



# The Collective Conversation

Weekly Torah Essays from the  
Young Israel of Scarsdale Community



Sefer Bereshit

Parshat Toldot

Kislev 5782 / November 2021



**JACOB**, We wish you a really **BIG** מזל טוב on the occasion of your Bar Mitzvah. This is a big day, but it's just the beginning!

*Simon and Lauren*

## The Power of Tefillah in Parshat Toldot

By Simon Morgenstern

At the beginning of this week's *Parsha*, *Toldot*, we find a story that seems a bit repetitive. One of the *Imahot*, our Foremother *Rivkah*, is struggling to have a child. This story appears similar to Sara's that we read a few *Parshiot* ago and to the story that we will read about Rachel in a few *Parshiot* from today.

Why is it that God made so many of the *Imahot* unable to have children?

The ר"ן, in *Drashos HaRan Drush 2*, goes further and notes that in last week's *Parsha*, Eliezer was sent by *Avraham* all the way to *Aram Nahrayim* specifically to find a wife for *Yitzchak*. His mission is a success as he finds *Rivkah*, yet after what we assume was a God-guided search, we learn that she was unable to conceive! Why?

*Rabbeinu Bahya* offers a very meaningful answer. He notes that if we look carefully at the *pesukim*, we will find a clue to the solution. The *pasuk* says,

וַיַּעֲמֵר יִצְחָק לַיהוָה לְנִכְחַ אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה הָיָה

*Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren (Bereshit 25:21)*

This *pasuk* first highlights that *Yitzchak* davened to ה', and only after mentions that he did so כִּי עֲקָרָה הָיָה, because she [*Rivkah*] was barren. *Rabbeinu Bahya* explains that the *pasuk* is teaching us that the reason *Rivkah* was barren was so that *Yitzchak* would daven. ה' wanted to hear *Yitzchak Avinu's* davening. ה' wanted to feel closer to *Yitzchak* through his davening, so He sent *Yitzchak* something — a reason — that he knew would motivate him to daven.

Why is it that God made so many of the *Imahot* unable to have children?

*Rabbeinu Bahya* also notes that this is the source for the *Midrash Rabbah* on *Shir HaShirim*, asking why so many of the *Imahot* are barren? The *Midrash* answers because *Hashem* desires and looks forward to the *tefillah* of the *tzadikim*. *Hashem* just wants us to *daven* to Him, to be closer to Him.

We also learn something even more important about the nature of *tefillah*, and its power from this episode, and from the stories of the other *Imahot*. We see that *tefillah* can literally change nature.

*Rivkah* was barren. She was unable to conceive, yet *Yitzchak's* davening to 'ה changed her nature. We learn that if we reach out and talk to 'ה, then he will change nature to help us.

As we move closer now towards Chanukah, this point will become even more apparent. The story of Chanukah provides another example of 'ה's willingness to change nature to help us. Whether it be to win in a battle or to enable us to worship properly in the Temple, the story of Chanukah is a story of *Hashem* responding to our davening.

The lesson is that we should try and internalize this *Koach HaTefilla*, the strength of prayer. Once we understand that 'ה just wants to hear from us and that we have the gift of being able to *daven*, to speak to the Master of the Universe, then when times get tough, we will know exactly where to turn for help.

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**Simon** and Lauren Morgenstern got married about six months ago and currently live in Washington Heights, on the Yeshiva University side. They are both so excited for Jacob to kill it on Shabbos!

*Want to write or dedicate a Parsha essay?*

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**The Collective Conversation** is a project of the Young Israel of Scarsdale and the YIS Living Torah Fund

*Learning and Growing Together as a Community • Learning as Legacy*

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