

Parshas Toldos

This week's parsha we are told of the 2 nations that will be born to Rivka- namely Yakov and Esav. Yakov and Esav are lifelong adversaries, and Mashiach's time is when Yakov conquers Esav (Obadiah 1:21 "v'alu moshi'im bihar tzion lishpot es har eisav). The twins that were born is an indication of choice between 'equal' yet rivaling options. In the case of the history of the Jews, Yakov was chosen as the soul to be the father of the 12 tribes and birth the nation of the Jews. Rashi in the parsha explains how Yakov was the first from conception in, and therefore was second out. Highlighting the fact that although Yakov was derived from a higher place, and theoretically should have been physically the bechor, and with that all the responsibilities of the bechoros, he was nevertheless second to be born (which fulfills the prophetic vision of Shem given to Rivka about the young conquering the old in chapter 25 posuk 23 see Rashi¹). Yakov is the neshama, and person who followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. Whereas Esav was educated in the ways, he opted out of them². Because they were twin (and couldn't be born at the exact same moment), one must be younger, but they derive from the same place, and are "equal". Because of this, Yakov was constantly reminded and reassured that the nation of Jews will be born from him, even though he was given the blessing once, he

required it to be reiterated multiple times. Esav's Kibud Av V'eim and gift of gab (he was able to speak Torah and convince his father of his knowledge-according to medrish in Rashi on 25:28), which means even if he didn't follow in the ways, on some indirect way he had the zechus of Torah learning. Yakov feared this, and the possibility that he would be conquered by Esav- a fear that is entrenched in our psyche, until the days of Mashiach, when "V'rav Yavod Tzair" (25:23). One of the first of these blessings, and the spreading of the Jews comes from 26:3-4-where because of the famine Yitzchak was given the blessing of his father, that the nation of Jews will be born from him. The blessing concludes in posuk 5 that because Avraham walked in the ways of Hashem this is why Avraham Yitzchak, and then Yakov will be the lineage chosen to be the nation which Hashem wants (Ata Vichartanu Mikol Ha'amim- Yom Tov Shmoneh Esrei). And it is by divine design of who is chosen, but this comes with a huge responsibility (like referenced with the bechoros³ which Esav belittled). The word to describe "because" is Eikev, (which can also be cross referenced to the first posuk of Parshas Eikev Devarim 7:12- which is linguistically connected here) which can also reflect on the root of the word Yakov, who was also going to follow in the path of the Torah (Rashi explains that the forefathers had a glimpse and insight into the Torah and its

¹ And this remains the theme for Jewish prophecy that the weak will conquer the mighty (think Joseph's dreams, Moshe being the youngest, David being the youngest etc.).

² As Esav stated- that why would he need the first-born birthright, he will die anyways, he belittled the first-born birthright, and as Rashi explains, this is because he knew the responsibilities of the firstborn and he didn't even try to hold up to it. Yakov then needed to "buy" the bechoros off him. Furthermore, part of Esav's anger at Yakov, wasn't just that he lost the first and powerful blessing of Yitzchak, it was that he lost the chance to be buried in Mearas Hamachpeila- although we know

according to the gemara that Esav repented at the end of his days, and his head ended up there).

³ The bechor was originally chosen to be the priests, but that changed with the sin of the golden calf, and the kohanim from the tribe of Levi took that responsibility. This means, that bechor, and Kohanim, can be interchanged, perhaps, and gives new meaning to Mamleches Kohanim V'Goy Kadosh. We are like priests who have the responsibility of what is originally the Bechor's job. Meaning today, and even before the Beis Hamikdash we know that everyone has a responsibility to follow in the path of Hashem.

ways, which differentiated them, and made concretized them as our forefathers⁴).

This introduction leads us to the connection between the parsha and the Haftora. The haftora is from Malachi (1:1-2:7), a later prophet from early in the second Beis Hamikdash, who prophesied to bring the Jews back on the path. The Prophet Malachi reminds the Jews of the time that Hashem loves Yakov and not Esav. This is an understandable introduction, because the Jews who were around at the beginning of the second Beis Hamikdash, either themselves witnessed, or were the children of the witnesses of Jewish destruction writ large (think of a modern-day version of the Holocaust). The people were understandably disillusioned, and perhaps optically, it would seem that Esav was the winning adversary that we had always feared would conquer us.

Yet Malachi says, remember Jews, Hashem loves, and chose Yakov as the fore parent for the birth of the nation of the Jews. From Yakov derived the 12 tribes, and the nation, which received the Torah on Har Sinai. Why would Malachi choose this approach as his introduction to bringing the Jews back on the path? Because as I mentioned above, even Yakov needed reassurance for his being the father of the Jews, especially when optically, it would seem that we are decimated. Once Malachi states his case and reassures that the nation of Yakov is the chosen one, Malachi explains where the Jews are lacking in the service, and what they can do to act better⁵.

⁴ When Hashem created the world, using Torah, Adam had all the knowledge, which got lost on animalistic devolution until Noach came, and Hashem was going to destroy the world, as a world without enacting Torah, is chaos. Then after the flood until Avraham, the knowledge of who G-d is, was lost, until Avraham came along and reignited the truth in the world, making him the first Jew, and the first of our forefathers, but

Namely it would seem they were acting in the ways of Hashem, but in a manner derived from Esav, that is they weren't sacrificing of themselves to provide the choicest and best items for the service of the temple. Remember he says, if we are the chosen people, we need to act like it. This is perhaps why he specifically references the work of the Kohanim in chapter 2, which like stated below in the footnotes, is connected to the bechoros, which Esav belittled. We cannot act like Esav (who knew the whole Torah, and yet at the moment of the sale of the birthright, didn't even try to improve himself). Knowing the law, and acting with in it, or "just getting by" can be embarrassing and belittling to the mitzvah, fulling committing ourselves to the mitzvah within our means is the way to act.

Malachi's message, and the connection to the parsha is quite distinct, and applies to us today. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, like Malachi in our generation, reminded us that from the ashes of the Holocaust we still have the responsibility to act like Yakov, and do our utmost to stay on the path of Torah, and to offer self-sacrifice in the name of serving Hashem, so we can bring Mashiach. He reassured us that Hashem loves us, and chose us, even if Esav seems to be 'winning'. May we stay on this path, so we can fulfill Obadiah's prophecy, of Lishpot Es Har Eisav, with Mashiach speedily in our days.

Good Shabbos.

connecting him directly to creation when Hashem used Torah as the blueprint. I say this to bring the point and recurring theme, that we are directly connected and descendants from Adam, until today with the same mission as always, "lasos lo dirah bitachtonim".

⁵ As well, Malachi's opening statements, support the notion that Esav was an equal adversary and constant threat to Yakov.