

Your Sweet Voice

The voice is that of Yaakov, but the hands are those of Eisav" (Bereshis 27:22). The Medrash Rabba (65:20) relates the following event. Rebbe Abba Bar Kahana said that there never arose philosophers in the world like Bilaam Ben Beor and Avnemus Hagardi. All of the star worshippers came together to ask them, "How can we harm this nation (Israel)?" They replied, "Go around to their shuls and bottei medrashim (study halls). If you hear children's voices learning Torah, then you cannot harm this nation. Their father (Yitzchak) promised them when he said, 'The voice is that of Yaakov.' When the voice of Yaakov is heard in shul, Eisav's hands are not his. If not, 'The hands are those of Eisav,' and you can harm them."

And Rivkah loved Yaakov" (Bereshis 25:28). Why? The Medrash explains. The more that she heard Yaakov's voice learning Torah, the more she loved him.

Kinderlach . . .

We want to hear your sweet voices learning Torah. Look at what learning Torah can accomplish! It can protect the Jewish people. It also makes us beloved. Just like Yaakov's Torah learning increased Rivkah's love for him, so too our learning increases Hashem's love for us. This is a time when enemies are threatening the Jewish people. We need protection. Learn Torah! Yitzchak Avinu promises that this will protect us. It will also make us beloved. How can Hashem let any harm come to the people that He loves? May Hashem protect us all and bring Moshiach speedily in our days.

I Love You

Yankie, I just warned you to speak nicely to your sister. You didn't listen. Now I must punish you."

"Abba, please don't punish me. I will stop speaking badly."

"You said that last time, Yankie. And the time before that. You leave me no alternative. Now go into your room for the rest of the afternoon."

"That's not fair. Abba, I want another chance. If you punish me like this, it shows that you don't love me."

"Do you really think that I don't love you?"

"Yes, because you won't give me another chance."

"Yankie, I'm afraid that you have it all backwards. If I did not love you *chas*

veshalom (G-d forbid) then I would give you another chance, and another, and another . . . as many chances as you want. I would not care how many times you spoke badly, or did anything wrong, for that matter. I would let you grow up to be an undisciplined person. That is the easy way out. However, I do love you. Therefore, I take the time and trouble to properly educate you. It is not easy for you or me. But it is the right thing to do."

"How do you know that, Abba?"

It is written in Rashi's commentary on this week's parsha. 'May Elokim (G-d) give you from the dew of the heavens and the fatness of the earth . . .' (Bereshis 27:28). This is Yitzchak's blessing to his son Yaakov. When Yitzchak blesses Eisav, the order is reversed. 'From the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling, and of the dew of the heavens from above' (Bereshis 27:39)." Rashi points out the significance of this turnabout. The righteous Yaakov will learn from Hashem's judgement. 'May Elokim (the name referring to strict judgment) give you . . .' if you are deserving. If not, take heed and correct yourself. The wicked Eisav, on the other hand, will curse Hashem if he receives a harsh judgement. He will not examine his ways. Therefore, there is no point in making him suffer. Hence, 'From the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling,' whether you deserve it or not."

"I see, Abba. You really do love me."
"With all of my heart, Yankie."

Kinderlach . . .

No one likes punishments. Not even parents. They are unpleasant to administer and even harder to accept. Why are we punished? To teach us a lesson. We want to be tzaddikim, like Yaakov Avinu. A punishment tells us that we are doing something wrong, and need to correct ourselves. One who changes himself is on the path to becoming a tzaddik. As the verse states, "Though the tzaddik may fall seven times, he will arise" (Mishlei 24:16).

The Inner Track

We are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Hashem's chosen people. We are called His favorite child, as the verse states, "My favorite son, Ephraim" (Yirmiyahu 31:19). The Targum

translates Ephraim as Yisrael (the Jewish people). Why then, do our enemies overcome us? What gives them the power to defeat Hashem's favorite child? The answer is found in Rashi's explanation of Yitzchak's blessing to Eisav.

On your sword you shall live, but your brother (Yaakov) you shall serve" (Bereshis 27:40). The Targum Unkelos translates the rest of the verse as follows, "When My children violate the teachings of the Torah, they cast off the yoke from their necks." Rashi explains that the sins of the Jewish people give Eisav an opening. He seizes the opportunity and is given the power to rise up against Yaakov and cause him *tsar* (distress). However, when we are strong in our Torah observance, Eisav remains subservient to us. We bear Hashem's yoke, therefore He protects us. Eisav cannot touch us because we have the "inner track" with Hashem.

Kinderlach . . .

Imagine that the teacher had a special errand to do. It was not easy, so he picked the best boy in the class. He gave him special instructions and a bit of training. Then he sent him off. It was not easy. The boy ran into some rough characters. When he followed the instructions, no one could touch him. When he tried to do it his own way, the evil characters had a way of catching him. Oy va voy. We are that best boy. The mission is to serve Hashem, and the instructions are the Torah. Follow the instructions. No one can touch you.

מוקדש לע"נ גרשון בן יוסף ז"ל

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