

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Toldos



בס"ד

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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Torah Wellsprings

Toldos

How To Receive Hashem's Brachos

It states (26:3, 5) ואברכך...עקב וישמר משמרת, "I will bless you...because Avraham hearkened 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.

Later, Yitzchak receives Hashem's brachos through his own merit, but initially,

he was blessed because of Avraham.

What merit did Avraham Avinu have over Yitzchak, enabling Yitzchak to receive his brachos through him?

The Torah (26:5) tells us that Hashem blessed Avraham because וישמר משמרת, "he kept My calling."¹ The Siforno explains וישמר משמרת to mean that Avraham did the deeds that are very precious to Hashem, the deeds that Hashem, Himself, performs.

1. The pasuk (26:5) adds other reasons why Hashem bestows blessing in Avraham's merits. It states, עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקולי וישמר משמרת חקתי ותורת.

Rashi explains that קולי means Avraham obeyed Hashem's voice when Hashem tested him. וישמר משמרת is that Avraham kept the gezeiros of Chazal (such as muktzeh on Shabbos), which safeguard the Torah. מצות are the mitzvos that we understand on our own, such as the prohibitions against stealing and murder. חקות are "[The prohibition] of eating chazir or wearing shatnaz, that don't have a reason. They are decrees of the King on His servants." תורת refers to the oral laws and halachos l'Moshe m'Sinai.

These refer to acts of chesed and bringing people closer to Hashem. The words of the Siforno are: עשה תמיד המשמרת המיוחדת לי שהיא לגמול חסד כאמרו כל אורחות ה' חסד ואמת ולהורות חטאים בדרך וזה עשה כאשר קרא בשם ה', "He did the service that is uniquely mine, and that is to do chesed and to teach sinners to go in the correct path..."

Avraham performed these deeds,² which caused blessings to flow.

Although Yitzchak also performed deeds of kindness, he wasn't teaching others about Hashem, at least not yet at this point of his life. Therefore he didn't receive the brachos in his own merit, only in the merit of Avraham Avinu. Each tzaddik serves Hashem in his own way, nevertheless, since Yitzchak lacked this

good deed of teaching emunah to others, he couldn't receive Hashem's brachos on his own.

A few pesukim later, it states (26:24) לא תירא כי אתך אנכי וברכתיך והרביתי את זרעך בעבור אברהם עבדי, "Fear not, for I am with you, and I will bless you and multiply your children for the sake of Avraham, My servant." Once again, Yitzchak received brachos in Avraham's merit.

The next pasuk (26:25) states, ויבן שם מזבח ויקרא בשם ה', "[Yitzchak] built a mizbeiach there, and he called Hashem's name." This refers to when Yitzchak began teaching others about Hashem.

A few pesukim further, Avimelech tells Yitzchak (26:29) אתה עתה ברוך ה', "You are now the blessed of Hashem." The Siforno explains that now Yitzchak

2. It states in *parashas Vayeira* (18:19), כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה את בניו אות ביתו, "For I love Avraham because he commands his sons and his household after him that they should keep the way of Hashem."

received Hashem's brachos in his own merit. He was engaged in acts of chesed and teaching people about Hashem. For these mitzvos, he deserved brachos in his own merit.

Yaakov Avinu received brachos in his own merit because he would teach others about Hashem. The Siforno explains, "From his youth, Yaakov was יושב אהלים, learning in the tents of Torah, and he was teaching people awareness of Hashem. Specifically, when he studied in the yeshivos of Shem and Ever, [he taught people about Hashem] because, certainly, all who searched for Hashem went there."

The Siforno points out that after Yitzchak taught people about Hashem and he received Hashem's brachos in his own merit, his life became much better. The Siforno writes, ולא מצאוהו עוד תלאות מקנאים ודברי ריבות כאשר בראשונה: "He didn't have the difficulties of jealousy and

disputes as he had beforehand."

Just one example of what Yitzchak had to endure before he received Hashem's brachos in his own merit was the story of the wells.

ויקנאו אותו פלישתים, וכל הבארות אשר חפרו עבדי אביו בימי אברהם אביו סתמום פלישתים וימלאום עפר, ויאמר אבימלך אל יצחק לך מעמנו כי עצמת ממונו מאד

"The Plishtim were jealous of him, and all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Avraham his father, were filled with earth. Avimelech said to Yitzchak, 'Go away from us, for you have become much stronger than us.'"

But after Yitzchak received Hashem's brachos in his own merit, everything changed. He didn't suffer from his neighbors anymore. In fact, after Yitzchak called out in Hashem's name and taught people about Hashem, it states in the pasuk (26:25)

that Avimelech came to make a peace treaty with Yitzchak.

We learn from this discussion the importance of doing kindness and of revealing Hashem to the masses. It was because of

these two good deeds that Hashem blessed the avos.

Each person, in his own way, can also occupy himself with these types of good deeds, and he will merit huge brachos from Hashem.³

3. On the topic of chesed, we share the following story, which was told by a rosh yeshiva in our generation. It happened to him:

His father passed away when he was a young child. His mother worked hard to put food on the table, and there was never money for extras. Once, he asked his mother for a new shirt. She told him that they couldn't afford it. Nevertheless, understanding how much a new shirt meant to him, she saved up her pennies until she was able to buy him a new shirt. He wanted to put it on immediately, but his mother told him to wait for Rosh Hashanah.

Rosh Hashanah night, he proudly went off to beis medresh in his new shirt, but to his chagrin, no one noticed his brand-new shirt. He felt so depressed that he even had thoughts of leaving Yiddishkeit. (Who can judge an orphan with the struggles he went through.)

On his way home, he passed Rechov Ralbach in Yerushalayim, and he saw throngs of people going to receive a brachah for the new year from the Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l. On the spur of the moment, he decided to join the crowd.

The Beis Yisrael looked up and saw the boy as he stood in line. The Beis Yisrael immediately picked up on his broken spirit. When it was the boy's turn to receive a brachah from the Beis Yisrael, the Beis Yisrael held onto his collar as he looked at the boy's shirt, complimenting him on his new shirt.

The rosh yeshiva concluded the story and told his students that everything they got from him was thanks to the Beis Yisrael, who

Teaching Emunah

When we teach emunah, we receive Hashem's brachos.

Avraham Avinu would teach emunah when he performed hachnasas orchim. He would tell his guests, "Do you think you ate my food? Don't thank me. Thank the One Who created the world and Who gave you the food" (see Rashi, Bereishis 21:33). In this way, he taught people about Hashem.

The Rambam (Hilchos Avodas Kochavim 1:2) writes, "[Avraham] told people that it is proper to serve Hashem and that they should bow to Him... He called forth in a loud voice to the entire world that they should know that there is one G-d in the world, and we should serve Him alone. Avraham would

go from city to city and from country to country, and he would call out, and he built up a following until he came to Eretz Yisrael, and he proclaimed [the emunah there] as it states (Bereishis 21:33) ויקרא שם 'בשם ה' 'He called in Hashem's name.'"

Hashem loves those who teach others to believe in Him and to go in His ways. Therefore, to become a *melamed*/teacher is a great privilege because it is an opportunity to train young children in emunah and to go in Hashem's ways. But it is also a great responsibility.

The Baal HaTanya hired a *melamed*⁴ to study with his young son, Rebbe Dov Ber (who later became renowned as the Mittlerer Rebbe zt'l). The Baal HaTanya said to the *melamed*, "Be aware that you are doing מלאכת ה' ,

paid attention to the needs of a young orphan.

4. The *milamed* was a student of the Magid of Mezritz zt'l.

Hashem's service, and it is דייני נפשות, a matter of life and death, because your students' spiritual life is in your hands, and spiritual life is more crucial than physical life. If you do your service well, you will earn credit for all the good deeds the children do, and you earn the merits of their children and their grandchildren forever. But if you don't teach well, the children's failure is because of you.⁵ 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."

Parents also have the incredible merit of training their children in emunah and in going in Hashem's

ways. However, they also have a great responsibility. They must know that everything is in their hands. If they educate their children well, they will be rewarded for their children's success and the success of their future generations. But if they are negligent, they will be held responsible.

Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu to appoint Yehoshua as his successor. Hashem said (*Devarim* 27:18) קח לך את יהושע, "Take Yehoshuah," and Rashi explains that Moshe should take Yehoshua with words by telling him, אשריך שזכית, "You are fortunate! You were granted the merit to lead Hashem's children."

Reb Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l said that a *bas kol*

5. Reb Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld zt'l once fired a melamed who wasn't fit for the position. The *melamed* complained, "What will I eat?"

Reb Yosef Chaim replied, "Would you rather eat children?"

proclaims these words every day, to every *melamed* (and sometimes, when the *melamed* needs more *chizuk*, the *bas kol* will say it to him twice a day): אשריך (שזכית להנהיג בניו של מקום "You are fortunate because you were granted the privilege to lead Hashem's children."

We add that the *bas kol* probably says these words every day to parents: אשריך (שזכית להנהיג בניו שלל מקום "You are fortunate because you were granted the privilege to lead Hashem's children."

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhill said that studying a *daf* Gemara on Shabbos is equivalent to studying five hundred blatt Gemara on a weekday. A chapter of *Tehillim* on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred chapters of *Tehillim* on a weekday. We add that an hour of singing *zemiros* with the family on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred such hours during the weekday.

One of the antidotes against the *yetzer hara* is to sing songs to Hashem. The

joy and inspiration of a *nigun* overpowers the lure of *gashmiyos*. Singing with the children on Shabbos is five hundred times more powerful and influential than a weekday.

So, sing with the family and show them the joy of Yiddishkeit. This is one of the ways we teach our children to go in Hashem's ways.

Reb Yonoson Chever Shlita, son-in-law of the *mashgiach* Reb Dov Yafo *zt'l*, related that one Shabbos morning, while reciting *pesukei d'zimra* in a room near the *beis medresh*, he overheard the conversation of two young children, who were pretending to learn Gemara. They were seated in front of large Gemaros and sang the Gemara tune (although they couldn't yet read the words).

One child sang, אסור אסור אסור. The second child asked, אסור אסור אסור? And the other boy replied, more forcefully this time, אסור אסור אסור.

אסור! "Forbidden! Forbidden! Forbidden!"

That week, Reb Yonoson Chever ate the Shabbos *seudah* at his father-in-law's home, Reb Dov Yafo, and repeated this episode, wanting to share what he thought was a cute story of two young children.

However, hearing the story, Reb Dov Yafo became visibly upset. He stood up and said, "I must go speak to their father now."

The Rebbetzin and the family tried to explain to Reb Yafo that it was just two children playing, but Reb Yafo wasn't calmed.

The Rebbetzin said, "But if you go to him now, while he is eating his *seudah*, he

will be startled. If you feel you must speak to him, better push it off for later."

Reb Yafo accepted her advice.

