

# DON'T TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER / TWO DIFFERENT BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #964 – The Non-Observant at Your Yom Tov Meal: Good Idea or Major Problem? Good Shabbos!

## Not Taking "No" For An Answer When It Comes To Praying To The Almighty For Our Needs

In this week's parsha, the Torah says that Yitzchak was forty years old when he married Rivka. *Rivka Imeinu* was barren – as was the case with *Sarah Imeinu* and as was the case with *Rochel Imeinu* (which is the subject of a discussion in Tractate Yevomos 64a). Yitzchak prayed to Hashem that his wife should be able to have children. The expression the Torah uses to express the nature of Yitzchak's prayer is "*Va'Ye'etar Yitzchak L'Hashem...*" [Yitzchak entreated Hashem] [Bereishis 25:21]. Rashi explains this to be "*hirba v'hiftzir b'tefillah*" [he importuned much through prayer]. This means, not only did Yitzchak daven for Rivka, but he was persistent in his davening. *L'Haftzir* means to persist and to do something over and over again.

Rav Shimshon Pincus, z"l, notes that the Talmud in fact comments [Brochos 32b] "If a person sees that his prayers are not being accepted, he should repeat them, as it is written 'Hope to Hashem, strengthen yourself and He will give you courage, and hope to Hashem.'" [Tehillim 27:14] This in fact is what Yitzchak did here.

However, we must ask, why is it like that? For example, if someone asks to borrow your car and for whatever reason you decline to lend your car, what is the appropriate approach for him to use in order to convince you to lend your car? It is certainly not to return ten minutes later and ask once again "Can I borrow your car?" It is not advisable to go back even the next day and say "Can I borrow your car? Can I please borrow your car? Can I 'pretty please' borrow your car?" Being a nudge is not the way to get somebody to lend you his car, after he has already refused to lend it to you.

When someone turns you down, perhaps you might ask a second time but not "*hifzir*" – not asking over and over again. It is not wise. It is not polite. A person does not do that. Yet, that *pasuk* teaches regarding the Master of the World "*Kaveh el Hashem*" [express hope to G-d through prayer] and if you are not answered then the solution is "*v'Kaveh el Hashem*" [once again pray to the Almighty]. This is what Yitzchak did. Rivkah was barren for many years. They got married when Yitzchak was forty.

Rivka did not give birth to Yaakov and Eisav until Yitzchak was sixty! Yitzchak *davened* and *davened* and *davened*. This is what Rashi is teaching us with the words "*hirba v'hiftzir b'tefilla*". So why is there such a difference between the way we should ask G-d and the way we should ask man?

The answer is very simple and very fundamental. When we ask someone to lend us his car or do some kind of favor for us and he declines, the whole issue is that we want the car or the money or the favor – some specific item that the other person does not want to give it to us or will not do for us. Period. We received our answer. Either he cannot or he does not want to satisfy the request and there is no point arguing about it.

Obviously, the *Ribono shel Olam* can do anything. He is never unable to do something. The *Ribono shel Olam* is not saying "no" because He is not capable of granting the request. The reason the Almighty wants us sometimes to *daven* over and over and over again is because He wants the relationship. He wants us to ask (sometimes multiple times) because He wants us to have a *shaychus* with Him.

The Talmud says that the *Ribono shel Olam* desires (*mis'aveh*) the prayers of the righteous. Our tendency is that if we have everything, we forget the *Ribono shel Olam*. When things are going well, He is not so much a part of our lives. When things are not going well, we all become a little more "religious" and we all *daven* a little more. This is what He wants – He wants that we should involve Him in our lives.

By human beings, if you receive a "no" once and certainly, if you receive a "no" twice, the prudent course is to stay away. On the contrary, it is just the opposite by the Master of the Universe: *Kaveh el Hashem, chazak v'ametz libecha, v'kaveh el Hashem* [pray to G-d; strengthen your heart; and then – if necessary – keep praying further].

### **The Difference Between Yakov's Blessing and Eisav's Blessing**

Our Sages say that on the fateful day that "Esav came home from the field tired" [Bereishis 25:29], Yaakov was cooking lentil soup, which is a dish for mourners, because their grandfather *Avraham Avinu* had just passed away. *Chazal* say that Avraham died five years earlier than he would have otherwise died so as not to live to see that his grandson Esav went off the path of morality that Avraham had hoped all his descendants would follow.

