

In this week's *Parashah*, we read how Yitzchak favored his wicked son Esav and sought to bless him. Many commentaries ask: how could Yitzchak (seemingly) have been fooled by Esav?

R' Yosef Gikatilla z"l (Spain; 1248-1310) explains: Yitzchak saw prophetically that Yaakov's descendants would sin and anger G-d. When he saw that Yaakov's descendants would be exiled at the hands of Esav's descendants [Rome], he rejoiced, for exile atones for sin. Yitzchak said, in effect, "I am pleased with the suffering that Esav's descendants will cause Yaakov's descendants, so that the latter will be cleansed in this world, not in *Gehinom*."

R' Gikatilla continues: Although the attribute associated with Yitzchak is "*Pachad*" / "Fear" [which is associated with Strict Justice], that attribute of G-d is intended for the good of the Jewish People, for it saves us from *Gehinom*. Therefore it is written (*Mishlei* 28:14), "Fortunate is the man who experiences *Pachad* always."

R' Gikatilla adds: This also explains why Yitzchak asked Esav to bring him food to eat before he blessed Esav. Usually, one eats after praying! Yitzchak's intention was to help him focus his blessings purely on the enjoyments of the material world, so that Esav's descendants would inherit this world and persecute Yaakov's offspring--for the latter's own benefit in the long run.

Why, then, did G-d arrange for Yaakov to receive the blessings? Because, R' Gikatilla explains, if Esav alone had received the blessings, the persecution at his hands would have been too much to bear. The Strict Justice that Yitzchak represents--though for our own good--is too strict. This is the idea behind Avraham, who represents *Chessed* / Kindness "binding"--i.e., constraining--Yitzchak ("Strict Justice") at the *Akeidah*. (*Sha'arei Orah: Sha'ar 5*)

Tefilah

This year, we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers.

The *Gemara* (*Yevamot* 64a) and *Midrash Rabbah* teach: "Why were our Patriarchs and Matriarchs unable to have children? Because *Hashem* desires the prayers of the righteous."

Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuven Gerondi z"l (Spain; 1320-1376) explains the *Gemara's* question and its answer: It is evident that Yitzchak did not marry Rivka by chance; the entire series of events described in last week's *Parashah* leaves no doubt that they were destined to marry. Yet, *Hashem* had promised that Yitzchak would father a great nation. How, then, did *Hashem* give Yitzchak a wife who could not have children?

The *Gemara* answers, Rabbeinu Nissim explains: *Hashem* desires the prayers of *Tzaddikim*, for this unites their souls with their Creator.

(*Derashot Ha'Ran* No.2)

R' Yechezkel Levenstein z"l (1895-1974; *Mashgiach Ruchani* in the Mir Yeshiva in Shanghai and the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak) elaborates: Our *Gemara* states that G-d, so-to-speak, desires prayer. A *Midrash* states similarly that the reason *Hashem* allowed *Bnei Yisrael* to be cornered on the shores of the *Yam Suf* was so that they would cry out to Him as they had in Egypt. Obviously, writes R' Levenstein, our Sages do not mean that *Hashem* does these things to force us to pray the standard, obligatory prayers. Rather, *Hashem* wants us to talk to Him, to bond with Him, to form a relationship.

(*Ohr Yechezkel: Emunah* p.177)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-593-2272

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Back issues at: www.TheTorahSpring.org

Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.



Sponsored by

Robert and Hannah Klein, on the *yahrzeits* of
his mother, Dorothy Klein (*Devorah bat Avraham a"h*),
and his brother, Kenneth H. Klein (*Kalman Hershel ben Meir a"h*)

Esther Edeson, in memory of her father and her father-in-law
Nathan Salsbury (*Nachum ben Yaakov a"h*)
and Joseph N. Edeson (*Yosef Nosson ben Moshe Shalom a"h*)

“Ve’yiten / And may Elokim give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth, and abundant grain and wine.’ . . .

“Then Yitzchak trembled in very great perplexity, and said, ‘Who--where--is the one who hunted game, brought it to me, and I partook of all when you had not yet come, and I blessed him? Indeed, he shall remain blessed!’

“When Esav heard his father’s words, he cried out an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me too, Father!’

But he said, ‘Your brother came with cleverness and took your blessing.’

