

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Toldos



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Toldos

Only Hashem Gives Brachos

Eisav was very upset when he discovered that Yaakov received the brachos, as it states (27:34) ויצעק צעקה גדלה ומרה עד מאד ויאמר לאביו ברכני גם אני אבי, "And he [Eisav] shouted out an exceedingly great and bitter shout and said to his father, 'Bless me too, Father! ... הצלת לי ברכה... Have you not reserved a brachah for me?'"

Yitzchak responded that he didn't have a brachah for him. Eisav continued to plead and cry, and so Yitzchak gave him a brachah. The Alshich HaKadosh asks what caused Yitzchak to change his mind and give a brachah.

It states (38) וישא עשו קולו ויבך, "And Eisav raised his voice and wept." He cried because he feared that he wouldn't receive the brachos. Tana

d'Bei Eliyahu (Rabba 24) states that Eisav's success in this world came from this cry. The Alshich HaKadosh zt'l asks why the Tana d'Bei Eliyahu doesn't state that Eisav received his good fortune in this world from the brachah he ultimately received from Yitzchak! Why does it state that it was due to his tears?

Yitzchak blessed Eisav (39) הנה משמני הארץ יהיה מושבך, "Behold, from the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling..." The Alshich notes that הנה, "behold," seems extra in this pasuk.

The Alshich answers these questions with the following concept: Brachos cannot accomplish anything if Hashem doesn't bless. Even Yitzchak Avinu's brachos would be powerless if Hashem didn't bless. Yitzchak didn't initially

bless Eisav because he knew that even if he were to bless him, the brachos wouldn't accomplish anything. Without Hashem's consent, they were futile. At first, Eisav didn't realize this. He thought that Yitzchak could bless at will. So he pleaded and requested that Yitzchak bless him. Yitzchak repeated that he couldn't bless him. This was when Eisav understood that the brachos weren't in Yitzchak's hands. He understood that it was Hashem Who didn't want to bless him. So וישא קולו ויכבד, Eisav raised his voice and cried. He didn't cry to Yitzchak; he cried to Hashem that He should have mercy on him and grant him brachos. The gates of tears are never sealed, and Hashem agreed to give him brachos.

Yitzchak began Eisav's brachah with הנה, an expression of preparation. Yitzchak told him, "Your tears prepared you, and now you can receive my brachos."

This is a lesson regarding all matters. No one can be helped unless it was decreed above. Therefore, (Yeshayah 2:22) חדלו לכם מן האדם אשר נשמה 2:22) הוא, באפו כי במה נחשב הוא "Stop [turning to man] who has breath in his nostrils, for what power does he have?"

Also, a person shouldn't be afraid of anyone because no one can harm him if it wasn't decreed Above. Rather (Tehillim 146:5) אשרי שקל יעקב בעזרו שברו על ה' אלקיו, trust in Hashem, your G-d, and He will help you.

Rebbe Berish of Biyala zt'l explained the pasuk (Yeshayah 44:6) אני ראשון ואני אחרון, "I am first and I am last..." Some people go to Hashem *first*. When they have a problem, they first go to Hashem with their tefillos and Tehillim, and after they finish their tefillos, they go and make the necessary hishtadlus. But their first and foremost attempt is with tefillah to Hashem because they know that only Hashem can help them.

There are others, however, that for them, אֵין אֶחָד, Hashem comes *last*. They first try to take care of their problems with their hishtadlus, and when they fail, they go to Hashem as a last resort and request His help.

Hashem says (ibid.) וּמִבְּלִעְדֵי אֵין אֱלֹקִים, that without Hashem's help, we can't accomplish anything, so wouldn't it be better if we turned to him in the first place?¹

In parashas Lech Lecha, Sarah is taken by Pharaoh and brought to his palace. This happened again in parashas Vayeira, when Sarah was taken to

Avimelech's palace. It didn't happen in this week's parashah, to Rivkah. Avimelech, the king of G'ror, told Yitzchak that he almost took Rivkah (see 26:10) but didn't. Rivkah remained at home. Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l explained that Avraham did hishtadlus and planned how he could be saved from trouble, but we don't find that Yitzchak made any plans. Yitzchak trusted Hashem alone, so this didn't happen to him.

(We surely have no understanding of the greatness of the holy Avos. Their ways are beyond us, and we don't have permission to question them. Nevertheless, we can learn from how it appears on a superficial level that we should stop making plans and strategies

1. Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe of Zvhil zt'l said he was once in a small city with only one doctor and pharmacist. The doctor and pharmacist took advantage of their monopoly and charged a fortune for their services. The prices were so exaggerated that the townspeople decided not to go to the doctor anymore. Instead, they would daven to Hashem. A year later, they checked the results of the year and found that no one died that year, other than the doctor and the pharmacist. Because when one davens from the depths of his heart, with emunah peshutah in Hashem, he is protected from all bad.

and instead trust in Hashem. We will have greater success when we place our trust in Hashem.)

Regarding the mitzvah of succah, there is a machlokes in the Gemara about what the succah represents and commemorates (see Succah 11:). Reb Eliezer says the mitzvah of succah is to remember the clouds of glory (ענני הכבוד) that surrounded Bnei Yisrael in the desert. Reb Akiva says that we are commemorating סוכות ממש, literal tents/succahs. Because in the desert, the nation dwelled in tents similar to the succahs we make today. The succahs we sit in are to remember those huts in the desert.

