

- 27 *When the lads grew up, Esav was a man who understood hunting, a man of the field, and Ya'akov was a totally dedicated man, living in tents.*
- בן ויגדלו הנערים ויהי עשׂו אישׁ ידע ציד אישׁ שדה ויעקב אישׁ תם ישב אהלים:

will overtake him in the end; he, the *צעיר*, the weaker one, of lesser strength, will ultimately occupy the first position.

*עקב* means: to follow someone unexpectedly. By extension, *עקב* denotes: the unexpected result, the unsought reward. Thus also *עקב*, to inflict harm unexpectedly, to trick someone (see above, 22:18).

- 27 *ויגדלו וגו'.* Our Sages never hesitate to point out to us the errors and shortcomings, both great and small, of our forefathers, and precisely thus they make Torah great and glorious, heightening its instructiveness for us (see Commentary above, 12:10).

On our verse, too, an observation made by our Sages indicates that the sharp contrast between the two grandsons of Avraham was caused not only by their natural tendencies, but also by mistakes in their upbringing (*Bereshis Rabbah* 63:10). As long as they were little, no one paid attention to the differences in their hidden natures (see v. 24); they were given the same upbringing and the same education. Their parents overlooked the cardinal principle of education: *תנך לנער על-פי דרכו וגו'* “Bring up each child in accordance with his own way” (*Mishlei* 22:6).

Each child should be guided in accordance with the path intended especially for him, the path that suits the qualities and tendencies latent in the depths of his personality, and thus he should be educated, both as a man and as a Jew. The great Jewish task is basically one, but the ways of its fulfillment are manifold and diverse, as human character traits and paths of life are manifold and diverse.

When the sons of Ya'akov gathered to hear their father's blessing, and he visualized in them the future tribes of Israel, he saw not only *Kohanim* and teachers of the Law. Standing around him were the tribe of *Levi'im*, the tribe of kingship, the tribe of merchants, the tribe of farmers, the tribe of warriors. Standing before his eyes was the whole nation, with *all its manifold* characteristics and *diverse* ways of devel-

opment. And he blessed *all* of them, איש אשר כברכתו ברכך אתם (below, 49:28), each according to his own special qualities. For the covenant that God established with Avraham is intended for a healthy, whole, and vital nation. The purpose of the covenant is to build a complete national life with all its manifold forms, all for the one great task, לשמור לדרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט. There, strength and courage, no less than thought and emotion, are to have their champions in the service of God, and all the people, in various callings, are to fulfill the one great common task.

Precisely for this reason, each child must be brought up על פי דרכו; educate him to the one great goal, according to his own unique way, in keeping with his potential. To attempt to educate a Ya'akov and an Esav together in the same classroom, in the same routines and in the same manner, to raise both of them for a life of study and contemplation, will inevitably mean to ruin one of the two. A Ya'akov will draw from the well of wisdom with ever-increasing interest and desire, whereas an Esav will hardly be able to wait for the day when he can throw away the old books and, together with them, a great life-mission, of which he was taught in a one-sided manner, totally unappealing to his nature.

Had Yitzchak and Rivkah delved deeply into Esav's nature; had they asked themselves at an early stage how even an Esav — with the strength, skills, and courage latent within him — could be harnessed for God's service, then the future גיבור ציד would not have become a גיבור לפני ה' but a true גיבור לפני ה'. Ya'akov and Esav, despite their different natures, would have remained twin brothers in spirit and in way of life. Early on, the sword of Esav would have entered into a covenant with the spirit of Ya'akov, and who knows what turn world history would have taken!

But this did not happen. ויגדלו הנערים: only after the boys had grown into men was everyone *surprised* to discover that the two brothers, from the same womb, who had been given the same care, the same upbringing, and the same schooling, were so different in their natures and actions. (Cf. *Collected Writings*, vol. VII, p. 319ff.)

Just as, in Ya'akov's case, איש תם is the character trait and ישב אהלים is the vocation, so too in Esav's case, איש ידע ציד denotes the nature of his character and איש שדה is the vocation.

