

# Parsha Q&A



## Parshas Toldos

For the week ending 2 Kislev 5759  
20 & 21 November 1998

### Parsha Questions

1. Why was it important that Yitzchak look like Avraham?
2. Why does the Torah stress that Rivka was the daughter of Besuel and the sister of Lavan?
3. What are the two differences between Tamar's pregnancy and Rivka's pregnancy?
4. Why was Esav named Esav?
5. Who gave Yaakov his name?
6. How did Esav deceive his father?
7. Why was Esav faint when he returned from the field?
8. Why are lentils a food for mourners?
9. What was the birth right that Yaakov bought from Esav?
10. Why was Yitzchak not permitted to go to Egypt?
11. Why did the Philistines plug up the wells?
12. Why did Yitzchak lose his sight? (three reasons)
13. At what age should one anticipate his own death?
14. Why did Rivka ask Yaakov to bring two kid goats?
15. Why did Esav leave his special garments with Rivka?
16. What fragrance did Yitzchak detect on Yaakov's garments?
17. What was the "fat of the land" promised to Esav?
18. When will Esav be freed from subjugation to Yaakov?
19. What inspired Esav to marry the daughter of Yishmael?
20. If we know that Machalas was Yishmael's daughter, it's self-evident that she was the sister of Nevayos. Why, then, does the Torah state that Esav married "Yishmael's daughter, the sister of Nevayos?"

### Sherlox Holmes and the Twin Mystery

"Mr. Barnsworth says he's English, but I have my doubts," said world famous detective Sherlox Holmes. "The English are a nation. As a nation, they have particular manners. For one, they never hold their fork in their right as Barnsworth does. A nation is so much more than just a lot of people."

"Speaking of nations," said Watstein, "please help me understand this text: And G-d told her: Two goyim (nations) are in your womb..." (Bereishis 25:23)

"What better describes Yaakov and Esav — the progenitors of antithetical empires — than two nations?" said Sherlox.

"My question exactly!" said Watstein. "The verse is perfectly understandable as is. Why then, does Rashi comment? Rashi says that goyim, nations, is spelled gei'im, princes, referring to the two mighty princes, Rabbi Yehuda Ha'nasi and Antoninus Caesar, who would in the future emerge from Rivka's womb."

"How prophetic!" said Sherlox. "Aside from reason, prophecy is my favorite subject!"

"But why does Rashi explain thus? Instead of a straightforward view of the verse, we end up with a midrashic one which seems, forgive me for saying it, far from the plain meaning."

"Rashi tells us why he comments: He wants to explain the word gei'im as spelled," said Sherlox.

"You know as well as I, Mr. Holmes, that Rashi makes no comment in dozens of similar instances where a word is spelled other than it is read. Why must he here?"

"A nation," said Sherlox, "is more than just a lot of people."

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## Answer

"A nation is more than just a lot of people," said Sherlock.  
"But a lot of people it is."

"I don't follow," said Watstein.

"A nation, Dr. Watstein, is a large group of people.  
Did Rivka have a large group of people in her womb?"

"Ha! Do you mean that Rashi was bothered by the literal meaning, namely, that there were two entire nations-full of people in her womb?" asked Watstein.

"You must admit, that is what the verse says literally," said Sherlock. "If the verse had said: 'Two heads of nations are in your womb Rashi may not have commented. And if the verse had meant that two nations will 'emerge' from her womb, the verse could have said so."

"Yes," said Watstein, "as in the very next phrase: Two kingdoms will depart from your womb (Bereishis 25:23). So, since the strict literal meaning — two nations in one womb — is hard to bear, so to speak, Rashi therefore offers a midrashic look at the verse."

"Spoken like a true Englishman, Dr. Watstein."

(Source: *Maskil L'David; Sherlock* is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek's "What's Bothering Rashi")

## I Did Not Know That!

**"Do not descend to Egypt; dwell in the land that I shall indicate to you." (26:2)**

Yitzchak was born in *Eretz Yisrael* and was never allowed to leave. The *gematria* (numerical value) of Yitzchak's name hints to this, since it has the same value as *ben-tzion* — son of Zion.

## Recommended Reading List

### Ramban

25:23	Two Nations
26:1	Yitzchak in Exile
26:5	The Avos and Mitzvah Observance
26:20	The Wells and the Future
27:4	Rivka's Secret
27:33	Why Yitzchak Trembled

### Sforno

25:24	Esav's Name
25:26	Yaakov's Name
27:1	Yitzchak's Blindness
27:29	Yaakov's Portion

## Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

- 25:19 - So that everyone would agree that Avraham was indeed his father.
- 25:20 - To praise her, that even though her family was evil she was righteous.
- 25:24 - Rivka gave birth at full term to two children, one righteous and one wicked. Tamar gave birth after seven months to two righteous children.
- 25:25 - Because he was born fully developed. The name Esav is based on the Hebrew word for "made."
- 25:26 - Hashem.
- 25:27 - Esav deceived Yitzchak by asking questions that suggested that he was very strict in mitzvah observance.
- 25:29 - From having murdered.
- 25:30 - They are round like a wheel and mourning is like a revolving wheel that eventually touches everyone.
- 25:31 - The right to bring sacrifices.
- 26:2 - Through the *akeida* he had attained the status of a *korban* and was forbidden to leave *Eretz Canaan*.
- 26:15 - They felt that either marauders would attack to capture the wells, or if attacking for other reasons, they would use the wells as a water supply.
- 27:1 - a) From the smoke of the incense offered by Esav's wives to their idols b) From the angel's tears which fell into Yitzchak's eyes at the time of the *akeida*; c) In order for Yaakov to receive the blessings.
- 27:2 - When he reaches five years from the age his parents were when they passed away, until five years after.
- 27:9 - One for Yitzchak and the other to offer as a *korban Pesach*.
- 27:15 - He suspected that his wives might steal them.
- 27:27 - The scent of *Gan Eden*.
- 27:36 - Italy.
- 27:40 - When the Jewish People transgress the Torah.
- 28:7 - When he saw that his father despised his current wives, he resolved to take a wife from his father's family.
- 28:9 - To indicate that Yishmael died between her betrothal and her wedding, and that it was Nevayos who gave his sister in marriage to Esav. Knowing the date of Yismael's death we can determine the date of Esav's marriage and thus Yaakov's age, 63, at the time of his flight from Esav.