

LET'S PRAY TOGETHER

We pray every week for the Jewish Friendship Ministry and their partner. I suggest our friends to pray from November 22 through 28, for Pastor Bruno Santeli and elder Carlos Muniz, they are pastoring and leading a Jewish Adventist community in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). As it was already said, during this pandemic Covid 19 the ministry is not easy, that is why it is important to pray for Pastor Bruno Santeli, elder Carlos Muniz, and their associates in Rio de Janeiro and for their families.

News

ANTISEMITISM IN USA

FROM I24NEWS: According to the FBI, 953 hate crimes were committed against Jews in the United States 2019, a 14-percent year-on-year increase from the 835 recorded in 2018.

In 2019, hate crimes against Jews constituted 60.2 percent of all hate crimes based on religion, a slight increase from the 58 percent recorded in 2017 and 2018. For the sake of comparison, Muslims were the next most-targeted group at 13.2 percent.

The newly released FBI hate crimes statistics for 2019 make for grim reading as they show that the number of attacks against Jews increased significantly in the United States.

In a year that saw three lethal and multiple victim attacks against Jews in the country, anti-Semitic incidents made up by far the majority of hate crimes based on religion.

"Federal officials recorded the highest number of hate-motivated killings since the FBI began collecting that data in the early 1990s, with the number of murders nationwide more than doubling the previous year," reported The Times of Israel.

The total number of hate crimes rose to the highest level in more than a decade.

INTERFAITH MEETINGS IN LONDON

Recently a week of Interfaith meetings was held in London, and some of our friends who participated in these meetings have sent us a report:

"INTERFAITH: Last night the Sabbath service at Chatham Shul (synagogue) was refreshingly different, reminding me of the methods used by Messiah: mingling with people, desiring their good, making friends and disciples.

We say, 'Well done' to all who attended the Interfaith Sabbath Service and also the Tree of Life (TOL) service at Ilford.

Our Jewish friends gave an amazing presentation at the GLA All Faiths event on Thursday.

FROM CCJ (Council of Christians and Jews): "This Interfaith Week has been one for reflection. At the start of the week we lost one of our former Presidents, Rabbi Lord Sacks. Throughout his life Lord Sacks was deeply committed to interfaith

and we are grateful for all that he contributed to CCJ. In his book, *The Dignity of Difference*, Lord Sacks wrote, 'Those who are confident in their faith are not threatened but enlarged by the different faith of others.' These words continue to inspire us. May his memory be a blessing."

GLOW TRACTS

Let's remember that we have produced three tracts published by Glow Tracts: the first one is on health, the second is about Shabbat and the third focuses on the prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9. These tracts are titled, "Healthy is Kosher!" "The Shabbat Keeps Us" and "Good News for the Jews."

The distribution of these tracts should be made in this order: we should start with the tract on health, and then when the conversation turns to religious subjects, the tract on Shabbat can be handed to your Jewish friend; then later, when confidence is built, the third tract on Daniel 9 can be introduced.

Glow Tracts suggests various ways to distribute these leaflets. Here they are seen by one of the authors in the Loma Linda Market (California).



Dutch Edition:
Hubert Paulleta
English Edition:
Richard-Amram Elofer
French Edition:
Sabine Baris
German Edition:
Yaw Heiser
Portuguese Edition:
Carlos Muniz
Russian Edition:
Alexandra Obrevko
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Claudia Masiero

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PARASHA FOR THIS WEEK

Toldot

תולדות

PARASHA OVERVIEW: GENESIS 25:19-28:9

After 20 years of marriage, Yitzchak's prayers are answered and Rivka conceives twins. The pregnancy is extremely painful. G-d reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the worldwide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins.

According to the Jewish tradition Eisav represents "Rome" and ultimately the "Goyim" or "nations" and Yaakov represents Israel.

Eisav is born, and then Yaakov, holding onto Eisav's heel. They grow and Eisav becomes a hunter, a man of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah developing his spiritual life. On the day of their grandfather Avraham's funeral, Yaakov is cooking lentils, the traditional mourner's meal. Eisav rushes in, ravenous from a hard days hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of lentils, demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of firstborn.

