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Attributions and Acquisitions

At the end of his life, Yitzchak Avinu blesses his two sons Yaakov and Eisav. At first glance the *brachot* seem quite similar: To Yaakov he says, “*Ve’yiten lecha ha’Elokim mi’tal hashamayim u’mishmanei ha’aretz...*— And may Hashem give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth...” To Eisav, “*Hinei mi’shmanei ha’aretz yihiyeh moshavecha u’mital hashamayim mei’al...*— Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling and of the dew of the heavens from above.” (*Bereisheet* 27:28, 27:39) They are both blessed

with the fatness of the earth and the dew of the heavens, wherein lies the difference?

The Chafetz Chaim *zt”l* takes note of the order in which the *brachot* are expressed and sees significant meaning in the slight variation. For Yaakov Avinu, the dew is mentioned first, signifying the primacy of spirituality and Divine connection. Esav, on the other hand, relates strongly to the world of physicality and therefore, the “fatness of the earth” is listed first. Shlomo Hamel-ech teaches us, “*ish le’fi mahalalo*—a man according to his praise” (*Mishlei* 27:21). That is to say, listening to what a person praises and how he arranges his priorities offers a window into his inner desires and drives. By his very nature, a Jew belongs to the world of the spiritual, and is meant to use the physical world as a medium to achieve a more refined, sacred existence.

Rashi *zt”l* points out another difference between the two *brachot*. “*Ve’yiten lecha ha’Elokim*,” Yaakov Avinu will only receive



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these blessings from Hashem, expressed in the aspect of judgement, if he is deserving. Eisav, however, will receive the blessings whether or not he deserves them. This is echoed in the tefillah of Shlomo Hamelech when the Beit Hamikdash was first consecrated. He asks for Hashem to accept the tefillot of the nations, irrespective of their worthiness. This should resonate with us all; everything we receive is justified in the Divine scheme, and we must not focus on what we lack, for if we needed something, Hashem would surely grant it to us.

Further, adds Rav Shach zt"l, Hashem's name is not even mentioned in the blessing given to Eisav. It seems that it is in Eisav's own hands to access and control what he gets. By contrast, Yaakov Avinu is blessed with the words *"ve'yiten lecha— and may Hashem give you."* The introduction of the word *"and,"* says Rashi, reflects Hashem's continuous giving, directly connecting with His beloved children more and more, again and again.

These subtle differences direct us to reflect upon the great chasm between the lives of Yaakov Avinu and his brother Eisav. Yaakov Avinu attributes every blessing to the grace of Hashem, and is keenly aware to use each gift toward a spiritual connection. Eisav's focus is physical comfort, convenience and pleasure, devoid of any spiritual connection.

Let us be mindful when speaking of our possessions and accomplishments, and be conscious to attribute it all to the Source. We must continually ask ourselves, when will our deeds reach the deeds of our forefathers? As we develop this greater awareness, we can more easily align our priorities with the elevated nature of our souls. ■

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