Later in the day, Reb Yafo spoke to the father, explaining that a child mustn't think of Yiddishkeit as אסור אסור אסור, that everything is forbidden. He should associate Yiddishkeit with joy and sweetness. Having negative, stifling views on Yiddishkeit could *chalilah* have terrible consequences.⁶

The father didn't take Reb Dov Yafo's warning seriously. Eventually, both children fell off the *derech* and became irreligious, *r'l*.

6. A rosh yeshiva said he saw a sefer on hilchos Shabbos for children. It taught the 39 malachos, and everything that is prohibited on Shabbos. This rosh yeshiva commented that he would have preferred if the first few pages of the sefer would describe the mitzvah of oneg Shabbos and the pleasure we have on Shabbos. Children shouldn't view Shabbos as a day of restrictions, rather as a day of pleasure and joy. And then they can study the restrictions and the halachos, too.

A *mashal* is told about a storeowner in a small town who sometimes got angry and shouted at his customers. He wasn't afraid they wouldn't return to his store because they didn't have anywhere else to go. But then a competitor opened another grocery in the small town. Now he was careful to speak respectfully to all customers because he knew that if they felt slighted, they may opt to go to the other store instead.

The *nimshal* is, in our generation, children have where to go. If parents don't show them love and instead shout and belittle them, the children might decide to find solace elsewhere, outside the house. So, we need to be cautious to demonstrate to our children that they are

always loved, wanted, and respected for who they are.

Boundaries

The Torah says (25:27) ויהי עשו איש ידע ציד איש שדה ויעקב איש תם ישב אהלים "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 limitations.

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 has boundaries.⁷

7. The Yeitav 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.

Eisav was יודע ציד, and Rashi explains that this means he knew how to hunt and trick his father. He would ask his father, "How does one give maasar from salt and straw," and his father thought he was cautious with the mitzvos.

In contrast, Yaakov Avinu is called איש תם, and Rashi explains, "Someone who isn't wise and cunning

to trick others is called a תם."

The *meforshim* say that Yaakov is called איש תם, which implies that he was in control of his *temimus*. When the need arose, he was very clever. Yaakov Avinu told Rachel (*Rashi* 29:12), אם לרמאות הוא בא גם אני אדיו, ברמאות, "If Lavan wants to trick me, I am his brother in cunning." However, this

The *roshei teivos* of ישראל is: יש שישים רבוא אותיות לתורה, "There are 600,000 letters in the Torah." Each member of בני ישראל is represented by a letter of the Torah. The letters of a *sefer Torah* need to be separated with white parchment (מוקף גויל). The white parchment hints to the boundaries, limits, and precautions the Jewish nation accepts on themselves to ensure that they remain within the realm of *kedushah*.

A leaf perched high on a tree watched birds fly by and was jealous. "Why can't I also fly? Why do I have to be tied down to a tree?"

Hashem heard its prayers. A strong wind blew, and the leaf broke free from the tree. It floated high up in the sky. It felt so proud of itself and free like the birds. But then it fell to the ground... and began to dry and crumble.

The *nimshal* is that some people want to break out from their boundaries, not realizing that the boundaries are for their benefit. There's a moment of euphoria when one breaks away but then come distress and destruction. The boundaries are there for our benefit and eternal bliss.

wasn't the life he desired. He wanted to live with simplicity and sincerity in the tents of Torah.

Noach is also called תם, as it states (*Bereishis* 6:9), נח איש צדיק תמים. But when the Torah discusses the flood, he is called צדיק alone (see 7:1 with Rashi). He isn't called תמים.

We can understand that in the generation of the *mabul*, Noach couldn't be a *tamim* anymore. The world was filled with *avodah zarah*, theft, and adultery (see *Rashi* 6:11), and Noach had to know what was going on in the world to protect himself and his family from bad influences.

When a generation is very corrupt, one must be very clever, or else he, and his children, might be drawn after their ways.

In this generation, there are simple people, תמימים, who only want Torah and mitzvos. They don't know

what the internet is and don't want to know.

This quality is a form of *temimus*, but when you have children, you can't be naive. You need to know what's happening, the dangers and the warning signs, and how to be cautious. One must be איש תם, in control of one's *temimus*, and know when to be wise and cunning to protect one's family.

Growth from Challenges

The Torah (26:19-22) tells us that Yitzchak's servants dug a well, and then the Plishtim claimed that the wells were 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 הרחיב 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, "Yitzchak went up from there to Be'er Sheva." This is difficult to comprehend. He finally found a peaceful location where there was water and no disputes. Why did he move on?

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* explains that Yitzchak always wanted to remember Hashem. 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.⁸

Yitzchak blessed Yaakov (27:28), "And may Hashem give you..."

The ויתן of ויתן is extra. Rashi explains that the ויתן "and give" implies ויתן ויהזור, 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 the blessing ויתן ויהזור ויתן means that Yaakov will always be lacking something, and he will always need more. This is a blessing, as this will force him to continuously raise his eyes to heaven.

Yitzchak said to Yaakov (27:29) אורריך ארור ומברכך ברוך,

8. In the next *pasuk* Hashem blesses Yitzchak, as it states, וירא אליו ה' בלילה ההוא ויאמר... אל תירא כי אתך אנכי וברכתיך והרביתי את זרעך בעבור אברהם עבדי "Hashem appeared to Yitzchak that night and said... 'Don't be afraid, because I will be with you, and I will bless you, and I will increase your offspring, in the merit of Avraham my servant.'" Reb Shwab explains that Yitzchak earned this blessing because he sought new opportunities to connect his heart with Hashem.

