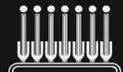




Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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The Book or the Blade by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Who are we? Who were we? Who will we be?

The Jewish people are called the "Children of Israel" and the name derives from the original Israel, third of our patriarchs, our father Jacob. In this week's *parshah*, we read how Jacob impersonated his brother Esau in order to be blessed by his father Isaac. He wore the goatskin garments of Esau, prompting the blind Isaac to exclaim in wonderment, *The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau!*

Our tradition has always understood these immortal words to have meaning far beyond the literal story of Jacob's charade. The *voice of Jacob* means the voice of Torah study, the sound of prayer and, generally, refers to the gentle, spiritual sound of the peace-loving People of the Book. The *hands of Esau*, on the other hand, represent the fist, the sword-wielding arm — physical might and brute force, violence and war.

And the question today is: to which of these are we raising our children? Are we perhaps not forgetting who we are and what we are meant to symbolize as a nation?

Let's face it. Our society is an Esau society. Our children are constantly bombarded by the box, by television, movies, video games and a media madness that glorifies the physical and, yes, even the violent. Never mind the news which is bad enough. How many thousands upon thousands of murders will the average child witness in all their gore

before his Bar Mitzvah? Parents need to think twice and three times before allowing themselves the luxury of this electronic babysitter.

Today we see the results. Just watch how kids play, even in nursery school. To tell you the truth, I myself am lucky to be alive. I remember going to pay a house visit on a family in my congregation and being attacked by their young son who had an AK-47 and, as I walked through the door, peppered me with bullets. Thank G-d, it was only a toy. How I cringed when his mom said, "Stop it, Ryan, you mustn't shoot the Rabbi!" Once upon a time kids played Cowboys and Indians. If you were a good shot, one Indian would get knocked off his horse. Today, one victim is nothing. Thanks to modern technology we can decimate entire armies. Battleships, space ships, whole planets are being smashed into smithereens by a seven-year-old on his play station.

A few years ago, I was on a plane aboard which the in-flight program offered the following enlightening choices of entertainment: "Terminator 3," "Planet of the Apes," "Return of the Mummies," and a martial arts film in a foreign language. So much for our cerebral society.

The same people who decry *shechitah*, the traditional Jewish method of slaughtering animals for food, say nothing about hunting for sport. In England it might even be the sport of kings. Esau is described in the Bible as *one who knows hunting, a man of the field*, but Jacob is the *sincere man and dweller of tents* — a reference to the tents of Torah. Jacob was the quiet scholar while Esau was the wild hunter.

Live & Laugh

Two very elderly Jewish ladies were enjoying the sunshine on a park bench in Miami. They had been meeting at that park every sunny day, for over 12 years...chatting and enjoying each others' friendship. One day, the younger of the two ladies turns to the other and says, "Please don't be angry with me dear, but I am embarrassed, after all these years...What is your name? I am trying to remember, but I just can't." The older friend stares at her, looking very distressed, says nothing for a full 2 minutes, and finally says.... "How soon do you have to know?"

The owner of a company tells his employees: "You worked very hard this year, therefore the company's profits increased dramatically. As a reward, I'm giving everyone a cheque for \$5,000." Thrilled, the employees gather round and high five one another. "And if you work with the same zeal next year, I'll sign those cheques!"

Calendar

Welcome to our guest Chazan Tzvi Gudelsky.

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall.
- ◆ **Social Shabbos.**
- ◆ Mincha: 5:55 pm
- ◆ Shabbos Ends: 6:04 pm

CHANUKAH FEST
Sunday 11 Nov 9:00-12:30pm
 Sydenham Community Centre
Explore this exciting festival with Rabbi Stern and special UK guest Rabbi Rafi Zarum, and enjoy an Olive Oil tasting and Artisanal Doughnuts.

- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of I.deal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
- ◆ **Vehicles wanted.** Any make, any condition. Best prices. Phone **ARNOLD ORKIN 082 823 7826**
- ◆ Acknowledgements: Chabad.org
- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.

found that Esau honored his father even more. Rabbi Shimon derives this from the fact that usually people serve their parents wearing ordinary clothes while they reserve their best for going out. Esau, however, had kept his best clothes in readiness to serve his father the food he had gone out to hunt. That is why Jacob was able to wear them while Esau was still out hunting.

We find, much later in the Torah, that G-d forbids the Israelites to wage war against Esau's descendants. He tells Moses:

Give the people these orders: "You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own."

And later still Moses commands the Israelites: *Do not abhor an Edomite [i.e. a descendant of Esau], for he is your brother.*

The sages saw these provisions as an enduring reward to Esau for the way he honored his father.

So, was Isaac right or wrong to love Esau? Esau reciprocated the love, but remained Esau, the hunter, the man of the field, not the man to carry forward the demanding covenant with the invisible G-d and the spiritual sacrifices it called for. Not all children follow the path of their parents. If it was Isaac's intent that Esau should do so, he failed. But there are some failures that are honorable. Loving your children, whatever they become, is one, for surely that is how G-d loves us.

Young Jewish Joburg
SPIRITSHUL & SOCIAL
Tuesday 13 Nov 7:45pm
Guest: Leonard Carr -
Clinical Psychologist
 Venue: Youth Bayit
 Finger food, drinks, free entrance

How about boxing? Whoever beats the other guy to a pulp gets the coveted prize and is crowned world champion. Listen to this logic. If someone pinches your parking space and you kill him in an act of road rage, you are a murderer. But if you kill him inside a ring with 25,000 witnesses cheering you on, you are a hero and the millions come pouring in... I won't even mention the bizarre and barbaric world of "entertainment" wrestling!

This is the sad reality of our world. When it comes to making a buck there is no conscience and no morality. If your child wants to buy a gun, guaranteed there will be someone to manufacture it. There might be some form of quality control to make sure it won't hurt his hand but, unfortunately, it will still harm his soul. All the above social phenomena are deadening our sensitivities and threatening to wipe out our refined Jacob character, spawning a generation of crude and coarse Esaus.

The Talmud says: *When there is a book there is no sword, but when there is a sword there is no book.* We cannot be a nation of noble scholars if we are playing with the sword. We have always been the People of the Book. Jews should want their children to pick up the book and drop the sword.

Do you know who made the following statement? "A violently active, dominating, brutal youth — that is what I am after." It was a fellow named Adolf Hitler (may his name be obliterated). That is what he wanted for his children. We want our children to be like Moses (or at least Einstein). When Moses saw two Jews quarreling he said, "*Rasha, wicked one, why would you strike your fellow?*" (Exodus 2:13). At that point, the man had only raised his hand. He hadn't yet physically struck the other guy but, as Moses saw it, he was behaving like a *rasha*, a wicked person.

If young Jews are being threatened by anti-Semites or if Israel is in mortal danger from murderous neighbors, then obviously we need to be able to defend ourselves. Self-defense classes are a necessity in today's world

and the Israel Defense Force protects us from another Holocaust, G-d forbid. But let us not turn brute force into a new value or ideal to aspire to. We must teach our children Torah and the pursuit of Jewish wisdom. When the *voice is the voice of Jacob*, then no *hands of Esau* will harm us.

Please G-d, we will continue to be a wise and sensitive nation of character, secure in our inner strength and proud of who we were and will, hopefully, always be.

Parsha Pointers

*Toldos: Artscroll Chumash pg 124;
Living Torah pg 117*

Rivka (Rebecca) gives birth to Esav (Esau) and Ya'akov (Jacob). Esav sells the birthright to Ya'akov for a bowl of lentil soup. Yitzchak (Isaac) sojourns in Gerar with Avimelech (Avimelech), king of the Philistines. Esav marries two Hittite women bringing great pain to his parents (because they weren't of the fold).

