

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES
Parshas Toldos
November 22, 2006

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
November 22, 2006

B"H

Parshas Toldos

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Dean

1. The Fruits of Yaakov's Humility

The Torah tells us that when Yaakov had come before his father Yitzchak to take the blessings that he had acquired from Esav, he addressed his father in refined manner – differently than his brother have. The Midrash states, “When the evil one comes, disgrace accompanies him. If Esav would have addressed his father Yitzchak, he would have said, ‘Come my father and eat...’ However, Yaakov spoke to his father in a gentle and beseeching manner. He had said, ‘Please father rise. Please sit and eat.’ He had spoken to Yitzchak with an expression of humility and respect. G'd said to Yaakov, ‘Because you had said to your father – *please rise*- Moshe, your grandson will be able to say to Me ‘rise Hashem and destroy Your enemies.’ Because you had said to your father – ‘please sit’ your grandson will be able to say to me – ‘rest...’” Because Yaakov had spoken in a beseeching and humble manner to his father Yitzchak, Moshe was able direct the Divine Presence, either in the context of traveling (rise) or in the context of ceasing to advance in the desert and allowing the Jewish people to camp.” Why did Yaakov's refined manner of speech to his father result in Moshe's ability to direct the Divine Presence?

It was essential that Yaakov should present himself as Esav to his father, Yitzchak, in order to receive the blessings. However we find that Yaakov chose a manner of speech that would reveal his true identity- thus jeopardizing his initiative for the blessings. Not only did he address his father in a beseeching and respectful manner, which was contrary to Esav's demeanor, he also chose to attribute the success of his trapping the game to G'd. As it states, Yitzchak asked him, “**How is it that you were so quick?**” Yaakov responded, “**Because Hashem your G'd arranged it for me.**” This demonstrates the standard of Truth that Yaakov possessed. Just as Yaakov would not attribute the success of his endeavor to himself because it would be considered a

denial of G'd's involvement in his life, so too Yaakov could not speak to his father in an unrefined manner because he would be compromising his essence. Because of this unwavering and uncompromising standard he merited to have the special grandson, Moshe, who was able to direct the Divine Presence.

However, the Midrash does not attribute meriting the special grandson to Yaakov's uncompromising position of truth and refinement. Rather, it is attributed to his humility. As Chazal tell state, “He spoke to his father in a beseeching an humble tone.”

Yaakov had rightfully purchased the birthright from his brother Esav in exchange for a bowl of lentil soup and some bread. The birthright qualified Esav to be the priest of G'd who would officiate in the Mishkan/Temple. Yaakov's interest in the birthright was not for his own self-interest and glory but rather for glory of G'd. When Yaakov was asked by Esav, “**Give me some of that red red stuff**”, which was referring to the lentil soup, he understood that his brother had no relevance to spirituality. He was totally consumed by physical desire and material. Yaakov felt that it would be a desecration of G'd's Name to have a person of this caliber to be His officiant. Thus, he needed to acquire the birthright from his brother. Had his brother been truly qualified, Yaakov would not have had an interest in the birthright. Thus, his decision to take the birthright at this moment, when it was confirmed that Esav was not qualified, was rooted in his own humility.

When Yaakov addressed his father in a most refined manner, it was only due to his humility. Understanding and appreciating the magnitude and dimension of what his father represented, Yaakov understood that Yitzchak was the conduit for G'd's blessing. He also appreciated the far-reaching spiritual and physical ramifications that would evolve regarding the future of the Jewish people. As a result of this recognition and understanding of the ultimate, he merited to have a

grandson, Moshe, who was also humbled to a point of total negation because of his recognition of the ultimate. Moshe therefore used the same terminology regarding the Divine Presence, as his forefather had done – measure for measure.

2. *The Unquantifiable Aspect of the Jew*

The Torah states, **“And these are the offspring of Yitzchak the son of Avraham – Avraham fathered Yitzchak...”** If the Torah identifies Avraham as the father of Yitzchak, then it is obvious that Avraham had fathered Yitzchak. What is the value of stating what is obvious? Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “It is to explain that it was only after G’d had changed his name to Avraham (with the addition of the letter ‘hey’) that he fathered Yitzchak.” What is the significance of knowing this fact?

The Torah tells us that after G’d had promised Avraham the Land of Canaan, he had said to G’d, **“See, You have given me no offspring; and see my steward inherits me...”** Avraham was concerned that since he was childless, seemingly his heir was going to be Eliezer his servant. If so, what is the value of all of the blessings? G’d assured Avraham that his heir would be his physical child saying, **“The one who will come from your loins shall inherit you...”** G’d had taken Avraham outside (from his tent) and said to him, **“Look at the heavens (ha’shamaimah). Just as you are not able to count the stars in the heavens so too will your offspring not be able to be counted.”** The Midrash explains that the word “shamaimah” is spelled with an additional “hey.” The Torah could have used the word, “shamayim (heavens)” without the additional letter “hey.” What is the significance of the “hey?” Avraham was an expert astrologer and was able to read the stars. His reading of the stars was, “Avram and Sarai will remain childless.” G’d said to Avraham, “Your reading is accurate as you see; however, the stars say ‘Avram’ and ‘Sarai’ will not have a child; however, ‘Avraham’ and ‘Sarah’ with the letter ‘hey’ added to their names will have a son.”

King David writes in Psalms, *“Ki b’kah Hashem tzur olamim* – with the Name of G’d (‘yud’ and ‘hey’) G’d formed the worlds.” The Gemara in Tractate Menachos explains, “The physical world was created with the spirituality that lies within the letter ‘hey’ and the world to come (the spiritual world) was created with the spirituality that lies within the letter ‘yud.’” Meaning, the spiritual energy that contained within the letter ‘hey’ brought about existence. The Midrash states, “G’d said to Avraham, “Just as the spiritual energy contained in the letter ‘hey’

was needed to bring about all physical existence, that same dimension of energy is needed to bring about a change within you to be able to father a son (the future Patriarch of the Jewish people).”

The additional “hey” added to Avram is not merely a name change, but rather, it brought about a profound metamorphosis within him – which was the equivalent of all existence. Avraham as an individual was a dimension of person that could not be quantified within human terms. In order for Avraham to father Yitzchak, the Patriarch of the eternal people, that metamorphosis which was the equivalent of all existence needed to take place. In essence, Avraham was the beginning of a new existence. Although Avraham, as a physical being, was no different than any other human being, his dimension of person was of another existence.

The Mishna in Tractate Sanhedrin states, “Whoever saves the life of a Jew, it is the equivalent of saving the entire world.” How could the life of one Jew be compared to the entire world, which contains unlimited numbers of people? The Mishna is communicating the innate value of a Jew from a qualitative perspective. G’d had promised Avraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens and the dust on the earth. In actuality, throughout history, the Jewish people have never reached those numbers. If this is so, then G’d’s promise to Avraham was never fulfilled (which is an impossibility). The Torah is not referring to the Jewish people within a quantitative context, but rather within the context of the spiritual. Just as the stars in the heavens cannot be quantified because of their physical number, so too the Jewish people cannot be quantified because of their innate spiritual value. The Jewish people are only eternal because they have relevance to the infinite – G’d Himself – the Omnipotent Being. In order for Avraham to be able to father Yitzchak, the Patriarch of the eternal and unquantifiable people, he needed to be transformed to a dimension that was the equivalent of all existence. Thus every Jew, being a descendant of Avraham, is the equivalent of the entire world.

3. *King David, the Model for Future Generations*

The Midrash tells us that G’d performed a miracle by causing Yitzchak’s facial features to be identical to those of his father Avraham. G’d had done this to refute the claim of the scoffers of the generation that it was Avimelech who fathered Yitzchak and not Avraham. This was necessary for two reasons. Firstly, it is so that the

pedigree of the Jewish people should not be in question. Secondly, it would undermine the impact and effectiveness of Yitzchak regarding his espousal of the word of G'd. If he was the son of the world renown individual who was proclaimed by the world as "the father of all nations," his influence on the world would be profound. However, if he were seen as the son of the pagan Philistine king, Avimelech, his influence would be limited. Therefore in order to establish Yitzchak as the Patriarch of the Jewish people and to maximize on his potential, G'd performed a miracle that he should resemble his father Avraham.

The Midrash continues to explain that a similar incident had occurred with King David. King David had married Avigayil, the widow of Naval. Because Naval had responded to a request of King David in the most disrespectful manner, he had died in a plague. King David married his widow three months after his death. Nine months after he had married Avigayil, she bore for him a son. The scoffers of the generation had claimed that the child was not the son of King David but rather he was the son of Naval. In order to refute their claims, G'd brought about a miracle and caused the facial features of the child to be identical to those of his father King David. The child was named Kilav. Chazal explain that the basis for the name Kilav was because he was "*Kulo av* – totally his father." No one could question his pedigree.

In order for Yitzchak to be effective and impact upon the world and be the Patriarch of the Jewish people, G'd needed to perform a miracle in order to silence the scoffers of his generation. It was crucial for the world to know with certainty that he was the son of Avraham, "the father of all nations." It was also pertinent for the Jewish people, who descend from Yitzchak to understand and appreciate their pedigree. However, Kilav, the son of King David did not become one of the kings of Israel. Regardless of what the world would believe regarding the pedigree of Kilav, it would be irrelevant to his value. One would think that perhaps in order not to disgrace King David, G'd had to preformed a miracle. However, this could not be the reason because even if Kilav was the son of Naval, he would be seen as a fully legitimate child – Avigayil was the wife of Naval. Therefore no disgrace would have come upon King David. If this is so, then why was it necessary for G'd to perform a miracle to cause Kilav to resemble his father King David?

One of the sons of King Shaul was Mifiboshes. The name Mifiboshes means "from his mouth there was disgrace/embarrassment." The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that in truth his name was not Mifiboshes but rather it was "*Isheboshis*" Why then was he called

"Mifiboshes?" It is because he embarrassed King David in the context of Jewish law (halachah). Rashi in his commentary explains that King David would often come to Mifiboshes to present before him a halachic ruling which he had understood to be correct; however, Mifiboshes would respond and prove to him that his ruling was in error. As a result, King David would be embarrassed. Nevertheless, "he humbled himself before Mifiboshes and allowed himself to be embarrassed for the sake of establishing the correct halachic ruling. Therefore, he merited having a son called Kilav." The Gemara states, "Kilav, the son of King David, was greater than Mifiboshes. Because of his advanced level of Torah, Kilav caused embarrassment to Mifiboshes in the area of halachah." Since David, although he was a king, humbled himself and was willing to endure embarrassment for the sake of Torah he merited a son who was greater than Mifiboshes – measure for measure.

If the world would have believed that Kilav was in fact the son of Naval, the lesson that could have been learned from King David's humility, would not have been known. Therefore in order to fully appreciate and understand the value of humbling oneself for the sake of Torah, G'd performed a miracle so that the pedigree of Kilav could not be questioned. He possessed the identical facial features as his father, King David.

We are able to learn from the model of king David, that if one is willing to humble himself for the sake of Torah even to the point of embarrassment, he will merit unlimited reward that is out of the ordinary. As we see G'd was willing to perform a miracle in order to establish the lesson from which others could learn.

4. Yitzchak's Unique Dimension as a Patriarch

The Midrash cites a verse from Proverbs, "The father of the tzaddik (devoutly righteous) rejoices and the one who bears the chacham (wise person) will rejoice with him...To whom is King Solomon referring? Yitzchak is the special tzaddik who caused all to rejoice with his birth. Who rejoiced in the birth of Yitzchak? It was heaven and earth, the sun, moon, and stars that rejoiced in his birth. Why did existence rejoice? It is because if Yitzchak had not come into existence, creation would not have continued to exist. As the prophet Yirmiya states, 'If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the extent of heaven and earth would not be put in place.' What is the covenant to which G'd is referring? It is

Yitzchak – as it states in the Torah, ‘My covenant I will establish with Yitzchak.’”

Why is existence only maintained because of Yitzchak? Why is it not maintained in the merit of the other Patriarchs - Avraham or Yaakov? Seemingly, existence should be maintained because of Yaakov who is referred to by Chazal as “the most special of the Patriarchs.” He was the only one qualified to father the twelve tribes, which is the basis for the Jewish people. In addition, the Gemara interprets the words of Yirmiya, “If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the extent of heaven and earth would be put in place” to be referring to the continuous study of Torah. If Torah were not studied day and night, existence would cease to be. Furthermore, Yaakov is quantified by the Torah as the Patriarch of Torah. As the verse states, “Yaakov is the perfect person who dwells in the tent (the tent of Torah).” One would think that the verse in Proverbs is referring to our Patriarch Yaakov. Nevertheless, the Midrash explains that it was the birth of Yitzchak that caused existence to rejoice. It is only with Yitzchak that G’d had established His covenant. How do we understand this?

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos cites and explains a verse from the prophet Yishaya, “(The Jewish people say to G’d) You are our Father. Avraham we do not know and we do not recognize Yisroel (Yaakov)...’ To what is this verse referring? At the end of time, G’d will say to Avraham, ‘Your children have sinned against Me.’ Avraham responds, ‘If they have sinned, they should be obliterated for the sake of Your Holy Name.’ G’d then will approach Yaakov, ‘Your children have sinned against Me.’ One would think that perhaps since Yaakov had experienced difficulties in raising twelve sons he would have more compassion than Avraham. Nevertheless, Yaakov will respond, ‘If they have sinned, they should be obliterated for the sake of Your Holy Name.’...G’d then will approach Yitzchak saying, ‘Your children have sinned against Me.’ Yitzchak will respond, “You refer to the Jewish people as ‘my children’ are they not Your children? When the Jewish people had declared at Sinai, ‘Naaseh V’nishma – we will do and we will listen,’ did You not call them ‘My child, My first born.’ Now that they have sinned, You refer to them as ‘my children.’ In addition, how much did they actually sin? Man lives 70 years. During the first 20 years of life, one has no culpability. Thus, there are only 50 years left for them to sin. One sleeps a total of 25 years in his life, and one does not sin in his sleep. Thus, there are only 25 years left to sin. Since some of one’s day is occupied praying, eating, and tending to his bodily needs during which time he is not sinning. Thus, there are a total of twelve and a half years open to

sin...If You wish to hold me personally culpable for the sins of the Jewish people then spare them... In addition, if You chose to obliterate me in their stead, did I not already give my life for You at the Akeidah? Therefore the account should be considered settled.’ Thus, Yitzchak will be the only Patriarch at the end of time that will defend the Jewish people...”

Yitzchak was the only Patriarch who actually gave his life for Kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G’d’s Name) – at the Akeidah. After the Akeidah, Yitzchak is referred to as the “unblemished burnt offering.” Yaakov our Patriarch was never in a situation in which he gave his life. Although Avraham had given his life to be thrown into the fiery kiln of Kasdim, it is not comparable to his son Yitzchak. When Avraham went into the kiln, he was considered a Noahide. Although he did perform the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem by going into the fire, he was not obligated to do so because sanctifying G’d’s Name is not one of the seven Noahide laws. If one performs a mitzvah to which he is not obligated, it does not have the same value as one who performs a mitzvah that he is obligated to perform. Yitzchak was willing to give his life at the Akeidah after he was told by G’d – through his father Avraham who was a prophet, to do so. Thus, Yitzchak’s willingness to die (which he was obligated to do) is valued by G’d to a greater degree than Avraham’s going into the kiln.

Yitzchak is the only Patriarch, that at the end of time, who will be qualified to take upon himself the spiritual debt that was generated by the sins of the Jewish people. It is only because of Yitzchak that the Jewish people will not be obliterated. If the Jewish people were to be destroyed then all existence would have no value/meaning/purpose. Therefore, all existence rejoiced with the birth of Yitzchak – because it is in his merit that the Jewish people will continue to exist. Consequently, it is because of Yitzchak that there is a value/purpose for existence.

5. The Greatness of Eliezer Despite His Defect

The Torah identifies Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, as “**Damesek Eliezer – Eliezer from Damascus.**” The Gemara explains that the term “Damesek” is an acronym which represents – “He drew and he watered from the Torah of his mentor (Avraham).” Meaning, all the Torah that Avraham had possessed was transmitted to his servant Eliezer. As a result of becoming the repository of his rebbe’s teachings, Eliezer radiated a

holiness that was similar to that of his master. Avraham had given over all the material responsibilities of his household and possessions to Eliezer. Eliezer, in the eyes of his master Avraham, was beyond reproach.

When Avraham had charged Eliezer to go to his homeland (Charan) in order to locate a wife for Yitzchak, Eliezer responded, **“Perhaps the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land...”** Eliezer understood the spiritual dimension of his master, Avraham. He had witnessed G'd performing revealed miracles on Avraham's behalf. If Avraham had instructed him with the mission to locate a wife in Charan for his son, it seems obvious that Eliezer's concern was baseless in the eyes of his master. Despite this, Eliezer did pose the question. Avraham understood that Eliezer had only asked this question because he had a conflict of interest. As Chazal tell us, Eliezer had a righteous daughter who he had considered to be qualified to become the wife of Yitzchak. To this Avraham responded, “Your daughter is not appropriate for my son Yitzchak, the future Patriarch of the Jewish people because you come from a cursed stock (Noach cursed Canaan) and I, a descendant of Shem (the most special son of Noach who had received his blessing) come from a blessed stock and something that is cursed cannot cleave to something that is blessed.” In order for Avraham to ensure that Eliezer would not deviate from his instruction he bound him by an oath saying, **“Place now your hand under my thigh. And I will have you swear by Hashem, G'd of heaven and G'd of earth, that you not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites.”**

The Gemara tells us that regardless of one's spiritual dimension, if one has a conflict of interest in a matter, he is disqualified from being a witness regarding that matter. This even applies to spiritual giants such as Moshe and his brother Aaron. The human being, who is endowed with the ability to have clarity, under the circumstance of conflict of interest, will have it disrupted. Therefore in order to eliminate that conflict, Avraham needed to bind Eliezer by a most severe oath – thus removing that alternative. This guaranteed that he would not deviate from his master's instruction. If Eliezer were to fail his master, he would forfeit his share in this world and the world to come. After being quantified by his mentor as being “of cursed stock” and thus having his daughter rejected by Avraham, one would think that Eliezer would have taken this as an affront- no longer allowing him to be sufficiently motivated and dedicated to his master's wishes. Nevertheless, Eliezer did not falter as much as an iota in his selfless devotion to Avraham.

Chazal tell us that the words of the Torah are so concise that many laws are extrapolated from a single letter contained within it. Nevertheless the narrative of Eliezer's saga relating to the seeking of a wife for Yitzchak is repeated three times. The Midrash comments, “How much ink was spilled on this story!” Why does the Torah speak at such length about the narrative of Eliezer? It is because “More beautiful are the words of the servants of the Patriarchs than the Torah of the children.” Evidently there are profound lessons to be learned from the narrative of Eliezer.

Eliezer, despite his level of selfless dedication and holiness was rejected by his mentor Avraham because of an innate spiritual defect. Although it may have been a shortcoming which Eliezer had felt was not sufficient reason to disqualify his daughter, he negated his own understanding and feelings to accept the will of his master. This negation is clearly seen over and over again as he identifies himself to the family of Rivka (the future wife of Yitzchak) as “I am the slave of my master Avraham.” He did not even identify himself as “I am Eliezer, the slave of Avraham.” Regarding his master, he did not exist as a person, despite his dimension of being.

What we must cull from the story of Eliezer the servant of Avraham, is that there are many disappointments and sufferings during one's lifetime that one cannot understand or even attempt to process. One can easily be discouraged and disheartened because he feels that he does not deserve this level of mistreatment. Despite this, one must negate those feelings and be dedicated to the Will of G'd and go forward with total dedication.