The pasuk seems to support Reb Eliezer's view because it states (Vayikra 23:43) בסכת תשבו שבעת ימים... למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים, "You must sit in succahs for seven days... so your ensuing generations know that I placed Bnei Yisrael in succahs when I took them out of Mitzrayim." The

pasuk states that Hashem placed us in succahs. This fits well with Reb Eliezer's view because Hashem enwrapped us and placed us within the protection of the clouds of glory. But if the pasuk refers to the huts in the desert, how can we understand that Hashem placed us in the huts? The nation placed themselves in the huts! They built the huts with their own two hands and dwelled in them. Why does the pasuk say כי בסוכות הושבתי, that Hashem placed us into the succahs/huts?!

Reb Shlomo Asulin zt'l (Ma'in Ganim) answers that the mitzvah of succah teaches us that even when a person builds a succah to dwell in its shade, it isn't the work of his hands. Hashem gave him the knowledge, desire, and ability to make it. It appears that the person built it himself, but we sit in succah and acquire the intelligence, למען ידעו דורותיכם, that Hashem does everything.

A similar lesson can be learned from the story of Yonah in the belly of the fish. It states (Yonah 2:11) ויאמר ה' לדג ויקא את יונה אל היבשה "Hashem said to the fish, and it spewed Jonah onto the dry land." ויאמר ה' לדג is a surprising expression. Should we understand that the fish had a prophecy?

The Radak explains, "Hashem aroused a desire in the fish to spew up Yonah onto dry land." When it states ויאמר ה' לדג, it means that Hashem gave the fish this desire. The fish didn't know that it was a decree

from Hashem. It was an urge that it suddenly had, but it was from Hashem.

Similarly, Ibn Ezra writes, ויאמר דרך משל, שהכריחוהו, לעשות חפץ ה' "when it states ויאמר, it is a mashal [because Hashem didn't actually speak to the fish. Rather] the fish was forced to do Hashem's will."

The same is true with everything that occurs in the world. It seems that things happen because of man's desires and doing. We must remember that Hashem is behind everything that occurs.²

2. Once, on chol hamoed Succos, a Yid from chutz l'aretz asked the Chazon Ish to give him a message that he could bring back to his community. (This was after a joyous celebration, with music and dancing in the Chazon Ish's beis medresh. Everyone had left, and only this man remained to ask the Chazon Ish this question. He told him that the Yidden in his community want to hear 'chizuk'.) The Chazon Ish told him that it states about Noach (6:9) תמים היה בדורותיו. This pasuk tells us that each generation has its mitzvah. And in our generation, the primary mitzvah is to be firm with emunah (see Maasei Ish, 5:127). Hashem is waiting for us to constantly live with firm emunah peshutah.

The Gemara (Makos 23:-24.) states, "Six-hundred-and-thirteen mitzvos were given to Moshe... Dovid condensed them into eleven [mitzvos]... Yeshayahu came and established them on

Boundaries

The Torah says (25:27) וידי עשו איש ידע ציד איש שדה ויעקב איש איש שדה, "And Eisav was a man who understood hunting, a man of the field, whereas Yaakov was an innocent man, dwelling in tents."

The difference between a field and a tent is that a field

doesn't have boundaries, while a tent has boundaries and limits.

This describes the difference between Yaakov and Eisav. Eisav doesn't want boundaries. He wants to feel free to do whatever he chooses and whenever he wants. Yaakov Avinu made boundaries.³

six... Michah came and established them on three... Yeshayahu returned and established them on two... Chavakuk came and consolidated them all into one, as it states (Chavakuk 2:4) וצדיק באמונתו יחיה." Certainly, these Nevi'im didn't suggest that we don't have to keep all 613 mitzvos (chalilah) and that it is enough to perform fewer mitzvos. Behold, we believe the Torah will never be changed, and there will never be another Torah from Hashem Yisbarach (as we say in the Ani Maamins). Rather, the Nevi'im identified through ruach hakodesh the primary mitzvos, which through them, we will be able to keep the entire Torah, with its 613 mitzvos. The final one is from Chavakuk, who said that the primary mission and emphasis in the final generation should be emunah. When our emunah is firm, we can keep the entire Torah.

And as the generations fall lower and lower, Chavakuk's counsel becomes even more essential. צדיק באמונתו יחיה, we have to be firm with emunah, and when we have emunah, we become צדיקים and can keep the entire Torah. Furthermore, יחיה, we will live a life of pleasure, tranquility, and joy.

3. The Yeitev Lev said this in his *hesped* on the Maharam Shik *zt'l*, saying that the Maharam Shik followed Yaakov's footsteps and didn't breach any boundaries on halachah or tradition.

Chazal established *gedorim*, boundaries and protections, so we don't come near transgressing *aveiros*, *chalilah*. They keep us several steps away from an *aveirah*,

One of Reb Shimon Shkop's *zt'l* students originated from Germany. Once, this student asked Reb Shimon Shkop, "The people of my country in Germany have a lot of *yiras Shamayim*; they are cautious with all the *mitzvos* of the Torah. But when it comes to the severe *aveirah* of shaving off the beard with a razor, some are lenient. How did this occur? They transgress five *lavin* each time they shave!⁴ How could it be that they aren't cautious with this *aveirah*?"

