

"Yaakov Avinu Never Died"

Yaakov's Neshamah Subdues Eisav and His Descendants Below Yisrael's Neshamah Subdues Eisav's Ministering Angel Above

In this week's parsha, parshas Vayechi, we read (Bereishis 47, 28): **"ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרה שנה ויהי ימי יעקב שני חייו שבע שנים וארבעים ומאת שנה, ויקרבו ימי ישראל למות ויקרא לבנו ליוסף ויאמר לו, אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך שים נא ידך תחת ירכי ועשית עמדי חסד ואמת אל נא תקברני במצרים, ושכבתי עם אבותי וגשאתני ממצרים וקברתני בקבורתם, ויאמר אנכי--Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim seventeen years; and the days of Yaakov, the years of his life, were one hundred and forty-seven years. The time approached for Yisrael to die, so he called for his son, for Yosef, and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your eyes, please place your hand under my thigh and do kindness and truth with me; please do not bury me in Mitzrayim. And I will lie down with my fathers and you shall transport me out of Mitzrayim and bury me in their grave." He said, "I will act in accordance with your request."**

All of the commentaries, including Rishonim and Acharonim, struggle to explain why the Torah detailed the number of years Yaakov Avinu lived in Mitzrayim: **"Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim seventeen years."** After all, it states here: **"The years of his life, were one hundred and forty-seven years."** In last week's parsha, when Yaakov comes to Mitzrayim, it states (ibid. 47, 9): **"Yaakov said to Pharaoh, 'The days of the years of my sojourns have been a hundred and thirty years.'" From these two pesukim, it is clear that he dwelled in Mitzrayim for a mere seventeen years. We will present several of the possible answers to this apparent difficulty.**

Yaakov's Seventeen Years versus Yosef's Seventeen Years

Rabeinu Bachayei, in his introduction to this week's parsha, addresses this question at length. He writes that the Torah

wanted to teach us a valuable lesson regarding the importance of the mitzvah of tzedakah; HKB"H compensates the person who gives tzedakah **"midah k'neged midah"**—"measure for measure." Here are his sacred words:

"וכן מצינו ביוסף שפרנס את אביו שבע עשרה שנה והיא מדה כנגד מדה, בזכות צדקה שעשה יעקב עמו שפרנס אותו שבע עשרה שנה, שהרי כשפירש יוסף מאביו בן שבע עשרה שנה היה, שנאמר (בראשית לז-ב) אלה תולדות יעקב יוסף בן שבע עשרה שנה, ובזכות שפרנס יעקב את יוסף שבע עשרה שנה, מצינו שפרנס יוסף ליעקב במצרים שבע עשרה שנה מדה כנגד מדה. וזהו שכתוב ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרה שנה."

Similarly, we find that Yosef supported his father for seventeen years. This is a demonstration of **"midah k'neged midah,"** in return for the tzedakah that Yaakov performed on his behalf—supporting him for seventeen years. For, when Yosef departed from his father, he was seventeen years old, as it states (Bereishis 37, 2): **"These are the generations of Yaakov, Yosef, at the age of seventeen years . . ."** In the merit of Yaakov supporting Yosef for seventeen years, we find that Yosef supported Yaakov in Mitzrayim for seventeen years—tit for tat (**"midah k'neged midah"**). This is the significance of that which is written, **"Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim seventeen years."**

Similar explanations are provided by the Da'as Zekeinim of the Tosafists, the Ba'al HaTurim and the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. The Ohr HaChaim hakadosh adds an allusion based on the passuk (Koheles 4, 9): **"טובים השנים מן האחד אשר יש להם שכר"**—"טובים הם שנים—two are better than one, for they get a greater return for their labor." The passuk employs the words **"טובים"** (the plural of **"טוב"**) and **"טוב"**; the numerical value of **"טוב"** is seventeen. Thus, the passuk alludes to the fact that both Yaakov and Yosef supported each other for seventeen years.

Additionally, we find in the commentaries of the Ba'al HaTurim, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, the Chizkuni and others that the Torah is teaching us that those last seventeen years of Yaakov's life were considered true life. During those years, he lived a life of peaceful pleasure and luxury under the canopy of his son Yosef, who was the King of Mitzrayim. The other years of his life, on the other hand, were filled with misery, due to all of the hardships that he endured.

