

תולדות

Toldot

SHABBAT TABLE EDITION

Genesis 25:19-28:9
Haftarah Malachi 1:1-2:7
Shabbat, November 14, 2026
ד׳ בְּ כִסְלֵו תשפ״ז

Contents		תוכן
Bereshit Rabbah 63:10	2	מדרש
Ohev Yisrael	4	חסידות
Noam Elimelekh	5	חסידות
Kedushat Levi	6	חסידות
Bat Ayin	7	חסידות
Sefat Emet	9	חסידות

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.



חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

APTA · OHEV YISRAEL, TOLDOT

Mend the Divine Presence's lack first, and your own need follows

Ohev Yisrael

Drawing on the verse "in all their affliction He is afflicted" (Yeshayahu 63:9) and the image of "I am lighter than My head" (Zohar), the Ohev Yisrael teaches that when a person prays for relief from trouble, the main intention should be to mend the lack felt by the Shechinah (the Divine Presence), so that his own need is repaired along with it. Yitzchak's prayer for Rivkah, who was barren, is presented as the model: he prayed for the Shechinah's lack, and Rivkah's own barrenness was then remedied. AI SUMMARY

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, etc." It is known that when some trouble or suffering comes upon a person, may it not happen, he should reflect and understand in his mind that there is surely great anguish for the holy Shechinah, so to speak, for "in all their affliction He is afflicted," so to speak. Therefore, when an upright person sets his heart to pray to G-d, may He be blessed, about some matter, the main kavanah (intention) and desire of his prayer must be that the lack that this causes in the Shechinah be filled, so to speak. This is in the manner of "I am lighter than My head," etc. When the flaw and lack there are repaired, his own lack is then repaired as well, automatically, and he is redeemed from his trouble.

Yitzchak, peace be upon him, did just this, for his entire aim, desire and kavanah were only to fill the lack in the holy Shechinah, so to speak. This is the meaning of "Yitzchak entreated Hashem, opposite his wife": that is, for the sake of the Shechinah, who is opposite his wife, for it is precisely she who is barren. And then Rivkah his wife was also automatically remembered. Understand this.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

LIZHENSK · TOLDOT, NOAM ELIMELEKH

Why did Rivkah send Yaakov after material blessings?

Noam Elimelekh

Drawing on the Talmudic and Zoharic idea that Yitzchak intended the material blessings for Esav and the spiritual reward for Yaakov, the Noam Elimelekh reads Rivkah's doubled "lemor" as her intention to speak on a different level: she sent Yaakov after material blessings so that the spiritual sparks hidden within the material would be sustained, since nothing physical can have life without holy sparks from the upper worlds. AI SUMMARY

"And Rivkah spoke to Yaakov her son, saying: Behold, I heard your father speak to Esav your brother, saying." The early sages already raised a difficulty about the word "lemor" (saying). It has no basis here, as it does elsewhere, where it is explained as "saying to another." Moreover, "lemor" appears twice.

It seems to me that I should explain the first "lemor," and the other will then be resolved on its own. This rests on what is found in the books: How could it enter our minds that Yitzchak our father, peace be upon him, wanted to bless Esav and not Yaakov? They explained that in truth he wanted to bless Esav in this world, with material things, and to bless Yaakov in the World to Come. Yitzchak wanted all four exiles to be under the hand of Esav; see there. Now Rivkah our mother wanted to sustain the children of Israel in exile, so that they too would have a little in this world.

And it is the way of the tzaddik (righteous one) that even when he speaks of material things, his kavanah (intention) is in the upper worlds, in spiritual matters. This is the meaning of "And Rivkah spoke to Yaakov her son, saying." That is to say, when she told Yaakov to receive material blessings from his father, her kavanah was in the upper worlds, for the sake of the spiritual within the material. For there is no material thing that does not contain spiritual nitzotzot (holy sparks). This is "lemor": her kavanah was for a different saying, for the sake of the spiritual, as above.

"Speak to Esav your brother, saying." Rivkah feared that Yaakov would not want to receive the material blessings, since the tzaddik has no desire for material things. Therefore Rivkah said, "I heard your father, etc.," also "saying." That is, when your father speaks of wanting to bless him materially, his kavanah is also to say a different saying, for the sake of the spiritual, as above: that in the material too there be spiritual nitzotzot. For there is nothing material in the world that can have vitality without the nitzotzot kedoshim from the upper worlds.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

BERDITCHEV · TOLDOT, KEDUSHAT LEVI

Why did Rivkah's painful pregnancy make her feel unworthy?

