

Toldot

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

**Ceaser**

# Toldot

## Genesis 25:19-28:9 Overview

- Isaac marries Rebecca. After twenty childless years their prayers are answered and Rebecca conceives. She experiences a difficult pregnancy as the "children struggle inside her"; G-d tells her that "there are two nations in your womb," and that the younger will prevail over the elder.
- Esau emerges first; Jacob is born clutching Esau's heel. Esau grows up to be "a cunning hunter, a man of the field"; Jacob is "a wholesome man," a dweller in the tents of learning. Isaac favors Esau; Rebecca loves Jacob. Returning exhausted and hungry from the hunt one day, Esau sells his birthright (his rights as the firstborn) to Jacob for a pot of red lentil stew.
- In Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, Isaac presents Rebecca as his sister, out of fear that he will be killed by someone coveting her beauty. He farms the land, reopens the wells dug by his father Abraham, and bores a series of his own wells: over the first two there is strife with the Philistines, but the waters of the third well are enjoyed in tranquility.



# Toldot

## Genesis 25:19-28:9 Overview

- **Esau marries two Hittite women. Isaac grows old and blind, and expresses his desire to bless Esau before he dies. While Esau goes off to hunt for his father's favorite food, Rebecca dresses Jacob in Esau's clothes, covers his arms and neck with goatskins to simulate the feel of his hairier brother, prepares a similar dish, and sends Jacob to his father. Jacob receives his fathers' blessings for "the dew of the heaven and the fat of the land" and mastery over his brother. When Esau returns and the deception is revealed, all Isaac can do for his weeping son is to predict that he will live by his sword, and that when Jacob falters, the younger brother will forfeit his supremacy over the elder.**
- **Jacob leaves home for Charan to flee Esau's wrath and to find a wife in the family of his mother's brother, Laban. Esau marries a third wife -- Machlat, the daughter of Ishmael.**



# Toldot

## Genesis 25:19-28:9

- Toldot means "offspring" and "generations"; it also means "generations" in the more general sense--that which a person generates and produces. Thus, "the toldot of Isaac" are Isaac's two sons, Jacob and Esau, as well as the deeds and achievements of Isaac--both of which are the subject of the Torah section of Toldot.
- And these are the generations of Isaac the son of Abraham-- Abraham fathered Isaac.
- And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to himself for a wife.
- But twenty years later, the couple was still childless.
- And Isaac prayed to G-d opposite his wife because she was barren, and G-d accepted his prayer, and Rebecca his wife conceived.
- Rebecca had a tumultuous pregnancy, as "the children struggled within her." When she inquired to G-d as to the meaning of this, she was told:
- Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall diverge from your belly. One nation will struggle against the other; and the elder shall serve the younger.

- *..Isaac the son of Abraham; Abraham fathered Isaac (25:19)*
- *The cynics of that generation were saying that Sarah had become pregnant from Avimelech, since she had failed to conceive in all the years she was with Abraham. What did G-d do? He formed the countenance of Isaac to resemble that of Abraham, so that all might attest that Abraham had fathered Isaac. This is the meaning of the repetitious wording of the verse: "Isaac (is certainly) the son of Abraham (since there is proof that) Abraham fathered Isaac."*
- *(Rashi)*
- *There are children who are embarrassed of their parents, and there are parents who are embarrassed by their children. With Abraham and Isaac it wasn't like that: Isaac prided himself in that he was "Isaac the son of Abraham," and Abraham prided himself in that "Abraham fathered Isaac."*
- *(Midrash Tanchuma; Midrash HaGadol)*

- *Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca ... as a wife (25:20)*
- *For three years, from the Binding of Isaac at age 37 to his marriage at age 40, Isaac was in the Garden of Eden.*
- *(Asarah Maamarot)*
  
