

פרשת תולדות

Parashas Toldos

יט וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק: כ וַיְהִי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקַחְתּוֹ יט וְאֵלֶּיךָ תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק: כ וַיְהִי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקַחְתּוֹ

רש"י

עשה הקצ"ה, לר קלסטר פניו של יצחק דומה לאברהם, והעידו הכל "לצרכהם הוליד את יצחק". וזהו שפסג פאן: "יצחק בן אברהם" היה, שהרי עדות יש ש"לצרכהם הוליד את יצחק" (ס: תנחומא א; בבא מיעא פו:). (ב) בן ארבעים שנה. שהרי כשצא אברהם מהר המזריה נתצער שנולה רצקה, ויצחק היה בן ל"ז שנה, שהרי זו צפרק משה שרה, ומשולל יצחק עד העקידה שמתה שרה, ל"ז שנה,

(יט) ואלה תולדות יצחק. יעקב ועשו האמורים צפרגה: ואלהם הוליד את יצחק. לאחר שקרא הקדוש ברוך הוא שמו אברהם אחר כך הוליד את יצחק (אגדת בראשית לו). דבר אחר, על ידי שפסג הפסג "יצחק בן אברהם" הוזהק לומר "לצרכהם הוליד את יצחק"; לפי שהיו ליצי הדור אומרים מאבימלך נתעברה שרה, שהרי כמה שנים שהתה עם אברהם ולא נתעברה הימנו; מה

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19. ואלה תולדות יצחק — AND THESE ARE THE OFFSPRING OF YITZCHAK.

Our verse does not write who these offspring of Yitzchak were. Therefore Rashi explains: — The verse is referring to Yitzchak's children, **Yaakov and Eisav, who are mentioned later in this passage** (vv. 25-26).^[1]

□ אברהם הוליד את יצחק — YITZCHAK SON OF AVRAHAM, AVRAHAM FATHERED YITZCHAK.

Once the verse wrote that Yitzchak was the son of Avraham, what is it adding by repeating that Avraham fathered Yitzchak? Rashi provides two explanations:

— לאחר שקרא הקדוש ברוך הוא שמו אברהם — The phrase *Avraham fathered Yitzchak* emphasizes that this happened **after the Holy One, blessed is He**, changed his name from Avram and **named him Avraham** (see 17:5 above); — אחר כך הוליד את יצחק — **only after that did he father Yitzchak**^[2] (*Aggadas Bereishis* §37).

— **Alternatively,** — על ידי שכתב הכתוב "יצחק בן אברהם" — **since the verse wrote YITZCHAK SON OF AVRAHAM,** — הוזהק לומר "אברהם הוליד את יצחק" — **it was compelled to say that it was undeniable that AVRAHAM FATHERED YITZCHAK.** — לפי שהיו ליצי הדור אומרים מאבימלך נתעברה שרה — **For the cynics of that generation were saying that Sarah conceived her child from Avimelech the king of the Pelishtim, and not from Avraham,** — שרה שנים שהתה עם אברהם ולא נתעברה הימנו — **since [Sarah] had spent many years with her husband Avraham and did not conceive from him,** yet she conceived immediately after Avimelech took her.^[3] — מה עשה הקדוש ברוך הוא — **What did the Holy One, blessed**

1. Although the verse begins, *These are the offspring of Yitzchak*, it explains the sequence of events that led to the birth of these offspring before identifying them (*Ramban; Gur Aryeh*).

[Because of this interruption between our verse and the mention of Yitzchak's children, some translate the word תולדות in our verse as "chronicles," similar to the verse, מה ילד יום, *what a day may bring* (*Mishlei* 27:1); consequently, our verse would mean, "these are the events that happened with Yitzchak" (see *Sforno*; see similarly, *Ibn Ezra* to 6:9 above and 37:1 below). However, the root ילד, whose literal meaning is "child" or "birth," can only be rendered as an event when used in relation to time, for in that context the chronicles can be described as "children" of time. Thus, had the intended translation of תולדות been "chronicles," the verse should have written ואלה תולדות ימי יצחק, *These are the toldos of Yitzchak's days*. Since it actually says ואלה תולדות יצחק,

associating the תולדות with Yitzchak himself, תולדות must be translated as "offspring," which Rashi here explains refers to Yaakov and Eisav, who are mentioned later in the passage (*Mizrachi*; see also *Sefer Zikaron*).]

2. As Rashi explained above (15:5), it was written in the stars that "Avram" would not have children. By changing his name to Avraham, this fate would be avoided and he would be able to give birth.

3. Following the destruction of Sodom, Avraham and Sarah relocated to the land of Pelishtim (Rashi to 20:1). Upon their arrival in Gerar, the capital of the land of Pelishtim, Sarah was taken by Avimelech, the king of Pelishtim. Shortly after Avimelech released Sarah, she conceived and gave birth to Yitzchak (see Rashi to 21:1). Although Avimelech did not even touch Sarah (20:6), there were people who spread malicious rumors that Avimelech was Yitzchak's father. See *Insight*.

⚡ **The Cynical Allegations** Rashi above (17:16, 21:7) cited the Gemara's teaching (*Bava Metzia* 87a) that cynics initially claimed that Sarah had not given birth at all; rather, Avraham and Sarah brought home an

¹⁹ And these are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham — Avraham fathered Yitzchak. ²⁰ Yitzchak was forty years old when he took

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is He, do to dispel these rumors? צָר קִלְסֵתָּר פָּנָיו שֶׁל יִצְחָק דּוֹמָה לְאַבְרָהָם — He designed the features of Yitzchak's face to be strikingly similar to those of Avraham, וְהָעִירוּ הַכֹּל "אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק" — and thus all who laid eyes on Yitzchak testified that AVRAHAM FATHERED YITZCHAK. וְזוֹהוּ שֶׁכָּתֹב בָּאֵן — This is the meaning of what is written here, Yitzchak son of Avraham, Avraham fathered Yitzchak. The verse is saying: יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם הָיָה — Yitzchak was clearly the son of Avraham, שְׁהָרִי עֲדוּת יֵשׁ — for there is testimony, from Yitzchak's appearance, that Avraham fathered Yitzchak^[4] (ibid.; *Tanchuma* §1; *Bava Metzia* 87a).

20. בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה — YITZCHAK WAS FORTY YEARS OLD.

Why did Yitzchak wait until he was forty years old to get married? Rashi explains:^[5]
 שְׁהָרִי כִשְׁבָא אַבְרָהָם מֵהַר הַמּוֹרִיָּה נִתְבַּשֵּׁר שְׁנוּלָהּ רִבְקָה — The reason Yitzchak did not marry earlier is because only when Avraham came back from Mount Moriah, following the *Akeidah*, was he informed that Rivkah, Yitzchak's ordained wife, had been born,^[6] — וְיִצְחָק הָיָה בֶּן לִ"ז שָׁנָה — and at that point Yitzchak was already 37 years old. שְׁהָרִי בּוּ בִפְרָק מֵתָה שָׂרָה — How is this calculated? For at that time, immediately after the *Akeidah*, Sarah died,^[7] — וּמִשְׁנוּלָהּ יִצְחָק עַד הָעֵקֶידָה שָׁמָּה שָׂרָה לִ"ז שָׁנָה — and

4. [See *Ramban* for another explanation why the Torah repeats *Avraham fathered Yitzchak*.]

According to the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 87a) cited in the Insight, Yitzchak was initially born without a particularly striking resemblance to Avraham, but after the rumors denying this miraculous event were spread, Hashem changed Yitzchak's features so that he looked just like his father, thus quieting the unfounded gossip. *Midrash Tanchuma*, however, indicates that Hashem performed this miracle while Yitzchak was still unborn. See *Mizrachi* here, and *Maharsha* to *Bava Metzia* there for discussion; see also Rashi above, 21:2 ד"ה לוקוניו.

5. It cannot be that the purpose of the calculation Rashi is about to present is to *prove* that Yitzchak was

forty when he got married, for once the verse says that Yitzchak was forty, there is no need to bring proof to that fact. Rather, Rashi is coming to demonstrate *why* Yitzchak waited until he was forty before getting married (*Mizrachi*; see also *Gur Aryeh*).

6. Avraham wanted Yitzchak to marry only someone from within his own family (see above, 24:3-4). Until that point Avraham had not yet identified a girl in his family worthy of becoming Yitzchak's wife. When he returned from the *Akeidah*, Hashem informed him that Yitzchak's preordained wife had been born (see above, 22:20, with Rashi).

7. From the shock of hearing that her son had almost been slaughtered (Rashi to 23:2).

abandoned infant and called it their own child. Hashem debunked this cynical claim, for when Avraham made a feast in honor of Yitzchak, the noblewomen all brought their children without their wetnurses, and Sarah miraculously nursed them all — which proved that Sarah had in fact given birth. The Gemara there says that afterward the cynics claimed that although the child was indeed Sarah's, she had conceived from Avimelech. Now, the birth of Yitzchak was in any event a great miracle, since Sarah was ninety years old at the time. Moreover, although she and Avraham had been married for many years without a child, clearly it was not Avraham who was the physical reason for the couple's childlessness, because Avraham himself already had a son (Yishmael, from Hagar). Obviously, Sarah was the one who had been infertile. Since Hashem had obviously performed a miracle for Sarah, any logical person would realize that she had conceived the miracle-child by her righteous husband. Why did the cynics persist in spreading an additional malicious claim that had so little merit?

Some suggest that it did not bother those who argued this to admit that a miracle had occurred. But to admit that the miracle happened to Avraham — *that* bothered them. This is because Avraham stood in opposition to the entire world, preaching loudly and forcefully against their entire ideology, as our Sages say (*Bereishis Rabbah* 42:8), *Why was he called Avram the Ivri (אִבְרָם הָעִבְרִי)? Because the entire world stood on one side and he stood on the other side (עָבַר אֲחֵר)*, espousing monotheism and refuting the world's belief in idols (see also *Rambam, Hil. Avodah Zarah* 1:3). A stupendous miracle, of having Sarah conceive from Avraham after so many years of childlessness, would serve as a major support to Avraham's ideology. In desperation, the cynics therefore raised even the most ridiculous argument. Yes, a miracle had occurred, but not to Avraham... (*Shiurei Rabbeinu Meir HaLevi [Soloveitchik]*, citing his father, the *Brisker Rav*).

ית רבקה בת בתואל ארמא מפרן
ארם אחתה דלכין ארמא לה לאנתו:
כא וצלי יצחק קדם יי לקבל אתה
ארי עקרא היא וקבל צלותה יי

את רבקה בת בתואל הארמי מפרן ארם אחות
לכין הארמי לו לאשה: כא ויעתר יצחק ליהוה
לנכח אשתו כי עקרה הוא ויעתר לו יהוה

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ארם. על שם ששני חרם היו: חרם נהרם וחרם
לוצה, קורא אותו "פדן", לשון "למד בקר" (שמואל א
י"א, ט), פרגומו "פדן תורין"; ויש פותרין "פדן חרם"
כמו שדה חרם, שצלושן ישמעאל קורין לשדה פדן:
(כא) ויעתר. הרצה והפזיר צתפלה: ויעתר לו.
נתפזר ונתפזים ונתפסה לו. ואומר חני, כל לשון עתר
לשון הפזרה ורצוי הוא, וכן "ועתר ענן הקטרת" (יחזקאל
ח, יא), מרצית ופזית העשן, וכן "והעפרתם עלי דצריכם"
(שם לה, יג), וכן "ונעפרות נשיות שונא" (משלי כז, ו),

פי צת תשעים היתה פשוט יצחק, וצת קכ"ז כשמתה
— שנאמר (כג, ה) "ויהיו חיי שרה וגו'" הרי ליצחק
ל"ז שנים, וצו צפרק נולדה רבקה; המסין לה עד
שתהא ראויה לציאה שלוש שנים (נדה מד:); ונשאה (סדר
עולם פרק א'; ילקוט שמעוני קי; מסכת סופרים כא, ט): בת
בתואל מפרן ארם אחות לכין. וכי עדיין לא נקפצ
שהיא צת צתואל ואחות לכין ומפרן חרם, חלל להגיד
שצחה, שהיתה צת רשע ואחות רשע ומקומה אנשי
רשע ולא למדה ממעשיהם (בראשית רבה סג, ד: מפרן

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בי בת תשעים — from Yitzchak's birth until the Akeidah, when Sarah died, 37 years had elapsed. For [Sarah] was 90 years old when Yitzchak was born (as stated above, 17:17), — וצת קכ"ז בשמתה שנאמר "ויהיו חיי שרה וגו'" — and 127 years old when she died, as it says (above, 23:1), *Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years.* הרי ליצחק ל"ז — Thus, at the time of Sarah's death and the Akeidah, Yitzchak was 37 years old. ובו צפרק — And at that point Rivkah was born, as noted above. המסין לה עד שתהא ראויה לציאה — [Yitzchak] then waited three years until she would be fit for marital relations^[8] — שלוש שנים — and married her, when he was 40^[9] (Seder Olam Ch. 1; Yalkut Shimoni §110; Maseches Soferim 21:9).

□ DAUGHTER OF BESUEL ... FROM PADDAN-ARAM, SISTER OF LAVAN. — בת בתואל מפרן ארם אחות לכין

Rashi analyzes the need for the verse to tell us the details of Rivkah's background here:

Why does our verse identify Rivkah's father, brother, and place of origin? — וכי עדיין לא נכתב שהיא בת בתואל ואחות לכין ומפרן ארם — Rather, our verse repeats these facts to proclaim her praise, — שהיתה בת רשע ואחות רשע ומקומה אנשי רשע

8. The Gemara states (*Niddah* 44b) that a girl becomes fit for marital relations at age three. See Insight.

9. This Rashi is consistent with Rashi below, v. 26, that Rivkah was three years old when Yitzchak married her, and with Rashi above, 21:34, from which it emerges that Yitzchak was 37 at the time of the Akeidah. However, *Tosafos* to *Yevamos* (61b ד"ה וכן) note that not everyone agrees that Rivkah was three at the time that Yitzchak

married her, as others say that she was fourteen years of age. That opinion maintains either that Rivkah was born eleven years before the Akeidah (*Daas Zekeinim* here), or else that Rivkah was born at the time of the Akeidah, but the Akeidah occurred when Yitzchak was only 26, and 11 years elapsed after the Akeidah until Sarah died (see *Hagahos HaGra* to *Seder Olam* Ch. 1, and *Maharzu* to *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:8).

§ Rivkah's Young Marriage In numerous places the Gemara cautions against marrying girls when they are too young (see *Niddah* 13b and *Kiddushin* 41a). Consequently, many commentators wonder why Yitzchak would marry Rivkah at such a young age and not wait for her to mature. Some argue that despite Rivkah's young age, her body and mind were as developed as those of a young woman, whom it would be appropriate to marry (*Be'er BaSadeh*). [That she was more advanced than the average three-year-old is plainly evident from Eliezer's interaction with her at the well (above, Ch. 24).] Others suggest that Yitzchak was concerned that if Rivkah were to stay at home any longer, she would be influenced by her wicked environment. Therefore, at the first possible opportunity he married her (*Eretz Chemdah* [*Malbim*]). For further analysis see *Mizrachi*, *Gur Aryeh*, *Nachalas Yaakov*.

Rivkah, daughter of Besuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram, sister of Lavan the Aramean, as a wife for himself. ²¹ *Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren. And Hashem was prevailed upon by him,*

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although she was the daughter of a wicked person (Besuel), and the sister of a wicked person (Lavan), and her hometown (Paddan-aram) was a place of wicked people, ולא למדה ממעשיהם — still, she did not learn from their wicked deeds^[10] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:4).

□ מפדן ארם — FROM PADDAN-ARAM.

The Torah previously stated (24:10) that Rivkah came from Aram-naharayim. Why then does our verse say that she was from Paddan-aram? Rashi explains:

Because there were two neighboring countries called “Aram,” Aram-naharayim and Aram-tzovah (see *Tehillim* 60:2), “קורא אותו “פדן” — [our verse] calls [the place] “Paddan”; לשון “צמד בקר” — for the word פדן has the same meaning as the word צמד in the phrase (*I Shmuel* 11:7), a “צמד” of oxen, “פדן תורין” — which *Targum Yonasan* translates as, a pair (פדן) of oxen. Paddan-aram thus means “pair of Arams.” Rivkah came from the specific location Aram-naharayim, which was part of the larger region called Paddan-aram.^[11]

Rashi presents an alternative way to understand the phrase פדן ארם:

But some interpret “פדן ארם” as meaning the field of Aram, which is how this place is referred to in *Hoshea* 12:13.^[12] שבלשון ישמעאל קורין לשדה פדן — It is called Paddan-aram because in the language of the Yishmaelites, i.e., Arabic, they call a field “paddan.”

21. ויעתר — “VAYETAR” YITZCHAK.

Rashi explains the meaning of the word ויעתר:

He prayed profusely and strongly; i.e., he entreated Hashem.

□ ויעתר לו — “VAYEFASER LO.”

ויעתר is the passive form of ויעתר. Rashi explains the word’s meaning in our verse:

[Hashem] was prevailed upon, appeased, and persuaded by [Yitzchak] through his abundant prayers.

Having explained the meaning of the terms ויעתר and ויעתר לו in our verse, saying that they both refer to Yitzchak’s prayers, Rashi explains the basic meaning of the root עתר:

I say that every form of the root “עתר” is an expression of urging or abundance, not necessarily related to prayer. “וכן ויעתר ענן הקטרת” — We find a similar expression in the verse (*Yechezkel* 8:11), An abundant cloud of incense, מרבית עלית העשן — in which עתר refers to an abundance of rising smoke. “וכן והעתרתם עלי דבריכם” — Similarly the verse states (ibid. 35:13), you have spoken excessively (העתרתם) against Me; “וכן וינערתו” — and similarly it states (*Mishlei* 27:6), excessive (נערתו) are the kisses of the enemy,

10. Since we know that Rivkah was righteous, we could conclude on our own that she had withstood the influence of the wicked environment in which she was raised. Nevertheless our verse repeats all the details of her background to highlight this admirable virtue (*Mizrachi*).

[A further way the Torah calls attention to this virtue is by its unnecessary identification of her father and brother as Besuel the Aramean and Lavan the Aramean. Since they lived in Paddan-aram, as the verse states, obviously they were Arameans. Rather, the Torah means to highlight that Rivkah’s relatives were wicked (ארמי, Aramean, is similar to רמאי, deceiver), yet she was not negatively influenced by them

(*Nachalas Yaakov* and *Maskil LeDavid*, from *Bereishis Rabbah* 63:4; *Emes LeYaakov*.)

11. *Radak* notes that there were other places called “Aram” as well, e.g., Aram Damesek and Aram Beis Rechov (*II Shmuel* 10:6). This area was called “Paddan” Aram since these two lands were close to each other and were seen as a pair.

12. The verse in *Hoshea* mentions the story appearing at the end of our *parashah* (28:7) in which Yaakov escaped Eisav’s anger by fleeing to Paddan-aram, where Lavan lived. The verse in *Hoshea* reads, ויברח יעקב שדה, Yaakov fled to the field of Aram, substituting פדן שדה (*Mizrachi*).

וַתַּהַר רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: כב וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים רַבְקָה וַעֲדִיאת בְּנֵיהָ בְּמִעָהּ
בְּקֶרְבָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה אֲנִי וַתֹּאמֶר אִם כֵּן לָמָּה דָּגַן אֲנִי

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דומות למרובות והנם למשא, אנקריישן"ט צלע": לנכח אשתו. זה עומד בצוית זו ומתפלל וזו עומדת בצוית זו ומתפללת (בראשית רבה טז ה, ועיין חטמית כג): ויעתר לו. "לו" ולא לה, שאין דומה תפלת לדיק בן רשע לתפלת לדיק בן צדיק, לפיכך "לו" ולא לה (יבמות טז): (כב) ויתרצצו. ° על כרחך המקרא הזה חומר דרשני, שסמך מה היא רליה ז', וקצ

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— which means that **they seem like many and are a burden** upon the one kissed, because he despises them.^[13] In Old French, עתר is *engraisserie*.^[14]

□ לִנְכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ — *OPPOSITE HIS WIFE*.

The verse cannot mean that Yitzchak prayed while facing Rivkah, as that is not the normal way to pray.^[15] Rashi explains what it does mean:

— וְזוֹ עוֹמֶדֶת בְּצוּיָתָהּ וְזוֹ עוֹמֶדֶת בְּצוּיָתָהּ — [Yitzchak] stood in one corner and prayed while [Rivkah] stood in another corner opposite him and prayed. Thus, Yitzchak stood in prayer before Hashem "opposite" the position in which Rivkah stood in prayer (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:5; see *Taanis* 23b).

□ וַיַּעֲתֶר לוֹ — *AND [HASHEM] WAS PREVAILED UPON BY HIM*.

As Rashi has just explained, both Yitzchak and Rivkah prayed for a child. Yet our verse does not write "and He was prevailed upon by them," Rashi explains:

שֶׁאֵין דּוּמָה תְּפִלָּה — Hashem was prevailed upon only "by him," and not by him and her; — "לו" ולא לה — צָדִיק בֶּן רָשָׁע לְתִפְלַת צָדִיק בֶּן צָדִיק — this is because there is no comparison between the prayer of a righteous person who is the child of a wicked person and the prayer of a righteous person who is the child of a righteous person. The prayer of the latter is more effective. Rivkah was truly righteous, but she was a child of the wicked Besuel; Yitzchak, however, was not only righteous himself, but also a child of the righteous Avraham. — לְפִיכָךְ "לו" ולא לה — Therefore, Hashem was specifically prevailed upon "by him," and not by her^[16] (*Yevamos* 64a).

13. Thus, when Rashi above stated that וַיַּעֲתֶר means Yitzchak prayed abundantly, he did not mean that praying is the *definition* of the word, because as he notes here, the word denotes urging or abundance. Rather, in the context of our verse the urging took the form of persistent prayer (*Mizrachi*).

14. In Modern French this means to fatten, cram;

i.e., fill to excess.

15. One should pray נִכַּח פְּנֵי ה', toward the "Face" of Hashem (*Eichah* 2:19), not facing a human being (*Mizrachi*).

16. Yitzchak's prayer was accepted more swiftly than Rivkah's. See Insight.

☞ **The Prayers of the Righteous** Righteous people who have wicked parents typically overcome unique challenges in their paths of growth, and in this sense are greater than those who are righteous and the children of righteous parents. [Indeed, Rashi explained the previous verse as highlighting this point in regard to Rivkah herself, who was unaffected by the negative influences of her family and homeland.] Many therefore wonder why the prayers of a צָדִיק בֶּן צָדִיק are more likely to be answered than the prayers of a רָשָׁע בֶּן צָדִיק.

Some suggest that the prayers of a צָדִיק בֶּן צָדִיק are more effective specifically in regard to barrenness (*Maharsha* to *Yevamos* 64a). This is because grandchildren are considered like one's own children. Therefore, when a righteous person prays for a child, he is praying not only for himself to be blessed with a child, but his prayers are for his parents as well — since his children will also be considered *their* children. Accordingly, when a righteous person who is the child of a righteous person prays for children, it is possible that even if he himself would not deserve to have his prayers answered, the merit of his righteous parents can cause his request to be granted, and thus he will be blessed with a child. However, a righteous person whose parents are wicked does

and his wife Rivkah became pregnant.

²² The children agitated within her, and she said, “If so, why is it that I am?”

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22. וַיִּתְרָצוּ — “VAYISROTZETZU.”

Understood simply, the phrase וַיִּתְרָצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ means that the children were crushing, i.e., applying pressure, inside of her. Rashi notes a difficulty with this interpretation, and cites two Midrashic approaches:

עַל כִּרְחֹף הַמִּקְרָא הָיָה אוֹמֵר דְּרָשְׁנִי — Although we generally give precedence to *peshat*, **you must admit that this verse cries out for a Midrashic explanation.** שָׁשְׁתָּם מָה הִיא רִצִּיצָהּ וּ — For it leaves unexplained what this “רִצִּיצָהּ” was that Rivkah experienced, which implies that no explanation is necessary, and it was the usual type of discomfort that all pregnant women feel. וְכֵתֵב אִם כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה — **Yet [the verse] writes** that because of this רִצִּיצָהּ Rivkah complained, “*IF SO, WHY IS IT THAT I AM,*” meaning (as will be explained below), “Why do I want to be pregnant?” — which indicates that her pregnancy was unusually challenging.^[17] This would not be the case if רִצִּיצָהּ refers to the typical internal pressure of pregnancy. What, then, does the verse mean?

רַבּוֹתֵינוּ דְּרָשׁוּהוּ לְשׁוֹן רִצִּיצָה — Our Sages therefore expounded [the word וַיִּתְרָצוּ] Midrashically, as an expression of “רִצִּיצָה”, running. כְּשֶׁהִיָּתָה עוֹבֶרֶת עַל פֶּתְחֵי הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁל שֵׁם וְעֵיבֶר — When [Rivkah] would pass by the entrances to the halls of Torah study of Shem and Eiver,^[18] יַעֲקֹב רָץ וּמִפְרָס לָצֵאת — Yaakov would run and agitate to come out, — and when she would pass by the entrances of houses of idol worship, Eisav would run and agitate to come out.^[19] The double letter *tzaddi* in the word וַיִּתְרָצוּ conveys that there were two conflicting “runnings,” and that is what caused Rivkah special anguish (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:6).

דָּבָר אֲחֵר — Alternatively, the word וַיִּתְרָצוּ in fact means crushing, מִתְרוֹצְצִים זֶה עִם זֶה וּמִרִיבִים בְּנִחָלָת — but the intent here is that [Yaakov and Eisav] were crushing (i.e., struggling with) each other and battling over the inheritance of two worlds, this world and the next^[20] (*Yalkut Shimoni* §110). According to both approaches, the verse is describing the extraordinary level of pain Rivkah experienced in this pregnancy, far beyond the regular pain and discomfort of carrying twins.

□ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם כֵּן — AND SHE SAID, “IF SO,”

גְּדוֹל צַעַר הָעֵבֶר — that is, if the pain of this pregnancy is so great,

□ לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי — “WHY IS IT THAT I AM?”

Rashi explains the meaning of this incomplete sentence:

מִתְאַוֶּה וּמִתְפַּלֵּל עַל הָרִיוּן — Why is it that I am so desirous, and praying so profusely, for pregnancy?

17. *Mizrachi*; cf. *Gur Aryeh*.

18. Shem and Eiver each maintained a yeshivah (see Rashi to v. 27 below).

19. Yaakov, being holy from conception, had a magnetic attraction toward houses of Torah; Eisav, being evil from

conception, had a magnetic attraction toward houses of idolatry. Yaakov’s internal compass pointed toward good whereas Eisav’s internal compass pointed toward evil (*R’ Yerucham Levovitz, Daas Torah*; see *Gur Aryeh*).

20. Each one said, “I will inherit both worlds” (*Sefer*

not have this benefit, as only his own merits can assist him (*Ben Yehoyada* there).

R’ Eliyahu Dessler (*Michtav MeEliyahu*, Vol. 3, pp. 124-125) cites another approach to this question, which is in fact a guiding principle in all service of Hashem. While it is certainly true that one born in a wicked environment must overcome challenges that others do not, still there is a certain freshness and excitement that comes from being the first to blaze a new path in the light of one’s recognition of the truth. We find this excitement in converts in the beginning of their path in Judaism. By contrast, one who is born into a righteous environment is missing this motivating factor, and can easily coast along on his already righteous path with little internal effort on his part. Yitzchak was born to the righteous Avraham and was brought up with the proper worldview, not needing to arrive at it on his own. Despite this, he worked to create his own genuine relationship to Hashem, his own path in His service; and having forged a unique, personal path in Hashem’s service, Yitzchak retained his freshness and zeal throughout. This is the special quality of one who is the son of a righteous person and despite this, becomes a righteous person in his own right!

וּתְלַךְ לְדָרֵשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה: ❖ כַּג וַיֹּאמֶר וַאֲזַלְתָּ לְמַתְבַּע אוֹלְפָן מִן
יְהוָה לָהּ שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם [גִּיִּים ב'] בְּבִטְנָהּ קִדְּם יְיָ: כַּג וַאֲמַר יְיָ לֵאמֹר
וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמַּעֲיָן יִפְרְדּוּ וְלֹאֵם מִלְכּוֹן מִמַּעֲיָבִי יִתְפָּרֶשֶׁן וּמִלְכּוֹ

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וּתְלַךְ לְדָרֵשׁ. לְבֵית מִדְרָשׁוֹ שֶׁל שֵׁם (תַּרְגוּם יוֹנָתָן): לְדָרֵשׁ
אֶת ה' שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם לָהּ מֵהָ תְּהֵא בְּסוּפָה: (כַּג) וַיֹּאמֶר ה'
לָהּ. עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, לְשֵׁם נֶאֱמַר צְרִיחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהוּא חֶמֶר
לָהּ (בְּרֵאשִׁית רַבָּה שֵׁם ז': שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם בְּבִטְנָהּ. "גִּיִּים" כְּתִיב,

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□ **וּתְלַךְ לְדָרֵשׁ — SO SHE WENT TO INQUIRE.**

If the verse means that Rivkah asked Hashem directly, through prophecy, it should have said וַתִּדְרֹשׁ וְיֹאמֶר ה', *she inquired of Hashem*. Why does the verse say that *she "went" to inquire*? Rashi explains:
לְבֵית מִדְרָשׁוֹ שֶׁל שֵׁם — She went to the study hall of the Prophet Shem to ask him to inquire of Hashem on her behalf^[21] (*Targum Yonasan*).

□ **לְדָרֵשׁ אֶת ה' — TO INQUIRE OF HASHEM.**

Rashi explains what Rivkah was inquiring about:
שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם לָהּ מֵהָ תְּהֵא בְּסוּפָה — Since she was experiencing such unusual agitation in this pregnancy, she asked that [Hashem] tell her what would be her outcome, i.e., the outcome of her pregnancy.^[22]

23. **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לָהּ — AND HASHEM SAID TO HER.**

Rashi previously explained that Rivkah asked Shem to inquire of Hashem for her. How, then, did the response come to *her*? Rashi explains:

עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ — Hashem spoke to her through an agent. [The answer] to her inquiry was told to Shem through *Ruach HaKodesh*, and he told it to her (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:7).

□ **שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם בְּבִטְנָהּ — TWO NATIONS ARE IN YOUR WOMB.**

Rashi comments on an irregularity in the spelling of the word גוֹיִם:
גוֹיִם, *nations*, it is written as "גִּיִּים" (with two *yuds*), which would normally be read גִּיִּים, meaning "proud" or "prominent ones."^[23] אֵלֹו אֲנִטוֹנִינוֹס וְרַבִּי — These "prominent ones" are the Roman emperor, Antoninus, and the Jewish *Nasi*, Rebbe (R' Yehudah HaNasi),^[24] שְׁלֵא

Zikaron); that is, each of them argued that both worlds were created for *his* sake (*Gur Aryeh*; see there for a deeper explanation).

Alternatively, Eisav chose for himself this world, while Yaakov chose for himself the World to Come, and they were vehemently arguing with each other as to which was the better choice (*Levush HaOrah*; *Be'er Mayim Chaim*).

21. Although Yitzchak and Avraham were also prophets, Rivkah preferred to ask Shem because she thought her pain may have been caused by her own sins, and she hesitated to expose her wrongdoings to such close relatives (*Gur Aryeh*; see also *Maskil LeDavid*). Alternatively, she went to Shem because he was the elder sage of the generation. [Shem, who was Noach's son, was 550 years old at the time] (*Mizrachi*; see *Imrei Shefer*).

22. Rivkah was concerned that she might not survive the pregnancy, or that she would miscarry; or, even if

she successfully gave birth, the child would not be a normal one (*Be'er Yitzchak*).

The phrase לְדָרֵשׁ אֶת ה' could have been rendered "to pray to Hashem" (see *Ramban*, who in fact understands it that way). However, from Hashem's response in the following verse, *Two nations are in your womb*, etc., it is evident that Rivkah did not simply ask Shem to pray for her. Rather, she wished to know what the outcome of her pregnancy would be (*Mizrachi*).

23. Although the Hebrew word for "proud ones" would typically be spelled גִּיִּים, with an *aleph* (as in *Tehillim* 94:2, הִשְׁבֵּה גְּמוּלָה עַל גִּיִּים), it can also be spelled גִּיִּים, as a *yud* sometimes takes the place of an *aleph* (*Mizrachi*).

24. R' Yehudah HaNasi (known as "Rebbi") was the leader of the Jewish people and the compiler of the Mishnah. In the course of Antoninus' travels through the empire, he visited Judea, where he met Rebbe, with whom he formed a lifelong friendship. The Gemara in multiple places records their interactions; see *Avodah*

So she went to inquire of Hashem.

²³ And Hashem said to her: “Two nations are in your womb, and two kingdoms from your innards shall be separated; one kingdom

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לא בימות — **whose tables never lacked either radishes or lettuce**, פסקו מעל שולחנם לא צנון ולא חזרת — **neither in the summer nor in the winter**, i.e., even when these items were not in season^[25] (*Avodah Zarah* 11a).

□ ושני לאמים — **AND TWO “LE’UMIM.”**

The verse already said שני גוים בבטנה, *two nations are in your womb*, so it could simply have said, וממנה יפרדו, *and from your innards they shall be separated*. What does the phrase לאמים add? Rashi explains:

אין לאום אלא מלכות — The term “לאום” (the singular form of לאמים) **means nothing but “kingdom.”** Each of the two nations will establish its own kingdom^[26] (*ibid.* 2b).

□ ממנה יפרדו — **FROM YOUR INNARDS SHALL BE SEPARATED.**

Seemingly, the verse should have said ממנה יצאו, *from your innards “shall come forth.”* Why does it say shall “be separated”? Rashi explains:

מן המעים הם נפרדים — Hashem was telling her that already **from** when they are in **the womb they are distinct** from each other, זה לרשעו וזה לתומו — **this one turning to his wickedness and that one turning to his wholesomeness.**^[27]

Zarah 10a–11a; *Sanhedrin* 91a–b; and *Yerushalmi Sanhedrin* 10:5.

25. The simple meaning of the verse obviously is that Rivkah was carrying twins who would become the heads of two great nations: Yaakov and Eisav. But in addition to its simple meaning, the verse alludes to two prominent descendants of these twins, who were contemporaries: Antoninus, the emperor of Rome, a descendant of Eisav, and R' Yehudah HaNasi, a descendant of Yaakov. Their prominence was expressed by their fantastic wealth, which allowed them to import

and serve seasonal vegetables throughout the entire year (*Maharsha* to *Avodah Zarah* *ibid.*; see *Gur Aryeh*). See Insight.

26. Rivkah's twins will not merely become two diverse peoples, but will actually establish competing *kingdoms* (see *Mizrachi*). לאמים *must* mean “kingdoms,” because the verse goes on to say ולאם מלאם יאמץ, *one shall gain strength from the other*, and it is kingdoms that battle each other for power (Rashi to *Avodah Zarah* 2b).

27. Whereas children usually go their separate ways after their birth, these two are already on different

§ **Rebbi and Antoninus** Over the centuries there have been countless prominent descendants of Yaakov and Eisav who lived as contemporaries. Why does Rashi (following the Gemara in *Avodah Zarah* 11a) identify specifically Rebbi and Antoninus as the two descendants alluded to by the word גוים?

The answer lies in the unique relationship between Rebbi and Antoninus. The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 10a–b) relates that upon becoming acquainted with Rebbi, Antoninus came to admire him to such an extraordinary degree that his life was transformed. He became Rebbi's loyal disciple. For a time, Antoninus resided in the Land of Israel in Caesarea, and during that period he would visit Rebbi by means of a secret underground tunnel, studying Torah with him and seeking his counsel not only in matters of mind and soul but also in affairs of government. His subservience to the Jewish sage was total.

Antoninus used his position as emperor for the betterment of the Jewish people in numerous ways. It was only because of the emperor's protection that Rebbi was able to gather the sages of his people into a great assemblage to complete the historic task of editing and sealing the Mishnah (see Rashi, *Bava Metzia* 33b רבי בימי רבי ד"ה).

Yaakov and Eisav's role in history as foretold by Hashem's message to Rivkah, *the elder shall serve the younger*, was to form a complementary partnership in which Yaakov would be the leader and promote good while Eisav would aid him by defeating evil. Had Eisav accepted his prophesied role, both brothers would have benefited, and the history of mankind would have been very different. In saying that the word גוים, *proud ones*, alludes to Antoninus and Rebbi, the Gemara means that these two descendants exemplified the prophetically intended relationship of the two brothers. When Antoninus, the ruler of the mightiest nation of Eisav's descendants, became a loyal disciple of Rebbi, the greatest Jew of his time, the prophecy told to Rivkah, *the elder shall serve the younger*, was — for a short period in history — fulfilled as it was meant to be, and as it will be in the Future Era (*R' Avigdor Miller, Exalted People* §421; *Or Gedalyahu, Toldos*).

ממלכו ותתקף ורבא וישמעבד
לזעירא: כד ושליומו יומהא למלד
והא תיומין במעקה: כה ונפק
קדמאה סמוק בלה בגלים (נ"א:
בבלן) דשער וקרו שמה עשו:
כז ובתר בן נפק אחוהי וידה אחידא

מְלָאִם יֵאָמֵץ וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר: כד וַיִּמְלְאוּ
יָמֶיהָ לֵלֶדֶת וְהָיָה תוֹמָם בְּבִטְנָה: כה וַיֵּצֵא
הָרָאוֹן אֲדָמוֹנִי כָּלֹו בְּאֶדְרֵת שַׁעַר וַיִּקְרָאוּ
שְׁמוֹ עֲשׂוֹ: כז וַאֲחֵרֵיכֵן יָצָא אָחִיו וַיְדוּ אֲחֻזָּת

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חָבַל כָּאֵן אֶחָד לְדִיק וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע (נ"ס): (כה) אֲדָמוֹנִי. סִימָן
הוּא שֵׂיחָה שׁוֹפֵךְ דָּמִים (נ"ס): כָּלֹו בְּאֶדְרֵת שַׁעַר. מֵלֵךְ שֶׁטֶר
כְּטֹלִית שֶׁל זָמֵר הַמֵּלֵכָה שֶׁטֶר, פְּלוֹקִיד"ל צִלַּע": וַיִּקְרָאוּ
שְׁמוֹ עֲשׂוֹ. הַכֹּל קָרְאוּ לוֹ כֵּן, לְפִי שֶׁהִיא נִטְשָׁה וְנִגְמָר
צִשְׁעֵרוֹ כִּכְּן שְׁנִים הִרְבָּה (תַּרְגוּם יוֹנָתָן): (כו) וַאֲחֵרֵי כֵּן
יָצָא אָחִיו וְגו'. שְׁמַעְתִּי מִדְּרַשׁ חֲלָדָה הַדְרָשׁוֹ לְפִי פְּשׁוּטוֹ:

מְלָאִם יֵאָמֵץ. לֹא יֵשׁוּ בְּגִדּוּלָה, כְּשֶׁזֶה קָם זֶה נֹפֵל, וְכֵן הוּא
אוֹמֵר "אֲמַלְאָה הַחֲרָבָה" (יחזקאל כז, ז), לֹא נִתְמַלְאָה לֹר חֵלָה
מִחֲרָבָה שֶׁל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם (מַגִּילָה ו:). (כד) וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ. חָבַל
צִתְמֵר כְּתִיב "וַיְהִי צִטַּת לְדָפָה" (לֵהֲלֵן לַח, כז), שֶׁלֹּא מֵלֵךְ יָמֶיהָ
כִּי לִשְׁצִטָּה חֲדָשִׁים יִלְדֶּתָם (בְּרָאשִׁית רַבָּה סג, ח): וְהָיָה תוֹמָם.
חֶסֶר, וּבִתְמֵר (לֵהֲלֵן לַח, כז) "תְּאוֹמִים" מֵלֵךְ, לְפִי שֶׁשְׁנֵיהֶם לְדִיקִים,

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□ מְלָאִם יֵאָמֵץ — ONE KINGDOM SHALL GAIN STRENGTH FROM THE OTHER KINGDOM.

