

# *Shiur L'Yom Shen*<sup>1</sup>

[Monday's Study]

READINGS:     ***Torah Toldot:***                     **Genesis 25:19-34**  
                  ***Haftarah:***                                 **Malachi 1:1-5**  
                  ***B'rit Chadasha:***                     **Romans 9:1-5**

***"... The elder will serve the younger."***  
                  **[Genesis 25:23]**

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**Today's Meditation is Psalm 107:1-7;**

**This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition No. 3, *S'lach* [the Prayer for Forgiveness]**

Last week's parsha began with the death and burial of Sarah; it ended - at least from the standpoint of narrative - with the death and burial of Avraham. These two events took place 38 years apart.

Near the beginning of the 38-year interval between these two bookends Avraham sent his servant to procure a bride for Yitzchak. As you will recall the bride in question – the one who was destined to become the next matriarch in the '*Seed of Woman*' lineage which the Holy One had promised would bring forth He Who would crush the head of the serpent – turned out to be *Rikvah*, daughter of Betuel the Aramean. In this week's parsha Rikvah will give birth to two very famous twins - **Ya'akov** [later known in the Western world as 'Jacob'] and **Esav** [later known in the Western world as 'Esau'].

Even though from the standpoint of the narrative of Torah we think of Avraham as dead and buried during the period of time covered by parsha *Toldot* chronologically it was not so. When you do the math regarding what we are told about the years of Avraham's and Yitzchak's lives you find that Avraham not only lived to see the births of his grandsons but did not pass away until the twins were fourteen or fifteen years old. According to Hebrew legend, the day of Avraham's funeral was the day Esav sold his birthright to Ya'akov for a bowl of porridge.

How much influence did Avraham have upon the two boys we will read about in this week's parsha during their formative years? It is of course impossible to say for sure. Avraham remarried a woman named Keturah and gave birth to six more sons of his own. Torah does not invade his privacy to tell us what his 'later life' with Keturah consisted of or even where in the land of Kena'an it occurred.

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We do not know how long after Avraham took up with Keturah Yitzchak and Rivkah stayed on in the ancestral camp at Hebron. But we do know that before the twins were born the newlyweds had established their own household several kilometers away from Hebron at an oasis we have seen once before in Torah – an oasis in the Southern Negev called *Be'er L'Chai Ro'ei*. You do remember *Be'er L'Chai Ro'ei*, don't you, Dear Reader?

### ***Midnight at the Oasis***

*Be'er L'Chai Ro'ei* is a Hebrew phrase meaning '**well [or spring] of life vision**'. We were first introduced to this fascinating place in connection with the narrative of Hagar's emotional flight from Sarah shortly after she became pregnant with Yish'mael. Hagar was headed back toward Egypt from whence she had come. When she reached this oasis however she ran headlong into a veritable gaggle of angels of the Holy One. One by one these angels announced to Hagar not only her life vision but the life vision of the child she was carrying. It was therefore actually Hagar who gave this place the name *Be'er L'Chai Roi* - 'well/spring of life vision'.

We will see a similar occurrence take place this week at the same very special location. This time the pregnant woman receiving a 'life vision' will be Rivkah. What exactly is a 'life vision' you ask? **A life vision is a forward-looking, Divinely enhanced glimpse into the very special, unique quality of life that the Holy One has created an individual to live.**

Put another way, a life vision is a vision of what an individual human life would look like if it was lived not **according to the mores and values of the predominant culture of the age, or according to lusts and addictions, overactive hormones and over-reactive emotions**, but was instead lived **according to the wisdom, counsel, purpose and destiny the Holy One designed it for**. A **life-vision** is a vision for your world – and the people and situations in it – that transcends the *status quo* by seeing the hidden beauty, the potential for good, and the pathway of growth the Holy One has designed to release both.

Before we get too deep into the parsha therefore I have a very important general question for you to meditate upon. Here it is: **Do you have a life vision** – i.e. a Divinely enhanced perspective of what your purpose and destiny on this earth entails? Do you have a life vision *for yourself*?

If you are married, or are [or planning to become] a parent, do you have a life vision *for your household*?

