

## Yaakov the “Wise” Son Defeated Eisov the “Evil” Son by Feeding Yitzchok the Afikomon on the Night of Pesach!

In honor of Pesach, the time of our freedom and redemption from the exile in Egypt, which approaches auspiciously, it is fitting for us to examine the matter of the wise son and the evil son. Regarding the first of the four sons, the narrator of the Haggodeh states: **“חכם מנה”** הוא אומר, מה העדות והחוקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אתכם, ואף אתה אמור לו כהלכות הפסח אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן” — what does the wise son say? “What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the laws which Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you?” And you, too, should tell him the laws of Pesach: “It is forbidden to eat ‘ Afikomon’ after the korban Pesach.”

Regarding the statement: **“אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן”**-- “It is forbidden to eat ‘ Afikomon’ after the korban Pesach” — this can be understood in light of what we have learned in the Mishneh (Pesochim 119b). **“אין מפטירין”** — means that we do not make any requests; **“אחר הפסח”** — after the meat of the korban Pesach has been eaten at the conclusion of the meal; **“אפיקו-מן”** — means taking out food, i.e. it is prohibited to eat after the korban Pesach has been consumed, so that the taste of the korban Pesach remains in one’s mouth. The commentaries have already raised the obvious question: Of all the haloches, why did the author of the Haggodeh specifically choose this one as the answer to the wise son: **“אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן”**--“It is forbidden to eat ‘ Afikomon’ after the korban Pesach”?

### Why Did the Author of the Haggodeh Change the Answer Given to the Wicked Son?

In honor of Pesach, I was moved by a wonderful idea. I would like to offer a new explanation, before the heavenly King of kings, as to why the holy narrator of the Haggodeh responds to the wise son specifically in this manner: **“אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן”**. First, though, let us examine the manner in which the author of the Haggodeh addresses the wicked son: **“רשע מנה הוא אומר, מה העבודה הזאת לכם, למה ולא לו, ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל כפר בעיקר, ואף אתה הקהה את שניו ואמור לו, בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים, לי הזאת לכם, למה ולא לו, אילו היה שם לא היה נגאל”** — What does the wicked son say? “What is this service to you?” — “to you,” but not to himself. Since he excludes himself from the group, he denies everything. You, too, should blunt his teeth, and say to him: “It is because of this that

Hashem did so for me when I went out of Egypt!” — “for me,” but not for him. Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.

The problem that bothers the commentaries and rattles the doorposts is well known. The source for the evil son’s question is found in parshat Bo (Shemos 12, 26): **“והיה כי יאמרו אליכם בניכם מנה”** — **“העבודה הזאת לכם, ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה’ אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל, ויקוד העם וישתחו”** — “and it shall be that when your children will say to you, ‘What is this service to you?’ You shall say, ‘It is a Pesach offering to Hashem, Who skipped over the houses of Bnei Yisroel in Egypt, while He smote the Egyptians, but He spared our households,’” and the people bowed and prostrated themselves. Rashi comments: **“ויקוד העם, על בשורת”** — **“הגאולה וביאת הארץ ובשורת הבנים שיהיו להם”** — the people bowed on account of the tidings of the redemption and the coming into the land and the tidings of the sons which they would have.

It seems that the Toreh provided a clear-cut answer to the wicked son without the need to blunt his teeth: **“ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה”**-- You shall say, “It is a Pesach offering to Hashem.” Upon hearing this, the people rejoiced and bowed down--**“וישתחו”**. They rejoiced at the news of the sons that they were destined to have. If so, what possessed the author of the Haggodeh to switch the answer that is written in the Toreh? Not only does he not give that answer, instead he advises to blunt the son’s teeth and to respond with the harsh words: **“אלו היה שם לא היה נגאל”**--had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.

It is also worth addressing the question raised by the Bnei Yissoscher (Nissan 5, 14) concerning the author of the Haggodeh’s response to the wicked son: **“אלו היה שם לא היה נגאל”**. Further on in the Haggodeh, the author of the Haggodeh himself established the formula: **“בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים... לא את אבותינו בלבד גאל הקב”ה אלא אף אותנו גאל עמהם”** — in each and every generation, a person is obligated to view himself as if he has gone out of Egypt . . . not only did HKB”H redeem our ancestors, but He redeemed us, as well, with them. He clearly states that all of us were included with our ancestors during the exile in Egypt; hence, this wicked son was also in Egypt. So, how can the author of the Haggodeh state that had he been there, he would not have been redeemed?

