

## And Yaakov kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. (29:11)

*Rashi* cites various reasons which *Chazal* mention for Yaakov's weeping upon meeting Rachel. One reason is that Yaakov lamented the fact that when Eliezer came to Rivkah, at Avraham *Avinu's* behest to seek a wife for Yitzchak, he came with jewelry and precious stones. In contrast he was coming with nothing. *Rashi* explains that Yaakov gave all of his possessions to Elifaz, Eisav's son, who at his father's command had chased after him to kill him. At the last minute, however, Elifaz just could not do it. He was overcome with doubt, confused by a life of error and misconception. On the one hand, his father had commanded him to slay his uncle. On the other hand, he did not feel he could kill Yaakov, as he had been raised under Yitzchak's supervision, visiting and spending time with his sainted grandfather. Sensing his confusion, Yaakov advised him to take away his possessions. This caused him to become poor. We are taught that "*ani chashuv k'meis*," a poor man is like dead man. Hence, Yaakov could be declared dead, absolving Elifaz from his father's directive.

The lessons to be inferred from *Chazal* are captivating. *Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita*, notes the *yetzer hora's* incredible capacity for confusing and misguiding a person. Elifaz was prepared to kill Yaakov, to murder his *rebbe*, in order to fulfill his father's command. He refrained from taking action only because he had grown up in Yitzchak's home. Yet, the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud Av V'eim*, honoring one's parents, had a compelling effect upon him, leaving him no recourse. Certainly, he was not driven by fear of Eisav. Had this been the case, he would not have accepted Yaakov's *halachic* alternative. Eisav did not want alternatives; he wanted Yaakov completely out of the picture!

Thus, we must conclude that because Elifaz had been raised in Eisav's home, where he was taught by Eisav's example to appreciate the *mitzvah* of *Kibud Av*, he was acutely sensitive to this *mitzvah*. At the same time, he also saw, and was influenced by, a father whose life revolved around murder. Human life had no value to Eisav. He lived by the sword. Is it any wonder that Elifaz was confused? He had no concept of murder and its evil! He also spent time with his grandfather, which left an impression to the point that he did not know what to do. The evil of murder, which was not as clearly defined for him as a result of his exposure to Eisav, coupled with his sensitivity to *Kibud Av* left him with a strong argument for carrying out his father's command. The impression that was imprinted upon him as a child of his grandfather have prevented him from committing murder.

The lessons are compelling. First, we see that impressions leave an indelible imprint upon a child's psyche. Growing up in an environment hostile to *Torah* leaves an indelible impression. On the other hand, those moments with Yitzchak saved Elifaz. Thus, we never know the powerful impact that a visit with a *tzaddik* can have on a young person. It may take years to surface - but, it is there! We also see how the evil inclination can color a sin as heinous as murder and present it as

a *mitzvah*. Elifaz viewed killing Yaakov as the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *Kibud Av*! Do we need to say more?