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Parshat Toldot

Childhood Memories

When Eisav was 40 he married two women who were idol worshippers. The Pasuk says that this caused bitterness of spirit to Yitzchak and Rivka. The Medrash points out that Yitzchok is mentioned first in the Pasuk because this incident was more upsetting to Yitzchok than it was to Rivka. Rivka who was raised in a home of idol worshippers was not as concerned as Yitzchok. Although Rivka was over 60 years old and she was out of her childhood home for more than a half a century, and the wife of a tzadik for many years, Avoda Zara was less of an abomination to her than it was to Yitzchok because of the childhood memories of Avoda Zara practiced in her own home.

It is the nature of people that once they see something, they become accustomed to it and develop a tolerance for it. Of course Rivka was upset by the Avoda Zara. But it did not upset her as much as it upset Yitzchok.

The lesson we can learn from this Medrash is that after a while, whatever negative influences we are exposed to, stops bothering us to the same degree. For example, the typical American child watches an average of three hours of TV a day. In the course of his childhood he views thousands of murders. Is it any wonder that there is such a tolerance for violence?

Let us keep in mind the long lasting impact of negative childhood memories that impact our children, so that we can raise our families with true Torah values.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi D. Selengut