
פרשת תולדות

פרק כז פסוק ז

וַעֲשֵׂה-לִי מְטַעְמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּתִי וְהִבִּיאָה לִּי וְאֹכְלָה בְּעֵבֹר תְּבָרְכֵךְ נַפְשִׁי בְּטָרֶם
אָמוֹת:

מושג

שְׁהַמְבָרֵךְ צָרִיךְ לִהְיוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָה (שו"ת מהר"ם סי' שנד).

Translation:

Because one who gives a blessing must be in a state of happiness.

Explanation:

Yitzchok acted as Hashem's messenger in blessing his son. In order to reach the closeness to Hashem required to transfer the Brochos, Yitzchok needed to be in a state of שמחה של מצוה. This is achieved by involving physical pleasure with the fulfillment of a Mitzvah. By asking Eisav to hunt and prepare a meal for him, Yitzchok would not only enjoy the meal, reaching a state of physical pleasure, but the meal would be the result of the Mitzvah of כיבוד אב, resulting in a שמחה של מצוה¹.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The commentaries ask why Yitzchok considered it necessary (בעבור) (בעבור for Eisav to hunt for him before he could bless him.

Additionally, why did Yitzchok say תברכך נפשי, which sounds as if his נפש will bless automatically, and not simply say בעבור אברכך²? Yitzchok realized that in order for the ברכות to be truly effective, he would have to achieve a state of שמחה של מצוה; this would come as a result of Eisav first doing an act of כיבוד אב. Once he reached this state he could act as a conduit (תברכך נפשי) to transfer the ברכות from Hashem to his son³.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: Before beginning any spiritual pursuit (תפילה, ברכות, לימוד תורה) a person should first be in a state of שמחה של מצוה.

Understand: Involving physical enjoyment in the act of a Mitzvah allows one to reach a higher spiritual level and to fulfill the Mitzvah in a more complete fashion.

Think: Careful reading of text, looking for peculiar wording (בעבור) or for active vs. passive tense (שתברכך נפשי) reveals deeper meaning.

1 See notes #1

2 As Rivkah herself says in ואברככה

3 See notes #2

NOTES

1. According to the Maharam, Yitzchok wanted the food in order to achieve a state of שמחה so that he would be able to give a ברכה. What is the connection? Also, if all he wanted was a good meal, why require Eisav to hunt? Why not just enjoy a good meal before blessing Eisav, why involve Eisav⁴?

There is a strong connection between שמחה and רוחניות. We find both נבואה and לימוד תורה are dependant on שמחה. The Gemoroh in (ל:) teaches:

"ושבחתי אני את השמחה" (קהלת ח:טו) שמחה של מצוה⁵ ... ללמדך שאין שכינה שורה לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות ולא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך שיחה ולא מתוך דברים בטלים, אלא מתוך דבר שמחה של מצוה, שנאמר (מלכים ב' ג) ועתה קחו לי מנגן והיה כנגן המנגן ותהי עליו יד ה'.⁶ אמר רב יהודה: וכן לדבר הלכה... כי הא דרבה (כמו שמצינו אצל האמורא רבה), מקמי דפתח להו לרבנן אמר מילתא דבדיחותא (לפני שהתחיל ללמד לתלמידים היה פותח בדברים של צחוק), ובדחי רבנן (והרבנן צחקו), לסוף יתיב באימתא ופתח בשמעתא (ואחר כן ישב באימה ופתח בלימוד). The Gemoroh in (לא.) adds Tefilah to the list of spiritual pursuits dependent on שמחה:

תנו רבנן: אין עומדין להתפלל לא מתוך עצבות, ולא מתוך עצלות, ולא מתוך שחוק, ולא מתוך שיחה, ולא מתוך קלות ראש, ולא מתוך דברים בטלים אלא מתוך שמחה של מצוה.

To reach a spiritual state, whether it be Tefilah or Torah (and certainly נבואה) one must be in a state of שמחה. It is interesting to note that both the Gemoroh in מסכת שבת and in מסכת ברכות go to great lengths to say that the Shechina does not come in a state (or through a state) of sadness or laziness or lightheadedness etc. Why in the world would I think that one could achieve a heightened state of spirituality through these things? What is the point of the Gemoroh that it needs to first invalidate all those moods and then conclude that one must be in a state of שמחה של מצוה?

