

בעזהשׁי״ת

# Parshah Insights

Pertinent Inspirational  
Insights on the Parshah

פרשת תולדות

Translated from the outstanding Lev Shomaya Parsha series that contain highlights of the lectures and deroshos given by:

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The purpose of this publication is to make these wonderful Divrei Torah and chizuk available to the English speaking public. We are very grateful to Harav Low shlita for allowing us to glean selected inspiring thoughts.

## פרשת תולדות

הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְתַאָּוֶה לְתַפְלָתוֹ שֶׁל צְדִיקִים

וַיַּעֲתֵר יִצְחָק לֵה' לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ  
כִּי עֲקָרָה הוּא וַיַּעֲתֵר לוֹ ה' וְגו' (בראשית כה כא)

'And Yitzchak davened to Hashem, opposite his wife, because she was barren, and Hashem accepted his tefillos'.

### *The Purpose of Tefillah*

At the beginning of this week's parsha the Torah states that Rivka was barren. She and Yitzchak did not merit bearing children for twenty years. Only after intense tefillos, as Rashi says that וַיַּעֲתֵר is an expression of intense supplication, were they blessed with children.

Rabbeinu Bechayei asks why does it say first that they davened, ויעתר, and then that she was barren, הוּא עֲקָרָה? Should it not have said that Rivka did not have children, and therefore they davened?

He explains that the possuk starts by stating that they davened, because tefillah was the main purpose. The reason for the tefillah was secondary. The primary point here was that Yitzchak and Rivka davened; that was the tachlis. As an aside, the Torah tells us the reason why they davened - because they were barren.

In fact, Hashem made the Imahos suffer infertility **so that they should daven**. As Chazal say, מְפַגְּי מָה נִתְעַקְרוּ הָאִמָּהוֹת, (מדרש רבה מה ד)

מפני שהקב"ה מתאנה לתפלתן של צדיקים Why were the Imahos barren? Because Hashem thirsts for the tefillos of tzaddikim. Tefillah was the purpose, and infertility was the cause which led to the end goal.

Hashem gave us the gift of tefillah as a medium to establish and strengthen our relationship with Him. Tefillah is our way of connecting, and its effects are numerous. Hashem granted tefillah so much power, so that we should be driven to engage in tefillah, and thereby connect to our Creator.

### *The Far-reaching Koach of Tefillah*

Rabbeinu Bechayei discusses the extent of the koach hatefillah וְצָרִיף אֶתָּה לְדַעַת פִּי כֹחַ הַתְּפִלָּה גָּדוֹל אֲפֹלוּ לְשׁוֹנוֹת הַטֶּבֶע (דברים יא ג). He says וְצָרִיף אֶתָּה לְדַעַת פִּי כֹחַ הַתְּפִלָּה גָּדוֹל אֲפֹלוּ לְשׁוֹנוֹת הַטֶּבֶע, and you should know the great power of tefillah, that it can change nature, save from danger and can nullify a bad decree.

Chazal tell us that the tefillos of tzaddikim are compared to an עֵתֶר, a pitchfork. They also explain why. As we see, the possuk uses this expression when stating that Yitzchak davened, וַיַּעֲתֶר יִצְחָק לַיהוָה, as well as later in the possuk when it says that Hashem accepted his tefillos וַיַּעֲתֶר לוֹ ה' . What is the connection between tefillah and an עֵתֶר? מָה עֵתֶר מְהַפֵּכֶת אֶת הַתְּבוּאָה בְּגֵרֹן אֶף תְּפִלְתָּן שֶׁל צְדִיקִים מִהַפְּחַת מִדַּת הַדִּין לְמִדַּת הַרְחָמִים (סוכה יד). Just like a pitchfork turns over and tosses the mounds of wheat from one place to another, so too the tefillos of tzaddikim can reverse strict justice to mercy. Tefillah has the power to completely transform or reverse any situation. Rabbeinu Bechayei quotes possukim which demonstrate that tefillah brings salvation in all these situations.

### *Reform Nature*

We learn the power of tefillah reversing the course of nature from this parshah. The nature of our Imahos was that they could not have children, yet their intense supplications actually changed the reality.