- *Marriage is a time of increased enmeshment in the material. It is a time when one begins to engage in the most physical of human drives; it is also a time when one is forced to begin, in earnest, the business of earning a livelihood, often at the expense of loftier and more idealistic pursuits. Thus the Zohar refers to marriage as a person's second birth: first, the soul enters into the body and assumes a physical existence, then, at a later point in life, it further "descends" into the physical state by marrying.*
- *Therein lies the lesson to be derived from the fact that, prior to his marriage, Isaac spent three years in the Garden of Eden, abandoning the physical state for a wholly spiritual existence. In order to ensure the success of the most physical phase of a person's life, it must be prefaced by a period of spiritual preparation. Although the primary objective of our mission in life is the development and sanctification of the physical world, one must enter that world well equipped with the spiritual vision of the divine purpose and with the spiritual fortitude to carry it out.*
- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

- The Twins
- When it came time for her to give birth, behold, there were twins in her womb.
- The first came out red all over like a hairy mantle; and they called his name Esau ("ready-made").
- After that came out his brother, his hand holding on to Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob ("he who heels").
- The passing years only accentuated the differences between them.
- And the youths grew up, and Esau was a man who understood hunting, a man of the field, whereas Jacob was an innocent man, dwelling in tents.
- They also differed in their relationship with their parents.
- And Isaac loved Esau because [his] game was in his mouth, but Rebecca loved Jacob.

- And the children struggled within her (25:22)
- Whenever she would pass a house of prayer or house of study, Jacob would struggle to come out ... and when she passed a house of idol-worship, Esau would struggle to come out. Also, they were struggling between themselves, fighting over the inheritance of the two worlds (i.e., the material world, and the "world to come").
- (Yalkut Shimoni; Rashi)
- One nation will struggle against the other (25:23)
- They will never be equal: when one rises, the other will fall, and vice versa.
- (Rashi)

- And Jacob was an innocent man, dwelling in tents (25:27)
- The academy of Shem and the academy of Eber.
- (Midrash Rabbah)
  
- Isaac loved Esau because [his] game was in his mouth (25:28)
- Esau would deceive him with his mouth. He would inquire of him: "Father, how does one tithe salt? Father, how does one tithe straw?" And Isaac would muse: "This son of mine, how diligent he is in the fulfillment of the commandments!"
- (Midrash Tanchuma; Rashi)

- A Pot of Lentils
- One day, Esau came back from the hunt exhausted and hungry; Jacob was cooking a pot of lentils.
- And Esau said to Jacob: "Give me to swallow, I beg you, of that red pottage, for I am faint"; therefore was his name called Edom ("red").
- And Jacob said: "Sell me this day your birthright."
- And Esau said: "Behold, I am about to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?"
- And Jacob said: "Swear to me this day." He swore to him, and he sold his birthright to Jacob.
- Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way; thus Esau despised the birthright.

- *Jacob cooked pottage (25:29)*
- *That was the day on which Abraham died, and Jacob made a broth of lentils to comfort his father Isaac.*
- *Why lentils? Just as the lentil has no mouth, so is the mourner speechless... Just as the lentil is round, so mourning comes round to all the inhabitants of this world.*
- *(The Talmud)*
  
- *Esau came from the field, and he was exhausted (25:29)*
- *Esau committed five sins on that day: he dishonored a betrothed maiden, he committed a murder, he denied G-d, he denied the resurrection of the dead, and he spurned the birthright.*
- *(The Talmud)*
  
- *On that day, Esau murdered Nimrod (the king of Babel).*
- *(Midrash)*

- **Water Wars**
- **A famine forces Isaac to relocate, but G-d commands him not to leave the Holy Land and reiterates His promise that "to you and to your seed, I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath which I swore to Abraham your father."**
- **So instead of going to Egypt (as Abraham did, and Jacob will when famine strikes the Land of Canaan), Isaac settles in Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, which is within the boundaries of the Holy Land.**
- **He does, however, follow his father's example in presenting Rebecca as his sister, "lest the men of the place should kill me on account of Rebecca, because she was fair to look upon." When the local king Avimelech happens to discover that they are husband and wife, he reproaches Isaac: "What have you done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." Avimelech then warns his people: "He that touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."**

- Water Wars
- Isaac prospers in Gerar. "He had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great store of servants." He works the soil: "Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold; for G-d blessed him." So successful is he, that the previously hospitable Avimelech no longer desires his neighborship. "Go from us," he now says to Isaac, "for you have grown mightier than us."

