

Aligning Our Destiny WITH THE BIRTHRIGHT

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Toldos

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Empowerment of the Patriarch Through The Matriarch

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1. After Yitzchok marries Rivka, the Torah tells us of Avraham's passing at the age of 175.
2. Avraham passed away when Yaakov and Esav were 13 years old; why mention it here?
3. Midrash: The Patriarchs' actions are indicative of the future events of the Jewish People.
4. Midrash: Avraham went down to Egypt and so did the Jewish People; Avraham left with great wealth and as did the Jewish People.
5. A Patriarch assumes that role if there is a Matriarch.
6. Yitzchok did not become the Patriarch until he married Rivka.
7. Although Avraham lived many more years, he no longer contributed as a Patriarch once Yitzchok married Rivka.
8. Avraham's actions were valued as an individual; no longer contributing to the destiny of the Jewish People.

Withholding The Script of Reality

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1. Rivka was barren and miraculously became pregnant due to Yitzchok's supplication.
2. During her pregnancy, she experienced unusual agitation within her womb and suffered greatly.
3. She sought out clarity from Shem the prophet.
4. He told her that there are two nations in her womb; one represents good and the other evil.
5. The 2 entities were in opposition of one another.
6. Rivka was now aware that Esav was truly evil.
7. Why did Rivka not share this information with Yitzchok? It would have prevented so much pain and suffering.
8. Why did Rivka seek out clarity from Shem and not from Avraham or Yitzchok?
9. Avraham passed away 5 years before his time so not to see his grandson Esav pursuing an evil path.
10. Rivka did consult with Avraham, but he did not know.
11. The basis for Esav hating Yaakov is a consequence of Yaakov haven taken the blessing meant for Esav.
12. Had Yitzchok been aware of the evil of Esav he would have never considered blessing him.
13. The context for Esav to be considered for the Blessing was only because Yitzchok did not know his true nature.
14. Rivka realized this should not to be known to her husband Yitzchok, and so could not divulge the true nature of Esav.

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When Intervention Is Without Self Interest

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1. Esav returns from the field fatigued and famished.
2. He asks Yaakov to give him of the lentil soup that he is cooking.
3. Yaakov agrees only if he sells him his birthright.
4. Esav agrees to sell his birthright for a pot of lentils and a loaf of bread.
5. As the narrative reads – Yaakov took advantage of the moment to snatch the birthright.
6. Midrash: The service in the Temple was reserved exclusively for the first born.
7. Yaakov said it would be disgraceful for such an evil person to be the officiant before G-d.
8. Yaakov had no self interest in the birthright; his initiative was solely to avert a desecration of G-d's name.
9. Years later Yaakov took the blessings that were meant for Esav by impersonating Esav.
10. Esav, upon returning and realizing what Yaakov had done, lets out a yelp and wails.
11. Yitzchok blesses Esav: When you are pained by the fact that your birthright was taken from you, when the Jews don't keep the Torah, you will then cast their yoke from your neck.
12. Why is the transgression of the Torah a basis to cast off their yoke?
13. Yaakov's justification to take the birthright was that it was disgraceful for an evil person to be G-d's officiant.
14. If there is a desecration it is no longer justified because the Jews themselves transgressed the Torah.

Weekly Video: Aligning Our Destiny with the Birthright

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When Is The Effort Extraneous or Superfluous

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Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Toldos

Aligning Our Destiny WITH THE BIRTHRIGHT

Yaakov, the Redeemer of Avraham

The *Torah* states, "...Avraham begot Yitzchak..." The *Midrash* cites a verse from Proverbs, "The crown of the elders is the sons of their sons (grandchildren) and the glory of the children is their forefathers." The *Midrash* explains, "The righteous are crowned through their grandchildren and the grandchildren through their grandparents. Where do we find this? Avraham was crowned in the merit of Yaakov."

