

## פרשת תולדות

"ויתרצו הבנים בקרבה ותאמר אם כן למה זה אנכי ותלך לדרש את ה' "

“And the children struggled together inside her; and she said if so why me? And she went to inquire to Hashem”

"ויאמר ה' לה שני גיים בבטןך"

“And Hashem said to her, there are two nations in your womb”

After intense praying, Rivkah was finally pregnant. After a while she began to feel unbearable pain and she asked, “why me”? Why did I pray so hard for this?! “She went to ask Hashem”; Rashi explains that she went to the emissary of Hashem; Shem (the son of Noah). Shem informed her that she was having twins, and that they both will prosper into great nations.

Rashi explains that when Rivkah passed a house of Torah, she would feel her baby kicking and trying to “run” out of her womb. When she would pass a house of idol worship, she would also feel kicking and the baby trying to escape. She did not realize that she was having twins, she thought that there was only one baby inside of her! This terrified her; would she be having a schizophrenic child that one day wants to serve Hashem and the next worship idols?! Shem calmed her by explaining that in fact there were *two* children in her womb. Each would take their separate paths, one for the good and one for the bad. This calmed Rivkah to a degree. At least she would have one of her children as a Sadik, as opposed to one very confused child.

Shem told Rivkah that she has two גיים in her womb. The word גיים (nations) is spelled in the Torah without the Vav (instead of גוים it says גיים), the word גיים means literally “proud ones”. Rashi explains that these proud ones refer to Rebbi (Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi or “Rabeinu Hakadosh”) and Antoninus (Marcus Aurelius- the Roman Ceasar). They were going to be the descendants of Yaakov and Eisav and this is what Shem informed Rivkah to calm her.

It is understood why knowing that such a great Sadik as Rebbi (the redactor of the Mishnayot, and to whose credit all of the Torah Shebeal Peh is today) was destined to come from her would gladden Rivkah. What needs to be clarified is; why

would her knowing that Antoninus- a roman Caesar- was destined to come from her make Rivkah feel better?! It seems that when she was informed about *both* she felt better, but why would her knowing of a descendant - that was a non Jewish Roman- calm her?!

To understand this, we need to explain the history and relationship between Rebbi and Antoninus, and the deeper connection between Rebbi and Yaakov Avinu and the connection of Eisav with Antoninus.

Antonenus lived in the same time as Rabeinu Hakadosh, and would sneak out via an underground tunnel to study Torah with Rebbi. This needed to be done in private. It would have been a great disgrace for the Romans to find out that their leader was studying the Jewish religion! He would study with Rebbi daily and even serve him. Eventually Antonenus circumcised himself and converted. Tosafot (Avodah Zarah 10b) mentions the Midrash that says that this relationship began when they were both just infants. The Roman Caesar issued a decree that banned circumcision. Raban Gamliel, the chief Rabbi of the Jews had a baby and circumcised him. There was a Jewish informer that told the Caesar of Raban Gamliel's disobedience of his edict. The Caesar summoned Raban Gamliel and his wife to bring their baby to the palace. Raban Gamliel and his wife arrived at the palace, and waited in the antechamber to be called in by the Caesar. While they were waiting, the wife of the Caesar entered the antechamber, and sensed the distress of the wife of Raban Gamliel. What is the Matter? ; asked the Caesar's wife. The wife of Raban Gamliel explained that they were summoned to the Caesar because they violated his command by circumcising their son, and they were now facing almost certain death! The wife of the Caesar also had an infant, and offered to save Raban Gamliel, his wife, and child by temporarily switching her own baby with theirs! This way, when the Caesar would inspect the baby he will find that it is *not* circumcised! She did this, and when the Caesar found the baby to be uncircumcised he killed the informant and ended up abolishing the decree. These two babies were Rebbi and Antoninus.

Tosafot says "חלב מטמא חלב מטהר"-“the milk of the mother can either bring purity or impurity”. He explains that after the wife of the Caesar switched her baby with Raban Gamliel's wife, the Caesar's baby began to cry. Raban Gamliel's wife nursed the baby in order to soothe him. It was from these pure drops of milk that Antonenus suckled from the mother of Rebbi that enabled him to end up studying Torah and converting. We see how powerful the effects of the milk of a Sadeket! We also see this by Sarah Imenu. When she gave birth to Yishak, there were some people who doubted that it was really her baby. Avraham Avinu advised her to offer to nurse other people's babies, and in this way everyone will see that she indeed bore Yishak and was nursing

him. People brought their children for Sarah to nurse (some came to test her to see if she can indeed nurse and some came to give their child the merit of nursing from the holy Sarah). It says that any child that nursed from Sarah ended up having a descendant that converted to Judaism, and all the converts throughout history come from the children that nursed from the milk of Sarah Imenu. Sarah was nurturing and giving sustenance to the holy spark that was destined to come from these babies.

