

3 Kislev 5781

Thursday, Parshat Toldot

19 November, 2020



An Upright Wife

At the end of the Parsha, the Torah speaks about Esav who honored his father's wishes, for when he heard that his father asked Ya'akov not to take a wife from the daughters of Cana'an, he too undertook this. However, he did not leave his wicked ways and did not look for an upright wife as his father wished, but rather chose for himself a wicked wife just like himself, who was not from the daughters of Cana'an. *"Then Esav perceived that the daughters of Cana'an were evil in the eyes of Yitzchak, his father. So Esav went to Yishmael and took Machalat, the daughter of Yishmael son of Avraham, sister of Nevayot, in addition to his wives, as a wife for himself"*. Rashi explains the meaning of *"in addition to his wives"*: *"He added a wicked wife to his present wicked wives."*

Many times when I am receiving people, I am approached by parents who come crying about their son who is about to marry a non-Jewish wife. Despite all their words of persuasion and threats of cutting off contact, he does not agree to abandon his evil ways. From my experience, threats are futile. Only soft words and a pleasant approach can possibly have an influence on the son who has decided to turn his back on his people. And even if one doesn't see immediate results, if the right words are used, they slowly permeate and may have an effect only after several years.

During one of my visits to Argentina, a couple approached me and with great pain told me that their son had distanced himself from a Jewish lifestyle and fallen very low, to the extent that he is about to marry a non-Jewish wife. I asked them to tell their son to come to see me and I will try to talk to him. At first, their son adamantly refused to meet with me, but after repeated begging on the part of his parents and acquaintances, he agreed to come.

I conversed with him pleasantly and did not try to rebuke him at all. I only showed an interest in him and his life and gave him many compliments. My words made him feel close to me. He looked at me as if waiting for the words that were sure to come but all I

said was, "You should know that just as Hashem loves those who observe His commandments, He loves you too and you are dear to Him, for you too are His son, a son of the King of Kings. And even if you have distanced yourself from Him, you always remain a beloved son of Hashem, in whatever circumstances you find yourself."

The young man was clearly very surprised. He was apparently waiting for a torrent of boiling words, and my kind sentiments were like cool water soothing a weary soul. After he left I prayed to Hashem that my words should find a path to his heart and that he merits complete repentance.

A year passed, and once again I travelled to Argentina for *zikui harabim*. Someone came to see me and I recognized him immediately. It was this young man who I had talked to last year. He turned to me, completely overcome, and said, "Honored Rav, I came to invite you to my wedding that G-d willing will soon take place. I am marrying a Jewish wife who is mitzvah observant!"

When I asked him how this change had come about, he explained. "Last year, at first I refused to meet with the esteemed Rav because I thought I would be subject to words of rebuke and harsh declarations about my conduct. But to my astonishment, you addressed me with pleasant words that drew me close. I realized that Hashem loved me even though I was so distant from Him, and I will always be desirable in His eyes. When I left I had a strong feeling that I must take some action, but I did not know how to do it. I lifted my eyes to Heaven and begged, "Master of the World, open my eyes and help me to truly come close to You".

The very next day, my non-Jewish girlfriend called and told me unequivocally that she wishes to sever our relationship completely... *"This emanated from Hashem"*, I rejoiced and understood that my prayer had been fulfilled.

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