## Yaakov Ovinu Received the Blessings on the Night of Pesach

Let us begin our journey of enlightenment by examining the magnificent miracle that took place on the night of Pesach many years before the exodus from Egypt — a miracle that left its imprint on the nation of Yisroel for all future generations. We are speaking of how Yaakov Ovinu received the blessings from his father, Yitzchok, by following his mother Rivkeh's instructions — thereby swindling the evil Eisov. Eisov almost received the blessings from Yitzchok by deception, as it is written (Bereishis 25, 27): **“ויהי עשו איש יודע ציד”** — Eisov became one who knows hunting. Rashi adds the following commentary: **“לצוד ולרמות את אביו בפיו, ושואלו אבא איך מעשרין”** — **“את המלח ואת התבן”** — he knew how to trap and deceive his father verbally.

This titanic battle between the forces of sanctity and profanity — kedusheh and tumah — between Yaakov and Eisov, took place on the night of Pesach. On that night Yitzchok Ovinu sat at the head of his table, conducted the “seder” according to the dictates of halocheh, and savored the taste of Gan Eden from the meat of the Pesach and Chagigah offerings that his son Yaakov prepared for him. The possuk informs us that Yitzchok's eyes were blinded on purpose (ibid. 27, 1): **“ותכהין עיניו מראות”** — and his vision was dimmed. Rashi explains that this occurred so as to enable Yaakov to come and snatch the blessings. Nevertheless, his spiritual, sanctified, pure eyes were wide open with a view to the distant future — envisioning that his descendants, the children of Yisroel, were destined to be released from the bondage and slavery of the Egyptians on that sacred night.

On that holy night, near his death, Yitzchok sought one of his sons to inherit the tremendous blessings that his father, Avrohom, had given to him. As we learn from Scriptures, HKB”H said to Avrohom (Bereishis 12, 2): **“והיה ברכה”** — the blessings belong to you. As we shall see, Yitzchok had his reasons for wanting to give the beroches to his eldest son, Eisov (ibid. 27, 2): **“ויאמר הנה נא זקנתי לא ידעתי יום מותי, ועתה שא נא כלך תליך וקשתך וצא השדה וצודה לי צידה, ועשה לי מטעמים כאשר אהבתי והביאה לי ואוכלה, בעבור תברכך נפשי בטרם אמות”** — 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.”

Now, Eisov's deception nearly succeeded. Yet, HKB”H, ultimately arranged to prevent the blessings from falling into Eisov's hands — due to the intrigue of our mother Rivkeh. She ordered Yaakov to follow his mother's instructions, to honor his mother as required, and to heed her words of divine inspiration (Bereishis 27, 8): **“ועתה בני שמע בקולי לאשר אני מצוה אותך, לך נא אל הצאן וקח לי משם שני גדיי עזים טובים, ואעשה אותם מטעמים לאביך כאשר אהב”** — so now, my son, heed my voice to that which I command you. Go now to the flock and fetch for me from there two choice young goats, and I will make of them delicacies for your father, as he loves. Rashi explains

in the name of the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 32): **“וכי שני גדיי עזים היה מאכלו של יצחק, אלא פסח היה, האחד הקריב לפסחו, והאחד עשה מטעמים”** — certainly, two kid goats was not Yitzchok's usual fare; rather, it must have been Pesach; one was used for his Pesach offering and the other was used to make delicacies.

Thus, in the midst of the “seder” night, Yaakov entered, clothed in Eisov's fine garments. With fear and trepidation, he said to his father, Yitzchok (ibid. 19): **“אנכי עשו בכורך עשיתי כאשר דברת אלי, קום נא שבה ואכלה מצידי בעבור תברכני נפשך. ויאמר יצחק אל בנו מה זה מהרת למצוא בני, ויאמר כי הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני. ויאמר יצחק אל יעקב, גשה נא — ואמושך בני האתה זה בני עשו אם לא”** — it is I, Eisov your firstborn; I have done as you told me; rise up, please, sit and eat of my game that your soul may bless me.” Yitzchok said to his son, “How is it that you were so quick to find, my son?” And he said, “Because Hashem, your G-d, arranged it for me.” And Yitzchok said to Yaakov, “Come close, if you please, so I can touch you, my son; are you, indeed, my son Eisov or not?”

What, in fact, caused Yitzchok to suspect that maybe the person standing before him was someone other than Eisov? The answer is revealed by Rashi: **“אמר יצחק בלבו, אין דרך עשו להיות שם שמים שגור”** — Yitzchok realized that Eisov did not usually utter the name of G-d; and this person had said, “Hashem, your G-d, arranged it.” With his suspicion aroused, he asked to touch him and see if this person was, indeed, Eisov or not.