Kedushat Levi

Drawing on the Ari's teaching that righteous women are spared the pains of pregnancy and birth, the Kedushat Levi explains that Rivkah's distress led her to fear she was not worthy, since a person who is not good cannot host holiness. G-d reassured her that she was righteous and that her suffering came from the two nations in her womb, who were in opposition to one another. AI SUMMARY

Genesis 25,22. she said: “if so (that the children already quarrel within my womb) ,what is the purpose of my existence?” We can understand this complaint of Rivkah on the basis of a comment by the Ari’zal that righteous women are spared the pain and discomfort of pregnancy. Rivkah, while experiencing even more than the normal amount of pain and discomfort during her pregnancy, had concluded that this was proof that G’d had not considered her righteous.

Moreover, it is a tenet of our faith that if someone is not a “good” person, such a person will not serve as a receptacle for anything holy or potentially holy. Our sages have based this insight on Leviticus 11,15 את כל עורב למינו, “and every subspecies of raven each according to its species” (is forbidden to eat). [The word כל in that verse means that even close association with something ritually unclean, i.e. a raven, is an obstacle to such a person hosting holy spirit, etc. Ed.

] According to Bereshit Rabbah 63,6 whenever Rivkah passed a Torah academy Yaakov would make an effort to leave her womb, whereas when she passed a pagan temple Esau would try to leave her womb. Thereupon she went to ask G’d about this strange phenomenon. The Midrash states further that the word זה in our verse refers to the fact that originally, -if not for her complaint- Rivkah was slated to become the mother of all the twelve tribes; seeing that she appeared to find fault with G’d’s arrangement, she was told that she would become the mother of only two sons, one of whom would be Esau.

One of the sages in the Midrash takes issue with the literal meaning of Yaakov and Esau respectively having shown awareness of when their mother passed a Torah academy or a pagan temple, and states that, of course, this is merely a simile, and that Rivkah consulted with the heads of the academy founded by Shem and subsequently headed by his great grandson Ever.

According to another opinion offered, Rivkah knew that the source of holiness is the One known as אנכי, and when she exclaimed למה זה אנכי, she expressed her confusion how she could be the receptacle of a son who clearly strived for holiness if she was not worthy. On the other hand, if she were worthy, why did she experience such a difficult pregnancy? G’d put her mind at rest, telling her that her difficulties did not mean that she was not worthy, but that the other son who would be unworthy was the one that caused her present problems.

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

AVRITCH · BAT AYIN, TOLDOT

Why did G-d answer Yitzchak's prayer for a child rather than Rivkah's?

Bat Ayin

Drawing on Rashi's comment that "by him" means the prayer of a tzaddik who is the son of a tzaddik is not like that of a tzaddik who is the son of a wicked man, Bat Ayin, citing a teaching of Rabbi Zev of Zhitomir, explains that G-d accepts prayer offered in humility, with a person making himself like the remnants of a song and relying on the merit of the forefathers. Yitzchak could pray on that merit, while Rivkah, the daughter of a wicked man, had to rely mainly on her own deeds, so G-d turned to Yitzchak's prayer. AI SUMMARY

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren; and Hashem let Himself be entreated by him" (Bereshit 25:21). Rashi explains: "by him," and not by her, because the prayer of a tzaddik (righteous one) who is the son of a tzaddik is not like the prayer of a tzaddik who is the son of a wicked man.

We can say about this as follows. I heard from the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Zev of Zhitomir, an explanation of the phrase "Who chooses songs of praise" (in the Yishtabach prayer). It means that the Creator of all worlds, blessed be He, chooses the remnants (shirayim) of song, that is, the one who makes himself like remnants at the time of song and prayer, and so forth. To understand this: the essence of divine service is humility and true lowliness. When a person stands to pray before the Creator of all worlds, blessed be He, he should reflect in his mind: "On account of my deeds I am not fit to speak a single word before Him, may He be blessed, or to ask anything of Him, great or small. On account of my deeds I do not even deserve an opening of the mouth to stand and ask before Him. I only ask the Blessed Creator to help me in the merit of my forefathers."

This kind of prayer is accepted before Him, may He be blessed, as the verse says (Tehillim 145:18): "Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." That is, Hashem is close to those who call upon Him, to accept their prayer, when they call upon Him in truth, meaning by the merit of the forefathers. Truth is the aspect of the forefathers: head, middle, end.

But this applies when he is a tzaddik the son of a tzaddik. Then he can ask Hashem by the merit of his forefathers. When he is a tzaddik the son of a wicked man, however, he cannot ask by the merit of his forefathers. His request must rest mainly on his own deeds. The Holy One, blessed be He, does not turn so readily to accept such a prayer, for He chooses only "songs of praise," that is, the one who makes himself like remnants.

