

## Parshat Toldot 5776

In this week's Parsha Yaakov, on the instruction of Rivka, requests blessings from Yitzchak intended for Esav. When Yaakov approaches Yitzchak, Yitzchak asks "...who are you, my son?" and Yaakov replies *אֲנִי יְעֹשֵׁב בְּכֹרֶךָ*- *It is I Esav your firstborn*" (Bereshit 27:18-19)

How can Yaakov say this, is this not a lie? The problem goes even deeper as we know that Yaakov embodies the middah of truth – 'Emes'. Yaakov is the one that brought emes into the world. There is proof of this in Micha (7:20) which says – '*Grant truth to Yaakov*'. Even more so we see in last week's parsha that Yaakov was extremely honest with Lavan, even when Lavan was so deceitful to him. How can things change so drastically in this week's parsha?

Rashi (Bereshit 27:19) answers that there is a break in the pasuk. When including this break one can interpret the pasuk to mean *אֲנִי יְעֹשֵׁב בְּכֹרֶךָ* – "*I (am me), (and) Esav is your first born*". In contrast, the Gur Aryeh notes that Esav used the words Ani (Bereshit 27:32) when speaking to his father. The Maharal delves deeper into this explanation of Rashi. He says that the actual wording of Yaakov proves he didn't lie. The Maharal explain that the word *אֲנִי* in term of grammar can appear in two ways within a pasuk. It can appear in a pasuk either with a hefsek (break) or without a hefsek. By Yaakov saying *אֲנִי* he was making his words ambiguous. His words could be interpreted with a break meaning 'I, Esav your firstborn' or without a break 'I Esav your firstborn'. Therefore Yaakov is not lying; he is saying something that could be understood in two ways.

However, if Yaakov had used the word *אָנִי* (Ani) instead of *אֲנִי*, then there would have been a problem. Ani appears in the Torah either with a chataf patach (◌ַ) or with a kamatz (◌ָ). The rule is that when 'Ani as a chataf patach underneath then there is no break between Ani and the next word in the sentence. However, when 'Ani has a chamutz underneath, then there is a break between Ani and the word next to it. Therefore if Yaakov had said Ani with a patach then it would seem that Yaakov would be lying by saying 'I Esav your first born'. However, if Yaakov had said Ani with a chamutz then Yaakov would have given the game away as Yitzchak would have been suspicious that Yaakov was breaking up his sentences in a strange manner by saying 'I, Esav your firstborn'. (Clearly the Maharal did not use modern ivrit /sefardi pronunciation!). Another interpretation of the word *אֲנִי* comes from the Bereishis Rabbah (65:18). He states that that word *אֲנִי* signifies the fact that

Yaakov would get the 10 commandments. This is because *אֲנִי* is the first word of them. Yaakov is hinting to Yitzchak that he alone, not Esav, will be destined to build the Jewish nation.

There is another means by which we can explain Yaakov's apparent 'lie' to Yitzchak. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Bereishit 27:1) explains that Rivka and Yaakov knew that the deception would eventually be revealed when Esav came back from the field. Therefore there was no intention of any lie being formed. The intention behind the 'deception' was to show Yitzchak that if Yaakov, a righteous man, can pretend to be an Esav how much more so could Esav pretend to be a righteous man. Yaakov was really trying to communicate to his father how wicked Esav really was. When Yitzchak realised the trick that Yaakov had played on him, only then did he wake up and see how all his life he had allowed Esav to deceive him.

The Chizkuni (Bereishit 27:19) says that Yaakov did not deceive Yitzchak as he was saying 'I (am in the place of) Esav you first born (as I am now the first born)'. Yaakov had brought the first born rights from Esav, therefore Yaakov now took the place of Esav. Yaakov is saying 'I am now coming in the place of Esav'. One can ask on this, why did Yaakov need to use the name Esav? Why could he not just say 'I am your first born?' The Rabbeinu Bachya (Bereishit 27:19) explains that Yaakov is saying 'I am the firstborn because of Esav'. Due to Esav being the firstborn, Yitzchak wanted to give him the blessing. However, Esav has sold his birthright to Yaakov so now he had the right to take the blessings in Esav's place. Yaakov is saying to Yitzchak I am Esav, Esav meaning firstborn. If Yaakov had just said 'I am Esav', that would not be true as he his is not Esav, he is only Esav because of the firstborn birthright.

The Baal HaTurim explains that what Yaakov is trying to say is that he is the one about whom it says '*My first born son is Israel*'. This comes from a pasuk in Shemot (4: 22) whereby Hashem tells Moshe to speak to Paroh saying '*My first born son is Israel*'. This is reinforcing that Israel (another name for Yaakov) is the firstborn. However, Esav is the one about whom it says '*Behold I shall kill you firstborn son*'. This comes from the consecutive pasuk in Shemot (4:23) when Hashem tells Moshe to speak to Paroh saying that He will kill all the Egyptian firstborns. Yaakov, according to the Baal HaTurim is trying to say that there are two types of firstborns. Yaakov is saying he is the righteous first born, the one who will inherit and Esav is the wicked first born the one that will be killed off in Mitzrayim.