



An Intriguing Combination of the Panim Yafos and the Chasam Sofer Eisav's Guardian Angel Wanted to Change Yaakov's Name to Yisrael to Annul the Powerful Effect of "Yaakov Yaakov"

This week's parsha is parshas Vayishlach. It portrays the mysterious wrestling match between Eisav's guardian angel and Yaakov Avinu. As we are taught, Yaakov Avinu wins this battle decisively but is not unscathed (Bereishis 32, 25): "ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר, וירא כי לא יכול לו ויגע בכף ירכו ותקע כף ירך יעקב". **And Yaakov remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. Upon realizing that he could not overcome him, he struck a blow to the ball of Yaakov's thighbone, and it became dislocated, as they wrestled.** They expounded in the Gemara (Chullin 91a): "ו**יאבק איש עמו, מלמד שהעלו אבק מרגלותם עד כסא הכבוד**—they wrestled so fiercely that they raised dust all the way up to the "Kisei HaKavod"—the Throne of Glory. [Translator's note: This elucidation is based on the similarity between the word "ו**יאבק**" employed by the passuk, meaning "he wrestled," and the Hebrew word "אבק", meaning "dust."]

Clearly, these events cannot be interpreted simply as they appear. The world in which HKB"H sits atop His Kisei HaKavod is not a material world; it is a spiritual world, and no dust or physical particle from this world can reach that world. Notwithstanding, we can explain the matter as the Shela hakadosh does (Vayishlach, Torah Ohr 4). He refers to a teaching in the Gemara concerning the thread of "techeiles" HKB"H commanded us to include in the Tzitzis (Menachos 43b): "תניא היה רבי מאיר אומר, מה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין, מפני שתכלת דומה לים, וים דומה לרקיע, רקיע לכסא הכבוד. **It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Meir used to say: What**

distinguished "techeiles" from all other type of dyes? It is because the color of "techeiles" is similar to that of the sea, and that of the sea is similar to that of the sky, and that of the sky is similar to that of the Kisei HaKavod.

Based on this elucidation, the Shela hakadosh interprets the passuk: "ו**יגע בכף ירכו ותקע כף ירך יעקב**"—a blow was struck to the י"ך of Yaakov by the malach. Yaakov merited three levels of kedushah alluded to by the acronym י"ם ר'קיע כ'סא—**the sea, the sky, the Kisei HaKavod**. The aim of the guardian angel of Eisav, the notorious, nefarious "samech-mem," was specifically to damage the level of **Kisei**. Hence, he struck a blow to the letter "**kaf**" of the word י"ך—i.e., the letter alluding to the **Kisei HaKavod**. We will endeavor to explain the significance of this struggle related to the Kisei HaKavod.

Why Would Eisav's Angel Willingly Concede: "Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael"

Additionally, it behooves us to examine the mystical, mysterious dialogue that took place between the two combatants after Yaakov defeated Eisav's guardian angel. First of all, the malach beseeched Yaakov to release him (ibid. 27): "ו**יאמר שלחני כי עלה השחר**"—**he said, "Release me, for dawn has broken."** To which Yaakov responded: "לא אשלחך כי אם ברכתני"—**I will only release you if you bless me.** Rashi explains that Yaakov insisted that the Eisav's malach concede that

the Berachos were rightfully his. Indeed, that is what happened, as it states (ibid. 30): "ויברך אותו שם"—and he blessed him there.

Then, the malach began to address the topic of Yaakov's name. The malach revealed to Yaakov that he now merited an additional name (ibid. 28): "ויאמר אליו מה שמך ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל, כי שרית עם אלהים ועם אנשים ותוכל." **He said, "No longer will your name be spoken of as Yaakov, but rather as Yisrael; for you have contended with divine beings and with men, and you have triumphed."** This was indeed a surprising concession. After all, Eisav's guardian angel, the "samech-mem," the Satan, is constantly trying to prosecute Yisrael and wishes them ill. Yet here it is extremely generous and reveals to Yaakov that he would now be called Yisrael. Why? Furthermore, how does this relate to Yaakov's demand that it concede the legitimacy of the Berachos to him?