Reb Shimon Shkop told him that it is because this *aveirah* doesn't have any *gezeiros* from Chazal. All

aveiros of the Torah have *gezeiros*, prohibitions from Chazal, to keep us distant from transgressing a Torah prohibition, but Chazal didn't set any precautions and boundaries for the *aveirah* of shaving the beard. The reason they didn't establish safeguards for this *aveirah* is because at the time of Chazal, the *goyim* also grew beards, and it wasn't likely that a Jew would shave off his beard. In their times, it wasn't necessary to make a *gezeirah* because who would want to shave off his beard? But since Chazal didn't establish any safeguards for this *aveirah*, people are liable to stumble.

The *Chidushei HaRim zt'l* (*Likutei HaRim*, *Acharei*) also discusses the phenomenon that Chazal didn't establish prohibitions and guards to prevent the severe *aveirah*

4. There are five corners of the beard that we are forbidden to shave off with a razor. When they would shave with a razor blade, they transgressed five *lavin*!

of shaving off the beard. This is the only prohibition of the Torah that doesn't have any Rabbinic prohibitions. The Chidushei HaRim explains that, as it is known, the chachamim suffered opposition from the Tzedokim, the apikorsim. The Tzedokim claimed that it was wrong to make gezeiros. "Why make it hard for the Jewish nation?" they said. "It is enough that they must keep the prohibitions of the Torah, why add on more?"

They said that if we are too strict with the Jewish community and have many gezeiros d'Rabbanan, in the end, they will abandon everything.

The chachamim disagreed. With proof and logic, they showed the Tzedokim that gezeiros are essential, and only in this way will the Yidden be able to keep the Torah. To prove that they are correct, the chachamim agreed that they wouldn't make any boundaries for one aveirah

- the severe aveirah against shaving with a razor. They did this to test who would be correct. They would see whether the gezeiros are needed or not.

The Chidushei HaRim concluded, "But now we see what came from this leniency and lack of gezeiros. The chachamim were correct!"

The need to set up gezeiros is learned from the pasuk (Acharei 18:30) ושמרתם את ממשמרתֵי. Chazal (Yevamos 21.) explain that this means you should make boundaries so that you won't come to aveiros. Sifrei mussar add that each person should make his own boundaries in the places they find necessary to keep oneself away from aveiros.

Chovos HaLevavos (Shaar HaTeshuvah ch.5) says, "It is told about some chassidim, who distanced themselves from seventy permitted gates, out of fear of the one prohibited gate."

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* was in a taxi, and the taxi driver (who didn't realize that he was giving a ride to one of the *gedolei hador*) said to Reb Shlomo Zalman, "The *chachamim* of our generation don't let us live. Every day, they come up with new rules and strict regulations."

Reb Shlomo Zalman didn't respond. The taxi stopped at a red light. Reb Shlomo Zalman said, "The people in charge of the roads don't let us live. They keep making new rules and new regulations. We can't go on red, only on green. For driving quickly, one receives a ticket. You will be fined if you don't wear a seatbelt, and there are many other laws. They simply don't let us live."

The taxi driver disagreed. "Why do you say they don't let us live? These laws give us life. People would die if it weren't for these laws."

Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "The laws of the

chachamim are the same. They give us life."

In this week's parashah, Hashem blesses Yitzchak and tells him that the *brachos* are in Avraham's merit. As it states (26:3, 5) *ואברכך...עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקולי וישמר משמרת*, "I will bless you... because Avraham listened to My voice and kept My calling..." The Siforno learns from this *pasuk* that Hashem didn't bless Yitzchak in his own merit. He was blessed in the merit of Avraham.

Avraham's merit was *וישמר משמרת*. We will explain this in two ways:

(1) Rashi writes that *וישמר משמרת* means that "Avraham kept the *gezeiros* of Chazal to distance ourselves from the *aveiros* of the Torah, such as *שניות לעריות*, the boundaries of *arayos* and the Rabbinic prohibitions of *Shabbos*."

Hashem blessed Avraham, and also Yitzchak in his merit because he was

cautious to keep the gezeiros that Chazal would later establish.

(2) The Sforno has another definition for *וישמר משמרתו*. He writes, "*וישמר משמרתו*, [Avraham] did the service that I would do, and that is to do kindness, as it states (Tehillim 25:10) *כל אורחות ה' חסד* 'All the ways of Hashem are kindness and truth,' and to teach sinners to go on the right path. Avraham did so..."

And because Avraham was occupied with *chesed*, and with the greatest *chesed*, which is to direct people to the true path of *emunah*, he received Hashem's *brachos*, and Yitzchak also received *brachos* in Avraham's merit.

Afterwards, Yitzchak also began teaching people *emunah*, as it states (26:25) *ויבן יצחק מזבית*, "He built a *mizbeiach* there and called out in Hashem's name." Now, Yitzchak could receive

Hashem's *brachos* in his own merit. Therefore, after the *pasuk* tells us that Yitzchak was calling out in Hashem's name, it states that Avimelech came to him and said, *אתה עתה ברוך ה'*, "Now, you, O blessed of Hashem!"

The Sforno adds, "We don't find that Yitzchak suffered anymore from jealousy and disputes, as had transpired beforehand." Due to Yitzchak's *chesed* and his teaching *emunah* to the masses, Hashem blessed him and granted him success and peace.

The Baal HaTanya hired a *melamed*⁵ to study with his young son, Rebbe Dov Ber (the "Mitteler Rebbe" *zt'l*). The Baal HaTanya said to the *melamed*, "Be aware that you are doing *ה' מלאכה*, Hashem's service, and it is *דיני נפשות*, a matter of life and death, because your students' spiritual life is in your hands, and spiritual

5. The *melamed* was a student of the Magid of Mezritch *zt'l*.

life is more crucial than physical life. If you do your service well, you will earn credit for all the children's good deeds and gain the merits of their children and grandchildren forever. But if you don't teach well, the children's failure will be your fault. Everything is in your hands. Think about this before you begin to teach, and Hashem will help you establish and mold good students. Your portion will be together with the great tzaddikim."

