

“דרך כוכב מיעקב וקם שבט מישראל”

How Does Eisav Have the Audacity to Sit among the Tzaddikim in Gan Eden until HKB”H Drags Him Out by Force

In this week’s parsha, parshas Balak, we read about the prophecies uttered by the wicked Bilam. HKB”H forces him to bless Yisrael against his will. In the following nevuah, he prophesies about Yisrael’s future geulah (Bamidbar 24, 17): **“אראנו ולא עתה”** אשרונו ולא קרוב, **דרך כוכב מיעקב וקם שבט מישראל**, ומוחץ פאתי מואב וקרקר כל בני **“I will see, but not now; I view it, but it is not near. A star shot forth from Yaakov and a rod has risen from Yisrael, and he shall strike down the extremities of Moav and undermine all the children of Sheis.** Apropos this nevuah, we find a fascinating passage in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Nedarim 12a):

“דרך כוכב מיעקב, ממי דרך כוכב ועתיד לעמוד, מיעקב. רב אחא בשם רבי חונא, עתיד עשו הרשע לעטוף טליתו ולישב עם הצדיקים בגן עדן לעתיד לבוא, והקב”ה גוררו ומוציאו משם, מה טעמא, (עובדיה א-ד) אם תגביה כנשר ואם בין כוכבים שים קנך משם אורידך נאום ה’, ואין כוכבים אלא צדיקים, כמוה דאת אמר (דניאל יב-ג) ומצדיקי הרבים ככוכבים לעולם ועד.”

“A star shot forth from Yaakov.’ From whom did the star shoot forth and is it destined to stand? From Yaakov. Rav Acha said in the name of Rav Chuna: In the future Eisav will wrap a tallit around himself and sit himself down amongst the tzaddikim in Gan Eden, and HKB”H will drag him out of there; why? Because the passuk states (Ovadia 1, 4): ‘Even if you raise us like an eagle or if you place your nest among the stars, I will bring you down from there—the word of Hashem.’ Here the stars are an allusion to the righteous, the tzaddikim, as we see in the passuk (Daniel 12, 3): ‘And those who make the multitudes righteous, like the stars, forevermore.’”

Clearly, this passage deserves further elaboration. First of all, the Yerushalmi expounds on this passuk--“דרך כוכב מיעקב”—employing a question and answer format. That in and of itself is interesting; furthermore, the question and answer are so straightforward that it is unclear what the Yerushalmi is trying to teach us. The passuk states explicitly that the star shot forth from Yaakov; how else could we interpret the passuk?

Secondly, the Yerushalmi associates this passuk with Rav Chuna’s statement regarding Eisav. He states that in the future, Eisav will have the audacity to wrap himself in his tallit and sit among the tzaddikim in Gan Eden, until HKB”H will come and drag him out of there. Where do we find even a semblance of an allusion in this nevuah of Bilam’s to Eisav’s future attempted deception?

Thirdly, it is extremely surprising! After all, this nevuah speaks of the future geulah—when Hashem’s light will be revealed in its full glory throughout creation, and the words of our prayer (Aleinu L’shabeiach) will finally be fulfilled: **“והאלילים כרות יכרתון לתקן עולם”**—and the false gods will be utterly exterminated to perfect the world as the kingdom of Shakkai; and all mankind will invoke Your name, to turn back to You, all the wicked of the earth. So, how is it even imaginable that Eisav—who rebelled against Hashem and His Torah in this world-- will have the audacity to wrap a tallit around himself and attempt to sit amongst the tzaddikim in Gan Eden? Surely he will realize the truth about himself—that he is thoroughly wicked and belongs in Gehinom rather than in Gan Eden. And can it be that no one will prevent him from entering Gan Eden and no one will bother evicting him from there until HKB”H, so to speak, will do so Himself: **“והקב”ה גוררו ומוציאו משם”**?

Furthermore, we may deduce from the language of the Yerushalmi: **“והקב”ה גוררו ומוציאו משם”**—**“and HKB”H will drag him out of there”**—that Eisav seems to feel that he has some justification for sitting amongst the righteous in Gan Eden; for, it requires an act of G-d, as it were, to remove him—in keeping with the passuk, **“אם תגביה כנשר ואם בין כוכבים שים קנך משם אורידך נאום ה’”**—**“Even if you raise us like an eagle or if you place your nest among the stars, I will bring you down from there.”** We must try to understand what possible justification Eisav might have for thinking that he belongs among the tzaddikim in Gan Eden—which ultimately necessitates that he be dragged out of there.

