

## ESAU'S TEARS & HIS HEAD

### 1. Esau's Tears

- a. **Genesis 27:34** When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out a great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me too, Father!"

- b. Yalkut Shimoni 115:19

"Esau shed three tears: one from his right [eye], one from his left, and one was removed within his eye — and this is [the meaning of] (Psalms 80:6), 'You have fed them the bread of tears, and You have given them tears to drink in a third measure.'

Israel said: 'If wicked Esau, for shedding three tears, was granted mercy, then we — whose tears are constant by day and by night like bread — how much more so [should we be shown mercy], as it is said (ibid. 42:4), 'My tears were my bread day and night.'

David said: 'Concerning my tear, do not be silent.'"

- c. Midrash Tehillim 80:4

You have eaten the bread of tears, etc. Rabbi Elazar says that Esau the wicked shed three tears from his eyes. One from his right eye, one from his left eye, and the third is connected to both eyes, as it says, "And you shall wet your bread with tears, a third part thereof" (Psalms 80:6... Rabbi Avin says, and some say it was in the name of Rabbi Shemlai, that the Great Assembly said before God, "Master of the Universe, because of the three tears that the wicked Esau shed, you have given him control over the entire world, and you have given him peace in this world. When you see the suffering of your children and their eyes overflowing with tears every day, just as it says, 'My tears have been my food day and night' (Psalms 42:4), have mercy on them, even if it is just a little."

### 2. The result

- a. Genesis 27:39 And his father Isaac answered, saying to him, "See, your abode shall enjoy the fat of the earth And the dew of heaven above.

#### Jacob already received this?

- b. Genesis 27:28 "May God give you Of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, Abundance of new grain and wine.
- c. Rashi on Genesis 27:39 THE FATNESS OF THE EARTH etc. — This refers to the Greek portions of Italy (Genesis Rabbah 67:6).

#### Solomon & Wine and a new island:

- d. **Vayikra Rabbah 12:5**

Rabbi Yudan said: During all the seven years that Solomon built the Temple, he did not drink wine. Once he had built it and married Bitya daughter of Pharaoh, that night he drank wine. There were two dances there, one a celebration for the building of the Temple and one a celebration for the daughter of Pharaoh. The Holy One blessed be He said: 'Whose [dance] shall I accept, of these or of those?' At that moment, it entered His mind to destroy Jerusalem.

- e. **Shabbat 56b:14**

**Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: When Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, the angel Gabriel descended from heaven and implanted a reed into the sea, and a sandbar grew around it, growing larger each year, and upon it the great city of Rome was built, which became God's instrument to punish Israel.**

### **3. Esau's tears vs Jewish tears**

Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg: "Behold, we cry so many more tears — we cry constantly — and there is a legal principle that *any substance is nullified in sixty times its amount*. Why then does our vast ocean of tears not nullify the single set of tears that Esau once shed?" But he himself raised the question and resolved it: "There is another legal principle: '*When something is mixed with its own kind, even in a ratio of one to a thousand, it is not nullified.*' And this is the problem: our tears and the tears of that wicked one are of the same 'type.'

He cried because he longed for all the pleasures of this world; and we too cry because we lack the needs of this world — or because we desire more than what we already have... If only our tears were shed *for the sake of Heaven* — if we asked for all our needs solely so that we could use them to serve God, and even when crying over bodily suffering we intended it as sorrow over the Shechinah, which (so to speak) suffers with us — then Esau's tears would be entirely nullified, nullified sixty times over and more."

### **4. Esau's head**

#### a. Genesis 50:13

His sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham had bought for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

#### b. Targum Jonathan on Genesis 50:13

But when his sons had brought him into the land of Kanaan, and the thing was heard by Esau the Wicked, he journeyed from the mountain of Gebala with many legions, and came to Hebron, and would not suffer Joseph to bury his father in the Double Cave. Then forthwith went Naphtali and ran, and went down to Mizraim, and came in that day, and brought the Instrument that Esau had written for Jakob his brother in the controversy of the Double Cave. And immediately he beckoned to Hushim the son of Dan, who unsheathed the sword and struck off the head of the Wicked Esau, and the head of Esau rolled into the midst of the cave, and rested upon the bosom of Izhak his father; and the sons of Esau buried his body in the double field, and afterward the sons of Jakob buried him in the cave of the double field; in the field which Abraham bought for an inheritance--sepulchre, of Ephron the Hitah, over against Mamre.

### **Burying bad people next to good people**

#### c. II Kings 13:21

Once a man was being buried, when the people caught sight of such a band; so they threw the man into Elisha's grave and made off. When the [dead] man came in contact with Elisha's bones, he came to life and stood up.

