בס״ד

# Divrei HaRav

*Parshas Toldos 5787*

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Rav of Khal Noam Hashem

Divrei Torah from Friday night, Shabbos day, and Shalosh Seudos
Prepared from a listener’s recollection

# Friday Night

## "ויט שם אהלו ...ויבן שם מזבח": First the Altar, Then the Tent

When אברהם אבינו settled, the תורה tells us: "ויט אהלה ...ויבן שם מזבח לה׳" ("And he pitched his tent... and he built there an altar to ה׳" (בראשית יב, ח): first the tent, and then the altar. When יצחק אבינו came to באר שבע, the order is reversed: "ויבן שם מזבח ויקרא בשם ה׳ ויט שם אהלו", "And he built there an altar, and called in the name of ה׳, and pitched his tent there" (בראשית כו, כה): first the altar, and only then the tent. The Rav asked: what lies behind this difference?

To explain it, the Rav began with a premise: we misunderstand יצחק אבינו a little. We tend to picture him as uptight, always worried and careful. But in the Rav's understanding, יצחק אבינו is much broader than that. He is full of contradictions: at the עקידה he was alive, yet as one already dead when he was laid on the altar to be offered as an עולה (בראשית כב, ב, ט). Even in his name this breadth can be seen. His name is יצחק, laughter: "ויפל אברהם על פניו ויצחק" (בראשית יז, יז), and שרה said, "כל השמע יצחק לי", "All who hear will laugh with me" (בראשית כא, ו). יצחק made people happy. We are used to saying that אברהם was חסד and יצחק was גבורה; but יצחק was not only גבורה. יצחק was a lot broader than the basic understanding we have of him.

The Rav's point was the difference between אהבה and יראה, love and awe. In אהבה, distance intensifies: when you are further away from the one you love, your love can grow stronger. When the one you love is right there with you, you do not feel their absence in the same way. יראה is the opposite: when a person has awe of someone, the awe is much greater when he is in the presence of that person.

Those were the מידות of אברהם and יצחק. אברהם's עבודה was through אהבה. Because love holds across distance, אברהם was able to first set up his tent and make everybody comfortable; he was able to stay at a distance for longer, because that was his way of serving ה׳, through love. Only afterward did he come closer, with the עבודה of building the altar. יצחק was the opposite. His עבודה was through יראה, and יראה needs closeness: in order to feel the awe, you have to be near. So when יצחק came to a place, he had to first put up the altar, to do the עבודה, to be close to ה׳. That was the expression of his יראה. And then, since he could not be there constantly, he went and built his tent.

The Rav added that we see the same idea in the field: "ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב", "And יצחק went out to supplicate in the field toward evening" (בראשית כד, סג). יצחק, the Rav said, was "the first ברסלבר": the field is where he did his התבודדות. He was always connected to ה׳; but he needed to build that altar first, so that he could come close.

And the Rav said that we have to be able to do both. We need both אהבה and יראה, and we have to bring קדושה into the mundane as well, into the things we do in our daily lives.

## Shabbos Day

### "החמדת ...בגדי עשו": The Perfect Picture, or the Whole Person

רבן שמעון בן גמליאל said: All my days I served my father, yet I did not serve him even a hundredth as well as עשו served his. I served my father in soiled clothes, but wore clean clothes when I went out. עשו would serve his father only in royal garments, for he felt that this was what his father's honor deserved (בראשית רבה סה, טז).

The Rav brought a question from פשיסחא: if it is so important to change one's clothing before serving a father, why couldn't רבן שמעון בן גמליאל simply do that? Man the grill, prepare the food, go change, and bring your father the food. What is the difference between his way of serving his father and עשו's?

The Rav explained that עשו was complete. That is in his name: "ויקראו שמו עשו" (בראשית כה, כה). As רש"י explains, he came out made, fully formed. יעקב is named for the עקב, the heel (בראשית כה, כו), which touches the ground as a person keeps moving forward. עשו wanted to put forward the perfect picture for his father. He never wanted his father to see the things he was doing, the parts of himself that needed work. So he would put on clean clothing, and his father would see עשו coming in, in clean clothing, serving him food. That was the כיבוד אב that עשו had.

רבן שמעון בן גמליאל was saying: I want my father to see the whole me. We all come with bad stuff; we all come not with broken parts, but with parts that we need to work on. And that is the great עבודה. A relationship with a father is much more wholesome when he can see your deficiencies as well, and that is what רבן שמעון בן גמליאל allowed his father to see.

The Rav said that we see this in our own עבודת ה'. We see it a lot before אלול, and throughout the year whenever a person is moved to do תשובה: a person takes something upon himself. We go to ה' with all of ourselves; we present ourselves to ה' with all of ourselves. We do not have to hide the deficiencies that we have. That is the whole עבודה. Yes, we have deficiencies, and we come with them.

And the Rav said that this applies in all the relationships in our lives. We are humans; we are people. If we want to have a real relationship with somebody, they can see it: we should be vulnerable and let them see our deficiencies while we are in the relationship. This applies between a husband and a wife, and between a parent and a child. You have to be vulnerable in order to do this.

