

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Toldot:*** **Genesis 27:30 - 28:9**
 Haftarah: **Malachi 2:1-7**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 9:14-26**

Who, then, is he who has taken venison, and brought it me?

[Genesis 27:33]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 107:31-43;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #3, *S'lach* [The Prayer for Forgiveness]

*Vayehi ka'asher kilah Yitzchak l'varech et-Ya'akov – And in came to pass when Yitzchak completed his blessing of Ya'akov ... **vayehi ach yatzo yatza Ya'akov me'et penei Yitzchak aviv** – and as Ya'akov went out from the presence of his father Yitzchak ... **v'Esav achiv ba mitze'ido** - Esav his brother returned from his hunt **Genesis 27:30.***

Esav was not a man of letters, of thoughtfulness, or of clever speech. He did not spend time meditating on the 'meaning of life' or the 'calling' or 'grand plan' of the Creator of the Universe. He lived for the thrill of the hunt and the lure of the prey. What motivated him in his woodsy endeavors was not the prospect of 'food'; no, he had endless stores of that at his disposal. His father owned vast herds and flocks. The land over which the Holy One had given his family stewardship responsibility was a land of milk and honey, producing bumper crop after bumper crop of nutritious grains, choice nuts, and a luscious cornucopia of fruits including figs, grapes, pomegranates, dates, and olives. So Esav's excursions in the wilderness were never about sustenance. What drove him to the rugged, wooded hillsides time after time was never physical hunger; it was the feeling of raw power that the *chase and kill* afforded him. This 'rush' was what Esav lived for. He was no 'brother's keeper'. He was no faithful servant. He saw himself as accountable to neither man nor 'God'. He had zero curiosity about the Mysterious Invisible Being to whom his father and mother had tried to teach him to pray. He had no interest whatever in personally knowing that Being, in walking in His ways, in marveling at His wisdom, in meditating on His awe-inspiring messages of 'Thunderspeak', or in even considering, much less doing, His will. The only altar at which Esav worshipped was the altar of pleasure, and the only deity before whom he would ever bow was the god of 'self'.

But let's look deeper at this young man. Because Esav was oblivious to spirituality, fear of the Holy One, or *emunah*, he was tragically incapable of experiencing

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shalom. Cast adrift on a raging sea of *ra* [evil], *shachat* [corruption], *chamas* [violence], he became hyper-sensual, over-sensitive, and ultra-sentimental. A willing victim of every stimulus, every distraction, every momentary setback, every problematic situation, he could neither think of nor care about anything other than [a] himself, and [b] how whatever was happening around him made him ‘feel’. This meant he could neither see nuance, conceive of eternity, judge objectively, give an ounce of ‘grace’, or show an inkling of mercy. Everything to him was ‘black’ or ‘white’ – depending on the emotions, sensual sensations, sentiments and/or hormone releases it evoked in him. He always reacted emotionally instead of rationally and responsibly. He wore his heart on his sleeve. When he got offended - which, for the above stated reasons, was often - everyone within earshot soon knew it. When he got angry, everyone in his sphere of influence immediately felt it. When he saw something he wanted, he felt entitled to it, so he just took it. This did not just apply to wild game, chattels, and inanimate objects, but also to local women – starting with *Yudit* and *Basemat*. See **Genesis 26:34 and 28:9**.

Meanwhile, look yonder – another majestic creature has fallen under the hand of the mightiest hunter the world has known since Nimrod. A pool of red, red blood spilled out on the ground like lentil soup. The stench of death fills the air. Vultures circle overhead. Soon a hastily field-dressed carcass will lie draped over the back of Esav’s donkey. It looks to be a *venison-prime-rib-and-father’s-affirmation* kind of night! And look at the young man smiling to himself, thinking: *Wait until you see THIS, Little Brother - you scroll-reading, soup-eating, birthright-obsessed loser! This is MY hour! Watch me shine ... and choke on my dust!* Clearly Esav has no clue what has just transpired in Yitzchak’s tent. But he is about to find out.

