



ב"ה

**Parshas Toldos in a Nutshell**

*(Genesis 25:19–28:9)*

Isaac and Rebecca endure twenty childless years, until their prayers are answered and Rebecca conceives. She experiences a difficult pregnancy as the “children struggle inside her”; G-d tells her that “there are two nations in your womb,” and that the younger will prevail over the elder.

Esau emerges first; Jacob is born clutching Esau’s heel. Esau grows up to be “a cunning hunter, a man of the field”; Jacob is “a wholesome man,” a dweller in the tents of learning. Isaac favors Esau; Rebecca loves Jacob. Returning exhausted and hungry from the hunt one day, Esau sells his birthright (his rights as the firstborn) to Jacob for a pot of red lentil stew.

In Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, Isaac presents Rebecca as his sister, out of fear that he will be killed by someone coveting her beauty. He farms the land, reopens the wells dug by his father Abraham, and digs a series of his own wells: over the first two there is strife with the Philistines, but the waters of the third well are enjoyed in tranquility.

*(continued next column)*

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If you dig past the surface, you will be able to see a person’s passions and drives — not all of that is pleasant. But if you really love a person, you won’t stop there. You’ll dig deeper until you find the essential core of G-dliness that person has.

-- *The Rebbe*

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Esau marries two Hittite women. Isaac grows old and blind, and expresses his desire to bless Esau before he dies. While Esau goes off to hunt for his father’s favorite food, Rebecca dresses Jacob in Esau’s clothes, covers his arms and neck with goatskins to simulate the feel of his hairier brother, prepares a similar dish, and sends Jacob to his father. Jacob receives his father’s blessings for “the dew of the heaven and the fat of the land” and mastery over his brother. When Esau returns and the deception is revealed, all Isaac can do for his weeping son is to predict that he will live by his sword, and that when Jacob falters, the younger brother will forfeit his supremacy over the elder.

Jacob leaves home for Charan to flee Esau’s wrath and to find a wife in the family of his mother’s brother, Laban. Esau marries a third wife—Machalath, the daughter of Ishmael. ❖

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**Shabbos Schedule**

**Erev Shabbos – Nov 25 / Kislev 1**

Candle Lighting.....4:13 pm

Mincha .....4:15 pm

**Shabbos Day – Nov 26 / Kislev 2**

Shacharis .....9:30 am\*

Torah Reading .....10:30 am

Kiddush.....12:00 pm

Mincha .....4:15 pm

Rabbi’s Drasha .....4:35 pm

Shabbos Ends .....5:15 pm

*\*Latest morning Shema is now 9:17 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

**Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):**

**Minyan**

Shacharis (Mon-Fri) .....6:15 am

Shacharis (Sunday) ..... 9:00 am

Mincha (Sun-Thurs).....1:45 pm

Maariv (Sun-Thurs) .....9:15 pm

**Bulletin**

*This week’s Bulletin  
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**Halachic Zmanim**

**Shabbos, Nov 26, 2022**

**Eastern Standard Time**

Earliest Tallis.....5:56 AM

Latest Morning Shema .....9:17 AM

Earliest Mincha (Gedola) 12:08 PM

Plag Hamincha..... 3:35 PM

Earliest Evening Shema .... 5:02 PM

## Chassidic Masters

### Jacob and Esau

*Based on the teachings  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

In many respects, the Torah's account of Isaac's family reads like a replay of Abraham's. Many years of childlessness are followed by the birth of two sons — the elder one wicked and the younger one righteous. Isaac favors the elder son, Esau, much as Abraham is sympathetic toward his elder son, Ishmael, while Rebecca, like Sarah, perseveres in her efforts to ensure that the younger, righteous son is recognized as the true heir of Abraham and the sole progenitor of the "great nation" which G-d promised to establish from his seed.

There is, however, a significant difference between the two sets of brothers.

Ishmael and Isaac were born of two different mothers: Ishmael was the son of Hagar, a former Egyptian princess still attached to her pagan ways, while Isaac was the son of the righteous Sarah. Furthermore, Ishmael was born when Abraham was still Abram and still uncircumcised, and can be said to belong to his father's imperfect past (Abraham was born into a family of idolaters and is even described as having himself worshipped idols in his youth), while Isaac was conceived after Abraham had attained the perfection signified by his name change and circumcision.

On the other hand, Esau and Jacob were twins, born of the same righteous mother and raised in the same holy environment.