At that moment, the entire heavenly court stood entranced, holding their collective breath, to see if the wicked Eisov would triumph with his deception, or if the pure and holy Yaakov would succeed in extracting the precious from the profane. Yitzchok's blessings were at stake: **“טל השמים ומשמני הארץ”** — the dew of the heavens and the fat of the earth. Would Yaakov succeed in salvaging the sacred blessings from the hands of the wicked Eisov?

A hearty sigh of relief was heard — from those in the heavens and from those down on earth — when they ultimately witnessed how Yaakov tilted his head down before his father, Yitzchok, who placed his holy hands on Yaakov's head, and with a clear voice that reverberated throughout creation, began to solemnly bless the young man (ibid. 28): **“ויתן לך האלקים מטל השמים ומשמני הארץ ורוב דגן ותירוש, יעבדוך עמים וישתחוו לך לאומים, הוה גביר לאחריך וישתחוו לך — בני אמך, אורריך ארור ומברכך ברוך”** — and may G-d give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth, and abundant grain and wine. Peoples will serve you, and regimes will prostrate themselves to you; be a lord to our brothers, and your mother's sons will prostrate themselves to you; may those who curse you be cursed, and those who bless you be blessed.

As stated, this miraculous event involving Yaakov Ovinu, the source of kedusheh in the people of Yisroel, took place in the middle of the night of the “seder” — as Yitzchok Ovinu was describing to his son, Yaakov, the miracles and wonders that HKB”H would perform on behalf of Yisroel in the future, during the exodus from Egypt. Incredibly, just as Yaakov received the blessings on Pesach night

due to the efforts of his righteous mother, Rivkeh Imeinu, so, too, the exodus from Egypt — which we celebrate on the “seder” night — occurred in the merit of the righteous women of that generation. Our blessed sages express this idea in the Gemoreh as follows (Sotah 11b): **“בזכות נשים צדקניות שהיו באותו הדור נגאלו ישראל ממצרים.”**

### **ה' אלקים The Wise Son Mentions the Two Names Just as Yaakov Ovinu Did as He Stood Before Yitzchok**

This, however, requires further explanation. Why, in fact, do we not mention this in the Haggodeh — how Yaakov Ovinu miraculously received the blessings on the night of Pesach? With this in mind, let us propose a novel interpretation of the formula chosen by the author of the Haggodeh to express the questions of the wise son and the wicked son. The wise son is meant to represent Yaakov Ovinu, who obeyed his mother's instructions. On the other hand, the evil son alludes to Eisov, who denied all that mattered.

Substantiation for this idea can be found in the commentaries' explanation and focus on a subtle linguistic difference that exists between the formulas employed by these two sons. The wicked son asks: **“מה העבודה הזאת לכם”** — what is this service to you? We deduce that he truly intends to exclude himself by saying **“לכם”**, meaning to you--inferring that it is not to him. Using a somewhat similar formula, the wise son asks: **“מה העדות והחוקים והמשפטים”** **“מה העדות והחוקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אתכם”** — what are the testimonies, the statutes, and the laws which Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you? Why do we not make a similar inference from the wise son's use of the word **“אתכם”** — to you and not to him?

An answer to this question is provided in the sefer Kol Eliyahu in the name of the Gr”a, ztz”l. He points out that in formulating his question, the wise son mentions the name of ה' אלקים: **“מה העדות והחוקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אתכם”** — what are the testimonies, the statutes, and the laws which Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you? So, it is clearly evident that when he goes on to employ the word **“אתכם”**, he has no intention of excluding himself from the community of Yisroel. The wicked son, on the other hand, makes no mention of G-d. Therefore, when he employs the word **“לכם”**, he is clearly excluding himself from the rest of Yisroel; hence: **“לכם ולא לי”** — to you and not to him.

Now, come and see something amazing! According to what we explained above, this is precisely the difference between Yaakov Ovinu and Eisov HaRasha. When Yaakov Ovinu entered Yitzchok's tent to receive his father's blessings on Pesach night, he mentioned the name of Hashem in his response to Yitzchok: **“כי הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני”** — because Hashem, your G-d, arranged it for me. This, in fact, aroused Yitzchok's suspicion as to the identity of the person speaking to him. For, Eisov was not in the habit of mentioning Hashem's name in conversation; whereas, on this occasion, Yaakov mentioned the two names: **“הוי”ה אלקי”ם**. These, in fact, are the same two names employed by the wise son: **“אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אתכם”** — which Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you. This is an indication that

the wise son truly alludes to Yaakov Ovinu and his descendants that follow in his footsteps — by mentioning the two names Hashem and Elokim.

