Points to Ponder – Parshas Toldos 5774

1. **Avraham birthed Yitzchak (25:19)** – Rashi notes that the clarification was necessary because the Leitzanei HaDor (the sarcastic ones of the generation) would mock the family and declare that Sarah had been impregnated by Avimelech. Therefore, Hashem changed Yitzchak face to appear almost exactly as Avraham’s so as to remove all doubt. **HaGaon Rav Aharon Leib Steinman Shlita** seems puzzled as to why Hashem would even bother to pay attention to those who mock? He explains that although normally we ignore those who are merely Leitzim, here it was necessary to respond since Avraham inspired Emunah into people and this series of rumors could have detrimental effects on those who had bought in to Avraham’s system. It was for them that Hashem responded. (We find a similar thing by Dovid HaMelech with his son Kilav).
2. **And the children fought within her and she said if this is the case then why am I here? (25:22)** – Rashi cites a Midrash that notes that each time she passed either a Beis Avodah Zara or a Yeshiva, she felt “the baby” trying to jump out. She worried about the disparate interests of the child and, in desperation, sought out advice from Shem. Yet, when she was told that there were two children with two different natures, she was calm. Why? **Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl**. explains that although knowing that a child will be born with a difficult nature is a tough challenge, a child who is confused and drawn to multiple, opposing directions in life is an even greater challenge as it makes it more difficult for him/her to set a course and make choices for a future. Rivka noted that if she already saw in utero, that the child was opposingly directed, how would she be able to raise him and educate him properly?
3. **Esav was a hunter, a man of the field. (25:27)** – **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl. (Sam Derech**) explains that in life we can have many different ways of serving Hashem. We just need to recognize Hashem in each of the paths. Yitzchak thought that this was the case with Esav who would serve Hashem through hunting. However, Esav was an Ish Sadeh – all he knew and all he spoke about was hunting. His entire essence was the field. Nothing more.
4. **The deal between Esav and Yaakov (25:29-34)** – The gemara (Bava Basra 16b) castigates Esav for violating 5 prohibitions that day. It also highlights his inability to even ask for food by name but rather to refer to it as “the Red thing.” Why such negativity about a man who remembered to say “please?” **Rav Yosef Carmel Shlita** explains that in Hebrew the word “Nah” can either refer to “Please” or to a state that means “now” or “raw”. When lentils are raw, they are red. When cooked properly, they turn green. This is the Torah’s hint toward Esav’s intent with the word “Nah” – he didn’t mean it nicely and diplomatically. He wanted his food and he wanted it NOW.
5. **Esav’s wives (26:34)** – Here they are referred to as Yehudit Bas Be’Eri and Basmas Bas Eilon HaChivi. Later, they are referred to as Adah Bas Eilon and Alalivah Bas Anah Bas Tzivon (P. VaYishlach). How did their names change so dramatically? **HaGaon HaRav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita** explains that Esav saw that they did not provide a good relationship for the in laws. As a result, he thought that be changing their names, it would change their relationship with Yitzchak and Rivka (of course, a change of a name does not mean much…)
6. **The Voice is the voice of Yaakov** – There is a Yirushalmi (Nedarim 8:3) that notes that according to Rav Acha B’shem Rav Chuna, Esav will dress up and wrap himself in a Tallis in the future and sit with the Tzaddikim in Gan Eden. Hashem will come and remove him. **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** asks how Esav will be able to get that far with the Tzaddikim. Why will HASHEM have to kick him out? He answers that Yaakov is not the only one who can put on a disguise. The difference is that Yaakov can look like Esav but not be like Esav. Esav on the other hand, can look like Yaakov but it will have an effect on him – enough to get him into Gan Eden. However, Hashem is able to see past disguises and will ultimately punish Esav by kicking him out of the garden.
7. **“I already made him the Gvir” (28:37**) – One cannot assume that Yitzchak intended to give the Berachos to Esav. After all, the Berachos included rulership over Kedushat HaAretz, something that could not go to someone who was unable to fathom it. Rather, explains **Maran HaRav Schachter Shlita**, Esav was destined to receive a Beracha on the extras – the financial wealth of the world. When Yaakov received THAT blessing, Esav asked him for a Beracha left for him – implying that he wanted the Birkas Avraham. Yitzchak told him that Birkas Avraham was not any old Blessing. The Beracha for wealth can be shared – but Birkas Avraham was to be reserved for he who deserved it – Yaakov.

1. **Haftorah – Machar Chodesh**: Why have a special Haftorah for the day before Rosh Chodesh? We do not have it for any of the other Yamim Tovim! **Rav Soloveitchik** ztl once noted that there are striking similarities between the moon and the Jewish people. Like the moon who right after it hits its nadir, it begins a rapid ascent toward a new beginning, the Jewish people can take solace in their darkest moments that Machar Chodesh – signaling a new day – a Yom She’Kulo Aruch!