



## Yitzchak Left Gan Eden and Went to Pray in the Field

### Yitzchak Went to Visit His Mother Sarah in Gan Eden to Study Torah for Three Years to Gladden Her

This week's parsha is Chayei Sarah. In the parsha, Avraham Avinu sends his servant Eliezer on a mission to find a suitable wife for his son Yitzchak (Bereishis 24, 1): **"ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל" — now Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything** ("bakol"). Rashi comments that the gematria of **"בכל"** equals **"בן"** (52). So, now that Avraham had a son, it was time to find him a wife.

The commentaries are perplexed by this comment. After all, the Torah has already mentioned numerous time that Yitzchak was Avraham's son. Also, the Torah states explicitly (ibid. 4): **"ולקחת אשה לבני ליצחק" — and take a wife for my son, for Yitzchak**. So, why was it also necessary to teach this to us by means of a gematria?

It appears that we can explain the matter based on a perusal of the initial, extraordinary encounter between Yitzchak Avinu and Rivkah Imeinu, as chronicled in the following pesukim (ibid. 63): **"ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב, וישא עיניו וירא והנה גמלים באים. ותשא רבקה את עיניה ותרא את יצחק ותיפול מעל הגמל. ותאמר אל העבד מי האיש הלזה ההולך בשדה לקראתנו, ויאמר העבד הוא אדוני ותקח הצעירה ותתכס."** **Yitzchak went out to converse** (meditate/pray) **in the field towards evening and he looked up and saw, and behold, camels were approaching. Rivkah looked up, and she saw Yitzchak; she let herself down from the camel. She said to the slave, "Who is that man walking in the field toward**

**us?"** The slave replied, **"He is my master."** She then took the veil and covered herself.

We will attempt to clarify three items mentioned in these pesukim related to Yitzchak Avinu prior to his actual first meeting with Rivkah Imeinu in person: (1) The passuk says **"ויצא יצחק"**, but it does not mention from where **"Yitzchak went out."** (2) It says that he went **"to converse,"** but it does not mention what the conversation was about. (3) It says that he went out to the **"field,"** but does not state to which field.

#### Eliezer Arrived with Rivkah Imeinu after Yitzchak Avinu Finished Praying Tefilas Minchah

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a pertinent teaching in the Gemara (Berachos 26b):

**"אברהם תיקן תפלת שחרית, שנאמר וישכם אברהם בבוקר אל המקום אשר עמד שם, ואין עמידה אלא תפלה, שנאמר ויעמוד פינחס ויפלל. יצחק תיקן תפלת מנחה, שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב, ואין שיחה אלא תפלה, שנאמר תפלה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ה' ישפוך שיחו. יעקב תיקן תפלת ערבית, שנאמר ויפגע במקום וילן שם, ואין פגיעה אלא תפלה."**

Avraham instituted the Shacharis prayer, as it is stated (Bereishis 19, 27): **"And Avraham rose early in the morning to the place where he had stood,"** and **"standing"** refers exclusively to tefilah, as it is stated (Tehillim 106, 30): **"And Pinchas stood up and prayed."** Yitzchak instituted the Minchah prayer, as it is stated (Bereishis 24, 63): **"And Yitzchak went out to converse in the**

field toward evening,” and “conversing” refers exclusively to tefilah, as it is stated (Tehillim 102, 1): “A prayer of the afflicted when he is faint and pours out his supplications before Hashem.” Yaakov instituted the Arvis prayer, as it is stated (Bereishis 28, 11): “And he encountered the place, and he slept there,” and “encountering” refers exclusively to tefilah.

Additionally, Chazal teach us that the passuk: **“ויצא יצחק לשוה בשדה”**—is informing us that Yitzchak Avinu went to the site of the Mikdash and called it a field. Here is the pertinent passage in the Gemara (Pesachim 88a):

**“מאי דכתיב והלכו עמים רבים ואמרו, לנו ונעלה אל הר ה' אל בית אלקי יעקב וגו', אלקי יעקב ולא אלקי אברהם ויצחק? אלא לא כאברהם שכתוב בו הר, שנאמר אשר יאמר היום בהר ה' יראה, ולא כיצחק שכתוב בו שדה, שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוה בשדה, אלא כיעקב שקראו בית, שנאמר ויקרא את שם המקום ההוא בית אל”**.

