

פרשת תולדת / Parashat Toldot

Shabbat Kislev 2, 5769, November 29, 2008
 32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d
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Every man did that which was right in his own eyes

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Genesis 25:19-28:9
 הפטרה: Malachi 1:1-2:7
 הברית: Romans 9:1-31
 החדשה

10 As you know there are seven major stems of the Hebrew verbal system. There are however a number of additional stems that are considered “minor” because of their relative infrequency. These stems are Polel, Polal, Hithpolel, and Hishtaphel. Biconsonantal verbs occur infrequently in the Piel, Pual, and Hithpaal stems but instead occur in the Polel, Polal, and Hithpolel stems. These stems are characterized by a Holem-Vav after the first consonant and duplication of the second root consonant. In this week’s parsha we find in *Bereshit / Genesis 27:29* and interesting use of a Hishtaphel verb. Interesting because Yitzchak (Isaac) uses the Hebrew word וישתחוו “to bow, worship” within the blessing he gives to his son Yaakov (Jacob).

20 The verb חוה (to bow down, worship) appears 173 times in the Masoretic text and requires special attention because it occurs in the stem called the Hishtaphel. (Some older lexical sources identify the verbal root as שחה and the stem as Hithpalel) these words are classified as a weak verb class which inflect quite regularly and are identifiable because of the distinctive prefixes of the Hishtaphel stem.

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Bereshit / Genesis 27:28-30

27:28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine; 27:29 May peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you; Be master of your brothers, And may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you.' 27:30 Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. (NASB)

28 רִיחַ בְּגִדָיו וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר רְאֵה רִיחַ בְּנֵי כְרִיחַ שְׂדֵה
 אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכְוּ יְהוָה: וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם הָאֱלֹהִים מִשְׁלַל הַשָּׁמַיִם
 29 וּמִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְרֹב דָּגָן וְתִירֹשׁ: יַעֲבֹדוּךָ עַמִּים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ
 לָךְ לְאֲמִים הֵנָּה גִבּוֹר לְאַחֶיךָ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לָךְ בְּנֵי אִמְךָ
 30 אַרְרִיךָ אָרוּר וּמְבָרְכֶיךָ בָרוּךְ: וַיְהִי כַאֲשֶׁר בִּלְהַ יִצְחָק
 לְבָרְךָ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיְהִי אָדָּם יֵצֵא יֵצֵא יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי
 31 יִצְחָק אָבִיו וַעֲשׂוּ אֶחָיו כָּאֲמִי מִצִּדּוֹ: וַיַּעַשׂ גַּם־הוּא
 29 v. ב"נ וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ בְלֹא גַעִיָּא. 25 v. ס"א לֹא. 28 v. נ"א ב"נ וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם. 29 v. וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ
 כְּתִיב, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ קָרִי. נ"א ב"נ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ. 31 v. בְּרֹב סַפְרִים תְּבָרְכֵנִי בְּשִׁבְא לְבָר.
 32 v. ס"א מִי. 33 v. בְּרֹב סַפְרִים וַאֲבָרְכֵהוּ. 37 v. ס"א הָיָה. 37 v. בְּהַלְלֵי אֵיפָא.
 38 v. ס"א תְּבָרְכֵהוּ.

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קרי (what is written and what is to be read)

30 When considering the scriptures we must consider the ancient Hebraic thought that goes into the scriptures. In *Bereshit / Genesis 27:29* Yitzchak uses the Hebrew word וישתחוו “to bow, worship” in the blessing he gives to his son Yaakov (Jacob). What exactly is Yitzchak really trying to say to his son? The nations and people will bow down to worship him?

35 ***Bereshit / Genesis 27:29***
27:29 May peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you; Be master of your brothers, And may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you.'

40 I have included a list of the more common tenses or inflections of the verb השתחו found in the Tanach. Examine the list below. Taking the meaning of the various inflections our understanding of the word וישתחו “to bow, worship” are we to believe Yitzchak is informing Jacob he will be worshiped by the nations and by his mothers sons? This certainly cannot be the case. The Bible promotes the worship of G-d alone (e.g. The Shema, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4*) but it is possible our understanding of the word וישתחו is misunderstood. What is Yitzchak trying to say to his son that the nations and his brothers will prostrate themselves to him? What does it mean to prostrate? Does it mean to serve or to show honor?

