VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

By Rabbi **Eli Meyer Smith** Shlit"a
Rosh Hakollel of Bais Ulfana Lehoroa »
«Email rabbi@yeshivasrebchaimozer.com

In English



בס"ד

The Yeshua Arises Even From Events That Appear Bad!

›› *Why Did Esav Disgrace the Bechorah?*

The *pasuk* in this week's Parshah (Bereishis 25-32-34) states: "And Esav said, 'Behold, I am going to die. What do I need the *bechorah* for?' And Yaakov said, 'Swear to me today.' And he swore to him, and he sold the *bechorah* to Yaakov. And Yaakov gave Esav bread and a pot of lentils. And he ate, and he drank, and he stood up and went. And Esav disgraced the *bechorah*."

The Ibn Ezra writes that the reason Esav didn't care about the first-born status was that Yitzchok was not wealthy. Since there was not going to be a large inheritance, Esav didn't care if he lost the first-born's right to a double portion.

He proves that Yitzchok did not have much money from the fact that there wasn't much food in his house. If there had been, Esav wouldn't have needed to trade anything for a pot of lentils, as there would have been something around for him to eat. Furthermore, Yitzchok would not have needed Esav to bring him food, and he wouldn't have loved him for this reason.

The Ramban strongly disagrees with this explanation and brings numerous proofs from *pesukim* that Yitzchok was not poor. One of his proofs is from the verse (Bereishis 25:11) that states: "And it was after the death of Avrohom. And G-d blessed Yitzchok, his son." He writes that this blessing included an increase in wealth, property, and honor. If so, how could he have suddenly become poor?

He adds that it is true that some *tzadikim* lose their wealth, but this would not occur to one who was blessed by Hashem. Therefore, he offers another explanation as to why Esav didn't care about the *bechorah*.

›› *Hashem Caused the Bechorah to Go to Yaakov!*

The Kesav Sofer *zt"l* explains the Ibn Ezra by saying that even though Yitzchok had been blessed by Hashem with wealth, He caused him to lose it. Hashem did this specifically so that Esav wouldn't want the *bechirah* because there would be no inheritance in any case, and he would be willing to sell it to Yaakov for a pot of lentils.

Once Yaakov acquired the first-born status, he was able to receive the *brachos* of Avrohom, as the Ramban explains that he needed to be the *bechor* in order to get the *brachos*. Thus, everything that occurred was for Yitzchok's benefit. He lost his wealth so that Yaakov and his descendants should have these blessings, rather than Esav and his descendants.

›› *Even When Things Look Bad, They are Good!*

The Ramban explains the reason why Yitzchok Avinu went blind in a similar way. He asks why this great *tzadik* deserved such a fate, and answers that Hashem made it happen so that Yaakov could receive the *brachos*. Again, we see that something which seemed bad – Yitzchok's blindness - was actually beneficial to him, as it allowed the blessings to be transmitted to Yaakov, and not to Esav.

The Baalei Tosafos use the same idea to explain the *pasuk* (Bereishis 26:35) that says that Esav's wives were a source of pain for Yitzchok and Rivka. They write that Hashem caused this to occur so that they would be unwelcome in Yitzchok's home. Therefore, they were not around to hear Rivka speaking to her son about the plan to take the *brachos*, and they couldn't reveal the plot to Esav. Once again, we see that the pain the wives of Esav caused Yitzchok was ultimately for his benefit.

This concept should be a source of encouragement for us all. When one goes through challenges and hard times, he should remember that whatever Hashem does is for the good. He should recognize that even the things that seem bad to him now are really for his benefit. Sometimes, one can see the good in a short time, and sometimes he might not see it until a long time has passed, but one can be assured that whatever Hashem causes to happen to him will be for his benefit in the end.

›› *The Bad of Avimelech Turned Into Good*

The *pasuk* states (Bereishis 26:29) that when Yitzchok Avinu made a covenant with Avimelech and his men, they said: "If you do not harm us, as we have not touched you, and as we have done with you only good." The Baal Haturim writes that Avimelech wanted to hurt Yitzchok, but Hashem orchestrated events to benefit Yitzchok, just as He transforms all bad things into good.

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"צ אלחנן
יוסף בן שמואל

Thus, Avimelech said, "If you do bad to us," it will certainly be transformed into good. The proof of this is that "we have not touched you". Although we wanted to harm you, Hashem did not allow it, and he transformed it into good. Therefore, we are sure that He will also change anything bad you want to do to us into good.