Lastly, it is worthwhile scrutinizing the Yerushalmi's statement: "עתידי עשו הרשע לעטוף טליתו ולישב עם הצדיקים בגן עדן" -- **In the future, Eisav will wrap a tallit around himself and sit himself down amongst the tzaddikim in Gan Eden.** In what kind of garment or tallit will the wicked Eisav choose to wrap himself? Surely not a tallit with tzitzit on its corners. For, the Yerushalmi would not have referred to such a garment as "his tallit" -- "טליתו". After all, Eisav was a heretic; he denied the validity and veracity of the entire Torah; he probably never wore a garment having tzitzit. So, what sort of garment will he wear in order to enter Gan Eden?

Evil One You Were Already Preceded by Their Father Avraham

We shall begin to shed some light on this enigmatic statement by our sages by presenting a precious insight from the teachings of the esteemed Chasam Sofer, zy"a, (Balak). He addresses the following passuk (Bamidbar 22, 21): "ויקם בלעם בבוקר ויחבוש את אתונו וילך עם שרי" -- **Bilam rose in the morning, he saddled his donkey and he went with the ministers of Moav.** Rashi comments: "מכאן שהשנאה מקלקלת את השורה, שחבש הוא בעצמו, אמר הקב"ה, רשע כבר קדמך אברהם אביהם, שנאמר (בראשית כב-ג) וישכם אברהם בבוקר ויחבוש את חמורו" -- **from here we see that hatred corrupts one's normal behavior. For, he himself did the saddling. HKB"H said to him: "Evil one! Avraham, their forefather, has preceded you, as it says, 'So Avraham arose early in the morning and he saddled his donkey.'"**

The Chasam Sofer explains the significance of this act based on what we learn from the Chovas HaLevavos. He writes that a person should learn how to employ the element of alacrity in the performance of a mitzvah from the alacrity displayed by sinners in the pursuit of their hearts' desires. For, if the wicked hurry to perform a transgression, how much more so should a Jew hurry to perform a mitzvah!

Viewed in this light, we can seemingly find some merit in Bilam's evil deed. He rose early and saddled his donkey himself in his eagerness to go and curse Yisrael. Jews can learn from him the importance of rising early in the morning to serve Hashem. Therefore, HKB"H reprimanded him: **"Evil one! Avraham, their forefather, has preceded you, as it says, 'So Avraham arose early in the morning and he saddled his donkey.'"**

We should point out that this vital principle—that we can learn from the enthusiasm of the wicked—is discussed by the Kedushas Levi (Noach). He expounds on the following passuk (Tehillim 119, 98): "מאויבי תחכמי מצותיך" -- **"from my enemies I will become wiser to keep your commandments."** In other words, it is worthwhile learning from the ways of the wicked how to better serve Hashem. For, if they

utilize every conceivable trick or device to achieve their improper ends and desires, and do not give up despite one hundred failures, how much more so should we persist in our struggle to overcome the yetzer and in our quest to better serve Hashem?! To quote the wisest of all men (Mishlei 24, 6): "כי בתחבולות תעשה לך מלחמה" -- **"For by means of strategies (devices and tricks), you can wage war on your own terms."** This then is the meaning of the passuk: "מאויבי" -- from my enemies, the wicked; "תחכמי מצותיך" -- I learn to serve Hashem and fulfill mitzvot with the same fervor that they exhibit.

The source for this noble idea comes from the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, zy"a, as described by the Tiferes Shlomo (Toldos):

"כשם הבעש"ט על פסוק (שמות כה-ב), [ויקחו לי תרומה] מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לכו תקחו את תרומתי, היינו שכל אדם צריך לשית עצות בנפשו, להפוך לעשות מדות טובות מכל אשר ידבנו לכו, מהתאוות החיצוניות ומדות הרעות אשר הרגיל בהם, מהם יקח דרך לעבודת הבורא ברוך הוא באותו חשק ובאותה התאוה ביתר שאת."

In other words, we must turn our external desires and bad habits into good habits that will be utilized to serve Hashem--with that very same or even greater desire and intensity.

