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It is just because of this — “train the youth in accordance with his way” — that each must be educated for the great goal based on his own personal way, in accordance with the future which can be foreseen for him based on his qualities. One who places Yaakov and Esav on the same study bench, and teaches them both together the same way toward a life of study and thought, is guaranteed to ruin one of them. Yaakov will draw from the well of wisdom with increasing desire, while Esav will only wait for the day where he can toss all the old books behind him, and together with them the whole great purpose in life, which he only recognized from one point of view — one which by his nature he detested.

Had Yitzhak and Rivkah penetrated more keenly into the soul of Esav, had they asked themselves how the latent energy, strength and flexibility in Esav's soul could be harnessed toward the ways of Hashem, then the future גבור — “mighty man” — might not merely be a גבור ציד — “an excellent hunter” — but he could be a “mighty man before Hashem.” Yaakov and Esav, with all their differences, could have remained brothers who complemented one another in their spirits and in their ways of life; at the very outset, Esav's sword would then have made a covenant with

Yaakov's spirit; and who knows what difference that would make in history. But that was not the way it happened. “And the boys grew up.” Only after the boys grew into men were all astonished to see that even though both came from the same mother's womb, were educated and trained together, they were so totally different from one another in their actions.

Raw Hirsch

A very interesting episode in Jewish history was the case of the man referred to as the "Gayr Hazedek" -- the righteous convert, Graf Patotsky. His father, the graf (count) Patotsky

was of great Polish nobility and to him belonged a tract of land which included the entire Vilna in the 18th century. He had a "ben Yoched", a single son who was drawn close to Judaism and he came to the Vilna "Bes Din" -- the Jewish court to be converted. This was very dangerous both for the Jews and for the convert for the penalty from the church was death. Therefore, he was advised to go to Amsterdam for conversion where the laws were much less stringent. There he went, became a devout convert to Judaism and sat and studied for a goodly time. However, he became lonesome for his land and so he returned and chose a small village to reside in around 50 miles from Vilna. By now, he was a "Lamdan" and he sat and studied. No one knew him or inquired about him. Once while he was either giving a Shiur or was studying, someone created an interruption and he chastised the youngster, telling him to be quiet. The boy went home, told his father who in turn took offense and declared, "that "Meshumed" (convert), I'll fix him. The authorities were informed. Patotsky was arrested at once as were the rabbis of the locality. The rabbis could not be prosecuted for "Garus" for they had nothing to do with it but Patotsky was sentenced to death. The populace tried to bribe the archbishop and the police but it was impossible for they wated to show their strength. On the first day of Shavuoth, Patotsky was burned to death. I visited his grave and saw a peculiar phenomenon. There grew a straight tree by the gravesite but one branch had curved out in a sweep, covering the entire grave to show that "Someone protected the grave." The night before the execution, instead of going to "Tikun Shavovoth" the Vilna Gaon went to visit the "Gayr Zedek" and found him crying. "Why are you crying?" he asked. "Are you afraid of the pain of death?" "No," he answered. "I cry because I'll be lonely in the world to come. I have no past and I leave no future." The Gaon answered from scriptures. "Ani Rishon V'ani Acharon." G-d declares, "I am the first and I am the last. I am the first one if the person has no 'father' and I am the last one if he leaves no children." This is the idea of "Avrohom Holid Es Yitzchak."

Transcription of letter from
The Rav 11/24/79