

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

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Digging into the Torah

This week's parashah is about Isaac and Rebekah's family and how the promised seed would descend through Isaac's son Jacob rather than through his older twin brother Esau. Isaac and Rebekah had been married for twenty years but were still without an heir to carry on the family line. Finally their prayers were answered and Rebekah conceived, though not without complications. When she inquired of the LORD about her travail, He told her that she was carrying twins that would be heads of two rival nations, but the younger child would in fact become the promised heir of the chosen people. When the day came for Rebekah to give birth, the first child came out "red and covered with hair," so they called his name Esau ("hairy"); then his brother came out with his hand grasping Esau's heel, so they named him Ya'akov ("supplanter," from the Hebrew root meaning "heel").

Esau grew up to be "a skillful hunter, a man of the field," while Jacob was ish tam yoshev ohalim, "a wholesome man, who lived in tents." Isaac favored Esau; but Rebekah, believing the promise of the LORD, favored Jacob... The portion then gives us a look at the spiritual life of the two boys. According to Jewish tradition, on the day of the funeral of their grandfather Abraham, Jacob was cooking lentil soup for Isaac, the traditional mourner's meal. Esau rushed in from a hunting expedition, exhausted and hungry. He then begged Jacob to give him some of "that red stuff" (ha'dom hazeh), but Jacob answered that he would give him some only if he would sell him his birthright. Esau agreed to the terms and discounted his birthright as being worth only a bowl of beans (on account of this incident, Esau was given the additional name of Edom ("red")). In this manner the Torah describes how Esau "spurned the birthright."

Read Genesis 25:19-34. What do you think is the primary theme of these verses?

A. Read Genesis 25:21. Can you think of any thematic connections to this verse? That's right. Therefore, we know that Rivka's pregnancy is related to

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Sarah's. The root word translated pleaded or entreated is taken from the Hebrew root which denotes abundance. Thus, it seems that Isaac and Rebekah were having difficulties with conception! According to Genesis 25:20 and 26, it took twenty years for Rivka to conceive. This explains why Isaac had entered into deep intercession for this event to occur. Since Ishmael is a son of Abraham just as Isaac, let's compare and contrast them pertaining to their offspring.

- Read Genesis 25:12-16. Do you see anything in this passage that even hints at problems with conception? No. In other words, it seems as if those who will bring forth the mighty nation of Israel must do so with much effort, whereas those without this calling seem to have children as effortlessly as these verses imply. Hmm, interesting. In lieu of the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, do you see a pattern unfolding here?
- This is the second Matriarch who has experienced delays in childbirth. Let's continue to keep count as we progress through the Torah.

B. Read Genesis 25:22-24. Have you noticed what was happening within Rivka? Once she had finally conceived, she then started having difficulties carrying the children. Is this a mean game God is playing with Abraham and his descendants concerning their great calling? I think not. We will clear this up in the last section, Messiah in the Parsha.

C. How is Genesis 25:22 thematically related to Genesis 25:21?¹¹ What was God's answer to Rivka's inquiry concerning her difficulties?¹² When we studied Parashat Bereishit, we learned about the Torah's usage of parallelism and symmetry as literary techniques. In a parallelism, a fact is stated twice. However, the second statement uses slightly different words to convey the same thought. For example, read Psalm 33:6. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. (Psalm 33:6) Notice the parallelism. The same fact (the Holy One created the heavens by His spoken word) is conveyed twice using slightly different language. This is parallelism. Notice the second, or parallel statement, is essentially the same as the first statement. In other words, the two statements have the same symmetry. Sometimes the Torah will use two different (and even contrasting) characters in a parallel situation. Then, the Torah will "break" the symmetry of the parallel situation to teach a significant point. It is the "breaking" of the symmetry that should grab your attention!

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Now read Genesis 25:23.

