



Who is Responsible?

Eisav was sitting on top of the world. He was the oldest son of the royal family of Yitzchak Avinu. He was going to receive his father's blessing, and inherit all of the delights of the world. Then suddenly, everything turned upside down. His younger brother Yaakov took the blessing. "You (Yaakov) will lord over your brother (Eisav)" [Bereshis 27:29]. This part of the blessing made Eisav a servant to Yaakov. In one instant, he went from a ruler to a subject.

What was Eisav's reaction to this terrible misfortune? Did he take it to heart? The Shem MiShmuel shares an important insight. Eisav should have realized that his evil deeds caused him this trouble. Instead, he hardened his heart as always, and did feel that he did anything wrong. He blamed it all on his wives. They were from the descendants of Canaan, who was not fitting to receive a bracha. Therefore, he married wives from the descendants of Yishmael, thinking that his uncle's royal lineage would solve the problem. If not he would kill Yaakov, and everything would come back to him.

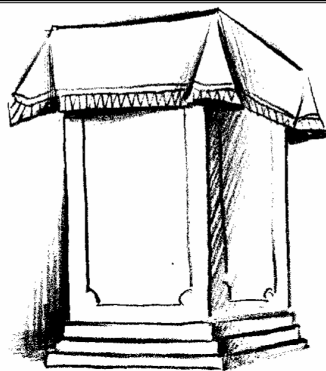
How can a person think like this? Doesn't he realize that his own mistakes bring troubles upon him? Not Eisav. He was so ingrained in evil self-righteousness, that it never crossed his mind that he did anything wrong. The *gematria* of Eisav's name is 376, the same as the word "shalom." He was totally at peace with himself and his wickedness. This point is brought out by the last verse in the parasha. "The chief of Magdiel, the chief of Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements in the land of their possession. He (*hu*) is Eisav the father of Edom" (Bereshis 36:43). The Gemora darshens that the word "*hu*" (he) before the name of Eisav, reveals that he was evil his entire life, from beginning to end.

Contrast this with Yaakov Avinu's reaction to misfortunes. He humbled himself, examined his ways, and did *teshuva*. His two names, Yisrael and Yaakov reflect different aspects of his personality. Yisrael is the minister of Hashem, a royal, glorified ruler. The name Yaakov stems from the word "eikev" – the heel – the lowest and humblest part of the body. The Gemora (Brochos 13a) states that although Hashem changed his name from Yaakov to Yisrael, one who calls him Yaakov does not transgress a positive mitzvah. Why? Although he became the minister of Hashem, he always looked at himself humbly.

The Shem MiShmuel concludes that this is a great lesson for everyone. When misfortunes come, do not blame them on others, or on circumstances. This is the

way of Rather, yourself, search your deeds, and do teshuva. Put more effort into your Torah and mitzvos. This is the way of Yaakov, our humble, holy forefather. He is our example forever.

Kinderlach . . .
No one wants troubles. However, sometimes they come. How do we react to them? Do we callously blame it on others, bad luck or circumstances? That is the wrong reaction. That is the way of Eisav. What is the correct response? To search our hearts, correct our ways, and do teshuva. Strengthen our Torah learning and mitzvah observance. This is the derech (way) of Yaakov Avinu. He had many troubles in his life, and he grew from all of them. He shows us the way to gain from everything in life.



Professional Speaker

"You look like you are deep in thought, Yankie."

"I am, Doni."

"What are you thinking about?"

"What I want to accomplish in life."

"That is very deep. You have my curiosity going. What do you want to accomplish in life?"

"I want to be a professional speaker."

"That is fantastic. To be able to speak in front of a large audience is wonderful. You can teach Torah on a large scale. I wish you a lot of success."

"Thanks for the well wishes, Doni, but that is not exactly what I meant by professional speaker."

"I see. What did you mean?"

"I want to be a professional speaker like my namesake, Yaakov Avinu."

"Really? How was Yaakov Avinu a professional speaker? I don't recall any mention in the Torah of him speaking before huge crowds."

"Very true, Doni. However, Yaakov Avinu was a professional in the sense that he chose his words very carefully, as a professional craftsman chooses his tools and materials."

"Can you give me an example, Yankie?"

"Look carefully at the conversation between Yaakov and Eisav, during their meeting after many years of separation (Bereshis 33:5-15). Rabbeinu Bechaye points out that Eisav speaks in short phrases, never mentioning Hashem's name. This is an indication of his *gaava* (conceit). Yaakov, on the other hand, is lengthy in his conversation; speaking praises of Hashem and all of the kindness that He performed for him."

"I see."

"Yaakov sent a message to Eisav before they met. 'I have ox, donkey, sheep, man and maidservant' (Bereshis 32:6). Although he had herds and herds of cattle, he described them in the singular: 'ox, donkey, etc.' This is the way of tsaddikim, to minimize their accomplishments. Yaakov chose his words carefully."

"Fascinating."

"Rabbeinu Bechaye has a deeper insight. Sheep are the choicest of all animals. If you look carefully into the Torah, you will see that sheep are always mentioned first. Paroh gave Avraham sheep and cattle (Bereshis 12:16). Yitzchak acquired flocks of sheep and cattle (Bereshis 26:14). Yaakov had many sheep maidservants and servants, camels and donkeys (Bereshis 30:43). However, when Yaakov sent a message to Eisav, he mentioned oxen first, and not sheep."

"Why?"

"Yaakov did not want to mention sheep first, because he used the skins of a goat to trick Eisav out of his bracha."

"What sensitivity. What craftsmanship. Every word was so carefully chosen."

"Yaakov Avinu was a master of the profession of speaking."

"I see what you mean. He was truly a professional speaker."

Kinderlach . . .

Select a good profession for yourselves. Be a professional speaker. Choose your words well. Don't say too much about yourselves and your accomplishments. Rather speak about Hashem, and all that He has done for you. Be sensitive to other people's feelings, and never say anything to hurt them. Loshon Hora or rechilus should never cross your lips. Remember kinderlach, it takes time and practice to learn a profession. However, it is worth it. Professional speakers have a wonderful life, in both this world and the next. Their words live on forever.

Parasha Questions:

- What is the difference between, "I have very much," and "I have everything?" (33:9,11 and Rashi)
- "Yaakov came complete to Shechem." In what way was he complete? (Rashi 33:18)
- What is the meaning of the name Bin-yomin? (35:18 and Rashi)