

And they (Esof's wives) were a source of bitterness of spirit to Yitzchak and Rivkah. (26:35)

Esof married Canaanite girls, the very women who Avraham had admonished Eliezer not to take for Yitzchak. The reality that these women were idol worshippers was a source of anguish to Yitzchak and Rivkah. In stating this fact, the *Torah* mentions Yitzchak's name before Rivkah's. The *Midrash* gives an insightful explanation for this. Yitzchak, having been reared in an environment of holiness and purity, was more intensely provoked by idol worship than Rivkah. Although Rivkah was a devout believer in Hashem, the abomination of idol worship seemed to lose its odium because of her prior exposure to it. Her tolerance of idol worship was greater than that of Yitzchak.

It seems puzzling that someone who overcame the influence of such a decadent lifestyle would yet maintain a tolerance of it. Obviously, in order to have achieved such a lofty level of spirituality, Rivkah must have nurtured an inordinate abhorrence for evil and idol worship. Yet, we see this is not the case!

Rabbi A.H. Lebowitz, Shlita, explains that no matter how vigorously one battles against the forces of evil, environmental factors inevitably influence his tolerance level. When we are exposed to evil, we are in danger of losing our revulsion of it. Exposure lowers one's threshold of disapproval, so that even the moral person becomes slightly inured.

As parents and educators, we are morally obliged to be aware of the effect that every element of our external environment has upon us and upon our families. The places we go, the material we read, our over-exposure to the various sorts of media, all have a direct influence on our perspective. This, in turn, affects our children. When we maintain a "spiritually pure" environment at home, we can aspire to achieve success in nurturing our children in the *Torah* way.