Jewish Tribune – Toldos

**The Great Defender**

Ever had a question that has been bothering you for years and then you come across a satisfying answer?

Well that recently happened to me. Let me share it with you.

It is well known that Avohom Ovinu’s greatest nisayon was the akeidah. His greatest test was to go against his middah of chesed and do something that was seemingly the exact opposite.

The same is true of Yaakov Ovinu. He had to grapple with his middah of emes and (instructed by his mother who was guided by Ruach Hakodesh), had to seemingly compromise the truth when he gets the brochos in this week’s sedra.

It seems that the Avos were tested in the very areas where they shone. Avrohom’s nisoyon was to against his middah of chesed and Yaakov’s was to go against his middah of emes.

What has bothered me over the years is Yitzchok Ovinu. Do we see this theme with him too? Yitzchok Ovinu’s midda is that of gevura or din. The antidote to Avrohom’s chesed. Do we ever find that he was challenged in this area?

I often wondered about this and then I came across a fascinating pshat of Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky in his Emes L’Yaakov.

The Gemoro is Shabbos (89b) tells us that in the future, HKBH will approach the Avos and tell them that their children, Klal Yisroel, have sinned against Him.

Avrohom Ovinu replies that they should be destroyed, so too Yaakov Ovinu. And it is actually Yitzchok who defends us with an interesting argument.

Yitzchok Ovinu pleads: Ribbono shel Olam, the average lifespan of a person is 70 years, for the first 20 years, a person is not culpable in the Heavenly Court. That leaves 50 years. Half of that time is night-time when a person is limited in sinning against You as he is sleeping and resting. Of the remaining 25 years of potential sin, half of that is spent on davening as well as on mundane activities such as eating and drinking. Ribbono shel Olam, You can surely waive these twelve and a half years.

So it is Yitzchok Ovinu who is destined to become the great defender of Klal Yisroel.

Says Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, this is the test of Yitzchok Ovinu. Despite a middah of gevurah and din, he is challenged to show fatherly love for his children and fight for mercy.

In school, I welcome parental communication. To be honest, it is sometimes challenging for me and my staff. It can be time consuming, sometimes we are very limited in what we can do and sometimes we feel their passion is misplaced.

But I often comfort myself and my wonderful colleagues by telling them to consider the alternative - parents who are apathetic and don’t care about the ruchniyus of their children. Isn’t that so much worse?!

I remind myself and my colleagues that for each parent, this child is their world. This is what their life is all about. At the stage of life of most of these parents, what drives them is not material pursuits. A new chandelier is not going to make a difference. They realise that getting nachas from their children and the ruchniyus of their loved ones is the name of the game. Awareness of this, really does make things easier.

And the precedent for this is Yitzchok Ovinu, the great defender of Klal Yisroel, where, clothed with his middah of gevurah and din, he has the opportunity to rise to his great nisoyon, and display immense chesed on our behalf.

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