

The parsha starts with Yaakov and Eisov struggling within Rivka's womb. Rivka went to seek Hashem to find out what is going on. She goes to Shem and Ever who were nevi'im. They told her she had two entire nations within her. She is about to give birth to two powerful individuals who will give rise to two powerful nations. These nations will struggle with each other throughout history.

Chazal explain that these two nations, Rome and Yerushalayim, represent two views of looking at the world. The world can be dominated through physical might or through spiritual might. The world cannot be controlled by both simultaneously. These philosophies are mutually exclusive. When one nation ascends, the other one is in decline. Who controls this see-saw? The older will be ruled by the younger. Yaakov controls the see-saw.

Who are Yaakov and Eisov? Yaakov is the 'ish tom yosheiv ohalim.' His personality is one of honesty and integrity, and he sits and learns to develop his spirituality. Eisov is a man of the field – developing his physical abilities to hunt and trap. He is a very smooth talker. He fools people. Yitzchok loves Eisov and Rivka loves Yaakov.

There is a fundamental difference between Yitzchok and Rivka. When Yitzchok got older, he became blind. He was not just physically blind, but he was blind to the faults and the dangers of Eisov. Why couldn't he see Eisov for who he really was? Chazal explain that while Yitzchok was on the mizbeach at the akeidoh, the malochim were shedding tears and those tears fell into the eyes of Yitzchok which weakened his sight. What does this mean? It means the akeidoh transformed Yitzchok. He was purified by his ordeal of the akeidoh and he became an olah temimoh. He wasn't allowed to leave Eretz Yisroel in times of famine like Avrohom was. He was totally pure.

Being so pure and so holy also meant he couldn't fathom the reality of evil in people. He didn't know what it meant not to be pure and holy. He never suspected Eisov was dominated by his yetzer horo. Rivka on the other hand, knew quite well that evil can and does exist in people. She grew up in a house of charlatans and idol worshippers! She was not fooled by Eisov's smooth frum talk. She could identify evil when she saw it, and she saw it in Eisov.

It is interesting to look at the brochos Yitzchok gave to Yaakov when he thought Yaakov was Eisov at the beginning of the parsha, and to compare them to the brochos he gave to Yaakov knowing he was Yaakov at the end of the parsha.

Yaakov and Eisov must have had similar voices, but the content of their speech was different. Yitzchok heard Yaakov attributing his success to Hashem and he became suspicious. This isn't how Eisov talks! But still thinking he is Eisov, Yitzchok blessed Yaakov with material wealth and dominance over his brother. What was Yitzchok thinking? The Beis HaLevi explains that although Yitzchok knew Eisov was no big tzaddik, he thought Eisov could be a partner with Yaakov who would supply the ruchniyus. Yitzchok intended that Yaakov and Eisov have a kind of Yissochor-Zevulun relationship where Yaakov would sit and learn while relying on the financial support of Eisov.

When Eisov finally walked in and Yitzchok realized his mistake, he realized that it was the hand of hashgocho that Eisov not be Yaakov's partner. Yaakov needs to control his own gashmiyus and not rely on Eisov. Yitzchok had a tremendous hesitation, but in the end, he does not rescind the brochos he mistakenly gave Yaakov. He doesn't know why, but he trusts the hashgocho that led him to give Eisov's brochos

to the wrong son.

Eisov hears this and demands that he must also get a brocho. He is still claiming to be the true bechor! Yitzchok was never told of the private arrangement where Eisov sold his birthright and his role in avodas Hashem for a pot of lentils. It was a private story that Eisov now reveals to Yitzchok. Now he has a much better picture. Yaakov has the bechorah and needs to be in charge of avodas Hashem.

Yitzchok reiterated the brocho that Yaakov is the master and he is financially independent. What can he do for Eisov? He gave Eisov from the 'shemen' of the land. It is interesting to note that the descendants of Eisov live in the Middle East where there is plenty of oil to make them rich. Additionally, Yitzchok says Eisov will live by the sword. He then added exactly what Shem and Ever told Rivka while they were in her womb: There will be a see-saw. When one is up, the other will be down. But Yaakov is still in charge. Yaakov can only go down because he doesn't stay faithful to the Torah. When he tries to dominate through physical force instead of spiritual greatness – when he wants to become Eisov – then Eisov will rise up and take over.