We mention this to remind *melamdin*, and also parents, that they are also occupied in kiruv, as were Avraham and Yitzchak. Everyone, in his own way, is teaching emunah. The reward is enormous, and the responsibility is great.

But if we try, Hashem will help us succeed.

Do What You Can, and Hashem Will Help

It states (68:35-36) תנו עוז לאלקים... הוא נותן עוז ותעצומות לעם, "Give strength to Hashem... It is He who grants might and power to the nation..." One of the tzaddikim of our generation asked that it seems like a contradiction. First, we say that we give strength to Hashem, keviyachol, and then it states that Hashem gives strength to His nation!

He answers that people often excuse themselves with the excuse, "I don't have strength. I can't." We tell them, תנו עוז לאלקים, do what you can, and then Hashem will give you strength. Hashem will help you.⁶

6. We can also explain תנו עוז לאלקים, "Give strength to Hashem," in the following manner:

Obviously, Hashem doesn't need our strength. Nevertheless, the system Hakadosh Baruch Hu placed in the world is that there

We will explain this idea with a mashal: A one-hundred-story skyscraper was constructed in a particular city. An announcement was made that whoever climbs to the top of this enormous building will receive a great reward.

Many people tried to climb to the top, envisioning their reward. But after climbing for a while, they got tired and walked back down. The stronger people climbed ten flights but calculated that since this was just a tenth of the number of flights they had to climb, they, too, turned back down. Only one person kept going up, and with bated breath, he climbed higher and higher. Suddenly, he got to the 100th floor. He

stood at the top floor and waved down to the people below. When he came down, they asked him how he climbed up the 100 flights so quickly. He replied that on the eleventh floor, there was an elevator.

Similarly, Hashem has prepared an elevator to bring us up to high levels, but a person must do whatever he can. He must not get discouraged from climbing up. He does what he can, and Hashem will help him the rest of the way.

Reb Avraham Genichovsky zt'l would tell the following story (which he was particularly fond of): The gaon, Reb Yosef Lis zt'l saw a young child standing at the curb of a very busy street where cars were whizzing

needs to be a התעוררות דלמטה, arousal from people down below. Hashem wants to bestow us with goodness, but He doesn't before people arouse Him to do so through their good deeds. Therefore, keviyachol, it can be said תנו עוז לאלקים, that we give strength to Hashem. Our good deeds satisfy the process Hashem desired and it is like we gave Hashem strength to bestow His kindness upon us.

by. Someone came by and asked the child if he needed help crossing the street. The child stood up straight, as if to appear older than his age and said, "I don't need help. I can cross the street by myself."

A second and a third person came by and offered to help the boy cross the road, but each time, the boy replied that he could manage on his own. Reb Yosef Lis was concerned about the child's safety, so he told the boy, "I am old, and I need help crossing the street. Can you help me?" And the boy was happy to help him. In this clever manner, he helped the boy cross the road.

Hashem also tells the person, "I need help. Please give me strength. Perform mitzvos, תנו עוז לאלקים, give strength to Hashem. Hashem doesn't need our help, but He says He does so that He can help us.

We can say that this is hinted to in the Chazal, רצה"

הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות". The word הרבה can mean that Hashem makes people great. He gives them a feeling of importance. They feel that they are helping Hashem, and with this technique, they perform mitzvos to their own benefit and help.

Eisav Lives by his Sword, Yaakov Lives by his Avodas Hashem

The Gemara (Kesubos 59:) states, הבטלה מביאה לידי שעמום, idleness leads to insanity. It is good to be busy. When one doesn't have what to do, it leads to insanity, depression, and aveiros r'l. The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Toras Moshe, Toldos) writes that this is the reason people lack things. Everyone has problems; no one is exempt. Hashem planned it that way for their benefit. It gives them a reason to get up in the morning and to have a challenge to overcome. The Chasam Sofer writes, "Whoever has everything he desires, every day, without

any problems, he will become disgusted with his life. There was a story that happened in our time where a person committed suicide, and in his suicide note, he wrote that he committed suicide because he had a perfect life with all the desires of his heart. He became disgusted with his life and killed himself. Indeed, this is the reason Hakadosh Baruch Hu created people with worries and frustrations with the hope that things will improve. There are ups and downs. Men buy and sell; sometimes, they earn a profit, and sometimes, they suffer a loss. They don't have peace in their heart. They are always tired, working hard, yet this is the root of their *chiyus*."

The Chasam Sofer says that this is the meaning of the Mishnah (Avos 4:22) על כרחק אתה חי, which can be translated as "you live from those matters that are על כרחק, against your will. It sounds strange, but it is the truth.

Your interest and excitement in life come precisely from the problems.

Yitzchak Avinu gave Eisav a brachah for material success. He said (Bereishis 27:39) הנה משמני הארץ יהיה מושבך ומטל השמים מועל, "Behold, your dwelling place shall be the fat places of the earth and the dew of the heaven from above." But in reality, this brachah would be like a curse for Eisav because Eisav would have everything, giving him no purpose in life. Therefore, Yitzchak added ועל חרבך תחיה, "You shall live by your sword." Chasam Sofer explains that this means he will constantly be battling with his problems and worries, and from this תחיה, he will live. His problems will give him a reason to live.

The Jewish nation, however, doesn't need Eisav's challenges. We have struggles and purpose from avodas Hashem, as it states ובחרת בחיים, choose life [by choosing to perform the

mitzvos]. Therefore, when Hashem gives blessings to Bnei Yisrael, Hashem says (Vayikra 26:4, 6) ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם והשיג לכם דיש את בציר.... ונתתי שלום בארץ והרב לא תעבור בארצכם "I will give your rains in their time, the land will yield its produce... I will place peace in the land, and no sword will pass through your land." We can have financial success, nothing will be

lacking, and we will still have a purpose. We don't need the sword, representing struggles and problems, to find purpose in life. We find purpose in our avodas Hashem.

Turn Your Eyes to Heaven

One of the benefits of facing struggles is that it forces us to turn our eyes to our Father in Heaven.⁷

7. In Krakow, a poor man would sit at the street corner, selling the bagels his wife baked. One morning, a wealthy person recognized the poor man and said, "You're a *talmid chacham* from an illustrious family! It isn't proper that you should do this for your *parnassah*. I will provide you with a weekly stipend so you can study Torah in beis medresh day and night."

The poor man agreed to this generous offer, left the corner, and returned to his beloved beis medrash. This arrangement continued for a number of weeks, but then the poor man was back on the street selling bagels. The wealthy man spotted and said, "We have an agreement. What happened?"

"I don't want to be supported anymore," the poor man replied.

"But a deal is a deal. You can't back out without a *din Torah*."

This unusual *din Torah* was heard by the Megaleh Amukos *zt'l*. The Megaleh Amukos asked the poor man why he wanted to back out of the deal that would enable him to study Torah without disturbances.

The poor man replied, "When my wife and I were in the bagel

The Torah (26:19-22) tells us that Yitzchak's servants dug a well, and then the *Plishtim* claimed the wells to be theirs. So, the servants moved to a different location and dug a well there. This happened three times. At the third well, there was finally peace. Yitzchak called this well רחובות because כי עתה

ה' לנו ופרינו בארץ, "For now Hashem has given us respite, and we will be profitable in the land." The next *pasuk* (26:23) states, ויעל משם באר שבע, "And Yitzchak went up from there to Be'er Sheva." This is difficult to comprehend. He finally found a peaceful location where there was

business, we constantly turned our eyes to Hashem. As my wife prepared the bagels, she would daven to Hashem that the bagels come out tasty and beautiful. When I went out to chop wood for the oven, I davened that I should find dry wood, which is better for baking. When I sat at the street corner, I davened that people should buy from me. We were constantly davening for *siyata dishmaya*. But now that we have a stipend, we daven less. This is why we decided to return to our previous lifestyle."

The Megaleh Amukos praised the couple for their devotion to Hashem.

Shortly before this episode, the Megaleh Amukos informed the leaders of Krakow that he planned to resign from his rabbanus in this city. He never shared with them the reason he wanted to leave. They asked him repeatedly why, but he refused to disclose the reason. But because of this *din Torah*, when he saw the poor couple's desire to have a constant connection with Hashem, the Megaleh Amukos changed his mind and decided to stay in Krakow. He wanted to be among such special people who sought constant closeness to Hashem.

In any event, the story is a reminder of the ideal of turning one's eyes to Hashem. And sometimes, it is precisely tzaros and hardships that bring out the best in us.

water and no disputes. Why did he move on?

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* explains that Yitzchak wanted to remember Hashem constantly. He appreciated challenges and hardships, as these were opportunities to turn his eyes to Hashem in prayer and *bitachon*. But now everything was peaceful. There were no challenges in his life, so he moved on.

Yitzchak blessed Yaakov (27:28), ... ויתן לך אלקים... "And may Hashem give you..." The ויא"ו of ויתן is extra. Rashi explains that the ויא"ו "and" implies ויתן ויהזור ויתן, Hashem will give to Yaakov again and again. If the bounty runs out, Hashem will give him more.

Why is it necessary for Hashem to give again and again? Why wouldn't Hashem provide enough for all Yaakov's needs at once?

Tzaddikim explain that Hashem wanted Yaakov to always be lacking something, so he would always be in

need. This is a blessing, as this will force him to continuously raise his eyes to heaven.

Yitzchak said to Yaakov (27:29) ארריך ארור ומברכך ברוך, "Those who curse you I will curse, and those who bless you shall be blessed." In this pasuk, those who curse are mentioned before those who bless. Rashi explains, ...הצדיקים האורריהם ומצעריהם קודמים לבמרכיהם, "For tzaddikim...those who curse them and cause them pain precede those who bless them."

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz *zt'l* asks why tzaddikim encounter people who curse them.

The Divrei Yisrael asks another similar question (quoting his father) on the words in Tehillim (109:28) יקללו המה ואתה תברך, "They shall curse, and You will bless." It seems from these words that we want the goyim to curse us. Why is that?

The Divrei Yisrael answers (quoting his father): It

states (Tehillim 23:6) אֵךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל יְמֵי חַיֵּי, "May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life." יִרְדְּפוּנִי (pursue) represents people who chase after you, those who are looking to harm you. For tzaddikim, this is אֵךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד, goodness and kindness, because the opposition and the hardships raise tzaddikim to very high levels. They are forced to turn their eyes to Hashem, and they grow from the experience.