## *Save from Danger*

The power of tefillah saving from danger can be learnt from the verse in Tehillim יִרְדֵי הַיָּם בְּאֲנִיּוֹת וּגּוֹ' וַיֵּאמֶר וַיַּעֲמֵד רוּחַ סְעָרָה וַתְּרוֹמֵם גְּלִיּוֹתֵיהֶם יִרְדֵי הַיָּם בְּאֲנִיּוֹת וּגּוֹ' וַיַּעֲקֹב אֶל ה' בְּצָר לָהֶם they traverse the ocean in ships and storm winds start to blow, and gigantic waves threaten to drown them, and they cry out and daven to Hashem in their distress, and the ocean returns to its peaceful state. So too, the psukim mention other dangerous situations, where one davens to Hashem and is saved from harm. Thus, we understand that tefillah can save from danger.

## *Nullify a Decree*

Finally, we know that tefillah has the power of nullifying a decree, from the episode where Chizkiyahu Hamelech was granted an extra fifteen years of life as a result of his intense tefillah. In fact, we can see that tefillah is even more powerful than nevuah, as Yeshayahu declared that he had gotten a nevuah that the decree of Chizkiyahu's imminent death had been sealed and cannot be changed. He told Chizkiyahu to inform his family that his time to depart from the world has come. However, Chizkiyahu told Yeshayahu, 'do not continue to tell me your nevuah as I was mekabel from my grandfather's house (Dovid Hamelech), אֲפִלּוּ חָרַב חֶדֶה מִנַּחַת עַל צוּאוֹרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם אֵל יִמְנַע עֲצָמוֹ (Dovid Hamelech), אֲפִלּוּ חָרַב חֶדֶה מִנַּחַת עַל צוּאוֹרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם אֵל יִמְנַע עֲצָמוֹ even if a sharp sword is resting on a person's neck, he should not stop to daven. Chizkiyahu then turned to the wall and pleaded to Hashem to grant him more years of life. Through heartfelt tefillah, Chizkiyahu actually managed to nullify the decree. (ברכות י.)

## *Keep Davening*

Rabbi Dovid of Lelov gives us a guide on how we should approach tefillah. He derives this from the words in next week's parsha, Parshas Vayeitza, where the possuk says וַיִּפְגַּע בַּקְּמוּם Yaakov met the place. This was the place where the Beis Hamikdash would later stand. Chazal say that וַיִּפְגַּע בַּקְּמוּם is also an expression of tefillah; this was the place where Yaakov established the tefillah of Maariv. R' Dovid of

Lelov said that **ויפגע** means to meet, to arrive. A person should not cease to daven for something, until he has arrived to what he was davening for. He should continue to beseech Hashem until his tefillos are answered.

Chazal actually instruct us to daven in this fashion. The Midrash (**קנה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקנה** ואתחנן ב) explains the verse in Tehillim **קנה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקנה** (בו יד) hope to Hashem, strengthen your heart and hope to Hashem. The Midrash says, one should daven, and strengthen himself further, and return to daven again, and the time will come when his tefillos will be answered.

The Gemara (ברכות לב:) says **אם ראה אדם שמתפלל ולא נענה יחזור ויתפלל** **אם ראה אדם שמתפלל ולא נענה יחזור ויתפלל** If a person sees that his tefillos are not being answered, he should return to plead again, as Dovid Hamelech says in tehillim twice **שנאמר קנה אל ה' וגו' קנה אל ה' קנה אל ה'** Rashi says one should hope and daven, and strengthen himself further, and if he is not yet answered he should not cease to daven, rather he should return and continue hoping.

Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz gives us another reason why we should continue davening even if we do not see an immediate yeshuah. He says in his sefer Imrei Pinchas that when one continuously davens, and his request is not fulfilled, he should not despair. For one can never know when there is an **עת רצון** and perhaps the moment in which his tefillah will be accepted is already approaching. There are special times of mercy which are not revealed to us. If one continuously davens, it is highly likely that he will daven in a time like that, a time of **עת רצון**, great rachamim, and in that moment his tefillos will finally be answered. (אמרי פנחס פר' בא אות פח)

### *A Promise and a Salvation*

In **פ' וזאת** it says how one can explain the verse in Tehillim **פ' וזאת** grant me my request Hashem because I will plead before you all day. Dovid Hamelech said, I know that

sometimes it takes long till the yeshuah comes because You want to hear my tefillos, however, I ask, grant me my request immediately, and I promise I will continue to daven. הַגִּנִּי is a loshon of a gift. Dovid, asks Hashem for a gift - that He should grant his request speedily - and he promises that אֶלְיָהוּ אֶקְרָא כָּל הַיּוֹם he will continue to be mispalled to Hashem all day, even though his supplications had already been accepted and granted.

