



Parasha Tol'dot

November 21, 2020

Genesis 25:19-28:9

Malachi 1:1-2:7

Romans 9:6-13

Shabbat shalom mishpocha! Our *parasha* today is *Tol'dot*. *Tol'dot* is usually defined as “generations” meaning a “history of descendants.” The Tree of Life Version uses the word “genealogies” which is a little more explanatory: *19 Now these are the genealogies of Isaac, Abraham’s son. Abraham fathered Isaac* (Genesis 25:19 TLV). Or, we could say “this is the family history.” The Hebrew is וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק, *ve’eleh tol’dot Yitzchak*, the family history of Isaac. While genealogies better describes the basic meaning of *tol’dot*, the term generations shows us the need to connect the generations by passing along information and preparing the upcoming generation for taking the leadership.

We begin today with the central story of the *parasha*, the story of the birthright. It begins saying, “These are the generations of Isaac,” a reference to the many generations of Abraham’s descendants who follow Isaac. This *parasha* is mostly about Jacob who got the best of his older brother Esau twice. In the first instance, told in Genesis 25:27-34, *Ya’acov*, Jacob, had made some stew. Verse 27 says: *27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a man knowledgeable in hunting, an outdoorsman, while Jacob was a mild man, remaining in tents* (Genesis 25:27 TLV). Esau became an *ish tzayid*, a “skillful hunter,” while Jacob became an *ish tam*. The TLV renders *ish tam* as “mild man” and the NASB uses “peaceful man.” But the Hebrew for “*tam*” suggests something else as well. The first definition for the Hebrew word *tam* is complete or blameless. Other definitions are guiltless, integrity, peaceful, and perfect one. Doesn’t this seem entirely opposite to the way that Jacob is usually described? He is usually described as a thief, a supplanter and was given his name *Ya’acov* from the word *aqav* which does not have a good meaning. It means to follow at the heel, to assail insidiously; to circumvent or overreach; to deal craftily, to restrain; supplanter or took by the heel, as occurred during their birth. But, when these two themes, the words *tam* and *aqav*, are taken together it suggests something other than the bad reputation which is usually given to Jacob. These words in *Torah* actually describe *Ya’acov* as a guiltless, peaceful man of integrity who by his name is also a crafty circumventer. The first part is usually overlooked in favor of “making Jacob a scoundrel.” But that is not the way that ADONAI looked at him. And, that’s what counts the most!

The story goes on: *28 Now Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob* (Genesis 25:28 TLV). Isaac’s love for Jacob seems a little shallow. *Torah* says it was because Esau would bring him what he liked to eat? We are not told why Rebecca loved Jacob, but suspect that it was a love placed there by ADONAI. *29 Now Jacob cooked a stew. When Esau came in from the field, he was exhausted, 30 so Esau said to Jacob, “Please feed me some of this really red stuff, because I’m exhausted”—that is why he is called Edom. 31 So Jacob said, “Sell your birthright to me today.” 32 Esau said, “Look, I’m about to die. Of whatever use is this to me—a birthright?” 33 Jacob said, “Make a pledge to me now.” So he made a pledge to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave*

Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25:29-34 TLV).

Would we condemn Jacob for making a business deal, or should we condemn Esau for caring so little about his birthright? The Hebrew word for "birthright" is *bekorah*, the right of the first-born. It generally means that the possessor of this right receives "head of household" status and the right to inherit his father's estate. The son with the birthright would get a "double portion" of his father's estate. In Esau's situation it could be that he didn't want the money and property. But there is something else here that we also have to consider. There is another part to the birthright. It is the other part which it seems that Esau rejected. *1 When Abram was 99 years old, Adonai appeared to Abram, and He said to him, "I am El Shaddai. Continually walk before Me and you will be blameless. 2 My heart's desire is to make My covenant between Me and you, and then I will multiply you exceedingly much." 3 Abram fell on his face, and God spoke with him, saying, 4 "For My part, because My covenant is with you, you will be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer will your name be Abram, but your name will be Abraham, because I make you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 Yes, I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings will come forth from you"* (Genesis 17:1-6 TLV).