A similar explanation is provided by Rabeinu Bachayei (in his introduction to parshas Chayei Sarah), but he adds that the first seventeen years of Yosef's life, before he was sold into slavery, were good and pleasant years for him. During those years, he learned with Yaakov and became the heir to the Torah that Yaakov had learned in the Beis Midrash of Shem and Eiver. He brings a wonderful allusion to this fact: "וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה כְּשִׁפְיֵרֶשׁ יוֹסֵף מִמֶּנּוּ, וְשֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, הָרִי שְׁלוֹשִׁים וָאַרְבַּע מִנִּין וַיְחִי", כי הם היו עיקר חייו של יעקב, וכל מה "וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה כְּשִׁפְיֵרֶשׁ יוֹסֵף מִמֶּנּוּ, וְשֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, הָרִי שְׁלוֹשִׁים וָאַרְבַּע מִנִּין וַיְחִי"—Yosef was seventeen years old when he was separated from his father; they spent another seventeen years together in Mitzrayim; all told, they were together thirty-four years, the numerical value of the word "וַיְחִי". Those were the essential years of Yaakov's life; the rest were marked by hardships and agony.

The Ohr HaChaim hakadosh adds that by finishing his life with those seventeen good and peaceful years, it was as if his entire life was good. For, we have a principle that everything follows or is characterized by the conclusion, as it is written (Iyov 8, 7): "וְהָיָה רֵאשִׁיתְךָ מִצְעָר וְאַחֲרִיתְךָ יִשְׁגָּה מְאֹד"—while your beginning will be painful, at the end your life you will thrive. Elsewhere, it states (Koheles 7, 8): "טוֹב אַחֲרִית דְּבַר מְרֵאשִׁית"—the end of a matter is better than its beginning.

This then is the message of the passuk: "וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה"—by living his last seventeen years peacefully and pleasantly, "וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה"—it was as if the remainder of his life was similarly transformed; all of his years were peaceful and pleasant. In truth, this is explained quite nicely in the Midrash cited by the Ohr HaChaim (Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah 5); it describes how Yaakov lamented all of the hardships he had endured:

"מִיָּד נִתְּגַלְגַּל רַחֲמֵי שֶׁל הַקֹּב"ה, וְנָתַן לִיעֲקֹב שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה סְמוּךְ לְזִקְנוֹתָיו טוֹבִים מֵעֵין עוֹלָם הַבָּא. מִכָּאן אָמְרוּ כָּל שֶׁהִשְׁגָּתוֹ שָׁנָה אַחַת טוֹבָה סְמוּךְ לְזִקְנוֹתוֹ סִימָן יָפֵה לוֹ, וְכָל שֶׁהִשְׁגָּתוֹ שָׁנָה אַחַת רָעָה סְמוּךְ לְזִקְנוֹתוֹ סִימָן רָע לוֹ, יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ

הָיָה בְּטוֹבָה שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה שֶׁהָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, וְהֵעֵלָה עָלָיו הַקֹּב"ה כְּאִילוּ כָּל יָמָיו הָיָה בְּטוֹבָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה וָגו'"

—immediately HKB"H showed His mercy; he gave Yaakov seventeen good years in his old age, resembling Olam HaBa. From here, it is said that anyone who experiences a single good year in his final years, it should be viewed as a good omen. Conversely, anyone who experiences a single bad year in his final years, it should be viewed as a bad omen. Yaakov Avinu experienced goodness during his seventeen years in Mitzrayim; HKB"H made it seem as if his entire life was good.

The Neshamah of Yisrael Vanished but the Neshamah of Yaakov Remained in His Physical Body

As is the way of Torah, which is multifaceted and can be elucidated in many different ways, I, too, will contribute my part in explaining why the Torah found it necessary to specify that Yaakov lived his last seventeen years in Mitzrayim. First, however, let us reconcile why the parsha begins by utilizing the name Yaakov: "וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שֶׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה", yet immediately afterwards, in the following passuk, switches to the name Yisrael: "וַיָּקֻרְבוּ יָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת".

Additionally, it is worthwhile reconciling the apparent contradiction regarding Yaakov Avinu's passing from this world. For, it states subsequently (ibid. 49, 33): "וַיֹּכֵל יַעֲקֹב לְצוּוֹת אֶת בָּנָיו: וַיֹּאסֹף רִגְלָיו אֶל הַמִּטָּה וַיִּגּוֹעַ וַיֹּאסֹף אֶל עַמּוּיָו—when Yaakov finished instructing his sons, he drew in his feet onto the bed; he expired and was brought to his people. Rashi comments: "Dying is not said of him; our Rabbis of blessed memory said that this implies that Yaakov Avinu did not die (Ta'anis 5a)." This statement is difficult to comprehend; it seems to contradict the passuk above which states explicitly: "The time approached for Yaakov to die." This passuk clearly implies that he actually died.

