

Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojournings. (37:1)

Rashi teaches that, after enduring the many trials of his life – Eisav, Lavan, the premature passing of Rachel *Imeinu*, and the violation of Dinah – Yaakov *Avinu* sought tranquility, *leisheiv b'shalvah*. Immediately, *Kofatz alav rogzu shel Yosef*, “The trial of Yosef tumbled suddenly upon him.” This world is one of continual striving. Although the Patriarch was near perfect, his work was not complete. The question that confronts us is simple: Does it have to be this way? Does life have to be a constant struggle? Would it have been so bad if Yaakov could spend his twilight years in tranquility, without having to mourn the loss of his son?

Parashas Vayishlach concludes with a detail of Eisav's lineage. *Parashas Vayeishev* begins with Yaakov's lineage. *Rashi* compares these *pesukim* to those detailing the generations both from Adam to Noach and from Noach to Avraham *Avinu*. Eisav's lineage is written quite briefly, providing no details concerning the people and events involved; Likewise, the generations from Adam until Avraham. Concerning Yaakov's lineage, the Torah goes into detail. Why? *Rashi* compares it to one who has lost a diamond in the sand. He sifts through the sand until he discovers his diamond and then throws out the sand. Likewise, the generations from Adam until Avraham are like sand to be discarded once the diamond – Avraham – has surfaced.

The comparison between Eisav's lineage and the generations that spanned from Adam until Avraham appears incongruous. The history leading up to Noach and Avraham has significance in that it teaches us about the family tree from which Noach and Avraham heralded. What, however, do Eisav's princes have to do with Yaakov? What impact did they have on his life?

The *Sefas Emes* explains that the Torah is teaching us a significant lesson. Evil was created to provide a training ground for the righteous. In order for a *tzaddik* to thrive and grow, he must battle the evil worldly influences whose goals are to undermine his ability to achieve success. As we read earlier in *Parashas Toldos (Bereishis 25:23)*, *u'le'om mi'le' om yeematz*, “And one nation (either Yaakov or Eisav) will be stronger from the other nation.” In order for the Jewish people, represented by their spiritual elite, to supersede the forces of *tumah*, impurity, represented by Eisav, it is essential for Yaakov to struggle with Eisav. Thus, Eisav had much to do with Yaakov's spiritual elevation. If not for Eisav, Yaakov would not achieve as much. Thus, Yaakov's perfection is a direct outgrowth of Eisav's malevolence.

Indeed, much of Yaakov's life involved confrontation and struggle. The **Sefas Emes** cites the *Zohar* which underscores the importance of struggle in the life of a *tzaddik*. *Rabos raos tzaddik, u'mi'kulam yatzilenu Hashem*. “Many are the ills of a *tzaddik*, and he shall be saved from all of them by Hashem” (*Tehillim 34:20*). *Tehillim* does not say that ills will happen to a *tzaddik*, but rather, the *pasuk* states, the ills are a *tzaddik*. This means that the ills which a *tzaddik* experiences are brought upon him by Hashem, and the Almighty saves the *tzaddik* from them all. The ills define the *tzaddik*; he is elevated by them.

The *Zohar* is teaching us that only by coping with affliction, while maintaining an unaltered course of commitment to Hashem, does a Jew earn the appellation of *tzaddik*. A *tzaddik* wants to grow with every opportunity. He is not satisfied with remaining on his current level. Striving to improve, seeking to grow, he is always aware of the presence of the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, and its constant schemes. This awareness strengthens the *tzaddik* and tempers his resistance.

Yaakov *Avinu*'s entire life was a struggle against the physical and spiritual dangers of the world. Every time he triumphed over one challenge, he was immediately confronted with another – and yet another. Just when it seemed that things had quieted down and perhaps now he could finally seek a respite, the trial of Yosef was tumbled upon him. A *tzaddik* cannot rest if he wants to grow.