

# G-D'S DESIRES

*by Rabbi Aron Tendler*

The Talmud in Tractate Yibamos 64a tells us that the fore-mothers - Sara, Rivkah, and Rachel, were barren because, "Hashem (G-d) desires the prayers of the righteous." G-d therefore constructs events and situations that force the righteous to express their dependency upon Hashem. This week's Parsha begins by describing the scene of Yitzchak and Rivka beseeching Hashem to grant them children. Rashi explains that although Rivkah and Yitzchak both prayed to Hashem, it was the prayers of Yitzchak that made the difference. Why? Because the Tefilos of a Tzadik (righteous person) who is the child of a Tzadik are more powerful than those of a Tzadik, the child of a Rasha - an evil man. Yitzchak was the son of Avraham who was righteous, while Rivka was the daughter of Betuel who was evil. Therefore, Yitzchak's prayers were more potent than Rivka's. Akeidas Yitzchak - the binding of Yitzchak, involved Yitzchak's willingness to be bound on an alter and his seemingly near brush with death. Yet, this uniquely courageous act is considered more the test of Avraham's faith in G-d, rather than a test of Yitzchak faith.

1. Why does Hashem "desire the prayers of the righteous? As the statement infers, they are already righteous! As "the righteous" they are already fully cognizant of their dependency upon G-d. Why does Hashem continue to test their belief in Him by forcing them time and time again to reaffirm their trust and dependency?
2. Why should the prayers of a Tzadik, the child of a Tzadik be more powerful than those of a Tzadik the child of a Rasha? If anything, it was the Tzadik the child of a Rasha who had to overcome much greater adversity and make greater changes in his life in order to become a Tzadik. Shouldn't that count for more than the Tzadik the child of a Tzadik who advanced his own righteousness on the strong foundation of righteous parents who raised him in an environment that encouraged righteousness and service to Hashem?
3. Why is Akeidas Yitzchak considered a greater challenge to Avraham than it was to Yitzchak? It was Yitzchak who was to be sacrificed, not Avraham!

As humans, our ongoing challenge in relation to G-d is to realize and accept how totally dependent we are on Him. We struggle with accepting our dependency because it obligates us to follow His commandments. "If we are living in G-d's house and eating at His table, we had better follow His rules!" Denying our dependency permits us to do as we see fit, rather than restricting our desires and actions. The lesson of dependency is built into the process of child rearing, as well as into the process for studying Torah. In our younger years, we humans are the most dependent creatures upon earth. If someone wouldn't have been there to care for us, nurture us, and love us, we wouldn't

have survived. The same is true for Torah. No one can ever learn Torah on his own. To learn Torah requires a teacher who is himself, or herself, the direct recipient of an unbroken transmission of information, starting with Moshe on Mt. Sinai.

The truth is that all knowledge of G-d requires a teacher. Even Avraham, who on his own realized that there had to be a G-d who created the universe, had to have a teacher teach him how that Creator relates to the universe, and what He expects from the human race. Avraham was taught by Ever and Shem, who had been taught by Noach, who was taught by Mesushelach, who studied with Chanoch, who was taught by Adam, who had been taught by G-d Himself! The transmission of Torah knowledge is a process of a student's dependency upon his teacher, who was himself a student dependent on his teacher, etc. etc.

The underlying lesson and ultimate goal of the birthing and learning processes is for every person to realize and accept his total dependency upon G-d. Dependency is natural to the human race, and the acceptance of our dependency on Hashem provides us with our only degree of personal control. Any illusion that we may have of personal control over our individual and collective destinies is a denial of reality. Therefore, to proceed through life making decisions based upon that illusion is a prescription for disaster and failure. On the other hand, accepting our lack of personal control, and permitting ourselves to feel our dependency, motivates us to learn more about G-d and His expectations. This in turn allows us to better serve Hashem, who in turn provides us with everything we need to better serve Him.

Regardless of the degree of our acceptance of our dependency, we continue to struggle with that dependency. The Pasuk forewarns, "It was My own strength and personal power that brought me all this prosperity." (Devarim 8:17) Even the greatest Tzadikim continue to struggle with this human condition. Therefore, Hashem constantly challenges His Tzadikim to confront that natural tendency and seek a deeper understanding and acceptance of their dependency. That is why the Avos (fore-fathers) and Imahos (fore-mothers) were barren. Whereas the natural assumption would have been to expect children, especially to the progenitors of the Chosen People; Hashem forced them to reassess what they took for granted and realize the totality of their dependency on Him.

Yitzchak's prayers were more potent than Rivka's because of his "frum - religious" upbringing. The essence of Tefilah is expressing our dependency on Hashem. As I heard from Rav Noach Weinberg shlita, Rivka had every reason to feel pride in her own courage and commitment. In the face of such great adversity she had remained focused and pure! On some very basic level she would have been justified in feeling, "It was my own strength and personal power that brought me all this prosperity!" On the other hand, Yitzchak became who he was because he had been trained by his mother and father. He had no right to take pride in his own realization and commitment to Hashem. If not for his "frum" upbringing who knows what kind of person he would have been. Therefore, when Yitzchak davened, his Tefilos expressed a greater realization of dependency on Hashem than Rivka's! That is why Hashem listened to Yitzchak's prayers more so than Rivka's.

Torah must be taught in order for it to be transmitted. The nature of the Rebbi (teacher) - Talmid (student) relationship is trust and dependency. The student is trained to trust the teacher's presentation of the information as being authentic and accurate. In fact, the entire system of Torah She-Baal Peh - the Oral Torah, is based upon this trust. In many ways, the trust that the Talmid has in his Rebbi infuses the student with a confidence that transforms theory into fact and the questionable into the rational. The relationship that Yitzchak had with his father was far more comprehensive than the classic Rebbi - Talmid. Avraham was Yitzchak's primary source for understanding Hashem and His expectations. Yitzchak's entire relationship with Hashem was built upon the teachings of his father. When Avraham bound Yitzchak on the Alter, Yitzchak was able to set aside any questions and doubts that he must have had, because he totally trusted Avraham. Avraham, on the other hand, had to trust himself and his own understanding of G-d's command. He didn't have the buffer of trusting his Rebbi. For Yitzchak it was a test of his trust in his father. For Avraham it was a test of his trust in Hashem.

---

Copyright © 1997 by [Rabbi Aron Tendler](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

---

The author is Rabbi of Shaarey Zedek Congregation, Valley Village, CA.

---