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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Toldot – We Are All Jacob

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Toldot, which is Hebrew for “generations,” and it goes from Genesis 25:19 to Genesis 28:9.

This parashah tells the story of the conflict between Jacob and Esau, which started even before their birth (Genesis 25:19-34).

It also speaks of Isaac passing off his wife, Rebekah, as his sister, taking after his father Abraham (Genesis 26).

Then there’s the story of Jacob and Rebekah deceiving Isaac into blessing Jacob (Genesis 27).

The parashah concludes with Jacob being told to flee to Paddan-aram to avoid Esau’s wrath (Genesis 28:1-9).

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to look at what Jacob teaches us about the Gospel.

When you read the story of Jacob and Esau, in spite of Esau’s immoral character and shortsightedness, you can’t help but feel a little sorry for the guy. After all, his own brother cheated him—twice!

Genesis 27:36

Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. **He took away my birthright**, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.

Many Bible commentators have gone through all kinds of mental gymnastics to try to justify Jacob’s behavior. But how can you really justify extortion and fraud? Concerning the birthright, while Esau had his own issues and clearly didn’t care about it to begin with, Jacob still took advantage of his own family. Concerning the blessing, Jacob straight up lied to his father to get it.

The biblical author clearly intends to portray Jacob as manipulative and motivated by self-interest. Even the name “Jacob” comes from the Hebrew word for heel, and it means “one who grabs the heel.” This name sort of carries a negative connotation, like tripping someone from behind. We see this throughout the early part of Jacob’s life—he tripped people from behind and ran them over.

What makes the story of Jacob all the more confusing is that God seems to be okay with the results of Jacob’s antics. For instance, Jacob gets this blessing through lies and deception. God never steps in and says, “Nope. Sorry. I’m not going to honor that. This blessing is very important, and you can’t just expect to obtain it by fraud.” Rather, God launches His chosen nation, that He promised to Abraham, through Jacob the deceiver. How do we make sense of this?

Maybe the key is in realizing that the Bible is not holding up Jacob as some paradigm of virtue. He was self-centered. He wronged people. He was a sinner, just like all of us. And yet, he still received the blessing, despite the fact he clearly didn’t do anything to “earn” it.

What is this blessing of Abraham anyway? Well, the blessing included the land, bringing forth a chosen nation, and being a blessing to the nations. But as we continue into the New Testament, we learn that this blessing represents something much more:

Galatians 3:8

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

As we read the Scriptures, we learn that the Messiah came forth from Abraham. The Messiah embodies this all-important blessing. He enters into our fallen, sinful world to save and redeem all of us who have certainly done nothing to earn this blessing.

So how do we make sense of this story? We need to realize that we are all Jacob. Jacob started off as selfish and manipulative. He was a sinner, just like us. And yet, he received this blessing, which ultimately represents the promise of the Messiah. He didn’t do anything to legitimately earn this blessing. Neither have we.

But what’s important to realize is that Jacob’s story didn’t end when he received the blessing. Despite his many character flaws, God began a work in Jacob’s life to transform him. God is doing this same work in each of us who have received Messiah. Jacob eventually wrestled with God, and his name was changed to Israel. He was no longer Jacob the deceiver. God changed him. Later, Jacob even reconciles with his brother Esau. It’s a powerful story of redemption.

By the way, this name, “Israel,” is the same name given to everyone who inherits this blessing of Abraham. God wants to change you, to transform you. By grace, you have received the blessing. Now walk as the redeemed child of God that you are.

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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