

Aligning Our Destiny WITH THE BIRTHRIGHT



YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Toldos

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Not Leaving the Confines of Eretz Yisrael

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Rivka's Positive Choices Despite Her Influences

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In the Name of a Person Lies His Destiny

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Toldos

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Meeting One's Potential

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Withholding The Script of Reality

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1. *Rivka* was barren and miraculously became pregnant due to *Yitzchok's* supplication.
2. During her pregnancy, she experienced unusual agitation within her womb and suffered greatly.
3. She sought out clarity from Shem the prophet.
4. He told her that there are two nations in her womb; one represents good and the other evil.
5. The 2 entities were in opposition of one another.
6. *Rivka* was now aware that *Esav* was truly evil.
7. Why didn't *Rivka* share this information with *Yitzchok*? It would have prevented so much pain & suffering.
8. Why did *Rivka* seek out clarity from Shem and not from *Avraham* or *Yitzchok*?
9. *Avraham* passed away 5 years before his time so not to see his grandson *Esav* pursuing an evil path.
10. *Rivka* did consult with *Avraham*, but he didn't know.
11. The basis for *Esav* hating *Yaakov* is a consequence of *Yaakov* haven taken the blessing meant for *Esav*.
12. Had *Yitzchok* been aware of the evil of *Esav* he would have never considered blessing him.
13. The context for *Esav* to be considered for the Blessing was only because *Yitzchok* did not know his true nature.
14. *Rivka* realized this should not to be known to her husband *Yitzchok*, and so could not divulge the true nature of *Esav*.

Tracing The Force That Brought Existence Into Being

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1. *Yitzchok* was only conceived by *Sarah* after *Avraham* was circumcised & had the letter *Hei* added to his name.
2. The world was created with the spirituality that is contained in the letter *Hei*.
3. *Gemara*: The shape of the letter *Hei* is indicative of man's free choice.
4. The shape: two vertical legs that are spaced and a small opening on the top of left leg.
5. The wide open space alludes that man has the choice to go into the oblivion, free fall.
6. If he chooses to repent, he can return by taking another path to allow himself to maintain his change for the better.
7. A *Noachide* must live his life within the context of seven *Noachide* Laws.
8. Before the sin of *Adam*, that would have been sufficient to achieve spiritual perfection.
9. After the sin, due to spiritual regression one needs 248 Positive and 365 Negative Commandments for perfection.
10. Since man is prone to fail, Repentance was embedded in the profile of creation.
11. *Avraham* needed a *Hei* added to his name to create the force that brought all existence into being.

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The Empowerment of the Patriarch Through The Matriarch

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1. After *Yitzchok* marries *Rivka*, the *Torah* tells us of *Avraham's* passing at the age of 175.
2. *Avraham* passed away when *Yaakov* and *Esav* were 13 years old; why mention it here?
3. *Midrash*: The Patriarchs' actions are indicative of the future events of the Jewish People.
4. *Midrash*: *Avraham* went down to Egypt and so did the Jewish People; *Avraham* left with great wealth and as did the Jewish People.
5. A Patriarch assumes that role if there is a Matriarch.
6. *Yitzchok* did not become the Patriarch until he married *Rivka*.
7. Although *Avraham* lived many more years, he no longer contributed as a Patriarch once *Yitzchok* married *Rivka*.
8. *Avraham's* actions were valued as an individual; no longer contributing to the destiny of the Jewish People.

When Intervention Is Without Self Interest

CLICK TO VIEW!



1. *Esav* returns from the field fatigued and famished.
2. He asks *Yaakov* to give him from the lentil soup he is cooking.
3. *Yaakov* agrees only if he sells him his birthright.
4. *Esav* agrees to sell his birthright for a pot of lentils and a loaf of bread.
5. As the narrative reads – *Yaakov* took advantage of the moment to snatch the birthright.
6. *Midrash*: The service in the Temple was reserved exclusively for the first born.
7. *Yaakov* said it would be disgraceful for such an evil person to be the officiant before G-d.
8. *Yaakov* had no self interest in the birthright; his initiative was solely to avert a desecration of G-d's name.
9. Years later *Yaakov* took the blessings that were meant for *Esav* by impersonating *Esav*.
10. *Esav*, upon returning and realizing what *Yaakov* had done, lets out a yelp and wails.
11. *Yitzchok* blesses *Esav*: When you are pained by the fact that your birthright was taken from you, when the Jews don't keep the *Torah*, you will then cast their yoke from your neck.
12. Why is the transgression of the *Torah* a basis to cast off their yoke?
13. *Yaakov's* justification to take the birthright was that it was disgraceful for an evil person to be G-d's officiant.
14. If there is a desecration it is no longer justified because the Jews themselves transgressed the *Torah*.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: *Toldos*