Have you been to a place like *Be'er L'Chai Roi* yet in life? If not, are you ready to go? Before you say 'Yes', Dear Reader, be sure to ask the Holy One the cost of the fare to this particular oasis.

### ***Introducing the 'Life Vision' Players***

We will not be given anywhere near as many details of the lives and times, God-encounters and God-ordained life experiences of Yitzchak and Rivkah as we were given about the lives and times, God-encounters and God-ordained life experiences of Avraham and Sarah. When Yitzchak and Rivkah's short time on Torah's pages is over, we will be left to wish we had gotten to know them better.

We will primarily remember Yitzchak as *the 'survivor of Mount Moriyah'*, as *the man who never left Eretz Yisrael*, as *the man who reopened the wells his father had dug*, and as *the man who fathered the first twins mentioned in the Bible*. We will primarily remember Rivkah as the beautiful young maiden of Charan who selflessly provided water to a stranger and his 10 thirsty camels, who later fell off one of those camels at her first sight of Yitzchak, and as the shrewd matron who aided and assisted Ya'akov [Jacob] in deceiving Yitzchak into giving Ya'akov the blessing he had intended to give Esav.

So let us seek to maximize our understanding of what information Torah sees fit to give us concerning these two links in the covenant chain. The first thing we will learn this week is that their married life both started and ended in *eras of sadness*

### ***The Barren Matriarch – Part II***

We learn from the opening verses of parsha *Toldot* that Rivkah and Yitzchak endured what we humans in our limited perspective perceive as a *'personal tragedy'*. Yitzchak took Rivkah as his wife at age 40. The twins – the only children he would father – were not born until he was 60. That means they endured 20 years of barrenness. It happened first to Sarai. Now it happens to Rivkah.

For 20 long years it must have looked hopeless to this young couple. Yitzchak and Rivkah must have questioned everything, and alternatively blamed the Holy One and themselves. They must have wept, and travailed, and cried out to the Holy One in both anguish and anger. At least they did not repeat the folly of Sarai and Avram, in introducing a 'surrogate' mother into the equation in an attempt to force the Holy One's Hand prematurely. Yitzchak, of all people, knew what havoc a Yish'mael in the family could wreak.

Why were Sarah and Rivkah – the matriarchs of the chosen people of the Holy One – the carriers of the ‘seed of woman’ promised in Genesis 3:15 – of all the women in the world, unable to conceive and bear children?

Let’s think about it. The Holy One blessed Adam on the day of his Creation, saying ‘*be fruitful, and multiply . . .*’” Genesis 1:28. After the Flood the Holy One blessed Noach and his sons, Cham, Shem and Yafet [Ham, Shem and Japheth], with exactly the same words: “*be fruitful, and multiply . . .*” Genesis 9:1; see also 9:7. These blessings constituted *prophetic empowerments*. And the physical bodies of the ancients responded. Hence we read in our English Bibles that so-and-so begat someone, and someone begat somebody, and somebody begat somebody else, etc. etc. on and on, generation after generation after generation.

The ‘*be fruitful and multiply*’ blessing spoken by the Holy One over mankind worked like clockwork. There was no stopping the begetting. The technology was in place. It did not take a rocket scientist. Men and women seemed to multiply like rabbits. Until we got to Avram and Sarai, that is. Suddenly when we got to Avram and Sarai the Holy One brought all the begetting to a *screeching halt*. In Genesis 11:30 we are given the stunning news – Sarai was the first woman in the history of man to find herself unable to participate in the ‘*be fruitful and multiply*’ blessing/empowerment of the Holy One.

Why? Was there some biological imperfection or physiological malfunction in her? No, that is not it at all. The way Torah describes it [see Genesis 11:30] Sarai was *akarah*<sup>2</sup>. While this word has been translated into English as *barren* or *sterile* it means much, much more. Let’s examine it Hebraically, shall we?

The verb root is *akar*<sup>3</sup>, meaning ‘plucked up’ – i.e. ‘uprooted’. The descriptive term *akarah* – used in Torah to describe first Sarai and now Rivkah – thus refers to a female who has been ‘*plucked up* – i.e., *uprooted*’. Now it makes more sense. Sarai was not ‘barren’ or ‘sterile’ as we understand those concepts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. What happened was that her womb was ‘*plucked up* – i.e. *uprooted*’ by the Holy One.

