

And it was when Yitzchak became old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing. (27:1)

Rashi explains that Yitzchak *Avinu's* premature vision loss was due to the smoke that Eisav's wives raised when they burned incense for their idols. Alternatively, when he was bound upon the Altar of the *Akeidah*, as Avraham *Avinu* was about to slaughter him, the Heavens opened up and the Ministering Angels saw what was happening to him. They began to cry, their tears descending and falling on Yitzchak's eyes, causing them to dim later in life. In his *hesped*, eulogy, for his son, who had died an untimely death, **Horav Shmuel Birnbaum, zl**, asked why was it necessary for the Heavens to open in order for the Angels to see Yitzchak. The Heavenly Angels' perception is quite acute, allowing them to see what transpires on our world without the 'aid' of the Heavens opening up.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explained this based upon a well-known incident that occurred concerning the *Ramban*, who had a student who became ill and passed away at a young age. Prior to his death the *Ramban* had asked him specific questions, for which he sought a "Heavenly" response. (There were questions concerning issues and occurrences which take place in this world with which the *Ramban* grappled philosophically.) He asked his student to appear to him in a dream with the answers. The student died, and, shortly afterwards, appeared to the *Ramban*, who asked him for the explanations to his queries. The soul of the student replied that, in Heaven, these are not questions. This means that the Heavenly perspective encompasses such a wide scope of data – past, present and future – that whatever questions one might have (in this world) are no longer relevant in the World of Truth. In Heaven, reward and punishment take on a new appearance. One is privy to a global perspective which circumvents any ambiguity, since everything is now crystal clear and unambiguous.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explained that this is why the Heavens required opening in order for the Angels to weep. Otherwise, they could not sense the compelling emotions that emerged as a result of the *Akeidah*. The question that arose was: how a father who had been childless for most of his life could be asked to sacrifice his only son – his future legacy – the very seed of the nation that was to be built from him. Can anyone imagine the emotional trauma that coursed through Yitzchak, knowing that his aged mother and father would now be bereft of their child, their destiny? So much pain, so much tragedy, so much equivocality. In Heaven, however, the orientation is different. There are no questions. There, the *Akeidah* is viewed from an entirely different perspective. Unless the Heavens were opened, so that the Angels could view the *Akeidah* from an earthly perspective, they could not weep, because they had no reason to express emotion. When they saw the *Akeidah* through the human lens, they saw questions, they saw pain; they wept.

We are confronted daily with questions for which we have no answers – other than we have these questions only because we see the surface. Our perspective is not all-inclusive; we see a limited image of reality. We may rest assured that, in Heaven, there are no questions. Everything makes

sense.

We have a similar exposition from an earlier sage, none other than the Advocate of *Klal Yisrael*, **Horav Levi Yitzchak, zl, Berditchever**, which underscores this idea (cited by *Rav Chaim Nakaz* in *Hahe'arah she'b'nistar*). *Chazal* (*Berachos* 34b) relate that when the son of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (the *Nasi* and leader of the Jewish People at the time) became dangerously ill, he went to Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa and asked him to pray for his son. Rabbi Chanina lay his head between his knees and sought Divine mercy for Rabbi Chanina's son – and he lived. The *Talmud* goes on to explain why Rabbi Chanina's prayer had such efficacy when, in fact, Rabbi Yochanan was his *Rebbe* and greater than he in Torah erudition. The question which glares at us is: Why did Rabbi Chanina adopt such a physical position (head between his knees) in order to pray? Is one specific physical stance during prayer more conducive for an effective entreaty?

The *Berditchever* explains that Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was on a high spiritual plane. His mind was in the Heavens, in a place that, wherever his eyes gazed, he saw truth in its pure, pristine and unembellished form. From this vantage point everything that Hashem did was perfectly clear. In order to pray with the proper emotion, one must sense the pain of he who is suffering. Thus, in order to pray effectively for mercy for Rabbi Yochanan's son, Rabbi Chanina placed his head between his knees, intimating that he was descending from the realm of spirituality to this physical world of pain and adversity, where very little is understood, where pain is a constant companion, where adversity is a way of life. It was only in this world that he could entreat Hashem to have compassion on Rabbi Yochanan's son.