What is the meaning of the passuk (Yeshayah 2, 3): “Many nations will go and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the Mountain of Hashem, to the House of the G-d of Yaakov, etc.’”? Why specifically the G-d of Yaakov and not the G-d of Avraham and Yitzchak? Rather, not like Avraham, who called it a “mountain” (Bereishis 22, 14) . . . And not like Yitzchak, who called it a “field” (ibid. 24, 63) . . . Rather, it is like Yaakov, who called it a “house” (ibid. 28, 19).

We learn from these two passages in the Gemara that Yitzchak went to the site of the Mikdash, which he called a “field,” and prayed tefilas Minchah there. Then, the Torah informs us: **“Yitzchak went out to converse (meditate/pray) in the field towards evening, and he looked up and saw, and behold, camels were approaching.”** Thus, we learn that immediately after instituting tefilas Minchah at the site of the Mikdash, he sees Rivkah Imeinu approaching.

Regarding this, the Ba'al HaTurim writes: **“לשוה בשדה”** היינו שיצחק תיקן תפלת המנחה ואז נזדמנה לו רבקה, והיינו דכתיב על זאת יתפלל כל חסיד אליך לעת מצוא, דהיינו אשה, דכתיב מצא אשה מצא טוב” He is suggesting that when Yitzchak instituted and prayed tefilas Minchah at the site of the future Mikdash, he was actually praying for a proper, suitable mate. We see that HKB”H answered Yitzchak’s tefilah. For, immediately,

upon completing his supplication, he looked up and saw the camels carrying Rivkah approaching. The Ba'al HaTurim supports this assertion by citing the passuk (Tehillim 32, 6): **“על זאת יתפלל כל חסיד אליך לעת מצוא”**—for this let every devout person (“chassid”) pray to You at an opportune time (“time of finding”)—and what they expounded in the Gemara (Berachos 8a): **“At an opportune time,”** refers to (finding) a (good) wife, as it is stated (Mishlei 18, 22): **“מצא אשה מצא טוב”**—one who has found a wife, has found goodness.

This coincides magnificently with the commentary of the Kli Yakar on the passuk: **“ויצא יצחק לשוה בשדה למנות”**—our Rabbis of blessed memory learn from here that Yitzchak instituted tefilas Minchah, whose time is “towards evening,” proximate to the setting of the sun. This supports the Rabbis statement that (Berachos 6b): **“A person should always be diligent with regard to tefilas Minchah. For Eliyahu was only answered through tefilas Minchah. And even though Avraham and Yaakov also instituted tefilas Shacharis and Arvis, we do not find that they were answered immediately and promptly. With regards to tefilas Minchah, we find that Yitzchak was answered immediately.”**

Presumably, Yitzchak prayed for a proper match while Eliezer was still on the way. “For this let every chassid pray at an opportune time,” i.e., for a wife . . . Immediately upon praying for her, it is written: **“He looked up and saw, and behold, camels were approaching.”** While praying, he cast his eyes downward; but immediately after the conclusion of the tefilah, he cast his eyes upward, and he saw that he was answered immediately: **“And behold, camels were approaching,”** transporting his mate (spouse). From this they deduced that a person is more likely to be answered with tefilas Minchah.

### Yitzchak Left Gan Eden after Three Years

Now that we have elucidated the words: **“Yitzchak went out to converse (pray) in the field”**—let us delight in Chazal’s interpretation of **“ויצא יצחק”**. Where did he come out of? The Midrash explains (Yalkut Shimoni,

Chayei Sarah 109): **From where did he come out? From Gan Eden.** This is the source of the Chizkuni's comment: **"Yitzchak went out"—from where did he come out? From Gan Eden. For he was there from the time of the Akeidah until now, for three years.** He presents the same explanation in the passage of the Akeidah (Bereishis 22, 19): **"Avraham returned to his young attendants."** And Yitzchak, **where did he go? Instead, he was secluded in Gan Eden for three years.**

Based on this fascinating insight, the Megaleh Amukos addresses that which is written in this week's parsha (ibid. 23, 2): **"ויבוא אברהם לספוד לשרה ולבכותה"—and Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry over her.** Why didn't Avraham bring Yitzchak with him to eulogize his mother as would have been expected and appropriate? After all, he was Sarah's only child. We find the answer to this question in the Midrash just cited; Yitzchak was secluded in Gan Eden for three years and was unable to attend.

