

SOUL FOOD

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

It was a daring mission. Yitzchak wanted to bless his firstborn Esav. He asked Esav to prepare a meal for him in order "that his soul would bless him." But Yaakov, beat Esav to the blessing.

Upon his mother's instructions, he dressed like Esav, and, before Esav arrived, brought his father goat meat as a meal. Then Yaakov respectfully asked his father to sit and eat in order "that your soul may bless me" (Genesis 27:19).

Thinking that Yaakov was Esav, Yitzchak obliged and blessed Yaakov with the words, "And may G-d give you of the dew of the heavens and the fat of the earth and abundant grain and wine" (Genesis 27:28).

Those words have been the hallmark of our blessing ever-since. They are cherished by Jews the world-over who repeat them, some in jubilant song, others in tearful longing, every Saturday night after the havdalah. But the story did not end there.

Soon after Yaakov left the room, his brother Esav burst in. He brought his father a well-prepared meal and was ready to receive the blessings that were intended for him. He told his father to eat in order that "your soul shall bless me!"

Yitzchak asks the giver, "Who are you?" And he answers, "I am Esav, your firstborn!"

Then it hit Yitzchak. It was too late. He had already given the blessings to his younger son, Yaakov. Realizing the mistake, "Yitzchak trembled in great tremor. "Who is the one who hunted game, and brought it to me?"

Esav pleads "Bless me too father!" Yitzchak's replies, "behold a lord, I have made him over you, and as for you, where, what can I do for you my son?" (Genesis 27:33).

Eventually, Esav weeps and says, "Have you not one blessing, Father? Bless me too, Father."

Yitzchak relents and blesses him with words that sound just like Yaakov's blessings. "Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling and of the dew of the heavens from above."

What begs explanation is: what did Yitzchak mean with the words, where shall I get a blessing from? Does the earth not contain abundance for two? Second, if at first Yitzchak felt he had nothing to give Esav then why did he finally relent?"

Third, what is the difference between Yaakov's blessing and Esav's blessing? They both are told that

they will get dew from heaven and the fat of the earth?

In the mid sixties, the State of Israel, like so many fledgling countries was interdependent upon other nations. Israelis tell the story of how, shortly after Levi Eshkol became Prime Minister, an aide burst into his office.

"Mr. Prime Minister, I have terrible news. We were just informed that a serious drought is imminent!"

Worried, Eshkol looked up from his desk. "And where will the drought occur?"

"In the Negev," replied the aide.

Eshkol's face cleared, and a smile broke across his face. "I was scared for a moment I thought you meant Kansas."

Rabbenu Bachya points out the difference between Yaakov's blessing and Esav's. Yaakov was blessed with dew, and so was Esav. The difference is that Yaakov was blessed with the words, "May Hashem give you of the dew of the heavens and the fat of the earth."

When Esav came crying to his father, his immediate reaction was, "How and where from can I bless you?" Yitzchak could no longer direct Hashem to give the blessings directly with His grace.

Of course, It is easy to give blessings from Kansas! But blessings from Hashem, with his countenance and spirituality, are not freely distributed!

At first Esav asked Yitzchak, "your soul shall bless me." In fact Both Yaakov and Esav asked for Yitzchak's soul to bless them. But Yitzchak was unable to give soul-blessings to Esav. His soul-filled blessings, the blessings of Hashem, had been already bestowed upon Yaakov. So Esav asks for any blessing and Yitzchak proceeds to bless him sans the words Hashem. The blessings of the soul, those that are handed directly from G-d, were already awarded to Yaakov.

Only after Esav omitted the quest for soulful blessings, and asked for Yitzchak himself to bless him, was Yitzchak ready to bless Esav. Yitzchak understood the world in a different way than kings, queens, and prime ministers. He understood the difference between a drought of spirituality and a drought in Kansas.

Rabbenu Bachya explains that blessings without affixing Hashem's name are easier given than those with direct ties to the Almighty. Transitory gifts are as fleeting as the evaporating dew. The only blessings that remain forever are those incorporated with the blessings of the Almighty. Those blessings, from the Source of blessings last a lifetime. But they are rarer than once in a lifetime. They are once in a heritage.

Dedicated In memory of our Zayde, Herbert Hauser, Reb Avraham Yehoshua Heshel ben Reb Yehuda HaCohen by Ira & Leah Hauser, Miriam, Josh, Tamar & Shlomo

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PARABOLIC REFLECTIONS

In Parshas Noach's Drasha I wrote, "Recently, a billion dollar project to Mars was destroyed because the language of the metric system was spoken in one factory and feet and inches were spoken in the other."

I received this brief letter from Harvey Schabes, a NASA engineer.

"Just a brief note from your friendly NASA Engineer: I am almost positive that the Mars project was in the low hundreds of millions and not billions. But what's a few million between friends."

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The author is the Dean of the [Yeshiva of South Shore](#).

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