

# EISAV THE BUSINESSMAN

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## Friday Night:

*When it came time for her to give birth, she had twins. The first one came out red all over like a fur coat, and they called him Eisav. (Bereishis 25:24-25)*

Eisav was more than just an interesting character who on so many occasions posed a threat to Ya'akov and his descendants. As the twin brother of Ya'akov who acted in just the opposite manner as his brother, he represents the "other view," or more precisely, the "opposite view" of Torah:

*G-d said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; two peoples will separate from inside of you. One nation will overpower the other; the greater one will serve the younger." (Bereishis 25:23)*

As such, he is Ya'akov's antagonist until the End-of-Days.

There were basically three aspects to Eisav's personality. First, there was Eisav the brute, who had no problem imposing his will and way on others less powerful than he was, which was just about everyone in the world at that time. Wherever he went, he took what he wanted, regardless of the moral implications of his actions, which, frankly, he didn't care a bit about.

However, there was another side to Eisav, who, after all, WAS the twin brother of the holy Ya'akov. This was the side of Eisav that could act in a somewhat religious manner. The rabbis teach that he did perform the mitzvah of honoring his father, and he even asked his father about the need to take tithes from salt and straw - which of course is completely unnecessary, and represented Eisav's ability to appear religious when it suited his purpose.

There was also Eisav the white-collar worker, a businessman. This was the part of Eisav's personality that was willing to make deals to get what he wanted. Not everything in life can be taken by force, and sometimes there is more pleasure in getting what you want in a gentlemanly manner, or at least in a business-like manner.

In Eisav the person, all three personalities came together and made him the most powerful man of his time. The only reason why he couldn't do away with Ya'akov was because G-d protected Ya'akov against his twin brother, thwarting Eisav every time he tried to eliminate his twin brother. This was true not just in Ya'akov's lifetime, but throughout the entire history of Ya'akov's descendants until present day.

Who are Eisav's descendants today? It seems as if history has caused a split in Eisav's personality, so-to-speak, spreading his characteristics amongst his many descendants of Edom, which can include peoples as diverse as Russians, Italians, and Americans. This was partially due to Sennecheriv mixing up the nations a couple of thousands of years ago when Assyria controlled the world of that time. (Brochos 28a)

For this reason, the power of Eisav has dissipated somewhat, limiting his ability to control the world and truly do to Ya'akov's descendants what he set out to do from the beginning - annihilate them. However, should the various parts of Eisav's personality reunite in a coalition of nations, especially against Ya'akov, then WATCH OUT!

On a physical level, it may only appear as if different nations are working together for a common cause. However, on a spiritual level a unification of Biblical proportions may in fact be taking place with very serious implications for world history. Until now, the combinations of people haven't quite lined up perfectly; in WW II, America fought along side with Russia, but Rome was on the other side.

However, in this latest war against terrorism there is a very interesting historical precedent occurring. In attacking America on home soil, and by bringing down two of the most powerful symbols of American culture, the Islamic world has successfully drawn together all three aspects of Eisav's personality as manifest in the different nations of today. Even the Persian Gulf War of 1990 didn't do that.

Thus, the "Coalition" of today may be far more than just a group of diverse peoples who have agreed to take on an invisible enemy together. It may be the official resurrection of Eisav, the powerful, coming back to life after being dormant for over three thousand years of history, an unnerving development in the direction of Gog and Magog.

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## Shabbos Day:

*Ya'akov was cooking some stew when Eisav came in from the field feeling faint. Eisav said to Ya'akov, "Please, let me gulp down some of that red stuff; I'm feeling faint." Thus, he was called "Edom."*  
(Bereishis 25:29-30)

If you read the Torah as a storybook, then that is what it will be for you. However, if you read the Torah on one level as you might a "spy" novel, then every word and nuance will be important to you because you know that it will probably be transmitting important information in the least obvious ways.

