

Toledot
"Generations"

Torah Reading: Genesis (Bereshit) 25:19 – 28:9

Haftarah Reading: Malachi 1:1 - 2:7

Study Questions

1. Go through the entire portion and cite all the examples of the sovereignty of God.
2. What was God's prophecy to Rebekah concerning Jacob and Esau? How has it come true in history, or hasn't it?
3. Why was Jacob named "Jacob"? Why was Esau named "Esau"?
4. What was the importance of both a birthright and a father's blessings?
5. Why did Esau spurn the birthright, yet covet the blessings?
6. Why do you think that the chapter describing the conflict between Isaac and the Philistines was inserted into the Torah?
7. How do you understand the historical reference to the Philistines?
8. Why did Esau cry so emotionally when Isaac could not give him the blessings he wanted?
9. Why did Jacob flee?
10. Which peoples came from Esau? What relationship have they had with Israel through the years?
11. Why was this Haftarah reading linked to this parasha?

Memory Verse

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant." Bereshit 26:24b

Study Notes

Outline

- God's sovereignty in birth
- God's sovereignty over the land
- God's sovereignty over inheritance

God's Sovereignty

- These are very confusing passages
- It seems that all we see are human decisions, human error, and human strength or weakness
- We need to step back and see the sovereignty of God in all these passages

- The repetition of this theme, God's sovereignty, in the Torah must mean that God wants us to keep it fresh in our minds

Issac

- We don't learn much about Isaac. He seems to be a minor character in the story
- The truth is that it does not matter how much or how little God has planned for us. What matter's is God's plan and that each of us has a part in it

Barrenness and Prayer

- God allowed Rebekah's barrenness and it brought her and Issac to God in prayer
- The word "entreated" means urging and profusion (25:21)
- Issac was continually seeking the Lord about the matter. There was regular communication.
- The Talmud states "Why were our ancestors barren? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, longs to hear the prayer of the righteous."

Pregnancy and Prayer

- The twins fighting in her brought Rebekah to prayer
- Thus, all the events concerning the birth of Jacob and Esau caused both parents to seek the Lord for wisdom, revelation, and encouragement

Prophecy

- A predictive prophecy is a portion of God's sovereign eternal plan that He has chosen to make known to man before it actually happens in human history.
- If God is eternal, then all of His thoughts are from eternity. If that is true then nothing takes Him by surprise. Nothing is decided within the confines of human chronology.
- All of His thoughts, ideas, and plans are from eternity. To assert anything less about God is to diminish His divinity.
- What do you think about these statements?

Prediction - Jacob and Esau

- God's sovereignty is demonstrated in the birth of the twins. Rebekah has told the older will serve the younger
- He determined their roles on earth and fixed their places in His sovereign plan for redemption
- What do you make of this?

The Heel

- Jacob's name is from the Hebrew root for 'heel'
- By giving Jacob this name his parents were unwittingly tying him to the Messianic prophecy in Bereshit 3

- We learn that the 'heel' is to be identified with Israel. The Messiah will come from Jacob.
- Most likely his parents did not realize what they were doing. Like so many of us they were being used without being aware of it.
- We are instruments of God's sovereignty in His unfolding plan of redemption

Philistines

- A seagoing people from the Aegean Sea area. They are not known to have permanently settled in Canaan until around 1200 BC. Isaac would have lived his life around 1800-1700 BC.
- This is used by some to show a contradiction. However, just like the Hittites it is very likely that the Philistines were colonizing the areas around them earlier than the dates we know now.

Testimony of the Wells

- The Patriarchs brought life to the land by digging wells. They named them in ways that were reminders of God.
- In 26:28 Avimelech states "We have indeed seen that the Lord has been with you". What evidence did they see?
- Isaac's material wealth led to envy, not peace so it must have been something else.
- The Lord was sovereignly causing His Name and His character to be made known throughout Canaan by the simple human act of digging and naming a well.

Confirmation of Covenant

- In 26:3-5 God confirms His covenant with Isaac "Because Abraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs".
- The implication seems to be that as Abraham followed by faith, so did Isaac.
- Isaac most likely needed this confirmation to encourage him during difficult times with family, the Philistines, and other hardships

Abraham kept Torah?

- While the Midrash states that Abraham kept the minutiae of the Torah the term does not have to mean the Torah given to Moshe
- Torah means teaching and it most likely indicates that Abraham was faithful in what God taught him.
- One thing seems evident, that the daily life of a man of faith is characterized by an obedient walk, following closely what the Lord teaches.

Birthrights

- First, they signified that the possessor was considered the family priest. He would perform the sacrifices in order to relate to the Lord and would facilitate the relationship between the family members and the Lord
- Secondly, the receiver of the birthright was the immediate inheritor of all that his father possessed. In him was the continuation of his father's spiritual heritage.

Esau's Rejection of the Birthright

- By rejecting his birthright, Esau may have been demonstrating that he did not possess a personal relationship with the Lord, nor did he care to help others draw closer to the Holy One.
- He was also not willing to curb his freedom to carry on the spiritual heritage of his father.

Jacob's Deception and a Conniving Mother

- First, God's will was done. That does not mean He approved of the method.
- We need to keep in mind that Jacob and Rebekah may not even have been concerned about performing God's will. They were most likely just being selfish.
- How all this works together I don't know. Just as Abraham needlessly tried to help God through Hagar we will see some unfortunate results for Jacob later on.
- God doesn't need us to sin to see His plan carried out.

The Blessing

- In 27 we see Isaac blessing his children. These were really prophecies. How does this play out with our children?
- Isaac refused to reverse his blessing despite the fact that he was deceived.
- Either he couldn't reverse it or God stopped him so His plan would be fulfilled.
- It was God's eternal plan for Jacob to receive both the family inheritance and the blessings from Isaac. No human situation would or could have thwarted that eternal plan.