

HEAVEN ON EARTH

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week's parsha, Toldos, begins with the births of Yaakov and Esav. Right from the start they were two dissimilar individuals with very different agendas: different desires, different aspirations, different worlds.

"Vayisrotz'tzu ha'banim b'kirbah (25:22)" - and the sons were 'running' inside of her. Where were they running to?! Rashi brings the chaza"l that each were running to different places. When she would pass a house of idolatry she would feel the baby 'running', trying to exit and when she would pass the study house of Shem and Ever she would also feel the baby 'running', trying to exit. The Kli Yakar explains that she, not yet knowing that she was having twins, thought that the baby was being drawn after two Forces. "Vatelech lidrosh es Hashem" - she went to get a clearer understanding of the nature of Hashem.

"Vayomer Hashem lah shnei goyim b'vitnech... v'rav ya'avod tza'ir (25:23)" - Hashem told her (via the prophet Shem) that she would have two different nations... and the older would serve the younger. There is only One Force in the world. However, you are having two sons, one will serve this Hashem and the other will not. There will be an eternal struggle for supremacy between them and ultimately, the older will be subservient to the younger.

The children grew older, with Esav developing into a hunter, a man of the field; and Yaakov developing into an "ish tam", an honest forthright person, who dwelled in the tents of study. As Yaakov was preparing a certain dish, Esav came in famished from the field. "Hal'i'taini na min ha'adom ha'adom ha'zeh (25:29)" - pour some of that red stuff down my throat - Esav demanded.

The medrash gives us a fuller picture of what transpired. Esav questioned Yaakov about the significance of the dish he was preparing. Yaakov answered that the elder (Avrohom) had died. (The dish was special food served to a mourner, in this case, to their father Yitzchak.) "Even Avrohom was hit with judgment?! Then there isn't true judgment, nor is there a judge!", exclaimed Esav.

The Beis HaLevi asks why the death of Avrohom shook up Esav to such a degree. He couldn't have thought that he would live forever! Hashem had explicitly told Avrohom that his children would be enslaved but he would be buried peacefully!

He explains that Avrohom was told that the enslavement would and could only begin after his death. Therefore, the day of his death caused Esav to be frightened - perhaps the enslavement would now begin. It was known that only through one of Yitzchak's sons would this lineage of Avrohom

continue. The enslavement and the subsequent receiving of the Torah would befall the son who would follow in the ways of Avrohom. Esav saw this as his safety guarantee. Count me out! "There isn't true judgment, nor is there a judge!" I'm willing to deny the very existence of Hashem in order to save myself from this enslavement. (Sound familiar?)

Yaakov's response was "michrah ka'yom es bechoroscha lee (25:30)" - sell me on this (fateful) day your birthright as the firstborn. You don't need to deny the existence of Hashem to save yourself from the enslavement! I am more than willing to go through the necessary preparations in order to ultimately merit the Torah!

It is clear that Esav wanted no part of this birthright. However, wasn't it worth far more than a bowl of soup!? Wouldn't this be considered a 'mekach ta'us', a faulty transaction?

The following true story is used to answer that question: A very poor man approached his Rebbe for a blessing to somehow get together the money needed to marry off his daughter. The Rebbe blessed him and instructed him to seize the first business opportunity that would come his way. The man happily began his return trip home and stopped off at an inn on the way. There he encountered a group of businessmen sitting and discussing different deals. As he tentatively approached them, one of them laughingly called to him, asking if he wanted to make a deal. Remembering the words of his Rebbe, he nodded affirmatively. Appraising the financial situation of the pauper standing before him, he mockingly offered to sell him his share in the world to come for the hefty price of one ruble! With no hesitation the man agreed. Amidst much laughter about how their friend was able to lift a ruble from a pauper they drew up an official document and the transaction was legally completed.

It was all laughs until 'Ralph' told 'Alice' about the deal he had made. His wife was furious. "I refuse to remain married to a man who has sold his portion in the world to come!", she exclaimed. "Buy it back immediately!" He returned to the inn and nervously approached the buyer. "All right, the joke's over now, I'll give you back the ruble and we tear up the contract", he said hopefully. The man steadfastly refused. "A deal's a deal and I won't renege." As far as he would raise the price, he met only with refusal. With no other option, they went back to his Rebbe, with the businessman hoping that the Rebbe would convince the man to sell it back and thereby save his marriage.

The Rebbe heard both sides and said that there is no obligation to reverse the transaction. However, for the sum of the full wedding expenses of his daughter, I'll convince him to sell it back. The desperate businessman readily agreed and he bought back his share in the world to come (and his marriage).

The businessman then approached the Rebbe and challenged him as to the justice of his decision. "How could you make me pay thousands of rubles for something that was sold for one ruble just the day before?!", he asked. The Rebbe smiled and explained: "Every thing is sold for its true present value. When you made a joke of your portion and sold it for a ruble, it was hardly worth even that."

Once you recognized that your marriage depended on it, its true value soared to the thousands!"

As the passuk states: "Va'yivez Esav es ha'b'chorah (25:34)" - Esav scoffingly degraded the birthright. Although he later recognized the true value of the birthright, at the time of the sale, in Esav's eyes, Yakkov's bowl of soup was a ridiculous overpayment!

Later in the parsha, Yaakov receives the blessing that he had rightfully purchased, urged on by his mother Rivka, who knew prophetically that the blessings were to be his. "Va'yiten l'cha HaElokim mi'tal ha'shamayim u'mishmanei ha'aretz (27:28)" - and Hashem will give you from the dew of the heavens and the fat of the land. Esav then furiously rushes in and pleads "ha'low atzalta lee b'racha (27:36)" - haven't you left any blessings for me?! Yitzchak tells him that there is nothing left but then says "mishmaney ha'aretz yihyeh moshavecha u'mi'tal hashamayim me'al (27:39)" - on the fat of the land you will dwell and from the dew of the heavens above.

The Chofetz Chaim asks that these two blessings seem to be almost identical! What are the real differences between them? He explains that firstly, the order is reversed. By Yaakov, the heavens are mentioned before the earth. Yaakov's life and actions emphasized the eternal as opposed to the fleeting. Esav, as we saw earlier, was willing to forfeit the heavens for a serious chunk of the earth. By him the fat of the land was mentioned first

The second difference is pointed out by Rashi. Yaakov's blessing was that Elokim would give him. Elokim refers to the attribute of justice. Everything that a descendant of Yaakov does or doesn't get is measured by Hashem with perfect justice. From this the Chofetz Chaim learns that a person should never complain about the portion that Hashem has allotted (or allotted) him. We must trust that if wealth would be beneficial to us, then Hashem would surely give it to us. If he hasn't, it's because our present state is the best possible environment for us. Fortunate is the person who isn't subjected to destructive wealth!

The Chofetz Chaim once asked someone how he was doing. The answer was a response that I'm sure many can relate to: things could be better - I could use a bit more. "How do you know that a bit more wouldn't make things worse?", challenged the Chofetz Chaim! Hashem is totally compassionate, knows much more than we do and certainly has the ability to give more. If He isn't giving, that means that things couldn't be better!

May we prioritize between heaven and earth, see and appreciate the blessings that we have and allow our lives to be truly 'heaven on earth'.

Good Shabbos.

Yisroel Ciner

Copyright © 1997 by [Rabbi Yisroel Ciner](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The author teaches at Neveh Tzion in Telzstone (near Yerushalayim).