When Nimrod cast Avraham into the fiery kiln of Kasdim, G-d descended to save him from the fire. The angels came to G-d with a claim, 'Is this the one who You want to save from the fire? There will be many evil descendants that will come from him in the future (Yishmael and Esav)!' G-d responded, 'In the merit of his grandson Yaakov, I will save him!' Where do we see that Avraham was saved in the merit of Yaakov? Rav Brechya says, 'It is written, 'G-d said to the House of Yaakov, who redeemed Avraham.' G-d rescued Avraham from the fiery kiln."

The angels claimed that Avraham should not be rescued because he will bring forth many evil descendants in the future. To respond to this claim, G-d told them that He was going to rescue Avraham in the merit of Yaakov, his grandchild. Did G-d save Avraham in the merit of Yaakov because Yaakov's dimension of spirituality was going to be of a dimension that would outweigh all of the evil descendants of Avraham? Or is it for a more profound reason?

The *Torah* states regarding Yitzchak's quantification of Yaakov, "*Hakol kol Yaakov v'hayadayim yidei Esav* - the voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Esav." Chazal explain this statement to mean, that as long as the Jewish people utilize their "voice" as the "voice" of Yaakov, which is the use of the power of speech in the study of *Torah* and prayer, then they will not be subject to the hands of Esav.

If the Jewish people are engaged in their spirituality as G-d prescribed, the influences of Esav in the world will

be subjugated, minimized, and ultimately vanquished. However, if the Jewish people do not engage in *Torah* study and prayer as they should, then *Esav* will become empowered and the Jewish people will be vulnerable to his might.

The angels were concerned that if *Avraham* were to be rescued from the kiln the world will be subsumed by the evil of those who will descend from him. Thus, the world would not meet its objective. G-d told them that the spiritual dimension of *Yaakov*, which is transmitted through him and his children, the twelve tribes of G-d (Israel), has the ability to vanquish that evil.

The prophet states, regarding the purpose of existence, "For My Glory I created it (the world)." It is only the Jewish people, who descend from *Avraham* and *Yaakov*, who could bring about that glory to G-d through their good deeds and prayers. Regarding the evil that will come about through the hands of *Avraham's* descendants, that is something in the realm of free choice. It is not predestined that one should be evil, but rather one has the ability to choose to be righteous or evil.

It is not that the good that *Yaakov* represents outweighs the evil of *Esav* and *Yishmael*, but rather because of *Yaakov's* dimension of spirituality, his descendants who choose to do the Will of G-d will dispel the evil of *Esav* and *Yishmael*. It is in the merit of *Yaakov*, the most special Patriarch who was the one who sat in the tent of *Torah*.

Avraham's Premature Passing

Chazal tell us that each one of the holy Patriarchs were meant to live 180 years. *Avraham*, our Patriarch however lived only 175 years. *Chazal* explain that G-d had promised *Avraham* that he would pass away at "a good old age." If he were to live until the age of 180, he would have witnessed his grandson, *Esav* becoming an evil person.

At the age of fifteen, *Esav* chose to become evil by violating five Cardinal Sins. This would have aggrieved *Avraham* to such a degree that it would have been contrary to the promise that G-d had made to him. Therefore, G-d caused *Avraham* to pass away five years before his time so that he should not witness the evil of his grandson.

The *Torah* tells us that *Yaakov* passed away at the age of 147 years. The *Midrash* tells us that initially *Yaakov* was meant to live 180 years as his father *Yitzchak* had. However, because of a statement that he had made to Pharaoh regarding his premature aging, that it was due to the hardships that he had experienced, G-d deducted thirty three years from his life corresponding to the thirty three words that he had spoken to Pharaoh. Thus, *Yaakov* lived 147 years, rather than 180 as he was meant to.

The *Torah* states, "*Esav* came in from the field and he was exhausted..." *Chazal* explain that *Esav* was exhausted because on that day he had committed murder, idolatry, adultery, and blasphemy. The *Midrash* tells us that when *Esav* returned from the field in a fatigued state he saw his brother *Yaakov* cooking lentils with ash on his face.