Let us begin to illuminate the matter with an important principle from the immaculate teachings of the Alshich hakadosh. He writes that Yaakov Avinu possessed two distinct neshamot. The first was the neshamah of Yaakov, with which he was born, and for which he was given the name Yaakov as he emerged into this world. The second and more exalted neshamah was the neshamah of Yisrael. He earned this neshamah after combating the angel of Eisav and vanquishing it. This is reflected by the angel's declaration (ibid.

32, 29): "וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יֵעָקֵב עוֹד שֵׁמֶךְ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שְׂרִית עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַם
"וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יֵעָקֵב עוֹד שֵׁמֶךְ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שְׂרִית עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַם
is Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have striven with the Divine and
with men and you have overcome."

Accordingly, the Alshich hakadosh teaches us that it was only the more exalted neshamah of Yisrael that vanished from Yaakov's physical body and ascended to the heavenly heights. The lesser neshamah of Yaakov did not depart from his physical body. For this reason, our blessed sages state specifically (Ta'anis 5a): "יֵעָקֵב אֲבִינוּ לֹא מָת" —**Yaakov Avinu did not die.** Thus, we find that whenever death is mentioned or associated with Yaakov, it is only with regards to the name Yisrael, but never with regards to the name Yaakov.

A Precious Introduction from the Shela Hakadosh and Eliyahu Ba'al Shem zy"a

Now, let us examine how the words of the Alshich hakadosh coincide beautifully with the words of the Shela hakadosh (Vayishlach). He teaches us an incredible idea concerning Yaakov Avinu's passing from this world; I found this same idea expressed in the sefer Michlol Yofi on Koheles, authored by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Eliyahu Ba'al Shem of Worms, zy"a, who lived concurrently with the Shela hakadosh. He relates this idea to the passuk (Koheles 4, 2): "וְשִׁבַּח אֲנִי אֶת הַמֵּתִים שֶׁכָּבַר מֵתוֹ" —**so I consider more fortunate the dead who have already died.** They reveal that when Yosef was sold into slavery, and especially after the shevatim took Binyamin to Mitzrayim with them, the neshamah of Yaakov left him, leaving him only with the neshamah of Yisrael. When the shevatim informed him that Yosef was still alive, the neshamah of Yaakov returned to him as well.

This is the message conveyed by the passuk (Bereishis 45, 27): "וַיֹּרֵא אֶת הָעֲגֹלֹת אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף לְשֵׂאת אוֹתוֹ וְתַחֲי רֹחַ יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם" —**and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him; then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived.** After it became clear to him that Yosef, his favorite son, was alive, his spirit returned to him. Therefore, the passuk states explicitly: "וְתַחֲי רֹחַ יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם" —**then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived. then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived.** This is why when Yaakov passed away, the neshamah of Yaakov did not leave him; only the neshamah of Yisrael did; because the neshamah of Yaakov had already experienced the taste of death when it departed due to the agony resulting from the sale of Yosef.

This enlightens us with regard to the meaning of the passuk: "וַיֹּחֲי רֹחַ יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂר שָׁנָה". As explained, the neshamah of Yaakov left him when Yosef was sold; this constituted a form of death for the neshamah of Yaakov. When he received the wonderful news that Yosef was still alive, the neshamah of Yaakov returned to him, as reflected by the words: "וְתַחֲי רֹחַ יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם". Seen in this light, the neshamah of Yaakov underwent "techiyas hameisim"—resurrection of the dead. This then is the interpretation of the passuk: "וַיֹּחֲי רֹחַ יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂר שָׁנָה"—Yaakov came back to life, in the sense of "techiyas hameisim," in the land of Mitzrayim, for seventeen years.

Hence, the Torah proceeds to tell us: "וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת" —that we shouldn't mistakenly think that after those seventeen years, the neshamah of Yaakov left him once again. For, in fact, only the neshamah of Yisrael left him, as a form of death. The neshamah of Yaakov remained hovering above his body forever, in keeping with the notion of: "יֵעָקֵב אֲבִינוּ לֹא מָת" —**Yaakov Avinu never died.** So, when the passuk states: "Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim seventeen years"—it is stating that he only lived in Mitzrayim seventeen years; subsequently, when he was buried in Me'aras HaMachpeilah, he continued to live on in Eretz Yisrael.

