

The Generations of Isaac

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The video version is at: <https://youtu.be/3DSxHpBIYtA>

The scripture reading is Genesis 25:19-34, 27:1-40

It does not take much reading of the biblical text to realize that genealogy is an important element. The Bible seems to spend an inordinate amount of time tracking and recording the genealogy of important people. But the genealogies as recorded in the Bible contain much more than the simple family tree that we think of when we approach the genealogy of our own family history.

The Hebrew word used in the Bible is Toledot, number 8435 in the Strong's Concordance. It generally means or is used in the context of a succession of progeny. However, the implications of the word and context in which it is used imply something much deeper.

As we examine the generations, or toledot, of Isaac, we begin to see these deeper implications. The story of Isaac is often looked upon as a foreshadow of Messiah Yeshua. But beneath the surface lies a greater mystery with shadows or connections we may not have thought about previously. What is it about the generations of Isaac that gives us a deeper understanding of the generations of Messiah?

The genealogy of Messiah Yeshua as recorded in the gospel of Matthew is unique and unlike any other such listing in the Bible. Matthew records the generations from Abraham, to David, and to Messiah Yeshua.

Matthew 1:1-6 NKJV 1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: 2 Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. 3 Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. 4 Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. 5 Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, 6 and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.

In Matthew's genealogy, he mentions several women in the line of Yeshua. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary the mother of Yeshua in verse 16. It is interesting to note that three of them, Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth are all Gentiles. The lives of all three perhaps give us a hint to Yeshua's virgin birth.

God promised Abraham and Sarah that He would provide them a son that, through whom, God would fulfill His promises. Abraham and Sarah were one day visited by three angels.

Genesis 18:10-11 NKJV 10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.

This promised son was Isaac. Both Isaac and Yeshua are sons of the promise and covenant that God made with Abraham. The obvious shadow of Messiah in the life of Isaac is his willingness to submit to being sacrificed like that of a lamb on the altar. Through Abraham's willingness to follow through with sacrificing Isaac, even though Isaac was the son of the promise, God swore to honor His covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 22:16-18 NKJV 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - 17 "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying

I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

We read in the previous Torah portion, Chayei Sarah, of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah. As it turned out Rebekah was barren and could not bear a son for Isaac. Isaac in turn interceded with the LORD on Rebekah's behalf.

Genesis 25:20-21 NKJV 20 Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. 21 Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Little did Isaac and Rebekah know at the time that Rebekah bore twins. Rebekah's pregnancy was apparently a difficult one. The twins "struggled" within her. Rebekah prayed to the LORD about this situation.

Genesis 25:22-23 NKJV 22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23 And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

This struggle of the twins alludes to a time of trouble or tribulation before the coming of Messiah Yeshua. Rebekah asks of the LORD, "why am I this way?" This may be a hint of the final redemption at the end of the age when Messiah returns. It is tribulation and trouble that indicate that the time of Messiah is near. In verse 22, the scripture says that the twins "struggle within her." The Hebrew word for within is number 7130 Keh'reb meaning within self. It is from the root word number 7126 Kaw'rab meaning to come near, to draw near, or something being at hand. Yeshua constantly reminded his followers that the kingdom of God was near or at hand. Speaking to His disciples as recorded in the gospel of John, Yeshua talks of the pain and sorrow of a woman in labor as a metaphor for the coming of Messiah and the nearness of the kingdom of God.

John 16:20-21 NKJV 20 "Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. 21 "A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

A Jewish targum says that "the children fought in her womb as men doing battle."ⁱ The LORD told Rebekah that two nations were struggling within her. Jacob the younger of the two will be the father of Israel, and Esau the elder will become the father of the nation of Edom. The twins become two opposite spiritual forces in the world. We can think of Jacob representing the kingdom of heaven, and Esau representing the kingdom of this world.

When Yeshua stood before Pilate, accused of asserting Himself as king, He makes the clear distinction between the two worlds.

John 18:35-37 NKJV 35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." 37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Yeshua had earlier told His disciples that the king of this world would be judged and cast out.

John 12:30-31 NKJV 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. 31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

In our book, "Babylon Rising" we identify eight earthly kingdoms spread throughout history that are a kind of satanic counterfeit to the kingdom of God. At the time of Yeshua, one of these kingdoms, the Roman empire, is the predominant kingdom on the earth. First Fruits of Zion in their work *Shadows of the Messiah* comments:

"The Romans brought all nations into subjugation and enforced *Pax Romana*, a kingdom of peace... The Roman emperor acted as a false Messiah: "The son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)"ⁱⁱ

This struggle between Jacob and Esau, which began in Rebekah's womb, will last for their lifetimes and will continue through their descendants to the end of the age when Messiah returns. This enmity between the brothers is apparent at their birth.

Genesis 25:24-26 NKJV 24 So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. 25 And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. 26 Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

Just as the birth of Esau came before Jacob, the kingdoms of this world will come before the kingdom of heaven arrives on this earth. Jacob was born still grasping the heel of Esau.

What is the significance of the heel of Esau? If someone were to grab you by the heel, you would most likely fall. Esau thought that the birthright and, therefore the ultimate kingdom, belonged to him. But just as with Jacob coming on the heels of Esau, Messiah will come at the end of the age, on the heels of the eighth and final earthly kingdom of the Antichrist.

The name Jacob, or in Hebrew, Yah-ak-obe' is number 3290 meaning heel catcher. It is related to Aw-kab', number 6117 meaning to seize by the heel or to restrain. From birth Jacob placed restraint on Esau. Messiah has and will in the future put restraint on the kingdoms of this world.

