

Toldos by Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

The blessings bestowed by Yitzchok upon Yaakov through Rivkah's intervention (Braishis 27: 1-33) are one of the most perplexing anecdotes in the lives of our ancestors. How is it conceivable that were it not for Rivkah's intervention Esau would have been the recipient of the blessings? Already in their early youth Yaakov manifested his Torah characteristics whereas Esau showed signs of mischief. When they reached the age thirteen everyone noticed Yaakov's love of the house of study and Esau's direction to treachery (see Rashi 25:27) How then could Yitzchok have been so misled as to regard Esau instead of Yaakov the designate for blessing? According to the Medrosh(Shemos 1;11), furthermore, Yitzchok, himself studied with Yaakov all that he received from Abraham, a legacy in which Esau was disinterested.

Some commentators suggest (see Malbim) that Yitzchok's intention was to bestow upon Esau only the blessing of physical abundance, However, the main blessing, that of becoming a holy nation of Torah, was reserved for Yaakov from the beginning. Thus, in the blessing given to Yaakov in disguise of Esau only material success is mentioned, "the dew of the sky and the fat places of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine" (27:28). The more significant blessing, that of being a holy nation in it's own promised land, the "blessing of Abraham", is accorded to Yaakov later in his own identity.

According to this observation Yitzchok had a grandiose plan for Yaakov, the Beth Medrosh student. It was that from him would develop a nation of Torah scholars, who will be occupied exclusively with the study of Torah. Seeking to link Esau, too, in some degree, to Torah, he desired to bless him with physical wealth, so that he could support the Torah nation, similar to the subsequent nation arrangement between two tribes, that of Zevulun, who were merchants, supporting that of Yisochor who engaged in Torah study (see Rashi Devorim 33:18).

The questions Esau hypocritically asked of his father seemed to have concentrated on the subject of laws of tithing (see Rashi 25:27), leaving the impression that he was eager to observe that Mitzvah of supporting a Torah nation with tithing.

Rivkah's defeating of the plan was based on her cognizance that Esau would never fulfill his duty of financially supporting Yaakov the Torah nation. She therefore

guided Yaakov in receiving himself the blessing of physical abundance as well, thus enabling the Torah nation to sustain itself independently.

Inspiration should be gleaned from this perspective both to enhance Torah scholarship and study on a national rather than tribal level (Yitzchak's original intention), and also to intensify our own financial support for such efforts.

Good Shabbos