Ya'akov impersonates Esav on the counsel of his mother in order to receive the blessing for the oldest son by his blind father, Yitzchak. Esav, angry because of his brother's deception which caused him to lose the firstborn blessings, plans to kill Ya'akov, so Ya'akov flees to his uncle Lavan (Laban) in Padan Aram -- on the advice of his parents. They also advise him to marry Lavan's daughter.

Esav understands that his Canaanite wives are displeasing to his parents, so he marries a third wife, Machlath, the daughter of Ishmael.

Why Did Isaac love Esau?

By Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Even before they were born, Jacob and Esau struggled in the womb. They were destined, it seems, to be eternal adversaries. Not only were they different in character and appearance. They also held different places in their parents' affections:

The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob. We know why Rebecca loved Jacob. Before the twins were born, the

pains Rebecca felt were so great that "she went to inquire of the L-rd." This is what she was told:

"Twinations in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

It seemed as if G-d were saying that the younger would prevail and carry forward the burden of history, so it was the younger, Jacob, whom she loved.

But why, in that case, did Isaac love Esau? Did he not know about Rebecca's oracle? Had she not told him about it? Besides, did he not know that Esau was wild and impetuous? Can we really take literally the proposition that Isaac loved Esau because "he had a taste for wild game," as if his affections were determined by his stomach, by the fact that his elder son brought him food he loved? Surely not, when the very future of the covenant was at stake.

The classic answer, given by Rashi, listens closely to the literal text. Esau, says the Torah, "knew how to trap [yode'a tzayid]." Isaac loved him "because entrapment was in his mouth [ki tzayid befiv]." Esau, says Rashi, trapped Isaac by his mouth. Here is Rashi's comment on the phrase "knew how to trap:"

He knew how to trap and deceive his father with his mouth. He would ask him, "Father, how should one tithe salt and straw?" Consequently his father believed him to be strict in observing the commands.

Esau knew full well that salt and straw do not require tithes, but he asked so as to give the impression that he was strictly religious. And here it is Rashi's comment on the phrase that Isaac loved him "because entrapment was in his mouth":

"The midrashic explanation is that there was entrapment in the mouth of Esau, who trapped his father and deceived him by his words."

The Maggid of Dubnow adds a perceptive comment as to why Isaac, but not Rebecca, was deceived. Rebecca grew up with the wily Laban. She knew deception when she saw it. Isaac, by contrast, had grown up with Abraham and Sarah. He only knew total

honesty and was thus easily deceived. (Bertrand Russell once commented on the philosopher G. E. Moore, that he only once heard Moore tell a lie, when he asked Moore if he had ever told a lie, and Moore replied, "Yes").

So the classic answer is that Isaac loved Esau because he simply did not know who or what Esau was. But there is another possible answer: that Isaac loved Esau precisely because he did know what Esau was.

In the early twentieth century someone brought to the great Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of pre-state Israel, the following dilemma. He had given his son a good Jewish education. He had always kept the commands at home. Now however the son had drifted far from Judaism. He no longer kept the commandments. He did not even identify as a Jew. What should the father do?

"Did you love him when he was religious?" asked Rav Kook. "Of course," replied the father. "Well then," Rav Kook replied, "Now love him even more."

Sometimes love can do what rebuke cannot. It may be that the Torah is telling us that Isaac was anything but blind as to his elder son's true nature. But if you have two children, one well behaved, the other liable to turn out badly, to whom should you devote greater attention? With whom should you spend more time?

It may be that Isaac loved Esau not blindly but with open eyes, knowing that there would be times when his elder son would give him grief, but knowing too that the moral responsibility of parenthood demands that we do not despair of, or disown, a wayward son.

Did Isaac's love have an effect on Esau? Yes and no. It is clear that there was a special bond of connection between Esau and Isaac. This was recognized by the sages:

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: No man ever honored his father as I honored my father, but I

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