

Parshat HaShavuah

תולדות

TOLDOT

ב' כסלו תשע"ו

NOVEMBER 14,
2015

A PUBLICATION OF



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חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting
5:13
S"Z Kriat Shema
9:21

Sunset
5:31
Motzei
Shabbat
6:08



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

CONTINUING THE LEGACY
RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

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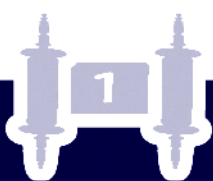
‘Where do I come from and where am I going?’, is a question that we constantly find ourselves asking. This question could not be anymore apparent than with the opening words of this week’s parsha: “וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק, בֶּן-אַבְרָהָם: אַבְרָהָם, הוֹלִיד אֶת-יִצְחָק” – “And these are the generations of Yitzchak the son of Avraham, Avraham fathered Yitzchak.” (25:19)

Many of us are familiar with the famous question of Rashi, as to why the Torah takes the “extra time” to tell us that Avraham was the father of Yitzchak; isn’t it obvious - the Torah just told us that Yitzchak is the son of Avraham?!

Rashi quotes the Midrash, which recounts that when Yitzchak was born the "leitzanei ha-dor," the cynics of the generation, claimed that Yitzchak was not Avraham’s son, but rather was the illegitimate child resulting from Avimelech's abduction of Sarah (ch. 20). To “prove” their claim, the cynics pointed out that Avraham and Sarah had been married for many years without children and it was only now – after her time spent with Avimelech – that Sarah finally conceived.

To counter this claim Hashem ensured that Yitzchak and Avraham shared a strong physical resemblance, to the extent that it was clear and undeniable that Yitzchak was in fact Avraham's son. This is the reason, concludes the Midrash, that the pasuk reiterates that “אַבְרָהָם, הוֹלִיד אֶת-יִצְחָק” to stress Avraham’s biological connection to Yitzchak.

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Rabbi Hochman continued

Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik raises two very strong questions. Firstly, why is the Torah concerned about gossip spread by idolaters? Secondly, if you think about it, this gossip was pretty absurd. Everyone knew that Avraham was able to have children because he had already fathered Yishmael. Now that Sarah had conceived, why was it so hard to believe that Avraham was the father?

R. Soloveitchik explains that the Torah's real concern was not for fertility or genealogy, but ideology. Would Yitzchak continue the legacy that Avraham had created? Would Yitzchak continue the values and beliefs that Avraham spread throughout the land and instilled within his family? Many assumed that Avraham was unique and nobody would or could follow in the great footsteps of Avraham. It was impossible that Avraham would have a son who would continue his work and legacy. Rather, Yitzchak must be the son of Avimelech, in the sense that he will follow the trends of society around him rather than staying committed to the ideals of Avraham. But they were wrong. Yitzchak remained committed and true to the values that Avraham had established.

As we continue to grow and make our lives extraordinary, we must remember the Jewish values that our parents, teachers, and mentors have set forth before us and build upon them. We must continue to walk in the ways of our *mesorah* and help shape the Jewish future.

NOW IN TERMS OF TOMORROW

JONATHAN LEFF ('17)

How does one ensure a future of growth and happiness? In this week's parsha, Toldot, Esav readily agrees to sell his birthright to Yaakov in exchange for a bowl of stew. The famous question is, why would he do something so foolish? Why would someone trade his most valuable commodity for something so insignificant and temporary?

This transaction between Yaakov and Esav teaches us a profound lesson in patience and reward. Esav acted with complete disregard for his future; he only cared about his current situation. Thus, Esav's demand for instant gratification emphasizes that we must often ignore our immediate tendencies and desires. Rather, it is important to put off our present inclinations and think of how they will impact our future.

Our ability to make good choices is heavily dependent on this understanding that our actions affect the future. It is imperative that we judge every decision we make with the future in mind, unlike Esav, who traded his valuable birthright on the premise that anyway he was eventually going to die. We must make an effort to resist the compulsiveness of our physical wishes and think about their consequences. Our tomorrows are contingent upon our actions; we must therefore choose them wisely.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

CHAYA COHEN ('16)

Themes of family and love permeate Parshat Toldot. There are numerous questions one can ask about this week's Torah portion, but one issue that stands out amongst the others is the Torah's statement that Rivka loved Yaakov and that Yitzchak loved Esav because Esav hunted for him.

