

Lack of Communication

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

Rivalries, disagreements between Esav and Yaakov echo earlier family conflicts. From Cain and Abel, through Avraham and Lot and then Yishmael and Yitzchak. It will of course be continued between Yosef and his brothers and then between the tribes, even to the point of going to war against each other. In most cases, it is a lack of communication that exacerbates the differences.

We aren't told much about the disagreement between Cain and Abel. But in the case of Esav we know he told Yaakov he did not care about the Birthright. The birthright was the double inheritance an elder son gets. Yet when it came to the blessing, remarkably this was what really mattered to Esav and what he was most upset and angry about. Would it have made a difference if he had told Yaakov? Perhaps not. But this lack of communication was crucial. In the end the birthright did not matter because they both became wealthy.

Sometimes these conflicts are accidental and sometimes intentional. Esav and Yaakov are very different in character and values. They had little in common and there was no love lost between them. On the other hand there was no such gap between Ishmael and Yisachak. Yisachak being more reflective a person which probably explains why he made an effort and in the end. That pair of brothers got on together, lived in close proximity and both came together to bury their father.

But it is more surprising that Isaac and Rivkah were so far apart. Especially if one considers that at first, they were very close and really loved each other. But they did not communicate over the blessing. And even when it came to sending Yaakov away out of Esav's reach, she does not tell her husband her true motive.

As time passed and their children grew up, they disagreed about how to bring up their children. They favored different sons and Yisachak was too indulgent and spoiled his first born as indeed many fathers do today. His wife on the other hand knew that the second son was a gentler better human being. Why didn't they talk about the issues and try to reconcile their differences? Perhaps they did but failed. Either way you can see how the best of marriages can fail if the partners do not communicate, explain themselves and try to resolve their differences.

Some disagreements simply cannot and should not be reconciled. But most can, with a combination of love and honesty.