

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

*Shmuessen from
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פרשת תולדות

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לעילוי נשמת
מנחם מנדל יחזקאל בן יששכר
בעריש הלוי ז"ל שרייבר
לכבוד היארצייט ג' כסלו

פרשת תולדות

וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֳלִים: (בראשית כ"ה כ"ז)

Three Different Kinds of Tents

Rashi learns that the 'tents' mentioned in this *pasuk* are referring to the Beis Medrash of Shem V'Ever; Yaakov was wholesome in the sense that he spent his days studying and *davening* there. The Seforno and the Rashbam propose a different meaning – that Yaakov was wholesome in his business; the 'tents' he designated for his livestock and wares were led with honesty and integrity. The Kli Yakar provides us with yet another approach – that 'tents' in this *pasuk* are referring to Yaakov's wife; his *shalom bayis* was exemplary in every way. The Kli Yakar proves his point by citing the *pasuk* that Hashem told Moshe to command to Klal Yisroel after *Kabbalas HaTorah*: שובו לכם לאהליכם, *Return to your tents*. (Rashi over there cites the *maamar Chazal* that this *pasuk* was actually notifying the Yidden that they were once again permitted to return to their wives.)

It All Boils Down to Being a Straight Person

It would seem that there is a major dispute amongst these *Rishonim* regarding the translation of this *pasuk* – but the truth is, there really isn't a *machlokes* here. The *Rishonim* were revealing to us that when a person is honest and wholesome in his character and his morals – then his *shalom bayis*, his dedication to Torah, his *tefillah*, and his business dealings are usually in a good place as well. Conversely, when a person is comfortable with dishonesty and deception – then his relationship with his wife, parents, children, and business partners will probably be embroiled with strife and discord.

When a person in *shul* is constantly disgruntled and is forever running into confrontations with the *gabboim* and the Rav, then his personal life is probably full of conflict as well. The same goes for the *bachur* in Yeshiva who is forever getting into *machlokes* with his *chavrusos* and classmates. If a person doesn't work on being straightforward with all of his interactions with others, then he will end up suffering on every front: *shalom bayis*, *parnassah*, raising his children, and so on. Being a person who is known as honest, easygoing, and uncomplicated is extremely beneficial for our success in all areas of *Avodas Hashem*.

וַיִּתְרַד יִצְחָק תְּרָדָה גְּדֹלָה עַד מָאֵד (בראשית כ"ז ל"ג)

The Two Times Yitzchok Trembled

When Yitzchok realized that the person he blessed was actually not Esav, the *pasuk* describes his reaction as follows: מאד – ויחרד יצחק חרדה גדולה עד מאד – *And Yitzchok trembled in very great perplexity*. Chazal compared this emotion to the one that Yitzchok felt at the *akedah*. The same trembling Yitzchok was consumed by when he saw the knife coming down at his throat was present when he recognized that Yaakov had taken the *brachos* in Esav's stead.

What exactly the *shaiches* is between these two episodes needs some clarification. But I would like to point out a very interesting connection I noticed between the wording by the story of the *akedah* and by the *brachos*.

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded Avraham Avinu to bring his son as an offering, the wording was: קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת – *"Please take your son, your only one, the one you love."* Similarly, when Yitzchok asked Esav "Who are you?" as he entered his tent, Esav replied: אני בנך בכורך עשו – *"I am your son, your firstborn, Esav."* The word 'son' lines up perfectly with the first word Hashem used while commanding Avraham to do the *akedah*. But I would like to suggest that the next two words were the same as well. When Esav said בכורך, perhaps he was implying that he was Yitzchok's 'special' son, like the word יחידך; a firstborn often has a closer connection with the father than the rest of the children. And when he identified himself as 'Esav', perhaps he was alluding to the fact that Yitzchok loved him very much – as the *pasuk* in the beginning of the *parsha* says, ויאהב יצחק את עשו, *"and Yitzchok loved Esav"* – which lines up with the words אשר אהבת. So, it turns out that the way Esav identified himself to his father was very similar to the description that Hashem used for Yitzchok at the *akedah*. And when Yitzchok heard these echoing words, he trembled.