Rabeinu Hakadosh was deeply connected to Yaakov Avinu. The Ben Ish Chai explains that Rabbi was actually the Gilgul (reincarnation) of Yaakov. This is hinted to in his name ר' יהודה הנשיא, the word נשיא stands for "הוא נצוץ של יעקב אבינו" (he is the spark of Yaakov Avinu).

We find this connection hinted to in several places. For example; Rebbi stated the Mishnayot with the laws of Shema of *Arbit* (מאמתי קורין את שמע בערבין), and Arbit was the Tefilah established by Yaakov Avinu. In addition, we see that the first three Berachot of the Amidah correspond to the three Avot. The first Berachah corresponds to Avraham Avinu, as it ends "Magen Avraham". The second corresponds to Yishak Avinu, it ends with "מחיה המתים" because Yishak was "revived" from the dead upon being taken down from the alter at the time of Akeidat Yishak. The third Berachah corresponds to Yaakov Avinu, it ends with האל הקדוש. Rebbi was also called רבינו הקדוש.

Another example of these connections is that each one of the Avot represented a different aspect of Hashem. Avraham Avinu represents Hesed, Yishak represents Gevurah, and Yaakov represents Tiferet. If we analyze the Pirkei Avot we find that the first mention of Rebbi's name is the beginning of פרק ב' when it says; רבי אומר איזוהי "דרך ישרה שיברור לו האדם? כל שהיא תפארת לעשיה ותפארת לו מן האדם" "Rebbi says; what is the best path a man should choose? Whatever is תפארת (lit; adornment)" etc. We see the connection between the attribute of Yaakov and the advice of Rabeinu Hakadosh.

Antonenus on the other hand, was connected to Eisav Harasha. Eisav was *almost* entirely evil. He did however have a little bit of good in him. We see this in his death, when his head rolled into the Mearat Hamachpela to be buried with the Avot and Imahot. His head represented the little bit of good that he contained, and therefore merited burial in the holy Mearat Hamachpela. The good in Eisav finally materialized in his descendant Antoninus. Antoninus was the Gilgul of Eisav, except in him the *good* of Eisav came out! The Megaleh Amukot says that this is hinted to in the prayer of

Moshe Rabeinu to enter Israel, when he prayed "אעברה נא ואראה" – "may I pass over and see". The words אעברה נא stand for:

"אנטונינוס עשו בימי רבינו הקדוש- ניצוץ אחד" – "Antoninus and Eisav in the time of Rabbi were one spark".

Antonenus actually *served* Rebbe, and in his time the Pasuk was fulfilled; "ורב" "the older one will serve the younger one". The descendant of Eisav-the older son, served the descendant of Yaakov- the younger son.

The Gemarah hints to the eventual emergence of Eisav's good when it says (Niddah 9a) "דם נעקר ונעשה חלב" – "the blood of a woman turns into milk". After a woman gives birth, her blood - that would normally make her impure as a Niddah- turns into milk to nurse the baby. For this reason as long as the mother is nursing she does not become Niddah. [A Niddah waits seven days before she can become pure, so too the Jews waited seven *weeks* as a nation before they received the Torah. After seven weeks the Jews received the Torah on the holiday of Shavuot and on Shavuot we eat *dairy* products to allude to the cessation of Tumah (the Tumah represented by blood) and the purity that we've reached (the purity is represented by the milk -dairy)]. When the Gemarah says that the "blood turns to milk" it is hinting to Eisav (who is synonymous with [Edom] red-blood), turned to milk. The milk is the purity of Antonenus, when the "blood" of Eisav finally turned into the "milk" of Antoninus.

This explains why Rivkah was satisfied with the report that Rabbi and Antoninus would be the descendants of her children. She realized that she would have a wicked child in Eisav. She was worried about this, and was also concerned about the pure milk that she would feed him. The milk of Rivkah was "extra holy". Where was the holiness in Eisav that her milk would help nourish?! When she found out that there would indeed be some good that comes from Eisav, she was happy. Her milk would be used to nourish the spark of goodness that was hidden deep inside of Eisav, and it would help eventually bring out his righteous descendant Antonenus.

