

BLIND TRUST

By Ozer Bergman

“When Yitzchak grew old, his eyes became too dim to see... [Yaakov said to Rivkah his mother,] “Perhaps my father will feel me; I will be in his eyes a deceiver. I will get myself a curse, not a blessing... [Yitzchak asked Yaakov,] ‘Who are you?’ Yaakov answered his father, ‘I, Esav, your firstborn...’; Yitzchak said to Yaakov, ‘Come closer so I can feel you...’” (Genesis 27:1, 12, 18–19, 21).

What do you do when you are forced to do something that runs totally contrary to your nature, to who you are? And what do you do if that something isn’t a sure thing—or worse, if it’s a “loser lose all” situation? And it looks like the deck is stacked against you and you’re not going to pull it off? What do you do?

Why, you listen to your mother, of course.

Way back in the Garden of Eden, everything was obvious. It was clear what each thing was, what it was good for and what it was meant for. There was no mistaking apples for oranges. Along came the Serpent and gave Eve a spiel and a *bubba maaseh* (old wives’ tale). She fell for it (not totally her fault), ate from the tree and got her husband Adam to eat from it as well. “By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread” (Genesis 3:19) and “You will bear children in pain” (ibid., v. 16) are the most famous corrective measures* resulting from that episode. Another one is that mankind has since had to wear clothes (ibid., v. 21).

We weren’t awake enough to perceive the truth about the greatness of who we are, so we trusted the Serpent and fell for his spiel. So God kindly dressed us—and everything else. Nothing is fully what it claims or seems to be. Even the holy Torah

wears clothes. All the stories it tells are clothing for other, deeper messages. One *tikkun* of all this “clothing” is to sharpen our lie-detecting and truth-detecting skills.

Have you bought anything lately, a car, a house, an appliance or an app? Did you buy it blind or did you think about it? Did you buy it, or were you sold on it by someone? Did you want to make the purchase, or did you have to be cajoled? I’ll answer for you. Somebody gave you a spiel and told you a story. It was either an advertisement or you sold it to yourself, making up a story why you *had* to have it.

Don’t feel too bad. We all get fooled sometimes. Even Yitzchak Avinu (our Patriarch) was sold on Esav, thanks to Esav’s prolonged pious self-promotion. But Yaakov Avinu, Mr. Truth & Honesty (Micah 7:20)—how could he wear someone else’s clothes and be who he wasn’t?

Before we can answer that question, we have to clearly understand the following. Chazal (our Sages, of blessed memory) do *not* “go to great lengths to explain that Yaakov did not lie.”** What Chazal are doing is undressing for us a complex, multi-layered situation that has daily—and eternal—ramifications for billions of individuals and for all of humankind.

Before he entered to receive his father’s blessing, Yaakov Avinu—who lived for an eternal world—wondered how could he present himself as his brother, who lived for a “dead” world, one that will ultimately pass away. Further, unlike Yaakov, Esav didn’t trust in God and used deceit to get what he wanted (*Bereishit Rabbah* 65:15). Yaakov Avinu awoke to the reality of who he was. He realized that he could put on Esav’s clothes (Genesis 27:15) and take them off, at will. It was a put-on, a temporary necessity, not the lie of assuming an identity that was

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman teaches:

The world considers forgetfulness a shortcoming. I consider it a very great advantage.

If a person didn’t forget, it would be impossible for him to serve God. Remembering all his wrongdoings would prevent him from ever being able to pick his head up and start again. With forgetfulness, however, a person can forget the past and face the future with hope (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #26).

not his. You can “wear” Esav’s clothing if you need to, but don’t get embedded in them!

*A gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

Based on *Likutey Halakhot*,
Geneivah 5:6

* *Tikkunim* in Hebrew. “Punishments” is too harsh a word for contemporary ears.

** Authentic Judaism does not “do” apologetics. (If it did, many of us would quit it in a minute.) Chazal’s explanations of events are lessons in how to perceive reality and how to truth-detect. Since the world is filled with lies (*Vayikra Rabbah* 26:7), it takes a long time to realize that is what they are doing. It takes an even longer time to learn those lessons well.

