

Parshat Toldot: Voices

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

In Parshat Toldot we read about how Rivka commands Yaakov to get the blessings from Yitzchak instead of Eisav. Yitzchak is suspicious. He feels Yaakov's arm and then exclaims, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov, but the hands are the hands of Esav." The most common understanding is the *Midrash* about Bilaam. The nations came to him to ask if they would be able to defeat the Israelites. Bilaam's advice was to go to the synagogues and see if there are children raising their voices in prayer and *Torah*. If so, "As long as the voice of Yaakov is heard, the hands of Esav are powerless against him."

Nevertheless, the simple reading of the verse seems to imply that the voice of Yaakov and the hands of Esav coexist simultaneously, writes the Halekach Vehalebu. The first "kol/voice" is written without the letter "vov." Rabbi Schorr quoting the Gra, extrapolates that when the voice of Yaakov is incomplete and weak, the hands of Esav can remain strong. When the two hands unite, one representing Ishmael and the other Esav, they are indeed powerful.

We also see a doubling of the word *kol/voice*, continues Rabbi Schorr. The first, incomplete voice represents prayer while the second represents *Torah*. When our prayer is weak our *Torah* learning will also be lacking. Many people minimize the power of *tefillah*, but prayer without the proper focus, is like trying to ring a bell that is missing a clapper. When both *tefillah* and *Torah* are strong, Esav has no hold over Yaakov adds the *Divrei Yisroel*.

We tend to focus on the importance of a young man's learning, especially in shidduchim, but his sincerity can perhaps be better gauged by observing his prayer.

Chalon Lateivah explain homiletically how the two imperatives of *Torah* and *tefillah* are the paradigm for our lives as well. The Ohr Hachayim interprets Yaakov leaving Be'er Sheva as the baby leaving the womb where it had been sworn/*shova* to observe the *Torah* that is the *be'er/wellspring* of all life. The baby goes out to *Charan*, to the world at large where the *yetzer hora* immediately enters into his psyche. How does one overcome these challenges? Through prayer, through encountering and entreating *Hamakom* (Hashem).

The mouth has two kinds of power, writes Rabbi Eisenberger. On the one hand, there is the power of prayer. On the other hand, there is the egotistical, bragging mouth that his personal conquest made him successful, not Hashem. This person's prayers are empty. When one has full faith in Hashem, he will use his hands in Hashem's service, to put in his own effort with God's help to actualize his prayer.

The letter *vov* that is missing in the first *kol* of equals six. In Kabbalistic terms, six refers to the quality of foundation, the trait associated with Yosef Hatzadik, writes Rabbi Schorr. Yosef was the essence of sanctity, raising his whole physical body to that state. If one's thought are impure, the hands of Esav are empowered. Rabbi Schorr warns us to avoid

the lure of current technology. Before beginning our prayers or our *Torah* study, we must cleanse our minds from these impurities.

Citing the Sefas Emes, Rabbi Schorr notes that the voice actually has two powers, that of speech and that of silence. The first *kol* without the "vov," refers to silence, writes the Shvilei Pinchas, while the second, full *kol* refers to speech. We need to know how to use both silence and speech appropriately. Yaakov understood both and Rochel and Leah, each epitomized one of these traits. Rochel was our silent matriarch while Leah understood the power of speech in expressing gratitude. One must know when to use each. Hur, of the Tribe of Yehudah, protested against making an idol, while Aharon also from Leah, remained silent at the death of his two sons. In contrast, Rochel raises her voice in heaven at the exile of her children with such until Hashem hears her voice.

The Sifsei Chaim says, each month corresponds to a letter of the *aleph bet*, with samech being *Kislev*, the month of Chanukah. We recite the verse daily, "*Somech Hashem lechol hanoflim*/Hashem supports all those who stumble..." The month of *Kislev* is auspicious to breaking out of Esav's hold. The value of "*Somech Hashem lechol hanoflim* is exactly equivalent to "*Hakol Kol Yaakov*," 453. Thus, we can understand that Hashem supports us when we are faltering specifically because our voices are filled with the sanctity of *Torah* and *tefillah*.

Tehillim 20

In Times of Trouble – A Prayer for Victory

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

The Midrash Shocher Tov tells the story of a father and son who were walking towards a city. The son became tired and asked the father when they would arrive. The father answered, "When you spot the cemetery, you'll know the city is nearby." When you find yourself struggling with challenges, know that the salvation is near.

Rashi points out that Tehillim 20 was composed by David Hamelech as a public

prayer that was said in times of war. Chazal tell us that when David Hamelech would go out to war those who stayed in the city would pray for him. Since then, it has become a traditional prayer to be said in any time of trouble. It's brought down that one should say this psalm for a woman in childbirth. The difficult period before *Mashiach* is described as *Chevlei Mashiach*-the agony before birth and the great *simcha* that comes shortly thereafter.

