

A TWIN STUDY....

by Rabbi Label Lam

The twin sons of Yitzchak, Yaakov and Eisav, can be used as a twin study to demonstrate that man makes history and not that history makes the man. Some may attempt to nullify the study claiming that Eisav's prenatal disposition toward evil overwhelmed him, and that Yaakov's natural inclination for good left him no choice either. However, in the area of nature vs. nurture each of them had a distinct advantage and disadvantage.

Yaakov, although inclined from birth for goodness, had a difficult partner in Eisav and could have been corrupted by him. Eisav, in spite of his powerful penchant for negativity, had a brother Yaakov, a father Yitzchak, a mother Rivkah and a grandfather Avraham. He was surrounded by the greatest and most noble souls of human history.

The Rabbis of the Talmud tell us that someone who is greater than his friend has an equally greater evil inclination, meaning that the more wicked a person is, the greater is his potential for good. With fire we can cook and light, or, conversely, burn and destroy. With atomic power the capacity to provide power is proportionate to the capacity for destruction.

What was the source of their parting of ways? On the day that Avraham died we find two divergent reactions on the part of Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov is seen stirring beans for his father's mourner's meal (Genesis 25:29-30, Rashi). Eisav returns hungry and exasperated having committed a laundry list of the most heinous crimes. He demands the "red red" soup. The Torah teaches us that because of this demand for red soup, Eisav is called Edom; Red. Why call Eisav "Red" for wanting instant soup? Wouldn't he be more deserving of this title for being born, as he was, with a ruddy complexion, or for spilling blood? The *baalei mussar* indicate that wanting instant gratification, impulsiveness, was the trait which led eventually to murder. The need to satisfy one's urges immediately puts one in a state of war with every thing and person that thwarts the will.

Another approach to the question forces us to examine why Yaakov was stirring beans at this point. These lentils were to be served at a mourner's meal for two reasons. Firstly, the roundness of lentils reminds us of the cyclical nature of life. People are born and then die and are then born into a higher world. Secondly, lentils appear as sealed lips. This reminds those whose hearts are hurt with bereavement not to complain, making declarations against heaven that they may regret when the pain recedes. Yaakov was focusing on these lentils and the lessons they contain. What did Eisav notice? "Give me that red red." He saw the color. The packaging is what lured him into an action of impulsiveness. Eisav was superficial! What a terrible combination; impulsiveness and superficiality.

This is Edom-Red who's influence spreads over the world today. "Have it your way" and have it **now!**

Yaakov experienced the death of his grandfather in a different way. First of all, he was busy studying deeply the lessons of the beans. Secondly, as opposed to Eisav's impulsive nature, Yaakov had a vastly different vision. On the day of his death, Avraham was 175 years old. The Rabbis of the Talmud tell us that he died 5 years earlier than he should have, so that he should not witness Eisav wandering from the path. Eisav blames his deviation on the death of Avraham. He had made a simple calculation. There was a family tradition since the Covenant of the Parts (Genesis 15:13), that Avraham's children would not inherit the Land of Israel until after 400 years. Eisav had always assumed that by virtue of his birthright, he would become the High Priest and leader in the future when the Temple would eventually be built. When Avraham died suddenly at the age of 175, short of Eisav's expectations, he realized that he himself would most likely live no longer than that. He would never gain the full benefit and glory associated with the birthright. Here he declared "I am going to die, what good is the birthright to me!? (Genesis 25:29-34)" In contrast, Yaakov was not concerned whether he would see the glory in his lifetime or not. To further the historical process, and plant the seeds, even if the fruit of his efforts would ripen beyond his lifetime, was sufficient to Yaakov. He was deep (as he studied the lessons of seemingly simple beans), and farsighted in his approach to required action.

Eisav blamed the death of his noble grandfather for driving him to self-destruction and nihilism but it was also Yaakov's grandfather who passed away on that day. The former saw life with a lens of superficiality and a legacy of impulsiveness, the latter experiencing life deeply and with far-sight. Eisav exchanged eternity for a few beans, and Yaakov turned a few beans into eternity. One allowed himself to be victimized by historical circumstances and the other manifested his destiny, and **that** made all the difference!

Good Shabbos.

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