

In parshas תולדות, there's a פסוק that, at first blush, presents profound philosophical and logical questions. That פסוק is (25:28): "וַיֹּאֲהֲבֵהוּ יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו כִּי צִיד בָּפִיו וַרְבֵּקָה אֶהְיֶה אֶת יַעֲקֹב". All of the מפרשים - almost every single one - spend an enormous amount of time and effort trying to understand the meaning of this פסוק. I have a beautiful פשט, a מדרש, from מאיר מפרמישלאן (most of you know that's where I originally come from; Zeidy Bennett's עלטערן came from פרמישלאן) that sheds a little light on the greatness of the אבות.

As we get older, it's extremely important not to see these stories as פשוט פשט, but to understand the גדלות of our אבות. We cannot ascribe our own thoughts, motives, or intentions to the אבות, they are far beyond our ability to comprehend, and this פסוק here gives us just a slight inkling of that.

There is a גמרא in שבת (89b) that is not well known, and it's כדאי to spend a moment on it. I'll share a summary of it, not the full גמרא. The גמרא says that when משיח will come, Hashem will turn to the אבות and say, "Your children have sinned." Both אברהם and יעקב, individually, respond, "They have to get what they deserve." The exact phrase the גמרא uses, which is terrifying, is יִמְחוּ עַל קְדוּשַׁת שְׁמִי – "They should be destroyed to bring about a Kiddush Hashem."

However, when the הקדוש ברוך הוא comes to יצחק אבינו, יצחק will sit down with the הקדוש ברוך הוא and start to make a חשבון. He'll go through all the חשבונות, questioning whether it's worth it for Hashem to punish them and whether כלל ישראל is כדאי for punishment. It's worth looking up that גמרא as a homework assignment. The question is: of all the אבות, why is יצחק the one who is כלל ישראל? How are we to understand that? אברהם is the paradigm of חסדים, יעקב is the paradigm of תורה, and יצחק is the paradigm of גבורה and פחד. What is going on? What does this גמרא reveal about יצחק אבינו that we don't already know?

However, when the הקדוש ברוך הוא comes to יצחק אבינו, יצחק will sit down with the הקדוש ברוך הוא and start to make a חשבון. He'll go through all the חשבונות, questioning whether it's worth it for Hashem to punish them and whether כלל ישראל is כדאי for punishment. It's worth looking up that גמרא as a homework assignment. The question is: of all the אבות, why is יצחק the one who is כלל ישראל? How are we to understand that? אברהם is the paradigm of חסדים, יעקב is the paradigm of תורה, and יצחק is the paradigm of גבורה and פחד. What is going on? What does this גמרא reveal about יצחק אבינו that we don't already know?

So we see that through יצחק אבינו's אהבה of עשו, which we might have thought was misplaced, פונקט, he took that אהבה and asked himself, "What am I going to do with this? Why did Hashem do this to me?" יצחק gives this טענה to the הקדוש ברוך הוא, providing a complete and absolute defense of כלל ישראל.

What a חידוש! What a כאפ! יצחק knew exactly what עשו was. He understood the situation that Hashem placed him in. He believed that Hashem did this for a reason - so that he could be a מליץ יושר for כלל ישראל. And listen to this: What does the פסוק say? וַיֹּאֲהֲבֵהוּ יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו כִּי צִיד בָּפִיו. Not what you and I might think. The phrase כִּי צִיד בָּפִיו means "he gives him something to answer back to the הקדוש ברוך הוא with his mouth." עשו provided יצחק with a טענה, something like מזונות, to offer the הקדוש ברוך הוא as a defense. יצחק became our ultimate defender, saving us from our עבירות. It's an amazing insight that מאיר saw, and we should strive to take even this small glimpse of the גדלות of יצחק and nurture it within ourselves.

May we use all of our חשבונות and abilities for השם, and try to see everyone in the best light.

