

starts פרשת תולדות (25:19), and then we immediately go into the story of the birth of יעקב and עשו. We see that עשו is described as ידע איש ידע (25:27) and יעקב as תם יושב אהלים (25:27).

מי שאינו חריף gives us a fantastic insight here. It seems so simple and yet it's so profound: "A person who is not quick and unable to deceive others is called a תם".

It's an interesting word choice. We often interpret תם as meaning innocent or simple, but רש"י highlights a different angle here, suggesting it also implies a lack of cunning. There's a powerful lesson in this approach, as brought down in מעייני התורה on this רש"י. The idea is that a person has an obligation to hold his מידות in his hand and be מושל on them, to control them and use them as needed. Sometimes, even a מידה רעה can be used לשם שמים.

As רבי שמעון בן לקיש אומר, כל מי שנעשה רחמן במקום אכזרי, סוף שנעשה: (7:16) קהלת רבה teach us in חז"ל ל - "If someone shows רחמנות where they should be strict, they may end up being אכזרי במקום רחמן where they should show compassion". The classic example is שאול המלך, who showed רחמנות to עמלק, but later wiped out the entire city of גוב.

So it's not the מידה of רחמנות itself that's important. It's how and when one uses it. רש"י is telling us that מי שאינו חריף לרמות is called a תם. This concept of תם, interestingly enough, shows up in פסח on ארבעה בנים. Often, we picture the תם as a sweet, innocent child. But in תנ"ך and literature, תם can mean someone who is simple in a naive sense, someone who doesn't know how to navigate complex or crafty situations.

However, the תורה doesn't just call יעקב a תם; it calls him an איש תם. That detail is significant. רש"י says, "מי שאינו חריף לרמות," someone who isn't quick to deceive, is a תם. But יעקב is described as an איש תם - an איש who was master of his תמימות, who knew when to use it and when to restrain it.

As the פסוק says in תהילים (18:27): עָקַשׁ תִּתְּפַחַל, and as it also says in the מדרש (29:12) (ע"ש רש"י) could be slick when necessary. This is what רש"י means: someone who cannot control themselves, who is always a תם and thus easily taken advantage of, is not an איש תם. But יעקב אבינו could use חריפות and רמאות when the situation called for it, as we see in his dealings with עשו and לבן.

This brings a crucial מוסר השכל for us: we must control and channel all of our מידות. A person who has a tendency towards arrogance or anger must control and redirect those traits. Similarly, someone who is תם by nature, who is trusting and easily believes others, must know when to temper that nature.

We must be the masters of our own מידות. There's no concept in Judaism like "temporary insanity" as an excuse; we are responsible to maintain control and use what we've been given לשם שמים and for עבודת ה'. Bezras Hashem, may we succeed in improving ourselves and our עבודה and reach true שלמות.

