WARMTH & WISDOM

Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Seuda Shlishis Parshas Toldos
(חדוותא דזעיר אנפין עמוד קצ"ג)

In this week's *Parsha*, the Torah describes Yitzchak Avinu's wealth and success.

וַיִּגְדַּל הָאִישׁ וַיֵּלֶךְ הָלוֹךְ וְגָדֵל עַד כִּי גָדַל מְאֹד (בראשית כ"ו:י"ג) - And the man became great and went on to become greater and greater until his was very great.

We must try to understand why, only in this *pasuk*, Yitzchak Avinu isn't mentioned by name but simply by the title האיש. (When she first saw Yitzchak, Rivka asked Eliezer מִי הָאִישׁ הַלָּזֶה. However, in that *pasuk* the reason for using that term is clear. She had no idea that the person she saw was Yitzchak Avinu).

Similarly, Yaakov Avinu is always referred to as either Yaakov or Yisrael. In only one *pasuk* does the Torah call him הָאִישׁ.

וַיִּפְרֹץ הָאִישׁ מְאֹד מְאֹד וַיְהִי לוֹ צֹאן רַבּוֹת וּשְׁפָחוֹת וַעֲבָדִים וּגְמַלִּים וַחֲמֹרִים (בראשית ל:מ"ג) And the man expanded very much and he had many sheep and maidservants and manservants and camels and donkeys.

Each of these two *pesukim* describes the great wealth of the *Avos*. Why specifically in this context, does the Torah refer to Yitzchak and Yaakov as הָאִישׁ?

I would like to suggest a possible explanation.

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Usually, the criteria used to evaluate a person are the value of his capital and possessions. If someone has been blessed *min hashamayim* with wealth, people admire and respect him. Based on nothing but his wealth, they will even declare that he is a *talmid chacham* and a *tzadik*. People seek his advice and opinions on matters that he knows nothing about, and they take everything that he says very seriously. As Shlomo Hamelech says in *Koheles* (י:י"ט) וְהַכֶּסֶף יַעֲנֶה אֶת הַכֹּל - Money is the answer to everything.

However, if someone has been blessed *min hashamayim* with the gift of poverty, he may be a great *Talmid Chacham*, with *Yiras Shamayim*, *Anava*, and *chasidus*. Despite those tremendous accomplishments, people will tend to belittle him because of his poverty. As Shlomo Hamelech also says in *Koheles*, וְחָכְמַת הַמִּסְכֵּן בְּזוּיָה וּדְבָרָיו אֵינָם נִשְׁמָעִים – And the wisdom of the poor man is scorned and his words are not heard (קהלת ט:ט"ז)

Therefore, it seems that this is the very principle that the Torah is teaching us by using the term האיש.

The greatness and significance of Yitzchak Avinu and Yaakov Avinu were not attained by their material and financial success. Therefore, when the Torah wants to tell us about their success, the *pesukim* that describe their wealth, (and only those *pesukim*) refer to Yitzchak and Yaakov simply as האיש.

The message is clear. We revere Yaakov Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu because of their spiritual wealth, and not because of their material success. In the case of Yitzchak, it was the perfection of his primary *mida* – *Yiras Shamayim*, and the modes of *tefilla* that he established וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה and וַיֶּעְתַּר יִצְחָק. Yaakov Avinu perfected the *mida* of *Tiferes* and personified *ameilus ba'Torah* וְיַעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהָלִים.

Unfortunately, in our generation people are captivated by those who possess wealth and bow down before *gvirim*. Rav Meir of Premishlan *zy"a* foretold this with his *peirush* on the *pasuk* in Tehillim, הַצִּילֵנִי מִדָּמִים אֱלֹקִים. (נ"א:ט"ז) The *pshat* of the *pasuk* is that David Hamelech asks Hashem to save him from bloodshed. However, the word דמים can also mean money.

