

“AND I HAVE GIVEN TO YOU ONE PORTION ABOVE YOUR BRETHREN, WHICH I TOOK OUT OF THE HAND OF THE AMORITE WITH MY SWORD AND WITH MY BOW.” (BEREISHIS 48:22)

YAAKOV REVEALED to Yosef that he will be receiving the extra portion of the inheritance of the Land of Israel normally bequeathed to the firstborn. Yaakov explained, according to the S'forno, the reason why he was now able to give this extra portion: because a generation earlier, Yaakov bought the firstborn rights from Esav. Had he not had the foresight to make that purchase of the birthright, he would have received a much smaller inheritance as the younger brother of Esav, who would have claimed two-thirds of the Land of Israel as the firstborn. The S'forno explains Yaakov's reference to his sword and bow is really referring to Yaakov's use of his wisdom and understanding, actually his Torah knowledge, to acquire the firstborn rights. This superior wisdom and insight, derived from Torah study, says the S'forno, is the “bow and arrow” of *tzadikim* enabling them to succeed in dealing with all types of people and situations.

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but he was no fool**

Esav may have been evil, but he was no fool. He was very savvy and a worthy intellectual adversary. Esav knew that the *bechora* included responsibilities and dangers that were negative factors in his eyes. On the other hand, he certainly understood the great benefits to the *bechora*. This deal was not a simplistic, flip-pant decision. The stakes were incredibly high – the future course of history hung in the balance. If this transaction would have been a multi-million dollar buyout, a shrewd board of directors would certainly be making spreadsheets and calculations, using all types of experts in actuarial and statistical probabilities, in market forecasting and many other disciplines, to get the most accurate picture of all the pros and cons of this acquisition.

**How can the study of  
Torah and mitzvos be the  
critical element?**

Would a *tzadik's* Torah knowledge and wisdom be of any use under such circumstances? One may argue that spiritual factors of the birthright needed the evaluation of a Torah scholar in Yaakov's particular case; however, the S'forno says that this, “bow and arrow” of Torah insight is the critical tool for *tzadikim* throughout history, enabling them to succeed in all their dealings. How can the study of Torah and *mitzvos* be the critical element that guarantees a winning performance at the bargaining table? In negotiating with the Esavs of the world, wouldn't a *tzadik* need to go to fight fire with fire and use knowledge of the secular world and monetary means to beat Esav at his own game?

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Torah knowledge is not only beneficial in performing *mitzvos* and avoiding transgressions. It not only empowers us to fight the *yetzer hara* and choose the right path in spiritual dilemmas. It is the most powerful force in the universe that a human being can acquire. It gives *tzadikim* and *talmidei chachamim* the extra edge against even the most formidable intellectual foe, to evaluate situations more precisely, to recognize and size up strengths and weaknesses, and to deal with other people in the most effective way possible. Torah wisdom applies to any subject and gives insight to any body of learning.

May we always strive to increase our Torah knowledge, and that of our children, through the use of every possible moment to study and deepen our understanding of its depth and beauty. May we also appreciate the greatness of our Torah giants and their perceptive insights that can help us win our battles and succeed in all our endeavors in life.