



The Community

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Boruch Hashem

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Rabbi's Article

Isaac's Eyesight

On the verse (-Genesis 27:1), "*It came to pass when Isaac was old, and his eyes were too dim,*" Rashi (-[Link](#)) comments, "*Because of the smoke of these (wives of Esau, who would burn incense to the idols). Another explanation: When Isaac was bound on the altar, and his father was about to slaughter him, the heavens opened, and the ministering angels saw and wept, and their tears fell upon Isaac's eyes. As a result, his eyes became dim. A third explanation: to enable Jacob to take the blessings.*"

Questions: (i) Why does Rashi need to give any reasons, if the verse itself states, "when Isaac was old"? (ii) When Rashi gives three reasons it is because (a) there is a problem which each reason, and (b) there is a virtue in each one of the reasons over the other two. How does this apply to these three reasons?

Rashi refuses to accept that, "Isaac was old," is the reason for his dimming of the eyes because, the Torah already told us previously (-ibid 25:11), "And G-d blessed Isaac," upon which Rashi commented, "Abraham was afraid to bless Isaac because he foresaw Esau emanating from him. So he said, 'May the Master of blessings come and bless whomever He pleases.' And the Holy One, blessed be He, came and blessed him." Hence, Rashi is now bothered, how can it be that Isaac, --who was blessed by the, "Master of Blessings,"-- at the age of 123 years old - not yet a distinct old age of ailment in Isaac's era-- should be (-Rashi, Genesis 28:13) "and his eyes were too dim... and hence it is as he were dead," left living like this for another 57 years?! Therefore, Rashi searches, finds and provides other reasons as to why Isaac's eyes, at this age, "were too dim."

The reason Rashi finds is the very detail of the Torah-portion related just prior to this verse: "And Esau was forty years old, and he married... And they were a vexation of the spirit to Isaac and to Rebecca," which Rashi explained, "for they worshipped idols." Hence, the first reason: "Because of the smoke of these (wives of Esau, who would burn incense to the idols)." However, this reason has its questions: (i) It is understood that Esau's wives didn't live at Isaac's tent, and hence, their incense offerings weren't near Isaac's eyes? (ii) And if it was, why was only Isaac's eyes effected, and not Rebecca's? Therefore, Rashi searches on and finds a second reason: "When Isaac was bound on the altar..."

However, this reason as well has its question, being that Rashi specifically focuses on simple interpretations, and not homiletic teaches such as this? Hence, the third reason: "To enable Jacob to take the blessings." However, on the third reason there is even a greater question than there is on the second reason (and hence, it's brought after the second reason): Having Isaac suffer only so that Jacob should be able to receive the blessings, -- when, "G-d has many paths (through which to bring His will to fruition),"-- is absolutely not a reason to explain G-d's actions?!

The virtue that each of the three have over the other two are:

Reason #1 is the only reason that is clearly hinted to in the verses (being stated immediately prior to the verse, "His eyes were too dim").

Reason #2 is the only reason that comes from a virtue (Isaac's being bound on the altar). While in **Reason #1** (idol worship of Esau's wives) and **Reason #3** (Isaac wanted to give Esau the blessings, and Jacob had to fool him) Isaac's, "eyes were too dim," was because of negative causes, which then means that Jacob receiving his blessings (made possible only through Isaac's blindness, and thus, Jacob's fooling him) came through negative events.

Reason #3 is the only reason that explains why the verse beings with, "It came to pass when Isaac was old," which was therefore the time to give the blessing to his son. While with **Reasons #1&2** --and especially according to **Reason #1** (Esau was born when Isaac was 60, got married when Isaac was 100, and Isaac's eye first grew dim 23 years later?!)-- there seems to be no specific reason why the verse would introduce Isaac's, "eyes were too dim," with, "when Isaac was old."

The Lesson: An amazing lesson that we are to learn from **Reason #3** is that G-d could have avoided this by simply telling Isaac that his son Esau was evil, and hence, unworthy of receiving the blessing! Nevertheless, G-d did not gossip, --even on a wicked Esau, upon who Isaac anyway had his doubts because of (-Rashi, ibid 21:21), "Esau does not usually mention the name of G-d with frequency..."-- and rather, let Isaac have that, "his eyes were too dim." Hence, how careful we must be **not to gossip about others!**

This Week...

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2022 ★ א' כסלו תשפ"ג

2ND DAY ROSH CHODESH: Recite *Hallel & Musaf* · Resolve to add this month in Torah-study, prayer, and charity
Shabbat Candle Lighting: North Miami: 5:11 PM · Mincha: 5:30 PM

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2022 ★ א' כסלו תשפ"ג

TORAH READING: [Chaya Sarah](#) (Genesis 23:1-25:18) · HAFTORAH: [Kings I](#): 1:1-31
Shacharit: 9:30 AM · Mincha: 5:00 PM · Shabbat Ends: North Miami: 6:06 PM