A famine strikes Canaan and Yitzchak thinks of escaping to Egypt, but G-d tells him that because he was bound as a sacrifice, he has become holy and must

remain in the Holy Land. He relocates to Gerar in the land of the Philistines, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say she is his sister.

The Philistines grow jealous of Yitzchak when he becomes immensely wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave.

Yitzchak re-digs three wells dug by his father. Avimelech, seeing that Yitzchak is blessed by G-d, makes a treaty with him.

When Yitzchak senses his end approaching, he summons Eisav to give him his blessings. Rivka, acting on a prophetic command that the blessings must go to Yaakov, arranges for Yaakov to impersonate Eisav and receive the blessings.

When Eisav in frustration reveals to his father that Yaakov has bought the birthright, Yitzchak realizes that the birthright has been bestowed correctly on Yaakov and confirms the blessings he has given Yaakov.

Eisav vows to kill Yaakov, so Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife.

EISAV SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT

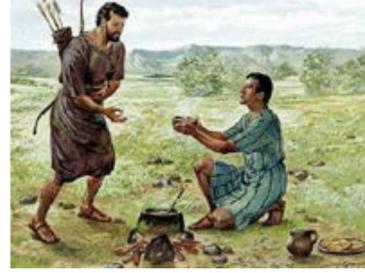
Our parasha for this week is about Yaakov and Eisav, the sons of Yitzchak. The relationship between Yaakov and Eisav became more intense: "So Yaakov said, 'Sell your birthright to me today [חַיָּוִם *chayom*]' (Genesis 25:31). The word *chayom* "this day," seems superfluous. "Sell me your birthright" should be enough. According to the Jewish tradition, "this day" was a day of mourning: it was the day on which Avraham died. Yaakov negotiated the birthright on the day of Avraham's passing! When it is said that Yaakov liked to be in the tent, it is understood that he liked to be in the tent of Avraham, to learn from him the biblical stories of the Creation, Noach, Tower of Babel, etc. Knowing the story of what happened between Yitschak and Yishmael, he asked himself: How would things be now if Yishmael, instead of Yitschak, had succeeded Avraham? Rabbi Hirsch adds: "Perhaps Yaakov was thinking: Grandfather now has died, and the grandson who is slated to succeed him and carry on his spiritual and moral mission roams the fields and absorbs himself in hunting." (2008, 563)

The Jewish tradition says Yaakov and Eisav were 15 years old when Avraham died. We know that when Yaakov and Eisav were born, Yitschak was 60 years old (Genesis 25:26). Since Avraham was 100 years old when Yitschak was born, this means Avraham was 160 years old when Yaakov and Eisav were born. Since Avraham died when he was 175 years old, this means Yaakov and Eisav were then 15 years old.

On that day, many people went into deep mourning and gloom—even dignitaries wept openly. People from all walks of life came to pay final tribute to the greatest and most beloved figure of their generation. The only one absent from the funeral was Eisav.

After the funeral, Yaakov returned home to prepare the mourner's meal—lentil pottage. Suddenly Eisav dashed in "from the field." Instead of weeping and mourning the great loss of his grandfather, he had gone hunting. Yaakov was shocked and ashamed. How could a grandson be so brutally insensitive? At that moment, Yaakov resolved to acquire the birthright; he therefore said to Eisav, "Sell me your birthright, today — because of what happened on this day. As the firstborn, you will be required to lead the worship service. A morally callous hunter like yourself is unworthy of so lofty a spiritual identity."

Eisav was only concerned with his own famished condition: "Feed me some of this really red stuff, because I'm exhausted!" (Genesis 25:30). Yaakov gave him more than he asked: "Then Yaakov gave Eisav bread and lentil stew" (Genesis 25:34)—he gave him not only "the really red stuff" but also "bread." The Jewish tradition says that when Eisav came from the field he was terribly hungry. It would not have been right of Yaakov to take advantage of the situation and tell Eisav that if he did not sell him the *bechora* (birthright), he would let him die from hunger. Yaakov knew that Eisav would then claim that he was under duress during the sale, and thus it was null and void. Wanting to make sure Eisav



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would not have any regrets about the sale, Yaakov first gave him enough bread to stave off his hunger. When Eisav was no longer hungry, Yaakov asked him if he still wanted the lentil stew in exchange for the birthright. Eisav was then relaxed, and with his free will exchanged his birthright for a pot of lentil stew.

