

תולדות

TOLDOT/GENERATIONS

Bereshith/Genesis 25:19-28:9

The name of our parasha, “**Toldot**” (תולדות), is an interesting word in Hebrew. We like to simply translate it as “**generations**,” or the “**offspring**” of. However, that translation does not always fit the context. The first time the word appears is in the creation story:

Bereshith/Genesis 2:4 These *are* the **generations** (תולדות) of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that יהוה Elohim made the earth and the heavens

What then are the “**offspring**” of the “**heavens and the earth?**” TWOT (Theological Book of the Old Testament) gives the meaning of “**toldot**” to be “the events that followed the establishment of heaven and earth. Thus, the verse is correctly placed as introducing the detailed account of the creation and fall of man.” The gist of “**toldot**” is to take us into the future. To give us a glimpse of not only where we came from, but what sort of generational characteristics will be part of our future.

We also saw “**toldot**” open the parashat **Noach**:

Bereshith 6:9 This is the **genealogy** (תולדות) of **Noach**. Noach was a **just** man, **perfect** in his generations. Noach **walked with Elohim**.

Following the word translated as “**genealogy**,” rather than immediately naming his children, Noach’s character traits are listed. This is the “**toldot of Noach**” – he was “**just, perfect, and he walked with Elohim**.” The story then that follows will be Noach’s expanded “**toldot**,” his legacy. He did not cave in to the temptations of his environment. He was faithful in the midst of a wicked generation.

Skipping past this week’s parasha, we find another “**toldot**” not followed by a listing of descendants:

Bereshith 37:2 These *are* the **generations** (תולדות) of **Ya’acov**. **Yosef**, *being* seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Yosef brought unto his father their evil report.

“**The generations** (תולדות) of **Ya’acov**. **Yosef**...” What’s the significance of “**generations**” (תולדות) here? It means that “**Ya’acov’s**” life was wrapped up in his son, “**Yosef**.” Therefore, when Yosef was taken away from him, his life sunk into one of bitterness and grief:

Bereshith 37:35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but **he refused to be comforted**, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus, his father wept for him.

Now returning to this week's parasha:

Bereshith 25:19 This is the genealogy (תולדות) of Yitzchak, Avraham's son. Avraham begot Yitzchak.

What follows the “genealogy (תולדות) of Yitzchak” is not a listing of his sons, but rather a description of who he is. “**Yitzchak**” is first and foremost – “**Avraham's son**.” This attribute is his physical and spiritual legacy. He is to be remembered as the “**son of Avraham**” because he did what Avraham did. His life, his “**genealogy**” reflected the fact that he was his father's son. Yeshua expects this to also be our testimony as spiritual children of Avraham:

John 8:39 They answered and said to Him, "Avraham is our father." Yeshua said to them, "**If you were Avraham's children, you would do the works of Avraham.**"

The writer of the book of **Hebrews** also agrees:

Romans 4:12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Avraham had while still uncircumcised.

It is true that in many ways “**Yitzchak walked in the footsteps of his father, Avraham.**” One thing that they shared was to be the heir of the covenant promises and yet to have a barren wife. What can we learn from how **Yitzchak** handled this trial?



Bereshith 25:21 Now Yitzchak pleaded with יהוה for his wife, because she *was* barren; and יהוה granted his plea, and Rivkah his wife conceived.

Does יהוה use “**prayer**” as a way to encourage man to participate in the fulfillment of prophecy? Prophecy is not just given for us to marvel at the greatness of the Creator. The Almighty reveals to His chosen ones His plans on earth in order for man to connect with Him in faith and in believing prayer. **Daniel** is our example as he entered into prayer and fasting when he understood that the time had come for the fulfillment of a prophecy:

Daniel 9:2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of יהוה through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. ³ Then I set my face toward Adonai Elohim to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

Were either **Daniel** or **Yitzchak** praying for their own self interests? No, they understood that the prophecies were the will of יהוה. Their plea was that the will of our Heavenly Father would be successful on the earth. As Yeshua prayed...

Luke 22:42 ... not My will, but Yours, be done."

Yitzchak believed הַבְּרִית would continue in the covenant promises given to Avraham, his father:

Romans 4:20 He did not waver at the promise of Yah through unbelief, but was **strengthened in faith**, giving glory to Yah,²¹ and **being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.**

Changing directions now, there is a lot of drama in this parasha about the issue of the “**birthright.**” The Torah informs us that Esav cared little about the “**birthright**”:



Bereshith 25:34 And Ya’acov gave Esav bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus, **Esav despised his birthright.**

The writer of **Hebrews** for this reason calls Esav “**a fornicator or a profane person**”:

Hebrews 12:15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of Yah; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;¹⁶ lest there *be* any **fornicator or profane person like Esav**, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

What does it mean to receive the rights of the firstborn? **Cathy Helms** ([Parashat Toldot](#)) in her commentary writes:

In the days of the patriarchs, when a man died, the eldest son inherited a *double portion* of the father’s wealth along with the responsibility to care for the extended family.