Right from birth we see the twins are quite different. Those differences become even more striking as they grow up.

Genesis 25:27 NKJV 27 So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.

We can infer a lot from this short description of Esau and Jacob. The text reads that Esau was a skillful or mighty hunter. Esau was not unlike Nimrod who was also described as a mighty hunter.

Genesis 10:9 NKJV 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD."

The sages say that Esau even sought to emulate Nimrod in other matters, seeking power and prestige among men. The words of John come to mind when we examine the life of Esau.

1 John 2:15-16 NKJV 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.

Their father Isaac preferred Esau over Jacob. Perhaps Isaac could not see these spiritual shortcomings of Esau. The scripture says that Isaac ate the game that Esau brought to him. Jewish tradition also states the Esau was deceitful and brought flattering and empty words to his father Isaac. On the other hand, Jacob is described as a "mild man, living in tents."

The NASV translates verse 27 as "Jacob was a peaceful man." The Hebrew in this phrase is "ish tam." Ish is a word for man, tam is number 8535 meaning pious, gentle, perfect, undefiled, or upright. First Fruits of Zion in Shadows of the Messiah comments:

"The Torah uses another form of the same word to describe unblemished animals fit for sacrifice. As the ish tam of the Torah, the father of the twelve tribes, and the man who would one day be named Israel, Jacob foreshadowed Messiah, the perfect man."ⁱⁱⁱ

Esau and Jacob could not be more opposite in personality and demeanor. Of the parents, Isaac preferred Esau and Rebekah preferred Jacob. Perhaps Rebekah saw the duplicity in Esau's character and understood the prophecy given to her about the older son serving the younger.

Isaac most likely suffered from a spiritual blindness to Esau. Isaac's blindness also concealed from him the essential goodness and worthiness of Jacob. As Isaac drew nearer to his time of death, he suffered from physical blindness as well. This blindness on the part of Isaac illustrates the blindness of Israel when it comes to Messiah.

Isaiah 42:18-19 NKJV 18 "Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see. 19 Who is blind but My servant, Or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, And blind as the LORD'S servant?"

Both the prophets and Yeshua Himself frequently rebuked the people and leaders of Israel for their spiritual blindness.

Matthew 23:15-16 NKJV 15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. 16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'

The miraculous healings that Yeshua performed as recorded throughout the gospels show Yeshua's mission of opening spiritually blind eyes. The apostles frequently wrote about the spiritual blindness that prevented many of the Jewish people from "seeing" their Messiah. Yeshua Himself said in Matthew 13:11-13

Matthew 13:11-13 NKJV 11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

As Christians we must guard ourselves from being overly critical of the Jews in their blindness to Messiah Yeshua. There is a divine purpose to it. Paul in his letter to the Romans speaks to the purpose of this blindness.

Romans 11:25-26 NKJV 25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

As we approach the end of Isaac's story, Isaac called Esau to his side, beginning another thread that points to Messiah.

Genesis 27:1-4 NKJV 1 Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." And he answered him, "Here I am." 2 Then he said, "Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. 3 "Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. 4 "And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die."

Rebekah overheard this conversation and told Jacob to retrieve two choice kids of the goats for her. Rebekah planned a deception and have Jacob disguise himself and take the prepared meal to Isaac and claim to be his brother Esau. Jacob objected to this deception stating that it would result in a curse upon himself. But eventually Jacob went along and agreed to the deception.

Genesis 27:15-19 NKJV 15 Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. 18 So he went to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me."

This begins a series of biblical accounts of deceptions and disguises that ultimately leads to the story of Joseph hiding his true identity from his brothers. This story of Jacob and his disguise is a shadow of the concealed identity of Messiah among Israel.

In the story of Isaac and Rebekah and their twin sons Esau and Jacob, we see only a part of the generations or toledot of Isaac. Through the telling of their story we see that the word toledot means much more than just listing names and recording a genealogical record. It also includes the stories and biographies of the families. The promises that the LORD made to Abraham would be passed down from Isaac to his progeny. The story of Isaac Rebekah, Esau and Jacob illustrates how God will ultimately fulfill his promises first given to Abraham. Each toledot we encounter in the Bible has a story to tell and a lesson to teach us. Each of them, in a small way, foreshadows the ultimate redemption of man through Yeshua the Messiah.

Study Questions:

1. What is the significance of each of the women mentioned by Matthew in the genealogy of Yeshua? How do the three Gentile women foreshadow Yeshua's virgin birth?
2. How is the ongoing enmity or struggle between Esau and Jacob a shadow of the struggles that happened at Yeshua's first coming and will happen again at His return?
3. Compare Rebekah and the birth of the twins Esau and Jacob to the woman giving birth described at the beginning of Revelation chapter 12.
4. Obadiah prophesied about the ultimate fate of Esau, (Obadiah 1:1-10) compare this fate with Esau's attitudes and actions in this Torah Portion and that recorded in other scripture.
5. What is the significance of the blessing from Isaac? Why would the brothers go to such lengths to secure it?

6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?
7. BONUS: Esau sold his birthright for a single meal. Why would he consider his birthright to be of such little value?

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ⁱ Targum Pseudo-Yonatan on Genesis25:22

ⁱⁱ FFOZ Shadows of the Messiah, D.T. Lancaster, Vol 1, p151

ⁱⁱⁱ FFOZ Shadows of the Messiah, D.T. Lancaster, Vol 1, p154