

The Two Akeida's (2023)

If we go according to the Rashban, who brings down that the Akeida was a punishment for desecrating the miraculous birth of Yitzchak with a needless political alliance, we see something similar in this week's Parsha. After the ratification of that original alliance with Avimelech, we read about further degeneration and assimilation of Esav and his intermarriages followed by Yitzchak's blessing which is like a second Akeida in a way. In the first Akeida the 'body' of Israel was almost destroyed and in the second Akeida the 'soul' of Israel was almost destroyed.

According to the Zohar at the Akeida the female soul of Itzchak went into the Ram and was slaughtered while a new male soul was now able to continue and be the progenitor of our Nation. Unlike the separation from Ishmael that was required for Yitzchak to progress, in this new Akeida a 'transformation' was required for Yacov to continue. Yacov had to borrow some of the attributes of his twin brother.

It is interesting to note that it is extremely rare to find an Ishmaelite convert, while throughout history most converts have come from the family of Esav. Esav's mother was Jewish so there is a closer connection. Alternatively, there are many Jews who escape into the world of Esav precisely because of a similarity that deceives them. The gematria of Esav is 'peace', but why would our warlike brother be related to this name? Rav Biderman brings down:

The Baal HaTurim writes that עשׂו is the same gematriya as שלום, peace. Eisav is peace?! He is the exact opposite of peace! What is the Baal HaTurim telling us? We can explain that Eisav made peace with the yetzer hara. He decided that instead of living a life full of inner conflict, he would make peace with the yetzer hara and let the yetzer hara have his way.

Esav makes peace with the devil. We see this on a national level as well. In the house of Lavan at the White House in the USA, they are concerned with humanitarian aid for our nazi enemies. Three hundred thousand Jews marched to the house of Lavan this week and they were welcomed and embraced. But the bear hug of our brother who sympathizes with our cause also feels the pain of the rapists and butchers we have displaced.

My friend Michael said recently that because we do not expel Ishamael as we were commanded to do, he succeeds in expelling us. Because we do not trick Esav out of the birthright, he tricks us with his woke philosophy and globalism, that causes us to lose whatever legitimate claim we had to Israel. The mothers of our nation understood that it was our merciful nature that threatened our survival. Avraham was hoping Ishmael would do teshuva but Sarah understood he was beyond the pale. Yitzchak thought Esav would also do teshuva but Rivka understood that he was beyond repair as well.

Yitzchak was surprised to hear the voice of Yacov with the hands of Esav. Maybe this is what he had always hoped for. Rivka understood that indeed it is essential for the voice of Yakov to

employ the hands of Esav, however the essence of our Nation must continue with Yacov and the hands of Esav are only tools to protect the Holy nation. It can never be the other way around.

I heard a similar idea from two soldiers in Gaza this week as they gave a dvar Torah. Among the ruins of Gaza, they sat on two confiscated armchairs and explained that they are now sitting in the same place Yitzchak sat, in Gerar which is Gaza. The IDF, they explained, are the hands of Esav, but the voice remains the voice of Yacov.

On Simchat Torah along with the massacres many idols were slaughtered, like the Ram caught by his horns. There is a new Yitzchak now that has risen from the ashes. Are we able to rise to the 11th test where Avraham proclaims his sovereignty as he buries his dead? It seems Yacov had learned from his grandfather that one must pay the price and redeem the promise of Israel and make it a political reality. Maybe because he went in the way of his grandfather instead of paying dearly, he received the birthright from Esav for practically nothing.

When Yitzchak 'proclaimed' in the valley of Gerar like his father Avraham had done and called out in the name of Hashem, Avimelech responded by praising Yitzchak. Strengthening conditional alliances again, however, will lead to Yacov's exile. Will the reborn Yitzchak continue to employ an Esav type arrogance by threatening the might of the IDF without invoking the name of God? Or will Rivka cry out to Hashem and use the tools of Esav to proclaim and enforce our birthright and Jewish identity?

As we said in the opening, if we go according to the Rashban, who brings down that the Akeida was a punishment, why then do we read this passage each morning in our siddur? Why do we ask Hashem to remember the Akeida? If it was a punishment, why would we want Hashem to remember this in our time of distress? Let me suggest that precisely in the times that we have been punished for our collective sins, and whether we understand this or not, or taken stock of how we arrived here, our response has been to support each other and sacrifice for each other despite our differences, then this is truly a time of potential favor and mercy from above. The Akeida begins with (Elokim) the God of judgment and ends with (Hashem Yireh) the God of mercy.

There are epic times where our Nation is sifted and shaken up through slaughter and sacrifice that maybe could have been prevented but nevertheless it is no longer business as usual and each one must do a cheshbon nephesh and examine where he stands. Some are putting on the hairy arms of Esav, while others are re-connecting with their voice of Yacov. After the Akeida, Yitzchak became a new man. After the blessing of Yitzchak, Yacov became a new man. When a Jew is facing the destruction of the body and the destruction of the soul, he needs to strengthen both.

May we proclaim loudly Gaza is now ours. And to Esav our frenemy in the white house let us remind him that if he wishes to do business with Israel, we can do business. If it is in his interest to assist us, we can assist each other, however we do not need any conditional support and there is no two-state solution. There is one Israel with one body and one soul. When we

proclaim our nationhood and our God, the nations will praise us and we will have nothing to fear. The price we pay will be minimal. At most it will be the cost of a bowl of soup.

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