

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter VI: Toldot (Gen. 25:19-28:9)

### Essay 1. Righteous descendants and wicked descendants

**פסוק** "ואלה תולדת יצחק", פרש רש"י, יצקב ועשו האמורים בפרשה. מקשים שדברי רש"י הם ללא צורך, שהרי הכתוב מכריז בסגל "נהנה תומם בבטנה ויצא הראשון אדמוני . . . ואחריו יצא אהיו".

There is a verse: **“And these are the descendants of Isaac, the son of Abraham”** (Gen. 25:19). **Rashi interpreted: “The parsha is speaking of Jacob and Esau.” [People] question that the words of Rashi are unnecessary, since the Scripture declares forcefully, “There were twins in her womb. The first one emerged red . . . afterward his brother came out”** (Gen. 25:24–26).<sup>1</sup>

ונראה שרש"י הרגיש שפיון דקנימא לו, כל מקום שנאמר "אלה" פסל את הראשונים "ואלה" מוסיף על הראשונים. וכאן הראשונים הם בני ישמעאל, איך אמר "ואלה"? ועוד דקאמר "ואלה תולדת יצחק בן-אברהם" וכי עד כאן לא שמענו שיצחק הוא בן אברהם? הנה לו לומר "אלה תולדת יצחק" ותו לא. אלא נדאי להשמיענו שהתולדות שלו היו כמותו של אברהם, לפי שעל ידי אותם התולדות מצאה הקדושה מקום להוציא הניצוצות שלה מתוך הקליפה, כמו שנקתוב לקמן בסמוך על פסוק "ניתרצצו הבנים בקרבה" וכו' ועיי"ש.

**It appears that Rashi felt that since we have established, as Rabbi Abbahu is quoted in Gen. Rabbah 12:3, that “everyplace that the word ‘these are’ [אלה] [eleh] is said, it interrupts the preceding text, and everyplace that the word ‘and these are’ [ואלה] [ve'eleh] is said, it adds to the preceding text.” Here, at Gen. 25:19, the subject of the preceding text are the sons of Ishmael, so how does it say, ‘and these are’ [ואלה] [ve'eleh]? How are Isaac’s sons the same topic as Ishmael’s sons? Also, as it is said, “And these are the descendants of Isaac, the son of Abraham,” haven’t we heard up until now that Isaac was the son of Abraham? [Scripture] could have said, “These are the descendants of Isaac,” and nothing more, i.e., omitting the prefatory “and” and omitting “the son of Abraham.” Rather, certainly Scripture added “the son of Abraham” to inform us that the descendants [of Isaac], including some descendants of Esau, were like those of Abraham, because by the same descendants, the holiness found room to take her sparks [nitzotzot] out from the husk [klipa], as we will write further in Essay 3 of this chapter, on the verse, “But the children struggled in her womb” (Gen. 25:22).**

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<sup>1</sup> This question is asked by Rabbi Avi Ezri Zelig Margolios, in Kessef Nivchar (Amsterdam 1711).

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁפִּרְשׁ רַשִׁי עַל פְּסוּק "שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם בְּבֶטְנָךְ", אֵלּוּ אַנְטוֹנִינוּס וְרַבִּי, וְלֹא פִּירַשׁ שְׁנֵי רֵאשֵׁי גוֹיִם עַל יַעֲקֹב וְעָשָׂו שֶׁהָיוּ הָרֵאשִׁימִים וְהָאָבוֹת לְשֵׁנֵי הָאוֹמוֹת. וּמֵעֵתָּה שֶׁפִּירַשׁ מִקְרֹו שְׁנֵיהֶם "תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק בְּרֵ-אַבְרָהָם", שֶׁהַתּוֹלְדוֹת שֶׁיָּבוֹאוּ מִחֶמֶת עֵיבוּרָה שֶׁל רֵבֶקָה, דֵּהֵינּוּ שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם שֶׁהָיוּ בְּבֶטְנָהּ, יֵהְיוּ כְּמוֹתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם.