There is still one more point that needs to be clarified. At the time Rabbi and Antoninus were switched as infants, Antoninus nursed from the wife of Raban Gamliel as mentioned. However when Rabbi was in the hands of the wife of the Caesar, *he too* became hungry and nursed from her!! Regarding the milk of a non Jewish woman the Halacha states that, strictly speaking it *is* permitted. However it is not suggested because it will create in the baby a tendency to sin, and it "blocks" his heart from being sensitive to the will of Hashem. We see that as an infant, Moshe Rabeinu refused to

nurse from the non Jewish Egyptian women who attempted to nurse him. If this is so, the question is; how could it have transpired that Rebbi should nurse from a non Jew?! How can it be that the Sadik Rabeinu Hakadosh nursed from an impure source?!

One explanation is based upon a Gemarah in Shabbat (53) that tells the story of a righteous man whose wife passed away leaving him with an infant. Having no money to pay for a wet nurse, a miracle occurred and the man grew breasts and was able to nurse his own son! The Rama Mifano explains that the man in this story was a reincarnation of the wife of the Caesar! She merited to nurse Rebbi, and now “came back” and had a miracle occur to her to be able to nurse her own son! This miracle was "measure for measure". She gave the child "miracle" milk that was not tainted, so too later on she experienced a miracle with milk! We see from here that in fact, her milk *did* have purity to it, as she ended up becoming a Jew! This is why he was called Rabeinu *Hakadosh*, - to show that he remained Kadosh even after drinking her milk! This was because the nature of the queen was good, which she displayed by having compassion on Rebbi.

There is another explanation, and in order to understand it, we need to first explain a different episode in the Parasha.

Rivkah instructed her son Yaakov to pretend he was Eisav in order to take the Berachot. She dressed Yaakov in the garments of Eisav in order that Yishak would not feel Yaakov's smooth skin. Why was it necessary for her to dress him Eisav's clothes? Why not simply place something rough on him, or for that matter put any type of clothing that would make his skin feel hairy?

The explanation is that Rivkah knew that Yaakov's trait was Emmet-truth, as it says "תתן אמת ליעקב". Yaakov was so truthful, that there was no way that he would be able to trick his father into giving him the blessings. For this reason Rivkah chose to dress him with the clothes of Eisav. “The clothes make the man”. The clothes of Eisav had an impurity to them. Rivkah purposely dressed Yaakov in them so that - through the impurity of Eisav's clothing - Yaakov would deviate slightly from the Path of perfect Emmet. This of course was necessary in order that Yaakov would receive the blessings that he needed for the entire Jewish nation.

A similar concept existed here. Rabeinu Hakadosh was the first Rabbi to write down the oral Torah. Until his time the laws of the Torah were strictly oral from father to son. It was *not allowed* to be written. Rebbi realized that if he did not compile and write down the oral Torah in his time, the Torah would be forgotten forever! The Pasuk says

"עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך"- "there are times that one must *transgress* for the sake of Hashem". Rabbi realized that he had to be the one to permit the writing of the oral torah in order to preserve it for the future generations. This explains why Hashem allowed Rebbe to drink from the milk of a non Jew as an infant. Like Yaakov, Rebbe needed to be "injected" with something impure to make him deviate slightly, and "transgress". Thus, by drinking the milk of a non Jew, Rabbi was able to "transgress" the law by putting the oral Torah in writing. This too was crucial for the continuation of the Jewish nation. The entire oral Torah today is to the credit of Rebbe!

Rebbi's *mouth* benefited from the milk of the non Jew because it was the תורה שבעל פה-the *oral* Torah that he needed to preserve by transgressing the law that it not be written.

We find however that even though there was good reason for Rebbe to drink from the milk of the Caesar's wife, he still suffered because of it. The Pasuk says; וּלְבָן שָׁנִים מִחֵלֶב" - "his teeth white from milk". We see from this Pasuk that the teeth are the part of the body that benefits most from milk. Rebbe suffered for thirteen years with intense toothaches. This was on account of his holy mouth benefiting from the milk of a non Jew - even though it was for good reason! He suffered for thirteen years corresponding to the thirteen principles of the Torah that the oral Torah is based upon. It was his Tikkun for having written down the oral Torah which came about from drinking the milk of a non Jew.

We see how careful we must be with what we ingest, and how the slightest bit of impure or unkosher food or drink can affect us negatively! It says that if one sees a child that is misbehaving in school, he should check into the food the child is eating! Perhaps he is being fed a non kosher product that "clogs" the spiritual sensitivity of his heart! Unkosher food creates an evil nature inside of a Jew, and because of this we must be vigilant on every level to insure that we maintain the highest level in kosher standards!