Let us embellish this noble idea a bit more. We now realize that Yaakov Ovinu received the blessings from Yitzchok on the night of Pesach in the merit of his action of self-sacrifice — his mention of the two names of Hashem in his statement: **“כי הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני”**. For, he also knew that Eisov did not customarily mention Hashem's name in conversation. Therefore, he was taking a significant risk that Yitzchok would detect the ruse and realize that he was not Eisov. Nonetheless, due to his extreme devotion to Hashem, he could not refrain from giving Hashem credit for his apparent success — despite the element of self-sacrifice.

At this point, it is not far-fetched to suggest that this realization is implied in the following response from Yitzchok. When it is ultimately revealed to Yitzchok that Yaakov stepped in to accept the blessings in Eisov's place and, notwithstanding, mentioned the two names of the G-d of Yisroel, at the risk of Yitzchok exposing his deception, Yitzchok proclaims (Bereishis 27, 33): **“מי אפוא הוא הצד ציד ויבא לי — ואוכל מכל בטרם תבוא ואברכהו גם ברוך יהיה”** — who, then, is the one who caught the game, brought it to me, and I ate of all when you had not yet come, and I blessed him? He shall also be blessed! According to Rashi, this statement indicates that with this realization, Yitzchok acquiesced to the blessings that had been delivered to Yaakov.

This coincides beautifully with the words of Yaakov Ovinu's prayer in parshat Vayeitzei (Bereishis 28, 20): **“וידר יעקב נדר לאמור, אם יהיה אלקים עמדי ושמרני בדרך הזה אשר אנכי הולך ונתן לי לחם — לאכול ובגד ללבוש, ושבתני בשלום אל בית אבי והיה ה' לי לאלקים”** — then Yaakov took a vow, saying, “If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me on this way that I am going; and He will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear; and I will return in peace to my father's house, and Hashem will be a G-d to me . . .” Here Rashi comments: **“והיה ה' לי — לאלקים, שיחול שמו עלי מתחילה ועד סוף, שלא ימצא פסול בזרע”** — that Hashem's name will rest upon me from beginning to end, that no defect be found in my offspring.

We can now interpret his prayer based on our previous discussion. He merited Yitzchok's blessings by mentioning the two names Havaya Elokim, despite the personal risk involved. Therefore, he prayed to Hashem that he should not stray while in Lavan's house and should be able to maintain his high level of devotion, believing wholeheartedly that Hashem Elokim would provide him with: **“לחם”** — food and clothing, in the merit of the blessings that he received from Yitzchok by employing these two names. This is why he specifically mentions the same two names--**“לי”** — that he mentioned in his self-sacrificing act of devotion while confronting Yitzchok. Furthermore, he was praying, as Rashi explains, that his offspring should not follow the path of Eisov--**“שיחול שמו עלי מתחילה ועד סוף, שלא ימצא פסול בזרע”** — who forgot the name of Hashem.

## The Wicked Son Represents Eisov Who Denied Hashem the G-d of Yisroel

Let us follow this line of reasoning to explain the question the author of the Haggodeh attributes to the wicked son: **“רשע מה”** **“רשע מה”** -- What does the wicked son say? **“What is this service to you?”** This question is designed to represent the wicked Eisov, who failed to employ the name of Hashem and mocked the performance of mitzvot. Attesting to this fact, the possuk states (Bereishis 25, 34): **“ויבז עשו את הבכורה”** — and Eisov belittled the birthright. Rashi teaches us that this possuk attests to Eisov’s wickedness and disregard for service to Hashem. Therefore, the author of the Haggodeh explains: **“לכם ולא לו, ולפי שהוציא את עצמו”** **“לכם ולא לו, ולפי שהוציא את עצמו”** — **“to you,”** but not to himself. Since he excludes himself from the group, he denies everything.

The answer to the Bnei Yissoscher’s question regarding the author of the Haggodeh’s response to the wicked son is now apparent. It says in the Haggodeh: **“ואף אתה הקהה את שניו ואמור לו, בעבור זה”** **“ואף אתה הקהה את שניו ואמור לו, בעבור זה”** **“עשה ה’ לי בצאתי ממצרים, לי ולא לו, אילו היה שם לא היה נגאל”** **“עשה ה’ לי בצאתי ממצרים, לי ולא לו, אילו היה שם לא היה נגאל”** You, too, should blunt his teeth, and say to him: **“It is because of this that Hashem did so for me when I went out of Egypt”** — **“for me,”** but not for him. Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed. After all, even the wicked son was among our ancestors and was redeemed from Egypt. Yet, as we have explained, the author of the Haggodeh is referring to Eisov, the wicked son, and his descendants. They are the ones who mock the mitzvot and ask brazenly: **“מה”** **“מה”** — **“לכם ולא לו”** — what is this service to you — specifically to you, and not to him. Therefore, he is answered in an appropriate fashion: **“בעבור זה עשה ה’ לי בצאתי ממצרים, לי ולא לו”** **“בעבור זה עשה ה’ לי בצאתי ממצרים, לי ולא לו”** **“אלו היה שם לא היה נגאל”** **“אלו היה שם לא היה נגאל”** It is because of this that Hashem did so for me when I went out of Egypt” — **“for me,”** but not for him. Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed. For, in truth, Eisov and his descendants were not exiled in Egypt; and had they been there, they surely would not have been redeemed, due to their heresy and denial of Hashem.

