

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5779 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

November 10th – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"
Oneg Shabbat 12:30 PM, In-Depth Torah Study



Then Rebecca took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. Genesis 27:15

Parsha Toldot -- Genesis 25:19 - 28:9

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אֲבִירָהּם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק:

Ve'eleh toldot Yitschak ben-Avraham Avraham holid et-Yitschak
and these (are the) generations (of) Isaac son of Abraham
Abraham gave birth to Isaac

Chosen Generations

The Torah portion this week opens with an accounting of the "**Toldot**," the generations of Isaac, Abraham's second-born son, the "son of promise." As we have already observed with Cain and Abel (Genesis, Chapter 4) and Noah (Genesis 9:18-26,10:1,21-32), God chose which son would become His servant to carry the future Messianic promise. The family genealogy of Messiah beginning with the "**Toldot**" of Abraham is found in **Matthew, Chapter 1**. These family records authenticated God's choice in every generation. Therefore, when we find Yeshua in this genealogy, we understand that throughout all the preceding generations from Adam, God protected and preserved His chosen servants, who were the progenitors of Messiah. This is an important concept because it illustrates that God's will cannot be thwarted! What God has decided will come to pass. It is also an important concept for believers in Messiah, Yeshua. God has chosen us to be His servants too. He has implanted faith within each of us to accept the finished work of Messiah and the desire to live a life which honors Him. We are His children, who possess the earthly promises of abundant living and the future inheritance of eternal life with our Father. We observe God's historical preservation and protection of His servants, and understand that we can count on Him today as well.

The Birth of Jacob & Esau



God had long before promised Abraham abundant seed (**Gen. 15:4-5, Gen. 22:17**). But Abraham and his wife were old and barren. Likewise, Rebecca was sent off to marry Isaac with a blessing of great fruitfulness: “May you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them” (**Gen. 24:60**), but she also turned out to be barren. Isaac and Rebecca must go through the same struggle as Abraham and Sarah, so that the birth of the chosen heir will depend not on human power but on God’s mighty intervention. But, although the birth depends on divine intervention, there is still a human element to it—Isaac prays. God does the impossible in partnership with humans who pray and trust.

Isaac prayed for his barren wife, Rebecca, to have a child. **Genesis 25** verse 21: “And Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren, and the Lord answered him, and Rebecca, his wife, conceived.” God responded to Isaac's prayer and told Rebecca that indeed she would have two children, who would become two separate nations. The nation from the older brother would serve the nation from the younger brother. Before Rebecca's two sons were born, and before either son could do any good works to deserve being chosen, God had already made His choice. He foreknew which brother would have a heart for Him and which brother's heart would serve his own appetites.

The brothers, Jacob and Esau, could not have been more different in character or more different in their spirituality. “Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents.” (**Genesis 25:27**) Esau was the more physical man, who relished hunting in the field. Jacob used his intellect, rather than his brawn, and was able to be successful in “hunting” for the first-born birthright; I call intellectual hunting “Jewish hunting” because it illustrates that “smarts” are superior to physicality. In Montana many hunters are unsuccessful. They go out into the field and hope to see a deer before the deer sees them. They enjoy tromping over the hills just to be in the outdoors, whether they are successful or not. “Jewish hunting” requires the intellect, researching hunting statistics to find the area in which the most deer are harvested, knowing that there would be deer damage from overeating in that area. Hay farmers encourage deer hunting in such areas. Visiting with farmers before hunting season in those areas allows the “Jewish hunter” to be warmly received and ensures he will be surrounded by many deer when hunting season opens. Thus the intellectual hunter, Jacob, can be more successful in hunting than the more physical hunter, Esau. **Romans 9:6-16** describes why God chose Isaac over Esau. It was according to His purposes before either brother could do anything to merit being chosen. God acts for His own purposes. Any standing or relationship we have with Him results from His doing (although, like Isaac, we must respond). Believers today in Messiah also realize that it was by God's choice that they have a relationship with Him; not because of any **mitzvot** (good deeds) they have accomplished.

Selling the Birthright



As you read through this chapter, ask yourself whether there was any deception by Jacob. Was the birthright already his by God's choice? Why do you think that Esau sold his birthright to Jacob? If Esau was so hungry that he felt he had to sell his birthright or die of hunger, as the son of Isaac, couldn't he have stopped at any tent and asked for food? Hint: read **Hebrews 12:16-17**. Why was Esau described as being spiritually immoral? We tend to focus on Jacob's "conniving" character, as he appears to be dishonestly taking the legal birthright/inheritance rights of Esau. However, let us more closely examine these events. Sometimes verse 26 is used as proof of Jacob's nature. His name "**Yakov**" means "a deceiver or trickster". However, let's remember that this is Esau's interpretation of events in Chapter 27:36: "So he (Esau) said, Is he not rightly named Jacob for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, he has taken away my blessing." In Hebrew, "**Yakov**" means "follower", and is simply describing Jacob's birth order. Esau spins Jacob's name to match his personal version of what happened to himself. A person like Esau with no spiritual appetite for the things of God will only have his visceral appetite satisfied by the things of the here and now. While it is true that God's people can temporarily yield to temptation, their spiritual sensitivity to God's voice within them will bring them to admit they have sinned, opening the opportunity for atonement through confession, **teshuvah** (repentance), and change of life. Esau despised his birthright (verse 34), so Esau sold it to Jacob for the value he received, which was more important to Esau at the time.