The Special Garments of Eisav Her Older Son

Let us examine the enlightening words of the Tiferet Shlomo regarding the amazing deed performed by Rivka Imeinu, described in parshas Toldos (Bereishis 27, 15): "ותקח רבקה את בגדי עשו בנה הגדול החמודות: "Then Rivka took her older son Eisav's special garments, which were in her house, and clothed her younger son, Yaakov." He teaches us the following lesson:

"בגדי עשו בנה הגדול החמודות, הם התאוות והחמודות רעות של עשו, ותלכש את יעקב בנה הקטן, הם הצדיקים שהם קטנים בעיניהם, ומורא על ראשם לגשת אל הקודש, והם מלבישים אותו החשק והרצון של תאוות עולם הזה, לקחת אותו חשק לעבודת הבורא ברוך הוא."

Eisav's coveted garments represent his evil desires and appetites. Rivka's younger son, Yaakov, represents tzaddikim, who diminish their own importance. They harness that desire and appetite for worldly things, and apply them to serve the Creator; blessed is He, with greater enthusiasm.

In this same vein, he proceeds to elucidate the passuk (Bereishis 31, 20): "ויגנוב יעקב את לב לavan הארמי, על בלי הגיד לו כי בורח הוא" -- **"And Yaakov deceived Lavan HaArami by not telling him that he was fleeing."** When Lavan saw how much Yaakov yearned to learn from him his scheming and deceptive ways, he was certain that Yaakov was a cheat just like him. Yet, the Torah attests to the fact: "יעקב יעקב את לב לכן" -- **"על בלי הגיד לו כי בורח הוא"** -- that Yaakov stole Lavan's evil ways; "הארמי" --

and did not reveal to Lavan that that he was fleeing from his domain in order to utilize what he had learned to better serve Hashem.

This allows us to better understand the wicked Lavan's allegation (ibid. 31, 30): "ועתה הלך הלכת כי נכסוף נכספתה לבית אביך למה: "Now, you have gone, because you longed greatly for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?" In other words, I cannot honestly complain that you wish to leave my house: "כי נכסוף נכספתה לבית אביך"—for you long to serve your Father in Heaven and resume a life of Torah; however, I do have a legitimate claim against you: "למה גנבת את אלהי"—why did you steal my gods, my negative traits, and then proceed to utilize what you learned from me to serve Hashem with even greater intensity?

A Complete Tzaddik Does Not Need to Learn from the Ways of the Wicked

In light of all that we have learned, let us reexamine the words of the Chasam Sofer cited above. He commented on HKB"H's remark to Bilam, after Bilam rose early in the morning to saddle his donkey: "רשע כבר קדמך אברהם אביהם, שנאמר וישכם אברהם בבוקר ויחבוש את חמורו". In other words, HKB"H informed him that his zeal and alacrity to perform his transgression served no purpose, with regards to Yisrael. For, they already learned how to serve Hashem with zeal and alacrity from their forefather, Avraham.

From his holy words, we learn a tremendous chiddush. Had it been necessary for Yisrael to learn this important attribute from Bilam—how to serve Hashem with alacrity—Bilam would have benefitted and accrued merit. Hence, HKB"H went to the trouble, so to speak, of informing Bilam: "רשע"—evil person—you accrue no merit on account of this act; "כבר קדמך אברהם אביהם, שנאמר וישכם"—for, Avraham preceded you and showed them how to serve Hashem in this manner.

To better appreciate the Chasam Sofer's idea, we are compelled to present a divergent point of view. While the sources quoted thus far suggest that learning the tricks and strategies of the wicked is desirable, other sources point out a minor pitfall. By adopting the methodology of: "מאויבי תחכמני מצוותיך"—from my enemies I will become wiser to keep your commandments—we are empowering the wicked to some small degree. For, they now have a somewhat justified claim that they have assisted Yisrael to ascend to a higher level in their service of Hashem.

One of these divergent sources is the Knesses Yechezkel written by the great Rabbi Yechezkel of Dezh, ztz"l, (Balak). In short, he states that a true tzaddik, one who has reached the pinnacle of perfection, does not need to learn from the wicked how to ascend

to a higher level in the service of Hashem. It is sufficient that he motivates himself to achieve greater heights as did Avraham Avinu (B.R. 61,1): "זימן לו הקב"ה שתי כליותיו כמין שני רבנים, והיו נובעות ומלמדות: "HKB"H provided him with two kidneys that functioned as two teachers, and they would flow and teach him Torah and wisdom."

He suggests that there is a way to distinguish which method the tzaddik is employing in his service of Hashem—learning from one's enemies, "מאויבי תחכמני מצוותיך", or self-motivation. If the tzaddik's level of kedushah and good deeds merely parallel the wicked person's level of malevolence and impurity, then it is a sign that he is utilizing the former method.

If, however, we discern that the tzaddik is rising to higher and higher levels of kedushah—far surpassing the wicked person's corresponding degree of impurity—it becomes clear that the tzaddik is not relying on the wicked person to learn how to better serve Hashem. In this case, the wicked person no longer has any merit or claim to reward from the domain of kedushah—from the good deeds of the righteous.

An Incredible Story Involving the Holy Sar Shalom of Belz

Further on in his discussion of this topic, the Knesses Yechezkel validates his theory with the following, telling story:

"ויסופר מאת מרן הקדוש שר שלום מבעלזא זי"ע, שבילדותו היה דר בשכונתו ערל נפח אחד, שהיה דרכו לקום בבוקר השכם אחר חצות לילה לעסוק במלאכתו, ואשתו הצדיקת כשהיתה שומעת קול הקורנס של הנפח מכה, היתה מעוררת את בעלה ואמרה, שלום שלום קום לעבודת הבורא כי הנפח כבר מכה בקורנס. והיה היום שהוא הקדוש קם בבוקר השכם, עוד טרם נשמע קול הקורנס, ובאותו יום מת הנפח, ואמר שכל עיקר חיותו היה על ידי אותה יניקה, שהוא היה מעורר אותו לעבודת הבורא יתברך שמו, ותיכף שאירע שקם בלתי התעוררות ממנו, נפסק פתיל חיותו כרגע."

Our holy master, Sar Shalom of Belz, zy"a, tells a story from his youth. A gentile blacksmith lived in his neighborhood; he woke up regularly in the very early hours of the morning, after midnight, and began his daily work. When his righteous wife, (the Rebbetzin Malkah, a"h,) would hear the sound of the blacksmith's sledge-hammer, she would wake her husband and say: "Shalom, Shalom rise up to serve the Creator, for the blacksmith is already pounding away with the sledge-hammer."

It so happened one day that the holy master rose early, before he heard the sound of the sledge-hammer. That day, the blacksmith died. He explained that the blacksmith's existence derived from that merit--that he served the function

of waking him to serve the Creator, Blessed is He. As soon as he arose without the other's assistance, the blacksmith's thread of existence ceased at that moment.

Now, let us examine the viewpoint of the Kenesses Yechezkel. Like the Chasam Sofer, he addresses the passuk: **וַיָּקָם בִּלְעָם בְּבֹקֶר** "וַיַּחְבוֹשׁ אֶת אֲתוֹנוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ עִם שְׂרֵי מֹואָב" **Bilam rose in the morning, he saddled his donkey and he went with3**

not be reckoned among the nations": There is no need for them to take note and consider the ways of the goyim in order to learn how to better serve Hashem, because they have an all-encompassing legacy from their forefathers. This is the crux of his amazing insight.

Rabbi Yisrael of Tshartkov's View on This Subject

Now, let us examine this concept with a slight twist, as it appears in the Yismach Yisrael, authored by Rabbi Yisrael of Tshartkov, zy"a, (Vayishlach). In his opinion, it is fine and appropriate to study the ways of the wicked in order to better serve Hashem, as one is beginning one's spiritual development. Once, however, one has children and students, this method possesses an inherent danger. Upon seeing him pay close attention to the ways of the wicked and even imitating them, his children and students might, chas v'shalom, mistakenly come to follow their improper behavior.

At that point in one's spiritual development, the optimal method of growth entails focusing on one's Torah study and davening. This avoids any contact and association with the wicked. In the words of Yisrael's sweet psalmist (Tehillim 119, 37): **הַעֲבֵר עֵינַי מִרְאוֹת שׁוֹא בִּדְרֵכֶיךָ** "Avert my eyes from witnessing falsehood, sustain me through Your ways." In other words, avert my eyes so that I will not need to observe the ways of the wicked in order to learn from them. Rather, guide me and sustain me in the ways of Torah and mitzvot—obviating any need on my part to pay attention to the wicked.

