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Parshas Toldos 5787
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Shvilei Pinchas

A Fascinating Revelation from the Shela HaKadosh

Yaakov Claims to Be Yitzchak's Firstborn after Rivkah Adorned Him with the Good Part of Eisav

This week's parsha, parshas Toldos, chronicles one of the most mystifying events in Jewish history—namely, Yaakov tricking his father Yitzchak into giving him the berachos intended for Eisav. Here are the pertinent pesukim (Bereishis 27, 1):

"ויהי כי זקן יצחק ותכהין עיניו מראות ויקרא את עשו בנו הגדול ויאמר אליו בני ויאמר אליו הנני. ויאמר הנה נא זקנתי לא ידעתי יום מותי. ועתה שא נא כליך תליך וקשתך וצא השדה וצודה לי צידה. ועשה לי מטעמים כאשר אהבתי והביאה לי ואוכלה בעבור תברכך נפשי בטרם אמות".

And it was when Yitzchak had grown old, his vision became poor, he summoned Eisav, his older son, and said to him, "My son." And he responded to him, "Here I am." And he said, "See, now, I have aged; I know not the day of my death. Now sharpen, if you please your gear—your sword and your bow—and go out to the field and hunt game for me. Then make me delicacies such as I love and bring it to me and I will eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

Here is how the Torah portrays Eisav (ibid. 25, 27): "ויהי עשו איש יודע ציד"—**and Eisav became a man who knows trapping.** Rashi interprets this as: **He knew how to trap and deceive his father verbally. He would ask him, "Father, how do we tithe the salt and straw?" This would give his father the impression that he was meticulous regarding mitzvos.** Rivkah was aware of Eisav's duplicity and knew that Yitzchak believed him to be a tzaddik. Hence, she intervened and arranged for Yaakov to receive the berachos instead of his undeserving, fraudulent brother, Eisav.

This, however, made Yaakov uneasy; he feared that his father would recognize the ruse. To prevent Yitzchak from recognizing Yaakov's true identity (ibid. 15): "ותקח רבקה את בגדי עשו בנה הגדול החמודות אשר אתה בבית ותלבש את יעקב בנה הקטן"—**Rivkah took the precious garments of Eisav, her older son, which were with her in her house, and clothed Yaakov, her younger son.** Then, when Yitzchak asked Yaakov (ibid. 18, 19): "מי אתה בני, ויאמר יעקב אל אביו אנכי עשו בכורך"—**who are you, my son? Yaakov answered his father, "I am Eisav, your firstborn."** In this manner, Yaakov successfully swindled Eisav and received the berachos in his stead.

Notwithstanding, this was undoubtedly orchestrated by HKB"H; it was His will that Yaakov receive the berachos and not Eisav. Rashi comments (Bereishis 27, 1) that the reason Yitzchak's vision deteriorated was **so that Yaakov would take the berachos.** This is also evident from the following passuk (ibid. 5): "ורבקה שומעת בדבר יצחק אל עשו בנו"—**now Rivkah was listening as Yitzchak spoke to his son, Eisav.** The Targum Yonatan explains that **Rivkah heard the words Yitzchak spoke to Eisav via "ruach hakodesh."** Thus, she understood that it was HKB"H's will that she command Yaakov to enter his father's quarters to receive the berachos prior to Eisav's return.

"Grant truth to Yaakov and kindness to Avraham"

Clearly, it was HKB"H's will that Yaakov receive the berachos rather than Eisav harasha. This, however, leaves us with an incredibly perplexing question. After all, we have learned in the Gemara (Shabbas 55a): "חותמו של הקב"ה אמת"—**HKB"H's emblem is "emes"**—truth. So, why would HKB"H arrange for Yaakov Avinu to receive these special berachos from Yitzchak Avinu in such a deceptive manner? First, Yaakov put on his brother's clothes, and then he proclaimed: **"I am Eisav, your firstborn!"**

