

You shall not reject an Edomi, for he is your brother; you shall not reject an Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in his land... the third generation may enter the congregation of Hashem. (23:8,9)

Understandably, we would not want to accept the children of a convert from those nations who have persecuted us. The Torah's line of thinking is different than ours. Hashem has enjoined us to take a positive view of the descendants of these nations. Edom is "family," and Egypt provided food and lodging for Yaakov *Avinu* and his family. What happened later is a different story. It does not absolve us of the obligation to show gratitude. Nonetheless, it takes three generations after conversion for their base nature to be expunged. The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains the *shoresh*, root, of this *mitzvah*. We must view the subjugation carried out by the Egyptians as a decree from Hashem. Thus, it is improper to hate them due to this issue. Likewise, Hashem "directed" the Edomi to treat us miserably. These nations were agents of the Divine to keep us in line. When they sincerely want to reject their ignominious heritage and join the *am ha'nivchar*, chosen people – we may not reject them.

In his commentary to the *Haggadah*, *Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl*, focuses on the concept of *maschil b'g'nus u'me'sayeim b'shevach*, "He begins with (our) disgrace, and concludes with our praise;" the *g'nus*, disgrace, is the idea of *avadim ha'yinu l'Pharaoh b'Mitzrayim*, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt." Why is this a disgrace? It is not as if we chose to be enslaved. They were our persecutors, brutal taskmasters, who controlled our lives. We neither sought nor agreed to the inhuman treatment that we received compliments of the Egyptians. If anything, *avadim hayinu* should ameliorate our disgrace. We were victims.

Rav Kornitzer explains that a *maamin*, believing Jew, understands that everything that occurs in his life is *gezeiras Elyon*, by Divine decree. Things do not just happen. One who believes this will not bow down to – or be affected by – the persecution wrought against him by others. He views them for what they are: agents of Hashem. The disgrace of *Klal Yisrael* is that we accepted that we were slaves. We are not slaves to anyone! Heaven places us in situations in which we are subject to subjugation, but our essence is unaltered. We are Hashem's children, and this is our immutable identity.

The *Rav* applies this idea to interpret the *pasuk*, *Ha'kol kol Yaakov v'ha'yadayim y'dei Eisav*, "The sound (of the voice) is that of Yaakov, but the hands are those of Eisav." *Yitzchak Avinu* was taken aback by the paradox that stood before him: an individual who spoke with the refinement that characterized Yaakov, but whose hands (activities) reflected the nature of Eisav. *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 65:16) interpret this as, "When the sound of Yaakov is alive and well in the *shuls* and *batei medrash*, then the hands of Eisav cannot affect them." Our greatest protection from the hate-filled machinations of Eisav is the *bais hamedrash* from which the sounds of Torah permeate its

environs. *Rav* Kornitzer explains that a Jew should realize and acknowledge that Eisav is merely Hashem's agent to keep us in line and that he has no power of his own. It is only of his "hands," but he is nothing. We pay him no regard, because, in his own right, he is nothing but a tool. This verity can only be acknowledged when one's mindset is inspired by the *kol Yaakov* of the *bais hamedrash*. Only one whose place is in the Torah milieu, who is influenced and guided by Torah dictate and its disseminators, whose every decision is shepherded by *daas Torah* – will not fear Eisav. His hands cannot harm us unless Hashem wills it. As long as we keep this idea foremost in our minds, we are safe from "him."