



Yeshiva University  
S. DANIEL ABRAHAM ISRAEL PROGRAM



## Divrei Torah for the Shabbos Table

# פירות הארץ

FROM THE TALMIDIM, FOR THE TALMIDIM

### Toldos / תולדות

Aviv Kleinman  
Orayta

"ויעתר יצחק לה' לנכח אשתו כי עקרה הוא ויעתר לו ה' ותהר רבקה אשתו" (בראשית כה:כא)

"And Yitzchak entreated Hashem, opposite his wife, because she was barren. Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him, and his wife, Rivkah, conceived."

This is probably one of the most confusing *psukim* in the *parasha* and brings up so many questions! Why does the *Torah* use such a word as "ויעתר", "entreated", instead of something else, like "פלל", "prayed"? What does "לנכח אשתו", "*Opposite* his wife" mean? Why is the word for "she", "היא" spelled with a *vav* ("הוא") instead of a *yud*, denoting the masculine pronoun instead of the feminine? Why is *Hashem* entreated by only "him" ("לו")? Didn't both Yitzchak *and* his wife *daven* for a child? And finally, why did Yitzchak have to *daven* for a child at all? Wasn't his father already promised as many descendants as the stars in the sky and the dust of the earth?!

*Rashi* explains the use of the word "ויעתר". Since the root of the word, ע.ת.ר., denotes *abundance* it is understood that Yitzchak prayed with abundance. He wanted a child so badly, to be able to continue the lineage of his holy father Avraham, that he probably spent all his waking hours *davening*, with abundance, for his wife. The *Midrash* explains that the meaning of "לנכח אשתו", *opposite his wife*, can be understood literally; that Yitzchak and Rivkah stood in opposite corners of the room and *davened*. *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* suggests that Yitzchak brought his wife to *daven* on *Har HaMoriah*, at the site of the *Akeidah* (and the future site of the *Beis HaMikdash*, *bezman karov*). Imagine that! Yitzchak decided to *daven* for the most important thing in his life at the site of his own binding for sacrifice!

The *Ba'al HaTurim* questions why the *Torah* used the wording of הוא instead of היא. He cites the answer of the *Midrash HaGadol*, which explains that both Yitzchak *and* Rivkah were barren and unable to conceive. That is why the *Torah* used the spelling of הוא, implying that Yitzchak as well as Rivkah was barren. However, the *Zohar*, cited in that same *Ba'al HaTurim*, suggests a dissenting opinion. After all, could this be possible?! *Hashem* promised Avraham, back in *Parashat Vayeira*, "כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע", "*Since through Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours [Avraham's]!*" (בראשית כא:יב) There is no way Yitzchak could have been barren, since *Hashem's* promise to Avraham was legitimate! According to this *Zohar*, Yitzchak knew that he was able to have children, and prayed specifically for his wife, Rivka.

Why did *Hashem* only allow Himself to be entreated by Yitzchak, as implied by "לו", *him*. Why didn't Rivkah's prayers entreat *Hashem*? *Rashi* answers that the prayers of a *tzaddik* who is a child of a *tzaddik* are "not comparable" to the prayers of a *tzaddik* (or *tzaddeikes*, in this case) who is the child of a *Rasha*, an evildoer. Rivkah was the daughter of Betuel, a *Rasha*, so her prayers weren't answered as readily as Yitzchak, the son of Avraham Avinu.

Finally, why did Yitzchak have to *daven* for a child at all? Wasn't Avraham promised to have multitudes of descendants? *Me'am Loez* brings up the fact that Rivkah, after all of her and her husband's prayers, became pregnant with two sons. In this way, we can see that even if *Hashem's* ways are not always clear to us, we have the potential to be rewarded *even double* (or even more than that!) of what we really wanted. May we all learn from this that through *davening* and having a strong *ratzon*, our *tefillos* will be answered *bimheira beyameinu*, speedily in our days, Amen.