

“Look, I am going to die, of what use to me is a birthright?” (25:32)

Eisav's negative position *vis-à-vis* the *bechorah*, birthright, is clear: He was not interested in it. His reason: “I am going to die, of what use to me is a birthright?” *Rashi* explains Eisav's rationale. He was likely to die as a result of performing the sacrificial service improperly. A deeper understanding of this may be that a life of relinquishment, or spiritual life as he knew it, was tantamount to death. Eisav viewed spirituality, with its various demands and strictures, as an imposition on his desired lifestyle. He was on earth to live – not die.

A sincere person understands that commitment to the spiritual/religious way of life may require inconvenience, hardship, danger and humiliation. One who is devoted to Hashem understands this. Eisav was not interested in accepting any difficulties. When Eisav learned that Avraham *Avinu* had died, he spurned reward and punishment. After all, if a saint such as Avraham had died, then what was the value of living a life of the spirit? He went on to deny *Techiyas HaMeisim*, Resurrection of the Dead, claiming that living a spiritual life in this world with the objective that when one dies he will live a better spiritual life in the world of the spirit meant no life at all! So, as so many like him, he said that he believed in nothing. He would live life on this world to its fullest, without constraint and without apology, come what may when he dies. He then rationally sold the *bechorah* for a pot of red bean soup, because at that moment the soup, which would satiate his hunger, had greater value than dreams of spirituality.

We have presented before us two perspectives on life: Yaakov views living on this world as an opportunity to gain entrance into *Olam Habba*, the World to Come, and, unless one lives his life on a spiritual plateau, he will succumb to the physical/material enticements of this world, which will cause him to diminish, even lose, his position in the World to Come. Eisav, on the other hand, felt that a life of the spirit was tantamount to death. Why die twice? He did not believe in the World-to-Come. If he had, he would have behaved differently in this world.

With this idea in mind, *Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl*, explains the significance of *kevurah*, burial, in accordance with Yaakov *Avinu's hashkafah*, outlook, as opposed to Eisav's “could-care-less” attitude concerning burial. We find Avraham *Avinu's* overriding concern to bury Sarah *Imeinu* in the *Me'oras Ha'Machpeilah*. This cave would serve as the burial place for the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, as well as Adam and Chavah. It was the first parcel of land purchased in the Holy Land. Yaakov *Avinu* made Yosef swear that he would see to it that he (Yaakov) not be buried in Egypt. He, too, wanted to be interred in the Cave of *Machpeilah*. Yosef also saw to it that he, too, would be interred in *Eretz Yisrael*. This teaches us that the burial place of a *tzaddik*, righteous person, plays an important role in his spiritual *weltanschauung*. For Yaakov, *bechorah* and *kevurah*, birthright and burial, went hand-in-hand, since they are both connected with the world of the spirit. Following his passing from this world, one who merits to live spiritually on this world will merit a special place in the world of the spirit. It is, therefore, only proper that the body which “facilitated”

such an admiral spiritual life receive an appropriate burial in preparation for its eventual resurrection.

Rav Heyman adds a caveat concerning the *yom ha'zikaron*, *yahrzeit*, anniversary of one's passing. Every day of the week has within it a reflection and remembrance of the original days of Creation. The *moadim*, festivals, also represent the events that took place – events which catalyzed the festival and its spiritual properties. Indeed, every calendar date of personal and collective significance spurs memories, underscores significant lessons, and provides opportunities for spiritual advancement based upon the unique spiritual essence and character of that date. If so, what is the importance of memorializing the day of one's passing? What can be derived from the loss, other than to serve as an opportunity for surviving family members to honor and perpetuate the memory of a loved one? This is all for the living. What about the deceased – if no one is “living” to perpetuate his/her memory?

We now have a new perspective on how to view the *yom ha'petirah*, day of death, and its anniversary. The day of death underscores the continuation of the life one led on this world. Yaakov *Avinu* taught us that life should be lived with constraints, restrictions, discipline and commitment to a higher, loftier ideal. He imbued his physical existence with spirituality. Thus, death was for him a continuation of “life,” a reward for a life well-lived. For Yaakov, and his descendants who follow in his perspective, the day of death is also the birthdate of the *neshamah's* homecoming! Death is the beginning of complete spiritual life. Eisav spurned all of this. He would rather have had a bowl of red lentils than have taken a “chance” on executing the birthright. To each his own.

Spirituality gives one's being a purpose. Sadly, some would rather wallow in self-gratification and self-preservation, but then we would be no better than animals. Intellect might elevate us cognitively over the animal world, but, if we defer to our base instincts and desires, we remain far from elevated. One who achieves spirituality, who rises above the physical/material “self”-dominated world, thus becoming G-dly in nature, truly achieves the purpose of creation. *Va'yipach b'apav nishmas ruach chaim*, “And He blew into his nostrils a soul of living spirit” (*Bereishis* 2:7) describes not only the creation of man, but, I think, his Divine purpose: to be and act like a soul derived from the very breath of Hashem; to be G-dly in nature; to be a living spirit distinct from the nature of animals.