He said, ‘Is it because his name was called Yaakov that he outwitted me these two times? -- He took away my birthright and see, now he took away my blessing!’ Then he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’” (27:28, 33-36)

Why did Yitzchak want to bless Esav, who was wicked? Also, the conversation between Yitzchak and Esav in the above verses seems repetitive. What were they saying? R’ Nossan Friedlander z”l (1808-1883; *Maggid* / preacher in Taurage, Lithuania, who traveled throughout Europe speaking, writing, and fund-raising for the resettlement of *Eretz Yisrael*) explains:

[R’ Friedlander’s answer begins with a long and complex discussion of the *Halachot* of inheritance, from which he concludes:] If a father tells his *Bechor* / firstborn son that he is giving him another son’s share of the inheritance as a “*Matanah*” / “gift,” *Halachah* will interpret that as making the older son a guardian for the younger son, not as giving the older son the younger son’s share outright. In contrast, if a father tells his younger son that he is giving him the *Bechor*’s share as a *Matanah*, it becomes the property of the younger son outright. [R’ Friedlander’s explanation of this *Halachah* is beyond the scope of this publication.]

Yitzchak did not know that Esav had sold the birthright; he believed that Esav was the *Bechor*, and he wanted to bless Esav, the firstborn, in order to make him a guardian for Yaakov, the younger brother, so that the latter could focus on Torah study. That is why Yitzchak’s blessing begins with the word, “*Ve’yiten*,” which has the same root as “*Matanah*.” Thus, when Yitzchak found out that he had given the *Matanah* to Yaakov, the younger brother, instead, he believed that it was too late to bless Esav, since he had given the younger brother the older one’s share as a *Matanah*.

At first, Esav did not understand; therefore, in verse 34, he asks Yitzchak to bless him nevertheless. In verse 35, Yitzchak explains to Esav what the problem is. Therefore, in verse 36, Esav reveals his secret: “In fact, Yaakov is the firstborn, not me! As such, you can bless me!”

(*Kos Yeshuah Ve’nechamah*, in *Kitvei Rabbi Nossan Friedlander* I p.108)

“The lads grew up and Esav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents.” (25:27)

Rashi z”l explains: As long as they were young, they could not be distinguished by what they did, and no one paid much attention to their characters. But, when they turned thirteen, one [Yaakov] went to the house of learning and the other [Esav] went to temples of idolatry. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z”l (1910-1995; one of the leading halachic authorities of the 20th century) said at a *Bar Mitzvah* celebration: We understand why, immediately upon becoming a *Bar Mitzvah*, Yaakov dedicated himself to Torah study. After all, our Sages say the *Bar Mitzvah* day is when the *Yetzer Ha’tov* / good inclination enters a person. But, it seems from *Rashi*’s words that immediately, on that same day, Esav turned into an idolator. How did this happen on the very day when Esav received the *Yetzer Ha’tov*?

R’ Auerbach answered: The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 91b) teaches that the *Yetzer Ha’ra* enters a person when he is born. But, being alone in the child--as the *Yetzer Ha’tov* will not arrive until 13 years later--the *Yetzer Ha’ra* does not exert itself too much, R’ Auerbach said. Only when Esav became a *Bar Mitzvah* and received his *Yetzer Ha’tov* did his *Yetzer Ha’ra* begin to “fight for its life” by asserting itself. Thus, on that very day, Esav succumbed to the *Yetzer Ha’ra* and became an idolator. (Quoted in *Tiv Ha’bacharut* p.27)

R’ Yitzchak Traube *shlita* (Kiryat Belz, Yerushalayim) writes, citing many *Chassidic* works and earlier sources, that the *Yetzer Ha’tov* actually is present in a person before he is born. After all, the well-known *Gemara* teaches that babies study Torah in the womb. However, when a child is born, the *Yetzer Ha’tov* departs, and the *Yetzer Ha’ra* enters. Why? Because the very purpose of our existence is to bring “light” into a “dark” world. And, the greater the “darkness,” the more stark is the “light” that follows. Therefore, of necessity, the “darkness” must precede the “light.” (*Mesilot B’ohr Ha’chassidut: Bar Mitzvah* p.29)

Listen to a class by *Hamaayan*’s editor entitled, “*Bar Mitzvah: Welcoming the Yetzer Ha’tov*,” by clicking <http://torahdownloads.com/shiur-1024324.html>.



“Yitzchak loved Esav for game was in his mouth . . .”

Why is no *Berachah* recited on the *Mitzvah* of honoring parents?

R’ Aharon Aryeh Katz *shlita* (Yerushalayim) cites three reasons mentioned by earlier sources:

(1) A parent is permitted to forego his or her honor; thus, if there were a *Berachah*, a child might recite it only to find that there is no *Mitzvah* to perform.

(2) The standard formulation of a *Berachah* on a *Mitzvah* is: “Who has sanctified us [*i.e.*, distinguished us] through His *Mitzvot*.” Since gentiles also honor their parents, this is not a *Mitzvah* that distinguishes us.

(3) Our Sages recognize that a child’s obligation to his parents is so far-reaching that it is virtually impossible to perform the *Mitzvah* properly; therefore, no blessing is recited. (*Pesakim U’teshuvot* 240:1)