חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

KRAKOW · MAOR VASHEMESH, TOLDOT

Rivkah's plan was sound, and Yitzchak's words praised Yaakov

Maor VaShemesh

Drawing on the Midrash's account that Esav brought carrion, the author argues that Rivkah's plan was sound: Yaakov was to direct the kavanah (intention) that would draw Yitzchak's blessing from the first heh of the Divine Name, the level of binah (understanding), and Yitzchak, sensing this intention in the savory foods, would bless him. The author also reads "mirmah" as "ramah" (height), so that Yitzchak's words to Esav praise Yaakov for drawing the blessing from a high and lofty place, rather than accusing him of deceit. AI SUMMARY

"And it was when Yitzchak was old," etc. "And he called Esav his son," etc. "Go out to the field and hunt game for me," etc. "And Rivkah heard when Yitzchak spoke to Esav his son," etc. "And Rivkah said to Yaakov her son, saying: Behold, I heard your father speaking to Esav your brother, saying," etc. And the whole portion.

The difficulties in this portion are many. First, the two instances of "saying" (leimor) are superfluous, for they are not meant as saying to anyone else. Second, how could Rivkah rely on giving Yaakov such advice? Perhaps Yitzchak would be angry with him and curse him. See Rashi, zichrono livrachah (of blessed memory). Third, Yitzchak said to Esav, "Your brother came with mirmah," etc., which in its plain sense means deceit. But he himself agreed to the blessings. And it is unthinkable, G-d forbid, to suppose that Yaakov came with cunning and deceit, since his attribute was truth. See Rashi.

It seems to me that this can be explained as follows. The commentators on the kri and ketiv (the way a word is read and the way it is written) above say that the kri is "and hunt for me game" (vetzudah li tzayid) without a heh, while the ketiv has a heh. This hints that Yitzchak told him the five halachot (laws) of shechitah (ritual slaughter), that he should be careful with them. To understand the matter truly: Yitzchak wished to draw these blessings down from the first heh of the Name Havayah, which is the level of binah, the root of Yitzchak.

Therefore he told him to be careful with the five halachot of shechitah, so that through this he could draw the blessing to himself from the first heh. And through the savory foods, Yitzchak would perceive whether Esav had been careful with them or not. For it is stated in the holy books that Yitzchak attained through the savory foods what Yaakov attained in the vision of the ladder. Therefore he commanded him concerning the five halachot of shechitah: if Esav would fulfill this and direct his actions toward the aforementioned kavanah, then Yitzchak could draw the blessing to him from that heh.

Now when Rivkah our mother heard all this, she knew about Esav that he surely would not fulfill his father's words, as explained in the midrashim (rabbinic homiletic teachings), that he brought carrion. Therefore she told Yaakov our forefather that he should bring his father the savory foods and direct the aforementioned kavanah, to draw the blessing to him from the first heh, which is the root of Yitzchak. Through this she knew for certain that his father would bless him. And even if it became

known afterward, he would not be angry at all, for Yaakov would be directing the kavanah so properly that his father would sense it in the savory foods.

And so it truly was: Yitzchak agreed to the blessings because he sensed that everything had been done correctly and with the proper kavanah. Rivkah too, when she made the savory foods, directed her intention to this, and therefore her heart was confident. It is known that Yaakov our forefather, alav hashalom (peace be upon him), is from the aspect of daat, and his root is above, in a high and lofty place. Yaakov intended to draw the blessing to himself from that high and lofty place, which is his root.

Now let us turn to explain the verses. "And Rivkah said to Yaakov her son, saying": she was precise with the word "saying" (leimor), pointing to the inner aspect of the saying, that is, she told him the kavanah he should direct in the savory foods. Afterward she said, "Behold, I heard your father speaking to Esav your brother," etc. That is to say, regarding what he said to Esav, "and hunt for me game" with a heh, which indicates the five halachot of shechitah that he should be careful with, I know that he will not fulfill his words, as stated in the midrashim.

This is the meaning of "saying: Bring me game," that is, he will not fulfill the ketiv with the heh, and only "game" as spoken will remain, and this is the kri. Therefore, "do not fear your father." "And now, my son, listen to my voice," etc. "And I will make savory foods for your father," with the kavanah that your father seeks, which is fitting for him according to his level. This is hinted in the word "for your father," that is, for his level.

And Yaakov our forefather fulfilled all of this. It is known that binah extends down to hod, and every sefirah (divine attribute) is comprised of ten, amounting to fifty. This is why Yitzchak said to Esav, "And I ate of all," etc. The word "all" (kol) has the gematria (numerical value) of fifty. That is, I sensed in the savory foods that he drew into them from the first heh, the level of binah, which is his root. "And I blessed him; indeed, blessed he shall be," for he is worthy of the blessing, as above.

"When Esav heard," etc. "And he said: Your brother came with mirmah." That is to say, mirmah is from the root ramah, meaning height and elevation. For he was drawing the blessing from a high and lofty place, the aspect of Yaakov, because he did everything with the kavanah that I desired. Therefore I also blessed him. And understand this.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)