Mi Atah? [i.e. *Who are You?*]

Esav knew how his father liked his venison. He knew it had to be koshered, seasoned, and cooked just right – and he therefore knew that he had a lot of work to do before he could eat. This was a special night, and everything had to be perfect. He hung the buck’s carcass to get as much blood as possible to drain out. While it was dripping he ran to gather the spices his father had taught him to use when seasoning wild game. He selected and sharpened a limb from a nearby oak tree to use as a roasting spit. Then he returned to the buck, butchered it, and selected choice cuts for the meal. He laid out those cuts carefully, liberally sprinkling them with Dead Sea salt to begin the koshering process. That process would take around an hour, so once he got it started, he turned his attention to building the fire and arranging the coals for a thorough roast. He drew water from the spring, then gave the meat he was going to serve his father three baths to be sure he had removed all salt and blood. Then he rubbed the meat with his father’s preferred blend of spices, skewered it, and positioned it perfectly above the coals.

Then he just had to sit and watch – and turn; shift position, watch – and turn; shift position, watch – and turn . . . until the meat was done the way Yitzchak liked it! It was quite an ordeal – but, he mused to himself, this time it was going to be *well worth it!* At one point he thought he saw Ya’akov come out of Yitzchak’s tent dressed up like some kind of cave man. He shook his head. His brother was one strange bird, that was for sure! Nothing he did surprised – or particularly interested – Esav anymore. He smiled to himself. This night was not going to be about the younger brother; it was going to be all about the elder one!

Choices, Actions, and Consequences

In today’s aliyah we see the consequences - or at least the immediate aftershocks - of the ruse Rivkah and Ya’akov have executed. Rivkah, of course, had grown up with a master in the dark arts of deception – i.e. her older brother Laban. As she was growing up in household with him, she probably fell victim to his deceptive words and ways many times. She undoubtedly carried the memory – and the insult - of every such deception in her heart.

And now Rivkah felt – rightly or wrongly - that she was about to lose control of her family situation. Old wounds of the heart began to resurface. Old fears began to take over. Familiar old voices began to whisper to her: “*You had better do something!*” So, driven by her panic over the sense of losing control she resorted, for the first and only time in Torah’s narrative, to the kind of dirty tricks she learned early in life, in her father’s household. In a seriously *Labanesque* moment she devised an elaborate undercover operation. She had Ya’akov dress up in Esav’s clothing and pretend to be Esav, while she disguised the meat of two choice goat kids as a dish of wild game. Her scheme was pure evil genius – and it *worked perfectly*. Ya’akov, all dressed up, smelled and felt just like Esav. To a man thinking about much more important things, Rivkah’s doctored goat meat smelled and tasted more than enough like venison. So Yitzchak played the role of the ‘mark’ to a tee. Hence when the smoke had cleared, Yitzchak had indeed imparted to Ya’akov the blessing of the firstborn – pretty much exactly as Rivkah had planned. The wounded one who never got over the wounds of her father’s house had inflicted some wounds of her own. The pattern of manipulation through deception – and the wounds that flow from that pattern - will carry forth to another household and another generation. And the events of the day will send *shock waves* through the family – and indeed through the world - that *reverberate still*.

Please, take the heart wounds of your childhood, of your past, and of your present to the Holy One. Please lay them at His Feet. And ask Him to take away the pain and scar tissue and give you healing and forgiveness in its place.

***There is Nothing Concealed that Will Not Be Revealed;
Nothing Hidden that Will Not Be Made Known***

I am sure Esav was flushed with excitement and anticipation as he stepped into his father's tent with the sumptuous tray for two in hand. Here is how Torah records it for us:

Vayehi ka'asher kilah Yitzchak l'varech et-Ya'akov

Yitzchak had finished blessing Ya'akov,

vayehi ach yatzo yatza Ya'akov me'et p'nei Yitzchak aviv

and Ya'akov had just left his father Yitzchak,

v'Esav achiv ba mitze'ido

when his brother Esav came back from his hunt.

Vaya'as gam-hu mat'amim vayave l'aviv

He had also prepared a delicacy and brought it to his father

vayomer l'aviv yakum avi veyochal mitze'id beno ba'avur

'Let my father get up and eat his son's venison,'

tevarachani naf'seicha

he said, 'so that your soul may bless me.'