- Water Wars
- Isaac sets himself the task of reopening the wells dug by Abraham:
- For all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them up, and filled them with earth...
- Isaac dug again the wells of water ... and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.
- Then he dug wells of his own:
- Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found there a well of living waters.

- Water Wars
- And the shepherds of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's shepherds, saying, "The water is ours"; so he named the well Esek ("strife"), because they had contended with him.
- And they dug another well, and they quarreled about it also; so he named it Sitna ("animosity").
- And he moved away from there, and he dug another well;, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehovot ("broad places"), and he said: "For now G-d has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land."
- At age forty, Esau takes two Hittite wives--Judith the daughter Be'eri and Basmat the daughter of Elon-- who were "a grief of spirit to Isaac and to Rebecca." Jacob remains an unmarried, reclusive scholar in the tents of learning.

- *And G-d appeared to him, and said: "Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the Land" (26:2)*
- *G-d said to him: "You are a burnt-offering without blemish; as a burnt offering becomes unfit if it passes out beyond the Temple enclosures, so will you become unfit if you go out of the Holy Land."*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
  
- *Isaac dug again the wells of water... and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them (26:18)*
- *Behold the humility of Isaac. A person acquires a house and gives it a name; then his son comes, adds a new part to it, and calls it by a different name. Not so Isaac: all the wells which Abraham dug and named, although they were entirely stopped by the Philistines, when Isaac redug them a second time he did not give them new names, but reinstated the names given them by his father.*
- *And what reward did he receive for this? The other Patriarchs had their names changed: Abraham was first called Abram and later Abraham; Jacob was initially called Jacob and subsequently given the name Israel. Isaac, however, was given the name "Isaac" from G-d even before his birth, and his name was not changed for all generations.*
- *(Midrash HaGadol)*

- *And he called the name of it Sitna ("animosity") (26:21)*
- *This comes to teach us that there is not a righteous man who does not have detractors.*
- *(Midrash HaBiur)*
  
- *And he dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it (26:22)*
- *The first two wells allude to the first two Temples, which the enemies of Israel destroyed. The third well represents the Third Temple which shall speedily be built, which will be established without animosity and strife; G-d will then broaden our boundaries and all nations will serve Him in unison.*
- *(Nachmanides)*

- A Scholar in Hunter's Clothes
- And it came to pass that Isaac aged, and his eyes dimmed so that he could not see; and he called Esau his eldest son, and said to him:
- "...Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death.
- "Now therefore take, I entreat you, your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and catch me some game. And make me savory foods such as I love, and bring them to me, that I may eat; so that my soul may bless you before I die."
- Rebecca overhears her husband's words to her elder son, and is determined that Jacob, not Esau, should receive Isaac's blessing. She summons Jacob and commands him to bring her "two choice kids" from the flocks, which she will prepare to resemble the "savory foods" which Esau serves his father. Jacob is to take them to Isaac before Esau returns from the hunt, and receive the blessings in his brother's stead.

- A Scholar in Hunter's Clothes
- And Jacob said to Rebecca his mother: "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man.
- "Perhaps my father will touch me, and I will appear to him as a deceiver, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."
- But Rebecca insists that he follow through with the plan. She dresses Jacob in Esau's clothes, and covers his arms and the back of his neck with the skin of the goats from which she prepared the "game" so that he should feel like his hairy brother to his blind father's hands.