Our Children Must All Feel Loved, No Matter What

What's interesting about this way of reading Esav's description is that it suggests that he indeed believed that he was special and beloved in Yitzchok's eyes. But before we go into that, let's ask a fundamental question.

The whole concept of ויאהב יצחק את עשו needs to be scrutinized; did Yitzchok not recognize who Esav was? Did he not realize that Esav was out shooting arrows all over from morning until night, while Yaakov was learning and *davening* all day? Of course, Yitzchok understood very well. We see how he dealt with Avimelech, we see how he made Avraham's business extremely lucrative; he was very sharp and astute. So, why did he not seem

to grasp his own children?

Well, the *meforshim* give many explanations to clarify this point, but I believe the most basic answer is that Yitzchok was actually very well aware of Esav's true nature; he just chose to focus on his qualities and show him love regardless of his shortcomings. Yitzchok was teaching us that even if a child is not giving us that much *nachas*, we are still supposed to make that child feel like number one. Giving a child a sense of confidence and appreciation is one of the best things a parent can do for him. And look at how far this love went: Esav even believed that he was Yitzchok's prized son!

It's not always easy to make a child feel like he's loved. Some children, *r"l*, give their parents a lot more *agmas nefesh* than *nachas*. But if you want even a sliver of hope that the child will give you *nachas* one day – then you must show him unconditional love.

Teaching Your Children Limitations

Speaking about things that are difficult to teach your child – over the years, I noticed that for people who are well-off financially, it must be difficult at times not to spoil your children. When the child knows that the father gives thousands of dollars to his *mosad*, drives a nice car, and they live in a beautiful home – it must be hard to say 'no' when the kid asks for an expensive toy in the store. After all, he is well aware of the fact that you have more money to spend than the average parent! This is a challenging test indeed, but just as a parent must show his child love, he must show him limitations. He must teach his child that everything comes at a price – some more than others.

I once heard an interesting *p'shat* in the name of Rav Yitzchok Koppelman, the Rosh Yeshiva of Luzerne. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos says: "ויהיו עניים בני ביתך" – *Paupers should be regulars in your home*. Rav Koppelman suggested that this maxim can alternatively be translated as follows: The regulars in your home – i.e. your children – should feel like paupers. Meaning: even if Hashem has blessed you with financial comfort, never create an environment where your children feel wealthy. Don't just buy whatever they ask for in the store. Children have to be taught to appreciate limitations; they have to recognize that everything comes with its price. If they think that no matter what they want, they can just swipe a credit card – then they will be crippled for life; hardly anything will be able to please them.

He Who Seeks Purity Receives Assistance

The Gemara teaches in the name of Reish Lakish: "הבא לטהר, מסייעין" – *"One who seeks purity receives assistance"*. The basic translation of these words is that when one

is seeking to purify himself, he receives 'support' or 'assistance' from *shomayim*; but if it is *טומאה* that he is seeking, *shomayim* 'allows' him to follow his desires, but they do not assist him. Now, the word *לטמא* in this context isn't necessarily referring to sin; it is referring to any time a person chooses a path that may be detrimental to him in the future.

For instance, when Noach came out of the *Teivah*, Hashem gave the earth tremendous *bracha* – anything he planted was ready to eat on that very day. Now, it wasn't a very good move on Noach's part to plant a vineyard right away, but Hashem didn't remove the earth's blessing just because Noach was utilizing it unwisely. That's a classic example of *למא פותחין לו*.

A great example of *הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו* is the episode with Basya in Parshas Shemos. Chazal learn from the *pesukim* that Basya was going to the river to 'wash herself' from the idol worship of her family. A few minutes later, as she peered into the casket that contained little Moshe, Chazal say that she "saw the *Shechina* surrounding him". Now, how many people merit to see the *Shechina* in their lifetime? If you ask me, it definitely shouldn't be a *goyta* who was native to the most impure land in the world, and lived her entire life surrounded by idols. But the *p'shat* is that she was seeking purity; she was bathing in the river in the effort to cleanse herself of her family's sins. Therefore, she received special assistance from above to actually see the *Shechina*.