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The Preservation of Free Choice

Parsha: “And these are the offspring of Yitzchak, son of Avraham – Avraham fathered Yitzchak.” We see from the beginning of the *pasuk* that Yitzchak was the son of Avraham. Why does the *pasuk* say later “Avraham fathered Yitzchak”? It seems obvious that if Yitzchak was the son of Avraham then Avraham fathered him.

Rashi citing *Midrash*: The generation’s deprecators gossiped that Sarah, Avraham’s wife, had been barren for over 50 years and that after one night with Avimelech, she conceived. Evidently, Avimelech was Yitzchak’s father and not Avraham. To counter such claims, Hashem made Yitzchak’s face almost identical to Avraham’s. Because of this similarity between Avraham and Yitzchak, the world attested to the fact that Avraham was indeed Yitzchak’s father regardless of the situation with Avimelech.

We know that the pedigree of a Jew is sacred. We also know that Sarah was a tzaddekes, and her power of

prophecy was even greater than Avraham’s. How could Hashem allow her to be sequestered with a heathen such as Avimelech? How could Hashem have allowed a question about Yitzchak’s pedigree to arise? In order to mitigate the damage caused by the questions arising from Yitzchak’s pedigree, Hashem caused Yitzchak’s face to be identical to that of Avraham to confirm his true pedigree. How can we understand this situation?

The purpose of existence is to enable man to make choices. Every moment is a choice between right and wrong due to a lack of complete clarity. If we make the right choices, we succeed; if not, we fail. Avraham was the role model of all existence. When Avram became Avraham, he became the father of all the nations. He was a man who introduced monotheism into existence. Avraham was not only one of the world’s most wealthy individuals but also the most spiritual. Avraham radiated with holiness, and his very presence minimized one’s ability to choose. How could a person choose to do wrong after being exposed to Avraham’s level of spiritual clarity?

For this reason, we know there is always a balance of good and evil throughout existence. Who is the counterbalance to *Avraham*? *Nimrod* (who threw *Avraham* into the kiln of *Kasdim*) was the antithesis of *Avraham*. In fact, *Chazal* tell us that the day that *Esav* killed *Nimrod*, *Avraham* passed away. We see that there cannot be a day where there is no counterbalance. *Avraham's* successor was *Yitzchak*. He was the son of the father of all nations. In addition, he resembled *Avraham*. In a way, they are both equated. If this is the case, how is *Yitzchak's* level of holiness counterbalanced in the world? How could there be free choice if there is no counterbalance?

Therefore, *Hashem* created a situation where people would question *Yitzchak's* pedigree. Is he the son of *Avimelech* (the heathen, murderer, and adulterer) or is he the son of *Avraham*? A woman who has been barren for over 50 years conceived after one night with *Avimelech* – it must be the case that he is the father and not *Avraham*. *Hashem* performed a miracle in order to confirm *Yitzchak's* true pedigree. Because of the conflicting evidence, *Yitzchak's* level is diminished due to the fact that people would question his pedigree. It is through this conflict of evidence that *Hashem* is able to preserve the power of choice in the world. Despite the resemblance to *Avraham*, people could still choose to see the situation incorrectly and question it. Because of this ambiguity, *Yitzchak's* ability to affect the world was no longer at *Avraham's* level.

We see that the counterbalance of good and evil is repeated clearly with *Yaakov* and *Esav*. This is the conflict between the Jews and *Amalek*. *Hashem* says that his throne will not be complete until *Amalek* is obliterated from the face of the earth. *Amalek* is the thorn in the side of all existence since it epitomizes evil, which undermines all the good of existence.

Chazal: *Amalek's* attack on *B'nai Yisroel* as they left Egypt was analogous to someone jumping into a scalding bath. Though the first person to jump into the bath will get burned, he will make the bath cooler for everyone else to dive in. All the nations of the world stood in awe of *Klal Yisroel* because they knew that the Jews had defeated the Egyptians who were the mightiest nation. Nevertheless, *Amalek* attacked the Jews, thus diminishing our appearance of invincibility. We see again the counterbalance and the ambiguity in perceiving the world. It is through this ambiguity that free choice is maintained in the world. If we are able

to choose the right path, then our reward will be of the highest degree in the face of ambiguous options.

