

## Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

### ***BLESSING IN DISGUISE***

By Ozer Bergman

**“[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 *da’at* (God-consciousness), and that he loved those who pursued *da’at*.

In fact, although 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 Sultan of Spin, the maestro of chicanery, Lavan. So Esav managed to come up with a plan to deceive his father: he feigned generosity in matters relating to eating. As Rebbe Nachman teaches elsewhere, a person’s level of longing for God can increase

tremendously when he eats—if he knows *how* to eat—and when he gives charity. When Esav provided his father with food, Yitzchak Avinu thought that Esav was advancing the pursuit of *da’at*. 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 him! “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 receive material blessing and prosperity only 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 *da’at*, 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.

\* *EiSaV* (עשו) comes from the root *ASEih* (שה, עש, do or make).

*a gutn Shabbos!  
Shabbat Shalom!*

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

### ***SIDEPATH***

Rebbe Nachman once gave a lesson about the greatness of the Holy Land and how the real victory comes when we succeed in reaching it. He started the lesson by saying: “Whoever wants to be a Jew can only succeed through the Land of Israel.”

After the lesson, Reb Noson asked, “What did you mean when you said that the Land of Israel is so great that this is the main victory?” He could not imagine that Rebbe Nachman was speaking literally, that he was referring to the land everyone knows as Eretz Yisrael.

Rebbe Nachman replied: “I meant Israel quite literally, with its houses and apartments.” He wanted every Jew to go to Israel (*Tzaddik* #141).

### ***PARASHAH PEARLS***

By Chaim Kramer

**25:21 Isaac prayed to God opposite his wife**

***Prayer Mitigates Harsh Decrees***

Isaac represents the attribute of *Gevurah* (judgment), and the “Torah was given from the mouth of *gevurah*” (see *Eruvin* 54b); therefore Isaac represents the Torah. Yet this was insufficient for him to break the decree of childlessness. He also had to attain prayer, and persist in his prayers in order to mitigate the decree. This prayer required the prayers of Rebecca as well.

Thus, the combined numerical value of the names *YitZChaK* (יצחק, 208) and *RiVKaH* (רבקה, 307) is 515, the same as the numerical value of the word *TeFiLaH* (תפילה, prayer), for both of them had to invoke the power of prayer (LH VIII, p. 33a-b).

**25:23 Rulership will pass from one government to the other**

***We Must Make A Choice***

Rashi explains this phrase to mean that Jacob and Esau would battle constantly, and that the ascent of one would result in the descent

of the other. This dynamic applies to every individual's life as well. A person cannot seek spirituality while at the same time indulging in materialism, for the ascent of one must mean the descent of the other. A person must exert himself to engage in spiritual endeavors, for only in this way can he maintain and intensify his connection to God (LM I, 1:2).

### 26:3 I will be with you

#### *At High Spiritual Levels, We Can Draw Down Blessings*

*Eheyeh* (אהיה, I will be) may also be read as a Divine Name (cf. Exodus 3:14), corresponding to the *sefirah* of Keter—and Keter corresponds to wisdom and is the source of all blessing. When a person attains the level of Keter—which is also associated with faith and repentance—he can draw down blessings continuously (LM I, 24:7).

### 26:18 Isaac returned and re-dug the wells

#### *Blemished Faith In The Tzaddikim Results In Arguments And Wars*

The wells represent the “wellsprings of advice” that were blemished when Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge. Ever since, the correct path is concealed from us and we must strive to reveal it. Many arguments, conflicts and wars arise in each generation as a result of each person claiming that his is the right path. This state of affairs reflects a blemish in faith in the tzaddikim. Though Abimelekh challenged Isaac again and again, Isaac kept digging until he was finally able to reveal the proper advice for all to see (LH III, p. 480).

### 27:1 His eyesight had dimmed

#### *The Blessings That God Sends Us Can Dim Our Spiritual Vision*

At the moment that Isaac was bound upon the altar and his father was about to slaughter him, the heavens opened and the ministering angels saw and wept. Their tears fell upon Isaac's eyes, and therefore his eyes were dimmed (Rashi).

Sometimes people come very close to God in the sense that they achieve the blessings they desire, such as wealth, power and vibrant health. Yet this leads to a complacency that dims their spiritual sight (LM II, 82).

### 27:3 Take your weapons, your sword and your bow, and go out to the field and trap game for me

#### *Faith, Morality And Torah Study Help Us Bring The Unholy Into Holiness*

Isaac sent Esau “out to the field”—a place outside the realm of holiness—to bring his material food into the house—into the realm of holiness. “Weapons” refers to faith, the “sword” and “bow” to morality. *TeLYekhah* (תליך, your sword) also alludes to Torah learning, as it is similar to *TaLuY* (תלוי, doubts), which are clarified through one's studies. With these armaments, one can tame the unholy and bring it into holiness (LH VIII, p. 171b).

### 27:22 The voice is the voice of Jacob

#### *When We Are Spiritually Low, We Must Cry Out To God*

There are two types of “voice”: one that reflects weeping and begging for salvation, and one that reflects joy and happiness (LH II, p. 296). The name *YaAKoV* (יעקב, Jacob) is similar to *EiKeV* (עקב, heel), which is at the lowest extremity of the body. When we are conceptually “Jacob”—at a very low level—we must use our voice to cry out to God (LM I, 21:8).

### 27:34 Bless me, too, Father

#### *An Excellent Prayer*

R' Yonah Lebel (d. 1961), a leading Breslover chassid of Jerusalem, was well-known for his heartfelt prayers. Once he came to Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Rosenfeld (1922-1978) with a broad smile after a night of *hitbodedut*. “Last night I hit upon a great prayer,” he said. “It worked for Esau, so it should work for me, too!” This prayer was: “Bless me, too, Father!” (R' Gedaliah Fleer).

## KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

### 6 — “Summon Joshua” (Deuteronomy 31:14) *(continued)*

10. Repentance must have three components. A person must “see with his eyes, hear with his ears, his heart [must] understand and [then] he will repent” (Isaiah 6:10). For a person must direct his eyes and heart to carefully examine his life and to look at his eternal purpose; and he must reflect deeply

and listen attentively to all the words of our holy Sages. Then he will merit genuine repentance.

11. Humility is the most crucial element of repentance. In other words, a person must “let himself be trampled upon like a desert” (*Eruvin* 54a) and not pay the slightest attention to the opposition and insults he receives. Rather, he must hold on to the attribute of silence, and be “one of those who listen to their own disgrace and do not respond” (*Shabbat* 88b). Then he is truly called “wise” and merits repentance, which is the concept of Keter. Through this, he merits true and eternal honor—which is “God's honor”—and a good portion in the World to Come. This is his primary repentance and rectification for all of his transgressions. [Through it,] he will merit to be included in “the man who sits upon the throne,” from which judgment goes out to all the inhabitants of the world.

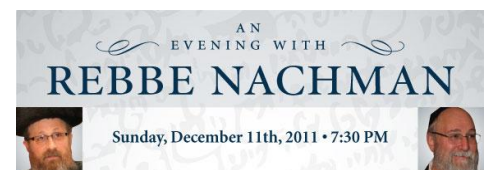
12. A person must always endeavor to look for every merit and every bit of good that it is possible to find in the Jewish people, and to judge every Jew favorably—even those who oppose him and humiliate him. Then he will always be saved from strife, and in this way, he makes a precious crown for God with all kinds of jewels.



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