

Yitzchak loved Eisav... but Rivkah loved Yaakov. (25:28)

One of the most perplexing aspects of the Yitzchak/Rivkah Yaakov/Eisav narrative is the love Yitzchak showed to Eisav. We have no doubt that Yitzchak was aware of his son's errant behavior. Certainly, Eisav's demeanor stood out in stark contrast to Yaakov's behavior. The commentators grapple with this enigma, each expounding his individual interpretation of Yitzchak *Avinu's* positive attitude towards Eisav. *Horav Meir Rubman, zl*, explains that we can apply two approaches to dealing with – and addressing – the issue of a recalcitrant son who has sadly gone off the *derech*, who has turned his back on religious observance. It all depends upon the son's attitude towards his parents.

If the son holds onto a semblance of *kibbud av v'eim*, if his rebelliousness has not digressed to the point that he no longer shows respect to his parents, then the parents can harbor hope. Under such circumstances, it is critical that the parents maintain open and non-judgmental dialogue, show genuine interest and listen attentively without interruption to what the child has to say. It is vital to reassure him that your love for him has not diminished and you are prepared to work with him until a reasonable solution to his issues has been agreed upon.

If, however, the son no longer respects his parents, shows open disdain for them and their way of life, the situation has plummeted to a nadir where leniency and compromise is a major challenge. A firm and resolute stand must be taken. Once a child shows disrespect, negotiation is off the table – until the child bends and realizes that one does not treat parents in such a despicable manner. Whatever Eisav was – and he was evil incarnate – he still demonstrated extraordinary *kibbud av*. Thus, the Torah writes that Rivkah loved (*oheves*) Yaakov, unequivocally. It was real. Concerning Yitzchak's relationship with Eisav, the Torah writes, *va'ye'ehav*, “and he loved;” he concocted ways and reasons to show love to him, with the hope that he might return.