The Neshamah of Yaakov Represents a Sword while the Neshamah of Yisrael Represents a Bow

Like a loyal servant grabbing onto his masters' coattails, I would like to explain further the wonders of Hashem and why he orchestrated that the neshamah of Yisrael would leave Yaakov, while the neshamah of Yaakov would remain with him down on earth permitting the statement: "יֵעָקֵב אֲבִינוּ לֹא מָת" —**Yaakov Avinu never died.** Now, before passing away, Yaakov says to Yosef (ibid. 48, 22): "וְאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ שְׁכֶם אֶחָד עַל אַחִיךָ אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיָּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחָרְבִי וּבִקְשָׁתִי" —**and I have given you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Emori with my sword and with my bow.** Targum Onkelos writes: "בְּחָרְבִי וּבִקְשָׁתִי, בְּצִלּוֹתִי וּבִבְעוֹתִי"—he interprets the sword and bow as allusions to prayers and entreaties. It behooves us to explain why Onkelos compares the various forms of supplication to the sword and bow.

The Binah L'Itim (Drush 62) explains why tefilah is specifically compared to these two types of weapons — the sword and the bow. The sword is useful to attack and wound an enemy from close range; whereas the bow shoots arrows which strike an

enemy from a distance. Now, we have learned in the Gemara (B.B. 16a): "הוא שטן, הוא יצר הרע, הוא מלאך המות" — **it is the Satan; it is the yetzer hara; it is the Angel of Death.** The Gemara (ibid.) goes on to explain: "במתניתא תנא, יורד ומתעה, ועולה ומרגיז, נוטל רשות ונוטל נשמה" — **it was taught in a Baraita: It (the Satan) descends and lures into sin; it then ascends and incites; it takes permission and takes the soul.** Rashi explains that at first it descends to this world to lead people astray; at this stage, it is known as the yetzer hara. Subsequently, it ascends back to the heavens to prosecute these people; at this stage, it is known as the Satan, because it accuses and prosecutes. Then it receives permission above to kill the sinner; it returns to earth and takes the neshamah; at this stage, it is recognized as the Malach HaMaves — the Angel of Death.

It is for this reason that Yaakov Avinu compared tefilah to the sword and the bow: **"Which I took from the hand of the Emori with my sword and with my bow."** For, it possesses the capacity to act as a sword — striking the yetzer hara from close proximity, when it attempts to persuade a person to commit an aveirah. On the other hand, even if a person falls prey to it, chas v'shalom, his tefilah possesses the capacity to function as a bow and strike the Satan from a distance, when it ascends to accuse and prosecute.

It appears that we can add a spicy tidbit to this idea based on Rashi's comment regarding Yaakov's statement to Yosef: **"And I have given you one portion more than your brothers"**—he bequeathed the birthright to Yosef, entitling him to a portion double that of the other brothers; **"which I took from the hand of the Emori with my sword and with my bow, from Eisav who performed acts characteristic of the Emori."** For, he had succeeded in acquiring the birthright from the wicked Eisav in the merit of his tefilah.

We see that Yaakov Avinu battled the wicked Eisav both down on earth and in the heavens above. In this world, he battled Eisav, confiscating from him the kedushah of the birthright and also Yitzchak's blessings—which Eisav almost received by deceiving his father Yitzchak into believing that he was a tzaddik. In addition, he battled Eisav's ministering angel, the "samech-mem," who stands up above and prosecutes Yisrael, as it is written (Bereishis 32, 25): **"ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק"** — **and Yaakov remained alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.** Rashi explains based on the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayishlach 8): **"זה סמאל שרו של"**

—this man was Samael, Eisav's ministering angel, who intended to kill him.

We have now gained a better understanding of Yaakov's statement: **"Which I took from the hand of the Emori with my sword and with my bow."** He compared his tefilah to the sword, which he used to defeat the wicked Eisav from close range, down in Olam HaZeh. He also compared it to the bow, which he used to defeat the ministering angel of Eisav, who ascends to the heavens, to the "Kisei HaKavod," to prosecute Yisrael. The two together—the power of tefilah functioning like a sword and the power of tefilah functioning like a bow—effectively subdue the wicked Eisav down below and his ministering angel up above.