This is even more confounding in light of the fact that of the three holy Avos, Yaakov specifically is associated with "אמת"—HKB"H's emblematic seal. In fact, we find an explicit reference to this association in the words of the prophet (Michah 7, 20): "תתן אמת ליעקב חסד לאברהם"—**grant "emes" to Yaakov and "chesed" to Avraham.** Furthermore, it is apparent that the label "אמת" befits Yaakov Avinu. As a mere thirteen-year-old youth, he was recognized as an "איש תם", as it states explicitly in our parsha (Bereishis 25, 27): "ויגדלו הנערים, ויהי עשו איש יודע ציד איש שדה, ויעקב איש תם יושב אהלים"—**the lads grew up and Eisav became a man who knows trapping, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man (**"איש תם"**), abiding in tents.** Rashi comments that "תם" implies that: **He is not proficient in all these things** (that Eisav was)**; as is his heart, so is his mouth. One who is not sharp** (adept) **at deceiving is called** "תם".

Clearly, even in his youth, Yaakov was wholesome—"תם"—he was not adept at deception. In fact, he went to his father to receive the berachos by means of a ruse only because his mother Rivkah instructed him to do so, as it is written (ibid. 27, 8): "ועתה בני שמע בקולי לאשר אני מצווה אותך"—**so now, my son, heed my voice to that which I command you.** Yaakov was already aware of the fact that his mother possessed "ruach hakodesh"; so, he obeyed her dutifully. That does not explain, however, why HKB"H, whose hallmark is **"emes"** arranged for Yaakov Avinu to receive the berachos through deception, the antithesis of **"emes."** As Yitzchak explains regrettably to Eisav (ibid. 35): "בא אחיך במרמה ויקח ברכתך"—**your brother came deceitfully and took your berachah.**

The Tikun for Deception and Falsehood Is to Use It to Reveal the Truth

We will begin to answer these questions by introducing a marvelous explanation found in the immaculate teachings of the Sefas Emes (Toldos 5633):

Regarding the matter of Yaakov taking the berachos by means of deception with Hashem's approval: We can learn from here that in order to achieve the truth, we are, indeed, allowed to do so by means of deception . . . since the essential desire to arrive at the truth is in no way considered "sheker" (a lie or deception)**; on the contrary, this constitutes the tikun of "sheker" . . . using deceptive methods to arrive at the truth. Since "sheker" is being employed to reveal the truth, the "sheker" is rectified. Most certainly, in Olam HaZeh, which is referred to as "alma d'shikra"** (the world of "sheker")**, it was HKB"H's intent to arrive at the truth specifically in this manner.**

He repeats this teaching (ibid. 5635) with a stern warning not to resort to the device of "sheker" if it is not absolutely necessary. He cites the Zohar hakadosh (Toldos 143a) that expounds on the passuk (Tehillim 120, 2): "ה' הצילה נפשי משפת שקר"—**Hashem, save my soul from lips of "sheker"—in relation to Yaakov Avinu, a"h, when he was compelled to answer, "I am Eisav, your firstborn."** He teaches that a tzaddik, who is committed to "emes," must occasionally resort to "sheker," as we are taught in the Gemara (Yevamos 65b): **It is permitted for a person to deviate** (from the truth) **for the sake of "shalom."** For, someone who is committed to **"emes"** and is not engrossed in **"sheker"** can actually abolish **"sheker"** in this manner. This, however, requires help from above—**"siyata d'shmaya"**—so as not to grow attached (and become accustomed) to **"sheker,"** chas v'shalom.

