

The Blessing Behind the Hunt: When Intent Matters More Than Action

This morning's dedications set the tone before a single word of Torah was spoken.

A first birthday filled with miracles. A patriarch of a community honored by children and grandchildren. Yahrzeits of loved ones whose neshamot continue to shine. Refuah shelemah wishes. Community donors supporting Torah. And guests walking in for the first time, finally getting to answer "Amen" live.

Every single name, every dedication, every moment was its own blessing — a tapestry of Jewish life woven together before the learning even began.

And in that moment, before the parashah, the room already held something powerful: **Joy. Gratitude. Anticipation. Heart.**

Exactly the ingredients needed for *berachah*.

Part I — Why Yitzchak Needed Joy to Give a Blessing

In our portion, Yitzchak turns to his son Esav and asks him to hunt, prepare food,

and bring it to him **"so that my soul will rejoice, and I will bless you."**

Why joy? Why food? Why now?

Our Rabbis teach:

The Shechinah only rests upon a person who is in a state of joy.

Prophecy, divine clarity, elevated blessing — none land on a heart clouded with sadness, stress, jealousy, or fear.

So Yitzchak tells Esav:

"Bring me a meal that fills my heart with simchah... then I can bless you fully."

This isn't Yitzchak asking for a steak because he's hungry.

It's Yitzchak doing something profound:

He is **preparing his soul** to channel the blessing that came from Avraham → to Yitzchak → and now must be passed on to the next generation.

To transmit destiny... he needs joy.

Part II — Why All the Details? Why the Tools? Why the Instructions?

The Torah lists every hunting utensil Esav must take — the bow, the quiver, the knife — as if Esav doesn't know how to hunt.

But Yitzchak isn't giving hunting advice.

He's giving **halachic** advice.

Five halachic requirements of shechitah are hinted in the silent “ה” of “צודה לי ציד” —

The knife must be sharpened.

No hesitation.

No tearing.

No pressure.

Fully visible incision.

Yitzchak is saying:

“If this meat is going to lead to prophecy... it must be perfect.”

Then he adds one more instruction:

“Bring me something that is yours — not stolen.”

Esav could not use stolen prey.

He could not even use **tools** that were stolen.

Yitzchak wants to give a blessing built on purity, honesty, and halachic integrity.

Part III — Why Esav Failed Even When He Tried

Esav had every advantage:

- He was the greatest hunter on earth.
- He had Adam HaRishon's mystical coat — stolen from Nimrod — that caused all animals to run toward the wearer.
- He had speed, strength, technique.

But this time... he had to leave the coat home.

Why?

Because Yitzchak said, **“No stolen items.”**

To Esav's credit, kibud av v'em was his one great mitzvah — the jewel of his soul — so he obeyed.

But then... every trap he set failed.

The animals escaped.

The Malach Gavriel undid his snares.

Time was running out.

Pesach night — the auspicious moment for blessing — was slipping away.

So what did Esav do?

He slaughtered the only creature he could catch:

a dog.

The Targum Yonatan says clearly:

“He brought him dog meat.”

Dog meat for the Korban Pesach.

Dog meat for the Hagigah.

Dog meat to unlock the joy needed to channel divine blessing.

And the Torah hints to it:

Where it says “וְאָכַל מִכֹּל” , our Rabbis read it

as “אֶכֶל מִכֶּלֶב” —

“I almost ate from the dog you brought me.”

Yitzchak shakes — **charadah gedolah me’od** — the great trembling.

In one flash he understands:

*“If this is what Esav brings
when everything is on the line...
what has he been serving me
all along?”*

And he realizes:

The blessing must belong to Yaakov.

Not because Yaakov tricked him.

Not because Rivka orchestrated it.

But because **Hashem protected him** from eating non-kosher and ensured the blessing would land where it belonged.

Part IV — Yaakov Enters: A Perfect Mitzvah Meets a Perfect Soul

When Yaakov enters wearing the clothing of Adam HaRishon — holy, pure, unstained — the smell of Gan Eden fills the room.

Yitzchak declares:

“יְרִיחַ בְּנֵי כְרִיחַ שְׂדֵה אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכוּ הָ”
“The scent of my son is like a
field blessed by Hashem.”

Yitzchak senses something divine — not because the meat smells good, but because **a perfectly performed mitzvah** carries the aroma of Olam HaBa.

Without knowing it, Yitzchak feels the spiritual aura of Yaakov’s soul — the soul truly destined for the blessing.

Part V — What Esav Got Wrong About Mitzvot

Esav’s greatest mitzvah was honoring his father.

He excelled at it.

He dedicated himself to it.

So why choose *this* mitzvah?

Why wasn’t he a shochet? A protector? A warrior for Hashem? A fighter of Amalek?

Because Esav — like a mafia boss asking for a blessing to die peacefully in his bed — chose the mitzvah that promised something **he** wanted:

“לִמְעַן יֵאָרִיכוֹן יָמָיו” — **long life.**

A career criminal, murderer, and thief chooses the mitzvah that guarantees... longevity.

It had nothing to do with his father.

Nothing to do with love.

Nothing to do with Hashem.

He wanted the *reward*, not the *relationship*.

And this is the danger for all of us.

When we chase segulot...
when we demand blessings...
when we fight for honors...
when we do mitzvot for what we think
they'll "give" us...
we risk performing a mitzvah with Esav's
mindset —
focused on the prize instead of the
purpose.

Part VI — When the Mitzvah Becomes Worth More Than the Person

People will bid thousands for Kol Nidre
honors.

Fight for aliyot.

Compete for kavod.

And sometimes — tragically —
hurt others in the process.

But the Torah says:

אָרוּר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְיָם אֶת דְּבָרֵי
הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת.

"Cursed is the one who does
not uphold this Torah."

Uphold — not *hold*.

Not the one who lifts it.

The one who **lives** it.

Better to keep the Torah quietly
than to grab the Torah loudly.

Better to respect the mitzvah
than to trample people for it.

Better to care about what Hashem wants
than to chase the blessing we want.

The Heart of the Derasha

A mitzvah done for the wrong reason
becomes a dog on the altar.

A mitzvah done with purity becomes a
gateway to Gan Eden.

Five Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

1. What mitzvah do YOU do best —
and are you doing it for Hashem,
or for the "reward"?

2. **Where in your life do you confuse
“holding the Torah” with
“upholding the Torah”?**
 3. **If joy brings blessing, what brings
YOU joy — and do you allow that
joy into your spiritual life?**
 4. **Have you ever done something
“good” but for the wrong reason?
Did it change the result?**
 5. **In what ways can we bring purity
and intention into our everyday
actions — even the small ones?**
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