

בשבת

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN
RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS



WORTH THE RISK

Bursting through the door, a famished Eisav spotted the red lentil soup that Yaakov had been preparing — a mourner's meal — and demanded it. Earlier in the day, Eisav had murdered a man and it left him exhausted. Yaakov was happy to help, but for a price. Though they were twins, Eisav had been born first, and therefore had all the rights of the firstborn. This included the *berachos* that Yitzchok was going to bestow upon one of his children, and as well, the right to do the *Avodah*, and bring *korbonos* to Hashem.

Reasoning that the wicked Eisav was not fit for such a noble position, Yaakov offered to sell the soup for the rights of the firstborn.¹ Rashi² explains that Eisav did not sell the rights out of hand, but asked Yaakov about the requirements of the office — what would the firstborn be expected to do? Yaakov explained some of the laws, including the fact that a violation of some would be punishable by death. Eisav determined that the risk was not worth it, and sold his birthright for a pot of soup.

The *passuk* then declares that in doing so, Eisav disdained the *avodah* of Hashem. However, R' Moshe Feinstein³ (1895–1986) questions this assertion. Eisav did not disdain the *avodah*, rather, he held it in awe! Because of his great concern and understanding of the precise and detailed requirements of the job, he felt inadequate for the position. Why is this held against him?

R' Moshe explains that of course it is not a simple task to carry out the *avodah* properly. And, in fact, it may be fraught with danger, as a single misstep can lead to disastrous consequences. However, if a person held *avodas Hashem* in the proper esteem, their concerns would not stand in the way. Therefore, since Eisav was willing to part with the glorious role of serving Hashem, he clearly did not have proper respect for what it truly meant.

There are times when we are called upon to be role models, or to lead by example. Other times, we may have to make choices in *avodas Hashem* that won't please everyone. It may be easier to shrink into the background, to attempt to shift the responsibility to another. That is not the way — the opportunity for *avodas Hashem* supersedes our personal discomfort, and when we realize that, we will be following in the ways of our great-grandfather, Yaakov.

1 Bereishis 25:29-34

2 Bereishis 25:32 s.v. הנה אנכי

3 Darash Moshe on Bereishis 25:32

**The opportunity
for *avodas Hashem*
supersedes
our personal
discomfort.**

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Avodas Hashem is generally not simple, and when it comes with added responsibilities or obligations, it can make it that much more difficult.

What strategies can one employ to deal with the pressures and difficulties one may find, especially when attempting to rise above one's comfort level?

Sometimes it can be something as simple as returning to basics. It is extremely important to understand what it is that we are trying to accomplish in this world.¹ Without that first step, anything we build will fall apart.

And though many of us can easily explain that our purpose is *avodas Hashem*, to do *mitzvos* and come close to Hashem, there is a vast chasm between knowing that basic fact, and passionately feeling it.

That feeling comes with constant repetition,² the drumbeat of a reminder, "This is why I am here, this is exactly where I will shine." By doing so, we will be well equipped to deal with any challenges that come our way.

1 *Mesillas Yesarim* Chap. 1

2 *Mesillas Yesarim*, Introduction

לעיני אבינו וזקנינו אברהם בן פסח (נלב"ע כט חשוון תשל"ה)

הנחיל מסורת יקרה: שם טוב - קידוש ה' - שלום

Sponsored by the Berzansky & Bensoussan Families

To sponsor, or receive by email, please contact us at info@ohr-yisrael.com or call 732-451-GROW

“
Our direct tradition is clear: the key to arousing our hearts to feel that which we know in our minds, is to practice R' Yisrael Salanter zt"l's formula called Mussar B'hispailus - the method of studying Mussar which unifies our intellect and our emotions as one. - Rav Henoch Leibowitz zt"l, Chiddushei HaLev vol. 1, pg. 34

THE HONOR IS MINE

Rabbi Yisroel Presser stepped through the door into the cold night air. "Sleep on it, and we'll discuss tomorrow. I think it's a good idea, and I hope you do too."

After he left, Dovid Kushner sat down at the dining room table, across from his waiting wife. "So, what do you think?" he asked, already knowing what his wife would say.

"You know how I feel about this," Shulamis responded. "And I know how you feel about this as well."

Dovid nodded. "I always liked to stay in the background. It's never hampered our ability to help the *yeshiva* out, financially or otherwise. But Reb Yisroel is making a pretty strong case for the dinner, and I'm just not sure what to do."

"He said that by honoring us, it would really help the *yeshiva*. What do you make of that?"

Dovid shrugged. "It's hard to know... I suppose some others might be inspired to help as well? I don't know."

Dovid and Shulamis sat in silence for a few minutes. "Let me call Rabbi Brody. I'll hear what he has to say."

Dovid dialed his *rebbe* of many years, going back to his days in high school. After detailing a few of the things he and his wife had done for the local *yeshiva*, he explained how they wanted to honor the both of them at the upcoming dinner. However, they very strongly felt it was not for them, it was simply uncomfortable.

"You remind me of *Shaul HaMelech*!" said Rabbi Brody, his trademark laugh in his voice. "He also didn't want the *kovod*... but Dovid, *Klal Yisrael* needs you!"

"I understand, but is there nobody else?"

"You can ask Reb Yisroel, but if the *yeshiva* feels that honoring you will inspire others to help the *yeshiva*, understand that you are trading an evening of discomfort for an eternity of bliss. I know you do more *chesed* than you told me, and I'm sure the honor is well-deserved. But that's not the point. Sometimes, no, often *avodas Hashem* takes us out of our comfort zone. As they say, get comfortable being uncomfortable!" and Rabbi Brody laughed again.

Dovid couldn't help but smile as he returned to his wife. "He said we should do it, didn't he?" she inquired.

"Yes, but..."

"I knew he would. And we're going to, aren't we?"

"It's about doing what's right. If it's what Hashem wants, then..."

"It's fine, Dovid. I'm with you, one hundred percent. Like you often say, if it's the right thing, then let's do it right."

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- A *dayan* must sit with fear and trepidation, knowing the destruction they will cause by judging improperly. Nevertheless, if one is the most fit to be a judge, it is imperative that they do so.¹
- Though *Shaul HaMelech* is praised for not wanting to become king,² he is faulted that once he was king, he should have stood up for the kingship, as representative of Hashem.³

¹ *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* 8:2-3

² *Orchos Tzadikim*, Chap. 3

³ *Yoma* 23a, and *Chidushei Aggados ad loc.* s.v. מפני שמחל