Continuing on along this exalted path, let us now address the strong question raised against the author of the Haggodeh, concerning the manner in which he chooses to reply to the wicked son. The Toreh’s reply to the evil son is: **“ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה”** **“ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה”** **“אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל”** **“אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל”** You shall say, **“It is a Pesach offering to Hashem, Who skipped over the houses of Bnei Yisroel in Egypt, while He smote the Egyptians, but He spared our households.”** Yet, the author of the Haggodeh advises to blunt the evil son’s teeth and exclude him from the general community of Yisroel. Why did he deviate from the response supplied by the Toreh?

We can now suggest that the holy Toreh is addressing a Jew who has been trapped in the wicked Eisov’s net and has strayed to the point that he asks his father a question typical of Eisov HaRasha: **“מה העבודה הזאת לכם”** **“מה העבודה הזאת לכם”** -- what is this service to you? To support and console the parents of this child, so that they do not give up hope

of returning him to the fold, the Toreh advises: **“ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה”** **“ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה”** **“אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל”** **“אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל”** You shall say, **“It is a Pesach offering to Hashem, Who skipped over the houses of Bnei Yisroel in Egypt, while He smote the Egyptians, but He spared our households.”**

It is seemingly difficult to comprehend why it was necessary for HKB”H to skip--**“פסח”** — over the households of Bnei Yisroel, while smiting the Egyptians. Certainly, HKB”H is omnipotent and could have exclusively killed the firstborn Egyptians without harming the firstborn of Yisroel without resorting to this act of skipping. Nevertheless, we can explain the matter based on the following possuk (Shemos 12, 21): **“ויקרא משה לכל זקני ישראל ויאמר אליהם, משכו וקחו לכם צאן”** **“ויקרא משה לכל זקני ישראל ויאמר אליהם, משכו וקחו לכם צאן”** **“למשפחותיכם ושחטו הפסח”** **“למשפחותיכם ושחטו הפסח”** Moshe called to all the elders of Yisroel and said to them, **“Draw away and take for yourselves one of the flock for your families, and slaughter the Pesach-offering.”** Rashi (ibid. 6) explains that they were engrossed in idolatry and it was necessary for them to separate themselves from that practice. Their idolatry, however, was not by choice but by coercion; therefore, HKB”H skipped over the households of Bnei Yisroel and devised a path of teshuvah for them.

This is truly a source of encouragement and consolation for the parents of such a wicked son. For although he has begun to ask heretical questions such as: **“מה העבודה הזאת לכם”**, they should not give up hope. Instead they must keep in mind: **“ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה”** **“ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה”** **“אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל”** **“אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל”** — that just as HKB”H spared the idolatrous members of Yisroel while smiting the Egyptians, by devising a path of teshuvah for them, so, too, this wicked son can make amends by means of teshuvah. In response to this encouraging news: **“ויקוד העם וישתחוו”** **“ויקוד העם וישתחוו”** -- and the people bowed and prostrated themselves. Rashi comments: **“בשורת הבנים שיהיו להם”** **“בשורת הבנים שיהיו להם”** — that they were encouraged by the news that their children would eventually perform teshuvah; that is truly a reason to rejoice.

The author of the Haggodeh, however, is addressing an entirely different wicked son. He is alluding to the true wicked son, Eisov and his descendants, the children of Edom. They purposely aim to corrupt the children of Yisroel and introduce perverted thoughts into their minds until they eventually ask: **“מה העבודה הזאת לכם”** — what is this service to you? In response to Eisov HaRasha, it is appropriate to blunt his teeth and reply harshly: **“בעבור זה עשה ה’ לי בצאתי ממצרים, לי ולא לו”** **“בעבור זה עשה ה’ לי בצאתי ממצרים, לי ולא לו”** **“אלו היה שם לא היה נגאל”** **“אלו היה שם לא היה נגאל”** It is because of this that Hashem did so for me when I went out of Egypt” — **“for me,”** but not for him. Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.