After seeing this, *Esav* asked *Yaakov*, "What happened?" *Yaakov* responded, "Our grandfather passed away." When *Esav* heard that *Avraham* had passed away, he was taken aback due to the tragic news and exclaimed, "There is no justice and there is no Judge!" He thus became a heretic. This was the fifth Cardinal Sin that he had violated on that day. What was the basis for *Esav's* denial of the existence of G-d with his statement "There is no justice and there is no Judge!" Every individual has to pass away eventually.

Esav understood that *Avraham* was meant to live 180 years. If he passed away five years before his time, it was an indication that G-d had denied his grandfather five years that were rightfully his. *Esav* knew that his grandfather was devoutly righteous and deserving to live a full life. If G-d had taken these years from such a righteous individual as *Avraham*, it was an indication that there is no justice and no Judge! He thus became a heretic.

It is interesting to note that the only reason that *Avraham* passed away before his time was because G-d did not want him to witness the evil of *Esav*. *Esav's* reaction to the news about his grandfather's passing was due to his own choice of evil. Thus, he was the cause of his own heresy. This is an example of the principle, "G-d brings tragedy to the hands of the guilty." The one who generates the greatest level of culpability is the one who is not meritorious.

Chazal tell us that on the day of *Avraham's* passing, *Esav* violated five Cardinal Sins. Why do *Chazal* tell us that he specifically violate five sins and not four? Seemingly, if *Esav* would have violated any of the five Cardinal Sins, it would have been contrary to the promise that G-d had given *Avraham*.

Maharal of Prague z'tl explains that the number five signifies something substantive not something that came about by chance. Five is also a representation of the essence of something. The *Gemara* in Tractate *Megillah* tells us that there were five people who were devoutly righteous from their beginning to their end and there were five evil people who were evil from their beginning to their end. Meaning, the number five represented the true essence of each of these individuals: five were truly righteous to the core of their being, while five were the epitome of evil.

The essence of *Esav* was evil. This is the reason *Chazal* tell us that *Esav* violated five Cardinal Sins in one day, which revealed his true evil essence. Had he only committed less than five sins, it would not have been an indication that his essence was evil and thus it would not have been contrary to the promise that G-d had made to *Avraham* that he would pass away at "a good old age." Had he witnessed *Esav* committing less than five Cardinal Sins, *Avraham* could have attributed the evil behavior to happenstance. *Esav* could repent and be reinstated as righteous; however, since he violated five Cardinal Sins, it was clear confirmation that his essence was evil and thus contrary to the promise that G-d had made to *Avraham*.

Very often we experience things in life that cause us to react. One must introspect and reflect that perhaps we are the cause of our own predicament. Rather than introspecting and understanding that he was the one who brought about the premature death of his grandfather, *Esav* chose to blame G-d, thus declaring "There is no justice and there is no Judge!"

Contentment, A Gift from G-d

The *Torah* states, "And *Avraham* passed away at a good old age, mature and content, and he was gathered to his people." *Ramban* explains, "*Avraham* passed away in a satisfied and content state because he had seen all the aspirations of his heart fulfilled and was thus sated with all good. The *Torah* is telling us of the special kindness of G-d that He does for the devoutly

righteous (*tzaddikim*). This is a gift that is bestowed upon the righteous. It is a positive quality of the *tzaddik* that he desires only what is needed and has no interest in excess.

The *Midrash* states, 'A person does not leave this world with half of his desires in his hand. This is because one who has one hundred, he desires two hundred. If he has achieved two hundred he desires four hundred... One who loves silver will never be sated...' This particular aspiration has no relevance to the *tzaddik*. It is only the one who sees excess as necessity.

Ramban states, "*Chazal* tell us that before a *tzaddik* leaves this world, G-d shows him the extent of his reward in the world to come, so that he should feel sated. Then he will sleep. Not only is the *tzaddik* satisfied because he has met the aspirations of his life, G-d also shows him the reward that awaits him in the world to come before he passes away." Why is it important for G-d to show the *tzaddik* his reward in the world to come at the moment before his passing?

