

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

Toldos, Sicha 3

The Verse:

It came to pass when Yitzchak had become old, and his eyes were too dim to see, that he summoned Eisav, his older son, and he said to him, "My son. And he said to him, "Here I am." (Bereishis 27:1.)

The Rashi:

Were too dim — Because of the smoke of these [wives of Eisav] (who would burn [incense] to the idols) (Tanchuma, Toledos 8; Pesikta Rabbasi 12). Another explanation: When Yitzchak was bound on the altar, and his father was about to slaughter him, at that time, the heavens opened up, and the ministering angels saw and wept, and their tears descended and fell upon Yitzchak's eyes. This is why his eyes became dim (Bereishis Rabbah 65:6). A third explanation: So that Yaakov should take the blessings (Ibid, 65:8).

The Questions:

The verse itself gives the cause of Yitzchak's blindness: "It came to pass when Yitzchak was old." Why does Rashi find it necessary to provide additional explanations?

Why are all three explanations necessary? What is the weakness in each explanation that necessitates the inclusion of the others?

The Explanation:

We previously read that after Avraham's death, "G-d blessed his son Yitzchak." (Bereishis 25:11) How could Yitzchak suffer from blindness after G-d Himself had blessed him? Therefore, Rashi concludes that there must have been extraneous causes for his blindness, and not simply old age.

We would have expected that the cause of his blindness would be alluded to in this narrative. The previous verse conveyed to us how Eisav's wives were a source of anguish for Yitzchak and Rivkah because Eisav's wives worshiped idols. (Bereishis 26:35; see Rashi) Therefore, Rashi's first

explanation is the most logical one: “Because of the smoke of these wives of Eisav who would burn incense to the idols.”

This explanation is not entirely satisfactory, however, because why would Yitzchak alone have been affected and not Rivkah?

Rashi therefore provides a second explanation: “When Yitzchak was bound on the altar, and his father was about to slaughter him, at that time, the heavens opened up, and the ministering angels saw and wept, and their tears descended and fell upon Yitzchak’s eyes. This is why his eyes became dim.”

This explanation, however, is entirely aggadic and has no textual basis in the simple meaning of the verse.

Rashi therefore provides a third explanation: “So that Yaakov should take the blessings.”

This is the final, and least plausible, explanation. For why would G-d make Yitzchak suffer just so that Yaakov could receive the blessings?

Now, each explanation is necessary because each has a strength that the other two lack. The first explanation (Eisav’s wives) is the only one rooted in a simple reading of the verse. The second explanation (the angel’s tears) is the only one with a positive connotation. If Yitzchak’s blindness led to

Yaakov’s blessings, it stands to reason that the cause of his blindness would be one that underscores Yitzchak’s holiness and not something negative (such as Eisav’s wives idolatry, or Yitzchak’s misplaced desire to bless Eisav). The third explanation is the only one that makes chronological sense. According to the first two, Yitzchak’s blindness happened years before he “turned old.” Only according to the third explanation — that the reason for the blindness was so that Yaakov could receive the blessings — does the order make sense. Yitzchak became old, and so he prepared to bless his children. Consequently, he was struck with blindness to enable Yaakov to receive the blessings.

The Lesson:

Yitzchak’s blindness could have been avoided if G-d revealed to him the extent of Eisav’s wickedness. This illustrates the severity of lashon hara — negative speech. G-d was prepared to direct the blessings to Yaakov in a circuitous way, even prematurely blinding Yitzchak, just to avoid speaking negatively about Eisav.

How much more so must we exercise caution when speaking about our fellow Jew.
