

This theme of avoiding entanglements, with those who do not know the Lord, is more specifically addressed by the Apostle Paul, who warned the Corinthians about the perils of being bound together with unbelievers:

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Messiah with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE [Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27]. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,’ says the Lord. ‘AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN [Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 20:34, 41]; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

While reflecting upon some of the decisions made by Abraham as he was approaching the end of his life, as noted in this week’s Torah reading, perhaps it would be beneficial for you to contemplate where you are in your own walk of faith. Are you mindful of the distinct faith that you have in the Creator God, through the redeeming blood of the Messiah Yeshua? Are you diligently striving to avoid being bound with unbelievers in your daily affairs? Are you praying for godly spouses for your children and grandchildren? Are you working to pass on your faith to your children and sharing it with others, who, like Eliezer, might be a part of your immediate surroundings in the family, neighborhood, or at work?

There is much to be thankful for as we all consider just where we are in our walk of faith. Perhaps now the words of **Isaiah 51:1-2** mean so much more as we consider the lives of Abraham and Sarah? *May we, by faith, pursue righteousness as we seek the Lord—and avoid being bound with those who do not believe—just like the distinctive faith of Abraham.*

Toldot תולדות History “Generational Faith”

Genesis 25:19-28:9
Malachi 1:1-2:7

By the time Torah students arrive at the sixth *parashah* of Genesis, *Toldot*, it should be obvious the Holy One is determined to communicate the efficacy and blessing of knowing and following Him, and walking in His ways **by faith**, as modeled by Abraham. However, because the human tendency inherited in Adam (Romans 5:12) is to be independent of God, it has been the challenge of every generation to hopefully pass on, to each succeeding generation, a trust and belief in the One True God. With this goal in mind, one can understand why the Almighty chose Abraham to be ultimately regarded as the father of faith. In our prior reading it has already been noted that Abraham would exemplify faith in God, and then instruct his progeny to follow after Him as well:

“For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and

justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him” (Genesis 18:19).

As the *Toldot* portion commences, the emphasis has turned from describing the lives of Abraham and Sarah, to the succeeding generation which consists of Isaac and Rebekah, the couple chosen to continue the faith relationship with the Almighty Creator God:

“Now these are *the records* of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife” (Genesis 25:19-20).

Recall from *Chayei Sarah* (Genesis 23:1-25:18) last week, that after the death of Sarah, Abraham was very concerned about finding a suitable wife for the beloved Isaac. In order to assure that the faith he had in the Lord God was not jeopardized by allowing Isaac to marry one of the local, pagan Canaanite women, Abraham had commissioned Eliezar to journey to upper Mesopotamia to find a wife from his close relatives (Genesis 24). And so, Isaac was united in marriage to Rebekah, the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, son of Nahor (Genesis 22:23). The critical marital and spiritual relationship between Isaac and Rebekah was established, so that the faith of Abraham would be transferred to the next generation. God's promise to Abraham, regarding Isaac receiving His blessings, is confirmed in *Toldot*, when the Lord appeared to Isaac, who had to move to Gerar to contend with a regional famine:

“The LORD appeared to him [Isaac] and said, ‘Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. **Sojourn 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. 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; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws**” (Genesis 26:2-5).

We see here how God not only chose Abraham because He knew that Abraham would instruct the members of his household to obey and follow Him, (Genesis 18:19), but that Abraham himself followed the instruction given to him by God (Genesis 26:5). The example of a faith demonstrated by actions pleasing to the Holy One is why Abraham is known throughout Scripture as the father of faith (Romans 4:12). The key for any succeeding generation, since the time of Abraham, has been to pass on an example of faithful obedience to one's children and grandchildren.

From the onset of our *parashah* this week, one is reminded of the critical principle for parents to help guide their children in the selection of spouses. Abraham had a great responsibility to pass on his faithful relationship with the Holy One to his son Isaac, who had already witnessed and participated in the act of worship at Mount Moriah, and had seen Abraham's God provide a sacrificial ram (Genesis 22). Now that his mother Sarah was gone, Abraham wanted to be certain that Isaac would follow in his walk of faith with the Almighty One. By securing Rebekah as a wife from his relatives, who had some knowledge of the same God as he, Abraham was minimizing potential conflicts in beliefs that might arise as Isaac and Rebekah began to start their own family. This practice of choosing a wife with similar beliefs should be noted, because later on in this reading, one finds Isaac and Rebekah following the same pattern for Jacob.