The role of patriarch was a complex responsibility that was not only time-consuming, but could be dangerous, as well as thankless. (Recall Abraham and Lot.) The elder brother was responsible to negotiate on behalf of the family, mediate family disputes, counsel family members, rescue them from debt and danger, return them to the flock and employ them himself if need be. The ultimate goal was to teach him how to prosper in all areas and teach others likewise. This is the idea of true discipleship. But by far the most important aspect of this role was the responsibility to be the family priest, to intercede for each family member and to offer sacrifices on their behalf. **Yeshua, our High Priest, is the preeminent Elder Brother.**

But Esau had no intention of pouring himself out for the family and that fact was undoubtedly made quite clear, at least to Rebecca.

The firstborn represented the future hope of the family and the preservation of its name. All of the sons of a family were to receive an equal share of the inheritance, but the firstborn son received a double portion. This is the blessing of the firstborn as the birthright blessing. Even if a father had multiple wives, his first son was to be acknowledged as the firstborn:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 21:17 "But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife *as the firstborn by giving him a double portion* of all that he has, for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.

So, if this Torah commandment was known to the patriarchs, why was it never followed? Avraham's firstborn, Ishmael, did not receive the blessing. Instead, Yitzchak, the son born through Sarah received the blessing. Yitzchak's firstborn son, Esav, did not receive the blessing. Instead, Ya'acov received the blessing. Ya'acov's firstborn son, Reuven, did not receive the blessing. Instead, Yosef received the blessing. Yosef's firstborn son, Manasseh, did not receive the blessing. Instead, Ephraim received the blessing from the hand of Ya'acov. And still further, when the tribes were numbered, יהוה declared the Levites to be the firstborn of Israel. Why was the law of the physical firstborn never followed by the patriarchs? The writer of **Romans** answers this question:

Romans 9:6 But it is not that the word of Elohim has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel,⁷ nor *are they* all children because they are the seed of Avraham; but, "In Yitzchak your seed shall be called."⁸ That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of Yah; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

יהוה knows the heart and His covenant promises were passed on through those whose greatest desire was not the world, but to draw near to Him. The physical seed must be combined with the spiritual seed.

Believers are not to be like Esav. As Israel, our Father's firstborn, we must not despise our birthright, our destiny, and our inheritance. Consider the following verses and their ramification:

Shemot/Exodus 4:22 ... "Thus says יהוה: "Israel *is* My son, My firstborn.

Galatians 3:29 And if you *are* Messiah's, then you are Avraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Jeremiah 31:9 ... For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim *is* My firstborn.

Daniel Rendelman writes:

As a physical descendant of Avinu Avraham (Father Abraham) you are Isra'el. As a believer in Messiah you are Isra'el. Don't be mistaken and don't be talked out of it. You are Isra'el. You are YHWH's firstborn (bikhor) and you are YHWH's special possession that is destined to inherit family leadership, serve as ruler, and minister as a priest.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 7:6 “For you *are* a holy people to YHWH your Elohim; YHWH your Elohim has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

We must not lose interest in the privilege of being YHWH’s bikhor and we must not fall into the sin of Esav who despised his birthright. Esav did not esteem the honor of being the son of Elohim. What about you? The sin of despising the birthright can manifest in many ways. Just think about these few areas...do you ever think that YHWH’s Torah is too hard to follow or too big of a burden? Do you have any antisemitism hidden inside of you? Have you accepted Israel as your identity? Have you dealt with the false teaching that says the church has replaced Israel? Do you live out your heritage and culture of Israel, or are you scared of what others may think or say about you? Do you ever feel that something the Bible commands you to do is simply “too Jewish?” Is your lifestyle more like the world around you, and is your life patterned after the Bible and its holy days and way of life?

As Isra’el you have been called to be in the family of faith. The name Isra’el itself simply means, “one who reigns and rules with El.” You have been given a special double portion inheritance from the Father through Messiah Y’shua.

What is the double portion? "I have come that you might have life, and life more abundantly," Y'shua said in Yochanan 10:10. The Father's legacy of life today is a way of living that has significance and meaning. His legacy is also life in the hereafter - with Him in the realm of the Spirit. This is possible through the Messiah, the firstborn of the dead and the firstborn resurrection. "Y'shua Ha Moshiach, is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth," Revelation 1:5. The firstborn blessings were to follow YHWH in abundance and then multiply and fill the earth. Read the entire commentary here - [Parasha Toldot by Rabbi Dani'el Rendelman](#)

Yitzchak has often been criticized for desiring to bless his son, Esav. Yet we do not have insight into what he was thinking. He did not have clear revelation into the plan אלהים had for a future chosen people named Israel. We look with hindsight and it’s easy for us. But consider this...an idol-worshipping man in Babylon fathered Avraham, Sara came from Nahor, and Rivka from Betuel. Would it not make sense for Yitzchak to at least consider that from Esav, could come a righteous son? Perhaps he was operating on what he knew...bless the firstborn son, unless אלהים gave a clear command (assuming Rivka had never shared her revelation). Amazingly, the Almighty’s will was still accomplished, and His blessings went where He wanted them to go.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love Yah, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

Shabbat Shalom!
Ardelle