

This shiur is dedicated in memory of Tom Weisz, z'l, Moshe Meir ben Avraham haKohen v'Rivka Rachel by his wife, Shelli and family. His dedication to Torah learning remains our inspiration

ימי עיון בתנ"ך תשפ"ה



Rav Yehuda Amital's Remarkable Reading of Akeidat Yitzchak

"Yerusha" - Haim Guri

ירושלם . חיים גורי

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...Isaac, as the story goes, was not sacrificed. He lived for many years, saw what pleasure had to offer, until his eyesight dimmed.

...יצחק, כמסופר, לא הועלה קורבן.
הוא חי ימים רבים,
ראה בטוב, עד אור עיניו כהה.

But he bequeathed that hour to his offspring. They are born with a knife in their hearts.

אבל את השעה ההיא הוא הוריש לצאצאיו.
הם נולדים
ומאכלת בליבם.

לֶךְ לְךָ
לְאַרְצְךָ,
לְמוֹלַדְתְּךָ, לְבֵית
אָבִיךָ, אֶל הַמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ
שֵׁם יִחְטָפוּ
אֶת בְּנֶךָ,
יְחִידְךָ.

אֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֶּתָּ.

1. Rabbi Soloveitchik

"God says to Avraham: "Take now your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, etc." That is to say, I demand of you the greatest sacrifice. Do not fool yourself to think that after you obey Me and bring your son up for a burnt-offering, I will give you another son in place of Yitzchak. When Yitzchak will be slaughtered on the altar – you will remain alone and childless....All your life you will think about him....You will spend your nights awake, picking at your emotional wounds. Out of your sleep you will call for Yitzchak, and when you wake up you will find your tent desolate and forsaken. I demand this sacrifice!

Clearly the experience, which was rooted in dread and suffering, ended in ceaseless joy... The religious act begins with the sacrifice of one's self, and ends with the finding of that self. But man cannot find himself without sacrificing himself prior to the finding. (Rabbi Soloveitchik, *Divrei Hashkafa*, pp. 254-255)

"Abraham implemented the sacrifice of Isaac not on Mount Moriah but in the depths of his heart. He gave up Isaac the very instant God addresses Himself to him and asked him to return his most precious possession to its legitimate master and owner... There was no need for physical sacrifice, since experientially Abraham had fulfilled the command before he reached Mount Moriah... Had Abraham engaged the Creator in a debate, had he not immediately surrendered Isaac... God would not have sent the angel to stop Abraham from implementing the command. Abraham would have lost Isaac physically." (Rav Soloveitchik. *Abraham's Journey*)

2. הראי"ה קוק, עולת ראייה א, עמ' פו-פז

"ויושכם אברהם בבוקר". מנוחת הנפש של הנשמה הקדושה, של האב הקדוש איתן האזרחי, לא נשבתה. שנתו לא נהיתה עליו, מתוך הידיעה הברורה, הבאה לו בדבר ה', ושום רגש של כהות, של רישול ושל דכאות, לא נתערב בהמיית נפשו המטוהרה. שנת ישרים במנוחה ועליזת קודש עברה, וזמן ההשכמה באה בסדרה, ועד ה' המשווה רגליו כאיילות, לרוץ בצבי ולהיות גבור כארי, לעשות רצונו של מקום ב"ה, סמכהו, כי השכים בבוקר... לא בכפיפת קומה ולא בכשלון כח הלך הישיש הקדוש הזה, לקראת העובדה המפליאה הזאת, שהיא ההיפוך מכל אחרות טבע נפשו של האדם, כי אם בקימה, במלוא הקומה ואזירת החיל. כל המשכת הליכתו הייתה תכונת כוח המושך, של מלא האהבה הרוממה העליונה"

3. Rav Amital. Et Ratzon pgs 199-200

The reader will think that the Akeida is merely a submissive acceptance of the Divine command in silence. Avraham Avinu is commanded to slaughter his son, and with the understanding that