Before addressing their similar decision, it is interesting to note that the ongoing influence of Abraham did not end when Isaac and Rebekah married. Abraham continued to live on, until he gave the bulk of his possessions to the beloved Isaac (Genesis 25:7). The larger family likely lived in close proximity, perhaps in the same encampment as was the custom in that era. For the start of Isaac and Rebekah's marital union, Abraham was an influence on them, able to dispense the wisdom and knowledge he had received during his life pursuing God to his family.

Rebekah's Pregnancy

For the first season of their marriage, Isaac and Rebekah did not have any children. The aging Abraham was likely aware of his lack of grandchildren, and could have wondered why Rebekah remained barren. Such a wait for children would have reminded Abraham of the excruciating delay for Sarah's pregnancy with Isaac. But without going through, once again, all the trials that tested and honed Abraham's faith—Isaac's walk of faith was different, as is the case with every generation. Instead of having a miraculous birth at a time beyond normal child bearing ages like Abraham and Sarah had, we are simply told how Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, and she conceived. When it is recorded that Isaac prayed to the Lord and she conceived, such good news would have encouraged everyone around them:

“Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If it is so, why then am I *this way*?’ So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.’ When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them” (Genesis 25:21-26).

In this part of *Toldot*, one finds that both Isaac and Rebekah had a maturing faith relationship with the Lord, as modeled by Abraham who preceded them. Both followed in the faithful footsteps of Abraham, as the Lord was sought for requests after twenty years of barrenness. First, Isaac prayed to the Lord regarding Rebekah, and she conceived—but the pregnancy was complicated. So, Rebekah inquired of the Lord about the struggle in her womb, and the Lord answered with much more than a reason for the discomfort. Specifically, Rebekah was told that she had twins who would eventually become two nations, and that in time, one nation would become stronger than the other. Most significantly, Rebekah was told how the older would serve the younger:

“Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23).

This must have been a somewhat confusing answer from the Lord to Rebekah, because ancient customs gave birthright privileges to the firstborn son. Rebekah had to be perplexed about the statement that the “older shall serve the younger,” because this was contrary to tradition. But, our Eternal God is not at all confined by any sort of human traditions, as demonstrated in the treatment of Ishmael and Isaac. Despite the fact that Ishmael was

technically the firstborn son of Abraham with the handmaiden Hagar, the Lord had specifically told Abraham that Isaac was the son of promise and not Ishmael (Genesis 17:18-21). After Isaac was born, Abraham obeyed the Lord when he sent Ishmael away (Genesis 21:11-14).

Rebekah had certainly heard about the trials of Abraham and the blessings that were to be inherited by Isaac, from her different interactions with her husband, and likely also her father-in-law. To understand what the Lord had revealed to her about her twins, and most specifically the word that the “older shall serve the younger”, she must have thought that God was going to eventually bestow the blessings of Abraham upon the second born son, like He had done with Isaac. We discover that from her later actions, it appears that this specific word from the Lord about the struggling twins in her womb, profoundly influenced some of Rebekah’s future decisions. The text does not indicate whether Rebekah shared the response she received from the Lord with Isaac, or anyone else, although it could be reasonable to conclude that she did. After all, hearing a verbal response from the Lord was *special and rare*. The excitement of sharing such a word with others, would be tough to avoid.

The Birth of Esau and Jacob

Regardless of what was or was not shared by Rebekah with her relatives, a prophetic glimpse, of what was eventually to come between the two brothers, is found when the younger son Jacob exited the womb while holding the heel of his brother Esau. This caused his parents to name him Jacob or *Ya’akov* (יַעֲקֹב), meaning either “heel holder” or “supplanter”¹⁶:

“Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. **Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob;** and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them” (Genesis 25:25-26).

This is an early peek at what was to take place later in the lives of Esau and Jacob, as the word to Rebekah was beginning to manifest itself through their birth delivery and naming process. In due time, it became evident over the formative years that these two youngsters were obviously different in their approaches to life. The older and stronger Esau was noted for his hunting skills, as he became a man of the field, regularly contributing to the bounty of game for the communal meals. On the other hand, the younger Jacob was considered a peaceful man, who spent most of his time in and around the tents rather than venturing out after game:

“When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents” (Genesis 25:27).

After learning that Esau devoted his time to hunting and Jacob preferred spending time around the tents, there is a specific statement inserted in the text that indicates the affection preferences that Isaac and Rebekah had toward their two maturing sons:

“Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob” (Genesis 25:28).

