



Parshas Toldos 2023, light shining bright

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of our land, Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers as they eradicate our enemies. May G-d save all the hostages in Gaza from harm and return them immediately. May G-d comfort all those who lost family or friends in the horrific attack. May G-d grant a speedy recovery to all those injured in the attack.

Our Parsha introduces us to the third and final forefather of the Jewish people: Ya'akov Avinu. His parents, Yitzchak and Rivkah, had a similar issue as his grandparents, Avraham and Sarah; they were both childless for a long time. But after twenty years, G-d finally accepted their prayers, and Rivkah gave birth to twins, Ya'akov and Esav. Even from birth, Ya'akov and Esav were extreme opposites; the firstborn, Esav, was naturally red, hairy, and energetic.

On the other hand, Ya'akov was small and only managed to emerge from his mother's womb because he grabbed onto his brother's heel. As the Pasuk writes (25:26), *"Then his brother emerged, holding on to the heel of Esav; so they named him Ya'akov."*

As the two grew older, the differences between them became more evident. Esav was a man of the field and an expert hunter, contrasting Ya'akov, a gentle and modest person. Esav also served idols and married women from Canaan (which displeased Yitzchak greatly). At the same time, Ya'akov studied Torah and developed his relationship with G-d.

At the age of 123 years, Yitzchak summoned Esav and stated that he wished to bless him but first asked him to hunt an animal and prepare a meal so he could eat. Rivkah, who overheard this conversation, quickly cooked some meat and told Ya'akov to put on some of Esav's clothing to trick his father into blessing him.

Ya'akov did as instructed: he put on Esav's clothes, took the meal his mother had made and went into his father's tent. Under the impression that Esav had returned (because he was blind), Yitzchak gave Ya'akov the blessings that he intended to give to Esav. These amazing blessings included the most important one: mastery over his brother.

As soon as Yitzchak concluded the blessings, Ya'akov left his father's presence just as Esav returned from the field. Esav entered Yitzchak's tent and offered him the food that he was asked to prepare. Yitzchak realized he was tricked and informed Esav that he had already given blessings to Ya'akov. Esav, now enraged, was determined to kill his younger brother. But Rivkah had already sent Ya'akov far away to Charan so he could find a wife.

However, a question comes to mind: Our Parsha begins with stating the lineage and origin of Yitzchak Avinu. The Pasuk states, *וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אֲבִרְהָם אֲבִרְהָם הוֹלִיד* *את־יִצְחָק* - "These are the children of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham, Avraham begot Yitzchak." Why does the Torah repeat the lineage of Yitzchak Avinu when he is forty years old and married for many years? What is this Pasuk adding to the narrative of Yitzchak Avinu?!

Rashi (Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading commentary on the Torah) answers this question with a simple explanation. He writes that we ended the last Torah portion by discussing Ishmael and his descendants. So, the Parsha re-introduces Yitzchak as we learn about his children and life story.

However, the Radak, Rav Dovid Kimchi and the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar, give a deeper explanation that is especially relevant in the painful circumstances we find ourselves in today.

The Radak quotes the Talmud in Bava Metzia (86a) that the numerical value of *הוֹלִיד* - gave birth is 55, which is the same as *דוֹמָה* - similar. Accordingly, the Radak explains that Avraham and Yitzchak had similar facial features and looked alike. Many hold that they were identical and almost indistinguishable from each other.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh takes this a step further. He writes that although Yitzchak did not have a difficult childhood or have to make tough choices for the sake of G-d like his father, Avraham, he had his holiness. He had his character, virtues, level of sacrifice and most importantly, a matching level of dedication and

devotion to our Creator, our Father in heaven. Although an aspect of their characters differed, kindness with Avraham and strength with Yitzchak, their core and essence were the same.

This lesson is ever more relevant as Jews around the world unite despite our differences through our essence, the soul, the piece of G-d, gifted to each one of us. Like Yitzchak, many of us may not have faced the same challenges or dilemmas as the previous generations, yet we possess a distinct holiness, character and virtue. Each person's level of sacrifice and chosen path may differ, but what unites us is a deep, unwavering commitment to our Creator, our Father in Heaven.

This past Tuesday, November 14th, was perhaps the largest gathering of Jews in the diaspora in recent memory. **Approx. 300,000 Jews from across America and beyond stood in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in our homeland, Eretz Yisroel.** Remarkably, it wasn't just one or two communities that rallied together, but communities across all levels of observance stood as one, proudly Jewish, unashamed of our holiness.

We walk in the footsteps of giants who set the path and demonstrate how to stand firm in adversity. Avraham Avinu was alive for 15 years of Ya'akov's life; the Talmud writes that Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov studied together for 15 hours daily. But during the other 9 hours, they would serve G-d uniquely: Avraham with love, Yitzchak with strength and Ya'akov with a combination of both.

We are just beginning the month of Kislev, the month of light. Kislev is a period when daylight gets shorter, and the darkness of night becomes longer. The holiday of Chanukah teaches us a powerful lesson: light shines the brightest on the darkest nights. When all hope is gone, when despair and depression take hold, we must remind ourselves to illuminate our souls G-dly light and share it with the world.

"Hope – not optimism – is what empowers us to take risks, to offer commitment, to give love, to bring new life into the world, to comfort the afflicted, to lift the fallen, to begin great undertakings, to live by our ideals."

- The Chief Rabbi's Haggadah by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Am Yisroel Chai!

*Have a meaningful Shabbos
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*