11-14-26 Message to Roeh Israel – *Toldot* (generations)
Torah Portion; Genesis 25:19-28:9
Haftarah: 1 Sam 20:18-42
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Rev 14:17-20

A Time for Choosing –Yacov or Esav

Central question of this message: Since the decision is for life or death, in which camp will you stand?

We are in *Toldot*. The generations of Yitzhak. It takes its name from the 5th word in the English and the second word in the original Hebrew.

Gen 25:19-21

> 19 Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. 21 And Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

19 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן־ אַבְרָהָם
And these are the generations of Isaac, son: Abraham's
428 9999 8435 3327 1121 85

אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־ יִצְחָק׃
Abraham begat Isaac:
85 3205 853 3327

20 וַיְהִי יִצְחָק בֶּן־ אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקַחְתּוֹ אֶת־
And was Isaac old forty years when he took
1961 3327 1121 705 8141 3947 853

רִבְקָה בַּת־ בְּתוּאֵל הָאֲרַמִּי מִפַּדַּן אֲרָם
Rebekah the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian, of Padan-aram,
7259 1323 1328 761 6307

אֲחוֹת לָבָן הָאֲרַמִּי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה׃
the sister to Laban the Syrian. to wife,
269 3837 761 802 3807a

Gen 25:22-26

22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. 23 And the Lord said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb;
And two peoples shall be separated from your body;

> And one people shall be stronger than the other;
> And the older shall serve the younger."
>
> 24 When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25 Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. 26 And afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

It is pretty clear from the passage that Rebekah was concerned regarding all the activity going on inside her, and she thought something must be going wrong. The L-rd told her that what she was experiencing was indeed not normal. Normally, twins inside the womb "get along" with one another. The space can be crowded, but somewhat peaceful.

But in this case the twins were clearly not monozygotic.[1] Their dramatically different physical characteristics were clear even from birth. And what is also rather clear is that they not only didn't share identical genetics, they didn't share identical temperaments. These two boys were apparently hostile to one another inside their mother – giving her considerable pain. And they would be hostile to one another after the birth

[1]Monozygotic twins, commonly referred to as identical twins, are formed when a single fertilized egg (zygote) splits into two embryos. This results in two individuals who share nearly identical genetic material.

as well, since G-d told her they wouldn't even live at peace in the same lands, thus: "Two nations are in your womb."

And clearly there will be some sort of struggle for dominance throughout history with the two clans that these boys will establish. Rav. Hirsch, in his commentary on Torah suggests a different interpretation of the Hebrew which is often rendered as, "And the older shall serve the younger." He says:

> רב never means the elder, but always: great in number and power. In the end it will be seen that the one who had seemed to be the mightier, who had fought only for lower purposes, the material, had in reality been working for the other, had really prepared the victory for him, and will finally submit to him. The representative of the spiritual and moral comes out of this struggle as the ultimate victor, and the representative of might and force is not destroyed, but at the end finds his own purpose served in submitting and devoting himself to the principles of the other.

Later, as an adult, Yacov was digging wells in the margins of the lands to water the flocks. Then he went to Beer-sheva ("well of seven") and something amazing happened to him there.

Gen 26:23-25

> 23 Then he went up from there to Beersheba. 24 And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said,
>
> > "I am the God of your father Abraham;
> > Do not fear, for I am with you.
> > I will bless you, and multiply your descendants,
> > For the sake of My servant Abraham."
>
> 25 So he built an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

So, now we already have two pronouncements directly from the L-rd. One to Rivkah and the other to Yacov that Yacov is the holder of the family line, and not Esav.

Then we see that Esav takes action to distance himself from the family. This decision will have far-reaching consequences.

Gen 26:34-35

> 34 And when Esau was forty years old, he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; 35 and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Why didn't Yitzhak do for his son Esav what Abraham had done for him? We don't know. He didn't send his servant to find a bride from his own people.

We also don't know whether Esav just got tired of waiting for his father Yitzhak to do something, but during his 40th year, Esav went and got his own bride. In fact, he got two of them. Maybe he wanted to double the insult to his father.

Now let's focus on the intentions of Yitzhak to bless his sons. It seems that we can discern from the passage that Yitzhak may have had two different blessings in mind for his boys.

Since we know that Yitzhak thought he was blessing Esav, we know what he intended to say, a blessing for wealth and power:

Gen 27:27-29

27 So he [Yacov] came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said,

"See, the smell of my son
Is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed;

Here comes the blessing part:

28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And an abundance of grain and new wine;
29 May peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you;
Be master of your brothers,
And may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be those who curse you,
And blessed be those who bless you."

Did Esav ever receive any blessing from his father? Yes, but this time it would prove more accurate, given the evil inclination of Esav.

Gen 27:39-40

"Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,
And away from the dew of heaven from above.
40 "And by your sword you shall live,
And your brother you shall serve;
But it shall come about when you become restless,
That you shall break his yoke from your neck."

Since we know that Esav eventually became Edom (lit. “red”), and since we know that Israel and Edom have been enemies from the beginning, it seems this blessing is proved to be quite true.

The final sentence in this passage has been the subject of much debate among our people. The analysis I find most satisfying is given by Chaim ibn Attar. [2]

> Alternately, the meaning could be that even when Esau dominates the rest of the world, his dominion will not extend over Jacob (the Jewish people) except inasmuch as he will not be dominated by Jacob. He himself will not dominate Jacob. There would be a stand-off between Israel and Edom.

[2] Chaim ibn Attar or Ḥayyim ben Moshe ibn Attar c. 1696 – 7 July 1743 is also known as the Or ha-Ḥayyim after his popular commentary on the Torah. He is arguably considered to be one of the most prominent Rabbis of Morocco.

We see a further blessing from Yitzhak to Yacov was delivered later.

Gen 28:1-5

> 28 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

And here comes the blessing part:

> 3 And may God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. 4 May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."

I find it sadly quite common that the normative church wishes to slander Yacov as a deceiver and schemer. They even say his name means “deceiver.” It does not. It means “one grasping the heel.” I believe that errant theology is borne from antisemitism.

In truth, the blessing of the firstborn was always Yacov's from before his birth, because G-d said it was to be that way.

And if that isn't enough, Esav despised his father's faith and his heritage that he sold his "birthright" – which he didn't even really have – for a bowl of soup.

And when Yitzhak was preparing to defy not only G-d, but the laws of sale and purchase, Rivkah devised a method of making things right so that G-d's will would not be violated by her husband.

If Yacov had not impersonated Esav, would G-d have struck Yitzhak dead for the violation? I don't know, but he at least would have struck him dumb so that he not deliver that erroneous blessing. Either way, Rivkah and Yacov actually caused Yitzhak to do what was correct in the eyes of G-d. So, is the deception that was carried out then sinful… or righteous?

Let's focus upon the struggle between nations, as predicted by G-d to Rivkah.

Nations have boundaries against one another. This means that these two boys will not live together in peace. They will separate, they will strive

with one another, and so will all those who follow after the separate paths that each shall take. Esav will become powerful and rule most of the world, but at the end, the greater Esav shall serve the lessor Israel.

These boys are figureheads for two very different groups of people. Esav is the father of those who rejected not only their worldly birthright, but also their spiritual birthright. These people groups are those who were once called Romans. These are the people who now, more each day, choose Islam and declare Allah to be "greater"… than the One true G-d.

Here, in the "two peoples" statement we see a deep theological point. One people will choose G-d, His Torah, His righteousness, His salvation (Yeshua).

The other people will not choose G-d, His Torah, His righteousness, nor his Yeshua. I don't think it a small thing that the Hebrew word for "hairy" is a close cousin to the word for "demonic".

Remember, they struggled in the womb? They struggle today. Yacov is became the father of the Hebrew people – a mixed multitude of people who worship the One true G-d.

Esav became the father of Edom and the Roman empire. Edomites, also called Idumeans, are even to this day hostile to Israel. Antipater the Idumean was the progenitor of Herod the Great, who ruled Israel with a cruel hand under Roman authority.

Esav, you recall from Gen 28:7, married a daughter of Ishmael, now combining that lineage in him as well. So, Esav is the father of the mixed multitude which today practices Islam.

Some have called Esav the father of modern Christianity as well, because of its traditional ties to Rome, its hostility to Israel as the homeland of Hebrews, the fact that one of its greatest heroes – Martin Luther – was the architect of a body of theology quickly adopted – sometimes almost word for word – by Hitler and the SS so as to justify the extermination of the Hebrews. But beyond that, the church even today stands apart from Yacov by its persistent rejection of G-d's Torah.

