The Shul
at the Lubavitch Center
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www.chabadshul.org



November 14, 2026 **Toldot** **4 Kislev, 5787**

The Stolen Blessings



The story of the stolen blessings is often understood as a contest between the two brothers for the legacy of Abraham and Isaac, with Isaac mistakenly taking Esau to be the worthy heir, and Rebecca, knowing the true nature of her elder son, devising the plan that would place Jacob at Isaac's bedside at the crucial moment.

However, a closer reading of the Torah's account indicates that Isaac was well aware of the difference between his two children. Jacob almost gave himself away when he said, in reply to his father's question about how he managed to find game so quickly, "The L-rd your G-d sent me good speed"; Isaac knew that Esau did not speak that way, and immediately suspected that the son before him was Jacob rather than Esau.

In fact, by the time we reach the end of the story, it is quite clear that Isaac never intended to bequeath the spiritual legacy of Abraham—the Divine promise to make his seed a great nation and to give them the Holy Land as their eternal heritage—to Esau.

When Esau discovers that Jacob has received the blessings, he begs Isaac, "Bless me, too, my father!" "But I have made him your master," says Isaac, "I have given him [the blessings of] grain and wine. What can I do for you now, my son?" "Have you only one blessing, my father?!" sobs Esau. "Bless me too, my father!" Finally, Isaac blesses Esau that "Of the fatness of the land shall be your dwelling, and of the dew of heaven above" (the fat of the land and the dew of heaven themselves having already been granted to Jacob), and promises him that should the descendants of Jacob sin and become unworthy of their blessings, they will forfeit their mastery over Esau's descendants in material affairs. This is the best he can do for his beloved elder son.

But in the very next chapter we read how Isaac summons Jacob to him, and ... blesses him. "May G-d Almighty bless you," says Isaac, "make you fruitful, and multiply you, and you shall become a populous nation. And may He grant you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants, that you may inherit the land of your dwelling, which G-d has given to Abraham"– blessings which had not been included in his earlier benedictions to either son.

So Isaac never intended to make Esau the father of the people of Israel, never thought to bequeath the Holy Land to him, never considered him heir to "the blessing of Abraham." There were two distinct blessings in Isaac all along (Esau seems to have sensed this when he cried, "Have you only one blessing, my father?!"), intended for his two sons: Jacob was to be given the spiritual legacy of Abraham, while Esau was to be granted the blessings of the material world.

Isaac desired that a partnership should be formed between his two sons: that the scholarly, unworldly Jacob should devote himself to spiritual pursuits, while Esau should apply his cunning and worldliness to the constructive development of the material world, in support of and in harmony with Jacob's holy endeavors.

Rebecca disagreed: both worlds must be given to Jacob. There cannot be "two departments," for the material world cannot be entrusted to materialists. Only one who is steeped in the Divine wisdom can know how to make proper use of G-d's world. Only one who possesses a spiritual outlook and value system will be able to master the physical reality rather than be mastered by it.

(from the Chassidic Masters by Yanki Tauber from www.chabad.org)

Following Our Forebears

In this week's reading, we learn that Yitzchak dug wells. Not just any wells: the Torah tells us that after the Philistines filled in the wells that had been dug in the days of Avraham, Yitzchak dug them again, and even called them by the same names [26:15, 18].

(continued on the other side)

If the Philistines were continuing to harass his servants, such that they had to dig additional wells and eventually leave [26:19-22], why was it important for Yitzchak to dig the wells of his father?

In reality, the fact that Yitzchak dug the same wells, and called them by the same names, was symbolic.

Avraham had made a radical change from the beliefs and lifestyle of his family. Yitzchak might have thought, "I, too, should make a radical change of my own, I should create something different, because that is what my father did."

But, of course, that was the very opposite of what was needed. His father Avraham had adopted belief in Hashem and in following His ways. The mission of Yitzchak, then, was to provide continuity—to do precisely as his father had done, which, at least metaphorically, extended even to the wells that his father had dug. He was teaching future generations that for all of the ways each person can create and innovate, the key task is to remain following the path laid out by our forebears.

We also saw this in last week's parsha, regarding his wife Rivka.

The Torah tells us that when Yitzchak brought Rivka into the tent of his mother, Sarah, it was at that point that he was consoled for the loss of his mother: "And Yitzchak brought her into the tent, Sarah his mother, and he took Rivka to be his wife and he loved her, and Yitzchak was consoled after his mother" [25:67].

Rashi notes (from Breishis Rabbah) that the language of the verse is ambiguous: it does not actually say the tent of Sarah his mother. The Sifsei Chachamim explains that instead of saying "to the tent of Sarah," the Torah used language that implies that "the tent" was an item by itself, and "Sarah his mother" was a separate item.

So, Rashi continues, this means it was as if Sarah herself came into the tent, that Rivka was modeled after her. When Sarah was alive, the lights in the tent remained lit from the eve of one Sabbath until the next, the dough was blessed, and there was a Cloud of Glory hovering over the tent. All of these things departed when Sarah passed away, and returned when Rivka came into the tent, because she brought back the same holiness of her departed mother-in-law. And this is what consoled Yitzchak, that his wife, too, was duplicating what his mother had done.

Our first obligation, as Jews, is to seek the path of previous generations, building our lives and homes in that way, while also using our unique talents and interests.

(by Rabbi Yaakov Menken from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Kol Hanaarim – every Friday evening during the winter at **7:30 p.m. in The Shul**. Cholent and pastries are served. Each session is 'topped off' at the end with a fascinating story by Rabbi Eli Itzkowitz. For any questions, please see Rabbi Itzkowitz.

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 11/13 — 3 Kislev
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 4:35 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:35 p.m.

Shabbat, 11/14 — 4 Kislev
Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:18 a.m.
Minchah — 4:25 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Shkiah — 4:52 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 5:35 p.m.

Sunday, 11/15 — 5 Kislev
Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:35 p.m.

Monday, 11/16 — 6 Kslev
Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:35 p.m.

Tuesday, 11/17 — 7 Kialev
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:35 p.m.

Wednesday, 11/18— 8 Kislev
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:35 p.m.

Thursday, 11/19 — 9 Kislev
Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:35 p.m.

Friday, 11/20— 10 Kislev
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 4:30 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.