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## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

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Lirfuat Mati Ben Yaacov

TOLDOT

2<sup>nd</sup> KISLEV 5777

Shabbat begins: 15:39

Shabbat ends: 16:47



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL  
DIRECTOR, TAL

Sons &amp; Fathers

A Rabbi said to a precocious six-year-old boy, "So, you tell me that your mother says your prayers for you each night. That's very commendable. What does she actually say?"

The little boy replied, "Thank G-d he's in bed!"

Leading a life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a parent is never easy. We find ourselves working during the day to make the necessary income, and in the evenings to ensure a good upbringing of our children. The secret is giving them over real time and *personally* investing in their education.

Our Parasha is called Toldot which means generations or offspring.

The Parasha opens: "And these are the offspring of Yitschak the son of Avraham – Avraham fathered Yitschak."

As is well known, the title of a Parasha is taken from the first key word of each Parasha. Sometimes this is the very first word, but can occasionally be up to fourteen words later, as we find in Parashat Kedoshim.

Our Parasha commences with the words – "Ve'eleh Toldot Yitschak ben Avraham".

Toldot is therefore a very apt name for the Parasha.

However there is a similar Parasha which also begins with the words Ve'eleh Toldot – that of Noach.

Yet there we find that the Parasha name is called Noach and here it is called Toldot. Perhaps Noach should be called Toldot and Toldot should be called Yitschak, why the difference in titles?

Noach was a righteous man who was primarily interested in himself. Even though it took 120 years to build the ark, he was never able to change any of his generation or encourage them to repent. This was in contrast to Avraham who later was able to bring the masses under the worship of the One G-d.

Avraham was able to earn the name of an Av – forefather.



Three times a day we begin the most holy of our prayers with the famous words, "Blessed are you G-d, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitschak, and the G-d of Yaakov".

The Gemara (Berachot 16b) teaches that only three individuals have the title 'Avot'. Rabenu Bechaye explains that the source for this comes from a Pasuk when Hashem introduces himself to Moshe at the burning bush as – "The G-d of your

fathers, the G-d of Avraham, The G-d of Yitschak and the G-d of Yaakov" (Shemot 3:15).

This was the way that G-d introduced Himself to Moshe and this, explains the Torah Temimah, is the reason we introduce our most holy prayers in this manner.

Avraham, through his life's ten tough tests, was able to withstand and become the prodigy of a nation.

Yet there is even more behind the scenes. Many commentaries wonder why the Torah mentions that Avraham was the father of Yitschak, a fact that we surely know.

R' Menachem Mendel Krochmal z"l (17<sup>th</sup> century Poland) offers the following explanation:

The Midrash Tanchuma teaches: Sometimes a son suffers degradation because of his father, as the righteous King Yoshiyahu suffered degradation because of his father, the wicked King Amon (Melachim II chapters 21- 22).

Similarly the righteous King Chizkiyahu suffered degradation because of his father, the wicked King Achaz (Melachim II chapter 16).

On the other hand, a father sometimes suffers degradation because of his children, as the prophet Shmuel did because of his sons, and the Kohen Gadol Eli did because of his sons (see Shmuel I 8:3 and 2:22).

However, concludes the Midrash, neither Avraham nor Yitschak ever suffered degradation on account of the other. To the contrary, each one was made more distinguished because of his association with the other. Perhaps, writes R' Krochmal, this is the message of our verse. Yitschak was proud to be Avraham's son, and



1. What is the significance of Yakov and Esav being twins?

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Avraham was proud to be Yitschak's father.

We find similarly that Moshe and his father-in-law Yitro each took pride in his relationship with the other.

R' Krochmal adds: It is the way of wise men and it is a sign of righteousness to always attribute one's accomplishments to others. Avraham attributed his accomplishments to Yitschak, and Yitschak, to Avraham.

In married life Yitschak took on the same character. After many years of not being able to have children, the Torah relates

that Yitschak would pray opposite his wife. The Pri Tsadik explains this to mean that he would pray to have children in *her* righteous merit and she would pray to have children in *his* righteous merit. Each one recognised the others virtues to an extent that their grandeur and achievements in life were down to the other.

When there is such respect in a father and son or husband and wife relationship, then we have the necessary ingredients for continuity.

We can now understand why our Parasha which deals with Yitschak and his offspring is called Toldot.

Noach lived in a tough generation but was self focused. His offspring was himself and that Parasha is named after him. But as far as Yitschak was concerned it was the *Toldot* – generations that mattered.

The lesson is profound; ultimately what matters most is not the extent to which our name is in print, but rather how successful we are in guaranteeing the continuity of our faith.



**RABBI DANNY KADA**

### Differentiation: A Modern Phenomenon?

There is much dialogue in the generation we live regarding successful parenting and education. Society around us gives us the impression that the new bestsellers on positive parenting and innovative courses on successful schooling are a must in order to effectively discharge one's duties as parent or teacher.

