

## Toldot: Torah Tidbits

- A number of very short thoughts about Toldot which might inspire creation of a full sermon on any one of them.

### TOLDOT: TORAH TIDBITS

(Following are thoughts about Toldot, each of which might be the germ of a full sermon, or a dvar Torah at an occasion.)

VAYEETAR... (Ber. 25:21) IM KEN LAMA ZE ANOCHI... This verse puzzles many of our commentators. Rebbetzin Chiena Kossowsky, my mother-in-law, aleha hashalom, explained this verse as follows. "Im Ken", if I were to have a rasha for a son, why did you have to go all over civilization to Padan Aram for a wife? "Lama ze anochi"? Any of the local Canaanite women could produce just such a rasha! Why did you go seeking so far for particularly me ?

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Yitzchak was the first Jew to be circumcised at 8 days.... The philosophers of Gentile nations sometimes, like Malthus, criticize the birthrate. In China, for a long time, there was a move for one child per family with the resultant imbalance of the population. It is Jews who have taught the world the value of progeny, but we have also taught the investment that must be made in rearing them. Unfortunately, Jews are forgetting the Jewish way of rearing.... (Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, Poked Ikarim 8b, 4a).

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"Vayehev Yitzchak et Esav ki tzayid befiv veRivka ohevet et Yaakov..." (Ber. 25:28) The pasuk gives a reason for Isaac's love of Esav, but not for Rywka's love of Jacob. Because it was "Ahava hateluya bedavar. Batal hadavar, batla haahava." (Avot, Ch. 5 mishna 17). Rywka loved Jacob without reason, and therefore it remained forever... (Rabbi Yehuda Leb of Gur, Sefat Emet).

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"Nezid adashim". He had time to be sorry and change his mind, for years, and did not, but despised the bechora. That is the significance of the passage "Vayakam vayelech, ... vayivez Esav..." Because he got up and went about his business and didn't give it a second thought, it demonstrates that he despised the bechora. If a person does something accidentally and then is not sorry, it is considered as if he did it purposely. (Rabbi Isaac Araama, Akedat Yitzchak).

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"Hine anochi holech lamut, lama ze li Habechora..." Our sages spoke highly of the efficacy of remembering the day of death as a means of Teshuva. It is helpful against the Yetzer Hara. If a person realizes he is not eternal, it will help him avoid sin... But here you find Esav remembering the day of death with just the opposite effect! Why didn't he conclude instead, "Behold I am going to die, of what use, after all, is this pot of pottage"? This is the best reason why our sages considered Esav wicked, and his character unalterable. If the day of death does not bring him to Teshuva, then nothing will....

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"Veyashavta imo yamim achadim ad asher Tashuv hamat achicha, ad shuv af Achicha mimecha, veshachach et asher Asita lo" (Ber 27:44-45). When a man is angry for whatever reason, his anger is poured out on all sides... He tears clothing, smashes crockery, and even is angry with himself. When he has time to grow cool, his anger is rekindled only when he is reminded of its cause. With time, the anger can entirely subside. The passage refers to these stages of anger. First in general the anger, which is directed against everything, should cool. Then, ultimately, it might cool even from against the brother who was the cause... (Rabbi Joseph Karo, Derashot HaBeyt Yoseph)

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"Vayetze harishon admoni, kulo keaderet sear... veachar kach yatza achiv veyado ochezet baakev Esav..." (verse 25-26) The wicked person is defined by physical appearance, the righteous by his deeds. Because the righteous controls his deeds and rules over his passions, while the wicked person is controlled by his passions and they rule him and his actions (Ibn Ezra).

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"Vanishlachacha beshalom": (28:29). Abimelech thinks he is doing Jacob a great favor by letting him go in peace and allowing him to leave his country with his possessions intact, instead of robbing him of them first (Hirsch).

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BERACHOT. There are three kinds of berachot.

1. Beracha of the Almighty to His creatures, giving them additional bounty and good...
2. Beracha of His creatures to the Almighty, thanksgiving, praise, glorification...
3. Beracha of creatures to each other, which are in the form of prayer that the author of blessing will bless them....

The blessings of Isaac were, therefore,

1. Prayer on the part of the one who blesses that the blessing will apply...
2. Preparation of the one who is blessed to be worthy of receiving the blessing;
3. The one uttering the blessing is only the conduit of the beracha through his words, but the one who gives the blessing is the Almighty. Nor can the person receiving the blessing be made worthy to do so, unless he is innately worthy. Only Jacob was worthy to receive such blessings. Rywka therefore intended to help carry out God's will.... (Abarbanel).

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Submitted by Nisson Shulman