

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay #35—Parshat Toldot 5762 (3)

We continue with our thoughts of [essay #33](#). Reb Noson writes:

"Yitzchak loved Esav because there was game in his mouth" (*Genesis 25:28*). In whose mouth? Rashi offers two comments. Esav would provide game that he had trapped to feed Yitzchak. Alternatively, Esav was a smooth talker. Indeed Esav would fool his father and ask him how does one tithe salt and straw.

How could Yitzchak have preferred to give the blessings to Esav over Yaakov? Even if Yitzchak thought that Esav was righteous, he certainly was aware that Yaakov, who continually studied and served God, was the greater tzaddik of the two! Wouldn't Yaakov thus take preference over Esav for the blessings? Furthermore, why would being fed by Esav cause Yitzchak to love Esav so much to offer him the blessings?

Yitzchak did know that Yaakov was a tzaddik, just as he knew that Esav was a trapper. Since Esav presented himself as a sincere person, Yitzchak wanted Esav to be at Yaakov's service. This would require Esav to subjugate himself to serving God in the manner he best could, by supporting Torah and the tzaddikim. For this, Esav needed the blessings, so that he would have sufficient wealth to properly distribute charity. For then, even one who is not immersed in Torah study or devotions to God takes a prominent position in life for his devotion, i.e., his charitable works.

Alas for Esav, he had no desire at all to serve God, or to be charitable towards those who do. By asking his father, "How does one tithe salt and straw?" and intimating that he wanted to give charity to support others, he made Yitzchak think that his intentions were pure. Thus, Yitzchak wanted to bless specifically Esav in order that Esav would have the wherewithal to perform charitable deeds in the future. It was Esav who needed the blessings in order to provide for Yaakov.

Conversely, Yitzchak thought that Yaakov would not need the material blessings at all, since his portion is service of God, the spiritual realm. Rivkah knew of Yitzchak's desire to bless Esav. However, she also knew that Esav was a trapper and a deceitful person who rejected the spiritual altogether, and had designs only for material wealth and power. Why did she give Yaakov Esav's clothing to dress up in? The name ESav represents ASiyah, "doing" (in Hebrew these words have the same initial letters, *ayin* and *sin*). In this material world a person must do something for his **material** existence, in order to attain the **spiritual** life and levels.

So Rivkah told Yaakov that he must "do something" to obtain the blessings, which would enable him in this world to draw material blessing while he toiled for spiritual achievements. This is borne out by the fact that when Yitzchak smelled the fragrance of Yaakov's clothes (which were actually Esav's), he said, "See the fragrance of my son as a perfume of the fields..." (*Genesis 27:27*). Rashi explains that when Yaakov came to Yitzchak, he was accompanied by a fragrance of the Garden of Eden. Thus, even

Yaakov's "doing" invoked spiritual fragrances and effects.

It is for this reason too, that Yaakov insisted on Esav selling him the birthright when Esav came back "tired" from the field (ibid. 25:29). Our Sages teach that Esav was "tired" from a busy day of idolatry, murder and adultery. Draw the desire for the material world upon himself tired Esav out. Not only did he not intend to support Yaakov, the tzaddik, but Esav demanded that Yaakov feed him! That is, Esav would even dip into Yaakov's pocket to support his immoral desires. Thus, when Yitzchak later heard that Esav had sold his birthright, he immediately recognized that Esav had no desire at all for devotion to God, even to support those who do wish to serve Him. Yitzchak then willingly and knowingly gave the blessings to Yaakov, despite the fact that Yaakov had received them in an Esav-like mode manner, with subterfuge (*Likutey Halakhot, Arev 3:21-25*).

Imagine that this world is all yours. Would you be compassionate and caring to others, sharing your wealth and good fortune with them? After all, everything is yours, why not share some of it and benefit other human beings too? You would, but Esav wouldn't, because his mind-set does not contain any of Avraham's chessed (kindness). As the Torah states, "From Yitzchak you will have seed" and our Sages teach, from some of Yitzchak, "but not all of Yitzchak" (*Sanhedrin 59b*). Esav, like Yishmael, is not considered a descendent and heir of Avraham. Instead, Esav's mind-set says, "What's yours is mine, and what's mine is mine" (*Avot 5:13*).

So at Rivkah's behest Yaakov came and received the blessings. He came into his father's room and spoke respectfully to him. When asked, "How did you manage to prepare the meal so quickly?" he replied, "God made it happen." This aroused Yitzchak's curiosity, since Esav never mentioned God. So he asked to touch the son who stood in his presence, to know if was hairy, like Esav. "The voice is that of Yaakov, but the hands are definitely Esav's" (*Genesis 27:22*). Yaakov, dressed in the wolf Esav's clothing, passed the test. But it was more than a test, for the "voice of Yaakov" represents the voice of prayer, the voice of Torah study, the voice of the kind word. And, as Rebbe Nachman teaches, it represents the "voice of rebuke," the ability to take an unpleasant situation and bring it to a beneficial conclusion, to take the sins of a person and rebuke him in such a way that he draws strength and encouragement to return, rather than becoming deflated and discouraged, turning to destructive self-pity and depression (*Likutey Moharan II, 8*).

