

For as an inheritance to Eisav have I given Mount Seir. (2:5)

The old cliché goes; *Es is shver tzu zein a Yid*, “It is difficult to be a Jew.” While this is a wrong attitude for a Jew to have, from a practical point of view, it may be considered true. Living an observant lifestyle takes a certain amount of conviction, resolution and forbearance. What we fail to acknowledge is that the cliché might have some validity – there may be a good explanation for the manifold challenges that a Jew confronts in life. *Horav Aharon Bakst, zl*, explains this as a reason for the distinction between Yaakov *Avinu* and Eisav with regard to the land which was endowed to them by Hashem.

Concerning Eisav, the Torah writes, “For an inheritance to the children of Eisav, I have given Mount Seir.” Eisav receives his portion of land without toil, without challenge – an inheritance, a bequest. *Klal Yisrael* also receives its allotment – *Eretz Yisrael*, but with strings attached. The Jewish People must first experience slavery in Egypt. It was not merely slavery; it was degradation, persecution, brutality and pain – all of this, so that they could travel forty years in the miserable Wilderness, and then enter the Promised Land. One would think that Hashem’s chosen nation would have received better treatment.

Rav Bakst explains that *Klal Yisrael* is not much different than a young calf, which is able to walk on its own a mere few days after birth. It is able to eat without help. Yet, a human must be helped with his food, spoon fed by his mother, until he reaches an age of cognition when he can do things on his own. After the parents have provided the basics, they must raise and educate their child. It is not a “done deal.” Why does man, who is the focus and purpose of the entire universe, have to go through such a lengthy training process? And, if he is lucky to be blessed with normal, decent parents, he might even succeed, while animals are born and shortly thereafter are independent?

Apparently, this is the underlying rule which guides the world: Anything whose purpose and function is lofty and critical must undergo a preparatory process whose difficulty coincides with the acute nature of its purpose and function in life. Man has purpose. He plays a decisive role in maintaining the world; thus, his process is lengthy and challenging. Animals have simple goals. Some serve as food, while others serve as man’s “best friend.” Man’s goals and area of achievement are considerable. He can aspire for eminence and achieve it. Therefore, the initiatory process is of greater challenge and greater consequence.

Eisav has no purpose in life. Without a Torah and a way of life dictated by Hashem, he has nothing to look forward to other than to eat, sleep and stay out of trouble. Yaakov, however, has definitive goals, choreographed by the Divine Creator of the world. Therefore, the process of investiture which he must undergo is that much more challenging.