

Shavua Tov

Weekly  Parsha

A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Toldot*

תולדות

“Generations”

**These are the chronicles of Isaac son of Abraham: Abraham was Isaac's father.
Ve'eleh **toldot** Yitschak ben-Avraham Avraham holid et-Yitschak.**

Scripture for study:

Bereshit (Genesis) 25:19 – 28:9

From the very beginning of this Torah portion there is a thread of strife and conflict that weaves its way through the very fabric of every story in this portion. While quite subtle, the first conflict we encounter is with those who would question the very integrity of Abraham and Sarah and the heritage of Isaac. Let us turn back to an earlier story of Abraham and Sarah, as they sojourned in the land of Gerar. The Holy One had already promised that after years of enduring the heartache and shame of barrenness, Sarah would conceive and give birth to a son in her old age.

“And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” (Genesis 18:9-12)

But after the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we read that Abraham and Sarah once again take to the journey, and once more Sarah was taken by the king.

“And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.” (Genesis 20:1-2)

The story goes on to emphatically tell us how Elohim appeared to Abimelech and warned him in a dream by night not to touch Sarah.

“And Elohim came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man’s wife.” (Genesis 20:3)

The Torah makes it very, very clear that YHWH had protected Sarah’s honor and that Abimelech did not defile her.

“But Abimelech had not come near her:” (Genesis 20:4)

But even with this emphatic statement made, the appearance of scandal is all that it takes to start rumors flying. After all of these years of infertility and barrenness, now suddenly after she spends the night in the tents of Abimelech, Sarah suddenly finds herself pregnant! It is against such rumors that our portion emphatically declares that Abraham is the father and progenitor of Isaac.

“And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son; Abraham begat Isaac.” (Genesis 25:19)

Note how emphatically this simple sentence strives to end all suspicion concerning the integrity of Sarah, and especially the heritage of Isaac. Not only does the Torah tell us that Isaac is Abraham’s son, for this could be so through adoption, but it emphatically states that Abraham begat Isaac! So our portion begins trying to quell any controversy that surrounds the blessing of a son given to Abraham and Sarah in their old age.

We may also see another pertinent message in this emphatic statement concerning the birth of Isaac. By dividing the statement into two distinct statements, the Torah tells us that there is something special to be gleaned from this message. First, let us note how the first half of the statement concerning Isaac being Abraham’s son is then further qualified by the statement describing Abraham as the biological father of Isaac. It is as if a subtle distinction is being made between being the son of Abraham, and being the biological descendant of Abraham. Here we may recall the similarly subtle distinction that YHWH made to Abraham when describing the manner and number of his future seed.

“And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.” (Genesis 13:16)

“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward the heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” (Genesis 15:5)

“That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.” (Genesis 22:17)

While the overt message of these passages is that Abraham's seed shall indeed be numerous and numberless, there is yet a subtle distinction being made. Abraham's seed shall indeed be like the sand and dust of the earth. These two descriptions, dust and sand, are pointing to an actual earthly line of descendants to Abraham. Remember that Adam came from the dust of the earth.

"And YHWH ELOHIM formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7)

While interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham confesses of himself:

"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto Adonai, which am but dust and ashes." (Genesis 18:27)

Thus, reference to the dust of the earth alludes to the fleshly or natural line of Abraham's descendants. The stars of the heaven, however, may be contrasted with the sands of the sea and the dust of the earth as speaking of a spiritual line of descendants. It is important that we understand that these two lines are not mutually exclusive, nor is one the antithesis of the other. It is both possible and probable that the physical descendants of Abraham would also be his spiritual descendants. It is probable that the physical descendants of Abraham, having spent time with, and being raised with him, would have been influenced by his faith and walk, and therefore be his spiritual children as well. It is also possible, however, that those who were not his biological descendants, but were likewise moved by Abraham's faithful walk, became his spiritual descendants. We may recall here those souls that Abraham won in Haran, as well as Eliezar, Abraham's most trusted servant.