To understand the story of the lentil stew, we have to understand Eisav's declaration: "Eisav said, 'I'm about to die. Of whatever use is this to me—a birthright?'" (Genesis 25:32). Eisav had been taught by Yitschak and Rivkah that death is the result of sin, as the Torah says: "For the day you eat from it you most assuredly will die" (Genesis 2:17). As Eisav reflected on death, he realized that Adam, Noach, Shem, Heber, Avraham—all of them righteous—had all died. Eisav regarded all death as an end with no future. The *Midrash*, (*Bereishit Rabba*, 63:11) says this was precisely Eisav's error. The great difference between Eisav and Yaakov is that Yaakov believed in Salvation by the merits of the coming Messiah. Yaakov knew that he would die like Avraham and all the righteous, but there will be a resurrection, and therefore the spiritual heritage of Avraham was very important. Eisav did not believe in the resurrection. What advantage would this birthright give him? He thought he would die one day as Avraham died and that would be the end, for there is nothing after death. In contrast to the message conveyed by Yaakov through his lentils, Eisav reasoned that if Avraham, the beloved of *Hashem*, whose righteousness sustained him through ten arduous trials of faith, had also failed and sinned, there was no way to rid oneself of sin, no matter how hard one strives for perfection. Eisav did not believe that *Hashem* could redeem him from sin and from the death that sin brings about. Man is powerless to perfect himself and must be saved by something outside himself: that was the message of the "sacrifice" of Yitschak. Without the intervention of *Hashem*, we are dead; without the Messiah, there is no future. Isaiah said, "But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities. The chastisement for our *shalom* was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

YITZCHAK BLESSES YAAKOV

The Parashah continues: "Now it was when Yitschak grew old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called Eisav his elder son, and said to him, 'My son.' 'Here I am,' he said to him. 'Look, I'm old,' he said. 'I don't know the day of my death. So now, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt me some game. Then prepare me a delicious meal, that I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die'" (Genesis 27:1-4).

Yitschak told Eisav that he would like to give him the *berachot*, but requested

Jacob was once simmering a stew, when Esau came home exhausted from the field. Esau said to Jacob, 'Give me a swallow of that red stuff! I'm famished!' (He was therefore given the name Edom). (Genesis 25:29,30)

that he first bring him food. Eisav remembered that the birthright did not belong to him anymore, and so he was reluctant to go. Thus, he pleaded with his father to give him the blessings immediately, and he would bring him food afterward. He did not say to his father that he was no longer the firstborn—rather, he told his father that Yaakov was very sly and he feared that during the time he would be away, Yaakov would sneak in and steal the *berachot*.

Some have wondered how Yitschak could be fooled when Yaakov came in, even if Yitschak was blind. Yitschak expressed recognition of Yaakov's voice. If the voice and the hands seemed to be those of two different people, then there should have been strong doubt as to the person's identity. Normally Yitschak should have doubted that it was Eisav there before him for the *berachot* (blessings). But Yitschak continued on to the end of the process. Why? Here is an explanation: Yitschak said to Eisav, "Indeed you are well aware that Yaakov has a refined character and speaks very politely. On the other hand, you speak roughly and without any respect. If Yaakov attempts to fool me, he will imitate your voice and speak in a very rough manner. Therefore, I advise you that when you bring the food, speak very gently. This will be the sign that you are really Eisav."

Because Yitschak was blind, Eisav was able to fool his father into thinking that he was a pious person. But Rivka knew the true character of her son Eisav. Yet, to avoid causing her husband pain, she had not revealed Eisav's true character to Yitschak. When Yitschak told Eisav to bring him food so that he could bless him, Rivka prepared the food and had Yaakov bring it to Yitschak instead. Yaakov, dressed in Eisav's clothes, pretended to be Eisav. The Torah relates that Rivkah overheard the conversation between Yitschak and Eisav: "Now Rivkah was listening when Yitschak was speaking to Eisav his son. So while Eisav went to the field to hunt game to bring in, Rivkah spoke (*amrah*) to Yaakov her son, saying (*lemor*), 'Look, I heard your father speaking to your brother Eisav'" (Genesis 27:5-6). The word *amrah* from the infinitive *lemor* usually means to say something to others. It is strange that Rivkah repeated twice the verb *lemor*. According to the above-mentioned explanation and according to the Jewish tradition, it is understood that Rivkah was advising Yaakov how to get the blessings. Thus, she told him "*lemor*" to speak in his regular tone of voice when he came before

