

Insights from the Meshech Chochma
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וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה יִצְחָק לְבָרֵךְ אֶת יַעֲקֹב וַיְהִי אַךְ יֵצֵא יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יִצְחָק אָבִיו וְעָשׂוֹ אָחִיו בָּא מִצִּידוֹ.
(פרק כז' ל')

And it was, when Yitzchak had finished blessing Yaakov, and Yaakov had scarcely left from the presence of Yitzchak, that Eisav his brother came back from his hunt.

Several Mefarshim question the superfluous **יִצְחָק מֵאֵת פְּנֵי** as opposed to writing simply **יִצְחָק אָבִיו**. According to the Haamek Davar, **פְּנֵי** is alluding to the fact that Eisav's arrival to his father was after not only Yaakov's departure from the room their father was in but from Yitzchak's entire property. And for this reason, the pasuk uses the repetitive words **יֵצֵא יַעֲקֹב** i.e., two "leavings", from the room and the entire estate. The Tzror HaMor (Rav Avraham Saba 1440-1510) says that **פְּנֵי** can be a reference to HKBH i.e., the *Shechinah* was present as Yitzchak was blessing Yaakov. He also understands **יֵצֵא יַעֲקֹב** as two "exitings", one referring to Yaakov exiting, and the other, the *Shechinah*, for we know that with Eisav's entrance, Yitzchak lost the intense presence of Hashem.

Rav Meir Simcha offers us two approaches to the "unnecessary" **פְּנֵי**. The first may in fact be a Biblical source for a halacha discussed in **יומא נג**: "R' Yonasan says... 'a student who takes leave of his teacher should not turn his face and walk but turn his face sideways and walk. This is in accordance with that practice of R' Elazar... who when he wanted to take leave (of his Rebbe, R' Yochanan), he would walk backward until he disappeared from his Rebbe's sight, and only then would he walk normally, so as not to turn his back on his teacher.'" The Gemara further relates: "When Rava took leave of R' Yosef, he would walk backward, paying no attention to the obstacles in his path, until his legs were bruised and the threshold of R' Yosef's house was bloodied from Rava's wounds. (They said to R' Yosef (who was blind), 'This is what Rava does.' R' Yosef said to him: 'May it be Hashem's will that you lift your head over the entire city, in reward for honoring your teacher.')" R' Yonasan derives his rule from **וַיָּבֵא שְׁלֹמֹה דְבָרֵי הַיָּמִים ב' א' יג** *וַיָּבֵא שְׁלֹמֹה*, *דְבָרֵי הַיָּמִים ב' א' יג* *וַיָּבֵא שְׁלֹמֹה* *לְבִבְתָּהּ אֲנֹכִי בְּגִבְעוֹן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם* *And Shlomo came to the high place that was at Givon, Yerushalayim*. He explains: "Now, what does Givon have to do with Yerushalayim, these are two different places? Rather, the verse compares his exit from Givon to Yerushalayim to his arrival from Yerushalayim to Givon. Just as in the case of his arrival from Givon to Yerushalayim his face was necessarily turned toward the high place, in the usual manner of a person's arrival, so too, upon his exit from Yerushalayim to Givon

his face was still turned toward the high place, in the manner of his arrival. This teaches that one does not turn his face away from a sacred place; rather, he must walk backward.” Rav Meir Simcha feels that our pasuk’s **פָּנָי יִצְחָק אָבִיו** is telling us similarly i.e., upon making his leave from his father/Rebbe, Yaakov walked backwards and was constantly facing Yitzchak. Another wonderful example of Rav Meir Simcha’s penchant to find *Chumash*-based sources for esoteric **פְּה נְשִׁבְעַל פְּה** exegesis.

His second approach to **פָּנָי** is based on a Psikta d’Rav Kahana where Rav Meir Simcha finds the usage of **פָּנָי** in the context of anger. He explains rather provocatively, that granted, Yitzchak thought that the son he was blessing was Eisav, but that this upset him that he was designating Eisav to be the **לְךָ בְּנֵי אִמְךָ** /*Be master over your brothers, and your mother’s sons will bow to you* and not Yaakov, the **אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים** /*wholesome man, abiding in tents*. Something “clicked” as Yaakov left **פָּנָי יִצְחָק אָבִיו** and Yitzchak became angry. This *resulted* in the *Shechinah* leaving him, as per **ל: שבת**, regarding Elisha, that after he became angry at the king of Israel, his prophetic spirit left him. Rav Meir Simcha points out, that only after Yitzchak became mad and the *Shechinah* departed from him that the pasuk tells us, **וַיִּחַרד יִצְחָק חֲרָדָה גְּדֹלָה עַד מְאֹד** /*Then Yitzchak trembled in very great perplexity* i.e., this type of visceral reaction could only happen if he lost the *Shechinah*.

What Rav Meir Simcha does not explain to us is if Yitzchak did not really want to give Eisav his blessing, why in fact did he? I cannot say that I know the answer. However, Rav Meir Simcha leaves us with a homework assignment, **עיין תנחומא**. There we read: “Why did Yitzchak tremble? Because he had blessed the younger before the elder... His intention was to call Eisav to bless him first, since he was the elder. Then afterwards, he would call Yaakov. So was the plan. Why? Because before HKBH it is difficult to supplant a genealogical chain, to replace primogeniture, the first born. Therefore, he only called Eisav... Yaakov went out and Eisav came in... and Yitzchak said: ‘Who is this one who entered and received the blessings?’ Hashem said to him: ‘It was Yaakov.’ ... (At this point) Yitzchak said: ‘Perhaps I transgressed a commandment of the Law in blessing the younger before the elder.’” So that according to this Tanchuma, Yitzchak’s anger was fueled when he realized that he in fact changed the Biblical order of inheritance, and not as Rav Meir Simcha proposed that he was upset to give “Eisav” and not Yaakov the blessings. Why did Rav Meir Simcha ask us to look at this Midrash? I am open to any suggestions, or we will have to wait to ask him ourselves.

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור ע"ה
לזכר נשמת חמי מורי יעקב נתן בן ר' ישראל שלמה ז"ל
ולזכר נשמת הרב יהודה בן ר' אברהם שמחה (קופרמן) זצ"ל
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