- A Scholar in Hunter's Clothes
- And he came to his father, and said: "My father!"
- And he said: "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"
- And Jacob said to his father: "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you have spoken to me. Please rise, sit down and eat of my game, so that your soul will bless me."
- And Isaac said to his son: "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?"
- And he said: "Because the L-rd your G-d sent me good speed."
- The tone and content of Jacob's speech arouses Isaac's suspicions.
- And Isaac said to Jacob: "Come near, please, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not."

- A Scholar in Hunter's Clothes
- And Jacob approached Isaac his father. And he felt him, and said: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau!"
- Thus Jacob receives the blessings which Isaac intended for Esau:
- "May G-d give to you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine.
- "May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; you shall be lord over your brethren, and your mother's sons shall bow down to you.
- "Cursed be those that curse you, and blessed be those that bless you."

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- And it came to pass that Isaac aged, and his eyes dimmed (27:1)
- From the smoke of the offerings that Esau's wives burned for their idols. Another explanation is that when Isaac was bound on the altar and his father wished to slaughter him, at that moment the heavens opened and the angels wept, and their tears fell into his eyes, which caused his eyes to dim. Another explanation: this came to pass in order to enable Jacob to receive the blessings.
- (Rashi)
- Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. (27:2)
- Said Rabbi Joshua ben Korchah: When a man comes to the age of his parents at the time of their death, for five years before and five years after he must fear death. For thus did Isaac reason: If I am to attain my father's years, I am yet far short of them. But if I am to attain my mother's years, "Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death." (Isaac was 123 years old at the time; Sarah lived 127 years; Abraham, 175.)
- (Midrash Rabbah)
- I know not the day of my death (27:2)
- Seven things are concealed from man: the day of death, the day of the Redemption, the absolute truth in a judgment; also, no man knows how he will earn a livelihood, what is in his neighbor's heart, what a woman is bearing, and when the wicked State [Rome] will fall.
- (Midrash Rabbah)

- *Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man (27:11)*
- *Two men, one possessing a thick head of hair and the other bald-headed, stood near a threshing-floor. When the chaff flew into the locks of the former, it became entangled in his hair, but when it flew on to the head of the bald man, he passed his hand over his head and removed it.*
- *By the same token, the wicked Esau is polluted by sin throughout the year and has no way to achieve atonement; whereas Jacob is defiled by sin throughout the year, but has the Day of Atonement through which to procure forgiveness.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
  
- *And Rebecca took the coveted clothes of Esau...and put them on Jacob (27:15)*
- *These are the clothes which Esau coveted from Nimrod, killing him in order to take them from him.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

- *And he said: "Because the L-rd you G-d sent me good speed" (27:20)*
- *As soon as Jacob said these words, Isaac said to himself: "I know that Esau does not mention the name of the Holy One, blessed be He; since this one does mention Him, he is not Esau but Jacob." Since Jacob spoke thus, Isaac said to him: "Come near, please, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not."*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
- *The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau (27:22)*
- *"The voice is the voice of Jacob"--no prayer is effective unless the seed of Jacob has a part in it. "The hands are the hands of Esau"--no war is successful unless the seed of Esau has a share in it.*
- *(The Talmud)*

- Flight to Charan
- Esau enters his father's room just seconds after Jacob's departure, and the deception is discovered, but nothing can be done. "Your brother came with cunning," says Isaac, "and has taken away your blessing... Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; with corn and wine have I sustained him. What can I do now for you, my son?"
- And Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father." And Esau raised his voice and wept.
- But all that Isaac can offer his distraught son is a blessing that, "Your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. And you shall live by your sword, and you shall serve your brother, and it will be, when you grieve, that you will break his yoke off your neck."
- Esau is furious, and plots to kill Jacob. Rebecca hears of this, and tells Jacob that he must flee to Charan, to her brother Laban.