Therefore, it states יִקְלָלוּ אֶתְּכֶם וְאַתֶּם תִּבְרָכֶם. We want our enemies to curse us because this results in וְאַתֶּם תִּבְרָכֶם, that you will be blessed. You will reach higher levels from the experience.

The Gemara (Taanis 7:) says, אֵי הוּא סְנֵי הוּא חֲכִימֵי טַפִּי. The Divrei Yisrael says that סְנֵי can be translated as שׂוֹנְאֵי, enemies.

If one has enemies, he becomes wiser in Torah. One grows from hardships.

We now understand why Yitzchak mentioned those who curse before those who bless (as it states אַרְרִיךְ אֶרֶז וּמְבַרְכֶךָ (ברוך). The curses and the hardships help us grow. We become better, and that is a blessing.

Growth from the Yetzer Hara

וַיְהִי כִּי זָקֵן יִצְחָק וַתִּכְהֶיךָ עֵינָיו מֵרָאִת (27:1), "And it was when Yitzchak became old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing." Why was Yitzchak visually impaired?

Rashi writes three explanations:

(1) Eisav's wives would sacrifice incense for avodah zarah, and the smoke harmed Yitzchak's eyes.

8. The simple translation is that if chachamim weren't beautiful, they would be greater in Torah. Rashi explains, "The beautiful can't be humble, and this causes them to forget what they learn."

(2) "When Yitzchak was bound on the mizbeiach and his father wanted to *shecht* him, at that moment, the heavens opened, and the malachim saw and they cried. The tears fell on [Yitzchak's] eyes. This is how his eyes became dim."

(3) It was destined that Yitzchak shouldn't see well, so Yaakov would be able to take the brachos.

The second reason is also written in Pirkei d'Reb Eliezer (ch.31). It states there

that when Avraham Avinu was about to slaughter Yitzchak, the malachim shouted and cried.

Why did the malachim cry?⁹

Reb Yitzchak of Vorkezt'l says that the malachim cried that they didn't reach the level of mesirus nefesh that Yitzchak had attained. Yitzchak passed tests, and a tzaddik who passes tests reaches levels above those of the malachim!¹⁰

9. The simple reason is because they feared that Yitzchak would die. Alternatively, they were praying that Hashem save Yitzchak (see Kedushas Levi, Vayeira, *ד"ה ויהי אחרי הדברים*).

10. On Yom Kippur, when the kohen gadol entered the kodesh hakadoshim, no one else was allowed to be even in the *heichal*. As it states (Vayikra 16:17) *וכל אדם לא יהיה באהל מועד בבואו לכפר בקדש עד צאתו*, "Any person shall not be in the Ohel Moed when [the kohen gadol] comes to provide atonement in the sanctuary until his departure." Chazal (Yerushalmi Yoma 1:5) say that malachim are included in this prohibition because *וכל אדם* "Any person" includes malachim, for they have a human face, as it states (Yechezkel 1:10) *דמות פניהם פני אדם*, As for the likeness of their faces: There was a human face..." Rebbe Yitzchak Vurka proved from this halachah that humans could reach higher levels than malachim. Malachim cannot be there, but the kohen gadol, a human, can. Rebbe Yitzchak Vurka explains that *nisyonos* that humans pass are what make it possible for them to reach such high levels.

It is impossible to describe the incredible joy Hashem has when a human being, made from clay, overcomes the yetzer hara for Hashem's honor! We also cannot fathom the immense reward that will be the portion of those who overcome struggles and their yetzer hara.

Chazal (end of Uktzin) say, "In the future, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give each tzaddik 310 (ש"י) worlds, as it states (Mishlei 8:21) להנחיל לאוהבי יש, "to bequeath to those who love Me ש"י (310 worlds)."

The Vilna Gaon (אדרת אליהו, Bereishis) teaches that the word ש"י stands for שמאל, ימין, right and left, which represents the yetzer tov, which resides on the right side of the heart, and the yetzer hara, which is on the left side. We receive the 310 worlds from the yetzer tov, and also from the yetzer hara, when we overcome him.

Notice that י is gematriya 10, while ש is gematriya 300. This indicates that most

worlds are attained from the ש, representing שמאל, the left side of the heart, the yetzer hara. For overcoming the yetzer hara, we receive three hundred worlds. For serving Hashem with the י, the ימין, the yetzer tov, there are ten worlds.

The Vilna Gaon teaches from this how much greatness and perfection a person attains from his struggles and hardships. It is from them that we achieve the most significant rewards and perfection.

A family in Bnei Brak received an electric bill for 1500 shekel for just one month! The head of the family gathered his wife and children and told them they could not go on like this. The price is enormous. They must cut down. He recommended not using the air conditioner. "Fifty years ago, no one had an air-conditioner, and they managed just fine. We will do the same." He told his family that his goal is that the electric bill should come

down and be no more than five shekels per month.

The following month, the electric bill was several hundred shekels less because they didn't use the air-conditioner, but he had a goal. He told his family that they wouldn't use the fridge for the next month. "Not too long ago, most people didn't have a fridge in their homes, and they managed just fine."

The next bill was only 150 shekel, but he wasn't satisfied. He gathered his family again and said, "This month, we will cut down on lighting. We won't use any lights besides one, the small reddish light that is near the bathroom. We must get down to five shekel a month for the electric bill," he explained.

The following month, the electric bill was back at 1500 shekels! He called the electric company and said that there must be some mistake. He didn't use any electricity this month except

a small red bulb. How can the bill be so high?

