



A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Is This from G-d?

RABBI ZALMY EPSTEIN



Yaakov approached Yitzchak, his father...

[Yitzchak] blessed him, and said, "...May G-d give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fat of the earth..." (27:22-28)

Eisav said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing [to give]?"

Yitzchak replied... "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fat of the earth, and of the dew of the heavens from above..."

AT FIRST GLANCE, THE BLESSINGS TO BOTH Yaakov and Eisav appear to be the same. The only noticeable difference is that in Yaakov's, the dew of the heavens is mentioned first, whereas in Eisav's, the fat of the earth is mentioned first. So the obvious question is: What is the difference between the two blessings?

My grandfather, Rabbi Zeidel Epstein, of blessed memory, explains that if you delve a little deeper into the blessings, you will notice that Yaakov received a blessing that "G-d give" him dew, emphasizing that this abundance will be from G-d—Yaakov will recognize that everything given to him is from G-d.

On the other hand, this is not mentioned as part of the blessing to Eisav. The reason for this is that Eisav may get this same abun-

dance, but he won't perceive it as a gift from G-d. He will believe that the abundance comes directly from his strength, and has nothing to do with G-d!

But what effect does this part of the blessing have on Yaakov in the long run?

In truth, the effect is tremendous. By perceiving this abundance as a gift from G-d, Yaakov will strengthen his relationship with G-d. Having a good relationship with G-d will bring a life of happiness, and even more abundance. In essence, Yitzchak blessed Yaakov with a life of connecting to G-d, which will ultimately result in happiness.

We can take this simple lesson and apply it to our daily lives. When we reflect on, and enjoy, the abundance in our lives, and we realize that G-d is the One giving it to us, we need to take a moment and actually say to ourselves, "This is a gift from G-d." By recognizing this, our relationship with G-d will get stronger, and our lives will become much happier. 🕊

THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN



One Shabbos, Reuven stopped by a synagogue with very wealthy members, where *aliyos* were sold at steep prices. Reuven had a *yahrzeit* for his father, so he approached the *gabbay* (sexton) to request an *aliyah*. The *gabbay* informed him how much *Maftir* (the final *aliyah*) would cost, Reuven agreed to buy the *aliyah*, and he was called to the Torah. After Shabbos, the *gabbay* approached Reuven to request payment, whereupon Reuven responded that he didn't have the means to pay the exorbitant price—although he had agreed to buy the *aliyah*, he had never intended to pay that much.

Q Must Reuven endeavor to pay what he originally promised?

A This question was asked to Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, of blessed memory, and he responded that it would depend on how the synagogue spent the money amassed from the sale of *aliyos*. If the

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A PARASHA Q & A

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

- Did Yitzchok originally plan to bless Yaakov *after* blessing Esav?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕊

TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On **28 Cheshvan, 5720 (1959)**, the New Hope (Tikva Chodosh) Synagogue and Center of Roselawn was officially dedicated. The congregation was founded in August of 1939 by recent immigrants, who had fled from persecution in Nazi Germany. They had wanted to keep their German customs and style of davening, and they were encouraged by Rabbi Eliezer Silver to start their own congregation. The congregation was led by Rev. Manfred Rabenstein. The first president was Dr. Leo Teitz, while the president at the time of the Roselawn dedication was Mr. Fred S. Mott, who had previously been a judge in Berlin. The first permanent home of the congregation was on Prospect Place in Avondale, east of what's now Children's Hospital; it was sold in 1957. The dedication ceremony featured one of the leaders of Orthodoxy in America as a guest speaker: Rabbi Dr. Samson R. Weiss. New Hope Synagogue included a shrine for ten Torah scrolls that had been rescued from Nazi Germany. 🕊

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as a source of merit for his father, Tuvia Tzvi ben Shmuel Dovid, of blessed memory

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED

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money wasn't used for the upkeep of the synagogue or in support of Torah learning—but, rather, for parties or suchlike—it would not be considered a charitable cause (*tzedaka*), and Reuven would not be obligated to pay.

Even if the money were intended for bona fide *tzedaka* purposes, there is still room to say that *gabbaim* have no sanction to charge everyone costly prices for *aliyos*, because participation in synagogue services is intended to be for all Jews, even the poor, and someone without means should not be precluded from receiving an *aliyah* for a parent's *yahrzeit*.

The Talmud (Bava Basra 8b–9a) says that in a city without an “important man” (presumably, a notable Torah authority), the community's lay leaders have the authority to appropriate *tzedaka* and set prices for food and wages as they see fit, and they may enforce their decisions. However, when an authoritative scholar is present, the laity may not decide or enforce these policies. Ran, quoted in *Nimukei Yosef*, explains why: these decisions may cause significant losses to people, so deference is made to the Torah scholar's decision.

In our case, too, *gabbaim* who charge exorbitant prices are acting inappropriately, causing losses to less-wealthy members of the congregation.

In conclusion, Reuven should pay whatever the price of an *aliyah* would be in a different, respectable synagogue; however, he is not required to pay the original, exorbitant price. 🍷

GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

YAAKOV PICKED UP HIS GIRLS FROM SCHOOL every day. On the street that led to and from the school, there lived an elderly man, who would stand at the end of his driveway every day, next to his mailbox, and smile and wave, as all the cars full of girls would pass by on their way home.

One day, overcome with curiosity about this man and his daily habit, Yaakov decided he would stop and ask him about it. Passing by the man's house, he saw him in his usual spot next to his mailbox, and he pulled over

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Rabbi Moshe D. Zeffren.. 9:30–10:30 AM

👉 **Shivti** (Self-contained learning, geared toward practical halacha)
Rabbi Avrohom Weinrib..... 10 AM–NOON

Monday

👤👉 **Torah Treasures for Seniors at the Mayerson JCC**
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 10:30–11:15 AM

Tuesday

👤👉 **Partners in Torah at the Mayerson JCC**
Rabbi Michael Soroka..... 8 PM

Wednesday

👤👉 **Downtown Lunch-n-Learn at Strauss & Troy**
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 12–1 PM

Thursday

👤👉 **Yehoshua/Shabbos** in the former Back Office
Rabbis Michael Soroka and Moshe Dovid Zeffren..... 9:10–10 PM

👤👉 **Leil Shishi Halacha Chabura** for boys in grades 7–8, with the occasional kumzits
Rabbi Moshe Fuchs..... 8:15–9 PM

🍷 *Homemade refreshments served*

KEY: 👉 Beginners 👤 Intermediate 👤 Advanced 👤 for men and women

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a kumzits at the Leil Shishi boys' chabura

Upon being asked why he waited there every day to smile and wave to the cars, the man responded, “Oh, I'm just getting my mail.”

“Every day, for a half-hour?”

The smile then left the man's face for the first time. “I'll tell you the truth. I had one lovely granddaughter. Several years ago, when she was already a teenager, she took sick and passed away after a difficult illness. I felt like all the spark had gone out of my life. I was crushed and depressed.

“Then, one day, I happened to be getting my mail, and I saw a little girl with her nose pressed up against the window of her

parent's car, looking at me. When I caught her eye, she smiled and waved. I smiled and waved back to her.

“When I turned to go back into my house, I realized that I felt better than I had in such a long time. I decided to stand here every day and wave to all the kids on their way home from school, and it has made such a difference in my life.”

Yaakov thanked the man for his time, and he got back in his car—with a new appreciation of how even small gestures can make a big difference. 🍷