"And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." (Genesis 12:5)

The phrase "son of Abraham" does not require us to understand it literally. We may understand this title the same way that we understand the phrase "sons of the prophets," or "Son of David." What is being communicated in these titles is not that the ones bearing the title are in fact biological descendants of the prophets or of David, but that they have the same moral character as the prophets or David.

"And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that YHWH will take away thy master from thy head to day?" (2 Kings 2:3)

"And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that YHWH will take away thy master from thy head to day?" (2 Kings 2:5)

We see a similar example between a disciple and his master in the Apostolic Writingsⁱ.

“Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith:” (1 Timothy 1:2)

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare:” (1 Timothy 1:18)

“To Timothy, my dearly beloved son:” (2 Timothy 1:2)

While Timothy was not Shaul’s biological descendant, Shaul clearly understood him to be his spiritual descendant. Shaul likewise makes a distinction between the physical line and the spiritual line when it comes to the descendants of Abraham. Shaul writes:

“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of Elohim, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Messiah came, who is over all, Elohim blessed forever. Amen. Not as though the word of Elohim hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are thy all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of flesh, these are not the children of Elohim: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” (Romans 9:4-8)

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:7)

Yeshua likewise understood this very distinction, as we see in his encounter with the Pharisees.

“And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above.” (John 8:23)

“They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed...” (John 8:33)

“They answered him and said, Abraham is our father. Yeshua saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham...” (John 8:39)

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is not truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44)

Clearly Yeshua is drawing a clear distinction between the spiritual descendants who share the same faith and moral character of Abraham, and those who merely have common DNA, but are spiritually in league with the adversary. So we see a tension arise between these two very diverse lines as they vie one with the other over their claim to become the inheritor of YHWH’S promised blessings to Abraham.

In our portion, when we read the phrase, *“Isaac, Abraham’s son; Abraham begat Isaac,”* we should understand that the Torah is declaring to us that Isaac was not merely the biological son of Abraham, but that he was also a son of Abraham by sharing the same incredible faith and moral character as Abraham. And it is due to this double status that he becomes the rightful heir of Abraham’s heritage, including the covenant promises.

The next story in our portion likewise contains the thread of strife and conflict. Our portion goes on to describe the beginnings of the generations of Isaac. This story begins, much like Isaac’s life, with testing and barrenness. As was true for Isaac’s mother, Sarah, so now also with his wife. Rebekah was suffering the same stigma that Sarah did prior to YHWH’S miraculous intervention. Isaac, being a righteous man, intercedes for his wife and she conceives. But here is where the struggle begins. While YHWH answered Isaac’s prayers twofold, this blessing quickly begins to feel like a curse, causing her to cry out again for understanding.

“And the children struggled together within her; and she said, if it be so why am I thus? And she went to enquire of YHWH.” (Genesis 25:22)

YHWH answered her:

“And YHWH said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Genesis 25:23)

Here let us build upon the foundation that we have already laid above. In the story of creation the Holy One, blessed be He, brought order to creation by making distinctions and setting boundaries.

“And Elohim saw the light, that it was good: and Elohim divided the light from the darkness.” (Genesis 1:4)

“And Elohim said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And Elohim made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament.” (Genesis 1:6-7)

“And Elohim said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place and let the dry land appear.” (Genesis 1:9)

“And Elohim said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind... ” (Genesis 1:11)

“And Elohim created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind.” (Genesis 1:21)

“And Elohim said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.” (Genesis 1:24)

Here we see that the Creator’s intended order was that everything is to come forth after its kind. This principle may also be applied to the two lines of descendants of Abraham. But due to the fall of Adam and Eve, there is confusion in creation. We should note that the only tree forbidden to Adam and Eve was the tree containing mixture - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:17)