- Flight to Charan
- To her husband, Rebecca says that it is time that Jacob married, and she certainly does not desire that he follow the example of his brother in marrying a Hittite woman. So Isaac summons Jacob and instructs him:
- "Do not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother."
- Before he goes, Isaac has an additional series of blessings for Jacob:
- "May the Almighty G-d bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and you shall become an assembly of peoples.
- "And may He give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your seed with you, that you may inherit the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."
- Our parshah concludes by relating how Esau, seeing that his father prefers that his children marry within the family rather than with the local population, takes an additional wife--"Machlat, the daughter of Ishmael the son of Abraham, and the sister of Nevayot."

- *Esau went to Ishmael, and he took Machalat, the daughter of Ishmael the son Abraham, and the sister of Nevayot, in addition to his other wives as a wife (28:9)*
- *What is the point of identifying Machalat as "the sister of Nevayot"? Rashi explains that this is to provide us with a clue as to Jacob's age at the time of his receiving the blessings from his father. Calling her "Nevayot's sister" indicates that her marriage to Esau took place after Ishmael's death, so that her brother, rather than her father, was the one who married her off. Yet the beginning of the verse describes how Esau went to Ishmael to arrange the marriage. This means that the event occurred right at the time of Ishmael's death.*
- *We know that Ishmael was 14 years older than Isaac (cf. Genesis 16:16); that Isaac was 60 years older than Jacob and Esau (ibid., 25:26); and that Ishmael died at age 137 (25:17). Hence, Jacob and Esau were 63 years old when Jacob stole the blessings from his brother and was sent by Isaac to Charan to take a wife from Laban's daughters.*

- *But following other clues provided by the Torah, we deduce that Jacob arrived in Charan quite a number of years later. Upon his arrival in Egypt, Jacob tells Pharaoh that he is 130 years old (Gen. 47:9); Joseph at the time was 39 (as per 41:46 and 45:6), which means that Jacob was 91 at the time of Joseph's birth; and Joseph was born 14 years after Jacob's arrival in Charan, after he had worked for two seven-year periods for Leah and Rachel but before his third, six-year term of working in return for a portion of Laban's sheep (30:25 and 31:41).*
- *In other words, Jacob left his parents' home in Be'er Sheva at age 63, but arrived in Charan 14 years later at age 77 (Eliezer, making the same journey a generation earlier to find a wife for Isaac, made the trip in a single day). Our sages explain that for fourteen years Jacob hid himself in the home of his ancestor and teacher, Eber (the great-grandson of Shem), where he immersed himself in the study of Torah.*

# Wein Online

RABBI BEREL WEIN

- The frightening thing about the struggle between Eisav and Yaakov is its apparently doomed inevitability. While yet in the womb of their mother Rivkah, they already find themselves opposed to one another. They are not only two different personalities, physically, emotionally and intellectually, but they represent two diametrically opposed worldviews. The only question that remains is therefore one of accommodating one another.
- If the Lord created them so differently, their freedom of choice in life is centered on how they will deal one with another. And in that respect, the question of accommodation - of the relationship between the Jewish people and the broader, more numerous and powerful non-Jewish world - remains alive and relevant until our very day.

# Wein Online

RABBI BEREL WEIN

- Eisav varies and wavers in his attitude towards Yaakov. Hatred, jealousy, scapegoating frustration are all present in certain aspects of his behavior patterns towards Yaakov. And yet there is also a grudging admiration and attempts at reconciliation on the part of Eisav. Yaakov is portrayed as reactive towards Eisav, of a more passive nature, of patiently attempting to wait out the situation and hope that Eisav will calm down and reconcile himself to Yaakov's right of existence – in what Eisav considers to be his exclusive world.
- And, therefore, the question arises - in reality the question of all of the ages - is there room in the world, especially our rapidly shrinking world, for Yaakov and Eisav to coexist peacefully. One would hope so, though history belies this optimistic view of the rivalry between the brothers.
- The Torah itself is pretty much noncommittal about the causes for the true source of Eisav's hatred of Yaakov. Even though Yaakov's purchase of the birthright and his subsequent preempting of his father's blessings are ostensibly the cause of Eisav's displeasure with Yaakov, these are only superficialities. For the hatred was there from the beginning, from the moment of their conception, even though no incidents between them had as yet occurred.