For example, such as the verses above. Very serendipitously the Torah points out how Eisav received his pen name, "Edom." It just happened to be on that one day, after a hard day's work in the

field (after murdering Nimrod, says the Midrash, and a whole host of other atrocities), he came home famished and faint, and desperately told his twin brother, "Give me some of that red stuff." Thus, he is called "Edom," which means "red" (Russia's favorite color).

Coincidentally (if you believe in such things), this also led to his selling the birthright with which he was born - and therefore, his chance to be the Jewish people. However, that didn't seem to bother him very much, as the Torah says:

*Ya'akov gave Eisav bread and lentil stew. He ate, drank, got up and left, and despised his birthright.*  
(Bereishis 25:34)

Furthermore, the food that Ya'akov was preparing when Eisav barged in, was for their father Yitzchak, who was in mourning over the death of his own father, Avraham Avinu. Lentils, as Rashi explains, is a traditional food of mourners because of its symbolic meaning. However, Eisav did not eat it as a mourner that day, obviously feeling no loss that his grandfather was gone from the world.

In other words, if you had to define Edom based upon the above scenario and possukim, it would be like this: someone who is willing to give up so much for so little, someone with little appreciation for the invisible future, and with too much appreciation of the tangible present.

This is the part of Eisav that can give rise to an Amalek - the grandson of Eisav: Eisav and Adah gave birth to Eliphaz, who married Timna and fathered Amalek. Amalek, of course, is the antithesis of the Jewish people, of whom Rashi writes:

...He made you cold and lukewarm after you had been boiling. For, all the nations were afraid to war against you, and this one came and led the way for others. It is like a boiling hot bath into which no living being could enter, until a wild person came and jumped into it. Although he scalded himself, he made it cooler for others. (Rashi, Devarim 25:18)

Unbelievable! Amalek was, and is, prepared to give up his future for the THRILL of making an impact in the present. "Besides," Amalek says, "the future has yet to unfold, and so much can happen between now and then. Maybe there will be a way to change everything - to have a blast now and get away with it tomorrow!"

In some respects he is right, because there is the concept of teshuvah; a person can sin today and repent tomorrow, and even turn his sin into a merit says the Talmud - PROVIDING, though, says the Rambam, that he did not sin thinking that he will repent after. If a person sins believing that he can simply say he is sorry after the fact and be forgiven, he is mistaken. The door to teshuvah is closed for such a sinner, says the Rambam.

However, that doesn't concern Edom. He has difficulty "feeling" what he can't physically touch, but loves what he can. When society - any society - walks that same path, then they are a descendant of Edom, if not physically, then certainly spiritually-speaking.

## SEUDAH SHLISHIS:

*Yitzchak said to them, "Why have you come here when you hate me, and have sent me away from you?" They answered, "We saw that G-d is with you. We decided that there should be an oath between us, a covenant between you and us." (Bereishis 26:27-28)*

How altruistic of Avimelech! No shame here. He might as well have answered Yitzchak by saying, "You're right, Yitzchak, we DO hate you. But, you know, there's this G-d thing again . . . just as it was with your father. We just sort of noticed that when we hurt you guys, G-d comes along and clobbers us. So, you know, let's make an oath, okay?"

An exception to the rule? Not even close. No peoples have traveled as much as we have since the spies spoke badly about Eretz Yisroel, and everywhere we have gone without exception, we have been disliked in the end, if not from the beginning.

It is not because we look different from the average European or American, because they have hated even the most assimilated Jew who has gone out of his or her way just to fit in. Likewise, it is not because we act differently that we attract the wrath of the gentiles, because again, even the Morranos who feigned conversion during the time of the Spanish Inquisition remained persecuted and were often brutally murdered as well.

So what's with them, or at least the trillions of "them" who have hated us over the ages?

The truth is, that you might as well ask why the sun comes up everyday in the east and sets in the west, because these two questions require the same answer: it is natural to do so.

