

Sir,

I am pleased to comment on Rabbi Israel Stein's remarks on my article "The Problem of Deception in Genesis 27".

Stein questions whether Jacob is a man who tended fields. He cites the statement that Jacob is a *yoshev o'halim* (an indoor person) and asks, "Where does the Torah suggest that Jacob tended fields?"

It is true that the Torah does not state explicitly that Jacob tended fields. The Torah is not often specific in its statements. It is multi-layered in meaning – thus, the constant study and possibilities of meaning and interpretation. It is up to rabbis and scholars to extricate meaning from its statements. With this in mind, permit me to state the reason for my statements.

The Torah describes Jacob as a *mild mannered man who stayed in camp* (New JPS). What was his function? He did not just eat and sleep in camp. A mild man fits the description of a pastoral man tending flock. Who else was there to take care of the goats? Not Esau. That Jacob had knowledge of the flock is revealed by Rebekah's statement to bring her two choice kid goats. Furthermore, Isaac's blessing to Jacob (supposedly Esau): *May God give you of the dew of Heaven and the fat of the Earth, abundance of new grain and wine. . .* indicates that Isaac knew the recipient was a man who tended the field, not a hunter, while Isaac's blessing to Esau states *Yet by the sword you shall live*. Actually, both were men of the field. Jacob took care of the field about the camp, while Esau, being a hunter, was a man of the field away from camp.

Sidney Breitbart
Aberdeen MD