"Those who curse you shall be cursed, and those who bless you shall be blessed." Those who curse are mentioned first, before those who bless. Rashi explains, הצדיקים... אורריהם, "For tzaddikim... those who curse them and cause them pain precede those who bless them."

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz zt'l asks: Why do tzaddikim have people who curse them?

The Divrei Yisrael asks another similar question (quoting his father) on Tehillim (109:28) יקללו המה ואתה תברך, "They shall curse, and You will bless." It seems that we want the goyim to curse us.⁹ Why is that?

The Divrei Yisrael answers (quoting his father): It

states (Tehillim 23:6) אך טוב וחסד יירדפוני כל ימי חיי, "May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life." יירדפוני (pursue) represents people who chase after you, those who strive to harm you. For tzaddikim, this is אך טוב וחסד, 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 יקללו המה ואתה תברך. We want our enemies to curse us because this results in ואתה תברך, that you will be blessed. You will reach higher levels from the experience.

The Gemara (Taanis 7:) says, ¹⁰ אי הווי סני הווי חכימי טפי. The

9. The pasuk doesn't state אם יקללו אתה תברך, "If they curse, you will bless." It states יקללו המה, "They shall curse." Why do we want their curses?

10. The simple translation is that if chachamim weren't beautiful, they would be greater in Torah. Rashi explains, "It is impossible

Divrei Yisrael says that סני can be translated as שונאי, enemies. If one has enemies, he becomes wiser in Torah. One grows from hardships.¹¹

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

Humility

Yaakov Avinu received Yitzchak's brachos in a most unusual manner. Yitzchak thought he was blessing Eisav, and Yaakov, dressed as Eisav, received the brachos.

The Drashos HaRan (drush 5) asks, "Why did Hashem want Yitzchak to bless Yaakov unknowingly? Although this didn't detract from the strength of the brachos, nonetheless, wouldn't it be more ideal if Yitzchak knew to whom he was offering the brachos?"

"Furthermore, the way the brachos were given resulted in eternal animosity from Eisav to Yaakov because Eisav claimed that Yaakov stole his brachos. This problem could have been averted if Yitzchak had been told in a prophecy that he should bless Yaakov.

"The answer is that Yitzchak loved Eisav. He

for the beautiful to be humble, and this causes them to forget."

11. The Gemara (Shabbos 31.) says, דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד, זו היא כל התורה, כולה, "What you hate when done to you, don't do to your friend. This is the entire Torah." Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l says that סני in this Gemara doesn't only mean hate. It means enemy, and your primary enemy is your yetzer hara. דעלך סני, if your enemy, the yetzer hara entices you to do aveiros, לחברך לא תעביד, don't make him your friend. He acts like your friend; he says he means your benefit, but don't trust him because he is your greatest enemy.

didn't recognize Eisav's true ways and nature. If the nevuah had told him to bless Yaakov and not Eisav, the elder son he loved, Yitzchak would have been upset, and his sadness would have caused the Shechinah not to be with him fully [because the Shechinah doesn't reside when one is sad]. Therefore, Hashem wanted Yitzchak to think he was giving his brachos to his beloved son so that he would be happy and have the ruach of Hashem [as he blessed Yaakov].¹²

The Koziglover Rav zt'l (Eretz Tzvi 5688, בד"ה בדרשות) says another reason why it was destined for Yitzchak to think he is blessing Eisav, and that Yaakov should get the brachos in a concealed manner. It was to increase Yaakov Avinu's humility, as this was a preparation

for receiving the brachos. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 65:19) writes, "When Yitzchak said to Yaakov גשה נא ואמשך בני, 'Please come closer, so I can touch you, my son,' water fell on his thighs, and his heart was as soft as wax. Hakadosh Baruch Hu prepared two malachim, one on his right side and one on his left side, and they held onto his arms so he shouldn't fall." Yaakov was extremely humble then, frightened that Yitzchak might touch him and recognize that he wasn't Eisav. He was filled with humility and anavah which prepares one to become a vessel to receive Hashem's brachos, as Chazal (Sotah 5.) say, "Hashem is with those who are humble."

The Kozeglover Rav concludes, "This is a lesson for all generations. When

12. Yitzchak said to Eisav (27:4) ועשה לי מטעמים... בעבור תברךך נפשי, "Prepare for me tasty foods... so that my soul will bless you." This is because simchah is essential when giving a brachah.

one is humble, he is a vessel to receive Yaakov's blessings because מעשה אבות סימן לבנים, the deeds of the avos are a sign for the children."

When Yitzchak kissed Yaakov, he said, ראה ריח בני כריח שדה אשר ברכו ה', "Behold, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field, which Hashem has blessed!"

Rashi writes, "There is no odor more offensive than that of washed goat skins! But this teaches us that the fragrance of the Garden of Eden entered with him."

Reb Leibele Eiger zt'l (ד"ה וירח את ריח, Toras Emes) explains that Yaakov Avinu was broken and humble at this time, as he stood before Yitzchak, dressed in Eisav's clothing. When you crunch and break besamim, the scent becomes stronger. This is what happened to Yaakov at this time. Since he was broken and humble, Yitzchak smelled the divine scent.

Hashem chose the Jewish nation because כי אתם המעט מכל (Devarim 7:7), "for you are the least of all nations." Rashi explains that Hashem chose us because of our humility.