Rivkah was not ‘barren’ or ‘sterile’ either – her womb as well was ‘*plucked up* – i.e. *uprooted*’ by the Holy One. Hmmmnn - *what meaneth this?* Why would the Holy One ‘pluck up’ or ‘uproot’ these two young ladies’ wombs?

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<sup>2</sup> *Akarah* is ayin, kuf, resh, hey. It is the feminine version of Strong’s Hebrew word #6135.

<sup>3</sup> *Akar* is ayin, kuf, resh, Strong’s Hebrew word #6131.

Let's look closer. The Hebrew verb *akar* is closely associated with horticulture. A gardener will pluck out/uproot a plant or tree that is either growing where he does not want it to grow. Every good gardener, you see, has a plan - and that plan involves seeing to it that everything grows in its proper place, in its proper season.

Sarai perceived this *akarah* status as the Divine intervention that it was. As we are told in the narrative of parsha *Lech Lecha*, "Sarai said to Avram, "See now, the Holy One has restrained me [Hebrew verb root *atzar*<sup>4</sup>] from bearing children. **Genesis 16:2**. What kind of blessing is this?

But the Hebrew horticulturalists in our midst would just smile and say that it is all a matter of preparing the soil for the crop the Master Gardener wishes to grow. It is all a matter of planning and plowing, and sowing. The wombs of Sarah and Rivkah are, you see, not to be like the wombs of other women. The seed they are to nurture and carry is not to be like the seed nurtured and carried by other women. Their seed is *holy*, set apart – and their wombs must be *especially prepared and nurtured*. They are not just going to bear children you see – they are going to birth *a nation set apart unto the Holy One*. And so the Holy One 'plucked up', or 'uprooted' their wombs. He soaked them in *spiritual root stimulator*. He nurtured them with living water. And He prepared them for the most special purposes for which the womb was created.

The Holy One's ways are not our ways. If we were going to set about to create a *people* [genetic engineering] for a specific purpose we probably would find someone who was proven to be fertile and fruitful – not someone [actually, a series of *someones*] who was *barren and sterile*. And we would not want to wait 20 years to get the project rolling.

But the Holy One had not only a perfect plan but a perfect understanding of timing. The world had to be ready for Esav and Ya'akov. The births of these two world-changers had to fit into the Divine Timetable established for them before the foundation of the world.

And not only did the world have to be ready – Yitzchak and Rivkah had to be ready. Kena'an had to be ready. Avimelech had to be ready. All the doorways had to be in place for the Holy One to prod his covenant players – and their worldly counterparts - through them.

After 20 years however everything was finally ready – even Yitzchak, who at last emptied himself of pride and self-sufficiency, poured out to the Holy One a helpless

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<sup>4</sup> *Atzar* is *ayin, tzade, resh*.

cry from a contrite and humble spirit, and taught us all what it means to *atar*. So now let us take one more step and look into what Torah has to say about what happened when the Holy One finally released to Rivkah's womb the power to conceive.

### ***Rivkah's First and Only God-Encounter***

Rivkah's long-awaited pregnancy was anything but ordinary. Torah informs us:

***Vayitrotzatzu ha-banim bekirbah***

*And the children would jostle violently inside her,*

***vatomer im-ken lamah zeh anochi***

*and when this occurred, she asked, 'Why is this happening to me?'*

***vatelech l'drosh et-Adonai***

*And she went to seek a message from the Holy One.*

Before we go any further in the narrative I should point out that Rivkah will only have one recorded God-encounter in her life. That sole God-encounter is about to occur in connection with Rivkah's questioning of the Holy One regarding the extreme internal conflict she was suffering in connection with her pregnancy.

How severe was the trauma Rivkah was experiencing? The Hebrew verb root used to describe that trauma is *ratzatz*<sup>5</sup>. It is the verb used in one place to describe the force necessary to smash a man's skull [Judges 9:53], and in another place to describe the force necessary to break or dislocate a man's shoulder [Ezekiel 29:7]. It is usually translated 'to crush', or 'to crush in pieces'. This was not just a little extra 'kicking' in the womb. Something frightening and dangerous was taking place in Rivkah's womb. And it virtually drove her to look beyond herself, and to 'seek a message' from the Holy One.