We find two approaches to these issues provided by a mentor and his disciple—the distinguished luminary, the Panim Yafos, zy"a, and his illustrious student, the Chasam Sofer, zy"a. According to the Panim Yafos, the guardian angel of Eisav extolled Yaakov's virtue by calling him Yisrael, because not only had Yaakov Avinu vanquished it, but Yaakov Avinu had actually converted it temporarily from a foe into a friend.

According to the Chasam Sofer, on the other hand, the coerced confession uttered by the guardian angel of Eisav can be explained as per Rashi (Bereishis 41, 12): **Cursed are the wicked, for their good deeds are not complete** (sincere). His declaration was veiled and toxic, intending to completely eliminate the name **Yaakov**; so that only the name **Yisrael** would remain in effect. Fortunately, HKB"H intervened and thwarted this malicious intent. HKB"H notified Yaakov Avinu that the name **Yaakov** would also remain in effect always. We will explain why this is critical.

The Panim Yafos Explains the Significance of the Addition of the Name Yisrael

We will begin our journey with the illuminating words of the Panim Yafos. He elaborates on the

remarks of Eisav's malach: **He said, "No longer will your name be spoken of as Yaakov, but rather as Yisrael; for you have contended with divine beings and with men, and you have triumphed."** He introduces an important teaching from our master, the Arizal. He reveals to us a wonderful, effective device to ward off the external forces of evil that attempt to impede a Jew while he is studying Torah and serving Hashem. He suggests that we focus on the name Yaakov pronounced twice—יעקב יעקב – whose gematria equals השש"ן (364).

Now, it behooves us to state up front that the methods professed by the Arizal involving focusing on sacred names are meant for elite individuals, who are devoted to the service of Hashem, are pure, and possess knowledge of the Torah of mysticism. Nevertheless, our sacred sefarim, and in particular the sefarim of Chassidut from the disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov hakadosh, explain the usefulness of this device—employing two times the name Yaakov—in an exoteric manner that is relevant to each and every one of us—as we will discuss further on in this essay.

Let us now return to the explanation of the Panim Yafos. In keeping with the revelation of the Arizal, he provides us with a magnificent interpretation of the only passuk in the entire Torah where the name Yaakov is mentioned in a repetitive manner (ibid. 46, 2): "ויאמר אלקים לישראל במראות הלילה ויאמר יעקב יעקב ויאמר הנני, ויאמר: **G-d spoke to Yisrael in a night vision, and He said, "Yaakov, Yaakov." And he said, "Here I am." He said, "I am the Almighty, the G-d of your father. Do not be afraid of descending to Mitzrayim, for I will make you into a great nation there."**

In keeping with this discussion, let us explain. It is evident that Yaakov was afraid of going down to Mitzrayim, because of the overwhelming power of the Satan and the forces of evil in Mitzrayim. Therefore, HKB"H called out his name twice: **"Yaakov, Yaakov."** Thus, HKB"H hinted to him that this sacred device is able to thwart the Satan and its forces. This proves that HKB"H did not intend to do away with the name Yaakov. He simply gave him an additional name, but

the name Yaakov remained in place. This was vital, so that Yisrael could employ the device of "יעקב יעקב"—possessing the same gematria as השט"ן—to ward off **the Satan** and its forces in times of need.

"He outwitted me twice" by Invoking the Power of "Yaakov Yaakov"

In this manner, the Panim Yafos interprets the outcry of Eisav HaRasha. After learning that Yaakov took the Berachos away from him, he said (ibid. 27, 36): **הכי קרא שמו יעקב ויעקבני זה פעמיים—**is he not rightly called Yaakov? He has outwitted me twice. He alluded to the fact that Yaakov Avinu managed to prevent Eisav from receiving Yitzchak's sacred Berachos by focusing on the repetition of the name Yaakov—

"יעקב יעקב"—possessing the same gematria as השט"ן. In other words, Eisav was outmaneuvered by the repetition of the name Yaakov— "יעקב יעקב".