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Rav Meir taught that David Hamelech asked Hashem to save him מִדָּמִים אֱלֹקִים - from money becoming his G-d.

We must do everything possible to resist worshipping money. Our children see the great honor accorded to *gvirim*. When they enter a *shul*, they are received with adoration and escorted to a place of honor. People gather around him, hanging on his every word.

At the same time, they notice that a *talmid chacham* is often ignored, and certainly not received with the same enthusiasm. Even if he says a *shiur* in the *Beis Medrash*, the same people who didn't want to miss a word uttered by the *gvir*, aren't paying that much attention to the *talmid chacham*.

How can we blame our children for concluding that material, financial wealth, is worth far more than the spiritual wealth of learning Torah? They realize that all of our lessons about the sweetness of Torah, and our singing (תהילים קי"ט) טוֹב לִי תוֹרַת פִּיךָ מֵאַלְפֵי זָהָב וָכָסֶף - (The Torah of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver), is simply lip service.

How can we blame the children who see how distorted our values are? No matter how much we speak about the primacy of Torah, our actions reveal to them that we value money more.

We must internalize, and transmit to our children, that טוֹב לִי תוֹרַת פִּיךָ מֵאַלְפֵי זָהָב וָכָסֶף - isn't just a song. It is reality! The world exists in the merit of those whose life is the *arba amos shel halacha*. They truly taste the sweetness of Torah, that is sweeter than anything in the world.

These are people described by the *Tanna* (אבות ו:ד):

"This is the way of Torah. Eat bread with salt. Drink water by the measure. Sleep on the ground, and live a life of discomfort, and toil in the study of Torah. If you do so, you are fortunate, and it is good for you. You are fortunate in this world, and it will be good for you in the world to come."

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Sometimes Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives those who aren't able to immerse themselves in Torah the *zechus* of helping support those who truly hold up the world. It is the *zechus* of supporting those who toil in Torah, that enables them to continue to amass wealth.

There is a simple litmus test that enables a person to determine how much he values Torah. Would he be willing to lose money rather than give up an hour of learning Torah? If in the middle of his hour of learning, someone trustworthy interrupts him and says that if he will only accompany him somewhere, he'll earn a certain amount of money, would he close his *sefer* and go? Honest introspection like this can help us gauge how much we value Torah, and the true extent of our *yiras shamayim*.

Someone who has been blessed with financial wealth must realize that money doesn't crown him with glory. The true measure of a person is based on his spiritual wealth rather than his finances. Therefore, he shouldn't hoard his wealth. He should share it generously with those in need.

This is especially relevant in the month of Kislev. Rav Meir of Premishlan *zy"a* said that Kislev is an acronym for כיס לב - the wallet and the heart. In other words, the heart depends on the wallet, and the wallet depends on the heart. As *Chazal* state in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (תרומות ח:ד):
"All of the limbs depend on the heart, and the heart depends on the wallet"

Our task in Kislev is to let the feelings of our hearts govern our wallets. As the *Sefer Yetzira* says, "The letter *samech* is coronated king over the month of Kislev." We know that the letter *samech* hints to the phrase סומך נופלים - supporting those who fall. This is our task in the month of Kislev. Our hearts should inspire us to open our wallets and give generously to those who need support.

The *Magen Avraham* (סימן תר"ע הקדמה) - states that "The custom of the poor is to go door to door on Chanuka".

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Those who are wealthy also need to remember and understand that even if the poor accept their donations, that won't be מטהר את השרץ - purify that which is essentially *tamei*. If someone knows deep inside that in order to amass wealth, he spent time in places that weakened his Torah observance, or that his words or deeds weren't honest, the money that he donates to K*lal Yisrael* won't atone for his sins. He still needs to do *teshuva*.

May the *Borei Olam Yisbarach* who is the true source of wealth and *kavod*, give us the strength necessary to internalize this truth, and to implant it in the hearts of our descendants.

ונזכה לביאת משיחנו ב"ב אמן.

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