

ב' דר"ח כסלו ה'תשע"ט

DON'T GET ALL RED IN THE FACE

ויזד יעקב נזיד ויבא עשו מן השדה והוא עיף. ויאמר עשו אל יעקב
הלעיטני נא מן האדם האדם הזה כי עיף אנכי על כן קרא שמו אדום¹

One of the many challenges we encounter throughout our lives is the struggle of emotional stability. We may want to be happy people, but sometimes are forced to be somber based on the environment and circumstances surrounding us, such as going to a funeral. לא עלינו, sometimes a person loses a relative shortly before יום טוב, and is forced to end the שבועה and be בשמחה with not much time in between. Things in life tend to happen very quickly, not just in the emotional sense. They say things can happen in the blink of an eye, and the challenge is how to make the impact of an event last longer than that. As important as that is, the bigger challenge is to take what we can control, and make sure it doesn't happen in the blink of an eye.

I'm sure we've all had that feeling at some point where we were just so out of it that we couldn't think straight. The lack of some physical necessity causes our brains to temporarily shut down, and we may even forget the name of the person we're talking to. Sometimes, it can even be too much of physical pleasures that shut us down. When עשו barged in asking for food, he was acting in the fashion of "those who are wayward and drunk". He called the lentils יעקב was making "this red stuff". In fact, he even asked יעקב to stuff it down his throat for him², out of laziness and seeking instant gratification.³ We see throughout the תורה that "red" is always repeated.⁴ In this instance, we see that עשו couldn't control his desires, and therefore was in a hurry to satiate his גוף, not thinking about those around him.

Not only do we see the red motif bringing out the draw of תאוה, but red is an inherent evil. It is no coincidence that all depictions of evil, the שטן, and גיהנום are often a flaming red devil-ish character. The world has picked up on this theme from the first recorded "red" in history, which we encounter in this week's פרשה. We know that because of the story with עשו and the lentils, that יעקב is the first one to call עשו by the name אדום. The nature of עשו is that of evil, of "red". אביי tells us⁵ that when babies are red, it is a danger to their life, and they shouldn't be circumcised. This is due to the fact that the blood has yet to be completely absorbed into the body. Since it is still on the surface, wounding the baby in any way would cause all the blood to spill out. By being called אדום, the תורה shows that עשו's nature is that of an undeveloped child, and that he never really grew up.⁶ We also see when משה was growing up in פרעה's palace, he was tested to see if he was really going to take over the crown. When משה reached for the bars of gold, the angel גבריאל pushed משה's hand towards the hot coals. He dropped one on his mouth, which caused his famous speech impediment.⁷ This shows the natural draw towards red, just as there is a natural draw towards תאוה. That's what פרעה and his advisors understood. However, aside from the נבואה of משה one day overthrowing פרעה, going for the gold showed his natural tendency towards good.

¹ בראשית כה.כט-ל

² עיין שבת קנה:

³ בית הלוי על התורה, תולדות ה

⁴ חזקוני בראשית כה.ל

⁵ שבת קלד.

⁶ כלי יקר בראשית כה.ל

⁷ שמות רבה א.כו

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Furthering these aforementioned concepts, the ר"ן⁸ brings down the famous גמרא⁹ that יעקב was preparing lentils because on that day, אברהם אבינו had passed away, and יצחק was sitting שבעה. Ignoring the point that עשו seemingly wasn't present at his grandfather's קבורה, he comes into the שבעה house, and pays no attention to his surroundings. Rather, he only thinks about himself, and demands the food that's really supposed to be for his father, who is suffering mourning the loss of the greatest man to ever live, at least to that point. עשו couldn't even take a few minutes to be מנחם אבל! The גמרא¹⁰ tells us that there is an ענין of honoring the oldest brother, because he is the father's ראשית אוננו, literally "first of his strength", and his honor to the father is more significant than that of the other siblings. יעקב was appalled that his father's כבוד should be manifested in the son who would go so far in his רשעות as to take his food when he was a mourner, that he made עשו give up the בכורה, so יעקב, now being the firstborn, can give יצחק the honor he deserved.

All these different facets of עשו's demeanor indicate one common factor, and that is the instinctual response to life and its challenges. He never really learned from his mistakes, and that's why he's been acting childish this whole time. When life throws challenges in our faces, we should learn to not be like עשו, and think before we respond. When someone does something that angers us, will we get red in the face right away, or will we take a deep breath and think about the situation? That is the חילוק to be made between a יעקב and an עשו. The fact that we are בני ישראל and not בני עשו should really drive home this message. אם ירצה השם, we should be able to control our emotions, and become "a people of the book", who always rationalize before we act.

⁸ דרשות הר"ן ב.לו
⁹ בבא בתרא טז:
¹⁰ כתובות קג.