Yaakov Avinu Declared "I am Eisav, your firstborn" Truthfully

With this introduction, we will explain how HKB"H—Whose hallmark is "emes"—protected Yaakov Avinu—the paradigm of "emes—from telling an out-and-out lie. Although, what he said to his father appeared to be a lie, he was actually telling the truth. We will refer to an intriguing revelation from the teachings of the Shela hakadosh (Toldos, Torah Ohr 7). He begins by focusing on the passuk: **"Rivkah took the precious garments of Eisav, her older son, which were with her in her house, and clothed Yaakov, her younger son."** Here is a summary of what he writes:

According to the text, Rivkah dressed Yaakov herself; he did not dress himself; this was seemingly inappropriate with respect to "kibud eim." He suggests a deeper, concealed reason for this. There were two reasons why Yaakov and Eisav were conceived as twins. Firstly, so that Eisav would absorb all of Yaakov's negative characteristics. Secondly, so that Yaakov would also inherit Olam HaZeh, which was designated as Eisav's portion. Thus, Eisav received the bad portion of Yaakov, and Yaakov received

the good portion of Eisav. This division was accomplished by Rivkah while they were inside her.

This is the deeper meaning of the depiction at the end of the parsha (Bereishis 28, 5)**: "The mother of Yaakov and Eisav." Rashi writes that he does not know what this comes to teach us. I believe that it teaches us that as their mother, she contained and designated the character traits of both of them. For this reason, she herself clothed him** (Yaakov) **in Eisav's clothes, so that he would feel to the touch like Eisav. Thus, he would also receive the berachos of Olam HaZeh belonging to Eisav, since they befitted Eisav more than Yaakov. By dressing up as Eisav, she prepared the way for him to receive the berachos of Olam HaZeh.**

His primary garments, however, were the coveted garments of Adam HaRishon, which reflected his tikun. They were fashioned in Gan Eden; this is why the scent of Gan Eden accompanied him. Wearing Eisav's garments symbolized that he had drained the good designated for Eisav out of him, while they were twins in their mother's stomach. From this perspective, he was telling the truth when he said, "I am Eisav, your firstborn; I have done as you instructed me." This is similar to what the Zohar writes in parshas Ki Seitzei concerning Esther HaMalkah.

Elaborating on the Insight of the Shela HaKadosh

We will now delve deeper into the comments of the Shela hakadosh regarding Yaakov's declaration to Yitzchak: **"אנכי עשו בכורך."** As we learned in last week's essay on Chayei Sarah, the Amudehah Shivah presents in the name of the Arizal a discussion concerning the assertion of the Zohar hakadosh that Esther sent a female demon to Achashveirosh in her place:

The Arizal questions the plausibility of the assertion that Achashveirosh never touched Esther, seeing as Daryavesh HaMelech (Darius the Great)**, the son of Achashveirosh, is referred to as the son of Esther** (V.R. 13, 5)**. He posits that every single human being is composed of a good side and a bad side. They resemble each other and are combined as one. The good part is referred to as a "levush," whereas the bad part is referred to as a "beged." The bad part is also referred to as the devil** (demon) **that causes a person to sin; it is the yetzer hara within him. The good part is the yetzer hatov that habituates a person to occupy himself with Torah, mitzvos, and good deeds . . .**

Mordechai and Esther knew how to use the Ineffable Name to separate the bad from the good; they used it to separate the evil part, the "beged" and demon, from Esther. It truly resembled Esther in all ways. Achashveirosh had intimate relations with that evil part. Therefore, Daryavesh is called the son of Esther, even though he was born from the demon, because that demon was originally part of Esther.

Understood in this light, we can begin to comprehend to some small degree the remarkable insight of the Shela hakadosh. When Rivkah Imeinu overheard Yitzchak Avinu instructing Eisav to prepare delicacies for him, so that he could bless him, she realized that Yitzchak was addressing the good that still remained in Eisav. Yitzchak figured that by giving him the berachos, it would enable Eisav to empower the good within him to dominate the bad and make him completely good.