The Kli Yakar (Bereishis 48:16) elaborates, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu prefers those who are small [and humble]. We see this pattern happening to all of Avraham's descendants:

"Yishmael was Avraham's first son, but he wasn't chosen; Yitzchak was.

"Eisav was Yitzchak's bechor. Eisav was disqualified, and Yaakov was chosen.

"Reuven was Yaakov's oldest son, but Reuven wasn't chosen; Yosef was.

Menasheh was Yosef's oldest son, yet Efraim was chosen. This teaches us a great lesson, and the wise will understand." It tells us that Hashem desires the humble.

The Zohar says that the highest form of tefillah is תפילה לעני, the tefillah of a poor man (more than תפילה למשה or תפילה לדוד). The humility of the poor opens the gates of heaven for his tefillos.

It states (Tehillim 34:7) זה עני קרא, וזה שמע ומכל צרותיו הושיעו, "This poor man called, and Hashem heard, and He saved him from all his troubles."

The Yismach Moshe zt'l (Tehillim) is perplexed by the expression זה עני, "This poor man," because זה implies that it is referring to a specific poor man. But which poor man is it referring to?

The Yismach Moshe answers, "The pasuk is revealing to us why the poor are called עני. The translation of עני is *answer*, and Haskadosh Baruch Hu answers their tefillos. The poor are called עני because ה' שומע, Hashem hears his tefillos ומכל צרותיו הושיעו, "and saves him from all his troubles."

So, זה עני isn't discussing a specific poor man. The pasuk is saying, זה עני, the reason he is called עני, is because עני, Hashem answers his tefillos.

Kibud Av v'Eim

The Torah (26:18) tells us, וישב יצחק ויחפר את בארות המים אשר חפרו בימי אברהם אביו ויסתמום פלישתים אחרי מות אברהם ויקרא להן שמות יצחק, "Yitzchak again dug the wells of water which they had dug in the days of his father, Avraham, and the Plishtim had filled them up after Avraham's death, and he gave them names like the names that his father had given them." He maintained the names of the wells that Avraham gave.

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains why Yitzchak didn't change the names of the wells. "He did this to honor his father. The Torah tells us about this to point out one of Yitzchak's merits. We should do the same for our parents. Yitzchak didn't even want

to change the names that his father gave to the wells. *Kal vechomer*, we should follow our parents' good customs and ways."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya concludes, "Perhaps this is why Yitzchak's name wasn't changed, unlike the other *avos*."

Avram was changed to Avraham, and Yaakov to Yisrael, but Yitzchak's name remained the same. Yitzchak didn't want to change the names his father chose; therefore, he deserved his name to remain the same.¹³

Eisav also honored his father. However, the Yaaras Dvash (*Yaaras Dvash* pg.70) says, he honored him in deeds and speech, but he didn't honor Yitzchak in his heart.

To prove this, consider the following:

The *Targum Yonoson* (27:31) writes, "Hashem prevented Eisav from finding kosher game, so he found a dog, killed it, made a meal from it, and brought it to his father. He said, 'Father, get up and eat from your son's game...'"

He wouldn't have done this if he had honored his father in his heart.

Furthermore, Rashi (*Bereishis* 29:11) says Eisav sent his son Elifaz to kill Yaakov! He wouldn't do that if he cared for his parents' feelings. He obviously didn't care if Yitzchak lost his son Yaakov.

And in this week's *parashah* (26:35), it states, ותהיין מורת רוח ליצחק ולרבקה, that Eisav's wives caused

13. The Torah tells us that Yaakov Avinu made good foods (27:31) ויבא לאביו, "and brought them to his father." The two words – ויבא – have the same letters, only in the opposite order. This hints that if you honor your parents, your children will honor you. Your good deeds will be returned to you.

Yitzchak and Rivkah much distress because they worshipped *avodah zarah* to spite and to anger Yitzchak and Rivkah. Eisav didn't stop them. So, we see that Eisav's honor was only in his deeds; he didn't admire his parents in his heart.

The primary aspect of honor was lacking. The Chayei Adam (67) writes, "Honoring parents means to honor them in your thoughts. You should consider your parents as being from the *gedolim*, from the most important people in the world. This is the primary aspect of honoring parents."

Yitzchak had this kind of admiration for his parents. An indication of this is that he didn't want to change the names of the wells. He so respected his parents that he didn't want to change what they decided and established.

Nevertheless, Eisav was rewarded for his *kibud av v'eim*. One reward was the strength and power that

went to his grandson, Amalek. Rebbe Yohonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* writes, "Amalek's power comes from Eisav's merits because he honored Yitzchak. As it states (22:28), ויאהב יצחק את עשו, 'Yitzchak loved Eisav...'. But it was all ציד בפיו, from Eisav's glib tongue because Eisav didn't honor Yitzchak in his heart. He didn't do anything from his heart, only with his mouth."

And since his honor was only in deeds, we can cancel and revoke Eisav's merits when we honor our parents with our deeds, speech, and thoughts. This perfect *kibud av v'eim* will annul and cancel Eisav's merits for his imperfect *kibud av*.