From this statement, coupled with what we see later when Isaac continued to have a voracious appetite for well-cooked game (Genesis 27:3-4), it is noted that Isaac loved Esau

¹⁶ Cf. *BDB*, 784; J. Barton Payne, “ya’āqōb,” in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:692.

because “he had a taste for game.” Apparently, Isaac’s affinity to satisfy his palate was a lifelong part of his personality, but this does not diminish the faith that Isaac had in the Holy One. After all, Isaac had seen God provide a ram when Abraham was about to sacrifice him, and there is every indication that Isaac followed in the ways of the Lord as established by his father.

When Isaac’s love for Esau is contrasted with Rebekah’s love for Jacob, one wonders why this was the case, with such specific preferences given. Perhaps Isaac “loved” Esau because he was a strong and skillful hunter, able to provide game from the field. Was Isaac proud of Esau’s abilities? On the other hand, perhaps Rebekah was more inclined toward the seemingly weaker Jacob, because he tended to hang around the tents, engaging in conversations with others? In addition to watching her sons mature, Rebekah had to be influenced by the direct communication she had received during her pregnancy. There is little doubt that she was witnessing the fact that one would be stronger, but most critically the emphatic word that “the older shall serve the younger.” From the unique birth and naming of the twins, Rebekah was harboring in her heart what she had heard the Lord say about the destiny of these two sons. Eventually we will find that Rebekah was bound and determined to make sure that the younger son would receive the blessings of Abraham.

The Birthright

Did Esau and Jacob have an opportunity to get to know their grandfather Abraham, for at least part of their lives? Our Torah portion is silent on this matter, but it does seem possible that they interacted with their grandfather at least a few times. It is certainly not difficult to imagine that while Esau was out perfecting his hunting skills, his younger brother Jacob was sitting around the tents engaging in conversations with those in the household. Even if Abraham was deceased by this time, Jacob would have surely been able to interact with various servants and laborers who had been impressed by his grandfather. This would all have given Jacob the impression that his grandfather Abraham was a man blessed by the Creator, who was then able to bless his father Isaac (cf. Genesis 25:5-6).

One of the defining moments of this *parashah* is seen when Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, for a bowl of lentil soup. A reader can conclude that while Esau devoted his time to mastering his hunting skills in order to please his father Isaac’s taste for game, Jacob spent his time in the tents with his mother Rebekah. As this transpired, to what extent was the word she received, “the older shall serve the younger,” steadily taking shape? Which of the two sons was more involved in the affairs of the family?

Having listened to the call and blessings that were bestowed upon Abraham, and then inherited by Isaac rather than going to the firstborn Ishmael, might have struck a chord with Rebekah. After all, she was a godly woman married to a faithful man, and she was definitely concerned about the generational blessings. Perhaps her noted love for Jacob (Genesis 25:28b) continued to blossom, because early on in his life, she was the first to recognize that the blessings of Abraham and Isaac would be bestowed upon the more spiritual leaning Jacob, and not the fleshly Esau. It is conceivable that because of all his time spent in tents, Jacob had some kind of inclination for the blessings of God that had been bestowed upon Abraham and then Isaac. This would naturally lead to a desire for the birthright blessing of the firstborn as he matured into a young man.

While the timing of the encounter for the trade for the birthright is not noted, Jacob had to have been primed by his understanding of the importance of the birthright, to take

advantage of Esau when an opportunity presented itself—or this trade would never have even been contemplated by Jacob, and certainly never consummated:

“When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; and Esau said to Jacob, ‘Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished.’ Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, ‘First sell me your birthright.’ Esau said, ‘Behold, I am about to die; so of what *use* then is the birthright to me?’ And Jacob said, ‘First swear to me’; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright” (Genesis 25:29-34).

What is recorded here is a back and forth negotiation between Esau and Jacob, for the birthright privileges. Obviously, Esau was a man more inclined to the carnal nature, as the interchange ended with a resounding statement that Esau despised his birthright. Esau had not spent the time he should have in the tents, being better informed about the blessings that were bestowed upon his family by the Almighty One. But Jacob was certainly aware of the blessings, and it is obvious by his actions that he desired to be the birthright heir to the blessings. Hence, when Esau was famished from his hunting expedition, Jacob cleverly took advantage of his hungered state to offer a bowl of lentil soup for his birthright. Esau overreacted by stating that he was going to die, totally disregarding his birthright, by trading it in for some “red stuff.” Jacob was clever to get Esau to verbally swear his birthright over to him, as payment for the soup. Clearly, Jacob valued the birthright, and from God’s perspective, it appears that the transaction was considered valid, because years later, even Esau admitted the validity of the trade (Genesis 27:36).