The following brief description is all we are told of the God encounter that followed:

***Vayomer Adonai lah***

*The Holy One's word to her was,*

***Shnei goyim b'vitnech***

*'Two nations are in your womb.*

***Ush'nei l'umim mime'aych yiparedu***

*Two governments will separate from inside you.*

***ul'om mil'om ye'ematz***

*The upper hand will go from one government to the other.*

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<sup>5</sup> *Ratzatz* is *resh, tzade, tzade sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #7533.

### ***V'rav ya'avod tza'ir***

*The greater one will serve the younger.'*

The Holy One explained to Rivkah that the internal conflict she was experiencing was due to the fact that she was pregnant with twins - twins which were then and would always be engaged in violent struggle for dominance. But the Holy One did not just answer Rivkah's question about why she was experiencing trauma within. He went much further, advising her *what she should expect* from the two very special children in her womb – and from their ***toldot***. The Holy One revealed to Rivkah that the suffering she was experiencing was a microcosmic prelude to a worldwide conflict that would rage between the two great nations that will issue forth from the twins in her womb. The Holy One told Rivkah – and all of us, through the medium of Torah - that the two brothers that were then wrestling in Rivkah's womb would ultimately become two great *nations* which would maintain a constant state of counter-balance, if not conflict, with each other. Their progeny would then become *offsetting powers* in the world – with very different styles and power bases. In some intervals in history, one would dominate; in other seasons, the other would hold dominion. The balance of power would go back and forth. But in the end of times, the larger of the two would serve the smaller.

The sages identify the 'larger' nation in this prophetic message, the descendants of Esav, as Rome and its progeny, and identify the 'smaller' nation referenced in this prophetic message, the descendants of Ya'akov, as Yisrael. More on that distinction later. Meanwhile the violent pregnancy is being brought by the Holy One to a merciful conclusion.

### ***The Blessed Day Arrives***

When Rivkah's blessed day of delivery comes Rivkah and Yitzchak find themselves custodians of two very different man-children. The one who appears first from Rivkah's body is hairy and reddish in coloring. To him they give the name ***Esav*** [Esau], meaning 'hairy'. On his heels however – in fact holding on to his heel – is another kind of man-child altogether. This one is smooth-skinned and lighter of complexion. To him the happy parents give the name ***Ya'akov*** [Jacob], meaning something akin to 'heel-grabber'. As Torah describes the birthing room scene:

***Vayimle'u yameyha laledet v'hineh tomim b'vitnah***

*When the time came for her to give birth, behold, there were twins in her womb.*

***Vayetze ha-rishon admoni kulo ke'aderet se'ar***

*The first one came out reddish, as hairy as a fur coat.*

**vayikre'u sh'mo Esav<sup>6</sup>**  
*They named him Esau.*

**V'acharei-chen yatza achiv v'yado ochezet ba'akev Esav**  
*His brother then emerged, and his hand was grasping Esau's heel.*

**vayikra sh'mo Ya'akov<sup>7</sup>**  
*[Yitzchak] named him Ya'akov.*

**v'Yitzchak ben-shishim shanah b'ledet otam**  
*Yitzchak was 60 years old when these births occurred.*

### ***The Parenting of Very Different Siblings***

Esav and Ya'akov carried their *in utero* struggles forward into the physical realm. Unable to cooperate on much of anything, they appear to have maintained an uneasy state of peace primarily by utilizing the most classical avoidance techniques - they adopted vastly different approaches to life that keep them separated most of the time. Esav directed all his energies and talents into outdoor things, becoming a great hunter and warrior. Ya'akov, on the other hand, stayed out of Esav's way by hanging around the tents of his mother and father, focusing all his aptitude and interests on matters of business. He thereby became a shrewd negotiator and manager.