### *Tears are like Spears*

The Baal Shem Tov said that lofty כוונות ויחודים are like keys. If it is the right key, it will open the door, but if not, the door will remain shut. However, a broken heart and tears are like an axe that will shatter every door. If a person davens and begs from a place of anguish and pain, his tefillos will surely be heard. The Zohar Hakodosh says on the verse in tehillim (לט יג) אֶל דִּמְעוֹתַי אֵל תִּחַרְשׁ do not silence my tears. One who seeks to enter the palace and begs with tears, not a single gate will stand in his way. For tears are never shed in vain.

### *Our Duty and Ability to Daven for Our Children*

Rebbi Pinchas of Koritz zt"l said that because the Avos and Imahos were Akoros, and therefore they were מְרַבֵּה בְּתַפְלָה, they spent years begging for children, they bequeathed that strength to all the proceeding generations. They left a koach that when a Yid davens to have children, or for the success of their children, the tefillos will have a special koach.

A woman once came to the Maggid of Metzritch, as she heard he had the power to give blessings and daven in order to effect yeshuos. She had not yet merited children, therefore she came to ask him to plead on her behalf. The Rebbe told her that he can bless her and intercede on her behalf, but she has to bring him an exorbitant sum of money in order to facilitate the blessing. She said that she is ready to do anything in order to merit a child, and she will try to raise the

required amount. She attempted to put together this large amount of money, but was only able to raise about half. She went to the Maggid and told him that she had worked extensively to raise the money but only succeeded to raise half the amount. He replied that he would not be able to help her unless she brought the full amount. With immense frustration she retorted that she does not need the Maggid's help. She will go straight to Hashem, for, in any event, only He can truly help her!

When she left, the Maggid told his talmidim that he is sure she will merit a child soon. Indeed, before the year was up, she gave birth to a healthy child. The Maggid explained that when she came to request his blessing, he could see that she was placing too much hope in him. A person must continuously daven for that which he requires, and then, as an additional hishtadlus, he can ask a holy person to intercede on his behalf. However, this woman was coming to the Maggid as her primary hishtadlus, and was not putting enough effort into her own tefillos. Therefore, the Maggid led her to become desperate, and to feel that only her own direct tefillos to Hashem can bring her salvation, so that she should put all her effort into those tefillos, thus meriting a yeshuah. Indeed, her desperate tefillos were accepted.

### *A Constant Obligation*

The של"ה הקדוש (שער האותיות אות דל"ת - דרך ארץ) said that parents are obligated to continuously daven for their children. A tefillah for the success and ehrlichkeit of their children should always be on the lips of parents. They should daven that their children should be lomdei Torah, tzadikim, and have good middos. One should especially focus on this while davening in birchas hatorah וְנִהְיֶה אֲנַחְנוּ וְצִדְקָתֵינוּ וְכוּ and also in אֶהְבֶּה רַבָּה when saying וְתִגְדַּלְנוּ בְּיָמֵינוּ וְכוּ one should daven that all his children, and their offspring for eternity, should stay Torah-true yidden. And finally when saying לִמְעַן לֹא נִיָּגַע in the tefillah of וְבָא לְצִיּוֹן one should also daven for all the generations that will come forth from him.