[Genesis 27:30-31]

Esav's hopes and expectations are however about to be smashed to tiny little pieces. Yitzchak had already eaten his fill – and, more importantly, he had already spoken forth the blessing he intended for this night. He was blind, but he was not senile. He poignantly asked, therefore: ***Mi-atah*** – i.e. *who are you?* Careful now, Esav – there may be a *lot more to that question* than you may realize. What if your father knows your *name*, but is asking you *who you really are at the core of your being?* What if he is asking you not only how you are going to choose to behave in this potentially future-shaping, identity-defining moment – but also *what kind and quality of mark you will leave on the world each time you face a difficult circumstance in life?*

Any suggestion of a deeper question flew right over Esav's head. He had, long ago, proven to be a willing slave to *appetite and emotion, sensuality, sentimentality, and pseudo-intellectualism*. He only lived for the moment, for the feeling, for the chase, and for the kill. He had no time for deep thought. He did not have the least bit of interest in pondering what impact his words or actions might have on other people or Creation. He had no concept of the Creator's Grand Plan of Redemption for mankind as a species, bloodline by bloodline and household by household, and for the Restoration of Creation to its originally intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*, acre by acre, hillside by hillside, valley by valley, and village by village. He had no sense of Covenantal Responsibility. He answered his

father's poignant *mi atah* question with just the bare facts as he saw them: *Ani bincha b'choreicha Esav* – i.e. *I am your first-born son, Esav*. It is interesting that Esav claimed first-born son status now, since up to that point in life he had *despised* [Hebrew, *baza* – to hold in contempt/show contempt for; trample underfoot as useless] firstborn status and everything –the entire battery of spiritual leadership practices, kinsman-redemption duties, example-setting obligations, asset management responsibilities, long-term family-planning disciplines, and covenantal accountability protocols – of which *bechorah* consists. Torah tells us:

Vayecheirad Yitzchak charadah g'dolah ad-me'od

Yitzchak was seized with a violent fit of trembling

vayomer mi-efo hu ha-tzad-tza'id vayave li

And he said: 'Who . . .where....is he who trapped game and served it to me?

va'ochal mikol beterem tavo v'avarachehu

I ate it all before you came and I blessed him

gam-baruch yihyeh

The blessing was, is, and will be.

[Genesis 27:32-33]

The last words of this quotation are the critical words for the night – *gam-baruch yihyeh* - the blessing was, is, and will be. These words pierced Esav's heart. Never being one to subordinate his over-active fleshly emotions to the harness of humility or wisdom, he immediately flew into a rage. As Torah puts it:

Kish'mo'a Esav et-divrei aviv

When Esau heard his father's words,

vayitz'ak tze'akah g'dolah umarah ...

he let out a most loud and bitter scream....

YA'AKOV!!!!!!!!!!!!

Esav was inconsolable. His screams pierced the night. Every time his brother's name came out of his mouth it sounded less and less like a name, and more like a foul demonic curse. Esav shouted that curse over and over again, with such hate, that it bounced off the surrounding hills and set off a great echo effect. The reverberations flew like sharp arrows through Yitzchak's heart. They sent shockwaves through Rivkah's soul. They set off a landslide in Ya'akov's spirit. Time seemed to stand still. The heavens and the earth seemed to cringe and shrink back in the face of Esav's rage.

Ya'akov has outmaneuvered his bigger, stronger, meaner older brother Esav once again. This time the prize obtained was Yitzchak's *beracha* [blessing] – with all its material and interfamilial 'perks'. So ... what does that mean *for Esav*? This is his moment in the crucible. He can choose to accept what has happened – and his own

part of the responsibility for it - and move on ... or he can choose to hold onto the anger and offense, let outrage take over the reins of his heart like Kayin did, and make a difficult situation that cannot be undone ten thousand times worse than it already is. Esav, like many today, chose the latter course of action. He made the choice to forever *live by the sword* and to follow the ‘*sulk, rant, wreak havoc*’, and ‘*make my wrath felt*’ pattern of darkness-enshrouded men.

Vayomer Esav belibo yik'reivu yemei evel avi

He said to himself, 'The days of mourning for my father will be here soon.

v'ahargah et-Ya'akov achi

I will then be able to kill² my brother Ya'akov.'

Premeditated murder? A second dose of the Kayin/Hevel disaster? A foretaste of what Yosef's brothers will plot and scheme about doing to him? Why not? If it feels good ... or seems ‘fair’ ... well, you see how this all ends, don't you?

