

Two people are in your womb, and two nations from your womb shall separate... and the elder shall serve the younger. (25:23)

The story of Yaakov and Eisav involves complex dynamics between two brothers – two very different brothers who had totally incongruous ways of life, goals and objectives. This was basically the *nevuah*, prophesy, that Rivkah *Imeinu* received when she went to the *yeshivah* of Shem and Ever to seek an explanation for her difficult pregnancy. Much can be derived from the narrative which serves as a lesson concerning family relationships, personal choices and the consequences one must bear as a result of his decisions. Obviously, the entire scenario is cloaked in profound layers of esoteric nature, leaving little for us to speculate. *Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl*, expounds upon a powerful lesson which I think we tend to gloss over.

Rivkah was told that one of her twins was going to leave the fold. He would lead a morally bankrupt life, absorbed in idol worship and profligacy. The other twin would be his complete opposite, devoting his life to Torah study, *mitzvah* observance and the pursuit of – and adherence to – the truth. Indeed, integrity would be his exemplar. Throughout the Torah, Yaakov *Avinu* is often characterized as exemplifying the value of truth. His actions and character demonstrate his unstinting commitment for *emes* and *tzedek*, integrity and righteousness. Yaakov always wanted to learn more; Eisav was *asui*, already completely formed. He knew it all. He needed nothing to supplement his life.

Eisav's evil character was not going to change. It was who he was, and no amount of love or encouragement would alter his life's trajectory. Consequently, Rivkah showered all of her love on Yaakov, demonstrating the love and admiration for him that any mother would manifest to a child from whom she receives much *nachas*.

Rivkah did not share with Yitzchak the prophecy she had received (*Ramban*). The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that: A) A Prophet is not permitted to reveal his/her prophecy; B) Out of extreme reverence for Yitzchak, Rivkah would never have revealed the true character of Eisav. Yitzchak knew that Eisav had issues to deal with and challenges to overcome. He felt that one does not close the door on a child just because he does not fit the mold that he planned for him. A parent never gives up on a child – regardless of his flaws. One must continue to make the effort, to expend the time, spend the money, and put on a smiley face no matter how much it hurts, even if deep down he knows that success will always be elusive.

Yitzchak's love for Eisav was unequivocal. He drew him close out of love. To think that Yitzchak palliated Eisav's repugnant behavior would be grossly inaccurate. He knew, but he still loved. Eisav's behavior would not smother Yitzchak's love. A parent invests their life into his child expecting at least some positive return. If this does not occur, it does not diminish the parent's love for the child. The parent will just have to try harder to reach his/her child. Success or failure in

achieving *nachas* should never be the barometer for a parent's love.

Eisav was the archetypical *rasha*, wicked throughout. If anyone was deserving of serious punishment and banishment from *Klal Yisrael*, it was he. Yet, as the *Rosh Yeshivah* points out, Eisav never lost *Yisrael* status (*Kiddushin* 18a). He was an apostate Jew – but a Jew nonetheless. His children, however, are considered gentiles. Yitzchak's love did in some way impact Eisav. While he could not change Eisav, he tempered his evil streak. Who knows, wonders *Rav Belsky*, how much evil Eisav would have done had Yitzchak rejected him?

This is a powerful statement and one that should give us something to mull over. We have suffered immeasurably at the hands of Eisav's minions. The hatred they have shown to us via the constant pogroms leading up to the Holocaust and the constant anti-Semitism to which we are subjected are all "tempered" by Yitzchak's fatherly love. We shudder to think what could have occurred had Yitzchak not acted in this manner. Perhaps it was because he was an *olah temimah*, perfect sacrifice. He was not able to sense that someone could be so evil – and if he was, it was the *yetzer hora* dominating him.