Num 15:37-41

> 37 The Lord also spoke to Moses, saying, 38 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tzitzit on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tzitzit of each

corner a cord of techeles. 39 And it shall constitute tzitzit for you to look at and **remember all the commandments of the Lord, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, 40 in order that you may remember to do all My commandments, and be holy to your God.**

The answer to the question that some believers have, being, "How should I be holy to G-d" is found in this verse. "Remember to do all My commandments." It is the heart of dedication to G-d that loves to do what G-d has determined in His infinite wisdom to be best for us. And it is in the doing of what He has commanded that separates us from those who will remain far from the Throne when the kingdom of G-d comes in its fullness.

Matt 5:17-20

17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law [Torah] or the Prophets [Neveim]; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law [Torah], until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments [of Torah],

and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them [Torah], he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

How will this struggle between Israel and Rome/Islam play out? First of all, Israel will be fully restored to the Land.

Ezek 37:24-28

24 "And My servant David[3] will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd[4]; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes[5], and observe them. 25 "And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. 26 "And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply

[3] Refers to the Messiah Son of David, sitting on His throne.
[4] Yeshua referred to Himself as the "good shepherd."
[5] Clear reference to two of the categories of commands in Torah

them, and will set My sanctuary[6] in their midst forever. 27 "My dwelling place also will be with them[7]; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. 28 "And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever."""

But will the nations who follow the pattern of Esav then accept the kingship of Yeshua and be bound by His commandments (Torah)?

G-d invites those who oppose Him to come near, to engage in battle.

Isa 45:20-25

20 "Gather yourselves and come;
Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations;
They have no knowledge,
Who carry about their wooden idol,
And pray to a god who cannot save.
21 "Declare and set forth your case;
Indeed, let them consult together.
Who has announced this from of old?
Who has long since declared it?

[6] This is the Ezekiel Temple.
[7] G-d will once again inhabit His Temple.

Is it not I, the Lord?
And there is no other God besides Me,
A righteous God and a Savior;
There is none except Me.
22 "Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is no other.
23 "I have sworn by Myself,
The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness
And will not turn back,
That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.
24 "They will say of Me, 'Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.'
Men will come to Him,
And all who were angry at Him shall be put to shame.
25 "In the Lord all the offspring of Israel
Will be justified, and will glory."

And they do come, as a swarm covers the earth.

Ezek 38:10-23

10 'Thus says the Lord God, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil plan, 11 and you will say,' I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls, and having no bars or gates, 12 to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.' 13 "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all its villages, will say to you, 'Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?""

14 "Therefore, prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord God," On that day when My people Israel are living securely, will you not know it? 15 "And you will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army; 16 and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It will come about in the last days that I shall bring you against My land, in

order that the nations may know Me when I shall be sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog."

17 'Thus says the Lord God, "Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you against them? 18 "And it will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," declares the Lord God, "that My fury will mount up in My anger. 19 "And in My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. 20 "And the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground. 21 "And I shall call for a sword against him on all My mountains," declares the Lord God. "Every man's sword will be against his brother. 22 "And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone. 23 "And I shall magnify

> Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the Lord.'"

The invading army will get to the outskirts of Jerusalem, but at that point, it will be completely destroyed.

Rev 14:17-20

> 17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." 19 And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

Then, after their destruction, we must cleanse the land of all the dead.

Ezek 39:7-16

7 "And My holy name I shall make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I shall not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. 8 "Behold, it is coming and it shall be done," declares the Lord God. "That is the day of which I have spoken.

9 "Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out, and make fires with the weapons and burn them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears and for seven years they will make fires of them. 10 "And they will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forests, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them, and seize the plunder of those who plundered them," declares the Lord God.

11 "And it will come about on that day that I shall give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off the passers-by. So they will bury Gog there with all his multitude, and they will call it the valley of Hamon-gog. 12 "For seven months the house

of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. 13 "Even all the people of the land will bury them; and it will be to their renown on the day that I glorify Myself," declares the Lord God. 14 "And they will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land, burying those who were passing through, even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. 15 "And as those who pass through the land pass through and anyone sees a man's bone, then he will set up a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. 16 "And even the name of the city will be Hamonah. So they will cleanse the land.'"

We stand at a fork in the spiritual road. It is time for choosing. This world is growing darker by the day. As the lines between these two opposing camps becomes sharper and sharper, it is my prayer that the normative church will join the camp of Yacov in full measure, and quit trying to keep one foot in the world of darkness and one foot in the world of light.

Every one of us must decide where we stand. We might try to preserve our life, and in doing so we lose it. Or we can pick up our cross and follow Him, laying down our life. In doing so, we will find it safely in His hand.