In conclusion, we can surmise that the author of the Haggodeh chose to introduce the wise son and the wicked son at the beginning of the Haggodeh as a means of giving praise and thanks to HKB”H. Yaakov Ovinu, the wise son, merited Yitzchok’s blessings for mentioning the two names Hashem Elokim in his statement: **“כי”** **“כי”** **“הקרה ה’ אלקיך לפני”** **“הקרה ה’ אלקיך לפני”** --because Hashem, your G-d, arranged it for me. Similarly, the wise son in the Haggodeh employs the same

two names: “אשר צוה ה' אלקיני אתכם” — which Hashem, our G-d, commanded you. On the other hand, the evil son, Eisov, neglects to mention Hashem's name, because he denies the truth; he excludes himself from the community and forfeits the blessings.

### “בא אחיך במרמה” -- במרמ"ה אפיקומן” Has the Same Numerical Value as

I have given much thought to providing an explanation for the response established by the author of the Haggodeh for the wise son: “ואף אתה אמור לו כהלכות הפסח, אין מפטירין אחר הפסח” -- And you, too, should tell him the laws of Pesach: “It is forbidden to eat ‘ Afikomom’ after the korban Pesach.” Let us begin by examining Yitzchok's remark to Eisov when he returned to receive the blessings (Bereishis 27, 35): “ויאמר בא אחיך במרמה ויקח ברכתך” — he said, “Your brother came with cleverness (במרמ"ה) and took your blessing. The following elucidation is supplied by the Medrish (B.R. 67, 4): “בא אחיך במרמה, רבי יוחנן אמר בא בחכמת תורתך” — cleverness implies that he applied the wisdom of his Toreh studies. We must endeavor to explain what specific Toreh wisdom Yaakov applied in this instance.

The sefer Bigdei Aharon (Toldos) provides a wonderful explanation based on a Medrish Pliah: “בא אחיך במרמה ויקח ברכתך, הוציא לו אפיקומן” — the Toreh is teaching us that Yaakov cleverly brought his father “ Afikomom.” Yaakov feared that Eisov would show up after him, Yitzchok would enjoy the delicacies he had prepared for him, and then Yitzchok would be forced to bless him as promised: “ועשה לי מטעמים כאשר אהבתי והביאה לי ואוכלה בעבור תברך נפשי” --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.

Therefore, Yaakov cleverly fed his father “ Afikomom” at the conclusion of his feast. As we all know, אין מפטירין אחר הפסח, אפיקומן, it is prohibited to eat after consuming the “ Afikomom” — so that its taste remains in one's mouth. Hence, due to this clever ploy, Yitzchok was not permitted to partake of Eisov's food; and, as a result, did not bless him. This is the lesson conveyed by the Medrish: “בא אחיך במרמה ויקח ברכתך, הוציא לו אפיקומן” — Yaakov cleverly brought him “ Afikomom,” hinting to him by this gesture that it was now prohibited for him to eat from the dishes that had been prepared for him by Eisov.

In the sefer Einei HaEidoh (Toldos), written by the great Rabbi Eliyahu hakohen of Izmir, the author of Shevet Musser, he presents a wonderful allusion in the name of the commentaries. The numerical value of the word במרמ"ה — which appears in the possuk to teach us that Yaakov acted cleverly — is identical to the numerical value of the word אפיקומן. This then is the message that Yitzchok conveys to Eisov: “בא אחיך במרמה” --your brother acted cleverly, במרמ"ה, indicating that he brought him אפיקומן. As Rabbi Yochanan explained in the Medrish: “בחכמת תורתך” — Yaakov applied his Toreh wisdom to feed his father “ Afikomom,” thereby prohibiting him from partaking of any further delicacies. Thanks to this wisdom: “ויקח ברכתך” — he took your blessing.

We now stand enlightened with regard to the author of the Haggodeh's intention. He formulated the wise son's question on the night of Pesach specifically mentioning the two names Hashem Elokim: “מה העדות החוקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקיני אתכם” -- What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the laws which Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you? He did so to invoke the blessings that Yaakov received from Yitzchok on the night of Pesach in the merit of mentioning these same two names: “כי הקרה ה' אלקיני לפני” — which Hashem, your G-d, arranged for me. Consequently, the response provided by the author of the Haggodeh to the wise son, who follows in the footsteps of Yaakov, is: “ואף אתה אמור לו כהלכות הפסח אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן” — by mentioning this halocheh concerning the “ Afikomom,” we invoke the merit of Yaakov, who acquired Yitzchok's blessings in the merit of this halocheh.

