TOLDOT – GEN 25:19-28:9
Rabbi Dan Moskovitz – NOV 2, 2013

1. Rebekah gives birth to twins, Jacob and Esau. (25:19-25:34). Isaac prays on behalf of Rebekah, who is barren. She gives birth to twins, Jacob and Esau. Esau sells to Jacob his birthright as the firstborn in exchange for some stew Jacob had cooked.
2. AREA OF FOCUS: Two very different twins – two nations in your womb, the old shall serve the younger.
    1) When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors; but Jacob was a mild man who stayed in camp. 28 Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah favored Jacob.
3. Three Questions:
    1) How could two brothers, born to the same parents and raised in the same household under the same conditions have turned out so different from each other?
    2) Why does the Torah choose to tell us that Isaac favored one son while Rebekah favored the other?
    3) Does the nature of each brother predetermine the outcome of the story?
4. Rabbinic tradition considers education and child-rearing to be among the most sacred of tasks. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch extracts from our Parashah much of the Rabbis' attitude toward education throughout the ages:
    1) "The striking contrast in the grandchildren of Abraham may have been due not so much to a difference in their temperaments as to a ***mistake*** *in the way they were brought up. No attention was paid to their differences while they were little; both were given the same teaching and educational treatment. Had Isaac and Rebekah studied the nature of Esau and spoken to that nature, who can say how different the history of the ages may have been recorded."*

5. **A Deeper Insight:** "Teach a child according to his own way." [Proverbs 22:6]
6. Later in our Parashah, Isaac asks Esau to hunt for him so that he [Isaac] may bless him [Esau], he says: "Take your quiver and your bow and go out into the field and hunt game for me. Prepare for me a tasty dish like I love and bring it to me so that I may eat and so that my **soul** may bless you before I die." [Genesis 27:3-4]
    1) Three verses later, when Rebekah recounts this conversation to **Jacob**, she has Isaac saying, "that I may bless you in the presence of **God** before I die."
    2) Again, when Jacob, dressed to appear before Isaac like Esau, Jacob speaks of God, Isaac responds, "The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau."
        i. Commentaries understand Isaac's comment, "the voice," as referring to Jacob's use of the name of God.
7. A student of Torah observes that Isaac and Rebekah speak of God when talking to Jacob but not when talking to Esau.
    1) Did Isaac and Rebekah try too hard to speak to Jacob and Esau only on the plane that they thought each would be comfortable?
8. **By perceiving Esau as "earthy," did they neglect to speak with him about God; perceiving Jacob as "spiritual" did they neglect to teach him about the beauty of physicality, also created by God?**
9. **<u>In their attempt to "engage" each son on his own terms, did they fail to challenge him?</u>**
10. Had Isaac and Rebekah challenged each of their sons to grow beyond their natural inclinations who can say how different the history of the ages may have been recorded?
11. **QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:**
    1) Why does the Torah include this story?
    2) How does this analysis inform your own engagement of your children/grandchildren?