



שמע קולנו

THE POWER OF POTENTIAL

Yossi Dietz (18)

In this week's *parsha*, Parshas Toldos, we are told how Eisav was able to trick his father into thinking he was a great *tzaddik*:

וַיַּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֶשָׂו אִישׁ יָדָע צִיד אִישׁ שֹׂדֵה וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ
תָּם יָשָׁב אֲהָלִים:

“And the youths grew up, and Esau was a man who understood hunting, a man of the field, whereas Jacob was an innocent man, dwelling in tents (Bereishis 25:27).”

Rashi tells us that when the *passuk* says “who understood hunting,” it is referring to Eisav’s conversation with Yitzchak. “Father, how do we tithe salt and straw?” Eisav would say. Yitzchak would think that Eisav was a great *tzaddik* because he wanted to take *ma’aser* on products from which *ma’aser* is not required to be taken. If you think about it, though, this is a pretty thin lie. Yitzchak, the Av that represents strict justice, should have easily picked through Eisav’s story and yet he didn’t. It begs the question: how could Yitzchak have been so blinded by Eisav’s insincere questions and an occasional meal?

In an article, Rabbi Label Lamm writes a fascinating story which might offer some insight into this question. Rabbi Lamm writes that he was walking into the Beis Medrash before he had *semicha* and he saw his *chavrusa* stand up. He quickly glanced behind him, expecting to see the Rosh Yeshiva, but no one was there. He realized his *chavrusa* had stood for him. Rabbi Lamm quickly walked over to his

chavrusa. “Why are you standing?” he asked. “You should stand for the *Rosh Yeshiva*, not me!” His *chavrusa* turned to him seriously and said “I’m not standing for you, but for your potential.”

I have an older friend who used to be a corrections officer. He told me that a father would always come and visit his son every week. His son was not exactly a model prisoner but whenever the father would come out of the visit he would be beaming. “He hasn’t picked a fight in three days!” his father would say; “Only got in trouble once this week!” he would gush. My friend was astonished. How could a father be so proud of his son for things that should be normal behavior? The answer is simple. The father saw the potential in his son even when there was so little to see. He saw the best in him when only the worst was showing. This is why Yitzchak had such love and admiration for his son. It wasn’t because he was naïve, *chas veshalom*, but rather because he saw his son’s potential.

We can take home three important lessons from this. First, you should always look at someone not as who they are, but at who they can become. If you have a friend or someone you know who is struggling, don’t turn away from them but instead realize that they can be great. Second, we should realize that potential can be used for good or for evil. Yitzchak saw that Eisav had the potential to be great. Eisav chose to use it for bad, but we don’t have to make that decision; we can choose to be great. Lastly, we have to remember that we, including every single person reading this article, have the potential to be great as long as we put our minds to it. My *beracha* to you the reader is that you stick to you Avodas Hashem and Shemiras Hamitzvos and, in

time, realize your full potential and do great things. Good Shabbos!

THE INNOCENT EISAV

Shua Pariser (20)

This week we read Parshas Toldos. In Parshas Toldos, we see the description of two brothers, Yaakov and Eisav. Everyone is taught from birth that Eisav is a complete *rasha*. Let's explore the *parsha* to see if this statement is true.

When a lioness is born, do we call it a *rasha* compared to a sheep? We do not. Why not? Because the lioness is genetically programmed to eat whatever is in front of it. In the womb, Eisav kicked when Rivka passed the houses of idol worship, while Yaakov kicked when she passed the *batei midrashim*. Do we call Eisav bad because of what he was doing in his womb? Do humans control what they do in the womb of their mother? It seems to be that their paths are predetermined.

If you open a Chumash to this week's *parsha*, and read it with no commentary, with no preconceived notions, Eisav does not appear to be such a bad guy. At the beginning of the *parsha*, we have the birth of Yaakov and Eisav. Eisav comes out first, and Yaakov is holding onto Eisav's heel (Bereishis 25:26). We can see that already, Yaakov does not like the position he is in. Yaakov is described as a student, and Eisav is described as a hunter, a man of the field. Rachel loves Yaakov, while Eisav feeds and has a deep connection with Yitzchak.

Eisav is hunting one day, and he comes home, exhausted. Yaakov is making soup, so Eisav says, "Give me some soup because I am weary." Yaakov says, "I will, but you need to give me your *bechorah*." Eisav then said, "Right now I'm going to die." so he gives the *bechorah* to Yaakov.

When Yitzchak feels he is close to death, he tells Eisav to go get him food, and he will give him a *beracha* (Bereishis 26:4). This was supposed to be a moment of intimacy between Yitzchak and Eisav. Yaakov gave the food and took the *beracha* from Eisav. Eisav brought food back and

Yitzchak said "your brother took your *beracha*. "Vayitz'ak tze'akah *gedolah*," Eisav started to cry (27:34). Rarely does the Torah express emotion, but it did over here. So, after all these events, Eisav got angry and wanted to kill his brother.

When a person is born, they can choose how to go through struggles and what the conclusion will be, but you cannot choose which path you are born on. There are two types of kids. One type is the one who will never get a call from the principal, always on time to the bus, a good student. There's a second child who gets a call home from principal every day, never on time for the bus, and is not good in class. To say that the second one is wicked is false. To say that Eisav is inherently bad is a bad thing to say. So why is Eisav considered bad? Everyone has a set destination that they need to get to. Eisav left from the path that he needed to get to this point. It is not coincidental that Avraham died and then Eisav stopped going on his path? Avraham, who was his last anchor, passed away, so he felt disconnected. We should all find our path to serve Hashem, become more connected and ultimately bring Mashiach.

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