In Yalkut (שמעוני ח"ב רמז תשכ"ט) the verse in Tehillim' בָּטַח בַּה' (לז ג) is explained with a story of a great Kohen who lived in the time right before the second Beis Hamikdash. He was a great ירא שמים who had ten children. Every single day he davened intensely and begged that none of them should ever stumble upon an unbecoming act chas vesholom. Before the year in which he began to supplicate so intensely was over, Ezra came and brought the Yidden out of Bavel and up to Yerushalyim to build the second Beis Hamikdash. And in this Kohen's lifetime he merited to see his children and grandchildren serving as both, regular Kohanim and Kohanim Gedolim for fifty years, until he passed on. On him it says בָּטַח בַּה' וַעֲשֵׂה טוֹב if one relies on Hashem and pleads to Him constantly, Hashem will grant him the privilege of seeing the fruits of his labor.

### *How to Merit Holy Children*

Rabbi Dovid of Lelov was a great tzaddik and a talmid of the Rebbi R' Elimelech. Once when the Rebbi R' Elimelech and his brother Reb Zusha were on one of their frequent travels, they came to the town of Biala, which was near Lelov. Already then, R' Dovid was known as an extremely lofty child. R' Elimelech and R' Zusha wanted to find out in what merit his parents were blessed with such a holy child. They went to the home of R' Dovid's parents. The father was away and they waited for the mother to come home, for it was supremely important to them to discover in which way one can merit such a child. When she returned, they asked her what great zechus she and her husband have; surely, they must be very lofty ה' עובדי to have merited a son like R' Dovid. She answered that she cannot think of a specific mitzvah that they did, however every week by שלש סעודות when her husband sang the zemiros in which we daven לראות ויזכנו ויזכנו לראות ויזכנו, he would say these words which great intensity. He would plead with tears and extreme desperation, until he would actually pass out and his wife would have to restore him to consciousness. Upon hearing this the holy brothers exclaimed

that now they certainly understand how one merits such holy offspring.

### *A Crucial Tefillah in Disguise*

Rabbi Yissocher Dov of Belz said that when we say in the brocha of מוֹדִים in Shmonei Esrei the words לְךָ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהִלָּתְךָ, in **every generation** we will thank you and declare your praise, it is really a tefillah for Torah-true generations. However, because davening for the integrity of our generations is so crucial, the Anshei Kneses Hagdolah made the tefillah obscure, so that the Satan should not be mekatrig, and the tefillah should be easily accepted. Therefore, it is embedded in the brocha of מוֹדִים, a brocha of gratitude and not of supplication, so that it should hopefully not be inhibited from achieving its crucial purpose. Every person must daven for this with his whole heart; that his children should be upstanding and G-d fearing, and that they should immerse themselves in Torah and mitzvos. R' Yissocher Dov said that even after parents have already married off their children they should still continue to daven for their success. Not even one tefillah should pass without tears and supplications for our children.

### *True Tefillah*

Rebbi Chaim Chaikin, a talmid of the Chofetz Chaim, recalled an incident where a yid came begging the Chofetz Chaim to daven for him that he should be zoche to have children. The Chofetz Chaim asked him if he himself davened for a yeshuah. The man replied in the affirmative, and the Chofetz Chaim then asked him to go and bring his tehillim. The man returned with his tehillim, and the Chofetz Chaim looked at it, slowly turning the pages one by one. He thereafter exclaimed that the pages look clean and new, and there are no signs of tears having been shed on the pages. He then climbed a ladder and removed an old, worn sefer tehillim from the top shelf of the seforim cupboard. He showed it to the petitioner and exclaimed "see these

tear-soaked pages? This Tehillim belonged to my mother. This is called true tefillah!"

There is an amazing story which shows the long-term, sometimes even unintended results of tefillah. R' Yosef Kalisher, from the town of Kalish, merited four children who were great Torah luminaries; two of them produced great Torah works and were well-known Torah giants. One was Rabbi Ariyeh Leib, known as the קצות החושן after his famous work of that name, and the other was Rabbi Yehuda known as the קונטרס הספיקות. The other two brothers, Rabbi Chaim and Rabbi Mordechai, were also great Torah scholars. A story is said about their grandfather's tefillos and how their parents' shidduch came to fruition.