With this understanding, the Megaleh Amukos interprets the passuk (ibid. 24, 64): **"ותשא רבקה את עיניה ותרא את יצחק ותפול מעל הגמל"—Rivkah looked up, and she saw Yitzchak, and she let herself down from (literally: she fell off) the camel . . . She inquired of the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field toward us?" The servant replied, "He is my master."** Rashi comments: **"She saw Yitzchak"—she saw that he was resplendent, and she was astonished by him.** This prompts the Megaleh Amukos to wonder: **Was it Rivkah's nature to inquire and pursue young men?!**

Therefore, the Megaleh Amukos explains that Rivkah encountered Yitzchak after he had just returned from three years in Gan Eden. She saw that he shone with a resplendent light not of this world. This then is the gist of the passuk: **"Rivkah looked up"** and beheld Yitzchak exiting Gan Eden. **"She saw Yitzchak"** emitting a brilliant other-worldly light, not of Olam HaZeh. This startled her, **"and she almost fell off the camel."** So, she asked Eliezer, **"Who is that man walking in the field toward us?"** And the servant said, **"He is my master."**

This explains fantastically the sacred words of the Yismach Moshe (Toldos). After Yitzchak bestowed the Berachos upon Yaakov, it is written (ibid. 27, 27): **ויגש וישק לו וירח את ריח בגדיו ויברכהו ויאמר, ראה ריח בני כריח שדה אשר ברכו"—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."** Rashi comments: **This teaches us that the fragrance of Gan Eden entered with him (Yaakov).** How did Yitzchak recognize the fragrance of Gan Eden? Based on what we have learned, the answer is clear: He recognized the fragrance of Gan Eden, because he had been secluded there for three years.

### Yitzchak Went to Learn Torah in Gan Eden to Gladden His Mother Sarah

I would like to present a fascinating idea to my royal audience that I have struggled with for many years. Why did Yitzchak Avinu go to Gan Eden after the Akeidah for three years, while he was still alive? I would like to propose an answer based on a teaching in the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (30) related to Akeidas Yitzchak:

**Rabbi Yehudah said: When the blade touched his neck, the soul of Yitzchak fled and departed, but when he heard His (HKB"H's) voice from between the two Keruvim, saying (to Abraham), "Do not extend your hand" (ibid. 22, 12), his soul returned to his body, and he (Abraham) set him free. Yitzchak stood up on his feet, and Yitzchak knew that the dead are destined to be revived in this manner in the future. He began to speak and said, "Blessed art thou Hashem Who revives the dead."**

In the Midrash Seichel Tov (Bereishis 22), this passage is brought down with a significant addendum. During the Akeidah, Yitzchak's neshamah flew away and ascended to Gan Eden. There, **it saw the neshamah of his mother, Sarah, who had already passed away, because the "samech-mem" had gone and said to her, "Poor thing, the son that was given to you in your old age, his father has already slaughtered him."** She screamed, and her neshamah left her.



Upon suddenly seeing his mother in Gan Eden, Yitzchak's pain and distress must have been extreme and unbearable. All the more so, when she told him what the Satan had told her. She expressed her intense sorrow that her son had been slaughtered before he had the opportunity to marry and father children who would continue the lineage of the holy people of Yisrael. Even though Yitzchak was not to blame for this, nevertheless he felt terrible that his Akeidah had caused these events, and it caused him immense grief and agony.

Sarah, on the other hand, was elated to see Yitzchak even for a short period of time. Her true desire, however, was that her son would continue his life in Olam HaZeh, marry a suitable wife, and father children and grandchildren, who would propagate the ways of the Torah and the Jewish faith. After all, this had been the life work she and Avraham Avinu had pioneered and publicized throughout the world, as expressed by the passuk (ibid. 12, 5): **"וְאֵת הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בְּחַרְוֶן" —and the souls that they made in Charan.** Rashi explains that this refers to all the people that **they took in under the wings of the Shechinah. Avraham would convert the men, and Sarah would convert the women.** Thus, it is understandable that it distressed Sarah immensely to see her son in Gan Eden before he had a chance to marry and have children that would continue their lineage and perpetuate their teachings.