# Wein Online

RABBI BEREL WEIN

- The Torah just seems to take it for granted that this is the way it is going to be. And this accounts to a great degree for the almost traditional Jewish attitude of fatalism regarding the behavior of the non-Jewish world towards the Jews. Rabi Shimon ben Yochai stated in the Talmud that it is a given rule that Eisav hates Yaakov. However, there are other opinions there in the Talmud that take a different tack and belie this inevitability of hatred and violence.
- After the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed, Jews felt that perhaps Eisav had finally reformed and had seen the evil of the ways of hatred and bigotry. Almost seventy years later we are not so certain about this hopefully sanguine view of Eisav's reconciliation with Yaakov. Though we are certainly less accepting and passive about the situation now than we were a century ago, nevertheless there are relatively few options left to us as how to deal with the matter.
- We should minimize whatever frictions possible but realize that we are dealing with a millennia-old problem that cannot be just wished away or papered over. Faith and fortitude in our own self-worth are the strongest weapons in our arsenal to bring Eisav to reconciliation and harmony.

# Yaakov vs. Esau in Kabbalah

Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn [1880-1950]

- There are various levels in the service of G-d. There is one level where the light of Holiness drives away the darkness, as is understood from the famous saying (*Tanya*, Chapter 12): "A small amount of light drives away a great deal of darkness." There is a higher level where one transforms the darkness itself into light.
- The *Zohar* states: "the time of Prayer is the time of battle!" This means that during the time of prayer there is a spiritual battle between the *Yetzer Hora* (evil inclination) - which is the darkness in man, and the *Yetzer Tov* (good inclination) - which is the light. The *Yetzer Hora* is called "darkness", because its urge and desire is solely for physical pleasures. For this reason, even the intellect of the *Yetzer Hora* is given the name - the "Animal Soul." The *Yetzer Hora* is characterized essentially by emotional qualities: love, fear, pride, etc. It also has the power of intellect, but its intellect is only for material things, contriving all kinds of schemes to acquire the physical pleasures which it desires, and also finding many ways to justify itself. Sometimes, the person himself recognizes that he is wrong, but nonetheless .....

# Yaakov vs. Esau in Kabbalah

*Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn [1880-1950]*

- ..... he finds various rationalizations - even those which he knows are false, yet he uses these false reasons as a basis to gain his desires. Since such conduct is similar to animal behavior, the intellect of the Yetzer Hora is called the "Animal Soul." The primary essence of the Yetzer Hora is that it possesses a "power of desire." This will and desire of the Yetzer Hora is of exceptional strength, as seen from the famous saying (Sukah 52b): - "The more one satiates his animalistic desires, the more hungry and lustful he becomes." The same applies to the Yetzer Hora . The more one submits to its desires, the more powerful - and the more fiery - does the "power of desire" become, until it finally, G-d forbid, can lead a person to actually rob, steal and murder. This is exemplified by a son who rebels against his parents (Deut. 21:1), that through his gross over-indulgence in eating and drinking he finally reaches the stage of murder, G-d forbid. Hence, the Yetzer Hora and the Animal Soul are called "darkness." On the other hand, the Yetzer Tov, together with its intellect - the Divine Soul - is called "light," because it infuses light into the darkness of the Yetzer Hora and the Animal Soul.



