

**Toldot** Generations The Peaceful Patriarch L-rd's Table

**Torah:** Genesis 25:19-28:9

**Haftarah:** Malachi 1:1-2:7

**Brit Chadashah:** Romans 9:1-13

Reading: Tehillot (Luke 1:46-53;68-75)& Ps. 36 Jewish Hero: Maccabees. Carrier Mike Taber

Isaac is the patriarch we are told the least about, even if he is the one who lived the longest. We discover that Rebekah was also sterile and only conceived after 20 years of marriage. She conceived twins: Esau, who was born covered in red fur like hair and Jacob, who was born clutching his twin's heel. His name meant seizing by the heel, or deceiving.

There is a big time lapse and we are shown the boys temperaments. Esau, the hunter was his father's favorite, while the gentler Jacob was his mother's favorite. Before returning to more details about the life of Isaac, we are immediately introduced to the story of Esau selling his birth right for a serving of red lentils. This is where he gets his second name Edom from because it means red. There are likely no witnesses to the oath which Esau swore and it is also likely that he had no intention of honoring it.

The account only mentions one encounter between Isaac and the L-rd and because Isaac obeys the L-rd and does not go down into Egypt, during a second famine, the Abrahamic blessing is bestowed on him. He copies his father's bad behavior and has his wife pretend to be his sister when he dwells among the Philistines. The area around Gaza is a place where there is usually an abundance of rainfall and after the Philistine king sees them "sporting" (which is likely a euphemism for making out), he forbids any of his people to touch Rebekah.

During his sojourn among the Philistines, Isaac greatly increases in wealth and the Philistines grew envious of him and as he begins to move out of their territory, he digs again the wells which Abraham had dug and which the Philistines had filled in. He moves three times before the Philistines leave him alone, then he finally settles at Beersheba and his servants dig a well of fresh water.

The Philistines come to meet with him and they swear an oath of peace with Isaac, which is why he called the new well, the well of the oath (Beersheba).

Esau's lack of character is again shown when he takes two Hittite women as wives. He is beginning to assimilate into the Canaanite culture and it is likely that these ladies began introducing pagan customs into the camp.

There is another time lapse and the blind, aging Isaac wants to bless his eldest son before he dies. Esau should have told his father about the deal he made with his brother and we see that he now has no intention of honoring it. He is the one who is stealing the blessing, not Jacob. His mother apparently knows all about the deal and while Esau is out hunting some game for his father to eat (Oaths and blessing were often accompanied by a ritual meal), she dresses Jacob in his brother's clothing and puts goat skins of his hand and around his neck.

She prepares some goat meat the way Isaac likes it – it would taste more like wild game than lamb or beef and sends Jacob in to serve it.

Just in case Isaac sees through the ruse and curses her son, she agrees to absorb any curse herself. Isaac asks his son who he is and Jacob tells him that he is Esau, because the blessing Isaac is going to give Esau, really belongs to him. He is not in fact Esau, but in terms of the blessing, he has taken Esau's place. If he had told his father the truth, Esau might have denied it or Isaac may have refused to honour the agreement, because it remained his right to bestow the blessing. Jacob has to steal that which rightly belongs to him.

Isaac is convinced that he is blessing Esau and bestows a tenfold rendition of the Abrahamic blessing which was irrevocable. When Esau returns and Isaac finds out the truth, Esau comes clean and laments that Jacob has not only taken his birthright, but his blessing as well, even though they are one in the same. Isaac bestows a reduced five fold blessing on Esau and Esau makes plans to kill his younger brother once their father has passed on.

If he had killed his younger brother, he would have been executed and Rebekah does not want to lose both of her sons in a single day. She concocts a plan to send Jacob away until Esau's anger has cooled. She says she could not stand the arrival of any more pagan wives, so she wants Isaac to send Jacob to get a wife from among her father's people.