"May the name of Hashem support you." Rav Hirsh points out that *yisgacheva* indicates being at a low point. Hashem says He will lift us up. Why does it say *Elokai Yaakov* and not *Yisrael*? Rav Hirsh explains that Yaakov's life was one long chain of trouble. As a result, he bequeathed to his people the assurance that throughout the years of suffering, Hashem will be there with us and pull us through just as Hashem supported him.

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“He will send the help that you need -*m'kodesh*.” Rashi explains that the assistance will come from the bet hamikdash or possibly from the parallel sanctuary up on high. Rav Hirsh explains, we have always had our eyes set on Yerushalayim. We've never forgotten it and we've always yearned for Hashem to bring us back and because we've held on to it, that's why the help will come from there. Seforno says *kodesh* is *midat harachamim*. Hashem will send the help *m'kodesh* because of His holy name - the *shem havaya*. He will do it out of love for us, not because we deserve it.

“May he remember of all your meal offerings and accept your fat burnt offerings...” Rashi says *minchot* refers to *tefilot*. The *korbonot* were only important to the degree they came

with the proper intentions. Other commentators say, Hashem will remember all the sacrifices you made. *Mincha* is not just *tefilla*, it refers to the gifts or the *tzedakah* a person gives. Hashem will remember your good deeds and intentions and faith.

Rav Hirsh explains that when the *kohen* would come in the morning to bring the *korbon* tamid he would collect the fat and ashes and put it on the side of the altar for a day and then remove it as if to declare- “The residue of yesterday is still here even as I bring something new, I'm building on what was accomplished yesterday.” Hashem will give you credit for your deeds and what was carries over to today.

“He will give you according to your own heart”

To the degree of sincerity and faith you have, that is how much you will receive. “And all of your plans and designs he will fulfill... May Hashem satisfy all your requests.” What we ask for and sometimes think are not necessarily the same. We ask Hashem to perfect our desires. We have resentment and doubts in our heart and if Hashem gives us back what's in our heart it might be terrible. So, we ask Hashem to fulfill our articulated requests.

“These trust in chariots and these in horses, but we remember the name of Hashem.” Rav Hirsh says the root of the word *vanisodod* is *od* -more. We will rise up and persevere. We will keep on going, the war is not over. “The king will answer us on the day we call.” On that day and in the future.

Respecting the Wishes of the Deceased Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The wishes of an ill person on his deathbed are always honored, because if the person senses it won't be followed it could cause his early death. Therefore, in *halacha* it's considered as if an acquisition was made. Chazal divided the stages. During the first three days when a person first falls ill, if he gives over all his property verbally you can be sure he's serious about it and it's halachically binding. If there were witnesses who heard what was said, *beit din* will enforce the gift. If a person didn't give away all his property and he left enough money to support himself for the next year, that means he doesn't think he will die and the gift is invalid. If a person is seriously ill or if he's being taken out to be killed or leaving on a dangerous journey, and he verbally bequeaths property to someone, it's halachically valid even if he leaves over a portion of property for himself, because it's clear that there's imminent danger of death.

If he doesn't die or if he dies of another reason the original bequeathment is invalidated and the estate is given to the halachic

heirs. If the person recovered slightly and was able to walk outside and then died, then if he died of the same illness and never really recovered, the gifts he gave is valid. But if he recovered and died of another illness, the gift is invalid.

Although in *halacha*, for testimony to be valid, two witnesses are needed and a women's testimony isn't valid, in the case of remarriage, the wife's testimony that her husband died is accepted. Chazal reasoned that if it was later revealed that she lied she would have to divorce both husbands and the new children would be *mamzerim*. No women would do this without being pretty sure her husband was dead. But if a wife testifies that her husband died so that she can get a portion of his estate, it's not accepted. In any financial case, two witnesses are required before anyone can touch the deceased's assets.

If a man drowns on the open seas and the witness did not see the person come up, that testimony is not enough to let the wife remarry

because an underwater current may have possibly carried the person to dry land. However, it's still adequate proof for his estate to be divided up.

Where someone left town of his own accord and never came back, no person may touch his property as it is unclear what happened to him. *Beit din* can appoint a guardian to look after the estate, however no relative or heir may take it over until his death is confirmed. *Beit din* would allow an *aris* to work the land and take a percent of the profit for himself. The rest would be put aside for when the person returns. Where a person disappears due to other circumstances, for example he was taken captive, *beit din* will appoint a guardian to look after the property.

Where there are a number of heirs, some grown up and some young children, *beit din* will not allow the older children to look after the interest of the minors. Rather they will appoint an independent guardian who will release the assets when the children come of age.