

TO-L'DOT



6th of the 54 sedras;
6th of 12 in B'reishit

Written on 172.7 lines, ranks 36th

4 Parshiyot; 2 open, 2 closed

106 p'sukim, ranks 29 (9th in B'reishit)
Tied with Vayigash and Bo; shorter than
each in words & letters and length

1432 words, ranks 34 (10th in B'reishit)

5426 letters, ranks 33 (10th in B'reishit)

Its p'sukim are below average in length

MITZVOT

None of the 613 mitzvot are in To-l'dot,
however, as we mention often, there are
Midot and values and other lessons to
be learned.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha
p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the
beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of
p'sukim in the parsha

Kohen - First Aliya 21 p'sukim - 25:19-26:5

[P> 25:19 (16)] This is the history of
Yitzchak b. Avraham; Avraham
fathered Yitzchak.

SDT: Rashi quotes the Gemara
that tells that when Yitzchak was born,
scoffers said that Avraham and Sara,
who were old and childless for so long,
had found a baby and claimed it as their
own. Avraham invited the leaders of the
nations, their wives and infants, and
Sara miraculously was able to wet-nurse
all the babies - not just her son Yitzchak.
(The Gemara points to the plural BANIM
in 21:7.) Then the scoffers accepted that
Sara bore Yitzchak, but chided Avraham
that Avimelech was the father (since
Yitzchak's birth followed Sara's
abduction). A miracle occurred and baby
Yitzchak was the very image of his
father Avraham, until the scoffers
proclaimed, "Avraham sired Yitzchak."

A note on proper pronunciation. We go
out of our way to write TO-L'DOT (in
English) because of how common it is in
the yeshiva world and among Anglos, to
mispronounce the name of this week's
sedra, twice. First, the word should be
accented on the last syllable MILRA),
not on the next-to-the-last syllable
(MIL'EIL) as is very common in certain
circles. This mis-accenting is very
common with people's names as well as
the names of the sedras. Israelis and
S'faradim don't have this problem. The
Moshes they know, they call mo-SHEH.
We (the aforementioned Anglos) most
often say MO-sheh. And so on. Last
week's sedra was cha-YEI sa-RA, not
CHAYei SA-ra, as we would say.

Which syllable to accent aside, the
other problem with the pronunciation of

this week's sedra is the SH'VA under the LAMED. Most common mispronunciation is TOL-dot (or TOL-dos). That treats the SH'VA as a syllable-closing SH'VA NACH - which it is not. Rather, the first syllable is TO (like the English word, toe). The LAMED has a SH'VA NA under it and it attaches itself to the DOT (like the English word, dote) syllable. So the two syllables are TO and L'DOT, which is why we often write it the way we do. sho-F'TIM is the other sedra so plagued. The wrong syllable accented goes for a majority of the sedras. BO and TZAV we get right. But not Mikeitz or B'shalach... and most of them.

It isn't the end of the world to day TOL-dot; it's just not correct.

Yitzchak is 40 years old when he marries Rivka (3 years after the Akeida). The Torah emphasizes Rivka's family background.

Safe to say that most of us learned from way back that Rivka was 3 years old when she married Yitzchak. This notion is based on the Torah's telling us of the birth of Rivka right after the portion of the Akeida. Yitzchak was 37 at the time of the Akeida and the death of Sara Imeinu. He married at 40, hence Rivka was 3 at the time.

However, Chizkuni (an early commentary of Torah and of Rashi) argues that if Rivka was only 3, there would be a discrepancy in the chronology of the rest of her life. We have sources that indicate she was 133 at the time of her

death. Working backwards with various events, we find that she was 14 when she married Yitzchak. The account of Nachor's family - including Rivka, does not necessarily mean that she was just born at the time of the Akeida. The Torah is just introducing us to Rivka in order to bring her into the picture, so to speak, as Yitzchak is about to take over the mantle of Patriarchhood from Avraham Avinu.

After 20 years of childlessness (10 until Rivka was of child-bearing age - based on the 3 year old opinion - plus an additional 10 years without a child), Yitzchak and Rivka pray to G-d. G-d hears their (actually his) prayer and Rivka becomes pregnant. She is having a "rough time" and goes to Shem b. No'ach (who died at age 600, outliving Avraham) who tells her G-d's message, that she will give birth to twins who will go in very different ways and become great adversarial nations.

SDT: Commentaries say that Rivka was unaware that she was carrying twins; she thought the turmoil within her existed in a single baby - THIS had her very upset; she was somewhat calmed by the Divine message of her carrying twins. Another commentator suggests that Rivka knew she'd have twins but did not see the benefit of bringing a Yaakov into this world if it meant also having an Eisav. Part of the reply to her question "why do I need this?" is that her conclusion was wrong.