### A New Meaning for the Ritual of “Yachatz”

Continuing along this exalted path, let us explain this matter a bit further. In the process, we will examine a well-known custom that serves to remind us of the tremendous miracle experienced by Yaakov Ovinu on the night of Pesach — his receiving the blessings. At this juncture, one might inquire as to why it was even necessary for Yaakov to feed Yitzchok “ Afikomom,” which is meant to remind us of the korban Pesach. We have already learned from Rashi, citing the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, that Yaakov prepared two kid goats for Yitzchok — one for the Pesach offering and one for the Chagigah offering. Hence, it would seem that the “ Afikomom” was superfluous.

We also learned that the word במרמ"ה alludes to the fact that Yaakov fed Yitzchok “ Afikomom.” Apparently, even without the “ Afikomom,” Yitzchok could not have eaten anything else after consuming the meat of his korban Pesach. (We do not find anywhere that the korban Pesach itself is referred to as “ Afikomom.”)

Before proposing a beautiful idea to resolve all of these issues, let us briefly discuss the custom of breaking the middle matzeh in two, known as “yachatz.” The Shulchan Oruch explains the procedure as follows (O.C. 473, 6): “ויקח מצה האמצעית ויבצענה לשתיים, ויתן חציה לאחד מהמסובין לשומרה לאפיקומן, ונותנין אותה תחת המפה, וחציה השני ישים בין שתי השלימות” — he takes the middle matzeh and divides it in two; one part is given to one of those in attendance for safeguarding as the “ Afikomom”; it is placed under the tablecloth; the other portion of the middle matzeh is placed between the two remaining whole matzeps. The Magen Avrohom writes in the name of the Maharil, and this is the custom, that the larger portion is hidden as the “ Afikomom.”

I saw the following in the sefer Chamra Toveh, written by the great Rabbi Avrohom Simchah of Barnov, zy"a: “גוי שחולקין המצה”

**לחלק קטן וגדול, רומז על עשו בנו הגדול ויעקב הקטן** — the reason we split the matzeh into a small piece and a big piece is to represent Eisov, the bigger, older son and Yaakov, the smaller, younger son. He is alluding to a point made in the sefer Hamanig (69); the three matzehs which we set out on the night of the seder represent Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. Accordingly, the middle matzeh corresponds to Yitzchok Ovinu. Therefore, we specifically split the middle matzeh into two — a bigger piece and a smaller piece. This alludes to the fact that Yitzchok Ovinu had two sons — Yaakov the younger and smaller one and Eisov, the older and bigger one.

Now, it is an accepted tenet that the Toreh can be interpreted in many different ways and has seventy different facets — “yesh shivim ponim la'Toreh.” As such, I would like to take the liberty of taking this great Rabbi's wonderful lead, but to present a diametrically opposite interpretation.

I am basing my interpretation on the following possuk concerning the exodus from Egypt (Shemos 4, 22): **“כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּנִי בְכוֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל”** — so said Hashem, “My firstborn son is Yisroel.” Rashi comments: **“וּמְדַרְשׁוּ”** **כָּאֵן חֲתָם הַקֶּבֶה עַל מַכִּירַת הַבְּכוֹרָה שֶׁלְקַח יַעֲקֹב מֵעֶשׂוֹ”** — according to the Medrish, with this declaration, HKB”H gives His seal of approval and validation to the sale of the birthright which Yaakov acquired from Eisov. Seeing as HKB”H approved of Yaakov's receiving the birthright, the larger portion of the “ Afikomon,” which is temporarily concealed, represents Yaakov, the greater of the two brothers; whereas the smaller portion which is placed between the other two whole matzehs represents Eisov, the brother of lesser stature.

### **Yaakov Wished to Demonstrate for Yitzchok the Difference between the Two Portions of Matzeh**

Still, we must explain the significance of the allusion to Yaakov and Eisov on this special and holy night. We can explain the matter based on the statement made by Eisov after Yaakov successfully acquired the blessings from his father Yitzchok on Pesach night (Bereishis 27, 36): **“הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פַעֲמַיִם, אֵת בְּכוֹרְתִי לָקַח וְהִנֵּה עֵתָה”** — **לָקַח בְּרַכְתִּי** — it is fitting that he was named Yaakov; he has now outmaneuvered me twice; he took my birthright and now he has taken my blessing.

Rashi explains in the name of the Medrish Tanchuma: **“לָמָּה חָרַד”** **יִצְחָק, אָמַר שְׂמָא עוֹן יֵשׁ בִּי שְׁבַרְכְתִי קֶטְן לְפָנַי גְּדוֹל וְשִׁנִּיתִי סֹדֵר הַיְחָס, הִתְחִיל עֲשׂו מַצְעֵק וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פַעֲמַיִם, אָמַר לוֹ אָבִיו, מָה עָשָׂה לָךְ, אָמַר לוֹ אֵת בְּכוֹרְתִי לָקַח, אָמַר בְּכָךְ הֵייתִי מִצַּר וְחָרַד שְׂמָא עִבְרַתִּי עַל שׁוֹרַת הַדִּין, עֲכָשִׂיו לְבַכּוֹר בְּרַכְתִּי גַם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה”** — why did Yitzchok tremble? He said, “Perhaps there is a sin in me that I blessed the younger ahead of the elder, and I deviated from the order of lineage?” Eisov began to cry out, “He outwitted me these two times!” His father said to him, “What other things did he do to you?” He replied, “He took my birthright as firstborn.” Yitzchok said, “Over this I was distressed and trembling, lest I crossed the line of the law. Now, I realize that I blessed the legitimate firstborn. He shall also be blessed!”

We can now rejoice and better appreciate the tremendous wisdom demonstrated by Yaakov, when he came to his father **בְּמַרְמֵה**, with cleverness, alluding to his use of the **אִפִּיקוֹמֵן** — which possesses the same numerical value as **בְּמַרְמֵה**. Yaakov cleverly fed Yitzchok “ Afikomon,” so that he would not partake of Eisov's delicacies. We posed the following question: Since Yitzchok ate an actual korban Pesach, why did Yaakov bring him “ Afikomon”? To resolve this problem, let us refer to the explanation of the Chasam Sofer (Toldos) addressing Yitzchok's motives for wanting to give Eisov the blessings in the first place rather than Yaakov, the innocent, dedicated Toreh scholar:

**“נִרְאֶה דִּיצְחָק יָדַע כִּי יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם וְעֵשׂו יוֹדֵעַ צִיד, אַךְ חוֹשֵׁב לְצַדִּיק, וַיְהִי ב' אַחִים אֱלוֹ כִּישְׁשֹׁכַר וְזוּבֹלוֹן, וַיַּעֲקֹב מִתְבַּרֵךְ בַּעֲבוּדָתוֹ, וַיְהִי עֲשׂו מְשׁוּעָבֵד לַיַּעֲקֹב לַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ כָּל צַרְכּוֹ כְּזוּבֹלוֹן וַיִּשְׁשֹׁכַר, וַיַּעֲקֹב מְשׁוּעָבֵד לַעֲשׂו בַּהוֹרָאָה אִיסוּר וְהִיתָר, כְּדַכְתִּיב לְהַדִּיא בִּישְׁשֹׁכַר (בְּרֵאשִׁית מֵט טו) וַיֵּט שְׁכָמוֹ לְסַבּוֹל וַיְהִי לְמַס עוֹבֵד.”**

According to the Chasam Sofer, Yitzchok recognized his two sons' distinct traits and natures. Although, Eisov was a hunter, Yitzchok still thought that he was righteous. He envisioned that they would work hand in hand — according to the paradigm of Zevulun and Yissocher. Yaakov would dedicate his life to the service of Hashem and Zevulun would support him. In return, Yaakov would teach and guide Eisov in matters of halocheh.

Viewed in this light, let us suggest that this is precisely what Yaakov wished to demonstrate to Yitzchok by giving him “ Afikomon.” In truth, in the times of the Beis HaMikdosh, they would eat the korban Pesach. During times of exile, however, when Yisroel would be exiled by Eisov and his descendants, who would destroy the Beis HaMikdosh, they would not be able to offer and partake of a real korban Pesach. In its stead, they would need to suffice by taking the second matzeh — corresponding to Yitzchok — and breaking it into two pieces, representing Yaakov and Eisov. This ritual act is meant to demonstrate the enormous gulf that separates Yaakov and Eisov — the epitome of kedusheh and the epitome of tumah.

This entire ploy was designed to make Yitzchok realize that his original scheme was impossible. Giving Eisov the blessings in the hope that he would support Yaakov's Toreh study and service of Hashem was not realistic. Their differences were too great. In fact, Eisov waged an all out war to annihilate Yaakov. Therefore, it was not conceivable that he would one day support Yaakov and his descendants in their sacred endeavors. Additionally, Yaakov intended to demonstrate to Yitzchok via the “ Afikomon” that the bigger piece of matzeh actually represented Yaakov, the legitimate firstborn — who had received HKB”H's stamp of approval. Thus, the blessings should deservedly be given to him as the firstborn. This, then, is the significance of Yitzchok's statement to Eisov: **“וַיִּקַּח בְּרַכְתְּךָ”** — **בְּמַרְמֵה** — which has the exact same numerical equivalent as **אִפִּיקוֹמֵן** — to rightfully acquire the blessings.

**לְזָכוֹת וְלִרְפוּאָה שְׁלִימָה שֶׁל בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן בֶּן רַחֵל וְשִׁמּוּאֵל אֶהְרֵן הִי”**