The Kedushas Levi *zt"l* explains that Avimelech wanted to kill Yitzchok. Still, Hashem didn't allow it to happen. Not only that, Hashem orchestrated events so that Yitzchok benefited from Avimelech. He ended up finding "*meah she'arim*", many wells of water, sheep, and many possessions. When Avimelech saw this, he realized that Hashem wants to provide benefit to everyone who trusts in him – even to wicked people like him! He told Yitzchok that even if he wanted to harm him, he couldn't, because he believes in Hashem and knows He will turn all evil intentions against him into good.

›› Goodness is Found Amidst Pain

The *pasuk* in this week's Parshah states (Bereishis 27:1-2): "And Yitzchok was very old, and his eyes were blinded from sight. And he called Esav, his older son, and he said to him, 'My son.' And (Esav) said to him, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'Behold, I am old. I don't know the day of my death.'"

Sefer Peninim Yekarim Hachadash quotes a Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah, Toldos 65:10) that states that Yitzchok saw the Shechinah, and it was decreed that he would die the same way that Nadav and Avihu died when they gazed at the Shechinah. He became blind because a blind person is considered dead (Nedarim 64B), so he fulfilled the decree in that way. He asks why Yitzchok didn't become blind right away at the Akeidah, when he saw the Shechinah, and answers that at that time he had no children, and a childless person is also considered dead. He didn't need to be blind until he had children.

"...Every second that Avrohom and Sarah suffered saved Klal Yisroel from a second of bondage in Egypt. We learn from this that every moment of pain saves a future generation from suffering. If one would recognize this, it would help to ease his pain..."

This means that Yitzchok's childlessness saved him from blindness for many years. And the blindness he subsequently experienced saved him from death. He writes that this should teach a person not to cry and complain when he is lacking something – such as children or health – as it is very possible that lacking one thing is saving him from a worse fate.

›› Yitzchok's Childlessness Benefited Klal Yisroel

Yitzchok did not have children for 20 years after his marriage. This was for his benefit, as the 400 years of *Golus Mitzrayim* started upon the birth of Yitzchok, whereas the actual bondage began after the last of his sons – Levi – died, 94 years after the nation went to Egypt.

Accordingly, those 20 years of childlessness delayed the bondage by 20 years. If Yaakov had been born 20 years earlier, the Shevatim would also have been born 20 years earlier, and the bondage would have started 20 years earlier. This is another example of how something that appears bad was actually good.

›› Yitzchok's Birth Was Delayed to Prolong Avrohom's Life!

Rashi states (Bereishis 25:30) that on the day that Yaakov traded the pot of lentils to Esav for the *bechorah*, Avrohom died. It is stated that he was meant to live five years longer, but Hashem caused him to die so that he should not see his grandson, Esav, taking the wrong path in life.

This means that if Rivka hadn't been childless for 20 years, Avrohom's life would have been shorter. Thus, Yitzchok and Rivka's childlessness extended Avrohom's life. When Yitzchok and Rivka davened excessively, Hashem granted their request to have children, and this shortened Avrohom's life by five years.

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt"l* sees a hint to this from the fact that the words "*vaye'etar lo Hashem*" (and Hashem answered his prayer) have the same *gematriah* as "*chameish shanim*". This indicates that the *tefillah* of Yitzchok took away five years from Avrohom. When Rav Yosef Chaim told this to Rav Aharon Kotler *zt"l*, Rav Aharon declared, "I am certain that the *gematriah* was said with *ruach hakodesh*!"

›› Every Bit of Pain Provides Salvation!

At the *Bris Bein Habesarim*, Hashem told Avrohom (Bereishis 15:13): "And I will enslave them... for 400 years." However, Hashem was "*chisheiv es hakeitz*". He started the calculation early to deduct 190 (*keitz*) years, so that they were only in bondage for 210 years.

Sefer Sifsei Kohen (Parshas Lech Lecha) states that these years were deducted because Avrohom Avinu was pained for 100 years until Sarah gave birth to Yitzchok, and Sarah was pained for 90 years. Their pain of 190 years served to deduct 190 years from the pain of their descendants.

Every second that Avrohom and Sarah suffered saved Klal Yisroel from a second of bondage in Egypt. We learn from this that every moment of pain saves a future

generation from suffering. If one would recognize this, it would help to ease his pain during difficult times.