Additionally, Rebbe Yohonoson Eibshitz says, if we serve Hashem with all our heart, that will also annul Eisav's strength. When we serve Hashem with our heart, mind, and soul, it will erase all Eisav's credits.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz bemoans that we lack heart,

especially during tefillah. He writes, "I talk about this matter all day and all night. I don't stop speaking about it: A Yid must serve Hashem with his heart, with *kavanah*. He shouldn't serve Hashem by rote, out of habit. Especially *tefillah* needs heart because *tefillah* is *avodah shebalev*, the primary service of the heart. Due to our many sins, people got into the habit of mumbling their *tefillos*. The lips and tongue move by habit, and the heart thinks about business and other matters. Woe to us from the day of judgment! When one becomes old, he won't have more than two or three proper prayers that were said with *kavanah* his entire life. The same is with *kriyas Shema*. How many weeks and years pass without saying *kriyas Shema*, the three *parshiyos*, with a whole heart, without thinking other thoughts?! Woe to us! This empowers our enemies because we are in *galus* under Eisav's

domain, and their merit comes from their forefather [Eisav], whose power was with his mouth (צִיד בְּפִי). If we serve Hashem with our heart, he loses his strength. But if we will be like them and only serve Hashem with our mouths, Eisav's merit remains in its place."

The Yaaras Dvash adds that this is the intention of the *pasuk* (27:22), הַקּוֹל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב, וְהַיָּדַיִם יְדֵי עֵשָׂו, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Eisav." This means that if all we have is the קוֹל יַעֲקֹב, the voice of Yaakov (such as the sound of Torah and *tefillah*), but it is without the heart, then וְהַיָּדַיִם יְדֵי עֵשָׂו, Eisav still has power over us.

Tests

The Yismach Moshe (בד"ה עור נ"ל לפרש) writes, "I heard in a dream that Yaakov was intrinsically good. Chazal say that when his mother passed a beis kneses or a beis medresh, Yaakov would try to come out of the womb to go

there. He naturally sought goodness and holiness. Eisav was the opposite. He was intrinsically bad, and he wanted to act corruptly. When his mother passed a house of avodah zarah, Eisav tried to leave the womb to worship avodah zarah. But then, we are faced with a question because it seems they weren't given free choice."

Without free choice, tzaddikim don't deserve reward, and resha'im don't deserve punishment. Free choice is essential. But where was Yaakov's free choice if he was intrinsically good, and how did Eisav have free choice? He was intrinsically bad!

The Yismach Moshe replies, "They did have free choice because they were twins in their mother's womb. This enabled their attributes to fuse between them. Eisav's *hislahavus* to do bad could have drawn Yaakov to do the same, and Yaakov's [*hislahavus* to do good could have drawn

Eisav to be good]. So, they had bechirah, they had free will, and they chose to remain who they intrinsically were. This is what I heard in a dream."

The Yismach Moshe adds, "I responded in the dream that this is the meaning of the pasuk (Malachi 1:2-3) 'אהבתי אתכם אמר ה' 'I love you,' says Hashem.

"ואמרתם במה אהבתנו, [The Jewish nation asks], "How have You loved us?"

הלא אח עשו ליעקב ואוהב את יעקב" ואת עשו שנאתי [Hashem replies] "Was not Eisav a brother to Yaakov? I loved Yaakov, and Eisav I hated."

The Yismach Moshe explains that we ask במה אהבתנו, "Why do you love us? If it is because of Yaakov Avinu's righteousness, behold, that was his natural self and not his free choice!"

Hashem replies, הלא אח עשו ליעקב, Yaakov and Eisav were brothers, twins from the womb, and yet, Yaakov didn't learn from Eisav's evil ways. He had free

choice, and he chose, on his own, to be righteous.

The Yismach Moshe explains that the foundation of Bnei Yisrael had to be entirely good, and therefore we had to originate from Yaakov Avinu. But there needed to be *bechirah* (free choice), too. Otherwise, his good deeds would lack significance. That's the reason Yaakov was born as Eisav's twin.

When Rivkah passed the houses of avodah zarah, Eisav tried to leave the womb. When she passed the batei knesses and batei medresh, Yaakov tried to leave the womb. Rivkah saw this and realized that one of her children would be totally good, and one evil, and she figured that they wouldn't have free choice, so she asked, **אם כן** למה זה אנכי. What is the purpose of bearing children who won't have free choice?

ותלך לדרוש את ה', Rivkah went to find an answer to this question. Hashem replied, **שני גוים בבטן... ולאום** מלאום. The response was that two opposite natures were in her womb, which creates an aspect of free will because each one can choose to be influenced by the mindset and approach of the other.

עקב means a heel. He was called by this name because **וידו אוהות בעקב עשו**, he held onto Eisav's heel at birth (see 25:25). Why should he be named for this episode? What is so significant about holding onto his brother's heel?

It is because holding onto Eisav's heel shows a connection between them, already from the womb, which was the root of Yaakov's free choice. This was very significant, as it demonstrated the source of Yaakov Avinu's *bechira*.¹⁴

14. The Toldos Yaakov Yosef *zt'l* (Toldos 1) says that **עקב** comes from the word **עקב**, heel, and it means Yaakov's focus is on the end, on

Yitzchak wanted to bless Eisav and not Yaakov. Some explain that he thought Eisav was a tzaddik, but there are other explanations. Some say that Yitzchak knew of Eisav's bad nature, which is why he wanted to bless him. The brachos would help him overcome his evil inclination. Yaakov, on the other hand, was totally good, so Yitzchak thought he didn't need the brachos.

Yaakov told Yitzchak, אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה בְּכֹרֶךָ, "I also have the tendencies of Eisav in me! I also need your brachos."

