

Kindert Torah

Parashas Toldos

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The Inner Track

We are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Hashem's chosen people. We are called His favorite child, as the verse states, "My favorite son, Efraim" (Yirmiyahu 31:19). The Targum translates Efraim as Yisrael (the Jewish people). Why then, do our enemies overcome us? What gives them the power to defeat Hashem's favorite child? The answer is found in Rashi's explanation of Yitzchak's blessing to Eisav.

"On your sword you shall live, but your brother (Yaakov) you shall serve" (Bereshis 27:40). The Targum Unkelos translates the rest of the verse as follows, "When My children violate the teachings of the Torah, they cast off the yoke from their necks." Rashi explains that the sins of the Jewish people give Eisav an opening. He seizes the opportunity and is given the power to rise up against Yaakov and cause him *tsar* (distress). However, when we are strong in our Torah observance, Eisav remains subservient to us. We bear Hashem's yoke, therefore He protects us. Eisav cannot touch us because we have the "inner track" with Hashem.

Kinderlach . . .

Imagine that the teacher had a special errand to do. It was not easy, so he picked the best boy in the class. He gave him special instructions and a bit of training. Then he sent him off. It was not easy. The boy ran into some rough characters. When he followed the instructions, no one could touch him. When he tried to do it his own way, the evil characters had a way of catching him - oy va voy. We are that best boy. The mission is to serve Hashem, and the instructions are the Torah. Follow the instructions. No one can touch you.

Mincha

"Abbas, we are saying 'Ashrei yoshvay vaysecha' again."

"Yes, Avi. We are striving to fulfill the words of the Gemora¹ which states that all who say 'Tehillah Li'Dovid' three times each day are assured of a place in *Olam Habo*. The Gemora gives two reasons. Firstly, the first letters of the verses in the *mizmor* follow the *aleph-beis*. Secondly, it contains the verse, 'You open Your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing.' The mystical sources² entreat us to focus intently on the provision of our food and the food of all Klal Yisrael when we say this verse."

"That is fascinating, Abba."

"We have reached our third recitation of the day, Avi, before *tefillas Mincha* (the afternoon prayers)."

"Why is the prayer called *Mincha*, Abba?"

"The word *Mincha* is taken from the word *menucha* - to rest, Avi. It refers to the resting of the sun and the dimming of its

bright light.³ Odom HaRishon sinned in the tenth hour of the day, towards evening. The verse⁴ describes the time of day as *-li'ruach hayom*, which the *targum* translates *'limnach yoma* - the resting part of the day.⁵ Its time begins when the sun passes the halfway point of its daily journey, entering the western sky and beginning its descent towards the *menucha* (resting place) where it will bow down to its Creator in the evening. The sun itself is a *korbon Mincha* (afternoon sacrifice) to its Owner. From the sun, we take example for ourselves - to sacrifice our bodies and souls to *Shomayim* (Heaven)."⁶ "How beautiful, Abba."

"Indeed, Avi. *Mincha* is a very special and powerful *tefillah*. Many of our prophets offered up their prayers specifically at this time of day and were answered. Rav Huna⁷ warns us to be careful when praying *Mincha* for Eliyahu's prayer was only answered at *Mincha*. 'And it was at the time of the afternoon-offering: Eliyahu HaNovi approached and said, "...Answer me, Hashem, answer me!"... A fire of Hashem descended and consumed the (*korbon*) *olah*... The entire people saw, fell on their faces, and exclaimed, "Hashem - He is the G-d! Hashem - He is the G-d!"⁸ Dovid HaMelech was also answered at this time when he said, 'Let my prayer stand as *ketores* (incense) before You; the lifting of my hands as a *Mincha*'.⁹ 'My Master, when the Beis HaMikdash was standing, we would burn *ketores* to You. Now we have neither a *mizbeach* nor a *Kohen Godol*. Accept my prayer - tear the heavens asunder and let my *tefillah* come in!¹⁰ There is nothing more cherished (to Hashem) than *tefillas Mincha*. We see this with Doniel¹¹ who made a campaign of prayers for 120 days, and was answered only at *Mincha*. Yitzchak Avinu realized the dearness of this *tefillah* and specifically went out to pray at the time of *Mincha*, as the verse¹² states, 'Yitzchak went out to pray in the field towards evening'.¹³ He was the one who fixed the *tefillas Mincha*. The main battle against the *avodah zara* of the sun was at that time of day. When it was going down, its worshippers bid it goodbye. Precisely then Yitzchak fixed *Mincha* to make known to the world that the sun is not a deity; rather it is a creation of the Holy One, blessed be He.¹⁴ Ezra (chapter 9:4,5) also offered up his heartfelt supplications specifically at the time of *Mincha*."