Then, suddenly, as described in the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, the voice of HKB"H was heard from between the Keruvim. He cautioned Avraham not to lay a hand on the lad and not to harm him in any way. Thereupon, Yitzchak's neshamah returned to his body, he stood up on his feet and uttered the berachah: **"בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מִזִּיחַ הַמֵּתִים".**

We know, however, that it states in parshas Toldos (ibid. 25, 20): **"וַיְהִי יִצְחָק בֶּן אַרְבַּעִים שָׁנָה בִּקְחָתוֹ אֶת רִבְקָה" —Yitzchak was forty years old when he took Rivkah . . . to be his wife.** Rashi explains that Rivkah was born at the time of the Akeidah when Yitzchak was 37 years old, **and he waited three years until she would be fit to have relations; then he married her.** In other words, even after Yitzchak was revived, he still had to wait three years until he could marry Rivkah.

## Yitzchak Wanted to Make Amends for His Mother's Sorrow

With the utmost respect, I would like to propose a novel idea. When Yitzchak's neshamah returned to his body, he contemplated what had transpired, as is the nature of tzaddikim. Why did HKB"H arrange for his neshamah to fly away and ascend to the very same Gan Eden where his mother Sarah's neshamah was located? He concluded that it was the will of HKB"H that he make amends for having caused her to pass away. He understood that even though it was on account of the Satan's duplicity, and he himself was not personally responsible for his mother's death; nevertheless, since his Akeidah had caused her such emotional turmoil, he felt that he should attempt to rectify the matter.

Therefore, he prayed to HKB"H to be allowed to ascend once again to the Gan Eden of his mother Sarah. There, he would study Torah for three years to make his mother happy and so that she could enjoy his Torah. This explanation relies on a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Shelach 167b) that it was revealed to Rashbi from above that that there are six separate havens—"heichalot"—in Gan Eden for women. They are situated adjacent to the "heichalot" of their husbands and sons, so that these women may delight in the Torah-study of their husbands and sons. At the end of three years, when Rivkah was suitable for marriage, Sarah sent her son back to Olam HaZeh to marry Rivkah and perpetuate the legacy and lineage of the people of Yisrael.

It appears that we can support this intriguing notion from a passuk in this week's parsha (ibid. 24, 67): **"וַיָּבִיאהּ יִצְחָק הָאֵהָלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת רִבְקָה וְתָהִי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּאָהֱבָה וַיִּנָּחֵם יִצְחָק" —and Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother; he took Rivkah, she became his wife, he loved her, and thus Yitzchak was consoled for the loss of his mother.** Here Rashi cites the Midrash: **"And he brought her into the tent"—and behold, she was "Sarah, his mother"; in other words, she then became the image of Sarah, his mother. For the entire time that Sarah was alive, a candle burned from erev Shabbas to erev Shabbas, a berachah was present in the dough, and a cloud was stationed over the tent.**

**But once she died, they ceased; but when Rivkah came, they returned.**

Rashi also comments: **“Yitzchak was consoled for the loss of his mother”—it is human nature that as long as a man’s mother is alive, he is attached to her; and when she dies, he is consoled through his wife.**

We can suggest that Rashi is alluding to what the Midrash teaches—that after the Akeidah, when his neshamah returned to him, Yitzchak went to Gan Eden for three years. As we have explained, he studied Torah there for three years to gladden his mother. In other words, during the entire three years that he waited to marry Rivkah, Yitzchak remained attached to his mother in Gan Eden. After he left Gan Eden and parted from her, he mourned the fact that she was no longer in Olam HaZeh. Then, when he married Rivkah, he was consoled over the loss of his mother.

Understood in this light, we can make sense of the passuk: **“ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה’ ברך את אברהם בכל”**. Recall that Rashi points out the gematria of **“בכל”** equals **“בן”**. This prompted us to ask why this gematria was necessary. We already knew that Avraham had a son; it is stated explicitly in the Torah. Based on what we have learned, however, we can suggest the following: This comment of Rashi’s is consistent with his viewpoint that Yitzchak remained attached to his mother Sarah in Gan Eden for three years. Accordingly, Avraham did not actually have a son in Olam HaZeh during those three years. Furthermore, he was not certain that Yitzchak would return to Olam HaZeh. After three years, however, when Yitzchak returned to Olam HaZeh, the Torah informs us: **“וזה ברך את אברהם בכל”**. As per Rashi’s clarification, this indicates that Avraham had his son, Yitzchak, once again. That being the case, **it was necessary to find him a wife.**