Isaac sends for Jacob and confirms that he now the bearer of the covenant promises. Jacob is being sent to procure a wife from Paddam Aram, which was were Rebekah's family lives. When Esau tries to correct the problem of his disobedience in taking Hittite wives, he only makes matters worse by marrying a daughter of Ishmael. We see that Isaac, not Ishmael is blessed and now Esau follows in Ishmael's footsteps. He does not demonstrate the same kind of character which his twin has.

The Haftarah portion repeats the comparison between Jacob and Esau and uses it to condemn the people who are cheating G-d in their offerings. We learn that many of the priests are at least complicit in this attempted robbery because they received these defective offerings from the people's hands. Three times in this passage, it says that G-d's name is exalted among the nations and by inference this means that it is not being exalted among His people.

In describing His judgment on the unfaithful priests, He says that he will throw the excrement of the defective offerings in the priests' faces. The passage ends with a seven fold description of an authentic priestly mandate, which is built around their obedience to His Word as special envoys of G-d to His people.

The Brit Chadashah portion begins by pointing out the seven fold blessing of Israel, which has not been transferred to the Gentile church, nor has the Gentile church replaced Israel. Paul again uses the comparison between Jacob and Esau to point out that not all the children of Israel are children of the promise, even though this is still their intended destiny. Esau forsook his destiny as do all those of the House of Israel who do not acknowledge the Messiah of promise. G-d is still at work in their lives and His blessing and protection will follow them until they finally come to faith in their true King and Messiah.

There are never any permanent roadblocks in the plans and purposes of G-d. We are either part of His plan or we are passed over by others who will accept His plans.

### **Sermon: The Joy of Trials**

**Passage:** *“My brethren, consider it as a subject of complete joy when you are exposed*

***diverse trials. You know that the trial of your faith produces patience and patience must perfectly complete its work so that you may be perfect and accomplished, without lacking in anything.***” (James 1: 2-4)

Too many believers fall into a double trap when they encounter trials. First they feel that believers who walk with the Messiah will not encounter trials and when they see those who are going through these troublesome experiences, they assume that these unfortunate ones must be doing something wrong and are being punished for it. Job's friends also adopted this false perspective, as did many of King David's carnal detractors.

Trials and tribulations are gifts from the L-rd even if we do not really want to experience them. I am spending a lot of time and energy reaching out to find a new place for us to hang our hats and there seems to be a considerable resistance to this noble endeavor. We have been happy at St. Timothy's and while it is not a perfect venue it has more than met our needs over the last several years.

I am not looking forward to the effort we will have to make to settle into a new place, but I am looking forward to how the L-rd will guide us and provide us through the whole process – and I am meeting some very wonderful people who worship in some pretty awesome locations.

Why does James say we should consider it a subject of complete joy when we encounter diverse trials? Well, let me say first that all believers who walk with the L-rd will frequently encounter trials and none of those who walk according to His Word will be exempt from them. He is not asking us to adopt a kind of personal masochism, were we are to take please in our pain and the pain of those around us.

Pain is not pleasant and James is not encouraging us to somehow find it pleasant. What he is asking is that we consider it a subject of complete joy when we encounter diverse trials because of the great, positive impact these difficulties will enrich our lives with. We still need to pray to be delivered from trials and they are not experiences we should be actively seeking to encounter.

He is also saying that we cannot avoid having to go through these times of difficulties and instead of whining and asking G-d why He has forsaken us and is allowing us to be tossed to and fro by the slings of outrageous fortune, we need to embrace them as special messengers of His love.

How are they special messengers of His love? They are kind of like a spiritual workout program that we are being taken through to make us stronger and more able to walk closely with our Saviour. Years ago, I tried out a Nautilus training session and was pushed so hard, that I had to run to washroom and throw up. I was told that this kind of program puts more stress and tension on your muscles that a nasty torture session. The torture is designed to break us and defeat us, whereas the Nautilus training is geared to building us up and making us stronger.