**Vayigdelu ha-ne'arim vayehi**  
*The boys grew up.*

**Esav ish yodea tza'id ish sadeh**  
*Esav became a skilled trapper, a man of the field.*

**V'Ya'akov ish tam yoshev ohalim**  
*Ya'akov was a scholarly man who remained with the tents.*

### ***The Unselfish, Unshakeable Love of a Father***

The next thing our English versions of Torah tell us about the Covenant Family in the early days is really disturbing. In the original Hebrew text the next line reads:

**Vaye'ehav Yitzchak et-Esav ki-tza'id be'fiv**  
**V'Rivkah ohevet et-Ya'akov**

Our English Bibles translate this more or less as “Yitzchak loved Esav, because he loved to eat wild game, and Rivkah loved Ya'akov.” Really? Did the English

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<sup>6</sup> **Esav**, pronounced *eh-sawv*, is an English approximation of the Hebrew name spelled in Torah as *ayin, sin, vav*. Esau, the more common rendition, is a much later Anglicized mutation of the Hebrew name.

<sup>7</sup> **Ya'akov**, pronounced *yah-ah-kove'*, is a close approximation of the Hebrew name spelled in Torah as *yod, ayin, kuf, veit*. The English name Jacob has been given to the youngest of the twins.

translators of the Torah really have that horribly low an opinion of our beloved patriarch Yitzchak? Did they – and do they expect us to - seriously believe that the patriarch Yitzchak determined which of his children to love and not to love by reason of *whether one or the other brought him a special kind of food which tickled his taste buds*? Do they really expect us to believe that Yitzchak was so self-consumed and material in focus that the reason he lavished love on Esav was actually because Esav occasionally let him gulp down a few bites of a wild game he had trapped, hunted, and killed?

I don't buy it for a minute. Do you? What do you say we go back and look at the Hebrew, and see if it really says what the English translators are telling us it says?

The critical phrase in the text is the Hebrew phrase '*ki tza'id befv*'. Does that really mean '*because he loved to eat wild game*'? No, it does not. The Hebrew word describing eating is none of the words in the phrase *ki tza'id befv*. The Hebrew word describing eating is instead *akal*<sup>8</sup>. That is the word used to describe eating throughout Torah, including in this very chapter – see Genesis 25:34.

So what does *ki tza'id befv* really mean? Literally it translates as for/because *prey - or perhaps entrapment - was in his mouth*. Okay – so what does *THAT* mean.

There are two lines of Hebraic thought. Rashi opined that the pronoun 'his' referred to Esav, and that the text was therefore telling us that *Esav had entrapment in his mouth*. Rashi opined that Esav was a slick deceiver who tricked Yitzchak into loving him through clever manipulation. Did Yitzchak really not know who Esav was? Did he really not know his dark side? Did he really fall for Esav's manipulations hook, line and sinker?

Perhaps. But there is *another, much different explanation* that has been offered. What if Yitzchak chose to love Esav with his eyes 100% open to all the elder twin's faults? What if he chose to love Esav simply because he knew Esav was unlovable, and that if he did not love Esav no one else would.

After all, Ya'akov had his mother's love. He hung around the home dutifully. He didn't run off to the local village and bring back troublesome Kena'ani women the way Esav did. He did not shoot his mouth off at every opportunity the way Esav did. He was not into violence and killing the way Esav was.

What if the pronoun 'his' referred back not to Esav but to Yitzchak? What if it was Yitzchak who was seeking by love to 'entrap' Esav back into a meaningful life and

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<sup>8</sup> *Akal* is *alef, kof, lamed*, Strong's Hebrew word # 398.

relationship with the Holy One? What if Esav was the hunted, and Yitzchak was the hunter? What if what Torah is trying to tell us that the love of a father in Covenant with the Holy One is a love that is sure, unshakable, unrelenting, and deterred by anything his child says or does not say, does or does not do, or appears or does not appear to be? What if '*ki tza'id befv*' means that in Yitzchak's eyes and heart and mind Esav – whom he knew very well was the most unlovable of all sons – was the one who needed love most?

I personally believe this is the most likely meaning of *ki tza'id befv*. I believe Yitzchak knew exactly what Esav was doing and why – and that he never, ever even considered giving up on the potential for greatness he knew the Holy One had placed in Esav. I believe that it was *Esav's ultimate redemption and deliverance from himself* that was the ultimate prey this passionate father could ever desire to taste.

