

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

PARSHAT TOLDOS

A Jew Is Not Bound By The Rules of Nature

Parshas Toldos begins, "And these are the children of Yitzchak, son of Avraham, Avraham fathered Yitzchak." If it already says, "Yitzchak, son of Avraham," why does it repeat, "Avraham fathered Yitzchak"? The Torah doesn't use extra words, but this seems extra.

There are many answers to this question; the Talmud, the Midrash, Chassidus and the Zohar each give answers to this question.

The Talmud's explanation is that the mockers of the generation didn't believe that Avraham fathered Yitzchak because he was already with Sarah for so many years and they didn't have children. And being that she had been recently abducted by Avimelech the king of the Philistines, they were saying that Avimelech was the father.

What did Hashem do? He made Yitzchak look exactly like Avraham, to the point that everyone of the generation said, "Avraham fathered Yitzchak, Avraham fathered Yitzchak." Hence the extra words.

The Midrash says that Yitzchak crowned himself with Avraham and Avraham crowned himself with Yitzchak. Meaning that Yitzchak took pride in the fact that Avraham was his father and Avraham took pride in the fact that Yitzchak was his son. Therefore, it says it in both directions, "Yitzchak son of Avraham, Avraham fathered Yitzchak."

The Chassidic explanation is that Avraham's attribute was chesed, loving-kindness, he symbolizes the love of Hashem, Yitzchak's attribute was gevurah, strength, he symbolizes the fear of Hashem.

SILENCE THE EXTERNAL NOISE, FOR THE WHISPER OF THE DIVINE RESIDES WITHIN YOU.

Hashem's will, because he doesn't want to be punished. He serves Hashem because he is afraid that if he doesn't, Hashem won't fulfill his needs or wants. Or perhaps a loftier ideal, that he is afraid that his spiritual connection with Hashem will be severed.

Then there is the higher fear (yira ilaa). He is so in awe of Hashem, that he wouldn't do anything against his will.

Then there is minor love (ahava zuta). This love is because he

hopes to gain out of his love for Hashem, to be in good favor with Him. Or perhaps a loftier ideal, he wants to have a connection with Hashem.

Then there is the greater love (ahava raba). He loves Hashem, "without the intention to receive a reward."

In the lower level of fear and love it is more about him. In the higher fear and love it is only about Hashem.

Since "The actions of our forefathers are a sign for their children," the Torah brings two Avrahams, symbolizing the two levels of love, and two Yitzchaks, symbolizing the two levels of fear. The order of our service to Hashem is first the more basic level of love or fear and then the higher levels. As our sages say, "A person should learn Torah not for its own sake (i. e. for selfish reasons), because through learning it not for its own sake, he will come to learn it for its own sake (i. e. because Hashem wants him to)." The same is when it comes to love and fear of Hashem, first comes the lower levels, and only after that, comes the higher levels. And the order follows the names in the verse, "Yitzchak son of Avraham, Avraham fathered Yitzchak," first lower fear, then minor love, followed by great love, and finally higher fear.

The lesson here for every one of us is, that we should serve Hashem through both love and fear, the way of Avraham and Yitzchak. However, that is not natural, the nature of people is to be either one way or the other. Similarly, one is either an introvert or an extrovert, but not both. For someone who is an introvert, to act as an extrovert is hard work, and vice versa. And that is what Hashem wants from us, to put in the work. It is easy to follow our natures, what is the big deal for a loving person, to be loving, it takes effort to also have fear of Hashem, and for someone who is naturally, disciplined and serious, fear of Hashem is easy; for him being loving takes effort. And our job is to make the effort to serve Hashem through both love and fear.

Then there is the Zohar's explanation. Avraham represents the Neshama. Yitzchak represents the pleasure that the Neshama will receive in the World-To-Come (the time of Moshiach).

The Zohar explains that "Yitzchak son of Avraham" is the reward of the Neshama in the world to come. And how does it earn that reward, that pleasure? Through its work in this world, serving Hashem, working with the body, doing Torah and mitzvahs. In other words, the Neshama creates its reward, or "Avraham fathered Yitzchak."

Whenever there are different explanations on the same words in the Torah, they must be connected in some way. How are these four explanations connected?

Every story in the Torah and every Torah teaching is a lesson for us in our daily lives. The Chassidic explanation has a lesson, that



we should serve Hashem through both love and fear. The Zohar's explanation has a lesson, that through our effort in this world, we generate the reward in the world to come. But what can be the lesson from the Talmud's explanation, that Yitzchak looked like Avraham? And what can be the lesson from the Midrash's explanation, that Yitzchak crowned himself with Avraham and Avraham crowned himself with Yitzchak?

Both the Talmud and the Midrash are telling us of things that are beyond nature.

The Talmud tells us that Hashem made it clear that Yitzchak was Avraham's son, by making them look exactly alike. Avraham couldn't have children naturally, and spiritually it was not in his cards either. As we know, the astrologers of the time had said, and Avraham himself saw it in the stars, that he would not have children.

That's why at the Bris Bein Habesarim (the covenant between the parts) it says, "And He took him outside." It was clear that the event was outdoors, if so what does it mean that Hashem took Avraham outside? Our sages say that Hashem said, "Go out of your astrology." He took Avraham out of the natural order of the world, and now he would be able to have children, regardless of nature and despite his astrological forecast.

The explanation of the Midrash says that "Yitzchak crowned himself with Avraham and Avraham crowned himself with Yitzchak." It uses the word "crowned," a crown is something that is above and adds to the person wearing it. In other words, Avraham felt that Yitzchak in a way, was above him, and added to who he was.

The natural order of things is that as the generations progress, the later generation is lower spiritually than the one that preceded it. As our sages say, "If the first ones were the children of angels, then we are the children of people..." So it would make sense that Yitzchak would be lower than Avraham spiritually. If that is the case, why would Avraham crown himself with Yitzchak? What the Midrash is saying, is that the Jewish people are not subject to nature, not even the nature of spirituality. They are entirely above the physical and spiritual world. That is why Avraham crowned himself with Yitzchak, because Yitzchak was in a way, greater.

So the lesson to us from the Talmud and Midrash, is that we are higher than the world, no one has a say in the life of a Jew unless he or she gives them power.

The mockers of the generation come with blistering words, they say, "Maybe you can transcend in the spiritual realms, but in the physical realm, you have to play by the rules, you have to go through the Avimelech, the king, the one who is in charge of the physical." In other words, "you are bound by nature."

What did Hashem do? He made Yitzchak look exactly like Avraham, proving that Avraham could have children and that a Jew is not bound by the rules of nature.

Now we will understand how the explanations of the Talmud, Midrash, Chassidus, and Zohar are connected.

The Talmud is the most revealed part of the Torah, it tells us that we are not bound to the physical nature of the world. Even Avraham, who according to nature, shouldn't be able to have children, Yitzchak looked exactly like him, thus proving that if we want to be, we are above nature.

The Midrash, which is the bridge between the revealed Torah and the esoteric, tells us that we are higher than the spiritual system that Hashem set in the world. Even though Yitzchak was born later, Avraham crowned himself with Yitzchak. This is true

for every Jewish person, as King Shlomo said, "The crown of the elders is their grandchildren." We do not have to conform to the spiritual system of the world, we are above.

Chassidus, which comes to teach you how to serve Hashem tells us how we can achieve this level and transcend the natural order of the world. It tells us to have love and fear at the same time, which are diametric opposites. It is normally an impossibility, it is only possible in our service to Hashem. And when we put in the effort to serve Hashem with both love and fear, the opposite of the natural emotions of love and fear, which are mutually exclusive, then Hashem bestows upon us from above, the ability to transcend the physical and spiritual nature of the world.

The Zohar, which is the esoteric part of the Torah, tells us what things will be like when Moshiach comes. Therefore, it tells us the reward for our physical service to Hashem. That if we transform the world into a home for Hashem, by serving Hashem in a transcendent way, in accordance with the first three explanations, we will surely merit the reward, the Divine pleasure that our souls will enjoy in the world to come, meaning, the time of Moshiach. May he come soon.

"Dear Rabbi Yitzi

I recently started following you on Instagram and it was long overdue. I always heard about you but I didn't know you had an instagram (you were tagged in my friend's story).

Rabbi Yitzi, You are so inspiring. Seeing how you live with no spiritual limitations and with such physical limitations really gives me so much strength.

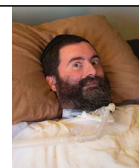
I'm looking forward to your Parasha Dvar Torah and I will bli neder print them and share them at the Shabbos table!

Thank you so much!"

- Zelda B, Florida

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
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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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