

לעילוי נשמת  
מרת עקא עדנה  
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל  
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



# על דשא

## AL E DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

## Of the Highest Quality

וימחר אברהם האהלה, אל שרה; ויאמר, מהרי  
שלש סאים קמח סלת, לנשי, ועשי עגות.

*And Avraham hurried to the tent to Sarah  
and he said, "Hurry, knead three seah of  
choice flour and make loaves"* (Bereishis 18:6).

Chazal (*Bava Metzia* 87a) point out that it  
says *kemach*, coarse flour, followed by *soles*,  
which is superior fine flour. From here we  
see that a woman is more frugal than a man.  
From this Gemara, it appears that Avraham

There is no need to  
keep searching for  
the highest quality  
gashmiyus. However,  
when it comes to  
ruchniyus, it doesn't  
pay to be satisfied  
with less.

Avinu was seeking something of high quality,  
while Sarah Imeinu insisted on something  
inferior. The problem with this is that the  
pasuk seems to suggest the opposite: he  
said '*kemach*,' and she said '*soles*.'

There is a story about the author of  
*Yeshuos Yisrael*, who once had a distinguished  
guest in his home. In honor of the guest, the  
*baal habayis* sent a servant to fetch a bottle

of wine from the cellar. Examining the wine,  
the Yeshuos Yisrael proclaimed, "This is a nice  
bottle, but we need something even better."

The servant brought a second bottle, which  
the Yeshuos Yisrael turned down once again.  
After this kept happening, the *rebbetzin*  
called out from the kitchen: "It's good  
enough, accept the bottle that the servant  
brought!" Upon hearing this, the Yeshuos  
Yisrael said, "I now understand this Gemara."  
Apparently, there was flour available, but  
Avraham Avinu turned it down, saying it was  
like *kemach* and the guests deserved better;  
while Sarah Imeinu responded, "It's good  
enough; it's practically *soles*!"

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59) states that  
in matters of *gashmiyus*, a wife should  
be listened to. This can be understood in  
connection to our theme. When looking  
for something of material value, if the wife  
says it's good enough, listen to her. There is  
no need to keep searching for the highest  
quality *gashmiyus*. However, when it comes  
to *ruchniyus*, it doesn't pay to be satisfied  
with less. Even if someone says, "This is  
*soles*—it's good enough," ignore them. View  
it as *kemach*; keep striving to reach higher  
and higher.

(וריא תשפ"ה – שבע ברכות)

## Rising Above

ויאמר אברהם אל נעריו, שבו לכם פה עם החמור.

*And Avraham told his lads, sit here with the  
donkey* (Bereishis 22:5).

From here, Chazal learn that the non-Jews  
are compared to donkeys, as opposed to the  
exalted Jewish nation. Why is this mentioned  
here; is it somehow connected to the Akeidah?

The *Tiferes Shlomo*<sup>2</sup> explains that as  
Avraham Avinu was about to undergo this  
tremendous test, giving up his precious son  
Yitzchak, he made this proclamation, as if  
to highlight the greatness of this test: even  
though his only heirs would be Eliezer and  
Yishmael, who could be likened to *chamorim* in  
comparison, he was still ready to give up his son  
because of Hashem's command. He knew what  
he was giving up, and he strengthened himself  
to follow Hashem's command unhesitatingly,  
gladly.

In a similar vein, we can explain why,  
specifically at this point, the Torah hints at  
this concept of *am hadomeh lachamor*. Chazal  
inform us (*Chagigah* 16a) that every person  
shares three physical similarities with an  
animal. A human being has natural animal  
inclinations; his *chumrius* pulls him down.  
Yidden have a special ability to rise above this,  
elevating the physical world in which they live.

<sup>2</sup> Rosh Hashanah.

## A New Creation

וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו, וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל,  
אַחֵר, נֶאֱחָז בְּסִבְךָ בְּקִרְנָיו.

*And Avraham raised his eyes and saw, and look a ram 'acher' was caught in the thicket by its horns (Bereishis 22:13).*

What does the *pasuk* mean by

our actions are tremendously powerful, and the entire world depends on our mitzvos. The universe only exists because we accept and keep the laws of the Torah.

*acher?*

The *Chiddushei HaRim* explains. The Mishnah in *Avos* (5:6) says that the *ayil* of the *Akeidah* was created on the sixth day of Creation, *bein hashemashos*. Its very existence expressed a question that remained unanswered for many centuries: would Avraham Avinu pass his great test, stepping up to sacrifice his precious son? Accordingly, it was created in the time of uncertainty, *bein hashemashos*, between day and night. Its creation depended on Avraham Avinu meeting this great

challenge, coming to the point where the *malach* tells him not to slaughter his son, upon which he finds the *ayil* as a substitute.

