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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

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FEEL THE PAIN!

PARSHAS TOLDOS

Rebbe Moshe, son of Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l, was very ill as a child. Everyone in the house was crying and beseeching Hashem that he should recover from his illness. As they were davening, a neighbor came and said that his son was also very ill, and they should daven for him as well. The family did as he requested. Soon, Rebbe Moshe began to show signs of improvement. There was much joy in the home. Rebbe Dovid rebuked his family. "You heard a few moments ago that a neighbor's son is very sick. How can you be happy when someone else is in *tzaar*, in pain?

When Sarah gave birth to Yitzchak, there was a lot of joy and happiness in the world. **Rashi** (Bereishis 21:6) writes, "Many barren women were able to bear children together with her, many ill were healed on that day... and there was a lot of joy in the world." Why was this miracle necessary? Why did many people receive their salvation when Yitzchak was born? It was because Avraham and Sarah wouldn't have been able to rejoice in the miracle that had happened to them if they would have known that other people were still suffering. Therefore, Hashem brought a lot of laughter and joy to the world so that Avraham and Sarah could also rejoice.

> *"When Esav heard his father's words, he cried with a great and exceedingly bitter cry, and he said to his father, Bless me too, my father." (Bereishis 27:34)*

When a Jew is in pain, our hearts must be with them. During World War I, the Chofetz Chaim's zt"l slept without a pillow! The Chofetz Chaim said that if Jews had to sleep in bunkers, then he could not sleep on a pillow. (Rabbi Elimelech Biderman, in The Jewish Vues)

When Esav heard that his father Yitzchak had given Yaakov the blessings that Esav wanted, Esav cried out. *"He cried with a great and exceedingly bitter cry, and said to his father, 'Bless me too, Father!'"* (Bereishis 27:34)

Midrash Rabbah (Berishis 67:4) says that Yaakov was punished since he was the cause of Esav's bitter cry. Hashem eventually punished Yaakov in the time of Mordechai and Esther. The **Midrash** (7:18) says that the prophet Eliyahu told Mordechai about Haman's plan to annihilate the Jews. The **Megillah** (4:1) says that when Mordechai heard this, *"He cried out an exceedingly loud and bitter cry."*

This **Midrash** is very hard to understand. Why was Yaakov punished? After all, Esav had sold the *bechora*, the birthright, to Yaakov. Therefore, Yaakov was entitled and supposed to receive the blessings from Yitzchak. Additionally, Yaakov's mother, Rivka, told Yaakov that he must be the one to receive the blessings. She prepared the plan which allowed Yaakov to receive the brachos. Furthermore, even Hashem wanted Yaakov to be the one to receive the blessings! Yitzchak had asked Esav to hunt an animal and prepare a meal for him. After the meal, Yitzchak was going to bless Esav. **Yalkut Shimoni** (115:19) says that Esav was delayed in bringing meat to Yitzchak. All day long he hunted animals and birds. Each time he tied them up, Hashem's angel untied them and they fled. The reason that

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Hashem orchestrated this was to delay Esav and enable Yaakov to receive the brachos from Yitzchak. Clearly, Yaakov was supposed to receive the brachos! So why was he punished? **Rav Dovid Leibowitz** zt"l says that Yaakov was obligated to do what he did. Yaakov was not punished for the pain that he incidentally caused to Esav. Rather, Yaakov was punished for not feeling badly enough that he had to cause pain to Esav. Of course, Yaakov felt badly. However, on some level, he should have felt Esav's pain a little more intensely. For not feeling it to that degree, he was punished.

We find a similar idea when Yaakov was about to meet Esav after years of separation. The Torah says, *"That same night he [Yaakov] arose, and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children, and he crossed the ford of the Yabbok."* (Bereishis 32:23) **Rashi** asks why does it only say eleven children? Where was Dina? The answer is that Yaakov had placed Dina in a chest so that Esav should not see her and desire to marry her. **Midrash Rabbah** (76:9) says that Yaakov was punished for doing so. Why? Had Esav taken Dina as a wife, perhaps she would have led him back on to the right path. Since Yaakov had kept Dina away from his brother Hashem caused her to fall into the hands of Shechem.

We can ask the same question here. Obviously, Yaakov did the right thing to try to keep Dina out of Esav's clutches. She was righteous and Esav was a rasha. So why was Yaakov punished? The answer is the same as above. Yaakov felt badly that he couldn't do this kindness to his brother to allow him to marry Dina. However, Yaakov did not feel badly enough. Esav was a rasha who even wanted to kill Yaakov! Yet, Yaakov was supposed to feel a higher degree of pain than he did.

There are times that we are not obligated, and may even be forbidden, to do an act of kindness.

However, even though we may not be able to help, we should still feel badly that we can't.

We must feel the pain of a fellow Jew!

What should we do if we don't feel the pain that another person is experiencing? Rabbi Elimelech Biderman quotes the The Chazon Ish zt"l who advises that we should daven for them and try to help them. Doing so will eventually cause us to genuinely care about their plight.

(based on a dvar Torah by Rabbi Henach Leibowitz zt"l)

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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