

# Yaakov: The Power of Introspection and Identity Reclamation

Source Sheet by Jennifer Raskas

Based on the book: **“Wrestling Jacob: Deception, Identity and Freudian Slips in Genesis”** by Rav Shmuel Klitzner

Introduction: Hilchot Teshuva - The Laws of Repentance

**Mishneh Torah, Repentance 2:4**

(4) Among the ways of repentance are, for the penitent to continue to cry out in tearful supplication before the Name, to bestow alms according to his means, and to distance himself exceedingly from the thing wherein he sinned, to have his identity changed, as if saying: "I am now another person, and not that person who perpetrated those misdeeds", to completely change his conduct for the good and straight path, and to exile himself from his place of residence, for exile atones iniquity, because it leads him to submissiveness and to be meek and humble-spirited.

**משנה תורה, הלכות תשובה**

**ב'ד'**

(ד) מִדְרָכֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה לְהִיּוֹת הַשָּׂב צוֹעֵק תָּמִיד לְפָנֵי הַשֵּׁם בְּבִכּוֹ וּבִתְחִנּוּנִים וְעוֹשֶׂה צְדָקָה כְּפִי כַחוֹ וּמְתַרְחֵק הַרְבֵּה מִן הַדָּבָר שֶׁחָטָא בּוֹ וּמְשַׁנֵּה שְׁמוֹ כְּלוֹמֵר אֲנִי אֲחֵר וְאֲנִי אוֹתוֹ הָאִישׁ שֶׁעָשָׂה אוֹתוֹ הַמַּעֲשִׂים וּמְשַׁנֵּה מַעֲשָׂיו כְּלָן לְטוֹבָה וְלְדֶרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגוֹלָה מִמְקוֹמוֹ. שְׁגָלוֹת מְכַפֶּרֶת עוֹן מִפְּנֵי שֶׁגוֹרְמֶת לוֹ לְהִכָּנַע וְלִהְיוֹת עָנּוּ וְשִׁפְלֵי רוּחַ:

## Part 1 - Yaakov's Childhood and Striving for Bechora (Elder Child Status)

### The Birth - Foreshadowing

#### Genesis 25:23-26

(23) and the LORD answered her, “Two nations are in your womb, Two separate peoples shall issue from your body; One people shall be mightier than the other, And the **older shall serve the younger.**” (24) When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. (25) The first one emerged red, like a hairy mantle all over; so they named him Esau. (26) Then his brother emerged, **holding on to the heel of Esau;** so they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

#### Chizkuni, Genesis 25:23

(5) “and the older will become subservient to the younger.” This is where the Torah decreed that Yaakov, though the younger, will eventually wind up as the senior one of the twins to be born. Rav Hunna (B’reshit Rabbah 63,6) is

#### בראשית כ"ה:כ"ג-כ"ו

(כג) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לָהּ שְׁנֵי גַיִם  
[גוֹיִם] בְּבֶטְנְךָ וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים  
מִמֶּעֶיךָ יִפְרְדוּ וְלֵאמֹם מְלֹאֵם יֵאָמְצוּ  
וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צְעִיר: (כד) וַיִּמְלְאוּ  
יְמֵיהָ לֵלֶדֶת וְהִנֵּה תוֹמֵם בְּבֶטְנָהּ:  
(כה) וַיֵּצֵא הָרִאשׁוֹן אֲדָמוֹנִי כָּלֹ  
כְּאֹדָרֶת שֵׁעָר וַיִּקְרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו:  
(כו) וְאַחֲרָיו יָצָא אֲחִיו וַיִּדּוּ  
אֲחֶזֶת בְּעֵקֶב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ  
יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְחַק בֶּן־שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה  
בְּלֶדֶת אֹתָם:

#### חזקוני, בראשית כ"ה:כ"ג

(ה) ורב יעבד צעיר כאן נגזר  
על יעקב שיהא גביר לאחיו. אמר  
רב הונא זכה יעקב רב יעבד  
צעיר ואם לאו רב יעבד מן  
הצעיר. ד"א הרבה יעבוד צעיר.

quoted as having said that it means if Yaakov merits it he will become the senior, if not, Esau will become senior to him. An alternate exegesis: the word רב does not mean: “the senior one,” but simply means “הרבה,” a great deal,” or “for a long time.”