The sages say that on this very day, Esav transgressed five major sins. He raped a betrothed maiden; he murdered someone; he denied belief in resurrection of the dead, he denied the existence of G-d, and he mocked the status of being a firstborn (*va'yivez Eisav es haBechorah* [Bereishis 25:34]). Ironically, of all these sins enumerated by the Rabbis that Eisav committed that day, the only one explicitly recorded in the *Chumash* is what appears to be the most minor of the offenses – belittling the birthright. The Talmud learns out the other four sins through hints and Biblical exegesis.

Everyone asks this question – of all the sins, why single out *va'yivez Eisav es haBechorah* for explicit

indictment?

I saw an explanation in the name of Rav Aharon Kotler, *zt"l*, that *va'yivez Eisav es haBechorah* speaks to the type of person Eisav was. Someone who mocks the birthright – given what the birthright symbolized in those days – was in fact committing a grievous sin. Firstborns were designated to be in charge of the Divine Service in the *Mishkan*. Rejecting the *Bechorah* was in effect denying respect for and interest in a relationship to the *Ribono shel Olam* or to His Divine Service. Rav Aharon says that every other sin enumerated by the Rabbis in cataloging Esav's crimes flows from this attitude. This rejection of the opportunity for a relationship with G-d, speaks to the spiritual lowliness of the person and leads to a person becoming a rapist, murderer and a heretic. Spirituality means absolutely nothing to him.

This explains another problem in the parsha. *Yitzchak Avinu* gives the blessing to Yaakov: "And may G-d give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth, and abundant grain and wine..." [Bereishis 27:28] Eisav comes in a few minutes later, realizes what happened, and says to Yitzchak "...Is there but one blessing to you, Father? Bless me too, Father!" The *pasuk* then continues, "And Esav raised his voice and wept." [Bereishis 27:38] Whereupon Yitzchak responds to Esav, "...Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling and of the dew of the heavens from above." [Bereishis 27:39].

If we consider these two blessings, they seem very similar. Yaakov received "the dew of the heavens and the fatness of the earth." Eisav is told that the fatness of the earth will be his dwelling and of the dew of the heavens from above. It almost seems like the same thing. What is the big difference?

The Shemen HaTov writes that there are two fundamental differences: The first difference is the priority. In the blessing to Yaakov, the dew of the heavens comes first and then the fatness of the earth. In other words, heavenly matters – spiritual things -- come first by Yaakov. Yes, a person must acquire from "the fat of the land". A person needs *parnasah* [the ability to earn a livelihood]. However, the focus must be "the dew of the heaven", i.e. – a relationship with the *Ribono shel Olam*. The order is reversed by Eisav.

The second fundamental difference between the two blessings is that Yaakov was told "*V'yiten lecha Elokim*" [And may G-d give you] while in Eisav's bracha, there is no mention of G-d. Our Sages further point out that Yaakov's blessing begins with the conjunctive 'vov' ) *v*'Yiten "and He should give you", implying that He has previously given AND He will continue to give more. The message is that it is crucial to be constantly in touch with the *Ribono shel Olam*. Eisav's gift from G-d was "in the bank". He was blessed with the "fat of the land" and he did not need repeated gifts. Yaakov was given what he needed and given again and again as part of an ongoing relationship.

A father who wants to help his married son can do so in one of two ways. He can give him a one-time generous check and let the son use that to become self-supporting and never need to come back to the father again. This is like saying: "Here, have a nice life!" Alternatively, the father can give

his son a monthly check, which will guarantee an ongoing relationship. There should be a constant *chibuv* [loving relationship] between father and son.

The implication of the blessing "*V'yiten lecha*" meaning, "*Yiten, v'yachzor v'yiten*" is that there must be a realization that there is an ongoing need. Esav had no interest in a relationship with the Almighty so he was given a "Here, have a nice life" blessing.

This idea is reminiscent of the question asked by the *Chiddushei HaRim* that the curse G-d gave to the Snake ("you shall eat dust all the days of your life" [Bereishis 3:14]) seems to be a blessing – if the snake can always eat dirt, it will never run out of food. The *Chiddushei HaRim* explains that this is indeed a curse. Since the snake always has dirt, it never needs to ask for anything and it does not need to have a relationship with a Higher Power. Such a setup, in which there is not a relationship with the Almighty, is really more of a curse than a blessing. This is what Eisav wanted, but from the perspective of a spiritual person, it is more curse than blessing. Yaakov's blessing was "And G-d will give... and give... and give..." – there will be an ongoing spiritual connection between Yaakov's descendants and their Father in Heaven.

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