The Center of Creation

Parsha: “And these are the offspring of *Yitzchak*, son of *Avraham* – *Avraham* fathered *Yitzchak*.” We discussed above one understanding of this *pasuk*.

Rashi: Another interpretation of “*Avraham* fathered *Yitzchak*” is that only after *Hashem* changed *Avram's* name to *Avraham* could he father *Yitzchak*. Does the *Torah* need to use four additional words simply to communicate that it was *Avraham* and not *Avram* who fathered *Yitzchak*? What do we learn from this? We need to understand the difference between *Avram* and *Avraham*.

Chazal: *Avram* was a great astrologer who could interpret the stars that informed him: “*Avram* will not father a son, but *Avraham* will.” However, there must be a deeper meaning besides a simple name change that prompted the *Torah* to use four additional words at the end of the first *pasuk* of *Toldos*. When *Avraham* was concerned that *Eliezer* may become his heir, *Hashem* told *Avraham* that he should look to the heavens and see that, as the stars cannot be counted, so too will be his progeny.

Yalkut: There is an extra letter “*hey*” at the end of *hashamayimah* when *Hashem* instructs *Avraham* to look to the heavens. The word for heaven should have been spelled *hashamayim* without the “*hey*” at the end. *Hashem* tells *Avraham* that he created this world with the letter “*hey*.” We also find in the *Gemara* that there is a *pasuk* in *Tehilim* that *Dovid HaMelech* states that with the letters “*yud*” and “*hey*,” *Hashem* created the worlds. With the power of the letter “*yud*,” *Hashem* created the spiritual world, and with the “*hey*,” He created the physical world. *Hashem* explained to *Avraham* that just as the letter “*hey*” was needed to form all of existence, so too would he, in order to become the father of the Jewish people, require a letter “*hey*” in his name. The letter “*hey*,” which created the entire world, caused *Avram* to become a new dimension of a person in the world who was equivalent to all existence. This is also the meaning of the additional “*hey*” in the word *hashamayimah*.

With this, we can also understand the *Mishna* that states that saving a single Jewish life is equivalent

to saving the entire world. Because the same energy force (influence) was needed to create the world as was used by *Hashem* to bring about the Jewish people through *Avraham*.

Chazal: The word found regarding creation, *biheeb'ar'am* (When He created them), contains the same letters as *Avraham*.

Maharal: When *Avraham* came into existence, he was not a continuation of his previous existence but rather the beginning of a new existence. We see that the Jewish people descend from a person who was the beginning of a completely new dimension of creation. With this, the *Maharal* explains that when the *Torah* tells us that *Terach* (*Avram's* father) died, he actually lived for many more years. If this is the case, why did the *Torah* tell us that *Terach* died?

Rashi citing *Chazal*: *Avraham* leaving his father would be seen as disrespectful since he would be violating his obligation to honor his father. *Hashem* said to *Avraham* that he was absolved from honoring *Terach*.

Maharal: If *Terach* was *Avraham's* father, how could he be absolved from his obligation? The answer is that *Terach* was no longer *Avraham's* father. *Avraham* was a new dimension of person who had no relevance to *Terach*. This is why the *Torah* states, "Avraham fathered *Yitzchak*." *Avraham* could only father the future patriarch, *Yitzchak*, after becoming a dimension of a person equivalent to all existence. This is the pedigree of every Jew. If we could only appreciate our own level and dimension, then we would be able to experience tremendous spiritual growth.

We Forge Our Own Path

Torah: *Esav* returned from the field after killing *Nimrod* (as well as committing four other cardinal sins on that day) and found *Yaakov* cooking lentils with his face covered with ash. *Esav* asked *Yaakov*, "What happened?" and *Yaakov* responded, "Our grandfather passed away." After hearing this, *Esav* proclaimed that there is no judgment and no judge! By this, *Esav* denied the existence of G-d. *Esav* knew that his grandfather would inevitably pass away, as all people do. In addition, *Avraham* had already lived for 175 years. What caused *Esav* to have such an extreme reaction?

Chazal: Each of the Patriarchs was destined to live 180 years. *Yitzchak* lived 180 years. *Yaakov* was supposed to live 180 years; however, he passed away after 147 years because *Hashem* deducted a year of his life for every word of complaint he gave to Pharaoh. *Avraham* was destined to live 180 years; however, *Hashem* deducted five years because He promised *Avraham* that he would pass away in a "good old age." If *Avraham* were to witness the day that *Esav* committed five cardinal sins, it would have undermined *Hashem's* promise of passing away in a "good old age" because *Avraham* would have been devastated to see his grandson following a path of evil.

Esav understood that his grandfather was supposed to live 180 years. After *Avraham* passed away at the age of 175, *Esav* questioned the justice of *Hashem*. If there were justice and a judge in existence, how could *Avraham* be denied five years of his life? We need to understand the situation. On the day that *Avraham* passed away, *Esav* killed *Nimrod*.

Midrash: *Nimrod* possessed the special garments of *Adam* that were fabricated by *Hashem*. These garments had a special power of attracting animals, and since *Esav* was a hunter, he wanted to take them for himself. *Esav* killed *Nimrod* for the sake of these garments. As we learned earlier, there cannot be an *Avraham* in existence without a *Nimrod* – every force requires a counterforce. *Hashem* maintains a perfect balance of good and evil in order to protect free choice. Ironically, we see that *Esav's* killing of *Nimrod* directly caused the passing away of *Avraham*. *Esav* was a cause of his grandfather's death because he chose to become a heretic on that day and commit five cardinal sins, one of which was murder.

Hashem had promised *Avraham* that he would pass away in a "good old age." Therefore, *Hashem* needed to deduct five years from *Avraham's* life so he would not see his grandson committing these sins. The irony is intensified because *Esav* denounced G-d since he believed his grandfather died prematurely when, in fact, *Esav* was the cause of *Avraham* losing five years of his life. *Esav* literally digs his own pit, jumps in, and blames G-d for being in the pit.

We can learn a lesson about ourselves through this incident. People often do not understand their lives and circumstances. Some may believe that life is

unfair because they deserve or do not deserve certain outcomes. We make many choices in our lives, often without clarity, and our circumstances directly result from our choices. The source of our problems really lies in us. If we are able to have clarity, then we will be able to understand our circumstances. Our free choice dictates the way *Hashem* will treat us, just as *Esav's* free choice resulted in the passing of *Avraham*. Let us not lose sight of these facts and hope to have clarity so as not to question the unwavering truth of *Hashem's* justice.

The Hidden Character of Yitzchak

Unlike *Avraham*, whose life and character is well chronicled by the *Torah*, we find that the *Torah* does not provide us with this level of detail about *Yitzchak's* life. *Yitzchak* remains an unknown individual whom the *Torah* presents as the object of the *Akeidah*. The *Torah* does not tell us if *Yitzchak* was in agreement with the *Akeidah* or if he was forced to participate. However, we are told that *Yitzchak* is deceived by his son and misled by *Yaakov* to receive the blessing of the birthright intended for *Esav*. The *Torah* conceals the true nature of *Yitzchak*.

Chazal: *Yitzchak* is called the *olah temima*, "the unblemished offering." *Yitzchak* is also referred to as the *kodshi kadoshin*, "the holy of holies." The *Torah*, however, does not explicitly reveal *Yitzchak* and his many qualities. *Yitzchak's* eyesight was impaired in his old age. The *Torah* clearly states that *Rivka* understood *Esav's* character, yet she did not reveal this knowledge to *Yitzchak*. It would seem that she should have told her husband about *Esav*. Why did *Rivka* choose to conceal this information and not do this? Another question arises - how did *Rivka* know *Esav* better than *Yitzchak*? How did she gain this special insight and not *Yitzchak*?

The *Torah* refers to *Esav* as a person with the greatest power of deception. He was able to have the appearance of a *Torah* sage while at the same time being evil to the core. One may posit that *Rivka* understood *Esav* from her personal experience with her brother, who was also a deceptive and deceitful person. The *Torah*, however, explains that *Rivka* gained this understanding of *Esav's* character in a specific manner. When *Rivka* was pregnant with *Yaakov* and *Esav*, she had great difficulty with her pregnancy. *Rivka* experienced painful jolting and movements within her womb that caused her to seek out *Hashem*. The *Torah*

tells us that she went to *Shem* for clarification. He informed her that in her womb were two great nations—one that epitomizes holiness and the other evil.

