

Yaakov said to his father, “It is I, Eisav your firstborn.” (27: 19)

If one studies *Chumash* only on a cursory level, merely translating the *pesukim*, he will leave in a state of ambiguity when confronting the lives of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. This is especially true upon studying the life of Yitzchak *Avinu* and his relationship with his twins – Yaakov and Eisav. On the one hand, we are taught that Yitzchak was the *olah temimah*, perfect sacrifice, the individual who most represented total selflessness to Hashem, the Patriarch who is singular in Fear of Heaven. On the other hand, we find this same holy Patriarch falling for Eisav’s ruse. Did he not see through Eisav, through his sycophancy, his lies, his evil?

Then we have Yaakov *Avinu*, the *bechir haAvos*, the chosen one of the Patriarchs – the individual who represents *emes*, truth, the paradigm of integrity – lying to his father, claiming that he is Eisav. Furthermore, his mother, the Matriarch Rivkah, set him up to this! As I said, on the surface, none of this makes sense. Thus, we must delve into the works of the commentators, both in *niglah*, revealed Torah, and *nistar*, hidden/mystical Torah.

Targum Onkeles writes: *Ki tzayid b’fiv*, “For game was in his mouth.” *Ari m’tzeido ka’achil*, “Since he ate of his hunt.” This implies that Yitzchak loved Eisav because he supported his father. **Horav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, zl**, explains that a *mitzvah* does not lose its infinite value – despite its being covered with the dross of evil that was so much a part of Eisav. Yet, Yitzchak sensed the *kedushah*, holiness, imbedded within the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud Av*, honoring one’s father.

That covers the *niglah*. From a *nistar* perspective, Eisav executed the *mitzvah* to the fullest extent of its *kedushah*, because concealed deep within Eisav’s spiritual psyche was the *Torah She’Ba’al Peh*, Oral Law, which would be expounded by the descendants of *geirim*, righteous converts, who would descend from him, such as: Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Meir. These holy *neshamos* were trapped within the likes of Eisav, and it was through these sacred spiritual entities that he was able to carry out the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud av*, to the point that Yitzchak sensed the holiness that emanated from the food that Eisav brought him.

We might add that *tzayid b’fiv*, game was in his mouth, refers to the *Torah She Ba’al Peh*, Oral Law, which Eisav held within him. *B’fiv*, in his mouth, refers to the Torah that is transmitted by mouth – *Torah She Ba’al Peh*.

Furthermore, explains *Rav Charlap*, whatever evil one is able to perceive results from the evil embedded within a person’s psyche. Even if one does not manifest this evil (in any way), if he is able to notice evil, it is because it is inherent within him. Thus, Yitzchak *Avinu*, whose soul left him while he lay on the *Akeidah* prepared to die for Hashem, became sanctified like no other human being. When he was resurrected, he received a pure soul, untainted by any vestige of evil. Thus, he was not permitted to leave the Holy Land. Since Yitzchak was essentially pure, he could not

perceive any evil, he did not possess any within himself. One cannot see what one does not possess within oneself. He saw only the good in Eisav. As unlikely as it may seem to us, Yitzchak was different. Rivkah saw what Yitzchak could not. She had been raised in the cradle of evil with Lavan, her pernicious brother. Consequently, Yitzchak and Rivkah had contrasting views of their errant son, Eisav.

Having established that Eisav in some way channeled *Torah She Ba'al Peh* via the holy souls of the *Tannaim* who were trapped within him, *Rav* Charlap explains Yaakov *Avinu's* declaration to his father: "It is I, Eisav, your firstborn." Our People have been miserably labeled and persecuted for what the anti-Semitic world considers to be "Jacob's lie." When we view this statement from the vantage point of the Oral Law trapped within Eisav, the same Oral Law that gave such pleasure to Yitzchak, the Oral Law which allowed him to love Eisav, we understand what Yaakov meant with this ambiguous statement, "I am Eisav, your firstborn." The love that you (Father) have for Eisav is due to the *Torah She Ba'al Peh*, which is my domain! Those *neshamos* are mine, which somehow became trapped within Eisav. In other words, Father, whatever good that you perceive in Eisav is from me. I am Eisav, your firstborn. The part of Eisav, which you love, is actually me – Yaakov!