The simple meaning of מְלָאִם יֵאָמֵץ would seem to be, "one kingdom shall overpower the other." But that is already implied by the next phrase, *the elder will serve the younger*.^[28] Rashi therefore explains that the verse means to express another idea:

לֹא יֵשׁוּ בְּגִדּוּלָה — Our verse means that [the kingdoms of Yaakov and Eisav] will not both be great simultaneously. — Rather, when this one rises, the other will fall. — *כְּשֶׁזֶה קָם זֶה נֹפֵל* — And so it says (Yechezkel 26:2), *Tyre has said of Yerushalayim, ...I will fill myself from the ruin,* — which our Sages interpret to mean: Tyre (the premier city of Edom at the time) became "full" only through the ruin of Yerushalayim. It is only when Yerushalayim was destroyed that Tyre began to flourish^[29] (Megillah 6a).

24. וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ — HER TERM TO GIVE BIRTH GREW FULL.

Rashi contrasts the description of Rivkah's birth of twins to that of Tamar:

paths, one good and the other evil (Mizrachi; cf. Gur Aryeh to v. 22).

This response answered Rivkah's question as to why she was experiencing such unusual pain. Hashem told her that she was expecting twins who already in the womb are "separate" from each other as to their paths in life. Hence, whenever she would pass a house of Torah study one would agitate to come out, and

whenever she would pass a house of idolatry the other one would agitate to come out (Sefer Zikaron; Maskil LeDavid; see note 19 above).

28. Sefer Zikaron; Maskil LeDavid; cf. Mizrachi.

29. Thus, each kingdom gains its strength from the other. The fall of Yerushalayim enabled Tyre to "seize" the strength that had previously been Yerushalayim's (Mizrachi). See Insight.

§ When This One Rises the Other Will Fall Gur Aryeh points out that Rashi's words here seem inconsistent.

The expression מְלָאִם יֵאָמֵץ, *one kingdom shall gain strength from the other*, implies that when one falls, the other rises; i.e., it is the fall of one that brings about the rise of the other. This is indeed reflected in the verse Rashi cites: only when Yerushalayim was destroyed did Tyre flourish. But Rashi characterizes this by saying it in the reverse order: *When this one rises the other will fall*, implying that when one rises on its own, the other will naturally fall!

Gur Aryeh explains that Rashi's words are precise, and reflect a difference in the cause of the rise and fall of these two kingdoms. Hashem directly gives strength for rising to the Jewish people, but not to the kingdom of Edom; Edom rises only as a result of the Jewish people's descent. Therefore, when speaking from the perspective of the Jewish people, it is correct to say that when this one (the Jewish kingdom) rises — through Hashem's intervention — the other (the kingdom of Edom) will naturally fall. From the perspective of Edom, however, it is correct to say that they draw their strength from the fall of the Jewish people. Thus, the verse that Rashi cites, which refers to the rise of Edom, states that Edom's rise resulted from the fall of the Jewish people. Rashi's explanation of our verse, *when this one rises the other will fall*, represents the rise of the Jewish people; their rise leads to the fall of Edom.

shall gain strength from the other kingdom, and the older one shall serve the younger one.”

²⁴ Her term to give birth grew full, and behold! there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first one emerged red, entirely like a hairy cloak; so they called his name Eisav. ²⁶ After that his brother emerged, with his hand grasping onto

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“וַיְהִי בֵּעֵת לִדְתָּהּ” — But regarding Tamar it is written (38:27 below), *And it came to pass at the time she gave birth*, without saying “her term grew full.” שלא מלאו ימיה כי לשבעה חדשים — That is because [Tamar’s] term was not filled, as she gave birth to [her twins] after just seven months of pregnancy^[30] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:8).

□ וַהֲנֵה תוֹמִם — **BEHOLD! THERE WERE TWINS.**

Rashi focuses on the unusual spelling of תוֹמִם. The usual spelling of the word for twins is תְּאוֹמִים: **הָסֵר** — Here the word for twins is written **deficient**, as it is spelled תוֹמִם, without an *aleph* and a *yud*, **מֵלֵא** — but in regard to Tamar, when the verse mentions the birth of her twins (38:27 below), it is spelled “תְּאוֹמִים”, in full. **לְפִי שְׁנֵיהֶם צְדִיקִים** — This is because in Tamar’s case, [the twins], Peretz and Zerach, were both righteous, **אֲבָל בָּאֵן אַחֵר צְדִיק וְאַחֵר רָשָׁע** — while here, in Rivkah’s case, only one twin was righteous and the other was wicked^[31] (*Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid.*).

25. אֶדְמוֹנִי — RED.

What is the significance of the fact that Eisav was born with a red complexion?^[32] **סִימָן הוּא שְׂוִיָּה שׁוֹפֵךְ דָּמִים** — It was a sign that he would be a spiller of blood, i.e., a murderer^[33] (*Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid.*).

□ כָּלֹ כְּאַדְרֶת שָׁעַר — **ENTIRELY LIKE A HAIRY CLOAK.**

Rashi explains what this means:

מֵלֵא שָׁעַר — He was full of hair, **כְּטִלִית שֶׁל צֶמֶר הַמְּלֵאָה שָׁעַר** — like a woolen cloak, which is full of hair; **פְּלוֹקִידִיָּא בִלְעִי** — *flochede* in Old French.^[34]

□ וַיִּקְרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ עִשָּׂו — **SO THEY CALLED HIS NAME EISAV.**

The verse says that “they” called him Eisav, in the plural. Who were these people? **לְפִי שְׁהִיָּה נֶעְשָׂה וְנִגְמַר בְּשִׁעְרוֹ** — *Everyone* who saw this child called him this name, **הַכֹּל קָרָא לוֹ כֵּן** — because he was fully developed (עָשׂוּי) and complete with respect to his hair, like someone who was many years old^[35] (*Targum Yonasan*).

26. וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן יָצָא אָחִיו וְגו’ — AFTER THAT HIS BROTHER EMERGED, WITH HIS HAND GRASPING ONTO THE HEEL OF EISAV.

Why was Yaakov holding onto Eisav?^[36] Rashi explains: **שָׁמַעְתִּי מִדְּרַשׁ אַגְדָּה הַדּוֹרְשׁוֹ לְפִי פְּשׁוּטָא** — I heard an Aggadic Midrash that expounds [our verse]

30. See also Rashi below, 38:27. [Some suggest that Hashem caused Rivkah to come to full term so that Eisav’s wickedness would be further delayed by two months (*R’ Shlomo Ganzfried* in *Apiryon*; see the contrast in 38:27, note 54).

31. The deficient spelling alludes to the spiritual deficiency of one of the twins, Eisav (*Yefeh To’ar*; see also Rashi to 38:27).

32. The following phrase, *all of him was like a hairy cloak*, explains why he was called Eisav (see Rashi below, *דִּיָּה וִיקְרָאוּ שְׁמוֹ*). But why does the verse write that he was red? (*Mizrachi*; *Devek Tov*).

33. As Rashi says in v. 29, Eisav already committed

murder at the age of fifteen.

34. “Something made of wool.” In Modern French *floche* means “shaggy.”

Thus, the sense of the phrase is, “Entirely hairy, like a hairy cloak.” The first word “hairy” did not need to be written explicitly, as it is implicit in the words, “like a hairy cloak” (*Nachalas Yaakov*).

35. The name עָשׂוּי is related to the word עָשׂוּי, which means “done” or “developed.” People called Rivkah’s first child עָשׂוּי when they saw that he was unusually developed, possessing hair all over his body like a grown man.

36. *Tzeidah LaDerech*; cf. *Gur Aryeh*; *Levush HaOrah*.

בַּעֲקֵב עֲשׂוֹ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְחָק בֶּן־שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה בַּעֲקֵבא דַּעֲשׂוֹ וַקְרָא שְׁמָהּ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְחָק בֶּר שְׁתֵּין שָׁנִין

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אליעזר פרק ל"ב; ילקוט שמעוני קי': וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב. הקדוש צרוך הוא. וְאִמְרָה: אֲתוֹן קְרִיתוֹן לְצִכּוֹרְכִם שֶׁ, אִף אֲנִי אֶקְרָא לְבְנִי צִכּוֹרִי שֶׁ, הִדָּא הִיא דְּכְתִיב "וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב" (בראשית רבה שם; תנחומא שמות טז). דְּבַר אַחֵר, אֲבִיו קָרָא לוֹ יַעֲקֹב עַל שֶׁ אֲחִיזָה הִטָּקָה: בֶּן שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה. עֲשָׂר שָׁנִים מִשְׁנֵאָה עַד שְׁנַעֲשִׂית צֵת י"ג שָׁנָה וְרִאשִׁיָּה לְהַרְיוֹן, וְעֲשָׂר שָׁנִים לָפָה וְהִמָּתִין לָהּ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲבִיו לְשָׂרָה (לעיל טז, טז, טז) כִּינּוּ שֶׁלֹּא נִתְעַצְּרָה יָדָהּ שֶׁהִיא עֹקְרָה, וְהַתְּפַלֵּל עָלֶיהָ.

דָּרִין הִיא חֹחוֹ צוֹ לְעַבְדּוֹ, יַעֲקֹב נֹלֵךְ מִמִּיפָה רִאשׁוֹנָה וְעֲשׂוֹ מִן הַשְּׁנִיָּה; לֹא וְלִמַּד מִשְׁפּוּפֶרֶת שְׁפִיָּה קֶלֶר, פֶּן צֶה שְׁתֵּי אֲבָנִים זֹו פָּתַח זֹו — הַנִּכְנָסֶת רִאשׁוֹנָה תֵּלֵךְ אַחֲרֹנָה וְהַנִּכְנָסֶת אַחֲרֹנָה תֵּלֵךְ רִאשׁוֹנָה; נִמְלֵךְ עֲשׂוֹ הַנֹּלֵךְ בְּאַחֲרֹנָה יֵלֵךְ רִאשׁוֹן, וְיַעֲקֹב שֶׁנֹּלֵךְ רִאשׁוֹנָה יֵלֵךְ אַחֲרָיו, וְיַעֲקֹב צָא לְעַבְדּוֹ, שִׁיָּהָא רִאשׁוֹן לְיִלְדָה בְּרִאשׁוֹן לְיִלְדָה, וְיִפְטוֹר אֶת רַחֲמָה וְיִטֹּל אֶת הַבְּכוֹרָה מִן הַדִּין (בראשית רבה טז:סא) בַּעֲקֵב עֲשׂוֹ. סִימָן שֶׁאִין זֶה מִסְפִּיק לְגַמֵּר מַלְכוּתוֹ עַד שֶׁזֶה עוֹמֵד וְנוֹטֵלָה הֵימָנוּ (פרקי דרבי

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following its simple meaning:^[37] — [Yaakov] was justified in holding onto [Eisav], trying to prevent him from being born first, — since Yaakov was formed from the first drop of seed and Eisav from the second. How do we know that Yaakov was formed from the first drop? — Go and learn this from a tube that has a narrow opening on one end and is closed on the other. — Put two stones into [the tube], one beneath the other, and then turn the tube over. — [The stone] that entered first will emerge last, and [the stone] that entered last will emerge first. Similarly, when two drops of seed enter the narrow opening of the womb and develop into separate babies, the babies will emerge in the opposite order in which the drops entered. — Accordingly, Eisav, who was formed last, emerged first, — and Yaakov, who was formed first, emerged last.^[38] — and Eisav, who was formed first, emerged last. — Therefore, Yaakov came and held onto Eisav, in order to prevent him from emerging, — so that he, Yaakov, would be the first to be born, just as he was the first to be formed, — and would open [his mother's] womb and take thereby the *bechorah* by right^[39] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:8).

□ בַּעֲקֵב עֲשׂוֹ — THE HEEL OF EISAV.

What is the significance of the fact that he was holding specifically onto Eisav's *heel*? Rashi explains: — It is a sign that this one (Eisav) will not have a chance to complete his kingdom (achieve full dominence) — before this one (Yaakov) arises and wrests it from him^[40] (*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, Ch. 32; *Yalkut Shimoni* §110).

□ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב — AND HE CALLED HIS NAME YAAKOV.

Upon the birth of the first child, the verse said in the plural, "they" called his name *Eisav*. Rashi explained that this means "everyone" called him by that name. Yet here, regarding the second child, the verse says, and "he" called his name *Yaakov*. Who was the one that gave this name? Rashi explains: — Since the verse does not say "his father called his name Yaakov," we understand that

37. Midrashim typically give interpretations that are beyond the verse's simple meaning. The following Midrash, however, fits in nicely with the simple reading of the verse, as explained in the following note. [See *Sifsei Yesheirim* Appendix regarding the authorship of the following comment.]

38. This explains why our verse says וַיִּצְא אֹחִיו, after that his brother emerged, rather than וַיִּצְא הַשֵּׁנִי, the second one emerged (parallel to the previous verse, which says וַיִּצְא הָרִאשׁוֹן, the first one emerged); for while

Yaakov emerged after Eisav, he was not the second brother, since he was actually formed first (*Sifsei Chachamim*).

39. Since, however, he was unsuccessful in preventing Eisav from being born first, he needed to buy the *bechorah* from Eisav, as described below (vv. 31-34).

40. The heel is the end of the body, so the emergence of the heel represents the end of Eisav's emergence into dominion. Before Eisav's kingdom can "emerge fully" to achieve complete domination, Yaakov will topple it.

the heel of Eisav; and he called his name Yaakov. Yitzchak was sixty years old

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it was the Holy One, blessed is He, Who called him by this name.^[41] אָמַר אֱתָם קָרִיתוֹן לְבְכוֹרָם שֵׁם — [Hashem] said to the nations of the world: You have given a name to your firstborn son, Eisav, אָף הָרָא הֵיא דְבְתִיב — so, too, will I give a name to My firstborn son, Yaakov.^[42] הָרָא הֵיא דְבְתִיב — This is the meaning of what is written, AND “HE” CALLED HIS NAME YAAKOV^[43] (Bereishis Rabbah 63:8; Tanchuma, Shemos §4).

דְּבַר אָחֵר אָבִיו קָרָא לוֹ יַעֲקֹב — Alternatively, his father called him Yaakov — על שֵׁם אֲחִיזַת הָעֵקֶב — on account of his holding onto the heel (eikev) of his brother.^[44]

□ בֵּין שְׁשִׁים שָׁנָה — SIXTY YEARS OLD.

It seems that immediately after Yitzchak began to plead for a child (v. 21), his prayers were answered. Yet, Yitzchak was forty years old when he married Rivkah, and sixty when his children were born. Why did he wait until he was almost sixty to plead for children?^[45] Rashi explains:

עָשָׂר שָׁנִים מִשְׁנֵשָׂאָה עַד שְׁנַעֲשִׂית בַּת יִיג שָׁנָה וְרֵאשִׁית לְהָרִיוֹן — Ten years passed from when he married [Rivkah] until she reached the age of thirteen years and was able to conceive.^[46] וְעָשָׂר שָׁנִים צָפָה — For the next ten years [Yitzchak] hoped and waited for [Rivkah] to conceive, כְּמוֹ — just as his father Avraham had done for Sarah.^[47] בֵּינוֹן שְׁלֵא נִתְעַבְרָה יָרַע שְׁהֵיא — [Yitzchak] concluded that she was barren, — וְהִתְפַּלֵּל עָלֶיהָ — so he prayed for her to have a child.^[48]

41. That is, Hashem instructed Yitzchak to name this son Yaakov (Ayeles HaShachar).

42. Yaakov is Hashem’s “firstborn” — i.e., His most important son — as He declares, בְּנִי בְכוֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל, My first-born son is Israel (Shemos 4:22; see Rashi there). Eisav, on the other hand, is the “firstborn” — i.e., the leader and most prominent — of the nations of the world who stand opposite Israel. [See Sifsei Yesheirim Appendix for another reading here.]

43. Since the verse first indicated that “everyone” called the first son Eisav, if Yitzchak was the one who named him, the verse should have said that Yitzchak called him Yaakov. This approach therefore holds that the non-specific “He” refers to Hashem (Gur Aryeh; Yerios Shlomo).

[This explains also why the next clause in the verse specifies, “Yitzchak was sixty years old.” It is because the subject of this clause is Hashem, not Yitzchak (Or HaChaim).]

44. This second approach maintains that since it is common practice that the father names his son, the verse did not need to specify that it was Yitzchak who did so (Gur Aryeh; cf. Yerios Shlomo; Levush HaOrah).

According to both approaches, the name יַעֲקֹב reflects the fact that Yaakov will topple Eisav in the End of Days, as indicated by his holding onto Eisav’s heel (עֵקֶב). It is not necessary to explain this according to the first approach, since Hashem knows what the future will bring, so He obviously gave the name Yaakov based on what will take place at the End of Days. Rashi mentions the holding of the heel in the second approach to explain how Yitzchak knew to name this son יַעֲקֹב. The child’s grasping of Eisav’s עֵקֶב was the sign through which Yitzchak understood that

the right name for this child is יַעֲקֹב (Gur Aryeh).

45. Amar N’kei; Divrei David; Ba’er Heitev.

46. As Rashi asserted in v. 20, Rivkah was three years old when Yitzchak married her. Although a girl becomes fit for marital relations at age three (see note 8 above), she cannot conceive a viable child until she reaches maturity (see Yevamos 12b).

[Actually, a girl reaches maturity and can conceive a viable child at the age of twelve (Yevamos ibid.). When Rashi mentions “the age of thirteen years,” he means that Rivkah became capable of conceiving when she entered her thirteenth year; i.e., on her twelfth birthday, which is the first day of the thirteenth year. This helps us understand Rashi’s entire calculation here: Yitzchak married Rivkah when he was 40 and she was 3; then nine years and a day passed until she became able to conceive, at which time Yitzchak was 49 and Rivkah was 12. Yitzchak then waited ten years for her to conceive, before he realized that she was barren; at that time, he was 59 years old (and Rivkah was 22). Yitzchak began to pray profusely, and Rivkah gave birth when Yitzchak was 60 (Be’er BaSadeh).]

47. Avraham waited ten years [after moving to Eretz Yisrael] for Sarah to conceive before marrying her maidservant (see above, 16:3 with Rashi).

48. Presumably Yitzchak prayed even before the second ten years elapsed, but his prayers did not take a pleading nature, because it is not uncommon for a woman to have to wait until she becomes pregnant. Once ten years passed, however, he realized that she was barren (see Yevamos 64a), so his prayers took on a different character. As Rashi explained in v. 21, וְיִצְחָק means that Yitzchak prayed profusely and strongly (see Be’er BaSadeh).

בְּלֶדֶת אֲתָם: ❖ כֹּז וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֶשָׂו
אִישׁ יָדָע צִיד אִישׁ שָׂדֶה וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם
יֹשֵׁב אֲהָלִים: כח וַיֵּאָהֶב יִצְחָק אֶת-עֶשָׂו
בִּי-צִיד בָּפְיוֹ וּרְבֵקָה אֲהָבָת אֶת-יַעֲקֹב:

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וְשָׂפָחָה לֹא רָלָה לִישָׁא, לְפִי שְׁנַתְקַדֵּשׁ בְּהַר הַמֹּרְיָה לְהוֹת
עוֹלָה תְּמִימָה (וּבְרֵאשִׁית רַבָּה טז, א): (כז) וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים
וַיְהִי עֶשָׂו. כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהָיוּ קְטַנִּים, לֹא הָיוּ נִיכְרִים בְּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם
וְאִין אָדָם מְדַקְדֵּק בָּהֶם מִה טֵיבָם, כִּיּוֹן שֶׁנִּשְׁעָשׂוּ בְּנֵי שָׁלֹשׁ
טַעֲמָה שָׁנָה, זֶה פִּירֵשׁ לְבִתֵּי מִדְרָשׁוֹת וְזֶה פִּירֵשׁ לְעִבּוּדָה וְזֶה
(וּבְרֵאשִׁית רַבָּה טז, י): יָדָע צִיד. לָלוּד וּלְרִמּוֹת אֶת אָבִיו בְּפִיּוֹ,

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Rashi explains why Yitzchak did not follow the path of Avraham, who married Sarah's maidservant Hagar when Sarah failed to conceive after ten years:

לְפִי שְׁנַתְקַדֵּשׁ בְּהַר הַמֹּרְיָה — [Yitzchak] did not want to marry a maidservant, וְשָׂפָחָה לֹא רָצָה לִישָׁא — for at the time of the *Akeidah*, he had been sanctified on Har HaMoriyah to be an unblemished *olah* offering, so he felt that marrying a maidservant was inappropriate for him^[49] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 64:3).

27. וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֶשָׂו — *THE LADS GREW UP, AND EISAV BECAME... BUT YAAKOV WAS...*

Rashi previously explained (v. 23) that Yaakov and Eisav were already different from when they were in Rivkah's womb. Yet our verse implies that their paths diverged only after they grew up. Rashi therefore explains:

As long as they were young, they were not yet distinguishable based on their actions, and no one paid close attention to them to see what their true nature was. Once they grew up and became thirteen years old, however, it became evident that they were fundamentally different: This one (Yaakov) went off to houses of Torah study and that one (Eisav) went off to idol worship^[50] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:10).

□ יָדָע צִיד — *A MAN WHO KNOWS TRAPPING, A MAN OF THE FIELD.*

If the description of Eisav as יָדָע צִיד, *one who knows trapping*, is to be understood simply — that Eisav knew how to hunt — how is that different from the characterization of Eisav as אִישׁ שָׂדֶה, *a man of the field*? Rashi explains that the phrase יָדָע צִיד does not refer to trapping animals:

Eisav was one who knew how to entrap and trick his father Yitzchak with his mouth. He would ask him questions to deceive him, such as, “Father, how does one tithe salt and straw?” As a result, his father thought he was meticulous in the performance of mitzvot^[51] (*Bereishis Rabbah* ibid.).

49. One might still wonder: Granted, it was inappropriate for the holy Yitzchak to marry a maidservant, but why did he not marry another freewoman? *Gur Aryeh* explains that after Yitzchak learned of all the miracles that occurred in the course of Eliezer's mission to find his wife, he realized that only Rivkah was his true mate and no other woman. He thus would not enter a marriage with anyone else. A maidservant, however, would not have the status of another “wife,” and therefore

would have been a possible option, if not for his holy status as an unblemished offering to Hashem.

50. See note 63 below for further discussion.

51. [See also Rashi to v. 28.] Eisav posed these questions to his father to lead him to believe that he was diligent in the performance of mitzvot. He asked specifically about salt and straw [rather than meat, which he commonly obtained through hunting] because

when she gave birth to them.

²⁷ The lads grew up, and Eisav became a man who knows trapping, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a straightforward man, remaining in tents.

²⁸ Yitzchak loved Eisav, for trapping was in his mouth; but Rivkah loved Yaakov.

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□ אִישׁ שָׂדֵה — A MAN OF THE FIELD.

וְצוּרָה בְּקִשְׁתּוֹ חַיִּית וְעוֹפוֹת — *A man of the field* means as it implies, אָדָם בָּטֵל — an idle man, — who hunts wild animals and birds in the field with his bow for sport.^[52]

□ תָּם — “TAM.”

Sometimes the Hebrew word תָּם is used to describe a simple-minded person. However, that cannot be the intent here, because it is apparent from the next *parashah* that Yaakov was extremely clever (see 30:28-43).^[53] Rashi therefore explains the intent of the word here:

אֵינוּ בָקִי בְּכָל אֵלָה — It means that [Yaakov] was **not practiced in all these** deceptive arts that Eisav was. אֵלָא בְּלָבוּ בֶן פִּי — **Rather**, he was a straightforward person; what he thought in **his heart** was consistent with what he said **with his mouth**. מִי שְׁאֵינוּ חֲרִיף לְרֵמוֹת קְרוֹי תָּם — **One who is not cunning at deception is called “תָּם”, straightforward.**^[54]

□ יָשָׁב אֹהֳלִים — REMAINING IN TENTS.

The verse contrasts Yaakov to Eisav — while Eisav was a *man of the field*, Yaakov spent his time indoors, in the tent studying Torah. But why does the verse use the plural form, אֹהֳלִים, *tents*? Rashi explains:

אֹהֶלוֹ שֶׁל שֵׁם וְאֹהֶלוֹ שֶׁל עֵיבֶר — Yaakov would study Torah in two tents, **the tent of Shem and the tent of Eiver**^[55] (*Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid.*).

28. בִּי צִיד בִּפְּמוֹ — FOR TRAPPING WAS IN HIS MOUTH.

The verse does not specify whose mouth it refers to. Rashi provides first the simple understanding of the verse and then a Midrashic explanation:

בְּתַרְגּוּמוֹ, בִּפְּמוֹ שֶׁל יִצְחָק — The plain meaning of the verse is **as Targum Onkelos renders it**, that Eisav would trap animals and place their meat **into Yitzchak’s mouth**.^[56]

only produce of the ground requires tithing, and straw and salt come from the ground (*Be’er Mayim Chaim; Nachalas Yaakov*). Nevertheless, in truth both of these items are exempt, salt because it does not grow from the ground, and straw because it is not a food.

[The Patriarchs kept all the mitzvos even though the Torah had not yet been given (see 26:5 below, with Rashi). *Tzeidah LaDerech* suggests that Eisav chose specifically the topic of *maaser* with which to deceive his father because Yitzchak was the first person to separate *maaser* from produce (see Rashi below, 26:12).]

52. Had Eisav been a farmer, the Torah would have described him as it did Kayin, עוֹבֵד אֲדָמָה, a worker of the earth (above, 4:2), or Noach, אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה, a man of the earth (above, 9:20). אִישׁ שָׂדֵה, a man of the field implies a man of idleness and leisure, who amuses himself by hunting (*Mizrachi*).

53. *Ba’er Heitev; Devek Tov*.

54. When Yaakov needed to deal with the swindling

Lavan, he was able to do so cunningly, as we see in the next *parashah*. However, that was not Yaakov’s chosen practice. His approach to dealing with people was *not* to speak with cunning, but rather to be absolutely straightforward (see Rashi to 29:12 and Insight there).

55. Shem and his great-grandson, Eiver, each headed his own yeshivah.

The verse’s descriptions of Yaakov and Eisav are thus symmetrical. The description of Eisav as אִישׁ יָדַע צִיד, a man who knows how to trick, corresponds to the characterization of Yaakov as אִישׁ תָּם, a straightforward man; the description of Eisav as אִישׁ שָׂדֵה, a man of the field, corresponds to Yaakov being יָשָׁב אֹהֳלִים, one who dwells in tents (*Mizrachi*).

56. Onkelos writes, אָרִי מְצִידָה הָיָה אָבִי, for he would eat of [Eisav’s] trapped game. Yitzchak loved Eisav because Eisav would constantly feed him game. [According to this interpretation, the verb in the phrase בִּי צִיד בִּפְּמוֹ is implied but not written, as if the verse read, “בִּי יִתֵּן”, for “he would place” game into his mouth (*Ramban*).]

כט וַיֵּזֶד יַעֲקֹב נָזִיד וַיָּבֵא עֲשׂוֹ מִן־
הַשֶּׁדֶה וְהוּא עֵיף: 5 וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוֹ אֶל־
יַעֲקֹב הֲלָעִיטְנִי נָא מִן־הָאָדָם הַזֶּה
כִּי עֵיף אָנֹכִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמוֹ אֱדוֹם:

ומדרשו, בפיו של עשו, שהיה לז אוחו ומרמהו בדבריו (תנחומא ח: (כט) וַיֵּזֶד. לשון בשול, בתרגומו: וְהוּא עֵיף. צרליקה, כמה דתימא "כי טיפה נפשי להרגים" (ורמיהו ד, לא; בראשית רבה סג, יב: (ל) הֲלָעִיטְנִי. אפתח פי ושפוך הרבה לתוכה, כמו ששנינו: אין אובסין את הגמל חבל מלעיטין אותו (שבת קנה; בראשית רבה ס: מן האדם האדם. עדשים הדומות, ואותו היום מת חברהם (בראשית רבה ס: יא), שלא יראה את

רש"י

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And its Midrashic interpretation is that *יציד, trapping, was in Eisav's mouth.* **Yitzchak loved Eisav because [Eisav] would entrap him and trick him with his words**^[57] (*Tanchuma* §8).

29. וַיֵּזֶד — “VAYAZED.”

Rashi explains the unusual word וַיֵּזֶד:

It is a term for cooking, **as Targum Onkelos renders it:** וַיֵּזֶד, *and he was cooking.*^[58]

□ וְהוּא עֵיף — AND HE WAS EXHAUSTED.

In the following verse Eisav himself declares that he is exhausted. Why, then, does our verse need to state this as well?^[59] Rashi explains that the term עֵיף here connotes more than simple exhaustion: **Eisav was “exhausted” from having committed murder**, for he had killed someone that day in the field. **— This use of the term “exhaustion” in the context of murder is as you read elsewhere (Yirmiyah 4:31), for my soul is exhausted by killers**^[60] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:12).

30. הֲלָעִיטְנִי — “HALITEINI”

Rashi explains what Eisav meant when he said הֲלָעִיטְנִי:

Eisav told Yaakov, I will open my mouth and you pour a lot of this red food into it. **— This use of the word הֲלָעִיטְנִי is like what we learned in the Mishnah (Shabbos 155b): One may not force-feed a camel on Shabbos (as that is considered excessive toil on the Sabbath), but one may pour food (מלעיטין) into its mouth in a way that the camel could spit it out**^[61] (*Bereishis Rabbah* ibid.).

57. As Rashi wrote earlier (v. 27), Eisav would ask Yitzchak about tithing salt and straw, thereby tricking his father into believing he was righteous.

According to the first interpretation *יציד, trapping*, means trapped game. According to the second explanation, it means tricking.

58. Elsewhere, we find the root יד used to mean conspiring, as in *Shemos* 18:11, *בי דבר אשר די עליהם, for in the matter which they had conspired — against them.* However, there too, it can be understood to mean cooking, for one who conspires “cooks up” a plot (see Rashi there).

59. *Divrei David; Be'er BaSadeh; cf. Mizrahi; Gur Aryeh.*

60. Although the word “exhausted” in the *Yirmiyah* verse does not refer to the killers but rather to those killed, nevertheless we see that the word is used in connection with killing (see *Ayeles HaShachar*).

61. Eisav said he was so exhausted that he did not have the strength to eat normally, so he asked Yaakov to pour the food into his mouth (*Meisiach Ilmim*). This manner of eating is particularly coarse, as we find this language used only in regard to feeding animals (*Be'er Mayim Chaim*).

²⁹ Yaakov simmered a stew, and Eisav came from the field, and he was exhausted. ³⁰ Eisav said to Yaakov, “Pour into me, now, some of that very red stuff, for I am exhausted.” (Because of this, he called his name Edom.)

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□ מִן הָאֵדָם הָאֵדָם — **SOME OF THAT VERY RED STUFF.**

Later in the passage, the verse writes that Yaakov gave Eisav two items, bread and lentils. What, then, is the very red stuff to which Eisav refers here? Rashi explains:

עֲרֻשִׁים אֲדוֹמֹת — It is **red lentils**.^[62]

Rashi explains why Yaakov was cooking lentils:

שְׁלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת עֵשָׂו בֶּן בְּנוֹ — **Avraham had died that day** (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:11), וְאֵינוֹ יֵצֵא לְתַרְבוֹת רָעָה — **so that he would not see his grandson, Eisav, stray to evil ways,** שִׁיבָה — **and he would return** — **as this would not be a fulfillment of the blessing,** “You will be buried in a good old age” (above, 15:15), **which the Holy One, blessed is He, had promised him.** לְפִיכָךְ קָצַר — **Therefore the Holy One, blessed is He, shortened [Avraham’s] lifespan by five years.** שִׁיזְחַק חַי ק”פ שָׁנָה וְזֶה קֵט”ה שָׁנָה — **This is apparent, since Yitzchak lived 180 years while this one, Avraham, lived only 175 years.**^[63] וְיִשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב עֲרֻשִׁים לְהַבְרֹת אֶת הָאֵבֶל — **Consequently, since it was the day that Avraham passed away, Yaakov cooked lentils to provide food for the mourner, Yitzchak.**^[64]

וְלָמָּה עֲרֻשִׁים — **And why did Yaakov cook specifically lentils?** שְׁדוֹמֹת גִּלְגָּל — **Because they are round, similar to a wheel, and as such they symbolize mourning,** שֶׁהָאֵבֶלֹת גִּלְגָּל הַחוּזָר בְּעוֹלָם — **for mourning is a revolving wheel in the world, with everyone experiencing it sooner or later**^[65] (*Bava Basra* 16b). וְעוֹד, מֵהָ עֲרֻשִׁים אֵין לָהֶם פֶּה — **Additionally, Yaakov chose lentils because just as lentils do not have a “mouth” (opening or fissure like other legumes),** כִּי הָאֵבֶל אֵין לוֹ פֶּה — **so too a mourner, figuratively, does not have a mouth,** שְׁאִסּוּר לְדַבֵּר — **as he is forbidden to speak freely, as will be**

62. Although, as Rashi goes on to explain, Yaakov was cooking the lentils for his father Yitzchak, Eisav wanted some of them poured into his mouth immediately. See Insight.

63. The fact that Avraham did not live out his originally assigned complement of years is hinted to in the verses. For whereas regarding Yitzchak the Torah says he died זָקֵן וְשָׁבַע יָמִים, *old and fulfilled of days* (below, 35:29), about Avraham it says only that he died זָקֵן וְשָׁבַע, *old and fulfilled* (above, 25:8), but it does not say *fulfilled of days* (*Sifsei Chachamim*).

[It emerges from this that Yaakov and Eisav were 15 years old at the time of Avraham’s death: Yitzchak was born when Avraham was 100, and therefore he was 75 years old when Avraham died. Yaakov and Eisav, who were born when Yitzchak was 60 (above, v. 26), were 15

years old. Although Rashi previously wrote (v. 27) that already when Eisav was *thirteen* he began to worship idols, this was not at odds with Avraham’s promised “good old age,” for at that time Eisav sinned only in private and Avraham was not aware of this. It was only now, when he turned fifteen, that he publicly displayed his wicked ways by murdering someone (*Daas Zekeinim* and *Mizrachi* to v. 27; see also *Be’er Mayim Chaim*; cf. *Gur Aryeh*).]

64. The first meal that mourners eat following the funeral is called *סעודת הקרָאָה* and must be provided by others, as Rashi explains below. [The laws of this meal are detailed in *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah* §378.]

65. The mourner is thus comforted, realizing that he was not singled out for misfortune.

☞ **Pour Into Me, Now, Some of That Very Red Stuff** Rashi explains that this “very red stuff” was a stew of lentils. Now, when red lentils are cooked, they do not remain red, but take on a yellowish hue. Why, then, did Eisav refer to the lentil stew as “very red stuff”? The verse alludes to the answer by quoting Eisav as saying “הִלְעִיטֵנִי נָא”. The word נָא can mean “please,” but Eisav was not in the habit of saying “please” even to his father (see Rashi to 27:22 below), and surely would not say it to Yaakov. However, the word נָא has another meaning as well — *raw* (or *partially cooked*), as it is used in *Shemos* 12:9. Thus, Eisav said to Yaakov, “Pour into me, while it is raw, some of that very red stuff.” What this conveys is that as the lentils had just begun to cook and were still very red, Eisav wanted them poured into his mouth without delay! He did not wish to wait until they were properly cooked. That is why the verse goes on to say, *Because of this, he called his name “Edom”* (“The Red One”). Eisav was called Edom not just because he asked for a red food, but because his request for “that very red stuff” displayed his basely gluttonous nature (*Lev Shalom [Schwadron]*).

לא וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב מִכָּרָה כִּיּוֹם אֶת־בְּכֹרְתָךְ לִי:
 לב וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוּ הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת וְלִמָּה־
 יָה לִי בְכֹרָה: לג וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב הַשְׁבָּעָה לִּי
 כִּיּוֹם וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ וַיִּמָּכֶר אֶת־בְּכֹרְתוֹ לַיַּעֲקֹב:

רש"י

זה כדאי שיקריב להקדוש צריך הוא (בראשית רבה טז טז):
 (לב) הנה אנכי הולך למות. פ"מ מתנונה והולכת
 היא הבכורה שלא תהא כל עת העבודה בצבורות,
 כי שצט לוי יטל חוטה, ועוד אמר עשו: מה פיצה של
 עבודה זו, אמר לו: כמה חזירות ועונשין ומיתות תלוין
 צה פחותה ששנינו: אלו הן שצמיתה: שתניין ופרועי
 ראש (סנהדרין כב). אמר: אני הולך למות על ידה, אם כן
 מה חפץ לי צה:

ולפיכך המנהג היום להברות את האבל בתחלת מאכלו ביצים —
 ביצים, שהם עגולים ואין להם פה, כך האבל אין לו
 פה, כדאמרין במועד קטן (כא:): אבל כל שלשה ימים
 הראשונים אינו משיב שלום לכל אדם וכל שכן שאינו
 שואל בתחלה, משלשה ועד שבעה משיב ואינו שואל,
 וכו'. צ"ש"י י"ן: (לא) מכרה ביום. בתרגומו, "כיום"
 דלחן, כיום שהוא צורך, כך מכור לי מכירה צריכה:
 בכרתך. לפי שהעבודה בצבורות, אמר יעקב: אין רשע

THE ELUCIDATED RASHI

— ולפיכך המנהג היום להברות את האבל בתחלת מאכלו ביצים —
Therefore, it is customary nowadays to feed a mourner hard-boiled eggs at the first meal after the funeral, — שהם עגולים ואין להם פה — **for they too are round and do not have a mouth,** — כן האבל אין — **just as a mourner does not have a mouth.**

The meaning of the statement "a mourner does not have a mouth" is **as we say in Tractate Moed Katan (21b):** — **The entire first three days of shivah a mourner may not reply to anyone's greeting,** — וכל שכן שאינו שואל בתחלה — **and certainly he may not initiate a greeting to anyone;** — משלשה ועד שבעה משיב ואינו שואל וכו' — **from the third until the seventh day of shivah, he may respond if greeted first, but may not initiate a greeting.** — This comment is found in an "old" version of Rashi. [ברש"י י"ן]

31. מכרה ביום — **SELL, AS THIS DAY.**

If Yaakov meant to say that Eisav should sell the *bechorah* "today," he should have said "היום" — מכרה היום. What is the meaning of "כיום", like the day? Rashi explains:

— The verse should be understood as **Targum Onkelos renders it: Like this day,** — **כיום דילחן,** — meaning, **just as the day is clear,** — **כיום שהוא ברור** — **so too, sell me the bechorah with a clear, unequivocal sale.**^[66]

□ בכרתך — **YOUR BECHORAH.**

Why would the righteous Yaakov exploit his brother's exhausted state to take the *bechorah* from him?^[67] Rashi explains:

— **Since the avodah of sacrificing korbanos was originally performed by the firstborns,**^[68] — **אמר יעקב אין רשע זה כדאי שיקריב להקדוש ברוך הוא** — **Yaakov considered it critical to take the bechorah from Eisav, for he said, "This wicked one is not deserving to offer sacrifices to the Holy One, blessed is He!"**^[69] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:13).

66. Yaakov told Eisav: Let the sale be "clear as day" and uncontestable. [Ramban explains Onkelos differently, that כיום דילחן means *as of whichever day*. The *bechorah* entails the right to become the leader of the family upon the death of the father. This would go into effect only once Yitzchak passed away. Thus, Yaakov told Eisav that the sale should take effect *as of whichever day* Yitzchak dies.]

67. *Devek Tov*; see also *Mizrachi*; cf. *Levush HaOrah*.

68. Until the Mishkan was erected, sacrifices to Hashem could be offered on a private *bamah* (altar) with a *bechor* performing the *avodah* (*Mishnah, Zevachim* 112b).