He then moved away from there and dug another well. This time it was not disputed, so he named it Wide Spaces (Rechovot). 'Now G-d will grant us wide open spaces,' he said. 'We can be fruitful in the land.' (Genesis 26:22)

his father, because "I heard your father speaking to Eisav your brother "*lemor*" [telling him] to talk to him in your tone of voice." Yaakov came before Yitschak and spoke with *Hashem's* name on his tongue. Yitschak thought to himself, "The first sign is true, and Eisav is following instructions. Let me make sure he really is Eisav." He instructed him to come closer so that he could feel if his skin was hairy. After inspecting him, Yitschak said, "Now that I have two signs: the voice is that of Yaakov and the hands are those of Eisav, indeed he is my son Eisav and I shall bless him."

Regarding Yaakov entering his father's room to take the blessing intended for Eisav, the Torah states: "Then he came to his father and said, 'My father.' And he said, 'I'm here. Who are you, my son?'" (Genesis 27:18). Yaakov came trembling to his father and said only one word, "*Avi*" (my father), not a complete sentence inviting him to eat. When Yitschak asked, "Who are you?" Yaakov was convinced that Yitschak did not recognize his voice, and that it was safe for him to continue speaking. He then invited his father to eat the meal prepared for him and then bless him: "I'm your firstborn, Eisav. I've done just what you said to me. Sit up, please, and eat some of my wild game so that your soul may bless me" (Genesis 27:19).

Yitschak exclaimed, "The voice is Yaakov's voice but the hands are Eisav's hands" (Genesis 27:22).

The blessings Yitschak then gave to Yaakov begin, "May God give you—from the dew of the sky and from the fatness of the land..." (Genesis 27:28). To Eisav, Yitschak later reversed the blessing and said, "Behold, away from the land's fatness shall your dwelling be, away from the dew of the sky above" (Genesis 27:39). The sages of Yisrael explain that the blessing to Yaakov, patriarch of God's people, was that "heavenly matters" come first, and faithfulness to *Hashem* will bring material success. "The fat of the land" should be secondary, regarded only as a means to achieve the spiritual goal.

When Yitschak found out that he gave the blessings to Yaakov and not to Eisav as he thought he had, the Torah tells us: "Yitschak trembled with intense trembling" (Genesis 27:33). Why did Yitschak tremble so much? Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz cited the Sages who stated:

Yitschak experienced greater fear and anxiety at this moment than he did at the *Akedah* when he was taken by his father Avraham up Mount Moriah as a sacrifice, where he was bound and ready to be killed with a sharp blade. 'From here we see,' said Rav Chaim, 'that the realization that one made a mistake is the greatest of pains. This was not a one-time mistake. Rather, Yitzhak realized that all the years he thought Eisav was more deserving than Yaakov, he was in error.' (aish.com).



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Trembling with astonishment and distress, the blind old father learned the deception that had been practiced upon him. He keenly felt the disappointment that must come upon his elder son. Yet the conviction flashed upon him that it was God's providence which had brought about the very thing he had determined to prevent. He remembered the words of the angel to Rebekah, and he saw in Jacob the one best fitted to accomplish the purpose of God. While the words of blessing were upon his lips, he had felt the Spirit of Inspiration upon him; and now he ratified the benediction unwittingly pronounced upon Jacob: "I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed." (EP 116)

APOSTOLIC WRITINGS

ROMANS 9:12-13

One verse of the *Parashah* for this section is quoted by Rabbi Shaul in the Apostolic Writings—the word the Lord spoke to Rivka, wife of Yitschak: "And the LORD said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger'" (Genesis 25:23 ESV). This text is quoted in Romans 9:12 where Rabbi Shaul speaks about the people of Yisrael, to demonstrate that *Hashem* has and always has had a remnant on earth (cf. Elofer 2020, 166-169). We say "a remnant on earth," because it is not any denominational label or record in the book of a church or a synagogue that saves us. To be a child of God is not received automatically because of someone's status at birth. To be a child of God is first to love God, to be in communion or fellowship with Him, to please Him, to read and daily meditate on His word, to keep His commandments, to believe what is written in the Bible, to accept Yeshua as the *Mashiach* for both Yisraelites and Gentiles.

