

# NO REGRETS

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

*"And he ate, and he drank, and he arose and he left; and Esav denigrated the right of the first-born." [25:34]*

According to the Medrash, the right of the first-born meant the ability to lead in the service of G-d. Before the children of Aaron and the entire tribe of Levi were designated, the service was led by the first-born. This is what Esav sold away.

The Sefer [book] Sha'ar Bas Rabim analyzes what transpired. At the beginning of this process, by which Esav sold his right of the first-born, there was a clear opportunity to look at him in a favorable light. We could say that he was extremely tired and hungry, and feared that he was near death - and therefore he decided to agree to the deal which Yaakov was offering. This interpretation would not lead us to believe that Esav intended to denigrate the right of the first-born, or underestimate its value.

But after eating and drinking, what should we have expected? Why, that Esav would feel intense pain! That he would cry out, "I was forced to do it! And I regret what I did! I regret the entire sale!"

What actually happened? "And he ate, and he drank, and he arose and he left..." - he got up and left quietly, satisfied, as if nothing had happened. Even more, it became clear that "Esav denigrated the right of the first-born" - for the entire sale had *not* taken place because he was hungry, but because he really didn't care. He thought the right of the first-born had no value. He didn't *care* about proper service of G-d.

How do we rate, if we evaluate ourselves in this light? When we fail to do the service of G-d, when we pass up a Mitzvah, how much do we regret it later?

I recall a classmate in college, basically a religious guy - but let's just say that the laws of Loshon Hora, prohibited speech, weren't his particular area of excellence. By his own admission, he was a terrible gossip - and he would say in a joking voice, "I'm going to be punished for this."

There are two ways of looking at his situation. Looking at him, we should say, "at *least* he felt some twinge of regret. Think of all the people who fill their days with gossip, feeling they are doing nothing wrong!" He has the soul of Yaakov, not Esav - at least he cares!

But to whatever extent we find this same trait within ourselves, our reaction must be just the opposite. "If I *really* cared, I wouldn't joke about it - I would stop!" At the very least, we must *try* to improve ourselves, if we are serious about bringing ethics and holiness into our lives.

---

Text Copyright © 2001 Rabbi Yaakov Menken and Project Genesis, Inc.  
The author is the Director of Project Genesis.