

# א ביסל תורה!

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## Coping With Struggle and Joy

By Avi Abbett '25

After **יעקב** sees the royal Egyptian wagons and tell him all that had happened, the תורה describes **יעקב** as: וַתְּחִי רוּחַ יַעֲקֹב. אַבְיָהֶם וַיֵּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב עוֹד יוֹסֵף בְּנֵי חַי אֵלֶיכָה וְאַרְאֶנּוּ בְּטָרֶם אָמוֹת. "The spirit of **יעקב**, their father, was brought back to life, and **ישראל** said How incredible! My son יוסף is still alive. I shall go and see him before I die" (בראשית מ"ה:כ"ז-כ"ח). The תורה switches from calling him **יעקב** to **ישראל**. Both of these were his names, but why does the תורה switch between these two names? What is the difference between them? What does each mean? The name **יעקב** comes from his birth when **יעקב** came out second and was grasping the heel (עקב in Hebrew) of his older brother **עשו**. Accordingly, **יעקב** means: the one who will never give up and has the determination to fight even when he is at the bottom. In contrast, **ישראל** means the victorious one, as it comes from the root שר, which means a prince or ruler. The תורה says that **יעקב** received this name when he defeated the angel, who blessed him that from then on, he would have the name "ישראל, כִּי־שָׁרִיתָ עִם־אַלְלֵקִים וְעִם־אַנְשִׁים וְתוֹכַלְתָּ" "for you strove with men and angels and you were victorious" (בראשית ל"ב:ל"ט).

This explains why the פסוק uses both names. As long as **יעקב** thought that **יוסף** was dead, he was sad, depressed, and worried that the family mission was a failure. He felt like he was on the bottom, struggling with the difficult challenge **ה'** had sent him. But, when he hears that **יוסף** is alive, viceroy of Egypt, and that this will be their salvation from the famine, **יעקב** sees how everything fits together. Thus, **יעקב** is at a high point in his life so the second half of the פסוק uses the name **ישראל**.

This interchanging of names continues throughout the פרשה. The תורה continues to refer to him as **ישראל** until he stops in שבע, where **ה'** says "יעקב, יעקב" (בראשית מ"ז:ב).

Why is **ה'** calling him **יעקב**, when he otherwise seems to be at a high point in his life? **ה'** then tells him, "אל־תִּירָא מִרָדָה," "Do not be afraid, for you are going down to Egypt, as there you will become a great nation, and I will eventually bring you back to the Land." Here, the תורה refers to him again as **יעקב**: "מִבְּאֵר" "and **יעקב** got up from שבע."

The switch occurs because, although **יעקב** was happy to be reunited with **יוסף**, he realizes that going down to Egypt will be the beginning of the painful slavery that **ה'** had prophesied to **יעקב**. **יעקב** is suddenly afraid and once again struggles with a frightening situation, but **ה'** tells him not to be afraid as he still has the "יעקב" power and can make it through this challenge as he made it through the others.

So, **יעקב** was both full of joy and worry about going down to Egypt. On a personal level, there was nothing that would make him happier than to see his beloved son **יוסף** once again. At the same time, part of him realizes that future generations will have darkness on the horizon and he is playing a part in bringing this on. These feelings don't cancel each other out. They are both there; he is both **יעקב** and **ישראל**.

An important lesson to be learned from **יעקב**'s two names is that the אבות and אמהות were so great that they did not think only of themselves, but also in terms of their immediate family and the entire Jewish people. If **יעקב** only thought of himself he would be ecstatic with no reason to worry. But he did not only think of himself. He thought of his children and grandchildren and the future Jewish people. He also had on his mind **ה'**'s promises to **אברהם** and continuing his ancestors' mission. This all left him worried and fearful about Egypt and what it would mean for the Jewish people. With **ה'**'s guidance, may we all be able to deal with challenges like **יעקב** and to live with joy like **ישראל**.

# יעקב's Sacrifice Before Going to Egypt

By Eitan Orkaby '27

After יוסף reveals himself to his brothers, his first question is concerning his father: "הֲעוֹד אָבִי חַי" "Is my father still alive?" (בראשית מ"ה:ג). Then, יוסף catches up with his brothers, and what he was doing for all of the years that he was not with his family. After doing so, יוסף requests for his brothers to bring his father down to Egypt. Upon the brothers' return to יעקב, at first, יעקב does not believe that יוסף is still alive, and decides to go down to מצרים to see for himself. Before embarking on this journey, יעקב brings sacrifices: "וַיָּבֵא בְּאֶרֶץ שְׂבַע וַיִּזְבַּח זִבְחִים לֵאלֹהֵי אָבִיו יִצְחָק" "and he came to שבע and sacrificed sacrifices to the G-d of his father יצחק" (בראשית מ"ו:א). The phrase "לֵאלֹהֵי אָבִיו יִצְחָק" "to the G-d of his father יצחק" seems to leave out a key person, אברהם. Usually, when יעקב mentions his father's G-d, he also includes אברהם, as we say every night before bed "וְשֵׁם אֲבוֹתַי" "and in the name of my fathers אברהם and יצחק" (בראשית מ"ח:ט"ז). Why does יעקב leave out אברהם?!

יעקב answers this question by simply pointing out the fact that יצחק is יעקב's father, and one must respect one's father over an older person; therefore, יעקב mentioned his father instead of grand-father, old person.

The רשב"ם understands יעקב leaving out אברהם as being connected to the place of the sacrifices, rather than the sacrifices themselves. יעקב goes to "בְּאֶרֶץ שְׂבַע" to bring the sacrifices to ה'. In שבע, יצחק makes a מזבח to ה' when ה' reveals himself to יצחק. This answer beautifully connects the very recent story of יוסף revealing himself to his brothers and ה' revealing himself to יצחק.

The ספורנו looks at this question in an even broader scope. Rather than only looking at this פסוק and trying to make sense of it, the ספורנו looks at why יעקב is bringing sacrifices in the place. יעקב knows that he should stay in Israel, just like יצחק did all of his life, therefore, יעקב must bring a sacrifice, almost to repent for leaving Israel. This then explains why only יצחק is mentioned, as יצחק was told not to go down to Egypt, therefore, connecting יעקב's sacrifice with someone who never had to repent for leaving Israel.

The רשב"ם ties the רשב"ם and the ספורנו together in a way of understanding the absence of אברהם. When יעקב was going down to Egypt, he saw that this would be the beginning of the Jewish exile, and was afraid of the generations that would come after him and what would happen to them. יעקב, therefore, mentioned only יצחק, and chose שבע, as באר שבע was known as a place of prayer. יעקב prayer was for בני" to withhold their connection to Israel, through his father, someone who never left.

יעקב deepens this explanation by understanding the prayer of יעקב as being one so that his descendants will not lose their connection with Israel, and one out of worry that him going down to מצרים looks like he is running away from Israel and ה'. Rather, יעקב leaves with a sacrifice to show that he will retain a connection with ה' even outside of Israel. This is proved by the next פסוק, which is where ה' speaks to יעקב that night, "וַיִּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמַרְאֵת הַלַּיְלָה" "and G-d spoke to ישראל at night" (בראשית מ"ז:ב), acknowledging and accepting the fact that יעקב will retain his connection with ה' even in Egypt.

When the תורה tells us someone's intentions upon acting, the precise language can teach many principles. The absence of language can sometimes teach so much more. We read a seemingly simple פסוק on how יעקב brought his sacrifices, and from the absence of one of the אבות, we must try to reinterpret the rest of the פסוק, if not the entire section. May we always be able to find the Bisl piece of Torah, that is so grand.



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