



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS TOLDOS

WHAT'S IT WORTH - TO YOU?

"Chaim, I really like your watch."
 "You are not the first one, Avi. Today someone wanted to buy it from me. He offered me ten dollars."
 "That does not seem like enough money for such a nice watch."
 "You're right, Avi. The watch is worth a hundred dollars. Naturally, I turned down his offer."
 "Even if you had accepted it, Chaim, you could have gotten your watch back. The sale would have been a 'mekach taos' – a mistake. In such a case where the buyer pays less than 5/6 (or 83%) of what the object is worth, the seller can revoke the sale, because he did not receive a fair price."
 "Fascinating, Avi. This reminds me of a famous question on this week's parasha."
 "Please share it with me, Chaim."

"Eisav sold the *bechora* (rights of the first born son) to his younger brother Yaakov for a plate of beans. What did those rights entail? The Holy Avodah (Service to Hashem) in the Beis HaMikdash. This *avodah* originally belonged to the *bechoros*. When they participated in the *chet ha'egel* (sin of the golden calf), it was transferred to the tribe of Levi. All of the mitzvos involved with offering the *korbonos* of Klal Yisrael could have belonged to the descendants of Eisav. How much do you think it is worth?"

"Priceless, just priceless."
 "Exactly. Therefore, when Yaakov bought it for just a plate of beans, it was apparently a 'mekach taos.' The sale should have been invalid. This question is raised by the 'Kesones Ohr'."

"That is fascinating. How was Yaakov allowed to keep the *bechora*?"

"The Hafla'ah begins his answer to this question by citing the Mishna in Pirkei Avos (2:1). 'Be as careful with a light mitzvah as you are with a serious one. For you do not know the reward for the mitzvos. Calculate the loss (of time, money, energy) of a performing a mitzvah against its reward.' This Mishna contradicts itself. If we do not know the reward of a mitzvah, how can we calculate its reward against its loss?"

"That is really puzzling."

"The Hafla'ah answers by quoting a Gemora (Chullin 87a). One man shechted an animal, and another man jumped ahead and covered the spilled blood, thereby 'stealing' the mitzvah of *kisui ha'dam* (covering the blood of a shechted animal). Rabban Gamliel fined him ten gold coins."

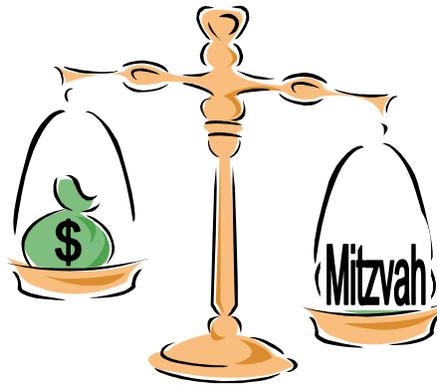
"How did he come up with that amount? We do not know the value of the *sechar* (reward) that we will receive for a mitzvah."

"Rabban Gamliel chose this amount to see how the man would react. If he accepted the ten gold coins, that would show how much he valued the mitzvah. If he refused it, then we know that the mitzvah was worth much more to him. Rabban Gamliel then would have forced the second man to pay whatever price the first one demanded."

"Fascinating."

"Now we can understand the Mishna in Pirkei Avos. We do not know the true value of the reward for a mitzvah. In reality, it is limitless. However, we are instructed to make a calculation of the reward of a mitzvah against its loss here in this world. The Mishnah is instructing you to personally evaluate the mitzvah. How much do you value it? How precious is it to you? That is your calculation of the reward."

"Now I understand. Eisav was not interested in the *bechora*, with all of its responsibilities and severe punishments for



mistakes. He truly saw it as only being worth a plate of beans. Therefore, the sale was not a 'mekach taos'."

"Exactly. The Hafla'ah concludes with a compelling thought. One who fulfills a mitzvah, not to receive reward, rather out of love of Hashem, values the mitzvah much more than any reward. What will his reward be? Limitless, unfathomable, unending pleasure. That is the unlimited value of a mitzvah."

Kinderlach . . .

How much is a mitzvah worth to you? Is it worthwhile for you to get up ten minutes earlier in the morning in order to pray with more kavannah (concentration)? Is it worthwhile for you to shvitz a little in order to help your neighbor carry a heavy box? Would you give up ten minutes of your lunch break to learn Halachos of Loshon Hora? Would you give a dollar to tzedaka instead of buying a candy bar? Would you mevater (give in) on a money argument in order to maintain peace? Every mitzvah takes time, money, and effort. How much are you willing to give Hashem for the mitzvah? This shows how

much you value it. What is the highest value? When you do a mitzvah purely out of love for Hashem. That mitzvah is priceless. It takes work to achieve this, but that is our goal. Kinderlach, all of your mitzvos should be priceless.

(For further explanation, see the sefer, "Chaim She'yesh Bahem . . .")

THE INNER TRACK

We are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Hashem's chosen people. We are called His favorite child, as the verse states, "My favorite son, Efraim" (Yirmiyahu 31:19). The Targum translates Efraim as Yisrael (the Jewish people). Why then, do our enemies overcome us? What gives them the power to defeat Hashem's favorite child? The answer is found in Rashi's explanation of Yitzchak's blessing to Eisav.

"On your sword you shall live, but your brother (Yaakov) you shall serve" (Bereshis 27:40). The Targum Unkelos translates the rest of the verse as follows, "When My children violate the teachings of the Torah, they cast off the yoke from their necks." Rashi explains that the sins of the Jewish people give Eisav an opening. He seizes the opportunity and is given the power to rise up against Yaakov and cause him *tsar* (distress). However, when we are strong in our Torah observance, Eisav remains subservient to us. We bear Hashem's yoke, therefore He protects us. Eisav cannot touch us because we have the "inner track" with Hashem.

Kinderlach . . .

Imagine that the teacher had a special errand to do. It was not easy, so he picked the best boy in the class. He gave him special instructions and a bit of training. Then he sent him off. It was not easy. The boy ran into some rough characters. When he followed the instructions, no one could touch him. When he tried to do it his own way, the evil characters had a way of catching him - oy va voy. We are that best boy. The mission is to serve Hashem, and the instructions are the Torah. Follow the instructions. No one can touch you.

Parasha Questions:

- What is the source of the name Beer Sheva? (26:33 and Rashi)
- Why did Yitzchak's eyes become weak? (Rashi 27:1)
- What did Yitzchak do with the two goats that Yaakov brought him? (Rashi 27:9)
- Why did Eisav keep his "bigdei chamudot" in his mother's house? (Rashi 27:15)

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