

# DESTINY FOR A BOWL OF BEANS

*by Rabbi Aron Tendler*

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Parshas Toldos begins the story of Yakov Avinu and his conflict with Eisav. To understand their conflict, the background to the conflict must be understood along with a number of other questions.

Why is it that there are four Imahos - Mothers and only three Avos - Fathers?

How is it that Yitzchak was fooled by Eisav's facade of righteousness while Rivkah saw through the charade?

Why did Yakov, the scholarly, truthful, man of G-d resort to deceit and conspiracy in order to receive Yitzchak's blessings and his rightful destiny?

Rivkah and Yitzchak's twenty long years of waiting and praying culminated in Rivkah's pregnancy. From the moment of conception, the Torah related that the pregnancy was difficult. Rivkah suffered from the seemingly internal struggle of a schizophrenic child who could not decide between right and wrong. At times, the child seemed to desire the world of Torah, and at other times he seemed to crave the immoral freedom of paganism.

Rivkah sought direction from Shem the son of Noach and his great-grandson Eber. They explained that the internal conflict she was suffering was between twins doing battle for dominance over each other. However, in the end, "the greater will serve the younger."

As with all prophecies, the prophecy needed to be interpreted. A closer examination of the prophecy (25:17) suggested two possible explanations.

1. The two brothers - nations, one good and one evil, would be in constant conflict with each other as they struggled for world dominance. However, in the end, the good would prevail over the evil.
2. The two nations would work in concert with each other to create a single world vision of goodness and devotion to G-d. Each brother - nation would contribute his talents in teaching the world to recognize the Creator and fulfill Avraham's legacy. At times, Eisav's strong economic and political leadership would be necessary; and at other times, Yakov's sanctity, spirituality, and truthfulness would lead. However, in the end, the strength and devotion of Eisav would serve the spiritual leadership and Torah of Yakov.

It is the dream of every parent that their children follow in their footsteps. Yitzchak and Rivkah were no different. Their dream was that both sons share equally in becoming the Chosen People. However, as the two boys matured, it became apparent that Eisav would not be following in his parent's footsteps.

If Eisav had joined Yakov in carrying on Avraham's mission, Yakov would have married Rachel and Eisav would have married Leah. Each of them would have fathered six of the tribes. In the end, there would have been four Fathers and four Mothers! The six tribes from Eisav would have assumed the external leadership of the nation dealing with issues of international relations, security, and commerce. The six tribes from Yakov would have focused on the internal structure of the nation attending to the Bais Hamikdash, the teaching of Torah, and the internal administration of Eretz Yisroel. Together, the 12 Tribes would have worked in concert with each other to be "a light unto the nations".

Chazal tell us that at the early age of 15, at the time of Avraham's death, (year 2123) it became painfully apparent to Yakov that Eisav could not be a partner in fathering the Jewish people. Yakov's deal to buy the first-born rights from Eisav removed Eisav's spiritual prerogative to father six of the tribes. This placed upon Yakov the full responsibility of fathering both components of the Jewish people. Therefore, he had to marry both Rachel and Leah.

In order to accomplish both his and Eisav's missions, Yakov had to learn to survive in the big, bad, outside world. He had to learn to manipulate and lie in order to best the likes of Eisav and Lavan. Rivkah, the sister of Lavan, was the proven master of survival. As Rashi explained, she was a righteous woman coming from a wicked family and a wicked community. Yet, Rivkah survived them all to be worthy of marrying Yitzchak. It also allowed her to recognize Eisav for who he was.

Yitzchak, on the other hand, maintained the hope that his son would one- day reform and join Yakov as a partner in fathering the Jewish people. A careful reading of the scene leading up to Yitzchak having "mistakenly" given the blessings to Yakov and not Eisav (27:1-40) shows the degree of Yitzchak's delusion.

After questioning the disguised Yakov and feeling his "hairy" arms, Yitzchak proclaimed, "...The voice is Yakov's voice but the hands are the hands of Eisav." (27:22) The absurdity of the scene begs for an explanation! A blind man depends more on his hearing than a man who can see. Yet, Yitzchak ignored the "voice of Yakov" and concluded that it was the "hands of Eisav"?! However, if Yitzchak hoped that Eisav would join his brother in serving Hashem's design, and if the two brothers were identical except for Eisav's hairiness, then the whole scene becomes understandable.

Immediately preceding Yitzchak having touched Yakov's disguised arms, Yitzchak asked Yakov how he had returned so quickly from the hunt. Yakov naturally answered by attributing his success to Hashem's benevolent intervention. (27:20) This response surprised Yitzchak because Eisav never attributed his successes to Hashem. Just the opposite! He always took full credit for himself and

denied any divine intervention. Therefore, Yitzchak, with growing anticipation, allowed for his most heartfelt wish to surface.

"Could it be? Had Eisav finally come around to recognizing Hashem and accepting his partnership with Yakov? Yes! The time had finally come that Eisav was speaking with the voice of Yakov but maintaining the hands of Eisav! What a moment! My greatest wish has been realized, both my sons will follow in my footsteps and merit to be fathers of the Jewish people!"

After Yitzchak blessed Yakov, Eisav returned and the duplicity was revealed. The Torah describes Yitzchak's "dreaded" realization that he had been wrong about Eisav all along, and that Rivkah had been right. "Eisav would not be a partner in the future of the Jewish people."

In an extraordinary show of acceptance and strength, Yitzchak immediately confirmed on Yakov the blessings that he had given him assuring that Eisav would never be a partner in the creation of the Jewish nation. Eisav, distraught and angered by Yakov's trickery, begged his father for a blessing. Yitzchak explained to Eisav that he could no longer confirm upon Eisav any part of Jewish destiny. At best, he would serve Yakov as a "servant-ally", but never as a partner in the creation of Kllal Yisroel.

In a final confirmation of Yakov's destiny as the sole father of the Jewish people, Yitzchak gave Yakov the "blessings of Avraham," before sending him out to confront Lavan. (28:4)

Good Shabbos.

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