

# Dvar Torah for Parshat Toldot

## 5772

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### Blessing in Disguise

“[Yitzchak] did not recognize [Yaakov] because [Yaakov’s] arms were as hairy as his brother Esav’s ...” (Genesis 27:23).

The age-old question: How did Yitzchak Avinu (our Patriarch) err to think that Esav was worthy of a great blessing? Even if we’ll grant that Esav fooled him into thinking that he, Esav, was a tzaddik, how could Yitzchak Avinu not know that Yaakov Avinu was a greater tzaddik? At the very least he should have intentionally blessed Yaakov Avinu first.

Reb Noson writes that Yitzchak Avinu was clearly aware of his sons’ unique talents. Yaakov was more spiritual—unassuming, meditative, studious. Esav, as his name\* implies, was a doer, throwing himself into any and every sort of physical/material activity with gusto. Esav’s trickery aimed to get Yitzchak Avinu to think that Esav was interested in the true goal of life, attaining *daat* (God-consciousness), and that he loved those who pursued *daat*.

In fact, Esav was well-suited to involvement in the material. Had he wanted, he could have been a vehicle for the holy and sacred. There was one necessary ingredient: He had to love his brother, Yaakov. Esav was made to support Yaakov Avinu. Had he been willing, he would have done for Yaakov Avinu what Zevulun did for Yissakhar, namely, toil all his days to bring home a paycheck to share with his brother.

This, writes Reb Noson, is the purpose of Jewish “ordinary

folk," those who aren't totally immersed in Torah study and prayer, aka *talmidei chakhamim*. They should be investing all their energies in making a livelihood and supporting *talmidei chakhamim*, so that the latter can throw themselves into Torah and prayer with gusto.

So although Yitzchak Avinu was extremely intelligent and wise, Esav was the son of Yitzchak and Rivkah, as well as the nephew of the maestro of chicanery, the Sultan of Spin, Lavan. So he managed to come up with a plan to deceive his father. Esav feigned generosity in matters relating to eating. As Rebbe Nachman teaches elsewhere, one's level of longing for God can increase tremendously when one eats—if one knows how to eat—and when one gives charity. When Esav provided his father with food, Yitzchak Avinu thought that Esav was advancing the pursuit of *daat*. The sad fact was that Esav, for his own selfish ends, was manipulating his father to get the blessing for material wealth.

He would have succeeded if not for our matriarch, Rivkah. She knew he was a no-good scoundrel. So she persuaded Yaakov Avinu to use some trickery of his own to get the blessings. Why was the trickery necessary? Please brace yourself for the answer.

At the root of his being, a Jew is extremely distant from material livelihood. That's right. Had Yaakov Avinu gone in as himself to ask for material prosperity, Yitzchak Avinu would have refused! "You shouldn't be thinking about money at all. You focus on Torah and prayer. Others will support you." Owing to their extremely spiritual nature, Jews can only receive material blessing and prosperity if they engage in some kosher sleight of hand. What might that be? "Rivkah took Esav's, her older son's, clothing ... and dressed her younger son Yaakov in them" (Genesis 27:15).

You see, Yitzchak Avinu was way ahead of his time. He wanted the world to already be working at his level of *daat*, with an intense level of desire and awareness of God's presence and

involvement in human affairs. However, at that time in history mankind had not yet wrenched itself free of the curses received from the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. So Esav and his ilk, instead of loving *talmidei chakhamim*, hated them and wanted material success only for their own gratification.

The time will come when every Jew will be fully and solely dedicated to Torah and prayer. At that time we won't have to lift a finger to have livelihood. Till then we have to sometimes disguise ourselves and wear those hairy, scratchy clothes to honestly earn what we need to feed our true selves.

Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Areiv* 3:20–23

*agutn Shabbos!*

*Shabbat Shalom!*

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\*From the root *aseih*, do, make.