When *Esav* was born, *Rivka* understood that *Esav* epitomized evil and that he would readily deceive her and *Yitzchak*. She knew this because *Shem* explicitly told it to her. The question is, why did she ask *Shem*? We know that *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* were greater prophets than *Shem*, yet she received the prophecy from *Shem*. The fact is, *Rivka* had gone first to *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* concerning her difficult pregnancy, but neither had any understanding of her predicament. If *Hashem* revealed this prophecy to *Shem* and not to *Avraham* or *Yitzchak*, evidently He did not want them to know *Esav's* true nature. From this, *Rivka* understood *Hashem* wanted to conceal this truth from *Avraham* and *Yitzchak*.

We learned earlier that *Hashem* promised that *Avraham* would pass away in "a good old age" without being exposed to the realization of *Esav's* evil nature. This is why *Hashem* did not reveal this to *Avraham*. *Hashem* needed to keep *Esav's* nature hidden from *Yitzchak* because he would have been cursed by *Yitzchak* and not considered for the blessings. *Rivka* understood that she was not permitted to communicate this knowledge to *Avraham* or *Yitzchak* because *Hashem* wished to conceal this from them.

Ohr HaChaim: The *Torah* reveals *Yitzchak's* character through one Hebrew letter. This week's *parsha* begins with *V'Aiele toldos Yitzchak v'Avraham,*" and these are the offspring of *Yitzchak*, son of *Avraham*..." The *Torah* could have omitted the letter *vav* in the beginning of the *pasuk*. However, the *Torah* is telling us through this *vav*, which is a connecting letter, that *Yitzchak* was the equivalent of his father *Avraham*. Just as *Avraham's* life and character were explicitly outlined in the *Torah*, *Yitzchak* is a continuation of *Avraham*. The question to ask is, if the *Torah* reveals *Avraham* in detail, why would it not depict *Yitzchak*?

We can all understand the characteristic of *chesed* "kindness," which was personified through *Avraham*. *Yitzchak*, however, represented the attribute of *din* or "judgment." He was completely dedicated to self-perfection. He was the "unblemished offering." How could we even begin to understand or conceptualize someone at this level? It would be similar to attempting to understand an angel, which is impossible to comprehend through textual description. The *Torah*

therefore simply states *V'Aiele* – he was equivalent to *Avraham*. Even though *Yitzchak's* focus was on the attribute of “judgment” while *Avraham* was “kindness,” they were equivalent. Since we could not be able to comprehend *Yitzchak's* characteristic, the *Torah* only alludes to his status through the letter vav.

Guarding Our Mouths

Parsha: *Yaakov's* mother, as a result of a prophecy, instructed him to go to his father and take the blessings that were rightfully his. For *Yaakov* to successfully accomplish this task, he needed to present himself as *Esav*, the designated recipient of *Yitzchak's* blessings. *Rivka* assisted *Yaakov* by preparing delicacies that he would serve to his father. In addition, she took goats' hides and placed them on *Yaakov's* hands and neck in order to resemble *Esav's* hairy skin. After this, *Yaakov* went to his father to serve him the delicacies. Surprised, *Yitzchak* asked his son how he could catch and prepare the game so quickly. *Yaakov* responded that *Hashem* had arranged it to be this way. *Yitzchak* became suspicious since *Esav* did not communicate in a refined manner, nor did he use the name of *Hashem*. *Yitzchak* asked him, “Are you indeed my son *Esav* or not?” *Yaakov* responded (“*ani*”), “I am.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “*Ani*” means “I am who I am, and *Esav* is *Esav* the first-born.” *Yitzchak* understood “*ani*” to mean that *Yaakov* was *Esav*, the first-born; however, what was intended by *Yaakov* was, as *Rashi* explains. How are we to understand this miscommunication? Is it a lie? Is a lie what one says or how it is understood? Evidently, it is both. We find that when *Avraham* went to *Gerar*, he told *Sarah* he would present her as his sister to *Avimelech*. During the first night with *Avimelech*, *Hashem* came to him and told *Avimelech* to return *Avraham's* wife or die.