"How awesome! Why is the time of *Mincha* so special, Abba?"

"The Seder HaYom¹⁵ relates that Eliyahu purposely waited for that hour to pray, because in the afternoon *middos hadin* (strict judgment) begin to rule in the world. One who can pray at such a time to arouse the *middos harachamim* (merciful judgment) has great strength. He causes the Heavenly Will to flow downward and arouse mercy at the time of *din*. Therefore, all of his requests will be answered and fulfilled. The Shaar HaRachamim also di-

vides the day into *chessed* and *din*. The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed and the Heichal was burned in the afternoon, the time of *din*. Therefore, a person should be careful when praying *Mincha*, for it is a time of *din*.¹⁶ All of a person's *tefillas* must be prayed with *kavannah* (intention), however, *Mincha* needs extra *kavannah* because *din* holds sway in the world. The Tur and the Levush exhort us to be extremely careful with *Mincha*, for Eliyahu's prayer was answered only then. The time of *Shacharis* is easy to recognize, for it is at the beginning of the day, before a man begins his undertakings. Similarly, the time of the *Maariv* prayer is easy to identify, for it is at the beginning of the night. However, *Mincha* is in the middle of the day, when a man is busy with his affairs. He must take the time to stop what he is doing and turn his heart to his Father in Heaven. If he does so, he will have immense reward.

"Therefore, Avi, let us wash our hands, and join the *minyana* for the prayer of *Ashrei* followed by *kaddish* and the *Amidah* of *Mincha*."

"May this and all of our *tefillas* find favor in Hashem's eyes, and may He fulfill all of our requests in a good way!"

"Amen!"

Kinderlach . . .

All of our *tefillas* are dear to Hashem, but one is especially precious - *tefillas Mincha*. Our prophets recognized the uniqueness of this prayer, and offered up their heartfelt supplications specifically at this time of day. The sun begins its descent in the western sky, towards its *menucha* (rest) at night, and *middos hadin* hold sway in the world. One's *tefillah* needs to be strong to overcome the *middos hadin* and bring down *rachamim*. Therefore, a proper *Mincha* has great power and will be answered. It is also the middle of the day, when a person is busy with his affairs. He stops, takes the time to address himself to his Creator, and offer up his body and soul to *Shomayim*. Yitzchak Avinu, Dovid HaMelech, Eliyahu HaNovi, Doniel, and Ezra were all careful to pray at this time. Kinderlach, let us too put our maximum efforts into our *Mincha* prayers, and may they be received before the Almighty with favor and be fulfilled beneficially.

¹ Brochos 4b

² Zohar Parashas Pinchas

³ Ramban on Shemos 12:6

⁴ Bereshis 3:8

⁵ Abudarham

⁶ Besamim Rosh as cited in Otzer HaTefillos

⁷ Brochos 6b

⁸ Melachim Aleph 18:36-39

⁹ Tehillim 141:2

¹⁰ Medrash Shochar Tov

¹¹ Doniel 9:21

¹² Bereshis 24:63

¹³ Agadas Bereshis Chapter 77 as cited in Shaar HaRachamim

¹⁴ Abarbanel as cited in Iyun Tefillah

¹⁵ cited in Shaar HaRachamim

¹⁶ Zohar Chayei Sara