

Do not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaani in whose land I dwell. (24:37)

Avraham *Avinu* rejected the Canaani as potential *mechutanim*, people from whom he was willing to take a wife for Yitzchak, because of their moral degeneracy. While his "family" were idol-worshippers, their iniquity was basically in the intellectual realm. Philosophic sin can be cured without leaving a blemish upon the individual's character. A lack of morality and ethics affects the entire psyche of the person. Such a person was disqualified from being a mate for Yitzchak. We see that the *Torah* presents a picture of Lavan and Besuel, Rivkah's brother and father, Avraham's "family" who were acceptable for a *shidduch* for Yitzchak, as decent people who "happened" to be idol-worshippers. Is this true? Lavan was a scoundrel, a thief and a crook, who lusted for money. Besuel was no different. These people were far removed from being the paradigms of integrity. Why would Avraham overlook their lack of ethical behavior just because they were not moral degenerates? Are there different levels of morality?

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, lends insight towards understanding the anomaly of Avraham's family, i.e. Lavan, etc. Living among idol worshippers while not believing in their idols, is difficult. Lavan was no fool; he knew that the idols were worthless pieces of stone. Yet, one cannot live in a community that worships a stone as god and not acquiesce to their practice - at least publicly. This is what they did. Lavan and his family lived a life of sham, publicly serving idols, while secretly realizing their folly. Even Terach, Avraham's father, was in the idol business; surely he knew that these idols which he fashioned had no supernatural powers. Business is business, however. In short, these people lived a lie. When someone lies long enough, it becomes part of his nature. He becomes accustomed to lying. He sees nothing wrong with it. He enjoys it. Indeed, he no longer knows how to tell the truth. They became crooked out of necessity - but were crooks, nonetheless. Rivkah, on the other hand, was a little girl who had no opportunity to be inculcated into the family way of life. She was still pure, untainted by their lack of integrity. Thus, she was acceptable to become Yitzchak's wife.