



## PARSHAS VAYEITZEI

### An Insight into Tefillah from the Ovos by Dr. J. H. Freilich

In Gemoroh Brochos 26: we find a Braisa, which contains the following statements.

Avraham instituted Shacharis as it says .... אשר עמד שם המקום אל וישכם אברהם בבקר

(19 v. 27). Yitzchak instituted Minchah as it says ..... ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה (24 v. 63).

Yaacov instituted Arvis as it says ..... ויפגע במקום וילך שם (28 v. 11). In all three cases the activities referred to are identified with praying. The question is asked why use a different expression for praying with each of the Ovos viz עמידה for Avraham, שיחה for Yitzchak and פגיעה for Yaacov.

The Dubna Maggid, in his sefer Ohel Yaacov on Chumash, suggests the following idea based on a *maamar* in Sanhedrin 44. 'A person should pre-empt *tzoroh* with *tefillah*' In other words, one should *daven* to Hashem while one is in peace and quietude so that one is protected from any mishap or evil decree. As Dovid HaMelech says in Tehillim 69 ....

ועתה רצון ואני תפילתי לך ה' עת רצון meaning I don't wait for the wrath of Hashem but I pray to him while it is still a time of acceptance. With this concept, we can understand better the references to Daniel praying. In a *medrash* on בא, it says "Daniel would start early (שוחר) to pray to Hashem, evening, morning and afternoon. Why did he start early ? In order that Hashem would have mercy on Israel" Also it says in Brochos 31, that Daniel prayed even before the Bnei Yisroel went into Golus. These *maamarim* highlight the efficacy of prayer before we reach the stage of distress. Even the word שוחר has a connotation of getting in early before it is time. This is the significance of Avraham instituting שחרית, by rising early.

On the other hand, Yitzchak showed us that we could come with fervent prayer to Hashem even if we hadn't pre-empted the *tzoroh*. This is apparent from the reference to Yitzchak *davening*, referred to above, which was just after the *petirah* of his mother Sarah, when he was still in mourning. The Gemoroh in Brochos 26: quotes the following verse in Tehillim 102 : תפילה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ה' ישפוך שיחו This not only aligns שיחה with prayer but also shows that a delayed prayer is still valid. The word יעטוף is being used in the sense of one who carries, similar to the sheep who were העטופים mentioned later in the Sedra. Thus although he submits his prayer belatedly, the psalmist goes on to beseech Hashem to listen to it.

Now we shall try to understand why Yaacov's prayer is described as פגיעה. As you will recall from Rashi, Yaacov initially passed by Har Hamoriah without praying and afterwards relented. He asked himself how can I pass by the place where my forefathers prayed and not pray there myself ? It appears as if it was only because he chanced to be in the vicinity in the first place that he *davened* there. Had he not happened to be there, it would not have been his intention to deliberately make it his business to go there.

With this, says the Dubna Maggid, we can understand the prophet Yirmiyahu 29 exhorting Bnei Yisroel והתפללתם אלי ושמעתו אליכם והלכתם וקראתם אותי. Why does he need to insert the word והלכתם 'you shall go' into the clause when it would make perfect sense without it? The answer he gives is that it provides a sense of commitment and deliberateness that would otherwise be missing. Too often we are praying for things 'by the way'. Yes, we sincerely pray for our material needs and well-being with great כוונה but when it comes to the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdosh, Jerusalem and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of David, we ask for those things not with great earnestness but 'by the way, please also consider...' We may therefore consider the *possuk* (28 v. 11) as alluding to a criticism of this form of prayer, which we need to redress.

In memory of Rev E. Freilich נתן ז"ל החזן ר' מאיר בן הרב ישעי' The yearzeit was on 7<sup>th</sup> Kislev