Whenever we seek out spirituality our physical side gets in the way, seeking to inhibit our connection to Hashem. For example, one might wish to arise early to daven, but his body will try and convince him to stay in bed a bit longer. The question is: How does one remove the roadblock erected by our physical side? Perhaps this is the point of the Gemoroh. The Gemoroh provides two possible approaches to deal with the problem. One is to try and fight or negate the physical. This could be accomplished by entering a morbid state in which one realizes the utter futility of searching for happiness through physical pleasure. Or, on the other end of the spectrum, one might try and remove the opposition of the physical by giving in, by satiating all their physical needs⁷. Therefore, teaches the Gemoroh, one might think that first he should try and negate the physical (עצבות) or to satisfy the physical (קלות ראש וכו') (עצלות). The Gemoroh answers that neither is effective. This is because the physical can be neither negated nor satiated. Rather, concludes the Gemoroh, one must find a way to involve the physical in the spiritual pursuit. This is the idea

4 Rov S.R. Hirsch explains that Yitzcok would not bless Eisav until he saw that Eisav could use his considerable physical skills for the good of mankind. In the previous Pasuk, Yitzchok had told Eisav כלִיךָ, "Lift up your tools". The use of the shoshon teaches us that he did not want Eisav to simply take his tools, but rather to lift up, to raise his tools, his skills, for the betterment of mankind. Only then would Eisav be worthy of a blessing. We might add, that since the blessings were physical in nature, Yitzchok was under the impression that it was Eisav his physical son, who was to deal with the challenges of the physical world. Ideally, Eisav and Yaakov were supposed to be the perfect partnership (hence they were born twins), Yaakov the spiritual force (יושב אהלים) with Eisav (איש שדה) providing the physical needs (הקול קול יעקב והידיים ידי עשיר). It was unthinkable to Yitzcok that Yaakov, his spiritual son, should have to deal with the challenges of materialism. Yitzcok, therefore, had to be confident that Eisav could use these physical blessings for spiritual good, lest the materialism gained through the blessings destroy him. Unfortunately, what Yitzchok did not realize was that Eisav had already become completely physical (הנה אנכי הולך למות) and that Yaakov had to take on Eisav's role (בכורה) of sanctifying the physical world.

5 Rashi gives an example of שמחה של מצוה as one who involves himself in הכלנסת כלה.

6 Rashi explains that Dovid Hamelech using music to bring himself to a state of simcha, that would result in prophecy, was in itself a mitzvah.

7 Reading through the second Perek in ספר קהלת we find the two extreme positions. First Shlomo Hamelech attempts to satisfy his physical urges with 'buying everything in sight' וכל אשר שאָלו עיני לא אצלתִי מהם לא־מַנְעִי אֶת־לְבִי וְשָׁנְאִתִּי אֲנִי אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִי שָׁאֲנִי עֲמַל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ (שם:יח) . וְשָׁנְאִתִּי אֲנִי אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִי שָׁאֲנִי עֲמַל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ (שם:יח) . מְכַל־שִׁמְחָה (קהלת ב:י). Shlomo did both in order to achieve a pure spiritual state, but realized that neither was effective.

behind שמחה של מצוה where I use the physical pleasure involved in dance (הכנסת כלה) or the joy of music (קחו לי מנגן) in order to fulfill a Mitzvah.

Yitzcok is giving the blessings of Avrohom to Eisav/Yaakov. Of course he acts as a messenger of Hashem, for it is Hashem who is the source of blessing⁸. Before he could reach the spiritual state which would allow him to transfer these Brochos he needed to be in a state of שמחה של מצוה, physical happiness that comes either as the result of doing a Mitzvah, or for the sake of Mitzvah. Asking his son to hunt for him and then eating from that meat, would bring him physical happiness from the result of the Mitzvah of כיבוד אב⁹, a true שמחה של מצוה. He combines the physical pleasure of a good steak with the mitzvah, allowing him to achieve the state of שמחה needed to be Hashem's messenger to give the ברכות.

2. When one blesses another it is obvious that the blessing is not coming from the person but rather the person is acting as a messenger from Hashem and simply guiding the blessing to the person he is blessing. Therefore the closer the messenger is to Hashem, the more effective his blessings. According to what we have written above, being in a state of שמחה של מצוה helps a person remove the physical barriers that prevent closeness to Hashem. This effectively allows his spiritual side to closely connect to Hashem and act as a conduit for the ברכות. This is why the Pasuk reads בעבור and not באברכך. Yitzchok could theoretically bless Eisav, אברכך, any time he pleases. However, Yitzchok is saying that Eisav should hunt and prepare a meal so that he may reach a state of שמחה של מצוה, which would allow for him to become a pure conduit, תברכך נפשי, to effectively transfer Hashem's blessings.

3. Questions for further thought:

- a. Other than the examples provided, can you think of other instances where a person entered a state of שמחה before fulfilling a Mitzvah?
- b. What other hints can you find in the Pasuk which show that Yitzchok wanted to be in a state of שמחה?
- c. Why do you think the need for שמחה של מצוה was more important for these ברכות than for other ברכות mentioned in the Torah?

⁸ See note #2

⁹ Accordingly, when Rivkah replaces Eisav with Yaakov, she also must make sure that the meal that Yitzcok eats is the result of a Mitzvah. For this reason she commands Yaakov (לאשר אני מצוה אותך - פסוק ח) himself to go and get her the animal from the flock, thus ensuring that the meal would be the result of the Mitzvah of כיבוד אב.