Parsha Plug: Parshat Toldot

Bereshit 25:19-28

בראשית כה:יט־כח

19 These are the generations of Yitzchak the son of Avraham; Avraham begot Yitzchak. 20 And Yitzchak was forty years old when he took Rivka the daughter of Betuel the Aramean of Padan Aram, the sister of Lavan the Aramean, to himself for a wife. 21 And Yitzchak prayed to the Lord opposite his wife because she was barren, and the Lord accepted his prayer, and Rivka his wife conceived. 22 And the children struggled within her, and she said, "If [it be] so, why am I [like] this?" And she went to inquire of the Lord. 23 And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two kingdoms will separate from your innards, and one kingdom will become mightier than the other kingdom, and the elder will serve the younger". 24 And her days to give birth were completed, and behold, there were twins in her womb. 25 And the first one emerged ruddy; he was completely like a coat of hair, and they named him Esav. 26 And afterwards, his brother emerged, and his hand was grasping Esav's heel, and he named him Yaakov. Now Yitzchak was sixty years old when she gave birth to them. 27 And the youths grew up, and Esav was a man who understood hunting, a man of the field, whereas Yaakov was an innocent man, dwelling in tents. 28 And Yitzchak loved Esav because [his] game was in his mouth, but Rivka loved Yaakov.

(יט) ואֵלּה תּוֹלדֹת יִצְחַק בֵּן־אַבְרַהַם אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֵת־יִצְחַק: (כ) וַיְּהַי בקחתו שׁנַה בַּן־אַרבָּעֵים יצחק אֶת־רִבְקַּה בַּת־בּתוּאל הַאֵרַמִּי מִפַּדַן אַרֶם אַחִוֹת לָבָן הָאַרַמִּי לְוֹ לִאִשָּׁה: (כא) יִצְחַק לַיקוֹק לנַכַח אָשׁתוֹ כִּי עַקרָה הָוא וַיֵּעָתר לוֹ יְלֹּנָק וַתָּהַר רִבְּקָה אשתו: (כב) ויתרצצו הבנים בקרבה ותַאמֵר אִם־כֵּן לָמָה זֶה אַנְכִי וּתְלֵד לדרש אַת־ יְקוַק: (כג) ויאמר יְקוָק לָהֹ שְׁנַי גיים גוֹיִם ב_{בטוב}ר וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים ממעיד יפּרֶדוּ וּלְאֹם מֹלְאֵם יָאֵמֶץ וֹרָב יַעַבָּד צָעִיר: (כד) וַיִּמְלִאָוּ יָטֶּיהָ לָלֶדֶת וֹהַנֵּה תוֹמָם בַּבַטְנָה: (כה) וַיֵּצֶא הַראשון אַדמוֹנִי כּלְוֹ כְּאַדֵּרת שׁעַר ויִּקראָוּ שׁמְוֹ עשַו: (כו) ואַחרי־כֵּן יַצֵא אָחִיו ויַדָו אַדֶּזֶת בַּעֲקַב עַשָּׁו וַיִּקרָא שִׁמְוֹ יַעקָב ויִצַחַק בּן־ שִׁשִּׁים שַׁנַה בַּלֶּדת אתם: (כז) ויִגדלוֹ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהֵי עשַׁו אַישׁ יֹדֶעַ צָיִד אֵישׁ שְּׁרָה ווַעַקב אַישׁ הָם ישֵׁב אהלים: (כח) וַיֶּאהַב יִצְחַק את־עשַו פִּי־צֵּיִד בְּפִיוֹ וְרִבְקָה אֹהֶבֶת אֵת־יַעֵקב:

Masechet Yevamot 64a

מסכת יבמות סד.

Rebbe Yitzchak stated: Yitzchak Avinu was barren; for it is said, "And Yitzchak entreated the Lord opposite his wife". It does not say 'for his wife' but 'opposite'. This teaches that both were barren. If so, "And the Lord accepted his prayer" should have read, "And the Lord accepted their prayer!" Because the prayer of a righteous man the son of a righteous man is not like the prayer of a righteous man the son of a wicked man. Rebbe Yitzchak stated: Why were our ancestors barren? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, longs to hear the prayer of the righteous. Rebbe Yitzchak further stated: Why is the prayer of the righteous compared to a pitchfork? As a pitchfork turns the sheaves of grain from one position to another, so does the prayer of the righteous turn the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, from the attribute of anger to

אמר רבי יצחק: יצחק אבינו עקור היה, שנאמר: ויעתר יצחק לה' לנכח אשתו, על אשתו לא נאמר אלא לנוכח, מלמד ששניהם עקורים היו. א"ה, ויעתר לו - ויעתר להם מיבעי ליה! לפי שאינו דומה תפלת צדיק בן צדיק לתפלת צדיק בן רשע. א"ר יצחק: מפני מה היו אבותינו עקורים? מפני שהקב"ה מתאוה לתפלתן של צדיקים. א"ר יצחק: למה נמשלה תפלתן של צדיקים כעתר? מה עתר זה מהפך התבואה ממקום למקום, כך תפלתן של צדיקים מהפכת מדותיו של הקדוש למדת ממדת רגזנות הוא ברוך

the attribute of mercy.

Midrash Aggadah on Bereshit 25:22

"And the children struggled within her": When she passed a house of idolatry, Esav twitched to go out to it, and as she passed houses of prayer and houses of study, Yaakov wanted to go out to them... "She said, 'If [it be] so, why am I [like] this?"": Rivka said, "If I had known the sadness of pregnancy, I would not have prayed to become pregnant".

