

And Yaakov listened to his father and to his mother. (28:7)

Yaakov followed his parents' instructions not to take a wife from the girls of Canaan. The *Midrash* refers to Yaakov as a *chacham*, wise man, because he listened to his parents' advice. They cite a *pasuk* in *Mishlei* 12:14, "One who listens to advice is a *chacham*." Let us analyze Yaakov's remarkable wisdom. Eisav is waiting to kill him. His parents told him that his "*bashert*," future wife, was waiting for him in Charan. He did not have many options. He had the choice to stay and be killed or to leave and meet his destined wife.

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, observes that specifically herein lies Yaakov's astuteness. While logic dictated that he should leave, he left only because he heeded to his parents. He ignored every other reason for going. He responded only to his parents' directive that he leave. His *chachmah* was his ability to listen.

Perhaps he should have stayed and confronted Eisav. After all, he was very strong. We see that he was able to lift a giant boulder that rested upon a well, a feat that would have taken an entire group of shepherds to perform. Maybe he should have rid himself of Eisav, once and for all. Yaakov realized, however, that a wise man realistically has only one approach to consider. He listens to advice from someone more astute and more experienced than he.

Many individuals experience difficulty listening to someone, taking advice from an elder or especially a peer. The alternative is to do things according to one's own line of thinking. Shlomo *Ha'melech* tells us that he who listens is a wise man. By implication, he who does not listen is a fool. The litmus test of an individual's objectivity is his willingness to heed advice.

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, takes a similar approach to explain an apparent inconsistency in the *Torah's* attitude towards punishment. We find that when Avraham sent Hagar, Sarah's maidservant, away with Yishmael, Hashem responded to the child's cry. According to the *Midrash*, the angels pleaded with Hashem not to perform a miracle to save Yishmael. They argued that because his descendants would persecute and murder Jews, he did not deserve to live. Hashem said that he would respond to Yishmael "*ba'asher hu shom*," according to his present deeds and not according to what would happen in the future. The question that plagues us is why is Yishmael different from the *ben sorer u'moreh*, the wayward and rebellious son, who is put to death in response to his inevitable future behavior. "*Let him die while he is innocent, and let him not die when he is guilty (of capital crime)*." What distinguishes the *ben sorer u'moreh* that we do not look at him "according to his present state"? *Horav* Solomon suggests that the answer lies in the *Torah's* characterization of the rebellious son, "(He) does not listen to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother." One who refuses to listen has demonstrated that his future will follow the course that he has charted for himself. He will not change. For one who refuses to listen there is no hope. Yishmael, on the other hand, repented later on in life. If one listens, there is hope; if one shuts his ears, he closes off his possible options.

Horav Ezrachi cites *Rabbeinu Yona* in *Shaarei Teshuvah* 2:12, who cites a remarkable *Midrash*. *Chazal* say, "If a person falls from a roof and breaks his bones and hurts and bruises himself; he will need a dressing for every individual organ that was hurt. If a person sins with all his organs, blemishing them spiritually, he only needs one dressing--for his ear." If a person is willing to listen, then regardless of previous spiritual damage, he can be healed. If his ear is not functioning, then no dressing will attain much healing power.