At the beginning of his spiritual journey, Yaakov Avinu followed the philosophy of **מֵאוֹיְבֵי תַחֲכֻמֵּי**—learning the strategies of one's enemies. To this end, the Scriptures state (Bereishis 32, 5): **עָם לָבָן** "עָם לָבָן"—**I dwelt with Lavan.** To which Rashi comments: **גִּרְתִּי**—**due to my perilous circumstances, living in close proximity to Lavan, I learned from his evil ways and was more diligent in observing the "taryag" (six hundred and thirteen) mitzvot.** Nevertheless, once his children, the holy shevatim, were born, he completely abandoned this methodology and chose to adopt the second method of spiritual development; he focused on Torah study and prayer, while avoiding any further contact with the wicked.

In this manner, he explains our sages words concerning Yaakov's conversation with Eisav after appeasing him (ibid. 33, 14): **יַעֲבֹר נָא אֲדוֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ וְאֲנִי אֲתַנְהִלָּה לְאִטִּי לְרֹגֶל הַמִּלְאכָה אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי וְלִרְגֵל הַיְלָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר אֲדוֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ וְאֲנִי אֲתַנְהִלָּה לְאִטִּי לְרֹגֶל הַמִּלְאכָה אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי וְלִרְגֵל הַיְלָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר אֲדוֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ**—**"Let my lord go ahead of his servant; I will make my way at my slow pace according to the gait of the work that is before me and to the gait of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir."** We learned in the Midrash (B.R. 78, 14):

"יַעֲבֹר נָא אֲדוֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ, אָמַר לוֹ [עֵשָׂו], מִבְּקֵשׁ אֶת שְׁנָהּ שׁוֹתָף עִמָּךְ בַּעֲלֹמָךְ, אָמַר לוֹ [יַעֲקֹב], יַעֲבֹר נָא אֲדוֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ, אָמַר לוֹ [עֵשָׂו], וְאֵינְךָ אֶת מַתִּירָא מְדוּכָסִי וּמִן אַפְרָכִי וּמִן אֲסֻרְטִילִי, אָמַר לוֹ וְאֲנִי אֲתַנְהִלָּה לְאִטִּי."

Eisav wished to be a partner in Yaakov's life and world; he wanted Yaakov to observe his ways and to incorporate what he learned into his service of Hashem. In this manner, Eisav would share in Yaakov's work and would be his partner. Yaakov replied: **"יַעֲבֹר נָא אֲדוֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ"**—**"let my lord go ahead of his servant"**—because I have abandoned the tactic of observing and learning from the ways of the wicked.

In response, Eisav inquires: **וְאֵינְךָ אֶת מַתִּירָא מְדוּכָסִי וּמִן אַפְרָכִי וּמִן אֲסֻרְטִילִי**—**"And aren't you afraid of my officials?"** In other words, aren't you concerned about the yetzer hara, who places obstacles and roadblocks in one's path? By observing my ways, you will know how to defeat him and circumvent the obstacles. Yaakov answers: **"וְאֲנִי אֲתַנְהִלָּה לְאִטִּי לְרֹגֶל הַמִּלְאכָה אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי וְלִרְגֵל הַיְלָדִים"**—now that I have children, it is too dangerous to employ the method of observing the strategies of the wicked. This is the meaning of the passuk (Bereishis 32, 25): **"וַיִּתְּרָה יַעֲקֹב לְכֹדוֹ"**—**"and Yaakov remained alone"**—he remained alone, implying that he now served Hashem entirely by means of his own devices, without involving the wicked.

Two Distinct Approaches Represented by Yaakov and Yisrael

With the sacred words of the Yismach Yisrael in mind, we can begin to comprehend why HKB"H conferred upon Yaakov Avinu two distinct names—Yaakov and Yisrael. For, it is written (ibid. 35, 10): **וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֱלֹקִים שִׁמְךָ יַעֲקֹב לֹא יִקְרָא שִׁמְךָ עוֹד יַעֲקֹב כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שִׁמְךָ** "וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל" **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." And He called his name Yisrael.** Regarding this matter, we have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 13a): **"לֹא שִׁיעָקַר יַעֲקֹב מִמְּקוֹמוֹ, אֲלָא יִשְׂרָאֵל עִיקַר וַיַּעֲקֹב טַפַּל לוֹ"**—**not that the name Yaakov will be uprooted, but rather Yisrael will be the primary name and Yaakov will be secondary to it.**

Let us begin by interpreting the pesukim that follow according to the Yismach Yisrael's elucidation (ibid.):

“ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו, וירא כי לא יכול לו, ויגע בכף ירכו ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו, ויאמר שלחני כי עלה השחר ויאמר לא אשלחך כי אם ברכתני, ויאמר אליו מה שמך ויאמר יעקב, ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל, כי שרית עם אלהים ועם אנשים ותוכל.”