To illustrate this truth, Rabbi Shaul reminds us that Rivka had two babies in her womb, Eisav and Yaakov. Eisav was the firstborn, which implies he was the potential heir of all the spiritual privileges of the firstborn of Avraham and Yitschak. However, as we have already noted, this is not automatic: the heir to spiritual leadership must show an interest in their spiritual legacy. Eisav was not interested in the spiritual heritage of Avraham and Yitschak. On the other hand, the youngest, Yaakov, demonstrated much more interest in the spiritual heritage of his father and grandfather. The text says about these twins: "When the boys grew up, Eisav became a man knowledgeable in hunting, an outdoorsman, while Yaakov was a mild man [יֵשׁוּבִים *ish tam*], remaining in tents" (Genesis 25:27).

While Eisav loved hunting—and all the pleasure which goes with that lifestyle, such as laughing loudly, friendship with non-believers, loving the company of women, eating and drinking excessively—it is written that Yaakov was יֵשׁוּבִים *ish tam*. This word *tam* is used for the first time in the Hebrew Bible in this text of Genesis 25, and it is used infrequently—only fifteen times. This word *tam* means "innocent" or "integrity," as in Psalm 37: "Notice the man of integrity [יֵשׁוּבִים *ish tam*] and watch the upright—for the man of *shalom* has a future" (Ps. 37:37), or "to shoot from hiding at the innocent [יֵשׁוּבִים *ish tam*]" (Psalm 64:5a). *Tam* is also the word used to describe Job as "blameless" [יֵשׁוּבִים *ish tam*] (Job 1:1); and in the Song of Songs, which symbolically describes the relationship between God and His people, *tam* is translated as, "my per-

fect one [תָּמִים *Tamim*]" (Song 5:2). Therefore, recapitulating the meaning of the word *tam* which is used to describe Yaakov, we discover that it means "innocent, blameless, full of integrity and perfect." Do we need more reason to understand God's love for him? *Hashem's* choice of Yaakov for spiritual leader was not an arbitrary decision, but the logical consequence of the beauty of character of this man.

The text of Genesis also tells us that Yaakov was "remaining in tents" (Genesis 25:27). This word, "tents" אֹהֲלִים *ohalim*, has a special connotation for the Jewish people as it reminds them of a beautiful song recited or sung in the synagogue, called *Mah Tov*: מְהֵרָה וְיָבִיאוּנוּ אֶת אֹהֲלֵינוּ: "How beautiful are your tents, Yaakov: your dwelling places, Yisrael" (Numbers 24:5 NIV), words originally pronounced by Bilaam (Balaam). Even though at first this word "tents" was describing the dwelling tents of Yisrael, metaphorically the word tent refers to the meeting place with God, a place of study. The expression אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד *Ohel Mo'ed* refers to the Tabernacle, and it is used with this meaning 140 times in the Hebrew Bible. When Yehoshua (Joshua, the servant of Moshe) wanted to study the word of *Hashem* taught and written by Moshe, he "did not leave the Tent" (Exodus 33:11). This custom of studying "in the tent" is first encountered in the text about Yaakov (Gen. 25:27), who was "remaining in tents." The Jewish tradition has always identified this "remaining in tents" with study.

What was the topic of Yaakov's study? He was studying *Hashem's* instructions. As we have already noted, when Avraham died, Yaakov and Eisav were 15 years old. The text of Genesis 25:27 focuses on: "When the boys grew up." Young people learn a lot between the ages of 6 to 15, and during these formative years Yaakov had close contact with his grandfather Avraham, since the family lived together in the same encampment (Hebrews 11:9). Yitschak and Rivka were not alone in charge of the education of Yaakov, for Avraham was also involved. His role was to teach all aspects of his life with *Hashem* to Yaakov. Everything *Hashem* had conveyed to him orally he had taught to Yitschak and now he taught these lessons to Yaakov. The tents where Yaakov liked to be were the tents of Avraham and of Rivka. That is why Rivka had a very special relationship with Yaakov and understood he was the son of the promise. This is why she did not hesitate to help Yaakov obtain the cherished blessing, even though today we might question the method she used.