Esav's choice to eschew a ‘more excellent way’ in favor of going with the outrage flow, gnashing his teeth, and rattling his saber, was, of course, something the Holy One's will could, albeit reluctantly, accommodate. That is the 'other side' of the beautiful gift of 'free will'. The Holy One is not wringing His Hands. In His Patience and His Wisdom, He is completely confident that even this unfortunate and dangerous choice of Esav can be used, over the course of centuries, for redemptive purposes. He knows He can find a way to actually tie this poor choice of a man into the Grand Divine plan to redeem mankind and restore Creation to its intended Edenic state. But in the meantime, *what about the very real human emotions and relationships that have just been traumatized? What about Yitzchak's pain? What about Esav's rage? What about Rivkah's guilt? What about Ya'akov's conscience? Are we to turn up our noses and console ourselves saying: “Esav didn't deserve the blessing - he got what was coming to him for despising and selling the **bechorah** [birthright] for a bowl of watered-down red beans, and for consorting with pagan women steeped in idolatry, among other misbehavior!” Or, because Rivkah and Ya'akov are beloved to us - like family - can we blindly justify their deeds, saying - the Holy One had not yet given the Torah, and there was no prohibition of lying, stealing, dishonoring parents, etc. Or can we justify Ya'akov's actions, saying “he was only following his mother's orders - shouldn't he honor his mother?” No. We know the “end” never justifies the “means”, and that *there is no way - however the end result seems “right” to us - to justify the deception planned by Rivkah or practiced by Ya'akov.* We sense that what was done by Rivkah and by Ya'akov in yesterday's aliyah was blatantly evil, *with or**

² The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as ‘kill’ is **harag**, *hey, resh, gimel*, Strong's Hebrew word #2026. The action pictured by this verb is the same word used by Torah to describe what Kayin did to Hevel in the field. It means to intentionally bring about a death, such as a hunter does to his prey.

without Torah as a guideline, a violation of all basic principles of right and wrong: a deed of the deepest kind of darkness known to man. We recognize it as *the way of the serpent in the garden*.

Let's call it what it was - it was *chet* - a missing of the mark. It was a significant deviation from the *derek* [pathway, lifestyle, footsteps] of the Holy One. And what is more, Ya'akov knew that fact full well, and even told his mother that if his father realized what was going on, he would curse him, not bless him. **Genesis 27:1-12.**

Rivkah knew it was not a *sh'ma* response to the Holy One's Ways as well, and hence she replied, "*let the curse fall upon me.*" **Genesis 27:13.** And that being the case, we can predict - if we understand even a little of the spiritual principles upon which the Creation is based - that the result of Rivkah and Ya'akov's great 'sting' operation will not be near as "sweet" as Rivkah and Ya'akov think. We can predict as well that the "curse" - of *sin*, not of "the law" - will indeed fall upon Rivkah - bruising Ya'akov and everyone else in the family as it descends. And so it does, beginning with today's aliyah. Let us look at the consequences through the eyes of each of the "players". In so doing, let us not forget that the consequences were not confined to those individuals - but to their generations for centuries to come.

The Curse Falls Upon Rivkah Indeed

First of all, let's look at the author of the deceitful scheme - Rivkah. How did she reap a harvest of evil consequences? From the Torah itself we know that her household was ripped apart, and Ya'akov, the very son she doted upon, was immediately separated from her. And as it turned out, due to the deception of her brother Lavan she would never see Ya'akov again in her lifetime! She would die before Ya'akov was able to return from exile in Charan. Not only did she lose the son she idolized (I do not use that term flippantly), the biggest problem she had prior to the event - the constant drama caused by the two Cheti women Esav had brought into the camp as 'wives' - became compounded, as Esav took yet a third pagan woman into his household for her to deal with. **Genesis 28:9.**

But if we might look beyond what Torah specifically tells us just for a moment (not for spiritual revelation, but merely for practical insight into the consequences of sin), let us consider, and ponder, what effect this deception by Rivkah had upon her relationships -

[a] with Yitzchak, her husband, whom she so rudely deceived. How long do you think it took to restore trust to that relationship?

[b] with Esav, her own son, whom she unflinchingly defrauded and brought to grief. How do you think Esav reacted on a personal level? How could she face him?

[c] with Ya'akov, whom she caused to sin against his father and his brother?
and

[d] with the Holy One, whom she did not trust enough to perform His word - given to her when she was pregnant with these children - that the elder would serve the younger.