“And Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he perceived that he could not overcome him, he struck the ball of his thighbone; and the ball of Yaakov’s thighbone became dislocated as he wrestled with him. Then he said, ‘Let me go, for dawn has broken.’ And he said, ‘I will not let you go unless you have blessed me.’ He said to him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Yaakov.’ He said, ‘No longer will it be said that your name is Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have striven with the Divine and with men and you have overcome.’”

First, let us reiterate a concept found in our holy sources numerous times. When the people of Yisrael are referred to as “יעקב”, it indicates that they are spiritually on a lower level—resembling the “עקב”, the heel. When they are referred to as “ישראל”, it indicates that they are on a higher level. The source for this distinction is found in the holy Zohar (Terumah 175b): “יעקב לאו—Yaakov does not reflect perfection; Yisrael does. Let us explain the significance and the difference between the title “יעקב” and the title “ישראל”.

Based on what we have learned thus far, we can suggest that the name “יעקב”, alluding to a lower spiritual level, similar to the heel, represents the beginning of one’s journey and development in one’s service of Hashem. It represents the stage in Yaakov’s development when he was still learning how to serve Hashem utilizing tactics learned from the wicked Eisav—learning never to despair or stop trying in his quest to achieve his goals. This is reflected by the name “יעקב”, which he was given because he emerged while grasping his brother Eisav’s heel. In other words, he was holding onto Eisav’s heel in order to utilize Eisav’s methods for the sake of kedushah.

This is the meaning of the verse: “ויצא הראשון אדמוני כולו כאדרת—The first one emerged red, all of him was like a hairy mantle.” Red is an allusion to sins and transgressions. Yet, immediately afterwards, Yaakov emerged: “וידו אווזת בעקב עשו”—grasping onto Eisav’s heel, indicating that he wished to employ his tactics in the service of Hashem. “ויקרא שמו יעקב”—HKB”H named him Yaakov indicating that serving Hashem in this manner is very important. Nevertheless, the name “ישראל” represents a stage in Yaakov’s life when he had elevated himself to a higher spiritual level, no longer requiring this association with Eisav.

This will illuminate for us the following pesukim: “ויותר יעקב לבדו—he no longer needed to serve Hashem by observing the methods of the wicked. So, when Eisav’s ministering angel was wrestling with him: “וירא כי לא יכול לו”—he realized that he no longer shared a part in Yaakov’s actions; “ויגע בכף ירכו”—so, he resorted to striking a blow at Yaakov’s descendants, who were not yet on that level of service and still needed to observe the ways of the wicked. As a consequence, he still had a minor connection with their holy accomplishments, which resulted in a minor and temporary injury to Yaakov’s thighbone: “ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו”.

“Then he said, ‘Let me go, for dawn has broken.’ And he said, ‘I will not let you go unless you have blessed me.’” On behalf of his descendants, Yaakov Avinu wished to force Eisav’s ministering angel to bless them, so that they, too, would merit serving Hashem in an elevated fashion not requiring an association with Eisav and his descendants. The angel concedes: “ויאמר אליו מה שמך ויאמר יעקב, ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל, כי שרית עם אלהים ועם אנשים—He said to him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Yaakov.’ He said, ‘No longer will it be said that your name is Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have striven with the Divine and with men and you have overcome.’”

In the Future Eisav Will Don His Garment Representing: “בגדי עשו החמודות”

We can now rejoice and celebrate our enlightenment. For, we have finally gained a deeper understanding of our sages’ enigmatic statement in the Talmud Yerushalmi: “A star shot forth from Yaakov. From whom did the star shoot forth and is it destined to stand? From Yaakov. Rav Acha said in the name of Rav Chuna: In the future Eisav will wrap a tallit around himself and sit himself down amongst the tzaddikim in Gan Eden, and HKB”H will drag him out of there; why? Because the passuk states (Ovadiah 1, 4): ‘Even if you raise us like an eagle or if you place your nest among the stars, I will bring you down from there—the word of Hashem.’ Here the stars are an allusion to the righteous, the tzaddikim, as we see in the passuk (Daniel 12, 3): ‘And those who make the multitudes righteous, like the stars, forevermore.’”

