

# MESHECH CHOCHMAH

## Parshas Vayeira

### “Hashem Will See” – The Origins of Jewish Nature

וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא ה' וַיִּרְאֶה

*Avraham called the name of the place “Hashem will see.” (22:14)*

Understandably, the name given by Avraham to the mountain where the *Akeydah* took place is somewhat enigmatic. What exactly is it that “Hashem will see,” and how is all this resultant from the *Akeydah*?

#### Thoughts and Actions

The Gemara<sup>1</sup> states that if a Jew intended to perform a mitzvah but was prevented from doing so, his intention is reckoned as a mitzvah. Conversely, an intention to sin that was not acted upon is not reckoned as a sin. However, this is only true for the Jewish people, not for the other nations of the world. What lies behind this seeming preferential treatment?

The Meshech Chochmah explains the matter as follows. A thought that reflects the essential inclination of the person is taken note of, for a true expression of the person has occurred, even if only in thought. The inner nature of the Jewish people tends toward good. Therefore, a positive intention – which is reflective of their essence – is substantial and recognized, while a negative

<sup>1</sup> Kiddushin 40a.

intention is ascribed to external factors until such time as it becomes a concrete act. Since only the Jewish people have this nature, only their positive intentions are accredited.

The follow up question, of course, is: On what basis does the nature of the Jewish people differ from that of the other nations? When did this occur and to what can it be ascribed?

The Meshech Chochmah explains that as part of the fallen state of man following the sin of the *Eitz Hadaas*, the default inner inclination of mankind tends toward evil. However, the *Avos* succeeded in reversing their core inclination and tending it toward good. A crucial and defining moment in this process was the time of the *Akeydah*, when Yitzchak was prepared to nullify his entire existence in fulfillment of Hashem's will. Through this, he so firmly actualized and internalized the inclination towards the Divine will that it then became embedded in his nature – to the degree that it could be bequeathed to his descendants as their own core nature. Indeed, the many Jews throughout the ages, who likewise were prepared to offer their lives rather than abandon their allegiance to Hashem, received the capacity to do so from the formative episode of the *Akeydah*.

### Sealing the Judgement

The Yerushalmi in *Maseches Sanhedrin*<sup>2</sup> states that when Hashem judges, He does not do so alone; rather, He assembles a Heavenly Court of ministering angels to adjudicate together with Him. However, the Yerushalmi adds that the final sealing of the judgement is performed by Hashem alone.

Why is the Heavenly Court excluded from the final stage of the judgment?

The full judgement of a person will take into account anything that may be reckoned as a merit for him. This includes, as we have seen, a person's intent to do a mitzvah, even if the mitzvah itself never materialized. However, people's thoughts are not discernable to angels, only to Hashem.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, after adjudicating with the Heavenly Court over matters that they can recognize, i.e. the person's deeds, Hashem then proceeds to seal the judgment by Himself, incorporating merits of which only He is aware, i.e. the person's positive thoughts and intentions.

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2 1:1.

3 The Meshech Chochmah notes that this assertion is in contrast to the position taken by Tosafos (*Shabbos* 12b s.v. *she'ain*) that angels too can discern a person's thoughts.

## A Name and a Prayer

With the above in mind, we can understand the meaning of the name that Avraham gave to the mountain at the time of the *Akeydah* – “*Hashem will see.*” With this, Avraham was praying on his descendants’ behalf, in light of what had just occurred on this mountain, with its implications for establishing Jewish nature as fundamentally aligned with Hashem’s will. Thus, he said, when judging the Jewish people, “*Hashem will see*” – that which only Hashem can see, i.e. their positive intentions, and include them when coming to seal their judgment.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Perhaps we may add that by taking the essential Jewish nature into account, this will affect their judgment not only by taking into account their positive intentions, but it will affect the way everything they have done – both good and bad – is judged. More weight will be ascribed to their good deeds, seeing as those deeds represent their essence, while their bad deeds will be emptied of essential significance, since those deeds are not a product of their core will. Indeed, in this light, we may further suggest that when we beseech Hashem on Rosh Hashanah in the conclusion of the blessing of *Zichronos* to “remember the *Akeydah* of Yitzchak for his descendants today with mercy,” we are not just asking that Hashem take that epic event into account as a merit for us; rather, we are asking that he recall the *Akeydah* to the extent that it defines us, and judge everything that we have done in light of that definition.