

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmeni zy"l, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



אמרות שמשון

How Yitzchak's Blindness Was the Cause of Him Wanting to Bless Eisav

וַיְהִי כִּי זָקֵן יִצְחָק וַתִּכְהֶינּוּ עֵינָיו מֵרָאֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֶת עֵשָׂו בְּנֹו הַגָּדֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הֲנִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי נָא וַיִּקְרָא אֵת עֵשָׂו וַיִּדְעֵתִי יוֹם מוֹתִי עֲתָה שָׂא נָא כְלִיךָ תְלִיךָ וְקִשְׁתְּךָ וְצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה וְצוּדָה לִי צִידָה (צִיד) וַעֲשֵׂה לִי מִטְעָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּתִי וְהֵבִיֵּאתָ לִי וְאָכַלְתָּ בְּעֶבֶר תִּכְרֹכֵךְ נִפְשִׁי בְטָרִם אָמוֹת (כו א-ד):

And it was when Yitzchak had become old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing, that he summoned Eisav, his older son... And he said "See, now, I have aged; I know not the day of my death. Now sharpen, if you please, your gear... Then make delicacies for me... so that my soul may bless you before I die".

The simple understanding of this Passuk is that when Yitzchak saw himself aging, he called over his son, Eisav, and told him that now that he is growing old, he understands that his day of death is coming closer, and thus he wants to bless him before he dies. There is a difficulty with this simple explanation; why does the Passuk feel it necessary to mention that Yitzchak's eyes have dimmed, as it doesn't seem to have anything to do with the discussion at hand, of Yitzchak wanting to bless Eisav, for it seems that it was Yitzchak's old age alone which compelled him to do so.

The Midrash tells us a reason why Hashem caused Yitzchak to lose his eyesight. אמר רב"ע מראות ברע, מראות ברעתו של רשע. ותכהין עיניו מראות. אמר רב"ע מראות ברע, מראות ברעתו של רשע. אמר הקב"ה, יהי יצחק יוצא לשוק ויהון ברייתא אַמְרִין דִּין אֲבוּהָ דֵּהוּא דְרִשְׁעָא, אלא *'And his eyes dimmed from seeing'*. R' Elazar ben Azarya said in explanation of this Passuk; *Yitzchak's eyes dimmed to prevent him from seeing evil, that is, from seeing the evil of the wicked one, Eisav. Hashem said, "Yitzchak will go out to the marketplace and people will say about him, "This is the father of that wicked person". Rather, to avoid this, I will dim his eyes and, inevitably, he will need to remain inside his home"*.

We find another Midrash that tells us an additional reason why Hashem caused Yitzchok to become blind. אמר לפניו, רבון העולמים אדם מת בלא יסורין מדת הדין מתוחה כנגדו, מתוך שאתה מביא עליי יסורין אין מדת הדין מתוחה כנגדו. אמר לו הקב"ה, חייך דבר טוב תבעת וממך אני מתחיל וכי *Yitzchak requested physical afflictions. He said, "Hashem, at present a man dies without having experienced any*

afflictions, and consequently, following his death the Divine Attribute of Justice is extended against him. However, as a result of Your bringing afflictions upon him during his lifetime, following his death the Divine Attribute of Justice will not be extended against him". [i.e. The suffering that one endures in this world has the effect of cleansing him of his sins, and can therefore spare him from punishment in the next world]. Hashem said to him, *"You have requested a good thing. I will therefore grant your request, and I will begin this practice with you..."*, as the Passuk states, *'And it was when Yitzchak had become old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing...'*



When Yitzchak became blind, he initially understood that the reason for his blindness was as the first Midrash explains; in order to protect him from seeing Eisav's wickedness. Thus, he realized that when the time would come for him to bless his children, although Eisav was the older brother, and it would only make sense that he should receive the blessings, nevertheless, because he was wicked, so much so as to cause Yitzchak to need to become blind, he definitely was not worthy of receiving the blessings.

But when Yitzchak realized the timing of losing his eyesight, that it was only after his becoming old, he understood that because he had aged, it was within reason to assume that his day of death was getting closer, and thus his blindness had nothing to do with Eisav at all. Rather, his blindness was a fulfillment of his request to Hashem, that before passing away one should be afflicted with physical ailments, so that *the Divine Attribute of Justice will not be stretched against him following his death*.

Thus, his blindness which came with old age, brought Yitzchak much clarity. It made him realize that his day of death was coming closer; it also made him realize that there was no reason to believe that his blindness had anything to do with Eisav, and thus he was indeed worthy of being blessed.

Accordingly, we can understand why the Torah says, *'When Yitzchak became old and thereafter his eyes dimmed from seeing'*, for indeed it was only the fact that Yitzchak became old, and subsequently became blind as well, which caused him to recognize that his day of death was near, and thus made him feel that the time had come to bless one of his sons. It also brought Yitzchak to understand that there was no reason to doubt Eisav's worthiness, as his blindness had no connection to Eisav, and therefore, *'he summoned his older son, Eisav, and said to him, "Now that I have aged and do not know the day of my death, please sharpen your gear and make delicacies for me so that my soul may bless you before I die"*.

Why the Miracle That Assisted Yaakov To Quickly Find Nourishment for His Father Was Easy to Bring About

וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל בְּנוֹ, מַה זֶה מַהֲרָתָ לְמַצָּא בְּנִי, וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי הִקְרָה ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ לְפָנָי: (בראשית כ"ו כ')

Yitzchak said to his son, " My son, how is it that you were so quick to find?" And he said, "Because Hashem arranged it for me".

