TOLEDOT: The difference between GPS and a Google car

Last week we saw how Abraham Abinu sent his servant to find a good wife for his son Isaac (Itshaq). The rabbis always insisted that the woman is the key to a good Jewish family. And Abraham knew that, although Isaac was a great tsadiq (righteous man), if his wife did not accompany him, the mission of Isaac, transmitting the legacy of Abraham, would have failed. Abraham knew this from personal experience. His first son, Ishmael, did not follow him. Ishmael imitated his mother Hagar, and ended up becoming a hunter, as his maternal ancestors.

Abraham wanted for Isaac someone exactly like Ribqa. A woman who would care about practicing hesed (generosity) which is manifested when, upon being asked, one does more than expected. In this sense Ribqá was a clone of Abraham, the man who represented the epitome of Hesed.

We also see another very important element in Ribqa's personality. Ribqá has a a natural modesty (seniut). Hakhamim indicated this by the way she sat on the camel, or when she covered herself with the veil upon hearing that Isaac was approaching, etc. But as we see in the dialogue she had with Eliezer and with her own parents, her modesty did not prevent Ribqa from having her own character, and a firm personality. Ribqa knew exactly what she wanted. She knew what she had to do and she did it! Exactly like Abraham, who did what he had to do, despite having the rest of the world against him. Ribqa firmness became crucial for the fate of Abraham's legacy, and the destiny of the Jewish people.

When speaking of marriage, the modern Greeks compare the husband to the head and the wife to the neck. I propose a slightly more sophisticated model: the Jewish marriage as an automobile. Who drives the car in this model? Who is holding the wheel? That is, the husband. And the wife? The wife is the GPS.

A few days ago I was on the Belt Parkway, close to exit 17, and I had to get off at exit 31. Suddenly, my GPS (Waze) tells me: "Take Exit 18". And I, of course, thought that the GPS was

wrong, and I ignored Waze's recommendation. When I was closer to Exit 18, my Waze kept insisting "In a quarter of a mile tale exit 18, to your right". I did not move from the left lane. Belt Parkway looked beautiful ahead of me. Just before passing through Exit 18, almost as if realizing I was going to ignore it, I think my GPS screamed at me: "Take Exit 18. Exit 18!!!" . I went ahead and told to myself: Why listening to the GPS when I know this highway much better than Waze? Then, the most predictable thing happened. Close to exit 20 I hit a terrible traffic. A total standstill. I lost about 40 minutes, because as you all know, once you passed Exit 18, there are no alternative routes ….

At that moment I remembered once again the difference between my wife and I: I, the driver, posses just human vision, my limited sight ends where my eyes stop seeing. But my wife, like Waze, has satellite vision. Somehow our wives (or is it just MY wife?) see much further than us. And sometimes, if we ignore them, we suffer the consequences ….

Most probably, Ribqa first did what a GPS would do, telling Isaac: "Esav is not the right candidate to continue the legacy of Abraham". "Esau is too busy with success". "Esav lives to pursuing his material appetites". "We have to choose Ya'aqob". But Isaac did not see the flaws of Esav… and ignoring the advice of his GPS, he decided to name Esav as his spiritual heir.

Now we have to understand the difference between a car with a GPS and Google car. The GPS tells the driver: "Exit 18, Exit 18". The Google car, however, does not give instructions to the driver. The Google car *leads the car directly* to Exist 18, and saves the driver from a standstill, without consulting the driver…

In the most crucial moment, when the fate of the legacy of Abraham Abinu was at stake, Ribqa acted as a Google Car. Ribqa was chosen by Abraham for that specific mission. To save Isaac from a limited vision, from making a terrible and irreparable bad decision. Ribqa, who was so similar to Abraham, was there "instead" of Abraham. Protecting Abraham's legacy. Acting as Abraham would have acted.

By having led Isaac to assign Ya'aqob as his spiritual heir, Ribqa saved the legacy of Abraham, and in a sense, she guaranteed the existence of the Jewish people.