#### d. Sanhedrin 47a:

**because a wicked man is not buried next to a righteous man. As Rav Aḥa bar Ḥanina says: From where is it derived that a wicked man is not buried next to a righteous man? As it is stated: "And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that behold, they spied a raiding**

**party; and they cast the man into the tomb of Elisha; and as the man came there, he touched the bones of Elisha, and he revived and stood up on his feet”** (II Kings 13:21). The man, who was not righteous, was miraculously resurrected so that he would not remain buried alongside Elisha.

e. Lubavitcher Rebbe:

This idea is expressed in the Midrash’s story about Esau’s head being buried with Isaac. Not all of Esau was evil and corrupt. His “head,” meaning his higher root, is connected to the realm of holiness associated with Isaac. Although this “head,” once joined with the “body,” descended lower and lower — to the point that he never repented — nevertheless, his higher root remained forever embedded in the realm of holiness. Moreover, Esau’s root and source are rooted in exceptionally lofty Divine levels; very elevated sparks of holiness were hidden within Esau. (These were redeemed over the generations in the form of figures like Onkelos the convert, Rabbi Meir, and others, who were descended from Esau and converted.) Isaac perceived in Esau his original root and these sparks of holiness. Therefore he loved him and wanted to bless him, seeking to reveal the immense good concealed within him.

### IS IT EVER PERMITTED TO LIE?

Distance yourself from a false matter, Shemot 23,6

- Abraham & Isaac
- Jacob
- Sons of Jacob
- G-d to Samuel

#### 1. Jacob the innocent vs Esau the cunning

a. Genesis 25:27

When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors; whereas Jacob was an innocent man, dwelling in tents.

b. Micah 7:20

You will keep truth with Jacob, Loyalty to Abraham, As You promised on oath to our fathers In days gone by.

c. **Makkot 24a:7**

**“Who has no slander upon his tongue”**; this is referring to one who conducts himself like **our forefather Jacob**, who did not want to mislead his father in order to receive his blessings, **as it is written: “Perhaps my father will feel me, and I will be in his eyes like a fraud”** (Genesis 27:12).

d. Rashi, ibid

A CUNNING HUNTER literally, understanding hunting — understanding how to entrap and deceive his father with his mouth. He would ask him, “Father how should salt and straw be tithed”? (Genesis Rabbah 63:10) (although he knew full well that these are not subject to the law of tithe). Consequently his father believed him to be very punctilious in observing the divine ordinances. A PLAIN MAN — not expert in all these things: as his heart was his mouth (his thoughts and his words tallied). One who is not cunning in deceiving people is called פתל plain, simple.

## **Jacob takes the blessings**

e. Genesis 27:11, 12, 19, 18, 19, 24, 33, 35

Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am smooth-skinned.

If my father touches me, I shall appear to him as a trickster and bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing."

He went to his father and said, "Father." And he said, "Yes, which of my sons are you?"

Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau, your first-born; I have done as you told me. Pray sit up and eat of my game, that you may give me your innermost blessing."

He asked, "Are you really my son Esau?" And when he said, "I am,"

Isaac was seized with very violent trembling. "Who was it then," he demanded, "that hunted game and brought it to me? Moreover, I ate of it before you came, and I blessed him; now he must remain blessed!"

But he answered, "Your brother came with cunning and took away your blessing."

## **2. Saving a life**

a. Genesis 20:2

Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.

b. I Samuel 16:2

Samuel replied, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." GOD answered, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to GOD.'

c. Genesis 26, 7

And the men of the place asked about his wife, and he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "[She is] my wife," [because he said,] "Lest the men of the place kill me because of Rebecca, for she is of comely appearance."

## **For peace**

d. Genesis 50:16-17

So they sent this message to Joseph, "Before his death your father left this instruction: So shall you say to Joseph, 'Forgive, I urge you, the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly.' Therefore, please forgive the offense of the servants of the God of your father's [house]." And Joseph was in tears as they spoke to him.

e. Rashi

THY FATHER DID COMMAND — They altered the facts (they stated something that was false) for the sake of peace, for Jacob had given them no such command because Joseph was not suspect in his sight (Yevamot 65b)).

f. Story of R' Ovadiah Yosef and the Pidyon Haben

## **Not an actual lie**

g. Radak on Genesis 27:19

Some people wonder how Yaakov, a righteous person, could say something like this, an outright lie in their opinion. Actually, the matter is not so strange seeing that Yaakov knew that he was entitled to the blessing more than his brother, and that the spirit of prophecy would come to rest on Yitzchok so that he would bless him instead. If, in a situation such as this, the tzaddik changes words so that they sound like a lie, this is in order and does not reflect on him negatively. Our example is Samuel I 16,2 where G'd tells the prophet Samuel to go and crown one of Yishai's sons as the future king of Israel. In order to escape suspicion in case Sha-ul would challenge his trip to Chevron where Yishai lived, G'd told him to take

with him a calf and to claim that he was taking it to Chevron to offer as a sacrifice. Besides, Yaakov was well aware that both his father and his grandfather had on occasion told lies about the marital status of their wives. No one ever accused either as having told lies, seeing there was an adequate reason for telling such a lie. Yaakov therefore was entitled to tell such a lie under the circumstances, and by representing himself as the one who was to get this blessing this did not turn him into a liar. Furthermore, in doing what he did he carried out his mother's instructions. The Torah specifically orders **איש אמו ואביו תיראו** "you shall be in awe of your mother and father." (Leviticus 19,3) Also, his mother was known to be a prophetess, so that her instructions could be trusted without reservations. Onkelos translates verse 13 **עלי בני קללתך בני**, to mean that what Rivkah said was "I have received a prophetic vision telling me that you will not be cursed."

