

Yitzchok Ovinu is called the עולה תמימה by Chazal. At the end of last week's parsha, Hashem told Avrohom Ovinu to offer Yitzchok up as a קרבן עולה. Avrohom built a mizbe'ach, and Yitzchok allowed himself to be bound and placed on the mizbe'ach – ready for slaughter. Avrohom took the knife and was about to slit Yitzchok's throat, when at the last second, a maloch called out to Avrohom to not carry out the offering. As we mentioned last week, out of the four people involved in the akeidoh, Avrohom returns to Be'er Sheva only with Eliezer and Yishmoel. Yitzchok does not return with them. Yitzchok knows that after undergoing such an exalted experience of mesiras nefesh, he can't just go back to life as usual. He has to make this experience a permanent part of him. The only way to do that is through limud haTorah.

My rebbe used to point out a very simple thing. The last year Klal Yisroel were in Egypt, they went through an entire educational process. They were free from slavery, and they were able to absorb the great lessons being taught by Hashem through each of the ten makkos. Hashem runs this world completely, and there is a din v'cheshbon. But in Parshas Bo, after all the lessons were seemingly already taught, Moshe is sent to Pharaoh yet again. Why? Hashem explains that these next makkos will be so powerful, that Klal Yisroel will never forget them throughout their whole history. These makkos will guarantee that the lessons will be passed down from father to son for all future generations.

There was a tremendous gilui Shechinoh at makkas bechoros and again at kriyas Yam Suf. Klal Yisroel were able to say קלי ואנורה זה. Hashem's Shechinoh was so clearly present before them that they could point to it. Chazal say the lowest Jewish maidservant was able to experience a gilui Shechinoh that surpassed Yechezkel Hanovi's level of nevuoh! Their nevuoh was greater than all other nevi'im except for Moshe Rabbeinu's level.

But then we read a very strange thing. Three days later, they run out of water and they began to complain. How could they sink so low after such a short time from this incredible experience of kriyas Yam Suf? The answer is that without something to concretize that experience and maintain that inspiration, it will quickly fade. They didn't yet have a Torah to do this, so Hashem gave them some parshiyos of Torah to be involved with, and Moshe Rabbeinu instituted a decree for the tzibbur not go three days without kriyas haTorah. This takono is built on an underlying takono that each individual Jew cannot go three days without limud Torah. This is what is required to make that uplifting experience a permanent part of your being and personality. This is how Yitzchok was able to hold on to the hisorerus of the akeidoh his entire life and remain an עולה תמימה from the akeidoh onward.

In this week's parsha we read very little about Yitzchok Ovinu himself. There is a midrash in Parshas Vayeishev which says he was also m'gayer geirim. So yes, he followed very closely in the footsteps of his father Avrohom. But the fundamental middoh of Yitzchok Ovinu was very different from that of Avrohom. The fundamental middoh of Avrohom was chessed – non-stop giving and going out into the world, helping others come close to Hashem. Yitzchok's middoh was gevuroh – he was intensely working on his own internal perfection – he was not focused on the outside world.

Towards the end of the parsha, the Torah says Yitzchok became blind. There is a puzzling midrash which explains how this happened. It says that all the way back at the akeidoh, when Yitzchok was about to be slaughtered on the mizbe'ach, the malochim in shomayim were

weeping and their tears fell into Yitzchok's eyes and blinded him. What are Chazal trying to convey with this midrash? They are telling us that Yitzchok was the עולה תמימה – he has to be kept totally pure and protected from any kind of tumoh and negative influence. He was not allowed to leave Eretz Canaan and go to Chutz Lo'oretz. He became blinded to the reality of evil. He couldn't perceive the evil within his son Eisov, and this is how Eisov was able to fool Yitzchok into thinking he was worthy of receiving the brochos. Rivka Imeinu, on the other hand, grew up in a very unsheltered environment – the house of Besuel and Lovon – and she knew exactly what evil looked like. She wasn't fooled by Eisov and she perceived the great differences between Yaakov and Eisov. So she arranged for Yaakov to get the brochos instead.

Yitzchok rose to an unbelievable level through a very special and unique experience, and he knew he could not acquire this lofty madreigoh to maintain it for any length of time unless he concretized it by ongoing limud Torah. This is why Klal Yisroel lost their inspiration from kriyas Yam Suf so soon afterward. It was because they didn't have any limud Torah to concretize it. This is why Moshe Rabbeinu made a takono not to go three days straight without limud HaTorah.

The first section of this parsha tells us a very interesting story about Rivkah's experience with her pregnancy. She knew something unusual was going on with the fetus, and she wanted to go to a novi to ask Hashem why this is happening. It is interesting that she didn't go to Avrohom her father-in-law, nor to her own husband Yitzchok – who were both nevi'im. She instead went to Yeshivas Shem and Ever and they told her she in fact has two fetuses in her womb who have two very different approaches to the world. Eisov's approach will be violence, using physical power to dominate the world. Yaakov will be an איש תם – יושב אוהלים – and this is how he will come to dominate the world. This dichotomy exists till this very day. Each son will rule in a different way. Who will gain supremacy over the other? Chazal say there will not be a stable balance of power. It is a constant see-saw, where one goes up while the other goes down.

Rashi says:

מלאם יאמץ. לא ישוו בגדולה, כשזה קם זה נופל

The midrash says that if someone tells you that Eisov is ruling the world, then you can be certain that Yaakov is being subjugated. If Yaakov is ruling the world, then Eisov is subordinate. But who makes the decision which one is up and which is down?

The Beis HaLevi explains that Yitzchok was in fact aware that Eisov and Yaakov had different natures and personalities. Eisov was a man of the field – a hunter – while Yaakov sat and learned. But Yitzchok thought Eisov could become a partner in Yaakov's ruchniyus and make a Yissochor-Zevulun relationship between them. This is why he planned on giving Eisov the brochos of parnossoh and gashmiyus. But Rivka understood that Eisov is evil and cannot be trusted as a partner with Yaakov. Yaakov has to do both ruchniyus and gashmiyus parts by himself. So Rivka arranges for Yitzchok to give the brochos of gashmiyus to Yaakov disguised as Eisov.

So it ends up that Yitzchok gives brochos to Yaakov twice: One where he thinks Yaakov is Eisov, and one where he knows it is Yaakov. But, as we will see, these are two very different sets of brochos!

Yitzchok hears Yaakov – disguised as Eisov – make references to Hashem, and attributes his rapid success in hunting to Hashem.

Yitzchok realizes that this is Yaakov's style of speaking. He suspects it might not be Eisov. But he gave Yaakov the brochos anyway, and it is clear that these are brochos of gashmiyus and superiority over his brother. Yitzchok thought he was setting up Eisov to be able to support Yaakov and he will need to be the dominant brother in the world to sustain Yaakov in the material realm.

Yaakov leaves, Eisov walks in, and Yitzchok is deeply shaken by the awareness that he was mistaken about who he gave the brochos to. But then he realizes that this was Hashem's plan, and confirms that Yaakov indeed deserved to get those brochos of gashmiyus and superiority over his brother. Eisov tells Yitzchok that this isn't the first time Yaakov tricked him out of something. Yaakov previously tricked Eisov out of the bechoroh as well. The truth was that Eisov wasn't interested in the bechoroh at all because it meant being the son who would carry on the spiritual legacy of the family in serving Hashem. Eisov certainly wasn't interested in that! So Yaakov said, I'll do you a favor and take it off your hands – sell it to me.

So Yitzchok always understood that Yaakov was the **איש תם יושב** and was going to be the one to carry on the spiritual legacy of Avrohom. Now he realized that there is no issue of not being the bechor. Yaakov got that too, and Yitzchok realized that this was all planned by Hashem.

Eisov begs and pleads for at least a single brocho, and Yitzchok agrees to give him the shemen of the earth.

(לט) ויען יצחק אביו ויאמר אליו הנה משמני הארץ יהיה מושכר ומטל השמים מעל: (מ) ועל חרבך תהיה ואת אחיך תעבד

Chazal say that Eisov is Rome, but today, perhaps Eisov has control of Saudi Arabia and this is what the shemen of the earth refers to – petroleum. He will live by the sword and be subordinate to his brother. But then Yitzchok adds a twist:

והיה כאשר תריד ופרקת עלו מעל צוארך:

Targum Onkelos explains as follows:

ויהי כד יעברון בנהוי על פתגמי אורייתא ותעדי גירה מעל צורף:

Now let us go back to the beginning of the parsha to what Rivka was told by Hashem – that there will be a see-saw relationship between the dominance of Yaakov and Eisov. When one goes up, the other goes down. In the end, the brochos were actually given to Yaakov, and he was given dominance over Eisov. But Yitzchok added a critical condition – that Yaakov remain Yaakov and not try to become Eisov. As long as he is keeping the Torah and upholds the ruchniyus role of the bechoroh, Yaakov remains dominant. But when he gives up being Yaakov and keeping the Torah, he also gives up the dominance over Eisov.

Rivka tells Yitzchok that Yaakov needs to go to her brother's house to find wives. Rivka was confident that just as she survived with her ruchniyus in such a hostile environment, Lovon's daughters would also survive. So Yitzchok sends Yaakov off and gives him a brocho – the birkas Avrohom – which means getting Eretz Yisroel. Why? Because the whole point of Eretz Yisroel is the inherent kedushoh in it,

which facilitates living a maximum lifestyle of kedushoh and taharoh according to the Torah. As the posuk in Tehillim (פרק קה) says:

(מה) ויתן להם ארצות גוים ועמל לאמים ירשו: (מה) בעבור ישמרו חקיו ותורתיו ינצרו:

Yitzchok is a very private person – an **עולה תמימה**. But he is still blessed with tremendous material success – despite the famine. Avimelech's servants are jealous and make trouble for him. Why is Yitzchok so successful?

We also find that Yaakov went from being penniless to tremendously wealthy. How did that happen? By being extremely scrupulous and honest in his business. Yaakov tells his wives that he worked for their father with all his strength, although he tried to trick him a hundred times. But Hashem protected him and foiled all Lovon's plans. Yaakov thought he could become wealthy by employing a biological theory, and Hashem said it was just hishtadlus – it was completely worthless and didn't have any effect at all. All your wealth came from Hashem's intervention to have your sheep impregnated.

The bottom line is that Yaakov was working for a master swindler who tried to rip him off at every turn, and only because Yaakov remained honest throughout, did he become wealthy in spite of Lovon's cheating.

Lovon comes chasing Yaakov down and he is searching Yaakov's belongings for his idols, and he comes up empty. Chazal say not only did Lovon not find his idols, he didn't find any of his possessions among Yaakov and his entire family's belongings! Imagine a large family living with their father-in-law for 20 years and not taking anything with him? Not even a fork or a spoon? This is an example of incredible honesty! Yaakov is the middoh of emes.

There is an important Rambam which shows you how deeply he believed in the power of ruchniyus to control the physical world. At the end of Hilchos Sechirus he says a worker has to be very exact in keeping track of his time at work and not taking more pay than is deserved. He can't take extra breaks and has to work with all his strength. We see this from Yaakov who worked for a swindler like Lovon and only because he was honest in his business, this is why he became wealthy.

כדרך שמוזהר בעל הבית שלא יגזל שכר עני ולא יעבדנו כן העני מזהר שלא יגזל מלאכת בעל הבית ויבטל מעט בכאן ומעט בכאן ומוציא כל היום במרמה אלא חייב לדקדק על עצמו בזמן שהרי הקפידו על ברכה רביעית של ברכת המזון שלא יגרוף אותה.

וכן חייב לעבד בכל כחו שיהי יעקב הצדיק אמר כי בכל כחי עבדתי את אביכן. לפיכך נטל שכר זאת אף בעולם הזה שנגמור ויפרץ האיש מאד מאד:

When Yaakov remains Yaakov, he can run the physical world. He can become fabulously wealthy. Yitzchok can remain the **עולה תמימה** and still become fabulously wealthy. There is no contradiction. He doesn't have to be a nebach. Yaakov can rule the world through his tzidkus and middas ho'emes. But it is up to Yaakov to decide whether he remains Yaakov, and if he decides not to be Yaakov, then the world runs him.

The Rambam says the sechar for honesty in business is given even in olom hazeh – in addition to and not instead of – olom haboh.