

PARSHAS TOLDOS

by Gedalia Litke

From the contrasting descriptions of Yaakov and Eisav at the beginning of the Parsha we can discern the appropriate characteristics we seek to develop in ourselves as Jews, the Bnei Yaakov. These characteristics include (i) striving to always improve ourselves, and (ii) emphasizing our inner selves (the neshomo) over the outer, physical trappings.

1. Eisav was born having mature physical characteristics (se'ar). The name Eisav means 'already finished', in the sense of not striving for more, or that everything is fine in its current state. Yaakov, on the other hand, means 'at the heel', indicating an awareness of needing to raise ourselves up and strive for improvement.

2. Eisav requests to eat 'min ha'adom ha'adom hazeh' (from 'this red stuff'), focusing on the superficial quality of the food (its color) as opposed to its substance (lentils). Eisav is described as an 'ish sadeh', a man of the field, an outdoorsman. Yaakov is described as a 'yoshev ohalim', one who sits at home, an indoorsman. Yaakov seeks to emphasize what is inside as opposed to what is outside, what is profound as opposed to what is superficial and what has substance as opposed to what is merely stylish.

[This is based upon a shiur of HoRav Zvi Berkowitz, Shlita.]

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