Eisav and Yaakov are born, Yaakov clutching the heel of Eisav. The boys grow and develop different personalities - Eisav is the hunter and outdoorsman; Yaakov, the mild, studious "tent-dweller". Yitzchak loves Eisav; Rivka loves Yaakov.

SDT: There are many different commentaries on these relationships. Note that Yitzchak's love is based on Eisav's providing food for him (or deceiving him - based on various drashot). Rivka's love is unconditional. Pirkei Avot says that only an unconditional love will endure forever.

Yaakov is preparing a lentil stew for his father. (The Gemara tell us that this was the day that Avraham died; Yaakov was preparing a traditional mourner's meal for Yitzchak.)

Eisav returns from the field in a state of exhaustion. He asks Yaakov for some of the food. In exchange for the food, Yaakov acquires the birthright, which is insignificant in Eisav's eyes, but meaningful to Yaakov.

[P> 26:1 (33)] A famine hits the Land (like the one in Avraham's time - this is one of the many similarities between the lives of Avraham and Yitzchak) and Yitzchak goes to Avimelech in Gerar. G-d appears to Yitzchak and reminds him that he must not leave the Land. G-d also repeats his promises of the Land and of the large nation that will descend from him.

Levi - Second Aliya 7 p'sukim - 26:6-12

Yitzchak dwells in Gerar.

Yitzchak and Rivka pose as brother and sister (as did Avraham and Sara, and for the same reason). After a while, Avimelech discovers that they are actually husband and wife and complains to Yitzchak about the deception. Avimelech orders his people to leave Yitzchak and Rivka alone. Yitzchak and family flourish in Gerar and G-d blesses them.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 10 p'sukim - 26:13-22

Yitzchak thrives in Gerar, which creates jealousy among the locals who fill in the wells that Yitzchak has dug.

(There is great symbolism in the Torah's account of the wells, their names, their failures, and then their successes.) Yitzchak is driven away from Gerar. A new well that Yitzchak digs (Eisek) is taken over by the shepherds of Gerar, as is yet another well (Sitna). Only the third well (Rehovot) permits Yitzchak to live in relative peace.

Some see this as a hidden reference to the 1st and 2nd Beit HaMikdash, which fell, and the 3rd which will stand forever. May we see it soon in our time.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 7 p'sukim - 26:23-29

Yitzchak sets himself up in Be'er Sheva. G-d appears to him and reiterates the promises for prosperity made to Avraham. Yitzchak builds an altar to G-d and continues to prosper. Avimelech, realizing that his own prosperity was due to the presence of Yitzchak, comes with a delegation to Yitzchak in order to enter into a covenant with him.

Not a rare experience through the generations - Jews expelled from a country, which subsequently regrets its actions because of the decline they experienced without them. And we, somehow, kept going back.

Chamishi 5th Aliya 33 p'sukim - 26:30-27:27

Yitzchak and Avimelech partake of a meal and exchange oaths. Be'er Sheva is reaffirmed as "the city of the Avot" by Yitzchak's actions. Another example of the similarity between Yitzchak's life and Avraham's.

[S> 26:34 (2)] Eisav marries at 40 years of age - a (sub)conscious attempt to emulate his father. However wicked Eisav is, he is genuinely respectful and loving of his father. On the other hand, Eisav's choice of a wife disgusts both Yitzchak and Rivka.

[S> 27:1 (55)] Yitzchak is old and blind

and calls Eisav to prepare for him a special meal and then receive a special blessing. While Eisav is in the fields doing his father's bidding, Rivka prepares Yaakov to receive the blessing instead of Eisav. She tells Yaakov to bring her two goats and she will prepare the dishes that Yitzchak loves. Yaakov hesitates for fear that Yitzchak will feel his smooth skin and realize that Yaakov has come to deceive him. Rivka dresses Yaakov in Eisav's garments and places a goat-skin on his neck to give it a rough feel. She gives Yaakov the food to bring to his father.

It seems obvious that Yaakov was punished measure for measure for his deception of Yitzchak. The Brothers not only deceived Yaakov concerning the fate of Yosef, but they used a goat and a garment (exactly the two items that Yaakov used to deceive his father) to bring about their deception. If we accept the idea that Yaakov was supposed to get the bracha that Yitzchak thought he was going to give to Eisav, that it was G-d's will, and even G-d's command, according to Onkeles, to Rivka to "set it up", then why was Yaakov punished so severely?