**This is what Rashi interpreted on the verse of, “Two nations are in your womb” (Gen. 25:23): “These are Antoninus and Rabbi.” He did not interpret the verse as referring to the two heads of nations, i.e., as referring to Jacob and Esau, who were the heads and the fathers of the two nations, and who struggled against each other even before they were born. Rather, Rashi highlighted descendants of each who were great men and also great friends of each other. Jacob’s descendant, Rabbi (Rabbi Yehuda haNasi), was very wealthy, the redactor and editor of the Mishnah, head of the Sanhedrin, known for his piety. Esau’s descendant, Antoninus,<sup>2</sup> was a Roman emperor who was according to Avodah Zarah 10b, was a great admirer and supporter of Rabbi.**

**Now it’s fine: [Rashi] identified the two of them, Rabbi and Antoninus, as “the descendants of Isaac, the son of Abraham,” because these descendants that will come because of the pregnancy of Rebecca—that is, the two nations that were in her womb—will be like Abraham.**

וּמְכַל מְקוֹם כְּתַב "וְאַלֶּה" לְהוֹסִיף עַל הָרֵאשׁוֹנִים לְפִי שְׂגָם מֵיַעֲקֹב יִצְאוּ רְשָׁעִים, כְּדַתְנֹן וְאֵלּוּ שְׂאִין לְהֵם חֶלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, וְעָשָׂו הָיָה הוּא עֲצָמוֹ רְשָׁע. וְקָרָא הַתּוֹלְדוֹת בְּשֵׁם אַבְרָהָם לְפִי שֶׁהָיָה הוּא תְּחִלָּה לְגֵרִים, וְכַתִּיב "כִּי אֲבִ-הֶמּוֹן גוֹיִם נִתְתִּיף", דֵּהֵינּוּ שֶׁאַבְרָהָם תִּקְנֶן רוֹחֲנִיּוֹת הַגֵּרִים וְהַמְשִׁיכֶם מִן הַקְּלִיפָה שֶׁהָיוּ עֲשׂוּקִים בָּהּ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתִבְנוּ לְעִיל בְּפִרְשַׁת וַיֵּרָא עַל פְּסוּק "וְהוּא יָשַׁב פְּתַח-הָאֵהָל" וְעֵי"ש. אֲבָל עֲדִיין הָיָה צָרִיף הַכְּנָה וּמַחְשָׁבָה כְּדִי לְהוֹצִיאֵם לְגַמְרִי.

**In any event, it is written “and these are” [וְאַלֶּה] [ve’eleh] to add the previously mentioned sons of Ishmael. They are included in the same topic with Jacob and Esau because wicked people also descended from Jacob, as we have learned (Sanhedrin page 90a), “And these are the ones who don’t have a portion in the World-to-Come,” with the list including the kings Jeroboam and Ahab (and some add Manasseh). Also, Esau was himself wicked, and thus relevant to the same topic as the sons of Ishmael.**

**The descendants were called by the name “Abraham” because he was the first of converts (Sukkah page 49b), and because it is written, “for I make you the father of a multitude of nations” (Gen. 17:5). That is, Abraham repaired the spirituality of the converts and pulled them from the husk into which they had sunk, as we have written above for parshat Vayeira (essay 2) on the verse, “he was sitting at the entrance of the tent” (Gen. 18:1) and see there. But preparation and thinking were still required in order to take them out entirely.**

Thus, “And these are” hints at the wicked descendants of both Jacob and Esau, by linking back to the previously mentioned sons of Ishmael, while “the descendants of Isaac, the son of Abraham,” hints at the righteous descendants of both Jacob and Esau.

<sup>2</sup> Two likely candidates were the emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (who lived 121-180), or Caracalla (formally Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who lived 188-217).