Without training, we would some become lax and cease to be in good spiritual shape. While training is not always pleasant, it is essential, if we want to stay in good spiritual shape. Trials also show us that G-d is bigger than any problems which we can encounter and He will let nothing destroy us or defeat us as we learn to trust Him even when the going gets tough. He will both turn us into those who are more than conquerors and will always provide a way of escape when we feel cornered or overwhelmed. David was frequently pursued by his enemies,

but in the L-rd, he was always one step ahead of them, even when he was betrayed by those whom he considered his friends. Sometimes we will encounter people who have no real business being our enemies, but who will target us for destruction out of spite or a carnal hatred we have done nothing to deserve.

Instead of following suit, we need to be determined to adopt a spiritual response to all and any carnal attacks because the weapons of our warfare are spiritual and we need to always be cultivating the fruit of the Spirit. We need to avoid carnal weapons and make sure that none of the works of the flesh are growing in any part of our lives or in how we respond to injustices which are perpetrated against us. Our calling is to take the high road and to aggressively turn the other cheek as we uphold G-d's word and refuse to wander away from its requirements.

We need to allow the L-rd to use trials and tribulations to teach us patience and even perseverance, because, unfortunately these two unwanted gifts will always be a part of our lives when we walk with the L-rd. We are never told that we will float up to glory on a cloud of ease and we can never name it nor claim it as if we were in charge of the traffic which comes our way on our journey to our Father's home in glory. Prosperity preachers falsely claim that you can live a life free of trials and walk as if you were living in Never Never Land and not going through deep valleys and having to climb high mountains as we walk the straight and narrow in everything we encounter in our lives.

Once you see how strong you are when the L-rd brings trials into your life, you can look forward to other challenges which you know He will also empower you to deal with. It is like you are working up beyond your initial your weight division as you grow more spiritual muscles and learn more spiritual strategies. Instead of cringing in a corner, dreading what comes your way, you can strike out boldly into the middle of the ring and loudly proclaim: bring it on and is that the worst that you have?

There will be times of rest and lots of time to heal and to recuperate between trials, but the only way which patience and perseverance can do their work is in subsequent trials where the lessons and the strength we have acquired can be put to good use. He does not want our weaknesses to dominate our lives, He wants us to be perfectly equipped and very able to handle everything and anything which comes our way.

He will rarely tell us what is coming down the pipe, but we need to be fully persuaded that whatever it is, He will make us more than conquerors time after time after time. A set back is just a blessing in disguise and the immeasurable weight of heavenly blessings will make even the deepest valley and the most heartbreaking loss seem minuscule in G-d's grand scheme of things.

Life will always have a measure of unpredictability and the speed with which we are able to adapt will guarantee that we live to fight another day, even when we have to beat any number of strategic withdrawals. Do you see your life as a series of disasters and failures or as an amazing epic where His grace has continually overcome anything in its path?

We all are called to grow in the L-rd and part of this growing will always require that we encounter a series of any number of trials and tribulations as par for the course. Those who have ceased to encounter trials and tribulations are either already deceased and resting in death or they have somehow stopped walking with the L-rd.

These trials and tribulations can take the form of sickness, or financial step backs. They may even come at us as we see our friends and family forsake us for no good reason. We may often suffer loss through no fault of our own and with the Apostle Paul be considered evil trouble makers, when we stand up for the truth of His Word and refused to be bullied into silence or submission.

As our society progressively secularizes, our faith and our spiritual morality will be increasingly called into question as we are both demonized for our faith and marginalized because of what we stand for. The LGBT lobby is an increasingly powerful political force and there are few politicians who are brave enough to take a stand against this abomination which is now protected by law.

I am glad that there is a growing resistance to the murder of babies in their mother's womb, but we are a long way from home free. During the last couple of centuries the enemy of our souls has been actively pursuing a two pronged attack on our faith. In the 1800's evolution reared its ugly head and the truth of G-d's Word lost the allegiance of the popular mind of the common people. A veritable ground swell of support for this stupid lie gradually pushed our creationist views to near extinction, but the truth remains the truth, no matter how many people cease to believe it our come up with tons of lies to try and overthrow it.