Understanding the choice that Adam and Eve faced in the garden is important to understanding the strife and conflict contained in our portion. The two trees of the Garden of Eden were more than mere trees. It was the presence of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that gave Adam and Eve their freedom to truly love YHWH ELOHIM. For love to be love, it must be freely given. For love to be freely given, there must be the freedom to withhold it as well. The forbidden tree gave Adam and Eve this opportunity to love or not love YHWH. In many ways, these two trees represented two paths or manners of living in the world. The tree of life represents living in complete submission to the revelation knowledge of YHWH as it is communicated from His Spirit to our spirit. The tree of life represents the spiritual path. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents living by our senses. The promise of this tree is freedom from dependence upon YHWH. This is the sensual or fleshly way of living in the world. By transgressing the clear commandment of Elohim, Adam and Eve brought mixed seed in the world. It is this mixed seed that we encounter in our Torah portion. When Rebekah conceives, the Torah tells us that the two children struggled within her. Rebekah inquires of YHWH as to why the trouble within her. YHWH responds to her prayers:

“And YHWH said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Genesis 25:23)

After the children are born, we learn much about them.

“And the first came out red all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.” (Genesis 25:25)

“... and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field.” (Genesis 25:27)

“... Esau despised his birthright.” (Genesis 25:34)

“And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.” (Genesis 26:34)

Esau is clearly the picture of the earthy and sensual man. He is a mighty hunter like Nimrod before him.ⁱⁱ We see Esau's connection to the earth and flesh even in his names. The name Esau means "complete." The Torah tells us that he was named "complete" because he was born with hair all over. In other words, he looked like a grown man instead of a little baby. But his other name is Edom, due to his red complexion and eating of red stew.

"And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint; therefore was his name called Edom." (Genesis 25:30)

It is in this name, Edom, that we see the great connection with the earth and the flesh. Let me give just a brief list of some of the Hebrew words related to this name.

- Edom (Aleph, Dalet, Vav, Mem) the man Edom or Esau.
- Adom (Aleph, Dalet, Mem) means red.
- Adam (Aleph, Dalet, Mem) means Adam or man.
- Adamah (Aleph Dalet, Mem, Hey) means the red clay from which Adam was created.
- Dam (Dalet, Mem) means blood.
- Damam (Dalet, Mem, Mem) means to be silent, to be still.
- D'moot (Dalet, Mem, Vav, Tav) means likeness or image.

Esau is clearly a man of the earth and a man of flesh - living in the fields, roaming the earth, hunting, killing, and indulging his appetites.

Jacob, on the other hand, is described somewhat differently.

"After that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob:" (Genesis 25:26)

"...And Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents." (Genesis 25:27)

Here we see that Jacob followed after his brother, and yet took hold of his brother's heel. While Esau was very recognizable, Jacob was simple and plain. While Esau loved the wide open field, Jacob dwelled in tents. The sages teach that Jacob was studying Torah in the tents of Shem and Eber. If Esau represents that earthly man, then Jacob is to represent the spiritual man. This is given testimony to in Shaul's statement,

"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is Adonai from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Corinthians 15:46-49)

The contrast between these two manner of men is confirmed in yet another somewhat hidden fashion. The Torah declares,

“And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold there were twins in her womb.” (Genesis 25:24)

The Hebrew word for “twins” is “TE’OMIM,” which is usually spelled Tav, Aleph, Vav, Mem, Yud, Mem. This is the way it appears when speaking of the twins Pharez and Zarah, born to Tamar and Judah.ⁱⁱⁱ Pharez and Zarah were identical twins in every way. They looked the same physically and they both shared an identical moral character. But in our text, the word “twin” is spelled defectively (Tav, Vav, Mem, Mem), missing the letter Aleph and the letter Yud. This is because Esau and Jacob are not identical twins. The ideograph of the letter Yud is that of a hand, and may represent the work and doing of a man. Esau and Jacob were not the same in anything they did. The ideograph of the letter Aleph is that of an Ox, and is often used to represent the Creator EL, whose name begins with this letter (Aleph, Lamed). This is telling us that when it comes to Elohim, Esau and Jacob have nothing in common. Thus we may assert that Jacob and Esau have very different moral characters. Before we go into the details of the struggle between these two very different brothers, let us return to the image of Rebekah as she experiences the struggle within.