The Panim Yafos adds an intriguing insight. In his protestation to Yitzchak, Eisav adds: **"He took away my birthright and behold, now, he has taken my blessing!"** This suggests that Yaakov Avinu acquired this powerful device—the power of two times Yaakov—by acquiring the birthright from Eisav, since by Jewish law, a firstborn receives a double portion.

Thus, we can interpret Eisav's remarks to Yitzchak as follows: **"הכי קרא שמו יעקב"**—you only called him Yaakov once; yet **"he has outwitted me twice"** by employing the repetition of his name **יעקב יעקב** to neutralize the power of השט"ן. Then, Eisav goes on to explain how Yaakov acquired this power: **"He took my birthright,"** which entitled him to a double-portion of his name; **"and now he has taken my blessing"** by repeating his name twice— **יעקב יעקב**—to negate השט"ן.

The Panim Yafos also adds a fantastic "remez" based on a passuk in parshas Bechukosai (Vayikra 26, 42): **"וזכרתי את בריתי יעקוב"**—I will remember My covenant with Yaakov. Note that this is one of the rare instances where the name Yaakov is spelled fully with a "vav"—"יעקוב". Hence, just like two times

השט"ן negates Eisav's guardian angel above, similarly, two times יעקוב (188) including the letter "vav," possessing the same gematria as עש"ו (376), alludes to the power to negate Eisav down below.

The Name Yisrael Indicates that the Satan Was Transformed into a Friend

Continuing with the illuminating insight of the Panim Yafos, he explains why Eisav's guardian angel chose this specific moment in time to make the pronouncement: **"No longer will your name be spoken of as Yaakov, but rather as Yisrael; for you have contended with divine beings and with men, and you have triumphed."** He provides us with a new perspective regarding the nighttime wrestling match with Eisav's guardian angel. Yaakov Avinu was going to meet Eisav with the goal of appeasing him and converting him from a foe into a friend. This was also the goal of the skirmish with the malach; Yaakov intended to convert the Satan temporarily from a foe into a friend, from a prosecutor into an advocate, and bring him into the realm of kedushah. Thus, this guardian angel would exert its influence on Eisav down below to make peace with Yaakov.

Therefore, Yaakov says to Eisav's malach, **"I will not release you unless you bless me"**—meaning that he would concede the legitimate, rightful ownership of the Berachos to Yaakov. This would prove that he had indeed managed to transform the malach into a friend. This explains why the Satan called Yaakov **ישראל** (541) possessing the gematria of the sum of **יעקב** (182) and **שט"ן** (359). This new name indicated that the Satan had been converted temporarily into a friend and was included in the kedushah of Yisrael. (Translator's note: To the victor the spoils.)

To prove his point—that the Satan can be converted into a holy malach—the Panim Yafos cites the tefilah of Rabbi Nechuniah ben Hakanah **"אנא בכח"**. The second name in this tefilah (derived from the first letters of the words **"ק'בל ר'ינת ע'מך ש'גבנו ט'הרגו נ'זרא"**) is **ק'רע שט"ן**. At first glance, it seems surprising that the name **Satan** is an inseparable, integral part of this sacred name. Perforce, we must conclude that

in the merit of this sacred name, it is possible to transform the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov and an evil malach into a good malach.