The electric company replied, "We don't make up the bill. It is according to the amount of electricity you use. If you want, we can send an electrician to your home to determine the problem."

Another month passed, the electrician hadn't come yet, and the bill was the same, 1,500 shekels. He now owed the electric company three thousand shekel. When the electrician finally came, he said, "The little red bulb that you turned on and used these past two months is the switch to turn on the boiler to heat water for the entire house."

This small, innocent bulb was far more critical than the family had realized. We can compare the little bulb to the mitzvos that we perform when we are at lower levels in our avodas Hashem. Those mitzvos are extremely significant.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l said to those who were drafted to the Russian army, "When you perform even a small mitzvah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu's joy is endless, and it is precious before Him much more than the great mitzvos we do" (Chofetz Chaim, חיינו ופעלו p.170).

Explaining the Names יעקב and עשו

The Yismach Moshe (Bereishis ד"ה א"י ולי מה יקרו) teaches in the name of the Baal Ha'Ikrim that for all parts of creation, the Torah writes, וירא אלקים כי טוב, "And Hashem saw that it was good." But for the creation of man, the Torah doesn't write וירא אלקים כי טוב. This is because man wasn't created טוב. He becomes "good" after he passes tests and betters himself.

Hashem said (Bereishis 1:26) נעשה אדם, "Let us make man." Why is נעשה written in plural? It is because man was created together with mankind. Hashem's creation

of man isn't complete until human beings pass tests. This is when the creation of man is completed.

Rebbe of Liska (אך פרי תבואה) (בפרשתו) repeats this lesson, which he heard directly from the Yismach Moshe. He adds that the creation of a Yid alone isn't complete because he is destined to become far better and greater than he was at the time he was born. About the goyim, it states עם הדומה לחמור, a nation similar to a donkey. They are like animals; they don't need growth, so they were completed at the beginning of creation.

אך פרי תבואה adds that this can explain the names of יעקב and עשו. On the words ויקראו שמו עשו (25:25), "And they called him עשו" Rashi writes, "Everyone called him this way because he was נעשה, made and complete with hair, like someone older." אך פרי תבואה explains that this represents the goyim who are created entirely made.

About the naming of Yaakov, it states (25:26) ויקראו שמו יעקב, and Rashi writes, "His father called him יעקב because he was holding onto the עקב [Eisav's heel]." אך פרי explains that Yaakov holding onto the heel of עשו implies that Yaakov was seeking to be עשוי, fully made, but he wasn't there yet. This is because the Jewish nation reaches their perfection and completion when they pass the tests they encounter in life.

Rivkah had a lot of pain in her pregnancy, and she didn't understand why. As it states (25:22) ויתרצו הבנים בקרבה ויתאמר אם כן למה זה אנכי ותלך לדרש את ה', "The children agitated within her, and [Rivkah] said, 'If so, why am I thus?' and she went to inquire of Hashem." Rashi (25:22) writes, "When she passed the doorway of Torah [of the yeshiva] of Shem and Eiver, Yaakov ran and tried to leave [the womb], and when she passed a doorway of avodah zarah, Eisav tried to leave [the womb]."

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l explains that Rivkah's question was why it should be destined for her to have a child a rasha, especially after she was blessed with these children because of her tefillos.

The answer she received was ולאום מלאום יאמץ, "One nationality becomes strong from the other nationality." This means that the Jewish nation will become better and stronger due to the opposition. Yaakov will become better because he will have to deal with the challenges his brother will place before him.

Furthermore, Rivkah heard from the yeshiva of Shem and Eiver, ורב יעבוד צעיר, "The elder shall serve the younger." We will explain this in three ways:

(1) The yetzer hara works especially hard when a person falls from his level because the yetzer hara hopes to cause the person to stay down and despair from ever serving Hashem. This

is hinted at in the words ורב יעבוד, the yetzer hara works a lot and hard, צעיר, when a person is at a low level.

(2) ורב יעבוד, a person must work very hard, צעיר, when he is at a low level.

(3) ורב, he will reach very high levels, יעבוד צעיר, when he serves Hashem and passes the tests when he is at low levels.

It states (25:27-28) ויגדלו הנערים ויהי עשו איש ידע ציד איש שדה ויעקב איש תם ישב אהלים, ויאהב יצחק את עשו, כי ציד בפיו ורבקה אהבת את יעקב, "The lads grew up and Eisav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents. Yitzchak loved Eisav for the game was in his mouth, but Rivkah loved Yaakov."

Rashi says that יודע ציד, "one who knows hunting" means he knew how to trick his father into thinking he was G-d fearing. Rashi writes, "He knew how to hunt and trick his father with his words. He would

ask, "Father, how does one give *maasar* for salt or straw?" His father thought that he was cautious with mitzvos."

We could understand why Yitzchak loved Eisav. He thought he was cautious with mitzvos. But how does it explain why he seemed to love him more than Yaakov? Yaakov was a perfect tzaddik who sat in the beis medresh studying Torah – וישב אהלים? Why did Yitzchak love Eisav more than Yaakov?

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that Yitzchak saw that Yaakov was an איש תם, someone who didn't seem to understand the ways of this world. Yitzchak thought that Yaakov studying Torah all day was not such an outstanding achievement. What else could he do with his time? But Eisav was a businessman; he understood how to go about this world, and nevertheless, he was cautious with the mitzvos, and that was very precious to Yitzchak.

