



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

A Mother's Advice

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Adjunct

"His mother said to him, 'Your curse be on me my son. Only heed my voice and go and take for me...'" (27:13)

Yitzchak wishes to impart his invaluable blessings to his firstborn son, Esav. Rivka, realizing that Esav does not deserve these special blessings, instructs Yaakov to pretend to be Esav in order to obtain those blessings. Yaakov is very hesitant, and he objects that if Yitzchak realizes that he is not Esav, he might curse him for his duplicity. Rivka responds that: "Your curse will be on me."

Rivka's response is difficult to understand. Her promise is seemingly meaningless. If Yitzchak were indeed to curse Yaakov, that curse would be directed at him, not at Rivka. Yet, we see that Yaakov heeded her directive. How did Rivka's response reassure Yaakov?

Rabbi Dovid Feinstein offers a penetrating insight to explain the exchange. Rivka's response was not a literal offer to accept the curse upon herself – this is not something she had the ability to do. Rather, Rivka's intent was to let Yaakov know that, since she is his mother, any harm that might come to him would equally hurt her as well. He should not feel that it was only he who was at risk, but rather she felt the risk as much as he did. Once Yaakov realized that, he saw he could trust Rivka's advice and went ahead with the plan.

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

He (Yitzchak) drew him close and kissed him (Esav); he smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him; he (Yitzchak) said, "See, the fragrance of my son smells like the fragrance of an orchard which Hashem has blessed." (27, 27)

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav, "The fragrance was like that of a "tapuach" orchard." (Taanis 29b)

Some explain this to refer to the fragrance of an esrog orchard. (Tosfos)

Why is Tosfos so particular about defining the exact fragrance Esav smelled like?

Furthermore, Hashem gave a curse to the trees of the world because they did not produce wood that tastes like its fruit (Rashi, Bereishis 1:11). Why would Yitzchak refer to this fragrance as an "orchard which Hashem has blessed," when in fact Hashem had cursed the orchards?

Parsha Riddle

What is the connection between Avraham's death and Esav?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

On what day of the year did Sarah die?

Answer: Rosh Hashana

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Toldos* (27:18-19), when Yitzchak asks Yaakov "Who are you?" he responds: "It is I, Esav your firstborn; I have done as you told me." Yaakov's response seems to comprise a series of lies: he was not Esav, Yitzchak's firstborn, and he had not been told to do anything, and many commentators deal either explicitly or implicitly with the problem of the apparent mendacity of one as righteous as Yaakov. Some acknowledge the mendacity, but justify it on the grounds of necessity: Yaakov was more deserving of the blessings than Esav; he was obeying the directive of his mother Rivka, in compliance with the *mitzvah* to revere one's mother (*Vayikra* 19:3); and Rivka herself had received prophetic endorsement of her plan to deceive Yitzchak (Ibn Ezra and Radak).

Others explain that Yaakov did not actually lie: by saying "It is I," he really meant "I am he that brings [food] to you," or was simply answering Yaakov's question of "Who are you?" with the common response of "It is I." When he said "I have done as you told me," he meant "I have done many things (at different times) as you told me." (Rashi and Bechor Shor)

Ibn Ezra, a proponent of the first approach, dismisses the latter approach as "nonsense," and elsewhere (*Shemos* 31:18) explains his objection as follows:

The one who explains "It is I, Esav your firstborn" as meaning, "I am what I am, but Esav is your first-born," is not offering the plain meaning of the text. Neither is he explaining the text in accordance with the rules of rhetoric. If a person asks his neighbor in a law court, "Are you the one to whom I lent the following sum of money?" and his neighbor responds, "I am," he cannot later say, "What I meant was, I am his neighbor."

But although this point is obvious to Ibn Ezra, the Talmud (*Shevuos* 29a) actually contains a lengthy discussion of a very similar question: when a litigant takes an oath in court that is false according to the ordinary meaning of the words, can the oath be justified by construing its language according to the oath-takers "own understanding," i.e., his own private meaning? (This issue bears further discussion, but this is beyond the scope of this article.)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. I was the day of the blessing
2. I have my own offering.
3. I am a day of redemption.
4. I correspond to Avraham.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. I was for Adam.
2. I was for Nimrod.
3. I was for Esav.
4. I was for Yaakov.

Last Week's Answers

#1 400 (I was the price of a cave, I was the time in a foreign land, I am "tough", I was for Esav's men)

#2 Yitzchak (I was the second, My brother nearly killed me, My father nearly killed me, I was bound.)

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