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Berachos* tells us that righteous people, after they pass, are considered as if they are alive; however, evil people, even when they are alive they are considered to be dead. How is this to be understood?

It is because the *tzaddik* in his lifetime utilizes every moment and aspect of his physical existence as a means to spiritualize himself and advance the spirituality of the world. The physical is only a medium to bring about spirituality. When the *tzaddik* passes away, it is merely a transition to a more advanced level of spirituality. Although he is no longer physically alive, the state of his essence has not changed. He only exists in another venue.

However, the evil person, although his mission and purpose in existence is to develop his spirituality to no less a degree than the *tzaddik*, he chooses to ignore its potential and allows it to wither. He focuses only on advancing his material horizons. He exists and functions in the world as an intellectual animal rather than as a spiritual being. His spirituality has no relevance to his life. He is thus considered as if he is dead.

This type of individual, because of his material aspirations is the one who is referred to by King Solomon in the *Midrash*, "If one has one hundred he desires two hundred..." The more one has, the more one

desires. There is no end and no point of satisfaction for the one who is driven by his desires to accumulate the material. This is another reason that the evil one, who has no relevance or interest in the development of his own spirituality, is considered to be dead although he is alive. To live in constant pursuit of a goal that is not attainable can be equated to death.

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Berachos* contrasts the passing of a devoutly righteous person and the passing of an evil person with an allegory. When the soul of the *tzaddik* departs from his body its transition is as smooth and gentle as a hair being removed from milk. In contrast, when the soul of the evil one departs from his body it is the equivalent of the fleece of a sheep being torn from a briar bush.

Because the soul of the evil one has been materialized and enmeshed with his physicality it does not want to depart from this world. It has difficulty separating itself from the body as the separation of fleece from a briar bush. However, the *tzaddik*, whose entire existence was imbued with spirituality, departs without being encumbered by his physicality.

King David writes in Psalms, "I rejoice (sos) over your words (the *Torah*) as if I found great spoils." The word for joy that King David utilizes is "sos" rather than "simcha" or other terms for joy. *Vilna Gaon* explains that the word "sos" connotes a joy that is experienced with a sense of being denied. He explains this with a parable.

A king wanted to reward his loyal and dedicated subject for his service. He said to him, "You will have the privilege to enter into my royal treasury and take whatever you want but only for a period of an hour." The king tells him that he will see objects of value that the commoner has never seen.

When the subject enters into the treasury, he realizes that what the king had described was only a semblance of what he was actually seeing. He understands that time is of the essence. Although he had amassed within the hour a great amount of wealth, simultaneously he was anguished and pained by the time constraint. This is because there was so much more that he could have taken if he only had the time.

Similarly King David rejoiced over the *Torah* that he had come upon because he understood and internalized its infinite value; however, simultaneously he was distressed by the fact that there was so much more

to be amassed, but he was limited by the length of his years. Because of his profound appreciation of the *Torah* he thus experienced a frustration because of his limitation of time.

Every *tzaddik* before he passes away experiences something that has a semblance of King David's experience. Although he feels privileged and fortunate that he had lived a life that was in accordance with G-d's Will, he understands at the end of his life how much more there is to accomplish. In order for the *tzaddik* to leave the physical existence in a state of peace and not feel denied, G-d reveals to him his share in the world to come in order to satisfy and calm him so that he should pass away in a tranquil state.

Yitzchak, the Patriarch Who Guaranteed Existence

The *Midrash* cites a verse from Proverbs, 'The father of the righteous one shall rejoice. The one who gives birth to the wise one will rejoice with him.' To whom is King Solomon referring in the verse? It is to the birth of *Yitzchak*, our Patriarch. When *Yitzchak* was born everyone rejoiced. Heaven and earth rejoiced. The sun and the moon rejoiced. The stars and the zodiac rejoiced.