Next, beginning in the early 1900's, our morality was next. The sanctity of marriage was challenged as well are our grasp of heterosexuality, which is the only form of sexuality which is acceptable to G-d. Two horrible world wars scared many generations of people and necessary laws like capital punishment got lost in the shuffle. A mother's womb became a battle ground where more babies were murdered than those who were allowed to finish developing in their mother's womb.

One of the crooked results of this slaughter is that now we are called an aging society because fewer babies are being born and more of the survivors are living longer and longer lives. Most advanced societies have a negative growth rate where there are more people dying than there are being born to replace them. How is the slack being taken up? Replacement of the murdered babies come more and more from Muslim and Hindu countries and Canada is filling up with persons of colour. As a fellow immigrant to this great land, I welcome our friends from around the world. It is not their fault that half of Canadian pregnancies are terminated by the murder which is what abortion is. It is also not their fault that we are also moving towards assisted suicide and euthanizing seniors who we feel have outlived their usefulness.

Even though no one clearly understands how homosexuality develops apart from trauma and abuse, this mental illness is now a right that has been written into our charter of rights and freedoms. Religious people are more and more being considered as a danger to society and they do not want us to instill our faith into the children, which our society feels belong more to them than they do to their own parents. They are being increasingly brainwashed to mock religious faith and to adopt the rigid agenda of politically correct lies.

First our faith was attacked and even considered overthrown by many in our society. It is seen as a thing of the past which we should have grown out of along with our belief in Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy. Biblical faith is now seen as a myth on par with the legends of the Romans and the foolish gods of the Scandinavians. Anybody who dares to seriously challenge evolution is seen as the worst kind of heretic trying to spread a disease our society wants no part of of.

The enemy of our souls did a good, thorough job of undermining our society's belief in the supernatural G-d of the Bible. We have been driven from the universities and from most of the seminaries and both our intelligence and our sanity are challenged whenever we make a stand for what the Bible teaches.

In the midst of this confusion, he began to take serious aim at all and any moral positions which were derived from the Bible. What was once considered bitter, is now considered sweet and what was considered darkness, is now considered light. In the grand scheme of things, nothing has changed, it is just that more and more people are being blinded by the lies of the enemy. Instead of fighting against racial prejudice and promoting people's human rights, we are now fighting for gay rights and a woman's right to kill the life which is growing in her womb. We protect murderers and rapists and punish people who should be protected.

Pedophiles are winning over the right to abuse preadolescent children by lowering the age of consent even below sixteen years old and I have heard there is a move afoot to legalize people having sex with animals. We are turning into a combination of Sodom and Gomorrah and the dark world in the days of Noah, where the righteous core of truth speakers and light seekers had completely disappeared from among the nations of our world.

It is the work of the enemy and he will always do his best to make our lives increasingly difficult as he spreads his influence over all the nations and generations of mankind before the coming of the glorious kingdom of our blessed Messiah.

So, as our lives fill up with more trials and tribulations, instead of wondering where the L-rd is in all of this, we need to ask how He would have us respond on all of this. While He is still the L-rd who rules over the entire universe, the question remains whether we are going to let Him rule and reign in our lives as the appalling darkness grows and intensifies around us. Are you letting Him be the L-rd over your private universe, or are you letting the lies of the enemy rob you of both your faith and your spiritual morality?

Unwanted pregnancies are not an excuse to murder babies in their mother's womb. Being abused and even raped is not an excuse for encouraging the practice of homosexual behavior. And if the truth be told, there are more homosexuals who refuse to indulge in that heinous lifestyle than there are those who have given in to it. We may not see the return of capital punishment in our lifetime, but we need to keep sentencing criminals to jail and not let them run rampant, murdering, stealing and raping at will.

We need to count it all joy when we encounter diverse trials because G-d will use them to make us stronger as we remain more than conquerors in our dark and dying world. What trials are you letting G-d use to make you stronger? He has never left us and will never forsake us. Shabbat shalom and Shavua Tov, mishpocah.