*Game on Esav. Just try to outrun your father's love!*

### ***Introducing the Covenant Concepts Of Birthright [B'chorah] and Blessing [B'racha]***

The primary focus of this week's parsha is basically going to be on two closely related things: something which in English we have come to call a '*birthright*' [Hebrew *b'chorah*] and something which in English we have come to call a '*blessing*' [Hebrew *b'racha*]. If we do not understand what these things are, and the difference between them, we will never understand the parsha.

A *b'racha*, or 'blessing', is a purely physical matter. It is the substance of that stuff which a father can bequeath to his son or daughter, and consists solely of things in and of this physical world – rights of possession and/or inheritance of lands, rights with respect to flocks and herds, gold and silver, and the like.

A *b'chorah*, or '*birthright*', on the other hand is something that is not subject to the will of a person's father or mother. The term *b'chorah* is a legal term from the ancient jurisprudence of covenant interpretation and enforcement. A perpetual covenant [in Hebrew, *b'rit olam*], you see, necessarily must make provision for something the law calls 'succession'. The right of a successor to the original covenant partner to be placed in the stead of the original covenant partner when the original covenant partner dies [called the *right of succession*] is called the *b'chorah*. The *b'chorah* is a matter of Divine Choice, not human will. Unlike the *b'racha*, the right of succession to the covenant does not necessarily go to the firstborn<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> The *b'chorah* did not therefore go to Yish'mael, the firstborn of Avraham, but to Yitzchak. Similarly, the *b'chorah* did not go to Reuven, the firstborn of Ya'akov, but to Y'udah [and, in some sense, to Yosef]. The

**B'chorah** has to do with the *method or protocol for determining who will take over the covenant rights and responsibilities of a deceased or otherwise displaced covenant partner*. Because **b'chorah** consists primarily of spiritual rather than physical essence it must ultimately be determined, accepted, and approved by *the remaining partner in the covenant relationship*. If the remaining covenant partner does not determine, accept, and approve a successor, the covenant is over.

Let's use the **b'rit olam** between the Holy One and Avraham [spelled out in Genesis 15 and 17] as our example for studying out the distinction between **b'racha** [blessing] and **b'chorah** [birthright]. We all know that Avraham was blessed of the Holy One. He was, in fact, very, very rich. He had herds, flocks, and extensive water and pasturage rights in the land of Kena'an. He had gold and silver galore, and personal possessions beyond counting. Some of this he gave to Yish'mael, and some to the sons born to Keturah after Sarah's death, but most of this he gave [via **b'racha**] to Yitzchak.

We also all know that Avraham had a covenant with God – a perpetual covenant, the purpose of which was that all the nations of the earth would be blessed, and the primary parts of which were that:

- [a] the Holy One would give Avraham numerous descendants [progeny];
- [b] the Holy One would give those descendants the land of the Kena'ani as a perpetual possession;
- [c] Avraham would teach his children and his household after him to follow the ways of the Holy One, and do righteousness and justice,
- [d] Avraham would circumcise every male child born in his household on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the child's life;

The **b'chorah** [birthright] – the rights to succession under this covenant - was something *the Holy One*, not Avraham, had to decide. The same held true for Yitzchak. *The Holy One*, not Yitzchak, had the right to make the choice as to which of Yitzchak's sons would be chosen to succeed Avraham and Yitzchak as His partner in this covenant. The Holy One made that choice *before the boys were ever born*.

Some things – primarily material possessions - a human father can impart to whomever he wills; other things – especially spiritual empowerments under an eternal Covenant - only the Holy One can determine who will receive. The Holy One had ordained before the twins were born that Ya'akov would be the one who

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same can be said concerning David, who was not the firstborn of Yesha [Jesse], yet received the **b'chorah**, and of Shlomo, who was not the firstborn of David, yet received the **b'chorah**.

would succeed Yitzchak as His partner in connection with the covenant by which all the peoples of the earth were to be blessed. If therefore there was *naiveté* practiced in relation to the ‘sale’ of the ***b’chorah*** [birthright] by Esav to Ya’akov, the *naiveté* was not on the part of Esav, but on the part of Ya’akov. Ya’akov therefore bargained for and purchased from Esav something that was already his and could be neither bought nor sold.