Falsehood and deception, treachery and betrayal, indeed have their consequences. And we are only beginning to explore those consequences.

The Effect on/Consequences For Yitzchak

Secondly, let us look at Yitzchak - the “mark” or “*dupe*” of the deception. Torah tells us that when Esav came to him, and he realized that he had been deceived by his wife and his youngest son, he “trembled violently”. The depth of the meaning of that phrase is lost upon us in translation into English. It would be more accurate, though still insufficient, in today’s English vocabulary, to say that Yitzchak was “devastated”, or “crushed”. The Hebrew word is *charad*³. It is the same word that Torah will later use to describe the response of Mount Sinai to the Manifestation of the *Sh'kinah* Presence of the Holy One. Exodus 19:16 says it ‘trembled’.

Now try to picture all that occurred on Mount Sinai, at the sound of the great shofar, happening *inside Yitzchak's body*. Yitzchak's world was, in those moments, violently *ripped apart*. It was as though an earthquake had struck his soul and spirit, and a great chasm opened up within him. The Hebrew sages say he looked into that chasm and saw - and smelled *Gehinnom* – i.e. the great lake of fire that the Holy One has reserved for the unrepentant wicked ones of earth.

What Yitzchak actually saw in that moment we do not know for sure - but whatever he experienced was so traumatic that it still breaks the heart of every husband and every father four millennia later. And beyond the gaping wound in Yitzchak's heart caused by the betrayal of his wife and youngest son, and the anguished cries of his eldest son who had been defrauded, we see that Yitzchak had to deal with the same problems that Rivkah did - separation from Ya'akov for at least 20 years, and the legacy of hostility and hatred between his sons for the last years of his life.

The Effect on/Consequences for Esav

Thirdly, let us look at Esav - the *victim* of the deception. It was he who was 0—or at least felt - defrauded. And it was not his birthright (which he had sold for porridge long ago) that was at stake here - it was *his father's blessing* – representing the place of *favor in his father's eyes*.

³ Charad is *chet, resh, dalet*. Strong's Hebrew word #2729, it is pronounced *khaw-rawd*.

We do not much dwell on Esav, for he is not a particularly likeable character, and his nature is revealed in Torah as base, materialistic, fleshly, emotionally dysfunctional, and anti-spiritual. But he is *not a monster*. He is of Yitzchak and Rivkah's DNA – so there *is tremendous potential* for greatness in him. There are *seeds of goodness* in him. And whatever sins Esav has committed – or will commit in the future - they cannot be said to justify un-necessary infliction of pain *at the hands of his own mother and brother*.

The Effect on/Consequences for Ya'akov

Finally, let us look at Ya'akov, the deceiver himself. What did he gain, Beloved? What did he *get*? He indeed got a “blessing” - but it was *a blessing he personally would never be able to enjoy*. What did he *lose*? He lost his *father's trust*. He *forfeited any real hope of positive influence on, or even peaceful co-existence with, his brother*. He *lost his home*. Indeed, as a direct and immediate consequence of what he did he had to run away from the only home he had ever known, and go into exile into the household of one of the most vile and inherently evil men to which Torah introduces us - Lavan, the deceiver of deceivers. Torah records:

Vayishlach Yitzchak et-Ya'akov vayelech Padenah Aram

Yitzchak then sent Ya'akov on his way. [Ya'akov] headed toward Paddan Aram,

el-Lavan ben-Betu'el ha-Arami achi Rivkah em Ya'akov v'Esav

to Lavan son of Betuel the Aramean, the brother of Rivkah, Ya'akov and Esav's mother.

[Genesis 28:5]

Ya'akov was to be exiled from his home, his family, and the land of Kena'an. He would never in his life *see his mother's face* or *hear her voice* ever again. He would also not see his father again for over 20 years. He would never be effectively reconciled with his brother - and there would be enmity between his descendants and his brothers' descendants forever. Ah, sin's consequences can be very, very ugly – even in this world.