Yitzchak replied, הַקּוֹל קוֹל הַקּוֹל, יַעֲקֹב וְהִידִים יַדֵּי עֵשָׂו, that although Yaakov has the voice of Torah and tefillah, nevertheless, due to אֲזוּחָהוּת וִידוֹ, that his hand was holding onto Eisav's foot, he could have picked up on Eisav's ways, so he also needs the brachos. his is

the reason Yitzchak blessed Yaakov.

Eisav heard that Yaakov stole his brachos, and he shouted (36) וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פַעֲמַיִם, "[Yaakov] has deceived me twice!"

Yitzchak heard that Yaakov had the trait of cheating others, so he said (27:33) גַּם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה, "he, too, shall be blessed." He understood that Yaakov also needed the brachos.

Positive Influences

When a child is in his mother's womb, he learns the entire Torah with a *malach*. We, therefore, wonder why Yaakov Avinu wanted to leave his mother's womb to go to the beis medresh of Shem and Eiver (see *Rashi* 25:22). What could be better than learning with a malach?

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* answers that

Olam HaBa. עֲשֵׂו means "to do," to act impulsively, without considering the consequences of his actions.

Yaakov preferred to leave the womb, so he wouldn't need to be around a bad influence. Learning with a malach is wonderful, but not when one must be together with Eisav, the rasha.

The Rambam (*Deios* 6:1) writes, "It is the nature of people to be drawn after the thoughts and the deeds of his friends, and he will behave like the people of his country. Therefore, it is essential to befriend tzaddikim and dwell near chachamim so you can learn from their ways. Distance yourself from *resha'im* who walk in darkness. Don't learn from their deeds. Shlomo HaMelech (*Mishlei* 13:20) says,

הולך את חכמים יחכם ורעה כסילים ירוע,
'He who goes with the wise will become wise, but he who befriends the fools will be broken.'¹⁵

This is one of the reasons it is a mitzvah to be in a beis medresh, even when you aren't learning Torah or davening. It is also because of the kedushah of the beis medresh.

Shulchan Aruch (151:1) states, "Sitting in beis medresh is a mitzvah, as it states, אשרי יושבי ביתך."

And *Shulchan Aruch* (155:1) states, "After [*shacharis* in beis kneses] go to the beis medresh." The *Mishnah Berurah* (6) writes, "Even if he doesn't understand what they are learning there,

15. A doctor asked his patient, "Why do you smoke? It is dangerous."

"I don't smoke," the patient replied.

"Your x-ray shows that your lungs are black! Surely you smoke!"

"I work next to people who smoke," he replied.

So we see how much a person is influenced by his environment.

nevertheless, spending time in beis medresh is a mitzvah."

The Rema MiPano writes, "From all the merits that Yaakov had - his Torah, his good deeds, they were so many - the Torah doesn't mention [any of these] other than that he was, *יושב אהלים*, that he would sit in the beis medresh. Because sitting in the beis kneses or beis medresh is very great, even if one just sits there and doesn't study Torah or pray."¹⁶

The Gemara (*Brachos* 7-8) says, "Whoever has a beis

knesses in his city and doesn't daven there, he is a bad neighbor... He causes exile for himself and his children..."

The Tzlach (*דרוש כ"ג לשבת* (שונה) explains, "Even if he davens in his home and with a minyan, he is a bad neighbor because he isn't davening in the beis medresh. The home doesn't have the *kedushah* of a beis medresh. The beis medresh is a *מקדש*, a Beis HaMikdash, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu dwells there. When a person enters a beis medresh, the *yetzer hara* leaves his heart, and it is

16. The Yismach Yisrael wrote the following letter to his chassidim, "I also request from the businesspeople, they should always daven in the *beis chassidim* (beis medresh) and should never miss. Even if they need to wait for a minyan to gather, they should wait, and in the meanwhile, they can learn something. I guarantee that this will not cause them a financial loss, *chalilah*. On the contrary, it will bring *brachah* into their *parnassah*. This will also train their children to go twice a day to the beis medresh, and when one spends time in a perfume store, he acquires a good scent."

The Maor v'Shamesh writes, "In particular, one must be cautious about davening with the congregation. If he does so, he is guaranteed to have *parnassah* in abundance every day. There will be a *brachah* in everything he does."

like he is in Eretz Yisrael. His *tefillos* go straight up to heaven because the *sar* (*malach* of *chutz l'aretz*) doesn't have any control over the air of a beis knesses. When one davens at home, he misses out on all these benefits."

Hashem is in Control

Someone asked a dreidel, "How do you have the strength to stand on one foot? And why are you so happy that you dance a kedatchke?"

He replied, "I don't have the strength to stand alone. A person turns me from above, and I dance from his strength."

Sometimes, people feel that they are on one foot; they feel that life isn't stable. But if they believe that everything that happens to them is turned from Above, they will be happy and even dance a kedatchka.

Yosele the fool came into the beis medrash crying bitterly. He said, "I

just lost ten million dollars, and it is all because of just one word!"

"What happened?" people asked him.

"I went to the bank and asked the clerk to give me ten million dollars. I figured that this was an easy way to become wealthy. But the clerk said, 'No.' With that one word, I lost ten million dollars."

Everyone laughed because they understood that he didn't lose ten million dollars; he never had it.

The same happens to people with grand plans to earn a lot of money, and when their dreams don't materialize, they feel they lost that money. But they need to realize they didn't lose anything because they never had the money!

Furthermore, even if they had money and lost it, they didn't lose anything. The money was never really theirs. Hashem gave it to

them to hold onto, and now Hashem took it back.

It states in our parashah (27:28) ויתן לך, and Rashi writes that the ויא"ו at the beginning tells us ויתן ויחזור ויתן, that Hashem will give us His bounty again and again.