*"Two nations are in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger."*

Note how the first half of the verse contains a parallelism. Both statements are symmetrical, i.e., each statement essentially states the same information. But notice the second half. It begins with a statement concerning the relative strength of the two nations within Rebekah's womb. And right when we expect another symmetrical statement concerning the strength of the nations, the Torah informs us that the older will serve the younger, which has nothing to do with the relative strengths of the two nations. This is done to emphasize the phrase that breaks the symmetry! The most important point is that the older will serve the younger. This verse seems to state that although one nation will be stronger than the other, the stronger nation will serve the weaker.

Connecting the Prophets

The Haftarah (Prophets) reading is found in Malachi 1:1-2:7. I will list some verses from the Haftarah reading. Your job will be to relate them thematically to the Torah reading.

I. What theme in Malachi 1:1-5 is thematically connected with a theme of the Torah reading?

- How is the character assessment of Esau and Edom, made by God, thematically related to Genesis 25:24-34 and 27:41?
- What portion of the sidra (Torah portion) is thematically related to Malachi 1:6b?
- How is Malachi 1:11 thematically connected with a theme of the Torah reading? It should come as no surprise that Abimelekh greatly desired a covenant of peace with Isaac AFTER he called out to YHWH.

In summary, the Prophets mentions the Holy One's Name quite often. Other than the reference to Esau, I think these references to the Name are the strongest connections to the Torah portion.

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Connecting the Torah with Jesus

As you read the Torah, anytime you see

- 1) pictures of resurrection,
- 2) pictures of renewed life as a result of deliverance from impending death and
- 3) pictures of victory and renewed life as a result of death, we know the Torah is about to give us a teaching concerning the Messiah.

I call these themes of The Resurrection and the Life, and they are especially strengthened when coupled in some manner with the number three. The first LIVING things (plants, grass, etc.) were created on day THREE! This is not strictly life from the dead; however, the principle of life coming from a state where there is no life is clear.

The Torah's picture of the RESURRECTION of the Messiah is found in the Holy Days. The Holy Day that is a shadow of Jesus's RESURRECTION is the THIRD Holy Day, the Day of the Omer Wave Offering (Leviticus 23)! The offering of the barley sheaves on the day after the first Day of Unleavened Bread (the day after the Shabbat) is a prophetic picture of the resurrection of the Messiah.

Jonah, who was in the belly of a great fish, should have been dead. But on the THIRD day he came forth ALIVE! Truly, death was swallowed in victory! The Akeida (**binding of Isaac**) found in Genesis 22—Abraham was supposed to offer Isaac as an olah (whole burnt offering). Although God prevented him from actually sacrificing Isaac on the THIRD day, the manner in which the Torah relates the story hints that Isaac died and was RESURRECTED. That's why Hebrews 11:17-19 records that Abraham received Isaac from the dead through RESURRECTION figuratively!

We also saw the number three in the story of Isaac's birth and the Akeida. In the story of the Akeida, it was on the third day that Abraham saw the place where he was to offer Isaac—Genesis 22:4! In the story of the promise of the birth of Isaac, Genesis 17:1, it states that Abraham was 99 years old, when God promised that Isaac would be born.

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We also saw that barrenness was a sign of the Messiah because, as Paul stated in Romans 4, life came forth from a dead womb! Therefore, when we see life coming forth from a barren womb, we should immediately make the connection to the sign of the Messiah. Then we should begin to search for Messianic significance. Therefore, it is not coincidental that Isaac and Joseph are Messianic figures!

The story of Rachel re-emphasizes our understanding that barrenness was seen as death and that life from a barren womb can be seen as resurrection. Read Genesis 30:1. How did Rachel see herself as long as she was barren? As you can see, once again, the Torah makes the connection between barrenness and death. Why? So that we can see the theme of resurrection whenever a child springs forth from a barren womb! This should then point us to the Messiah. Does it surprise you that Messiah's mother required supernatural assistance to conceive as did the Matriarchs? Of course not. The fact that three Matriarchs needed supernatural help to conceive (bring forth life from a dead womb) teaches us about the virgin birth in this manner—Messiah's mother would also require supernatural help to conceive seed and bring forth Him Who would bring Life through His Death and Resurrection in Three days! Hopefully, you understand the following Messianic theme!