In many ways Rebekah is a type of the Messianic believer. Man was created to be a spiritual being in communion with the Creator. Man was created to be in the image of Elohim.^{iv} But since the fall of Adam and Eve, man is born in the image of fallen man.^v So it is that man now enters the world as mixed seed, born with two natures or potentials; the Yetzer HaTov, which is the inclination to do good, and the Yetzer HaRa, which is the inclination to do evil. Because of this mixed nature, we often find ourselves like Rebekah - filled with incredible wrestling and conflict within ourselves. The apostle Shaul may have described this condition of man the best in his letter to the Romans.

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I have, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” (Romans 7:14-20)

Shaul also realized that there was great animosity between these manner of men within us.

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity with Elohim: for it is not subject to the law of Elohim, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please Elohim.” (Romans 8:5-8)

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Galatians 5:17)

We should be careful to note that Rebekah would not be free from this inner struggle and strife until the day of her deliverance, when the two natures would be separated from her. In other words, until the day of deliverance comes, we must live in the struggle of these two natures. In the meantime, there is great wisdom in YHWH'S response to Rebekah. Let us take a closer look at these words as they relate to our own spiritual walk and conflict.

“Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Genesis 25:23)

We have already identified that fact that the two children represent two distinct ways of living in the world. Esau is the fleshly or natural man, while Jacob is the spiritual man. These two natures war with each other for dominance. For most of us, the fleshly nature is inherently the stronger of the two. This is largely due to the fact that the flesh nature is older, the first born. We are all born in the flesh. For most of our lives we live in the flesh, feeding the flesh, nurturing the flesh, indulging the flesh, while the spirit man is often neglected or ignored. Once we come to faith, however, the spirit man is made alive. From then on we begin to mortify the flesh and strive to live and walk in the spirit. According to the verse above there is great hope for us, for the promise of Elohim is that the elder shall serve the younger. That is to say, that even though the fleshly man comes first and is the elder and possibly even the stronger of our inclinations, the promise of YHWH is that the elder (the flesh nature) will ultimately serve the younger (the spiritual nature). This promised victory of the spirit over the flesh is not without its constant struggles in this world.

This spiritual struggle is brought to life in the very dynamics witnessed between Esau and Jacob. In our next story we again see the very nature of conflict brought to light. Esau, the man of the field, is out indulging his fleshly desires to hunt, kill, and eat. After indulging his flesh and ignoring his spirit, Esau is hungry, famished, and fainting. He comes to his spiritual brother desiring now to be fed. The pottage, or stew in this case, represents that fruit of spiritual endeavors. “Teach me,” “Bless me,” says Esau to Jacob. But Jacob asks for the honor and birthright of the firstborn. Here we should understand that the firstborn is Adam. What was the birthright of Adam? It was to be in the image of Elohim. This was natural man's first calling. So now the spiritual man says to the man of flesh, “Give me your right to be in the image of Elohim.” The Torah tells us that the man of flesh despised his birthright, and sold it to feed his flesh. Our flesh couldn't care less about being the image of Elohim. But the spirit man lives for such an honor, willing to forsake food and pleasure to possess such a treasured calling. We should note that Jacob did not wrestle with his brother to wrest this honor from him, but instead purchased the calling at cost only to himself. We should not be ignorant of the fact that there is a cost to becoming a spiritual man.

While these struggles all go on within a man, the next conflict we encounter in this portion is with those outside of ourselves. When we achieve, by the grace and mercy of YHWH, a certain amount of strength over the man of flesh, certain blessings begin to be evident in our lives. These blessings may indeed be blessing to us, but they may also become the cause of jealousy and cursing on the part of others around us. This is the case in the story of Isaac's sojourning in

Gerar. Isaac's journey to Gerar begins with a famine in the land of Canaan. Like his father before him, Isaac desires to go to Egypt for safety and sustenance. YHWH stops Isaac in Gerar and tells him to remain in the land of Canaan. YHWH tells Isaac:

"And YHWH appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 26:2-4)

So Isaac, like his father before him, obeyed the voice and will of YHWH and was indeed very richly blessed.

"Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and YHWH blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possessions of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants; and the Philistines envied him." (Genesis 26:12-14)

At first, the appearance of YHWH'S blessings invoke interest and awe from those around us, but eventually these blessings become the root of jealousy and conflict. In Isaac's case, we see that the Philistines began to envy Isaac his success. When people see that Israel is blessed, they tend to invite them to come and stay with them in hopes that some of the blessing will rub off onto them. When these same people begin to realize that it is faith and obedience to YHWH that merits such blessings, then they tend to feel judged and become hostile. This was in many ways the case with the Philistines and Abimelech. The Philistines began to envy Isaac, and sought to destroy him by driving him out of their land. Abimelech likewise came and asked Isaac to leave.

"And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we." (Genesis 26:16)

Here the Hebrew reveals another variant understanding. The Hebrew word translated as "than we" is "MEMENU," (Mem, Mem, Nun, Vav). The first Mem is a preposition which may be either the comparative "than" as is used in this text, or it may also be the preposition "from." With this later understanding, we may read the complaint of Abimelech as follows,

"And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us, for thou art much mightier FROM us." (Genesis 26:16)

In other words, Abimelech is accusing Isaac of getting rich at the expense of the Philistines. The Torah tells us that part of what made Isaac so fruitful was that he was digging up wells that Abraham had dug in the wilderness. Water is life. Where there is water there is life - for plants, animals, flocks, herds, and humans. We should remember that wells and water are a symbol of

the Torah. When Abraham came through this town he dug wells; that is, he established watering holes for the thirsty soul. Everywhere Abraham went he began spreading the Torah. He brought living water to thirsty souls. But the Torah tells us that the Philistines came along after him and filled in with dirt all of the wells that Abraham dug. We may ask ourselves why the enemy would want the desert to become arid again. Why would people want the Torah done away with, and life to stop? Yeshua, using the imagery of light, taught as follows:

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.” (John 3:19-20)

The Torah Commentary Haketav Vehakabala explains the answer this way,

“And he called their names by which his father had called them – it is conceivable that Isaac’s naming of the wells bore affinity to other expressions of calling names - to mark the kindness of the Lord such as where it is stated that Abraham called the name of that place ‘The Lord will see,’ ‘The Lord is my sign,’ ‘the well of him that liveth and seeth me.’ Abraham did the same thing with regard to the wells which he dug, calling them by the name of the Lord. Since it was his preoccupation to spread abroad the knowledge of the Lord and show the people that idols were valueless, Abraham thought out a wonderful device to help to bring those who were misled under the wings of the Divine Presence. He called the well by a name that would drive home the lesson of the true existence of the one true God. By this he would arouse in them an awareness of the Eternal God! The wells were public necessity, and in this manner the people were initiated into a knowledge of the true God. Like the faithful servant of a king who tries to persuade rebellious subjects who had fled to return to the country, so Abraham strove to turn the hearts of those who denied God. Whilst he was alive – as the prince of Elohim among them, his fear was upon them, and they left the wells intact with their names, but after his death they reverted to idolatry, and in order to erase from their memory the names of these wells which recalled the very opposite of their false opinions, they stopped up the wells. With the disappearance of the wells, the names also disappeared. The Torah then comes to inform us that Isaac followed in his father’s footsteps and endeavored to dig out these same wells, and resurrect their names in order to restore the crown of the true faith to its former glory.”^{vi}

Here we learn that as life and blessing spring forth in our lives from keeping and teaching the Torah, there will also be those who seek to prevent us. I cannot help but make the comparison that as we bring the Torah to life and share its life giving message with others, religious men come around behind us trying to stop up the life giving waters with their man made (dust of the earth) religious laws and legalism. Why do they want to see the blessings stop? Religious men are against the Torah wells because if blessings and life follow from the Torah, it will expose the aridness of their man-made religion and expose the impotency of their false gods. So we should expect resistance not only from our flesh from within, but also from the flesh of those around us as well.