Let us explain. The passuk quoted at the end of this passage (Daniel 12, 3): “ומצדיקי הרבים ככוכבים”—teaches us that the tzaddikim, who guide the public to be righteous and meritorious, are likened to stars. Therefore, in the future--when Eisav sees that Yaakov’s descendants, who are merely on the spiritual level of “יעקב”, who

follow in their forefather's earlier ways and serve Hashem with the methods Yaakov learned from him, as reflected by the words: "וידר אוחות בעקב עשו"—he will claim that he, too is a star; because he has guided the public to be meritorious and, thus, deserves to sit amongst the tzaddikim in Gan Eden.

Accordingly, we can suggest a very nice interpretation of Rav Chuna's statement: "עתידי עשו הרשע לעטוף 'טליתו' ולישב עם הצדיקים בגן עדן". We posed the question: What specific "tallit"—garment—is this passage referring to? Now, however, we can propose that the Yerushalmi is referring to the garments discussed in the following passuk: "ותקח רבקה את בגדי עשו בנה הגדול החמודות אשר אתה בבית ותלבש"—Eisav's special, prized garments that he had entrusted to his mother, Rivka, who used them to clothe Yaakov. As we have learned from the Tiferet Shlomo, "בגדי עשו החמודות", is an allusion to Eisav's trickery and conniving ways, which he utilized to satisfy his worldly appetites. Yaakov was clothed in these garments, implying that he adopted these methods to serve Hashem. Thus, it is this "tallit"—representative of "בגדי עשו החמודות"—that Eisav will don when he sits among the tzaddikim in Gan Eden.

Nevertheless, HKB"H will drag him out and expel him from their midst. For, in truth, the tzaddikim sitting around him in Gan Eden will primarily be those on the level of "ישראל", who did not need to learn how to serve Hashem from Eisav. And even regarding those members of Yisrael still on the level of "יעקב", who did learn how to serve Hashem from Eisav to some degree, he surely doesn't deserve any reward for helping them. After all, he lacked any good intentions in the matter, and, in reality, caused Yisrael tremendous grief and hardships in his attempts to prevent them from serving Hashem.

At this point, we can marvel at the words of the Yerushalmi. The passage begins by expounding on Eisav's unbelievable "chutzpah." He will wrap himself in a "tallit" and sit down among

the tzaddikim in Gan Eden, forcing HKB"H to drag him out of there. This exposition is founded on a passuk in our parsha from one of Bilam's prophecies: "דרך כוכב מיעקב - ממני דרך כוכב ועתיד לעמוד מיעקב". Based on what we have discussed, the Yerushalmi is referring to the wicked Eisav; he will present himself as a tzaddik—a star, "כוכב"—consistent with the words of the passuk: "ומצדיקי הרבים ככובים"—those who serve the multitudes resemble stars. Regarding this audacity, it is written: "דרך כוכב מיעקב". So, the Yerushalmi proceeds to explain: "ממני דרך כוכב ועתיד לעמוד"—in other words, where did this "chutzpah" come from? From where did Eisav presume to present himself as a tzaddik, as a virtual "star"? The Yerushalmi answers: "מיעקב"—from those members of Yisrael on the level of "Yaakov"—who learned from Eisav how to better serve Hashem. This will cause Eisav to believe erroneously that he deserves to be in Gan Eden among the tzaddikim.

In fact, in the nevuah itself, Bilam alludes to Eisav's downfall with the words: "דרך כוכב מיעקב וקם שבט מישראל, ומוחץ פאתי מואב וקרקר"—A star shot forth from Yaakov and a rod has risen from Yisrael, and he shall strike down the extremities of Moav and undermine all the children of Sheit. In other words, albeit Eisav's star emerged from those who were yet on the level of "Yaakov"; nevertheless: "A rod has risen from Yisrael"—tzaddikim on the level of "Yisrael" will rise, those who did not need to learn from Eisav how to better serve Hashem. In their merit, HKB"H will drag Eisav out of Gan Eden: "And he shall strike down the extremities of Moav and undermine all the children of Sheit." For, the goyim lack any merit for teaching Yisrael how to serve Hashem. The words of the passuk are not applicable: "מאויבי תחכמי מצוותי"—from my enemies I will become wiser to keep your commandments—due to the merit of the tzaddikim representative of "Yisrael."



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