

שבו לכם פה עם החמור

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When Avrohom Avinu was traveling to the *Akeidas Yitzchok* with Yitzchok, he told Yishmael and Eliezer, “*shvu lochem po im hachamor, va’ani v’hana’ar naylcha ad ko.*” He directed them to wait where they were with the donkeys while he continued on with Yitzchok. The *gemara* in *Kiddushin 68* makes the following *drasha* from this *posuk*: “*im hachamor*” means “*am hadomeh lachamor*” and from here we learn a fundamental *halacha*. This is not a pejorative or racist remark, but the *halacha* is simply that if a Jew lives with a maidservant, their child is not *meyuchos acharov*. The baby is not *halachically* considered his child.

It would seem that the *Akeidah* is a peculiar place to learn out this *halacha*. After all, this is a very technical *halacha* and the *Akeidah* is one of the most dramatic *parshiyos* in the Torah. We invoke this *parsha* on Rosh Hashana. It was also chosen by *Chazal* to be recited every day before *Pesukei D’zimra*. Why then is this the place for the *drasha* of “*am hadomeh lachamor*?”

The *Beis haLevi* on this week’s *parsha* explains as follows: The reason why Avrohom Avinu chose these words on his way to the *Akeidah* was, for lack of better terminology, because he was psyching himself out. HaKadosh Boruch Hu already told Avrohom “*ki b’Yitzchok yekarei lecha zora,*” that Yitzchok was to be his sole heir. Because Yishmoel was born from a *shifcha* he was not considered Avrohom’s heir. For all intents and *halachic* purposes, Avrohom Avinu had only one son and now, after all the years of waiting for a child, Hashem commanded him to *shecht* that son and end his life.

Avrohom Avinu was worried that perhaps he would be tempted to lessen this *nisayon* by telling himself, “Yes, I know he’s my beloved son but at the end of the day I still have Yishmael and it’s not as if I am giving up everything. I still have an heir.” If Avrohom Avinu would have thought this, it would have lessened the impact of the *Akeidas Yitzchok*. The full effect was Avrohom sacrificing his only son because Hashem said to, even if it didn’t make any sense to him. Rationalizing it with this thought process would have almost defeated the purpose of the *nisayon*.

This is why Avrohom Avinu reemphasized to himself that this is it, this is the end of the line. He told Yishmael “*shvu lochem po im hachamor,*” with the *drasha* that is embedded therein, to strengthen his own resolve by stating that Yishmael is not his *halachic* son nor his heir. There is no one but Yitzchok. This is why we learn out the *halacha* of *yichus* at this juncture.

Avrohom Avinu must have also been thinking that he was killing *Klal Yisroel* along with Yitzchok. He had no *kushyos* because Hashem told him to do this, but still this was the end. The irony is that this was not only not the end of the line, but really the beginning of the line.

The following is written in *perek 31* of *Pirkei D’Rabi Eliezer*. “R. Yehuda says that when the knife came to the neck of Yitzchok, he died and his *neshama* departed from him. When he heard the voice from between the *keruvim* say, “*al tishlach yodcho el hana’ar,*” his *nefesh* came back.” Which means to say that Yitzchok was actually *niftar* and reborn because he was then given another *neshama*. The *Pirkei D’Rabi Eliezer* even adds that Yitzchok was the first person to experience *techiyas hameisim*. At that moment, Yitzchok made the *bracha*, “*baruch Atoh Hashem mechayei hameisim.*” The *makor* of the *bracha* “*Mechayeh haMeisim,*” which we all know is the *bracha* of *Gevuros* which is the *bracha k’neged* Yitzchok, was in fact coined by Yitzchok himself when he experienced *techiyas hameisim*.

The Ari haKadosh says a very interesting thing. He writes that Yitzchok was born with the *neshama* of a *nekeiva (misitra d'nukva)*. I don't know exactly the *teefkeit* of this, but the Arizal writes that this *neshama* which Yitzchok had was incapable of having children because it was in the body of a *zochor*. He goes on and says that when Yitzchok died, "*porach nishmaso,*" he was gifted with a *sitra d'zochor* instead and was then able to have children.

That which Avrohom Avinu thought "it's all over," was just the opposite. It was really the beginning. Only because of this was Yitzchok able to have children and *Klal Yisroel* have a *kiyum*.

This is why the Torah writes the *parsha* of Rivka being born directly after the *Akeidah*. The *Akeidah* is arguably the most dramatic *parsha* in all of the Torah. The Torah then immediately writes what can be described as most anticlimactic. Why put it here? Why spoil the moment, the high drama of *Akeidas Yitzchok*?

The answer is that now Yitzchok is capable of having children. Now he needs a wife, and therefore the Torah introduces the birth of Rivka Imeinu.

Again, what Avrohom thought to be the end of his lineage was really what enabled and facilitated the whole *binyan* of *Klal Yisroel*. Herein lies one of the great lessons of life and of history. That which we sometimes think is the tragic ending is in fact the seeds of a future victory.

R. Moshe Mordechai Epstein, the Slabodker Rosh Yeshiva (the Rosh Yeshiva of Moreinu V'Rabbeinu HaRav Ruderman zt"l), once pointed out that two things happened on August 1st, 1492. The Jews were expelled from Spain, and on that day Columbus set sail for what was to become the New World and America. One would have thought that the Spanish Inquisition and the Spanish Expulsion was *mamesh* the demise of *Klal Yisroel*. Perhaps what was more painful was that historically, Jews were so instrumental and vital in building up the country of Spain.

At that time, Spain was the most powerful nation in the world, the United States of the 20th century. On that day in 1492, when they were expanding their global power, historians report that there were so many ships in the harbor of Jews trying to flee Spain that the harbor was gridlocked and Columbus had to wait to actually set out on his voyage. *Zu Torah v'zu s'choro?* Or the opposite, that this *medina* which perpetrated such an *avlo* is about to discover the New World with all its riches?

Little did anyone realize that four hundred years after Columbus discovered the New World, Jews would be able to come to America to live and build new lives in this country. You may have parents or grandparents that survived Europe and came to America. That which we thought made no sense and was so terrible at the time, being expelled from Spain, turned out to eventually be the rebirth of so many *Yidden*.

That is the lesson of *Akeidas Yitzchok*. That which Avrohom Avinu thought was the end was indeed really the beginning. On both a national scale and a personal scale we have to keep this in mind, that we don't have the full picture. The Spanish issue took four hundred years to develop. Hindsight being 20/20, we see that the seeds of *yeshua* were planted on that very tragic day in Jewish History, *Tisha b'Av*.