

"And Eisav took his wives... and all the members of his household... and went to a land because of Yaakov his brother." (36:6)

The commentators suggest a number of reasons that Eisav suddenly decided to separate from Yaakov. Some of them posit that pure greed motivated this decision. He felt the land could not support him in the style to which he had become accustomed. **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, contends that Eisav's decision was a pragmatic one; he could not tolerate Yaakov's presence. Despite their newfound relationship, the moral gulf that existed between them was loathsome for Eisav. He simply could not cope with his brother's lifestyle. These various explanations notwithstanding, we still must address the reason that Eisav left. Why could he not just have demanded that Yaakov move on? Why was Eisav so acquiescent to leaving? It hardly seems consistent with his nature!

Horav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, zl, comments that Eisav left because, now that Yaakov was in his presence, the sham that Eisav had lived until now was exposed. As long as Eisav was Yitzchak's only descendant who dwelled in the land, he could present himself as the sole heir of the Patriarchs. He was the true beneficiary of Avraham's *middah* of *chesed*. After all, was he not the one who exemplified himself in his *Kibud Av*, the honor he accorded to his parents? He emphasized *mitzvos bein adam l'chaveiro*, areas dealing with inter-relationships among people. This pretense continued as long as Yaakov could be depicted as the ne'er-do-well, sitting with his ancient books studying in the tents of *Torah*. Yaakov had no time to perform deeds of *chesed*. He was too busy studying. He had no time to interact with the broader world!

Eisav employed such slander to help himself in climbing the social ladder. By denigrating Yaakov, he was able to elevate his own stature in the eyes of other people. Everyone sought out this distinguished heir to the legacy of Avraham. He became "*mechutanim*" with the noble aristocracy of his time. Eisav set the stage in a way that would enhance his own image at Yaakov's expense.

When Yaakov returned amidst pomp and glory, a wealthy man who had earned his fortune through hard work and integrity, people took notice. Suddenly, Eisav's disparaging remarks did not seem to be based in reality. Yaakov distinguished himself in every area of human endeavor; he was successful materially at the same time that he maintained a reputation that was above reproach. His love and respect for his fellow man was exemplary. He endured the cheating and thievery of Lavan without descending to his level of debasement. Yaakov managed to achieve all of this while he maintained his commitment to *Torah* study. The people now saw the blatant lies that Eisav had spread. No longer did Eisav have a place in the land. Yaakov's presence was a glaring indictment against him. He was compelled to leave in humiliation to go live in the area of Har Se'er.

It would serve us well to just stop and digest these words. *Bnei Torah* are the targets of the same type of disparagement that Yaakov *Avinu* suffered. People have offered a number of responses to these degrading remarks - most of them foolish and undignified. Perhaps, the most astute reply

would be the one that Yaakov used - to say nothing. He behaved with integrity and decency, maintaining his observance of *Torah* and *mitzvos* to the extreme. Eisav and his successors cannot fight the truth. We have only to continue to "live" it.