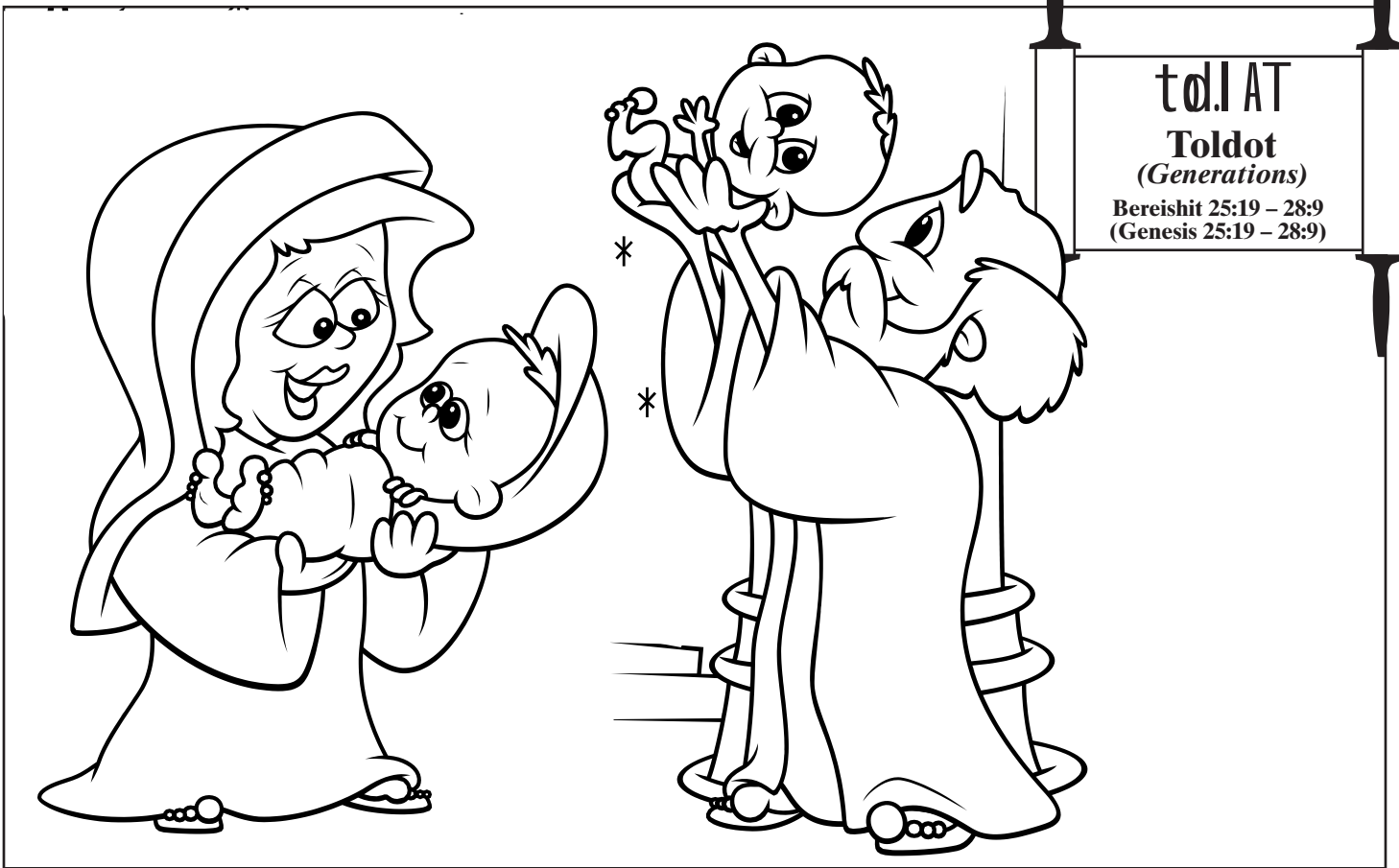


— Parashat HaShavuah —



**Understanding the Parsha  
Genesis 24:1 - 24:67**

**Objective**—Learn how to

- 1) Understand the main theme of a Parsha (Scripture portion),
- 2) Make thematic connections to that Parsha and
- 3) Learn how to get a greater understanding of the Parsha we are learning through its thematic connections to other portions of Scripture.

**A Story of Contrasts (*oppositeness*)**

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

The difference between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Jacob    Esau

**A. Read Genesis 25:21. Can you think of any thematic connections to this verse?** Write in the name

\_\_\_\_\_ was also barren.

sarah

That's right. Therefore, we know that Rivka's pregnancy is related to Sarah's.

The root word translated pleaded or entreated is taken from the Hebrew root, תולדות Toldot, which means abundance. So, it seems that Isaac and Rivkah were having difficulties with conception! Remember in Genesis 25:20 and 26, it took twenty years for Rivka to become pregnant. This explains why Isaac had entered into deep intercession for this to happen.

Since Ishmael is a son of Abraham just as Isaac, let's compare what the Scriptures say about them concerning their offspring (children).

**1. Read Genesis 25:12-16. Do you see anything in this passage about Ishmael's descendants that would make you think there is a problem with having children?**

Circle one    Yes    No.  
ON

As you can see, it will be those who are called to bring forth the mighty nation of Israel that will have to do so with great effort, and those without this calling seem to have children with no problem at all. This is what verses like these are showing us.

Isn't that interesting? Even though we have the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 saying his descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky, yet still it will be difficult for Abraham's descendants to have all these children.... watch for the pattern that is unfolding here as we go on!

**2. Who is the second Matriarch who has experienced delays in child birth? Fill in the right letters**

\_\_\_\_\_ **v** \_\_\_\_\_ **a** \_\_\_\_\_  
Rivka

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 Adonai is playing with Abraham and his descendants concerning their great calling? No not at all. But you will need to do the study, Messiah in the Parsha, to find out why this happens to Rivka.