But we sometimes forget that we have a Book, our eternal Torah, which although ancient, contains timeless lessons if only we explore and examine it properly. The book of Bereishit in particular deals with relationships, albeit uneasy ones. We have strained relationships between father and son (Yitschak & Yaakov and Yaakov & Reuben), mother and son (Sarah & Yishmael and Rivkah & Esav), siblings (Kayin & Hevel and Yosef & brothers) and even husband and wife (Yaakov & Leah). These episodes are for us to learn from and apply to our daily lives.

One of the central difficulties and disappointments of Toldot is, how could an Yitschak and a Rivkah produce an

Esav? Couldn't such righteous parents produce children loyal to their values and principles? Moreover, both children seem to have potential in different 'fields'. Yaakov is described as "*ish tam, yoshev ohalim*" – a 'simple' man abiding in tents and Esav is "*ish sadeh yodea tza'id*" – a professional hunter of the fields. What happened? How and why did Esav become Esav the wicked?

Some have argued that it was mere genetics. Rivkah came from an idolatrous home and so did Avraham. Esav happened to receive all the negative genes from both sides – paternally and maternally. This doesn't fit very well with the concept of Free Will, one of the axiomatic principles of Judaism. Others attribute Esav's slump to Rivkah's favoritism of Yaakov. Rivkah was the 'mother at home' and Esau sensed her lack of interest in him causing him to embark on his own path.

Rabbi Shimson Raphael Hirsch (1808 1888) maintains that Yitschak and Rivkah were responsible for Esav's new path but for a different reason. For Rabbi Hirsch, the key words in their upbringing are "*Vayigdelu hane'arim*" and the lads grew up'. That was the parents' mistake. *Yaakov and Esau grew up in the same educational infrastructure*. Yaakov was a wholesome individual and the schooling system of his parents suited him and his needs. Esav, alas, was of different nature. He was more animated and energetic and was not suited for the same educational system that his brother was experiencing. But his parents failed to recognize that and made them grow up together: one school, one system, one

technique. Esav was stifled and the natural reaction of being stifled is to burst open from those chains and forge a new, independent path through life.

Every child must be raised as an individual. Each individual child whose education has been entrusted to us has a unique mission to complete. The practical means by which we are to guide each individual child to his or her potential are not the same. They are as different from one another as the tendencies and abilities and the intellectual and emotional potential are in each individual personality. A shoe does not fit all feet. An effective parent or teacher should be able to raise children as different as Jacob and Esav in such a manner that both of them will grow up to be good and capable as each other, but in different fields.

King Shelomo later echoed this with the maxim "*chanoch lenaar al pi darko*" raise the child according to *his* path and character traits. Children have different learning preferences and one size doesn't fit all.

Our children are our saplings. Just like different plants need different types of food and varied amounts of water and sunlight, so too our children need different types of training and varied amounts of praise and love.

We can thus understand why the Talmud teaches us that teachers (and parents, for every parent is essentially a teacher) who perform their duties as required, will shine like the stars for eternity.



2. What are the two reasons why Yakov left home at the end of the parsha?

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## STORIES OF OUR CHACHAMIM

### Rav Yeshaya Bardaki

It was a terribly sad day in the year 1827. The wife of Rav Yeshaya Bardaki and mother of his two small children had just passed away after a sudden illness. The young boy and his older sister felt a deep void in their lives, and nothing Rav Yeshaya did could alleviate their pain or mitigate their sadness. After much deliberation, he decided that the best thing to do was to start anew.

He would take his two children and leave Pinsk, to go to Eretz Yisrael. There, he hoped, he would be able to rebuild his life and give his children the chance to experience the joy they had shared in the past.

Rav Yeshaya was a Gadol b'Torah and a pillar of the Pinsk community. The news of his planned departure was met with a mix of sadness and joy: sadness that they would be losing a great Torah giant, but joy that he and his two children would have a chance to begin their lives anew.

Shortly after Pesach, the big day arrived; the family packed up their meagre belongings and prepared for the long journey.

They travelled from town to town, staying in inns or in people's homes as they slowly made their way toward their final destination.

Rav Yeshaya would put his children to sleep every night by telling them stories about the heavenly city of Yerushalayim.

Finally, after a few months, they were about to begin the final leg of their journey.

They had reached the city of Beirut, Lebanon, just north of Eretz Yisrael. They were ready to take a boat from there to the port city of Acco, where they hoped to arrive right before Succot.

