Assembly Notes
PARSHAS TOLDOS 5786
Assembly Theme: Theme - Elevating the lowest aspects of life

Dvar Torah

Is it fair to expect someone to achieve something that is impossible because of their genes? Can you blame them for their failures? Obviously not!

In this week's Parsha (Toledos) Hashem Himself sent a message to the pregnant Rivka: You are carrying twins, and they are going to have polar opposite personalities. And of course, it came to be.

From the beginning Yaakov was drawn to study, spirituality, kindness (Chessed) and selflessness. His twin Esav was just as drawn to the earth and the wild, to physical indulgence and selfishness ("What's in it for me"), to hunting and violence. Can we blame Esav for living up to his destiny?

This raises a number of troubling issues. For example:

1) The concept of reward and punishment is based upon freedom of choice. Could Esav possibly have turned out differently?

2) Why would two perfectly righteous parents have a child who was congenitally wicked?

3) Why would G-d create such an individual?

4) Why did Yitzchok want to give the greatest blessing ever to someone who was a wild, scheming narcissist?

The obvious answer is that no child is born evil, Esav included. Esav's divine mission in life was to engage with the material world and to elevate it through uncovering the G-dliness within it. He had to grapple with challenges and temptations and overcome them.

Chassidic teachings explain that the power to elevate the lowest level of physicality stems from a much higher source. To combine opposite forces you need a power that is higher than both; in this case, combining the spiritual with the material.

Yitzchok felt that the way to achieve this is through empowering Esav with transcendent blessings and power. That is why he wanted to bless Esav. Rivka saw the reality on the ground, and she realised that giving the blessings directly to Esav would overwhelm him. The Divine goal of elevating Esav and the world can only be fulfilled through Yaakov receiving the blessings and then refining Esav. That is what has been happening over the past three thousand years.

The Torah is telling us what occurred with our ancestors with the primary purpose that we apply it to our own personal lives and challenges.

The twins struggling before they were born are the story of the competing impulses of our lives. Our Yaakov is drawn to spiritual experiences, Torah and inspiration. Our Esav relates to life in the material realm and our physical needs. Most of us spend the majority of our time involved with the latter. The legacy of Yitzchok and Rivka is to unleash the most sublime powers in existence through our Esav being guided and refined by our Yaakov.

Shabbat Shalom!
Good Shabbos!

גוט שבת!