The next story of conflict is one that is self-made, and should come as a warning to those of us who truly seek to live the spiritual life. The remainder of our Torah portion focuses upon the

animosity caused between Jacob and Esau by a stolen blessing. Here let us see that there is a difference between the birthright which Esau despised, and Jacob bought legally and fairly. But this blessing was Isaac's to give to whomever he chose. There is great debate as to why Isaac would bless Esau, when it was clear that Esau was not a godly man and cared little for the sacred calling upon the descendants of Abraham and Isaac. This becomes particularly clear when Esau breaks with the tradition of his fathers and marries two Hittite women, causing great grief to his parents.^{vii} Yet still Isaac prepares to bless him. Some of the commentators focus on the fact that Isaac's eyes were growing dim, and declare that he did not see the wickedness in Esau. The Torah already told us that Isaac loved Esau.^{viii} I believe that it is possible that righteous father Isaac prepared an appropriate blessing for Esau to help him return to, value, and embrace the covenant of his father Abraham. Just as Abraham caused his beloved servant to swear an oath to give him resolve in the matter of finding a wife for Isaac^{ix}, and as Jacob would later cause Joseph and his other sons to swear an oath to bury him in the land of Canaan, in order that they may have resolve to return to the land^x, so too does Isaac seek to bless Esau that he may be drawn to the Torah life. But Esau would not know the strength of this blessing, for Jacob would indeed steal it by deceit and bring the wrath of the man of flesh down upon himself. Here we see Jacob clearly recognizing that the actions he was taking were wrong. But led by the misguided love of his mother, Jacob does indeed steal what belongs to his brother and creates schism within his family.

The details of this story speak for themselves. What we should realize from this conflict, however, is that YHWH had already determined to give Jacob the blessing of Abraham. In other words, there was a blessing for Esau to help him draw near to the covenant, and there was a blessing for Jacob from YHWH himself.

“And El Shaddai bless these, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which Elohim gave unto Abraham.” (Genesis 28:3-4)

It was a spirit of jealousy and greed that caused Jacob to desire the blessing of his father designed for his brother. By robbing his brother, he brought punishment down upon his own head. Now Jacob would have to flee from the land, and would be living in fear of his brother. We will deal more on this topic in the weeks to come. For now, however, let us realize the importance of trusting YHWH to give us what we need when we need it. We need to learn to accept that what we have, we have because El Shaddai has lovingly given it to us. But we must also learn to accept that we lack what we lack because the same El Shaddai has lovingly withheld it from us. In this we learn a valuable lesson. The Spirit man is blessed to bring the man of flesh into jealousy for YHWH. But the spirit man should never be jealous of the fleshly man, for it will only lead to strife and conflict.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.” (Exodus 20:17)

“Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.” (Proverbs 3:31)

*“A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.”
(Proverbs 14:30)*

“Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of YHWH all the day long.” (Proverbs 23:17)

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5)

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, there with to be content” (Philippians 4:11)

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Timothy 6:6)

For the spiritual man, the conflict must be fought within and without. It should be enough for us that we must fight our nature within, as well as with those who would thwart us carrying out our calling. Let us be careful that we do not provoke yet others to side against us by our own selfishness and jealousy. We should always be busy seeking to make advocates for ourselves, and not adversaries.

SHAVUA TOV !

ⁱ *Apostolic Writings* is a more accurate phrase than “New Testament,” since the use of “New” vs. “Old” implies that the “Old” has passed away . . . or is “finished,” or “replaced.” Brit Chadasha is “Hebrew” for New Testament, so implies the same erroneous meaning.

ⁱⁱ Genesis 10:9

ⁱⁱⁱ Genesis 38:27ff

^{iv} Genesis 1:26

^v Genesis 5:1-3

^{vi} Studies in Bereshit, Nehama Leibowitz, LAMBDA Publishing, pg. 259

^{vii} Genesis 26:34-35

^{viii} Genesis 25:28

^{ix} Genesis 24:1ff

^x Genesis 47:29-31