



## HAMAN'S FIGHT FOR ESAV'S LEGACY

Reading through the Megillah, it seems that Haman's outrage with Mordechai was sparked by Mordechai's simple refusal to bow. However, a close reading of the text signifies that there was a much more significant dynamic at play.

In the aftermath of the stolen bracha, Rivka instructed Yaakov to flee to Lavan's house until Esav's anger dissipated. It was not until Hashem instructed Yaakov to leave Lavan's house that Yaakov ventured back to his homeland. Since there was no assurance that Esav's anger had subsided, Yaakov believed that he would encounter Esav, and a deadly battle would take place. Out of excessive caution, Yaakov prepared himself in every way possible to spare his life and the lives of his wives and children. It is noteworthy that despite praying, preparing for



war, and sending a significant gift to Esav, it was the simple act of bowing that ultimately appeased Esav. Rashi (Bereishit 33:4), quoting *Bereishit Rabbah*, explains:

נתגלגלו רחמיו כשראהו משתחוה כל השתחאוות הללו.

*His (Esav's) mercy was moved forth when he saw him (Yaakov) bowing with all of these bows.*

Rashi quotes the *Sifri* and further explains:

אמר רבי שמעון בר יוחאי הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא ליעקב, אלא שנכמרו רחמיו באותו שעה, ונשקו בכל לבו.

*Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said: It is a known fact that Esav hates Yaakov, but his mercy was warmed at that time, and he kissed him with all of his heart.*

These midrashim demonstrate how significant Yaakov's act of bowing was before Esav. Even though Esav bore a lethal grudge against Yaakov, his compassion was stirred to brotherly love and mercy when "he witnessed Yaakov prostrating himself." Centuries later, it was this same act of prostrating that reappears in the dynamic between the descendants of Yaakov and Esav.

וירא המן כי אין מרדכי כרע ומשתחוה לו וימלא המן חמה. ויבו בעיניו לשלוח יד במרדכי לבדו כי הגידו לו את עם מרדכי ויבקש המן להשמיד את כל היהודים אשר בכל מלכות אחשורוש עם מרדכי.

*Haman saw that Mordechai would not bow down or prostrate himself to him and Haman was filled with wrath. But it seemed contemptible to lay hands on Mordechai alone, for they had told him Mordechai's nationality. So Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the entire kingdom of Achashvayrosh, the people of Mordechai.*  
**Esther 3:5-6**

We must ask: Why did Mordechai's specific refusal to bow to Haman elicit such a drastic response from Haman? Additionally, if Haman deemed it improbable to succeed in laying hands on Mordechai alone, why would Haman think he would actually succeed in destroying the Jewish people?

The Megillah records Haman's frustration with Mordechai using the words *vayivez b'einav* (it seemed contemptible). There are only two instances in Tanach where the word *vayivez* is used. The first case is after Esav sold his *bechora* to Yaakov. There, the Torah informs us:

...ויבז עשו את הבכורה.

*And Esav scorned the birthright.*

**Bereishit 25:34**

The *Ba'al HaTurim* comments:

ויבז. ב' - ויבז עשו, ויבז בעיניו גבי המן. דהינו, בוזה בן בוזה, זה המן הרשע שיצא מעשו.  
*We find the word *vayivez* twice. Once regarding Esav, "And Esav scorned" and "It seemed contemptible" regarding Haman. Meaning a scorner, the son of a scorner, this is the evil Haman who descended from Esav.*

Haman, a direct descendant of Esav, mirrored the actions of Esav. Esav was a scorner and Haman continued this disgraceful legacy. By specifically using the word *vayivez*, we learn that there is an inherent connection between the sale of the *bechora* and Haman's endeavor to wipe out Mordechai's nation.

When selling the *bechora* to Yaakov, Esav reasoned that the *bechora* was of no use to him. Rashi explains that Esav understood that the *bechora* was a spiritual privilege that granted the chosen nation the right to serve Hashem in the Beit HaMikdash. Both Yaakov and Esav understood that Esav was unbecoming and ill-suited for this role. Hence, Esav sold away his *bechora* and scoffed at the matter.

