

There is a fascinating discussion brought down in the wonderful Torah journal קול התורה, which comes out twice a year from England. In this week's Parsha, ויצא, it delves into an intriguing problem regarding the tremendous נבואה that יעקב אבינו was זוכה to, the vision of the מַצֵּב אֲרֶצָה. In this נבואה, he saw הקדוש ברוך הוא and מלאכים. Upon experiencing this, he exclaimed (28:16): אָכֵן יֵשׁ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה and then further states (28:17): וַיֵּיכָר וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה נִזְרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹהִים - This is the place of the בית המקדש - not only for now, but for all דורות. It is a tremendously holy place.

The מפרשים raise an interesting question, brought down from a rebbi in Bnei Brak named R' Aaron Goodman. The phrasing in the פסוק is peculiar: אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹהִים. If you or I were speaking, we would say בֵּית אֱלֹהִים, כִּי זֶה הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה, מֶה נִזְרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה. What is the תורה teaching us with this specific phrasing?

The חתם סופר addresses this in שו"ת חתם סופר, יורה דעה סימן רל"ג, in the name of his rebbi, R' Nosson Adler. He explains, based on מדרשים, a critical הלכה relevant to us. The מדרש states that in ארץ ישראל, עבודה זרה was so rampant that every high place - every גבוה or גבעה נשואה - was associated with עבודה זרה. The question then arises: how could הקדוש ברוך הוא choose a place that had עבודה זרה to house the המקדש? Wouldn't the טומאה from the עבודה זרה render the location unfit?

R' Nosson Adler answers with another מדרש, which explains that when אברהם אבינו came for the עקדה and saw the המקדש from afar, as we know (22:7) וַיֵּיכָר אֶת הַמָּקוֹם מֵרֶחֶק. At that time, the המקדש was a valley, not a mountain. אברהם exclaimed that it was not fitting for the הקדוש ברוך הוא to dwell in a valley, and at that very moment, a miraculous event occurred: the valley rose and became a mountain. This מדרש asserts that because the mountain did not exist before that moment, it had never been associated with עבודה זרה.

Moreover, אברהם אבינו was מקדש the mountain and was קונה it; it was given to him. Once it belonged to אברהם, it could no longer be subjected to עבודה זרה. The מדרש emphasizes that even if others placed gechkas on it, they had no רשות because the mountain belonged to אברהם, and as we know, a person cannot דבר שאינו שלו. Thus, when יעקב אבינו said בֵּית אֱלֹהִים, אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹהִים, he was emphasizing that this place was inherently holy, never tainted by עבודה זרה, and therefore fit for the הקדוש ברוך הוא to dwell.

This מדרש and its message are powerful for us in many ways. It teaches us that through our words and actions, we too can cause tremendous spiritual effects in both עולם הזה and עולם הבא. While we cannot compare ourselves to the אבות הקדושים, who had unparalleled spiritual capabilities, we must not underestimate our potential.

May we use our abilities to perform מצוות and מעשים טובים to be מזכה ourselves and all of ישראל, and bezras Hashem, further the במהרה בימינו אמן!

