

Toldot - 6

Torah: Genesis 25:19 - 28:9

Haftarah: Malachi 1:1 - 2:7

New Testament/Brit Chadassah: Romans 9:1-13

Toldot is a Hebrew word that means “generations” and this portion records the next phase of the building of the House of Israel. Up until now, the story centered around Abraham, the great Friend of God, but with his death, he has passed from the scene.

At the end of the previous portion, Isaac had taken Rebekah as his wife and was comforted after the death of his mother, Sarah. Genesis 25:20 states that Isaac was forty (40) years old when he married Rebekah.

But as with Sarai, Rebekah was beautiful and barren. Isaac prayed for his wife Rebekah for approximately twenty years before she conceived the twins. We get twenty years because Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth (Genesis 25:26).

21 Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children; and the Lord answered him, and his wife Rebekah conceived. (Genesis 25:21)

This is perhaps one of the most powerful lessons in faith that we learn from Isaac. No matter how long it takes, keep praying for our wives and children. We cannot see that far in the future for the most part. Again, we must not give up in praying for our wives and children!!

22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is so, why am I in this condition?” So she went to inquire of the Lord (Genesis 25:22)

This looks to me like a case of appeal. The babies were struggling in the womb and she asked out loud why this was the case. Perhaps she asked her husband and he couldn’t give her an answer. Then she inquired of the Lord and He granted her insights about the children. It is an open question whether she repeated to her husband what she received from the Lord. But going back to the chain of hierarchy that we have from Paul in I Corinthians 11:3: Father <- Son <- Man <- Woman, we see YHVH responding to Rebekah. He would not have done

that unless Isaac had granted permission for her to “escalate to higher authority” her question. Therefore, the man can step back and grant direct access between the Father and/or the Son and the woman.

After the twin boys were born, they began to manifest their differing destinies. Esau, the elder, became a hunter in the field, while Jacob dwelt in the tents. Given his later skill with breeding Laban’s beasts, he studied animal husbandry. Jacob valued the heritage that he and his brother would someday receive from Isaac their father and Abraham their grandfather. If Jacob had not known the prophecy that his mother Rebekah received, I doubt he would have acted as he did with respect to the birthright and the blessing of the firstborn.

Jacob set up a straightforward business deal with his brother. His brother was hungry and wanted the red stew that Jacob was cooking, so he was willing to give up the dish in exchange for the birthright. He had something that Esau wanted, and Esau had the birthright that Jacob wanted, so the exchange was made. From this, we men need to know what we have and value it appropriately. Equally, we can identify what we want and work to get it legitimately. If the opportunity comes up, seize it!

Later on, while the twins were still living with their parents, there was a famine. Isaac chose to move everyone to Gerar among the Philistines (Genesis 26:1). Shortly after Isaac relocated, YHWH appeared to him there. He told Isaac to stay where he was and not go down to Egypt.

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. **2** And the Lord appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. **3** Live for a time in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. **4** I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, **5** because Abraham obeyed Me and fulfilled his duty to Me, and kept My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” **6** So Isaac lived in Gerar. (Genesis 26:1-6)

All Isaac had to do was stay in Gerar and avoid going down to Egypt and he would receive the same covenant blessings that his father Abraham had received. But note should be taken of verse 26:5 because of the three patriarchs,

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Abraham alone was described as keeping “[His] commandments, [His] statutes and [His] laws.” Yet, based on Genesis 18:19, we can safely assume that Abraham taught Isaac his son, and Isaac in turn taught the twins. It is not a safe assumption to think Esau accepted the lessons but a safe assumption that Jacob learned something from his father. Here is another crucial responsibility that fathers bear and that is teaching their children the commandments, statutes and laws.

Under normal circumstances, it is not necessary to repeat our fathers’ mistakes. In fact it is a good idea not to repeat the mistake! In this case, Isaac was afraid that the men of Gerar would kill him to take his wife Rebekah, just like his father had been afraid. He repeated his father’s lie that Rebekah was his sister. He was caught out in his lie by sporting or intimately caressing Rebekah where he could be seen and was in fact observed by Abimelech, king of Gerar. Abimelech issued a stern rebuke to Isaac and ordered his people to leave the couple alone. From this, we learn not to walk by fear but in trust. After all, YHVH had told Isaac that He would be with him!

Genesis 26:12-22 records the growing economic prosperity and power that YHVH blessed Isaac with. For some unreported number of years, Isaac sowed and YHVH blessed him 100-fold. His blessings came in the form of flocks and herds and a great household of servants. His economic wealth put him in an increasingly powerful position in the city of Gerar to the point where Abimelech told Isaac to move out of the city. I don’t teach any form of the prosperity gospel. I will say that if YHVH chooses to bless someone with wealth, that is His sovereign choice. As with the rich young ruler, sometimes wealth is more a curse than a blessing (see Matthew 19:16-26).

Isaac moved from the city of Gerar to the valley of Gerar and dug three wells. The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with his men over the first two wells, but not the third well. Then Isaac was relieved and now they can live in peace. The key point that should be made here is that the Gentiles pushed Isaac out of their midst and then pushed him further away. The Gentiles were the ones that forced the separation.

Isaac left the area and moved to Beersheba. During the same night as his arrival, YHVH appeared to him again and affirmed the covenant.

Given this state of affairs, it is rather ironic that the same Abimelech that ordered Isaac out of the city came now to Isaac and requested a non-aggression pact. Undoubtedly Isaac had to point out that they hated him, and now they come to him to ask for peace? Gives one something to ponder here, doesn't it? Chapter 26 closes with the observation that Esau at age 40 was the first to marry and he took two women of the children of Heth. These two women grieved Isaac and Rebekah a great deal. Young men, don't choose women that grieve your parents!

Chapter 27 is the story of Jacob's deception of his father on the orders of his mother. Jacob rightly feared invoking a curse instead of a blessing, and his mother assumed the curse on herself and she died prematurely. Unfortunately the blessing exposed a serious rift in the family. Even though Isaac may or may not have known about the prophecy that YHVH gave his wife decades earlier and was grieved by his daughters-in-law, he was still determined to bless Esau just because he loved the game that Esau killed and prepared for him.

Rebekah put Jacob in a difficult spot by ordering him to deceive his father. He obeyed her, and found himself exiled and fleeing for his life.

After the deception was exposed and the blessings (or blessing and curse) were given, Isaac now had to deal with the aftermath. Because of Jacob's deception and Esau's rage, Jacob was the one sent into exile to Rebekah's brother. However, as Rebekah pointed out to her husband, neither of them wanted Jacob to emulate Esau and marry a daughter of Heth. So the exile had multiple purposes: get Jacob out of town for his personal safety and for him to get his wife from Rebekah's brother's family.

Here, note should be taken of how specific Isaac and Rebekah were in instructing Jacob to go to Rebekah's brother and choose a wife from his daughter. Abraham's servant was more general when he prayed and YHVH answered with Rebekah. This section closes with Esau noting Jacob's exile and obedience to his parents about choosing a wife, and he responds by choosing for himself a wife from his uncle Ishmael's family.