Now Yaakov was told to leave Eretz Yisroel to find a wife. Before he leaves, Yitzchok gave Yaakov a whole different set of brochos – of carrying on the mesorah of Avrohom Ovinu. He never planned on giving that to Eisov. Until now, the issue of which son will get Eretz Yisroel was not up for discussion. Now, Yaakov is leaving and Yitzchok does not know the future. He gives the mesorah of Avrohom Ovinu to Yaakov together with the exclusive right to Eretz Yisroel. After Yitzchok realizes that Yaakov got the bechorah from Eisov and became financially independent, he realizes that Yaakov deserves to get the brochos of Avrohom and he will exclusively inherit the land of Eretz Yisroel and give rise to the special nation of Hashem. Eisov has no part in this.

This is a very powerful story.

Some people in this country sometimes get this message confused. Their national pride is in the military prowess of the IDF. They decorate their succos with pictures of tanks and fighter planes and the forces of the IDF proudly on display. In other succos, there are pictures of gedolim. It is clear that for many Jews – even frum Jews – their source of pride isn't in their Torah or their kedushoh – which is what Yaakov takes pride in. It is in the military might of Israel – the things that Eisov takes pride in.

We are a special nation. The posuk in Tehillim says the only reason Hashem gave us this land is because it is the ideal place for keeping the Torah. Klal Yisroel's identity is based on our unique spiritual level. Yes, we need to engage in the world for parnassoh, etc. But this is only because we cannot rely on Eisov providing for us. He is totally unsuitable to be in a partnership with Yaakov – their philosophies are completely incompatible. Rivka realized that any partnership with Eisov will corrupt Yaakov, so she made sure that Yaakov got the brochos of gashmiyus to become independent from Eisov. Eisov's philosophy is that physical might will rule the world and there are no spiritual values. People get confused and don't realize that we have a spiritual identity and we can't join with Eisov and his identity.

As long as Yaakov remains Yaakov, we will dominate the world with ruchniyus and Eisov will be subservient to us. Eisov is out of the picture. But as soon as we want to be like Eisov we lose our dominance, and Eisov and his values of physical strength will dominate. We empower

Eisov when we try to become like Eisov.

We live in very confusing times – in this country in particular.

There is something deeply troubling when you read any of the frum weekly magazines. They dedicate a special section every week putting a spotlight on frum Jews who are wildly financially successful – millionaires or billionaires with hundreds of employees, etc. Yes, we live in a material world, but this is not our identity. Jews have a simple problem. We always try to imitate the customs and the lifestyles of the non-Jews we live among. This problem is not new. It goes way back in our history in golus. When I was growing up, the non-Jewish world was very religious. But now, religion is crumbling and Catholic colleges are closing all over the place. The world is losing all spiritual values, but it doesn't mean we have to go down with them. We have to stop worshipping material success.

When Yonah HaNovi was on the boat and it was about to capsize, the sailors realized that something wasn't normal about this storm. The whole sea was calm all around them except for the area they were in. They knew one of the passengers must be the cause for this unusual squall. They drew lots and it fell on Yonah. So they naturally asked him who he is and what he does, to try to figure out why he is causing this.

Most people define themselves by their country or their occupation or their ethnic identity. Many people have started to identify themselves by their taivos and sexual orientation. Yonah says I am a Jew who worships Hashem. I'm different. I define myself by my spiritual identity. I am not defined by where I come from or what I do for parnossoh – and certainly not by my taivos.

This is the biggest lesson of the parsha – Yaakov controls the world. When we stop becoming Yaakov and try to become Eisov, we give over the control of the world to Eisov. We are different and unique.

In havdoloh, we make differences between light and darkness, kodesh and chol, and Yisroel and non-Jews. The difference between light and dark is apparent. We hope we feel the difference between kodesh and chol, and we state the fact that there is a difference between Jews and non-Jews.

At the end of our tefillos, before we go out into the world, we prepare ourselves by saying Aleinu. We say we are fundamentally different than the nations of the Earth and we are proud that our identity is a spiritual identity – not like the non-Jews around us. We have to internalize this pride in who we are as a nation and as individuals.