Esav did not own the ***b’chorah***. It had never been his – and it never would or even could be his.

### ***The Infamous ‘Birthright’ Transaction***

One day – some of the sages of Israel say that it was the day Avraham died<sup>10</sup>, others say it was the anniversary of the sixth day of creation, the day the Holy One formed and breathed life into Adam - Esav came in from the field hungry and demanded of Ya’akov some of the food he was cooking. Ya’akov did not initiate the transaction – that was Esav’s doing. Here is how Torah describes it:

***Vayazed Ya'akov nazid vayavo Esav min ha-sadeh v'hu ayef***

*Ya'akov was once simmering a stew, when Esav came home exhausted from the field.*

***Vayomer Esav el-Ya'akov***

*Esau said to Ya'akov,*

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<sup>10</sup> According to one *midrash*, on the day of their grandfather Avraham's funeral Ya’akov was cooking lentils, the traditional mourner's meal. Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting in the course of which he had slain Nimrod and committed numerous other sins.

***ha-l'iteni na min ha-adom ha-adom hazeh ki ayef anochi***

*'Give me a swallow of that red, red stuff! I'm famished!'*

***al-ken kara-shmo Edom***

*(He was therefore given the name Edom).*

Keep in mind as you read this narrative that the two principal characters have been 'at each other's throat' in a violent manner since they were formed in Rivkah's womb. They *do not like each other* – not even a little bit. They *do not trust each other* – not one whit. Their eyes are wide open, and they are *constantly on their guard*. They are *mortal enemies*, constantly circling each other, staring each other down, looking for any and every advantage they can exploit in the life and death struggle between them. It is *kill or be killed* – and do unto the other before the other has the power and opportunity to do unto you. And their conversations are thus *the conversations of mortal enemies*, and not merely the bantering of mischievous siblings.

Hence understand that when Esav demands soup from Ya'akov, Ya'akov sees the situation as a challenge, not an opportunity to share a meal. He therefore agrees to give Esav the soup - *on the condition that Esav, in exchange for the food, convey to Ya'akov a b'chorah that he did not – and could never – own.*

***Vayomer Ya'akov michrah chayom et-bechoratecha li***

*Ya'akov replied: 'First sell your birthright to me,'*

Esav was unmoved. He was interested only in that which brings instant gratification – like the watered-down red bean soup he has seen simmering in Ya'akov's kettle. He was not particularly enamored of things of long-range (in particular, *trans-generational*) value like a ***b'chorah*** [birthright]; hence, he gladly agreed and the deal is struck.

***Vayomer Esav hineh anochi holech lamut***

*'Here I'm about to die!' exclaimed Esau.*

***v'lamah-zeh li bechorah***

*'What good is a birthright to me?'*

***Vayomer Ya'akov hishave'ah li kayom***

*'Make an oath to me right now,' said Ya'akov.*

***vayishava lo vayimkor et-bechorato l'Ya'akov***

*He made the oath, and sold his birthright to Ya'akov.*

***V'Ya'akov natan l'Esav lechem unezid adashim***

*Ya'akov then gave Esav bread and lentil stew.*

***v'yochal vayesht v'yakom vayelach***

*[Esau] ate it, drank, got up and left.*

***vayivez Esav et ha-bechorah**  
And thus Esav rejected the birthright.*

Esav will later in the parsha characterize this transaction as a theft by Ya'akov of his **bechorah** [birthright]. As is clear from the Torah account of the incident, however, there was in reality no theft whatever. Esav absolutely **despised/rejected** the 'birthright'/**bechorah**. But learn this, and learn it well. It is the nature of Esav, and of his progeny, to re-write history and to accuse Ya'akov of wrongdoing of which he is in no wise guilty.

Esav and his descendants have now learned how to be very convincing in the presentation of their well-rehearsed misrepresentations and blood libels.

### ***Questions for Today's Study***

1. In last week's parsha we bade good-bye to both Sarah and Avraham. In this week's parsha we are given a chance to examine the relationship of the Holy One with their son Yitzchak [Isaac].

