

Yitzchok meets Rivkah for the first time. He listens to what Eliezer, servant of Avraham recounts, and then Yitzchok proceeds to marry Rivkah immediately.

וַיְבִיֵאֵה יִצְחָק הָאֵלֶּלֶה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־רִבְקָה וַתְּהִי־לּוֹ לְאִשָּׁה
וַיֵּאָהֱבָה וַיִּנְחָם יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי אִמּוֹ: {פ}

“And Yitzchok brought her into Sarah, his mother’s, tent; he took Rivkah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. He was then consoled after his mother(‘s death).” (Genesis 24:67).

The Torah teaches us about what love is and how love develops for another person. We also learn Yitzchok’s attitude toward love. It mentions that Yitzchok loved Rivkah, almost immediately upon meeting her. From here we see a concept of *true love* as the poets put it. It is more than an immediate connection with another person. We also see that love follows marriage. It was after he brought her into his mother’s tent, after he took her, after he married her, that he loved her. There is significance, too, to that fact that he only loved her after he heard what Eliezer had to recap about how Eliezer met her, knew she was the one, and then brought her back to Yitzchok.

The Gemara Bava Kamma 92b says, “Rava said to him: You said the proof from there, from a verse in the Prophets, and I say the proof from here, from a verse in the Torah. As it is written: “And Yitzchok brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rivkah, and she became his wife; and he loved her, and Yitzchok was comforted for his mother” (Genesis 24:67). And it is written immediately afterward: “And Avraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah” (Genesis 25:1). After seeing his son marry, Avraham was disquieted by the fact he himself was not married.” This is akin to one who sees another eating and then realizes that he is hungry.

Perkei D’Rebbi Eliezer 32 says that “It is natural that while a man’s mother is living he is wrapped up in her, but when she dies he finds comfort in his wife.” In this case, when his mother passed, Yitzchok found comfort in Rivkah.

Ramban says, “The purport of the verse is to tell of the honor that Yitzchok bestowed upon his mother for from the time that Sarah died they did not take down her tent because they said, “Let not another woman come into the tent of the honorable lady of the house.” But when

he saw Rivkah he brought her into that tent in her honor and there he took her as his wife. This is the meaning of the words, “and he loved her, and he was comforted” indicating that he was deeply grieved for his mother, finding no comfort until he was comforted by his wife through his love for her. Otherwise, what reason is there for Scripture to mention a man’s love for his wife?

“But Onkelos explained: “And Yitzchok brought her into the tent” and, behold, she was like “Sarah his mother.” It is for this reason that the Torah mentions the love he had for her because it was on account of her righteousness and the aptness of her deeds that he loved her and was comforted by her.”

Ramban is saying the love that Yitzchok had for Rivkah was because now Rivkah was worthy of taking over his mother’s position in the household. Yitzchok saw that Rivkah was as good a lady as his mother was, and that is why he loved her. That love was then able to comfort him in his mourning for this mother.

Sforno says similarly, “until this time he had refused to accept consolation for the death of his mother, seeing that she had been such an outstanding person.”

Bartanura says, “Sarah had the special phenomena in her tent. Based on the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 60:15) Sarah had a light that lasted from Friday to Friday, the dough never spoiled, and there was a cloud above the tent. How then could Yitzchok believe he can place Rivkah in the tent and these would return? It is because Sarah was careful in the laws of marital purity, hafrosches challah, and lighting Shabbos candles that she merited the aforementioned benefits: Because Sarah was careful in marital purity there was a cloud above the tent; because she was careful in lighting candles they lasted week to week; and because she was careful in hafrosches challah the dough never spoiled. Yitzchok saw these same qualities in Rivkah and Rivkah was careful in these laws so the phenomenon returned.”

Chizkuni explains likewise, “now Yitzchok became comforted, from the death of his mother, when he saw that his wife possessed the virtues his mother had been famous for.” This allowed him comfort over the loss of his mother of three years earlier because he saw that such goodness will live on and he was privy to it in his household. The virtue returned to his life. Not only literally in Sarah’s tent but like she was Sarah’s replacement.

Yitzchok faced a great loss. His mother was a great and virtuous woman and he had lost her, suddenly. He returned from his venture with his father and his mother had died. For three

years he refused to be comforted. He was then comforted because such virtue returned to the household in Rivkah. He loved Rivkah. His love was based on Rivkah's virtues.

Birkas Asher points out that "*Yitzchok loved Rivkah* is similar to the verse "And Adam knew his wife Chava." (Genesis 4:1). Thus, Yitzchok's love for Rivkah was because he *knew* her." The verse *knew her* can be taken in the biblical sense or it can be taken literally. I think Birkas Asher is saying it can be taken as both. Love develops after marriage, after becoming intimate. It also develops after really knowing a person, that is real intimacy and that is what cultivates true love.

The verse can be expounded as Yitzchok loved Rivkah after Rivkah brought joy back to his life, married him, and replaced his mother. This would not be correct because the verse tells us he loved her and then he was comforted. He also only loved her after hearing about her virtues from Eliezer and seeing them for himself when she took over the duties of Sarah, when she stepped into that role with the same virtue.

