



Parashat Toldot

5 Kislev 5784 – November 18, 2023

In this week's parashah, we read that Yitzchak's eyesight is fading. In the Gemara, it is written that "one who is blind is considered as dead." There is physical, emotional, spiritual, and religious blindness and I believe this is what the Gemara is referring to. If you've ever played hide and seek with a two or three-year-old they would cover their eyes, and in their minds, if they couldn't see you, it meant you couldn't see them. If they couldn't be seen, no harm could come to them.

A story is told of Reb Nachman; he told this man, "If things get really bad make yourself into nothingness." The man asked him, "How does one make himself into nothingness?" Reb Nachman answered, "Close the mouth and eyes – nothingness." This is good advice for someone who feels overwhelmed by "Evil." One may find their mind to be overrun by chaos, finding it next to impossible to overcome. How does one calm the chaos? Become nothingness and humble oneself before HaShem.

Why did Yitzchak's vision dim? Rashi answers with three reasons:

1. Eisav's wives burned incense sacrifices to idols.
2. When Abraham was to offer Yitzchak as a sacrifice on the altar the Angels wept and their tears fell in his eyes.
3. In order that Ya'akov would receive the blessing.

Reb Nachman is teaching us that as long as there is idolatry and lack of faith in existence, HaShem's kindness decreases and darkness grows. The darkness that Eisav's wives (Yitzchak's daughters-in-law) brought into the family caused dissension. The dissension forced Yitzchak into physical blindness so he could maintain his spiritual visual acuity. The hope that Yitzchak had for Eisav was misplaced and his spiritual vision gives Ya'akov the blessing and the Ultimate Destiny!

Good Shabbos!

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