

# Pursuit of Purpose

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פרשת

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## The Relief Of The Truth

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

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In this week's Parsha, פרשת וירא, the Torah records the episode of Akeidas Yitzchak. This was the final and hardest test that Avraham Avinu would face. Each one of Avraham's tests highlight his greatness, and help us expand our aspirations of becoming like him, fulfilling Chazal's mandate that every person is obligated to say *מתי יגיע מעשי למעשה אבותי*. Akeidas Yitzchak is no different, emphasizing Avraham's greatness in a unique way that was not seen by the other tests that he endured.

The Medrash tells us, "Avraham stretched out his hand to grab the knife and his eyes were overflowing with tears. Tears of compassion for his son, these tears fell on the eyes of Yitzchak. Yet Avraham was still happy to fulfill the will of his Creator." The Anaf Yosef explains what the Medrash is teaching us, Avraham did not reduce his love for Yitzchak in order to be able to do the Akeidah. On the contrary, Avraham awakened and increased his love for Yitzchak at the Akeidah. It was his love of Hashem that overcame this overwhelming love that he had for Yitzchak.

Keeping this image in the backdrop, we can now explore another aspect of the Akeidah presented by Rashi. Hashem tells Avraham, "Don't stretch out your hand to Yitzchak, because now I know that you fear Hashem." Rashi comments, Rebbi Abba says, Avraham said to Hashem, "Explain to me your speech. Yesterday you told me that my descendants will come from Yitzchak, and then you told me to take my son. Now you're telling me not to touch my son!" Hashem responded, "I am not breaking my covenant with you, and I am not changing what I said. When I told you to take your son, I never said to kill him, I said to bring him up, and then take him down."

Rebbi Abba is saying that Avraham was confused, but the Rambam tells us, "that it is possible for promises to not be fulfilled due to a person's sins."

Based on this, why was Avraham confused? First he was promised, then maybe he sinned and his level declined causing the promise to not be fulfilled. However, now through the Mesiras Nefesh of being willing to kill Yitzchak, he was elevated, and now Hashem was keeping His original promise, due to Avraham being deserving of it.

We can understand Avraham's confusion by Hashem's response, where the focus is on the fact that, "I didn't change my words. I kept what I said." In other words, it sounds like what was bothering Avraham was not the fact that Hashem kept changing, as this was explainable due to a change in his level of Ruchnius. However, what Avraham couldn't bear was the the fact that Hashem had to change what he said, making His words, in reality, lacking ever so slightly in absolute truth.

The Gadlus of Avraham Avinu is נורא ואיום, he was just told that he does not have to kill his son. A moment prior, tears were flowing from his eyes out of tremendous love for his son, so one would think that after being told this great news, he would be jumping for joy. Rebbi Abba tells us that he was not jumping for joy, but was rather concerned about the lack of truth. The fact that this entered his mind as a real question on Hashem, to the point where Hashem had to address it, at a time where he should have been so relieved to know that he doesn't have to kill Yitzchak, speaks volumes about Avraham's greatness and the importance of truth.

We all have the ability to reach the heights of the Avos. This means we all have this craving and sensitivity towards truth. When something doesn't make sense in a Tosfos, it should bother us so deeply, and should cause us to delve deeper and deeper until the truth is revealed. The pursuit of truth is the ultimate goal.

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## Shir Hashirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

The Rambam (Mishnah, Makos 3:16) writes: It is among the fundamental principles of the Torah that when an individual fulfills one of the 613 commandments in a fit and proper manner, not combining with it any aspect of worldly intent but rather doing it for its own sake, out of love, then they merit the World to Come through this single act... When Rav Chanina ben Tradiyon was asked (*Avodah Zarah 18a*), "Will I merit life in the coming world," and received the response, "Have you ever done anything?"; this also indicated the same principle. The answer he received meant, "Have you ever had the chance to do one of the commandments properly?"; His answer was that he once had the chance to give tzedakah in a wholehearted fashion, as much as possible, and it was through this that he merited life in the World to Come.

But why is this true? How does the fulfillment of only one of 613 mitzvos wholeheartedly suffice to earn one the ultimate goal of Creation, the reward of the world-to-come?

The answer can be found in the following words of Shir HaShirim (4:9 with Rashi): "**You have captured my heart, you have drawn My heart to you. My sister, my bride, you have captured my heart with one [glance] of your eyes, of the many good characteristics that you possess, if you had only one, I would love you dearly, and all the more so with all of them. And similarly, with but one of the chains of your necklaces, these are the adornments of commandments through which the [Bnei] Yisroel are distinguished with one coil of your necklace.**"

Chazal (*Bereishis Rabah 44:1*) teach us that, "All the mitzvos were only given to refine our character." It seems from all of the above that it is even one mitzvah done wholeheartedly that brings out the infinitely great character deep within every Jew, capturing the heart of Hashem in infinite love, earning himself the ultimate reward of Olam Habah, to bask in his Beloved's loving presence forever!



## Emunah Highlights

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If everything we earn is, in reality, a miracle from Heaven why must we work altogether? Perhaps, a story recounted in this week's Haftorah (*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 do you have 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 of 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 which Hashem is about to perform.