third Temple which will be built in the times of the Mashiach, during the time of peace and love. It was called Rehovot, open spaces. We will all repent and have the space to act on our own.

6. There are names, and there are titles. Everyone knows that the king of Egypt was the Pharaoh. This wasn't his name; it was his title. The same is true for Avimelech. That was his title, not his name. Similarly, the commentators state that Phichol was the title of Avimelech's general. The king of Amalek was called Agag, and this was not his name. The Midrash states that the word "Phichol" means "the mouth, Peh" responsible for the department of the army. The same was probably true for Malki Tzedek. This makes it challenging to officially date these events, since we are not getting the names of these officials. We don't see this within Jewish history. In non-Jewish history, it must have been quite common to assume the identity of leadership, without identifying the actual person. I wonder what the real story is for the Catholic popes, when a cardinal is elected Pope, he changes his name to a more recognizable name in Catholic history.

7. In the commission of the ruse that Yaakov performed upon his father, a significant part was the article of clothing used by Yaakov to disguise himself as Esav. At the yeshiva

in Volozhin in Poland in the 19th century, one yeshiva student started to dress himself in more modern garb. The other students informed the Rosh Yeshiva, the Netziv, but the Netziv quickly disregarded the issue, stating what is the difference. What sin is involved? The Netziv explained: when a clock stops working, it is not a problem with the hands of the clock. The problem is inside the clock, the mechanism. Similarly with one's clothing. The problem, if there is one, is not with clothing. The problem is completely within the person's body, in his head. A Jew's style of clothing can be an issue if it fails to reflect proper modesty. This defines Jewish dress.

other objects.) A difference exists between paper and cloth napkins when usage will cause discoloration. If one's face or hands, for example have become soiled by food which gives off color, such as cocoa or strawberries, one may use a paper napkin, which is disposed of after use, even if this incidentally colors the paper. If using a cloth napkin or towel, one should rinse his face or hands first before wiping, to avoid transferring color to the cloth. Pre-torn paper towels or tissues may be used on Shabbat, notwithstanding the fact that they are liable to tear in use.

8. MIDRASH. It was taught: Seven things are concealed from man. 1) the day of death. 2) the day of comfort (the day of the salvation and the rebuilding of Zion). 3) the absolute truth of judgement (a judge will never know when certain facts are hidden from him). 4) no man knows through what he will profit. 5) no man knows what is in his neighbor's heart. 6) no man knows what a woman is bearing (the nature of the child). 7) when the wicked state of Rome will fall. (Bereishit Rabbah 45:12, where the Midrash is commenting on Yitzchak's statement to Esav that he is old.) [RED's note: At the end of our life, certain realities of life are more known and accepted by each of us. Pithy comments like these dot our ancient literature. Similar lists can be compiled in our time.]

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.

SHABBAT HALACHAH

NAPKINS. Paper table napkins must not be folded into special shapes as is often done when setting a table for guests, but may be folded in half or into quarters or as is regularly done, for the sake of neatness. A cloth table napkin which has unfolded should not be refolded into its original folds. (One is generally permitted to fold a piece of paper, either into its original folds or into new folds, but one is not permitted to fold paper to make a toy, toy boat, toy plane, or