Why is this necessary? Wouldn't it be better if Hashem gave the bounty once, for a long time? Why does Hashem give again and again?

Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l (Darash Moshe, וישלח ד"ה ויהי לי) explains that when someone has something for many days, Hashem is giving it to him each day anew.

Let's say someone has a good piece of furniture, and it has been in his home for many years. Each day, Hashem gives it to him anew. ויתן ויחזור ויתן, every day, it is given to him again.

This explains why we say the birkas hashachar each morning. It seems unnecessary. You praised Hashem yesterday and the day before that for making

you a Yid, for the shoes you wear, for your eyesight, for your clothes, etc. Why do you say these brachos each day?

The answer is that each day, new miracles occur. Hashem gives you clothes, eyesight, and all your needs, each day.

When a human gives you something, he gives it to you once, and then you have it. But Hashem's gifts are given to you each day anew.

Beis Yaakov (Vayeira) writes, "The counsel for everything is to be happy, and you will have all types of yeshuos. I heard from my rebbe (Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l), when I came to him to ask him to daven for my son, who was dangerously ill. He said he doesn't have any advice for me other than that I should be b'simchah. I followed this counsel, and I gave the chasidim to buy food and drink, and we ate and drank together with joy and with ahavas chaverim,

and with Hashem's help, my son was healed immediately."

When one knows that everything is from Hashem, he will always be happy.

He will also never be afraid.

It states (27:33) ויחרד יצחק "Yitzchak was extremely afraid." The Or HaChaim explains that Yitzchak was afraid because he realized that he was tricked and that he had made a mistake. He thought he had blessed Eisav, and now that Eisav arrived, he realized he had blessed someone else. Rashi writes that Yitzchak was afraid because he saw Gehinom open before him. The Targum Yonoson writes that Yitzchak was afraid because when Eisav was before him, he smelled the scent of Gehinom.

Targum Yonoson writes that the translation of ויחרד is וידעוע, trembled, afraid.

According to all these explanations, Yitzchak was afraid, literally.

However, Rashi (in one explanation) writes, בתרגומו ותוהו, לשון תמיהה, "It is as Unkelos translates it, 'he wondered.' [ויחרד] means תמיהה, wonder, question." So, ויחרד יצחק חרדה, גדולה עד מאוד, means Yitzchak was very confounded, and he wanted to understand what happened. He thought he blessed Eisav, and now Eisav arrived!

Throughout the Torah, ויחרד is translated as fear. So why this time do Rashi and Unkelos want to translate ויחרד as wondered?

The answer is that it is impossible to write ויחרד, fear, trembled, about Yitzchak, because Yitzchak wasn't afraid of anything other than Hashem, Himself. Indeed, when one knows everything is from Hashem, there is nothing to fear.

Yitzchak is called פחד יצחק, he excelled in the attribute of fear of Hashem,

and he wouldn't be afraid. Therefore, they changed the translation of ויחרד to mean ותה, wondered.

Avimelech came to Yitzchak to make a peace treaty with him, and Yitzchak said to him (26:27) מדוע באתם אלי ואתם שנאתם אתי ותשלחוני מאתכם "Why have you come to me since you hate me, and you sent me away from you?"

The Baal HaTurim says that the hatred went to the extent of attempted genocide. Avimelech tried to kill Yitzchak.

Avimelech said (26:29) ה' אלהיך ברוך ה' "Now you are blessed by Hashem." The Baal HaTurim writes that the words ה' ברוך ה' are written one other time in the Torah. Lavan said to Eliezer (24:21) ה' ברוך ה' "Come the blessed of Hashem." The Baal HaTurim writes, "This tells us that just as Lavan and Besuel planned to kill Eliezer (they served him poison), so did Avimelech plan to kill Yitzchak."

Hashem protected Yitzchak from Avimelech's plans and granted him life and immense success. It states (26:12-14) ויזרע יצחק בארץ ההוא וימצא בשנה ההוא מאה שערים ויברכהו ה', ויגדל האיש וילך הלוך ויגדל עד כי גדל מאד, ויהי לו מקנה צאן ומקנה בקר, ועבדה רבה ויקנאו אתו פלשתים, "Yitzchak sowed in that land, and he found in that year one hundred fold, and Hashem blessed him. The man became great and grew constantly greater until he had grown very great. He had possessions of sheep and possessions of cattle and much production, and the Plishtim envied him."

From Yitzchak's success, Avimelech attained awareness that Hashem turns things around. When someone wants to harm his fellow man, Hashem makes everything good for that person. Avimelech wanted to harm Yitzchak, and Hashem protected Yitzchak and gave him financial success.

So, Avimelech told Yitzchak that Yitzchak shouldn't attempt to harm him because Hashem protects the victim (and Avimelech thought that Hashem would protect him, too, if Yitzchak tried to harm him).

The same occurred with Yosef HaTzaddik. His brothers wanted to harm him, and their attempts led to Yosef being the ruler of Mitzrayim.

In Mitzrayim, Pharaoh wanted to harm the Yidden, but this only increased the Jewish nation. It states (Shemos 1:12) *וכאשר יענו אתו כן ירבה*, *וכן יפרץ*, "As much as they would afflict them, so did they multiply and so did they gain strength" (see Kli Yakar, Shemos 1:8 *ד"ה אשר לא ידע את (יוסף)*).

So, the lesson from this is that when people try to harm you, be aware that you will only gain from it.