

The lads grew up. (25:27)

Rashi writes that when the twins turned thirteen-years-old they went their separate ways. Yaakov *Avinu* gravitated to the *bais hamedrash*, while Eisav *ha'rasha* leaned toward idol worship. It must be noted that their transformation (especially in Eisav) did not just happen in a moment. Their spiritual destination was not a fate accompli. They neither ran nor walked – they gravitated to their respective choices of worship. Indeed, growing up, Eisav was far from being a devoted idolater. On the contrary, he viewed himself as a *tzaddik*, a righteous and virtuous person. After all, he was so meticulous in his *mitzvah* observance that he sought his father's guidance on how to give *maaser*, tithe, from salt. This was, however, all a sham. Eisav was a fraud, a swindler, whose greatest victim was none other than himself.

Horav Aharon Schiff, Shlita, of Antwerp, observes that every fraudulent act has its parameters (it is soon discovered). The parameters depend mostly on the relationship one has with the swindler (the more distant one is, the greater the difficulty in seeing the truth). A wise man can be duped for a few months, until he discovers the deception. One's family sees through the ruse within a few weeks. One's wife can tell the signs within a few short days. All, sooner or later, see the swindler for the charlatan that he is – only the timing is different. The swindler himself, however, is the victim of self-deception, for which there are no parameters. A person is capable of living a lie, and believing it, throughout a lifetime.

Eisav's downfall occurred because he was not *piv v'libo shavin*, expressing what one appears to be. He was a double-dealing hypocrite, for whom deception was a way of life. Such a person fools not only others; he is his own greatest victim. Eisav talks the talk, but does not walk the walk. Nonetheless, he believes what he says, despite acting contrary to the words that he expresses. He sought to emulate his father's actions superficially. As his father married at the age of forty-years old, Eisav also married at that same age, but he married a pagan woman. The only thing his marriage had in common with his father's was their age.

A Jew in Pressburg, who, despite hailing from a distinguished, observant family, decided to live a secular life, both inwardly and outwardly. He dressed as a secular person, shunning the black frock that every member of his family had worn for generations. They had been wholly committed Jews. He was committed to everything but religious observance. When his father passed away, he seemed to undergo a metamorphosis of sorts. He moved into his father's home and began to dress in traditional garb. People thought that, perhaps he might have repented. Unfortunately, this, too, was part of his hypocrisy. He explained that he wanted to emulate his late father; thus, he dressed like him. *Frumkeit*, religious observance? Never! The outer appearances may change, but the heart remains the same.

Horav Gedalyah Elsmann, zl, posits that it was specifically Eisav's penchant for emulating the superficial that earned him the appellation *rasha*, wicked. Rather than emulate Yitzchak *Avinu's* laudatory attributes, Eisav decided to add one more wife to his harem of idol worshippers. His

father married when he was forty. He, too, would marry when he was forty. This is to what *Rashi* alludes when he compares Eisav to the *chazir*, pig. It prides itself with its split hooves, which is one of the symbols of *kashrus*. The hidden symbol, regurgitation, however, does not apply to it. Eisav copied his father, because he wanted to continue sinning. He conjectured that, if for all outward appearances he was acting appropriately, no one would ever notice his many sins. Thus, emulating Yitzchak was his segue to sin.

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel (*Bereishis Rabbah* 65:16) said, "All my days I served my father. However, I did not ever perform *kibbud av* one percent of what Eisav did. I would serve my father with whatever clothes I was wearing. If they were soiled, I would serve him anyway." In contrast, Eisav, would don *bigdei malchus*, clothes suited for a monarch, when he served his father. The *Imrei Emes* of Gur asked, "What prevented Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel from also wearing princely garb when he served?" He explained, *Nuch gemacht is gornisht*, "Copying is nothing." The *Rebbe* is teaching us that the superficial, which is not motivated by internal emotions, is of no value.

This does not mean that all emulation has a negative, vacuous connotation. The following two instances cited by *Horav Eliezer HaLevi Turk, Shlita*, show that one can demonstrate positive forms of modeling oneself and his lifestyle, emulating a great *Rebbe*. After his marriage, *Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl, Mashgiach Kaminitz*, decided after his marriage to exchange his American suit/short jacket for authentic *Yerushalmi* clothing. Once, when his revered *Rebbe, Horav Yisrael Chaim Kaplan, zl* [*Rav Yisrael Chaim* was the son-in-law of *Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl*, and father-in-law of *Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, zl*] saw his student (from *Bais Medrash Elyon, Monsey*) wearing a long frock, he commented, *Ah, a fartiger talmid chacham*, "Oh, a finished Torah scholar. Are you there yet?"

A short while later, when *Rav Moshe Aharon* related the comment of his *Rebbe*, he said, "At first, I felt slighted. When I ruminated over the *Rebbe's* aphorism, however, I realized that he was telling me that imitation that is not motivated by an inner desire for growth is nothing, and it will not last.

Following the wedding of his granddaughter, *Horav Yisrael Gustman, zl*, began to wear a *gartel*, silk wrapped-around belt designated to be worn during *davening*. A *chassidic* man, to whom the *gartel* was part and parcel of his *davening* preparations, asked, "Why does the great *gaon* wear a *gartel*?" (He was probably alluding to the fact that a *gartel* was not part of the *davening* dress code in the Lithuanian *yeshivos*.)

Rav Gustman replied, "My *Rebbe, Horav Shimon Shkop, zl* (Grodno), began putting on *Rabbeinu Tam Tefillin* one day after *davening*. When one of his students questioned this practice, *Rav Shimon* said, "I have constantly spent time and exertion in an attempt to explain the expositions of *Rabbeinu Tam*. Can you imagine that when I will go up to Heaven and be greeted by *Rabbeinu Tam*, I do not want him to rebuke me for being a *karkafta d'lo monach Tefillin*, a man who did not wear *Tefillin* (since, according to *Rabbeinu Tam*, the sequence of the placement of the *parshiyos*, differs from that of *Rashi*)." Likewise, when *Rav Shimon* reached a certain age, he began to wear

a *gartel*. When he was queried for a reason for this practice, he said, "That he wanted to prepare for the *davening*." (*Hikon l'kraas Hashem Elokecha*, "Prepare to meet your G-d." One should perform a preparatory act prior to *davening*. The *gartel*, belt, is used by many as a garment set aside for prayer.) "Like my revered *Rebbe*, I have reached an age at which I would like to accept a new *mitzvah* (manner of serving Hashem) upon myself.