69. Another privilege of the firstborn is that he receives a double portion of the father's inheritance (see *Devarim* 21:17), but Yaakov did not pursue the

³¹ Yaakov said, “Sell, as this day, your bechorah to me.”

³² And Eisav said, “Look, I am going to die, so of what use to me is the bechorah?”

³³ Yaakov said, “Swear to me as this day”; so he swore to him, and he sold his bechorah to Yaakov.

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32. הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת — LOOK, I AM GOING TO DIE.

If Eisav meant that he was selling the *bechorah* because he was dying of hunger or exhaustion, then the verse should have written, הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי מֵת, *Look, I am dying*. What did Eisav mean when he said, אֲנֹכִי “הוֹלֵךְ” לָמוּת, *I am “going” to die*? Rashi explains:

מִתְנַוֵּנָה וְהוֹלֵכֶת הִיא הַבְּכוֹרָה — The privilege of the *bechorah* is something that **will deteriorate and waste away**,^[70] i.e., it is an unstable privilege, שְׁלֹא תִהְיֶה כָּל עֵת הָעֲבוּדָה בְּבְכוֹרוֹת — **for the *avodah* will not be performed by the firstborns for all time**, כִּי שָׂכֵט לִי יִשׁוּל אוֹתָהּ — **because the tribe of Levi will eventually assume [this privilege]**.^[71]

A second explanation of the phrase, *I am “going” to die*:

וְעוֹד — An **additional** explanation is that Eisav said these words as a result of a conversation he had with Yaakov. אָמַר עָשׂוּ מֶה טִיבָה שֶׁל עֲבוּדָה זוֹ — When Yaakov asked Eisav to sell him the *bechorah* because he (Yaakov) wants to do the *avodah*, Eisav said, “What is the nature of this *avodah*?” אָמַר לוֹ: כִּמְה אֲזָהֳרוֹת וְעוֹנָשִׁין וּמִיתוֹת תְּלוּיִין בָּהּ — [Yaakov] replied, “It carries grave responsibility, as **there are numerous prohibitions, punishments, and death penalties associated with it**.” כְּאוֹתָהּ שְׁשֻׁנִּינָה: אֵלּוּ — Yaakov referred to laws **such as that which we have learned** (*Sanhedrin* 22b): **These are the ones who are liable to death** at the hand of Heaven for performing the *avodah* in an unfit state: אֲמַר: אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת — Those who have drunk wine and those with long hair.^[72] אָמַר: אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת — [Eisav] said, “Then I am certainly ‘going’ to die on its account, for I will not be able to follow such strict rules! אִם בֶּן מֶה חֶפֶץ לִי בָּהּ — If so, why would I want it?”

bechorah out of a desire for money. Rather, it was to ensure that Eisav would not perform the *avodah* (*Meisiach Ilmim*). See Insight.

70. [Rashi’s wording is paraphrased from *Sotah* 6a and *Chullin* 57b.]

71. After the firstborns sinned along with the rest of the nation at the incident of the Golden Calf, the privilege of performing the *avodah* was taken away from them and given to the tribe of Levi, who did not sin (Rashi, *Bamidbar* 3:12).

[According to this explanation, אֲנֹכִי, *I*, does not refer to Eisav, but rather to the *bechorah*, and לָמוּת, *to die*, refers to the cessation of this privilege. Eisav was saying, “I — that is, the privilege of *bechorah* with which

I am identified — will eventually come to an end. It is not a privilege worth keeping.” Although this privilege would not cease until centuries later, the very fact that it was not destined to last diminished its value in Eisav’s eyes.]

72. The Torah (*Vayikra* 9:10) explicitly imposes death (at the hand of Heaven) on one who performs the *avodah* of an offering after having drunk wine or another intoxicating beverage. And one who does the *avodah* with long hair is compared (in *Yechezkel* 44:20) to one who does it after drinking wine (see *Sanhedrin* there; *Rambam*, *Hil. Bi’as HaMikdash* 1:8). [“Long hair” refers to thirty days’ growth (*ibid.*).]

❧ **Can Someone Pay to Become a Kohen?** Rashi explains that Yaakov’s interest in buying the *bechorah* was to take over Eisav’s role as the one who could perform the *avodah*. Many commentators wonder how such a sale works. Can a non-Kohen purchase the right to become a Kohen and perform the *avodah*? To answer this question, some draw a distinction between a Kohen and a firstborn. While both perform the *avodah*, Kohanim are designated to do so by a law in the Torah. Therefore, the special status of Kehunah is not transferable. On the other hand, the right of the firstborn to do the *avodah* in the pre-Mishkan era was not because of any law. Rather, it was understood at the time that the firstborn is the leader of the family, and that leadership position entitles him to do the *avodah*. Consequently, although Eisav had the position of family leader by virtue of having been born first, Yaakov was able to “buy” that position from him, and together with it gain the ability to perform the *avodah* (*Gur Aryeh*; *Divrei David*; *Be’er BaSadeh*; see also *Ramban* to v. 34; cf. *Mizrachi*; *Nachalas Yaakov*; *Maskil LeDavid*).

לד וַיַּעֲקֹב יִהְיֶה לְעֹשֵׂי לֶחֶם וְתִבְשִׁיל
דְּטְלוּפָחִין וְאֶכֶל וְשָׁתִי וְקָם וְאָזַל
וְשָׁט עָשׂוּ יֵת בְּכֹרֶתָא: א וְהָיָה
כַּפְנָא בְּאַרְעָא בַר מַכְפָּנָא קְדַמָּא
דִּי הָיָה בְיוֹמֵי אַבְרָהָם וְאָזַל יִצְחָק
לְנֹת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ מִלְכָּא דְּפִלְשֶׁתִּי
לְגַרְרָ: ב וְאֶתְגַּלִּי לָהּ יִי וְאָמַר לָהּ
תַּחֲוֹת לְמַצְרַיִם שְׂרִי בְּאַרְעָא דִּי
אֵימַר לָהּ: ג דּוֹר בְּאַרְעָא הָדָא
וְהָיָה מִימְרֵי בְּסַעֲדָךְ וְאַבְרָכָנָךְ
אַרִּי לָךְ וְלִבְנֶיךָ אֲמֵן יֵת כָּל
אַרְעָתָא הָאֵלִין וְאָקָם יֵת קִנְיָא דִּי
קִנְיִית לְאַבְרָהָם אֲבוֹנָ: ד וְאֶסְגִּי
יֵת בְּנֶיךָ בְּכֹכְבֵי שָׁמַיָא וְאֲמֵן

לד וַיַּעֲקֹב נָתַן לַעֲשׂוֹ לֶחֶם וְנִזְיֵד עַדְשִׁים וַיֹּאכֵל
וַיִּשֶׁת וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיָּבֹז עָשׂוּ אֶת־הַבְּכֹרָה: פ
[כו] א וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ מִלְכָּד הָרָעַב הָרֹאשׁוֹן
אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בִּימֵי אַבְרָהָם וַיֵּלֶךְ יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ
מִלְכ־פְּלִשְׁתִּים גְּרָרָה: ב וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר
אֶל־תָּרֵד מִצְרַיִם שָׁכֵן בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלָיךְ:
ג גּוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְאֵהִיָּה עִמָּךְ וְאַבְרָכָךְ כִּי־
לָךְ וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ אֲתֵן אֶת־כָּל־הָאֶרֶץ הָאֵל וְהַקְמַתִּי
אֶת־הַשְּׂבָעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ:
ד וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנָתַתִּי

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כְּמוֹ הָאֵלֶּה: (ד) וְהַתְּבָרְכוּ בְּזֶרְעֶךָ. אֲדָם אֹמֵר לְבָנוֹ:
יְהִי זֶרְעֶךָ כְּזֶרְעוֹ שֶׁל יִצְחָק, וְכֵן כָּל הַמִּקְרָא, וְהָ אֵל
לְכוּלָּם: "כִּד יִבְרַךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחַמֵּר יִשְׁמַךְ וְגו'" (וְהֵן מֵת,
ט; וְחָף לְעֵינַי הַקָּלֵל מֵיָנוּ כֵּן, "וְהִיטָה הָאֵשֶׁה לְאֵלֶּה"
ובמדבר ה, כז), שֶׁהַמִּקְלָל שֹׁמְרוֹ אֹמֵר: פָּהֵא כְּפִלוּנִית,

(לד) וַיָּבֹז עָשׂוּ. הַעֵיד הַכְּתוּב עַל רָעוֹ שֶׁצִּיָּה עֲבֹדְתָו
שֶׁל מָקוֹם: (ב) אֵל תָּרֵד מִצְרַיִם. שֶׁהִיא דַּעְתּוֹ לָרֵד
לְמִצְרַיִם, כְּמוֹ שֶׁיָּרַד אָבִיו צִיָּי הַרְעֵב; אָמַר לוֹ: "חַל
פָּרַד מִצְרַיִם", שֶׁאֵתָּה עוֹלָה תְּמִימָה, וְחֵין חוֹלָה לְאֶרֶץ
כְּדָלִי לָךְ (בְּרָאשִׁית רַבָּה סד, ג; תַּחֲמוּמָא יֶשֶׁן ו: (ג) הָאֵל.

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34. *EISAV SPURNED THE BECHORAH* — וַיָּבֹז עָשׂוּ.

One might understand this phrase to mean that in addition to the four things enumerated earlier in the verse (*he ate, drank, got up, and left*), Eisav did one more thing, namely, he mocked the *bechorah*, saying that he had made a good deal, because the *bechorah* was in any case a worthless thing.^[73] Rashi, however, explains that the phrase does not mean to enumerate a fifth thing that Eisav did. Rather, it is the Torah commenting about Eisav's behavior:

that — שְׂבִיחָה עֲבֹדְתוֹ שֶׁל מָקוֹם — The verse is testifying to [Eisav's] wickedness, by selling the birthright [Eisav] belittled the *avodah* of Hashem, the Omnipresent.^[74]

26.

2. *DO NOT DESCEND TO EGYPT* — אֵל תָּרֵד מִצְרַיִם.

What prompted this warning by Hashem to Yitzchak?^[1] Rashi explains:

— [Yitzchak's] intention was to descend to Egypt on account of the current famine — כְּמוֹ שֶׁיָּרַד אָבִיו בְּיָמֵי הָרָעַב — just as his father had descended there during the famine in his time (see 12:10 above).^[2] — Therefore, [Hashem] told him, "*DO NOT DESCEND*"

73. This is indeed how *Chizkuni* in his second explanation interprets the phrase. To ensure that people not think him a fool for selling his birthright, Eisav disparaged it afterward, saying that it was not worth much anyway. [See *Meisiach Ilmim*.]

74. The sense of the verse therefore is, "...thus Eisav spurned the *bechorah*" (*Meisiach Ilmim*).

Rashi's explanation is implied by the verse's syntax. If the verse meant to enumerate a fifth thing that Eisav did, it should have said, "and he spurned the *bechorah*" (just as it says, "and he ate, he drank, etc.). The addition of the word "Eisav" ("*Eisav* spurned the *bechorah*")

indicates a shift, from a narration of what Eisav did to the verse's commenting about it. [The placement of the phrase's primary dividing *trop* mark of the verse, under the word וַיֵּלֶךְ also implies this: It sets off the phrase וַיָּבֹז עָשׂוּ אֶת הַבְּכֹרָה as a distinct clause, indicating that this is not a continuation of Eisav's actions.]

1. This is especially puzzling, since Hashem did not prevent Avraham from temporarily leaving Eretz Yisrael for Egypt when famine struck (see 12:10 above). Why was Yitzchak's situation different? (*Yefeh To'ar*).

2. This is learned from the seemingly superfluous phrase, *aside from the first famine that had occurred*

³⁴ Yaakov gave Eisav bread and lentil stew, and he ate, he drank, he got up, and he left; Eisav spurned the bechorah.

26

¹ There was a famine in the land, aside from the first famine that had occurred in the days of Avraham; and Yitzchak went to Avimelech king of the Pelishtim, to Gerar. ² Hashem appeared to him and He said, “Do not descend to Egypt; dwell in the land that I shall tell you. ³ Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Avraham your father.

⁴ And I will increase your offspring, as the stars of the heavens; and I will give

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TO EGYPT, שְׂאֵתָהּ עוֹלָה תְּמִימָה וְאֵין חוּצָה לְאֶרֶץ כְּדַאי לָךְ — **for you are considered an unblemished olah-offering** on account of the *Akeidah*, **and** residing **outside the Land of Israel is not fitting for you**”^[3] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 64:3; *Tanchuma Yashan* §6).

3. הָאֵל — “HA’EL.”

Rashi clarifies the meaning of this term:

הָאֵל — כמו הָאֵלָה has **the same** meaning as “הָאֵלָה”. Both words mean “these.”^[4]

4. וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּנֵיךָ — AND ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH SHALL BLESS THEMSELVES BY YOUR OFFSPRING.

The phrase וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּנֵיךָ could be understood to mean “they shall be blessed *because* (i.e., in the merit) of your offspring.”^[5] Rashi explains that it has a different meaning:

אָדָם אֹמֵר לְבִנוֹ יֵהָיֶה וְנֵרְךָ בְּנֵיךָ שֶׁל יִצְחָק — **A person from among the nations will say to his son** whom he wishes to bless, “**May your offspring be like the offspring of Yitzchak.**”^[6] Thus, the verse means: *all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves (i.e., their children) by using your offspring [as an example].*

וְכֵן בְּכָל הַמִּקְרָא — **Similarly, throughout Scripture** the phrase, *blessed through (or by) you*, has this meaning.^[7]

וְהָאֵל אֵב לְכוּלָּךְ — **And the following verse is the primary illustration** of this meaning **for all** such phrases: “בְּךָ יִבְרַךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר וְשִׁמְךָ וְגו’” — Yaakov blessed Ephraim and Menasheh saying (below, 48:20), *By you shall Israel bless* their children, *saying, “May [God] make you like Ephraim and like Menasheh.”* In that verse, which also says, “*by you shall... bless,*” it is clear that the Jewish people will bless their children by using Ephraim and Menasheh as an example.

וְאֵין בְּנֵיךָ — **And in the context of cursing we find this idea as well**, that a person is used as an example for a curse.

וְהָיְתָה הָאִשָּׁה לְאֵלָה — **For example, the Torah writes regarding the fate of the sotah (Bamidbar 5:27), And the woman shall become a curse,** שְׁהִמְקַלֵּל שׁוֹנְאוֹ אֹמֵר: תְּהֵא כְּפִלֹנִית — **meaning that one who curses his enemy will say, “May you be like So-and-so!”**, i.e., may the

in the days of Avraham, which implies that Yitzchak intended to go down to Egypt in response to the current famine just as his father had done in response to the famine that occurred in his time. That is, Yitzchak thought to *learn* from his father’s earlier conduct that it was appropriate to leave Eretz Yisrael in this situation (*Gur Aryeh*; see *Ramban*; *Tzeidah LaDerech*).

3. When Yitzchak was bound on the altar on *Har HaMoriyah* to be sacrificed as an *olah*, his body became sanctified as if he was an *olah* offering (see Rashi above, 22:2 וְהֵעֵלֵהוּ, and 25:26 שְׁשִׁים (דִּיּוּה בִּן שְׁשִׁים) if it is removed from the Courtyard of the Beis HaMikdash, Yitzchak would similarly become “defiled” if he left the Holy Land (see *Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid.* and *Mizrachi*; see further, *Be’er BaSadeh*.)

4. The word הָאֵל here is a shortened version of הָאֵלָה, meaning “these.” [See similarly above, 19:8 with Rashi, and 19:25.]

[Elsewhere, the word אֵל means “strong,” and that is how the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 64:3) interprets it here — i.e., strong lands. Rashi teaches that this is not the simple meaning; rather, the verse means “these” lands. See *Ba’er Heitev* and *Minchas Yehudah* for further discussion.]

5. This is in fact how Onkelos translates this phrase (here and in 12:3 above; see note 25 to Rashi there).

6. Yitzchak’s offspring will be so greatly admired that they will be used as a prototype of success among the nations when they bless their own children.

7. Whenever a verse uses a form of the verb בָּרַךְ, *to bless*, followed by a word that begins with the *beis* prefix (as

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to your offspring all of these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your offspring. ⁵ Because Avraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguard, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs.”

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Commandments refers to **things which**, even **had they not been written** in the Torah, **are appropriate to be commanded**, כגון גזל ושפיכות דמים — **such as the prohibitions against theft and murder**^[12] (Yoma 67b).

□ חֻקֵּי — **MY DECREES.**

Rashi explains how this term (“*decrees*”) differs from the previous one (“*commandments*”):

דברים שגזר ה'רע ואומות העולם משיבין עליהם — These are the **matters** in the Torah **which the yetzer hara and the nations of the world challenge** because they cannot be explained logically, כגון אכילת חזיר — **such as the prohibitions against eating pork and wearing shaatnez, for which there are no reasons known to man.** אלא גזירת המלך והקותיו על עבדיו — **Rather, they are the King's edicts and His decrees upon His servants**, which must be observed whether or not they are understood.^[13]

□ וְתוֹרָהּ — **MY TORAHs.**

Rashi explains this final term, and clarifies why it is in the plural (“*Torahs*”):

לְהַבִּיאַת תּוֹרָה שֶׁבַעַל פֶּה — The plural form comes **to include the Oral Torah** as well, that is, הַלֵּכָה לְמֹשֶׁה — the **Law** that was orally taught by Hashem **to Moshe at Sinai**. Thus, Avraham kept both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah before they were given to the Jewish people^[14] (Yoma 28b; Bereishis Rabbah 64:4).

My voice), we do not find that Hashem issued Avraham any other commands. What, then, does the verse mean when it says that Avraham kept Hashem's *commandments*?

12. In most cases, the term מצוות includes all types of commandments. However, when the verse splits the commandments into two categories, מצוות and חֻקִּים, as it does here, the term מצוות refers to the commandments of the Torah that are also dictated by logic and morality, while the term חֻקִּים refers to the mitzvos whose reasons are not understood by man, as Rashi explains in his next comment.

13. See also Rashi to Shemos 15:26 and Vayikra 18:4, 19:19.

14. *Ramban*. That Avraham observed the Written Torah is evident from the words “*commandments*” and “*decrees*,” as Rashi explained above. The word “*Torahs*,” then, must be including a different category — the Oral Torah (*Ri Kanizal*; cf. *Mizrachi*).

[According to Rashi's interpretation of the four categories that Avraham observed, the verse lists Rabbinic safeguards before Biblical obligations, which seems odd. See *Gur Aryeh*, *Levush HaOrah*, and *Maskil LeDavid* for possible reasons for this.] See Insight.

§ **To What Extent Did the Patriarchs Observe the Torah?** The commentators ask: If Avraham [and the other Avos as well — see Yoma 28b and Rashi to v. 12 below, 27:9, 33:19, and 46:27] kept the Torah even before it was given, why do we find instances in which they apparently violated its laws (e.g., Yaakov married two sisters)? *Ramban* answers that since the Avos were not commanded to observe the Torah and kept its laws only voluntarily (כְּמִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ מִצְוָה וְעוֹשֶׂהָ), they strictly adhered to its laws only while inside the Holy Land. Outside Eretz Yisrael, however, they sometimes acted in ways that would eventually become prohibited after the Torah was given. This, *Ramban* explains elsewhere (Vayikra 18:25), is the reason that as soon as Yaakov re-entered Eretz Yisrael, Rachel died, since she was the sister he had married second, in “violation” of the Torah's prohibition.

Rashi's view, however, seems to be that Yaakov *did* observe the Torah even outside of Eretz Yisrael (see Rashi to 32:5 below and the Insight there). Some commentators therefore suggest the following answer: Every prohibition in the Torah has a reason. In most cases the Torah does not reveal the reason to us, so that a person should not mistakenly think that the reason does not apply in his particular case, and allow himself — wrongly — to transgress that prohibition (see *Sanhedrin* 21b). The Avos, however, were not *commanded* to keep the Torah, as it had not yet been given. Rather, they discerned the Torah's mitzvos through their great wisdom, along with the *reasons* for the mitzvos, and they fulfilled those mitzvos that they knew Hashem wanted them to keep. Yaakov was allowed to marry Leah and Rachel since he possessed knowledge of the reason for the prohibition against marrying two sisters, and knew, through his great wisdom, that Hashem did not want him to keep this particular mitzvah (*Beurei Maharai*; *Minchas Yehudah*; see also *Nefesh HaChaim* 1:21). For other approaches, see *Gur Aryeh* to 46:10; *Divrei David*; *Maharsha* to Yoma 28b; *Or HaChaim* to 49:3.

ו יתיב יצחק בגרר: וישאלו אנשי אתרא על עיסק אתתה ויאמר אחתי היא ארי דחיל למימר אתתי דלמא יקטלגני אנשי אתרא על רבקה ארי שפירת חיזו היא: ח ונהו כד סגיאנו לה תמן יומיא ואסתכי אבימלך מלכא דפלשתאי מן חרבא וחזא והא יצחק מחזי עם רבקה אתתה: ט ויקרא אבימלך ליצחק ויאמר ברם הא אתתך היא ואיכדן אמרת אחתי היא ויאמר לה יצחק ארי אמרית דלמא אתקטל (נ"א: אימות) עלה: י ויאמר אבימלך מה דא עבדת לנא כנעיר פון שכיב דמיוחד בעמא עם אתתך ואיתימתא עלנא חובא:

שני וישוב יצחק בגרר: וישאלו אנשי המקום לאשתו ויאמר אחתי היא כי ירא לאמר אשתי פן יהרגני אנשי המקום על רבקה כייטובת מראה הוא: ח ויהי כי ארכו לו שם הימים וישקף אבימלך מלך פלשתים בעד החלון וירא והנה יצחק מצחק את רבקה אשתו: ט ויקרא אבימלך ליצחק ויאמר אף הנה אשתך הוא ואיך אמרת אחתי הוא ויאמר אליו יצחק כי אמרתי פן אמות עליה: י ויאמר אבימלך מה זאת עשית לנו כמעט שכב אחד העם את אשתך והבאת עלינו אשם:

רע

(ז) לאשתו. על אשתו, כמו "אמרי לי אחי הוא" (ועל כ, יג: (ח) כי ארכו. אמר: מעתה אין לי לדאוג, מאחר שלא אנסוה עד עכשיו, ולא נזהר להיות נשמר ובראשית רבה סד, ט: וישקף אבימלך וגו'. ראהו משמש משתו (סס: (ז) אחד העם. המיוחד צעט (אונקלוס), זה המלך (תרגום יונתן): והבאת עלינו אשם. אם שכב, כפר הבאת אשם עלינו:

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7. לאשתו — THE PEOPLE OF THE PLACE ASKED “*LISHTO*,” AND HE SAID, “SHE IS MY SISTER.”

The literal meaning of the word לאשתו is “to his wife.” But if the people of the place were speaking to Rivkah, why would Yitzchak respond?^[15] Rashi explains:

על אשתו — The verse means that they asked “**about his wife**.”^[16] The *lamed* prefix of לאשתו is used here in place of על, *about*. — כמו “אמרי לי אחי הוא” — This is **similar to** the verse in which Avraham told Sarah, say “**about**” me (לי): **he is my brother** (20:13 above). In that verse as well, the word לי, which usually means “to me,” is translated as “*about me*.”^[17]

8. כי ארכו — AND IT HAPPENED, WHEN HIS DAYS THERE LENGTHENED, THAT AVIMELECH, KING OF THE PELISHTIM, GAZED DOWN THROUGH THE WINDOW AND SAW THAT BEHOLD! YITZCHAK WAS JESTING WITH HIS WIFE, RIVKAH.

Rashi explains why the verse mentions that this occurred after Yitzchak had been in Gerar for a long time:

אמר: מעתה אין לי לדאוג מאחר שלא אנסוה עד עכשיו — The previous verse says that Yitzchak was initially afraid to say that Rivkah was his wife. However, after some time passed, **he said** to himself, “**From now on I do not have to worry, since we have been here a while and they did not forcibly take her (and kill me) until now.**” — He therefore was not careful to be on guard to avoid acting with her as husband and wife^[18] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 64:5).

□ וישקף אבימלך וגו' — AVIMELECH, KING OF THE PELISHTIM, GAZED DOWN THROUGH THE WINDOW AND SAW THAT BEHOLD! YITZCHAK WAS JESTING WITH HIS WIFE, RIVKAH.

It is common for a person to act lightheartedly with his sister. How, then, did Avimelech know that Rivkah

15. *Maharik; Sifsei Chachamim*; cf. *Maskil LeDavid*.

16. That is, the people asked Yitzchak about her identity and marital status. Onkelos similarly translates: וישאלו אנשי אתרא על עיסק אתתה: “The people of the place asked *about the matter of his wife*.”

17. See Rashi there.

18. [See Rashi’s next comment.] The verse does not mean that Avimelech gazed at Yitzchak and Rivkah *because* they were there a long time, or that Yitzchak jested with his wife *because* they were there a long time, since these things had nothing to do with the length of time they were there. Rather, the intent is that Avimelech was able to see Yitzchak and Rivkah

⁶ So Yitzchak settled in Gerar. ⁷ The people of the place asked about his wife, and he said, “She is my sister” — for he was afraid to say “my wife” — “lest the men of the place kill me on account of Rivkah for she is of fine appearance!”

⁸ And it happened, when his days there lengthened, that Avimelech, king of the Pelishtim, gazed down through the window and saw that behold! Yitzchak was jesting with his wife, Rivkah. ⁹ So Avimelech summoned Yitzchak and said, “But indeed she is your wife! How could you say, ‘She is my sister?’”

Yitzchak said to him, “Because I said that perhaps I would die because of her.”

¹⁰ Avimelech said, “What is this that you have done to us? One of the people has nearly lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us!”

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was in fact Yitzchak’s wife, and not his sister, just because he was “jesting” with her?^[19] Rashi explains: **וְרָאָהּ מִשְׁמֵשׁ מִשְׁתָּו** — The word **מִצְחָק** does not mean “*jesting*” in our verse; it means acting in an intimate way. **[Avimelech] saw [Yitzchak] having marital relations** with Rivkah — and this is how he knew that they were married^[20] (*Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid.*).

10. הָעָם — ONE OF THE PEOPLE.

In its simplest sense, the phrase, *one of the people*, refers to any citizen of the land.^[21] But if so, why would Avimelech say that had such a person lain with Rivkah, it would have brought guilt, “upon us,” and not just “upon *him*”? Rashi explains:

הַמְיֻחָד בָּעָם — The phrase **אֶחָד הָעָם** means **the most distinguished one among the people** (*Onkelos*), **זֶה הַמֶּלֶךְ** — **that is, the king** (*Targum Yonasan*). Avimelech was thus referring to himself, and saying that if *he* had violated Rivkah, it would have brought guilt upon all his kingdom.^[22]

וְהָבֵאתָ עָלֵינוּ אָשָׁם — **AND YOU WOULD HAVE BROUGHT GUILT UPON US.**

The word **וְהָבֵאתָ** can be understood either in the future tense (*and you will bring*) or in the past tense (*and you have brought*).^[23] Rashi explains the correct meaning here:

אִם שָׁכַב — If [one of the people] would have lain with your wife **בְּכֶר הָבֵאתָ אָשָׁם עָלֵינוּ — you would**

behaving like husband and wife only because they had already been there a long time, and Yitzchak had therefore let his guard down (*Mizrachi*).

19. *Ri Kanizal*; see also *Mizrachi*.

20. **מִצְחָק** is also used in this sense in 21:9 above (see Rashi there) and 39:14, 17 below (*Rashbam*; *Gur Aryeh*; see also *Chizkuni*).

The commentators wonder: Could Yitzchak have possibly been intimate with his wife in full view of Avimelech? Was this not a breach of modesty? Some explain that Avimelech did not actually see Yitzchak having relations through the window, as Yitzchak certainly closed it for privacy. Rather, the word **וַיִּרְא** (literally, *and he saw*) here means “*and he understood*” (see Rashi to 18:2 above, **וַיִּרְא**). That is, when Avimelech saw Yitzchak seclude himself in a room with Rivkah and close the window — something he had not done earlier when he was living under the pretext that Rivkah was his sister — Avimelech *understood* that Yitzchak must be having relations with Rivkah. This also explains why Rashi comments on the words **וַיִּשְׁקֶה אֶבְיִמֶלֶךְ** (as opposed to the word **מִצְחָק**). Rashi is teaching that the meaning is not that Avimelech gazed through *his* window; rather, Avimelech gazed at *Yitzchak’s* closed window, and thereby realized that Rivkah was his

wife (*Amar N’kei*; *Levush HaOrah*; *Nachalas Yaakov*; see also *Chizkuni*; *Be’er BaSadeh*). [For another approach, see *Maskil LeDavid*.]

[Commentators further ask how Yitzchak had relations during the day and in a time of famine, which is usually prohibited (see *Niddah* 16b-17a and Rashi to 41:50 below). For discussion, see *Chizkuni*, *Mizrachi*, *Amar N’Kei*, et al.]

21. This is indeed how many Rishonim interpret this phrase; see *Ramban* (v. 1); *Radak*; *Chizkuni*.

22. A nation can be held accountable for the sins of its leader, as we find that when Pharaoh and Avimelech forcibly took Sarah, all the members of their household were punished; see above, 12:17 and 20:9 (*Amar N’Kei*; *Imrei Shefer*).

Alternatively, Avimelech was explaining why he had nearly sinned with Rivkah: Perhaps no one else would have dared to take her by force, but I am the king, and it is therefore not necessary for me to ask permission to take her, since it is an *honor* for her to be married to me! (*Sforno*; see also *Maskil LeDavid*). [For other approaches, see *Nachalas Yaakov*; *Be’er BaSadeh*; *Sifsei Chachamim*.]

23. Action in the future may be indicated in Hebrew

יא וַיֵּצֵא אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר הַנִּינֵעַ בְּאִישׁ
הַזֶּה וּבְאִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת יוּמָת: יב וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בְּאֶרֶץ
הַחֹמָה וַיִּמְצָא בִּשְׁנָה הַהוּא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ
יְהוָה: שליש יג וַיִּגְדֹּל הָאִישׁ וַיְלֶךְ הָלוֹךְ וַיִּגְדֹּל עַד
כִּי־גָדֹל מְאֹד: יד וַיְהִי־לּוֹ מְקַנְה־צֹאן וּמְקַנְה בָּקָר

יא וַיֵּצֵא אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר הַנִּינֵעַ בְּאִישׁ
הַזֶּה וּבְאִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת יוּמָת: יב וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בְּאֶרֶץ
הַחֹמָה וַיִּמְצָא בִּשְׁנָה הַהוּא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ
יְהוָה: שליש יג וַיִּגְדֹּל הָאִישׁ וַיְלֶךְ הָלוֹךְ וַיִּגְדֹּל עַד
כִּי־גָדֹל מְאֹד: יד וַיְהִי־לּוֹ מְקַנְה־צֹאן וּמְקַנְה בָּקָר

רש"י

שְׁחֲמֻדָּה פְּמָה רְאוּיָה לְעֵשׂוֹת, וְעֵשָׂה עַל חַחַת שְׁחֲמֻדָּה
מֵאָה (אוּנְקָלוֹס). וְרִצְוֹתֵינוּ אֲמָרוּ אֲמָד זֶה לְמַעֲשֵׂרוֹת הָיָה
(בְּרַחֲשִׁית רַבָּה טז: (יג) בִּי גִדֹּל מְאֹד. שְׁהִי אוֹמְרִים:
יִצְחָק פְּרֻדֹּתָיו שֶׁל יִתְחַק וְלֹא כִסְפוֹ וְזִבְבוֹ שֶׁל אֲבִימֶלֶךְ
(טז טז)

(יב) בְּאֶרֶץ הַחֹמָה. חָף עַל פִּי שְׁחִינָה חֲשׂוֹבָה °כְּחָרָן
יִזְרָחֵל עֲלִמָּה, כְּחָרָן שְׂבַעָה גוֹיִם: בִּשְׁנָה הַהוּא. חָף
עַל פִּי שְׁחִינָה כְּתֻבָּה, שְׁחִינָה שְׁנַת רְעֻבּוֹ: °בְּאֶרֶץ
הַחֹמָה בִּשְׁנָה הַהוּא. שְׁחִינָה לְמָה, לֹמֵר שֶׁחָרָן קָשָׁה
וְהַשְׁנָה קָשָׁה. בְּרַחֲשִׁית רַבָּה (טז, טז: מְאֹד שְׁעָרִים.

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already have brought guilt upon us.^[24]

12. בְּאֶרֶץ הַחֹמָה — YITZCHAK SOWED IN THAT LAND.

It is obvious that Yitzchak sowed in “that land.” Why, then, does the verse stress this fact? Rashi explains:

אָף עַל פִּי שְׁחִינָה חֲשׂוֹבָה בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲצֻמָּה — Hashem blessed Yitzchak, and he reaped a bountiful harvest *in that land* of Gerar **even though** [Gerar] is not as esteemed as the main part of Eretz Yisrael itself, *בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁבַעָה גוֹיִם* — meaning, **as the land of the seven Canaanite nations.**^[25]

□ בִּשְׁנָה הַהוּא — IN THAT YEAR.

Here, too, it is obvious that Yitzchak reaped his harvest in “that year.” Rashi explains why the verse mentions this:

אָף עַל פִּי שְׁחִינָה כְּתֻבָּה — Yitzchak was blessed with a bountiful crop **even though** [that year] was not typical, *שְׁהִינָה שְׁנַת רְעֻבּוֹן* — as it was a year of famine (as related in v. 1).

□ בְּאֶרֶץ הַחֹמָה — IN THAT LAND... IN THAT YEAR.

Rashi sums up the twofold wonder of Yitzchak’s harvest that year:

לֹמֵר — It means **Why** does the verse mention **both** “in that land” and “in that year”? — שְׁחִינָה לְמָה — **that both the land was harsh** (i.e., not as fertile as Eretz Yisrael proper) **and the year was harsh** (i.e., it was a time of famine), and yet Yitzchak still reaped a tremendous harvest. — *בְּרַחֲשִׁית רַבָּה* — This comment is found in *Bereishis Rabbah* (64:6).^[26]

in one of two ways, either by using the future tense of the verb, or by using the past tense and prefixing a *vav*, known as the *conversive vav* (*conversive vav*) to the word. The *vav* serves the purpose of converting the tense to the future. Thus the word *הָבֵאתָ*, *you brought*, when prefixed with a *vav* (*וְהָבֵאתָ*), can mean either “and you brought,” if the *vav* is simply the conjunction “and,” or “and you will bring,” if the *vav* is a *conversive vav*. The meaning in each case is determined by context.

24. Since the word *שָׁכַב* is past tense, the meaning of *וְהָבֵאתָ* is obviously also past tense. Furthermore, Avimelech would not be speaking about the future (i.e., that if someone *would* sin with Rivkah, it *would* bring guilt upon everyone) because now that it was known that Rivkah was Yitzchak’s wife, no one would molest her (*Nachalas Yaakov; Be’er Yitzchak*).

25. Rashi above (v. 2) stated that because of Yitzchak’s status as an *olah*, Hashem told him not to leave Eretz Yisrael but to remain in Gerar, in the land of the Pelishtim. From this it is clear that Gerar is considered part of Eretz Yisrael. Nevertheless, Rashi here explains that Gerar is not the *primary* part of Eretz Yisrael, and as such is not blessed with the same fertility as the land of the seven nations. [The Pelishtim were not one of the seven nations; see *Devarim* 7:1.] The verse therefore emphasizes that Yitzchak realized an extraordinary harvest even though he had not planted in the most blessed part of Eretz Yisrael (*Mizrachi; Ba’er Heitev*; see also *Rabbeinu Bachya*).

26. Rashi repeats this to teach that the land in which Yitzchak planted was not just barren, but was actually more barren than the surrounding lands. Similarly,

¹¹ Avimelech then commanded all the people saying, “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

¹² Yitzchak sowed in that land, and in that year he realized a hundredfold; and Hashem blessed him. ¹³ The man became great, and kept becoming greater until he was very great. ¹⁴ He had flocks and herds

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□ מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים — A HUNDREDFOLD.

The verse says that the field yielded a *hundredfold* (a hundred times), but does not explain a hundredfold of what. Rashi explains:

שְׁאִמְדוּהָ כְּמָה רְאוּיָהּ לַעֲשׂוֹת — They estimated how much [the field] could be expected to produce, and it produced a hundred times the estimated amount^[27] (*Onkelos*).

Rashi explains why Yitzchak assessed the field in the first place:^[28]

וְרַבּוֹתֵינוּ אָמְרוּ אוֹמֵד וְהָיָה לְמַעֲשָׂרוֹת הָיָה — Our Sages said that this estimation was done for the purpose of separating tithes (*maasros*)^[29] (*Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid*).

13. בִּי גָדַל מְאֹד — THE MAN BECAME GREAT, AND KEPT BECOMING GREATER UNTIL HE WAS VERY GREAT.

The verse already said that Yitzchak became great, i.e., wealthy. What is added with the conclusion of our verse, *until he was very great*? Rashi explains:

שֶׁהָיוּ אוֹמְרִים — The phrase *he was very great* means that everything he owned was a source of great blessing, so that [people] would say: וְכָל פְּרוֹדוֹתָיו שֶׁל יִצְחָק וְלֹא כֶסֶף וְזָהָב שֶׁל אַבְימֶלֶךְ — “Better the dung of Yitzchak’s mules than the silver and gold of Avimelech!”^[30] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 64:7).

that year of famine was more severe than other years of famine. Yet despite this, Yitzchak’s crop thrived (*Maskil LeDavid*; cf. *Be’er BaSadeh*).

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 66:6) quoted by Rashi concludes: “and had it been a *good* [land and year], how much more [would Yitzchak have harvested]!”

27. The word שְׁעָרִים does not mean *gates*, but *estimations, assessments* (related to the word הִשְׁעָרָה). The field’s output was a hundred times what had been originally estimated (see *Mizrachi* and *Yefeh To’ar*).

28. The Gemara (*Taanis* 8b) teaches that Divine blessing does not take effect upon things that are already weighed, measured, or numbered. Why, then, did Yitzchak assess how much his field was expected to produce — would that not prevent his crops from being blessed? (*Mizrachi*; *Gur Aryeh*).

29. Yitzchak wished to know how much the field would

yield in order to know how much *maasros* (tithes) he would need to separate. [*Maaser* must be exactly a tenth of the crop, no more and no less; see *Avos* 1:16 and *Rambam, Hil. Maaser* 1:14.] Since he was doing this to perform a mitzvah, there was no loss of blessing. On the contrary, the Gemara (*Taanis* 9a) promises wealth to one who is careful to separate tithes. This is alluded to in the conclusion of the verse, which states: *and Hashem blessed him* (*Yefeh To’ar*; *Lekach Tov*).

[*Rambam (Hil. Melachim* 9:1) writes that Yitzchak was actually the one who introduced the mitzvah of *maaser* to the Jewish people. Rashi to 14:20 above, however, implies that Avraham was the first to perform this mitzvah.] See *Insight*.

30. People ascribed supernatural powers to everything Yitzchak owned, saying that even the dung of his mules was more valuable (as fertilizer) than all the

§ **Yitzchak’s Separation of Maasros** Rashi’s comment seems difficult, because why would Yitzchak’s intention to separate *maaser* lead him to estimate *in advance* how much the field would yield? Why would he not simply wait until the actual harvest and then measure the crops precisely? What is more, the Mishnah (*Avos* 1:16) warns that one should *not* separate *maaser* based on estimation! Some commentators therefore prefer a reading found in some editions: וְהָיָה לְמַעֲשָׂרוֹת הָיָה, *this [measurement] was for maaseros* (omitting the word אוֹמֵד, *estimation*). According to this version, Rashi means that at the time of *harvest* — after having discovered that his field produced a hundred times more than he had estimated — Yitzchak measured the produce for the purpose of separating *maaser*. Indeed, *Bereishis Rabbah* 64:6, which is Rashi’s source, makes this comment in regard to the measurement of the harvest (*Rash Almoreshnino*; *Meisiach Ilmim*).