The Hard Lessons to Be Learned

Departing from the Way of the Holy One to get what our fickle flesh thinks it wants or deserves is never “worth it”. But because the kindness and mercy of the Holy One leads to repentance, the ugliness of sin and its consequences *does not have to be the end of the story*. The end of the story can – and should - always be *the discovery of the mercy and grace of the Holy One*. The end of the story should always be *the forgiveness of God, after repentance and, where possible, the making of restitution*. The end of this story, you see, is the un-alterable, eternal reality that God is always going to be faithful to his covenant with Avraham, no matter how badly his descendants stray from the *derech [i.e. way, path]* of the Holy One. Sin will indeed have horrible consequences that will traumatize you and

everyone you love. But there is a Healer, a Redeemer. There is a God Who loves and pursues His beloved relentlessly. There is a Great Creator Who brings forth ultimate good from even our worst mistakes. I will sing of His love forever!

We are not told how Rivkah made peace with Yitzchak, Esav, and the Holy One, and received forgiveness. But somehow, in our hearts, we believe, at least we hope, she did. We *are* told, in great detail, in the next few parshot, of how the Holy One lovingly, but relentlessly, chastened Ya'akov, and pursued him until he could but surrender to His love, and the destiny of a man, and a people, who would be named *Israel*.

So *weep*, Dear Reader. Weep for the Rivkah within you, for the Yitzchak within you, and for the Ya'akov within you. Weep also for the Esav within you. And quickly run to the Healer, and *be healed*. Return to the Amidah Prayer referenced above (Petition No. 3, the Petition for Forgiveness) one more time. Israel calls his children. *Sh'ma*, Yisrael.

The Final Blessing

The shockwaves are still rumbling from what happened in yesterday's aliyah. But do not let the shockwaves distract you from the most important aspect of parsha *Toldot*. The truth is that *the most important blessing Yitzchak gave was not stolen*. The blessing that really mattered was not obtained by *trickery* or *deceit*. The truly important blessing was not given to a Ya'akov dressed up in Esav's clothing. The truly important blessing was given by Yitzchak after the truth about what had transpired was fully and completely known. The truly important blessing was given *despite the horrible sin in which Ya'akov had participated*. This is proof positive that the really important blessings of life have always come only through *chanan* – the covenantal substance that we, in English, have come to call God's 'grace'.

Read with me the way in which Torah records Yitzchak's *final blessing* – as he sends his incorrigible younger son off to Paddan-Aram to find a wife:

V'El Shaddai yevareich otcha

Any may God Almighty bless you,

v'yafreicha v'yarbeicha

and make you fruitful, and increase your numbers.

v'hayita l'k'hal amim

And may you become an assembly of nations.

V'yiten-lecha et-birkat Avraham lecha ul'zar'acha itach

And may He entrust [in stewardship] Avraham's blessing to you and your descendants,

L'rishteicha et-eretz megureicha

so that you will take over the land where you previously lived only as a foreigner.'

asher-natan Elohim l'Avraham

which God entrusted [in stewardship] to Abraham.

Now **that** is *a blessing!* And such a blessing is never bestowed upon someone wearing someone else's clothing. Take off the *disguises*. Take off the *masks*. Cast away *the false senses of identity* in which you have thought you had to dress yourself to get what you wanted out of life. Accept *who the Holy One created you to be*. Arise, and walk in the fullness of the blessing ordained for you. It is time to *embrace your true identity, your true mission, and your true destiny*.

Questions For Today's Study

1. After Yitzchak blessed Ya'akov, thinking him to be Esav, Esav returned with his game and enters Yitzchak's chambers only to find Ya'akov had *beat him to the punch*.

[A] In verse 33 Yitzchak is said to have 'trembled very exceedingly'. In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the word translated as 'trembled'. Write the Hebrew word and its meaning.

[B] Why do you think Yitzchak 'trembled very exceedingly'.

[C] Why do you think Yitzchak did not, once he knew the truth, revoke the blessing given to Ya'akov and give it to Esav, or make Ya'akov convey the blessing he had received to Esav?

[D] In verse 35 it is said that Ya'akov came with '*subtlety*' [KJV]. In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew word so translated. Write the Hebrew word and its meaning.

[E] In verse 36 Esav refers back to the transaction where Ya'akov acquired the *bechorah* [birthright]. How does Esav characterize that transaction? Do you agree with his characterization?

2. In verses 39 - 40 of chapter 27 *Yitzchak* [Isaac] gives to *Esav* [Esau] a ***beracha*** [blessing] which is subordinate to the ***beracha*** he has already given to Ya'akov [Jacob].

[A] Where was Esav's [Edom's] dwelling to be?

