

PARSHAS TOLDOS – “THE MOST EXPENSIVE SOUP EVER BOUGHT” – SHRAGA COHN

In this week's סדרה we are told of two seemingly unconnected stories that happened almost half a century apart. The first incident is when Eisov sells the firstborn rights to Yaakov, and the second is when Yaakov receives the blessings that Yitzchok intended to give to Eisov.

ויאמר הכי קרא שמו יעקב ויעקבני זה פעמים את בכרתי לקח והנה עתה לקח ברכתי ויאמר הלא אצלת לי ברכה... (בראשית כז: לו)

And Eisov said “Was it for this reason that he was named Yaakov? For he has outwitted me now twice; earlier he took my first-born rights and now he has taken my blessing.”

Eisov realises that that Yaakov has taken the brochos and comes with a double complaint; Yaakov has deprived him of the rights he was entitled to of being the first-born and has also taken his brochos. Little did Eisov know that in making his first complaint, he made his whole claim less legitimate. Rashi explains that when Yitzchok realised that he had accidentally given the brochos to Yaakov he was worried that he had sinned by giving brochos to the younger son before the older one. When Eisov complained that Yaakov had also bought the first born rights, Yitzchok then understood that he had got it right and said the words “גם ברוך יהיה” - “he should be blessed after all”.

Rashi explains that by saying these words Yitzchok decided that although he had blessed Yaakov accidentally, and perhaps at the time unwillingly (had he known that it was Yaakov that was standing before him he would not have blessed him), he was now happy that Yaakov was the recipient of the blessing.

When Eisov faces the tragic news that he has been ousted by his brother, he begs his father to nevertheless bestow a blessing on him. His father replied:

”בא אחיך במרמה ויקח ברכתך” (בראשית כז: לה)

“Your brother has come with wisdom and has taken your blessings”.

The word “ויקח” comes from the root “לקח”, which means “acquiring” as opposed to just taking. Yitzchok was telling Eisov that the brochos were directed to the first-born, and as it now transpires Yaakov is the owner of the first-born rights. Yaakov, through buying the first-born rights had also acquired the blessings.

ר' צבי הירש פרבר, who served as Rav in the West End Great Synagogue asks in his sefer *כרם הצבי*, how could Yaakov claim that the first-born rights were his as he had possibly fraudulently obtained them, having bought them from Eisov at a time when he was so desperately hungry – and perhaps so fatigued and weakened that his life was endangered – that he had no option but to agree to the sale?

The *כרם הצבי* answers that while Eisov had only asked for lentil soup, Yaakov responded by providing both bread and lentil soup (this is stated clearly in the pesukim). When Eisov satisfied his first hunger pangs on the bread, his life could no longer be considered in danger. It was at this point that he agreed to sell the first-born rights, in exchange for a bowl of soup (rather a bad deal, I'm sure you'll agree!). This sale was then one hundred percent legitimate.