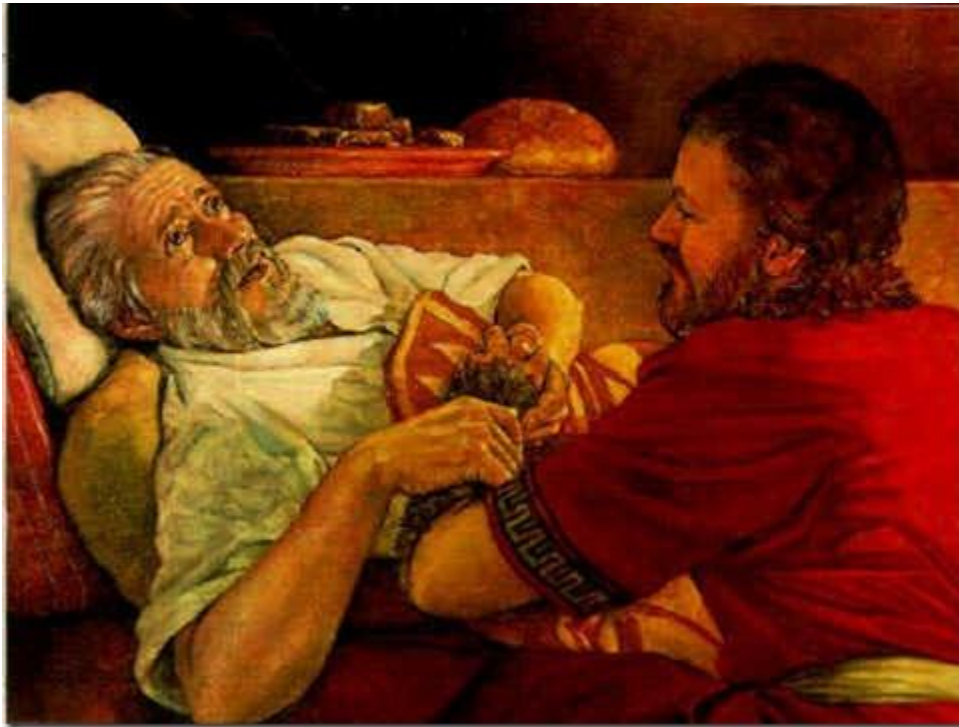
The Influence of Parental Decisions

Chapter 26 illustrates how the decisions of parents can influence their children. Before the birth of Abraham's children, Abraham decided to go to Egypt because of a famine. In Egypt, **Abraham lied to Pharaoh**. He put Sara's life in jeopardy to save himself, **saying that his wife Sarah was his sister**. Sarah was taken into the harem of Pharaoh, putting God's choice of Isaac to be Abraham's son in jeopardy (**Gen.12:10 - 20**). Later in **Chapter 20**, Abraham went to Gerar and told the Abimelech that Sarah was his sister. **Chapter 26** begins by telling us again that there was a famine in the land. In response Abraham's son, **Isaac**, fails to pray but travels to Gerar and later **tells the Abimelech (ruler/king) the same lie about Rebecca that his had father told about Sarah**: His wife, Rebecca, was his sister. Incidentally, God had just recommitted to Isaac the protection promises of the Abrahamic covenant. Did Isaac have the "faith of Abraham"? He knew God's promises, yet he was so afraid that he lied and put his wife in jeopardy. Can we, as believers in Messiah, have faith in the God of Abraham, which will be sufficient to keep us safe and in His will, even during difficult times?" An Orthodox Rabbi from Israel, Hanan Schlesinger, quotes from **Deuteronomy Ch. 11**, stating that the Torah lets us know that "the land that you are about to enter is

not like a the land of Egypt from which you have come.” He goes on to say that the Land of Egypt has an extremely dependable water source in the Nile river. While in Israel, all there is to rely on is the unpredictable water from the rains of heaven. Finally he states, “Could it be that God is bequeathing us this land because it is a drought prone land? Could it be that the instability of life in Israel is part of the divine plan? **God does not want the course of our lives there to be stable and certain.**” I agree. God wants us to trust in Him; to worship Him; to depend only on Him. For God alone can provide dependability and stability. **Deuteronomy 11:13-15:** “And it shall come about, if you listen obediently to My commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for our land in its season, the early and late rain that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. And He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied.” In other words, God’s desire is that life for His people be totally predictable; a good life where His people dwell with Him in total security with abundant crops and live an abundant life.....an abundant life keeping His commandments, worshipping and serving God alone! Today both in Israel and in America, the course of our lives is certainly not stable and certain. Could it be that neither nation is keeping God’s commandments; neither nation is worshipping and serving God alone?

