

Jacob's Descent to Esau

We explained in our previous article, *A Place Called Botzrah*, that according to Rashi (-[Link](#)), Shem's (-[Link](#)) prophesy to Rebecca (-[Link](#)) concerning her unborn twins, Esau ("the elder") and Jacob ("the younger"), "And the elder will serve the younger," is unconditional, as well as it is for all times. Hence, the question, how could, "Jacob sent angels ahead of him to his brother Esau ... 'So shall you say to my master to Esau, 'Thus said your servant Jacob' ...and he took from what came into his hand a gift for his brother Esau ...and prostrated himself to the ground seven times?!'" All in direct contrast to Shem's prophesy, "And the elder will serve the younger?!" --to the point that (-Rashi, Genesis 32:5) Jacob's direct intent was to show Esau, "It is not worthwhile for you to hate me on account of your father's blessing, [with] which he blessed me: 'You shall be a master over your brothers,' for it was not fulfilled in me!?"

In the realm of the simple meaning of the verses this is not a question, because we see clearly that even concerning G-d's direct blessing --of (-ibid, verse 13), "And You said, 'I will surely do good with you, and I will make your seed [as numerous] as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of multitude,'"-- Jacob said (-Rashi, ibid, verse 11), "I fear lest I have become sullied with sin since [the time that] You promised me, and it will cause me to be delivered into Esau's hand," how much more so, Jacob would fear as such concerning a prophesy said to his mother (through Shem)! Nevertheless, this answer is not smooth, for this prophesy, and so too, Isaac's blessing of, "and you shall be a master to your brothers," are both unconditional. And as explained (in the article, *A Place Called Botzrah*), that even Isaac's blessing to Esau, "And it will be, when you grieve --Rashi: When the Israelites will transgress the Torah --precisely Jacob's present fear!-- and you will have cause to grieve about the blessings that he took-- you will break his yoke off your neck," means, that Esau will only be able to break his actual work of servitude to Jacob, but nevertheless Jacob remains with, "Be a master over your brother." Hence, how could Jacob have done all that contradicts the prophesy (of Shem) and the blessing (of Isaac), to the point of calling himself the slave, and Esau his master?!

And while it is true that the Midrash (-[Link](#)) states (-Bereishit Rabba, portion 75:1-3 & 11) "The Holy One, blessed be He said, 'Because you (Jacob) humiliated yourself (before Esau)...'" Jacob was therefore punished, nevertheless, being that (-Berishit Rabba, Portion 47:6; Tanya, Chapter 23), "The Patriarchs are truly the [Divine] chariot ...they served as a vehicle for nothing but the Divine will, throughout all their days," it is not possible to say that the Patriarchs ever sinned --and even their actions which are nicknamed sin are not called sins in its simple meaning. Thus, we find concerning this very instance of Jacob's action of humiliation of self towards Esau, that even though Jacob was punished for this, nevertheless (-Yalkut Shmoni, Remez 133), "From here we say that we flatter the wicked in this world for the sake of peace." Meaning, that not only isn't it a sin (albeit that on Jacob's level of faith and righteousness he was punished for this), but rather, it is the source of a law on how we should behave the same! Hence, we need to understand why Jacob correctly and purposefully did so, according to the deeper teachings.

In the teachings of Chassidus it is explained that the reason why Esau was the firstborn by birth is because in their spiritual source, Esau is higher than Jacob, and only through Jacob 'refining and rectifying' Esau is there then an even greater light than that of the source of Esau, shining into Jacob --and maybe hence, Esau sells the firstborn -hood to Jacob -this is but the writers thought, and not stated in the Rebbe's talk. With this we can now understand why, "Jacob sent angels ahead of him --meaning above Jacob's source-- to --the source of-- his brother Esau," and, "So shall you say to my master to Esau, 'Thus said your servant Jacob,'" for Jacob was doing all of this on a spiritual level to the source of Esau, which is higher ("my master... your servant") than the source of Jacob. And therefore, it is not an act of defiance or contradiction to the prophesy and blessing, "Be a master over your brother," for on the contrary, through this, "Is there then an even greater light than that of the source Esau, shining into Jacob!"

However, this is only the way it is concerning the spiritual source of Jacob and Esau, while the Midrash stated, "Because you (Jacob) humiliated yourself (before Esau)." Therefore, we must explain how Jacob did this, not in his elevating himself spiritually, but also in his descent ("humiliated yourself (before Esau)") physically.

The explanation is that in 'refining and rectifying' there are two formats: (i) Shine: The refiner remains above, and shines upon the refined. (ii) Enclothe: The refiner descends into the realm of the refined, and clothes himself within the refined. The first way is better for the refiner, that he remains above, and does not need to descend into a, "he who wrestles with a filthy person," in which he can, "become soiled himself." While for the refined the second way is better, because it isn't a Light shined but upon him, which but breaks and pushes away the darkness, but in this way of enclothing, the change is happening within the refined, that the refined, -- as it is in its definition and properties of opaqueness-- itself, becomes transformed into transparency to Light.

However (-Maimonides, Laws of Chanukah, C.4, L. 14), "The entire Torah was given to bring about peace within the world." True peace is only when the 'enemy' himself is transformed into a friend. Hence, it is all about making peace within the world. The Hebrew word for world is olam, connected with the etymology helem: concealment; opaqueness. Hence, the job is to take olam, in its properties of helem, and to transform it into transparency. Even deeper yet, not only to transform the olam, when it is in its natural state of helem, but even when the olam is in a state of exile, a double darkness, and an opaqueness within an opaqueness, the ultimate purpose is to have our very prosecutors in exile to acknowledge and ratify our self-sacrifice to, "G-d is one!"

So too, Jacob (the refiner) descended --even though Jacob will need a rectification himself (was punished) for this!-- to Esau (the refined) to transform Esau as he is down here, to the point that Esau ratified Jacob's blessings (-Genesis 33:9), "My brother, let what you have remain yours --(Rashi:) Here he acknowledged his (Jacob's) right to the blessings!"