### Small lies in the Talmud

#### a. Yevamot 63a

The Gemara cites more statements with regard to wives. When **Rav was taking leave** of his uncle and teacher, **Rabbi Hiyya**, upon his return from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia, Rabbi Hiyya **said to him: May the Merciful One save you from something that is worse than death.** Rav was perplexed: **Is there anything that is worse than death? He went, examined** the sources, **and found** the following verse: **"And I find more bitter than death the woman, etc."** (Ecclesiastes 7:26). Rabbi Hiyya was hinting at this verse, and indeed, **Rav's wife would constantly aggravate him. When he would say to her: Prepare me lentils, she would prepare him peas; if he asked her for peas, she would prepare him lentils. When Hiyya, his son, grew up, he would reverse** the requests Rav asked him to convey **to her**, so that Rav would get what he wanted. Rav **said to** his son Hiyya: **Your mother has improved** now that **you** convey my requests. **He said to Rav: It is I who reverse** your request **to her.** Rav **said to him: This is** an example of the well-known adage **that people say: He who comes from you shall teach you wisdom;** I should have thought of that idea myself. **You, however, should not do so,** i.e., reverse my request, **as it is stated: "They have taught their tongue to speak lies, they weary themselves to commit iniquity, etc."** (Jeremiah 9:4). If you attribute such a request to me, you will have uttered a falsehood.

#### b. Berakhot 43b

The Gemara relates: **Rav Pappa happened** to come **to the house of Rav Huna, son of Rav Ika. They brought before him** both scented oil and a myrtle branch. **Rav Pappa took and recited a blessing** over the **myrtle branch first and then recited a blessing** over the oil. Rav Huna **said to him: And does the Master not hold** that the **halakha is in accordance** with the opinion of **the decisor?** If so, you should have recited a blessing over the oil first. Rav Pappa said: **Rava said the following: The halakha is in accordance with** the opinion of **Beit Hillel.** The Gemara comments: **That is not so,** as Rava did not issue that ruling. **Rather, Rav Pappa did this in order to extricate himself** from an unpleasant situation and justify his conduct.

### Used against Jacob:

#### a. Midrash Tanchuma (old version), Vayetze 11:

"The whole night she made herself appear as Rachel. When the morning came, 'and behold, it was Leah,' he said to her: 'Daughter of a deceiver! Why did you deceive me?!' She said to him: 'And you — why did you deceive your father? When he said to you (Genesis 27), "Are you really my son Esau?" you said to him, "I am Esau your firstborn." And you say

to me, 'Why did you deceive me?!' Did your father not say about you, 'Your brother came with deceit?'"

b. Kitzur Ba'al HaTurim on Genesis 27:35:1

"With deceit — this phrase appears twice in the Masorah: this one, and the other, 'And the sons of Jacob answered ... with deceit.' Because he (Jacob) came to his father with deceit, his sons came [to others] with deceit."

### **Cunning to win the cunning**

a. Rashi on Genesis 27:35

WITH SUBTLETY — with cleverness.

b. Hayom Yom

The *yetzer hara*, (the evil impulse), is called "animal soul," not because it is necessarily a brute animal. At times it may be a fox, the most cunning of beasts, and great wisdom is needed to perceive its machinations.

c. Sefer HaMa'amarim 5703 / p. 187

"The reason that they acted through ways of cunning is because the fall of the lights ... also occurred through ways of cunning, as it is written, '*And the serpent was cunning*', for he deceived Chavah and Adam. And since the taking of the sparks of holiness was with deceit, the refinement and the taking from it must also be with deceit.

And this is [the meaning of] Rivka and Yaakov — who are [corresponding to] Adam and Chavah (for 'the beauty of Yaakov was a reflection of the beauty of Adam HaRishon,' and Rivka was the aspect of Chavah) — [that] they used Esau's deceit and schemes to take the blessings from Esau."

d. Likkutei Sichos,

"In order to receive the Divine blessings, Rivka carried out several acts of deception, and Yaakov wore Esau's garments. And from this comes the instruction for all of us: a Jew's approach to worldly matters is in a manner of 'deception.' Outwardly, he is engaged in material matters — eating, drinking, and so on — but his intention in this is *for the sake of Heaven*. He indeed wears Esau's garments, but his intention in doing so is to redeem the sparks of holiness that fell there."