While we are not specifically told at exactly what age the birthright was transferred to Jacob, it was before a famine that forced Isaac and Rebekah to move their family, entourage, and livestock to Gerar. What we are specifically told is that Esau despised his birthright, and did not regard the birthright of the firstborn as something of great value to him. Esau was confident that his father Isaac loved him because Isaac had an appetite for the tasty game that he hunted. This preview into the personality of Isaac, reveals that for his lifetime, he certainly had an inclination to satisfy his palate. When he thought that his final days had arrived, he called Esau to hunt one final meal for him:

“Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, ‘My son.’ And he said to him, ‘Here I am.’ Isaac said, ‘Behold now, I am old *and* I do not know the day of my death. Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die’” (Genesis 27:1-4).

What would happen, as a result of Esau going out to hunt game for his aging father—would have significant reverberating effects throughout history. Jacob, at the insistence of his mother, would make his move to formally receive the family birthright.

The Blessing of Isaac

The disappointment of Esau’s marriages to two Hittite women (Genesis 27:34-35) must have impacted Isaac and Rebekah, because they had to be reminded of the great lengths that Abraham had taken to bring them together. Isaac did not know that he would continue to live after the encounter which is witnessed (Genesis 35:28), but as this

transpired and he steadily became blind, Isaac did want to get his affairs in order by blessing his firstborn son Esau.

When reviewing the scene of Genesis 27, we can wonder whether or not Isaac was thinking clearly. Extending his blessings to Esau, would include passing along the blessings that Isaac had received from Abraham—yet Isaac and Rebekah were already concerned about the choices Esau had made with his two wives from the Hittites. This would have surely presented challenges, in terms of passing along the faith of Abraham to their descendants. Isaac certainly recognized that Esau was far more interested in hunting for game. How serious would Esau be in managing the affairs of the house, as his brother Jacob did associate himself in tents?

As Rebekah was listening to Isaac's request, she realized that if there was ever a time to intervene, *this was the time*. Rebekah was aware of the great lengths that Abraham had taken after the death of Sarah to make sure that his beloved Isaac found a suitable wife, from some relatives with whom they shared something in common. She had to have remembered that she had sufficient faith in the Lord to leave the comfortable confines of her family, and venture forth to Canaan to become the wife of Isaac. Additionally, she had heard the voice of the Lord speak to her when she inquired about the difficulty of her pregnancy. By this time in her life, with Isaac having watched Esau and Jacob grow up, she knew that Esau was definitely the stronger of the two sons. But most assuredly, she recalled that ultimately, according to the word of the Lord, the "older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). Without any apparent hesitation, she chose to boldly redirect the blessings of Isaac from Esau to Jacob, the son she believed whom the Lord God intended to bless with the extended blessings of Abraham:

"Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring *home*, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, 'Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, "Bring me *some* game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death." Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them *as* a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall bring *it* to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death.' Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, 'Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.' But his mother said to him, 'Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me.' So he went and got *them*, and brought *them* to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob. Then he came to his father and said, 'My father.' And he said, 'Here I am. Who are you, my son?' Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me'" (Genesis 27:5-19).

While Rebekah might have known from the Divine word she received when the twins were in her womb, and known that the birthright had been secured by Jacob years later—there was still considerable *deception* involved in getting the aged and near blind Isaac, to bestow his blessings on whom Isaac thought was his oldest son Esau. But for whatever reasons, Rebekah justified her desire to have Isaac bless Jacob. Rebekah was so sure of her

plan, that she was willing to receive any of Isaac's curses if the scheme were discovered by her husband and turned into a rebuke. Was Rebekah's faith in the Lord and what He had spoken to her years earlier being tested? Not only was she manipulating the interaction with Isaac and Jacob, but she was also placing Jacob in a position where he could be cursed rather than be blessed. Additionally, this scheme required Jacob to deceive his father Isaac multiple times, by first declaring that he was Esau, then by stating that God had accelerated the capture of the game for the meal and finally, when asked a second time whether he was indeed Esau, we see that Jacob lied again:

"Isaac said to his son, 'How is it that you have *it* so quickly, my son?' And he said, **'Because the LORD your God caused *it* to happen to me.'** Then Isaac said to Jacob, 'Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.' So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.' He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. **And he said, 'Are you really my son Esau?' And he said, 'I am.'** So he said, 'Bring *it* to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you.' And he brought *it* to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Please come close and kiss me, my son.' So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, **'See, the smell of my son Is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed; now may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine; may peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you'**" (Genesis 27:20-29).

