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76-01 147 St | Flushing, NY



(718) 544-5213
JEPQueens@gmail.com

by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

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PARSHAS TOLDOS

In says in the **Torah**, *"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren"* (Bereishis 25:21). **Rabbeinu Bachya** points out that the pasuk seems to be inverted. The pasuk should say that since Rivka could not have children therefore she and Yitzchak davened to Hashem for children. **Rabbeinu Bachya** says that the structure of this pasuk teaches us a very important fundamental of tefillah. Prayer was the cause of the barrenness. In other words, Hashem caused Rivka to be unable to conceive so that both Yitzchak and Rivka would find request a cure.

Hashem wants us to daven because Hashem wants to have a relationship with us. This is what prayer is about. It is about establishing a relationship with

Hashem. Unfortunately, we are not always motivated enough to pursue that relationship unless we have an incentive. Therefore, Hashem set things up in such a way so that man should pray for his needs. Sometimes Hashem sees that this arrangement is not enough to solicit sincere prayer, so Hashem gives us "challenges" to motivate our sincere prayer.

At times, we encounter situations in life that we feel are hopeless. We must remember that the impending challenge that we are facing is not there because Hashem wants to harm us. On the contrary. Often the challenge is only there because Hashem wants to hear our prayers. That is why we should never give up. If the whole reason that we have the challenge is to motivate us to pray, then when we pray in earnest then the challenge will be removed.

The idea that Hashem wants a relationship with us and that is the cause for Hashem giving us a "motivation to pray" should give us new hope for the effectiveness of our prayers.

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren" (Bereishis 25:21)

it necessary to pray to Hashem to

The **Sefas Emes** explains that Hashem gave the ultimate curse to the snake by telling it "You will walk on your stomach, eating dust all the days of your life" (Bereishis

3:14). The **Sefas Emes** asks that on the surface, this curse seemed like a great benefit. The snake's meals would always be available to it. The **Sefas Emes** explains the powerful aspect of this curse. Hashem disassociated Himself permanently from the snake. In essence Hashem was telling the snake that He wanted nothing to do with it. It will always have food. It will never need to ask Hashem for anything therefore it will never have a relationship with Hashem.

This idea helps us understand the blessings that our forefather Yitzchak gave to Yaakov and Esav. **Rashi** says that Yaakov's blessings were conditional. Yaakov had to maintain a close and proper relationship with Hashem. Then, and only then would he receive the brachos. On the other hand, the brachos given to Esav were unconditional, regardless of whether he was righteous or wicked (Bereishis 27:28). The blessings given to Esav were similar to what Hashem told the snake. There is no need to keep in touch.

Hashem creates us with needs because Hashem wants us to keep in touch. In fact, the blessing said after certain foods, blesses Hashem “Who creates many souls and their needs” (borei nefashos rabbos, v’chesronon). The fact that Hashem created us with needs is something to be grateful for. As a result of those needs, we always maintain our connection to our Creator. If we

always had everything and had no needs, then we would never have the need to become close to Hashem. What a loss that would be!

In fact, the generation that was destroyed by the Flood had everything! All their needs were provided for by Hashem. They felt that since they had everything, they no longer needed Hashem. They began serving idols and doing terrible things. That ultimately led to their destruction.

We are so lucky that Hashem, the Creator of the entire universe, wants to have a relationship with us. We must let Hashem know how much we appreciate all that He does for us.

(based on Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Torah.org)

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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