Summary

Aftet twenty years of marriage without children, Yitzchak's prayers to Hashem are answered and Rivka conceives twins, Esav and Yaakov. The pregnancy is extremely painful. Hashem reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the world-wide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins — Rome and Israel. Esav is born first, and then Yaakov, holding onto Esav's heel. As they grow up, the contrast between the twins becomes apparent: Esav is hunter, a man of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah, developing his soul. On the day of the funeral of their grandfather Avraham, Yaakov is cooking lentil soup, the traditional mourner's meal. Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting, and sells his birthright (and his concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of soup, clearly demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of the firstborn. Yitzchak tries to escape to Egypt when a famine strikes Canaan, but Hashem reminds him that because of the Akeida (where he was offered up as a sacrifice) he has become holy and must remain in the Holy Land. Instead he relocates to Gerar in the land of the Philistines, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say that she is his sister. Yitzchak arouses jealousy when he becomes immensely wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave. Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife. Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife. After twenty years of marriage without children, Yitzchak's prayers to Hashem are answered and Rivka conceives twins, Esav and Yaakov. The pregnancy is extremely painful. Hashem reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the world-wide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins — Rome and Israel. Esav is born first, and then Yaakov, holding onto Esav's heel. As they grow up, the contrast between the twins becomes apparent: Esav is hunter, a man of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah, developing his soul. On the day of the funeral of their grandfather Avraham, Yaakov is cooking lentil soup, the traditional mourner's meal. Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of soup, clearly demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of the firstborn. Yitzchak tries to escape to Egypt when a famine strikes Canaan, but Hashem reminds him that because of the Akeida (where he was offered up as a sacrifice) he has become holy and must remain in the Holy Land. Instead he relocates to Gerar in the land of the Philistines, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say that she is his sister. Yitzchak arouses jealousy when he becomes immensely wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave. Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife.

Commentaries

The Voice

"The voice is the voice of Yaakov, and the hands are the hands of Esav" (26:22).

The Voice is given to Yaakov. And the Hands, to Esav. The internal power which emanates from the heart — that's the Voice. The external power of action — the Hands. But these Hands are not satisfied just to dominate the physical world. They strive constantly to subjugate the Voice. The Hands of Esav thrust themselves into the inside of Yaakov; coarse Hands delving into the depths of the neshama; setting up an idol in the inner sanctuary of the Jewish soul. Superficiality swelling up and suffusing the innermost chambers of the heart. The Hands strangling the Voice; The Voice of prayer without the feeling of the heart; A mitzvah done mechanically — the Hands are working. And the Voice grows quieter and quieter...

But in spite of this, the Voice is the voice of Yaakov, destined to rise up, to dominate and elevate the Hands, to purify them and make them holy.

When Yitzchak said that the voice was "the voice of Yaakov and the hands were the hands of Esav," he thought that it was Esav who was in front of him, and that Esav had acquired the voice of Yaakov — the Voice had sanctified and elevated Esav. The truth of the matter was that Esav had remained unchanged in his evil, while it was Yaakov who stood before him, garbed in the neshama; setting up an idol in the inner sanctuary of the Jewish soul. Superficiality swelling up and suffusing the innermost chambers of the heart. The Hands strangling the Voice; The Voice of prayer without the feeling of the heart; A mitzvah done mechanically — the Hands are working. And the Voice grows quieter and quieter...

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(Adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin - L’Torah U’L’Moadim)
**Tales Your Children Well**

“And these are the generations of Yitzchak, son of Avraham. Avraham fathered Yitzchak” (25:19).

It may be true that example is a powerful educator. But, in the education of one’s children, it should not be relied on exclusively. The assumption that children will naturally want to imitate the positive attributes of their parents can never replace constant attention and clear direction. The Torah tells us that Avraham fathered Yitzchak, to emphasize that Yitzchak was not just the product of exposure to his father’s success in bringing the world to recognize Hashem, but Avraham actively labored to implant love and recognition of Hashem in Yitzchak’s heart.

(Adapted from Drash Moshe)

**TWO’ S A CROWD**

“The children agitated inside her” (25:22).

During her pregnancy, whenever Rivka passed by the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, Yaakov struggled to be born, and when she passed a place of idolatry, it was Esav who tried to leave. One can understand why it was that Esav was anxious to leave his mother’s womb, for he could find no idolatry there; but why did Yaakov want to leave? After all, as the Talmud teaches us (Nidah 30), during pregnancy, an angel teaches the fetus the entire Torah. Why would Yaakov want to leave his angelic teacher? The answer is simple: You can have the best rebbe in the world, but if you’ve got a bad room-mate — you’ve got to get out!

(Rashi, Mayana Shel Torah)

**Haftorah: Malachi 1:1-7**

**PASS THE SALMON**

“You say ‘Behold! It is so burdensome!’ And you sadden Him...and you bring stolen, lame and sick animals... for an offering...” (1:13).

Things don’t change. How much care and attention we put into our physical existence — our clothes, cars, furniture and food! But to spend an extra ten or twenty dollars on a first-class mezuza...well the other one is kosher isn’t it? The Rambam writes that beyond the requirement to offer only blemish-free animals on the mizbeach (holy altar), we are obliged to give our very best to Hashem. When Bnei Yisrael were righteous, they imported choice rams from Moav for offerings, special lambs from Chevron, as well as the best doves. Now, when we import, it’s Smoked Salmon from Scotland, and that’s to go on the mizbeach of our own appetites!

(Based on The Midrash Says)

**Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.**

**Yoshe Shabbos Koosh**

“Meat, wine and fish — no delights shall be missing... Yosef cut open a fish and found a jewel in its flesh.”

“Yosef Mokir Shabbos” earned his title, say our Sages (Masechta Shabbos 119) because of the extraordinary fashion in which he honored the Sabbath. Stargazers informed his wealthy gentile neighbor that all of his riches were fated to go over to Yosef. To insure himself against such a fate he sold all of his possessions and bought a precious jewel which he wore in his turban. While crossing a bridge a strong wind blew off the turban and when the jewel fell into the water below it was swallowed by a fish. The fish was caught and brought to market just before Shabbos when there were no customers around. The fisherman was directed to Yosef who was renowned for buying whatever would add honor to the Sabbath. When Yosef cut open the fish he discovered the jewel and became a wealthy man in fulfillment of the maxim: “Shabbos repays the one who lends it money.”

Parshas Toldos

For the week ending 2 Kislev 5756, 24 & 25 November 1995