And this, the Rav concluded, is in every aspect of עבודת ה'. As the Rav says so often, עבודת ה' does not just mean sitting and learning. יעקב was growing, and that is great. But עשו was coming from the field, "ויבא עשו מן השדה והוא עיף", "And עשו came in from the field, and he was exhausted" (בראשית כה, כט), and that work, too, could be עבודה. What עשו brought before his father, though, was the perfect picture. A real relationship has room for the whole person.

## Shalosh Seudos

### "הקל קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו": Raising the Hands Above the Head

The Rav began, parenthetically, with רבקה אמנו. When the children struggled within her, "ויתרוצצו הבנים בקרבה... ותלך לדרש את ה'", "And the children struggled within her... and she went to inquire of ה'" (בראשית כה, כב), she went to inquire in the בית מדרש of שם (רש"י שם). The Rav asked: why שם? Her father-in-law was אברהם אבינו; why did she not go to him? The Rav answered that אברהם would come home full of excitement about the teachings of שם and עבר: did you hear what שם said today? Did you hear that דבר תורה? He instilled in his family a regard for שם, and that carried רבקה. She said to herself: who does my father-in-law talk about all the time? שם. So I will go to שם for this.

And the Rav said that there is something important here for every father and every רבי. It is possible to always be saying: oh, you heard that speech; he missed this, he missed that. But if you instill in your family, and in yourself, that you can always see the positive, that is how רבקה ended up going to שם.

Then the Rav turned to the ברכות of יצחק. What was יצחק's thought process? Why did he want to give the ברכות to עשו? And what are we to make of the unusual back-and-forth, "אתה זה בני עשו ויאמר אני", "Are you my son עשו? And he said, I am" (בראשית כז, כד)?

The Rav explained the חשבון of יצחק. There are two things: there is דיבור and there is מעשה, the word and the deed, and the world needs both of them in order to make things happen. עשו was the מעשה, the doer; that is his name, עשו, made, done. And יעקב was the דיבור. יצחק had this concept in mind.

The Rav compared it to קין and הבל. קין was a worker of the ground, a farmer, and הבל was a shepherd. The Rav suggested that הבל did not want to deal with the ground, because it had been cursed. קין brought his קרבן and הבל brought his, and קין was upset that הבל's קרבן was accepted and his was not. ה' told קין: "הלוא אם תיטיב שאת", "Surely, if you improve, you will be lifted up" (בראשית ד, ז), and the רמב"ן explains that, as the firstborn, he could rise even higher than his brother (רמב"ן בראשית ד, ז). The Rav drew out the lesson: that is the work of מעשה, to take the physical and elevate it into the spiritual.

The Rav brought the comparison back to here. יצחק wanted to give the ברכות of the ground: "ויתן לך האלהים מטל השמים ומשמני הארץ", "May ה' give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fat of the earth" (בראשית כז, כח). The earth should be עשו's portion. But יעקב saw that עשו had stepped away from that עבודה: he was not going to be the one to elevate the physical. So יעקב went to get the ברכות, because he knew that his father's vision, עשו as the מעשה and יעקב as the דיבור, was not going to work.

And that, the Rav said, is the meaning of יצחק's words: "הקל קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו", "The voice is the voice of יעקב, and the hands are the hands of עשו" (בראשית כז, כב). The קול is the דיבור, the spiritual; the ידים are the מעשה, the physical. The hands can rise above the head: the head represents שכל, the intellect, and the hands show how high action can reach. That is how the Rav explained יעקב's words, "אנכי עשו בכרך", "I am עשו, your firstborn" (בראשית כז, יט). He was saying to יצחק: The עבודה you want your firstborn

to do, to elevate the physical into the spiritual, is the work I am taking on. What you wanted עשו to do, I am going to do.

The Rav then asked about a later פרשה. When יעקב sends מלאכים to עשו, he instructs them: "כה תאמרון לאדני לעשו, כה אמר עבדך יעקב: עם לבן גרתי", "So shall you say to my lord עשו: so says your servant יעקב, I have sojourned with לבן" (בראשית לב, ה). The Rav asked: first of all, are we even allowed to give חניפה, flattery, to a רשע? And not only that: even if you are going to greet him, then tell the מלאכים what to tell him. Why are you already calling him "my lord" when you are just giving the instructions? The Rav answered that at that time, יעקב honestly saw עשו as still able to play that superior role: he was still able to take his place, his proper place. So it was not חניפה at all; יעקב honestly saw him that way at that point, and that is why he called him "my lord".

And what did יעקב himself do? His fourteen years in the בית מדרש of עבר had been before he came to לבן (מגילה יז ע"א). After his years with לבן and his meeting with עשו, he came to שכם and "ויקן את חלקת השדה", "he bought the parcel of land" (בראשית לג, יח–יט). The Rav explained the purchase this way: if עשו would not take on the work of elevating the physical, יעקב himself would have to connect to the ground and take on the work of מעשה.

## Editorial note

These teachings were prepared from a listener's recollection and are presented in edited form, not as a verbatim transcript. Source references in parentheses were added in preparation.