Rivkah, however, was aware of Eisav's true nature and knew that he had no intention of performing teshuvah. Therefore, she wisely stripped away his sacred **"levush"**—his good portion—which he had **בגד**—betrayed and rejected in favor of a life of evil. This is the deeper meaning of the passuk: **"ותקח רבקה את 'בגדי' עשו בנה הגדול 'החמודות' אשר אתה בבית."** They were precious and coveted due to the good within him; Eisav, however, had transformed them into garments of mutiny and betrayal—**"begadim."** In this vein, the text continues: **"ותלבש את יעקב בנה הקטן"**—Rivkah clothed (**"ותלבש"**) Yaakov, specifically referring to the holy **"levush"**—the good qualities that Eisav had rejected.

Therefore, when Yitzchak Avinu asked Yaakov to identify himself, he actually told the truth. Since he was now clothed with the good portion and qualities of Eisav, he answered honestly: **"אנכי עשו בכורך."** In other words, I am the one whom you addressed and instructed to prepare delicacies for you, so that you could bless me. Thus, everything Yaakov said was surprisingly truthful—**"emes."**

Rivkah Extracted from Eisav the Holy Levush He Had Received from Her and Yitzchak

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to expand on the explanation of the Shela hakadosh based on the teachings of the Arizal in Likutei Torah (Vayeira). He enlightens us with regards to the mitzvah of "kibud av v'eim." He explains that every Jew receives a "levush" from his father and a "Levush" from his mother. All spiritual and material bounty a Jew receives in his lifetime comes exclusively from these two "levushim." All the mitzvos one does is due to the "levush" one inherits from one's father and mother. The "levush" assists one to perform mitzvos even when one is too young to know what to do. This is especially true in the case of a "gilgul," since previous iniquities do not allow the person to perform a mitzvah; hence, that person requires assistance from the "levush." This also applies to a new, original neshamah that is not accustomed to Olam HaZeh. A man and woman form a partnership to provide their children with this "levush." This explains why the Torah is strict with regards to the sanctity of marital relations. If parents sanctifies themselves, they instill a holy "levush" in the child's neshamah which helps them serve Hashem. Even an elite neshamah requires this sanctification; otherwise, it can harm him like the yetzer hara. Thus, if a child sins, it is attributable to his parents.

This teaching of the Arizal provides us with a better understanding of Chazal's statement (Kiddushin 30b): **"תנו רבנן שלשה שותפין הן באדם, הקב"ה ואביו ואמו"—the Rabbis taught: There are three partners in the creation of a human being—HKB"H, his father, and his mother.** Not only are they partners in the formation of the human being, but they are also partners in the assistance that person receives from above to serve Hashem. HKB"H gives the person the neshamah that enables him to serve Hashem, and his mother and father give him the "levush" that enables him to fulfill the mitzvos.

Yitzchak Avinu Intended to Bestow the Berachos on the Good "Levush" within Eisav

So, even though Eisav was a total rasha, and his divine neshamah had abandoned him, and all he was left with was his animalistic soul, nevertheless he still had the two good "levushes" from Yitzchak and Rivkah, his parents. This led Yitzchak to believe that there was still some good in Eisav. Hence, he thought that by blessing Eisav with all the good influences of Olam HaZeh, it would inspire him to better himself and serve Hashem properly. With this understanding, let us interpret the text: **"And it was when Yitzchak had grown old, his vision became poor"**—in other words, he was oblivious to Eisav's wrongdoings and evil ways; **"he summoned Eisav, his older son"**—he appealed to the "levush" within him, the good he had instilled in his firstborn son; **"and said to him, 'My son'"**—addressing the good part of him; **"and he responded to him, 'Here I am'"**—since he was in the habit of deceiving his father and pretending to be righteous, he answered **"הנני"**—I am here at your beck and call, ready to do good. This encouraged Yitzchak to bestow the berachos on him.

