

## Two Trepidations

Twice in his life Yitzchak Avinu trembled with great trepidation. The *midrash (Bereisheet Rabba 67b)* tells us that the first time was at the *Akeidah* and the second was when he realized that he blessed Yaakov Avinu thinking it was Esav. The *midrash* wonders, which of the two was with greater intensity? The *midrash* answers, when Yitzchak Avinu realized that he blessed the ‘wrong’ son, “He was filled with a **great** trepidation” (*Bereisheet 27:33*). This was clearly the greater of the two. Yet we may still wonder, how could anything be greater than the *Akeidah*, the fear of imminent death?

Rav Sternbach in *Taam Vedaas* notes that these two experiences are representative of future experiences that Jews would endure throughout history. The *Akeidah*

symbolizes Jews dying *al Kiddush Hashem*. Yitzchak Avinu trembled with the fear that Jews would not be able to withstand this challenge. The incident of the *brachot* reflects those times when Jews will need to resort to using deception and trickery for self-preservation. Yitzchak Avinu was afraid that such acts of subterfuge may negatively impact the Jewish people and taint their inherent holiness. This fear was the greater of the two.

Rav Goldvicht in *Asufout Marachot*, focuses on the individuals involved in each event. When Yitzchak Avinu saw his father, the paradigm of *chesed*, acting counter to his essence, it filled him with dread. In our *parashah*, when Yitzchaku Avinu sees Yaakov Avinu acting counter to his middah of *emet*, this too filled him with dread. Not only did Yitzchak see Yaakov engaged in deception, it was coupled with seeing Rivka orchestrate such an event that ran counter her nature – being supportive of her husband. Hence, Yitzchak Avinu was filled with greater dismay and wonder.

Rav Shmulevitz in *Sichos Mussar* offers a profound insight into this analysis that holds a great lesson for our lives. When Yitzchak Avinu sees Esav in front of him, Chazal tells us that he saw *gehenom* open in front of Esav and he trembled with a sudden awareness. At that moment he



Mazal Tov dearest  
Mum/Mumsie

on your special 90th birthday!

Wishing you good health and happiness ad 120

All our love, Susan, Danny, Miriam, grandchildren  
and great-grandchildren

realized that he had been mistaken about who his son really was. It was a moment of extreme clarity; he had spent many years with a false understanding and had made choices and decisions according to his perceived reality. He had treated Esav as the future heir and suddenly the truth about Esav emerged. Rav Freiman in *Sha'arei Derech* applies this understanding with a sobering perspective. We must constantly introspect so as not to fall into a similar trap. At times people pride themselves on the performance of a mitzvah, an ideology, or even being involved in a project that perhaps is actually faulty or not as beneficial as they imagined. As humans, our nature is to get into a certain groove in life believing we are on the right track without stopping at regular intervals to reassess. The pain of realization that we were mistaken on the path we chose may occur many years down the road. This is the agonizing awareness that Yitzchak Avinu felt not only for himself but for us, his children, as well. It is indeed something to be conscious of always. ■

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