The Name Yaakov Subdued Eisav Down Below The Name Yisrael Subdued His Ministering Angel Up Above

Upon careful consideration, it appears that Yaakov merited these two names—Yaakov and Yisrael—so that he could combat Eisav down below with the name Yaakov and combat Eisav's angel up above with the name Yisrael. [As explained above, these two names correspond to two distinct neshamot—one more exalted than the other.] Let us explain. The name Yaakov was given to him at birth when he grabbed hold of Eisav's heel ("ah-keiv"), as it is written (Bereishis 25, 25): **"ויצא הראשון אדמוני כולו כאדרת שער ויקראו שמו עשו, ואחרי כן יצא אחיו וידו אוחזת בעקב עשו" — the first one emerged red, all of him was like a hairy mantle; so they called his name Eisav. After that his brother emerged with his hand grasping onto the heel of Eisav; and he called his name Yaakov.** Rashi points out that it was HKB"H who named him Yaakov.

According to our current discussion, this alludes to Yaakov's power to grab onto Eisav's heel in order to prevent him from chasing after Yisrael with the heels of his feet to harm them. We even find that Eisav himself acknowledges the significance of the name Yaakov, as he says to his father Yitzchak (ibid. 27, 36): **"ויאמר הכי קרא שמו יעקב ויעקבני זה פעמים את בכורתי לקח והנה עתה" — he said, "Is he not fittingly named Yaakov? For he has outwitted me these two times; he took away my birthright and see, now he took away my blessings!"**

The name Yisrael, however, was only bestowed upon him after his encounter with the angel of Eisav—the "samech-

mem," the Satan, who ascends to the heavens to present his accusations and prosecute Yisrael. When Yaakov defeated him, the angel said to him: **לֹא יִעֲקֹב יֹאמַר עוֹד שְׁמוֹ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי**—"Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael; for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed." A wonderful allusion to this fact is presented by the Panim Yafos (Vayishlach) and the Agra D'Pirka. The name **יִשְׂרָאֵל** (541) possesses a numerical equivalent equal to the sum of the names **יִעֲקֹב** (182) and **שֵׁטָן** (359). This indicates that the power of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is superior to the power of **יִעֲקֹב** in its ability to subjugate the Satan and transform it into a positive force for good. Consequently, it will not accuse and prosecute Yisrael and furthermore it will concede that the Berachos rightfully belong to them, as it conceded to Yaakov.

This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the passuk (ibid. 32, 25): **וַיֹּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיִּאֲבֹק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֹלֹת הַשָּׁחַר**—**and Yaakov remained alone and a man wrestled with him until dawn**. When the angel of Eisav recognized: **וַיֹּתֵר יַעֲקֹב**—"וַיֹּתֵר יַעֲקֹב"—that he had only one name, **"יִעֲקֹב"**, without the name **"יִשְׂרָאֵל"**, he figured that he only had ample power to battle Eisav down below. Therefore, he mustered up the strength to wrestle with Yaakov until the break of dawn. Yet, when he saw that he still could not overpower Yaakov, he understood that Yaakov already possessed the power of **"יִשְׂרָאֵל"**, enabling Yaakov to subdue him. Hence, he immediately proclaimed: **"Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael; for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed."**

This now enlightens us and gives us cause to rejoice at having gained a better understanding of the wondrous ways of Hashem. When it came time for Yaakov Avinu to depart from this world, HKB"H arranged for the neshamah of Yaakov—whose power is well-suited to combat Eisav down below—to remain below in Olam HaZeh hovering over his body. Thus, he would be able to pray on behalf of Yisrael in times of trouble. In this manner, he could subdue the klipah of Eisav and his descendants down below in Olam HaZeh and prevent them from pursuing Yisrael, fulfilling the prophetic words: **וַיִּדּוּ אוֹחֶזֶת בְּעֵקֶב עֵשָׂו**—**with his hand grasping onto the heel of Eisav**. This reality prompted our blessed sages to remark: **"יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ לֹא מָת"**—**Yaakov Avinu did not die!**

On the other hand, the neshamah of Yisrael, which has the additional power to subdue the ministering angel of Eisav, HKB"H elevated to the heavenly realm, as indicated by the

words of the passuk: **"וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת"**—**the time for Yisrael to die approached**. This would enable him to combat Eisav's angel, the "samech-mem," who ascends and prosecutes Yisrael. The two working in concert—the neshamah of Yaakov below and the neshamah of Yisrael above—are well-suited to battle and subjugate Yisrael's enemies below and above. This is what Yaakov did while he was still alive, as he expressed to Yosef: **"Which I took from the hand of the Emori with my sword and with my bow."**

