

Nature vs. Nurture

The Disparity of Jacob & Essau

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Bereishit 25:27

27. 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.

כז. וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדָע צֹדַע אִישׁ שָׂדֶה וַיִּנְעֻקֵּב אִישׁ תֶּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶלִים:

And the youths grew up, and Esau was: As long as they were small, they were not recognizable through their deeds, and no one scrutinized them to determine their characters. As soon as they became thirteen years old, this one parted to the houses of study, and that one parted to idol worship. — [From Gen. Rabbah 63:10; Tanchuma, Ki Theze 4]

who understood hunting: [He knew how] to trap and to deceive his father with his mouth and ask him, "Father, how do we tithe salt and straw?" His father thereby thought that he was scrupulous in his observance of the commandments (Tanchuma, Toeldoth 8).

a man of the field: As its apparent meaning: an idler who hunts beasts and birds with his bow. — [From Targum Jonathan]

an innocent man: He was not an expert in all these [matters]. Like his heart, so was his mouth. A person who is not astute at deceiving is called תָּם, innocent.

dwelling in tents: the tent of Shem and the tent of Eber. — [From Gen. Rabbah 63:10]

וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו: כל זמן שהיו קטנים לא היו נכרים במעשיהם ואין אדם מדקדק בהם מה טיבם, כיון שנעשו בני שלש עשרה שנה זה פירש לבתי מדרשות וזה פירש לעבודה זרה:

יודע ציד: לצוד ולרמות את אביו בפיו, ושואלו אבא היאך מעשרין את המלח ואת התבן, כסבור אביו שהוא מדקדק במצות:

איש שדה: כמשמעו אדם בטל וצודה בקשתו חיות ועופות:

תם: אינו בקי בכל אלה, אלא כלבו כן פיו. מי שאינו חריף לרמות קרוי תם:

ישוב אהלים: אהלו של שם ואהלו של עבר:

Bereishit 25:22

22. And the children struggled within her, and she said, "If [it be] so, why am I [like] this?" And she went to inquire of the Lord.

כב. וַיִּתְרָצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקֶרֶךְ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה אֲנִכִּי וַתִּלְדֵּךְ לְדָרֶשׁ אֶת יְיָהוָה:

struggled: Perforce, this verse calls for a Midrashic interpretation, for it does not explain what this struggling was all about, and [Scripture] wrote, "If it be so, why am I [like] this?" Our Rabbis (Gen. Rabbah 63:6) interpreted it [the word וַיִּתְרָצְצוּ] as an expression of running (רוּצָה). When she passed by the entrances of [the] Torah [academies] of Shem and Eber, Jacob would run and struggle to come out; when she passed the entrance of [a temple of] idolatry, Esau would run and struggle to come out. Another explanation: They were struggling with each other and quarreling about the inheritance of the two worlds (Mid. Avkir).

ויתרצצו: על כרחך המקרא הזה אומר דורשני, שסתם מה היא רציצה זו וכתב אם כן למה זה אנכי. רבותינו דרשוהו לשון ריצצה, כשהיתה עוברת על פתחי תורה של שם ועבר יעקב רץ ומפרסס לצאת, עוברת על פתחי עבודה זרה עשו מפרסס לצאת. דבר אחר מתרצצים זה עם זה ומריבים בנחלת שני עולמות:

Saying of the Rabbis

Maaseh Avos Siman L'banim – The actions/occurrences in the lives of the fathers are a sign/root of the lives of the children/future generations.

Niddah 30:2

ומלמדין אותו כל התורה כולה
וכיון שבא לאויר העולם - בא מלאך וסטר על פיו, ומשכחו כל התורה כולה

[A fetus] is taught the entire Torah... and once it is born, an angel slaps it above its mouth, and [this] causes it to forget the entire Torah [that it learned while in utero].

Bereshis Rabba 47:1

Forefathers are referred to as a “Merkava” meaning a chariot. A Chariot is symbolic of someone who is given over to a will beyond their own. Just as the chariot goes in whatever direction is dictated by the driver.

Rambam Shmoneh Perakim Chapter 6

There are two types of people in the world. 1) *Chosid Hameulah* - those whose nature is only to do good and 2) *Kovesh et Yitzro* – those who must conquer an evil inclination in their nature in order to do good.

Parsha Overview

Isaac and Rebecca endure twenty childless years, until 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 digs 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.

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 father’s 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 older.

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—Machalath, the daughter of Ishmael.