

FALSE ACCUSATIONS

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

"And he did not recognize him because his hands were as hairy as Esav's, and he blessed him."
(Bereshith 27:23)

Immediately after blessing Yaakov, Yitzchak ate the food that had been prepared for him, and then he proceeded to give Yaakov the blessing of the firstborn. Yaakov had come to his father only expecting to get one blessing, and in the end he received two. What was the nature of this first, unanticipated blessing?

There is almost nothing as painful as the experience of being accused of a crime that one did not commit. In most cases the subject has no way of proving his integrity, and his cries of innocence fall upon deaf ears. Because of the serious nature of this transgression, a person who is guilty of making a false accusation is subject to corporal punishment¹. After Yaakov had proven that he "really was Esav," Yitzchak realized that he had been guilty of accusing his son falsely. In an attempt to rectify the situation and counteract what he had done, Yitzchak gave Yaakov an additional blessing².

Yitzchak's sensitivity to the enormity of this specific misdeed came from previous experience in this area. Because of circumstantial evidence, Yitzchak had accused Eliezer of acting immorally with Yitzchak's new wife Rivka while Eliezer had accompanied her home from Padan Aram. God intervened in the situation directly, and miraculously proved Eliezer's innocence. In order to compensate Eliezer for the anguish that he had suffered, he was given an unprecedented award: he was admitted into the Garden of Eden alive³.

Similarly, we find that under certain very specific circumstances a woman who is suspected of having acted immorally is taken to the Temple for a test to verify her chastity. If, after all else has failed, the situation has not been clarified, the Divine name is dissolved in water which she is then given to drink. If she is guilty, she dies immediately. If she is innocent, she is rewarded profusely, and if she had not given birth to children prior to this experience, she would have children afterwards⁴.

Rav Yosef Caro was once accused of acting immorally. Until he was proven innocent he suffered tremendous disgrace. He later went on to write the Shulchan Aruch and many other widely used and authoritative works. When asked why he had merited such unprecedented success, he claimed that it was the Divine reward for all the anguish he had suffered when falsely accused.

Footnotes:

¹ Shabbath 97a.

² Commentary of the Seforno on Bereshith 27:23.

³ Yalkut Shimoni - Parshath Chaye Sarah 109.

⁴ See article entitled "[For The Sake Of Peace I](#)," (page 97) on Bereshith 18:13 which expounds on this topic.

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