3. עת רצון עמ' 199-200

המתבונן יחשוב, לכאורה, שאין בעקידה אלא קבלת צו א-לוהי בשתיקה ובהכנעה. אברהם אבינו מצווה לשחוט את בנו, ומתוך הכרה שאין דבר העומד בפני ציוויו של הקב"ה,

nothing stands in the way of God's instructions, he annuls his will in the face of the will of the Almighty. As if, all human emotions are non-existent, no love between parent and child, no mercy, or ethical concerns. It is all numbed, paralysed, it dissolves and disappears in the face of the Divine command – "My heart is hollow within me" (Ps. 109:22) – as if his heart is emptied of all human feeling.

For me, this perception is absolutely wrong. Avraham's love for his son did not disappear or melt away at the moment of the Akeida. The opposite is true! – this love is the very premise upon which the act of the Akeida stands. Not for nothing did God emphasize in His command, "the son that you love". The warm emotions between father and son are given prominence throughout the narrative ... It is precisely the love between father and son that is the core of the Akeida. Their love emphasizes the test, gives it gravity, and expresses its uniqueness.

4. Midrash Tanchuma. Vayera

Satan appeared before him on the road in the guise of an old man and asked: "Whither are you going?" Abraham replied: "To pray." "And why," Satan retorted, "does one going to pray carry fire and a knife in his hands, and wood on his shoulders?" "We may tarry there for several days," said Abraham, "and slaughter an animal and cook it." The old man (Satan) responded: "That is not so; I was present when the Holy One, blessed be He, ordered you to take your son. Why should an old man, who begets a son at the age of a hundred, destroy him? Have you not heard the parable of the man who destroyed his own possessions and then was forced to beg from others? If you believe that you will have another son, you are listening to the words of a Satan. And furthermore, if you destroy a soul, you will be held legally accountable for it." Abraham answered: "Not the Satan, but the Holy One, blessed be He, who told me what to do, and I shall not listen to you."

5. Yalkut Shimoni. Vayera #101

Yitzchak said: Father! I feel awful! What will you do in your old age? He replied: Son! – We know we will die soon. He who looked after us until now will continue to look after us.

He placed him on the altar: Abraham's eyes towards Yitzchak's eyes, and Yitzchak's eyes towards the Heavens. The tears were falling from Avraham's eyes until his whole body was covered with tears... and he said: "I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where will my salvation come?!"

מבטל הוא את רצונו מפני רצון הקב"ה. לכאורה, כל רגשותיו האנושיים בטלים, ואין בו אהבת אב לבנו, רחמים, או שיקולי מוסר. הכל משתתק, נמוג ונעלם אל מול הצו הא-לוהי. "לְבִי חָלַל בְּקֶרְבִּי" (תהלים קט, כב), כאילו ליבו ריק מכל רגש אנושי.

לדידי, תפיסה זו מוטעית לחלוטין. אהבת אברהם לבנו לא נעלמה או נמוגה בזמן העקידה; אדרבה, עוצמתה היתה תנאי למעשה העקידה כולו. לא בכדי מדגיש הקב"ה בצוותו את אברהם לשחוט "את בנך ... אשר אהבת". היחס החם שבין האב ובנו מובלט היטב לאורך הסיפור כולו: "ואת יצחק בנו... וישם על יצחק בנו... ויאמר יצחק אל אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הנני בני... יראה לו השה לעולה בני... ויעקוד את יצחק בנו... לשחוט את בנו" דווקא באותם יחסי אהבה מיוחדים שבין אב לבנו טמון סוד העקידה. אהבתם מבליטה את הניסיון, מעצימה אותו ומבטאת את ייחודו...