Others explain that Yitzchak did in fact estimate what his field would yield before the harvest. The reason he did so was to separate *maaser ani* (the poor man’s tithe) immediately, even before the produce was harvested. Since it was a year of famine, Yitzchak wished to distribute the tithe to the needy as soon as possible (*Riva*; *Ri Kanizal*; *Chizkuni al Rashi*).

וּפְלִחְנָא (ג"א: וְעִבְדָּה) סְגִי וְקִנְיָאוֹ
 בַּהּ פְּלִשְׁתֵּינִי: טו וְכָל בִּירֵי דִי חֲפְרוּ
 עֲבָדֵי אֲבוּהִי בְיוֹמֵי אֲבָרְהָם אֲבוּהִי
 טמוֹנוֹן פְּלִשְׁתֵּינִי וּמְלוֹנוֹן עֲפָרָא:
 טו וְאָמַר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לְיִצְחָק אֵיזִיל
 מִעֲמֻנָּא אֲרִי תִקְפְּתָא מִנָּנָא לְחֲדָא:
 יו וְאִזֵּל מִתַּמָּן יִצְחָק וְשָׂרָא בְנַחֲלָא
 דְגֵרָר וַיִּתֵּב תַּמָּן: יח וַתֵּב יִצְחָק
 וַחֲפָר יֵת בִּירֵי דְמֵיָא דִי חֲפְרוּ בְיוֹמֵי
 אֲבָרְהָם אֲבוּהִי וְטַמוֹנוֹן פְּלִשְׁתֵּינִי
 בְּתַר דְּמִית אֲבָרְהָם וְקָרָא לְהוֹן שְׁמֵהּ
 בְּשִׁמְהוֹן דִּי הֵוָה קָרִי לְהוֹן אֲבוּהִי:

וְעִבְדָּה רַבָּה וַיִּקְנֵאוּ אֹתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים: טו וְכָל־הַבְּאֵרֹת
 אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ עֲבָדֵי אָבִיו בְּיָמֵי אֲבָרְהָם אֲבִיו סִתְּמוּם
 פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּמְלְאוּם עָפָר: טו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶל־
 יִצְחָק לֵךְ מֵעֲמֻנּוֹ כִּי־עֲצַמַת מַמְנוֹ מָאֹד: יז וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם
 יִצְחָק וַיֵּחָן בְּנַחֲל־גֵרָר וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם: יח וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק
 וַיִּחְפֹּר | אֶת־בְּאֵרֹת הַחַיִּים אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ בְּיָמֵי אֲבָרְהָם
 אָבִיו וַיִּסְתְּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אֲבָרְהָם
 וַיִּקְרָא לָהֶן שְׁמוֹת בְּשֵׁמֹת אֲשֶׁר־קָרָא לָהֶן אָבִיו:

רש"י

3. "טמונון פלשתאי", לשון סתימה, וזלשון מִשְׁנֶה: מְטַמְטֵם
 אֶת הַלֵּב (פסחים מ:). (יז) בְּנַחֲל גֵרָר. לחוק מן העיר:
 (יח) וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיִּחְפֹּר. הבחירות אשר חפרו בְּיָמֵי אֲבָרְהָם
 אָבִיו וּפְלִשְׁתִּים סִתְּמוּם קודם שֶׁנֶּסֶם יִצְחָק מִגֵּרָר, חֲזַר וַיִּחְפֹּר:

(יז) וְעִבְדָּה רַבָּה. פעולה רבה (אונקלוס), זלשון ל"ט
 אוֹצְרֵינִי"א. "עבודה" מִשְׁמַע עבודה רחבה, "עבודה" מִשְׁמַע
 פעולה רבה: (טו) סִתְּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים. מפני שֶׁאֲמָרוּ:
 תְּקַלָּה הֵם לָנוּ מִפְּנֵי הַגִּיטוֹת הַבָּאוֹת עָלֵינוּ (תוספתא סוטה י,

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14. **וְעִבְדָּה רַבָּה — AND “AVUDAH RABBAH.”**

Rashi defines this unusual phrase:

— The word עִבְדָּה is related to עֲבוּדָה, *work*. Thus, the phrase עִבְדָּה רַבָּה means **an abundance of enterprise**, many types of work; i.e., Yitzchak's abundant possessions generated many forms of work (Onkelos). — In Old French, this is translated as *ouvraine*.^[31] — **עֲבוּדָה** מִשְׁמַע — The word “עֲבוּדָה” implies a **single task**, whereas the word “עִבְדָּה” implies an **abundance of work**.^[32]

15. **סִתְּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים — THE PELISHTIM STOPPED UP.**

The previous verse concludes, *and the Pelishtim envied him*. It would thus seem that the Pelishtim stopped up the wells that Avraham previously dug because they were jealous of Yitzchak. But why, then, did they stop up the wells and not simply take them for themselves?^[33] Rashi therefore explains that the Pelishtim did this for a different reason:

— The Pelishtim stopped up the wells **because they said, “They are a hazard for us, because of the armies that come to wage war against us”**^[34] (*Tosefta, Sotah 10:2*).

gold and silver of Avimelech, for using that dung would bring blessing (*Mizrachi*; see also *Be’er BaSadeh*). Alternatively, this was an exaggeration: Yitzchak was so wealthy and blessed that people — seeking a way to describe his wealth — would say that the dung of his animals was worth more than all the riches of Avimelech (*Divrei David*; *Meisiach Ilmim*).

31. In Modern French, *oeuvre*, “work.”

32. The word עֲבוּדָה denotes a specific task, and the plural form for this word is עֲבוּדוֹת, *tasks* (or עֲבוּדוֹת רַבּוֹ, *many tasks*). The word עִבְדָּה, by contrast, is used to describe something that *is worked*, like a field or animal. The phrase עִבְדָּה רַבָּה thus means that Yitzchak had many possessions that required various forms of work, *much industry* (see *Be’er Yitzchak*; *Haamek Davar*; but see *Yosef Hallel*).

[Some explain that עֲבוּדָה refers specifically to agricultural work, or land that needs to be worked (see *Rashbam* and *Sforno*). Rashi follows Onkelos, who renders this וּפְלִחְנָא סְגִי, *and much enterprise*.]

33. *Gur Aryeh*. Furthermore, these wells were dug many years earlier by Avraham, and were stopped up by the Pelishtim after Avraham's death (as stated in v. 18 below) — well before Yitzchak arrived in Gerar. Thus, their envy of Yitzchak could not have been the cause of them stopping up these wells (*Mizrachi*).

34. They argued that the wells in the fields around Gerar would provide water to besieging armies (*Minchas Yehudah*; *Maskil LeDavid*).

Some commentators explain, unlike *Mizrachi* cited above, that even according to Rashi, the real reason the

and an abundance of enterprise; and the Pelishtim envied him.

¹⁵ All the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Avraham his father, the Pelishtim stopped up, and filled them with earth. ¹⁶ And Avimelech said to Yitzchak, "Go away from us for you have become much mightier than we!" ¹⁷ So Yitzchak went from there and encamped in the valley of Gerar, and dwelled there. ¹⁸ And Yitzchak dug anew the wells of water that they had dug in the days of Avraham his father, and the Pelishtim had stopped them up after Avraham died; and he called them by the same names that his father had called them.

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Rashi now addresses the meaning of the word סְתָמוּם, and explains how Targum Onkelos is to be understood in light of the above explanation:

לְשׁוֹן סְתִימָה — "טַמּוֹנוֹן פְּלִשְׁתִּי" — That which Targum Onkelos translates the phrase סְתָמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים as "טַמּוֹנוֹן פְּלִשְׁתִּי" is an expression of "closing up," i.e., the Pelishtim closed and stopped up the wells, from the root טָמַם. **ובלשון משנה: מְטַמֵּם אֶת הַלֵּב — And in the Mishnaic language** we also find a word that has the root טָמַם and means *to stop up*: "it clogs (מְטַמֵּם) the heart"^[35] (*Pesachim* 42a).

17. בְּנַחֲל גֵרָר — IN THE VALLEY OF GERAR.

It would seem that the valley of Gerar was right outside the city of Gerar (hence its name). But Avimelech had told Yitzchak, "Go away from us," so why would Yitzchak move close by? Rashi therefore explains:

רְחוֹק מִן הָעִיר — The valley of Gerar was **far from the city** of Gerar.^[36]

18. וַיִּשְׁבּ וַיַּחְפֹּר — AND YITZCHAK DUG ANEW THE WELLS OF WATER THAT THEY HAD DUG IN THE DAYS OF AVRAHAM HIS FATHER, AND THE PELISHTIM HAD STOPPED THEM UP.

The verse appears to say that after Yitzchak moved from Gerar to the valley of Gerar (v. 17), he redug the wells that his father Avraham had previously dug and that had been stopped up by the Pelishtim. But since these wells were in Gerar itself (as implied by v. 15),^[37] how could Yitzchak have redug them *after* he relocated to the valley? Rashi therefore explains that the verse should be read differently:

הַבְּאֵרוֹת אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ בִּימֵי אֲבִרָהֶם וּפְלִשְׁתִּים סְתָמוּם — Regarding **the wells that they had dug in the times of Avraham his father, and that the Pelishtim had** subsequently **stopped up** (as stated in v. 15), **קֹדֶם שֶׁיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק מִגֵּרָר חֹזֵר וַיַּחְפֹּר — Yitzchak dug them anew before he traveled away from Gerar** to the valley of Gerar.^[38]

Pelishtim stopped up the wells was because they *were* envious (as many Rishonim explain; see *Ramban* to v. 18; *Rabbeinu Bachya*; *Ralbag*). However, to disguise their true motives, they *claimed* that there was a valid reason to stop up the wells (*Nachalas Yaakov*; *Gur Aryeh* to v. 18).

35. One might have understood Onkelos' word טַמּוֹנוֹן as being from the root טָמַם, meaning *to conceal* (as in וַיִּטְמֵן in וַיִּטְמֵן אֶתְּמָם, *and Yaakov hid them*; below, 35:4). This would mean that the Pelishtim hid the wells and guarded them so that only they could use them. If this were the meaning, Onkelos would be saying that the Pelishtim were interested in holding the wells for themselves, not in withholding them from their enemies — which would not conform with what Rashi just said. Rashi therefore tells us that Onkelos' term טַמּוֹנוֹן means "stopped up," which fits with what Rashi has said (*Mizrachi*).

As for why Rashi rejects the alternate understanding

of the term, it is because verse 18, which according to Rashi speaks of the same wells, says that Yitzchak *dug* the wells anew, whereas if our verse meant that the Pelishtim hid the wells, verse 18 should have said that Yitzchak *exposed* them (*Meisiach Ilmim*; cf. *Sefer Zikaron*).

36. Although it was not in Gerar proper, it was called "the valley of Gerar" because it was part of the jurisdiction of Gerar (*Nachalas Yaakov*; cf. *Mizrachi*; *Sefer Zikaron*). [*Ramban*, however, disagrees and holds that this was not a valley, but the name of a place called Nachal-gerar.]

37. That verse mentions that these wells were first dug by Avraham, who lived in the city of Gerar (20:1 above), not the valley of Gerar (*Be'er Yitzchak*).

38. [Elucidation follows *Mizrachi*; for other approaches, see *Gur Aryeh*; *Maskil LeDavid*.] Although Yitzchak redug these wells before he left Gerar, our verse (v. 18)

יט וַיַּחֲפְרוּ עַבְדֵי־יִצְחָק בְּנַחֵל וַיִּמְצְאוּ־שָׁם בְּאֵר מַיִם
חַיִּים: כ וַיְרִיבוּ רַעֲי גֵרָר עִם־רַעֲי יִצְחָק לֵאמֹר לָנוּ
הַמַּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם־הַבְּאֵר יַעֲשֹׁק כִּי הִתְעַשְׁקוּ עִמּוֹ:
כא וַיַּחֲפְרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וַיְרִיבוּ גַם־עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא
שְׁמָהּ שְׁטָנָה: כב וַיַּעֲתֶק מִשָּׁם וַיַּחֲפֹר בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת
וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחֹבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־
עָתָה הִרְחִיב יְהוָה לָנוּ וּפָרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ: רביעי כג וַיַּעַל
מִשָּׁם בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע: כד וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּלִילָה הַהוּא
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם אָבִיךָ אֶל־תִּירָא כִּי־
אֶתְּךָ אֲנֹכִי וּבִרְכָתִיךָ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ בְּעֶבֶר
אֲבֹרָהֶם עַבְדֵי: כה וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם
יְהוָה וַיֵּט־שָׁם אֹהֶל וַיִּכְרוּ־שָׁם עַבְדֵי־יִצְחָק בְּאֵר:
כו וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ הַלֵּךְ אֵלָיו מִגֵּרָר וַאֲחֻזַּת מִרְעָהוּ

(ב) עֶשֶׂק. טְרַטְרוֹר: בִּי הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ. נִתְעַשְׁקוּ עִמּוֹ
טָלְיָה צְמִירָה וְטְרַטְרוֹר: (בא) שְׂטָנָה. נְיִישְׁמַנִּי:ט:
(כב) וּפְרִינוּ בְּאַרְץ. פִּתְגָּמוֹמוֹ: "וְנִיפּוֹשׁ צְהִרְעָלִ":
(כו) וְאַחֲזֹת מִרְעָהוּ. פִּתְגָּמוֹמוֹ: "וְסִיעַת מִרְחֻמֵּי",
סִיעָה מֵאַחֲרָיו. "וְנִיפּוֹשׁ פּוֹתְרִין" מִ"מִּרְעָהוּ" מ' מִסּוֹד
הַפְּזִיבָה, כְּמוֹ "שְׁלֵשִׁים מִרְעִים" (שׁוּפְטִים יד, יא) דֶּשֶׁמֶשׁוֹן,

20. עֵשֶׂק — HE CALLED THE NAME OF THAT WELL EISEK.

ערעור — “An argument.” Yitzchak named the well *eisek*...

נתעשקו עמו עליה במריבה וערעור — That is, they involved themselves with him over [the well] in quarreling and contention.^[39]

39. The root פָּרַץ means “to be involved with, to deal with,” and can refer to involvement in any matter. Rashi teaches that here it means “to be involved in an argument.” Yitzchak would not have named the well פָּרַץ on account of simple “involvement” [perhaps meaning that the Pelishtim *negotiated* with Yitzchak

Mizrachi suggests that Rashi was not bothered by *Ramban's* question, for it is possible that the Pelishtim had stopped up the wells during a time of war, while Yitzchak redug them later, during a time of peace (see also *Gur Aryeh; Nachalas Yaakov*).

¹⁹ Yitzchak's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of fresh water. ²⁰ The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Yitzchak's herdsmen saying, "The water is ours," so he called the name of that well Eisek because they involved themselves with him. ²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also; so he called its name Sitnah. ²² He relocated from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rechovos, and said, "For now Hashem has expanded for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

²³ He went up from there to Be'er-sheva. ²⁴ Hashem appeared to him that night and said, "I am the God of your father Avraham: Fear not, for I am with you; I will bless you and increase your offspring because of Avraham my servant." ²⁵ He built an altar there, called out in the Name of Hashem, and there he pitched his tent; there Yitzchak's servants dug a well.

²⁶ Avimelech went to him from Gerar with a group of his friends

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21. שִׁטְנָה — SITNAH.

Rashi defines this word:

נויִשְׁמנִיט — **Nuisement** in Old French, which means "damage, harm."^[40]

22. וּפְרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ — AND WE SHALL BE FRUITFUL IN THE LAND.

There are two possible ways of translating the word וּפְרִינוּ: either it is in the past tense, "and we were fruitful," or it is in the future tense, "and we *will* be fruitful."^[41] Rashi explains its meaning here: "וְנִיפֹשׁ בְּאֶרֶץ" — The phrase וּפְרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ is the future tense, as **Targum Onkelos translates it: and we shall increase in the land.**^[42]

26. וְאֶחָדָה מֵרֵעֵהוּ — WITH A GROUP OF HIS FRIENDS.

Did Avimelech come with *all* of his friends, or *some* of his friends? Rashi clarifies:

"וְסִיעַת מִרְחֻמוֹהִי" — This should be understood as **Targum Onkelos renders it: "סִיעָה מֵאֶחָדָה בֵּינֵיהֶן"**, which means "סִיעָה מֵאֶחָדָה בֵּינֵיהֶן" — a single **group from among his friends.**^[43]

Rashi cites an alternative explanation, which he proceeds to reject:

"וְיֵשׁ פוֹתְרִין" — There are some who interpret the word "מֵרֵעֵהוּ" with the letter **mem** being an essential part of the word and not a prefix (i.e., the root is מֵרַע, not רַע), **כְּמוֹ "שְׁלִשִּׁים"** — like the phrase "**thirty friends**" (מֵרַעִים), which appears in a verse that speaks of

over the well], because everything people do is through involvement, so the name "involvement" would not commemorate anything. Rather, it must mean that they got involved in a conflict over this well (*Mizrachi*; see also *Be'er Yitzchak*).

[Other commentators, however, understand (as *Radak* explains) that the actual meaning of עִשְׂק is "argument" (*Be'er BaSadeh*; *Imrei Shefer*).]

40. [This word is related to the Modern French and English word, "nuisance."] The difference between עִשְׂק, *argument*, and שִׁטְנָה, *harm*, is that an argument generally is backed by a claim, whereas someone who seeks to do harm will do so even without a claim or reason. Thus, Yitzchak named the first well עִשְׂק because the Pelishtim fought him with the claim, "the water is ours" (v. 20). But then their hatred of Yitzchak progressed until they quarreled with him without any

claim, which he commemorated by naming the second well שִׁטְנָה. This explains why Yitzchak relocated, as the next verse relates. Once he saw how much they hated him, he feared for his safety and moved to a different location (*Darash Moshe*; see also *Chizkuni*; *Malbim*).

41. The prefix *vav* of וּפְרִינוּ can serve as a conversive *vav* (וְיִי הַדְּפוּף) that changes a word from the past tense to the future; see note 23.

42. It cannot mean the past tense ("and we *were* fruitful"), for Yitzchak said that it is only עַתָּה, *now*, that Hashem has expanded for us (i.e., granted us ample space), and it takes time after experiencing this blessing to become fruitful and multiply in the land (*Mizrachi*; *Sifsei Chachamim*).

43. The letter *mem* serves as a prefix to the word רֵעֵהוּ, meaning, "from among" his friends (*Mizrachi*; *Gur Aryeh*).

ופיכל רב חילה: כו ואמר להון יצחק
מא דין אתיתון לותי ואתון שנאתון
יתי ושלחתוני מלכותון: כח ואמרו
מחזא חזינא ארי הנה מימרא
דיי בסעדר ואמרנא תתקים כען
מומתא דהות בין אבהתנא ביננא
ובינך ונגזר קים עמך: כט אם תעבד
עמנא בישא כמא די לא אנקנך
ובמא די עבדנא עמך לחוד טב

ופיכל שר-צבאו: כו ויאמר אליהם יצחק מדוע
באתם אלי ואתם שנאתם אתי ותשלחוני
מאתכם: כח ויאמרו ראו ראינו כי-היה יהנה |
עמך ונאמר תהי נא אלה בינותינו ובינך
ונברתה ברית עמך: כט אם-תעשה עמנו רעה
באשר לא נגענוך ובאשר עשינו עמך רק-טוב

רש"י

ולא מיין" (ישעיהו נא, כא): אַחֻזַת. לשון קבוצה ואגודה
שנאחזין יחד: (כח) ראו ראינו. "ראו" בלשון, ראינו
בד' (בראשית רבה טז י: תהי נא אלה בינותינו וגו').
האלה אשר בינותינו מימי לביך פה גס עתה בינינו
ובינך: (כט) לא נגענוך. כשאמרנו לך "לך מטמנו"
(ועיל פסוק טז):

כדי שתהיה תיבת "ואחזת" דבוקה; אבל אין דרך לרץ
לדבר על המלכות בן: סיעת אוהביו, שאם בן כל סיעת
אוהביו הוליד עמו, ולא היתה לו אלא סיעת אחת של
אוהבים. לכן יש לפתור פלשון הראשון. ואל תתמה על
פיו של "ואחזת" ואף על פי שאין הפיכה סמוכה, יש
דוגממה במקרא, "עזרת מזל" (תהלים ס, יג), ו"שכרת

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Shimshon (*Shoftim* 14:11). In that verse, the *mem* is clearly part of the root and not a prefix; it means *thirty friends*, not *thirty "of" his friends*. Thus, in our verse as well, the meaning is that Avimelech took *his group of friends* (and not a group "from among" his friends).^[44] — **כדי שתהיה תיבת "ואחזת" דבוקה** — The advantage of this translation is **so that the word "ואחזת" can be connected** to the next word, as indicated by the form *ואחזת* (and not *ואחזה*).^[45] — **אבל אין דרך לרץ ארץ לדבר על המלכות בן סיעת אוהביו** — But this explanation is incorrect, because **it is not respectful to speak of royalty in this way**, saying that King Avimelech took "**his group of friends**," **שאם בן כל סיעת אוהביו הוליד עמו ולא היתה לו אלא סיעת אחת** — **for if so, it would mean that he brought his entire group of friends with him, implying that he had only one group of friends!** — **Therefore, [this phrase] should be interpreted like the first explanation:** Avimelech took "a group from among his friends."

But according to Rashi's preferred explanation, why indeed does the word *ואחזת* end with a ת (and not a ה) if it is not connected to the following word? Rashi explains:

ואל תתמה על תי"ו של "ואחזת" ואף על פי שאין התיבה סמוכה — **And do not wonder about the letter tav of the word "ואחזת", even though this word is not connected** to the next word, **יש דוגממה במקרא** — **for there are other examples like this in Scripture**, in which a word ends with the letter *tav* even though it is not connected to the next word, such as: **"עזרת מזל"** — the word *עזרת* in the verse (*Tehillim* 60:13), **help from the oppressor;** **"ושכרת ולא מיין"** — and the word *ושכרת* in the verse (*Yeshayah* 51:21), **and drunk from wine**. These words, too, should seemingly have been written as *עזרה* and *ושכרה*, since they are not connected to the following words. Thus we see that the final *hei* can sometimes be replaced with a *tav* even if the word is not connected, and the same applies to the word *ואחזת* of our verse.

□ **אַחֻזַת — "ACHUZAS."**

Rashi defines this word:

אחוזת יחד — שְׁנֵאֲחֻזִין יחד — **This means an assembly and a group.**^[46] **לשון קבוצה ואגודה (from the root אחז, to hold), because [the people] who comprise it are "held together."**

44. Rashbam adopts this approach.

45. A Hebrew word in the construct form (סמיכות) is one that is connected to the word that follows (for example, *בראשית*, in the beginning "of"; see Rashi to 1:1 above). In words ending in the letter *hei*, this is expressed by replacing the ה with a ת (e.g., *בראשונה*, in the beginning, becomes *בראשית*, in the beginning "of"; Rashi there).

Similarly, according to these commentators, the fact that the word *אחזת* in our verse ends with a ת indicates that it is connected to the word *מרעוהו*, and the phrase means *his group "of" friends*. It follows that the *mem* of *מרעוהו* is not a prefix meaning *from among*, but part of the root of the word.

46. [There is an opinion in the Midrash (*Bereishis*

and Phichol, general of his legion. ²⁷ Yitzchak said to them, “Why have you come to me? You hate me and drove me away from you!”

²⁸ And they said, “We have indeed seen that Hashem has been with you, so we said, ‘Let the oath between ourselves now be between us and you, and let us make a covenant with you: ²⁹ If you will do evil with us ...! Just as we have not touched you, and just as we have done with you only good,

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28. רָאוּ רְאִינוּ — WE HAVE INDEED SEEN THAT HASHEM HAS BEEN WITH YOU.

Rashi explains the significance of the double wording רָאוּ רְאִינוּ (literally, *seeing, we have seen*):

בְּאֵיךְ “רָאוּ” — Avimelech told Yitzchak, “We had **seen in your father** Avraham that Hashem was with him,^[47] בְּרְאִינוּ — and now **we have seen in you** that Hashem is with you as well”^[48] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 64:10).

□ תְּהִי נָא אֶלֶּה בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ וְגו' — **LET THE OATH BETWEEN OURSELVES NOW BE BETWEEN US AND YOU.**

Why does the verse say “between ourselves” *and* “between us and you”? All it should have said was, “Let there be an oath between ourselves,” or “Let there be an oath between us and you.” Rashi explains why both of these phrases are necessary:

הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר “בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ” מִיְּמֵי אֲבִיךָ תְּהִי גַם עֲתָה “בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ וְכִינָךְ” — Avimelech meant: **“The oath that has been BETWEEN OURSELVES since the days of your father (see 21:23-24 above) should now also be continued BETWEEN US AND YOU.”**^[49]

29. לֹא נִגְעְנוֹךְ — JUST AS WE HAVE NOT TOUCHED YOU.

Avimelech goes on to say that he has done “only good” to Yitzchak. Why, then, does he mention that he did not touch (i.e., harm) him? If he did only good, it is obvious that he did not harm him! Rashi explains: בְּשֹׂאמְרֵנוּ לָךְ “לֹא נִגְעְנוֹךְ” — When you lived among us we treated you well, and even **when we told you** (v. 16 above), **Go from us**, at which point we might have been expected to do you harm, we did not do so.

Rabbah 64:9) that אַחֻזָּה was the name of a person (“his friend, Achuzas”). Rashi teaches that this is not the simple meaning (*Meisiach Ilmim*; see *Maskil Le-David*).]

47. See 21:22 above and Rashi there.

48. The Torah adds the word הָיָה, *has been*, in the past tense (in the phrase *We have indeed seen that Hashem “has been” with you*) to indicate that Avimelech and his people saw *in the past* that Hashem was with Avraham just like He was with Yitzchak (*Nachalas Yaakov*).

Avimelech mentioned that Hashem was with Avraham as if to say that Hashem’s blessings to Avraham had also carried over to Yitzchak, and that just as he forged a covenant with Avraham, he wished to do so with Yitzchak as well [as stated in the end of the verse] (*Nachalas Yaakov*). Alternatively, Avimelech meant that from having witnessed the open miracles

that Hashem performed for Avraham, he realized that Yitzchak’s success, although seemingly more natural, was also a result of Divine favor (*Eitz Yosef*).

49. Avimelech was not suggesting that a completely new oath be made now, but rather that the previous oath between him and Avraham should now be renewed between him and Yitzchak. For this reason, Rashi adds a *hei* to the word אֶלֶּה of our verse and writes אֶלֶּה, “the” oath, because Avimelech was referring to a specific oath, “the oath” made with Avraham (*Mizrachi*).

Although Avimelech had already made a covenant with Avraham that their descendants should not harm each other (see 21:23 above), he was afraid that he had violated this covenant by driving Yitzchak out of Gerar. He therefore wished for Yitzchak to swear that he would affirm the previous covenant (see *Ramban*; *Chizkuni*; *Be’er BaSadeh*). See *Insight*.

§ The Identity of Avimelech The commentaries discuss whether the Avimelech who appears in our passage is the same Avimelech who lived in Avraham’s time, or if he was the son of the previous Avimelech, and “Avimelech” was the generic title for all the kings of the Pelishtim, just as “Pharaoh” was the title for all Egyptian rulers (see Rashi to *Tehillim* 34:1). From Onkelos’ rendering of the word בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ in our verse as, *between “our fathers,”* it is clear that he understands that the current Avimelech was the *son* of the Avimelech who interacted with Avraham (see *Ramban* to v. 1). However, Rashi here appears to hold that the Avimelech of our chapter is the same as the previous one, since he writes: *The oath that was between ourselves since the days of your father*, implying that the original oath was made between *himself* and Avraham (see *Ayeles HaShachar*; cf. *Nachalas Yaakov*).

וַיִּשְׁלַחְךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶתְּהָ בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה: חמישי ל
לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ: לא וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ בַבֹּקֶר
וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ אִישׁ לְאָחִיו וַיִּשְׁלַחֵם יִצְחָק וַיִּלְכוּ מֵאֵתוֹ
בְּשָׁלוֹם: לב וַיְהִי | בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיָּבֹאוּ עֲבָדֵי יִצְחָק
וַיַּגְדּוּ לוֹ עַל-אֲדוֹת הַבְּאֵר אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ
מִצָּאֵנוּ מַיִם: לג וַיִּקְרָא אֹתָהּ שְׁבַעָה עַל-כֵּן שֵׁם-
הָעִיר בְּאֵר שְׁבַע עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: לד וַיְהִי עֲשׂוֹ
בֶּן-אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה אֶת-יְהוּדִית בַּת-בְּאֵרִי
הַחֲתִי וְאֶת-בְּשִׁמֹּת בַּת-אֵילָן הַחֲתִי: לה וַתֵּהֱיוּ
מֵרַת רוּחַ לְיִצְחָק וּלְרַבְּקָה: ס [כז] א וַיְהִי

וַיִּשְׁלַחְךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶתְּהָ בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה: חמישי ל
לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ: לא וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ בַבֹּקֶר
וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ אִישׁ לְאָחִיו וַיִּשְׁלַחֵם יִצְחָק וַיִּלְכוּ מֵאֵתוֹ
בְּשָׁלוֹם: לב וַיְהִי | בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיָּבֹאוּ עֲבָדֵי יִצְחָק
וַיַּגְדּוּ לוֹ עַל-אֲדוֹת הַבְּאֵר אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ
מִצָּאֵנוּ מַיִם: לג וַיִּקְרָא אֹתָהּ שְׁבַעָה עַל-כֵּן שֵׁם-
הָעִיר בְּאֵר שְׁבַע עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: לד וַיְהִי עֲשׂוֹ
בֶּן-אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה אֶת-יְהוּדִית בַּת-בְּאֵרִי
הַחֲתִי וְאֶת-בְּשִׁמֹּת בַּת-אֵילָן הַחֲתִי: לה וַתֵּהֱיוּ
מֵרַת רוּחַ לְיִצְחָק וּלְרַבְּקָה: ס [כז] א וַיְהִי

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בְּטִלְיָהוּ וּמִטְנֵה חוֹתָן, כְּשֶׁהָיָה בֶּן חֲרָצִים חֹמֶר: חֲזָא בֶּן
חֲרָצִים שָׁנָה גָּשָׁא חֲשָׁה, חָף חָנִי בֶּן וּבְרָשִׁית רַבָּה סה, א: (לה) מֵרַת רוּחַ. לָשׁוֹן "הַמְרָחֵת רוּחַ, כְּמוֹ "מִמְרִים
הַיָּיָס" (דברים ט, כד), כָּל מִטְשִׁיחַן הָיוּ לְהַכְעִים וּלְעֲזֹבוֹן
לְיִצְחָק וּלְרַבְּקָה, שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹבְדוֹת עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה (תַּנְחוּמָא ח; בְּרַשִׁית רַבָּה סה, ד):

אֵתָהּ. גס עֵתָה טָעָה לָנוּ כְּמוֹ כֵּן: (לג) שְׁבַעָה. עַל
שֵׁם הַבְּרִית (תַּנְחוּמָא יט וַיֵּא ט): (לד) בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה.
עֲשׂוֹ נִמְשָׁל לְחִזְרִי, שְׁנִיחֵמֶר "כְּרִסְמָנָה חִזְרִי מִיֵּטֶר" (תְּהִלִּים
פ, יד), הַחִזְרִי הָזֶה כְּשֶׁהוּא שׁוֹכֵץ פּוֹשֵׁט טַלְפִּי לֹמֶר: רָחוּ
שְׁאֵנִי טְהוֹר; כִּד חָלוּ גוֹלִים וְחוֹמָסִים וּמִרְחִים טַלְמָס
כְּשִׁרִים; כָּל חֲרָצִים שָׁנָה הָיָה עֲשׂוֹ לָד גָּשִׁים מִתַּחַת יָד

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□ אֵתָהּ — *JUST AS WE HAVE DONE WITH YOU ONLY GOOD... NOW, YOU.*

The verse does not seem to conclude Avimelech's thought. What did Avimelech want from Yitzchak? Rashi supplies the conclusion:

Avimelech told Yitzchak, "*JUST AS WE HAVE DONE WITH YOU ONLY GOOD... YOU, too, should NOW treat us similarly*, and do only good with us, *O BLESSED ONE OF HASHEM!*"

33. שְׁבַעָה — SHIVAH.

Why did Yitzchak give it this name? Rashi explains:

Yitzchak named the well שְׁבַעָה **on account of the covenant** between Yitzchak and Avimelech, which was upheld by an oath [שְׁבוּעָה]^[50] (*Tanchuma Yashan, Vayeitzei* §9).

50. Although the name שְׁבַעָה was derived from the Hebrew word שְׁבוּעָה, which means an *oath*, Rashi writes that it was given this name because of the *covenant* (בְּרִית). This is because an oath is not significant in itself, but is merely a way to affirm a covenant. Thus, the well was named for the covenant which the oath upheld (*Sefer Zikaron; Maskil LeDavid*).

The end of the verse says that the name of the city where the well was located is Be'er-sheva. This is a combination of both events that occurred that day: Yitzchak's servants dug a new well [בְּאֵר, *Be'er*] and Yitzchak took an oath [שְׁבוּעָה, *shevuah / sheva*] (*Meisiach Ilmim*). See Insight.

¶ **Two Be'er-shevas?** Above (21:31), the Torah tells us that Avraham and Avimelech made an oath to each other at a well, and therefore the place was called Be'er-sheva. Our verse, however, says that this name was given on account of the oath between Yitzchak and Avimelech. *Ramban* suggests that the Be'er-sheva of our verse is the same city mentioned there, and the well of our verse is the same well mentioned there. Avraham, too, had named that well "Shivah" in commemoration of his oath to Avimelech; but after his death, the Pelishtim stopped up the well just as they stopped up all of Avraham's other wells, as stated above (v. 18). When Yitzchak's servants dug the well anew, he restored the name "Shivah" to it (just as he restored his father's names to all the wells his father had dug and the Pelishtim stopped up; see v. 18 above). The city was called Be'er-sheva after the well that father and son had dug there — a well that now commemorated *both* oaths. [See, however, *Rashbam*, who says that these were two different places named Be'er-sheva.]

and sent you away in peace — You, now, O blessed one of Hashem!”

³⁰ He made them a feast and they ate and drank. ³¹ They awoke early in the morning and swore to one another; then Yitzchak sent them off and they went from him in peace. ³² And it was on that very day that Yitzchak’s servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said to him, “We have found water!” ³³ And he named it Shivah; therefore, the name of the city is Be’er-sheva until this very day.

³⁴ When Eisav was forty years old, he took as a wife Yehudis daughter of Be’eri the Chittite, and Basmas daughter of Elon the Chittite; ³⁵ and they were a provocation of the spirit to Yitzchak and to Rivkah.

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34. בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה — WHEN EISAV WAS FORTY YEARS OLD.

Why is it important for us to know how old Eisav was when he married?^[51] Rashi explains that this illustrates Eisav’s deceptive nature:

שָׁנָאִמַר — שְׁנֵי מִשְׁלָלִים — Eisav is compared to a boar (a wild pig), “בְּרִסְמָנָה חֲזִיר מִיֵּעַר” — as it says regarding the descendants of Eisav (*Tehillim* 80:14), *a boar of the forest ravages [the grapevine]*.^[52] — הַחֲזִיר הַזֶּה בִּשְׂחָוָא שׁוֹכֵב פּוֹשֵׁט טְלָפָיו לִמְרָא: רָאוּ שְׂאֵנֵי טְהוֹר — For just as when the pig lies down, it stretches forth its split hooves as if to say, “See, I am kosher,”^[53] — בֶּן אֱלוֹ גּוֹזְלִים וְחוֹמְסִים וּמִרְאִים עֲצָמָם בְּשָׂרֵם — so too [the descendants of Eisav] rob and take things by force, yet they pretend to be decent. They learned this trait from their ancestor Eisav: — כָּל אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה הָיָה עָשׂו צָר נָשִׁים מִתַּחַת יָד בְּעֲלֵיהֶן וּמַעֲנָה אוֹתָן — All the first forty years of his life, Eisav would snatch women away from their husbands and violate them, — בְּשָׂהִיָּה בֶן אַרְבָּעִים אָמַר: אָבִיא בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה נָשָׂא אִשָּׁה אִף אֲנִי כֵן — but when he became forty years old he said, “Father married a wife when he was forty years old (25:20 above), and I will do the same!” Eisav thus behaved like the pig, pretending to be like his righteous father even though he was in fact very wicked^[54] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 65:1).

35. מִרְתּוֹ רוּחַ — A PROVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT.

Rashi explains the meaning of the phrase מִרְתּוֹ רוּחַ:

לְשׁוֹן הַמְרָאָת רוּחַ — This refers to rebelling against the spirit of another, i.e., acting contrary to the wishes of another person,^[55] — כְּמוֹ “מְמָרִים הָיִיתָם” — like the word מְמָרִים in the verse (*Devarim* 9:24), *You have been rebels* (מְמָרִים) against Hashem. — כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶן הָיוּ לְהִכְעִיס וּלְעֲצֹבוֹן לִיִּצְחָק וּלְרִבְקָה — That is, all of [Eisav’s wives’] actions were a source of anger and anguish TO YITZCHAK AND TO RIVKAH, שְׂהִי עוֹבְדוֹת עֲבוּדָה נִרָּה — for they would worship idols^[56] (*Tanchuma, Toldos* §8; *Bereishis Rabbah* 65:4).

51. The Torah does not generally tell us at what age people were married. Even among the Patriarchs, it is not explicitly mentioned how old Avraham or Yaakov were when they married (see *Gur Aryeh; Maharzu*). [Yitzchak’s marriage age is mentioned (as Rashi states below), for the specific reason Rashi states above, in 25:20, 26.]

52. The Jewish people are compared to a grapevine (see *Yeshayah* 5:1-7; *Yechezkel* Ch. 15; *Shemos Rabbah* 44:1; *Vayikra Rabbah* 36:2). The verse is describing how the boar (wild pig) of the forest — a reference to the Roman Empire, which descended from Eisav — has persecuted and ravaged the Jewish people (see Rashi to *Tehillim* 80:9, 14; see *Tzeidah LaDerech*).

53. An animal requires two signs to be kosher: it must have split hooves and must chew its cud. The pig has split hooves, but does not chew its cud, and is therefore

not kosher (see *Vayikra* 11:3, 7). Nonetheless, unlike other hooved animals that fold their legs under them when they lie down, the pig stretches forth its split hooves, as if to give the impression that it is kosher.

54. The verse mentions how old Eisav was when he married, to teach that Eisav falsely claimed how he carefully followed the ways of his righteous father (*Yefeh To’ar*; cf. *Gur Aryeh*).

[Rashi also points out Eisav’s deceptive behavior in his comments to 25:27-28 and 36:2.]

55. The word מִרְתּוֹ is not from the root מָרַר, to make bitter; but from the root מָרַד, to rebel (*Mizrachi*; see *Havanas HaMikra*). And the word רוּחַ (literally, spirit) in this context means “wish, desire.” Everything Eisav’s wives did was contrary to the wishes of Yitzchak and Rivkah (*Rabbeinu Bachya; Rash Almochnino*).

