

# א ביסל תורה!

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ויגש

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### יעקב The Meaning Behind the Two Names of

By Avi Abbett

One of the most dramatic moments in this week's פרשה is when the brothers return to tell their father יעקב that יוסף, their long-lost brother and son, is still alive and is the viceroy of Egypt. יוסף was יעקב's favorite son, and all this time יעקב was lead to believe that יוסף was dead.

The תורה describes that after יעקב saw the royal Egyptian wagons and after the brothers told him all that had happened: בָּטָרָם אָמַתּוֹ, יוֹסֵף עוֹד-יֹסֵף בְּנִי, הִי; אֵלֶיָּה וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ, בְּטָרָם אָמַתּוֹ. "The spirit of יעקב 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." The תורה switches from calling him יעקב to ישראל. Both of these were his names, why does the תורה switch between these two names? What is the difference between the two names? What does each mean? And why does יעקב have two names at all?

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 יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּי-שָׁרִיתָ עִם-אַלְקִים וְעִם-אָנְשִׁים וְתוֹקֵל "for you strove with men and angels and you were victorious."

The two names, יעקב and ישראל, have another set of opposite meanings. עקב can also mean twisted or crooked, and thus יעקב means someone who can act with cunning and even trickery in murky and confusing situations. After עשו realizes that יעקב had tricked their father to get the firstborn blessing, he exclaims הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה "Now I know why he is called יעקב, for he has tricked me twice." The name ישראל also has a second meaning. As a conjunction of the two words ישר א-ל, which Could either mean: ה' is straight and upright or the straight and upright one of ה'. Thus ישראל, the opposite of the bent and tricky יעקב, represents someone who acts honestly and who sees ה' plan in a clear and straightforward way.

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, he 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 as it says, וַיֵּסַע יִשְׂרָאֵל – and ישראל traveled, but he first stops in באר שבע and offers sacrifices to ה'. There ה' 'turns' to ישראל and says "יעקב, יעקב." Why is ה' calling him יעקב, when he otherwise seems to be at a high point in his life? ה' tells him, אַל-תִּירָא מִרְדָּה מִצְרַיִם כִּי-לְגוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשִׁימְךָ שָׁם "Do not be afraid, for you are going down to Egypt, but 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:t

באר שבע יעקב got up from יעקב, וַיֵּקָם יַעֲקֹב, מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע.

The switch occurred because, although יעקב was happy to be reunited with יוסף, it is here that he realizes that going down to Egypt will be the beginning of the painful slavery that ה' had prophesized to יעקב. יעקב is suddenly afraid, and once again is struggling with a frightening situation, but ה' tells him not to be afraid because 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 to go down to Egypt. On a personal level, there was nothing that would make him happier than to once again see his beloved son יוסף. At the same time, part of him realizes that future generations have darkness on the horizon and he is playing a part on bringing this on. These feelings don't cancel each other out. They are both there; he is both יעקב and ישראל.

The תורה continues to alternate between these two names. When יעקב and יוסף actually meet it is a joyous moment. They hug and weep. The תורה says: וַיֹּסֶף וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יוֹסֵף, אָמַתּוֹתָ הַפֶּעַם – יִשְׂרָאֵל "Now I can die," his

life is complete; he has nothing else to ask for. This was about his personal life and relationship with יוסף, and in that moment he was filled with joy, thanksgiving, and at a high point, therefore the תורה refers to him as ישראל.

However, later יוסף introduces his father to פרעה and in this scene, everything suddenly turns very pessimistic. "And יעקב said to פרעה 'my years have been few and bad.'" Fitting with this negative mood he is called יעקב, as he understood he was standing before פרעה, under his authority, and as a guest in his land, representing the beginning of the Jewish people's wandering and slavery. In that moment he was filled with worry and fear, facing a new challenge and was thus once again יעקב.

One 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 always thought 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. He would live once again with his favorite son in wealth and comfort in Egypt. But יעקב did not only think of himself and his personal life. He thought of his children and grandchildren and the future Jewish people. He also had on his mind 'ה' promises to אברהם and continuing his ancestors' mission. And this all left him worried and fearful about Egypt and what it would mean for the Jewish people. With 'ה' guidance, may we all be זוכה to deal with the challenges like יעקב and to live with joy like ישראל.

## The Tremendous כיבוד אב ואם of יעקב

By Binyamin Orkaby

In פרשת ויגש and his family go down to מצרים to see יוסף. On his way, יעקב gives יצחק אָבִיו יִצְחָק sacrifices to the G-d of his father יצחק. This seems strange for why is the תורה specifically stating יצחק's name when referring to 'ה'? Why not just say אָבִיו יִצְחָק?

רש"י on this פסוק says that the reason why only יצחק's name is used is because it is more important for one to honor his parents than his elders. רמב"ן, however, thinks that this answer of רש"י is insufficient to fully answer the question. The תורה could have just said לאל-קי אבותיו, that יעקב sacrificed to the G-d of his forefathers without having to specify a single person. Furthermore, רמב"ן quotes יעקב in פרשת ויחי when he gives the ברכה to יוסף and uses both of his forefathers names as it says ויצחק וישראל לפניו אברהם ויצחק. Also in יעקב's תפילה to 'ה' he mentioned both of his forefathers אָבִיו יִצְחָק and אָלֵ-קֵי אֲבִרְהָם וְיִצְחָק. The רמב"ן adds that the תורה could have said ויזבח as he brings down from when אברהם in לך פרשת לך לך builds a מזבח and the תורה says ויבן מזבח לה'. The רמב"ן answers that the reason for only יצחק's name being mentioned in this פסוק was that יעקב was specifically afraid of the slavery that was to befall his nation in מצרים. Thus, יעקב offered קרבנות in the name of his father יצחק, so as to appeal to 'ה' מדת הדין, the attribute of justice, most closely related to his father יצחק.

רשב"ם gives another answer and says that the reason only יצחק's name is mentioned is for the fact that יצחק had brought זבחים in שבע, באר שבע, so too יעקב also brought זבחים in שבע, following the precedence of his father. The כלי יקר says that the reason only יצחק's name is used was because יעקב wanted to make up for not having been able to do כיבוד אב for more than twenty years.

ספורנו gives a wonderful opinion as he says that the reason for the תורה's usage of specifically יצחק is to remind us that יצחק had not been allowed to leave ארץ ישראל nor go down to מצרים during the previous famine. Therefore, יעקב was asking 'ה' for permission to go down to מצרים, contradicting the commandment given to his father יצחק. This explains why 'ה' responds to יעקב reassures him that He will be with him and will protect him in מצרים.

We can learn from יעקב the importance of כיבוד אב ואם. Until his final days יעקב was haunted by his more than twenty year absence from his father. With this dedication and connection to his father, even after יצחק had died, shows how important כיבוד אב ואם was to יעקב. Every time we have the opportunity to honor our parents we should take action and not lose out on the opportunity to fulfill this מצוה. May we all be זוכה to שנים רבים and many years of giving כיבודים to our parents.

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