

# CLASS 28 - TOLDOS

*by Rabbi Heshy Grossman*

Of all the Avos, the life of Yitzchak remains an enigma.

Yitzchak is silent.

Even at the great moments of his life, his role is never clearly stated.

Silently, he walks to the Akeida.

Unknowingly, he watches in silence as his blessing is manipulated by his wife and son, while the future of Klal Yisrael is snatched from Eisav's hands.

Yitzchak has learned his lesson. His brother Yishmael was banished from Avraham's home for being Mitzachek, a laughter of derision and scorn.

Yet - Yitzchak's very name is laughter.

Yitzchak represents those things in life that are not easily understood.

He will laugh - but not now.

1

His shining moment - Akeidas Yitzchak.

Why is it the Akeida, the binding of Yitzchak, that is highlighted? Would not Hakravas Yitzchak, or Hala'as Yitzchak be a more appropriate term? Was it the binding at the altar that was central to this great event?

The Akeida was not a mere moment in time. It was more than an act of inspiration.

Yitzchak sacrificed the balance of his life.

Let us explain.

Each of the Avos exemplify particular characteristics that reflect the essence of G-d's revelation. While Avraham is the manifestation of Chesed, Yitzchak brings to earth the G-dly trait called Din.

G-d directs the world as a heavenly king, in precise conjunction with His preordained will. The slightest digression activates a Heavenly response that sets the world aright. This is pure justice, a Din that often demands punishment and retribution.

The man who actualizes this dimension of existence in his daily life exhibits a sense of everlasting obligation, forever committed to the requirements of G-d's law. He recognizes that G-d's word must be, and he identifies himself with the inflexible nature of His binding decree.

As secular jurists have noted, the very term 'obligation' is an invention of the religious mind. Common law knows only of enforceable rights, and by what force can man be obliged?

Yitzchak made obligation his life.

Understanding completely that nothing can be but the will of G-d, he ties himself to His word. From the moment of the Akeida and on, Yitzchak will not make a move of his own, living a life on the altar.

Yes: it is the act of binding that symbolizes the magnitude of Yitzchak's sacrifice, surrendering his will to a higher authority.

He stands before the King - eternally.

In the presence of the king, servants dare not make an unmeasured move, for royal functions are executed with precision and exactitude.

This is Yitzchak, a life of Din.

2

*"And the youths matured, Eisav's was a man who knew how to hunt, a man of the field...."* (Breishis 25:27)

*"...Ish Batel - an idling man..."* (Rashi, ad. loc.)

Eisav's whiles his life away, no rules, and no obligations, searching for the nearest bowl of beans.

How does Yitzchak beget an Eisav's, the evil son who lives by the sword?

The answer is this: Eisav's shares his father's affinity for Din, but he takes it in the wrong direction.

Yitzchak knows that whatever G-d wills must be.

Eisav's thinks that since he is, therefore he must be.

He knows of obligation, only it is the world who is obliged to him.

G-d is the seat of Din, and Eisav's puts himself on His throne. It follows then, that years later, it is the descendants of Eisav's, heirs of the Roman empire, who turn man into God.

How does this idea square with the description of Eisav's as an Ish Batel?

The Vilna Gaon describes the unnatural pull of the inclination towards Bittul.

*"...they desire to speak Devarim Betailim. Although there is no worldly pleasure in it, still, it is particularly sweet ..... their spirit will not quiet or rest until they speak words of frivolity, and from this*

they have pleasure...." (Commentary to Mishlei,1:22-3)

What is the nature of this Yetzer Hara, the desire to idle one's time?

When people gather for idle conversation, the first topic of discussion is the solution of life's problems. Whether it be President Clinton's nuclear disarmament policy, or the latest flood tolls in rural India, talk shows are filled with Joes from Des Moines who share their thoughts with the world.

The urge to gossip is quite similar. When one finds a particular person truly disturbing, he finds no rest until he can sit in a quiet circle of friends, unload his pain and anger, and slice his foe to pieces with a few well-placed words.

Why is Lashon Hara so satisfying?

In person, I may feel powerless and humiliated, but, at least here, in this room, I have killed him.

Speech is a form of control, a tool of power. The words may be idle, but they define one's world.

It is Eisav's's unbridled pursuit of power that is the impetus for idle chatter.

I may have no interest in the political unrest in Fiji, or in man's quest to find live worms on Mars, but an hour spent reading the New York Times provides the illusion that all of life is in my hands.

Twenty-two minutes and we'll give you the world.

3

The Torah has words of a different sort.

Boruch SheAmar V'Haya HaOlam.

The Torah obligates.

The word of G-d suffers no denials, His will binding all the world in forced compliance.

Eisav's, on the other hand, speaks of his own world, an imaginary existence in which he is obligated only to satisfy his fancy.

He idles away his time, exercising his right to do as he pleases.

In the enlightened world view of modern society, man is prodded to demand his rights, resisting any infringement on his personal liberty.

Why is there never a protest rally in support of fulfilling one's obligations?

At a time when man is king, his idle words silence the sound of G-d's creation, filling the air with blaring laughter, the call of those who know no tomorrow.

And the righteous man, ever mindful of his duties, suffers silently the taunting jeers of the fool.

"Ish Ba'ar Lo Yaida, U'Ksil Lo Yavin Es Zos - A boor cannot know, nor can a fool understand this:...."  
(Tehillim 92:7)

The Ksil sees the flowering of a world intoxicated by its own success, mindful only of its crusade for fame and fortune. Oblivious to the call of responsibility, he ridicules the pitiful few who faithfully heed His word.

".....Bifroach Reshaim Kemo Esev, VaYatzitzu Kol Poalei Aven - LeHishamdam Adei Ad."

"....when the wicked bloom like grass, and all evildoers blossom - it is to destroy them for eternity."

Eisav's sees things as they are, selling his soul for a sweet-tasting moment.

The wise man sees the future.

Rooted to one spot, he knows that true success is the measure of a tree that's solidly planted.

Yitzchak too will laugh - and he will laugh best.

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