The level of deception to receive the blessing of Isaac was risky, because Jacob could have been issued a curse rather than a blessing. Isaac did know that he was a recipient of the blessings of Abraham (Genesis 26:3-5), but it was his own responsibility to make sure that the blessings given to him were passed on to the appropriate son. It appears that Isaac desired to pass on the blessings to his firstborn Esau, something that the Lord did not want to happen. And we know how Rebekah had received a word from the Lord that the older would serve the younger, and based on her observations of her twin sons, she was bound and determined to make sure that Jacob received the blessing of Isaac and not Esau.

The episode of Isaac blessing Jacob is always a difficult episode for us to contemplate, because we always wonder why Rebekah and Jacob had to resort to deception to get Isaac to bless Jacob. One might logically ask, "Where is the faith in Rebekah and Jacob to trust God, rather than manipulate Isaac?" Obviously, the Lord could have had the blessings come to Jacob in a different way, such as Esau dying and Jacob having to be blessed as the only surviving son—but it is instead seen how Isaac blessing Jacob is treated as legitimate. And surely, if God did not want Jacob to receive the blessings, He certainly could have had Isaac discover the deception, or later have had Isaac annul the blessings he issued when finding out that he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau. But since neither of these occurred, one has to conclude that this is the way the Lord ordained the transfer of the blessings.

Isaac bestowed a blessing on Jacob, which in essence affirmed the prophecy that "the older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23), when saying, **"May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you"** (Genesis 27:29). Following this, Jacob departed and Esau

entered the tent with the meal he had prepared from the game he had hunted. Isaac quickly discovered that he had been deceived by Jacob, and the news that he had blessed Jacob and not Esau shook him to the core of his being. In addition to this, we also see how Esau was quite perturbed that the blessing of the firstborn was now upon Jacob, as he emoted with bitter weeping. Esau truly wanted the blessing of Isaac, but since Isaac had already spoken the blessing over Jacob, it became irrevocable, and Isaac was unwilling to alter the blessing. Esau begged for a blessing, and so Isaac did bless him, but with the acknowledgment that the older would serve the younger:

“Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, ‘Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that you may bless me.’ Isaac his father said to him, ‘Who are you?’ And he said, ‘I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.’ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, ‘Who was he then that hunted game and brought *it* to me, so that I ate of all of *it* before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.’ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me, *even* me also, O my father!’ And he said, ‘Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.’ Then he said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.’ And he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’ **But Isaac replied to Esau, ‘Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him.** Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?’ Esau said to his father, ‘Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, *even* me also, O my father.’ So Esau lifted his voice and wept. **Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, ‘Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, and away from the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve; but it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck’**” (Genesis 27:30-40).

After reading these passages, one might wonder why Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau had to go through what must have been a traumatic ordeal as these blessings were being relayed. For myself, all I can say is that we each must recall how God knows the beginning from the end. *He is sovereign and knows the heart intentions of people.* God knew from before the birth of Esau and Jacob, that Esau was going to be a man of the flesh, and that Jacob was going to be much more compliant regarding His ways. It was going to take a while, and some unseemly deceptions were required to orchestrate the blessings of Isaac upon Jacob, but this was all a part of God’s plan. Confirmation is seen when Esau uttered threats that upon the death of Isaac, he was going to kill his brother Jacob (Genesis 27:41). This prompted Rebekah to suggest that Jacob go east to her brother Laban’s, to her original home (Genesis 27:42-46).

The marriage of Esau to two Hittite women greatly displeased Rebekah (Genesis 27:46). From her own life experience, she knew how critical it was to be wed to someone of common background. So the general pattern established by Abraham when he sent Eliezar to find a wife for Isaac from his relatives, began to repeat itself. Jacob compliantly obeyed the request of his father Isaac and mother Rebekah, and traveled back eastward, so that he would not be tempted to marry a wife from the local pagans. Once again, maintaining the generational faith of Abraham was most important to Rebekah, and now

Isaac—as he understood that God had ordained Jacob to receive the blessings of Abraham. By sending Jacob to where Rebekah’s brother Laban resided, Isaac and Rebekah were taking every measure they knew to insure that the faith of Abraham would be preserved for future generations:

“So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.’ Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, *and that* when he blessed him he charged him, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,’ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth” (Genesis 28:1-9).