STORIES AND TRADITIONS

the fields hunting and stealing while Jacob devoted his time in prayer and study.

At what age does a child's education begin?

Here is what the Talmud says about Rabbi Yehoshua, who was one of the greatest Talmudic scholars. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, credited Rabbi

From his youngest age, even though his brother was considered the oldest, Yaakov understood he was the one who would positively answer God's calling; and when the opportunity arose to bargain for the right of the firstborn, he did not hesitate, even though his only available strategy involved a dish of lentils. Certainly he saw this as a valuable opportunity because his mother frequently reminded him of what *Hashem* had said to her—"The older will serve the younger"—as she encouraged him and trained him to be worthy of receiving this blessed heritage.

And it is these words Rabbi Shaul quotes in his letter to the Romans: "... she was told, 'The older will serve the younger'" (Romans 9:12 ESV). Again, we remember that Yitschak had two children, but they were not both "God's people"—only the one who made the choice of being the heir of the promise actually received it. Yaakov made that choice, but Eisav did not. That is why in this text Rabbi Shaul also wrote, "As it is written, 'Yaakov I loved, but Eisav I hated'" (Romans 9:13), which is not a word from Rabbi Shaul, but, as he said: "As it is written." This is a quotation from the Hebrew Bible, specifically the prophet Malachi: "'I loved you,' says *HASHEM*. But you say: 'How have you loved us?' 'Was Eisav not Yaakov's brother?'—it is the declaration of *HASHEM*—'Yet I loved Yaakov and Eisav I hated'" (Malachi 1:2–3a). Without knowing the background of Yaakov and Eisav as we have just explained above, we would not understand this affirmation of *Hashem* through Malachi. We could think *Hashem* was prejudiced, or this is a case of "predestination" where a person has no choice because one's entire life is already written out before he is born. Such a conclusion would not be correct. All the stories of the Bible tell us there is no predestination—our life and final destiny are the result of our own choices. While from time to time we may make the wrong choice, as did Avraham, Yaakov or David, God is there to forgive us and help us get back on the right track.

The important lesson for us? If we desire to be a child of God, we need to follow the example given to us by Avraham, Yitschak and Yaakov and choose the way of the Lord laid out for us in the Bible. Even though Yishmael and his six brothers were sons of Avraham, they did not make the right choice to love and serve *Hashem*. But all hope is not lost, because one of the sons of Avraham was Midian, and even if it is not recorded that Midian followed the God of Avraham, one of his descendants, Yitro (Jethro) followed *Hashem* and became a high priest for the Gentiles. God is a God of love and we always have the possibility to come back to Him.

HAFTARAH MALACHI 1:1 - 2:7

The prophecy begins: "An oracle: The word of *HASHEM* to Yisrael by Malachi" (1:1). It is clear that even though this first verse says this prophecy is addressed to Yisrael, the prophecy is referring directly to the people of Judah since the ten tribes of the Northern kingdom of Yisrael did not exist anymore. This verse, addressed to Yisrael, demonstrates that the Jewish people, the people of Judah, have taken back their original name, "Yisrael," which means the descendants of Yaakov.

