

Another insight: R' Yose ben R' Dosa said: "Canaan" is "Eliezer,"^[102] וְעַל יְדֵי שְׂשֻׁרָת אֹתוֹ צָדִיק בְּאֵמוּנָה וְעַתָּה מְקַלֵּל אֶרֶץ לְכָל בְּרִיךְ — and through having served that righteous man (i.e., Abraham) faithfully, he went from inclusion in cursed to inclusion in blessed.^[103]

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60:7

27 ויגדלו וגו'. Our Sages never hesitate to point out to us the errors and shortcomings, both great and small, of our forefathers, and precisely thus they make Torah great and glorious, heightening its instructiveness for us (see Commentary above, 12:10).

On our verse, too, an observation made by our Sages indicates that the sharp contrast between the two grandsons of Avraham was caused not only by their natural tendencies, but also by mistakes in their upbringing (*Bereshis Rabbah* 63:10). As long as they were little, no one paid attention to the differences in their hidden natures (see v. 24); they were given the same upbringing and the same education. Their parents overlooked the cardinal principle of education: וְהָיָה לְעֶזְרָא כְּלִי וְדָרְכּוֹ וְגו' "Bring up each child in accordance with his own way" (*Mishlei* 22:6).

Each child should be guided in accordance with the path intended especially for him, the path that suits the qualities and tendencies latent in the depths of his personality, and thus he should be educated, both as a man and as a Jew. The great Jewish task is basically one, but the ways of its fulfillment are manifold and diverse, as human character traits and paths of life are manifold and diverse.

When the sons of Ya'akov gathered to hear their father's blessing, and he visualized in them the future tribes of Israel, he saw not only *Kohanim* and teachers of the Law. Standing around him were the tribe of *Levi'im*, the tribe of kingship, the tribe of merchants, the tribe of farmers, the tribe of warriors. Standing before his eyes was the whole nation, with all its manifold characteristics and diverse ways of devel-

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opment. And he blessed all of them, איש אשר כברכתו בך אחם (below, 49:28), each according to his own special qualities. For the covenant that God established with Avraham is intended for a healthy, whole, and vital nation. The purpose of the covenant is to build a complete national life with all its manifold forms, all for the one great task, לשמור. דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט. There, strength and courage, no less than thought and emotion, are to have their champions in the service of God, and all the people, in various callings, are to fulfill the one great common task.

Precisely for this reason, each child must be brought up על פי דרכו; educate him to the one great goal, according to his own unique way, in keeping with his potential. To attempt to educate a Ya'akov and an Esav together in the same classroom, in the same routines and in the same manner, to raise both of them for a life of study and contemplation, will inevitably mean to ruin one of the two. A Ya'akov will draw from the well of wisdom with ever-increasing interest and desire, whereas an Esav will hardly be able to wait for the day when he can throw away the old books and, together with them, a great life-mission, of which he was taught in a one-sided manner, totally unappealing to his nature.

(2)
continued

Had Yitzchak and Rivkah delved deeply into Esav's nature; had they asked themselves at an early stage how even an Esav — with the strength, skills, and courage latent within him — could be harnessed for God's service, then the future גיבור would not have become a ציד but a true גיבור לפני ה'. Ya'akov and Esav, despite their different natures, would have remained twin brothers in spirit and in way of life. Early on, the sword of Esav would have entered into a covenant with the spirit of Ya'akov, and who knows what turn world history would have taken!

But this did not happen. ויגדלו הנערים: only after the boys had grown into men was everyone surprised to discover that the two brothers, from the same womb, who had been given the same care, the same upbringing, and the same schooling, were so different in their natures and actions. (Cf. *Collected Writings*, vol. VII, p. 319ff.)

(3)

2-4 What could have been Yitzchak's motive in telling his son, whom he wanted to bless, "First prepare for me a tasty dish"?

Strangely, it has been suggested that a parallel exists in Elisha's request for stringed music (*Melachim* II, 3:15) — as though a tasty roast, too, has the power to send the soul into a rapture!

What this suggestion overlooks is that Scripture here says not בעבור but בעבור תברכך נפשי. Such an expression is not to be found in any comparable blessing. Blessings are bestowed by the personality, not by a specially emphasized part of the personality, such as נפש. A similar expression is found only in *Iyov* (31:20): אִם-לֹא בְרִכְתִּי תִלְצִי. There, the meaning of the expression is clear. The loins, the poor man's body protected against the cold, feel the benevolence of the benefactor and gratefully bless him for it. Also, of man relating to God, it says: בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי. Expressing more than just a general resolve to serve God, בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי is meant to awaken man's heart to feel with all his soul all that God has done for him, so that he should serve God with every fiber of his being.

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כח אלהים

In light of the foregoing, the meaning of תברכך נפשי is clear in our verse as well, as we shall now explain.

Yitzchak wanted to bless Esav in the spirit of his future calling. Just as he hoped that Esav's natural tendencies would someday become a source of blessing and be used for exalted purposes, he also wished to see him in this way when he blessed him. *The savage craft of hunting must be elevated and used for exalted humane purposes.* For it seems that Esav did not usually hunt in order to provide a nourishing meal for his aged, feeble father. He enjoyed hunting for its own sake, for the sight of the steaming blood of his prey; he enjoyed pitting his wits against the strength of the animal. But it was not Esav's nature to hunt game for the purpose of providing refreshment for someone weak and ill.

Yitzchak therefore tells Esav: "Please take your gear, hunt some game for me, and prepare a tasty dish for me." *You yourself*, this time, use the tools of your trade to perform an act of kindness for someone, to restore the strength of an old man. I want you to experience how good it feels to use one's own strength and skill to bring pleasure to another.

4

– It appears that Rebecca had never told [Isaac] the prophecy that God had told her, “the elder shall serve the younger” (above, 25:23). – For otherwise, how would Isaac “transgress the mouth of God, which cannot succeed”?² – Now, at

בי "והלקך לדרש" first she did not tell [Isaac] about this prophecy out of propriety and modesty, – את ה' "שקלכה בלא רשות יצחק" for the verse, *she went to seek out Hashem* (above, 25:22), implies that she went without asking for Isaac's consent. כי – או שאמרה "אין אנכי צריכה להגיד נבואה לנביא, כי" Alternatively: She did not tell Isaac, because she said to herself, "I do not have to relate a prophecy to a prophet (Isaac), for he is greater in prophecy than the one who told it to me!"³ – ועתה לא רצתה לאמר לו "כך הגיד לי מאת ה' טרם לרתי" And now, too, when she saw that Isaac was preparing to bless Esau, she did not want to tell him, "Such and such was told to me by God before I gave birth," – כי אמרה, באהבתו אותו לא יברך יעקב, ויגזיר הכל בידי שמים – for she said to herself, "If Isaac hears of this prophecy now, out of his love for [Esau] he would not bless Jacob, but would leave everything in God's hand,"⁴ – and she knew that, as a result of [her silence] and her stratagem, Jacob would be blessed from [Isaac's] mouth "with a complete heart and with a willing soul."⁵ או הם סבות – Alternatively: They, i.e., Rebecca's not telling Isaac about the prophecy, and her overhearing Isaac talking to Esau, etc., were circumstances arranged by God so that Jacob should be blessed, – וגם עשו בברכת הנחב – and also that Esau should be blessed with the blessing of living by the sword. – ולו לבדו נתקנו עלילות – For "by Him alone are deeds accomplished."⁶

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