

Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojourning... These are the chronicles of Yaakov: Yosef. (37:1,2)

Yaakov *Avinu* had more than one son. Yet, when the Torah enumerates his offspring, it mentions only Yosef. Furthermore, why does the Torah first inform us that Yaakov continues to live in Canaan, the land that his father chose as his place of habitation, and then inform us about his offspring? Clearly, his family had the obligation to take ownership over the place in which he lived. It is almost as if where he chose to live is connected with his offspring. *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, explains that in the Torah's vernacular, offspring is a reference to one who is spiritually connected to his father, rather than merely biologically connected. Thus, only one who follows his father's spiritual pathway of life is worthy of the term *toldos*, offspring.

Even in a family in which all of the children follow their father's religious path, one child will always stand out in his relationship, thereby earning the appellation of *toldah* more so than the others. More than his brothers, Yosef had established a unique relationship with his father. Therefore, the Torah grants him *toldah* status. *Rav Sholom* suggests that Yosef studied his father's *derech ha'chaim*, approach to living, because he wanted to be just like him. Additionally, Yosef maintained a physical resemblance to Yaakov; both were born circumcised. Therefore, the Torah informs us that Yaakov's offspring was Yosef. Furthermore, when Yosef almost succumbed to the blandishments of Potifar's wife, the image of Yaakov appeared before him at the last moment – and saved him. Yaakov bore the exact same visage as Yosef, and the son was able to realize how succumbing to sin would affect his spiritual countenance. (Sometimes, looking in the mirror and visualizing oneself prior to committing a sin will inspire a person to cease his actions, before he distorts his present image.)

Yaakov wanted to be just like his father, Yitzchak, so he lived in *Eretz Canaan/Yisrael*. He continued the Abrahamaic legacy – not Eisav. Yaakov followed Yitzchak, and Yosef followed Yaakov.

While we are aware of stories of illustrious Torah leaders who maintained a negative relationship with their progeny who rejected their Torah way of life, we have an equal number of stories of similarly great individuals who, although not supporting their children's negative activities, continued to leave the door open and the light on, in anticipation of the return of their children. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the pros and cons of these opposing parenting approaches, one thing is for certain (author's opinion): If the parents, by virtue of their personal approach to raising their child (being too demanding, inflexible, unforgiving, etc.), maintain (or should maintain) some of the onus of guilt for how their child developed spiritually – they certainly should leave their "light on"!

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, observes that in the *brachah*, blessing, *Modim* (during *Shemoneh Esrai*), we thank Hashem as "our G-d and the G-d of our fathers." In other words, we

first thank Him that He is “our G-d.” This means: He has given us life and supervises us constantly. We then thank Him for enabling our tradition to be transmitted from father to son, from generation to generation. It is this gift of being able to pass *Yiddishkeit* from generation to generation that has maintained our religious tradition throughout the most difficult times. A secular Jew once told Rav Gamliel, “You religious Jews have a great gift of being able to pass down your *emunah* and your traditions. This is why you are able to withstand all of the difficulties that come your way!”

Returning to Eisav’s rejection of Yitzchak Avinu’s way of life, we wonder what it was that spurred him to turn his back and shun tradition? Rav Sholom explains that actually two occurrences negatively influenced his actions. The Torah writes (*Bereishis* 35:6,7), “Eisav took his wives, his sons, his daughters... and went to a land because of his brother Yaakov.” *Rashi* lists a number of reasons that Eisav separated from Yaakov. Primarily, Eisav understood the decree that whoever lived in Canaan would be subject to a long, harsh exile. He wanted no part of that. Furthermore, he was embarrassed that he had sold the *bechorah*, birthright. Rav Sholom presented two questions. If living in *Eretz Yisrael* would incur a difficult exile, why did Yaakov have no problem with it? Second, why did Eisav suddenly become embarrassed now (after so many years) for selling the *bechorah*? If Yaakov reasoned that the exile, with its accompanying travail, was worth the benefit of *Eretz Yisrael*, why did Eisav shun it? Embarrassment over a foolish decision is usually immediately apparent, not exhibited years later.

Rav Sholom posits that both reasons are actually one: shame. Eisav gave up his purported right to the Land, because he was overwhelmed with shame for his nonsensical sale of his birthright. Certainly, Eisav was immediately embarrassed over the sale. He soon realized that his actions were governed by the need for immediate gratification, coupled with stupidity, but, as long as Yaakov was not in *Eretz Yisrael*, he was able to downplay his shame. Now that Yaakov was returning, however, Eisav sought another reason to gloss over and conceal his embarrassment.

We seek excuses to cover up our mistakes, but the real reason is the one that we do not acknowledge: the shame over committing an error. Our ego is impugned, which is an experience most of us cannot handle. The *Maggid* relates an incident that occurred in Chevron with a student who acted with *chutzpah*, audacity. The *Mashgiach*, Horav Yehudah Leib Chasman, zl, considered his actions audacious and called him a *mechutza*. The student figured that the *Mashgiach* (by calling him a *mechutza*) was also placing him in *nidui*, excommunication, so he left the *yeshivah*.

The *Mashgiach* summoned him to return to the *yeshivah*. The student demurred, claiming that one who is in *nidui* was prohibited from coming in contact with others. When the *Mashgiach* called him for a second time, the student understood that there was no *nidui* and he returned to the *yeshivah*. The *Mashgiach* called him in and said, “Let us analyze your current situation. You learn well, and, for all intents and purposes, you are a good student and a credit to the *yeshivah*. The moment someone offends you, however, you lose control and become insulted to the point that the ensuing shame has the potential to cause you to leave the *yeshivah*! Once you leave the *yeshivah*, it will

not be long until Torah and Judaism become your next victims. All of this is the result of embarrassment. The issue at hand is not a question of *chutzpah* or *nidui*. The issue is your inability to tolerate a little bit of disgrace. In order to cover up your embarrassment and support your self-imposed inability to return to the *yeshivah*, you invoked the concept of *nidui*, which does not apply in this instance.”

We must give this rejoinder some thought. How often does it happen that someone wrongly insults us or we act foolishly, and the humiliation comes back to haunt us? How often do we wallow in degradation, rather than accept and own up to the shame, in order to be able to return to good standing? No, we would rather be miserable, remain alone, divorced of our friends, all because our ego does not permit us to admit wrong, accept the ridicule and move on. This was acceptable behavior for Eisav, not us.