

He raised his eyes and saw the women and children, and he asked, “Who are these to you?” he answered, “The children whom G-d has graciously given your servant.” (33:5)

Eisav took one look at the women and children and asked Yaakov *Avinu*, “Who are these to you?” Yaakov replied that the children were graciously bestowed to him by the Almighty. We assume that, upon seeing the group of women and children, Eisav questioned Yaakov concerning both the women and children. Yaakov, however, only replied concerning the children. He seems to have ignored the wives. The **Malbim** explains that Yaakov was conveying to Eisav an important aspect of his outlook on life, which was altogether different than that of Eisav.

To Eisav, a wife was a goal within itself. He had no other purpose in establishing the relationship. It was all for the purpose of self-gratification. Yaakov, however, married for the purpose of procreation, which, without a wife, was impossible. Marriage served as the cornerstone for a family. A family is of primary significance in Jewish life. Family represents future. Life is all about future. Without a future, we have no present.

Eisav asked about the women and children. Yaakov responded concerning the children, because the women’s significance was intrinsic to the children. They were all one family unit. Eisav could not comprehend the idea of a family, because everything he did was to satisfy the here and now. Family represents future. Eisav lives for the present.

Perhaps, Yaakov was suggesting another perspective on marriage to Eisav. Eisav inquired concerning the women and children who were accompanying Yaakov, as if they were two separate entities, sort of Yaakov’s “possessions.” The Patriarch replied only concerning the children – not the women. He was intimating to Eisav that the women who Eisav viewed as assets were his wives, the mothers of his children, and, hence, had status equal to his own. They were a couple, and the children were “theirs.”

In Eisav’s perverted world, the woman/mother had no individual status. Rather than being the husband’s companion for life, she was his chattel; she belonged to him. This is why Eisav asked about the women in the same manner as he asked about the children. Yaakov’s reply was very telling. The children were “theirs.” In the “triangle” of Yaakov’s family, he and his wives were along the same “line,” with their children serving as the focal point. Not so Eisav, who viewed himself as the focal point, and his wives and children to be mere possessions. They were just not on the same page.