[A] The name of this week's parsha is "**Toldot**", translated "generations" in the KJV. In Strong's and Gesenius look up the word "*toldot*" and write its definitions.

[B] How old was Yitzchak when he got married?

[C] Who did Yitzchak marry, and whose daughter was she?

2. As Sarai had been, *Rivkah* [Rebecca] was barren in the early years of her marriage. After Yitzchak '*prayed much to the Holy One for his wife*' [NIV], however, Rivkah became pregnant.

[A] How long were Yitzchak and Rivkah married before Rivkah gave birth?

[B] How old was Yitzchak when the birth occurred?

3. Rivkah had a difficult pregnancy, and called out to the Holy One.

[A] Since Rivkah grew up in a pagan household in the land of Paddan-Aram, how do you suppose she learned to pray to the Holy One, the one true God?

[B] What was the substance of Rivkah's prayer?

[C] In verse 23, the Holy One answered Rivkah, in a divine encounter. What did the Holy One say to Rivkah?

[D] Write the Hebrew names that were given to the twins born to Yitzchak and Rivkah. Look up the meanings of each of those names in Strong's or in Smith's Bible Dictionary, and write those definitions.

[E] What were the distinguishing characteristics of Esav [Esau]?

[F] What were the distinguishing characteristics of Ya'akov [Jacob]?

4. In verses 29-34 of today's aliyah of Torah Esav sells something to Ya'akov.

[A] What was the 'purchase price' of what Esav sold?

[B] What did Esav 'sell'? What exactly did that mean?

[C] What does this transaction tell us about the spiritual difference between Ya'akov and Esav?

5. This week's haftarah is taken from the words of the prophet Malachi. Today we read the following introductory words:

***Masa-devar Adonai el-Yisra'el b'yad Mal'achi***

*The burden of the word of the Holy One to Israel by Malachi.*

***Ahavti etchem amar Adonai***

*I have loved you, says the Holy One.*

***v'amartem b'mah ahavtanu***

*Yet you say, 'How have You loved us?'*

***halo-ach Esav l'Ya'akov ne'um-Adonai***

*'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' says the Holy One.*

***va'ohav et-Ya'akov***

*Yet I loved Jacob,*

***V'et-Esav saneti va'asim et-ha-rav shmamah***

*but I hated Esau; I destroyed his mountains*

***v'et-nachalato letanot midbar***

*and gave his heritage to the jackals of the desert.*

[A] What does the name "Malachi" mean?

[B] When - during what time period - did Malachi prophesy?

[C] To whom is Malachi's prophetic message directed?

[D] Summarize the message of today's haftarah.

6. In today's reading from the Messianic Writings we set the stage and give the context for the selected verses chosen to correspond with Parsha **Toldot**.

*I tell the truth in Messiah.*

*I am not lying, my conscience testifying with me in the Ruach HaKodesh,  
that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart.*

*For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Messiah*

*for my brothers' sake,*

*my relatives according to the flesh, who are Yisra'elites;*

*whose is the adoption, the glory,*

*the covenants, the giving of the law,  
the service, and the promises; of whom are the fathers,  
and from whom is Messiah as concerning the flesh,  
who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen.*

**[Romans 9:1-5]**

[A] Who is speaking?

[B] What is the speaker's emotional state?

[C] Why is the speaker in this state?

[D] In verses 4-5, the 'birthright' of the descendants of Avraham through Yitzchak's son Ya'akov is described, and its aspects listed. List the things that the writer of Romans says make up the 'birthright'.

*May you and all your household  
be numbered among the generations of the righteous.*

### ***The Rabbi's son***

### ***Meditation For Today's Study***

Psalm 107:1-7

*Give thanks to the Holy One, for he is good,  
For his lovingkindness endures forever.  
Let the redeemed by the Holy One say so,  
Whom he has redeemed from the hand of the adversary,  
and gathered out of the lands,  
From the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.  
  
They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way.  
They found no city to live in.  
Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.  
  
Then they cried to the Holy One in their trouble,  
And he delivered them out of their distresses,  
He led them also by a straight way, that they might go to a city to live in.*