

פרשת וירא

שבו לכם פה עם החמור ואני והנער נלכה עד כה [כב,ה]

אברהם told ישמעאל and אליעזר to wait at the bottom of the mountain until they return from the שפחה כנענית, a gentile maidservant, and a Jewish father is not considered his son and is not Jewish. This is learned from the words עם החמור, עם, with the donkey, but is read עם החמור, people similar to donkeys, without lineage. There doesn't seem to be any correlation between this halacha and the story of the עקידה. Why does the Torah specifically choose this פסוק to teach this to us?

The Beis Halevi explains that Hashem had already told אברהם that his primary descendants will be through יצחק and not through ישמעאל, as the פסוק says כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע. אברהם had indeed internalized this and considered only יצחק his true son. Now Hashem was commanding him to sacrifice this only son. אברהם was concerned that perhaps now as he goes to sacrifice יצחק, he might try to comfort himself by saying that ישמעאל was still alive. This would not only cause him to go against what Hashem told him that only יצחק should be considered his son, but would also diminish the נסיון, the test that Hashem was putting him through. Part of the challenge was for אברהם to give up his only son, and now he would be consoling himself with ישמעאל. Therefore, אברהם was constantly מחזק and strengthening himself to regard יצחק as his only son, and putting ישמעאל in the same category as a donkey; as if he had no relation to him. This is why the Torah teaches us here the status of a person born from a שפחה. The Torah is hinting to us the extent of how אברהם fulfilled Hashem's mitzvos. Just like a child born to a שפחה is halachically considered חמור in relation to his father, so too ישמעאל was considered like a חמור to אברהם.

We can see from here the great אהבה, the great love אברהם had toward Hashem and how he directed it toward serving Him. He could have made it easier for himself by comforting himself with ישמעאל but he didn't. His actions were a natural outgrowth of his tremendous love for Hashem. When somebody is demonstrating his love for another, there is no such thing as doing it the easy way. On the contrary, the more effort involved, will demonstrate his love that much more. When we do mitzvos, we don't want to do them the easy way, but rather in a way that truly shows our love for Hashem.

Have a good Shabbos,

Rabbi Yitzchok Davis

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