



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

REFORMING JUDAISM

There is something so very modern in the Torah's statement that Yitzchak re-dug the old wells which his father Avraham had dug before him (B'reishit 26:18).

Something similar is happening all over the Jewish world today.

I had a teacher who used to say, "If you want to reform Judaism, restore it."

The restoration of Judaism seems to be going on everywhere these days. Jews are going back to the sources to delve into the old ideas, principles and practices.

The packaging is up-to-date. The technology of the 21st century is being utilised. But the content is traditional Judaism - Yishayahu and Yirmiyahu, Hillel and Shammai, Rambam and Yehuda HaLevi, Rashi and Ibn Ezra, Yosef Karo and the Chafetz Chayim.

Don't let anyone persuade you that Judaism is disintegrating or in danger of disappearance: it is the modern world which is under scrutiny and its laissez-faire relativism is being found wanting.

THE CUNNING HUNTER

Yitzchak's two sons were contrasts.

Yaakov was the studious one who enjoyed his home and his books: The text says he loved his tents (25:27), which Radak indicates means that wherever there was a tent of learning, that's where one would find Yaakov.

Eisav, on the other hand, was the "cunning hunter" (25:27). Rashbam takes this phrase literally: Eisav was the prototype of the macho man who, in later parlance, went in for "huntin', shootin', and fishin'".

Ibn Ezra thinks the idea of being not only a hunter but cunning is particularly important, since Eisav exercised his wiles on deceiving the animal prey and making it easier to capture them.

But the way the story works out with Eisav and Yaakov vying to impress their father, it seems more likely that the phrase "cunning hunter" doesn't only refer to animal targets. It conveys the sense of a man who could flatter and dissemble when it came to other human beings, especially Father Yitzchak.

Poor Yitzchak was old and losing his eyesight - a contrast to the later Moshe who even at the end of his life was still vigorous and clear-sighted (D'varim 34). Yitzchak, on the other

hand, was not only taken in by Eisav's wiles but probably wanted to be.

The boys' mother Rivka got Yaakov to pretend to be Eisav in a superb piece of see-through disguise because she knew how gullible Yitzchak had become, and she wanted to show that if a patent disguise that covered the smooth arms of Yaakov could fool him, all the more so could he be taken in by the smooth talk of Eisav. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH