

(Eisav) raised his eyes and saw the women and children. (33:5)

In his commentary to *Parashas Toldos*, **Horav Mordechai Druk, zl**, observes the glaring contrast between Yitzchak *Avinu* and his errant son, Eisav. The *Rav* begins with the maxim, “A person sees what he wants to see,” or, alternatively, “a person sees who he is.” We are creatures of habit, our human nature comprising who we are and how we live. Indeed, our nature most often dictates our perspective, how we perceive people and situations. Who we are determines how we look at concepts, events, people. A *ben Torah* whose life is molded by the Torah which he studies and to which he is committed, naturally has an outlook governed by the Torah.

Let us look at father and son. The above *pasuk* informs us that Yaakov *Avinu* was traveling with a large retinue. In addition to his considerable family, he had goats, donkeys and a large herd of cows. All of them presented themselves to Eisav, who saw only the women and children. He ignored everything. He was too busy looking at Yaakov's wives. This was not because he ignored material wealth. Indeed, his entire life was about materialism, but his base instinct prevailed over his desire for wealth. His lust superseded his desire.

Yitzchak *Avinu* was unquestionably a holy man. He is referred to as the *Olah Temimah*, perfect sacrifice, because that is what he was. Every fiber of his being was sanctified to Hashem. As Yitzchak went out to the field in search of a quiet place to entreat Hashem, his session was interrupted when he beheld a caravan travelling towards him. He looked up to see his future bride, Rivkah *Imeinu*, coming towards him. Yet, the Torah writes that, when he looked up, all he saw were camels! A caravan in which the woman with whom he would forge the next link in the Patriarchal lineage of *Klal Yisrael* was coming towards him; yet, the Patriarch saw no woman – he saw only camels! He was a holy, virtuous man who, upon seeing a woman riding on a camel coming towards him, saw only the camel – not the woman.

It is all in a person's perspective – an outlook which is based upon the character of the individual. One is constantly influenced by the environment in which he finds himself. A negative environment has a negative effect; a positive environment ultimately has a positive effect. Basically, under normal situations, this is the rule. However (and this is an important “however”), when a person has a base character, when he has a negative outlook on life (for whatever reason – even if it is not his fault), his negativity injects a virulent malignancy into everything positive in his life. I just had the misfortune of reading a blog by a girl from a beautiful *Chassidische* home who took the plunge and turned her back on her parents, *Yiddishkeit* and Hashem. While my heart goes out to this pathetic woman, the picture she paints, and the venom with which she expresses herself, are the products of terrible negativity. She was in an enviable environment; yet, she saw only evil and darkness. When one wears black glasses – even the most white image appears dark. Environment is important, but perspective determines how one processes the environment.