

א ביסל תורה

November 29, 2024

THE PARSHA NEWSLETTER
OF MAIMONIDES SCHOOL

כ"ח חשוון תשפ"ה · תולדות

The Power of תורה

By Eitan Orkaby '27

In order to get his birthright, יעקב had to trick יצחק into thinking that יעקב is in fact עשו. This was not a simple matter, so יעקב's mother רבקה helped out in disguising יעקב. After יעקב receives the birthright blessing, עשו finds out and becomes furious. He becomes so angry that "וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו בְּלִבּוֹ" "and עשו said in his heart 'when the days of mourning for my father comes I will kill יעקב, my brother'" (בראשית כ"ז:מ"א). This פסוק seems quite strange. עשו is planning to kill יעקב only until after his father dies. What is עשו waiting for? What is so special about the time period of mourning his father?

עשו answers by saying עשו did not want to cause his father pain. After his father died, however, עשו would not be causing his father any pain by killing his brother. This answer follows the opinion that the only מצוה that עשו did was respecting one's parents.

The רמב"ן agrees that עשו did not want to cause his father any distress, but adds a twist to the, what seemed like, a good deed. He adds that עשו was not worried about his father's distress, rather, עשו was worried about the blessing he received from יצחק. If עשו would have killed יעקב immediately, יצחק would have turned עשו's blessing into a curse. This is then why רבקה told יעקב to leave immediately, lest יצחק die and עשו would go running to kill יעקב.

The כלי יקר completely disregards even the notion that עשו would do any good deed. He says that עשו was figuring out the best opportunity for killing יעקב. Back when explaining what עשו and יעקב did all day, the תורה describes יעקב as a "אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים" "simple man who sits in tents" (בראשית כ"ה:כ"ז). In this case, sitting in tents

means learning תורה all day. עשו knew that when learning תורה one cannot become harmed. He therefore, was going to wait until יעקב was not learning, in order to have an opportunity to kill him. The כלי יקר explains that when sitting in the seven days of mourning, one is not allowed to learn תורה, as it will cause the mourner happiness. Only when יעקב is not protected by the shield of the תורה will he be susceptible to עשו trying to kill him.

This profound idea of תורה protecting us from distress and pain is an incredible concept which can be hard to understand. We have a law in Judaism called "אין" "we do not rely on miracles." How are we supposed to balance using תורה as our shield of protection, to not relying on any miracle, like a תורה shield, to protect ourselves. While there are many answers to this question, one can be found in this very event. Immediately after עשו becomes enraged with יעקב, instead of relying on the תורה to protect her son, רבקה instructs יעקב to flee to her brother לבן, and not to come back until עשו completely forgets his anger, and there is no danger in returning. However, רבקה understands that תורה must still be used in protecting her son, therefore, forbidding יעקב from marrying a woman "מִבְּנוֹת־יִתָּת" "from the daughters of ית" (בראשית כ"ז:מ"ו). The שו"ת says that these women were terrible influences. From this we see that רבקה understood the importance taking initiative into our own hands, and of having תורה infused in every action we make. May we be able to balance these two aspects of Judaism in our every action.

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Thinking Through Our Actions

By Deenah Levin '25

When I was younger, פרשת תולדות was my favorite פרשה. In פרשת תולדות, עשו sells his birthright to יעקב in return for some red... soupy stuff to gulp down. וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל-יַעֲקֹב הֲלֵעִיטֵנִי נָא מִן-הָאֲדָמָה הַזֹּאת, “קַח-אֶת-שִׁמְךָ אֲדָמָה” “And עשו says to יעקב, ‘Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am exhausted’ that is why, he was called אָדָם (בראשית) (כ”ה:ל). This seemed so humorous to me, selling away your right to land and a blessing, all for a bowl of some lentils. For the rest of eternity, עשו’s nation would be named אָדָם, not after עשו’s hair, not after his anger, but after his lentils.

When we look at the commentaries, we can see that the story is a bit silly on surface level—but that is what makes it so poignant. רמב”ן comments that the name אָדָם was given to עשו because of this incident, not just as a reference, but as a mockery. For eternity, עשו would have to be remembered for the time he sold all of his rights away for a bowl of soup.

רש”י also notes that this is the only time in the תורה that the word “הלעיטני” “give me” is used in the תורה—yet, we know from the משנה in (כ”ד:ג) שבת, that the word “הלעיטני” is used when describing feeding an animal.

With both of these commentaries, we can start to understand that the story of עשו is not just one of a hungry man always remembering his hunger, but one of a man who permanently altered his world for a material purpose. One lesson that the story of עשו comes to teach us is that we too, in our everyday lives, make decisions that aren’t the most calculated. This story comes to warn us to always do our best and to think before everything we do, because we have free will, and that our world is in our hands. It is a lot of

responsibility, but if you look at it from the inverse perspective, it is a complete blessing. Standing up for what is right, making a קידוש השם, or just choosing the יצר הטוב over the יצר הרע when you’re too tired to say שמע; it all makes a difference. Our world is in our hands - we have the power to change the world and make it a better place with every small decision we make.



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A BISL TORAH

is published weekly
at Maimonides School,
Brookline, Massachusetts

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