The next verse makes the link between this *Haftarah* and the *Parashah* for this week. In *Parashat Toldot*, we read about the birth of Yaakov and Eisav, their differences and conflict. The prophet Malachi recalls that the covenant made with Avraham and Yitschak was confirmed to Yaakov and not to Eisav: "I loved you," says *HASHEM*. But you say: 'How have you loved us?' 'Was Eisav not Yaakov's brother?'—it is the declaration of *HASHEM*—'Yet I loved Yaakov and Eisav I hated'" (Malachi 1:2-3). This verse once again proclaims to us how much *Hashem* loves Yisrael. The Jewish people are people who have sinned and have been punished by *Hashem*, but this punishment is from a Father who loves His child. The prophet, speaking for the people of Yisrael, asks, "How have you loved us?" Yisrael knew that *Hashem* loved the patriarchs and ancestors, but they wanted a confirmation of His love for this generation. At first, *Hashem* answers this question with a question: "Was Eisav not Yaakov's brother?" Yes, of course Eisav was the brother of Yaakov—they were twins—but the blessings of *Hashem* were more upon Yaakov and his descendants than upon Eisav. Then *Hashem* emphasizes: "Yet I loved Yaakov and Eisav I hated." The text then prophesies how the land given to the descendants of Eisav will always be a desert: "I made his hills a wasteland and gave his inheritance to jackals of the wilderness" (Malachi 1:3). The land given to Eisav is east of the Arabah and south of the Dead Sea, an area that is even today a difficult, arid land, full of desert. Yet Yisrael was to always respect their brothers, the descendants of Eisav, for the Torah said to Yisrael: "You are not to detest an Edomite, for he is your brother" (Deuteronomy 23:8).

After affirming His love for Yisrael, *Hashem* says to His people that He does not see that Yisrael reciprocates His love—it seems that Yisrael is not honoring *Hashem*, her God, as

she should: "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. So if I am Father, where is My honor? If I am Master, where is My reverence?"—Says *HASHEM-Tzva'ot*—"you, *cohanim* who despise My Name!" (Malachi 1:6a). The main reproach is made to the *cohanim* (the priests); they are the leaders, they are the teachers—it is their responsibility to teach the law of God; instead, not only do they neglect to teach the people, but they "despise My Name," said *Hashem*. However, the *cohanim* deny their guilt, and answer God: "How did we despise Your Name?" (Malachi 1:6b). *Hashem* then responds by telling them they despise the name of God by offering inappropriate sacrifices. In the Hebrew text, the term used to describe such inappropriate sacrifices is *lechem* (bread). Radak affirms that this Hebrew word is used in Scripture for all kind of sacrifices (see Leviticus 21:21; Numbers 28:2). *Hashem* asked Yisrael to bring perfect sacrifices to the "table of the Lord," but instead they bring "a blind one as sacrifice" or "a lame or sick one" (Malachi 1:8). In fact the entire text of this *Haftarah* portion criticizes the behavior of the *cohanim*.

In chapter 2, *Hashem* reminds the *cohanim* that the covenant of Shalom (peace) was made with the tribe of Levi, through Aharon, their head. In that time, the "fear of the Lord" was a characteristic of the entire tribe of Levi; they were the only tribe who did not possess any portion in the land of Yisrael, and they were the preachers of truth: "Instruction of truth was in his mouth. Injustice was not found on his lips. In *shalom* and uprightness he walked with Me, and he turned many from iniquity" (Malachi 2:6). Some commentators have seen in this verse a reference to Pinchas (Phinehas), and some other continue to see here a reference to Aharon. Rashi's view is that this verse is referring to Aharon, Elazar and Pinchas and their descendants who taught God's Torah with sincerity and guided the nation with true Torah-based decisions. The *Talmud Yerushalmi* says, "the teaching of truth is referring to the teachings that Aharon received from Moshe who had received them directly from the Almighty" (*Peah* 1:1). This *Haftarah* portion ends with advice to the *cohanim*: "For a *cohen's* lips should guard knowledge, and instruction must be sought from his mouth. For he is a messenger of *HASHEM-Tzva'ot*" (Malachi 2:7).

Jacob then gave Esau bread and lentil stew. [Esau] ate it, drank, got up and left. He thus rejected the birthright" (Genesis 25:34)



NEVER TOO LATE NEVER TOO EARLY

Our sages explain that while they were small, the difference between Eisav and Yaakov wasn't as noticeable. Only when the boys reached Bar Mitzvah, the age of thirteen, was there a noticeable difference between Eisav and Yaakov. Eisav spent his time in

Yehoshua's mother for her son's great Torah knowledge. Each day she would bring her infant son to the study hall where they were studying Torah, so that he would absorb the holy words of the Torah even while still in his crib! Just like it is never too late to learn Torah, it is never too early!