When Esav later realized that he had not simply sold the rights to spiritual privilege, but he had also squandered

the ability to prevail above his brother, he quickly regretted his decision and detested Yaakov for it. Esav woefully beseeched his father:

...הברכה אחת היא לך אבי ברכני גם אני אבי וישא עשו קלו ויבך.

*"Is there but one blessing to you my father? Bless me too, my father." Esav raised his voice and wept.*

**Bereishit 27:38**

Esav begged for an alternative to the fate that had just been gifted to Yaakov. Conditionally, Yitzchak answered Esav:

"...ואת אחיך תעבד והיה כאשר תריד ופרקת עלו מעל צוארך"

*You shall serve your brother, yet it shall be that when you will be aggrieved, you may remove his yoke from upon your neck.*

**Bereishit 27:40**

Rashi clarifies:

...כלומר: כשיעברו ישראל על התורה ויהיה לך פתחון פה להצטער על הברכות שנטל ופרקת עלו וגו'.

*As if to say, Yitzchak meant: When Yisrael will transgress the laws of the Torah, and you will have a claim to be aggrieved over the blessings that Yaakov took, "You may remove his yoke, etc."*



**Not only did the Jewish community demonstrate that they did not deserve a return to Zion and worship in the Beit HaMikdash, they seemed apathetic, and happy with their state of exile.**

The Book of Esther opens with a shocking impression of the Jews of Persia. Achashveirosh hosted a party to celebrate the continued exile of the Jewish people. Except for Mordechai, the Jewish community was present at this celebration, where the exiled utensils of the Beit HaMikdash adorned Achashveirosh's table. Not only did the Jewish community demonstrate that they did not deserve a return to Zion and worship in the Beit HaMikdash, they seemed apathetic, and happy with their state of exile.

Since the Jews had thrown off the yoke of Torah, Haman sensed that this would be his chance to exact revenge on Mordechai and the entire nation as well. Haman intuitively understood that if Mordechai was refusing to prostrate himself before Esav's descendants, then this should have been under circumstances when Yaakov's descendants were following the laws of the Torah. Given the current state of *churban* and the exiled Jews, Mordechai had no right to turn down Haman's request to prostrate himself.

This would precisely be the claim that Haman would use when attempting to destroy Mordechai's

entire nation. He understood that this was not only a personal vendetta between himself and Mordechai, but a continuation of Esav's claim against Yaakov. Haman understood that this situation reflected the deeper dynamics granted by the blessing of the *bechora*. The *bechora* only entitles Yaakov sovereignty over Esav when Israel follows the laws of the Torah and demonstrates an earnest desire to serve Hashem in the Beit HaMikdash. However, when Israel transgresses the Torah and participates in a celebration over the continued ruin of the Beit HaMikdash, Esav may be aggrieved over the blessings that Yaakov took and may remove his yoke. As Haman witnessed Mordechai's refusal to bow, the very act that stirred Esav's compassion awakened his vengeance to survey the Jewish nation and conclude that Israel no longer had rights to the *bechora*. Haman assumed that he would be successful in eliminating the nation and throwing off the yoke of Yaakov.

Nonetheless, as the situation in Shushan unfolded, the Persian Jews were stirred to do *teshuvah*. While Haman may have correctly assessed that momentarily the Jews did not deserve the privileges and protection granted to them, he did not foresee

the national *teshuva* movement that would ensue.

Ultimately, *hasin'ah kilkela et hashura*, his hatred caused his downfall and Haman was subjected to the conditions of Yaakov's *bracha*. While he was fully versed in Esav's blessing, he seemed to have forgotten the way Yitzchak had blessed Yaakov:

"ארריך ארור ומברכך ברוך..."

*Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed.*

**Bereishit 27:29**



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