

And Eisav became one who knows trapping, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents. (25:27)

The Torah's characterization of the differences between Yaakov *Avinu* and Eisav *ha'rasha* seems minor in contrast to the actual stark differences between the two. Yaakov was holy, righteous, the pillar of Torah and truth, the third leg of the Heavenly chariot. Eisav was the epitome of evil, the archenemy of our people. Yet, the Torah chose to underscore the fact that Eisav was a man of the field, *yoshev batel*, did nothing all day, wasted his time. Yaakov, however, was a wholesome man who spent his day in spiritual ascendance, studying Torah. Apparently, herein lay the difference between the two. The nadir of depravity to which Eisav descended was the direct result of his being *yoshev batel*, wasting his time doing nothing. This led to his downward plunge, to committing one nefarious deed after another until he became Eisav *ha'rasha* – an appellation that lived with him. Yaakov grew spiritually every day, until he earned the distinctions of *amud haTorah*, *amud ha'emes*.

Everything has to begin somewhere. No one becomes a distinguished Torah leader overnight. It takes years of toil in Torah, unrelenting diligence, uncompromising commitment, devotion and love of Torah and *mitzvos*. Likewise, one does not wake up one morning, decide to become a *rasha* – and, suddenly, he is evil. It is a process. First, one is bored, he has nothing to do, lots of free time. He must occupy himself with something, and, apparently, Torah does not fit into his time slot. With nothing constructive to do and no commitment to Torah to protect him, what else should one do? One either ascends the ladder of spirituality or he plummets to the ground.

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl, observes that with regard to Eisav, the Torah states *yodea tzayid*, who knows trapping. No mention is made of his actual trapping – just his knowledge of the skill. On the other hand, concerning Yaakov the Torah mentions his abiding /sitting in tents, without telling us anything about his achievements in Torah. This too teaches us volumes about their disparate characters. The gentile suffices with knowledge of a given discipline. Receiving a doctorate, achieving distinction in a given field, is determined by knowledge – not action. Concerning *chochmas haTorah*, the wisdom of Torah, the important determining factor of achievement is not knowledge, but diligence and commitment. Knowledge is a gift from Hashem. Distinction is earned via toil. Eisav was *yodea*; Yaakov was *yosheiv*. Knowledge is extrinsic and does not necessarily transform the individual. *Yosheiv ohalim*, sitting and learning in the tents of Torah, transforms a person. He learns; he is changed.

Horav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, zl, relates that when he studied in *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin*, a *rav* visited the *yeshiva* and spoke to the students. He said, "I have met many *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars, and the majority of these scholars did not possess exemplary aptitude. (They were not geniuses.) Nonetheless, they had become impressive scholars. How did this happen? It is because the primary factor in success in Torah is not an outstanding mind. Success in Torah is

primarily the result of *hasmadah*, diligence and toil. Thus, Yaakov is praised for being a *yosheiv ohalim*, sitting in the tents – learning. Learning Torah is of greater importance than the *yedios*, knowledge, one amasses as a result of his learning.

One note: there are those who contend that Eisav was not wasting his time. He was preoccupied with hunting, a skill which takes time, effort and dedication to master. True – but what enduring value is derived from this skill? The definition of wasting time is to either do nothing or to do something which is actually nothing, because it is performed during the gift of time which Hashem gives us for a purpose. Time must be channeled – not spent. Eisav wasted his time; Yaakov invested his time with purpose.