4. מדרש תנחומא

קדמו השטן בדרך ונדמה לו כדמות זקן. אמר לו: לאן אתה הולך? אמר לו: להתפלל. אמר לו: ומי נשאלך להתפלל? למה אש ומאכלת בידו ועצים על כתפו? אמר לו: נשמה נשמה יום או יומים ונשחט ונאפה ונאכל. אמר לו: זקן, לא נשם הייתי נשאר לך הקדוש ברוך הוא קח נא את בנך, וזקן כמוך ילך ויאבד בן שנתי לו למאה שנה. לא נשמת המשל, מה שהיה בידו אבדו ומבקש מאחרים. ואם תאמר יהיה לך בן אחר, תשמע מן המשטין ותאבד נשמה שתתחייב עליה בדין. אמר לו: לא משטין היה אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא יתברך היה, לא אשמה ממך.

5. ילקוט שמעוני וירא רמז קא

אמר ליה יצחק: אבא! צר לי עליכם, מה תעשו עלי לזכותכם? א"ל בני - יודעים אנו שמיתתנו קרובה, מי שנחמנו עד עכשיו נחמנו עד יום המיתה.

וישם אותו על המזבח. עיני אברהם בעיני יצחק, ועיני יצחק בשמי שמים, והיו דמעות מנשרות ונפלות מעיני אברהם ... באותה שעה פער פיו בבכיה וגעה געה גדולה, והיו עיני מרופפות וצופות לשכינה, והרים קולו ואמר: "אשא עיני אל ההרים מאין יבוא עזרי? עזרי מעם ה' עושה שמים וארץ."

6. Mishnah Taanit 2:4

For the conclusion of the first blessing, he recites: **He Who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah**, He will answer you and hear the sound of your cry on this day.

7. Rav Amital. Et Ratzon. Pg. 181

Notwithstanding the direct instruction to bind his son, Abraham did not resolve himself to the command of the Akeida. He stood and prayed for his son. This Midrash reveals the relationship of Abraham to God's command' On the one hand, "A loyal servant" who hurries to perform his master's will; and on the other hand, a merciful father, who does not suppress his feelings, but prays and beseeches God to save his life.

We know well the phenomenon of suppressions of human feelings in a moment of religious passion and ecstasy – so it was with the ancient ritual of Molech, and so it is today, that when we hear of a Shahid who dies while taking innocent human life. But the test of the Akeida has no trace of this ecstatic religious intoxication. Were it there it would make the entire episode invalid.

6. משנה תענית פרק ב משנה ד

על הראשונה הוא אומר, **מי שענה את אברהם בהר המוריה**, הוא יענה אתכם וישמע בקול צעקתכם היום הזה, ברוך אתה ה' גואל ישראל

7. הרב עמיטל. עת רצון. עמ' 181

למרות מאמרו של הקב"ה וציוויו שיעקוד את בנו, לא השלים אברהם אבינו עם צו העקידה, אלא עמד והתפלל על בנו. במדרש זה מתגלה לעינינו יחסו של אברהם לצו הקב"ה: "עבד נאמן", הממהר לעשות רצון קונו, ומאידך, אב רחמן ואהוב, שאינו כובש רגשותיו, אלא מתפלל על בנו ומתחנן להצלת נפשו. אנו מכירים היטב תופעה של דיכוי כל רגש אנושי ואבהי בשעה של אקסטאזה דתית. כך בימים ההם, בעבודת המולך, וכך בזמן הזה, בתגובת שכנינו למשמע השמועה על מותו של אחד ה"שאהידים" תוך כדי הרג חפים מפשע. אילו היה נסיון העקירה של אברהם אבינו חסר מימד אנושי זה, לא זו בלבד שהיה מתגמד בשל כך, אלא אפשר שהיה הופך את המעשה כולו לפסול מעיקרו!