56. Eisav’s wives did not actively rebel against Yitzchak

כִּי־זָקֵן יִצְחָק וַתִּכְהֶינּוּ עֵינָיו מֵרֵאֶת וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־
עֶשָׂו | בְּנֹו הַגָּדֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנְנִי:
ב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נָא זָקֵנְתִי לֹא יִדְעֵתִי יוֹם מוֹתִי: ג וַעֲתָה

כד סיב יצחק וכהיא עינוהי
מלמחיו וקרא ית עשו ברה
רבא ואמר לה ברי ואמר לה הא
אנא: ב ואמר הא כען סיבית לית
אנא ידע יומא דאמות: ג וכען

רש"י

(א) וַתִּכְהֶינּוּ עֵינָיו. צִטָּטָן עַל חָלוּ אִשְׁהֵי מַעֲשָׂנוֹת
וּמִקְטִירוֹת לַעֲבוּדָה זָרָה (תנחומא ח; פסיקתא רבתי יב;
פיוט לפרשת זכור). אִדְכָּר אַחֵר, בְּשָׁנֶעֱקֵד עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
וְהִיא אֲבִיו רוֹצֶה לְשַׁחֲטוֹ, צְלוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה נִפְתָּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְחָיו מִלֵּאכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת וְהָיוּ צוּכִים, וַיִּרְדּוּ דַמְעוֹתֵיהֶם
וַנִּפְלוּ עַל עֵינָיו, לְפִיכָךְ כָּהֵן עֵינָיו (בראשית רבה טז ס' י.
דָּכָר אַחֵר, כְּדֵי שִׁטּוֹל יַעֲקֹב אֶת הַבָּרְכוֹת (תנחומא

ס: (ב) לֹא יִדְעֵתִי יוֹם מוֹתִי. אֲמַר רַבִּי יוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן
קִרְקָה: אִם מִגִּיעַ הָדֵם לְפָרֶק אֲבוֹתָיו יִדְאָג חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים
לִפְנֵי בֶן וְחֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים לְאַחֵר בֶּן. וַיִּצְחָק הָיָה בֶּן קכ"ג,
אֲמַר: שָׂמָא לְפָרֶק אֲמִי חָנִי מִגִּיעַ וְהִיא צֵת קכ"ז מֵתָה,
וְהָרִנִּי צִחְמֵשׁ שָׁנִים סְמוּךְ לְפָרֶקָה, לְפִיכָךְ "לֹא יִדְעֵתִי
יוֹם מוֹתִי", שָׂמָא לְפָרֶק אֲמָא שָׂמָא לְפָרֶק אֲבָא (בראשית
רבה טז ס' יב):

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27.

1. **וַתִּכְהֶינּוּ עֵינָיו** — *AND IT WAS WHEN YITZCHAK HAD BECOME OLD, AND HIS EYES DIMMED FROM SEEING.*

Simply understood, the verse means that Yitzchak's eyes dimmed due to old age. But Yitzchak was 123 years old at this time (see next Rashi) and he died at 180, so he lived another 57 years. Thus only about two-thirds of his life had elapsed, and it is not usual for a man's eyes to dim at this relatively early point. Rashi thus offers three reasons for his loss of sight:^[1]

וַתִּכְהֶינּוּ עֵינָיו — Yitzchak's eyes dimmed **due to the smoke of these** wives of Eisav, mentioned in the previous verse, **שֶׁהָיוּ מַעֲשָׂנוֹת וּמִקְטִירוֹת לַעֲבוּדָה זָרָה** — **who would raise smoke and burn incense to idols**^[2] (*Tanchuma* §8).

וַתִּכְהֶינּוּ עֵינָיו — **דָּכָר אַחֵר בְּשָׁנֶעֱקֵד עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְהִיא אֲבִיו רוֹצֶה לְשַׁחֲטוֹ בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה נִפְתָּחוּ** — **Alternatively, when [Yitzchak] was bound atop the altar at the time of the Akeidah and his father wanted to slaughter him,**

and Rivkah by not listening to them. Rather, all their actions went against everything that Yitzchak and Rivkah stood for, and thus caused them great suffering (*Rash Almoshino; Nachalas Yaakov*).

This also explains why the verse says "to Yitzchak and to Rivkah." If they were wicked women, why did they cause anguish only to Eisav's parents? The answer is that they worshiped idols, which angered only Yitzchak and Rivkah, but not others, since most of society in those days practiced idolatry (*Ri Kanizal*). See Insight.

1. *Be'er Yitzchak*; cf. *Mizrachi*; see following note.

[Regarding Yaakov as well, the Torah says that his eyesight failed in his old age, but there the verse states, וַיִּבֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּבֹדוֹ מוֹקֵן, *Israel's eyes were heavy* "because of old age" (below, 48:10). Here, by contrast, the verse does

not say that Yitzchak's eyes dimmed *because* of old age; it merely says that the upcoming story happened *when* (1) Yitzchak became old, and (2) and his eyes dimmed from seeing. Accordingly, no reason is given by the Torah for Yitzchak's eyes dimming. Rashi therefore provides various reasons.]

2. Thus, our verse is connected to the previous verse, which alludes to the idol worship of Eisav's wives, as Rashi explained there (*Mizrachi*).

Only together with Yitzchak's advanced age was the smoke able to cause him to become blind. Therefore, even though Rivkah lived in the same house, she was not affected by the smoke, since she was significantly younger than Yitzchak (see *Eved Shlomo*).

Alternatively, it was not the smoke itself that caused

⚡ **A Provocation of the Spirit to Yitzchak and to Rivkah** Rashi's explanation clarifies a difficulty in the verse. Why does the Torah add the extra letter *lamed* (meaning *to*) to the word וַיִּלְבָּקֵהּ? Instead of saying *to Yitzchak and "to" Rivkah*, it could have simply said, "to Yitzchak and Rivkah." Based on the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 65:4), the commentators answer that the Torah is alluding to the fact that Yitzchak was much more affected by the actions of Eisav's wives than Rivkah. Yitzchak had never been exposed to idol worship in his own family, so the idolatry of Eisav's wives caused him deep sorrow and anger. Rivkah, on the other hand, grew up among a family that worshiped idols, and thus was not provoked to the same extent when she witnessed Eisav's wives engaging in these practices. Thus, they were a provocation of the spirit *to Yitzchak* on one level, *and to Rivkah* on another level (*Mizrachi; Nachalas Yaakov*).

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¹ And it was when Yitzchak had become old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing, that he summoned Eisav, his older son, and said to him, “My son.” And he said to him, “Here I am.” ² And he said, “See, now, I have aged; I do not know the day of my death.” ³ Now

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הַשָּׁמַיִם — at that moment the heavens opened — וְרָאוּ מַלְאָכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת וְהָיוּ בּוֹכִים — and the ministering angels saw what was happening and they were crying, — וַיִּרְדּוּ דְמֻעוֹתֵיהֶם וַנִּפְּלוּ עַל עֵינָיו — and their tears dropped and fell onto [Yitzchak’s] eyes. — לְפִיכָךְ כָּהוּ עֵינָיו — Therefore, his eyes dimmed^[3] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 65:10).

הַבְּרָכוֹת — דָּבָר אַחֵר, בְּדִי שִׁטּוֹל יַעֲקֹב אֶת הַבְּרָכוֹת — Alternatively, Hashem caused Yitzchak’s eyes to dim so that Yaakov should be able to take the blessings without Yitzchak being aware [as described later in this chapter] (*Tanchuma* §8).

2. לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי — I DO NOT KNOW THE DAY OF MY DEATH.

One *never* knows when he will die, so what prompted Yitzchak to ponder his demise particularly now?^[4] Rashi cites a Midrash:

אִם מִגִּיעַ אָדָם לְפָרֶק אָבוֹתָיו — If a person approaches the age when one of his parents died, — יֵדָאג חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים לִפְנֵי בֶן חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים לְאַחֵר בֶּן — he should be concerned for his own death over a ten-year period, five years before he reaches that age and five years afterward. — וַיִּזְחַק הָיָה בֶּן קכ”ג — And at this time Yitzchak was 123 years old,^[5] — אָמַר: שָׁמָּה לְפָרֶק אִמִּי אֲנִי מִגִּיעַ וְהָיָה בֵּת קכ”ז מֵתָה — so he said, “Maybe I am only destined to approach the age of my mother, and she died when she was 127, — וְהָיִינוּ בְּחֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים סָמוּךְ לְפָרֶקָה — and I am thus within five years of her age of death.” — לְפִיכָךְ “לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי” — Therefore, Yitzchak said, “I DO NOT KNOW THE DAY OF MY DEATH”; — שָׁמָּה לְפָרֶק אִמִּי אֲמָא לְפָרֶק אָבָא — i.e., “perhaps I am destined to approach the age of my mother and my death is thus imminent, or, perhaps I am destined to approach the age of my father, who lived much longer”^[6] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 65:12).

Yitzchak’s blindness. Rather, Rashi means that the *aggravation* of seeing Eisav’s wives burning incense to idols caused Yitzchak to go blind. According to this approach, the word מֵרָאוֹת (“from seeing”) is not part of the description of his blindness, but rather the *reason* for it; i.e., his eyes dimmed *as a result of witnessing* what his daughters-in-law were doing. Rivkah, however, did not suffer the same degree of aggravation, as explained in the Insight to the previous verse, so she did not go blind (*Mizrachi*, based on *Tanchuma*; *Maskil LeDavid*; see also *Gur Aryeh*). See Insight.

3. The process of Yitzchak’s failing eyesight *began* at the *Akeidah*, but only as he aged did he actually become blind (*Eitz Yosef*).

4. *Ba’er Heitev*; *Meisiach Ilmim*.

5. Yitzchak was 60 years old when Yaakov was born (25:26, above), and Yaakov was 63 years old at the time Yitzchak blessed him (Rashi below, 28:9). Hence, Yitzchak was 123 years old (60 + 63 = 123).

6. This is in fact what occurred, as Yitzchak lived to the age of 180, five years longer than his father, who died

☞ **Tears of the Angels** Rashi says that the tears of the angels fell into Yitzchak’s eyes. Obviously, this cannot be understood literally. Angels are spiritual beings, who do not cry actual tears, whereas Yitzchak was a physical man.

Shem MiShmuel explains that Avraham’s agreement to bring Yitzchak as a sacrifice was completely outside of the natural order of Creation. But the deeply-rooted, all-consuming *ahavas Hashem* that filled Avraham broke all barriers, and thus he was prepared to do the unthinkable. With this act, Avraham transcended human nature. In response, Hashem transcended His own laws of “nature,” and for the period of the *Akeidah*, with respect to Avraham and Yitzchak, Hashem removed the barriers that usually separate the spiritual and the physical.

Ordinarily, man cannot gaze directly upon pure spirituality. Rather, Hashem put in place a series of “filters” between Heaven and Earth that dim the radiance of the spiritual world, allowing man a limited perception of spiritual matters. At the *Akeidah*, these filters were removed — which the Midrash refers to as, “the heavens opened” — and Yitzchak was able to gaze upon and perceive *undimmed* the full radiance of the spiritual world above. He perceived clearly the agitation of the angels, which the Midrash refers to as, “the tears of the angels falling onto Yitzchak’s eyes.” When Yitzchak later descended from the lofty heights of the *Akeidah* to earthly existence, the vision he had seen — which was “imprinted on his eyes” (*Bereishis Rabbah*) — had a blinding effect, so with the passage of time Yitzchak’s eyes dimmed (*Shem MiShmuel*, 5673 ברש”י).

סב בעז ויניח סיפך וקשתך ופוק לחקלא וצוד לי צידא: ד ועיבד לי תבשילין כמא די רחמיית ואעיל לי ואיכול בדיל די תברכנך נפשי עד לא אמות: ה ורבקה שמעת כד מליל יצחק לנת עשו ברה ואזל עשו לחקלא למצד צידא לאיתא: ו ורבקה אמרת לנת יעקב ברה למימר הא שמעית מן אבוך ממלל עם עשו אחוך למימר: ז איתי לי צידא ועיבד לי תבשילין ואיכול ואברכנך קדם יי קדם מותי:

שֶׁאֵנָּה כְּלִיף תְּלִיף וְקִשְׁתְּךָ וְצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה וְצוּדָה לִי צִיד [צידה כ]: ד וַעֲשֵׂה-לִי מִטְעָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּתִי וְהָבִיָּאָה לִי וְאִכְלָה בְּעֶבֶר תְּבַרְכֶּךָ נַפְשִׁי בְטָרִם אֲמוֹת: ה וְרַבְּקָה שָׁמְעַת בְּדַבָּר יִצְחָק אֶל-עֶשָׂו בְּנוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ עֶשָׂו הַשָּׂדֶה לְצוּד צִיד לְהָבִיא: ו וְרַבְּקָה אָמְרָה אֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּנֵה לֹאמֹר הִנֵּה שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת-אֲבִיךָ מְדַבֵּר אֶל-עֶשָׂו אַחִיךָ לֹאמֹר: ז הָבִיָּאָה לִי צִיד וַעֲשֵׂה-לִי מִטְעָמִים וְאִכְלָה וְאֶבְרַכְּכָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לִפְנֵי מוֹתִי:

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(ג) שֶׁאֵנָּה. לשון השקפה, פחותה ששנינו: אין משהיוני את הסבין אבל משהיוני את הסבין על גבי חצרתה (בנייה) (ה) לצוד ציד להביא. מהו "להביא", אם לא ימלא יד יצא מן הגזל (סס): (ז) לפני ה'. בראשית, שניספים (בראשית רבה סה, יג): תלויך. חרצך שדךך לתלותה:

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3. שֶׁאֵנָּה — “SA,” IF YOU PLEASE.

Typically, the word שֶׁאֵנָּה means “take” or “carry.” Yet, since Yitzchak was asking Eisav to hunt, *of course* he would take his gear; it would be unnecessary for Yitzchak to tell him to do so.^[7] Therefore, Rashi provides another translation of the word שֶׁאֵנָּה:

כְּאוֹתָהּ שְׁשִׁינוּ: אֵין מִשְׁחִיזִין אֶת הַסְּבִין אֲבָל — The term שֶׁאֵנָּה is an expression of sharpening, like that which we learned in a Mishnah (*Beitzah* 28a), *We may not sharpen a knife in the normal way on Yom Tov, but one may sharpen it by scraping it against another knife.*^[8] — מְשִׁיָּאָה עַל גְּבִי חֲבֵרָתָהּ — Yitzchak told Eisav, “*Sharpen your knife and slaughter well the animal you capture, so that you do not feed me neveilah*”^[9] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 65:13).

□ תְּלִיף — “TELYECHA.”

Literally, the Hebrew word תְּלִיף means, “your hanging thing.” Rashi explains to what this refers: — חֲרָבָךְ — It means **your sword**. — שְׁדָרְךָ לְתוֹלָתָהּ — Yitzchak called it תְּלִיף, *your hanging thing*, because it is commonly hung on one’s belt.^[10]

at 175. [Actually, according to what Rashi said above (15:15 and 25:30), that Avraham was originally supposed to live to 180 and he died early only so that he would not see Eisav stray to evil ways, Yitzchak lived *exactly* as long as his father was originally destined to.]

7. *Be’er BaSadeh*; cf. *Maskil LeDavid*.

8. From that Mishnah we see that שֶׁאֵנָּה means “sharpen.” However, the Mishnah indicates that there are two types of sharpening — one called הַשְׁקָה, which is done by holding the knife against a grinding stone; the other is referred to as מְשִׁיָּאָה, which is done by scraping one knife against the other. Yitzchak specifically requested the latter form of sharpening (שֶׁאֵנָּה), because only with this method does one avoid causing nicks in the knife [see following note] (*Gur Aryeh*).

9. The halachah is that if an animal is slaughtered with a knife that has a nick, the slaughter is invalid (see

Chullin 15b and *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah* §18). An animal that was not slaughtered properly is called a *neveilah*.

Although Yitzchak was under the impression that Eisav was righteous (see Rashi to 25:27, above), Yitzchak feared that in his haste to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring his father, Eisav would not properly check the slaughter knife for nicks. Therefore, Yitzchak cautioned Eisav to calmly check the knife and sharpen it, to ensure that the animal would be slaughtered properly (*Gur Aryeh*).

[Onkelos, however, renders the word שֶׁאֵנָּה in our verse in its more familiar sense, as *take* or *carry*.]

10. Onkelos as well translates תְּלִיף as סִיפֶךָ, *your sword*. See, however, *Targum Yonasan* and *Ibn Ezra*, who suggest that it can refer to a quiver, in which the archer’s arrows are *hung*.

sharpen, if you please, your gear — your sword and your bow — and go out to the field and hunt game for me. ⁴ Then make me delicacies such as I like and bring to me and I will eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die.”

⁵ Now Rivkah was listening as Yitzchak spoke to Eisav his son; and Eisav went to the field to hunt game to bring. ⁶ And Rivkah had said to Yaakov her son, saying, “Behold I heard your father speaking to your brother Eisav saying, ⁷ ‘Bring me game and make me delicacies and I will eat, and I will bless you in the presence of Hashem before my death.’”

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□ וְצִדָּה לִי צִיד — AND HUNT GAME FOR ME.

The word לִי, *for me*, seems superfluous, because in the next verse Yitzchak says explicitly וְהִבִּיאָה לִי, *and bring to me*. Rashi therefore explains Yitzchak’s intent here:

וְלֹא מִן הַגָּזֵל — “For me” means **from** that which is *suitable* for me, i.e., **ownerless** game, **and not from stolen** property^[11] (*Bereishis Rabbah* ibid.).

5. לָצוּר צִיד לְהִבִּיאַ — EISAV WENT TO THE FIELD TO HUNT GAME TO BRING.

Rashi has difficulty with the final word in this verse: לְהִבִּיאַ, *to bring*:

“מִהוּ — **What** is meant by the word “לְהִבִּיאַ”, *to bring*?^[12] אִם לֹא יִמְצָא צִיד וְיָבִיא מִן הַגָּזֵל — It teaches that Eisav’s intention was that **if he would not find ownerless game, he would bring** an animal **from stolen** property. One way or another he would “bring” game to his father, legitimately or not^[13] (*Bereishis Rabbah* ibid.).

7. לְפָנֵי ה' — I WILL BLESS YOU IN THE PRESENCE OF HASHEM.

Why did Yitzchak say that he would bless Eisav “in the presence of Hashem”? This is obvious, since Hashem is everywhere!^[14] Rashi explains:

בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ — “In the presence of Hashem” means **with His permission**, שְׂמִיכִים עַל יְדֵי — meaning, provided **that He will agree with me**.^[15]

11. Similar to what was explained in note 9, Yitzchak thought that Eisav was righteous, but he feared that Eisav’s passion to perform the mitzvah of honoring his father quickly would lead him to hunt animals in places close to the city, where the animals might not be ownerless (*Gur Aryeh*; see there for further discussion).

12. Simply understood, Rashi is asking that the entire word seems to be superfluous. Obviously, Eisav will bring the game he hunts! (*Torah U’Peirushah*). Alternatively, the question is that the verse should have said לָצוּר צִיד, *to hunt game “and” to bring*, just as it states regarding Yitzchak’s request (vv. 3-4): וְהִבִּיאָה: ... וְצִדָּה לִי צִיד. ... וְצִדָּה לִי צִיד, *hunt game for me ... “and” bring* (*Maskil LeDavid*).

13. “To bring” teaches that Eisav was determined — under any circumstances — to bring something back. Although Yitzchak instructed Eisav to hunt only ownerless game, if he would not be successful in *trapping* an ownerless animal [לָצוּר צִיד] he would resort to taking an animal belonging to someone else, and bringing

it [לְהִבִּיאַ] (*Be’er Yitzchak*).

With this, the verse demonstrates the extent of Eisav’s wickedness. The prohibition to steal is one of the Seven Noahide Laws, and was thus in effect even in those days [unlike the requirement to use a sharpened knife, a future Torah law which Yitzchak followed even then]. Eisav cared nothing even for this serious prohibition, and was prepared to violate it (*Maskil LeDavid*).

14. *Be’er BaSadeh*.

15. Yitzchak wanted Eisav to understand that he would receive Yitzchak’s blessing only if Hashem consents. He did so in the hope that this would encourage Eisav to be extra scrupulous to serve Yitzchak only meat that was properly slaughtered and was not stolen (*Nachalas Yaakov*).

[The term פָּנִים is used here to depict *consent* and *knowledge*. Similarly, above, 6:13, *the end of all flesh has come before Me*, לְפָנֵי, *before Me*, means “to My attention” (*HaKesav VeHaKabbalah*).] See Insight.

⚡ When Did Yitzchak Say “In the Presence of Hashem”? The earlier verses did not quote Yitzchak as telling Eisav that he would bless him “in the presence of Hashem” (i.e., with Hashem’s consent). How, then, could Rivkah tell Yaakov that Yitzchak said this?

The answer is that Yitzchak told Eisav that he should prepare him a meal נִפְשִׁי, *so that my soul may bless you*. When Yitzchak referred to the blessing as coming from נִפְשִׁי, *my soul*, his intention was that his soul, i.e., his spiritual self, would divorce itself from all physical and personal considerations and become Hashem’s *tool* in conferring the blessings as He willed them. Thus Rivkah paraphrased, but did not change, the meaning of Yitzchak’s words (*HaKesav VeHaKabbalah*; see *Maskil LeDavid*).

ח וּבָעֵן בְּרִי קָבֵל מִנִּי לְמָא דִּי אָנָּא
מִפְקָדָא וְהָ: ט אִיזִיל בְּעֵן לִנְת עֲנָא
וְסָב לִי מִתְּמֵן תְּרִין גְּדִי עֲזִין טְבִין
וְאָעֲבֵד יִתְהוֹן תְּבִשְׁלִין לְאִבּוּךָ
כְּמָא דִּי רַחֵם: י וְתַעִיל (נ"א: וְתִיתִי)
לְאִבּוּךָ וְיִיכּוֹל בְּדִיל דִּי יִבְרַכְנָךְ
קֳדָם מוֹתָה: יא וְאָמַר יַעֲקֹב לְרִבְקָה
אִמָּהּ הָא עָשׂוּ אַחִי גִבֹּר שְׂעֶרְךָ וְאָנָּא
גִּבֹּר שְׂעִיעַ: יב מָאִים יִמְשֹׁנִי אָבָא

ח וְעַתָּה בְּנִי שְׁמַע בְּקֹלִי לְאֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִצְוָה אֹתָךְ:
ט לָךְ-נָא אֶל-הַצֹּאן וְקַח-לִי מִשָּׁם שְׁנֵי גְדֵי עֲזִים
טְבִים וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אִתָּם מִטְעָמִים לְאִבִּיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהֵב:
י וְהִבַּאתְ לְאִבִּיךָ וְאָכַל בְּעֶבֶר אֲשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ לִפְנֵי
מוֹתוֹ: יא וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-רִבְקָה אִמּוֹ הֵן עָשׂוּ אַחִי
אִישׁ שְׂעֶר וְאָנֹכִי אִישׁ חֶלֶק: יב אוֹלִי יִמְשֹׁנִי אָבִי

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ט"ז מִטְעָמִים. צִפְרָקִי דְרַבִּי חֲלִיעֶזֶר (פֶּרֶק ל"ז): כַּאֲשֶׁר
אָהֵב. כִּי טַעַם הַגְּדִי כְּטַעַם הַזֵּבִי: (יא) אִישׁ שְׂעֶר.
צֵטל שְׂעֶר: (יב) יִמְשֹׁנִי. כְּמוֹ "מִמֶּשֶׁשׁ צֵלְהֶרֶס" (דְּבָרִים
כח, כט):

(ט) וְקַח לִי. מִשְׁלִי הֵם וְאִינִם גִּזְל, שְׂכָךְ כְּתִבָּה לִּי יִצְחָק
בְּכִתְּבֻתָּהּ לִיטּוֹל שְׁנֵי גְדֵי עֲזִים בְּכָל יוֹם. צִרְאָשִׁית רַבָּה
(סס יד): "שְׁנֵי גְדֵי עֲזִים. וְכִי שְׁנֵי גְדֵי עֲזִים הָיָה מֵאֲכָלוּ
שָׁל יִצְחָק, חֲלָל פֶּסַח הָיָה, הָאֶחָד הַקָּרִיב לְפָסְחוֹ וְהָאֶחָד

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9. וְקַח לִי — AND FETCH FOR ME.

Rivkah did not want the goats for herself but for Yitzchak, so what did she mean by saying לִי, *for me*?^[16] Rashi explains:

וְאִינִם גִּזְל — Rivkah was telling Yaakov, "They are rightfully mine, and are not stolen."^[17]
— For so had Yitzchak written for her in her *kesubah* (marriage contract),
— לִיטּוֹל שְׁנֵי גְדֵי עֲזִים בְּכָל יוֹם — that she be permitted to take from his flock two kid goats every day as a private allowance. — בְּרַאשִׁית רַבָּה — This is from *Bereishis Rabbah* (65:14).

□ שְׁנֵי גְדֵי עֲזִים — TWO KIDS OF GOATS.

Yitzchak was certainly not going to eat two whole goats in one meal. Why, then, did Rivkah prepare two goats? Rashi explains:

וְכִי שְׁנֵי גְדֵי עֲזִים הָיָה מֵאֲכָלוּ שָׁל יִצְחָק — Did Yitzchak's meal consist of two whole kids of goats? Surely not! — **Rather, it was Pesach.** — [Yaakov] — הָאֶחָד הַקָּרִיב לְפָסְחוֹ וְהָאֶחָד עָשָׂה מִטְעָמִים — **therefore brought one goat as [Yitzchak's] pesach offering and the other one he made as delicacies.**^[18]
— בְּפֶרֶקֶי דְּרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר — This is found in *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* (Ch. 32).

16. *Be'er Yitzchak.*

17. A wife may not take any of her husband's possessions without permission (unless she does so for the maintenance of the household). Since Yitzchak did not want that his own goats should be used for this meal, Rivkah's sending Yaakov to fetch goats — even though she did so in order to feed Yitzchak — should have been considered stealing. She therefore explained, with the word לִי, that she was entitled to take them.

18. This incident took place on the day that, in the future, would be Erev Pesach. Since the forefathers kept the entire Torah (see above, 26:5), Rivkah prepared one of the goats as Yitzchak's *pesach* offering. And since the *pesach* offering should be eaten when a person is satiated (see

Pesachim 70a), she prepared another animal for Yitzchak to eat from first and become full (*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* *ibid.*). The animal eaten to become full also paralleled an offering; namely, the *chagigah* of Erev Pesach, which was brought and eaten so that the people would be satiated before eating the Pesach (*Targum Yonasan*).

Accordingly, Yitzchak did not eat two whole goats. Although a *pesach* offering must be eaten in its entirety with nothing left over until morning (*Shemos* 12:10), Yitzchak ate only the required *kezayis* of the *pesach*, while the rest was eaten by his family, and he likewise ate only part of the one made as delicacies, not the entire animal (*Zayis Raanan* §5 to *Yalkut Shimoni* §114). See Insight.

§ **Yitzchak's Pesach Offering** The wording of Rashi differs somewhat from that of *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*. Rashi says that הָאֶחָד הַקָּרִיב לְפָסְחוֹ, *he offered one as his pesach*, which implies that it was an actual *pesach*. The teaching in *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, however, states, אֶחָד כְּגֵד הַפֶּסַח, *one to correspond to the pesach*, which implies that it was not an actual *pesach*, but was merely brought to symbolize the *pesach* — i.e., to parallel the future offering of the Jewish people (*Radal* there). [Rashi's wording is actually found in *Yalkut Shimoni* §114.]

Radal (*ibid.*) points out that Rashi's wording does not fit well with the plain meaning of our verse, which states: *and I will make of "them" (the two goats) delicacies*. We see that Rivkah prepared *both* goats in this way. The *pesach*, however, is not prepared as a fancy dish, but is roasted plain over the fire, with absolutely nothing

⁸ So now, my son, heed my voice to that which I command you. ⁹ Go now to the flock and fetch for me from there two kids of goats, and I will make of them delicacies for your father, as he likes. ¹⁰ Then bring it to your father and he shall eat, so that he may bless you before his death.”

¹¹ Yaakov replied to Rivkah, his mother, “Behold, my brother Eisav is a hairy man and I am a smooth-skinned man. ¹² Perhaps my father will touch me

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□ בְּאִשֶּׁר אָהֵב — AS HE LIKES.

Why was it important for Rivkah to say that Yitzchak liked the taste of goat? Rashi explains that she was reassuring Yaakov that his scheme would not be discovered.^[19]

בִּי טַעַם הַגִּידִי כְּטַעַם הַצִּבִּי — For the flavor of a kid goat’s meat is like the flavor of deer meat. Accordingly, although Yitzchak had asked Eisav to hunt a wild animal, which typically would be a deer, and he was now being fed goat meat, there was no danger that Yitzchak would realize this, for these types of meat taste the same.^[20]

11. אִישׁ שָׁעַר — EISAV IS “ISH SAIR.”

Translated literally, אִישׁ שָׁעַר means “a man of hair.” In Hebrew, it is uncommon to use a physical characteristic like “hair” as an adjective for the word אִישׁ, *man*.^[21] Rashi therefore explains that אִישׁ is used here in a different sense:

בְּעַל שָׁעַר — In this verse, the phrase אִישׁ שָׁעַר means בְּעַל שָׁעַר: Eisav is **one who possesses** an abundance of body **hair**, a hairy man.^[22]

12. יִמְשְׁנִי — PERHAPS MY FATHER WILL TOUCH ME.

One might erroneously think that the word יִמְשְׁנִי is of the root מָשַׁח, *depart* (meaning, “perhaps my father will send me away”). Rashi must therefore clarify that it is actually of the root מָשַׁח, which is a form of “touching”.^[23]

כְּמוֹ מִמְשֹׁשׁ בְּצִהְרֵי יוֹם — The term יִמְשְׁנִי is related to מִמְשֹׁשׁ in the phrase (*Devarim* 28:29), you will **grope about at noontime** like a blind man gropes in darkness.^[24] Since Yitzchak was blind, this is the way he would touch Yaakov, by blindly groping about until he felt him.^[25]

19. *Be’er Yitzchak*.

20. *Be’er Yitzchak; Mishmeres HaKodesh*.

21. We find expressions such as אִישׁ צַדִּיק, *a righteous man*, and אִישׁ חָכָם, *a wise man* — using adjectives that describe the *essence* of the man. We do not find adjectives with אִישׁ that provide descriptions which have no bearing on the person’s status as a *man* (*Gur Aryeh* here and to *Shemos* 15:3; *Sefer Zikaron*).

22. The term אִישׁ — literally, “man” — is sometimes used in the sense of בְּעַל, *owner, possessor*. Here, too, it means בְּעַל שָׁעַר, “one who has [a lot of] hair” (*Gur Aryeh*

here and to *Shemos* 15:3).

23. *Be’er Yitzchak; Mizrahi*.

24. [This is one of the curses of the *Tochachah*. It describes confusion so great as to rival that of a blind man groping about in the darkness.] Although יִמְשְׁנִי has only one *shin*, while מִמְשֹׁשׁ has two *shins*, they are of the same root: מָשַׁח. The *dagesh* in the *shin* of יִמְשְׁנִי comes in place of a second *shin*, as if the verse had said: יִמְשְׁנִי (see *Mizrahi; Torah U’Peirushah*).

25. The verse could have used a more common term for “touching,” such as יָנַח (the verse would read: אֲוִלִי יָנַח בִּי).

added! Evidently, this was not an actual *pesach*, but was a cooked dish served to symbolize the *pesach*, and accompanied by another served to symbolize the *chagigah*, much as we do in the present day at the Pesach Seder. [According to Rashi, Rivkah must have meant that she will make of them *spiritual* delicacies, i.e., offerings.]

The approach that this was merely a symbol for the *pesach* serves to explain why Rivkah needed to use her goat to make Yitzchak’s offering. If it was an actual *pesach*, Yitzchak surely would have made arrangements for his own offering! Rather, Rivkah wanted to bring an offering that would call to mind the *pesach*, to serve as a merit for Yaakov, so he would succeed in his approach to Yitzchak. As for Yitzchak himself, he was not seeking to memorialize the *pesach* offering in advance of its time; therefore, he asked Eisav only for delicacies, but not to prepare a *pesach* (*R’ Moshe Feinstein in Mesoras Moshe*, Vol. 3, p. 432).

Others say that this was an actual *pesach* (as Rashi implies), and suggest that Yitzchak *did* request it of Eisav, ordering him to trap two animals, one as a *pesach*, the other to be prepared as delicacies. Although Eisav was hunting deer, and the law is that wild animals may not be brought as offerings, these commentators argue that this rule was not in effect before the Giving of the Torah (*Amaros Tehoros and Lehoros Nassan* here).

ואהי בעינוהי כמתלעב ואהי מיתי
עלי לוטין ולא ברבן: יג ואמרת לה
אמה עלי אתאמר בנבואה דלא
ייתון לוטין עלך ברי ברם קבל מני
ואיזיל סב לי: יד ואזל ונסיב ואיתי
לאמה ועבדת אמה תבשילין כמא
די רחם אבוהי: טו ונסיבת רבקה
ית לבושי עשו ברה רבא דכינתא
די עמה בביתא ואלבישת ית יעקב
ברה זעירא: טז וית משכי גדיי בני
עזי אלבישת על ידוהי ועל שעיעות
צוריה: יז ויהבת ית תבשילין וית
לחמא די עבדת ביזא דיעקב
ברה: יח ועל לות אבוהי ואמר אבא
ואמר הא אנא מן את ברי: יט ואמר
יעקב לאבוהי אנא עשו בוכרך

והייתי בעיניו כמתעתע והבאתי עלי קללה
ולא ברכה: יג ותאמר לו אמו עלי קללתך בני
אך שמע בקלי ולך קח-לי: יד וילך ויקח ויבא
לאמו ותעש אמו מטעמים כאשר אהב אביו:
טו ותקח רבקה את-בגדי עשו בנה הגדל החמדת
אשר אתה בבית ותלבש את-יעקב בנה הקטן:
טז ואת ערת גדיי העזים הלבישה על-ידיו ועל
חלקת צואריו: יז ותתן את-המטעמים ואת-
הלחם אשר עשתה ביד יעקב בנה: יח ויבא
אל-אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הנני מי אתה
בני: יט ויאמר יעקב אל-אביו אנכי עשו בוכרך

רש"י

אלא שהיה זקי צמטשין וחושן (סס): (יט) אנכי עשו
בכרך. לנכי הוא המביא לך, וטעם הוא כזכרך (תנחומא
יז ט)

(טו) החמדת. הקניות, פתגמו: "דכייתא". דבר אחר,
שחמד אותן מן נמרוד (בראשית רבה סה, טז): אשר אתה
בבית. והלא כמה נשים היו לו והוא מפקיד אלל אמו.

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15. *HACHAMUDOS* — החמדת

The simple meaning of חמדת is *coveted*, or *desirable*, which connotes that there was something special about these garments. What was the unique feature of Eisav's garments that caused Rivkah to clothe Yaakov in them at this time?^[26] Rashi offers two explanations. According to the first approach, the term חמדת in this verse does not mean "coveted":

פתגמו: — The simple explanation is that in this case, החמדת means **"the clean [garments],"** **הנקיות** — as Targum Onkelos translates: **"דכייתא", the clean ones.** Eisav, who excelled in honoring his father, had a special set of clean clothing which he would don whenever he served Yitzchak, and Rivkah clothed Yaakov in those garments.^[27]

According to this explanation, the verse could have said הנקיות, which would be the usual term to use when referring to clean items. Rashi therefore offers a Midrashic explanation that preserves the usual meaning of חמדת — "coveted":^[28]

Alternatively, these were [the garments] which Eisav had **coveted** and stolen **from Nimrod**^[29] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 65:16).

Rashi therefore cites the verse in *Devarim*, to illustrate that ימשי is particularly fitting for the way in which Yitzchak might come into contact with Yaakov, though a blind groping, as described in that verse (*Ri Kanizal*).

26. See *Be'er BaSadeh*.

27. *Be'er BaSadeh*; see *Bereishis Rabbah* 65:16. We find the term חמד used in the sense of "clean" in *Daniel* 10:3; see Rashi there. [Some understand Onkelos to mean that the garments were טהור, ritually clean. Thus, although Yaakov would ordinarily not wear Eisav's garments, which were presumably tamei, he was able to wear these garments (*Chida* in *Chomas Anach*; see Rashi to *Daniel* 10:11).]

28. *Amar N'kei*.

29. These were the garments that Hashem had made for Adam and Chavah after they sinned (above, 3:21). They had the unique power to draw animals to them, which made hunting easy for the one who wore them. Cham, son of Noach, took them into the Ark with him, and later passed them on to his grandson, Nimrod. These garments made Nimrod a supremely successful and famous hunter (see above, 10:9). Eisav coveted these garments, so he killed Nimrod and took them for himself (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:13 and 65:16; *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, Ch. 24; see also Rashi to *Pesachim* 54b (ד"ה בגדו). Therefore, the verse refers to them as "Eisav's coveted garments."

Since Adam wore these clothes in the service of Hashem, it was appropriate for Yaakov to wear them

and I shall be as a mocker in his eyes; I will thus bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing.”¹³ But his mother said to him, “On me be your curse, my son; only heed my voice and go fetch [them] for me.”¹⁴ So he went, fetched, and brought to his mother, and his mother made delicacies as his father liked.¹⁵ Rivkah then took her older son Eisav’s coveted garments which were with her in the house, and clothed Yaakov her younger son.¹⁶ And the skins of the goat-kids she put over his arms and over his smooth-skinned neck.¹⁷ She placed the delicacies and the bread which she had made into the hand of her son Yaakov.

¹⁸ And he came to his father and said, “Father,” and he said, “Here I am; who are you, my son?”¹⁹ Yaakov said to his father, “I am Eisav your firstborn;

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□ **אֲשֶׁר אִתָּהּ בְּבֵית — WHICH WERE WITH HER IN THE HOUSE.**

It seems odd that Eisav, a married man, would keep his clothing in his mother’s house. Rashi explains why he did this:

וְהָלֹא בְמֵה נָשִׁים הָיוּ לוֹ — [Eisav] had numerous wives, וְהוּא מִפְקִיד אֶצֶל אִמּוֹ — yet he deposits his garments with his mother?!^[30] אֶלֹא שֶׁהָיָה בָקִי בְּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶן וְחוֹשֶׁן — Rather, he was familiar with [his wives’] wicked ways and was suspicious of them, lest they steal his valuable garments, so he entrusted them with his mother^[31] (*Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid.*).

19. אֲנֹכִי עֲשׂוּ בְכוֹרָךְ — I AM EISAV YOUR FIRSTBORN.

In forthcoming passage, on three occasions, Yaakov *seems* to say things that are untrue, twice in our verse, and once again in verse 24. But this is impossible, for Hashem despises falsehood!^[32] Furthermore, it cannot be that Yaakov, whose prime characteristic is truth, would utter a lie.^[33] Rashi therefore explains that in fact, these three statements were *not* lies. Rather, Yaakov phrased his statements cleverly, so that they could be understood in two different ways. Yaakov spoke only the truth, according to his intended meaning, but Yitzchak understood his words incorrectly, according to the meaning Yaakov did not intend.

In this case, Rashi divides Yaakov’s statement into two parts, and shows how each phrase is an independently true statement:

לֹךְ — “אֲנֹכִי” הוּא הַמְבִיֵּא לָךְ — This is what Yaakov meant: (1) “**I AM the one who brings to you this food;**” וְ“עֲשׂוּ” הוּא “בְּכוֹרָךְ” — and, separately, (2) “**EISAV IS YOUR FIRSTBORN**” (*Tanchuma Yashan* §10).

when he served his father, for the honor one owes his parents is compared in the Torah to the honor one owes Hashem (*Be’er BaSadeh*; see *Kiddushin* 30b). See Insight.

30. The verse could have stated simply: אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית, *which were in the house*. The word אִתָּהּ, *with her*, is extra. It tells us that Eisav’s valued garments were *always* אִתָּהּ, with Rivkah (see *Maskil LeDavid*).

31. This comment accords with the *second* explanation mentioned in the previous Rashi, that these were the valuable garments he stole from Nimrod (see *Amar*

N’kei). [According to the first explanation mentioned there, that they were clean garments which he wore when serving his father, he kept them in his parents’ home out of convenience, because that is where he would serve his father.]

32. As the verse states (*Mishlei* 12:22), תוֹעֵבַת ה’ שִׁפְתָּי, *An abomination to Hashem are lips that speak falsehood* (*Gur Aryeh*).

33. As the verse states (*Michah* 7:20), תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לַיַּעֲקֹב, *Give truth to Yaakov*. This is Yaakov’s particular *mid-dah* (*Devek Tbv*).