As you read through Genesis we find that both Abraham, then Isaac, and now Jacob practiced deception to get what they wanted. And now **Chapter 27**, ask yourself how Jacob's deception of his father, Isaac, could have been caused by his being the chosen and favored son. One son was chosen and received favor, the other was not chosen. Sibling rivalry and family dysfunction ensued. It seems that the idea of one son being chosen and favored resulting in family dysfunction was passed down from father to son, becoming part of family identity. Lurking in the background to exacerbate the family deception of Isaac was the dysfunctional relationship of Isaac and Rebecca, regarding their children. Today we call it “playing favorites.” Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob, and they had more in common. Rebecca loved Jacob more than Esau. God had told her that Jacob would be His chosen of the two brothers. When Rebecca heard that Isaac was going to give his blessing of inheritance and prosperity to Esau instead of Jacob, she hatched a plan to deceive her husband and “commanded” Jacob to participate (27:8). Do you think we may see the same family situation with Jacob’s family in coming **parashiyot**? A good resource on the dysfunctional family based upon one son (Joseph) being chosen and favored, leading to sibling rivalry is well treated in Rabbi Russ Resnik’s book, “**A Life of Favor...A Family Therapist Examines the Story of Joseph and His Brothers.**”

Jacob deceives Isaac



Jacob dressed up to look and smell like his brother, Esau, so that his father would give him the blessing meant for Esau. **Jacob's deception was sealed with his lie, "I am Esau your first-born; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me" (27:19).** When Isaac again questioned whether he was speaking to Esau, Jacob lied a second time. Humanly speaking, Jacob was fortunate that Isaac began his blessing to Jacob with the words, "Now may God give **you**...." (vs.28), rather than "Now may God give **you, Esau**, ..." However, as we have said above, **the choice of who received the birthright was God's choice, and His choice was Jacob.** Therefore, deception or no deception, Jacob would have received the birthright and therefore the blessing. But **because Jacob chose to participate in the deception of his father, there were consequences** for both himself and his mother. **Jacob had to flee** from the wrath of his brother, who swore to kill him. His mother convinced Isaac to send Jacob back to her family, ostensibly to find a wife. We remember that **Isaac was not allowed to leave the "promised land"** to find his wife, Rebecca, but in Chapter 28, he allowed his son, Jacob, not only to leave the area, but also **to travel alone without sufficient money to pay a bride price.** We are not told why Isaac took this action. Was he, too, afraid of the wrath of Esau? Yet **Isaac stuck to his blessing of Jacob, even after knowing the deception perpetrated on him.**

Isaac Blesses Jacob – Rebecca watches for Esau



In **Chapter 28**, verse 3, Isaac invokes the blessing of "God Almighty" on Jacob and reconfirms the promises of the Abrahamic covenant on him and his descendants. There were also consequences for Rebecca. Her plan was for Jacob to "flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides,.....Then I shall send and get you from there" (27:43-45). Instead, we will learn in the Torah portion for next week that Jacob was in service to Rebecca's brother, Laban, for twenty years. During this time, Rebecca died. She would never again see her son, nor her grandchildren.

Only the Chosen Line Inherits the "Promised Land."

The last principle to be illustrated in this Torah portion concerned the inheritance given to the "non-chosen" son. Part of the practice of faith across generations was shown by Isaac, who gave his son, Esau, an inheritance **away** (27:39) from that given to Jacob. Just like his father, Abraham, who gave an inheritance to Ishmael away from the "promised land" in the wilderness of Paran (21:21) and "from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria" (25:18), Isaac gave Esau the land of Edom (Malachi 1:1-5). Today with the Palestinians claiming parts of Israel for their own State, we would do well to remember from our Torah that God created the earth. He owns everything, and He gave the land of Israel (and much more) to Abraham and to Abraham's **chosen** descendants. He allowed Messiah to die (**Isaiah 53**) to purchase sin atonement for those chosen to receive it. Through the "faith of Abraham" and belief in the finished work of Messiah to provide atonement for sin, both Jew and Gentile can become the chosen of God. As the chosen of God, we will inherit the eternal "promised land" and also eternal life with Him!

SHABBAT SHALOM



Greg & Tanna Olson Jerusalem

Scenes of Domestic Tranquility







Who gets the Last Word?