This is the spiritual part of the birthright that Abraham passed on to his son Isaac and which Isaac was to pass on to one of his sons. The son who received the birthright from Isaac was to receive in addition to his father's estate, money and property, the right to carry forth the title of Abraham's name, not his name but the title. The holder of the birthright was spiritually given the title of "father of many," the actual meaning of the name, *Avraham*. ADONAI said to Abraham, *"I have made you the father of a multitude of nations"* (Genesis 17:5b TLV). He said this thousands of years before it ever happened, a promise received in faith by Abraham. And this same promise was received by faith by each descendent who received the birthright. Esau didn't have faith and didn't believe that it was important. What was happening at the moment was more important to him. He said: "I'm hungry. I'll worry about the future later." Esau was rejected by ADONAI as the recipient of the birthright because he did not consider it of value.

In our *Sh'lichim* reading it says: *12 it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." 13 As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated"* (Romans 9:12-13 TLV). *Sha'ul* was quoting Malachi 1. The last statement is called a Hebraism, an idiom, and it is not to be taken at face value. It does not mean that ADONAI actually hated Esau. We know that G-d is love. It means that He loved him less with regard to filling the position of family leader. ADONAI hated his actions. Because ADONAI knows the heart of each of us, He knew that Esau would not treasure and care for the birthright, but that Jacob would.

The second instance in which Jacob got the best of Esau is found in chapter 27 where we read about Jacob's deception of his father, Isaac. *24 But he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" So he said, "I am." 25 Then he said, "Bring it to me and I'll eat some of my son's wild game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought it to him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come closer and kiss me my son." 27 So he came closer and kissed him. When he smelled the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, "Behold, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that Adonai has blessed. 28 May God give you— from the dew of the sky and from the fatness of the land— an abundance of grain and new wine. 29 May peoples serve you and may nations bow down*

to you. Be master over your brothers. May your mother's sons bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and may those who bless you be blessed" (Genesis 27:24-29 TLV). And so, Jacob received his father Isaac's blessing, and even though it was under false pretenses, the blessing stood. Isaac could not take it back. And now, both birthright and blessing were possessed by this peaceful man of integrity who was also a crafty circumventer. And, it seems that ADONAI wanted it that way because He knew Jacob's heart. The birthright was the spiritual leadership of the family and a double portion of his father's estate and the blessing was the blessing which ADONAI gave to Abraham, the father of a multitude of nations and the father of kings.

The pattern was that the birthright and blessing were passed on to the eldest son. This didn't happen with Isaac. If we ask the question, "would Jacob pass the birthright and the blessing on to his eldest son," we later discover that this answer is also no. And, we find consistently that in Abraham's family, the eldest son does not end up being the favored son. ADONAI does not follow human convention when he decides whom he will bless. In the case of the descendants of Abraham, we can see that each of the firstborn sons had some kind of flaw that caused them to be disqualified. Abraham's eldest son, Ishmael, was the son of a concubine and not the son of promise. Isaac's son Esau cheaply bartered away his birthright. And Jacob's firstborn son Reuben, slept with Bilhah, his father's concubine (Genesis 35).

The story of Jacob many years later passing on blessings to his sons is told in Genesis 49. *1 Jacob called his sons and said to them: Gather together so that I can tell you what will happen to you in the last days. 2 Be assembled and listen, sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father" (Genesis 49:1-2 TLV). First he spoke to Reuben: 3 Reuben, my firstborn are you, my vigor and firstborn of my power, endowed with extra dignity, endowed with extra strength— 4 like water boiling over you will not have extra, for you got up into your father's bed, when you defiled a maid's couch" (Genesis 49:3-4 TLV). In one moment of weakness and human desire for sexual pleasure, Reuben destroyed his birthright, just as Esau did years earlier for just one meal of lentil stew. Can you imagine how horrible that would have been for Reuben to hear – in front of all his brothers.*

Reuben didn't get the birthright, so who did? Even before Jacob gathered his sons to bless them, something else had happened: *13 Then Joseph took the two of them—Ephraim with his right hand across from Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand across from Israel's right—and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and placed it upon Ephraim's head (though he was the younger), and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, crossing his hands (though Manasseh was the firstborn) (Genesis 48:13-14 TLV). Before Jacob called his twelve sons together, he had already given two of his grandsons, the sons of Joseph, status as sons. As sons, Jacob blessed Joseph's son *Efrayim* with his right hand and gave him a double portion of possessions over his older brother *M'nasheh* and also over all of Jacob's other sons. But did he give *Efrayim* the birthright? The answer is not given here in Genesis.*

