

THE BLESSING OF BLESSING

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

Parshas Toldos

The Blessing of Blessing

By Rabbi Shlomo Jarcaig

Yitzchak (Isaac) and Rivka had two sons, Esav and Ya'akov (Jacob). "The lads grew up and Esav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Ya'akov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents." (Beraishis/Genesis 25:27) The two sons had completely different natures. Esav led a life of immorality; when he grew older and settled down, he married wives who intentionally embittered the lives of his parents. Yitzchak and Rivka had a difference of opinion as to which of their sons Yitzchak should bless with material abundance. Yitzchak wanted to bless Esav, but Rivka wanted him to bless Ya'akov. Why did Yitzchak want to give the blessing to Esav? Was he totally unaware of Esav's nature?

Rabbi Eliezer Dessler (1) explains that blessings can never sway the fundamental principle that all human beings in all circumstances have the freedom to choose. When G-d judges us, He looks at the choices we made in our own individual circumstances. Blessings, at best, can improve our circumstances. G-d can send us health, wealth, children, or any other form of blessing; we must choose how to capitalize on the opportunities these circumstances give us.

Yitzchak knew that Ya'akov was a truly righteous person. He would choose to serve G-d regardless of his circumstances. From Yitzchak's perspective, not only did Ya'akov have no need for his blessing, he would be better off without it. If he could serve G-d under the most difficult circumstances he would ultimately accomplish more in life. Esav, on the other hand, needed a blessing. He had a difficult time overcoming his evil inclination to serve G-d. Yitzchak hoped that under the right circumstances he would improve.

Rivka appreciated two subtleties in this situation. First, improving Esav's circumstances would not improve him. He had succumbed to his evil inclination to such a degree that the more blessings he

would be given, the more he would misuse them to fulfill his own selfish desires. Further, Ya'akov needed a blessing. Even though he was truly righteous, his descendants throughout time, who may not be as righteous as he, would also be impacted by the blessing. They would certainly need any available Divine assistance to enable their proper service of G-d.

We often pray for blessings in life, sometimes reflexively. In reality, these blessings are designed to facilitate our service of G-d. If it is truly in our best interest, then G-d will certainly respond to our prayers affirmatively.

Have a Good Shabbos!

(1) in Michtav Me'Eliyahu, his collected writings and discourses; 1891- 1954; of London and B'nai Brak, one of the outstanding personalities and thinkers of the Mussar movement

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