מדרש אגדה בראשית כה:כב

ויתרוצצו הבנים בקרבה, היתה עוברת על בית של ע"ז, היה עשו מפרכס לצאת, עוברת על בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות, יעקב רוצה לצאת...ותאמר אם כן למה זה אנכי. אמרה רבקה אילו הייתי יודעת צער העיבור לא הייתי מתפללת על העיבור.

Degel Machaneh Ephraim on Parshat Toldot

"And Yitzchak entreated the Lord opposite his wife... and the Lord accepted his prayer, and Rivka his wife conceived": There are deep things here as great-grandfather [the Baal Shem Tov] said. For everything comes from the Shechina, and a person should understand that all the deficiencies that he has are a deficiency in the Shechina, kivyachol, blessed be He and blessed be His name...Therefore all of a person's prayers must be to fill the deficiency in the Shechina, kivyachol, and thereby his own deficiency will be repaired. This is the meaning of "The tzadikim are the messengers of the Shechina," for the tzadikim understand through their own deficiency that there is a deficiency in the Shechina similar to their own deficiency, and they unify it in perfect unity... This is what is alluded to in the verse, "And Yitzchak entreated the Lord opposite his wife". This means that he understood through his wife who was barren that there is a deficiency...

דגל מחנה אפרים פרשת תולדות

ויעתר יצחק לה' לנוכח אשתו וגו' ויעתר לו ה' ותהר רבקה אשתו: יש בזה דברים עמוקים על דרך שאמר אא"ז נ"ע זללה"ה כי כל הדברים הם באים מהשכינה כביכול וכל החסרונות שיש לאדם יבין שהם חסרון השכינה כביכול ברוך הוא וברוך שמו...לכן כל התפילות צריך להתפלל שתתמלא חסרון השכינה כביכול וממילא יתוקן חסרונו וזהו צדיקייא אינון שלוחי דמטרוניתא כי הצדיקים על ידי חסרונם מבינים שיש חסרון בשכינה דוגמת חסרונם ומיחדים אותה ביחוד גמור...וזהו שמרומז בכתוב ויעתר יצחק לה' לנוכח אשתו פירוש הבין זה על ידי אשתו שאינה מולדת הדוגמא לזה שיש חסרון...

Noam Elimelech on Parshat Toldot

It never entered [Yitzchak's] mind to pray for children in the world in the aforementioned manner; rather, all his intentions and prayers were for the sake of God...This is [the meaning of] "And Yitzchak entreated opposite," that is to say, in opposition to the thought of his wife, for she had in mind the aforementioned thought that children are necessary for the world. This is [the meaning of] "because she was barren", that is to say, she would bring this thought to mind. "And the Lord was entreated of him" means that God, blessed be He,

נועם אלימלך פרשת תולדות

ולא היה עולה על מחשבתו להתפלל על זרע בעולם באופן...רק כל מגמותיו ותפילותיו היה לה' כנ"ל. וזהו ויעתר יצחק לה' לנוכח, רצה לומר זה היה התנגדות למחשבת אשתו שהיא היתה חושבת בכוונה הנזכרת לעיל שהזרע הוא צורך לעולם. וזהו כי עקרה היא, רצה לומר שהיתה מעלה המחשבה זאת על דעתה. ויעתר לו ה'. פירוש שהשם changed Yitzchak's will from its original intention to this intention. The word vay'ater is used in the sense of what Chazal said: "Why are the righteous compared to a pitchfork? Just as a pitchfork turns over the grain on the threshing-floor, etc." You see then that the word "eter" means "turning over". God, blessed be He, forms the will of the tzadik. This is the meaning of "He forms the will of those who revere Him" (Tehilim 145:19), that is to say, that He forms a will for those who revere Him. Then when God changed Yitzchak's will that it be directed toward children, as stated, "And Rivka his wife conceived", then he knew that his wife had conceived. This was not so at the beginning, when he did not know anything about this, because he was entirely conjoined with God.

יתברך הפך את רצון יצחק מכוונתו הראשונה: להכוונה הנזכרת לעיל ויעתר הוא על דרך שאמרו חז"ל (יבמות סד א) למה נמשלו הצדיקים לעתר מה עתר מהפך התבואה בגורן. ונמצא עתר הוא לשון הפך שהשם יתברך עושה רצון להצדיק. וזהו (תהלים קמה, יט) רצון יראיו יעשה, רצה לומר שעושה רצון ליראיו ואז כאשר הפך ה' את רצון יצחק שיהיה כוונתו על הזרע כנ"ל. ותהר רבקה אשתו, רצה לומר אז ידע שהורתה אשתו ולא כן מתחילה לא ידע מזה כלל, כי היה דבוק כולו בה'.

Rav Itamar Eldar, Parshat Toledot: He Fulfills the Desire of Those Who Revere Him

Yitzchak needs his wife Rivka to show him the deficiency of barrenness in this world. Rivka may demonstrate similar ability when she sees what is lacking in Esav, something that Yitzchak is unable to see. In similar fashion, Yaakov needs Rachel, who reminds him with the full force of life, "Give me children, or else I die" (Bereishit 30:1). So too Avraham needs Sarah, who is able to see that "the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, with Yitzchak" (Bereishit 21:10). Our matriarchs taught our patriarchs whose heads were in the heavens to lower their eyes and look at the material world, to recognize its value, to see its limits, to feel the pain of its deficiencies, and to desire that they be filled. This perspective, together with the heavenly help of "He makes the desire of those who revere Him", provides the patriarchs with "knowledge", that is, the connection between this world and the heavenly worlds. This is what fashions the tzadik [who is] the foundation of the world, whose head may be in heaven, but his feet are firmly planted with all his consciousness, thoughts and feelings on the ground.