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How could Yitzchak love Esav if he was evil? How could Yitzchak love his son despite knowing about his aggressiveness? The Torah answers that Yitzchak loved Esav because Esav gave food to his father and respected him. The Lekach Tov further expands on this idea and states that Yaakov knew that Esav was evil, but since Esav respected him so much and performed an abundance of Kibud Av Va'Em, Yaakov saw that he was not a lost cause and was hopeful that Esav would change his ways for the better.

However, if one looks closely at the pasuk, he/she will notice an oddity in the text. When the pasuk says that Yitzchak loved Esav, it uses the past tense. But, when the pasuk describes Rivka's love for Yaakov, it uses the present tense. It is no coincidence that Yitzchak's love for Esav was based on something tangible and was therefore short lived. Many commentaries support this assertion by explaining that when Yitzchak gives Yaakov the blessing of the *bechor*, he knows it is Yaakov, not Esav, but blesses him anyway because his love for Esav has diminished.

However, Rivka's love was pure and everlasting. The Torah, here, is teaching us a very important lesson. We cannot base our love on anything physical. That type of love will never last. To love a person unconditionally we must understand who they are, not just what they can offer us. The same message applies to God. We cannot only love Him when times are good and when He has something to offer us. Instead, we must constantly work on our love for God and for what He stands for.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF RIVKA

YONI MAYER ('18)

“אִם-כֵּן, לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי” (Bereishit 25:22). Rivka Imeinu asks Hashem the following question, "If so, why am I thus?" At this time Rivka is pregnant with Yaakov and Esav and is wondering why she is undergoing such a stressful and troublesome pregnancy. However, it is not unusual for a woman to experience pains during pregnancy. The Chanukat Hatorah raises the seemingly obvious question, why is Rivka so surprised?

The Gemara in Sotah states that righteous women are granted the gift of not experiencing pains during their pregnancy. Separately, another Gemara in Yevamot says that Hashem created the matriarchs unable to have children so that they would have to daven extra hard for a child. Hashem desires the prayers of righteous people, and by making the matriarchs barren, He knew He would receive many prayers.

Since Rivka was barren for many years, she correctly assumed that she was one of the women to whom Hashem had done this to. She also assumed that since she was a righteous person, she would also be blessed with no pains during her pregnancy. For this reason she questioned Hashem that if she was really righteous, why would she be having pains? And if she wasn't one of the righteous people that Hashem had chosen, why would she be barren for so long?

Hashem's response to her question provides us with an alternate answer. He says that she has two nations in her womb. By answering her question as such, He demonstrates to Rivka that she really is one of the righteous women. However, the reason she is experiencing pain is because there are two conflicting nations in her womb.

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We sometimes think we know who we are and why things happen. However, we must always remember that Hashem has His plan and even if that plan does not appear to be going our way, we can't forget that in the end it is part of who we are and what Hashem wants us to be.

LIVING THROUGH TORAH ELI LITWIN ('18)

This week's Parsha is פרשת תולדות. The Parsha begins with יצחק and רבקה both davening for children because רבקה is barren. Low and behold Hashem answers their תפילות, and רבקה becomes pregnant with twins. Not only is it evident from the outset, even in the womb, that the two are drastically different, but it becomes even more apparent once they are born. עשו is described as an "איש יודע ציד איש שדה" - a man who knew how to trap and a man of the field," while יעקב's character is described as "איש תם ישב אוהלים" - "an honest person dwelling in tents." (25:27)

What is meaning of יושב אוהלים? Our Rabbis explain that these words mean that יעקב spent his entire day learning Torah.

Rabbi Nisan Alpert, zichrono l'vracha, asks a very interesting question. If the Torah meant to tell us that יעקב was a scholar who sat and studied Torah all day long, why wasn't the Torah more specific in its description of יעקב? Why couldn't the Torah have simply stated that יעקב learned Torah? What does the description "dwelling in tents" teach that the explanation "he learned Torah" could not?

Rabbi Alpert answers the question as follows: when we study a certain subject we usually do so for ulterior motives. We either want to get good grades, sound smarter, get a better job, or achieve some kind of recognition. יעקב understood that Torah study represents itself. Thus, יעקב's Torah study is described as his having "dwelled in tents" to teach us that we should view our own Torah study as part of how we live- just as important as breathing, eating, drinking, and taking care of all of our vital needs. Just like a person lives by dwelling in tents, יעקב understood that one lives through Torah learning.

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