

FRAGRANCE OF OUR ACTIONS

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the parsha of Toldos. "V'aileh Toldos Yitzchak ben Avrohom [And these are the generations of Yitzchak the son of Avrohom]. [25:19]" The parsha tells us about the birth of Yaakov and Esav, their development and the blessings that Yitzchak gave his sons.

Rivkah had been told through prophecy that the elder son would be subservient to the younger. She understood that the blessing had to go to Yaakov. She therefore sent in Yaakov, disguised as Esav, in order that the prophecy would be fulfilled and he would receive the blessings.

"And Yitzchak, his father, said to him: 'Come close and give me to drink, my son.' And he (Yaakov) drew close and gave him to drink and he (Yitzchak) smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him. [27:26-7]"

Rashi quotes the Medrash that teaches that the raiach [scent] of Gan Eden [the Garden of Eden] entered along with Yaakov.

Rav Yerucham zt"l in his Daas Torah explains this raiach [scent] in the following manner.

Chaza"l teach that Eliyahu Hanavi [the prophet] was once walking along with another person. They passed a corpse that had deteriorated and was emitting a very foul odor. This person covered his nose commenting about the smell while Eliyahu commented how white the teeth were. When they later passed a sinner, Eliyahu now covered his nose from the stench that was coming from that person while the person accompanying him noticed nothing at all.

Rav Yerucham explains that there is a spiritual reality that is actually quite tangible. Mitzvos and good deeds give off an actual smell! A remarkable fragrance that affects the whole surrounding area. Similarly, sins actually emit an odor that individuals of high spiritual stature can actually sense.

When Yaakov came before his father, Yitzchak, for the blessing, Yitzchak was somewhat unsure of his true identity. However, once he smelled the scent of Gan Eden that accompanied him, he was confident that this person truly deserved the blessing.

This spiritual reality can even be detected in our generation. At an early stage of their commitment to mitzvos, a number of boys from my yeshiva went to the Steipler Gaon, zt"l, to ask for a blessing. Although his vision was so weak that he had to hold a note literally in front of his eyes in order to read it, the moment these boys entered, he called from across the room asking why they weren't wearing tzitzis. One of the boys called back that it was already night (and as such, there is no

obligation). The Steipler quickly countered, "You don't wear during the day either..."

Another time, three friends of mine went for a blessing from the Baba Sali, zt"l. The accepted custom was to immerse oneself in a mikveh [ritual bath] before going to see him. At the bathhouse, two of the boys immersed themselves while the third simply wet his hair under a sink. They then went to his house and waited their turn to see him. The moment they entered his room, he pointed to the boy who had wet his hair instead of immersing himself and said, "Faker, get OUT of here!"

Rav Eliyahu Lopian, zt"l, was once sharing a Shabbos meal with the administrator of the yeshiva. At his urging, Rav Eliyahu relayed an incident that had occurred many years before.

"When I was still a young man, my wife had gotten so ill, all of the doctors said that there was nothing to be done. The whole family was crying by her bed and I was in the adjacent room when the door suddenly opened. A man walked in and asked why everyone was crying. When I explained the situation he instructed me to go to a certain place, pluck the vegetable that grows there, cook it and give it to her to drink. I did that and she immediately started to get better. I'm sure that it was Eliyahu Hanavi who had come in the merit of my righteous wife."

When the administrator said that he had heard that there was more to the story, Rav Eliyahu remained silent. He then asked if he could relay what he had heard and Rav Eliyahu would let him know if it was correct.

The administrator then said: "A few years later you (Rav Eliyahu) went to the Sfas Emes, zt"l, [one of the great Chassidic Masters of Gur] for a blessing. The Sfas Emes said to you, 'Someone who merited a revelation of Eliyahu Hanavi doesn't need a blessing from me!' You responded, 'If the Rebbe on his own knows what happened, then I'm definitely interested in a blessing!'" The administrator then asked Rav Eliyahu if it was correct. Rav Eliyahu didn't answer. When he asked him again, Rav Eliyahu responded, "Those great Chassidic Masters had a real sense of smell..."

Good Shabbos,
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