

Eisav took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters... and all the wealth that he had acquired in the land of Canaan and went to a land because of Yaakov, his brother. (36:6)

Little things make a difference. It is striking, however, how these seemingly little things affect various people differently. We will present two examples of how little/minor actions had a negative effect on Yaakov *Avinu*, while a little act of decency on the part of Eisav earned him incredible reward. When Yaakov met with Eisav, he presented his family, consisting of his wives and their eleven children (see 32:23). Something is wrong – Yaakov had twelve children. Although this took place before the birth of Binyamin, what about Dinah? Her inclusion would have equaled twelve children. *Chazal* relate that Yaakov hid Dinah in a box, lest Eisav behold her and seek her hand in marriage. Yaakov was not planning to have that *rasha*, wicked person, as a son-in-law. It was bad enough that he had him as a brother.

One would think that Yaakov's act of sparing his child a confrontation with Eisav was laudatory. *Chazal* do not seem to think so. In fact, Hashem punished Yaakov for this. We are taught that since he prevented his daughter from possibly marrying Eisav legally/permissively, instead, he saw her fall into the hands of Shechem *ben* Chamor. His daughter was violated by this creature, because Yaakov hid her from his brother. Clearly, *Chazal's* statement begs elucidation. Is Yaakov supposed to risk his daughter's spiritual and physical future by allowing her to fall into the clutches of an Eisav *ha'rasha*? Is this type of parenting to be expected of the Patriarch – or of any person, for that matter? One might suggest that Dinah could possibly have had a positive impact on Eisav. Never! Eisav was evil incarnate. Dinah was not going to change that. So, what did Yaakov do that was so bad?

The *Slabodka Mashgiach*, *Horav Avraham Grodzenski, zl*, explains that unquestionably, Yaakov was not expected to give his daughter to Eisav. That would have been ludicrous. Did he, however, have to “press down so hard on the top of the box” in which she was hidden? In other words, while it goes without saying that Yaakov had to prevent Eisav from laying eyes on Dinah, in preventing this from taking place did Yaakov have to revel in his success in outsmarting Eisav? Indeed, we are compelled to do certain things for our own protection. But, this does not mean that we have to enjoy the course we must take. We separate ourselves from harmful environments, people, etc., because we must – not because we enjoy it.

Another example of a “little thing” that made a compelling difference, and had ramifications which we are still experiencing today concerns Timna, the *pilegish*, concubine, of Elifaz, Eisav's son. They had a child whom they named Amalek. Yes, our archenemy, who has been slaughtering us for thousands of years, was the product of that union. How did this take place? Could it have been prevented? Whose fault was it?

It all happened because of little things, but apparently, there are no “little things” when it

involves *tzaddikim*, righteous persons. Timna originally approached the Avos, Patriarchs, requesting to convert. Her desire to be a Jewess by choice, reflects how much she loved Judaism and the esteem which she had for the Avos. They rejected her. It is not as if she was not sincere. She just was not considered Jewish material. The Avos detected a faint odor of *middos ra'os*, negative character traits. Thus, they decided that she was not a candidate for acceptance in *Klal Yisrael*. Yet, Hashem judged them on the Heavenly scale of justice reserved for such righteous persons. The scale of a *chut ha'saarah*, hairbreadth, is a demanding one, especially reserved for the righteous. The Avos were considered guilty of distancing Timna. Therefore, when she said, "I would rather be a maidservant to this people than a matron to another nation," she became Elifaz's concubine, setting the stage for the birth of a son like Amalek – all because they should have converted and not distanced Timna (*Sanhedrin* 99b, *Rashi*). While we may not consider this distancing – in Heaven they did. "Little things" become quite large under the surveillance of the Heavenly microscope.

"Little things" have an effect in Heaven when it comes to *reshaim*, wicked persons, as well. In fact, when a *rasha* performs the simplest of *mitzvos*, he will receive immediate reward in **this** world – the world that he loves and cherishes. After all, what would the *rasha* do in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come? At the end of the *Parsha*, the Torah enumerates the many *alufim*, princes who descended from Eisav, who were in place in their lands many years **before** the Jewish nation had its first king. One wonders what great *mitzvah*, what incredible good deed, Eisav had done to deserve such reward.

Horav Shalom Schwadron, zl, cites a *Ramban* who quotes *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* that illuminates the origin of Eisav's reward. The Torah writes that Eisav traveled with his great fortune; wives, children, servants, cattle, animals – all of his possessions (Ibid. 36:6). It seems like an amazing fortune. Where did he go with all of his wealth? *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* explains that when Yaakov *Avinu* informed Eisav that Canaan was his, so that he should go elsewhere, Eisav immediately complied with his brother's wishes! In reward for deferring to Yaakov's wishes, Eisav was granted one hundred provinces. All of these were the result of one grain of good that surfaced from amidst all of the bad. For this, he was repaid a thousand fold!

Rav Sholom then asks a pivotal question: Eisav did one positive "little thing," a hairbreadth of good, and he received such an incredible reward; yet, the righteous who live an entire life of piety and virtue do one "little thing" wrong – a hairbreadth – and are punished mercilessly! Why? The *Maggid* explains that, first of all, that which appears to be "small" is not necessarily small. Look at the stars. They seem tiny, but upon closer inspection, they are big beyond our wildest imagination! Likewise, people who might appear to be small in this world – in comparison to other physical entities – are actually quite large when viewed through the Heavenly lens which factors in their righteous, good deeds.

These righteous individuals have no negative deeds to diminish their Heavenly size. They do have an *avak*, "dust," of critique against them, relative to their inner resolve and true character. When

one achieves spiritual perfection, the slightest taint of imperfection can leave a spiritual blemish. Thus, even the most diminutive act is not considered as being tiny. It becomes magnified relative to the spiritual landscape against which it is positioned.

Rav Sholom adds another insight to explain why the righteous are scrutinized so meticulously. He cites *Yirmiyahu* 46:28, "You, do not be afraid, My servant, Yaakov – the word of Hashem – for I am with you; though I shall make an end of all the nations where I have dispersed you, but of you I shall not make an end; I shall punish you **with** justice, but I shall not destroy you utterly." The words in the latter part of the *pasuk*: *v'y'sarticha la'mishpat*, which is translated, "I shall punish you **with** justice," seem to have the wrong prefix. *La'mishpat* means, "**to** justice." "With justice" is, "*ba'mishpat*." This question is addressed by the *Zohar HaKadosh* who explains that Hashem "provides" us with *yissurim*, pain, troubles, in order to lighten and decrease the judgment against us. The trouble which we experience, the pain which we sustain are *la'mishpat*, for the purpose of *mishpat*, justice. In order to lessen the punishment, Hashem "avails" us of *yissurim*, as *Chazal* say: "Hashem is *makdim*, precedes/prepares, the *refuah*, therapy/healing, prior to the *makah*, punishment."

We wonder why *tzaddikim* are scrutinized, why they suffer so. It is because Hashem is preempting their punishment in this world, so that they receive their full reward in *Olam Habba*. Why should they lose out "later," when they can get it out of the way now?