›› *Everything Hashem Does is For the Good!*

This can be better understood by quoting the famous words of Chazal, who relate (Brachos 60B) that it was taught in the name of Rebbe Akiva that a man should always accustom himself to constantly say, 'Whatever Hashem does is good." He once came to a town and looked for lodgings but was refused. He said, "Whatever Hashem does is good", and he went and spent the night in the open field. He had with him a rooster, a donkey, and a lamp. A gust of wind came and blew out the lamp; a weasel came and ate the rooster; a lion came and ate the donkey. He was left alone and empty-handed, but he said: 'Whatever Hashem does is good."

That night, armed robbers came and carried off the inhabitants of the town. Had his fire not burnt out, they would have seen him. Had his rooster and donkey been alive, they would have made noise and alerted the robbers to his presence. It was revealed that all these occurrences that seemed bad were really for his benefit.

After all that happened to Rav Akiva, it would be difficult to imagine that any of it was for his benefit. Rav Akiva, however, had so much *emunah* that he was confident that everything was orchestrated by Hashem and must be for the good. He constantly said that whatever Hashem does is good, so he fully believed that what was happening to him now was also good.

And so it was. He was saved by the fact that he had not been allowed in and that his fire went out and his chicken and donkey died and, therefore, the robbers did not see or hear him. It was clearly proven that all the things that seemed bad were for his benefit.

›› *The Words of the Chochomim are Pleasant!*

The verse (Koheles 9:17) states: "The words of the wise that are heard with '*nachas*' more than the shout of a ruler of fools." Sefer Shar Bas Rabim says that this hints at the fact that the "words of the wise" who say that "whatever Hashem does is for the good" are heard with "*nachas*" – the word "*nachas*" being an acronym for "*ner*", candle, "*chamor*", donkey, and "*tarnigol*", rooster – the items in the story of Rav Akiva which proved this concept.

Sefer Eileh Hadevarim adds two points. Firstly, a person must fully believe that his pain is meant solely for his benefit. Only if one trusts that whatever Hashem does is good while he is immersed in his difficulty can he be assured that good will come out of it. Secondly, he explains that the *emunah* is what eases the pain. He compares this to a person who peeks through a keyhole and sees a pen writing. It looks like the pen is writing on its own, but that is only because the view is limited and he can't see the whole picture. Once the door is opened, he sees the hand holding the pen. If a person understands that when he looks through the hole, he isn't seeing the full picture, he will know that there must be a hand holding the pen that he cannot see at this time, and he won't get scared by the strange sight.

So too, if a person recognizes during his time of pain that he cannot see the full picture and he trusts that Hashem is guiding events and orchestrating them for his benefit, he will not be afraid, and his pain will subside.

›› *One Who Trusts in Hashem is Surrounded by Chesed!*

This is as Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim (32:10): "There are many pains for a wicked man, but one who trusts in Hashem is surrounded by *chesed*." A *rasha* who doesn't trust in Hashem and doesn't believe that whatever He does is good is stopping his own salvation. He only sees part of the picture and thinks that it is bad. Therefore, he will have to live with pain. But one who trusts Hashem and knows that he can only see part of the picture accepts the fact that things certainly will play out for his benefit. He is surrounded by *chesed*. He recognizes that even in times of difficulty, Hashem is kind to him.

›› *All Suffering is Chesed!*

The Gemara (Pesachim 50A) states: "The next world is not like this world. In this world on good tidings, we make a blessing of '*Hatov Vehameitiv*'. On bad tidings, we make a blessing of '*Dayan Ha'emes*'. In the next world, there is only the blessing of *Hatov Vehameitiv*." The Tzlach asks that the Gemara seems to be saying that in the next world we will recite *Hatov Vehameitiv* even on bad occurrences. How can we say that anything is "bad" in the next world?

It is explained in the name of Rav Efraim of Brod *zt"l* that in this world we are taught to say "everything Hashem does is for the best" even when we cannot understand why it is for our benefit. Therefore, we recite the blessing of "the true judge." In the future, we will understand how everything is good, and we will recite the blessing upon this goodness that our eyes can see.

The Ramchal (Sefer Da'as Tevunos, Siman 140) writes that on that great day everything will become revealed, the entire sequence of events from the beginning of time will be clear, and all will see how everything was orchestrated for our benefit. It will become obvious to all that everything that occurred was for our good – and we will therefore recite only the blessing of *Hatov Vehameitiv*.

This is also seen in the verse (Yeshaya 52:8): "For eye to eye they shall see when Hashem returns to Zion." On that day, our eyes will see how everything that He sent was part of His great plan for our good.

From all this, we learn that at times, things seem bad to him, but those things are also part of His Divine kindness. All we have to do is strengthen our *emunah* and believe that "*kol mah d'avid rachmanah l'tav avid*."