⚡ **Why Did Eisav Not Take His Garments When He Hunted That Day?** According to Rashi’s second explanation,

these garments had special powers that made hunting much easier. Why, then, did Eisav leave them with Rivkah on the day he went to hunt game for Yitzchak? Some suggest that Eisav knew that Rivkah loved Yaakov more than him. He therefore feared that if she were to become aware of Yitzchak’s desire to bless him, she might scheme to transfer the blessings to Yaakov (as indeed she did). Therefore, since the special garments were kept with Rivkah, Eisav left without taking them, in the hope that his mother would not realize that he had gone hunting to receive the blessing from Yitzchak (*Tiferes Yosef*). However, Hashem revealed to Rivkah that Eisav had in fact gone hunting, and she therefore had the opportunity to dress Yaakov in the special clothing.

עבדית כמא די מלליתא עמי קום
בען אסתחר ותיכול מצידי בדיל
די תברכני נפשך: כ ואמר יצחק
לברה מא דין אוחיתא לאשכחא
ברי ואמר ארי ומין יי אלהך
קדמי: כא ואמר יצחק ליעקב קרב
בען ואמושנך ברי האת דין ברי
עשו אם לא: כב וקריב יעקב לנת
יצחק אביו ומשה ואמר קלא
קלא דיעקב וידא ידוהי דעשו:

עשיתי כאשר דברת אלי קום-נא שבה ואכלה
מצידי בעבור תברכני נפשך: כ ואמר יצחק
אל-בנו מה-זה מהרת למצא בני ואמר כי
הקרה יהוה אלהיך לפני: כא ואמר יצחק אל-
יעקב גשה-נא ואמשך בני האתה זה בני עשו
אם-לא: כב ויגש יעקב אל-יצחק אביו וימשהו
ויאמר הקל קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו:

רש"י

עשיתי כמה דברים כאשר דברת אלי: שבה. לשון מוסב על השלחן, לכה מתורגם "אסתחר": (כא) גשה נא ואמשך. אמר יחק כלבו: (כב) קול יעקב. שמדבר בלשון תחנונים, "קום נא",

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Both of these statements are true.^[34]

□ עשיתי — **I HAVE DONE AS YOU TOLD ME.**

This statement also appears to be untrue. Rashi explains what Yaakov actually intended:

“כמה דברים” — Yaakov meant, **I HAVE DONE numerous things AS YOU TOLD ME** at various times. Thus, this statement too was entirely true.^[35]

□ שבה — **PLEASE RISE, SIT AND EAT.**

Why would Yaakov ask Yitzchak to rise, and then immediately say that he should sit?^[36] Rashi explains: לכה מתורגם — “Sit” in our verse is **an expression meaning to recline at a table.**

34. The word אנכי, *I am*, can be used as a complete, independent statement which stands on its own, or as the beginning of a longer statement. Yaakov intended the former; thus, he said “I am,” which Rashi explains to mean: “I am the one who brings this food to you.” Since אנכי stands on its own, the next phrase begins a new statement: עשו בכרך, meaning, “Eisav is your firstborn.” Thus, both of Yaakov’s statements were true. [If, however, Yaakov would have said: אני עשו בכרך, substituting אני for אנכי (as indeed Eisav did below, v. 32), his statement could not have been divided this way, because אני (with a *chataf-patach* vowel under the *aleph*) is never an independent statement, but always connects to the next words.]

Yitzchak, however, understood אנכי according to its

other use, in which it is the beginning of a longer statement. Accordingly, he understood Yaakov to be saying: “I am Eisav, your firstborn.” Yaakov spoke no lie, but Yitzchak misinterpreted his meaning (*Gur Aryeh*). See below, v. 24.

35. Yaakov did not mean that he had done what Yitzchak told him *now*, in bringing him the delicacies, for that would have been a lie. Rather, he meant that at various times, he had *often* done “many things” (כמה) that Yitzchak had told him to do (*Mizrachi*). Yitzchak misunderstood, and thought he was referring to what Yitzchak had said *now*. See Insight.

36. *Maskil LeDavid*.

☞ **Clever Phrasing to Avoid a Lie** Rashi shows that Yaakov cleverly worded his statements to ensure that he spoke no lie during his conversation with his father (see also Rashi to v. 24). At the same time, such clever phrasing designed to have two meanings cannot be considered the pristine truth! Under ordinary circumstances, Yaakov would have been careful to speak with utmost clarity, so that his words should not be misconstrued. However, Yaakov understood that his mission — to do whatever was necessary to receive the blessings from Yitzchak — was Divinely ordained, for Rivkah was a prophetess, and her instructions derived from her Divine prophecy. Accordingly, the acts Yaakov needed to do, and the statements he needed to make, in order to obtain the blessings were actually mitzvos, for they obeyed Hashem’s command as conveyed through Rivkah’s prophecy!

Nevertheless, although Yaakov was forced to speak in a way designed to mislead Yitzchak, he did all that was in his power to avoid saying an actual lie. Yaakov’s behavior must be understood as an attempt to remain as truthful as possible even in a case where some level of deviousness was not merely *unavoidable*, but actually *required* (*R’ Yerucham Levovitz in Daas Torah*). See the related discussions in the Insights to 33:14 and 50:16 below.

I have done as you told me; please rise, sit and eat of my game so that your soul may bless me.”

²⁰ Yitzchak said to his son, “How is it that you were so quick to find, my son?” And he said, “Because Hashem, your God, let it happen for me.”

²¹ And Yitzchak said to Yaakov, “Come close, please, so I can feel you, my son; are you indeed my son Eisav or not?”

²² So Yaakov drew close to Yitzchak his father, and he felt him and said, “The voice is Yaakov’s voice, but the hands are Eisav’s hands.”

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“אִסְתַּחֲרָה” — That is why it is translated by Onkelos as “אִסְתַּחֲרָה”, which means *recline*.^[37] Yaakov asked his father to rise from his seat and come recline at the table.

21. גָּשָׁה נָא וְאֶמְשַׁךְ — COME CLOSE, PLEASE, SO I CAN FEEL YOU... ARE YOU INDEED MY SON EISAV OR NOT?

Rashi explains what led Yitzchak to suspect that it was not Eisav who was serving him:

אָמַר יִצְחָק בְּלִבּוֹ: אֵין דָּרָךְ עֲשׂוֹ לְהִיּוֹת שֵׁם שְׁמוֹם שְׁגוֹר בְּפִי — Yitzchak said to himself, “It is uncharacteristic of Eisav to have the Name of Hashem readily on his lips, וְזֶה אוֹמֵר ‘כִּי הִקְרָה ה’ אֵלָיָהּ’ — yet this one standing before me says, *BECAUSE HASHEM, YOUR GOD, LET IT HAPPEN*”^[38] (Bereishis Rabbah 65:19).

22. קוֹל יַעֲקֹב — THE VOICE IS YAAKOV’S VOICE.

This cannot mean that Yaakov’s voice sounded different than Eisav’s, for if Yitzchak could discern a difference between their voices, he should have asked to feel Yaakov *as soon* as Yaakov spoke (vv. 18-19), and should not have waited until he used the Name of Hashem. Clearly, Yaakov’s voice sounded like Eisav’s, and Yitzchak could not tell them apart.^[39] What, then, did Yitzchak mean when he said that the “voice” was Yaakov’s? Rashi explains:

שְׁמִדְבָּר בְּלִשׁוֹן תְּחִנּוּנִים, “קוֹם נָא” — Yitzchak meant: This one’s *manner of speaking* is similar to Yaakov’s,

37. The Aramaic term אִסְתַּחֲרָה is related to סָחֹר סָחֹר, *around* (see Onkelos above, 23:17), and refers to the fact that people eating together would recline on couches set in a circle, with a small table before each one, just as nowadays people sit together around a large table. The Hebrew term for reclining at a meal, הִסְתַּיָּח, likewise is related to סָבִיב, *around* (Rav Hai Gaon, cited by Rabbeinu Yonah, Berachos fol. 30b).

38. Yitzchak was not saying this because he held Eisav to be wicked, for, on the contrary, Yitzchak considered Eisav to be righteous. Rather, Yitzchak thought that it was a feature of Eisav’s *piety* that he refrained from casually mentioning Hashem’s Name, out of fear of uttering it in vain or in an unclean place (Ramban; see Mizrachi).

As Rashi explains below (v. 22 קוֹל יַעֲקֹב), from the beginning of the conversation, even before Yaakov mentioned Hashem’s Name, Yitzchak had already noticed the uncharacteristically polite manner of speech, *Please rise* (v. 19). Yet although this was not Eisav’s usual style of speech, Yitzchak thought that in this instance, Eisav spoke this way out of respect. However, when Yitzchak later heard the person use Hashem’s Name, which he thought Eisav avoided doing on *principle*, he became suspicious. Therefore, only at this point did he ask to feel his son (Maharai; see also Be’er BaSadeh). See Insight.

39. *Nachalas Yaakov*; see Gur Aryeh, vv. 21-22; see also Ramban to v. 12.

⚡ **Using Hashem’s Name** As explained in note 38, Yitzchak assumed that Eisav avoided using Hashem’s Name out of piety. This is difficult, because why, then, did it not bother Yitzchak that Yaakov — who was certainly pious — would use the Name freely?

Gur Aryeh explains: Yitzchak understood that the individual practices of Eisav and Yaakov were rooted in their different approaches toward *avodas Hashem*. The *middah* of Yitzchak was to serve Hashem with reverence and awe [*yirah*] (see below, 31:42 — וַיִּפְחַד יִצְחָק). One who serves God in this manner *never* says His Name. The very thought of uttering the Holy Name fills him with fear and trembling. Yitzchak perceived that this was Eisav’s nature as well. [It was because of this perceived similarity that he loved Eisav.] Therefore, he assumed that Eisav also feared to say Hashem’s Name.

With regard to Yaakov, however, Yitzchak understood that his primary mode of serving Hashem was out of love [*ahavah*]. One who dearly loves his friend mentions him constantly; the friend’s name is always on his lips. Given that this was the manner of Yaakov’s *avodas Hashem*, it did not trouble Yitzchak that Yaakov would often mention Hashem’s Name.

כג וְלֹא הִכִּירוּ כִּי־הָיוּ יָדָיו עֹשׂוֹ אָחִיו שְׂעֵרַת
וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ: כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶתָּה זֶה בְּנִי עֹשֶׂה וַיֹּאמֶר
אָנֹכִי: כה וַיֹּאמֶר הַגֵּשָׁה לִי וְאֶכְלָה מִצֵּיד בְּנִי לִמְעַן
תְּבָרְכֶנּוּ נַפְשִׁי וַיִּגְשֵׁהוּ וַיֹּאכֹל וַיָּבֵא לוֹ יֵין וַיִּשְׁתְּ:
כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יִצְחָק אָבִיו גֵּשָׁה־נָּא וּשְׁקָה־לִּי בְּנִי:
כז וַיִּגַּשׁ וַיִּשְׁקֵהוּ וַיֵּרַח אֶת־רִיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ
וַיֹּאמֶר רֵאשִׁית רִיחַ בְּנִי כְּרִיחַ שָׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכָה יְהוָה:

כג וְלֹא הִכִּירוּ כִּי־הָיוּ יָדָיו עֹשׂוֹ אָחִיו שְׂעֵרַת
וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ: כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶתָּה זֶה בְּנִי עֹשֶׂה וַיֹּאמֶר
אָנֹכִי: כה וַיֹּאמֶר הַגֵּשָׁה לִי וְאֶכְלָה מִצֵּיד בְּנִי לִמְעַן
תְּבָרְכֶנּוּ נַפְשִׁי וַיִּגְשֵׁהוּ וַיֹּאכֹל וַיָּבֵא לוֹ יֵין וַיִּשְׁתְּ:
כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יִצְחָק אָבִיו גֵּשָׁה־נָּא וּשְׁקָה־לִּי בְּנִי:
כז וַיִּגַּשׁ וַיִּשְׁקֵהוּ וַיֵּרַח אֶת־רִיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ
וַיֹּאמֶר רֵאשִׁית רִיחַ בְּנִי כְּרִיחַ שָׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכָה יְהוָה:

רס"ו

הַעֲזִים, אֶלֶּל מְלִמֵּד שֶׁנֶּכְנֵס עִמּוֹ רִיחַ גַּן עֵדֶן (עיין בראשית
כז סה, כז): בְּרִיחַ שָׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכָה ה' שֶׁנֶּכְנֵס עִמּוֹ רִיחַ
טוֹב, וְזֶהוּ שֶׁלֶּה תְּפֻחִים. כִּד דְּרָשׁוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז"ל (תענית כט):

אֶכְלָל עֲשׂוֹ בְּלִשׁוֹן קְטוֹרֵיחַ דְּבָר, "יָקוֹם אָנֹכִי" (תנחומא יא):
(כד) וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי. לֹא אָמַר אָנֹכִי עֹשֶׂה אֶלֶּל "אָנֹכִי" (בראשית
כז סה): (כז) וַיֵּרַח וְגו'. וְהֵלֵךְ אֵין רִיחַ רַע יוֹסֵר מִשְׁטָף

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אֶכְלָל עֲשׂוֹ בְּלִשׁוֹן קְטוֹרֵיחַ דְּבָר, **"Please rise."** for he speaks entreatingly, politely saying (v. 19, above), **"By contrast,** we find that Eisav spoke in a domineering tone, instructing Yitzhak (v. 31 below), **"Let Father rise"**^[40] (*Tanchuma* §11).

24. וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי — AND HE SAID, "I AM."

Here too, as in verse 19, it might seem that Yaakov uttered an untruth. For Yitzhak said, "You are indeed my son Eisav," and Yaakov responded, "I am." Rashi explains that here, as above, Yaakov worded his response cleverly, so that it could be understood in another way:

— **He did not say, "I am Eisav,"** which would have been a lie, **but only "I AM"**^[41] (*Bereishis Rabbasi*).

27. וַיֵּרַח וְגו' — HE SMELLED... HE SAID, SEE, THE FRAGRANCE OF MY SON IS LIKE THE FRAGRANCE OF A FIELD.

Yitzhak remarked on the pleasant fragrance of Yaakov's garments, which seemingly inspired his blessing. Rashi points out that in fact, Yaakov's garments had an unpleasant smell:

— **But surely there is no worse smell than that of the hair of goats,** which Yaakov was wearing on his neck and arms! What then was the pleasant fragrance that Yitzhak smelled?^[42] — **Rather, this teaches that** when Yaakov entered his father's presence, **the fragrance of Gan Eden entered with him.** It was this fragrance that

40. Nevertheless, Yitzhak believed Eisav was righteous, for many have a habit of speaking in a commanding manner even though they are good people (*Mizrachi*). Alternatively, Yitzhak interpreted his elder son's authoritative manner of speech as a sign that he would one day become a leader (*Gur Aryeh*).

Some wonder why Rashi does not explain, "The voice is Yaakov's voice," to be referring to mention of Hashem's Name (similar to what he said in v. 21). The answer is that while the term *voice*, קוֹל, can refer to the manner of speaking, it cannot refer to the use of a particular word, which would be expressed by the term *דיבור*, not קוֹל (*Ba'er Heitev*).

41. Meaning, "I am who I am" (*Torah U'Peirushah*). Yitzhak understood Yaakov to have responded to what

he, Yitzhak, had said, which would have meant that Yaakov agreed that he was indeed Eisav. But in fact, Yaakov was not responding to Yitzhak's words, but was making an independent statement: "I am."

[Although the word אָנֹכִי (with a *chataf-patach* under the *aleph*) is never an independent statement, but always connects to the next phrase, the word אָנֹכִי (with a *kamatz* under the *aleph*) is always an independent statement (see *Gur Aryeh* to v. 19, and note 34 above).]

42. Although the garments of Eisav, which Yaakov was also wearing, might have been perfumed, no ordinary perfume would have hidden the terrible smell of the goat hair, especially when Yitzhak kissed Yaakov and placed his face near Yaakov's neck (*Yefeh To'ar*).

²³ But he did not recognize him because his hands were like the hands of Eisav his brother — hairy; so he blessed him. ²⁴ He said, “You are, indeed, my son Eisav!” And he said, “I am.” ²⁵ He said, “Serve me, and let me eat of my son’s game that my soul may bless you.” So he served him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank.

²⁶ Then his father Yitzchak said to him, “Come close, please, and kiss me, my son.” ²⁷ So he drew close and kissed him; he smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him; he said, “See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field which Hashem has blessed —

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Yitzchak smelled^[43] (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 65:22). And this is what Yitzchak was referring to with his next statement:^[44]

□ כְּרִיחַ שְׂדֵה אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכוּ ה' — **LIKE THE FRAGRANCE OF A FIELD WHICH HASHEM HAS BLESSED.**

שָׁנָתָן בּוֹ רִיחַ טוֹב — The blessing Hashem gave a certain field is that He imparted to it a good fragrance,^[45] וְזֶהוּ שְׂדֵה תְּפֹחִים — and this is “the field of apple trees,” which is a reference to Gan Eden.^[46] כִּי דָרְשׁוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז"ל — Thus have our Sages, of blessed memory, expounded^[47] (*Taanis* 29b).

43. The verse places great emphasis on the fragrance, implying that it was the fragrance which inspired Yitzchak’s blessing. Since no ordinary scent could have accomplished this, it clearly must have been an otherworldly scent: the fragrance of Gan Eden (*Torah U’Peirushah*). This Heavenly fragrance was so powerful and intense that it nullified the smell of the goat hair (*Yefeh To’ar*).

44. *Bereishis Rabbah* here; *Zohar*; Vol. 3, p. 84a.

45. Usually, blessing a field would mean that it will produce bountiful crops. Here, though, Rashi explains, the term refers to the blessing of a pleasant fragrance (*Gur Aryeh*).

46. *Zohar* *ibid.*; see *Tzeror HaMor*, *Shir HaShirim* 2:5; *Pri Tzaddik*, *Korach* §11.

Some say that the fragrance of Gan Eden was actually emanating from the garments Eisav took from Nimrod, which Yaakov was now wearing. As explained above (note 29), these were the garments Hashem had

made for Adam HaRishon. When worn by the wicked Eisav, they gave off no scent. But when Yaakov donned these garments, the fragrance of Gan Eden with which they were imbued was awakened (for the soul of Yaakov was connected to that of Adam; see *Bava Metzia* 84a), and thus they radiated the fragrance of Gan Eden. Once Yitzchak smelled this Heavenly fragrance, he understood that this son was worthy of his blessings (*Zohar*; Vol. 1, 142b).

47. According to the simple meaning of the verse, the phrase אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכוּ ה' would have been understood as referring to Yaakov (with אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכוּ ה' meaning “whom Hashem has blessed”), and would have meant that Hashem blessed him with a pleasant fragrance. Rashi now explains that it refers to the field. Yitzchak was saying that the fragrance of his son is like the fragrance of a field which Hashem has blessed with a pleasant fragrance (*Mizrachi*; see further, next Rashi). See Insight.

⚡ Are תְּפֹחִים Apples? Rashi, based on the Gemara in *Taanis*, says that the fragrance discussed here was that of “the field of תְּפֹחִים.” We have explained תְּפֹחִים to be *apples*, which is the usual translation. This approach is supported by *Beur HaGra* (to *Orach Chaim* 583:1), who says that on Rosh Hashanah we dip an *apple* into honey because it was the fragrance of apples that entered with Yaakov when he came before Yitzchak, and this episode took place on Rosh Hashanah. [According to *Gra*, this episode took place on Rosh Hashanah, rather than Erev Pesach (see *Zohar*, Vol. 3, pp. 99b and 258b).]

There is, however, another explanation, from *Tosafos* in *Taanis* there (ד"ה של תְּפֹחִים), which says that תְּפֹחִים here refers to *esrogim*, and thus, it was the fragrance of *esrogim* that Yitzchak smelled (see also *Tosafos*, *Shabbos* 88a פ"ה פ"ו).

This explanation fits well with those who say that the fragrance of Gan Eden that entered with Yaakov emanated from his garments that originally belonged to Adam HaRishon (see notes 29 and 46). According to some, the tree from which Adam and Chavah wrongfully ate was the *esrog* tree, and what tempted Chavah was the fragrance of the *esrog* that the tree gave off. It is possible that when Adam ate from the *esrog* tree in Gan Eden, his garments absorbed the fragrance of its fruit, and thus it was this exquisite fragrance that Yitzchak smelled when Yaakov entered (*Maharsha* to *Taanis* *ibid.*).

וַיִּתֵּן-לָהּ הָאֱלֹהִים מִטָּל הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמִשְׁמַנִּי הָאָרֶץ

(בכח) ויתן לך. יתן ויחזור ויתן. צראשית רצה וכו', ג.
וילפי פסומו מוסק לענין הראשון: "ראה ריח צני" שפתן
כלו הקדוש צרוך הוא, "כרית שדו וגו'", ועוד "יתן לך משל
השמים וגו'": משל השמים. פשמענו, ומדרש אגדה יש

28. וַיִּתֵּן לָךְ — AND MAY GOD GIVE TO YOU.

ותן — When Yitzchak said, “And may He give you,” he meant, **may He give you and then give you again, more and more.**^[48] בראשית רבה — This is found in *Bereishis Rabbah* (66:3).

— But according to [the verse's] plain meaning, [the word “and”] adds to the previous matter, connecting this verse with the previous one. Thus, the passage is read as follows: “רֵאָה רֵיחַ בְּנִי” שָׁתַן לוֹ הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא “בְּרִיחַ שָׂדֶה וְגו’” — Yitzchak said: *SEE, THE FRAGRANCE OF MY SON, which the Holy One, blessed is He, has given him (my son), IS LIKE THE FRAGRANCE OF A FIELD, etc.* “וְעוֹד יִתֵּן לָךְ מִטֵּל הַשָּׁמַיִם וְגו’” — **“AND” in addition** to the blessing of a pleasant fragrance, *MAY HE GIVE TO YOU FROM THE DEW OF THE HEAVENS, etc.* According to this understanding, the blessing of fragrance mentioned in the previous verse is a blessing that Hashem had given to Yaakov. Accordingly, although Yitzchak’s blessing begins only in this verse, the verses are thematically connected, since both speak of a blessing given to Yaakov. This is indicated by the word “and,” which, as per its usual meaning, indicates a connection between the verses.^[49]

□ מטל השמים — *AND MAY GOD GIVE TO YOU OF THE DEW OF THE HEAVENS.*

בְּיָסְקוֹ — *The dew of the heavens* is meant **in its literal sense**, as referring to actual dew. The blessing, however, is not for the dew itself, but for the crops which grow because of the dew. In other words, Yaakov was blessed with abundant crops.^[50]

However, there is an Aggadic Midrash which gives numerous interpretations of this blessing, in which “dew” is interpreted in various ways.^[51]

interprets this phrase as referring to Yaakov, whom Hashem blessed with a pleasant fragrance. [This is essentially how *Ramban* (to v. 28) interprets our verse.] Accordingly, the previous verse should be rendered: “See, the fragrance of my son, whom Hashem has blessed, is like the fragrance of a field” (*Mizrachi*). Having mentioned the blessing of a pleasant fragrance which Yaakov already possessed, Yitzchak added, “*And may He [also] give you from the dew of the heavens ...*

50. *Mizrachi*.

51. In *Bereishis Rabbah* 66:3, the “dew” of this blessing

²⁸ *And may God give to you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth,*

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In our verse, when saying that God should bless his son, Yitzchak specified the Name *Elokim*. In the blessings Yitzchak later gave to Eisav (vv. 39-40), there is no mention of the Name *Elokim*. Rashi explains why this Name is mentioned in Yaakov's blessings only:^[52]

אחר — Another matter: מהו "האלהים" — **What is the reason Yitzchak mentioned the Name *Elokim* (האלהים) when blessing Yaakov?** He did so because *Elokim* denotes God's Attribute of Strict Justice,^[53] **בדין** — and thus it implies that the blessing will be given **by the strict letter of the law:** אם ראוי לך יתן לך ואם לאו לא יתן לך — **If [the blessing] befits you — i.e., if you deserve it — may He give it to you, and if you do not deserve it, may He not give it to you.** אבל לעשו אמר "משמני הארץ יהיה" — **אבל לעשו אמר "משמני הארץ יהיה" — However when giving his blessing to Eisav, [Yitzchak] said unconditionally (v. 39 below), of the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling, implying,** בין צדיק בין רשע יתן לך — **whether you are righteous or wicked, may He give it to you.**^[54]

Yitzchak's differentiation between the blessings to Yaakov and Eisav was mirrored in a prayer said by Shlomo HaMelech many years later. Rashi explains:

ובנינו למד שלמה כשעשה הבית — And Shlomo HaMelech learned from [Yitzchak] when he built the Beis HaMikdash, **סידר תפלתו — and he formulated his prayer** at that time, asking Hashem to hearken to all prayers that people would utter at that site. But he took pains to differentiate between

is interpreted in various ways: as the *manna* (מן), which rained down from Heaven like the dew; as Tzion (i.e., Eretz Yisrael), which is the land upon which the dew falls (see *Yefeh To'ar*); or as the Written Torah, which came down to the Jewish people from Heaven like dew (see *Devarim* 32:2). According to this approach, the blessing is for the "dew" itself (*Mizrachi*), but "dew" is not meant literally. See Insight.

52. *Sefer Zikaron; Meisiach Ilmim*. [Also, in the previous verse Yitzchak mentioned the Four-Letter Name of Hashem, so he could have simply said, ויתן, *And may He give*, and it would have been understood that "He" refers back to the Name mentioned in the previous verse.

Why did Yitzchak need to mention the Name *Elokim* here? (*Torah U'Peirushah*).]

53. The Four-Letter Name ה represents God's Attribute of Mercy; the Name *Elokim* represents His Attribute of Justice (see Rashi above, 1:1 ברא אלוקים).

54. Although Yitzchak thought the first blessing was being given to Eisav, Hashem placed the word *Elokim* in his mouth, so that the blessing would be contingent on whether Yaakov would be deserving of it. When he later gave a blessing to Eisav, Hashem did not make Yitzchak say this word, so that the blessing should be given unconditionally (*Sefer Zikaron; Meisiach Ilmim*).

☞ **Why Worldly Blessings and Not Spiritual Ones?** The blessings given to Yaakov primarily concern physical pleasures, such as food, drink, and the like. Were there no loftier blessings that Yitzchak could have given Yaakov? *Beis HaLevi* explains that these blessings were for worldly matters because they were the blessings which Yitzchak had originally intended for Eisav, who was fit only for such blessings. The blessings he had intended for Yaakov, which he eventually bestowed upon him before his departure to Paddan-aram (below, 28:1-4), indeed concerned spiritual matters. [Yaakov wanted no part of Eisav's worldly blessings, but Rivkah understood that these blessings, too, were needed by Yaakov (see *Beis HaLevi* for elaboration).]

Or HaChaim says that spiritual blessings were also given. They are not detailed, but are merely alluded to in the previous verse, with the word ויברכהו, *and he blessed him*. The physical blessings, however, are detailed in our verse ("the dew of the Heavens, etc."). [This, says *Or HaChaim*, is why our verse begins with "And," because the previous verse spoke of spiritual blessings given to Yaakov, and this verse continues with worldly blessings.]

However, *Gur Aryeh* maintains that this question is actually what Rashi himself is addressing here. Rashi was troubled by why Yitzchak gave only worldly blessings, not spiritual ones, and explains that in fact, many important blessings, both physical and spiritual, were contained in Yitzchak's words in our verse (although they were not spelled out explicitly). These implicit blessings are expounded in the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid.*), and include blessings related to various spiritual matters, such as *korbanos*, *nesachim*, *bikkurim*, Eretz Yisrael, and the Written and Oral Torah. Yitzchak's intention was to bestow *all* these blessings upon Yaakov. This is what Rashi is referring to when he says: ומדרש אגדה יש להרבה פנים, *there is an Aggadic Midrash which gives numerous interpretations*.

וסגיות עיבור ונחמ: כט ופֿלחונף
עממין וישתעבדון לך מלכונ
הוי רב לאחיק ויסגדון לך בגי
אמך ליטיף יהון ליטין ובריכין
יהון בריכין: ל ונהנה פד שיצי
יצחק לברכא ית יעקב ונהנה ברם
מפק נפק יעקב מלות אפי יצחק
אבוהי ועשו אבוהי על מצידה:
לא ועבר אף הוא תבשילין

וְרַב דָּגָן וְתִירָשׁ: כט יַעֲבֹדוּךָ עַמִּים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ
[וישתחו כ] לְךָ לְאֲמִים הוּא גִבִּיר לְאַחִיךָ
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְךָ בְּנֵי אִמְךָ אֲרִרְיָה אֲרֹר וּמִבְּרַכְיָה
בָּרוּךְ: 5 וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה יִצְחָק לְבָרֶךְ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב
וַיְהִי אָף יֵצָא יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת פָּנָיו יִצְחָק אָבִיו
וַעֲשׂוּ אַחֲיוּ כֹא מַצִּידוֹ: לא וַיַּעַשׂ גַּם־הוּא מִטַּעַמִּים

רש"י

"בְּנֵי אִמְךָ" (בראשית רבה שם 7): אֲרִרְיָה אֲרֹר וּמִבְּרַכְיָה
בָּרוּךְ. וּבְצִלְעָם הוּא אֹמֵר "מִבְּרַכְיָה בָּרוּךְ וְאֲרִרְיָה
אֲרֹר" (במדבר כד, ט). הַלְדִּיקִים תַּחֲלָטָם יְסוּרִין וְסוּפִין שְׁלוֹה
וְאֲוִרְיָהִם וּמִלְטְרִיָּהִם קוֹדֵמִים לְמִבְּרַכְיָהִם, לְפִיכָךְ יִחָק
הַקִּדִּים קָלֶלֶת אֲוִרְיָהִם לְבִרְכַּת מִבְּרַכְיָהִם. וְהַרְשָׁעִים תַּחֲלָטָן
שְׁלוֹה וְסוּפִין יְסוּרִין, לְפִיכָךְ צִלְעָם הַקִּדִּים בָּרַכָה לְקַלְלָה
(בראשית רבה שם: (ל) [אֲרִי] יֵצָא יַעֲקֹב. זֶה יוֹצֵא זֶה בָּא
(תנחומא יא; בראשית רבה שם ה:)

יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהוּא בָּעַל חֲמוּנָה וּמִלְדִּיק עָלָיו הַדִּין לֹא יִקְרָא עָלָיו
תִּגְרָה, לְפִיכָךְ "וְנִתַּן לְאִישׁ כָּל דְּרָכָיו אֲשֶׁר תַּדַּע חַת לְבָבוֹ"
(מלכים א' ח, נט), אֲבָל נִכְרִי מְחוּסֵר חֲמוּנָה, לְפִיכָךְ אִמֵּר
"אֵתָה תִּשְׁמַע הַשָּׁמַיִם וְגו'" וְעֵשִׂית כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא אֵלָיו
הַנִּכְרִי" (שם פסוק מג) בֵּין רִאיוֹ בֵּין שְׂאִינוֹ רִאיוֹ תָּן לוֹ, כְּדִי
שְׁלֹא יִקְרָא עָלָיו תִּגְרָה (תנחומא יט ו' 17): (כט) בְּנֵי אִמְךָ.
וַיַּעֲקֹב אִמֵּר לִיהוּדָה "בְּנֵי אֲבִיךָ" (להלן מט, ח), לְפִי שֶׁהָיוּ לוֹ
בָּנִים מִפֶּמְהָה אֲמֵהוּת, וְכֵאֵן שְׁלֹא נִשָּׂא אֵלָּה אִשָּׁה אַחַת אִמֵּר

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יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁהוּא בָּעַל חֲמוּנָה וּמִצְדִּיק עָלָיו whether the person praying there would be a Jew or a non-Jew. **A Jew, who has faith in Hashem and unconditionally acknowledges the justice of whatever befalls him, will not complain against You** — לא יִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ תִּגְרָה — if his prayers are not answered. Rather, he will attribute the fact that he was not answered to his own sins. **לְפִיכָךְ "וְנִתַּן לְאִישׁ כָּל דְּרָכָיו אֲשֶׁר תַּדַּע חַת לְבָבוֹ"** — Therefore regarding the Jew, Shlomo prayed, **may You give that man in accordance with his ways, as You know his heart** (I Melachim 8:39), meaning that You should grant his request provided that he deserves it. **How-ever a non-Jew lacks faith in Hashem.** — אֲבָל נִכְרִי מְחוּסֵר חֲמוּנָה. **Therefore,** regarding him [Shlomo] said, **Also a non-Jew, who is not of Your people Israel, but will come from a distant land, for Your Name's sake... and will come and pray toward this House, May You hear from Heaven ... and act according to all that the non-Jew calls out to You** (ibid. vv. 41-43), **בֵּין רִאיוֹ בֵּין** — meaning, **whether he is deserving or not deserving, grant him** what he requests, **so that he will not complain about You**^[56] (Tanchuma Yashan §14).

29. בְּנֵי אִמְךָ — YOUR MOTHER'S SONS.

Rashi discusses the contrast between the expression *your mother's sons* and an expression used by Yaakov years later when he blessed his son Yehudah:

Yitzchak said to his son, "*Your mother's sons*" will prostrate themselves to you, whereas Yaakov said to Yehudah when blessing him, "*your father's sons*" will prostrate themselves to you (49:8, below). Why did Yaakov word his blessing differently? **לְפִי שֶׁהָיוּ לוֹ בָּנִים מִפֶּמְהָה** — It is because [Yaakov] had sons from multiple mothers (Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah). Therefore, he needed to say *your father's sons*, to include all of Yehudah's brothers, even those who were from a different mother than Yehudah. **Here, though, where [Yitzchak] had married only one wife, Rivkah, he said, your mother's sons,** since this would include all of his son's siblings^[56] (Bereishis Rabbah 66:4).

55. Rashi to *Melachim* (ibid.) explains that it would be a desecration of God's Name if non-Jews would travel from afar to pray at the Beis HaMikdash and then not have their prayers answered. Whereas a Jew, who believes in God's ability to do as He wishes,

would attribute his unanswered prayers to his own faults, a non-Jew would conclude that prayers at the Beis HaMikdash are as ineffective as praying to idols (Heaven forbid).

56. Had Yitzchak said, "your father's sons," it also

and an abundance of grain and wine. ²⁹ Peoples will serve you, and regimes will prostrate themselves to you; be a lord to your brethren, and your mother's sons will prostrate themselves to you; they who curse you shall be cursed, and they who bless you shall be blessed."

³⁰ And it was, when Yitzchak had finished blessing Yaakov, and it was just as Yaakov was leaving from the presence of Yitzchak his father, that Eisav his brother came from his hunt. ³¹ He, too, made delicacies,

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□ אֲרֵרֶיךָ אָרוּר וּמְבָרְכֶיךָ בְּרוּךְ — **THEY WHO CURSE YOU SHALL BE CURSED, AND THEY WHO BLESS YOU SHALL BE BLESSED.**

Yitzchak first said, *they who curse you shall be cursed*, and only afterward, *they who bless you shall be blessed*. Another person who conferred blessings, however, stated this in the reverse order:

“וּבְבָלָעַם הוּא אוֹמֵר “מְבָרְכֶיךָ בְּרוּךְ וְאֲרֵרֶיךָ אָרוּר” — But regarding Bilam, when he blessed the Jewish people in the Wilderness, it is stated, *They who bless you shall be blessed, and they who curse you shall be cursed* (Bamidbar 24:9), mentioning those who bless you first and those who curse you second. Why is the order in these two places reversed? הַצְדִּיקִים תְּחִלָּתָם יְסוּרִין וְסוֹפֵן שְׁלוֹהֹ — It is because the righteous typically experience suffering (i.e., curse) first and then tranquility (i.e., blessing), וְאֲרֵרֶיהֶם וּמְצַעְרֵיהֶם קוֹדְמִים לְמְבָרְכֵיהֶם — so that chronologically those who curse them and cause them suffering precede those who bless them. לְפִיכָךְ יִצְחָק הַקָּדִים קָלֶלֶת אוֹרְרִים לְבִרְכַּת מְבָרְכִים — Therefore, reflecting his own experience, the righteous Yitzchak mentioned first a curse upon those who curse before he mentioned a blessing upon those who bless. — But with the wicked it is the opposite — they experience tranquility first and suffering in the end. לְפִיכָךְ בָּלָעַם — Therefore, reflecting his own experience, the wicked Bilam put the blessing upon those who bless before the curse upon those who curse^[57] (Bereishis Rabbah ibid.).

30. אָךְ יִצְאָ יִצְאָ — **AND IT WAS JUST AS YAAKOV WAS LEAVING... THAT EISAV HIS BROTHER CAME.**

It is not clear why the word אָךְ, *just as*, is needed. Seemingly, the verse could simply have stated יְהִי יִצְאָ, “and it was when [Yaakov] left.” Rashi explains what is added with the word אָךְ:

זֶה יֹצֵא זֶה בָּא — This tells us that even as this one was in the process of leaving, before he had completely done so, that one came in^[58] (see Tanchuma §11 and Bereishis Rabbah 66:5).

would have included all of Yaakov's siblings. However, since Yitzchak was concerned that he might die soon (as he stated in v. 2), he took into account the possibility that Rivkah would remarry and bear other children, who would then be his son's brothers only through the mother (Chizkuni; Imrei Shefer; Ba'er Heitev; cf. Gur Aryeh).

57. *Sefer Zikaron*; see also *Mizrachi* and *Gur Aryeh*. This merely explains the order in which the parts of the blessing were stated. But it does not mean that the parts of the blessing took effect in that order. Rather, both parts of the blessing were meant to always be in effect, then and for all time (*Gur Aryeh*).

[Ramban asks that when Hashem blessed the righteous Avraham, He said (above, 12:3), *I will bless those who bless you, and he who curses you I will curse*, placing the blessing before the curse. For various answers, see Ramban and *Gur Aryeh*.]

58. The word אָךְ, *but*, is a מִיָּעוּט (a limitation), and thus

implies that the act of leaving was incomplete, for Eisav arrived before Yaakov had completely left the room (*Gur Aryeh*; *Mizrachi*; cf. *Sifsei Chachamim*). There are two ways this might have occurred — either the room had two entrances and Eisav entered through one just as Yaakov was leaving through the other. Alternatively, there was only one entrance, but Eisav pushed the door open as Yaakov was leaving, and Yaakov hid behind the pushed-open door until Eisav's back was to him, whereupon he slipped out (*Bereishis Rabbah* 66:5).

[The elucidation follows *Mizrachi* and *Gur Aryeh*. However, some versions of Rashi do not include the word אָךְ in the *dibbur hamaschil* (opening phrase). Accordingly, the implication is from the double wording: יִצְאָ יִצְאָ, which implies a two-part act of leaving, the first stage when Yaakov went behind the door, the second stage when he slipped out behind Eisav's back (*Be'er BaSadeh*; see *Sifsei Yesheininim* Appendix).]