Their father, Isaac, was "a burnt-offering without blemish" who was circumcised on the eighth day of his life and who never set foot outside of the Holy Land. Unlike his father, he had no idolatrous past and no "pre-Isaac" period in his life. So where did Esau's "evil genes" come from?

Even more puzzling is the fact that Esau's wickedness seems predestined from the womb. If Esau had turned bad later in life, we might attribute this to the fact that every man is given absolute freedom of choice to be righteous or wicked. But how are we to explain Esau's gravitation to evil even before he was born?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the fact that Esau was naturally inclined toward idolatry was not, in and of itself, a negative thing. It meant that his ordained mission in life was the conquest of evil rather than the cultivation of good.

Jacob and Esau are the prototypes for two types of souls, each with a distinct role to play in the fulfillment of the Divine purpose in creation. Maimonides calls these two spiritual types "the perfectly pious" and "the one who conquers his inclinations"; Rabbi Schneur Zalman refers to them as the "Tzaddik" and the "Beinoni." Humanity is divided into these two types, writes Rabbi Schneur Zalman in his Tanya, because "there are two kinds of gratification before G-d. The first is generated by the good achieved by the perfectly righteous. But G-d also delights in the conquest of evil which is still at its strongest and most powerful in the heart, through the efforts of the ordinary, unperfected individual."

Thus Rabbi Schneur Zalman explains the Talmud passage which cites Job as crying out to G-d: "Master of the Universe! You have created righteous people, and You have created wicked people!" The actual righteousness or wickedness of a person is not predetermined by G-d — in the words of Maimonides, free choice is "a fundamental principle and a pillar of the Torah and its commandments," without which "What place would the entire Torah have? And by what measure of justice would G-d punish the wicked and reward the righteous?" Yet Job is right—G-d does indeed create "righteous people" and "wicked people" in the sense that while certain souls enjoy a life wholly devoted to developing what is good and holy in G-d's world, other souls must struggle against negative traits and ominous perversions implanted within them in order to elicit that special delight that can come only from the conquest of evil.

This, says the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is the deeper significance of Rashi's commentary on the opening words of our parshah. Citing the verse, "And these are the generations of Isaac," Rashi comments: "Jacob and Esau who are mentioned in the parshah."

The simple meaning of this commentary is that the word *toldot* ("generations") can also refer to a person's deeds and achievements (cf. Rashi's commentary on Genesis 6:9).

***(Continued next page)***

Rashi is telling us that here the word *toldot* is to be understood in its literal sense—the children of Isaac, though these are named only further on in the *parshah*.

On a deeper level, says the Rebbe, Rashi is addressing the question: How does an "Esau" come to be a descendant of Isaac and Rebecca? How do two perfectly righteous individuals produce an offspring who is evil from birth?

So Rashi tells us: the "generations of Isaac" are the "Jacob and Esau who are mentioned in the *parshah*." The wicked Esau we know is not a product of Isaac but the result of Esau's own failure to overpower his negative inclinations. The Esau of the *parshah*--Esau as viewed from the perspective of Torah, where everything is seen in its innermost and truest light—is not evil, but the instrument of conquest over evil. The Esau of the *parshah* is the purveyor of the "second delight" and an indispensable element of the purpose of life on earth.

In this also lies the deeper deeper meaning of the Midrash that describes Jacob and Esau fighting in the womb "over the inheritance of the two worlds" (i.e., the material world and the "world to come"). This would seem to be one area in which they would have no quarrel: the Esau we know desires the materialism of the physical world and shuns everything that is G-dly and spiritual, while the reverse is true of Jacob. So what were they fighting over?

Explains the Rebbe: *The "world to come" is not a reality that is disconnected from our present existence.*

*Rather, it is the result of our present-day efforts in dealing with and perfecting the material world. The world of Moshiach is the culmination of all positive achievements of history, the era in which the cosmic yield of mankind's every good deed will come to light.*

In other words, our present world is the means and the "world to come" is the goal. This is the deeper significance of Jacob's claim on the "world to come," and Esau's (and here we speak of the "Torah's Esau," the righteous conqueror of his inclinations) preference for the present world. Jacob sees perfection as the only desirable state of man, while Esau sees the struggle with imperfection as desirable in and of itself.

Yet both Jacob and Esau recognize the necessity for both of "the two worlds," for the process and its outcome. The "perfectly pious" man also requires the material world as the vehicle that leads to ultimate perfection. And the "conqueror" also sees perfection as the goal to which his efforts lead. For although his purpose in life is defined by the process itself, a process, by definition, must have a goal.

