PTDT

PhiloTorah D'var Torah

TO-L'DOT
The Whole Story

Why transliterate the word TO-L'DOT rather than TOLDOT? To emphasize the fact that the proper syllabification of the word is TO (like toe or tow) and then L'DOT. Not tol-dot. See the Sedra Summary for more details.

For me, the TO-L'DOT Story started with a comment (I don't remember the source) about the fact that the word TO-L'DOT in V'EILEH TO-L'DOT YISHMAEL is spelled without VAVs and for Yitzchak there is a VAV, indicating that Yishmael's line of descent is not considered the continuation of Avraham's legacy, but rather Yitzchak's lineage is.

That got me curious about the word TO-L'DOT, and this is what I've found.

The word occurs 13 times in Tanach. 11 times in the Book of B'reishit, once in Bamidbar, and once in Megilat Rut.

Of the 11 times in B'reishit, the Book, twice we find the word in Parshat B'reishit, four times in Parshat No'ach, once in Chayei Sara, once in the sedra named TO-L'DOT, twice in Vayishlach, and once in Vayeishev.

As to the spelling - TO-L'DOT has four different spellings among the 13 occurrences of the word.

Twice it is spelled with two VAVs:

TAV-VAV-LAMED-DALET-VAV-TAV

The first and last times in Tanach that the word appears.

B'reishit 2:4, right after the account of Creation, the Torah presents another picture of Creation, with EILEH TO-L'DOT HASHAMAYIM V'HA-ARETZ B'HIBAR-AM. In this context, TO-L'DOT means the story or the chronicles or the history.

More commonly, TO-L'DOT translates as generations.

The other two-VAV TO-L'DOT is in Megilat Rut (4:18) - V'EILEH TO-L'DOT PERETZ, PERRETZ HOLID ET CHETZ-RON.

Once, as mentioned earlier, TO-L'DOT is spelled without any VAVs -

TAV (CHOLOM CHASEIR, just a dot above and to the left of the letter) - LAMED - DALET (CHOLOM CHASEIR) - TAV. V'EILEH TO-L'DOT YISHMAEL BEN AVRAHAM (B'reishit 25:12)

Ten times with one VAV - Seven times TAV-VAV-LAMED-DALET-TAV.

The first is different from all others in that it doesn't start with EILEH or V'EILEH. In B'reishit 5:1 we have ZEH SEFER TO-L'DOT ADAM...

Six more times with the same spelling - EILEH... NO'ACH, V'EILEH... B'NEI NO'ACH, EILEH... SHEIM, V'EILEH... TERACH, This week's V'EILEH... YITZCHAK BEN AVRAHAM - all in B'reishit, and one more - V'EILEH TO-L'DOT AHARON UMOSHE - in Bamidbar.

And then there are three spelled

TAV-LAMED-DALET-VAV-TAV.

These are V'EILEH TO-L'DOT EISAV, twice! and finally, EILEH... YAAKOV.

Avraham Avinu doesn't have a TO-L'DOT AVRAHAM, but his name is attached to three TO-L'DOTs - TERACH HOLID ET AVRAM, YISHMA-EL BEN AVRAHAM, and YITZCHAK BEN AVRAHAM followed by AVRA-HAM HOLID ET YITZCHAK.

Except for my memory of a comment about Yishmael's lack of VAVs, I have no explanation for the various spellings of the word.

And to really finish the TO-L'DOT story, There are 13 additional TO-L'DOTAMs, 9 L'TO-L'DOTAMs, and one K'TO-L'DOTAM in Tanach. **PTDT**