

## This Week's Parshah - Parshas Toldos

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of  
Yonah ben Reuven a"h

a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his *neshamah*

### The View from Above

In this week's *parshah*, the Torah provides a description of Yitzchak having reached an advanced age: "And it was, as Yitzchak grew old, and the vision of his eyes was weak" (*Bereishis 27:1*). Seemingly, his weakened eyesight was a result of the deterioration of old age.

### Malachim (Angels) Don't Need Glasses

However, Rashi explains differently. The Torah's mentioning that he grew old was the setting for the upcoming episode and the reason he prepared to bless his son. But (as the Netziv points out in *Ha'amek Davar*), the *passuk* itself never stated explicitly that his old age was the *cause* of his vision impairment.

So what caused it? Rashi cites the Medrash that this condition was occasioned by an earlier event – the *Akeidah* (Binding of Yitzchak):

"... Yitzchak was bound upon the altar, and his father sought to slaughter him (in fulfillment of Hashem's command, which was a trial for Avraham). At that moment, the Heavens parted, and the ministering angels beheld the scene. They began to cry, and their tears fell into Yitzchak's eyes. That is how his eyesight was dimmed."

Elsewhere (*Mishnas Chayim, parshas Kedoshim, 5770*), we examined this Medrash, focusing on the underlying causes of the angels' tears: why, indeed, did they cry? Surely, as celestial beings privy to the broader picture, they must have known about the magnitude of this event and the tremendous benefit that would accrue to Klal Yisrael for generations to come as a result. Instead of weeping, they should have rejoiced! We now approach the Medrash from a slightly different angle – but may uncover, in the process, further clarification of the issue of the angels' tears.

What is particularly noteworthy in this narrative is the reference to the opening of the skies: "At that moment, *the Heavens parted*, and the ministering angels beheld the scene. They began to cry." Once again, let us recall that we are discussing *malachim*, spiritual beings with assets and abilities far exceeding those of mere mortals. Why, then, was it necessary for the sky to "open" in order for them to witness the proceedings? Couldn't they just as easily have watched the spectacle from their regular station in the celestial spheres? Did they really need the "Heavens to part" in order to get a better view?

We might be able to arrive at an understanding by examining an issue centered on a Mishnah in *Berachos* (9:2,5), which states:

על בשורות הטובות אומר ברוך הטוב והמטיב, ועל שמועות רעות אומר ברוך דין האמת... חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שהוא מברך על הטובה, שנאמר ואתם את ד' אלוקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך... בכל מאדך, בכל מדה ומדה שהוא מודד לך הני מודה לו במאד מאד.

"Upon receiving glad tidings, one recites the blessing of '*Hatov v'hameitiv*' (the One Who is good, and bestows goodness). Upon hearing sad news, he recites '*Baruch Dayan Ha'emes*' (Blessed is the True Judge)... A person is obligated to bless over misfortune, just as he blesses over fortune. As it states (*Devarim 6:5*): 'And you shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of

your *me'od*' (this latter term is usually translated as 'might,' 'wealth,' or 'a lot', but will be expounded upon here based on the sounding of its root-word)... 'All of your *me'od*' (means the following) – through whatever measure (*middah*) Hashem metes out (*moded*) to you (i.e., whatever happens in one's life), you should give thanks (*modeh*) to Him with very much (*me'od*) feeling."

### Here and Hereafter

This Mishnah contains an integral and profound concept – but the way it is conveyed might almost appear contradictory. The basic theme the Mishnah seeks to impart is a message of *emunah u'bitachon* (faith and trust in Hashem). Whatever Hashem does is for our ultimate benefit. Thus, we bless Him upon learning (for example) that a son was born into the family; and even, G-d forbid, upon suffering a loss, we acknowledge that Hashem is the True Judge of what is ultimately in everyone's best interest. But the Mishnah concludes that we must bless Him for misfortune *just as* we bless over fortune! Why, then, are there two separate blessings? If we truly acknowledge that everything is Divinely calculated for a person's maximum overall welfare, shouldn't we bless "*Hatov v'hameitiv*" in *all* situations – good and "bad"?

We can gain insight from the Gemara in Pesachim (50a), which seems to simultaneously concede the point, as well as resolve the issue. The Gemara states that, in essence, this is correct – "*Hatov v'hameitiv*" *should* be recited over everything, good and bad. And so will it be – in the World to Come. In mandating two different blessings, the Mishnah was referring to actual practice here in This World. As mere mortals, our long-range vision here is limited. Thus, we recite "*Hatov v'hameitiv*" over what is *perceptibly* beneficial in the here and now. Regarding tribulation, we suffice with an acknowledgement of faith that deep down we know that Hashem is Merciful and Good and that His acts are precisely and justly calculated. In the World to Come, we will be able to look back on whatever misfortune was suffered and – at that point – recite with a full heart "*Hatov v'hameitiv*" even over (what appeared to be) travails.

R' Shmuel Berenbaum (*cited in Ohel Moshe [R' Moshe Scheinerman], p. 205*) explained the issue of the "parting of the Heavens" in a similar fashion. Of course, the angels could *see* what was happening to Yitzchak from the Heavenly realm without any adjustment for better viewing. But then, of course – from their perch in the celestial heights, where their supernal perception is crystal-clear – they would not shed tears, for they would know without a shadow of a doubt that the event was wholly and completely a happy, beneficial exercise. Thus, in order to elicit crying, it was necessary for Hashem to "part the Heavens," that is, provide them with an "earthly" perception instead of an otherworldly view.

For only in This World is it possible to shed tears. May Hashem help us to merit life in the World to Come, and behold the day when we may look back on everything and pronounce with gratitude and exuberance: "*Hatov v'hameitiv*."