אי נמי בְּדֶרֶךְ אַחֲרָתָּהּ, וְנִדְיִיק מֵהוּ זֶה שְׂפָתָי, הָאֲמֹרִים בְּפִרְשָׁהּ, שְׁהָרִי כָּאֵן מִיָּד בְּסִמּוּךְ נְאֻמָּוּ, שְׁהִנֵּה כְּתָבוּ הַמְּפָרְשִׁים שְׂבָכָאן הָיָו אַחַד צְדִיק וְאַחַד רָשָׁע לְפִי שְׂיִצְחָק הִנֵּה צְדִיק בֶּן צְדִיק וְרַבְקָה הִנֵּה בַת רָשָׁע. וְקִשָּׁה עַל זֶה שְׁהָרִי אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק שְׁהִנֵּה צְדִיק, וְאַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה לֹא הָיוּ בְּנֵי צְדִיקִים, שְׁתַּרְח וְהָרָן הָיוּ עוֹבְדֵי עֲבוּדָה זָרָה, וְאָף כָּאֵן הָיוּ יְכוּלִים לִהְיוֹת שְׂנִיָּהִם צְדִיקִים, וְלָמָּה הִנֵּה אַחַד צְדִיק וְאַחַד רָשָׁע.

**Alternatively, in a different manner, we will investigate what [Rashi] wrote, that the parsha is speaking of Jacob and Esau, for immediately adjacent to our verse, they are mentioned by Rashi. The next verse, Gen. 25:20, states that Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel and the sister of Laban. Rashi notes that we already knew her lineage, and that it is repeated in Gen. 25:20 as praise, for even though she was the daughter of a wicked man, and sister of a wicked man, and her native place was one of wicked people, yet she did not learn from their way of life. Nevertheless, her background had an effect, per commentators wrote that here from their union there was one righteous [son], Jacob, and one wicked [son], Esau, because Isaac was a righteous man who was the son of a righteous man, while Rebecca was a righteous woman who nevertheless was the daughter of a wicked man. But there is a question about this, for Abraham fathered Isaac who was a righteous man, and yet Abraham and Sarah were not children of righteous people, for their respective fathers, Terah and Haran<sup>3</sup> were idol worshippers, and nevertheless [Abraham and Sarah] were able to be righteous. Why couldn't Jacob and Esau both have been righteous? Why was one, Jacob, righteous, and one, Esau, wicked?**

אֵלָּא יֵשׁ לוֹמֵר שְׂמִסְפֹּר הַפִּרְשָׁה אָנוּ לְמַדִּים שֶׁהִטְעַם שְׂבָאוּ הַבְּרָכוֹת לִיעֲקֹב בְּמַרְמָה אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂרָאוּיוֹת הָיוּ לוֹ יוֹתֵר מֵעֵשָׂו, לְפִי שְׂלֹא רָצָה הַקַּב"ה שְׂיִבֹאוּ הַבְּרָכוֹת לִיעֲקֹב בְּשִׁלְוָה וְהַשְׁקֵט, שְׂלֹא יִהְיֶה כָּל כֶּף מִהַעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, כְּדֵי שְׂיִזְכֶּה לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וּמִשׁוּם הַכִּי גִלְגַּל הַקַּב"ה אֶת הַמַּעֲשִׂים שְׂיִעֲקֹב וְזָרְעוּ לֹא יִהְיוּ בְּבְרָכוֹת אֵלָּא בְּדַאֲגָה וּבְמוֹרָא וּבְשִׁנְאוֹתָיו שֶׁל עֵשָׂו, כְּמוֹ שְׂנֵכְתוּב לְקַמָּן בְּמִקוּמוֹ. וּבְשִׁבִיל זֶה הוֹצִיא מִיִּצְחָק יַעֲקֹב וְעֵשָׂו שְׂיִתְגָּרוּ בֵּינֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה שְׁלוֹם וְהַשְׁקֵט לִיעֲקֹב, וְכְדֵי שְׂתַתְּקֵי הַבְּחִירָה שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם שְׂפִירֵר הַגְּלִיּוֹת לְבְנֵי יַעֲקֹב.

