

TORAH THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

PARSHAS TOLDOS

To Lie Or Not To Lie?

Yaakov said to his father, "It is I, Esav your firstborn" (Gen. 27:19)

Yaakov came to Yitzchak to receive the blessings intended for Eisav. He deceived his father into giving him the blessings by saying "It is I, Esav your firstborn." What is difficult to understand is that the Torah states that Yaakov was a man of truth. He was never deceitful or dishonest. How then do we understand his deception?

Picture a man walking down the street on the way to a wedding when suddenly a thug approaches him and says "Your money or your life!" This man happens to have \$10,000 cash on him. The law states that he is permitted to say, "I'm sorry, I don't have any money on me."

Eisav was an imposter, fooling his father into thinking that he was righteous. Yaakov's actions were therefore a fulfillment of the truth since Yitzchak himself wanted to give the blessing to the fitting heir and not to the imposter. Therefore he prevented Eisav from extorting what was never his.(1)

The Torah's definition of Truth is that which is conducive to good and which conforms with the will of the Creator.(2) Thus the counter-deception of saying that you don't have money is in fact Truth, because the thug is trying to take what is not his. One is preserving the truth by not giving him what he is trying to extort.

NOTES

1. R' Yaakov Kamenetsky.

2. Michtav M'Eliyahu, Vol. I, p. 94.