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DEDICATIONS
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THE BLAME GAME

By Yossi Katz

Being blessed with twins, I can testify to the unique relationship that they have with each other. Besides their physical similarities, they share a deep understanding and kinship. Our Patriarch Isaac was also blessed with his own set of twins, Jacob and Esau—however, these two were a world apart.

“The first one (Esau) emerged red” (Genesis 25:25). Esau was born a redhead; redheads are stereotypically described as strong and aggressive. According to the Kabbalah, red represents the trait of Gevurah (Strength) and also strict judgment. Rashi explains that the red signifies that Esau would grow up to be a murderer. But if Esau was destined to become a murderer, why would Isaac want to anoint Esau as his successor and bestow the blessings on him?

The *Midrash Rabbah* (63:10) explains that Esau fooled Isaac by asking him questions like, “How does one tithe salt and straw?” The Torah commands us to give at least a tenth of “the produce of the earth” to charity, but salt and straw don’t fit into this category and are thus exempt. Esau tried to show his father how careful he was with the commandments of the Torah by asking how to keep this law, even though he was exempt from it.

If we analyze Esau’s question, we can discover a great insight into the flaws of human character. We have a natural tendency to be extremely judgmental and harsh, particularly on ourselves. We constantly second-guess, blame and put ourselves down. This is not to say we should live a carefree life and do whatever we like; such a lifestyle will result in little accomplishment. But being too harsh on ourselves actually has the same effect. How many times do we give up simply because we decide that anyhow we already did the wrong thing? We are so quick to throw in the towel, or to say that tomorrow is another day.

Such thinking cannot be further from the truth. Even if we did much wrong, God’s kindness is eternal. Not a moment passes us by without hope for the future. Even if we are steeped in our bad ways, every time we hold ourselves back a little bit, we gain eternal merit and will actually be saved and fully return to God. If the reason we are so exacting with ourselves is because we know God judges our every action, we should realize that good is much more potent than evil. God will certainly see us trying to change and appreciate every baby step we make.

Why are we so hard on ourselves?

Ishmael was the son of Abraham, the scion of kindness and charity. Ishmael inherited his father’s traits, but in a negative way. He relied on God’s limitless kindness, living a carefree life and doing only what he was in the mood for. Esau was the son of Isaac, the scion of strength and strict judgment. He, too, failed to utilize these traits for the good. Instead, Esau was overly stringent in his observance. He asked his father how to tithe salt and straw, things the Torah never asked us to do. Esau’s character flaw of harsh self-judgment ends up making the Torah an undesirable, burdensome and depressing yoke to bear.

Thankfully, we Jews are the children of Jacob. Jacob was called the “complete offspring” and represents the trait of Tiferet (Harmony). Jacob was the perfect balance of kindness and strictness. May we merit to go in the way of our father Jacob and constantly “push” ourselves to remember that God is always there, waiting for us to return to Him.

Based on *Likutey Halakhot*,
Hilkhoh Matanah 5

KITZUR L”M WEEKLY

17 — “It happened as they emptied their sacks” (Genesis 42:35)
(continued)

14. Know, however, that sometimes when the evil sees that the good is pining and straining and wants to return to its place, then the gentiles overpower the good even more and bring it into even greater concealment—or more specifically, they bring it into the inner recesses of their thoughts. In other words, they begin to think thoughts about this good, which brings the good into even deeper concealment within the inner recesses of their thoughts. Subsequently, this good emerges in the form of the children that they beget. For this good is hidden away and concealed in the inner recesses of their thoughts and their minds, and [the brain is] the origin of the process of reproduction. [The seed originates in the brain and then descends to the reproductive organs (*Zohar Chadash* 15a; also see KLM #7).] This good then comes out in the generative seed, and the evil in their offspring does not have the strength to overpower the good within them. Thus, the good emerges through these offspring and they become converts.

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