וַיָּבֹא לְאָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָבִיו יָקִים אָבִי וַיֹּאכַל
מִצֵּיד בְּנֹו בַּעֲבֹר תִּבְרַכְנִי נִפְשָׁךְ׃ ֵב וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
יִצְחָק אָבִיו מִי־אַתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי בִנְךָ בְּכֹרְךָ
עָשׂוֹ׃ ֵג וַיַּחֲרֹד יִצְחָק חֲרָדָה גְּדֹלָה עַד־מָאוֹד
וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אַפּוֹא הוּא הַצֵּד־צִיד וַיָּבֹא לִי וַאֲכַל
מִכָּל בָּטֶרֶם תִּבּוֹא וַאֲבִרְכְּהוּ גַם־בָּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה׃

כ"ש"י

(ל) ויחרד. פֿעמסעטען לָשׁוֹן תְּמִיּהָ וְאִיפּוֹא הוּא הַלֵּךְ לִי: וְאָבֵל מָבֵל. מִפֿל טַעֲמִים, וְיִתְּוָה, לָשׁוֹן תְּמִיּהָ. וּמִדְרָשׁוֹ: רָחָה גִּיהֶס פְּתוּחָה מִתְּחִתָּיו (וממוחל ס; בראשית רבה ס, ז; מִי אָפּוֹא. לָשׁוֹן לַעֲמֹנוּ. מִשְׁמַשׁ עִם כַּמָּה דְּבָרִים. "אִיפּוֹא", חִיָּה פֿה. מִי

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Generally, the root **חרר** is used to denote fear and trembling. Accordingly, **וַיַּחַרְר** means that Yitzchak trembled in fear. But a blessing given to Yaakov should not have resulted in fear!^[59] Because of this difficulty, Rashi explains that our verse is using **וַיַּחַרְר** in a different, though related, sense:

במשמעו לשון תמיכה — If the verse is interpreted **in its literal sense**, which is that Yitzchak was re-
sponding to the realization that he had given the blessing to Yaakov, the term [וַיִּתְּחַרֵּר] **is an expression
of astonishment**. Yitzchak was in a state of complete astonishment upon realizing that it was Yaakov,
not Eisav, who had received his blessing.^[60]

There is, however, an alternative interpretation of the verse which understands וַיִּתְּרַךְ to be an expression of fear, but explains that Yitzchak was responding to something else entirely:

And [the verse's] Midrashic explanation is that Yitzchak trembled in fear when Eisav entered because **he saw Gehinnom open beneath him**^[61] (*Tanchuma* ibid.; *Bereishis Rabbah* 67:2). According to this approach, וַיִּחָרֵד retains its usual meaning. For Yitzchak was responding to the sight of Gehinnom, and thus fear and trembling was a perfectly understandable response.^[62]

□ מי אפוא — WHO — “EIFO” — IS HE WHO HUNTED GAME?

Rashi explains the word אפנה:

— מִשְׁמַשׁ עִם כְּמֵה דְּבָרִים — The word אָפּוֹא is a **unique expression** of no fixed meaning, **which is used in different contexts** to mean various different things.^[63] — "איפוא" איה פה — In this

59. Yitzchak was in no way upset or anguished about having given the blessing to Yaakov [as is clear from his subsequent statement, *וְגַם בְּרִיךְ יְהוָה*, *Indeed, he shall be blessed*]. Thus, the verse cannot mean that Yitzchak trembled at the realization that he had done this (*Gur*

Aryeh; see *Devek Tov*). [See, however, Rashi below, v. 36.] 60. *Mizrachi*; *Gur Aryeh*. The term חרד is used not only to mean trembling in fear, but also to mean greatly astonished. The two meanings are related. For they have in common that they are caused by a sudden, unexpected turn of events, leaving the person confused and bewildered. If it is a frightening matter, he is left trembling in sudden fear; if it is merely an unexpected occurrence, he is left in a state of complete astonishment (*Gur Aryeh*; *Be'er Yitzchak*).

[This is also how Targum Onkelos explains וַיַּחֲרֹד, as

referring to Yitzchak's astonishment. An alternative version of Rashi reads: כְּתַרְגֵּמוֹ וְיִתְחַהֵּב — the word וְיִתְחַהֵּב is to be understood *as Targum Onkelos translates it*: וְתַהֵּב, which is *an expression of astonishment*.]

61. That is, beneath Eisav. When Yaakov entered, he brought Gan Eden with him (see Rashi to v. 27), but when Eisav entered, he brought Gehinnom with him (*Gur Aryeh*, from *Bereishis Rabbah* 65:22).

Alternatively, Yitzchak saw Gehinnom open beneath *himself*, because he had been about to curse Yaakov for tricking him (*Chizkuni*, explaining Rashi; see v. 12, where Yaakov expressed his fear of such a curse).

62. *Gur Aryeh.*

63. אֶפּוֹא is a word added to provide emphasis, and the sentence would read perfectly well without it. The

and brought them to his father; he said to his father, “Let Father rise and eat of his son’s game, so that your soul will bless me.”

³² Yitzchak his father said to him, “Who are you?” And he said, “I am your son, your firstborn, Eisav.” ³³ And Yitzchak trembled with a very great trembling, and said, “Who — where — is he who hunted game, brought it to me, and I ate of all when you had not yet come, and I blessed him? Indeed, he shall be blessed!”

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verse, “אִיפּוּא” is a contraction of the words אִיָּה, *where*, and פֹּה, *here*.^[64] Thus, with this phrase, Yitzchak was asking *where* this person was, as follows: מִי הוּא וְאִיפּוּא הוּא הַצֹּדֵר צִיד — “WHO is he and WHERE IS HE WHO HUNTED GAME?”^[65]

□ וְאָכַל מִכָּל — AND I ATE OF ALL.

Yitzchak was served only a single kind of food — kid-goat meat. What, then, did he mean when he said that he ate of “all” that he was served?^[66]

מִכָּל טַעְמִים שֶׁבְּקִשְׁתִּי לִטְעוֹם טַעְמָתִי בּוֹ — He meant, “Any flavor that I desired to taste when eating the food, I tasted in it”^[67] (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 67:2).

□ וְגַם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה! — INDEED, HE SHALL BE BLESSED!

Yitzchak had already blessed Yaakov, so why did he now repeat that Yaakov should be blessed? Rashi explains:

שֶׁלֹא תֵאָמַר — So that it should not be said — אִילּוּלִי שְׂרִימָה וְעַקֵּב לֹא נָטַל אֶת הַבְּרָכוֹת — that had Yaakov not tricked his father, he would not have taken the blessings, and therefore they are meaningless (because they were bestowed in error). לִכְךָ הִסְבִּים וּבְרַךְ מִדַּעְתּוֹ — Therefore, to prevent this, [Yitzchak] consented to what Yaakov had done, and blessed him knowingly, with his whole heart^[68] (*Bereishis Rabbah* *ibid.*).

word has various meanings, depending on the context in which it is used (*Mizrachi*; *Meisiach Ilmim*, based on Rashi below, 43:11; see *Gur Aryeh*; see also *Daas Yissachar*). See *Mizrachi* for examples of various usages.

64. Thus, אִיפּוּא translates literally as “where here” (i.e., “where in this place?”), but the sense is simply: “Where?” (see *Mizrachi*).

[אִיפּוּא, ending in *aleph*, is the equivalent of אִיפּוּה, ending in *hei* (*Imrei Shefer*); both are contractions of אִיָּה and פֹּה. See also Rashi to *Iyov* 38:4.]

65. The word הוּא in this verse refers back to both the

earlier word מִי *and* to the immediately preceding word אִיפּוּא. Yitzchak was asking two things: “Who” [and] “where” is he who hunted game? (*Meisiach Ilmim*).

66. *Nachalas Yaakov*; *Meisiach Ilmim*; see *Mizrachi*; cf. *Yefeh To’ar*.

67. *Bereishis Rabbah* elaborates: “I tasted the taste of bread, the taste of meat, the taste of fish, the taste of grasshoppers, the taste of all the delicacies in the world.” See *Insight*.

68. See Rashi to v. 36 for further elaboration. And see *Ramban* here, who disagrees.

§ The Flavor of Manna In the two goats Yaakov served him, Yitzchak tasted every flavor in the world. Thus, the goats were like the Heavenly food the Jewish people ate in the Wilderness — the מָן, *manna* — which, famously, contained virtually every possible flavor (see *Yoma* 75a). *Nezer HaKodesh* explains that in return for this food which contained all flavors, Yitzchak repaid Yaakov in kind with the blessing of “May God give you of the dew of the heavens,” which, says the Midrash, refers to the manna, which also contained all flavors (see note 51 above).

Now, Yaakov received the blessings on Pesach (see Rashi above, v. 9). The *Imrei Emes* (*R’ Avraham Mordechai Alter*) draws a number of parallels between the events of that night and similar events which transpired on the Pesach night of the Exodus from Egypt. One of these concerns our Rashi. The Gemara in *Kiddushin* (38a) teaches that the Pesach matzah which the Jewish people baked in Egypt had the flavor of manna. This was foreshadowed by the flavors of manna which Yitzchak tasted on Pesach night, when he ate the food Yaakov brought (*Likkutei Yehudah* above, v. 9; see there for other parallels between these nights).

Finally, the *Imrei Emes* points out that the connection to manna is indicated through *gematria*. The numerical value of מָן is 90. This is precisely the numerical value of מָן (*Likkutei Yehudah* here).

לד כד שמע עשו ית פתגמי אבוי וצנח צנחא רבא ומיריא עד לחדא ואמר לאבוי ברבני אף אפא אפא: לה ואמר על אחור בקבמתא וקביל ברבתי: לו ואמר יאות קרא שמה יעקב וחקבני דגן תרתין ומנין ית בכירוית נסיב והא כען קביל ברבתי ואמר הלא שבקת לי ברבתי: לו ואמריב יצחק ואמר לעשו הא רב

לד כשמע עשו את דברי אביו ויצעק צעקה גדלה ומרה עד מאד ויאמר לאביו ברכני גם אני אבי: לה ויאמר בא אחיך במרמה ויקח ברכתך: לו ויאמר הרי קרא שמו יעקב ויעקבני זה פעמים את ברכתך לקח והנה עתה לקח ברכתך ויאמר הלא אצלתי לי ברכה: לו ויען יצחק ויאמר לעשו הן גביר

רש"י

אמר: צדק הייתי מלך וחרד שמא עברתי על שירת הדין, עכשיו לצדור צדקתי, "גם צדוק יהיה" (ולעיל פסוק נג): ויעקבני. פתגמו, "ויכמני", ארצני. "וארצ" (דברים יט, יא) "ויכמנו". ויש מתרגמין "ויכמני", נחשס לי: אצלתי. לשון הפקדה, כמו "ויחלל" (במדבר יא, כה): (לו) הן גביר. צדקה זו שביעית היא והוא עושה חוזה ראשונה. אלא אמר לו: מה פועלת לך בצדקה, אם תקנה נכסים שלו הם,

(לה) במרמה. צחקמה (אונקלוס); בראשית רבה שם ד: (לו) הרי קרא שמו. לשון תימה הוא, כמו "הרי אחי חפה" (להלן כט, טו), שמא לך נקרא שמו יעקב על שם סופו, שהיה עתיד לטקבני. פתגמו (שם כג): למה חרד יצחק, אמר: שמא עון יש בי שצדקתי קטן לפני גדול ושנתי סדר היחס. התחיל עשו מעטק "ויעקבני זה פעמים", אמר לו אביו: מה עשה לך. אמר לו: "את צדקתי לקח".

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35. במרמה — WITH "MIRMAH."

The word *מרמה* usually means *deception*, which has a derogatory implication. But Yitzchak just affirmed that it was proper that Yaakov be blessed, so surely he would not now say that Yaakov had been deceptive. Rather, the word has a different meaning here:

מרמה — The term *מרמה* means **with cleverness** (*Onkelos*; see *Bereishis Rabbah* 67:4).

36. הרי קרא שמו — IS IT BECAUSE HIS NAME WAS CALLED YAAKOV?

Rashi explains the term *הרי*:

הרי — It is an expression of questioning, similar to the word *הרי* in the verse (29:15 below), *Should it be (הרי) that because you are my relative, you should serve me for nothing?* — שמא לך נקרא שמו יעקב על שם סופו — Eisav wondered, "Was he perhaps given the name Yaakov for this reason, because of what he would end up doing; — שהיה עתיד לעקבני — for he was destined to outwit me?"^[69]

Rashi cites a Midrash which provides another explanation of the dialogue between Eisav and Yitzchak in our passage:

תנחומא למא חרד יצחק — The following is found in Midrash *Tanchuma Yashan* (§23): **Why did Yitzchak tremble** (v. 33) when he realized that he had blessed Yaakov rather than Eisav? — אמר: שמא עון יש בי — He said to himself, "Perhaps I have on my record a sin, for I blessed the younger son before the older one, and changed the order of lineage." — התחיל עשו — אמר: "ומעקבני זה פעמים" — At that point Eisav began shouting, "And he outwitted me twice!" — אמר לו: "את ברכתך" — His father said to him, "What else did he do to you?" — אמר: "[Eisav] responded, 'He took my *bechorah*, i.e., my birthright of being the firstborn!' — לקח" — [Yitzchak] said, "It was about this very point that I was disturbed and fearful, thinking that perhaps I violated the strict letter of the law by blessing the

69. The name *יעקב* was given on account of the *heel* (עקב) which Yaakov grabbed when he was born (see Rashi to 25:26 above). However, the name *יעקב* could also be understood to share the same root as the word *יעקבני*, which means to outwit (see following Rashi). Eisav noted that Yaakov was not called *עקב*, but was

instead called the future tense of the name *יעקב* (indicated with the prefix *yud*), and pondered whether at the time of birth he was prophetically named Yaakov because of future events — that he would cleverly outwit Eisav (*Yerios Shlomo*; *Divrei David*; see *Mizrachi*).

³⁴ When Eisav heard his father's words, he cried out an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me too, Father!"

³⁵ But he said, "Your brother came with cleverness and took your blessing."

³⁶ He said, "Is it because his name was called Yaakov that he outwitted me these two times? — He took away my bechorah and behold, now he took away my blessing!" Then he said, "Have you not set aside a blessing for me?"

³⁷ Yitzchak answered, and said to Eisav, "Behold, I have made him a lord

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younger son instead of the older one. עֲבָשׂוּ לְבִכּוֹר בְּרַכְתִּי — Now it emerges that I in fact **blessed the bechor**. "גַּם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה" — **Indeed, he shall be blessed!**^[70] (v. 33).

□ וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי — **"VAYAKEVEINI."**

This word can be understood in two ways. Rashi gives both interpretations:

אֲרַבְנִי — This means as Targum Onkelos translates it: "וַיַּכְמֵנִי", "that he ambushed me." "וַיַּכְמֵנִי" — Similarly the word "וַיַּרְבֵּ", and he will ambush, in Devarim 19:11, is rendered by Onkelos as "וַיַּכְמֵנִי".

וְיִשׁ מִתְרַגְּמִין — There are those, however, who have a different version of Targum Onkelos and translate וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי as "וַיַּחְכְּמֵנִי", נִתְחַכֵּם לִי — meaning, "that he outwitted me."^[71]

□ אֶצְלָהּ — **"ATZALTA."**

There are different ways to explain the word אֶצְלָהּ. Rashi gives his interpretation:^[72]

לְשׁוֹן הַפְּרָשָׁה — It is an expression of setting aside, כְּמוֹ וַיֹּאצֵּל — similar to the word "וַיֹּאצֵּל" in Bamidbar 11:25, which has the same meaning.^[73] Eisav meant: Have you not reserved a blessing for me?

37. הֵן גְּבִיר — BEHOLD, I HAVE MADE HIM A LORD OVER YOU.

This refers to the blessing Yitzchak gave Yaakov of לְהִיָּה גְבִיר לְאַחֶיךָ, be a lord to your brethren (v. 29). This was not the first of Yitzchak's blessings to Yaakov. Rashi explains why nevertheless, it was the first that Yitzchak mentioned to Eisav:

בְּרַכָּה זוֹ שְׁבִיעִית הִיא — This blessing, that Yaakov shall be a lord to his brothers, is the seventh blessing that Yitzchak gave him, וְהָיָה עוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָהּ רִאשׁוֹנָה — yet [Yitzchak] makes (i.e., mentions) it the first when he tells Eisav what blessings he gave Yaakov!^[74] Why did he do so? The answer is that when telling this to Eisav, Yaakov was not merely letting Eisav know which blessings he had already given to Yaakov. אֶלָּא אָמַר לוֹ — Rather, he was conveying a message to Eisav, in essence telling him, מַה אִם תִּקְנֶה — "What use would you have with a blessing that I would now give you?" נִכְסִים שְׁלֹהֶם — Even if you would become wealthy and acquire possessions because of my blessing,

70. Midrash Tanchuma is bothered by the following difficulty: When Yitzchak realized in v. 33 that someone had impersonated Eisav and stolen the blessings, his expected reaction should have been to curse the impostor, rather than say, "Indeed, he shall be blessed!" Moreover, saying this should have caused Eisav to cry, "Why are you blessing him now, Father!," and should have led him to disbelieve that Yitzchak had been fooled. The Midrash therefore explains that Yitzchak's response, *Indeed, he shall be blessed*, came after Eisav's outcry that Yaakov had acquired the bechorah from him, and that his acquiring the bechorah was itself the reason why Yitzchak reaffirmed Yaakov's right to the blessing (Meisiach Ilmim).

It emerges according to Midrash Tanchuma that the verses are written out of order, because the exchange beginning in verse 34 and continuing until the אֶתְנַחֲמָה

in verse 36 actually took place before Yitzchak exclaimed in v. 33, *Indeed, he shall be blessed*. See *Divrei David* and *Maskil LeDavid*, who find grounds in the actual wording of the verses for such a non-sequential interpretation.

71. Our versions of Onkelos have the latter reading.

72. Radak says that אֶצְלָהּ is from the word אָצַל, next to. Eisav was asking whether Yitzchak had kept a blessing "next to" him that he might give Eisav. Rashi disagrees (*Be'er Mayim Chaim*).

73. The verse there states that Hashem separated some of the spirit that was upon Moshe and gave it to the seventy elders.

74. The seven blessings are: (1) the dew of the heavens; (2) the fatness of the land; (3) abundant grain; (4) and wine [v. 28]; (5) peoples will serve you; and (6) regimes will prostrate themselves to you; (7) be a lord to your

שויתתה עלֹךְ וְיָת כָּל אַחֲוֵי יְהִיבִית
לָהּ לְעֶבְדִּין וְעִיבֹר וְחִמֵּר סִעְדָּתָה
וְלָךְ הָכָא (ב"א: כען) מָה אֶעְבֹּד בְּרִי:
לֹא וְאָמַר עָשׂוּ לְאַבְוֵי הַבְּרָכָה
חֲדָא הִיא לָךְ אֲבָא בְּרַכְנִי אִף לִי
(ב"א: אָנָּה) אֲבָא וְאָרִים עָשׂוּ קָלָה
וּבְכָא: לֹט וְאֲתִיב יִצְחָק אֲבֻוֹהִי
וְאָמַר לָהּ הָא מְטוּבָא דְאֲרַעָא יְהִיא
מוֹתְבָךְ וּמְטָלָא דְשָׁמַיָא מְלַעְלָא:
מ וְעַל חֲרָבְךָ תַּחֲיִי וְיָת אַחוּךְ תַּעֲבֹד

שְׁמִתִּיו לָךְ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲחָיו נָתַתִּי לוֹ לְעֶבְדִּים
וְדָגָן וְתִירָשׁ סִמְכָתִיו וּלְכָה אֲפֹא מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה
בְּנִי: לֹא וְיֹאמֶר עָשׂוּ אֶל־אֲבִיו הַבְּרָכָה אַחַת
הוּא־לָךְ אֲבִי בְּרַכְנִי גַם־אֲנִי אֲבִי וַיֵּשָׂא עָשׂוּ
קָלוֹ וַיִּבֶךְ: לֹט וַיַּעַן יִצְחָק אֲבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה
מִשְׁמַנִּי הָאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה מוֹשְׁבָךְ וּמִטָּל הַשָּׁמַיִם
מִעַל: * מ וְעַל־חֲרָבְךָ תַּחֲיֶיהָ וְאֶת־אָחִיךָ תַּעֲבֹד

* חצי הספר בפסוקים

רש"י

כָּבֹל (שמואל-ב ג, ג): (לֹט) מִשְׁמַנִּי הָאָרֶץ וְגו'. זו חִטְלִילָה"ה
שֶׁל יוֹן (עֵינִן בְּרָאשִׁית רַבָּה שֶׁס ו: (מ) וְעַל חֲרָבְךָ. כְּמוֹ חֲרָבְךָ.
יֵשׁ "עַל" שֶׁהוּא בְּמָקוֹם אוֹת ב', כְּמוֹ "עַמְדָתְךָ עַל חֲרָבְךָ"
(יחזקאל לג, כו) חֲרָבְךָ, "עַל לְבָאֲתִים" (שמות ו, כו) בְּלִבְאֲתִים:

שְׁהִי "גְבִיר שְׁמִתִּיו לָךְ" וְיִמָּה שְׁקָנָה עֶבֶד קָנָה רַבּוֹ (בְּרָאשִׁית
רַבָּה סז, ה: וּלְכָה אֲפֹא מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה. °חִיָּה פֶה חֲזָקָה מֶה
לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ: (לֹא) הַבְּרָכָה אַחַת. ה"א זו מִשְׁמַשֵּׁת לְשׁוֹן פִּימָה,
כְּמוֹ "הַבְּמִתִּים" (בְּמִדְבָּר יג, יט) "הַשְּׂמִנָה הִיא" (שֶׁס כ) הַכְּמוֹת

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for I HAVE MADE — שְׁהִי "גְבִיר שְׁמִתִּיו לָךְ" וְיִמָּה שְׁקָנָה עֶבֶד קָנָה רַבּוֹ — they would be [Yaakov's] in any case, **HIM A LORD OVER YOU, and the law is that whatever a servant acquires becomes the property of his master**"^[75] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 67:5).

□ AND FOR YOU, "EIFO" — WHAT CAN I DO? — וּלְכָה אֲפֹא מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה

Rashi explains how to translate the word אֲפֹא in our verse:

אֲבָקֶשׁ מָה — It means "where."^[76] Yitzchak was explaining that he was at a loss, asking Eisav: — אִיָּה פֶה — Where shall I search to find what to do for you?

38. הַבְּרָכָה אַחַת — HAVE YOU ONLY ONE BLESSING?

In Hebrew, where there are no question marks, questions are indicated by the words themselves. One of the ways this is done is by adding a *hei* to the beginning of the word. Ordinarily such a *hei*, known as a *chataf-patach* (הֿ),^[77] is vowelized with a *chataf-patach* (הֿ). In our verse, however, the prefixed *hei* of the word הַבְּרָכָה is vowelized with a simple *patach* (ה). Rashi explains that nevertheless, it is a *hei* of question:

— הִיא זוֹ מִשְׁמַשֵּׁת לְשׁוֹן תִּימָה — This prefix letter *hei* in the word הַבְּרָכָה, even though it is not vowelized with a *chataf-patach*, serves to express a question, — כְּמוֹ "הַבְּמִתִּים" — like the prefix *hei* in the phrases, **are they open cities?** (*Bamidbar* 13:19), — "הַשְּׂמִנָה הִיא" — **is it fertile?** (*ibid.* v. 20), — "הַכְּמוֹת נָבֵל" — **should Avner have died like the death of a lowlife?** (*II Shmuel* 3:33). In all these examples, the *hei* indicates a question even though it is vowelized with a simple *patach* rather than a *chataf-patach*. The same applies here.^[78]

brethren [v. 29] (*Mizrachi*). [Yitzchak gave Yaakov a total of ten blessings. *Be a lord to your brethren* is the seventh of those ten.]

75. [See Mishnah, *Kiddushin* 1:3.] Nonetheless, in the following verse, Eisav countered, *Have you but one blessing, Father? Bless me too, Father!* Eisav argued that there must be another category of blessings which would not be relevant to Yaakov, and he wanted those blessings. Yitzchak accepted this argument and consequently blessed Eisav with *the fatness of the earth* as a dwelling place, referring to a land outside the holy land of Eretz Yisrael. Since Yaakov would receive and dwell

in Eretz Yisrael, this blessing was not relevant to him. Likewise, Yitzchak blessed Eisav with *By your sword you shall live*, which is also not relevant to Yaakov, whose *middah* is peace and truth (*Gur Aryeh*).

76. *EIFO* can have various meanings; here it means "where" (a contraction of the words אִיָּה פֶה; see Rashi to v. 33 above, with note 64).

77. See Rashi above, 4:9 and 18:25; below, 41:38; *Devarim* 4:34.

78. The reason in these cases the *hei* is not vowelized with a *chataf-patach* is that the letter following the *hei* prefix has a *sheva*, and there is a grammatical rule that

over you, and all his brethren have I given him as servants; and with grain and wine I have supported him; and for you, where — what can I do, my son?”

³⁸ And Eisav said to his father, “Have you only one blessing, Father? Bless me too, Father!” And Eisav raised his voice and wept.

³⁹ So Yitzchak his father answered, and said to him: “Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling and of the dew of the heavens from above. ⁴⁰ By your sword you shall live, but your brother you shall serve;

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39. מִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְגו' — *OF THE FATNESS OF THE EARTH SHALL BE YOUR DWELLING.*

In Yaakov's blessing, Yitzchak said, *May God give you... of the fatness of the earth*, meaning that Yaakov would benefit from a plentiful harvest. Eisav's blessing, however, was that his *dwelling* would be *of the fatness of the earth*, meaning that he would dwell in the fattest part of the earth.^[79] Rashi identifies where this place is:

זו איטליא — **This is a reference to Italy of Greece**^[80] (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 67:6).

40. וְעַל חֶרֶבְךָ — *BY YOUR SWORD.*

The word על translates literally as “on.” Rashi explains the meaning here:

כְּמוֹ בְּחֶרֶבְךָ — The phrase על חֶרֶבְךָ is understood as “בְּחֶרֶבְךָ”, *by your sword*, as though it had been written with the prefix *beis*. וְשֶׁל “עַל” — **For there are various places where the word “עַל” is written in place of the letter *beis* and means “by,”** כְּמוֹ “עֲמַדְתֶּם עַל חֶרֶבְכֶם” — **such as, *You stood “עַל”*** (Yechezkel 33:26), which means בְּחֶרֶבְכֶם — ***by your sword***, “עַל צְבָאוֹתָם” — **and “עַל צְבָאוֹתָם”** (*Shemos* 6:26), which means בְּצְבָאוֹתָם — ***by* (i.e., according to) *their legions***.^[81]

two *shevas* (or one *sheva* and one *chataf*-vowel, which is like a *sheva*) can never come together in the beginning of a word. Hence, since the word בְּרַבָּה, as well as the various words cited by Rashi in example (כְּמוֹת וְשִׁמְנָה) begin with a *sheva*, the prefix *hei* has a *patach* instead of a *chataf-patach* (*Gur Aryeh*; *Sefer Zikaron*; *Maskil LeDavid*).

79. This is why there is no contradiction between the blessings of Yaakov and Eisav, both of which mention “the fatness of the earth.” Yaakov’s was a promise of plenty (in Eretz Yisrael); Eisav’s was a promise of a different land of plenty outside Eretz Yisrael (*Mizrachi*; *Gur Aryeh*; *Devek Tov*; see note 75).

80. The Gemara in *Shabbos* (56b) refers to this place as בְּרַבָּה גְּדוֹל שֶׁל רוֹמָי, *the great city of Rome*; meaning, of the Roman Empire. When Shlomo HaMelech wrongfully married Pharaoh’s daughter, the angel Gavriel descended and drove a post into the ocean. Over time, sediment collected around the post and eventually an island was formed. When Yeravam ben Nevat set up two golden calves for worship, the first hut was built

on this island, which grew into the city of “Italia shel Yavan.” It was part of the Greek Empire, but eventually was conquered by Rome (Rashi to *Shabbos* *ibid.*; see, however, Rashi to *Megillah* 6b). It is a very fertile land (*Eitz Yosef*).

This place, which came into being through grievous sin, was a place of impurity — the polar opposite of the holy land of Eretz Yisrael — and was thus fittingly specified to be Eisav’s portion (see *Maharal*, *Chidushei Aggados*, *Shabbos* *ibid.*).

[Others explain that the Romans are themselves descendants of Yavan; i.e., Greeks, which is why this place was called “Italy of Greece”; for details, see *Ramban*, *Sefer HaGeulah*, *MHK* ed., p. 284. Historically, the coastal areas of southern Italy (including the island of Sicily) were colonized by Greeks during the era of the first Beis HaMikdash, and remained under Greek control for about three centuries, until they were conquered by Rome. Indeed, the Roman name for this area was *Magna Graecia*, “Greater Greece.”] See Insight.

81. See also Rashi there.

§ **The “New Land” of Italia shel Yavan** Various commentators wonder why Rashi finds it necessary to specify the exact land which Eisav received. They explain that Rashi was bothered by the fact that if all the world was given to Yaakov, where was this land that Yitzchak was promising to Eisav? Also, once he promised “the fatness of the earth” to Yaakov, how could he give it to Eisav? Rashi answers that this was the land of “Italia Shel Yavan,” which, as the Gemara in *Shabbos* explains, did not *exist* when the blessings were given! Yitzchak’s blessing to Yaakov concerned the existing world; to Eisav he gave a place that would come into being only later, and thus was not included in Yaakov’s blessing (*Chanukas HaTorah*; *Liflagos Reuven*, foreword). See note 79 for a different answer to the question.

ויהי כד יעברון בנוהי על פתגמי
אורייתא ותעדי נירה מעל צורה:
מא ונטר עשו דבבו ליעקב על
ברכתא די ברכה אבוי ואמר עשו
בלבה יקרבון יומי אבלה דאבא
ואקטול ית יעקב אחי: מב ואתחנה
לרבקה ית פתגמי עשו ברה רבא
ושלחת וקרת ליעקב ברה ועירא
ואמרת לה הא עשו אחור כמן
לך למקטלה: מג ובען ברי קבל
מני וקום איזיל לך לות לבן אחי

וְהָיָה בְּאִשֶּׁר תִּרִיד וּפְרַקְתָּ עָלָיו מֵעַל צוּאֲרָךְ:
מא וַיִּשְׁטֹם עֲשָׂו אֶת־יַעֲקֹב עַל־הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר בִּרְכוּ
אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשָׂו בָּלְבוּ יִקְרְבוּ יְמֵי אָבִל אָבִי
וְאֶהְרֹגָה אֶת־יַעֲקֹב אָחִי: מב וַיֵּגֶד לְרַבֵּקָה אֶת־דְּבָרֵי
עֲשָׂו בְּנֵה הַגָּדֹל וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא לְיַעֲקֹב בְּנֵה הַקָּטָן
וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה עֲשָׂו אָחִיךָ מִתְנַחֵם לָךְ לְהָרְגֶךָ:
מג וַעֲתָה בְּנִי שִׁמְעֵ בְּקֻלִּי וְקוּם בְּרַח־לָךְ אֶל־לְבָן אָחִי

רש"י

צרות הקדש הוגד לה מה שעשו מהרהר צלצו (בראשית
רבה שם טז): מתנחם לך. נחם על החסרה לחשוב מחשבה
אחרת להתנחם לך ולהרגה. ומדרש אגדה: כצר אחיה מת
צטניו ושתה עליך כוס של פתחומים (שם). ולפי פשוטו
לשון פתחומים, מתנחם הוא על הצרכות צהרייתך
(פתחומים יין ויאל א):

וְהָיָה בְּאִשֶּׁר תִּרִיד. לשון זעזוע, כמו "אריד צחי" (תהלים נה, ג), כלומר פשיעצרו ישראל על הסורה ויהיה
לך פתחון פה להצטער על הצרכות שנטל, ופרקת עליו
וגו' (אונקלוס; בראשית רבה שם ז): (מא) יקרבו ימי אבל
אבי. כמשמעו, שלא הצטער את הצדא (בראשית רבה שם
ח). ומדרש אגדה לכמה פנים י: (מב) ויגד לרבקה.

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□ וְהָיָה בְּאִשֶּׁר תִּרִיד — **YET IT SHALL BE THAT WHEN YOU ARE AGGRIEVED, YOU MAY CAST OFF HIS YOKE FROM UPON YOUR NECK.**

Rashi explains the meaning of the word תִּרִיד, and when Eisav will be able to cast off Yaakov's yoke:
לשון צער — The term תִּרִיד is an expression of pain, **כמו "אריד בשיחי"** — as in the verse, **I lament** (אריד) **as I speak** (Tehillim 55:3).^[82] Yitzchak was saying that when Eisav is in pain and aggrieved at the loss of the blessings, he will be able to free himself of Yaakov's lordship.

But surely Eisav's pain and anger are not enough on their own to allow Eisav to cast off the yoke! After all, Eisav was *already* angry at Yaakov for outwitting him; yet, Yitzchak did not withdraw the blessings from Yaakov.^[83] Rather, Yitzchak meant that should certain conditions prevail, Eisav's pain would have this effect. Rashi explains:

וְהָיָה לך — That is to say, when Israel will transgress the Torah, **כלומר פשיעצרו ישראל על התורה** — **פתחון פה להצטער על הברכות שנטל** — **you (Eisav) will then have an opening to complain about your pain over the blessings which [Yaakov] took,** at which point: **— וּפְרַקְתָּ עָלָיו וְגו' — YOU MAY CAST OFF HIS YOKE FROM UPON YOUR NECK**^[84] (see *Onkelos* and *Bereishis Rabbah* 67:7).

41. יִקְרְבוּ יְמֵי אָבִל אָבִי — LET THE DAYS OF MOURNING FOR MY FATHER DRAW NEAR, AND I WILL KILL MY BROTHER YAAKOV.

Rashi explains the connection between the days of mourning for Yitzchak drawing near and Eisav killing his brother:

82. For other interpretations of תִּרִיד, see *Chiz-kuni*; *Daas Zekeinim*; *Kli Yakar*.

83. *Levush HaOrah*. Moreover, if Yaakov's blessing would be contingent on Eisav not being angry about the blessings, then it would be no blessing at all, for

Eisav would always be angry (*Gur Aryeh*).

84. This is consistent with Rashi's comment above (v. 28) that the phrase וַיִּתֵּן לָךְ הַבְּרָכָה teaches that Yaakov would receive the blessings only while he would deserve them (*Imrei Shefer*; *Sifsei Chachamim*). See Insight.

§ **Eisav is Permitted Only to "Cast Off the Yoke"** *Kli Yakar* points out that there are various sources which teach that at the End of Days, Eisav and his descendants will be called to account for the pain and suffering they inflicted upon the Jewish people over the centuries. He explains that although the Jewish people forfeit Yitzchak's blessings when they transgress the Torah, this allows Eisav *only* to cast off Yaakov's yoke — meaning, that Eisav will no longer be Yaakov's servant. It does *not*, however, give Eisav license to persecute the Jewish people. For these transgressions, Eisav will pay the price.

yet it shall be that when you are aggrieved, you may cast off his yoke from upon your neck.”

⁴¹ Now Eisav harbored hatred toward Yaakov because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Eisav said to himself, “Let the days of mourning for my father draw near, and I will kill my brother Yaakov.”

⁴² Rivkah was told of the words of her older son Eisav, so she sent and summoned Yaakov her younger son and said to him, “Behold, your brother Eisav is consoling himself regarding you to kill you. ⁴³ So now, my son, heed my voice and arise; flee for yourself to my brother Lavan,

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שְׁלֹא אֶצְעֵר — This means as it implies. I will wait to kill Yaakov until my father is dead, וּמִדֶּרֶשׁ אֲגָדָה לְכַמֵּה פָּנִים — so that I do not cause Father pain^[85] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 67:8). יוֹשֵׁה — However, there is an Aggadic Midrash that gives various interpretations of this verse^[86] (see *Bereishis Rabbah* ibid.).

42. וַיִּגְדַּל לְרִבְקָה — RIVKAH WAS TOLD.

The previous verse says that Eisav said his plan to kill Yaakov *in his heart* — meaning, he said it to himself. How did Rivkah become aware of Eisav’s thoughts?^[87]

בְּרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ הוּגֵד לָהּ — It was told to her through *Ruach HaKodesh* (Divine Inspiration) מִה שֶׁעָשָׂה — what Eisav was thinking in his heart^[88] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 67:9).

□ מִתְנַחֵם לָךְ — EISAV IS “MISNACHEM” REGARDING YOU.

The word מִתְנַחֵם, of the root נחם, can either mean “regrets” or “is consoling himself.” Rashi first explains how our verse can be understood following the former translation:

נָחַם עַל הָאֲחֵיהּ — The phrase מִתְנַחֵם לָךְ means that [Eisav] regrets the existing brotherly relationship between you, לְחֹשֶׁב מִחֻשְׁבָּה אַחֶרֶת — and is rather harboring a thought other than one of brotherhood, לְהִתְנַבֵּר לָךְ וּלְהִרְגֶךָ — to estrange himself from you and kill you.

Rashi cites a Midrash which assumes the second translation, that מִתְנַחֵם means “is consoling himself”: וּמִדֶּרֶשׁ אֲגָדָה: כִּבְרַת אָתָּה מֵת בְּעֵינָיו — And an Aggadic Midrash explains that Rivkah told Yaakov, “You are already dead in his eyes, וְשָׁתָה עֲלֶיךָ כּוֹס שֶׁל תְּנַחֲמוּמִים — and he has already drunk a cup of consolation regarding you”^[89] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 67:9).

Assuming the Midrash’s translation of מִתְנַחֵם as an expression of *consolation*, Rashi offers an alternative explanation of what Rivkah was saying:

וּלְפִי פְשׁוּטוֹ לְשׁוֹן תְּנַחֲמוּמִים — And according to [the verse’s] simple meaning, assuming it is an expression of consolation, Rivkah meant to say that מִתְנַחֵם הוּא עַל הַבְּרָכוֹת — [Eisav] is consoling himself over the loss of the blessings, בְּהִרְיָתְךָ — with the thought of killing you^[90] (*Tanchuma Yashan*, *Vayeitzei* §1).

85. Although Eisav was a wicked person, he was extremely meticulous with regard to the mitzvah of honoring his father, so he was careful not to cause his father pain (*Imrei Shefer*; *Sifsei Chachamim*).

[*Ramban* suggests as an alternative that Eisav feared that Yitzchak might curse him if he killed Yaakov while Yitzchak was alive.]

86. For example, *Bereishis Rabbah* says that Eisav plotted to marry Yishmael’s daughter (which he did; see below, 28:9), so that Yishmael would take up his new son-in-law’s cause and kill Yaakov. According to this approach, the verse would be translated as: *Let the days of mourning “of” my father draw near*; meaning, Yitzchak’s mourning for his son Yaakov.

87. *Devek Tov*; *Be’er Yitzchak*.

88. For the Matriarchs were prophetesses (*Bereishis Rabbah*); see Rashi below, 29:34, with note 66. [*Ramban*, however, suggests that the phrase “say in the heart” does not necessarily refer to pure thought, but refers to any decision reached after careful deliberation, even when it is spoken out.]

89. It was customary to give a mourner a cup of wine to relieve him from his sorrow; see *Yirmiyah* 16:7.

90. According to this interpretation, לָךְ, “to you,” means “that which is to you,” i.e., the blessings that you have taken.

In saying וּלְפִי פְשׁוּטוֹ, *And according to its simple*

חֲרָנָה: מִדֶּ֫י וַיִּשְׁבֹּת עִמּוֹ יָמִים אֲחָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר־תָּשׁוּב
 חֶמֶת אֲחִירָה: מִדֶּה עַד־שׁוּב אֶפ־אֲחִירָה מִמֶּךָ וְשָׁכַח אֶת
 אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתָ לוֹ וְשָׁלַחְתִּי וּלְקַחְתִּירָה מִשָּׁם לָמָּה
 אֲשַׁכֵּל גַּם־שְׁנֵיכֶם יוֹם אֶחָד: מִזֶּה וַתֹּאמֶר רַבֵּקָה אֶל־
 יִצְחָק *קִצְתִּי בַחַיִּי מִפְּנֵי בָנוֹת חַת אִם־לִקְחָה יַעֲקֹב
 אִשָּׁה מִבָּנוֹת־חַת כָּאלֵלָה מִבָּנוֹת הָאָרֶץ לָמָּה לִּי
 חַיִּים: [כח] א וַיִּקְרָא יִצְחָק אֶל־יַעֲקֹב וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ
 וַיִּצְוֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֹא־תִקַּח אִשָּׁה מִבָּנוֹת כְּנָעִין:
 ב קוֹם לֵךְ פָּדְנָה אֲרָם בֵּיתָה בְּתוֹאֵל אָבִי אִמָּךְ וְקַח־

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(מד) אַחֲדִים. מוֹעֲדִים (אונקלוס): (מה) לְמָה
אֲשַׁבֵּל. אֲהִיָּה שְׂבוּלָה מִשְׁנִיכָם. הִקְוֹצָר כֹּת צִנּוּי קְרוֹי
שְׂבוּל, וְכֵן צִנּוּקָצ אֲמַר "כֹּחֶשׁ שְׂכֻלְתִּי" וְלֹהֵן
מִג, (ד': ג) שְׁנֵיכֶם. אִם יָקוּם עֲלֶיךָ וְאַתָּה תִּהְרָגְנִי

44. אַחַדִּים — “ACHADIM” DAYS.

