

HE GAVE HIM THE ROYAL RING!

PARSHAS TOLDOS

Our forefather Yitzchak wanted to give a blessing which would determine the destiny of Yaakov & Esav and their descendants for eternity. Yitzchak wanted to give the blessings to his first-born son, Esav. Our matriarch Rivka knew that Yaakov was the son who deserved these blessings. She told Yaakov that he should go to Yitzchak to receive the blessings. Yaakov was aghast! He was the pillar of *emes*, of truth. How could he be part of this subterfuge? However, he listened to his mother and got two goats from the flock to prepare food for Yitzchak. "He [Yaakov] went, took, and brought to his mother." **Midrash Rabba** (Bereishis 65:15) says that Yaakov went "compelled, coerced, and weeping". Clearly, he did not want to do this deception. Then Yaakov said to his mother, "My father perhaps will feel me, and I shall seem to him a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing." (27:12) Rivka told Yaakov not to worry. She prepared food for Yaakov to bring to Yitzchak. She gave him goatskin to put on his smooth skin to appear hairy, like Esav. She also gave him Esav's special clothing.

When Yaakov arrived, Yitzchak asked him, "Who are you, my son?" (27:18) Yaakov gave a curious answer. He said, "It is I, Eisav your firstborn. I have done as you had told me." At first glance it

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(Bereishis 27:19)*

seemed as if Yaakov's response was not truthful. However, most commentators interpret Yaakov's words in a way which was truthful. **Rashi** says that Yaakov was saying, I am he that brings food to you, and Esav is your first-born. I have done many things at different times as you had asked me. **Or HaChaim and Riva** (27:19) say that when Yaakov said, "I am Esav your firstborn" he meant that since he had purchased the birthright from Esav, he was now in place of Esav, entitled to the blessings as the new firstborn. Yaakov added, "I have done as you had told me." The reason you told Esav to hunt game, etc., was because you assumed that he was your firstborn. **Mizrachi** says, "I am he who brings to you and Esav is your first born."

A while later, Yitzchak asks Yaakov, "Are you indeed my son, Esav?" (27:24) Yaakov responded, "It is I". Again, the commentators rush to explain what Yaakov meant when he said, "I am".

Rashi says that he did not say, "I am Esav". Rather, he said but "It is I". The commentaries make a point of explaining Yaakov's words to show that he did not lie. **Gur Aryeh** says that you must explain Yaakov's words in this manner. It is impossible to say that Yaakov would lie. Furthermore, Hashem hates falsehood and how could Yitzchak's blessings have been received through falsehood? **Rabbeinu Bachya** adds that there is no question that Yaakov spoke the truth on every occasion. This is what the prophet (Michah 7:20) emphasized when he said, "You gave truth to Yaakov."

However, even though Yaakov did not lie, Yitzchak did get the impression that it was Esav in front of him. Wouldn't that also show a lack of truthfulness?

Rav Henach Leibowitz zt"l points out that even misleading a person shows a lack of *emes*, of truthfulness. How was Yaakov permitted to mislead Yitzchak? The **Talmud** (Sanhedrin 92A) quotes Rabbi Elazar who says that anyone who amends the truth in his speech, is considered as though he worships idols. **Maharsha** brings a story from **Sefer Haikarim**. Once, a sinner who was also a robber wanted to repent. However, he was not prepared to accept upon himself the multitude of mitzvos that are in the Torah. A wise man told him to accept upon himself never to lie. That, the robber accepted. Some time passed and the robber was on his way to rob. He met a man along the way. The man asked him where he was going. The robber remembered that he accepted upon himself not to lie, so he told the man that he was on his way to rob someone. Soon after, he met another man and told him the same thing. Then the robber realized that there were two potential witnesses against him. He decided not to rob. Little by little, this strategy of telling the truth led him to leave his evil ways.

When asked where he was going, couldn't the robber have answered that he was going to a certain place without saying that he was going there to rob someone? Apparently, that would have given the misimpression that he was going to that place to do something appropriate. Even though he would not have been lying outright, since the listener would have mistakenly assumed from his words that he was going to do something appropriate, that would have been considered a lack of truth. Clearly, giving someone a false impression is considered lying.