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The Hishtaphel step – weak verbs

Tense	Heb. Form	Gender	Translation
Perfect	(השת)		
	השתחוה	3ms	he worshipped
	השתחוו	3cp	they worshipped
Imperfect	(ישת)		
	ישתחוה	3ms	he will worship
	וישתחו	3ms	he worshipped (vav consecutive)
Imperative	(השת)		
	תשתחוה	2ms	you will worship
	אשתחוה	1cs	I will worship
Inf. construct	ישתחוו	3mp	they will worship
	(השת)		
	השתחות		(you) worship
Participle	(משת)		
	משתחוה	ms	to worship, bow down
	משתחויים	mp	worshiping, bowing down
			worshipping, bowing down

70

Is this prostrating in the same manner in which one prostrates oneself before G-d in worship? There appears to be something we are not understanding in the ancient Hebraic thought process here. We have to be very careful how we study the scriptures. There would obviously be a problem if we used the list above to suggest the Bible promotes worshipping Yaakov (Jacob). Similarly we have to be careful to examine our perceptions on how scripture should be interpreted from what we have been taught from tradition. Scripture interpretation is a strong function of our own pre-misconceived perceptions of real meaning behind scripture. Scripture doesn't teach itself, we have to dig and dig to understand what G-d would have us to know about the scriptures. One of the most prevalent problems today deals with this very thing. Our personal opinion along with tradition out weighing what the Bible really says. This isn't a new phenomenon though; this is something that has been occurring for thousands of years. One such example can be found while reading the rabbinic literature on the discussion of Parashat Toldot and Yitzchak's blessing of Yaakov and Esav.

In the rabbinic literature there is a discussion over Parashat Toldot, on why Yitzchak prefers Esau over Yaakov (Jacob)? It is commonly understood that Yitzchak can bless only one of his two sons, either Yaakov or Esav. With this understanding a problem arises questioning Yitzchak's choice of Esav over Yaakov. Yitzchak's choice of Yaakov over Esav is quite disturbing and so it is suggested there is the possibility Yitzchak actually planned to bless both of his sons.

HaShem's choice of Avraham and his sons to become His special nation has become a major theme in sefer Bereshit (book of Genesis). HaShem promised Avraham numerous times:

"l'zar'acha natati et ha'aretz ha'zot..."

"to your offspring, I have given this land"

See Bereshit / Genesis 12:7, 13:15, 15:18, and 17:8

HaShem advised Avraham that only Yitzchak would be blessed to fulfill this destiny. G-d later informs Yitzchak of this blessing and forbids him from leaving the land (see *Bereshit / Genesis 26:2-5*). Unlike Avraham, Yitzchak has two sons from the same mother. It is assumed then that Yitzchak believes both Yaakov and Esav would be chosen to fulfill the blessing and promise of G-d. The dilemma occurs if Yitzchak considered both Yaakov and Esav why does Yitzchak intend to bless only one of them? The answer is obtained by suggesting there are two types of blessing. It is proposed there are two basic types of blessings found in sefer Bereshit (book of Genesis), (i) bechira and (ii) bracha. The bechira process is that which describes G-d's blessing of "zera v'aretz" to the Avot (fathers) being chosen to become the forefathers of His special nation. This suggests bechira is bestowed by G-d. The bracha process is one which blesses personal destiny. An example is given from *Bereshit / Genesis 9:24-27* when Noah blesses his sons. This suggests bracha is bestowed by the father.

120 It is suggested then that Yitzchak expects both his children to become the
nation of Yisrael. It is reasoned since Esav has a job, is married with children and
can take care of himself and others this would make Esav a good leader. Yaakov
on the other hand is still living at home and single, and thus it is assumed that
Yaakov is the “ish tam yoshev ohalim” a man of the book and can provide the
family with spiritual guidance. This is a theoretical blessing that is believed to be
125 similar to the duty of the shevet Levi (see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 33:10*). The
idea is the nation of Yisrael needed to be setup first (meaning Esav) and then the
spiritual leader would be able to operate in his intended purpose (meaning
Yaakov). With this the question is posed why Rivka intervenes and causes
Yaakov to steal Esav’s blessing?

130 The rabbinic dilemma is over the question of the complexity of the bechira
process and why trickery, lying, and steeling must be employed to arrive with the
correct leader being blessed to carry on the leadership role. Now do you notice
something here? This calls into question an interesting point. The rabbinic
interpretation eludes to the idea that Yitzchak being one of the Avot of Yisrael, he
should have been spiritually in tune to not make the kind of mistake he did to
bless Esav over Yaakov. This assumption then becomes the underlying theme
135 which the Chazal (חז"ל) need to explain. As a result the assumption is made that
one’s national spiritual leader could not have made such an error. Now in order to
explain this obvious problem, different stories have been invented such as the
proposition that Yitzchak was intending to bless both his sons. From tradition, it
is possible to miss completely what G-d is trying to tell us.

140 Even in the midst of man’s mistakes, sin, etc G-d is able to work out his divine
will and providence. Yitzchak was a man just like you and I, and was given to
making mistakes in his choices and even given to make the wrong spiritual
choices. I believe this demonstrates the grace of G-d in his mercy he continues to
work out his will and purpose in the lives of those He loves.

145 Like our understanding of the word וישתחו “to bow, worship” we must be
careful not to invent stories to make an explanation. We must further be very
careful to examine tradition in light of all scripture. So, my question for you
today is this, are you living your life from your own personal opinion or from a
biblical world view? In the Neviim and Katuvim (prophets and writings) there
150 are two interesting verses I would like to look at.

Judges 17:6; 21:25

*17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was
right in his own eyes.*

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*21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was
right in his own eyes. (NASB)*

Proverbs 14:12

*14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of
death. (NASB)*

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חז"ל, Chazal,
is an acronym for
"Chachameinu
Zichronam
Livracha", חכמינו
זכרונם לברכה, literally
"our sages of
blessed memory". In
rabbinic writings
this generally refers
to Talmudic sages,
either collectively or
individually.

165 Has the state of believers today returned to a similar condition that Yisrael was
in during the period of the Judges? More specifically, are you in a state of living
according to what is right in your own eyes? These verses are not positive
statements but negative ones. This sin of doing that which is right in their own
eyes was what accounted for the sins of idol worship in the prophet Micah. The
Torah of God had been forsaken and replaced with subjectivism. This is exactly
170 what I see today in the postmodern relativist culture we live in today. Have you
been the tool of subjectivism?

175 It is quite obvious during this year's presidential election. I have spoken with
people on their choice for the president of the United States and the reasons for
their choice. Some say they only want change. It doesn't matter what a person's
beliefs are, it doesn't matter that G-d's values found in the scriptures are ignored
by leadership. Some don't even care what the plan is for economic recovery. The
motto or mantra is we want change and so nothing else matters.

180 This mentality which is a part of postmodern relativist culture has made far
and wide inroads to our hearts and minds. The question we have before us today
is this "have you been living according to what you feel is right in your own eyes
making a mockery of scripture in a sense?" I have to say believers today are
being made after the imaginations of men but I question whether it is really after
the imaginations of men or after our own imaginations. You ever wondered how
believers can mix New Age Eastern Mysticism with their beliefs for example
Yoga? What about the idea of doing anything to get people into churches
185 compromising the word of G-d for shorter sermons and jazzier music to entertain
people? How about removing the altar call because it isn't popular in modern
church practice?

190 **Have you considered the spiritual implications of your choices yesterday, today, or even tomorrow?**

195 In the age where everyone does what is right in their own eyes it is not
surprising to see ignorance epitomized or the Bible redefined or simply ignored.
Proverbs 14:12 says the result of the ways which are right in our own eyes is the
"way of death." Let's stop making up our own rules and start doing what is right
in G-d's eyes. We have to commit to serving the Lord instead of ourselves. It is
time today, right now to check your motives! Proper motivation is important to
the Lord and improper motivation may well be idolatry as one worships self,
religious performance or approval of others. Maybe it is time to stop worshipping
200 man (word וישתחו "to bow, worship") and start worshipping G-d with a pure and
clean heart!

205 **Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!**

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,

"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever