

ויעתר יצחק לה'

In this week's *parsha*, we get a glimpse at how the Avos daven *b'eis tzara*. The *posuk* says, "ויעתר יצחק לה' לנכח אשתו כי עקרה היא ויעתר לו ה' ותהר רבקה אשתו" (בראשית כה, כא). The simple *pshat* in this *posuk* is that Yitzchok was davening because Rivka was barren, and Hashem accepted his *tefila* because, as Rashi explains, the *tefila* of a *tzaddik ben rasha* is not comparable to that of a *tzaddik ben tzaddik*. The Gemara in *מס' יבמות* tells us that in fact both Rivka and Yitzchok were unable to bear children, but no one knew who was the cause that they were childless. The Midrash tells us that the Imahos were *עקרות* because Hashem wanted their *tefilos*, so He put them in such a position that they needed to cry out to Him. Rabbeinu Bachye explains the *posuk* should really have told us Rivka was barren and then relate that Yitzchok davened for her, so we see from the *posuk's* order that the whole reason for her to be barren was in order to elicit Yitzchok's *tefilos* to Hashem. The Chizkuni says that Yitzchok knew he was not the cause because Hakadosh Boruch promised Avraham Avinu, "כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע" (בראשית כא: יב). Therefore, Yitzchok knew he must be able to have children.

The *posuk* uses the *lashon* of "ועתר" for Yitzchok's *tefila*, and Rashi explains this to mean that he davened a lot and with pleading. The Gemara, in a few places, tells us that the *tefilos* of *tsaddikim* is compared to an *עתר*, a shovel, because just like a shovel moves dirt from place to place, so too, the *tefilos* of *tzaddikim* uproot the *midas achzariyus* of Hakadosh Boruch Hu and change it into *midas rachmanus*.

Targum Yonasan ben Uziel has a fascinating *pshat* in this *posuk*. He says that Yitzchok went to Har Hamoria, referred to as 'the mountain of *tefila*', to "the place where his father tied him up." That was where he was *mehapech* the *din* through his *tefila* of 'עתי'. He continues that Yitzchok davened because Rivka was barren, and Hashem was *mehapech* the *din* that he, Yitzchok, could now have children because, in fact, they both suffered from *עקרות*. So, the *siba* for the *tefila* of Yitzchok was Rivka's barrenness, but the outcome was that he too was now able to bear children. The question we are left with is why the *posuk* needs to tell us this? We know that, being a *tzaddik*, Yitzchok's *tefila* would work for Rivka. Why does the *posuk* need to also tell us that he was cured as well? Furthermore, what is the significance of going to Har Hamoria to daven? Maybe, we could've suggested that is the site of the Bais Hamikdosh, and therefore a good place to daven. But Targum Yonasan adds, "the place where his father tied him up." Where in the *posuk* is this taken from?

The Gemara in *בבא קמא* tells us that when Avraham davened for Avimelech after he returned Sorah, Sorah became pregnant before the women of Avimelech's house. Chazal tell us from this we see the principle that one who suffers from the same issue as his friend and davens for his friend, is answered first. A possible approach to understand this is the following. When someone is going through the same *nisayon* as *yenem*, his *tefila* is, "Ribono Shel Olam, I know exactly what he is going through personally. Please have *rachmanus* on him!" Hakadosh Boruch Hu says, if you take your *nisayon* and use it to gain *rachmanus* for another *Yid*, you don't have to go through your *nisayon* anymore because that is seen as having passed it.

According to this approach, perhaps we can suggest this is what Targum Yonasan ben Uziel is learning in our *posuk* with an additional *nekuda*. Yitzchok had the *nisayon* of the Akeida, and he was looking for a way to alleviate Rivka's burden. We know a *tzaddik's* *tefila* can overturn a *gezeira* into *midas rachmanus*. When a *tzaddik* davens for someone else, he changes his demeanor and tries to feel what that person is feeling in order to fully appreciate that which he is davening for. For Yitzchok, this was to go back to the Akeida, where he had his biggest

nisayon. And in doing so, his *tefila* saved him from the *nisayon* he didn't even know he had. Targum Yonasan is telling us that Yitzchok's *tefila* relieved him of his עקרות, because he was *mispallel* for *yenem*. This shows us that not only is one answered on himself first when he davens for *yenem*, but it can even prevent one from getting the *nisayon* of *yenem* which he is davening for.

We are living in a time where people are looking for *zechusim* to be able to daven for people we know. Maybe we can learn something from this *parsha*. Eight months ago, we all felt the *sakana* of the *mageifa*. We all went through the *nisayon* of the *eis tzara* together. Yitzchok went through his *nisayon* of the Akeida, and looked back to it when he davened for Rivka. That was not an easy thing to do, he had to go back to Har Hamoria to fully conjure up the feelings he had by the Akeida. When we go through a *nisayon*, we are not supposed to say goodbye to it and let it pass and fade away. We are supposed to keep access to the *nisayon*, in order to use it to daven for someone else. This is not an easy thing, drawing upon our memory alone is usually not enough. We have to do something to fully tap into the arousal we originally felt at the time.

So too us, we went through a *gevaldigge nisayon* a few short months ago. Baruch Hashem, a lot of Klal Yisroel is not currently in that *nisayon*. But we know there are people who are in *sakana gedola*. Even if there isn't imminent *sakana* for everybody, Klal Yisroel is still wearing masks, and the Ribono Shel Olam clearly wants us to be in the position where we have to wear the masks. Maybe, we can learn from this a message from the Ribono Shel Olam that even if we are not sitting *b'makom sakana* right now, we must tap into the original *sakana* to daven for those in Klal Yisroel who currently need our *tefilos*. Hakadosh Boruch Hu is giving us the opportunity to have *tefilas tzaddikim*, of עתָר, to be *mis'hapech* to *midas rachmanus* all those who are now *b'makom sakana*. With these *tefillos*, may Hakadosh Boruch Hu accept the collective עתָר of Klal Yisroel to avert any *gezar din* which was supposed to come to us and bring the *yeshua*, *bimheira biyomeinu*, *amen*.