8. Rav Amital Sicha 1989 <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/rosh-hashana/hope-and-despair-akeida>

"Behold, a ram was behind, caught by his thorns in the thicket," the Sages explain:

"What is the meaning of 'achar' (behind, after)? Rabbi Yitzchak taught: AFTER all of these things, Israel becomes caught up in sins, and suffer troubles, and they are destined to be redeemed by the horn of a ram, as it is written (Zekharia 9:14): 'And the Lord God will sound the shofar....'" (Bereishit Rabba 56)

In order to understand the full significance of the Akeida, we must note an additional point. "There were ten generations from Noach until Avraham." Only ten generations had passed since God had declared, "The end of all flesh has come before Me." The Flood had come and gone, and new hope had flickered on the horizon. ...However, the world looked as though it were back at the time of the Flood, in a situation where everything lacked purpose and direction. "Avraham ha-Ivri" (the Hebrew) was so called because "all the world was on one side (me-ever echad), and he was on the other side."

Avraham's dream was to "perfect the world under the kingdom of God." He was fully aware that this would involve a historical process lasting thousands of years, but he believed, with all his heart, that he and his descendants could realize this dream... But a time came when hope appeared: "And God remembered Sarah as He had said, and God did for Sarah as He had said." The Divine promise, "Your seed will be called after Yitzchak," was coming true; it was being revived in all its glory. Avraham was looking towards the future. The conversation in his household was turning to the future of the family....

Then comes the test of the Akeida.... The Akeida presents Avraham with the possibility that the great dream will dissolve in a second. Its memory will descend into the depths of oblivion, dragging with it. Avraham, will have passed like a burst of light in human history for just a moment, leaving behind him no real impression.

...The Holy One commands: "Do not lay your hand upon the boy, and do not harm him... I shall bless you greatly, and I shall increase your seed greatly like the stars of the heavens... all the nations of the world will be blessed through your seed." ...Avraham returns to his original dream. The terror has passed, and his anxieties have dissolved.

...The Akeida thus bears an important message for all generations. Even when it appears that dreams, visions and aspirations have shattered on the rocks of reality, there is no place for despair. Individuals have the power to build worlds – if only they will believe in their power.

I do not know if there were many generations that suffered such a sense of helplessness as has our generation. Ours is a generation that survived the **Holocaust** – "a nation that is remnants of the sword;" a generation that shortly thereafter had to stand – vastly outnumbered – and fight a war for its independence. It is a generation that, while meriting to witness the establishment of the State, could not then retire in peace and quiet. War followed war: the Sinai campaign, the Six-Day War, the War of Attrition, the Yom Kippur War, the Lebanon War, the war of rocks and Molotov cocktails, day by day, hour by hour.

...At this time, we have an obligation to aspire to the characteristic of Avraham Avinu: to believe in the power of individuals to change the world, to dream and to fight for a world that is more moral, more spiritual, more just.

9. Rav Binyamin (Beni) Lau. The Akeida. An Israeli Perspective. From the book יצחק לזרעו in memory of Yitzchak Hirschberg z"l.

We stand here and say to *Hakdosh Baruch Hu*, to the מלך חפץ בחיים – the King who Desires Life - that we too are a nation who seek life, but that at the same time, we are committed to Him and that we are going to stride with this unwavering commitment in the deepest way, all the way. Even when it means sending a child to the army! We are not pacifists! We observe the mitzva of protecting the Land, and the protection of the nation.

Our act of preserving and guarding the nation is in some manner, an Akeida-like act... Sometimes, I am challenged by people who live abroad – "How do you endanger your children in this way?" We answer by saying: We embrace life. We do not sacrifice our children... we are a nation who desires life, we are integrally connected to life, and we are commanded to embrace life. Hence, *Akeidat Yitzchak* is so shocking year after year! On Rosh Hashannah, we blow the Shofar, not the Slaughter Knife!! We cleave to life, and we hold tightly to it and when situations become dangerous, we try to avert that danger. But we will not abandon life, because of life. Eretz Yisrael is our life, Am Yisrael is our life, and if our life is threatened then we guard our life with our very lives. This is the essence of our existence... The Shofar comes to tell God the story of our life and not the story of our death.