Why did all existence rejoice after the birth of *Yitzchak*? Had *Yitzchak* not been born, the world would have not continued. As the prophet *Yirmiya* states, 'If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the extent of heaven and earth would not be put in place.' What is the covenant to which G-d is referring? It is *Yitzchak* – as it states in the *Torah*, 'My covenant I will establish with *Yitzchak*.'

The *Torah* states in the Portion of *Bereishis*, "and it was the sixth day (*yom ha shishi*)." Regarding all of the other days of Creation, the *Torah* refers to the day as "day one," "day two, etc." However, regarding the sixth day of Creation the *Torah* states, "the sixth day" indicating that there is something special about the sixth day.

Chazal explain that this is alluding to the sixth day of the month of *Sivan*, when the Jewish people were to receive the *Torah* at *Sinai*. If they were to accept it on that day, when it will be offered to them, the world would continue to exist. However, if they choose reject G-d's *Torah*, the world would revert back to pre-existence.

As it states in the *Gemara* in Tractate *Avoda Zorah*, “Existence was not tranquil until the Jewish people accepted the *Torah*.” The world was only created for the purpose of the fulfillment of the *Torah* by the Jewish people who were the only ones qualified to be spiritualized through its laws. Had they not accepted the *Torah* on the sixth day of *Sivan*, Creation would have no value, thus causing it to come to an end.

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Nidarim* interprets the verse in *Yirmiya*, ‘If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the extent of heaven and earth would not be put in place’ as referring to the study of *Torah*. If the study of *Torah* should cease for even a moment, existence would not be able to continue. The existence of the world is contingent, firstly on the Jewish people accepting the *Torah* and secondly on its study.

In order for the *Torah* to be accepted at Sinai, there needed to be a people qualified to receive it. Had *Yitzchak* not been brought into existence, this would not have occurred. The miracle that allowed our Matriarch Sarah to conceive was necessary to guarantee the future of existence. Therefore when *Yitzchak* was born and was circumcised, it set forth the future of the Jewish people who would receive the *Torah* at Sinai and allow the world to continue. *Yitzchak* only had relevance to *Torah* and spiritual advancement after he was circumcised.

There is an argument in the *Gemara* in Tractate *Nidarim* regarding the words “if not for My Covenant (*Bris*)” in the verse from *Yirmiya*, is referring to the study of *Torah* or circumcision (*bris milah*). *R’ Akiva Eiger* explains that the opinion that states that “*Bris*” is referring to circumcision also concurs that it refers to the study of *Torah*. In order for one to have relevance to *Torah*, the foreskin must be removed. The removal of the foreskin allows the removal of a spiritual impediment that prevents the Jew from having relevance to his spiritual potential which is achieved through the study of *Torah*. Therefore when the covenant (*bris milah*) is in effect, do the Jewish people have relevance to continuous spiritual growth through the study of the *Torah*.

Every aspect of existence rejoiced with the birth of *Yitzchak* because heaven, earth, and all aspects of existence correspond to a spiritual world that functions through a hierarchy of angels. They carry out G-d’s Will for the sake of His Glory. If the world would come to an end as a result of Sarah, remaining barren, the intent

of Creation would never be realized and G-d’s Glory would never be addressed.

The Depth of Avraham’s Capacity for Joy

The *Torah* tells us that after *Avraham* had returned from the *Akeidah*, he learned that Sarah his wife had passed away. The *Torah* states, “*Avraham* came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her (*v’livkosah*).” The letter “*chof*” in the word “*v’livkosah*” is written smaller than all of the other letters of that word. Why is this so?