Once, on Shabbos afternoon, R' Yosef's father came into shul and he saw a yid sitting and crying bitterly over his Tehillim, greatly immersed in his supplications. He approached the Yid and told him that he sees he is praying intensely, perhaps there is something can help him with. This person told him that indeed he is davening because unfortunately he struggles greatly with parnassah, and he can barely scrape enough money to sustain his family. He now has an older daughter at home, and because he does not have a dowry for her, he cannot find her a suitable mate. On Shabbos when he comes home and sees his daughter, he becomes terribly distraught, so he does what every yid in distress does. He goes to shul, says Tehillim, and beseeches Hashem to send him his salvation.

R' Yosef's father listened to the man's account, and to the reason for his intense tefillos, and responded that he in fact is in the same predicament. He has an older son at home, called Yosef, whom he too does not have the means to marry off. Perhaps they could make a shidduch between Yosef and this man's daughter and neither side will request financial assistance, and the couple will rely on Hashem to sustain them. And so, the shidduch was confirmed, and R' Yosef Kalisher and the daughter of this man who continuously davened for

her, got married. Together they had four sons, Torah giants, who would bring eternal light to Klal Yisroel.

The Chofetz Chaim would tell his talmidim this story, and he would highlight the fact that surely these four great Torah scholars came as a result of their grandfather's tefillos. He would further point out that the grandfather was not even davening for grandchildren who would be talmidei chachomim. He was in such distress over his financial situation, and his daughter's weak prospects, that he simply pleaded from the depth of his heart that his daughter should merit to marry well. However, because his tefillos were so sincere, they had far greater results. Hashem granted him much more than he had actually davened for. In the merit of these tefillos his daughter had four sons, each of them a Torah giant whose works and influence are known and used until today.

### *The Eternal Impact of Tefillah*

The Gemara (ברכות לא:) discusses many aspects of tefillah that we learn from Chana the mother of Shmuel. When Shmuel was two years old, she brought him along to the Beis Hamikdash to bring korbonos. Shmuel saw that they were looking for a Kohen to sacrifice the korbonos. The holy young child announced שְׁחִיטָה כְּשֶׁרָה בְּזָר it is not necessary to look for a Kohen, because even a זָר, a non-kohen, is allowed to do the slaughter of a sacrificial animal, and only the processes after the slaughter must be done by a kohen. The Kohanim on duty went to ask Eli Hakohen if this is indeed the halacha, and Eli approached the child prodigy and asked him from where he knows this halacha. Shmuel quoted the possukim from which this is derived, and Eli agreed with his interpretation.

However, Eli declared that Shmuel had transgressed the prohibition of וְכֹל הַמּוֹרֶה הֶלְכָה בְּפָנָי רַבּוֹ one who renders a halachic decision in the presence of one's Rabbi, for which one is חַיֵּב מִיתָה. It is therefore decreed that he will have to die. (This whole episode between Eli and Shmuel, including why Shmuel's announcement was considered such

a grave misdeed, is discussed at length by the meforshim. However, the exchange between Eli and Chana here, is what teaches us a powerful lesson about the koach of tefillah). Chana cried out and Eli comforted her, that he will daven for her to have another child, who will be even greater than this one. Chana protested אָל (שמואל א א כו) אָל (שמואל א א כו) אָל (שמואל א א כו), I have davened for this child. I do not want him to die and I should give birth to another child.

The Maharsha explains that a child for which she herself had davened for was more precious to her. A child who was born as a result of her heartfelt tefillos was the greatest prize; she therefore did not want another child, even if he would be greater. Eli accepted her pleas, and Shmuel stayed alive.

Perhaps what Chana meant is that a child who comes as a result of such intense tefillos, the tefillos will sustain him throughout his life. Hence, he has a far heightened chance of meriting greatness, because he is accompanied by the tefillos from before his birth, and these tefillos are the greatest protection and his strongest champion in shamayim.

Like the wife of R' Yosef Kalisher, whose father's intense tefillos accompanied her, and in the merit of these tefillos she later merited four children who were Torah giants. The tefillos we utter on behalf of our children are priceless. Their effects can continue to reap rewards for many years, even for generations!

May we merit to create a lasting connection with our Father in Heaven through sincere tefillah that will bring untold hashpaos. And may our constant heartfelt tefillos for ehriliche, G-d fearing children be accepted on High, and we should indeed be zoche to greet Moshiach surrounded by our children who are a pride to Torah and Klal Yisroel. אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן

גוט שבת







