

# Parashat Toldot Shabbat Table Conversations for Children and Adults

We are now on the 320<sup>th</sup> day (or so) of March 2020. With so many activities restricted by the pandemic, sometimes dinner table conversations can be more difficult than normal. At the same time, meaningful communication (not just talking) and human interaction has never been more important! In our Torah portion this week, we even see what happens when a couple fails to communicate. As such, for this Shabbat, I encourage you to plan ahead in order to make your Shabbat table conversations richer and more meaningful. Make Shabbat special! Here are some resources, based on this week Torah portion, Parashat Toldot:

To read the *parashah* in its entirety (Hebrew and English), click here: <https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.25.19-28.9?lang=bi&aliyot=0>.

To read a family-friendly summary of the Torah portion, click here: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/summary-of-parashat-toldot/>

Conversation for Families with Children at Home:

- What do you know about Isaac and Rebecca? Jacob and Esau?
- What is a birthright and why would someone want it?
- Nobody – even a parent – is perfect. What are some of your favorite mistakes that you have made?
- What characteristics or values does God want in a Jewish leader?
- We often have a favorite food or a favorite movie (feel free to discuss your favorites here). Is it okay to have a “favorite child” too? Why or why not?
- Is there a difference between a parent treating children “the same” as compared to treating them “equally”?
- In that Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of lentils, what does that reveal to us about Esau?
- In that Jacob was willing to trick his father, what does that say about Jacob?

For Adults:

- Why do you think Isaac favored certain characteristics and Rebecca others? Is there gender stereotyping going on here? Is there something else to this part of the story?
- Why would God have spoken to Rebecca and not Isaac?
- How do we reconcile the covenant carrying on through Jacob with all his imperfections?

- What does Gen. 26:18 reveal about Isaac? What might this say about the child of someone of "importance"?
- In our portion, God reveals truths to Rebecca. Have you ever felt like God is speaking to you? When and in what circumstances?
- Do you think there is a broader road map – a plan – for your life? If so, what is your purpose?

After Shabbat, please let me know if you engaged in a Torah discussion!

Here are some other resources for Shabbat table discussions you might enjoy:

- *What If ...?* By Rabbis Zilberstein and Sherrow.
- *Covenant and Conversation* by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (z'l)
- *Torah for Teens* by Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen
- *The Heart of Torah* by Rabbi Shai Held

Rebecca, Caleb and Ayal join me in wishing you Shabbat shalom.

*Rabbi Aaron Starr*  
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