

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

TOLDOT

Rivka Part II: Mother Of Israel

In Parshas Toldos, we read about Rivka's difficulty becoming pregnant, her pregnancy, birthing twins, her effort to make sure that her good son, Yaakov, got Yitzchak's blessings, her involvement in saving Yaakov from the hands of Eisav and finally, her hand in Yaakov's shidduch.

After their marriage, Yitzchak and Rivka waited ten years to try to have children because she was too young. Then, they tried and prayed regularly to conceive. After ten years of trying, they realized that Rivka was barren. They knew that Yitzchak was able to have children because Hashem told Avraham, "It is through Yitzchak that you will have pG-dliness. So they intensified their prayers; he would stand on one side of the room and pray, and she would stand on the other side of the room and pray.

Hashem answered, and she became pregnant.

Now, the Torah tells us what she was experiencing during her pregnancy. "The children were struggling in her belly." You could imagine what she was thinking. She was unaware that she was carrying twins and she was experiencing the strangest thing. When she would pass a house of idol worship, she would feel a crazy struggling, and when she passed the yeshiva of Shem and Eiver, again she felt the struggling, what craziness. She said, "If so [much is the pain of pregnancy], why did I [pray for this]."

She had questions. What was the meaning of this? What should she expect in the future? She wanted to enquire of Hashem, so she went to Shem, son of Noach, who would be able to convey Hashem's message.

Hashem's message to her was, "Two nations are in your belly, and two powers will diverge from within you. The upper hand will pass from one power to the other, and the older one will serve the younger."

Why didn't Rivka consult with her husband, Yitzchak, or her father-in-law, Avraham? Surely, they were able to receive Hashem's words, and they were closer. It is also

natural for a wife to talk to her husband first. So why did Rivka go out of her way and travel to Shem to get her answers?

For starters, it is quite possible that she first asked Yitzchak and Avraham, and when they couldn't answer her, she went to Shem. It would make sense that Hashem would withhold this information from them because finding out that one of Rivka's babies was going to be wicked would have brought them

unnecessary anguish. As we learn later, Hashem took Avraham from this world five years early so that he wouldn't see Eisav turn bad.

On the other hand, there was a good reason for her not to speak to Yitzchak about it because she herself didn't want to give him unnecessary anguish. After all his prayers, she finally became pregnant, and now she was questioning the whole thing because of what she was going through. She didn't want to burden him with this.

This would also be true for Avraham because he went through this roller-coaster ride before. First, he and Sarah couldn't have children. Then Hashem gave them Yitzchak and said, "It is through Yitzchak that you will have progeny." Then Hashem tells Avraham to bring him up as an offering, etc. Now, the same kind of turmoil was happening again. First, she couldn't get pregnant, then Hashem answered Yitzchak's prayers, and now, with all the pain she was going through, it caused her to question the whole thing. Rivka didn't want to put him or Yitzchak through that again and have them question Hashem's ways. So she decided to go to Shem.

Rivka carried to term and gave birth to twins. The first to be delivered was born hairy and ruddy. They called him Eisav, from the word assu, which means complete because he was hairy like an adult. Then the second came out holding on to Eisav's heel, and Hashem named him Yaakov. Rivka was 23 years old when she gave birth to them.

When they grew up, Eisav became a hunter, and with his clever tongue, he would say things to make Yitzchak think that he was pious. Yaakov, on the other hand, was the real deal, holy and pious. Yitzchak loved Eisav, while Rivka, seeing right through Eisav's roos, loved Yaakov.

Why could Rivka see Eisav for what he was while Yitzchak could not?

It is common for men to be oblivious to the obvious, while it is the nature of women to be down to earth.

Yitzchak was in a state of holiness, in which he saw everything according to their source in the spiritual realms. It was Rivka who was able to ground Yitzchak and see the world for what it was. Yitzchak saw Eisav as he was in his source, which was beautiful.

There was a famine, and Yitzchak and Rivka moved to Grar. The people asked about Rivka, and Yitzchak said that she was his sister because he was afraid that they would kill him over her. You see, they were religious about not being with a married woman, but they had no problem with murder. Now, if they kill him, she wouldn't be married anymore. Why was he afraid of

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this? Here, the Torah tells us, for the second time, that she was beautiful.

Now the Torah tells us that Avimelech, the king of Grar, was looking out the window of his palace and saw Yitzchak "gladdening Rivka." They were being intimate, and he realized that they were husband and wife.

The Torah doesn't tell us of a private moment of any of the other matriarchs. It could have just said that Avimelech found out that they were married. Why tell us about this intimate moment?

Yitzchak, as his name tells us, symbolizes the joy that is generated above when we serve Hashem. Rivka is the ability to actualize that joy through effecting and refining the physical and uplifting it to be a dwelling place for Hashem. This joy can only be generated by transforming the physical and only by us. This is why Torah and mitzvas are all about the physical world. Angels, for example, cannot generate this joy because they do not have the physical worldly existence and tendencies that we have. They have no parents to honor, they haven't the urge to steal, to be jealous, etc., and they can't affect the essence of the physical, to infuse it with G-dliness. This is symbolized by Rivka, whose name means three or four animals harnessed together, and when they are united, they are so powerful. Meaning that Rivka is the ability to affect the physical through creatively unifying the elements of existence, transforming them into a useful and powerful force to accomplish Hashem's will.

Yitzchak and Rivka, together, symbolize our essential purpose in this world. And the king, watching from the window, is Hashem taking pride and joy in us, doing his will.

When Eisav was 40 years old, he married two Hittite women who did everything to make Yitzchak and Rivka miserable.

Now we read that Yitzchak wanted to give Eisav his blessing and the lengths Rivka went to make sure that Yaakov got them instead.

Yitzchak's eyesight was going; he was 123 years old, five years before the age his mother passed away. He asked Eisav to trap some game and to make him delicacies so that he can bless him. Rivka overheard the conversation.

While Eisav was out hunting, she told Yaakov her plan to have Yaakov impersonate Eisav so that he would get the blessings. Yaakov was afraid that if Yitzchak catches on, he might curse him instead. Rivka responded the way any Jewish mother would. She said, "Let your curse be upon me, my son..." This is the natural self-sacrifice a Jewish mother has for her children.

She prepared two goats the way Yitzchak liked them. She covered Yaakov's arms and neck with the goat's fur to simulate Eisav's hairy skin. She dressed him in Eisav's prized garments, which were with her for safekeeping because Eisav didn't trust his wives. She then sent Yaakov to get the blessings, which he got.

Why didn't Rivka talk to Yitzchak and have him give the blessings to Yaakov? Wouldn't Yitzchak have listened to her? Was there an issue with their marriage that they couldn't talk to each other?

Certainly, Rivka could have spoken to Yitzchak; they had a great marriage. However, Rivka was not just thinking about Yaakov. She was thinking about each and every one of us, Yaakov's children. Most of Yaakov's descendants would be like him, but it is possible that some will be like Eisav. By sending Yaakov dressed as Eisav, she ensured that Yitzchak gave the blessings

even to an Eisav-like Yaakov, so that every descendant of Yaakov will inherit the blessings, even the ones that do not act like him.

When Eisav found out that Yaakov got the blessings, he thought to himself that soon his father will die, and after that, he will kill him. Rivka was told, through prophecy, of Eisav's ill intentions. She called Yaakov and advised him to flee to her brother Lavan in Charan until things blow over and he is out of harm's way.

She then told Yitzchak that the Hittite girls disgust her and that if Yaakov should marry one, "why should I go on living." This motivated Yitzchak to advise Yaakov to take a wife from the daughters of Lavan. Which he did.

Here, we see the greatness of Rivka over Yitzchak. First, she made sure that Yaakov and all his descendants got the blessings. Then, she made certain that Yaakov could enjoy the blessings by saving him from Eisav and by impressing upon Yitzchak the importance of having Yaakov marry well so that he would have children who would become the Jewish people.

These are the strengths of every Jewish woman, daughters of Sarah, Rivka Rachel and Leah. First, they bring blessing to their families. Second, they make sure that the blessings are actualized and enjoyed by their families, by making her home into an edifice of Jewishness. And finally, they ensure that it continues on, by impressing upon their daughters to build Jewish homes, and that they be the backbone of their home.

In the spirit of Hashem's words to Avraham, "Whatever Sarah tells you, heed her voice," Yitzchak listened to Rivka. So too, every Jewish woman could have a tremendous effect on their husbands, strengthening the Jewishness of the home.

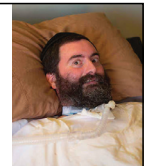
This will bring the ultimate blessing, the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

*"Dear Rabbi Yitzi,
I read your Yom Kippur article about your choice to live and focus on the positive. Thank you for those beautiful words. It was a perspective I really needed to hear. L'shanah Tovah u'metukah!"*

- Emily B, Ohio

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
(937) 770-4802 | TORAHFROMMYEYES@GMAIL.COM

Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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