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DAF KESHER

SHAPELL'S / YESHIVA DARCHE NOAM · MIDRESHET RACHEL V'CHAYA · PATHWAYS ISRAEL · PATHWAYS PLUS

We mourn Sgt. Binyamin Yakobovitch, הי"ד, who died from wounds caused by last week's terror attack near Chevron. We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.

DVAR TORAH BLESSED FERTILIZER

Our sages have a very colorful way of expressing how blessed Yitzchak became in the land of the Plishtim: "It got to the point where people would say, 'Better the fertilizer from Yitzchak's mules than Avimelech's silver and gold'" (Rabbi Chanin, quoted in Bereishit Rabbah 64:7). This is not only offbeat, but, asks the author of Divrei Yechezkel, Harav Yechezkel of Shinova, זצ"ל (1813–1898, Poland), also puzzling – what is so great about having such valuable fertilizer? Granted, the Torah itself uses very extreme language when it speaks of Yitzchak's financial growth – "The man became great; and he continually grew until he had become exceedingly great" (Bereishit 26:13) – but why does the Midrash translate that into how expensive his mules' fertilizer was?

We must backtrack to the previous verse, where the Torah tells us that when Yitzchak seeded his field he harvested a hundred-fold, "מאה שערים". The verse closes with "ויברכהו ה'" – "Hashem blessed Him" (Bereishit 26:12), and then follows with our verse, the headline of this comment in the Midrash, "He continually grew until he had become exceedingly great." The Midrash, says the Shinover Rov, is teaching us the meaning of Divine blessing.

Something touched by the Divine blessing is granted the ability to transcend limitations. Just as Hashem Himself is not confined and restricted by the constraints of the physical world; the blessed person – or even the blessed thing – can break out of those confines.

Our forefathers were blessed and became a source of blessing to others. Hashem blessed Avraham with the words "והיה ברכה" – "You should be a blessing" (Bereishit 12:2), and the Midrash tells us that anyone who bought a cow from Avraham became blessed (Bereishit Rabbah 39:11). Yaakov was blessed with great wealth, and even the evil Lavan had to admit to Yaakov, "ויברכני ה' בגלליך" – "Hashem blessed me because of you" (Bereishit 30:27).

This explains the offbeat comment about Yitzchak Avinu's mules. Avimelech's silver and gold was expensive, but limited. Ten grams of his gold would never become more than ten grams of gold, and their price would be limited by the restrictions of the market, never to break out of them. But even the fertilizer that came from Yitzchak's mules was blessed, and had that quality of limitlessness. And someone who fertilized his field with it would be blessed with such abundance that people would actually prefer Yitzchak's fertilizer to Avimelech's silver and gold.

We can tap into this source of blessing ourselves: "One who says Birkat Hamazon over a full cup of wine," says the Gemara (Berachot 51a), "is given 'a limitless inheritance.'" Shabbat is one of our greatest sources of blessing, says the Gemara (Shabbat 118a). "כל המענג את השבת" – "Anyone who delights in the Shabbat, merits a נחלה בלי מצרים, a limitless inheritance, as it says, 'Then you will delight in Hashem, and I will cause you to ride on the high places of the earth, and have you partake of the inheritance of your forefather Yaakov, for the mouth of Hashem has spoken' (Yishayahu 58:14)."

SOURCE GUIDE: YAAKOV'S CLOTHING, ESAV'S CLOTHING

Yaakov succeeded in getting blessed by Yitzchak through wearing Esav's clothing. That clothing and that episode are the subject of rich midrashic discussions. A chapter of Asufat Maarachot (a series based on the teachings of Harav Chaim Goldvicht, זצ"ל, the late Rosh Yeshivah of Kerem B'Yavneh) is devoted to uncovering the themes underlying these midrashim and is the basis of this source guide.

A. Verses and Surprising Midrashim

Under Rivkah's direction Yaakov wore Esav's clothing to impersonate him and get blessed by Yitzchak, and her plan worked:

<p>1. Bereishit 27:15, 27 (15) And Rivka took the coveted garments of Esav her older child – that were with her in the house, and dressed Yaakov her younger son ... (27) [Yaakov] approached and kissed him, [and Yitzchak] smelled the fragrance of his garments and said, “See, the fragrance of my son is like that of a field that has been blessed by Hashem.”</p>	<p>בראשית כז:טו,כז (טו) וַחֲקָה רַבְקָה אֶת בְּגָדֵי עֶשָׂו בְּנֵה הַגָּדֹל הַחֲמֹדֶת אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בְּבֵית וַתַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת יַעֲקֹב בְּנֵה הַקָּטָן ... (כז) וַיִּגַּשׁ וַיִּשָּׁק לוֹ וַיִּרַח אֶת רִיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיִּבְרַכְהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר רְאֵה רִיחַ בְּנֵי כְרִיחַ שָׂדֵה אֲשֶׁר בְּרַכְוּ ה'.</p>
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Yaakov's clothing had a profound effect on Yitzchak. It was the fragrance of his clothing that inspired him to bless Yaakov. Why that was so is the subject of the following midrash:

<p>2. Bereishit Rabbah 65:22 “He smelled the fragrance of his garments” – Said Rabbi Yochanan: There is nothing whose smell is as bad as goat hair, yet the verse says, “He smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him”?! Rather, when Yaakov our father entered his father [Yitzchak]'s presence the Garden of Eden entered with him. This is what [Yitzchak] said to him, “See, the fragrance of my son is like that of a field [that has been blessed by Hashem].” But when Esav entered his father's presence Gehenom entered with him ...</p>	<p>בראשית רבה סה:כב “וירח את ריח בגדיו” – א”ר יוחנן: אין לך דבר שריחו קשה מן השטף הזה של עזים ואת אמרת וירח את ריח בגדיו ויברכהו?! אלא, בשעה שנכנס אבינו יעקב אצל אביו נכנסה עמו גן עדן. הדא הוא דא”ל “ראה ריח בני כריח שדה.” ובשעה שנכנס עשו אצל אביו נכנסה עמו גיהנם ...</p>
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We are not surprised by the Midrash's associating the righteous Yaakov with the Garden of Eden and the evil Esav with Gehenom – but the question of the Midrash is surprising. It wonders – as Yitzchak wonders – how goat hair clothing could smell so wonderful. Apparently, the assumption was that those garments would have retained their stench even when worn by Yaakov.

Rabbis of the Talmud quote verses to prove how great the lowest levels of the People of Israel are. Our verse is quoted by Rabbi Zeira, assuming that Yitzchak related to a darker side of Yaakov Avinu:

<p>3. Sanhedrin 37a Reish Lakish said: Here is the source – “Your temple (רקתך) is like a portion of a pomegranate” (Shir Hashirim 4:3). [It can be read as] ‘Even your empty ones (ריקנין) are full of commandments like a pomegranate.’ Rabbi Zeira said: Here is the source – “He smelled the fragrance of his garments (בגדיו).” Do not read this as ‘garments’ but, rather as ‘traitors’ (בוגדיו).</p>	<p>סנהדרין לז. ריש לקיש אמר: מהכא – “כפלה הרמון רקתך” (שיר השירים ד:ג). אפילו ריקנין שבך מלאין מצות כרמון. רבי זירא אמר: מהכא – “וירח את ריח בגדיו” אל תיקרי בגדיו אלא בוגדיו.</p>
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Yaakov receives the blessings from his father only after Yitzchak smells **the beautiful fragrance of the traitors of Israel** and only after the stench of the goat hair garments is countered by the fragrance of the Garden of Eden. Who are these traitors and why do they smell like the Garden of Eden?

B. The Traitors of Israel

The Gemara illustrates Rabbi Zeira's derivation with an anecdote about his friendship with Jewish ruffians:

<p>4. Sanhedrin 37a</p> <p>There were some ruffians who lived in Rabbi Zeira's neighborhood, that Rabbi Zeira was drawing them close so they should repent. The sages objected to this. When Rabbi Zeira passed away they (the ruffians) said, "Until now, the burnt one with the small legs (a nickname for Rabbi Zeira based on Bava Metzia 85a) would pray for us. Now, who will pray for us?" They had thoughts of repentance in their hearts and did teshuvah.</p>	<p>סנהדרין לו. הנהו בריוני דהוה בשיבכותיה דרבי זירא דהוה מקרב להו כי היכי דניהדרו להו בתיובתא. והוה קפדי רבנן. כי נח נפשיה דרבי זירא אמרי: עד האידינא הוה חריכא קטיין שקיה דהוה בעי עלן רחמי. השתא מאן בעי עלן רחמי. הרהרו בלביהו ועבדו תשובה.</p>
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The following Midrash cites Yosef Meshita as another example:

<p>4. Bereishit Rabbah 65:22</p> <p>Another explanation of "He smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him" – This refers to people like Yosef Meshita and Yakum of Tzrorot. Yosef Meshita: When the hated ones wanted to enter the Temple Mount they said, "Let one of them (one of the Jews) go first." They said to him (Yosef Meshita), "Go in and what you take out is yours." He entered and removed a gold menorah. They said to him, "That is not appropriate for a normal person's use. Go in a second time and what you take out is yours." But he did not agree. Rabbi Pinchas said: They offered him three years free of taxes and he still didn't agree. He said, "Was it not enough that I angered my G-d once; need I anger Him a second time?" What did they do to him? They placed him on a carpenter's work table and sawed into him. He screamed, saying, "Vay, oy, oy that I angered my Creator!"</p>	<p>בראשית רבה סה: כב ד"א וירח את ריח בגדיו ויברכהו כגון יוסף משיתא ויקום איש צרורות. יוסף משיתא בשעה שבקשו שונאים להכנס להר הבית אמרו, "יכנס מהם ובהם תחלה." אמרין ליה "עול, ומה דאת מפיק דידך." נכנס והוציא מנורה של זהב. אמרו לו, "איין דרכו של הדיוט להשתמש בזו. אלא, עול זמן תנינות ומה דאת מפיק דידך." ולא קיבל עליו. א"ר פנחס: נתנו לו מכס ג' שנים ולא קיבל עליו. אמר, "לא דיי שהכעסתי לאלקי פעם אחת אלא שאכעיסנו פעם שניה?" מה עשו לו? נתנו אותו בחמור של חרשים והיו מנסרים בו. היה מצווח ואומר "ווי אוי אוי שהכעסתי לבוראי!"</p>
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C. Clothing and the Essence

Unlike Avraham who had Yishmael and Yitzchak who had Esav, Yaakov Avinu managed to pass on to his descendants – all of them, including the traitors, the **בוגדים** – an inner core of deep righteousness. Like Yosef Meshita, their evil was only a non-essential external layer; when the right moment came, the inner connection with Hashem was revealed. Yosef Meshita the thief gave up his life sanctifying the Divine Name and Rabbi Zeira's ruffian friends repented. Yitzchak Avinu blessed all of Israel's descendants and smelled in them the fragrance of the Garden of Eden.

Clothing is a central image of our verse and the midrashim on it. Harav Goldvicht encourages us to take a close look at clothing. Clothing can reflect the societal group one is part of, or, like the policeman's uniform, one's role in society. It can be donned, removed, or switched; for it is not a person's essence. Even our behavior and actions can be viewed as clothing to our neshamah, our souls.

Yaakov had to wear Esav's clothing, to adopt externally Esav-like tactics, using deceit to attain the Divine blessing. But deceit was not his essence. Yitzchak sensed this; instead of the stench of goat hair he smelled the fragrance of Yaakov's essence. And that pure essence penetrated all of Yaakov's descendants, even the non-righteous among them.

We can now take a closer look at our verse: "[Yaakov] approached and kissed him, [and Yitzchak] smelled the fragrance of **his garments** – **בגדיו** – and said, 'See, the fragrance of **my son** – **בני** – is like that of a field that has been blessed by Hashem.'" Yitzchak smelled the garments, but then said, "My son's fragrance" is that of the Garden of Eden.

RED STUFF BY RABBI AVRAHAM NISSIM

When Esav came back from a long day at the office, tired and hungry, the smell of the lentil soup cooking in Yaakov's kitchen was too much of a temptation. "Pour me from that red stuff!" he ordered.

Because of these words, the Torah says, we call him Edom (Red) to this very day. Asks the Admor from Skulen (Harav Eliezer Zusia Portugal, זצ"ל, 1898-1982, in his Noam Eliezer on Parshat Toldot): Because of this one sentence, blurted out by a tired man, we call him a name associated with evil?!

The truth is that these words weren't a mere accident. They were, in fact, a matter of life for Esav. The purchase of any worldly pleasures – be it even a bowl of soup – would always precede anything which remotely resembles something holy. No matter that the taste of the soup passes within a few seconds, Esav's motto in life was, "Eat and drink today, for tomorrow we die."

However, in the end, even the רשע, the evil one, admits his mistake. When Yaakov stole the blessings originally meant for Esav, Esav complained that this was the second time Yaakov had cheated him. The first time he referred to was the selling of the birthright. But did Yaakov really steal the birthright? Esav was the one who laughed at the need to be the first born.

This lesson is symbolic of the ways of the evil. They are willing to give up the eternal world for the passing pleasures of the physical world. In the beginning the enjoyment is great. But in the end the initial pleasures are replaced by pain and suffering. Esav let out a piercing cry - if only he could move the clock back!

We still have that chance.

שבת שלום ומבורך

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Rachel bat Yitzchak ז"ל