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of thought. Towards the end of the parsha, the pasuk says, “וַיְחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הַאֲדָמָה וַיֵּטֶע כָּרְמִים:”. I don’t understand, in the beginning of the parsha, the pasuk said that “נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק”, he was the greatest person of his time. All of a sudden he’s stam a mench? How did he go from being so קדוש, to the תורה basically calling him a Joe Shmoe? One answer could be that this was where he was נישל and got drunk, which lowered his level of קדושה. However, answers the משך חכמה, the real reason is from something much earlier. When ה' came to Noach and told him that there was going to be a flood and he had to build the teiva, his response in regards to the general public, was to just go tell them what was

going on and suggest that maybe they should do tshuvah. However, as the greatest man of his דור, he should not have stopped there. He should have been the one backing them to do better, pushing and trying everything to get them to do tshuvah. Instead, he did not bother himself with the needs of the ציבור, he just went on doing what he felt was necessary. Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest מנהג of כ"י, as great as he was, the more responsibilities he took on as the leader, the lower his greatness went, since he couldn't focus on being a תלמוד חכם. Says the משך חכמה, if Noach would have put in the time and effort to be a leader for his people in addition to focusing on the greatness that he already had, not only would he have been able to accomplish both,

he would have been even greater than Moshe! But since he did not push himself to be the מנהג that his people needed, not only did he not reach that level of greatness, his קדושה fell to the point that he was just a regular person.

So, what we learn from this דרש משה and משך חכמה, is that when we are presented with an opportunity, whether helping the klal or anything having to do with שמיים, we must grasp the chance that was given, always having the importance at the forefront of our minds, that every decision we make has to have this thought process. And with that, hopefully we can continue to bring nachas to ה' and accomplish what it is he wants us to accomplish.

## RUNNING OUT OF WOMB

By Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

“... Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him, and his wife Rivka conceived” (25:21)

This week’s parsha introduces the miraculous pregnancy and birth of our matriarch Rivka. After having been barren for twenty years, Rivka conceives.<sup>1</sup> The Torah relates that although both Yitzchak and Rivka prayed for the birth of a child, Hashem answered the prayers of Yitzchak. Rashi explains that Rivka’s prayers were denied, for the prayer of a righteous individual whose parents are also righteous is more effective than the prayer of a righteous individual whose parents are wicked.<sup>2</sup> Presumably, both Yitzchak and Rivka were praying for the same result. Therefore, Yitzchak’s prayer being more effective does not necessarily indicate that Rivka’s wishes were not met. Why then, does the Torah emphasize that Rivka’s prayers were not answered?

The verse states “vayisrotzatzu habanim b’kirbah” – “the sons agitated within her”. Rashi cites the Midrash that “vayisrotzatzu” stems from the word “ritzah” – “running”; when Rivka would pass a house of study Yaakov would rush to exit, while Eisav would

do the same when Rivka passed a house of idol worship.<sup>3</sup> How can fetuses contained within a womb be described as running?

Rivka was troubled with the physiological experiences of her pregnancy and went to seek council from Shem, who offered her Divinely inspired advice. The Ibn Ezra, citing the Midrash, explains that prior to seeking Divine council Rivka spoke with other women to inquire as to whether her sensations were common for expectant mothers. When informed that her symptoms were unique, she proceeded to seek council.<sup>4</sup> Why was her discomfort unique? Furthermore, why did Rivka not have any subsequent children? Finally, why do we find no mention of Rivka’s womb opening as we do in the cases of Rochel’s and Leah’s pregnancies?<sup>5</sup>

The Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that Rivka’s consternation was caused by her feeling the struggle within her from the onset of her pregnancy. This, he continues was unique, for at the onset of pregnancy a woman does not experience any movement at all within her.<sup>6</sup> The Rabbeinu Bechaya

is explaining that Rivka’s pregnancy did not involve fetal development. Following conception, Hashem miraculously developed completely formed human beings in miniature size within Rivka’s stomach.<sup>7</sup> Since there was no need for fetal development, the Torah mentions that the location of the pregnancy was “b’vitnah” – “in her stomach”; no womb was necessary.

The Talmud reveals that Rivka was born physically incapable of ever birthing a child.<sup>8</sup> Whereas Rivka prayed to develop the necessary biological components to father Yitzchak’s child, Yitzchak prayed only for her to give birth. The Torah emphasizes that his prayers were answered but hers were not, for her body did not develop in the manner necessary for birthing a child. Technically she remained barren. Therefore, she subsequently had no more children.

1.Rashi 25:20 2.Rashi 25:21 3.Rashi 25:22  
4.Ibn Ezra Ibid S.See 29:31, 30:22 6.25:22 7.This is the same process described by the Midrash regarding the birth of Kayin and Hevel. Midrash Rabba 22:2  
8.Yivamos 64a

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