## The Selling of the Bechorah

### Genesis 25:28-33

(28) Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah favored Jacob. (29) Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the open, famished. (30) And Esau said to Jacob, “Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished”—which is why he was named Edom. (31) Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” (32) And Esau said, “I am at the point of death, so of what use is my birthright to me?” (33) But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

### בראשית כ"ה:כ"ח-ל"ג

(כח) וַיֶּאֱהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת-עֵשָׂו  
כִּי-צִיד בְּפִיו וְרֵבֶקָה אֲהַבְתִּי  
אֶת-יַעֲקֹב: (כט) וַיָּזַד יַעֲקֹב נֶזֶד  
וַיָּבֵא עֵשָׂו מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא עֵיף:  
(ל) וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל-יַעֲקֹב  
הֲלֵעִיטֵנִי נָא מִן-הָאֲדָם הָאֲדָם  
הַזֶּה כִּי עֵיף אָנֹכִי עַל-כֵּן  
קָרָא שְׁמוֹ אֲדָוִם: (לא) וַיֹּאמֶר  
יַעֲקֹב מִכֶּרֶה כִּיֹּם אֶת-בְּכֹרְתְךָ לִי:  
(לב) וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו הֲנֵה אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ  
לָמוֹת וְלָמָה-זֶה לִּי בְכֹרֶה: (לג)  
וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב הַשְּׁבַעָה לִּי כִּיֹּם  
וַיִּשְׁבַּע לוֹ וַיִּמְכֹּר אֶת-בְּכֹרְתוֹ  
לְיַעֲקֹב:

## The Act of Deception

### Genesis 27:12-13

(12) If my father touches me, I shall appear to him as a trickster and bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing.” (13) But his mother said to him, “Your curse, my son, be upon me! Just do as I say and go fetch them for me.”

### בראשית כ"ז:י"ב-י"ג

(יב) אולי ימשני אבי והייתי בעיניו כמתעתע והבאתי עלי קללה ולא ברכה: (יג) ותאמר לו אמו עלי קללתה בני אה שמע בקולי ולה קח-לי:

**Question - Why might Rivka be so confident this type of deception is ok? Where else did she see deception of role in family for a greater good?**

### Jacob deceives his Father

### Genesis 27:16-19

(16) and she covered his hands and the hairless part of his neck with the skins of the kids. (17) Then she put in the hands of her son Jacob the dish and the bread that she had prepared. (18) He went to his father and said, “Father.” And he said, “Yes, which of my sons are you?” (19) Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau, your first-born; I have done as you told me. Pray sit up and eat of my game, that you may give me your innermost blessing.”

### בראשית כ"ז:ט"ז-י"ט

(טז) ואת ערות גדיי העזים הלבשה על-ידיו ועל חלקת צואריו: (יז) ותתן את-המטעמים ואת-הלחם אשר עשתה ביד יעקב בנה: (יח) ויבא אל-אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הנני מי אתה בני: (יט) ויאמר יעקב אל-אביו אנכי עשו בכרך עשיתי כאשר דברת אלי קום-נא שבה ואכלה מצידי בעבור תברכני נפשך:

## The Blessing of the Bechorah - the Oldest Son

### Genesis 27:28-29

(28) “May God give you Of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, Abundance of new grain and wine. (29) Let peoples serve you, And nations bow to you; Be master over your brothers, And let your mother’s sons bow to you. Cursed be they who curse you, Blessed they who bless you.”

