

קלא די עקב

Parshas Vayeyiro

Cheshvan 5772 November 2011

Heaven Sent

וַיִּקְרָא מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶל הָגָר מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם

“An angel of Hashem called to Hagar from the heavens.” (21:17)

The Meshech Chochmah notes a difference between this case of an angel conversing with Hagar and a previous one. In the Possuk quoted above, which occurs after Hagar and Yishmoel have been sent away by Avrohom, the Possuk informs us that the angel called to Hagar from the heavens. In contrast, during the previous occurrence, as related in Parshas Lech Lecha, when Hagar felt oppressed by Soroh and ran away, the Possuk tells us that the angel actually appeared to Hagar. Why was it, asks the Meshech Chochmah, that the angel appeared to Hagar in the first instance, but only spoke to her from heaven in the latter? He answers, that the difference lies in the manner of Hagar's exodus from Avrohom's house. In Parshas Lech Lecha, Hagar fled of her own accord. This meant that she was required to eventually return, and would once again become part of a household where angels were commonplace. As such, Hagar had not lost the ability, which was conferred upon her by her status as a member of Avrohom's household, to see, and converse with angels. However, when Avrohom banished Hagar she lost this status and by extension this ability, which explains why the angel merely spoke to her from the heavens and did not appear in person.

The Meshech Chochmah adds a further understanding to this, to explain why the Possuk tells us that the angel, who told Avrohom not to sacrifice his son, is referred to by the Possuk as speaking from heaven. He writes that the place where the Akeidoh occurred was invested with a degree of holiness similar to that of the Kodesh Kedoshim (holy of holies) on Yom Kippur. This level of holiness is the level of a direct manifestation of Hashem's presence, and the Halocho is that due to this high level, no-one is allowed to enter the Kodesh Kedoshim whilst the Kohen Godol performs his duties. This even applies to angels, since the Possuk refers to them as having human facial characteristics. Therefore, it was impossible for an angel to appear to Avrohom at the Akeidoh, just as no angel could enter the Kodesh Kedoshim during the Avodah of Yom Kippur.

Harav Shimshon Pincus, quotes this Meshech Chochmah, but notes that the second half of his explanation, can actually be used to give an alternative answer to the original question; why the angel called to Hagar from heaven the second time instead of appearing in person. He explains, that the first time the angel called to Hagar was after Soroh had oppressed her, however Hagar, whilst sad, was not in any real pain or anguish. In contrast, the second time an angel appeared was when Hagar was sitting next to her son who was dying. Yishmael was suffering from severe dehydration, and Hagar cried out in pain at seeing her son dying before her eyes. Chazal (Shabbos 12) tell us, that it is permissible to Daven in Aramaic next to the bed of an ill person, which is not normally permitted, since Hashem Himself attends the bedside of a sick person. The place where Yishmael lay dying was therefore similar to the place of the Akeidoh, and the Kodesh Kodoshim, in as much as it was the place of a full revelation and manifestation of Hashem's presence. It was therefore impossible for an angel to appear in person to Hagar, just as it was impossible for one to appear to Avrohom at the Akeidoh, or to enter the Kodesh Kedoshim during the Avodah.

Kindly Cruel

וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי בֵּן

“He said, ‘My Father,’ He said, ‘I am here my son.’” (22:7)

The Kli Yokor notes that the Possuk does not give us the details of this conversation between Avrohom and Yitzchok. Rather, the Possuk then continues with a separate point; Yitzchok enquiring as to where the lamb is for the sacrifice which they are clearly planning to offer up. To explain this, the Kli Yokor writes that Yitzchok was actually nervous. He instinctively realised that his father was intending to sacrifice him. An action which in his mind, could only be understood as that his father had ceased to love him, and become a cruel person.

It was to test this that Yitzchok called out, “Father!” Yitzchok wanted to see if Avrohom would respond, meaning he still viewed himself as his father, or not, thereby illustrating a total severing of the familial bond. When Avrohom did reply, with the words, “I am here my son,” this reassured Yitzchok and led him to ask as to the whereabouts of the lamb for the sacrifice.

Merry Days

וַתֹּאמֶר שֹׂרָה צָחֵק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים

“G-D has made merriment for me.” (21:6)

This comment of Soroh reflects her late stage of life when Hashem allowed her a child. The Berditchever explains why Hashem delayed His goodness until Avrohom and Soroh were so old. He writes that Hashem wanted them to spend their early years distressed over their lack of children, so that their rejoicing, when eventually granted their wish, would be all the greater. This is because, he continues, no-one appreciates anything they have not struggled for. It was this that Soroh was hinting at when she referred to Hashem by the name G-D, which refers to His attribute of strict justice. Soroh was hinting that it was the strictness of Hashem, in withholding children from her that had made the day she eventually had her son, such a day of rejoicing and merriment.