Avimelech returned *Sarah* to *Avraham* and asked him how he could have claimed that *Sarah* was his sister when, in fact, she was his wife. *Avraham* responded that he saw that the people and the king of *Gerar* had no fear of *Hashem* and, therefore, needed to protect himself and *Sarah*. *Avraham* explains to *Avimelech* that he did not lie to him. *Sarah* was in fact his sister. How was *Avraham* able to claim this? *Avraham* stated that *Sarah* was his brother's daughter and, therefore, the granddaughter of his father. There is a principle that grandchildren are like the offspring of the

grandparents; therefore, *Sarah* is his sister. *Avraham* was making it clear that he did not lie. The fact that *Avimelech* understood *Avraham* to mean that *Sarah* was his actual sister is irrelevant. In fact, *Avraham* said that *Sarah* was his niece, and since he was in danger, *Avraham* was permitted to state that she was his sister in a sense. He did not say a lie within the specific context that we just explained.

Gemara in *Shabbos*: There is a discussion between *Rav Abaye* and *Rav Puppa*, which states that the *Torah* study of young children has greater value than the *Torah* study of these two *Amoraim*. How is this possible? These were some of the greatest interpreters of the *Mishna*. They understood that since young children have never uttered sinful words, therefore their *Torah* study is untainted. Even though they were great *Amoraim*, their *Torah* was tainted slightly by any inappropriate expression that may have come from their mouths. *Yaakov* and *Avraham* understood this on the most absolute level. They knew they needed to minimize any amount of lying, even under circumstances that were a matter of life and death. If the listener only misinterpreted the statements of *Yaakov* and *Avraham* in the situations cited above, then they effectively minimized the lie.

The value of the expression of speech emanates from the ability of a listener to interpret the meaning. The effectiveness of one's expressions depends on how tainted one's mouth is from lies. The *Torah* which one communicates could be diminished by a mouth that lies. *Avraham* and *Yaakov* were very careful not to damage the effectiveness of their speech by carefully phrasing their comments to be true within the context of expressing truth. We see that although *Yaakov* disguised himself before his father, *Yitzchak*, he did not change his manner of speech. If he intended to mislead his father into believing that he was *Esav*, then why would he speak in a refined manner or mention *Hashem*?

Yaakov understood the necessity of receiving the blessings but was not willing to sacrifice his adherence to the ways of the *Torah*. He did not wish to take credit for catching the game independently of G-d's help because he knew it would be a *chilul Hashem*. Even though he knew that *Esav* would never have expressed himself in this manner, *Yaakov* believed that if he was going to be successful in his mission, he

would not need to deviate from his refined behavior. This is *Yaakov's* hishtadlus, "taking initiative." *Yaakov's* hishtadlus involved only those actions that the *Torah* permits. If an action was not permitted, it was not part of *Yaakov's* hishtadlus. In terms of ourselves, we also need to take initiative; however, it needs to be within the context of the *Torah*.

Ramchal: A person must take the initiative because it is part of the curse of mankind: "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread." Even though the *Gemara* states that a person's physical and monetary situation is predetermined from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Rosh Hashanah*, we still need to take the initiative. This initiative needs to be within a permitted context. Just as *Yaakov* and *Avraham* were careful about their speech, so too do we need to be careful because the effectiveness of our expression and our *Torah* will be determined by not saying slander, lies, or other damaging comments emanating from our mouths.

Hashem's Plan

Parsha: *Yaakov* took the blessings that *Yitzchak* had intended for *Esav*. After *Esav* discovered that *Yaakov* had taken the blessings, "He harbored hatred toward *Yaakov* because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and *Esav* said in his heart when the days of mourning for my father draw near, then I will kill my brother *Yaakov*."

Rashi: This means that when *Yitzchak* will pass away, *Esav* will then kill *Yaakov*. *Esav* pledged to wait until after *Yitzchak* passed away because he had great honor and respect for his father and did not wish to cause him pain and anguish. Immediately after *Esav* said silently "in his heart" that he would kill *Yaakov*, the *Torah* states, "When *Rivka* was told the words of her older son *Esav*, she summoned *Yaakov*, her younger son, and said to him," Behold, your brother *Esav* is consoling himself regarding you to kill you. So now, my son, heed my voice and arise; flee to *Lavan*, to *Charan*". The question is who told *Rivka* the words that *Esav* said only "in his heart"?

Rashi: *Rivka* received this information through divine prophecy. We should note that at this time, *Yaakov* was 63 years old and fled from his home as a result of *Rivka's* warning. He was away from his parents for a period of 38 years (22 years with *Lavan*, 2 years traveling, and 14 years in *Shem V'Aver*). After 38 years, *Yaakov* returned

home, and *Yitzchak* was still alive. What was the point of *Yaakov's* premature fleeing? Why did *Rivka* receive the prophecy from *Hashem* foretelling *Esav's* actions so early? *Yaakov* could have easily remained home with his father and mother for many more years.