The Power to Bless and Heavenly Assistance

I found a source for this concept in this week's *parsha*. When Yitzchok started to bless Yaakov, he began with the famous words that many Yidden recite every Motzei Shabbos: "ויתן לך אלוקים מטל השמים" – *And may Hashem give you of the dew of the heavens*. The Ohr Hachaim asks an obvious question: why does the *bracha* begin with "And"? Based on the wording of the preceding *pasuk*, it would seem that these words were the first of the blessings – so why does it begin with the word "ויתן", implying that there was another blessing before?

The Ohr Hachaim answers that there was indeed a *bracha* that preceded the blessing of *ויתן לך*. In the previous *pasuk*, it says: "וירח את ריח בגדיו" – *He smelled the fragrance of his garments and he blessed him*. The Ohr Hachaim explains that the word "וירח" was not merely an introduction to the next verse, but rather a *bracha* in its own right. It was at this point that Yitzchok blessed Yaakov with the supernatural ability to give blessings that come to fruition – just as Avraham had given this capability to Yitzchok.

When Yitzchok passed on this tremendous gift to the line of Yaakov, he granted every Yid in the future the power to give *brachos*. When you tell a *Baal Simcha* “*Mazel Tov*”, you should recognize: I am a descendant of Yaakov Avinu! These aren’t just nice words – they’re a real *bracha*! You should have *kavanah* that this *shidduch* should go with *mazel*, or that this *bar mitzvah bachur* should have the right *mazel* to grow up to be a great *talmid chacham*! If you would only concentrate on the fact that you have an elevated mouth that has immense power, then you would say every “Good Shabbos” and every “*Refuah Sheleimah*” with real *kavanah*.

Spirituality Works with Middas HaRachamim

The Ohr Hachaim then offers another answer. He points out that this highly sought-after *bracha* seems to only include *gashmiyus’dik* success and abundance. “Dew of the heavens” and “abundant grains” sound like financial stability, not necessarily *hatzlacha* in *ruchniyus*. Furthermore, he points out that the *bracha* is given with the name *Elokim*, which is the name of *Middas HaDin*. The Ohr Hachaim therefore concludes that the word ויברכהו in the first *pasuk* must have been a blessing for *hatzlacha* in *ruchniyus*, and it was given with the power of the שם הוי”ה, which is the name of *Middas HaRachamim*. Only after Yitzchok gave Yaakov this unparalleled *bracha* did he move on to give him the *bracha* of *gashmiyus* – ויתן לך אלוקים, And may Hashem give you.

According to this *p’shat*, we can gain a deeper understanding into the inner-workings of all of the *shefa* that we receive from Hashem. When we do well financially, or we experience success in our regular interactions and endeavors, we are being given assistance from above – but all within the framework of *Middas HaDin*. If we deserve *hatzlacha*, then the *brachos* Yitzchok Avinu grant us special *siyata dishmaya*. However, when it comes to *ruchniyus* – we are blessed through *Middas HaRachamim*, resulting in an abundance of *hatzlacha* with our *Avodas Hashem*.

Now, there are ways to be *zoche* to special merits even with *Middas HaDin*. Chazal teach us that “כל המעביר על מידותיו, מעבירין לו מן השמים”. If a person chooses to stay away from conflict, and he does whatever he can to avoid any form of confrontation – even when he is 100% right – then Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives him an extra dose of *bracha*. On Rosh Hashanah, when they decide to give his business a profitable year, the *kateigor* may try to say: “But what about this sin that he did? And what about that one?” But Hakadosh Baruch Hu will just tell him: “Last year, when a fellow *misparallel* insulted him in Shul, he just walked away.” And that will settle everything – because even within the strict guidelines of *Middas HaDin*, there are ways to acquire exceptional success. Rav Zeidel Epstein זצ”ל used to say that in fact, this is perfect *Din*; the

same way this person allows insults and attacks to fall to the side and he looks the other way, so too Hashem chooses to turn a blind eye on his misdeeds.

