SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 4 Kislev 5787, corresponding to November 14, 2026.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 93 Hz) (p. 140 S) (p. 121 Hi) (p. 124 AS)
TOLDOT תולדות
Genesis 25:19
[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis]

1. 25:19. After the Torah tells us of the total number of children that Avraham fathered, it then tells us of the offspring of Yishmael. Now it continues with the offspring of Yitzchak. The first verse adds the clause Avraham begot Yitzchak, a repetition of the beginning statement. Rashi makes two comments. One is that only after Hashem changes Avram's name to Avraham was he able to father Yitzchak. The second Midrashic comment was to answer the scoffers who doubted that all of a sudden Avraham was able to have a son, who looked like him. They were suggesting that Sarah became pregnant when Avimelech took her. Here, the Torah was negating that theory by making Yitzchak look clearly like his father, Avraham.

2. Allow me to add my own thoughts on this question. The Torah was giving us a headline for this entire Parshah. Avraham not only was Yitzchak's father, he was the influence in his life. In fact, everything that Yitzchak did was a reflection of what his father did before him. Midrashically, Yitzchak also conducted an open home, feeding many guests and trying to introduce them to monotheism. In the text, every where he went, he told the locals that his wife was his sister. Where his father dug a well, Yitzchak dug a well in the same place. When a famine struck, he wanted to go to Egypt as his father did, but Hashem told him not to. He created a similar peace treaty with Avimelech, just as his father had done a generation before. The only thing he did not do was to expel Esav, and he should have.

3. When Rivkah experienced difficulty in her pregnancy, she went out to Shem, Noach's son, to get insight as to why this was happening. She did not go to her husband or to her father-in-law. Not every prophet was given direct and total news. Neither Yitzchak nor Avraham were privileged to hear Hashem's version of what was happening. As such, Rivkah figured that if Hashem did not reveal to them what's going on, neither should she. This is similar to what we note in the future. Yitzchak knew that Yosef did not die, but he withheld the news from Yaakov because since Hashem did not inform Yaakov, then so should he. Not every prophetic vision is supposed to become public knowledge.

4. When Avimelech approached Yitzchak to make a peace treaty, at first Yitzchak was apprehensive because as Yitzchak said: you hate me. At first Avimelech did treat Yitzchak with respect and honor, but this was only because he was Avraham's son. Avraham had proven himself as a Baal Chessed, a generous and kind person. He was also a valiant warrior and a true leader. Yitzchak had not proven himself at all. But now, Avimelech said: we see that Hashem is with you. This changed their view of Yitzchak entirely. Now Avimelech could rightfully say: let's make a deal.

5. The Netziv wrote a novel insight on last week's Parshah, which we see in this week's reading. When Rivkah first sees Yitzchak, she covers her face with a veil. This veil represented a barrier which existed in their marriage for their entire marriage. Rivkah could never communicate with her husband in major matters. Sarah did tell her husband Avraham that the future of their people is not from Yishmael; only through Yitzchak. Rivkah could not tell her husband in straight definitive terms that their future is not through Esav; it is only through Yaakov. She could not do it. Even at the end of the Parshah, Rivkah could not tell her husband that Esav wanted to kill Yaakov. Instead she told him that Yaakov should go to Charan to get a wife. She could tell him the entire story.

6. It seems that Yitzchak's only desire was to bless his firstborn son, his Bechor, and no other son. Yaakov on the other hand, had the desire to bless all his sons before he died. Yitzchak had no idea that Esav had sold his Birthright to Yaakov. The Torah even said explicitly that "Esav despised the Birthright." But Esav never acknowledged that sale. Maybe he felt that he sold it only because he was starving to death. It was under duress. Esav did desire his father's blessing. He did love his father. But not his mother. Clearly this was a disfunctional family. And the family broke up at this stage. Yaakov moved to Charan. Esav moved to Seir. Yitzchak was blind. Rivkah never saw her Yaakov ever again. A very sad picture.

7. Yaakov probably would want to leave his house. When Sarah told her husband to expel Hagar and Yishmael, Avraham didn't want to listen, but Hashem instructed Avraham to listen to her. And Avraham cleaned his house from any form of impurity. When Yitzchak aged, he never expelled Esav from the home. In fact, Esav lived in the house with his idol

worshipping wives. They lived with Yitzchak and Rivkah, not a very good situation. So did Yaakov really want to continue living in a home environment that was filled with pure and righteous parents, but with extreme impurity provided by his evil and dishonest brother. Hashem had created this environment on purpose to create a new and improved Yaakov.

8. Esav was a courageous man, a man of action and daring. He created a world around him that reflected his desires in life. Yaakov was a studious person, seemingly introverted, and learned. Yitzchak saw and wished that they could compliment each other's strengths and lead a huge combined nation. But the voice of Yaakov could not possibly exist with the actions of an Esav. Yitzchak's dream was not realistic for this world!

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT TOLDOT 5787

I. From the Text
1. How old was Yitzchak when he married Rivkah? (25:20)
2. What did Esav do for a living? (25:27)
3. What did Yaakov give Esav for the birthright? (25:34)
4. Where did Yitzchak wish to go when there was a famine in Canaan? (26:2)
5. Whose idea was it for Yaakov to pose as Esav to get Yitzchak's Berachah? (27:6…)

II. From Rashi
6. Why does the Torah relate Rivkah's brother and father by name? We already know her and her family. (25:20)
7. The Torah states that when Yitzchak aged, "his eyes dimmed from seeing." (27:1)
Rashi wrote 3 interpretations as to why Yitzchak's eyes were "dimmed." What were they?
8. Why did Yitzchak want TWO goats? (27:9)
9. How did Rivkah know that Esav planned to kill Yaakov? (27:43)
10. How old was Esav when he married Yishmael's daughter? (28:9)

III. From the Rabbis
11. Yitzchak dug wells and the Philistines plugged them up. What history lesson is the Torah teaching us? (Ramban)
12. How was it possible for Yitzchak to bless both sons with wealth? ( Ramban)
13. When did Yaakov see his mother again after he left town to get a wife?

IV. Midrash
14. How old was Esav when he died?

V. Haftorah
15. What ultimately happened to the descendants of Esav?

VI. Relationships
16.
a) Nevayot - Esav. (2 answers)
b) Yishmael -Yaakov
c) Nachor - Rivkah
d) Avraham - Lavan
e) Esav - Reuven

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT TOLDOT 5787

1. Yitzchak was 40 years old.
2. He was a hunter.
3. Bread and lentil stew.
4. To Egypt, like his father.
5. Rivkah's idea.
6. To praise her. She was righteous even though her brother and father were wicked.
7. 1) His eyes were injured from the smoke of Esav's wives' idol worship.
2) When Yitzchak was at the Akeidah, the tears of the angels fell into his eyes. 3) Hashem did this to enable Yaakov to get his father's blessing.
8. It was Pesach. One goat was for the Pesach sacrifice. The other goat was for dinner.
9. Through Divine Inspiration.
10. 63 years old.
11. Each well symbolized a Holy Temple. The first Temples were destroyed. The third well was allowed to continue. So too will the third Holy Temple.
12. Yitzchak's blessing of wealth to Yaakov was only in Eretz Yisrael.
13. He never saw his mother ever again.
14. According to the Midrash, Esav tried to stop Yaakov's funeral. He was then killed by a great nephew. Since he was the same age as Yaakov, therefore he was 147.
15. They will be destroyed.

16.
a) First Cousins, Brother in law
b) Uncle Yishmael
c) Grandfather Nachor
d) Great Uncle Avraham
e) Uncle Esav