An answer might be suggested in the form of an analogy. When one has to take drastic, life-saving treatments - "serious" medication, radiation, etc., what is done might be absolutely necessary, but there are often harsh side-effects.

SDT: When the Torah tells us that Yaakov gave his father wine to drink, the TROP note under the word LO (to him) is a MEIRCHA CH'FULA, double meircha. This rare note (only 5 times in the Torah), suggests the Meshech Chochma, reminds us of the proper way to drink a cup of wine - not gulping it down in one shot, but rather finishing it in two "installments". It's more polite that way.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 23 p'sukim - 27:28-28:4

The blessing invoked by Yitzchak upon Yaakov, for bountiful produce and respected status among nations, has been borrowed by us to be recited on Motza'ei Shabbat -

V'YITEN L'CHA HA-ELOKIM... 'May G-d grant you the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, much grain and wine. Nations will serve you; governments will bow down to you. You shall be like a lord over your brother; your mother's children will prostrate themselves to you. Those who curse you are cursed, and those who bless you are blessed.'

As Yitzchak finishes blessing Yaakov, Eisav returns from the hunt. He prepares food for his father and presents it with a request (demand) of the blessing. Yitzchak trembles greatly when he realizes that the bracha went to Yaakov. When Yitzchak explains to Eisav that Yaakov received (rightly so)

the blessing, Eisav bitterly cries out and asks his father for a blessing too. Yitzchak gives Eisav a blessing (not as exalted as Yaakov's). Eisav plans to kill Yaakov for this, the second time he has taken something away from him. Rivka hears (how? Ru'ach HaKodesh, says Rashi) of Eisav's plans and encourages Yaakov to flee to Rivka's hometown until Eisav's wrath subsides. Rivka suggests to Yitzchak that he send Yaakov away to find a proper wife.

Note that Rivka did NOT tell Yitzchak that Eisav wanted to kill Yaakov. Perhaps she felt that it would pain him too much to learn of Eisav's true character. Perhaps, Yitzchak would have refused to believe that his Eisav would contemplate such a thing. Instead, Rivka expresses another (legitimate) concern as her reason for wanting Yitzchak to send Yaakov away.

Yitzchak calls for Yaakov and blesses him again and sends him off to Padan Aram to find a wife from Rivka's family. He gives Yaakov "the blessing of Avraham", thus providing for the continuity of what becomes The Jewish People.

SDT: Once again, we see that it is the IMA who understands what is going on, and the ABBA who is 'blinded' by his love.

Avraham loved his son Yishmael and balked at Sara's demand that he banish Yishmael and Hagar because of the

potential negative influence on Yitzchak and because of actual misdeeds by Yishmael to Yitzchak.

Now it is Yitzchak who is 'blinded' by his love of Eisav, to Eisav's real character. Rivka Imeinu is the one - guided by G-d - who acts to secure the b'racha for Yaakov.

And it doesn't end here. It happens in the next generation, and beyond. Stay tuned for further details as we proceed from sedra to sedra.

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 5 p'sukim - 28:5-9

Yitzchak sends Yaakov off to Padan Aram to Lavan b. B'tu'el, the brother of Rivka who is the mother of Yaakov and Eisav. (Unusual ID.) Eisav sees that their father has sent Yaakov to find a wife, because he does not want him to take a Canaanite wife. Yaakov goes on his way and Eisav takes as another wife, the daughter of Yishmael, Machalat b. Yishmael...

Talmud Yerushalmi explains that this is ba-S'MAT (not BAS-mat - another to-L'DOT example), and asks why her name was changed. The astonishing answer is that all Eisav's sins were forgiven when he took a wife intended to please his parents. The Talmud generalizes and gives this as the source that the sins of a CHATAN (and KALLA) are forgiven when they marry. Strange source for a significant concept.

Haftara 21 p'sukim Mal'achi 1:1-2:7

There is speculation as to whether Mal'achi is the name of an individual, or a description of "My messenger". Some say that Mal'achi was Ezra. Mal'achi is known as the last of the prophets. Mal'achi brings G-d's message to the people that He loves Yaakov (and his descendants), and hates Eisav, even though Yaakov and Eisav are brothers. Thus, the haftara echoes the rivalry and relationship between the two brothers that is the substance of the sedra To-l'dot. The haftara refers to the respect a son has for his father. In this regard, Eisav was exemplary.

Mal'achi criticizes the kohanim of the time for not being careful in the offering of korbanot. We can see this as a preparation for the building of the new Beit HaMikdash in the hopes that it will function properly and be a true honor to G-d.