Based on this idea, the Torah uses the word *achar*, after—it was only *after* he reached this point that the *ayil* of creation was really created. Until now, it had been uncertain. Now it was being made anew, with finality. Avraham Avinu had passed this great test; now the *ayil* became a real creation, ready to be *shechted*.

Hashem created the entire world on the condition that Bnei Yisrael would accept the Torah; otherwise, as the Gemara states (*Shabbos* 88a), it would have reverted to nothingness.

The *Rivash*<sup>1</sup> states that before *kabbalas haTorah*, a *kinyan* was valid on something even before it came into existence, and therefore Yaakov Avinu was able to purchase the *bechorah* from Esav. After the Jewish nation received the Torah, such a sale would not be valid.

The *Yeshuos Malko* explains that this was because the entire world was still in a state of uncertainty. The world was in limbo, everything was uncertain. In the first two thousand years of history, so many things happened that upended the world

completely: the creation of the oceans washing away a third of the world, the *Mabul*, the *Dor Haflagah*. The world's creation had yet to be finalized, and everything was still hanging in the balance. It makes sense that a *kinyan* would be valid for a *davar she'eino ba l'olam*: even what was already in the world was as uncertain as if it weren't quite in the world. Creation only became finalized with the Jewish nation's acceptance of the Torah.

There is a fundamental lesson here that applies to every one of us. It is possible to live with a shallow mindset: the world is what it is; and when I do a mitzvah, that's my way of doing a favor to Hashem. In reality, our actions are tremendously powerful, and the entire world depends on our *mitzvos*. A person shouldn't think: there's a world out there, existing on its own, and that has nothing to do with my actions. Instead, focus on this point: The universe only exists because we accept and keep the laws of the Torah. Hashem only created it with this in mind.

(סעודה שלישית וירא תשפ"ה מאמר)

<sup>1</sup> *Siman* 328.

# Rising Above

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This power came to us as a result of Akeidas Yitzchak, when our forefathers instilled within us the ability to be *moser nefesh* for Hashem.

Later, the Torah states that Avraham Avinu picked up the '*maacheles*' to slaughter his son. '*Maacheles*' means a knife, but it is an unusual word to use. Rashi explains that it has the root of 'to feed'—because the reward from this incredible act would sustain *Klal Yisrael* for generations. The reward Rashi speaks of includes a profound transformation: because

This ability is instilled within Bnei Yisrael for generations; the ability to give up worldly pleasures even when they are permissible.

of that great act, the ability to be *moser nefesh* became intrinsic to *Klal Yisrael*. From that point on, it was something passed down for generations: the ability to rise above physical desires, while the rest of the world remain *domeh l'chamor*.

The ability to rise above *chumrius* has been part of the Jewish nation from that point in time. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 98) tells us that Mashiach will come to us riding on a *chamor*, and the *Maharal* explains: he will be someone who is above *chumrius*.

The rest of humanity never inherited this capability, and their lives revolve around physical desires. This is why Avraham was pointing this out specifically here: you are *domeh l'chamor*, and you will stay that way,

unlike Yitzchak and his descendants, who will forever become elevated.

Although Yitzchak wasn't physically slaughtered, as the *malach* stopped it at the last second—still, on some level, he had become an *olah temimah*. It was because of this that he wasn't allowed to leave Eretz Yisrael.

About the essence of *korbanos*, the pasuk (*Vayikra* 1:2) tells us אִדָּם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָּן, וְלֹא—*When a person brings from himself a korban*. The most excellent form of a *korban* is to give up from oneself, to rise above our physical desires.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 89b) tells us that in the future, Hashem will say that the Jewish nation deserves to be punished for their *aveiros*, and Yitzchak Avinu will speak up in their defense: "I was willing to give up my life for You."—by the *akediah*. On a simple level, Yitzchak was saying that the *am Yisrael* should be saved in the merit of this incredible act of *mesirus nefesh*. But perhaps Yitzchak was pointing out the greatness of every *Yid*. "I was willing to give my life for You, and this was an everlasting achievement which elevated the *am Yisrael* forever. Even if Yidden have sinned, it doesn't reflect who they are at their essence. They should be forgiven, because that elevated spark has not been extinguished."

The Mishnah (*Nedarim* 10b) gives a case where a person forbade upon himself something 'like an *imra*.' Tosafos explains that he intended to refer to the *ayil* of Akeidas Yitzchak. This is an odd example to use, as *korbanos* weren't valid at that point in history, and we don't have this *ayil* anymore. This person is trying to elevate himself, using the power of *neder* to take another restriction upon himself. To rise above materialism, tapping into this holiness that

lies within each Jew: that comes from Akeidas Yitzchak, when this became part of who we are.

In *Parshas Behaalos'cha*, Rashi presents an interesting *mashal*. Moshe Rabbeinu tells Hashem that it wouldn't make sense to give the Bnei Yisrael meat to eat if they deserved to be killed immediately after. This can be compared to giving a donkey a *kur* of barley when its head is about to be cut off. The reason this is specifically compared to a donkey is that it is the symbol of *chumrius* and physical pursuits.