### בראשית כ"ז:כ"ח-כ"ט

(כח) וַיִּתֵּן-לָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים מִטֵּל הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְרֹב דָּגָן וְתִירֹשׁ: (כט) יַעֲבֹדוךָ עַמִּים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ [וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ] לָךְ לְאֲמִים הַיְהוּה גְּבִיר לְאֹחֶיךָ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לָךְ בְּנֵי אִמְךָ אֲרָרֶיךָ אֲרוּר וּמְבָרְכֶיךָ בְּרוּךְ:

## Yitzchak tells Esav what happened

### Genesis 27:35

(35) But he answered, “Your brother came with **guile** and took away your blessing.”

### בראשית כ"ז:ל"ה

(לה) וַיֹּאמֶר בָּא אֹחֶיךָ בְּמַרְמָה וַיִּקַּח בְּרַכְתְּךָ:

## Yitzchak Blesses Yaakov when he knows he is Yaakov

### Genesis 28:1-4

(1) So Isaac sent for Jacob and blessed him. He instructed him, saying, “You shall not take a wife from among the Canaanite

### בראשית כ"ח:א-ד'

(א) וַיִּקְרָא יִצְחָק אֶל-יַעֲקֹב וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ וַיְצַוֵּהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֹא-תִקַּח אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת כְּנָעַן: (ב) קוּם יְלֶךְ

women. (2) Up, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take a wife there from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother, (3) May El Shaddai bless you, make you fertile and numerous, so that you become an assembly of peoples. (4) May He grant the blessing of Abraham to you and your offspring, that you may possess the land where you are sojourning, which God assigned to Abraham."

פַּדְנָה אֲרָם בֵּיתָה בְּתוֹאֵל אָבִי  
אָמַר וְקַח-לָךְ מִשָּׁם אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת  
לְבֵן אָחִי אָמַר: (ג) וְאֵל שְׂדֵי יִבְרָךְ  
אֶתְךָ וַיִּפְרֹךְ וַיִּרְבֶּךָ וְהָיִית לַקְהָל  
עַמִּים: (ד) וַיִּתֵּן-לָךְ אֶת-בְּרִכְתּוֹ  
אֲבִרְהָם לָךְ וְלִזְרַעְךָ אֶתְךָ לְרִשְׁתָּךְ  
אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִגְרִיךָ אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן אֱלֹהִים  
לְאַבְרָהָם:

## Part 2 - Yaakov Lives with the Deception

### Reminders Surround Yaakov...

#### Genesis 29:26

(26) Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older.

#### בראשית כ"ט:כ"ו

(כו) וַיֹּאמֶר לְבֵן לֹא-יַעֲשֶׂה כֵן  
בְּמִקְוָמָנוּ לִיתַת הַצְעִירָה לְפָנֵי  
הַבְּכִירָה:

#### Genesis 31:1

(1) Now he heard the things that Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from that he has built up all this wealth."

#### בראשית ל"א:א'

(א) וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת-דִּבְרֵי בְנֵי-לְבָן  
לְאֹמֹר לְקַח יַעֲקֹב אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר  
לְאַבְרָהָם וַיִּמְאָשֶׁר לְאַבְרָהָם עָשָׂה אֵת  
כָּל-הַכֶּבֶד הַזֶּה:

### Genesis 31:34-37

(34) Rachel, meanwhile, had taken the idols and placed them in the camel cushion and sat on them; and Laban rummaged through the tent without finding them. (35) For she said to her father, "Let not my lord take it amiss that I cannot rise before you, for the period of women is upon me." Thus he searched, but could not find the household idols. (36) Now Jacob became incensed and took up his grievance with Laban. Jacob spoke up and said to Laban, "What is my crime, what is my guilt that you should pursue me? (37) You rummaged through all my things; what have you found of all your household objects? Set it here, before my kinsmen and yours, and let them decide between us two.