The Midrash (בר"ר סה יט) explains Yaakov's reply in light of the miracle that occurred with Eliezer, when Avraham Avinu sent him to find a wife for his son Yitzchak. *When Yaakov replied to Yitzchak, "Because Hashem arranged it for me", he was alluding to the following. "If Hashem arranged for you to find a marriage partner in the most miraculous way, how much more so would He arrange sustenance for you in a miraculously quick manner".* [i.e. For Eliezer had blindly relied on his request to Hashem, that He send his way the proper maiden for Yitzchak, when he prayed as follows. "May You do kindness with my master Avraham. I will stand by the spring of water as the daughters of the townsmen will come out to draw water. Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, "Please tip your jug so that I may drink", and who replies, "Drink, and I will even water your camels", her have You chosen for your servant, Yitzchak".]

This Midrash appears to imply that providing sustenance to man, is a 'simpler' and 'easier' miracle than pairing up a man and a woman for marriage. The Iyun Yaakov (פסחים ק"ח ע"א) asks that this seems to be clearly contradicted by a Gemara. For in regard to man's sustenance the Gemara in Pesachim (ק"ח ע"א) says, *קשין מזונותיו של אדם כקריעת ים סוף* - *Providing man's sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea.* [i.e. When Hashem gives a man his sustenance, He performs for that person a miracle as great as the miracle involved in the splitting of the Red Sea.]. And in regard to matching up man with his potential wife, the Gemara in Sotah (כ"ב ע"א) says the same, *וקשין לזווג כקריעת ים סוף* - *and it is as difficult for Hashem to match up a man and a woman for marriage as it was to accomplish the splitting of the Red Sea.* Because these two wonders, providing sustenance to man as well as matching up a man and a woman for marriage, are both a miracle as great as the miracle of splitting the Red Sea, it would clearly indicate that the two miracles are of equal 'difficulty'.

There is also something else that we need to understand. The Mishnah in Pesachim (ד"ט ע"א) says, *On Erev Pesach the Korban Pesach was slaughtered in three groups. After the first group entered and the Courtyard was filled, they closed the gates of the courtyard.* The Gemara (ד"ט ע"ב) then quotes Rava who states that the Mishna specifically says that they closed the gates, and not that the gates would miraculously close on their own, because *לא סמכינן אניסא - we do not rely upon miracles.* Accordingly, it's hard to understand why Eliezer had relied on a miracle to ensure that the girl that he would find would indeed be suitable for his master, Yitzchak.

The Mishnah in Rosh Hashana (ל"ב ע"א) discusses a Halacha regarding the various Passukim we mention in the Mussaf prayer on Rosh

Hashana. *We recite no fewer than ten Passukim of Kingship, ten Passukim of Remembrance, and ten Passukim of Shofar.*

The Gemara (ל"ב ע"ב) then states the following two guidelines regarding the choice of Passukim which mention Remembrance. The first is that we only recite Passukim that discuss Hashem's remembrance of the Jewish Nation or of the world at large, not those pertaining to a private individual. And the second, that Passukim which contain an expression of *פקדון - taking note*, may be used as one of the ten Passukim of *זכרון - remembrance*, as their meanings are sufficiently similar; for example, *וה' פקד את Sarah - And Hashem took note of Sarah.*

It is upon this choice of example that the Gemara asks; even if a Passuk of 'taking note' may indeed be used in lieu of a Passuk of 'remembrance', nevertheless according to the first rule, the Passuk *'And Hashem took note of Sarah'* may not be used, for it is in reference to taking note of a private individual, Sarah. The Gemara answers as follows. *Since Hashem's 'taking note' of Sarah resulted in the birth of Yitzchak, from whom the entire Jewish Nation descended, this was, in effect, a 'taking note' of the entire Jewish Nation, and not just of Sarah alone.*



We can explain Eliezer's rationale in relying on a miracle, based on the following distinction that the Iyun Yaakov (ברכות נ"ד ע"א) makes. He says that a miracle which will benefit many people is 'easy' to generate, for there are many collective merits amongst all those who will benefit from the miracle, as opposed to a miracle pertaining to one individual which is so much 'harder' to bring about, because the merits of one person aren't as plentiful. In light of this, we can understand that because finding a wife for Yitzchak was in effect a miracle which would eventually benefit the entire Jewish Nation whom would descend from them, it is therefore a much 'easier' miracle, upon which Eliezer felt he may rely.

In this vein we can also understand why the miracle of pairing up Yitzchak with his wife, was indeed more 'difficult' than the miracle of assisting Yaakov in providing sustenance for his father. For although the miracle which provided Yitzchak with his partner in marriage, as well as the miracle which provided him with sustenance in this instance [when Yitzchak asked for the food so that he may bless his child who will provide him with the nourishment], were both of benefit to the many descendants of Yitzchak, and not to one lone individual, nevertheless, Yitzchak's marriage would benefit Eisav's not-so-righteous children just as much as it would benefit Yaakov's righteous children [as they were both equal descendants of Yitzchak], while the miracle in helping Yaakov provide sustenance to his father would only benefit Yaakov and his righteous children, for only they would be on the receiving end of the blessings which Yitzchak would bless Yaakov after receiving the nourishment. Thus indeed, as Yaakov told Yitzchak, *"If Hashem brought about the more difficult miracle of arranging for you a marriage partner, how much more so would He bring about the easier miracle of arranging for you sustenance".*

פרשת תולדות אות י"א זרע שמשון

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