# Yaakov vs. Esau in Kabbalah

Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn [1880-1950]

- This task of the Yetzer Tov and the Divine Soul to brighten the darkness of the Yetzer Hora and Animal Soul is called "battle," because each of them, the Animal Soul and the Divine Soul, employs its greatest powers, each one trying to overcome its opponent. The desire for victory and control over another, and especially over one who is an opponent and enemy, is so great, that all means are considered worthwhile to gain this victory. We find that in order to be victorious in battle, a king will utilize and expend his most precious treasures which have been accumulated and guarded for many generations, and both sides engage in battle with a firm determination to die - if necessary. This analogy can also be applied to the spiritual battle between the inner forces of good and evil - each one exercising its utmost capabilities to win.
- In warfare, various types of weapons are used. There are certain types of arms which can only be used at short range, while others are fit only for long-range purposes. This is also true in the spiritual war between the Yetzer Tov and Yetzer Hora, both possessing these various types of armaments. The revealed - or short-range - weapons of the Yetzer Yora, both possessing these various types of armaments. The revealed - or short-range - weapons of the Yetzer Hora are the physical and material things, even those .....

# Yaakov vs. Esau in Kabbalah

Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn [1880-1950]

- ..... which are permissible according to the Torah. As the *Alter Rebbe* [Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad-Lubavitch] explains in *Tanya* (Chapter 7), even kosher food, when it is eaten with the intention of satiating one's desire, becomes evil! The desire, which was the factor in using the food, transforms the good into evil, and this evil eventually becomes a weapon which destroys the person spiritually, or, at the very least, makes him spiritually defective. He receives his vitality from Evil, which brings him to the level where he derives pleasure from a physical desire.
- The Yetzer Hora also possesses weapons that work on a long-range basis. Unlike the aforementioned, where one indulged only in things which are permissible, now the evil inclination causes him to transgress unwittingly, by doing things which are forbidden, thereby killing him spiritually! A man once came with his scholarly son-in-law to the Alter Rebbe in Liozna, and complained that his son-in-law, who had always conducted himself properly, suddenly was beset with doubts about his faith, thereby causing himself great anguish. The Rebbe told him that, unknowingly, he had eaten forbidden food. The Rebbe showed him the way to repent, and he became spiritually healthy once more. Thus, forbidden food and the like, are the vile weapons of the Yetzer Hora which reach far out and destroy, G-d forbid, or, at the very least, make the person spiritually defective.



# Yaakov vs. Esau in Kabbalah

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- The Yetzer Tov also possesses two types of weapons, i.e., those that perform at close-range, and those which are far-reaching. The latter are of such a nature that they prevail over even the hidden evil of the Yetzer Hora. These two types of weapons are: 1) *kabolas ol malchus shomayim* - to accept and carry the yoke of Torah and Mitzvoth, 2) *yiras shomayim* - fear of the Almighty. The service of *Kabolas Ol Malchus Shomayim* is the weaponry of the Yetzer Tov which works at short-range. *Kabolas Ol* means that one's service of G-d, both in the study of Torah and the fulfillment of the Commandments, is not dependent upon one's understanding, or desire to understand, the reason for the Mitzvah. On the contrary, he performs it simply because it is G-d's command, without questioning "why?" *Kabolas Ol* guards one from the Yetzer Hora and its desires, because he has resolved that everything the Yetzer Hora urges, he will not do. This resolution has been made as a result of *Kabolas Ol*, and not reason.
- There is an essential difference between the service of G-d based on understanding and the service of G-d based on *Kabolas Ol*. When the resolution not to conform to the whims and desires of the Yetzer Hora is .....

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- ..... founded on reason, it is subject to changes in relation to the fluctuations of the intellect. This can be seen in the case of a scholar presenting a profound thesis and expounding upon it with deep insight. From every intellectual statement or concept there must necessarily follow a practical result or application. Obviously, the practical result depends upon the underlying reason. When another scholar repudiates the thesis, then the practical outcome is also correspondingly changed. Likewise, the service of G-d founded solely on intellect, will be affected by changes in reasoning and logic. On the other hand, service inspired by Kabbalas Ol transcends reason; hence, there are no changes.
- The resolution of Kabbalas Ol, that whatever the Yetzer Hora desires, he abstains from, is the weapon which overpowers the Yetzer Hora. That is, he utilizes those physical objects which he needs, not for the purpose of gratifying his pleasurable desires, but because they are necessary for his physical existence. The second weapon of the Yetzer Tov is Yiras Shomayim, the fear of G-d, namely, that he fears that which G-d has forbidden. This overpowers the hidden evil of the Yetzer Hora, for Yiras Shomayim is characterized by a scrupulousness in all that one does, and therefore he is protected in all his ways.