### בראשית ל"א:ל"ד-ל"ז

(לד) וְרָחֵל לָקְחָה אֶת־הַתְּרָפִים וַתִּשְׁמַם בְּכַר הַגָּמֶל וַתֵּשֶׁב עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּמְשֹׁשׁ לָבָן אֶת־כָּל־הָאֱהָל וְלֹא מָצָא: (לה) וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־אָבִיהָ אֶל־יִחָר בְּעֵינַי אֲדֹנָי כִּי לֹא אוֹכֵל לָקוּם מִפְּנֵיהָ כִּי־דָרָה נָשִׁים לִי וַיַּחְפֹּשׂ וְלֹא מָצָא אֶת־הַתְּרָפִים: (לו) וַיִּחָר לִיעֶקֶב וַיִּרְבּוּ בְּלִבָּן וַיַּעַן יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר לְלָבָן מַה־פָּשְׁעֵי מַה חָטָאתִי כִּי דֹלְקֶת אַחֲרָי: (לז) כִּי־מִשְׁשֶׁת אֶת־כָּל־כְּלִי מַה־מָּצָאתָ מִכָּל־כְּלֵי־בֵיתְךָ שֵׁים כֹּה נִגַּד אַחִי וְאַחֲרָי וַיִּזְכִּיחוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵינוּ:

## Part 3: The Moment of Truth - Yaakov's Wrestling

### Genesis 32:25-32

(25) Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. (26) When he saw that he had not prevailed

### בראשית ל"ב:כ"ה-ל"ב

(כה) וַיִּזְתַּר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיִּאָבֶק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלֹת הַשָּׁחַר: (כו) וַיֵּרָא כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לוֹ וַיַּגַּע בְּכַף־יְרֵכּוֹ

against him, he wrenched Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled with him. (27) Then he said, "Let me go, for dawn is breaking." But he answered, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." (28) Said the other, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob." (29) Said he, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed." (30) Jacob asked, "Pray tell me your name." But he said, "You must not ask my name!" And he took leave of him there. (31) So Jacob named the place Peniel, meaning, "I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved." (32) The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping on his hip.

**Now Yaakov is ready to face external challenges, he is ready to face Esav**

#### Genesis 33:11

(11) Please accept my present which has been brought to you, for God has favored me and I have plenty." And when he urged him, he accepted.

וַיִּתְקַע כַּף-יָרֵךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּהֶאֱבֹקוֹ  
 עָמוּ: (כז) וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחְנִי כִּי עֲלֶה  
 הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁלְּחֶךָּ כִּי  
 אִם-בְּרַכְתָּנִי: (כח) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
 מַה-שְּׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב: (כט)  
 וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֹאמַר עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ  
 כִּי אִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-שָׂרִית  
 עִם-אֱלֹהִים וְעִם-אָנָּשִׁים וַתִּזְכָּל:  
 (ל) וַיִּשְׁאַל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר  
 הַגִּידָה-נָא שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה  
 תִּשְׁאַל לְשִׁמִּי וַיְבָרַךְ אֹתוֹ שֵׁם:  
 (לא) וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם  
 פְּנִיאֵל כִּי-רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנִים  
 אֶל-פָּנִים וַתִּנָּצַל נַפְשִׁי: (לב)  
 וַיִּזְרַח-לוֹ הַשָּׁמֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָבַר  
 אֶת-פְּנּוּאֵל וְהוּא צָלַע עַל-יָרְכוּ:

#### בראשית ל"ג:יא

(יא) קח-נָא אֶת-בְּרַכְתִּי אֲשֶׁר  
 הֵבֵאתָ לִּי כִּי-חֲנַנִּי אֱלֹהִים וְכִי  
 יֵשׁ-לִי-כָּל וַיִּפְצַר-בּוֹ וַיִּקַּח:



## At end of Yaakov's Life - He Blesses All His Sons

Genesis 49:28

(28) All these were the tribes of Israel, twelve in number, and this is what their father said to them as he bade them farewell, addressing to each a parting word appropriate to him.

בראשית מ"ט:כ"ח

(כח) כָּל־אֵלֶּה שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר וְזֹאת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר לָהֶם  
 אָבִיהֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר  
 כְּבָרְכָתוּ בֵּרֶךְ אֹתָם:

Question - What Lessons Can We Learn from Yaakov's Journey?

*Source Sheet created on Sefaria by Jennifer Raskas*