This also provides us with a better appreciation of the degree of Rivkah's kedushah. She was not fooled by Eisav; she recognized his wickedness. This motivated her to ensure that he would not receive the berachos, and they would be given to the worthy recipient—namely, Yaakov. To accomplish this, her first step was to remove the holy "levush" Eisav had received from her. This is the underlying message of the passuk: **"Rivkah took the precious garments of Eisav—'בגדי עשו'—her older son, which were with her in her house."** The language of the passuk teaches us that Eisav had transformed her **"levush"** into a **"beged"** by betraying and rejecting its good, positive influence on him; **"and clothed Yaakov, her younger son"**—here the passuk employs the term **"ותלבש"**, indicating that Yaakov was now adorned with the holy **"levush"** that had previously been part of Eisav.

When she removed her "levush," simultaneously, she also removed Yitzchak's "levush"; both were transferred to Yaakov. We can now interpret the continuation of the narrative (ibid. 27, 21): **"ויאמר יצחק אל יעקב גשה נא ואמשך בני האתה זה בני עשו אם לא"—Yitzchak said to Yaakov, "Come close, if you please, so I can touch you, my son; are you, indeed, my son Eisav or not?"** In other words: Are you the good "levush" of Eisav I addressed previously and requested to prepare delicacies for me? **"ויגש יעקב אל יצחק אביו וימשהו ויאמר הקול קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו, ולא הכירו כי היו ידיו כידי עשו אחיו שעירות ויברכהו, ויאמר אתה זה בני עשו ויאמר אני"—so, Yaakov drew close to Yitzchak his father,**

and he touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov, but the hands are the hands of Eisav." But he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like the hands of Eisav his brother; and he blessed him. He said, "You are, indeed, my son Eisav!" And he said, "I am." This was indeed a truthful response, since he was adorned with the good "levush" Yitzchak had imparted to Eisav.

To summarize, Yitzchak asked Yaakov, **"Who are you, my son?" Yaakov answered his father, "I am Eisav, your firstborn."** He indicated that he now possessed the good portion of Eisav, Yitzchak's firstborn. He also indicated that this is whom Yitzchak had addressed; as such, **"I have done as you instructed me."** From this perspective, everything Yaakov said was completely truthful!

Rivkah Received from Sarah the Ability to Separate the Good from the Bad

It gives me immense pleasure to substantiate the explanation of the Shela hakadosh based on our lengthy discussion last week for parshas Chayei Sarah referenced above. The Amudehah Shivah taught in the name of the Arizal that Sarah Imeinu separated the negative part of her from the positive part by sending her maidservant Hagar away; Hagar represented her bad, negative part. In similar fashion, Rivkah Imeinu extracted the good part of Eisav and transferred it to Yaakov, while extracting the bad part of Yaakov and transferring it into Eisav.

As we explained, prior to his circumcision, Avraham still possessed a negative side in the form of his foreskin. Sarah wanted her maidservant Hagar to draw it out of him in the form of Yishmael. As a result, after his bris-milah, Avraham would not have a negative part; he would be all good. With that accomplished, Sarah and Avraham would both be cleansed of all bad and be ready and able to beget Yitzchak.

Let us review the relevant text (ibid. 24, 67): **"ויביאה יצחק האהלה שרה אמו ויקח את רבקה ותהי לו לאשה ויאהבה וינחם יצחק אחרי אמו"—and Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother; he took Rivkah, she became his wife, he loved her, and thus Yitzchak was consoled for the loss of his mother.** Here Rashi cites the Midrash: **"And he brought her into the tent"—and behold, she was "Sarah, his mother"; in other words, she then became the image of Sarah, his mother. For the entire time that Sarah was alive, a candle burned from erev Shabbas to erev Shabbas, a berachah was present in the dough, and a cloud was stationed over the tent. But once she died, they ceased; but when Rivkah came, they returned.**

It is evident from Rashi's comment that upon entering the tent of Sarah Imeinu, Rivkah was imbued with Sarah's kedushah. As such, she also possessed the capacity to extract the good part of Eisav and transfer it to Yaakov and vice-versa. Thus, we have gained wonderful insights from the incredible teachings of the Shela hakadosh regarding how Yaakov Avinu received the berachos from Yitzchak Avinu.

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