**Rather, it can be said that from the story of the parsha, we learn that the reason that the blessings came to Jacob by deception, even though he deserved them more than Esau, was because the Holy One, Blessed be He, didn't want the blessings to come to Jacob in the way of tranquility and quiet. G-d preferred that Jacob not enjoy [the tranquility and quiet] so much in this world, in order that he would merit them in the World-to-Come. Because of this, the Holy One, blessed be He, mixed up the events so that Jacob and his seed would only enjoy the blessings with worry and trepidation and with the hatred of Esau, as we will write later in its place, in essay 16 of this chapter. Because of this, [G-d] brought out Jacob and Esau from Isaac, and made them quarrel among themselves such that there would be no peace and quiet for Jacob, and in order to fulfill Abraham's choice that the children of Jacob would**

<sup>3</sup> In Gen. 20:12, Abraham tells Abimelech that Sarah is his half-sister, "She is in truth my sister, my father's daughter though not my mother's; and she became my wife." However, Rabbinic tradition is that she is his niece, the daughter of Abraham's brother, Haran. Thus, Sarah was Abraham's father's [grand]daughter. See Sanhedrin 69b, where Rabbi Yitzchak interprets Gen. 11:29 as saying that Sarai was another name for Haran's daughter Ischah.

**face exile.** This references the midrash, Gen. Rabbah 44:21: “Shimon bar Abba said in Rabbi Yochanan’s name: [G-d] showed [Abraham] four things, Gehenna, the [foreign] kingdoms, the Giving of Torah [at Mt. Sinai], and the Temple, with the promise: As long as your children occupy themselves with the latter two, they will be saved from the former two. [If not,] would you rather your children descend into Gehenna or into the power of the [foreign] kingdoms?” [The rabbis then disagree over what Abraham answered. Some say that he chose subjugation by the foreign kingdoms, while other rabbis says that Abraham answered “Gehenna” but that G-d overruled him.] Israel would not have to face Gehenna, but would be subject to Exile and to subjugation at the hands of Esau.

וְהוּא הוּא דְבָרֵי רַשִׁי, יַעֲקֹב וְעָשָׂו הָאֲמוּרָיִם בְּפָרָשָׁה, כְּלוּמַר שְׁלֹפֵי שְׂיִצְחָק הִיָּה "בְּוֹ-אֲבְרָהָם" וְאֲבְרָהָם בִּירַר הַגְּלוּת, מִשּׁוּם  
הַכִּי יֵצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם יַעֲקֹב וְעָשָׂו, שְׂמִכְלָם מֵהַ שְׂפָתוֹב בְּפָרָשָׁה אֵתָה לְמַד שְׂיַעֲקֹב אֵינּוּ יָכוֹל לֵישֵׁב בְּשַׁלְוָה מִחַמַּת עָשָׂו, לְקַיֵּם דְּבוּרֵי  
שֶׁל אֲבְרָהָם, וְזֶהוּ "וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק" לְפִי שֶׁהוּא "בְּוֹ-אֲבְרָהָם", וְלֹא מִשּׁוּם דְּרַבְרָקָה הִיָּתָה בֵּת רַשָּׁע.

**These, then are the words of Rashi, “The parsha is speaking of Jacob and Esau,” as if to say that because Isaac was the “son of Abraham,” and Abraham had chosen exile and subjugation by the foreign kingdoms over a descent into Gehenna, because of this, Jacob and Esau came from [Isaac]. That is, from everything that was written in the parsha, you learned that Jacob is not able to sit in tranquility because of Esau, to fulfil the words of Abraham, and this is the meaning of “And these are the generations of Isaac,” because he is “the son of Abraham,” and not because Rebecca was the daughter of a wicked man.**

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