[C] By what would Esav [Edom] live? What does this mean?

[C] Who would Esav [Edom] serve?

[D] What would cause Esav [Edom] to rebel? What does this mean?

3. Esav's response to the receipt of a subordinate *beracha* was anything but respectful of the Holy One's will.

[A] What attitude did Esav have?

[B] What did Esav plan to do?

[C] When did Esav intend to carry out his plan and why do you think he chose to wait?

[D] What was Rivkah's plan to prevent Esav from killing Ya'akov?

[E] Why do you think Rivkah did not tell Yitzchak her real reason for wanting to send Ya'akov to Paddan-Aram? What reason did she give?

4. This week's parsha concludes with the aftermath of the final *beracha* of Ya'akov by Yitzchak - the *beracha* of the *bechorah* [right of covenant succession] of the son of Avraham, which would affect the 'toldot' [generations] of the earth forever.

[A] What did Yitzchak instruct Ya'akov not to do?

[B] To what land and to whose home did Yitzchak direct Ya'akov to go?

[C] What was Ya'akov to do there?

[D] Verses 3-4 contain the impartation to Ya'akov of the *bechorah* of Yitzchak, son of Avraham, friend of God. List the things which are mentioned here as part of that birthright.

[E] What was Esav's response to the news of Ya'akov's departure? What do you think was his motivation?

5. Do you see any prophetic applications of this week's parsha, *Toldot*, in/to your life? in/to modern Israel? in/to modern America? in/to the world? Meditate on this, and explain.

6. In today's Haftarah the Holy One spells out in certain terms a 'last warning' to the sons Aharon concerning their priesthood. If they will not *sh'ma*, they will fall under a curse that will result in the discontinuance (at least for the duration of the "times of the Gentiles") of the priesthood of Aharon in dishonor.

Now, you Kohanim, this mitzvah is for you. If you will not sh'ma, and if you will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name," says the Holy One of Hosts, then will I send the curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart.

Behold, I will rebuke your seed, and will spread dung on your faces, even the dung of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it.

You will know that I have sent this mitzvah to you, that my covenant may be with Levi," says the Holy One of Hosts.

"My covenant was with him of life and shalom; and I gave them to him who he might be reverent toward me; and he was reverent toward me, and stood in awe of my Name.

The torah of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips. He walked with me in shalom and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity.

For the Kohen's lips should keep knowledge,

**and they should seek the Torah at his mouth;
for he is the messenger of the Holy One of Hosts.**

[A] What is the first and primary obligation of the Aharonic priest [see v. 2]?

[B] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the word translated as 'curse' in verse 2. Write the Hebrew word and describe the Hebraic word picture it presents.

[C] What do you think it means that the Holy One was going to 'curse the blessings' of the Aharonic priests? What were the 'blessings' of the Aharonic priests (see v. 5)? If these were 'cursed', what would be the effect?

[D] What are the defining characteristics of a true priesthood of the Holy One (see verses 5-7)?

[E] The lips of a *kohen* should '*preserve knowledge*' [NIV]. In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the words translated:

- "preserve" [Strong's #8104, *sh'mar*, pronounced *shaw-mar*'], and

- "knowledge" [Strong's #1847, *da'at*, pronounced *dah'-at*].

Write the Hebrew words, in Hebrew letters, with their vowel markings, and describe the Hebraic word pictures these words present. Then write in your own words what it means that '*the lips of a kohen*' ought to preserve knowledge.

[F] 'From [the mouth of a *kohen*] men should seek *instruction*' [NIV]. In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the word translated '*instruction*' [Strong's #s 8451 and 8452, *torah*, pronounced *to-rah*']. Write the Hebrew word in Hebrew letters with vowel markings, seek out the verb root, and then describe the Hebraic word picture presented. Finally, now that you have an understanding of the Hebraic word picture being presented, write in your own words what it means that men should seek '*instruction*' from the mouth of a true *kohen* [priest].

[G] [A true *kohen*] is the '*messenger of the Holy One*' [NIV]. In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the word translated "*messenger*" [Strong's # 4397, *malak*, pronounced *mal-awk*']. Write the Hebrew word in Hebrew letters with vowel markings, seek out the verb root, and then describe the Hebraic word picture presented. Finally, now that you have an understanding of the Hebraic word picture being presented, write in your own words what it means that a true *kohen* is a '*messenger*' of the Holy One.