Torah: *Rivka* had told *Yaakov* to flee to *Lavan* for only "a short while" until *Esav's* anger would subside; yet, *Yaakov* fled for 38 years during which time he was unable to fulfill his obligation of honoring and serving his father *Yitzchak*. As a result of the 22 years in which he overstayed his refuge with *Lavan*, *Yosef* was later separated from him for 22 years. Why did this chain of events need to unfold in this manner?

Midrash: There is a principal – *Maaseh avos siman L'banim*. "The actions and experiences of the Patriarchs are an indication of what their descendants will experience." For example, since *Avraham* went to Egypt, the Jewish people would need to go to Egypt. *Avraham* returned from Egypt with phenomenal wealth, and so did the Jewish people who left Egypt. While in Egypt, *Sarah* (*Avraham's* wife) was not defiled. As a result, the Jewish women were not defiled while being slaves in Egypt. These are examples of *Ma'ase avos siman L'banim*.

The Patriarch, *Yaakov*, represents golus "exile." This is why he enacted the prayer of the evening *Amidah*, which occurs during the evening hours (night denotes golus). There was no other Patriarch who suffered as much as *Yaakov* in exile. He was outside of the land of Israel more than any other Patriarch. After he returned from his 38-year fleeing of *Esav*, *Yaakov* left for Egypt, where he spent the remaining 17 years of his life. Why did *Yaakov* need to suffer in this manner in exile?

Yaakov is the patriarch who foretells the future of the Jewish people. Just as *Yaakov* survived and grew as a spiritual being despite the harshness of exile, so too will the Jewish people survive and flourish in exile. We have the innate capability of surviving and flourishing in exile because of *Yaakov*. Evidently, every moment of *Yaakov's* life in exile was crucial to the future development and survival of the Jewish people.

Even though *Yitzchak* was not going to pass away for many years, *Hashem* needed to inform *Rivka* early so that she could warn *Yaakov*. *Rivka* applied the information told to her exactly as *Hashem* intended that she warn *Yaakov* to flee immediately. This is

because *Hashem* wanted *Yaakov* to experience the exile and tribulations he experienced to prepare future generations of Jews who were destined to live in exile. There was no mistake in *Yaakov*'s leaving early. It was essential for our surviving exile.

A *Daas Torah* is a person who invests his life in *Torah* and is spiritually charged as a result of his achievements in *Torah*. The *Daas Torah*'s has a *Torah* mind – he can see situations and the world through the insights of the *Torah*. The chemical activity in his brain is not what determines his mind's processing. How do we understand if a *Daas Torah* explains a situation in one way and it unfolds in another way?

For example, during World War II, there were many *Torah* sages of the generation who were asked if the Jews of Europe should flee. Many *Torah* sages advised against leaving Europe and great tragedy unfolded in Europe – communities perished, and millions were slaughtered. Did these *Torah* sages make a mistake? Or did they, in fact, communicate the correct message that *Hashem* told them, just as *Rivka* communicated to *Yaakov* to flee, although *Yitzchak* lived until after *Yosef* was sold into slavery?

This is the way it needed to happen. *Hashem* communicated to *Rivka* that *Yaakov* needed to flee at that time because he needed to go into exile for many years and experience the difficulties he experienced only because the Jewish people needed to be able to survive in exile. We do not know G-d's mind. We do not even begin to comprehend the purpose of the events that unfold before us. We certainly do not understand the devastation to the Jewish people in World War II. All of this is part of the mind of G-d and therefore part of the mind of *Torah*.

My *Rosh Yeshiva z'l* used to say that we find that *Nadav* and *Avihu* were outstanding individuals destined to become the leaders of the Jewish people. However, because they brought the fire for an offering without asking *Moshe*, they were killed by G-d. The *Torah* refers to their fire as *aish zarah* "strange fire." In reality, the fire they brought was correct on a halachic or legal basis; however, they did not follow the proper procedure by not asking *Moshe*. Because the proper protocol was not followed, *Hashem* did not want the fire and killed them.

This is part of G-d's will. The world and its events are part of G-d's design. The *Torah* sages, who advised

people to stay in Europe during World War II, processed the information from *Hashem* exactly as they were supposed to process it. It is not that they made a mistake. We simply do not understand *Hashem*'s plan just as we could not understand why *Rivka* told *Yaakov* to flee so prematurely. We see, however, that *Hashem*'s plan, albeit hidden from our understanding, is in our best interest. Because if *Yaakov* did not leave at the time he did, we would not have been able to survive the many years of our exile.

