

RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS TOLDOS תשפ"ז

THE ABSENTEE VOVS IN THE PARSHA

Yitzchak was suspicious of the true identity of the individual claiming that he was Aisav who was standing before him. He remarked **הקול קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו** the voice that I am hearing sounds like Yaakov, contradictory to his hairy hands that feel like Aisav's. *Chazal* interpret Yitzchak's statement to reflect on another truth that followed Yisrael throughout their history.

(בר״ר סה כ) הקול קול יעקב **בזמן** שקולו של יעקב מצוי בבתי כנסיות **אין הידים** ידי עשו ואם לאו הידים ידי עשו

Yaakov's strength lies in his קול his voice when it was used for learning Torah and *Tefillah*. Aisav's strength was in his hands, physical force, warfare, control of others. When we have allegiance to our uniqueness of קול, with it we will defeat all of our enemies. However, if we use the brute and power to increase and focus on our materialism thereby emulating Aisav and his descendants, then we will become the conquered not the conqueror.

The question that *meforshim* ask on this *Chazal* is that its interpretation is the exact opposite of what the *passuk* says that even with the קול of Yaakov nevertheless the hands are that of Aisav that will destroy us.

To the following answer the Vilna Gaon addresses. The spelling of the word קול includes the letter *vov*. However here in Yitzchak's statement in the first קול the *vov* is missing. This is indicative that the *Kol* of Torah and *Tefillah* are incomplete and blemished. With this observation we can now read the *passuk* which fits with the words of *Chazal*. When the **קל** of Yaakov is missing its wholesomeness represented by the omitted *vov*, the hands of Aisav will overpower us. However if we bring to the table a complete *kol* with the letter *vov* we will overpower our enemies with the help of Hashem.

A hint that supports this interpretation is to see the letters that follow the word קול spelled with a *vov* and without a *vov*. Without a *vov* the letters that follow **קל** are **רמ** which is **עמלק** and . As the *passuk* says ויחנו ברפידים and Chazal say that the name רפידים are two words רפו ידים they weakened their hands from the Torah. Immediately Amalek comes and attacks them. In contrast when **קול** is spelled with a *vov* the letters that follow are **זמר** which means to cut away. With proper Torah and *Tefillah* it is we *Am Yisrael* who possess the power to cut down and destroy our enemies.

We suggest that the missing *vov* conveys our faltering state that even though we *daven* three times a day nevertheless our *davening* is not connecting to the words of *tefillah*, either because it has become rote, stale, mechanical, boring, I am ADD, previous trauma associated with *tefillah*, laziness or plain ignorance of its significance and your bonding with Hashem. The letter *vov* serves as a connection to what came previously and is therefore interpreted to mean "and". This is manifest in the word **ווין** in the *Mishkan* were the clasps that held together the two coverings on the top of the *Mishkan*. The Baal Shem Tov on the *passuk* בא אל התיבה when Hashem told Noach to come into the Ark, those same words tell every Yid to enter the words of Torah and *Tefillah* and not merely say them heartlessly (תיבה also means word).

The word *kol* without the letter *vov* can be read as *kal* which means light. Just like we find in Beer *lehavdil* the term "light" means without the full alcohol content, so too with *davening* "light" would suggest without *kavannah* and kick. To make your *Tefillah* or learning Torah "light" instead of the



required state of ראש **כבד** (heavy) as stated in Berachos perek 5 Mishnah 1, one might also take on a casual appearance such as folding your feet one on top of the other in a relaxed sitting fashion, or while looking at your phone, which is a posture which my Rebbi ztl went ballistics on during *davening* or *tefilla*. None of the two should be fulfilled with an unconcerned attitude experience.

Let us take the words of the Gaon a step further as we look at the *passuk* (Bereishis 27,8) ועתה בני שמע בקלי Rivka tells Yaakov to listen to her voice and get two kid goats which I will prepare for your father to eat so that you will be in place of Aisav to get the *berachos*. Don't be worried that perhaps your father will feel your smooth skin and thereby know that you are an imposter, for I will cover your neck and arms and hands with their hairy skins.

Here too we find the *kol* to be incomplete without a *vov*. What is the message that **this** absentee *vov* is conveying? Many times in life we are placed in positions such as family *simchas* that either make us uncomfortable or an occasion that crosses your personal level of religiosity. You have no choice and you must have this encounter. What should be your attitude and conduct? Such an inquiry was addressed concerning the Cantonists. Between 1827 and 1856, thousands of Jewish boys (some as young as six) were drafted into Cantonist schools. Jewish community councils (*kahal*) were forced to meet strict draft quotas, often targeting the poor, orphans, or marginal families, sometimes aided by kidnappers. There were no options of getting kosher food. The answer given was "you are permitted to eat the meat but don't lick the bones". Don't make the *bedieved* into a *lechatchilah*. At least try to minimize your enjoyment as much as you can.

Rivka is instructing Yaakov to impersonate Aisav to get receive his *berachos*. Yaakov symbolizes the Pillar of Emes in the world. To act in this way he is being asked to blemish his perfected *middah* of *emes*. He would rather not do so to the point of even forfeiting the *berachos* if need be. However the command of his mother to execute the plan and the heavenly *Bas Kol* that she heard, persuaded him to follow his mother's scheme.

The missing *vov* in Rivka's *kol* to Yaakov is instructing him **to listen** and also **not to listen** simultaneously. Her message was that the feeling of remorse for this very act should accompany him throughout this experience making and defining it as a *bedieved* an after the fact action and not an ideal preferred one at the outset. *Chazal* reveal to us that as Yaakov entered the chamber of Yitzchak he *davened* the *passuk* (Tehillim 120,2) הצילה נפשי משפת שקר By doing so his *middah* of *emes* will not be compromised – תתן אמת ליעקב.

Aisav also raises his *kol* when he finds out that Yaakov stole his *berachos* as the *passuk* says וישא ויבך **קלו** he lifted up his voice and cried. Here too we find his *kol* incomplete as it too is missing the letter *vov*. If Aisav's *kol* was compromised why then are we punished for his anguish? For on the *passuk* עד מאד **ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה** *Chazal* say that we were punished with Haman's decree of Am Yisrael's annihilation to which Mordechai responded (Esther 4,1) **ויזעק זעקה גדולה ומרה** with the same piercing anguish of Aisav's reaction to having his *berachos* hijacked by Yaakov.

Rav Avraham Schorr answers that by Aisav the *passuk* also adds to say ויבך and he cried besides the screaming. Tears are never forgotten even from an Aisav.

Rav Brazil, Gut Shabbos