

## **"And the boys grew up, and it came to pass that Eisav was a man who understood hunting, a man of the field, and Yaakov a single minded man dwelling in tents. (25:27)**

Eisav was not a simple person who wantonly lusted after his heart's passions. He was an intelligent human being who had developed his own philosophy of life. Eisav's ability to "fool" Yitzchak, a feat which even the Satan could not successfully accomplish, provides evidence of this. In distinguishing Yaakov from Eisav, the *Torah* characterizes their chosen vocations as the manifestation of their divergence. The *Torah* describes Eisav as "*one who understood hunting, a man of the fields,*" while, in contrast, it characterizes Yaakov as "*a single minded man dwelling in tents.*" Yaakov is not presented as the *tzaddik*, while Eisav is not viewed as the *rasha*. Nonetheless, this is what they were. Where in the *Torah's* description of them lies the foreshadowing of their future development?

*Horav Dovid Bliacher, z.l.*, explains the contrast between one "who dwells in the tent" and one who is "*a man of the field*" in the following manner. These two descriptions suggest polarized life orientations. The *ohkvat* is one who maintains a disciplined lifestyle, living within a framework of predetermined restrictions. His theological consciousness and philosophical speculation is limited to his level of understanding. He is acutely aware of his inability to gain insight into matters which are beyond his sphere of comprehension. His faith and trust carry him through moments of ambiguity. He does not sense that his intellectual capacity is "stunted" by the limits on thought and activity. He realizes that man must live within the confines of discipline, mandated by a Superior Being. The power of belief in a higher moral authority and the concomitant fear of disobeying the untamperable religious law can overwhelm an individual. No other power could demand the complete subordination of one's will. The outcome not only serves as the best method of effecting man's good life, but it also generates a euphoric feeling of joy, serenity, and satisfaction.

In contrast to this orientation is the "*vsat*", the free thinking individual who does not live within the framework of Divine restriction and obedience. He relies completely upon his own intellectual faculties. The premise of his theory is that man should be able to differentiate for himself between right and wrong. He should not be intellectually "dwarfed" by restrictions which he feels are not rational. He feels that limitations should not be placed on virtue. Hence, Eisav went to all lengths to honor his parents, unaware that there are moments when other *mitzvos* take precedence. He felt that if one must give a tithe of foods, then salt and straw should likewise be tithed. He rebelled against any externally imposed form of constraint.

The *Torah's* seemingly innocuous characterization of Yaakov and Eisav is a profound description of the chasm that exists between the *Torah* observant Jew and his free-thinking secular counterpart.