When Yitzchak heard that Yaakov cleverly got the *bechorah* and the brachos out of Eisav, he realized that Yaakov also knows how to be clever in this world and, nevertheless, chose to devote himself to *avodas Hashem*. He, therefore, realized that Yaakov's qualities outweighed Eisav's, and he blessed him וגם ברוך יהיה.

Ahavas Yisrael

Hashem promised Yitzchak that a large nation would come from him and that this nation would inherit Eretz Yisrael (26:5) עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקלי וישמר משמרותי מצותי חקותי ותורתי "because Avraham obeyed my voice, and performed My mission, My commandments, My *chukim*, and My Torah."

On the word חוקים, the Ramban explains this to mean that Yitzchak will bear children, and they will inherit Eretz Yisrael because of the deeds of *chesed* that

Avraham performed. We quote the Ramban:

"חוקתי" means that Avraham went in Hashem's ways to be kind and compassionate to all and to do *tzedakah* and judgment, and he commanded his family to follow in that path."

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* asks, a *chok* always refers to a *mitzvah* for which we don't know the reason. But to do *chesed* and to be kind to others is logical and humane. Why are such deeds called חקותי in this *pasuk*?

Reb Shimon Shwab answers that there are some people about whom you think there is no *mitzvah* to help them. You focus on their faults and feel that they aren't the type of people you are obligated to help. The Torah says that Avraham did *chesed* with all, even when it was like a *chok*, and logically, he didn't understand why he should

be compassionate towards these people.¹¹

The difference between the tefillin shel yad (that is worn on the arm) and the tefillin shel rosh (that is worn on the head)

is that the tefillin shel yad is one box, while the tefillin shel rosh has four compartments.

This hints that the minds of people may be divided.

11. Some people once insulted Reb Gedalyah Moshe of Zvhil zt'l, and Reb Gedalyah's gabbaim wanted to admonish them to stick up for their Rebbe's honor, but Reb Gedalyah Moshe instructed them to let it pass and not to make an issue of it. He explained, "My father, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l, was a rebbe because he was a great tzaddik, but my only quality is that I am silent and don't respond during a machlokes. If you take that away from me, I have nothing."

Once, Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe davened Musaf quickly. The reason was that as he approached the amud, he overheard two children say, "Oh no! The rebbe is going to daven musaf. Davening will be very long." He didn't want to cause distress to those children.

When his first great-grandchild was born, he didn't tell anyone. On Shabbos morning, when the chassidim heard that the rebbe had a great-granddaughter, they asked him, "Why didn't you tell us? We would have prepared a kiddush."

For shalashudes, the gabbai arranged extra food in honor of the simchah.

Reb Gedalyah Moshe later explained that one of his gabbaim didn't have children. He didn't want to celebrate the simchah, so as not to cause tzaar to this Yid.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l never took a grandchild on his lap because some of his children never had children. He didn't want them to suffer watching him enjoy his grandchildren, who were born to his other children.

Each person is entitled to his opinion. However, when it comes to the heart, people must be united. Their difference in opinion shouldn't divide their hearts.¹²

The Smag (Sefer HaMitzvos, Mitzvas Asei 3) writes, "I taught the following in a drashah:

Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the mitzvah of tefillin of a rasha more than the mitzvah of tefillin of a tzaddik. This is because the primary purpose of tefillin is to remind resha'im that they should go on a good path. They need this reminder more than those

12. Before Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l put on tefillin shel yad, he first kissed the yud [the knot attached to the box, בית]. He said, "Before we put on tefillin and think about Hashem's oneness, we must first kiss the Yud – the Yid – to remind us that we must first have Ahavas Yisrael.

Perhaps this is the explanation: Tzaddikim say that the path to attain love of Hashem is to love one's fellow man. Tefillin is about being attached to Hashem with love. To love Hashem, one must first love his fellow man.

When people put on tefillin, they often count the straps (silently) to be sure that they have wrapped the straps around the arm seven times. When Rebbe Itzekel of Pshevorsk zt'l would check his tefillin and count to seven, he would count by having in mind the seven words of the Mishnah (Avos 1:6) *הוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות*, "Judge every Yid favorably." Once again, we see the connection between unity and loving one's fellow man to putting on tefillin.

Reb Isaac of Kamarna said that *הוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות* is gematriya שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.

Others count to seven with the pasuk (Devarim 4:4) *ואתם הדבקים בה' אלוהיכם חיים כולם היום*, "But you, who are davuk (connected) to Hashem, your G-d – you are all alive today." This hints at the deveikus with Hashem we achieve when we don tefillin.

raised with yiras Shamayim all their lives. I brought strong proof to this because there are four parshiyos in the tefillin. Each parashah

states לטוטפות, except for one that changed it to (Shemos 13:9) זרון. This tells us that the purpose of the tefillin is to serve as a reminder.¹³

13. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 4:) says that the word טטפת is a combination of two words in different languages: טט בכתפי שתים פת. באפריקי שתים טט means two in the Katfi language, and פת means two in the African language." So, טטפת is twice two, hinting at the four parshiyos of tefillin.

We wonder why the number of parshiyos of tefillin should be hinted at through foreign languages.

The Sfas Emes answers that the purpose of tefillin is to reveal Hashem's oneness. The use of foreign languages in connection with tefillin is thus a demonstration that even foreign languages are from Hakadosh Baruch Hu. When people say טט in Katfi, it is also from Hakadosh Baruch Hu. It is all part of Hashem's oneness.