Now Yitzchak was a tzaddik the son of a tzaddik, so his prayer rested only on the merit of his forefathers. Rivkah was a righteous woman, the daughter of a wicked man, and her prayer rested on her own merit. This is the meaning of "Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife": Yitzchak's entreaty and prayer stood "opposite" his wife, that is, in opposition to her prayer. Why was his prayer in opposition? The verse gives the reason: "because she

was barren." That is, in her prayer she herself was the main element (ikar), because she could not ask by the merit of the forefathers, as explained above. Therefore "Hashem let Himself be entreated by him." The Creator of the worlds, blessed be He, turned only to his prayer, because his prayer was only in the aspect of remnants, and the Holy One, blessed be He, chooses only the one who makes himself like remnants at the time of song and prayer.

This is what Rashi explained: the prayer of a tzaddik the son of a tzaddik is not like the prayer of a tzaddik the son of a wicked man. The former can ask by the merit of the forefathers and makes himself like remnants, so the Creator, blessed be He, turns to his prayer. The latter cannot ask by the merit of the forefathers, and he is the main basis of his own prayer. The Creator, blessed be He, chooses only "songs of praise," as explained above, in the aspect of humility. May it be His will that we merit this.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

GER · TOLDOT, SEFAT EMET

Why did Yitzchak have to dig his own wells?

Sefat Emet

The main teaching is that each of the Patriarchs was worthy in his own right, so Yitzchak could not simply inherit Avraham's spiritual attainments but had to dig out the straight path himself. Drawing on the Midrash, the Sefat Emet adds that every tikkun (repair) brings a new concealment and a stronger yetzer (inclination), so each generation must rise level by level, with Yitzchak's path rooted in yirah (awe) and gevurah (strength, severity) and Avraham's in chesed (lovingkindness) and love. AI SUMMARY

"And all the wells that his father's servants had dug... the Philistines stopped up... And Yitzchak dug again..." It is taught that only three are called "fathers," meaning Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. But this is difficult either way. If so, let us follow the first and call only Avraham a father. The reason, however, is that every tzaddik (righteous one) has merit through his forefathers, whereas each of the three Patriarchs was worthy on his own. So it is taught in the midrash (rabbinic homiletic teaching) on the verse "And I will remember My covenant with Yaakov...": each one was worthy on his own. Corresponding to this, the verse tells us here that all the illuminations that his father had attained were afterward stopped up, and Yitzchak was compelled to dig and clarify the straight path by himself.

This is also the meaning of "There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine." As the midrash teaches, there are ten famines in the world. That is, there are ten traits, corresponding to the ten utterances, which the tzaddikim must fulfill. As it is taught in Avot, "in order to give good reward to the righteous..." Avraham our father, peace be upon him, repaired the aspect of chesed and love, and he repaired the famine of his days. Afterward, "there was another famine." So too with Yaakov.

The truth is that after every tikkun a new concealment arises. This is also the meaning of "one people shall be stronger than the other." As our Sages (Chazal) said, whoever is greater than his fellow, his yetzer (inclination) is greater than his. So it is that the more a person repairs himself, the more the power of the yetzer and of the sitra achra (the "other side") against him increases. Through this he adds strength to overcome it, and he rises higher. This proceeds level after level; understand this. Likewise, had Avraham's way not become concealed, no one would afterward have sought a new way. Therefore "there was a famine," and Yitzchak needed to seek out for himself the way of yirah and gevurah.

[And it is written, "Do not go down to Egypt." For the deeds of the fathers ascend to benefit the children, so that they need not do everything in actuality. That is, Avraham went down to Egypt, and the Zohar explains that he needed to put himself into it in order to repair all the dangerous places, so as to nullify the famine that came from the sitra achra; see there. Yitzchak was prepared for this, and so he was told, "Do not go down..." For the preparation for it was sufficient.

This is the meaning of "He chooses their ways...": since he is prepared for the deeds of his fathers, he need not demonstrate it in actual deed. Only Avraham our father, peace be upon him, who was

the first to repair, needed to be tried with ten trials in actuality. This is the meaning of "because Avraham listened to My voice..." Therefore Yitzchak no longer needed to go down to Egypt in actuality, as above.] So too, in particular, with each and every person, who must repair all ten of the above levels.

And certainly Avraham our father, peace be upon him, had a true fear of Heaven, as it is written, "Now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man." As for his trait being chesed and love, it was through love that he came to awe, while Yitzchak came to love through awe. But all the traits are included in one another. This is the meaning of "Yitzchak, son of Avraham..." And so wrote the Ramban, of blessed memory: in the matters of this world (olam hazeh), love and awe contradict each other, since toward one whom a person loves, awe does not apply. But in the avodah (divine service) of G-d, love and awe are united. For true love is what brings one to awe, and likewise true awe is what brings one to love, as above.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)