

NO TWO PEOPLE ARE THE SAME

by Rabbi Berel Wein

Finding a mate is no simple matter. The rabbis characterized its difficulty as being on the scale of splitting the Yam Suf. But finding that mate and building a successful and satisfying marriage thereafter are two different tasks. From this week's parsha it is obvious that Yitzchok and Rivka are at cross purposes regarding the treatment due to Eisav. Yitzchok is willing to give him almost everything in order to attempt to save him from his own evil nature and negative course in life.

Rivka feels that Eisav is irredeemable and that the entire investment of parental energy should be concentrated on Yaakov. Her policy of very tough love contradicts that of Yitzchok towards Eisav. Thus she does not inform Yitzchak of her plans to grant Yaakov the blessings by dressing him up as Eisav. She demands that Yaakov now flee the country to escape Eisav's wrath and death threats.

Yitzchak acquiesces in her wishes though not from the same motives that impelled Rivka to send Yaakov away. In short for much of the parsha Yitzchak and Rivka do not appear to be on the same page as far as the future of their sons is concerned. This naturally leads to complications and problems that will again reflect themselves in the family of Yaakov and his wives and children.

The rift between Yitzchak and Rivka is not discussed further in the Torah and even Midrash and the commentators do not dwell on it. Yet it appears to be a major influence on the lives of both Yaakov and Eisav and on the tortured relationship between the two brothers.

The saga of favoritism by parents regarding one of their children will be repeated by Yaakov in the story of Yosef and his brothers. That dispute will haunt Jewish life throughout its history. Everyone strives to achieve a harmonious home and family. But the goal is an elusive one for many. Differing circumstances, personal preferences, human error, and societal influences all play a part in the problem of creating a harmonious and loving household.

That is what the rabbis meant when they stated that Yaakov wanted to dwell in peace and serenity - he wanted to achieve that household of goodness and peace. Instead, the disaster of Yosef and his brothers impressed itself upon him and his family. A great sage once said that life and especially family life can be likened to ships that traverse the ocean. Each one fabricates its own wake but the wake soon disappears and the next ship has to find its way across the ocean by itself.

No two family situations are the same nor are two children in the same family identical - even identical twins. The Torah informs us of the difficulties inherent in family situations and differing personalities and opinions. It offers no magic solution to these situations for there is no one-size fits

all that can be advanced. Wisdom, patience, good will and common sense are the ingredients for family success and achievement.

Shabat shalom.

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Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com