Internalization is the key to blessing.

Torah: After *Yaakov* received *Yitzchak*'s blessings, *Esav* approached *Yitzchak* and asked for his blessing only to discover that *Yaakov* had already taken them. The *Torah* says, "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!... Have you not reserved a blessing for me?... Have you but one blessing?" *Yitzchak* responded by giving *Esav* a blessing focused on the material world: "Behold, of the fatness of the earth, shall be your dwelling and of the dew of the heavens from above. By your sword, you shall live, but your brother you shall serve; yet it shall be that when you are "tarried (aggrieved)," you may cast off his yoke from your neck."

Rashi: The Hebrew word "tarried (aggrieved)" is an expression of anguish and pain when the Jews will violate the *Torah*. You will have a reason to agonize over the blessings that *Yaakov* had taken, and you will be able to throw off his yoke. Perhaps *Rashi* could have simply said that the Jews deserve blessings only if they follow the ways of the *Torah*, and if they do not, then *Esav* may throw off the yoke of his brother. What does *Rashi* mean by stating, "You will have a reason to agonize over the blessings *Yaakov* had taken"?

We can understand that *Yaakov* took the blessings because he understood that he and his descendants would follow the *Torah* and be worthy of *Yitzchak*'s blessings; however, if *Yaakov* and his descendants deviate from the *Torah*, then *Esav* could have a legitimate claim to the blessings. Yet *Rashi* adds, "You will have a reason to agonize." How do we understand this?

Esav was a person who did not even believe in G-d. As we learned earlier, he said, "There is no judgment and no judge." He was also a ruthless murderer and thief and possessed all the characteristics that are

the antithesis of spirituality. However, we see that *Esav* reacts in an astonishing manner when he hears that *Yaakov* received the blessings. We should note that *Esav* was feared throughout the world as a fierce hunter and warrior; yet, we find that he wailed and cried uncontrollably when his father told him that his brother took the blessings. If the world trembled in his presence and he apparently did not believe in G-d, then why did *Esav* react extremely? He could have easily dismissed *Yitzchak* and his blessings without any reaction at all.

Regardless of how *Esav* chose to live his life, he understood who *Yitzchak* was. *Esav* knew that his father had the ability to determine who would live or who would die – who would succeed and who would fail. This was the value of his father that was rooted in *Yitzchak's* level of holiness. Even though *Esav* conducted himself as if there was no judge or judgment, he knew deep within himself that his father represented *Hashem's* will in this world. Why did *Esav* cry from the depth of his being?

Esav's response to hearing that the blessings were given to *Yaakov* and he would be denied was a validation of his father *Yitzchak* who represented holiness in the world. *Esav's* anguish emanated from his acknowledgment of holiness in the world. We can now begin to understand what *Rashi* was adding: "Yet it shall be that when you are "tarried" aggrieved, you may cast off his yoke from your neck." When *Esav* was

aggrieved, he was validating that his father's blessing had value, thus making him worthy of the blessing.

Gemara in *Berachos*: There is story of *Reb Yehuda*, an Amora. During *Reb Yehuda's* time, the *Torah* sages were proficient only in two areas of the *Talmud*. However, whenever there was a drought, *Reb Yehuda* only needed to take off one shoe and begin praying for rain, and it would rain immediately. In our day when we are proficient in all areas of the *Talmud*, we do not receive a drop of rain in answer to our greatest prayers. What is the difference between the earlier generation of *Reb Yehuda* and the later generations?

Gemara: The earlier generations "gave their lives to sanctify *Hashem* and we did not." The *Gemara* relates how *Reb Yehuda* exemplified *Kiddush Hashem*. There was an incident where the laws of modesty were breached. When *Reb Yehuda* witnessed this breach, he reacted to correct the wrong regardless of the consequence of his action. This revealed to what degree his spirituality was internalized and, therefore, merited miracles. We can now understand that deservingness is determined by one's internalization of spirituality. To what degree are we pained (if at all) when we witness a *chilul Hashem*? Or how elated are we when we witness a *Kiddush Hashem*? Despite *Esav's* level of evil, he was pained and anguished when his father did not give him the blessings. This was his acknowledgment of the holiness of *Yitzchak*.



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