

# PARSHAS TOLDOS

תשפ"א

Yitzchok and Rivka have two sons. While in the womb, Hashem told Rivka that these two sons are really two nations. The world is going to be dominated by two different philosophies – one of Yaakov and one of Eisov. Which one of the two will be the most dominant one? Rashi quotes the midrash which says both sons will have descendants who are great – Antoninus and Rebbi. Both were exceedingly wealthy.

But the posuk says Yaakov and Eisov will part ways at birth and follow their own very different inclinations. This one will go towards evil and this one towards temimus. They will not rule the world together as a 50-50 partnership. It will be like a see-saw. When one rises the other will fall.

What is the philosophy of Yaakov Ovinu and Eisov? Eisov is an 'ish tzayid' – a hunter. He believes in power – the world is physical and is run by physical power. But, at the same time, he has tzayid bepiv. He is deceptive. He puts on a guise of piety, pretending to care about morality in order to gain trust and favor – in order to take advantage of people. He seduces other men's wives and entraps them. He not only traps animals, he traps people. Eisav would found a nation that says that physical might and physical achievement rule the world.

Yaakov is an 'ish tom yoshev oholim'. Yaakov isn't skilled at deception and trapping. He is totally straight. He sat and learned Torah all day. The two go hand-in-hand: honesty and Torah. A person should want to learn Torah because he has a drive for the emes and the ultimate emes is in Torah. People can learn Torah for all sorts of reasons, but the keser Torah would only be worn by those who learn Torah with the middoh of emes. Yaakov would found a nation whose purpose was to inform the world that spiritual values should rule the world. They are Hashem's treasured nation. They are a spiritual nation – a mamleches kohanim vegoy kodosh.

Emes isn't only what you do or what you say. It is a middoh – like chesed and rachamim. You acquire it and make it a core part of your personality. You can't just turn it on or off. It is part of who you are as a person.

I was zoche to be in the company of many of the gedolei Torah of the previous generation – each with very different personalities. But one middoh which went through all of them was the middoh of emes.

There was a major contributor to the yeshiva who was very wealthy. He came to Eretz Yisroel and asked me to take him to Rav Shlomo Zalman for a specific brocho that his business should be successful. I first went in to Rav Shlomo Zalman's study to vouch for him personally and present his request – a brocho that his business should be successful. He looks at me and asks me if it is an ehrlicheh business. I told him that he is a generous fellow who gives 20% of his earnings to tzedoko and our yeshiva is a beneficiary, and from what he tells me it is ehrlich. But I'm not inside the business myself so I can't guarantee it. He told me to call him inside. He told the businessman that if the business is an honest business, it should be successful. Rav Shlomo Zalman would not put his name to a venture that he wasn't sure was completely ehrlich.

This businessman was quite upset and asked me to take him to Bnei Brak to see Rav Shach. We went to Rav Shach. I went through the same routine to vouch for him as much as I could, and ask for a brocho for his business to be successful. But Rav Shach asked the same exact question. Is it an ehrlicheh business? I told him the same thing. I'm not inside the business and I can't guarantee it. So the brocho is the same.

If the business is ehrlich you should be successful. He would not put his name or give a brocho to anything unless it was completely honest.

Emes is a middoh of integrity. Yaakov doesn't know how to fool people. He is incapable of doing it. His essence is straight.

Eisov fooled Yitzchok into thinking he was worthy of receiving a brocho. How did this happen? Yitzchok was blind. What blinded him? The midrash says that while Yitzchok was on the mizbeiach about to be offered at the Akeidoh, the angels in Heaven were crying and a tear fell into Yitzchok's eyes and blinded him. What is the message being conveyed by this midrash?

At the Akeidoh, Yitzchok became the oloh temimoh – the pure and complete sacrifice to Hashem. He couldn't leave Eretz Yisroel. He entered a realm of purity and kedushoh. In such a realm, Yitzchok couldn't fathom there was such a thing as evil, as duplicity, and manipulation. This is why Eisov could fool him. Rivka, by contrast, grew up in the house of Besuel and Lovon. She knew all about charlatans and deception. She wasn't fooled by Eisov.

Yitzchok knew that Eisov wasn't exactly Yaakov. He knew that Eisov isn't spending his time learning. He is out in the field hunting! But he thought that the two brothers could be partners. Eisov is the bechor so he will get the brochos of parnossoh. Yaakov is the son who is learning, Eisov with his business skills would be the son who supports Yaakov. This was Yitzchok's vision of cooperation between his two sons in ruchniyus and gashmiyus. But Rivka knew well that this partnership would be a disaster.