So this is their "fight." Jacob and Esau each lay claim to both worlds as part of their life's endeavor. But their priorities are reversed. To the Jacobs of the world, the material world is but a tool, a means to an end. To its Esaus, man's material involvements and the struggles they entail are what life is all about. A futuristic vision of perfection is necessary, but only as a reference-point that provides coherence and direction to the "real" business of life.

The tension between them over their differing visions of the "two worlds" is not a negative thing. It is the result of two world views, both positive and necessary, both indispensable components of man's mission in life. ❖

## Powerful Insight From the Rebbe

One activity of Isaac's on which the Torah elaborates at some length is his well-digging. We are told how he reopened the wells originally dug by Abraham, and how he dug a series of wells of his own.

Isaac is portrayed as a farmer and a well-digger. Isaac had learned the profound secret of the seed: growth and profit come only when you allow yourself to disintegrate and become one with the soil from which you have come. Isaac was a digger of wells, boring through the strata of emotion and experience in search of the quintessential waters of the soul. Boring deeper than feeling, deeper than desire, deeper than achievement, to the selflessness at the core of self.

Abraham's love of G-d and humanity took him on a journey from the self outward—a journey etched in the roads of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Canaan. Isaac never left the boundaries of his homeland. For his was an inward journey, a journey into the depths of self, to the essence within. ❖

## From Our Sages – Toldos

### **Isaac loved Esau because [his] game was in his mouth (Genesis 25:28)**

*Esau would deceive him with his mouth. He would inquire of him: "Father, how does one tithe salt? Father, how does one tithe straw?" And Isaac would muse: "This son of mine, how diligent he is in the fulfillment of the commandments!"*

*(Midrash Tanchuma; Rashi)*

### **Jacob cooked a stew (Genesis 25:29)**

*That was the day on which Abraham died, and Jacob made a broth of lentils to comfort his father Isaac.*

*Why lentils? Just as the lentil has no mouth, so is the mourner speechless. . . . Just as the lentil is round, so mourning comes around to all the inhabitants of this world.*

*(Talmud)*

### **Esau came from the field, and he was exhausted (Genesis 25:29)**

*Esau committed five sins on that day: he dishonored a betrothed maiden, he committed a murder, he denied G-d, he denied the resurrection of the dead, and he spurned the birthright.*

*(Talmud)*

*On that day, Esau murdered Nimrod (the king of Babylonia).*

*(Midrash)*

### **G-d appeared to him, and said: "Do not go down into Egypt; dwell in the Land" (Genesis 26:2)**

*G-d said to him: "You are a burnt offering without blemish; as a burnt offering becomes unfit if it passes beyond the Temple enclosure, so will you become unfit if you go out of the Holy Land."*

*(Midrash Rabbah)*

### **He dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it (Genesis 26:22)**

*The first two wells allude to the first two Temples, which the enemies of Israel destroyed. The third well represents the Third Temple which shall speedily be built, which will be established without animosity and strife; G-d will then broaden our boundaries, and all nations will serve Him in unison.*

*(Nachmanides)*

### **It came to pass that Isaac aged, and his eyes dimmed (Genesis 27:1)**

*From the smoke of the offerings that Esau's wives burned for their idols. Another explanation is that when Isaac was bound on the altar and his father wished to slaughter him, at that moment the heavens opened and the angels wept, and their tears fell into his eyes, which caused his eyes to dim. Another explanation: this came to pass in order to enable Jacob to receive the blessings.*

*(Rashi)*

### **The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau (Genesis 27:22)**

*"The voice is the voice of Jacob"—no prayer is effective unless the seed of Jacob has a part in it.*

*"The hands are the hands of Esau"—no war is successful unless the seed of Esau has a share in it.*

*(The Talmud) ❖*

## Haftorah for Parshas Toldos in a nutshell

*Malachi 1:1-2:7*

This week's haftorah opens with a mention of the tremendous love G-d harbors for the children of Jacob, and the retribution He will visit upon the children of Esau who persecuted their cousins. This follows the theme of this week's Torah reading, whose two protagonists are Jacob and Esau.

The prophet Malachi then rebukes the kohanim (priests) who offer blemished and emaciated animals on G-d's altar: "Were you to offer it to your governor, would he be pleased or would he favor you? . . . O that there were even one among you that would close the doors [of the Temple] and that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain!"

The haftorah ends with a strong enjoiner to the kohanim to return to the original covenant that G-d had made with their ancestor, Aaron the High Priest. "True teaching was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. In peace and equity he went with Me, and he brought back many from iniquity." ❖

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**Good Shabbos to all!**