The word אָהָרִים is from אָהַר, *one*.^[91] Rashi explains what it means in this context: מועטים — The term אָהָרִים means **a few**. Stay in Charan for “a few days”^[92] (*Onkelos*).

45. למה אשבל — WHY SHOULD I BE BEREAVED OF BOTH OF YOU?

The term אֲשַׁכַּל could be understood as a transitive verb, in which case the phrase אֲשַׁכַּל גַּם שְׁנֵיכֶם would mean, “I will bereave both of you.” Rashi explains that in fact, this is *not* what it means:^[93] אֲהִיָּה שְׂכּוּלָה מִשְׁנֵיכֶם — Rivkah meant to say, “**I will be bereaved of both of you.**” Not that she would cause them to be bereaved, but that she would be bereaved.^[94] הַקּוֹבֵר אֶת בְּנָיו קְרוֹי שְׂכּוּל — For **one who buries his children** (i.e., his children die in his lifetime) **is called “שְׂכּוּל,” a bereaved one.**

Rashi gives examples of such usage:
”וְכֵן בִּנְיָמִן אָמַר — Similarly, regarding Yaakov, when he sent Binyamin to Egypt, **he said** about himself, *as I have been bereaved* of Yosef and Shimon, *so I am bereaved* of Binyamin (43:14 below).

of security, so that he can ambush and kill you.]

91. See *Chizkuni*, who explains יָמִים אֶחָדִים to mean “one year.” See also *Ibn Ezra*.

92. See Rashi below, 29:18, for discussion of what exactly “a few days” entails.

93. *Be'er Yitzchak*; see following note.

94. אָפֿשָׁכּ is not a transitive verb, with the phrase אָפֿשָׁכּ גַּם שְׁנֵיכֶם meaning, in the active sense, “I will bereave both of you.” [That would be its meaning if the word were vowelized אָפֿשָׁכּ, similar to תִּשָּׁכֵךְ in the phrase (*Devarim* 32:25) תִּשָּׁכֵךְ חֶרֶב, *the sword will bereave*.] Rather, אָפֿשָׁכּ is an *intransitive* verb meaning, in the passive sense, “I will be bereaved.” Furthermore, the word שְׁנֵיכֶם should be understood as if it had a *mem* prefixed to it — מִשְׁנֵיכֶם, “of both of you” (*Be’er Yitzchak*).

to Charan. ⁴⁴ And remain with him a few days until your brother's seething will be withdrawn — ⁴⁵ until your brother's anger is withdrawn from you and he forgets what you have done to him — then I will send and bring you from there; why should I be bereaved of both of you on the same day?"

⁴⁶ Rivkah said to Yitzchak, "I am disgusted with my life on account of the daughters of Cheis; if Yaakov takes a wife of the daughters of Cheis like these, of the daughters of the land, why do I need life?"

28

¹ So Yitzchak summoned Yaakov and blessed him; he instructed him, and said to him, "Do not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. ² Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Besuel your mother's father, and take

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□ גַּם שְׁנֵיכֶם — **BOTH OF YOU ON THE SAME DAY.**

Rivkah was aware that Eisav wished to kill Yaakov, but presumably had no reason to fear Eisav's death. Why, then, would she express concern that *both* of her sons would die, and on the same day? Rashi explains Rivkah's calculation:

אִם יָקוּם עָלַיךָ וְאַתָּה תִּהְיֶה רֹגֵנוּ — Eisav's desire to kill you may lead to both of you dying on the same day, for **if he will rise up against you** to try to kill you, **and you kill him** in self-defense, יַעֲמִדוּ בְנָיו וְיִהְיֶה רֹגֵךְ — **his sons will arise** to avenge his death **and kill you** that very day.^[95]

Aside from what Rivkah meant to say, there was a hidden prophecy in her words as well:^[96]

וְרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ נִזְרְקָה בָּהּ וְנִתְנַבְּאָה שְׁבִימִים אֶחָד יָמוּתוּ — And in saying this, **Ruach HaKodesh was cast into her and she unknowingly prophesied that [Yaakov and Eisav] would die on the same day**, כְּמוֹ שֶׁמְפֹרָשׁ בְּפֶרֶק הַמְּקָנָה לְאַשְׁתּוֹ — **as is explained** in Tractate *Sotah* in Chapter *HaMikanei LeIshto* (13a), that in a certain sense, this is in fact what happened.^[97]

46. קִצְתִּי בְחַיִּי — KATZTI WITH MY LIFE.

The term קִצְתִּי could have more than one meaning. Rashi explains what Rivkah intended here:

מֵאַסְתִּי בְחַיִּי — Rivkah said: **I am disgusted with my life.**^[98]

28.

2. פְּדָנָה — "PADDENAH-ARAM."

This verse contains two place-names to which are added the letter *hei* as a suffix: פְּדָן אֶרֶם (*Paddan-aram*) and בֵּית בְּתוּאֵל (*Beis Besuel*, "the house of Besuel"). This Rashi and the next one explain the function of this *hei*:

כְּמוֹ לְפָדָן — The word פְּדָנָה is **the same as "לְפָדָן"**, to Paddan, and...

□ בֵּיתָה בְּתוּאֵל — **"BEISAH BESUEL"**

לְבֵית בְּתוּאֵל — is **the same as "לְבֵית בְּתוּאֵל"**, to the house of Besuel. The *hei* suffix means "to."

95. Thus, Rivkah's concern was not about Eisav himself, but rather, that Eisav's death might lead to Yaakov's death. See further, *Nachalas Yaakov*.

96. If Rivkah was concerned only for the *possibility* that both might die in one day, then she should have said: פְּנֵי אֶשְׁכַּל, "Perhaps I will be bereaved of both of you," which expresses doubt. She should *not* have said, "Why should I be," which implies that it will *definitely* happen. Because of her certainty, Rashi explains that there was prophecy involved (*Gur Aryeh*; *Devek Tov*).

97. The Gemara (ibid.) relates that when Yaakov's sons came to bury him in the Cave of Machpeilah, Eisav interfered and claimed that the last remaining burial

plot belonged to him. During the debate that ensued, Chushim the son of Dan became outraged that Yaakov was forced to lie in disgrace, and killed Eisav. The Gemara concludes that while indeed Yaakov and Eisav did not *die* on the same day [for Yaakov died in Egypt and was mourned there for seventy days (50:3 below), and Eisav was attending his funeral after Yaakov had been brought to Eretz Yisrael], Rivkah's prophecy in our verse was fulfilled in part, as they were both *buried* on the same day.

98. קִצְתִּי is not from קָצָה, "end." Rivkah did not say "My life is ending" (*Leket Bahir*; see *Divrei Negidim* for another approach). Rather, the root of קִצְתִּי is קִץ, "to be disgusted." See also Rashi to *Vayikra* 20:23.

לך מתמן אתמא מבנת לבן אחוהא
דאמך: ג ואל שדי יברך יתך ויפשוך
ויסגיך ותהי לכנשת שבטין:
ו ויתן לך ית ברפתא דאברהם
לך ולבניך עמר למירתך ית ארע
תותבותך די יתב יי לאברהם:
ה ושלח יצחק ית יעקב ואיל לפדן
אָרם לָוֹת לָבֹן בֵּר בְּתוּאֵל אֲרַמָּא
אָחוּהָא דְרִבְקָה אֲמִיָּה דִיעֲקֹב
וְעָשׂוֹ: ו וְחָזַא עָשׂוֹ אָרִי בְרִיךְ יִצְחָק
יֵת יַעֲקֹב וְשָׁלַח יִתְהָ לְפָדֹן אָרָם
לְמַסָּב לָהּ מִתְמָן אֲתֵמָא כֹּד בְּרִיךְ
(בֵּא: בְּדִבְרֵיךְ) יִתְהָ וּפְקִיד עֲלוּהִי
לְמִימֵר לֹא תִסָּב אֲתֵמָא מִבְּנֵת כְּנָעִין:
ו וקביל יעקב מן אבוי ומן אמה

לך משם אשה מבנות לבן אחי אמך: ג ואל שדי
יברך אתך ויפרך וירבך והיית לקהל עמים: ד ויתן
לך את ברפת אברהם לך ולורעך אתך לרשתך
את ארץ מגרירך אשר נתן אלהים לאברהם:
ה ושלח יצחק את יעקב ויילך פדנה ארם
אל לבן בן בתואל הארמי אחי רבקה אם יעקב
ועשו: ו וירא עשו כי ברכך יצחק את יעקב ושלח
אתו פדנה ארם לקחת לו משם אשה בברכו
אתו ויצו עליו לאמר לא תקח אשה מבנות
כנען: מפטיר ז וישמע יעקב אל אביו ואל אמו

רס"ו

ממך ילא חותו הגוי וחוטו הזרע המזרקה: (ה) אָם
יעקב ועשו. חִינִי יֹדֵעַ מֶה מְלַמְּדֵנוּ: (זִיט) וְיִשְׁמַע
יעקב. מְחֻזָּר לְעִנּוּן שְׁלֵמַנְלָה: "וְיִרְאָה עָשׂוֹ פִי צֶרֶךְ
יִצְחָק וְגו' " (פסוק ו), וְכִי "שָׁלַח אֹתוֹ פְּדָנָה אֲרָם" (סס),
וְכִי שָׁמַע יַעֲקֹב אֶל אָבִיו וְהָלַךְ פְּדָנָה אֲרָם,

כָּל תִּיבָה שְׁצָרִיכָה לְמִ"ד בְּתַחֲלֻתָּהּ הַטֵּל לָהּ ה"א בְּסוּפָהּ
(יבמות יג): (ג) וְאֵל שְׂדֵי צִבְרוֹתָיו לְמַתְּרֵכִין
מִפּוֹ יִבְרַךְ אֹתָךְ: (ד) אֵת בְּרַבַּת אֲבִרָהֶם. שְׁחֵמֵר
לוֹ "וְאֵתְשָׁךְ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל" (לעיל יב, ז), "וְהִתְצַרְכוּ בְּצִרְעָךְ"
(סס כב, יח), יִהְיוּ חֹסֵן צָרָכוֹת אֲמוֹרוֹת "בְּצִלְיָךְ,

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Rashi sets forth the rule:

Any word that would need a *lamed* at its beginning, which means "to," [the Torah] sometimes instead puts the letter *hei* at [the word's] end, and it has the same meaning^[1] (Yevamos 13b).

3. AND MAY "EL SHADDAI" BLESS YOU. — וְאֵל שְׂדֵי

Rashi explains why Yitzchak invoked the particular Name, שְׂדֵי, in his blessing:

Yitzchak meant to say, "May the One Whose blessings have sufficient (דִּי) means to provide for those blessed by Him, bless you."^[2]

4. MAY HE GRANT YOU THE BLESSING OF AVRAHAM. — אֵת בְּרַבַּת אֲבִרָהֶם

Rashi explains what "the blessing of Avraham" refers to:

This refers to that which [Hashem] told [Avraham] (above, 12:2), *I will make you into a great nation*, and (above, 22:18), *and all the nations of the world shall bless themselves by your offspring*. At the time Hashem gave Avraham these blessings, He did

1. See further above, 14:10. Although Rashi says, "any word," this is not precise. This rule applies only when discussing going to a *place* [e.g., a city, as in פְּדָנָה אָרָם; a house, as in בֵּיתָה בְּתוּאֵל]. It does not apply in the context of going toward a *person* [e.g., one going to see Shimon is not said to be going אֶשְׁמְעֶנָּה (Gur Aryeh)].

This substitution of a suffix *hei* for a prefix *lamed* meaning "to" is common, and Rashi does not always comment on such occurrences. However, since the terms פְּדָנָה אָרָם and בֵּיתָה בְּתוּאֵל in our verse are each made up of two words, Rashi wished to clarify that the prefix *lamed* is substituted with a *hei* at the end of the word which would take the *lamed* (i.e., the *first*

word), and not at the end of the two-word term (*Beurim LePeirush Rashi*).

2. Wherever the Name אֵל שְׂדֵי appears in Scripture, it connotes, "the One Who has sufficient means in His Divinity (שְׂדֵי בְּאֱלֹהוּתוֹ)" to do whatever that particular verse is discussing. שְׂדֵי is a variation of שָׂדִי, which is a contraction of שָׂדִי שֵׁשׁ דִּי, *there is sufficient*.] In the present verse, where Yitzchak is pronouncing a blessing, this Name connotes the following: May the God Whose blessings are sufficiently potent to provide for those He blesses, bless you (*Be'er Yitzchak*, from Rashi above, 17:1; see there, notes 1 and 3; see also Rashi below, 43:14).

yourself a wife from there from the daughters of Lavan your mother's brother.³ And may El Shaddai bless you, make you fruitful and make you numerous, and may you become a congregation of peoples.⁴ May He grant you the blessing of Avraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may possess the land of your sojourns which God gave to Avraham.”⁵ So Yitzchak sent off Yaakov and he went toward Paddan-aram, to Lavan the son of Besuel the Aramean, brother of Rivkah, mother of Yaakov and Eisav.

⁶ Now Eisav saw that Yitzchak had blessed Yaakov and had sent him off to Paddan-aram to take for himself a wife from there when he blessed him, and had commanded him, saying, “You shall not take a wife from among the daughters of Canaan”;⁷ and that Yaakov obeyed his father and his mother

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not specify which of Avraham's descendants would be the one through whom the blessings would be fulfilled. Yitzchak therefore blessed Yaakov, **וַיְהִי אוֹתָן בְּרָכוֹת הָאֲמוֹרוֹת בְּשִׁבְלָךְ** — “May those blessings that were said to Avraham be for you”; meaning, **מִמֶּךָ יֵצֵא אוֹתוֹ הַגּוֹי וְאוֹתוֹ הַיָּרֵעַ הַמְּבוֹרָךְ** — may that great nation and that blessed offspring that Avraham was blessed with, come forth from you and not from Eisav.^[3]

5. אִם יַעֲקֹב וְעִשָׂו — LAVAN THE SON OF BESUEL... BROTHER OF RIVKAH, MOTHER OF YAAKOV AND EISAV.

The words “mother of Yaakov and Eisav” seem superfluous, as we already know this fact. Rashi comments:

אִינִי יוֹדֵעַ מִה מְלַמְּדֵנוּ — I do not know what this phrase teaches us.^[4]

7-9. וַיִּשְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב — AND THAT YAAKOV OBEYED ... AND WENT TO PADDAN-ARAM.

Simply understood, the verse is reporting what Yaakov did. However, this is difficult, for the Torah already wrote earlier, in verse 5, that Yaakov went to Paddan-aram, so there is no need to repeat this point in our verse.^[5] Rashi explains that the point of the verse is not to report what Yaakov did, but what Eisav observed:

מְחוּבָּר לַעֲנִין שֶׁלִּמְעֵלָה — [This verse] is connected to the preceding matter, i.e., it is a continuation of the previous verse, which relates what Eisav observed, as follows: “**וַיֵּרָא עֵשָׂו כִּי בָרַךְ יִצְחָק וְגו'**” — **EISAV SAW THAT YITZCHAK HAD BLESSED YAAKOV,** “**וְכִי שָׁלַח אוֹתוֹ פָּדָנָה אֲרָם**” — **AND that he HAD SENT HIM OFF TO PADDAN-ARAM TO TAKE FOR HIMSELF A WIFE FROM THERE.** Our verse then continues: **וְכִי שָׁמַע יַעֲקֹב אֶל** — **AND HE ALSO SAW that YAAKOV OBEYED HIS FATHER AND WENT TO PADDAN-ARAM.**^[6]

3. See further, Rashi below, 28:15, with note 36 and the Insight there.

4. *Sifsei Chachamim* asks: Why was it necessary for Rashi to inform us that he did not know what this verse was coming to teach? If he had no explanation, he could simply have written nothing at all! *Sifsei Chachamim* answers that Rashi was aware of the various interpretations that are given for the verse, but he did not know which one would best explain **מִקְרָא שֶׁל מְשֹׁרֵת**, the plain meaning of the verse. This is what he means when he says: “I do not know.”

The commentators, both early and late, offer numerous explanations of this verse. *Gur Aryeh* explains that Yitzchak understood that building the Jewish nation required the emergence of offspring that were completely pure. Yitzchak had not yet achieved that, since his wife

Rivkah was the mother of *both* the righteous Yaakov and the wicked Eisav, and thus Yitzchak's offspring were not yet of the necessary perfection. It was for this reason that Yitzchak sent Yaakov to marry a daughter of Lavan, so that he could produce offspring without any defect with which to lay the foundation for the Jewish people. This is why the verse mentions that Rivkah was the mother of Yaakov and Eisav. See there for another approach; and see *Ramban* for yet another. See also *Maskil LeDavid* and the other commentaries to Rashi.

[Rashi makes a similar comment below, 35:13. See note 47 there.]

5. *Meisiach Ilmim*; *Maskil LeDavid*.

6. The word **כִּי**, *that*, in the beginning of verse 6 refers not only to the things mentioned in that verse, but also to the things mentioned in the next verse. Eisav saw both

וַיֵּלֶךְ פְּדָנָה אֶרֶם: ח וַיֵּרָא עֵשָׂו כִּי רָעוֹת בָּנוֹת כְּנָעַן
בְּעֵינָי יִצְחָק אָבִיו: ט וַיֵּלֶךְ עֵשָׂו אֶל-יִשְׁמָעֵאל וַיִּקַּח
אֶת-מַחְלָת | בִּת-יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן-אֲבִרְהָם אַחֹת נְבִיּוֹת
עַל-נָשָׁיו לֹא לְאִשָּׁה: ס ס ס ק"ו פסוקים. על"ו סימן.

וַיֵּלֶךְ פְּדָנָה אֶרֶם: ח וַיֵּרָא עֵשָׂו כִּי רָעוֹת בָּנוֹת כְּנָעַן
בְּעֵינָי יִצְחָק אָבִיו: ט וַיֵּלֶךְ עֵשָׂו אֶל-יִשְׁמָעֵאל וַיִּקַּח
אֶת-מַחְלָת | בִּת-יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן-אֲבִרְהָם אַחֹת נְבִיּוֹת
עַל-נָשָׁיו לֹא לְאִשָּׁה: ס ס ס ק"ו פסוקים. על"ו סימן.

רש"י

לֹא שָׁהָה צְדִית לָבֵן לִפְנֵי יִדְתָּו שֶׁל יוֹסֵף חָלָל י"ד שָׁנָה,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וַיִּצְדָּקְהָ חֶרֶב עָשָׂה שָׁנָה צָשָׁפִי צְנוּתִיד וְשֵׁשׁ
שָׁנִים צִלְחָק" (וְהָלֵךְ לֹא, מֵאֵל, וְשֶׁכֶר הָלֵךְ מִשְׁנֹלֵד יוֹסֵף
הָיָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וַיְהִי פֶּאֶשֶׁר יִלְדָה רַחֵל אֶת יוֹסֵף וְגו'") (ס
ל, כה). וְיוֹסֵף צֵן שְׁלוֹשִׁים שָׁנָה הָיָה בְּשִׁמְלֹךְ (וְהָלֵךְ מֵאֵל, מו),
וּמֵשֶׁם עַד שֶׁיִּרְדַּע יַעֲקֹב לְמָלְכִים פֶּשַׁע שָׁנִים, שָׁבַע שֶׁל
שׁוֹבַע וְשָׁנִים שֶׁל רַעֲב, וְיַעֲקֹב חָמַר לִפְרָעָה "יְמֵי שְׁנֵי
מִגֻּרֵי שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה" (סס מו, טו). לֹא וְחֶשֶׁב י"ד
שָׁנָה שֶׁלִּפְנֵי יִדְתָּו יוֹסֵף וְשְׁלוֹשִׁים שֶׁל יוֹסֵף וְחֶשֶׁב מִשְׁמֹלֶךְ
עַד שֶׁצָּא יַעֲקֹב, הָרִי כ"ג. וְכִפְּרִישׁ מֵאֲדָוִי הָיָה צֵן ס"ג,
הָרִי קט"ו, וְהוּא אוֹמֵר: שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה, הָרִי חֲסִידִים

וְכִי רָעוֹת בָּנוֹת כְּנָעַן, וְהֵלֶךְ גַּם הוּא אֶל יִשְׁמָעֵאל:
אַחֹת נְבִיּוֹת. מִמֶּשֶׁמֶע שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "צֵת יִשְׁמָעֵאל" חִינִי
יֹדֵעַ שֶׁהָיָה אַחֹת נְבִיּוֹת, חָלָל לְמִדְּוֹ שֶׁמֶת יִשְׁמָעֵאל
מִשְׁיִטָּה לַעֲשׂו קוֹדֶם נִשְׁאִיָּה, וְהִשְׁאִיָּה נְבִיּוֹת חִיָּה.
וְלְמִדְּוֹ שֶׁהָיָה יַעֲקֹב צִחֹתוֹ הִפְרָק צֵן ס"ג שָׁנִים. שֶׁהָרִי
יִשְׁמָעֵאל צֵן ט"ד שָׁנִים הָיָה בְּשִׁמְלֹךְ יַעֲקֹב, שִׁי"ד שָׁנָה
הָיָה גְדוֹל יִשְׁמָעֵאל מִיִּצְחָק, "וַיִּלָּחֶק צֵן שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה צִלְדָּת
חֹתֶם" (וְשִׁל כה, כו), הָרִי ט"ד, וְשִׁמְלֹךְ הָיָה קל"ז, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
"וַחֲלָה שְׁנֵי חֲמֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל וְגו'" (סס פסוק יז), נִמְלָא יַעֲקֹב
בְּשִׁמְתָּה יִשְׁמָעֵאל צֵן ס"ג שָׁנִים הָיָה. וְלְמִדְּוֹ מִכָּאֵן
שֶׁנֶּמְטָן צְדִית עֶבֶר י"ד שָׁנָה וְאַחֵר כָּךְ הֵלֶךְ לְחָרֵן. שֶׁהָרִי

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The next two verses also flow from the previous ones:

And from this *EISAV PERCEIVED THAT THE DAUGHTERS OF CANAAN WERE EVIL IN THE EYES OF YITZCHAK, HIS FATHER*, — **וְהֵלֶךְ גַּם הוּא** — **אֶל יִשְׁמָעֵאל** and so, he too went *TO YISHMAEL* to marry someone from within the family.^[7]

□ **אַחֹת נְבִיּוֹת** — *SO EISAV... TOOK MACHALAS, THE DAUGHTER OF YISHMAEL... SISTER OF NEVAYOS.*

Rashi addresses an apparent redundancy in the verse:

From the implication of the statement that Machalas was *THE DAUGHTER OF YISHMAEL*, — **אֵינִי יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהָיָה** — **אַחֹת נְבִיּוֹת** — **would I not already know that she was the SISTER OF NEVAYOS?** We have already been told above, 25:13, that Nevayos was Yishmael's oldest son! — **אַלֵּא לְמִדְּוֹ שֶׁמֶת יִשְׁמָעֵאל מִשְׁיִטָּה לַעֲשׂו קוֹדֶם נִשְׁאִיָּה** — **Rather**, with these words [the Torah] teaches us that Yishmael died after he designated [Machalas] as a wife for Eisav but before her wedding, — **וְהִשְׁאִיָּה נְבִיּוֹת אַחִיהָ** — **and Nevayos her older brother married her off in place of his father.**^[8]

Rashi explains what the Torah is teaching us with this seemingly unnecessary piece of information: — **And by this [the Torah] teaches us that at that juncture,**

the things that Yitzchak did, enumerated in verse 6, and the things that Yaakov did, enumerated in verse 7.

7. Understood simply, Eisav wished to please his father and therefore married the daughter of Yishmael, a woman of proper lineage. See Insight for an alternative explanation.

8. [See also Rashi below, 36:3.] This also explains why

the Torah wrote: *So Eisav went "to Yishmael" and took Machalas the daughter of Yishmael.* The words "to Yishmael" seem superfluous. But the Torah wishes to indicate that originally Eisav went to Yishmael himself, who was alive at the time of Machalas' engagement, but then Yishmael died and Nevayos her brother married her off (*Maskil LeDavid*).

§ **Eisav's Interest in Marrying Yishmael's Daughter** Being that Eisav stayed married to the Canaanite women whom he had married earlier, and who were a source of aggravation to Yitzchak (26:34 above), why would he think that his marriage to Machalas would be enough to please Yitzchak? Some suggest that Eisav did not marry Machalas to make Yitzchak happy; rather, once Eisav realized that Yitzchak desired that he not marry Canaanite women, Eisav feared that the blessings which he received would be fulfilled only through children of non-Canaanite women. Therefore, Eisav married the granddaughter of Avraham, to bear offspring fit to receive Yitzchak's blessings (*Or HaChaim*).

and went to Paddan-aram; ⁸Eisav thus perceived that the daughters of Canaan were evil in the eyes of Yitzchak, his father. ⁹So Eisav went to Yishmael and took Machalas, the daughter of Yishmael son of Avraham, sister of Nevayos, in addition to his wives, as a wife for himself.

THE HAFTARAH FOR TOLDOS APPEARS ON PAGE 553.

When Erev Rosh Chodesh Kislev coincides with Toldos, the regular Haftarah is replaced with the Haftarah for Shabbas Erev Rosh Chodesh, page 561.

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when Yishmael died and Yaakov left to Paddan-aram, **Yaakov was 63 years old**. How is this calculated? **שְׁהָרִי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן עֵד שְׁנִים הָיָה בְּשָׁנֹלָד יִצְחָק** — For Yishmael was 74 years old when Yaakov was born, **שִׁיד שָׁנָה הָיָה גְדוֹל יִשְׁמָעֵאל מִיִּצְחָק** — since Yishmael was 14 years older than Yitzchak,^[9] **וְיִצְחָק בֶּן שִׁשִּׁים** — and it say regarding the birth of Yaakov and Eisav, **וְיִצְחָק הָיָה בֶּן שִׁשִּׁים שָׁנָה בְּלִדְתָּ אוֹתָם** — *and Yitzchak was sixty years old when she gave birth to them* (25:26, above). **הָרִי עֵד** — Hence, at the time Yaakov was born, Yishmael was 74 (14 + 60 = 74). **וְשָׁנֹתָיו הָיוּ קָלִיז שְׁנָאֵמֶר וְיִצְחָק שְׁנֵי חָיִי יִשְׁמָעֵאל וְגו'** — And we know that [Yishmael's] lifespan was 137 years, as it says (ibid. v. 17), *These were the years of Yishmael's life: one hundred years, thirty years, and seven years.* **נִמְצָא יִצְחָק בְּשִׁמְתָּ יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן ס"ג שְׁנִים הָיָה** — It emerges that **Yaakov was 63 years old when Yishmael died** and when he left his parents' home. The verse informs us of Yishmael's death (by mentioning Nevayos) to show that at this juncture, Yaakov was 63 years old.

Rashi explains the significance of this fact:

וְלִמְדָנוּ מִכָּאן שְׁנֵי עָבָר יִיד שָׁנָה — Consequently, we learn from here (i.e., from *sister of Nevayos*, which hints that Yaakov was 63 when he left his parents' home) **that [Yaakov] hid himself away studying Torah in the yeshivah of Eiver for 14 years,** **וְאַחֲרָיָה בֶּן הָלָךְ לְחָרָן** — and only afterward went to Charan.^[10]

Rashi clarifies how this is deduced:

שְׁהָרִי לֹא שָׁהָה בְּבֵית לָבָן לִפְנֵי לִידְתּוֹ שֶׁל יוֹסֵף אֶלָּא יִיד שָׁנָה — For Yaakov spent only 14 years in Lavan's house prior to Yosef's birth, **שְׁנָאֵמֶר עֲבַדְתִּיךָ אַרְבַּע עָשָׂר שָׁנָה בְּשִׁתֵּי בְנוֹתֶיךָ וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים בְּצֹאנְךָ** — as it says (31:41 below), *I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flocks,* **וְשִׁשִּׁים שָׁנָה הָיָה שְׁנָאֵמֶר וְיִצְחָק בְּלִדְתָּ רָחֵל אֶת יוֹסֵף וְגו'** — and the six years' work for which he received the wage of flocks began after Yosef was born, as it says (30:25, ibid.), *And it was when Rachel had given birth to Yosef... And [Lavan] said, "Specify your wage etc."* **וְיִצְחָק בֶּן שְׁלוֹשִׁים שָׁנָה הָיָה** — Now, Yosef was 30 years old when he became ruler in Egypt (41:46, below), **וּמִשָּׁם עַד שִׁידָר** — and from that point until Yaakov descended to Egypt, there elapsed a period of 9 years, 7 of plenty and 2 of famine (see below, 45:6). **וְיִצְחָק אָמַר לְפָרְעָה** — And when he descended to Egypt, Yaakov shared his age and said to Pharaoh (47:9 ibid.), *The days of the years of my sojourns have been a hundred and thirty years.* **נָא וְהוֹשִׁיב יִיד שָׁנָה שְׁלֹפְנֵי לִידְתָּ יוֹסֵף וְשְׁלוֹשִׁים שָׁנֵי יוֹסֵף וְתִשַּׁע מִשְׁמָלָךְ עַד שָׁבָא יִצְחָק** — Now go and add together the 14 years that Yaakov spent in Lavan's house prior to Yosef's birth, plus the 30 years of Yosef's life before he became ruler in Egypt, plus the 9 years from when he became ruler until Yaakov came down to Egypt; **הָרִי נ"ג** — they total 53 years (14 + 30 + 9 = 53). **וּכְשִׁפִּירֵשׁ מֵאֲבִיו הָיָה בֶּן ס"ג** — And when [Yaakov] parted from his father he was 63, as demonstrated above. **הָרִי קט"ז** — It emerges that he should have been 116 years of age when he came to Egypt (63 + 53 = 116). **וְהָיָה אָמֵר: שְׁלוֹשִׁים וּמֵאָת שָׁנָה** — Yet, when he arrived there, [Yaakov] said to Pharaoh that he was 130 years old (below, 47:9). **הָרִי חסרי**

9. Avraham was 86 when Yishmael was born (16:16 above) and 100 when Yitzchak was born (21:5 ibid.). Thus, at the time of Yitzchak's birth Yishmael was 14.

10. [Above, 25:27, Rashi explained that when the verse describes Yaakov as *רֹשֵׁב אֶהָלִים*, *residing in tents* (plural), it refers to two tents, i.e., two yeshivos, the yeshivah of Shem and the yeshivah of Eiver. Here, however, Rashi writes that he hid himself in Eiver's yeshivah,

but does not mention Shem's. Why is this? The answer is that if we calculate the years of Shem based on the lifespans of the generations recorded in the Torah, we find that Shem, who died at age 600, died when Yaakov was 50 years old. Thus whereas in Yaakov's youth he was still able to study under Shem, by the time he left his father's house at age 63, Shem was no longer alive. Hence, he studied only in the yeshivah of Eiver (*Mizrachi* to 25:22; *Maharsha, Megillah* 16b).]

רש"י

י"ד שנים. הא למדת שאחר שקבל הברכות נטמן בציט
עבר י"ד שנים. אצל לא נענש עליהם צרכות התורה,
שהרי לא פירש יוסף מאביו אלא כ"ב שנה, דהיינו מ"ו
עד ל"ט, כנגד כ"ב שפירש יעקב מאביו ולא כצדו.
והם עשרים שנים צצית לצן ושתי שנים ששהה בצדו,
בדכתיב "ויצן לו צית ולמקנהו עשה סבות" (להלן
ג, י), ופירשו רבותינו ז"ל מזה הפסוק ששהה י"ח
חדשים בצדו, ד"צית" הנה צימות הגשמים ו"סבות"

הא למדת שאחר שקבל הברכות — So 14 years of Yaakov's life are missing and unaccounted for! — י"ד שנים
Thus, you learn from this that after [Yaakov] received the blessings at
age 63, he detoured before going to Charan and hid himself away in the yeshivah of Eiver for 14
years.^[11]

During the years that Yaakov remained away from his father he did not perform the mitzvah of
honoring him.^[12] For this Yaakov was punished by having his own son, Yosef, separated from him for a
corresponding number of years:

אבל לא נענש עליהם בזכות התורה — However, although he was punished for neglecting to honor his father
during the years he was away from home, and 14 of those years were spent in the yeshivah of Eiver, he
was not punished for [those years], in the merit of the Torah he studied during that time. He was
punished only for the other years he was away. How is this seen? שהרי לא פירש יוסף מאביו אלא כ"ב
— that is, from — דהיינו מ"ו עד ל"ט — For Yosef was separated from his father for only 22 years,
age 17, when he was sold (below, 37:2), until age 39, when he was reunited with his father,^[13]
בנגד כ"ב — corresponding to the 22 years that Yaakov was apart from his father
and did not honor him. — These 22 years consist of the 20 years that he spent in Lavan's house plus 2 years that he spent on the road traveling
home from Charan. Where do we see that his homeward trip spanned 2 years? בדכתיב "ויבן לו בית
— ולמקנהו עשה סבות" — For it is written about that trip (below, 33:17), But Yaakov journeyed to [a place
of] shelters, and built himself a house, and for his livestock he made shelters; he therefore called the
name of the place Succos; — and our Sages, of blessed memory, explained based on this verse that [Yaakov] spent eighteen months on the road,
— because the word *house* implies a winter home and *shelter* implies a summer dwelling — and since it says *shelters*, plural, it implies two summer
dwelling.^[14] Yaakov was in Succos for two summer seasons and a single winter season in between,
which together constitute a period of eighteen months. He then spent the next six-month winter season
in Beis-El.^[15] Thus, Yaakov spent a total of 2 years on the journey home to his father, in addition to the
20 years he spent in Lavan's house, totaling 22 years. — But according to the calculation that emerges from the verses that we reckoned earlier,
משפירש מאביו עד שירד — למצרים שהיה בן ק"ל שנים — we find an additional 14 years that he was away from his

11. Actually, the preceding calculation itself demonstrates only that 14 years of Yaakov's life are unaccounted for; it does not indicate where Yaakov was during those 14 years. Nevertheless, since we know that Yaakov spent his young years studying Torah in the yeshivos of Shem and Eiver, and Eiver was still alive at this time, it is reasonable to assume that that is where he was during those 14 years (*Maharsha, Megillah* 16b).

12. The mitzvah of honoring parents entails serving them meals, dressing them, taking them wherever

they need to go, etc.; in short, helping them in every way (see *Kiddushin* 31b, end).

13. As Rashi explained above, Yosef was 30 when he became ruler over Egypt and Yaakov came down to Egypt 9 years later.

14. *Maharsha, Megillah* 17a.

15. Although Rashi here does not mention these six months in Beis-El, the Gemara in *Megillah* 17a, which is Rashi's source, mentions them. Rashi below, 37:34, mentions them as well.

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father.^[16] Why was he not punished for those years as well? אֵלָא וְדַאי נִטְמָן בְּבֵית עֵיבֶר בְּהַלִּיכְתּוֹ לְבֵית לָבָן — Rather, it is **certainly** because **on his way to Lavan's house he hid himself away in Eiver's yeshivah in order to learn Torah from him,** וְגַשְׁבִּיל זְכוּת הַתּוֹרָה לֹא גָעַשׂ עֲלֵיהֶם — **and in the merit of the Torah he studied during those years, he was not punished for them.** וְלֹא פִירֵשׁ יוֹסֵף — Thus, although Yaakov did not honor his father for a total of 36 years (22 + 14), he was punished for only 22 of those years, and **Yosef was separated from him for only 22 years,** מִדָּה כְּנֹגֵד מִדָּה — **measure for measure**^[17] (*Megillah* 16b-17a).

□ עַל נָשָׁיו — *EISAV... TOOK MACHALAS... IN ADDITION TO HIS WIVES, AS A WIFE FOR HIMSELF.*

Why does the verse mention that Eisav married Machalas *in addition to his [other] wives*? Rashi explains:

הוֹסִיף רָשָׁעָה עַל רָשָׁעָתוֹ — With his marriage to the Machalas, [Eisav] **added wickedness upon his previous wickedness,** שְׁלֹא גֵרַשׁ אֶת הָרִאשׁוֹנוֹת — **for he did not divorce his wicked first [wives],** and she too was wicked as they were^[18] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 67:13).

16. Yaakov was 63 when he left home. Rashi showed above that 53 years elapsed from the time Yaakov arrived at Lavan's house until the time he went down to Egypt. If we add 63 + 53 we arrive at a total of 116. But Yaakov was 130 when he came to Egypt! This leaves a gap of 14 years, and the gap must be between the time that Yaakov left home and the time he arrived at Lavan's house.

17. The question arises: Since Yaakov was *sent away* by his parents, why was he punished for all the years he stayed away and did not serve them? The answer might be that perhaps they intended only for him to go to Paddan-aram and marry, and then be prepared to return as soon as they sent for him. But Yaakov *voluntarily* offered to stay and work for seven years for Rachel [as opposed to marrying Leah, for whom he would not have needed to work]; therefore *all* the years he was away [except the fourteen he studied in the yeshivah of Eiver] were counted against

him (*Rabbeinu Bachya* to v. 5). It may also be that they actually sent for him [shortly after he arrived in Paddan-aram] — as mentioned by Rashi to 35:8, that Rivkah sent her wet nurse Deborah to fetch him — but he did not want to come as of yet, because he wished to marry Rachel (*Chizkuni* below, 37:34). See Insight.

18. “Rashi” to *Bereishis Rabbah*. [The wickedness of Eisav's other wives is mentioned above, 26:35. See also Rashi to 26:34.]

Rashi below (36:3) says that Eisav's wife was called Machalas because through marriage to her, Eisav's sins were *machul*, forgiven, as per the rule that marrying a woman causes one's sins to be forgiven. From our Rashi we see that this holds true even in the case of one's second marriage, and even if one is still married to the first wife, *and* even if the bride is wicked, as Machalas was (*Nachalas Yaakov*). See the Insight to 36:3 for further discussion.

§ **The Yeshivah of Eiver** One might wonder why Yaakov detoured to Eiver's yeshiva for 14 years before fulfilling his father's command to go to the house of Lavan. Why, Yaakov had spent all of his 63 years occupied in Torah study under his grandfather Avraham and his father Yitzchak (see *Yoma* 28b; *Rambam, Hil. Avodah Zarah* 1:3). Why did he feel the need at this juncture to spend another 14 years in the yeshiva of Eiver, rather than immediately fulfilling his father's command?

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky answers that although Yaakov had studied Torah for so many years under his grandfather and father, there was a unique type of Torah that he had yet to learn. Eiver possessed the traditions of his ancestor Shem, who had learned from his father Noach how to remain strong against the corrupting influence of the generation of the Flood. Eiver himself lived in the generation of those who sought to build a tower up to the heavens to wage war against Hashem, yet he was not swept along with the tide. Yaakov knew that his uncle Lavan, to whom he was heading, was a wicked person and a cheat. The people of Paddan-aram were of the same ilk, as we find that later all of them were invited to Yaakov's wedding and helped Lavan trick Yaakov into marrying Leah (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 70:19; Rashi above, 25:20). Yaakov therefore felt incapable of fulfilling his father's command without taking out time to *prepare* himself, by studying the Torah of those who knew how to remain steadfast in the face of evil influences. Surely his parents would not want him to go to the house of Lavan if he would not be able, once he emerged, to confidently declare, “With Lavan I sojourned but I did not learn from his evil ways!” (see Rashi below, 32:5). Thus, Yaakov's detour to the yeshivah of Eiver was not a defiance of his father's instruction. He *could not* go to Lavan's house without first immersing himself in the Torah taught by Eiver (*Emes LeYaakov* to 28:11 below). [Still, were it not for the special merit of Torah study, Yaakov would have been punished for not honoring and aiding his parents during those 14 years — just as he was punished for the other 22 years.]