

א ב י ס כ ל ת ו ר א !

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א' כסלו תשפ"ו · תולדות

Perseverance is Essential

By Baer Homa '29

An often overlooked section of פרשת תולדות is the episode of יצחק in the land of גרר. גרר went to גרר, the land of the פלישתים, to find food because there was a famine in ארץ כנען. There, he found material success in farming and herding. However, that success brought envy from the local people. The תורה says: "וַיְהִי־לּוֹ מִקְנֵה־צֹאן וּמִקְנֵה בָקָר וַעֲבֹדָה רַבָּה וַיִּקְנֶאֱנוּ אֹתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים" "He had acquired flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and many enterprises; and the פלישתים envied him" (בראשית כו:יד-טו). From this, יצחק goes on to dig up the filled-in wells of אברהם, which the פלישתים had filled with sand, which the פלישתים then fight over. He continues this process with other wells until he finally finds a well that the פלישתים do fight him for, which he calls "רְחוֹבוֹת... כִּי־עָתָה הִרְחִיב יְהוָה לָנוּ וּפָרִינוּ בָאָרֶץ" "Spaces, for now Hashem has granted us ample space and we can be fruitful in the land" (בראשית כו:כב).

At first glance, this episode in the תורה seems unnecessary. One can imagine that the flow of ספר בראשית would be fine if it were not even there in the first place. But when you take a deeper dive into it, there is much to be learned from it.

One approach to find deeper meaning in this story is given by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. He relates that the actions taken by the פלישתים against יצחק are representative of antisemitism. Rabbi Sacks provides several arguments for this, amongst them is a theory of antisemitism which states that a conspicuously

successful minority will attract envy that may deepen into hate and provoke violence. He applies this to יצחק, arguing that יצחק fit that profile as someone who was a stranger in the land, who was very successful during a famine, and was one family there, in comparison to the local populace.

Rabbi Sacks also finds deeper meaning in יצחק's response. יצחק moved on to the other wells his father had made and redug them and continued to do so until he found peace. He showed courage, perseverance, and faith in his father's legacy.

This message is meaningful because at first glance this excerpt from the פרשה looks like it is nothing special, but when you look deeper one will find more layers to explore. This same reasoning applies to understanding people as well, and one should always try and find out more about a person before judging them. יצחק, who stuck to his faith and courage, and persevered in the face of everything he went through, shows that even when one is at their lowest point, one should always try to have faith, courage, and persevere.

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Did אברהם Keep the תורה?

By Aryeh Gold '28

Did אברהם follow the תורה? The פסוק says “עָקַב” אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַע אֶבְרָהָם בְּקוֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמָר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרוֹתַי “because אברהם has listened to my voice and has kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My teachings” (בראשית כ:ה). This sounds like אברהם kept all of the mitzvot, which is what רש”י says. He says מצוות are the fences for דאורייתא, the מצוות דרבנן interprets מצוות as laws that we would have followed even if they weren't in the תורה such as prohibitions of murder and robbery. רש”י, חקויות, says are laws that don't have a reason that ה' just told us to do. רש”י says that אברהם even followed שבע מצוות בני נח which is why the תורה says תוֹרוֹתַי, in plural. This opinion tells us that אברהם followed all the laws we follow now, even before the תורה and the תלמוד.

רש”י's grandson רשב”ם disagrees with him. He says מצוות is a ברית, and מצוות is the rule that the ברית is on the eighth day. He says חוקותי ותורותי are the well accepted laws, like רש”י says for מצוות. We see that according to רשב”ם, אברהם did not follow all of the מצוות. He was before the time of the תורה and תלמוד, so he didn't follow them. He followed the laws of his time, and the law ה' told him to follow which was having a ברית מילה on the eighth day.

The שור בבור says something in between these two. He says מצוות are the tests of “לך לך” and the עקידה. He says מצוות are the עשה, and תורות are the עשה. This opinion is more like רש”י with all of the

included in what he says, though he also mentions specific things the way רשב”ם does.

וישמר משמרתי says something different. He says אברהם is doing things like חסד, and warned people not to sin, redirecting their path. He says מצוות בני נח are the חקויות ותורות. נח is saying that not only did אברהם tell others to follow the מצוות בני נח, but he followed them as well.

This ספורנו, and all the other commentators on this teach us a lesson about אברהם. Even if אברהם did not follow all the מצוות we follow today, he still followed at least the שבע מצוות בני נח. He followed the laws of his time, which not everyone did. אברהם found ה' on his own from a house that worshipped idols, and he stopped with those idolatrous practices. He, even without the תורה, did all that he could to do what was right. We should learn from אברהם that we should be going around and teaching people the right thing to do. Not only this, but we must also be practicing these things so we can be a model for the people we teach.



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