

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

The Emotional Conflict Of Akeidas Yitzchak

based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

In this week's Parsha, the Torah relates the episode of Akeidas Yitzchak, the greatest of Avraham's ten tests. Chazal, in explaining why this test was so difficult for Avraham, say that Avraham was conflicted between what Hashem told him, that Yitzchak would be his spiritual heir, and the fact that he is now being told to bring him as a Korban. This dichotomy of on the one hand being told that Yitzchak will produce future descendants, yet on the other hand being told to kill him, presented Avraham with his greatest challenge.

This is difficult to understand, and seems to contradict the Ralbag, who writes, "The Torah is coming to inform us that it is possible for promises made by Hashem not to be fulfilled due to sin. It is for this reason that we find that although Hashem promised Avraham that his descendants would come through Yitzchak, Avraham still believed that it was Hashem's will to bring Yitzchak as a Korban."

This Ralbag clearly states that Avraham knew that a promise from Hashem is predicated on the person remaining on that spiritual level. However, if a person sins then the promise could be nullified. Based on this, why was the contradiction between what Hashem said earlier that "Your descendants will be called by Yitzchak," and what Hashem said now to bring Yitzchak as Korban, so difficult to resolve, seemingly the resolution should be that he sinned and therefore he is no longer worthy of the previous promise of Hashem? Why is this conflict the primary factor which made Akeidas Yitzchak so difficult, if Avraham himself understood that a promise is predicated on a person's worthiness?

It is clearly evident that despite the fact that intellectually

a person has a resolution to this conflict, by attributing the lack of fulfillment of a promise from Hashem to his sins, emotionally a person still feels the pain of the conflict. This may be due to a resistance to accept his unworthiness, and he may therefore continue to feel that Hashem is not keeping His promise. Therefore, even though Avraham fully believed intellectually that it was his sin that caused the promise to be nullified, emotionally he was prone to view this as Hashem falling short in his promise. This was the test of Avraham.

Based on this, we can understand why suffering causes us to question Hashem's kindness. Although a person knows with certainty that "Hashem's kindness is forever," and that suffering is due to his sin, a fact that should clearly indicate that suffering is not a challenge to Hashem's kindness, a person may be resistant to accept that he is unworthy and he will rather question Hashem's kindness. Therefore, it is critical that we find a resolution to this conflict in order that we maintain our deep belief in Hashem's unwavering kindness.

Perhaps we can address this conflict to Hashem's kindness from the Malbim's commentary on the Pasuk of, "One who Trusts in Hashem will be surrounded by kindness." The Malbim says, "One who trusts in Hashem will come to realize that even the suffering that he has is also kindness." It seems that a person can develop a worldview that is able to reframe even those things that seem antithetical to Chesed and view them as kindness from Hashem. Through developing this viewpoint a person will be able to view suffering within the framework of Hashem's kindness, despite his emotional resistance to view the suffering as a result of his sin.



Why did Priority-1 initiate the 1-Focus Say Nishmas Campaign?

Priority-1 initiated this campaign because we are passionate about helping people strengthen their emunah and develop a strong connection with Hashem. We have noticed a wonderful increase in awareness of Hashem's absolute control over the world during the coronavirus pandemic. We want to ensure that the strides we have made on a communal level continue even after the crisis ends. That is the sole purpose of this campaign.

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Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

A century of crying to fulfill the dream of his life
A century of pleading beside his lonely wife
Who will continue the work we have begun?
Who will change the world if we have not a son?
After one hundred years the dream finally comes true
A beautiful baby boy their lives begin anew
Their love for him so infinite blinding in intensity
The purpose of creation would be fulfilled through he

The boy grew into a wonder, the fulfillment of their dream
The spiritual successor to the world's greatest ever team
From he would clearly come to fruition G-d's promise to man
A light onto the nations like the stars and like the sand
But one day his Beloved surprises with a request,
give it all up to me slaughter him at My behest
It is not even a command, just a simple request (*Abarbanel*)

What of all the promises? the dreams still unfulfilled?
The purpose of creation simply to be killed!
The love for Him so great these questions didn't surface
Not only would he sacrifice his son he would do it with happiness
He arises early the next day to do His will excitedly
As "love [not for his son, but for Hashem] disregards the rule" (*Rashi*) he
loads his donkey personally

As he scales the mountain his son the truth perceives
Yet joins with an identical heart his love for Him leaves him at ease
"Tatty! Tie me up," he says, "lest the korbon become faulty."
Their love for the Creator burns within them so brightly
As the knife reaches his neck a voice calls out from Heaven,
"Stop! It was only a test"
Now I know your love for Me will always be the best.

But sadness overwhelms him (*Zohar, Vayeira*)
instead of breaking into a dance
Instead of jumping for joy he's thinking, "Have I lost my chance?"
"Ah, you are beautiful. Your eyes are like doves." (*Shir HaShirim 4:1*)
"which cleaves to its mate in love
And when they slaughter it, it does not struggle but stretches forth its
neck towards the knife above" (*Rashi ibid.*)

How can such love exist on Earth in hearts mere flesh and blood?
How can it reach such infinite heights? *Ki cholas ahavah oni* -
for they were sick with love! (*Shir HaShirim 2:5*)
That love so deep within was passed down to his every descendant
it burns deep within each one of them from that day to the present

How else can one explain the simple Spanish ignoramus who proudly
ascended the stake
To burn alive, instead of his G-d forsake
This scene repeated again throughout the Jewish nation
In Babylon, Rome, and throughout the world in every generation
"It is for Your sake that we are slain all day
We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered and to slay." (*Tehillim 44:23*)

How is such love possible? Oh how can it be?
There can be only one answer *Ki cholas ahava oni!*



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

A Westwood Realty Initiative

If everything we earn is in reality a miracle
from Heaven why must we work altogether?
Perhaps, a story recounted in this week's Haftarah
(*Melachim II, 4,1-7*) can answer this question:

"A certain woman, the wife of one of the disciples of the prophets, cried out to Elisha: 'Your servant my husband is dead, and you know how your servant revered Hashem. And now a creditor is coming to seize my two children as slaves.' Elisha said to her, 'What can I do for you? Tell me, what have you in the house?' She replied, 'Your maidservant has nothing at all in the house, except a jug of oil.' 'Go,' he said, 'and borrow vessels outside, from all your neighbors, empty vessels, as many as you can. Then go in and shut the door behind you and your children, and pour [oil] into all those vessels, removing each one as it is filled.' She went away and shut the door behind her and her children. They kept bringing [vessels] to her and she kept pouring. When the vessels were full, she said to her son, 'Bring me another vessel.' He answered her, 'There are no more vessels'; and the oil stopped. She came and told the man of G-d, and he said, 'Go sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your children can live on the rest.'"

The obvious question is: Why did the Navi ask if she had anything in her house? Why couldn't the miracle take place from an empty jug? Additionally, why did the Navi tell her to, "Shut the door behind you and your children," before the miracle would take place?

An answer to both these questions is the principle that Hashem generally makes the smallest revelation of His hand needed to accomplish His goal. For the more He reveals His hand the less free-choice we retain to fulfill or not to fulfill His will, and the less free-choice we have, the less reward we will receive for obeying Him.

So next time and every time we engage in an act of Hishtadlus let us imagine we are simply providing that first jug as well as closing the door behind us to hide as much as possible the miracle Hashem is about to perform.