# Yaakov vs. Esau in Kabbalah

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- The time and place of this spiritual struggle is during prayer. Then, both the Divine Soul and the Animal Soul strengthen themselves with their maximum power, each one trying to overcome the other. As it is written about Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:23): "and one nation will try to prevail over the other" (referring to the two nations stemming from Jacob and Esau). In a deeper sense, which is relevant in the service of every Jew to G-d, Jacob and Esau refer to the spiritual and the mundane, respectively. Esau, the son of Isaac, is called "a man of the field," (ibid. 25:27) for his interest lay only in mundane and worldly affairs; his whole desire was only for physical pleasures; he acted falsely and deceitfully. He had the greatest respect for this father, Isaac, (when he had to serve him food, etc., he dressed in his best clothes, thus fulfilling the commandment of honoring one's father) yet, he deceived him also.
- Jacob, on the other hand, represents the spiritual, as he is called - "a simple man," (ibid.) one who is neither able nor desirous of fooling others. Jacob's only interest was in spiritual matters; all of his thoughts centered on how to elevate and improve himself, as it is stated (Kiddushin 40a) that a person should be kind to people and devoted to G-d. His whole pleasure was the study of Torah; he is described as "a tent dweller" (Gen, ibid.) - studying the Torah which was taught in the Yeshivot of Shem and Ever.
- In terms of a Jew's service of G-d, Jacob and Esau correspond to the two souls within every Jew, namely, the Divine Soul and the Animal Soul, respectively. Both souls wishing to dominate the person, battle between themselves. This is the meaning of "and each nation will try to conquer the other." When two people fight, the actual fighting gives each one a certain amount of courage and strength. The same applies to the spiritual battle between the Divine Soul and the Animal Soul, which takes place during the time of prayer. Therefore, we find that during prayer two opposite emotions are revealed within the person, one stemming from the Divine Soul, and the other from the Animal Soul. We see that during prayer, various alien thoughts enter one's mind, until he even forgets that he is standing in the presence of G-d, .....



# Yaakov vs. Esau in Kabbalah

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- ..... the King of kings, and praying. However, when a person is occupied with his business affairs or other mundane matters, such as eating and drinking, then no other thoughts enter his mind. On the contrary, while speaking or listening to idle talk, he momentarily forgets his financial worries; but during the time of prayer strange and foreign thoughts enter his mind. We also find, however, that during prayer, even though one is not mindful of the meaning of the prayers, nevertheless there are certain paragraphs or verses which he says with an inner warmth, and a vitality that permeates his whole being. These opposite dispositions originate from the Divine Soul and the Animal Soul. The Animal Soul causes to arise in one's mind all sorts of strange and improper thoughts, distracting him from prayer, while the Divine Soul inspires him with vigor which expresses itself in a sudden heartrending outcry of repentance. This outburst stems from simple faith and complete trust that "he will be saved from it."
- And through the individual redemption of each and every Jew, which is achieved by means of the victory of the good over the evil within himself - will come the complete Redemption of all our people. Then we will all witness the fulfillment of the prophecy - "how great is that day, there is none like it," with the downfall and destruction of Gog and Magog, and the complete Redemption of all the Jews through our righteous Messiah.

All of what we are, we see, we did and will do,  
is the Work of HaShem

This we celebrate fifty-two times a Year on  
Shabbat.

“May it be Your Will, HaShem, that the Holy  
Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and  
grant us our share in Your Torah....”

Shabbat Shalom