In *ruchniyus*, it works in a totally different way. We can receive *shefa* from above without even meriting it strictly by *Din*. And I believe that the best example for this phenomenon is the teaching of Reish Lakish: הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו. A person may not deserve to be granted supplemental assistance to reach higher levels in *yiras shomayim* and the like, but the moment he makes an honest effort to grow – he receives help from above to supplement his feeble human capabilities.

Don't Shy Away; Hashem Will Help You Get There

Rabbosai, what we're saying here is a little scary. People tend to lie low in the areas that they find difficult by simply telling themselves, "This challenge is just too hard for me." I'm not the type of fellow that can easily concentrate by *davening*, so maybe I should just focus on other things? I find it hard to greet everyone with a smile, so maybe I should just pay attention to *shteiging* in my learning and forget about that *nisayon*? But this insight reveals that we can't reason in that manner. If we will only attempt to succeed in our *ruchniyus*, then we will see supernatural assistance from above. The excuses may be true, but we're working with *Middas HaRachamim*; if you only try, you will be helped.

However, you have to really *want* to grow. You can't just say, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, You know that in theory, I want to be *matzliach* with my *middos*. Now is the part where You step in." That's silly. Of course, you need to show Hakadosh Baruch Hu how badly you really want to go up to the next level. You have to lose sleep over your struggles. You have to keep going back to the Beis Medrash and try learning the Daf again and again, even if you don't understand it – this way, you're showing that you really care to grow.

The *pasuk* in Tehillim that Reish Lakish learned this idea from says: וְלַעֲנוּיִם יִתֵּן חֵן – *To the humble ones, He will give grace*. Perhaps the deeper meaning of this *pasuk* according to Reish Lakish is as follows: Only when we become humble – by showing Hashem that even though we keep failing, we still believe that He can assist us, and we therefore keep trying – will we merit this special assistance from above.

Two Ends of the Spectrum

Rashi gives three explanations as to how Yitzchok became blind: 1 - The smoke of the numerous offerings that Esav's wives brought to the idols

blinded him. 2 - The tears that the *Malachim* cried during the *akedah* fell into his eyes. 3 - Hashem orchestrated his blindness so that Yaakov would be able to get the *brachos*.

The first two explanations are on the two opposite ends of the spectrum. The first suggests that the blindness was caused by the excess of impurity that he was surrounded by, while the second suggests that it was caused by an abundance of *kedusha*. This contrast reminds me of a very important *yesod* in *Avodas Hashem*.

Chazal tell us that the *pasuk* of "ברכו ה' מלאכיו" is referring to the Yidden who keep *Shmittah*. Those who are able to withstand this trying test are considered like *Malachim*. Why? Because usually when a person has to overcome a *nisayon*, he only fights it for a short period of time, and then the battle is won. But the *shomrei Shmittah* – they're fighting the temptation to kick people out of their fields week after week, month after month – all the way until the end of the year. He who has the ability to withstand such a *nisayon* for such a long period of time is like an angel. However, at the same time, the Torah tells us that when the Yidden will stop keeping *Shmittah* – Eretz Yisroel will spit us out into the most dreadful exile imaginable.

We see from here that in some areas of *Avodas Hashem*, the Torah expects us to be either a total angel – or a complete *rasha*. It may be true that the test is a rather daunting one – but this doesn't take away from the fact that failing in it would be an abomination. The aforementioned Rashi shows that when it comes to Yiddishkeit, there are areas wherein we can end up either blinded by the *Malachim*, or the opposite – by *Avodah Zara*.

In these times, as the *Geulah* is drawing nearer, we are faced with many challenges that seem impossible to overcome. However, we must keep in mind: just because it's difficult to pass the test, that doesn't mean that you will get a free pass when Moshiach comes. Many people will end up either going along with Moshe Rabbeinu and the *Avos HaKedoshim* to the *Beis HaMikdash* – or be left behind forever. So let's do our best to make sure that we know for certain which group we will be part of.

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