מדרש

Midrash

ON GENESIS 25:27

Why did two brothers raised together turn out so differently?

Bereshit Rabbah 63:10

Drawing on Rabbi Levi's parable of a myrtle and a thorn bush growing side by side, the midrash describes how Esav and Yaakov shared the same upbringing until age thirteen, when one turned toward the study hall and the other toward idolatry, and Rabbi Elazar adds that a father is responsible for his son only until that age. Reading "Esau was a man who knows hunting" through Rabbi Abahu and Rabbi Chiya, the midrash takes Esav's hunting to mean that he ensnared people with his speech and gave himself over like a field, and it cites Jeremiah 49:22 to show that G-d will repay Edom in kind for mistreating Israel. Yaakov's "dweller in tents" is read as two tents, the study halls of Shem and Ever, and Rivkah's love for Yaakov is said to grow each time she hears his voice. AI SUMMARY

"The lads grew; Esau was a man who knows hunting, a man of the field; Jacob was a simple man, a dweller in tents" (Genesis 25:27). "The lads grew" – Rabbi Levi said: This is analogous to a myrtle and a thorn bush that grew adjacent to one another. When they grew and blossomed, this one produced its fragrance and that one produced its thorns.

So, all thirteen years, both of them would go to school and both of them would come from school. After thirteen years, this one would go to study halls, and that one would go to houses of idol worship. Rabbi Elazar said: A person must be responsible for his son until age thirteen. From there on, he must say: 'Blessed that He has absolved me from the punishment of this one.'

"Esau was a man who knows hunting [tzayid]" – he would ensnare [tzad] people with his mouth. You [say you] did not steal; who stole with you? You [say you] did not kill, who killed with you? Rabbi Abahu said: He was a field person, a hunting person. He hunted in the house and hunted in the field. In the house, [he said]: 'How does one prepare salt?' In the field, [he said:] 'How does one prepare straw?'

Rabbi Ḥiyya said: He abandoned himself like a field. Israel said before the Holy One blessed be He: 'Master of the universe, is it not enough that you subjugated us to seventy nations, but even to this one, that engages in relations like a woman?' The Holy One blessed be He said to them: 'I, too, will exact retribution against him with that expression.' That is what is written: "The heart of the valiant of Edom will be on that day like the heart of a woman in anguish" (Jeremiah 49:22).

"Jacob was a simple man, a dweller in tents" – two tents; the study hall of Shem, and the study hall of Ever. "Isaac loved Esau because of the game in his mouth, and Rebecca loved Jacob" (Genesis 25:28). "Isaac loved Esau because of the game in his mouth" – good meat for his mouth and a good cup for his mouth.

"And Rebecca loved Jacob" – the more she would hear his voice, the more she would add love onto her love for him.