Yitzchok certainly knew who Yaakov really was. At the end of the parsha, when Rivka insists that Yaakov leave to Padan Arom to get a wife from her family, Yitzchok gives Yaakov Ovinu another set of brochos – the brocho of carrying on the mesorah from Avrohom Ovinu. Yitzchok knew that Yaakov would found Klal Yisroel. He would need to have the brochos of Eretz Yisroel. But Avrohom was also promised to be very wealthy. Yitzchok got brochos of wealth as well. So to whom would the brocho of parnossoh go to? That was the question Yitzchok struggled with. He thought Eisov could get those brochos and use them to support Yaakov's ability to found a nation based on spiritual values.

Yaakov pretends to be Eisov and got the brochos of parnossoh from Yitzchok. Yaakov left and right away Eisov entered and demanded those brochos. Yitzchok realized his mistake. He was mistaken about Eisov and that really Yaakov also deserved the brochos of parnossoh. Eisov revealed that he had sold the bechorah to Yaakov. The brothers knew that the brochos were a package deal. If you are the bechor and deserve to get the wealth, you also have to carry the mesorah of Avrohom Ovinu. But Eisov wasn't interested. The bechorah carried too many obligations, too many restrictions. So he sold the bechorah off to Yaakov and hoped he could still fool Yitzchok into thinking he is worthy of the brochos anyway. But Yitzchok now realized his mistake and said that Yaakov would remain with the brochos. He realized that Eisov didn't really deserve them.

So Eisov pleads with Yitzchok to give him any brocho that he can. Yitzchok blessed Eisov with 'shmanei ho'oretz' which can be understood as the oil-rich regions of the world. "And you will live by the sword." Here we see that Yitzchok finally understood Eisov's true nature.

Then Yitzchok places a condition on the brocho he gave Yaakov. Onkelos explains that Eisov would serve his brother until Yaakov's

children stop keeping the Torah. Then Eisov will dominate. It is the same see-saw we read about at the beginning of the parsha.

There are two very different philosophies about the world. Yaakov's philosophy is that spiritual values are the power that run this world. Eisov's philosophy is that physical might is the power that runs this world. Whose philosophy will actually prevail? It depends. If Yaakov stays with his mission to keep the Torah and remains the mamleches kohanim vegoy kodosh, then his philosophy will prevail. He will dominate Eisov and have all the brochos of the physical world fulfilled with him.

But if he stops being the mamleches kohanim and tries to become Eisov and violates the Torah, then Eisov takes over. In order for Yaakov to be on top, he has to stay Yaakov. If you want to be a little bit of Yaakov and a little bit of Eisov, it doesn't work.

The Rambam says that Yaakov ended up very wealthy after living with Lovon all those years only because he was brutally and absolutely honest – no fooling, no faking.

Yaakov was working for the master swindler! He told his wives that he worked for their father with all his might even while Lovon was trying to rob him of all the earnings for his hard work. Later when Lovon caught up with Yaakov and accused him of stealing his idols, Yaakov challenges him to go through all his belongings to see if he took a single item. Lovon couldn't find anything that didn't belong to him! He couldn't find even a spoon or a fork. Imagine living with family members for 20 years and when you leave, there is nothing you take with you that isn't yours.

This was Yaakov's middoh of absolute emes. This is why he became

wealthy. The Rambam gives this advice to every one of us – it isn't just for Yaakov Ovinu. Anyone who deals with people honestly and doesn't cut corners is guaranteed success in his financial matters. But if you compromise on your integrity, it doesn't work. Emunoh and bitochon are challenges to live by spiritual values in a world that seems ruled by physical power and cunning.

There is a see-saw in this world. Yaakov can dominate over Eisov when he is dedicated to the mission of being a mamleches kohanim and goy kodosh. But the minute Yaakov loses sight of his mission, Eisov will ascend.

When a person sits down and asks himself who am I, the answer is that our mission is to represent Hashem in the world with spiritual goals and spiritual values. There are two philosophies that are incompatible with each other. We have to get it into our heads that we are not Eisov. We don't believe that physical might runs the world. The greatest murderers of the 20th century, Hitler and Stalin, both hated Jews because they knew we represented the opposite philosophy. Sometimes it is the non-Jews who understand the truth of what a Jew is better than some Jews.

We grew up in a western world dominated by physical power and physical taivoh. They worship the physical body devoid of any ruchniyus. That is what they are consumed with and obsessed with. But we are a neshomo – that is who we are. It is difficult to maintain that focus because we are drowned in the opposite message. We have to understand we are different.

Yaakov Ovinu can dominate the world – as long as he stays Yaakov. But if he wants to be a little bit Yaakov and a little bit Eisov, it doesn't keep us on top. We start to go down and Eisov goes up.