When discerning how the Torah defines what true love is, we also look at the other times it mentions love. The Torah first mentions love by the Binding of Yitzchok. "And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, the one you love, Yitzchok, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I will point out to you." (Genesis 22:2). HaShem mentions to Avraham that it is Yitzchok who he loves. When talking about Yitzchok's attitude toward love, the Torah tells us—besides our verse—about how Yitzchok loved others. "Yitzchok loved Esav because game was in his mouth, and Rivkah loved Jacob." (Ibid 25:28). When giving his blessing to his children, Yitzchok tells Yaakov, who he thinks is Esav, "Then prepare a dish for me such as I like (ehav), and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my innermost blessing before I die." (ibid 17:4). In the same episode, Rivkah tells Yaakov, "Go to the flock and fetch me two choice kids, and I will make of them a dish for your father, such as he likes (ehav)." (ibid 27:9). Later in the same episode, "He got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared a dish such as his father liked." (ibid 27:14).

Clearly there is love between a father and a son. However, we see that HaShem is differentiating two sons by telling Avraham, "the son that you love, Yitzchok." Then the Torah tells us that Yitzchok had a special love toward Esav while Rivkah had a special love toward Yaakov.

People say they ‘love’ food, but love of food is not the same as a love for another person. When a person says ‘love’ about food, it means, the food is liked and gives the person the feeling of euphoria similar to how another person who he loves makes him feel. The person he loves gives him enjoyment; so too, his food gives him enjoyment—albeit temporary.

We then look at the two significant verses. Ours—where Yitzchok loved Rivkah, his wife. And Yitzchok loved Esav because “he had game in his mouth.” In the latter verse the Torah gives us a reason why Yitzchok loved Esav. Esav fed Yitzchok his favorite foods. This qualifies the love. Perhaps Yitzchok only loved Esav because of the food that Esav brought him. When Esav was not feeding Yitzchok then Yitzchok did not love Esav. Was this love so fleeting and capricious? It seems the Torah is saying that Yitzchok loved Esav because it was Esav that cared for Yitzchok and gave Yitzchok what he needed and enjoyed. His love for Esav was not like the love for his food, although they both gave him enjoyment. He loved Esav because Esav did things for Yitzchok so Yitzchok loved him. He loved Esav for who Esav was—the food being a byproduct. He loved the effort Esav put into caring for him.

Yitzchok did not know Rivkah very long. However, he first heard about her good deeds. He heard Eliezer recount how she offered not only to give Eliezer to drink but also the camels. He heard how she did not stop until they were satiated; how she was literally the answer to Eliezer’s prayers; how she was asked if she wanted to delay coming to Yitzchok or come forthwith and she chose to come straightaway. Then Yitzchok took her into Sarah’s tent (and she fit right in), he took her (had relations with her), married her (she became his wife), and only then did he fall in love with her. It was only after he knew about her good deeds, virtues, and saw her in action running Sarah’s tent and picking up those duties and obligations, having relations with her, and then securing marriage with her, did he love her. It was true love because he saw beyond her beauty. He saw her as a person and that person, her *penimius*, was more beautiful than her physical appearance. The love was not based on her looks but based on her soul and her deeds. The Torah tells us, that this is true love.

It is also true that a person loves what he cooks the most. A person who fishes or raises cattle and then eats from those animals, or grows vegetables in his or her own garden, those foods he loves the best. Further, a person loves the goods and items he or she purchases more than others. The effort into catching, raising, or using earned money to purchase goods, creates a bond of love. Other food and gifts may be enjoyable, but the person will not love them. (A gift

can be loved for the significance of who gave it and under what circumstances it was given). That is why Yitzchok *loved* the food that Esav prepared, because it came from Esav as a labor of honor and love. Later we will see how Yaakov sent over all his possessions when crossing a river at night because a person loves even small possessions when earned earnestly with hard labor. (*see* Genesis 32:24).

Surely Avraham loved both of his children. That is the natural love of a father to children. However, he sacrificed more for Yitzchok as he had to circumcise himself so that he can have Yitzchok. He had to throw out his adolescent son, Yishmael, and his wife, Hagar, for Yitzchok's well-being. He saw how Yitzchok was following in his footsteps and would be his heir. It was the giving and sacrificing to Yitzchok and seeing the good man that Yitzchok was, that developed Avraham's love. So Yitzchok was the one he loved.

Yitzchok had similar love for Esav. Both Yitzchok and Rivkah loved both of their children. However, as the Torah defines love of another person, Yitzchok loved Esav. Esav had good *penimius*. He served his father, he sacrificed for this father. Yitzchok appreciated these good attributes. Not for the 'taste' in his mouth. But the 'game was in his mouth' (the substance of the good deeds hit home). In turn, he worried over Esav and kept him close. It was the toil, sweat, worry, and sacrifice that produced Yitzchok's love for Esav. Rivkah, conversely, loved Yaakov because she toiled, worried, and sweated for him. She saw he was the rightful heir for Yitzchok and she gave and sacrificed for Yaakov. He was the one she loved.

Love is not about how food or a person makes us feel. That is a fleeing love that lasts only for as long as the food is on the plate. If the love for another is based on what the person does for us, then that love is just as fleeing as food. However, a love for another person must be based on who the person is and what we do for that person. That is true love. That is how to love children—not for the good they do for us, but for the good we see in them and for what we do for them. Love for a spouse is also not based on looks or what one spouse gives to the other. It is based on how a spouse perceives the other, sees the good in the significant other, and gives, sweats, and toils to make the other happy. We like someone because they give to us and make us feel good. We love them when we understand that their giving makes them a good person and we appreciate them as good and virtuous people.