As a final act of disrespect and defiance, Esau, knowing that it displeased his father Isaac and mother Rebekah, instead secured a wife from Ishmael.

Generational Faith

So what have we learned from *Toldot*? God is very concerned that faith in Him is transferred to future generations, even if the transference of such faith does not follow traditional norms and customs regarding birthrights. We have seen how a specific word from the Lord, given during a troubled pregnancy, can impact an entire family. Rebekah did demonstrate a faith in the Lord, and the belief that she heard from the Lord about her twin sons, prompted her to make decisions as she watched the children mature into older men. She was most concerned about the heritage of faith she had witnessed in Abraham, and in her husband Isaac, which was to be continued by the next generation. As a result, she took questionable actions to help Jacob secure the firstborn blessing from Isaac, regardless of the potential consequences. Then after the blessing of Isaac was transferred to Jacob, both Isaac and Rebekah agreed that Jacob was to find a suitable wife from their relatives. From all of this we can conclude that it is imperative that each generation take actions to assure that the faith of Abraham be instilled in their successors (Genesis 15:6; cf. Romans 4).

How do we intend to pass the promises of God onto our successors today, as Messianic Believers? We might look at some of the actions seen in *Toldot* with some skepticism, noting at them and wondering why God did not punish those who were fleshly-minded, or deceivers. This is where we have to remember that the Lord enacts His plan for His Creation using flawed, normal people. In many ways, the Patriarchs and Matriarchs had more flaws than some of us living in the Twenty-First Century. And at the same time, these same Biblical characters have fewer flaws than we do. The key with any generation that seeks after the Holy One is that we are *to learn* from those who have preceded us—so that we can each aim steadily closer to perfection and excellence. For those of us who recognize that the culmination of the Abrahamic promise has been manifested in the Messiah Yeshua,

our ability to learn via the power of the Holy Spirit, should be greater than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Too frequently, though, those who have preceded us are shown to have more faith, in spite of some of their errors and misjudgments.

V'yeitzei וַיֵּצֵא He went out “Jacob’s Maturing Faith”

Genesis 28:10-32:2
Hosea 12:12-14:10 (A); 11:7-12:12 (S)

Torah students should realize that after the first 11 chapters of Genesis record a wide swath of human history, from the Creation to the scrambling of the languages, the remaining chapters deal with the four generations, which consist of Abraham, his children, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren. From Genesis chs. 12-25, the focus is on God testing Abraham, the person chosen to be the father of faith. From Genesis chs. 25-28, the emphasis is on Abraham’s son Isaac and how he continued along the walk of faith that Abraham had established. When we now turn to the Torah portion *V’yeitzei* in our weekly readings, the life of Jacob is detailed, and is followed by specific actions taken by his twelve sons and daughter for the balance of the Book of Genesis. The first book of the Pentateuch is primarily concerned with the Lord God, and how He interacted with these individuals and their steadily enlarging family, as they learned to trust wholeheartedly in Him. This Deity is hence forever referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—precisely because their personal testimonies establish a foundation for their successors in the balance of the Holy Scriptures.

It is not only interesting—but also extremely important—for readers to study, analyze, and compare how these different individuals responded to the Almighty. Each generation is unique, and no two people and their experiences with God are identical. Abraham had at least a modicum of belief in the One True Creator, when his father Terah and their family left Ur. When Abraham received the direct call from the Holy One to go forth to another country (Genesis 12:1-3), Abraham responded without any recorded hesitancy. Abraham is so recognized as “the father of faith,” because his intimate relationship with God was not necessarily modeled by his father Terah. Abraham was uniquely chosen by God to establish a special relationship with one man and his family, which would set in motion a system of belief that has endured down through the millennia. It is from the early chapters of Genesis that the foundation of the Judeo-Christian faith system and worldview are derived.

Believers in the Messiah are reminded centuries later how the Torah is to serve as an example of things for instruction and admonition (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11). And, this is one of the primary reasons why one studies the recorded stories of the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Just like modern people today, these early heroes of our faith were human beings with foibles and carnal tendencies, which did not make them perfect in any way. Even though they each had varying degrees of personal interaction with the Holy One as recorded, there were still times when some of their decisions were “curious,” to say the