Kesav Sofer, in his commentary on the *Torah* explains that *Avraham* had just returned from fulfilling the greatest spiritual accomplishment of his life, the *Akeidah* that guarantees the survival of the Jewish people for eternity. There was no other test that *Avraham* faced that had such a profound impact on the future of the Jewish people other than the *Akeidah*. Had it not been for the *Akeidah*, the Jewish people would not be able to survive the prosecution of satan on the Day of Judgment (*Rosh Hashanah*). The blowing of the ram’s horn (*shofar*) reminds G-d of the binding of *Yitzchak*, the son of *Avraham*, which was a sanctification of His Name in the ultimate sense. Thus, it is only the blowing of the shofar that silences satan’s prosecution.

The *Torah* tells us that an angel of G-d had called from heaven to *Avraham* at the time of the *Akeidah* and said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him...” He was thus prevented from slaughtering *Yitzchak* as an offering. In order for *Avraham* to actualize his intent regarding the *Akeidah* a ram presented itself to be used in the place of *Yitzchak* and it was offered as a burnt offering. Having fulfilled and concretized the intent of the *Akeidah* the angel said to *Avraham*, “I swear, the word of G-d, that because you have done this thing....I shall bless you and greatly increase your offspring like the stars of the heavens...”

At that moment, *Avraham* was overwhelmed with joy because it was confirmed that he had succeeded in the test of the *Akeidah*, and that it would be a vital merit for the Jewish people until the end of time. In addition, he did not actually need to slaughter his beloved son *Yitzchak* who was to be the future Patriarch of the Jewish people. Because *Avraham* had dedicated his life for the sanctification of G-d and the future of the

Jewish people, the level of joy that he experienced at that moment, was all-consuming because he fully appreciated and understood the value of the eternal ramifications of his accomplishment.

When *Avraham* returned after the *Akeidah* and realized that Sarah had passed away, he understood that it was a direct result of the *Akeidah*. Although he was pained as a human being, it was not possible for him to be fully immersed in grief at that moment, because at that moment he was imbued with an exceptional level of joy. He thus did not have the capacity to fully grieve over the loss of Sarah. This is the reason the letter “*chof*” in the word “*v’livkosah*” is written smaller than all of the other letters, to indicate his capacity to grieve was limited due to the overwhelming joy of the experience of the *Akeidah*.

What is the *Torah* communicating by revealing that *Avraham* could not fully grieve because of what had previously taken place? The *Torah* states, “Now *Avraham* was old, well on in years, and *Hashem* had blessed *Avraham* with everything (*ba kol*).” *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain that the numerical value of the word “*ba kol* – everything” is the equivalent numerical value of the word “*ben- son*.” Meaning, the *Torah* is telling us that to *Avraham*, his son *Yitzchak* was everything.

Despite the unparalleled spiritual accomplishments of *Avraham* and his great wealth, power, and renown, the greatest blessing he received from G-d was his son *Yitzchak*. Prior to the birth of *Yitzchak*, all of *Avraham*’s accomplishments were only a means to an end, qualifying him to father the future Patriarch of the Jewish people. Other than *Yitzchak*, nothing had any value to *Avraham*, because *Yitzchak* represented the future of the Jewish people and eternity. Thus, the *Torah*, by minimizing the letter “*chof*” reveals that *Avraham*’s capacity for appreciating and internalizing spirituality was unique.

The fact that *Avraham*’s capacity to grieve for Sarah, who he had fully appreciated every aspect of her greatness, was minimized due to the joy of the *Akeidah*, indicated that his primary focus was the future of the Jewish people, who will descend from *Yitzchak*. Everything else was secondary to this. He fully internalized this understanding to the core of his being that the purpose of Creation could only be brought about through the Jewish people, which needed to be established and secured.

We say in the *Modim* prayer in the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer), “We gratefully thank You for it is You Who are *Hashem* our G-d...” Although we continue by saying, “(You are) the Rock of our lives, Shield of our salvation...” the primary expression of thanks, is that G-d chose the Jewish people to be their G-d. The fact that G-d provides us with everything is secondary to the acknowledgement that He is Our G-d and we are His people. One’s health, prosperity, and good fortune are all secondary and only to facilitate one’s service of G-d, which is the primary objective and focus of the Jew.



Yad Avraham Institute