Esav, on the other hand, came roaring into his father's room. When he realized that Yaakov had already received the blessings, he began to carry on, like the spoiled brat he was, knowing that he had now lost everything he ever wanted, material wealth and desires. He cried and shed tears and never let go. Yitzchak placated him but to no avail, for Esav cried more, begging in every way and demanding a blessing. "My father!" he cried, "bless me too!" Yitzchak eventually agreed saying, "When you *tarid* (find complaint against Yaakov), then you will throw off his yoke and vanquish him, taking with you the blessings of this world" (*Genesis 27:40*).

Reb Noson explains that Esav's crying represents his depression, for tears are excess to the body and excesses parallel depression. He cried before his father demanding material blessings and since the world had not yet reached a stage of rectification, Yitzchak was forced to share some blessings with him (for the Other Side must have some nourishment too to sustain it, at least until Mashiach comes). Rashi explains that *tarid* translates as anguish, i.e., depression. This indicates that Esav will be able to throw off Yaakov's yoke and ascend to rule when he brings depression into the Jews' life. Conversely, when Yaakov (the Jews) cry, they counter the tears of Esav. This is why we must cry over the destruction of

the Temple, to counter Esav's blessings, for a Jew's crying to be able to serve God arouses compassion, Divine Favor and draws God's Providence and Blessing upon us (*Likutey Halakhot, Arev 26-28*).

Esav was very successful in bringing depression upon the Jewish nation. How many deaths, how much destruction has Christian Europe wreaked upon the Jews? The establishment of the church in the first few centuries during the Roman Empire, along with the Crusades, Inquisition, blood libels, pogroms, etc. culminating with the very recent Holocaust. How can one not be depressed? All we longed for is our Land, our salvation, never seeking that which wasn't ours. All Esav did was take more and more, kill more and more.

Rashi explains that Esav is compared to the pig, an unkosher animal which has split hooves, one of the signs of a kosher animal, but does not chew its cud, the second required sign. The pig extends its forelegs as if to show off how kosher it is, tricking all who allow themselves to be deceived (*Genesis 26:33*). But included in Esav's blessing was the phrase, "you shall live by your sword" (*ibid. 27:40*).

(By the way, I humbly suggest that in order to spare lives, the United States Army airlift into Afghanistan some 100,00 pigs, an animal which Islam forbids and Moslems consider impure. The pigs can be taken from the farms near Nazareth. Let them loose in the cities, roam the mountains and enter the caves, to flush out the Taliban—and bin Laden, if he is in fact there—who, because they are religious Muslims, will flee from the pigs. We accomplish two things by this. By using pigs in place of "pig" [i.e., Esav], we rid the Holy Land of something impure, something that our Sages forbade to raise in the Holy Land. And, we save soldiers' lives.)

The "righteous west" demands justice of all terrorists! This is the correct thing to do. However, let them avenge ALL those guilty of terror. Back in the 1960s-1970s terrorist groups operated around the globe. Red Army factions operated throughout Western Europe; South America had Fidel Castro's brand of terrorism. At that time it was determined that any group which sought liberation from an oppressive power could use terror legitimately, provided it only struck governmental or military targets. Otherwise, the groups were to be labeled **TERRORIST**s, which they were—and still are.

For over 50 years the Arabs are attacking civilians, continually, day after day. Yet, the world's governments support them. Why isn't the PLO considered a terrorist group? Furthermore, it has received support from the west via Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc. Does that not make them supporters of terrorists? Are not those backers of the terrorist nations, the western countries who have supported the Saudis and others, as guilty as the terrorists themselves?

So, let the indignant west include themselves when exacting payment. As the saying goes, "Vultures of a feather flock together." The final verse of this week's Torah reading states that Esav married Yishmael's daughter. The west has made an anti-terror coalition, but included in it some of the world's worst offenders. Saudi Arabia, guilty of supporting the PLO from its inception, as well as other states that harbor and nourish terrorism. Iran, Syria, Pakistan, etc. are all backers of the "noble anti-terror" campaign. But this is not a new alliance. It was forged some 3,600 years ago between Esav and Yishmael and has continued throughout the ages. Even now, when Yishmael fights Esav, the west, they form an alliance, to the exclusion, and to the detriment, of Yaakov, of Israel. For Esav lives by the sword; he deceives people into thinking he is waging a war for justice, but is really seeking his own material benefit from it.

We must learn from this. We must learn how to counter Esav's crocodile tears, lest we find ourselves

actually wanting to join such a coalition. We must cry out to God and shed our tears, pleading and asking for God's blessing, for the blessing of the tzaddikim, the blessings of the Yitzchaks, those who seek benefit for all. Then we can merit all the blessings and to the Land which is the source of those blessings.

My father-in-law, Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Rosenfeld (d.1978), was once standing in the Breslov shul in Jerusalem, when Rabbi Yonah Lebel (d.1961) approached him. "Reb Zvi Aryeh," he said, "I was last night on Mount Zion at the gravesite of King David and found it difficult to pour out my heart before God. I was yearning and hoping, but it seemed of no avail. Then, I thought of Esav and came upon the most perfect prayer, because if it worked for him, it should work for me too." And for the rest of night Reb Yonah stood before God crying, "Father!" Reb Yonah cried, "Bless me too!"

May we merit to pour our hearts out before God in prayer, effecting salvation and blessing for all of us. Amen.

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