**C. Now let's think about how is Genesis 25:22 thematically related to Genesis 25:21? Draw a circle around the answer**

Someone is praying about Rivka's pregnancy

She is barren and can't have a child

Someone is praying about Rivka's pregnancy

What was Adonai's answer to Rivka's inquiry concerning her difficulties?

YHWH told her that two separate \_\_\_\_\_ were in her body.  
suofnan

When we studied Parashat Bereishit, we learned about the Torah's using parallelism and symmetry. Do you remember in a parallelism, a fact is stated twice. But, the second statement uses slightly different words to say the same thing. For example, in 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

Look for 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 like the first statement, just said another way. 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 an important point. It is the "breaking" of the symmetry that should grab your attention! 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.”

See how the first half of the verse contains a parallelism. Both statements are symmetrical, meaning, each statement is saying the same thing. But notice the second half. It begins with a statement concerning the strength of the two nations in Rivkah’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 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 is saying that although one nation will be stronger than the other, the stronger nation will serve the weaker nation. Now that’s interesting.

**II. We are beginning to learn that the events in the lives of the Patriarchs are prophetic shadows or pictures of events that will occur in the lives of their descendants in the future.**

We know this to be true simply because of the strong thematic connections we have made already between the lives of the Patriarchs and the future events that occurred in the lives of Am Yisrael (the people of Israel). Now let’s look for proof in the text to show us this is true.

What was happening within Rivka during her pregnancy? The unborn children were \_\_\_\_\_  
אֶחָדָם

What did the Holy One say was the reason they were fighting?

He said that the \_\_\_\_\_ would serve the \_\_\_\_\_. And that the \_\_\_\_\_  
older younger stronger  
 would serve the \_\_\_\_\_.  
weaker

How does this story relate to the idea that the lives of the fathers are prophetic foreshadows of their descendants? Prophetically, the two wrestling babes in Rivka’s womb meant that the children would grow up to father two separate nations that would always be striving against each other. The actions of the two children (in her womb) were a foreshadowing of what would really happen to their descendants! Just as they fought within her womb, so too would their descendants always be fighting generations later.

**A. Did you know that the prophets in the Scriptures, would prophetically act out a future event?** Isaiah 20:1-6 explains how Isaiah walked around barefoot and naked with his buttocks uncovered. This was an example of how the Egyptians would be led away captive by the Assyrians. In Ezekiel 4, Ezekiel builds a miniature battlefield and lies on his sides to show Am Yisrael how they would be overcome by their enemies. In both examples, the prophet acted out a future event. These are clear-cut prophetic acts. However, most people are totally unaware of the hidden prophetic acts of the Fathers. They are rich lessons of prophecy, especially of the Messiah!

III. The Torah often uses indirect ways to make its points. One way the Torah does this is to set up a situation of symmetry and then break that symmetry. Let’s note how this breaking of the symmetry is used several times in the opening parsha.

**A. Read Genesis 25:25-26.** Note the opening words of verse 25, “and the first one emerged . . .” What is stated about Esau? Write in the answers

The way he \_\_\_\_\_ and then his \_\_\_\_\_ .  
looks name

Notice the opening words of verse 26, “and afterwards his brother emerged . . .” After reading the first usage of the phrase, “and the first one emerged,” what do we expect to read concerning Jacob?

Something about the way he \_\_\_\_\_ and then something about his \_\_\_\_\_ .  
looks name



**How is the symmetry broken?** Circle the word

Instead of giving a description of Jacob's looks size color (like it did with Esau), and then something about his name.

looks

This is the first difference the Torah wishes to draw between the Jacob and Esau.

Esau is characterized by his fleshly characteristics, whereas Jacob is characterized by his internal drive, will and desire! As you can see, when we begin to understand the Torah's literary techniques, then, and only then, will we be able to learn its simple, yet profound, wisdom.

**1. Read Genesis 25:27. What two things does the Torah state concerning Esau? Fill in the answers**

He knew how to \_\_\_\_\_ and he was a man of the \_\_\_\_\_ .

hunt

field

What two things does the Torah state about Jacob?

He was a \_\_\_\_\_ man living in \_\_\_\_\_ .

simple

tents

What does the Torah seem to be trying to describe in both instances? Circle the right word

What the both do say feel in their calling in life.

op

**By thinking about the two statements concerning both men, how is the symmetry of their calling in life broken?**

A. It makes sense to connect a man who knew the hunt and a man of the field go together, but it does not make sense to connect a simple man and a man dwelling together.

B. The symmetry is not broken. Everything flows nicely.

v

**What message is the Torah trying to teach us through this lack of symmetry?**

Draw a line to the right match

Esau

Jacob

Both spiritual and natural

Flesh only



2. The expression, "dwelling in tents," is an expression used to mean that Jacob was a shepherd. What kind of thematic connection can we make between Esau (a man of the field/farmer) and Jacob (the shepherd) and Cain and Abel? What is the Torah trying to teach us by this obvious thematic connection? Talk about it now.

What other natural difference is there between a man of the hunt and a shepherd?

A hunter \_\_\_\_\_ animals and a shepherd \_\_\_\_\_ for animals.

kills

cares

Through these thematic parallels we find that the Torah is trying to show us more than originally meets the eye.

**3. Read Genesis 25:28.** How is symmetry broken in this verse? Talk about it now. We can see that the Torah is teaching us about the wicked character of Esau (he is equated thematically with Cain) and the righteous character of Jacob.

**Great job in your thematic study!** Keep at it, and as you go, you will be able to see more and more and build on the unfolding story the Father has put before you!