Every person has within them *chumrius*, the animal nature that wants to pursue all the physical attractions the world has to offer. Sometimes, a person is even willing to 'lose his head'—the part of the body where a human being is considered on a higher level than an animal. The head is where the *seichel* is located, and only humans walk upright. In the *mashal*, the *chamor* is getting a *kur*, which is in fact enough to feed many *chamorim*. The *satan* comes to challenge us: be like a *chamor*, make sure to obtain plenty of *taavos* from this world/ *Klal Yisrael* stands tall, rising above the *chumrius*, without losing their heads.

When the Torah introduces the episode of the Akeidah, it says, *Hashem tested Avraham*. There is no mention of Yitzchak Avinu being tested, even though he was the one to go willingly on the *mizbe'ach* because of Hashem's command.

The explanation is that, once Avraham had instilled within himself this total *mesirus nefesh*, it could be passed down—allowing Yitzchak to tap into this great power. The Akeidah wasn't considered a test for Yitzchak, because his father had paved the way for him from the beginning of the journey. In the same

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Vayera	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbos
Brooklyn	4:27	5:34
Lakewood	4:29	5:36
Baltimore	4:40	5:40
Chicago	4:17	5:20
North Miami	5:17	6:11
Los Angeles	4:36	5:33

## Dust of their Feet

יִקַּח נָא מַעַט מִיָּם, וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם.

*Let a little water be fetched and bathe your feet (Bereishis 18:4).*

Rashi explains that Avraham Avinu was *makpid* that they should wash off the dirt on their feet, because they were *aravim* who bowed to the dust of their feet. When it comes to Lot, the order was the other way around; he told them to sleep over and then wash their feet, whereas Avraham Avinu was more meticulous. Lot's father was Haran, and it may be that some of his character traits were passed down to him. When they were at Or Kasdim, Avraham Avinu was willing to jump in and be *moser nefesh* without any *cheshbonos*. Haran, on the other hand, stood on the side and watched; once Avraham Avinu came out alive, he calculated that it made sense to jump in as well. Similarly, Lot didn't serve *avodah zara*, but he didn't have the full-fledged *mesirus nefesh* that Avraham Avinu had.

The *Shinover Rav* explains that the dust on their feet refers to their actions. Rashi uses the word *aravim*, which can also refer to merchants, people who travel to do business. Such a person runs the risk of thinking he is only successful because of his own actions: traveling to the right places, making the right deals. Avraham Avinu was telling such people to wash themselves; they should realize that what comes about from their own feet is meaningless, it all comes from Hashem.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 69b) tells us that the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah nullified the *yetzer hara* to serve *avodah zarah*. The *sefarim* read the *pasuk* "*zechor yemos olam, binu shnos dor v'dor*" (*Devarim* 32:7) as telling us how to defeat the *yetzer hara*. Remember previous generations, in what areas they struggled in. For us, it is almost laughable to think that it would be feasible to bow down to the dust on the ground; but for those people, it was a real struggle. This should be a

source of reflection; our desires that are set forth by the *yetzer hara* are the same, causing us to have an urge for things that are meaningless.

Although the urge to serve *avodah zarah* is gone, there can be still a *nisayon* to sometimes forget Hashem. A person can still think he should bow to the dust by his feet, convincing himself that his successes come from his own actions. We have to remind ourselves that everything comes from Hashem. This is a *middah* we inherited from Avraham Avinu, which he taught his children to follow.

(סעודה שלישית וירא תשפ"ד מאמר א)

## Rising Above

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vein, for any *mesirus nefesh* that a Yid is called upon to do, he has this tremendous power within himself, reaching back to *Akeidas Yitzchak*.

When Hashem told Avraham to bring his beloved son Yitzchak as a *korban*, He used the word נָא, a beseeching expression. Rashi explains that He was adding a special request: "Please be victorious over this challenge, so that people should see your greatness." The *Sfas Emes*<sup>3</sup> explains differently: this wasn't a

real commandment, but a request. Hashem had promised Avraham that Yitzchak would be his inheritor—and He was bound to that promise. Hashem was requesting that Avraham be *mochel*, willing to give up on the promise he had received. According to this understanding, there was an extra layer of *mesirus nefesh* involved—for a request that wasn't an actual command.

Avraham Avinu was willing to sacrifice, even for a *dvar reshut*. This ability is instilled

within Bnei Yisrael for generations; the ability to give up worldly pleasures even when they are permissible. Once Avraham Avinu passed that test, this character trait would be passed down for the future.

It's essential to remember that a person's capacity to love things is limited. If a Yid wants to feel love for Hashem, he should subdue his natural desire for physical pleasures.

(סעודה שלישית וירא תשפ"ד מאמר ב)