

Toldot: The One and Only Bracha

- R' Moshe Dovid Tendler.

The real Bracha that Yitzchok had from Avraham, that of hashgachat HaBoreh as expressed in "En Mazal LeYisrael", we are not guided by forces of nature or constellations above, could not be given to Esav. That is why Esav's plea for a bracha was at first refused by Yitzchok.

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The text in Parashas Toldos omits any details of the controversy between Yitzchak and Rivkah concerning their sons, Yaakov and Esav. The existence of such a disagreement is hinted to in the enigmatic verse: Vayeahav Yitzchak es Esav vRivkah oheves es Yaakov (Bereishis 25:28). Was Yitzchak unaware of the reality that Esav was a ruthless Ish Sadeh whereas Yaakov was a Yosheiv Ohalim and therefore more deserving of this love and respect? The Malbim [27:5] deduces from the blessing given unwittingly by Yitzchak to Yaakov, that he hoped to encourage Esav the Ish Sadeh to lead a more moral life by showering him with material wealth. Yaakov, the Yosheiv Ohalim, was best left to continue upon his chosen path, commuting between the ohalim of Shem, Ever, and Avraham [Vayishlach, 9]. It was Yitzchak's plan to arrange a Yissacher Zevulun pact between his sons, in an attempt to dissipate any latent hostility between the brothers, satisfy Esav's egoism, and provide for Yaakov's sustenance.

Rivkah did not concur with Yitzchak's plan. She feared Esav's evil. She feared for Yaakov's life and soul, lest intimate association with Esav would lead her younger son away from his destined goal of being a Yosheiv Ohalim, the progenitor of the twelve Shivtei Hashem.

After Yitzchak realized that he had mistakenly given Yaakov the bracha intended for Esav, he sensed that Divine intervention affirmed the truth of his wife's position, and therefore exclaimed "Gam Baruch Yihiyeh" (27:33) But his subsequent behavior is in need of careful analysis. Why did he exacerbate Esav's animosity by refusing to give him his own blessing? Despite Esav's plea, "Barcheni gam ani avi", Yitzchak refused, claiming that he had no ability to give him his blessing "Ulcha eifo mah e'eseh bni" (27:37 38).

Why? As Esav pleadingly inquires of his father, "Ha'Bracha achas l'cha avi"? Was Yitzchak authorized by Hashem to give but one bracha and no more? Yitzchak did finally respond with a magnanimous bracha, "Mishmanei Ha'Aretz uMital HaShomayim"(27:39). But why the expressed reluctance of Yitzchak to bless Esav, further kindling Esav's anger against Yaakov?

Yitzchak had but one unique bracha to transmit to his son. This sole bracha was the "Bircas Avraham" to which he was heir, not the Bircas Av of a dying father which he had in limitless abundance for Yaakov and for Esav. Hashem had blessed Avraham with a one and only bracha that of "Ein Mazal BeYisroel" (there are no celestial signs holding sway over Israel [but rather Hashem's hashgacha and providence]), as a component of the covenant of the "Bris Bein Ha'Bsarim".

As the Gemara relates: “Amar Avraham Lifnei HKBH Nistakalti b'itztagninus sheli v'eini ra'uiy l'holid ben. Amar leih, tzai m'itztagninus shelcha ϕ sh'ein mazal b'Yisroel” Avraham said before HKBH I have already consulted my astrology, and I see that I am not fit to bear a son! [HKBH] said to him: Go outside your astrology, for the celestial signs hold no sway over Israel! [Shabbos 156a].

Jewish survival throughout the millennia was guaranteed by this bracha to Avraham. Your children will not be subject to the natural law governing all the nations. Which nation ever survived 2000 years of exile from their homeland, resisting homogenization by the dominant and pervasive cultures, and continual efforts to physically destroy them? The blessing of Mishmanei Ha'Aretz can be shared by both sons of Yitzchak. But only Yaakov was to inherit the Bircas Avraham of “Ein Mazal B'Yisroel”, and with it the Divine right to claim Eretz Yisroel as an inheritance unto eternity.

(Submitted by Nisson Shulman, as found in <http://www.enayim.org>
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