קִרְעַ שֵׁטָן יִעֲקֹב יִשְׂרָאֵל The Two Names Equal

This explains very nicely what the Chasam Sofer (Vayishlach) writes regarding the surprising fact that Eisav's angel acted so benevolently toward Yaakov by proclaiming: **"Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael; for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed."** His explanation is based on a careful examination of the language employed by the Torah. When HKB"H announces to Yaakov the addition of the name Yisrael, it states (Bereishis 35, 10): **וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֱלֹקִים שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב לֹא יִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ עוֹד יִעֲקֹב כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שְׁמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא**—**Then G-d said to him, "Your name is Yaakov; your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but rather Yisrael shall be your name."** We must endeavor to explain why HKB"H prefaces His remarks to Yaakov with the seemingly superfluous statement: **"Your name is Yaakov."** It would have sufficed to say: **"Your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but rather Yisrael shall be your name."**

We can explain the matter based on what we have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 12b): **לֹא יִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ עוֹד יַעֲקֹב כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה**—"not that the name Yaakov will be uprooted, but rather Yisrael will be the primary name and Yaakov will be secondary to it." Therefore, HKB"H prefaces his announcement by emphasizing that: **"שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב"—your name is Yaakov**. Thus, HKB"H made it extremely clear that even in the future, the name Yaakov would remain in effect; however: **"לֹא יִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ עוֹד יַעֲקֹב"**—it would not remain the primary name; **"כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שְׁמוֹ"**—Yisrael would become the primary name and Yaakov would assume a role of secondary significance.

Eisav's ministering angel, however, cleverly omitted the two prefatory words **"שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב"**. Instead, he stated directly: **לֹא יִעֲקֹב יֹאמַר עוֹד שְׁמוֹ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל**—**Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael**—because he intended to uproot

and replace the name Yaakov completely. He wished that the name Yaakov would no longer remain in effect but would be replaced for all practical purposes by the name Yisrael. Here the Chasam Sofer provides us with an explanation. The two names יעקב ישראל together possess a numerical value equivalent to the words קר"ע שט"ן—alluding to the fact that these two names in conjunction possess the power to destroy and eliminate the satan. Therefore, the "samech-mem" wished to eliminate the name Yaakov completely, so that in the future he would only be called Yisrael and would lack this dual power.

Based on our current discussion, an explanation is forthcoming. The two names יעקב ישראל equal קר"ע שט"ן. Acting together, the two names are better-suited to eliminate the Satan, Eisav's ministering angel—whose sole purpose is to influence and assist Eisav and his descendants down below in their battle against Yisrael. By means of the two names Yaakov and Yisrael, its power is negated both below and above. For, the name Yaakov negates the power of Eisav and his descendants down below; while the name Yisrael negates the power of Eisav's angel up above.

This being the case, when Eisav's angel saw that Yaakov successfully overpowered him, he realized that Yaakov accomplished this feat utilizing the power of the neshamah of Yisrael—whose power is designed to subdue Eisav's

ministering angel above. Therefore, he malevolently planned to outwit Yaakov. For at that juncture, Yaakov had yet to meet up with Eisav. So, had he taken the name of Yaakov away from him, leaving him only the name Yisrael, Eisav would have been able to overcome him. This was his intent as conveyed by his comment to Yaakov: "לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל"—**your name will no longer be Yaakov but only Yisrael.** HKB"H, however, comprehending his evil intent, prefaced His statement to Yaakov with the words: "שמך יעקב"—**your name is Yaakov**—indicating that the name Yaakov would remain in place as before; thus, Yaakov withstood the threat of Eisav and subdued him.

Let us conclude with the words of David HaMelech, Yisrael's sweet psalmist (Tehillim 14, 7): "מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל בשוב"—**if only He would grant from Tziyon Yisrael's salvation! When Hashem restores the captivity of His people, Yaakov will exult, Yisrael will rejoice.** For the sake of the future geulah, Yaakov Avinu will employ both of his neshamot. He will use the neshamah of Yaakov down below to subdue Eisav and all the nations of the world; he will use the neshamah of Yisrael up above to subdue Eisav's angel—the "samech-mem"—and all of the ministering angels of the nations of the world. As a result: **"Yaakov will exult; Yisrael will rejoice!"**—in celebration of Yisrael's geulah, swiftly, in our times. Amen.



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