But, it is in 1Chronicles: *1 The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel—.. (1Chronicles 5:1a TLV). Jacob gave Reuben's birthright to the sons of Joseph. The birthright was the spiritual leadership of the family. But, does this mean that *Ephrayim* and *M'nasheh* actually got the right to carry out the lineage and the promise which ADONAI gave to Abraham; that nations and kings would come from them? The story gets a*

little complicated here. But, no, it doesn't mean that, because verse 1 tells us more. Speaking of Reuben it says: *1...so he is not reckoned as the firstborn in the genealogical record* (1Chronicles 5:1b TLV). According to 1 Chronicles, Reuben's birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, but as we will see shortly, it was not given in such a way for Ephraim to be regarded in the genealogy as the firstborn. As we continue reading 1Chronicles 5, verse 2 tells us why: *2 Though Judah was the strongest among his brothers, and a ruler came from him, the birthright belonged to Joseph* (1Chronicles 5:2 TLV). ADONAI gave blessings to the sons of Joseph and also the birthright to Ephraim, but not the right to pass on the lineage. This right, the right to pass on the lineage from which nations and kings would come, went to Judah. Here is Jacob's blessing of Judah in Genesis 49: 10 *"The scepter will not pass from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs will come. To him (שילה) will be the obedience of the peoples"* Genesis 49:10 TLV). I added the Hebrew word meaning *Shiloh* to this verse. The TLV translated the Hebrew, שילה, *Shiloh*, as him. But, we also need to understand that *Shiloh* is a messianic title. The Hebrew word *Shiloh* means something similar to "he whose it is" and we understand this to be an obvious reference to Messiah Yeshua who was to come. The right to pass on the lineage from whom kings would come went to Judah from whom came David and his greater son, Yeshua.

We have just described what happened in three short generations. ADONAI chose Abraham, blessed him, and promised to make him the father of nations with kings descending from him. ADONAI rejected Abraham's first son Ishmael and chose his second son, Isaac, to carry on the line. Among Isaac's sons he chose second born Jacob over first born Esau to carry on the line. Among Jacob's sons ADONAI rejected his first born, *Re'uven*, his second born, *Shimon*, his third born, *Levi*, and selected his fourth born, *Y'hudah*, Judah, to carry forward the lineage. All of this was a matter of divine choice, a choice which we just read in 1Chronicles 5:2: *2 Though Judah was the strongest among his brothers, and a ruler came from him, the birthright belonged to Joseph* (1Chronicles 5:2 TLV). "And a ruler came from him," was a decision made by ADONAI. Because Abraham found favor with ADONAI, his descendants were also a favored nation and were chosen to be priests to the rest of the nations. Why did He choose Judah to be the father of the rulers to come? It was certainly not based upon Judah's righteousness!

Here is Judah's story (Genesis 38). He had three sons with a Canaanite woman named *Shua*. This in itself was evil. By having children with a Canaanite woman, Judah did the same thing that his uncle Esau did. Then he married his eldest son, *Er*, to a woman named *Tamar*, but ADONAI killed *Er* because he was evil. Judah then sent his second son *Onan* to be the husband of *Tamar*, but he refused to give her a child, and so ADONAI killed him as well because he was evil. Judah then promised *Tamar* that his third son, *Shelah*, would marry her when he grew up. But after some time he had not sent *Shelah* and because of this *Tamar* took matters into her own hands and disguised herself as a prostitute sitting at the city gate. Judah came along on his way to shear his sheep and saw her and slept with her. He didn't know at the time that she was his daughter in law. Judah was at fault because he had been ignoring her marriage rights. Why did these two less than honorable persons, *Tamar* and Judah, end up in the lineage of Messiah Yeshua? Isn't it because ADONAI's grace is large enough to cover a multitude of sins. If ADONAI can use a harlot like *Tamar* and a fornicator like Judah, there is hope that He can use even you and me. What is the answer to the question, "Why did ADONAI choose Judah to pass on the kingly lineage?"

It is because He is G-d! ADONAI's Son Yeshua was born into the tribe of *Yehudah* by G-d's grace and His sovereign choice.

From here we go to Romans 9. In verses 1-5, *Sha'ul* is grieved because most of his brothers and sisters in the flesh, Israel, the Jews, had not chosen to believe in and to follow Messiah Yeshua. The pain in his heart was so great that he could wish to be under G-d's curse if it would help save some of his brothers and sisters. *Sha'ul* had such love and concern for the fate of Israel that he was willing for himself to be separated from Messiah if it could help Israel to know Messiah. *Sha'ul* continued: *6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all those who are descended from Israel are Israel,..* (Romans 9:6 TLV). What does it mean: "Not everyone descended from Israel is a part of Israel?" Verses 7 & 8 explain it: *7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's seed; rather, "Your seed shall be called through Isaac."* *8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God; rather, the children of the promise are counted as seed"* (Romans 9:7-8 TLV). This means that the children of G-d are those from the chosen seed. And *Sha'ul* goes on in the next verses to explain that ADONAI chose those that he wished to choose: *23 "And what if He did so to make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory? 24 Even us He called—not only from the Jewish people, but also from the Gentiles"* (Romans 9:23-24 TLV).