This is what the rabbis have taught: It is law that Eisav hates Ya'akov - and that Eisav's descendants will hate Ya'akov's descendants, as will any other people that buys into Eisav's philosophy about life. "Law" means that it is built into creation, an immutable principle of history until the yetzer hara is done away with, and evil is eliminated from the world in Yemos HaMoshiach.

This is because anti-Semitism is more than racism. It is, rather, a supernatural form of communication between G-d and His people. Granted that there are "nicer" ways for G-d to talk to us and get His message across throughout the generations, and He agrees. In fact, He only resorts to it when He finds that we don't return His calls, and it is not for HIS good, but for OURS.

It is G-d's way of saying that the distinction between us and the gentiles is not as distinct as it ought to be. This is not to make us different from everyone else just for the sake of being different and disunified, rather it is within that distinction that lies a mission as primal as creation itself. That mission is to be a light unto the nations, a leader amongst the masses, leading the masses back to G-d Himself. If we don't do it, no one else will, and that illogical hate for a people that just wants to blend in with everyone else, is just Heaven's way of reminding us of that immutable truth.

## MELAVE MALKAH:

It is taught: The ingathering of the exiles will precede the resurrection of the dead by forty years, as it says, "And Yitzchak was forty years old." (Zohar, Toldos 138b)

Well, that makes sense, doesn't it? Yitzchak was forty years old, and therefore, it will take forty years to gather in the exiles at the End of Days. WHAT is the connection between the two?

Well, it is not just that he was once forty years old, but it was that he also married Rivkah at the age of forty. Really? You mean there is some kind of correlation between being married and exile? Ah, well, that's not what the Torah teaches; if anything, marriage is supposed to be some kind of redemption process, though, admittedly, it is not always that way. However, one would expect that between the Forefathers and their wives, the marriages were somewhat ideal.

Consequently, we're back to square one again: what connection can there be that Yitzchak was married at the age of forty, and the future and ultimate ingathering of the exiles to the land of Eretz Yisroel?

Perhaps the remainder of the quote from the Zohar will be helpful:

What will those forty years be like? Rav Kahana said in the name of Rav Broka: From the time of the ingathering of the exiles until the period of the resurrection of the dead, there will be many troubles (tell us about it!). Many wars will be waged against Israel, and happy is the one who is free of them . . . Rebi Yehudah said from here there will be a separating, a whitening, and much refining (of the Jewish people), just as a silversmith refines his silver and a goldsmith refines his gold . . .

In other words, says the Zohar, the point of Kibbutz Golios - Ingathering of the Exiles - is to refine the Jewish people and prepare them spiritually for a higher level of existence, first in the days after Moshiach brings peace to the world, and then for the period of resurrection itself. During the forty years of this period of history, all that will occur will be just for the sake of filtering out the negative elements of Jewish living, and instead infusing our lives with Torah values - whether WE recognize this at the time or not.

In fact, the Kabbalists explain that it will happen so subtly, that it will appear to the onlooker as doing just the opposite! However, G-d has ways of accomplishing His will in the most hidden ways until He determines that the time has come for us to recognize what He has been doing up until then.

That was really the story of Yitzchak's life as well, until the age of forty. For his first thirty-seven years of life he was constantly refining himself and preparing himself for the day that G-d could accept him as the "Burnt-Offering" he actually became. The Akeidah symbolized the very high level of success he had achieved, and it brought him to an even higher level of perfection.

However, it wasn't until the age of forty and after he was married, that he was able to make the final transition to his ultimate level of spiritual perfection while in This World. That came with the birth of Eisav, who represented the final aspect of Yitzchak's negative qualities now removed from him to become rectified by Eisav himself. Ya'akov, the last of the three Forefathers, gave birth only to people who could be a part of the Jewish people.

And thus, we can now appreciate the connection between the forty years of Yitzchak's life, (the forty years in the desert,) and the forty years of Kibbutz Golios.

Have a great Shabbos,  
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