צור is related to סוד, as we already noted regarding Nimrod (above, 10:9), whose spiritual heir seems to be Esav. סוד: a plan that one keeps

- 28 *Yitzchak loved Esav, because he was a hunter also with his mouth, but Rivkah loved Ya'akov.* כַּח וַיֵּאָהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת־עֵשָׂו בְּיַד בְּפִיו וְרִבְקָה אָהָבָת אֶת־יַעֲקֹב:

to oneself until the time comes to carry it out. צוד: one implements the plan, overcoming all obstacles. A ציד will appear to be totally innocent, but in his heart he harbors the intent to kill. His art is the exercise of trickery; used in a different sphere ציד means: diplomacy.

Esav was an expert hunter; he knew the art of *self-control: set a trap, and then wait patiently for the opportune moment*. His upbringing, to which we referred earlier, which was so contrary to his nature, only repressed his true self and forced him to develop patience, the ability to wait for the opportune moment. These were the skills that made him an איש שדה. Precisely because he had been forced to remain glued to the schoolbench, he now rejected everything and was *entirely* a man of the field.

Ya'akov, by contrast, was an איש חם, a man who knows only one direction and devotes himself entirely to it, a man single-minded in his whole essence. He was single-minded in seeking to fulfill the mission entrusted to him as Yitzchak's son and Avraham's grandson, and therefore became a יושב אהלים, a person whose sphere of activity is in human society, in whose midst he leads a life of study and practice. So, too, later in life, יעקב קראו ביה (Pesachim 88a): In the midst of human society he recognized and taught the highest revelation of God's guidance.

- 28 Another factor that could not fail to have a negative effect was the difference in the feelings of the parents toward their children. Agreement between the parents as regards the rearing of the children; equal love for all the children, even for those who are deficient in character (who are in need of love and devotion, even more than those who are physically ill) – these are the essential conditions and cornerstones of all successful child-rearing.

To be sure, Yitzchak's love for Esav and Rivkah's love for Ya'akov can easily be explained by the attraction of opposites. Yitzchak, who was an “עולה תמימה,” withdrew from the commotion of the world; he preferred to dwell in quiet solitude, near the well of “the Living One

- 29 *One day Ya'akov cooked a pottage, and Esav came in from the field, exhausted.* כֵּס וַיֵּזֶד יַעֲקֹב נֹזֵד וַיָּבֵא עֵשָׂו מִן־  
הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא עָיֵף:
- 30 *Esav said to Ya'akov: Please let me gulp down this red, red [pottage], for I am exhausted. He therefore called himself Edom.* ל וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הֲלִעִיטֵנִי  
נָא מִן־הָאֲדָם הָאֲדָם הַזֶּה כִּי עָיֵף  
אָנֹכִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמוֹ אֶדּוֹם:

Who sees me,” rather than amidst the bustle of human society. It is possible, then, that Esav’s bold and vigorous nature appealed to Yitzchak, and that he saw in Esav the strength, which exceeded his own, to be the mainstay of the household. Rivkah, on the other hand, saw in Ya’akov the ideal personality, representing a way of life she had never known in her father’s house.

The sympathies of Yitzchak and Rivkah are understandable, but parents should not allow such nebulous feelings to determine their educational approach.

**ציד בפיו:** tales of hunting were in his mouth; he knew how to enthrall his father with tales of his hunting adventures and exploits. Alternatively — and this is the more likely interpretation: he was a hunter also with his mouth; i.e., he employed the skills of a hunter even when he spoke. He knew how to use the tricks of his trade even against his father. By contrast, Rivkah’s love for Ya’akov came of its own. Ya’akov did not have to “capture” it. He won her love through his very personality: אהבת את יעקב.

- 29 **ויזוד** is the הפעיל of זוד (the basic root of סוד and צוד): to prepare something for a long time and let it become thoroughly ripe. By extension, זוד is an intentional, premeditated act. The הפעיל form indicates that he had the dish prepared by others.

**נזיד** and **זוד** are related roots, as are **נזל** and **מול**, **זול** and **נזל**, **זור** and **נזר**, then, is a dish that is thoroughly boiled.

- 30 **הלעיטני** (related to להט, to burn intensely): to gulp down greedily. The color attracts him no less than the dish itself. The color reminds