We see another facet of lying from the famous story involving King Shlomo (I Kings 3:16-27). Two women came to him, each claiming to be the mother of a baby. Apparently, one of the mothers had accidentally smothered her baby. The second mother claimed that in the middle of the night the first mother had switched her dead baby with the

second mother's live one. Each of the women was claiming the live baby. Shlomo judged and said, "Cut the live child in two, and give half to one and half to the other." (pasuk 25). Based on the responses of the two women, Shlomo determined who the real mother was. "Give the live child to her," he said, "and do not put it to death; she is its mother." (pasuk 27). The **Talmud** (Makos 23B) asks, how could Shlomo have said with certainty "she is its mother"? Perhaps the other mother had tricked him. The **Talmud** answers that Shlomo did not say "she is its mother". Rather, those words were stated by a *bas kol*, by a Heavenly voice, for all to hear, to affirm that the action taken by King Shlomo was correct.

Shlomo was the wisest of all men and he had many clear proofs as to who the true mother was. **Rabbi Henach Leibowitz** zt"l asked, if that was the case then why couldn't Shlomo himself say the words, "she is its mother"? It must be that although Shlomo had so many indications who the mother was, since there was the remotest possibility that the woman was deceiving Shlomo, he did not have the right to say 100% that this was the mother. That would have been a lack of truth. Although he had the right to determine the law and give the baby to that woman, he did not have the right to say, "she is its mother". We see that it would be considered a lack of truth to say something as a fact if there was the remotest possibility that it was not true.

This would be a question according to the commentaries who explain how Yaakov's words were truthful. Yaakov gave Yitzchak the impression that he was Esav. Shouldn't that have been considered a lack of truth?!

Radak and others say that Yaakov did not want to deceive his father. **Torah Temima** adds that Yaakov only did so to follow his mother's command and because his mother also had a prophecy from Hashem that Hashem wanted Yaakov to receive the

blessings. The **Ramban** says that this episode was orchestrated by Hashem for Yaakov to receive the brachos.

Clearly Yaakov acted accordingly to honor his mother and follow Hashem's instruction. The question is, why did Hashem specifically want Yaakov to receive these blessings in a manner which seemed deceitful?

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l (Emes L'Yaakov) says that Hashem gave each of our forefathers major tests to merit eternal reward of a true father of the Jewish People. Avraham had 10 tests which went against his nature of kindness. This was Yaakov's test which was against his nature. Yaakov was a man of truth. Hashem tested him to see if he would go against his nature if that was what Hashem wanted. That would show that all of Yaakov's actions were for the sake of Hashem.

Another answer is given by the **Derashos HaRan** (5) which is quoted by **Rav Avraham Pam** zt"l (Rav Pam

on Chumash by Rabbi Sholom Smith). The **Ran** says that Hashem orchestrated events in this manner to create a fraternal hatred of Esav and his descendants to Yaakov & his descendants. "Esav hates Yaakov" is a fact of life (**Rashi** Vayishlach 33:4 quoting a **Midrash**). Esav has eternal hatred because of his perception that Yaakov took the blessings that he was supposed to get. The purpose of this eternal hatred is to provide a control on Yaakov. If the Jewish nation would slacken in their service to Hashem, then Esav would persecute and torture them to force them to return to the ways of our forefathers. In fact, Esav's persecutions have accomplished more to bring the Jews back to Hashem than the rebukes of the greatest prophets. The **Talmud** (Megillah 14A) says that the act of Achashverosh giving his signet ring to Haman, to seal the decree of extermination of the Jews, accomplished more to bring the Jewish People to repentance than the rebukes of our 48 greatest prophets!

Our souls originate from beneath Hashem's throne, a place of purity, where there is no falsehood (**Orchos Tzadikim**, Gate of Truth). Let us try to retain that holiness by only telling the truth and not giving others a misimpression, which is also considered a lack of truth.

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