7. The Holy One mentions in today's haftarah aliyah that He has established a *covenant* [Hebrew, *b'rit*] with Levi.

[A] When was this *b'rit* with Levi established? Cite the passage of Torah where this occurred, AND describe the circumstances which brought the covenant into existence.

[B] What were/are the terms of the Holy One's *b'rit* with Levi?

[C] Do you think the *b'rit* with Levi has been revoked by the Holy One?

[D] Do you think there is any possibility the Holy One's *b'rit* with Levi will be restored? If so, when and how, and what will it involve?

[E] When AND how was the Aharonic priesthood discontinued/ interrupted?

[F] Why do you think the Holy One allowed this [the events which resulted in the discontinuance/interruption of the Aharonic priesthood] to happen?

[G] Read Hebrews 7:23-26. How is Yeshua the *kohen* after the order of Melchi-tzedek different from the *kohanim* of the time of the prophet Malachi? Make a list of the ways Y'shua's priesthood surpasses the Aharonic priesthood in excellence, even at its best.

[H] What in your opinion was/is the divine purpose of the Aharonic priesthood in God's plan of redemption for mankind?

8. In today's final reading from the apostolic Scriptures in conjunction with our study of parsha *Toldot* Shaul speaks of the mystery of the *sovereignty* of the Holy One. The word "sovereignty" is, of course, an English word meaning *supreme power*, as manifested by the *absolute freedom from outside restraint or control*. God's *sovereignty* means He does not have to do what *we* want, or what *we* think is "righteous" or beneficial. He does not have to choose to bless who we want Him to bless, heal who we want Him to heal, or punish who we want Him to punish. It is He who decides.

Because the Holy One is sovereign, He is not subject to our manipulation [if He was, that would be *witchcraft*—which, after all, is merely *human manipulation of the supernatural/Divine*. He oftentimes *forgives those we cannot forgive*, and *condemns those we would excuse*. He oft-times blesses *abundantly those we secretly wish He would curse*, and *curses horribly those we wish He would bless*. But the Holy One is not a whimsical madman. He exercises His supreme power [sovereignty] according to a *Divine Plan*, formulated with *supreme wisdom*.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with the Holy One?

May it never be! For he said to Moshe, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of the Holy One who has mercy.

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I caused you to be raised up, that I might show in you my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the eretz."

So then, he has mercy on whom he desires, and he hardens whom he desires.

You will say then to me, "Why does he still find fault? For who withstands his will?"

But indeed O man, who are you to reply against the Holy One?

Will the thing formed ask him who formed it "Why did you make me like this?"

Or hasn't the potter a right over the clay,

from the same lump to make one part a vessel for honor, and another for dishonor?

What if the Holy One, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known,

endured with much patience vessels of wrath made for destruction,

and that he might make known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy,

*which he prepared beforehand for glory,
us, whom he also called, not from the Y'hudim only, but also from the Goyim?
As he says also in Hoshea, "I will call them 'my people,' which were not my people;
And her 'beloved,' who was not beloved."
"It will be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'
There they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"*

[A] What is Shaul's point in Romans 9:14-26?

[B] What is the root of the sin human beings so often engage in of judging between people who is and is not worthy of being blessed?

Good Sabbath to all!

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 107:31-43

*Let the Holy One be praised for his lovingkindness, for his wonderful works
for the children of men! Let the Holy One be exalted also in the assembly of the people,
and may He be praised in the seat of the Zakenim.*

*He turns rivers into a desert, water springs into a thirsty ground,
And a fruitful land into a salt waste, for the wickedness of those who dwell in it.
Yet, He turns a desert into a pool of water, and a dry land into water springs.
There he makes the hungry live, that they may prepare a city to live in,
Sow fields, plant vineyards, and reap the fruits of increase. He blesses them also,
so that they are multiplied greatly. He doesn't allow their cattle to decrease.*

*When His people are again diminished and bowed down through oppression, trouble,
and sorrow, He pours contempt on princes, and causes them to wander in a trackless waste.
Yet he lifts the needy out of their affliction, and increases their families like a flock.
The upright will see it, and be glad. All the wicked will shut their mouths.*

***Whoever is wise will pay attention to these things.
They will consider the lovingkindnesses of the Holy One.***