To explain these verses *Sha'ul* quotes the prophet Hosea : *25 "as He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' and her who was not loved, 'Beloved.' 26 And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God"* (Romans 9:25-26 TLV).

It is now becoming clear how people who are from the other nations of the earth get to be included in the sons of God. And it is because the chosen seed of ADONAI are spiritual seed. Israel, the Jews, are physical seed with regard to the Abrahamic Covenant, but both Jews and Gentiles are descended spiritually from Messiah Yeshua, the seed of Abraham. *Sha'ul* continues his explanation: *30 "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness—that is, a righteousness of faith"* (Romans 9:30 TLV). We, the Gentiles entered in through faith. And, that was also the way that Israel was to have entered. But, the majority of *Sha'ul's* brothers and sisters in the flesh didn't enter during this period right after Yeshua died on the stake, the reason for his sadness in verses 1-5. Here is why they didn't: *31 "But Israel, who pursued a Torah of righteousness, did not reach the Torah. 32 Why? Because they pursued it not by faith, but as if it were from works"* (Romans 9:31-32a TLV). The majority of the Jews of *Sha'ul's* day didn't pursue a righteousness grounded in faith as their father Abraham had, but pursued a righteousness of legalism. It is still the same today. We, both natural Israel, the Jews, and sojourning Gentiles, are to pursue righteousness grounded in faith. To pursue righteousness means to seek to follow the commands of ADONAI, but we must do it in the right way. We do it first by being grounded in trust; faith. And, then, righteousness is an outgrowth of our faith. After we trust in Messiah Yeshua, we wish to do his will, and naturally will want to keep His commandments. Keeping His commandments is pursuing righteousness.

But, the primary reason that all Israel has not yet come to this righteousness grounded in faith in Yeshua as Messiah is because of the stumbling stone. *32 .. "They stumbled over the stone of stumbling, 33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and whoever believes in Him shall not be put to shame"* (Romans 9:32b-33 TLV). This rock, this stumbling stone, Yeshua our Messiah, the chief

cornerstone, still prevents many of Israel in the flesh from entering in today because of hardness of heart. The very statement most often used by traditional rabbis to describe Messianic Jews reflects the fact that they are stumbling over this stone. Today they say, "a Jew who has accepted Jesus is no longer a Jew."

Tol'dot, the generations of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the foundational generations of everyone who trusts in Yeshua as Messiah, Jew and Gentile. Through Yeshua, each one of us has inherited a birthright, a spiritual responsibility to be spiritual leaders and to lead our own children and family to a relationship with Yeshua. Not only to them, but also to all of G-d's children who don't know Yeshua. But, it's not just about salvation. That is only the beginning point. We are to make disciples for Yeshua, so that everyone would be dedicated, sold-out followers of Him.

With regard to making disciples, it's never been more evident that we have failed within the body of Messiah Yeshua. As a body, we repented for this on the day of "The Return," September 26th, but the greatness of our combined failure was not revealed until November 3rd. That which proclaims itself to be His body is not always His body. We have much work to do now. We, as a part of the committed, believing core of Yeshua's body, have to be about His business both here and in the other communities where we live. There are a limited number of years remaining before Yeshua returns and a limited amount of time to seek and save the lost. Because we are living in the "last days," we are also living in what our Messiah described as "the trouble of those days:" 29 *"But immediately after the trouble of those days, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.'* 30 *Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven' with power and great glory"* (Matthew 24:29-30 TLV).

Nobody knows how long the trouble of those days will be, but we are clearly in them. The final reward for our labors will be to rise to meet Yeshua after those days when He comes on the clouds. How many years do we have before that happens?

As I mentioned to you several weeks ago, there may be a parallel between our days and Noah's days. It took him 100 years to build the ark. Comparing Noah's life of 950 years to our promised three score and ten, the 100 years it took him to build the ark would be 7 years of our lifetimes. What this means, I am not certain, and I am not setting any dates, but know that we do have a limited number of years before Yeshua returns. But, we do have the time needed to build an ark, an ark of salvation and discipleship for all who need it. Will we take the challenge? We will and with Yeshua's help, we will succeed! *Shabbat shalom!*