

And Hashem said to her, “Two nations are in your womb.” (25:23)

The word “nations” is spelled in the *Torah* with two “*yudin*,” which means “proud ones.” It is read, however, with one “*yud*” to mean nations. *Rashi* explains that the “proud ones” is a reference to two great leaders, each hailing from different nations, who were close personal friends – Rabbi Yehudah *Ha’nasi*, the redactor of the *Mishnah*, maintained a healthy, personal relationship with Antoninus, the Roman leader.

Hashem prevented Yitzchak from discerning the true nature and character of his son, Eisav. Hence, Yitzchak had no reason to harbor any ill will toward him. Indeed, the *Torah* says that Yitzchak loved Eisav. We must endeavor to understand why Hashem would conceal Eisav’s true identity from Yitzchak.

Horav Mordechai Gifter, z.l., explains that human nature dictates that relationships are reciprocal; when a person shows affection to me, I will respond in kind. Yitzchak’s love for Eisav effected a reciprocal response, albeit many generations later, in the guise of Eisav’s great-grandson, Antoninus. This relationship was the precursor of the Oral Law that has sustained our People throughout the millennia. Imagine, the standard of scholarship in *Klal Yisrael* was waning. In order to ensure their continued spiritual existence, it was crucial that the scholars compile the *Mishnah*. Antoninus, Rabbi Yehuda *Ha’nasi*’s “good friend,” granted him a tranquil and prosperous life, without which he probably would have had a difficult time compiling the *Mishnah*. Without the *Mishnah*, the Oral Law would clearly have been forgotten, allowing *Klal Yisrael* to fade into oblivion. Antoninus’ benevolence was a reflection of Yitzchak’s love for Eisav.

We now understand the meaning of “*Two proud ones are within you.*” Indeed, although *Klal Yisrael* descended only from Yaakov, the younger twin, both children played a leading role in *Klal Yisrael*’s eternity. The two “proud ones” that descended from Yaakov and Eisav preserved our spiritual heritage.