As Rav Yeshaya reached the port, he saw a group of men loading a ship with wood to take to Acco in order to build a house for a wealthy gentleman who lived there. Rav Yeshaya was anxious to board that boat, but the gruff men were not interested in

taking along any extra passengers and baggage. Rav Yeshaya reached down into his pocket, pulled out the last of his money, and gave it to the men in the hope that it was enough to convince them to change their minds. It was. And so, they boarded the ship destined for Acco, eagerly anticipating their arrival in the Holy Land. The trip was not supposed to be a long one. But as soon as they set sail, the sky darkened, the winds picked up, and a storm began to rock the ship.

Rav Yeshaya davened that everything should turn out well. The sailors were quite concerned, but then, just as quickly as the storm had begun, it disappeared. All in the boat were grateful, especially Rav Yeshaya, who thanked Hashem for allowing them all to continue safely. His children, who had endured so much adversity in their young lives, handled the tough conditions with the maturity of those many years their senior.

The ship was now scheduled to reach its destination a few days later than originally planned, so it was obvious that they would still be on board when Succot began. The men on the ship graciously offered Rav Yeshaya some of the wood they were carrying so that he could build a temporary Succah. This generosity on the part of the rough sailors made Rav Yeshaya realize that although he had not yet arrived in Eretz Yisrael, the Hand of Hashem was guiding and protecting him.

The next day, the winds picked up once again and the ship tossed and turned, hurling them from one side of the deck to the other. The sky grew dark; the storm that was brewing seemed to be much more treacherous than the first one. The thunder cracked and bursts of lightning lit up the sky. The sails fluttered wildly in the air, as the ship struggled to stay a float.

Suddenly, someone screamed, "Land! Land!" The land, though visible, was still a few thousand feet away. The enormous waves carried the boat high in the air, and then came crashing down violently, flooding the deck. Rav Yeshaya held onto his two small children, davening that they had not come this far for naught. Some of the sailors jumped into the sea, hoping they could swim for it, but Rav Yeshaya was unable to do so with his two small children. There was no way they would be able to make it. Then all of a sudden, a tremendous noise ripped through the air; the ship had broken in two! Rav Yeshaya fell into the ocean, holding onto his children with all of his strength. The ferocious, violent waves threatened to drown them. He tried his utmost to hold onto them, but his grasp was slipping. He looked at his children, each one holding onto one of his arms as

their heads kept dipping under the water try as he might, he could not prevail. He felt himself being pulled down. He wanted, more than anything he had ever wanted, not to let go. But he couldn't! "Please! Hashem, help me!" And then there was darkness and silence. The sun beat down on him and he squinted to block it from view. When he finally managed to open his eyes, Rav Yeshaya looked around and reality set in. He had made it. He was alive! But what about the children?! He looked down along the shore and saw his son's body lying there. He picked him up; after a few frightening moments, the little boy coughed up some water and opened his eyes. He was alive! Rav Yeshaya then thought about his daughter and began to cry bitterly. All of a sudden, he noticed a form lying farther down the shore. He ran over there and saw that it was his daughter's lifeless body.

With a feeling of dread he bent down to pick her up, a sickening feeling rising up from his stomach. But just as had happened with his son, she began to cough! She too was alive!

It was a miracle!

A short while later she explained what had happened. The two children had somehow managed to grab hold of one of the pieces of wood from the Succah on the ship, and had floated on it to the shore.

Rav Yeshaya held onto both of his children and looked up to Shamayim. How could he ever thank Hashem?! He made his way to the centre of town where the townspeople welcomed him and helped him get settled.

Soon after, he travelled to Yerushalayim, settled there, and became one of their most prestigious Rabbanim.

He was zocheh to live there with his children and grandchildren for the rest of his life.

Reflecting on this incredible episode, Rav Yeshaya Bardaki saw in it a lesson of great significance. He compared it to times when people feel that they are drowning, when life has overwhelmed them and they feel that they can't hold on, or perhaps don't deserve to continue because they have failed the Almighty. That is when they must cry out, "Hashem, please don't let go of me." And He will never let go.

He is our Father, of course, and the compassion He has for each and every one of us supersedes what we may deserve. When He sees our fear and the need we have to hold onto Him, He will not let go of us. Not today, not tomorrow, not ever!



3. In Parshas Toldos it brings at length the episode of Yitzchok digging up three wells. Why?

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1. Twins represents the idea of partners who work together. The mazal for the month of Sivan is Teumim, twins, and represents unity as seen in that month when there is the giving of the Torah. The partnership here should have been like Yissocher and Zevulun with Esav working in this physical world to help support Yakov with his spiritual pursuits.
2. Yakov left as instructed by his father to go and look for a wife. However, the reason why his mother wanted him to go away was because she was scared that Esav would try and kill him for taking away his brochos.
3. The Ramban (26:20) explains that the Torah is hiding an allusion to the two Botei Mikdoshim that were destroyed by the other nations while the third alludes to the future Beis Hamikdash where there will no longer be any interference with by the other nations, may it be speedily built in our days.

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