### **“Yitzchak went out to pray in the field” to Pray about the Churban**

Following this sublime path, we will now proceed to explain the fascinating connection between what Yitzchak Avinu did when he exited Gan Eden—**ויצא**—and HKB”H’s immediate

response to his tefilah: **“He looked up and beheld camels approaching.”** As explained, Yitzchak went to the site of the future Mikdash, which he called a field; there, he instituted tefilas Minchah, while praying for a proper match. We will now introduce an interpretation of these pesukim from the esteemed Rav of Apta, zy”a, in Ohev Yisrael. He asserts that Yitzchak saw via **“ruach hakodesh”** that the Beis HaMikdash was destined to be destroyed, and that the people of Yisrael were destined to suffer greatly and endure difficult ordeals in galus. This is attested to by the passuk (Yirmiyah26, 18): **“כה אמר ה’ צבאות ציון: שדה תחרש”—thus said Hashem, Master of Legions, “Tziyon will be plowed over like a field.”**

This is why Yitzchak went to pray in a **“field”**; he went to pray about the dire situation of Yisrael at the time of the churban, when Tziyon would resemble **“a plowed field”**—**“ציון שדה תחרש”**. He interprets the words **“לפנות ערב”** as clearing (**“lifanot”**) and removing the darkness associated with the forces of **“din”** associated with galus (which is likened to the darkness of evening—**“erev”**). Notwithstanding: **“וישא עיניו”**—Yitzchak looks up spiritually and beholds the geulah—**“וירא והנה גמלים באים”**. Here are his sacred words:

**“ראה הגמול הטוב שיצמח מזה לזרע ישראל לעתיד לבוא, עבור גודל ורבות הצרות והיסורין שקיבלו על עצמם וסבלו בעת הגלות, ואף על פי כן היו עובדים את השי”ת ושומרים התורה והמצוות, וכשראה זה הגמול הטוב אז נח דעתיה בזה והסכים על הדבר.”**

He foresaw the wonderful reward (**“gemul”**—a play on the word **“gamal,”** meaning camel) that will be bestowed upon the children of Yisrael le’asid la’vo as compensation for the immeasurable, excruciating indignities and suffering they endured during the times of galus. Nevertheless, they continued to serve the Almighty and observe the Torah and the mitzvos. Upon seeing this wonderful reward, he was appeased and agreed to the matter. Let us add a lovely **“remez”**: The term **באי”ם** in the passuk just cited is an abbreviation for the four primary exiles—**בבל א’דום י’ון מ’די**. Thus, the passuk states that Yitzchak foresaw all the **“gemul”**—reward—that HKB”H would bestow upon Yisrael for the suffering that they endured in these four galuyos.

The Ohev Yisrael teaches us that when the Torah says: **“Yitzchak went out to converse in the field”**—it means that Yitzchak went to pray about the period of the churban Beis HaMikdash—of which it says: **“Tziyon will be plowed over like a field.”** The Ba'al HaTurim and the Kli Yakar taught us that Yitzchak prayed for a suitable wife. We can suggest that the two explanations coincide with one another. After all, Rivkah was already on her way to meet him with the “gemalim.” Hence, he understood via “ruach hakodesh” that she would give birth to two sons with him—Eisav HaRasha, whose descendants were destined to destroy the Beis HaMikdash, and Yaakov HaTzaddik, whose descendants would merit building the third Beis HaMikdash.

Therefore, he went to the site of the Mikdash as evening approached with great purpose—to pray about the churban. For this reason, he instituted and prayed tefilas Minchah. For, as we learn from the

Zohar hakadosh (Chaye Sarah 132b), the customary time for tefilas Minchah is when the sun starts to set in the west; that is the time when the forces of “din” start to prevail in the world. It is precisely for this reason that the burning of the Beis HaMikdash occurred primarily towards evening. Therefore, it was Yitzchak Avinu specifically whose midah is “din” who instituted tefilas Minchah; it was his responsibility to mitigate and modify the force of “din.” Thus, he prayed at that time to mitigate the forces of “din” associated with the churban Beis HaMikdash, which was burned late in the afternoon.

In conclusion, we see that Yitzchak Avinu’s tefilas Minchah was answered immediately. Immediately, upon finishing his tefilah, Rivkah, his bride-to-be, arrived. Their union produced Yaakov Avinu in whose merit the third Beis HaMikdash will be built. May we merit seeing the **“plowed field”** become the third Beis HaMikdash swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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