We can now present the incredible explanation of the Panim Yafos concerning the esoteric conversation between Eisav's guardian angel and Yaakov Avinu: "ויאמר אליו מה שמך ויאמר יעקב, ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר 'עוד' שמך". This evil malach was informing Yaakov that he would no longer need to invoke the name Yaakov an additional time—"עוד" פעם—to employ the device יעק"ב יעק"ב, with the same gematria as השט"ן, to drive him away; כי "אם ישראל"—because his new name **Yisrael** possesses the unique capacity to transform the Satan himself into a good malach. As explained, this is inherent in the name ישראל which is the sum of יעק"ב and שט"ן. To emphasize this point, Eisav's malach concludes by saying: **"Because you have contended with divine beings and with men, and you have triumphed."** In other words, you have converted me from a foe into a friend; hence, you no longer require the device of יעק"ב יעק"ב. This concludes his sacred remarks.

Eisav's Guardian Angel Wanted to Completely Eliminate the Name Yaakov

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation. I would like to combine the illuminating explanation of the Rav, the Panim Yafos, with the illuminating explanation of the disciple, the Chasam Sofer, zy" a (which can be found both in his commentary on this week's parsha and in his Derashos). In his own sacred way, he explains why Eisav's guardian angel, the "samech-mem," magnanimously announced to Yaakov that he was being given an additional name, Yisrael.

If we compare the way HKB"H informed Yaakov of his new name and the way Eisav's malach informed him, we find a distinct difference. HKB"H says (Bereishis 35, 10): "שמך יעקב, לא יקרא שמך עוד יעקב כי אם ישראל"—**your name is Yaakov; your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but rather Yisrael shall be your name.**" HKB"H begins His pronouncement by stating explicitly **"your name is Yaakov."** Your name will always remain **Yaakov**; however, **"your name shall no longer be called**

Yaakov," i.e., it will no longer be your primary name; **"but rather Yisrael shall be your name"**—your primary name will be **Yisrael**, and **Yaakov** will be your secondary name.

The Chasam Sofer points out that Eisav's guardian angel malevolently does not preface his pronouncement with the words **"your name is Yaakov."** Instead, he immediately says: **"No longer will your name be spoken of as Yaakov, but rather as Yisrael."** This is because he did not want the name Yaakov to remain in effect; he wanted to eliminate it completely and to have only the name Yisrael remain in its place.

Now, if we combine the explanations of these two great luminaries—the Panim Yafos and the Chasam Sofer—we see the objective of Eisav's guardian angel in a new light. The malach wished to eliminate the name Yaakov completely and leave only the name Yisrael. Thus, only Jews who were on an extremely high spiritual level would be capable of transforming the Satan from a foe into a friend. Everyone else would not be able to withstand the negative influence of the Satan and ward it off with the device of **Yaakov Yaakov**, since the name Yaakov would no longer be in effect.

Fortunately, HKB"H foiled its devious plan by declaring explicitly **"your name is Yaakov."** HKB"H made it clear that the name Yaakov would remain forevermore. Additionally: **"No longer will your name be spoken of as Yaakov,"** because you now have an additional name; **"but rather Yisrael will be your name"**—it will be your primary name, whereas Yaakov will be your secondary name. Thus, the explanation of the Panim Yafos and the Chasam Sofer complement each other magnificently.

The Mechanism of the Device of Yaakov-Yaakov

Following this line of reasoning, we will now explain the incredible device suggested by the Arizal to drive away the Satan in a way that is relevant to each and every one of us. Chazal teach us that the image of Yaakov is etched on the Kisei HaKavod. As they expounded in the Gemara (Chullin 91b) on the passuk (ibid. 28,

12): "והנה מלאכי אלקים עולים ויורדים בו". תנא עולין ומסתכלין בדיוקנו של מטה. מעלה, ויורדין ומסתכלין בדיוקנו של מטה. The malachim ascended the ladder in Yaakov's dream to gaze upon his image above—the human visage among the four animals—“Chayos hakodesh”—etched on the Kisei HaKavod; then they descended to gaze upon his image below to confirm that they were identical. Rashi explains: **The visage of man among the four animals was the image of Yaakov.** This is also taught in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 22, 65b): **The image of Yaakov is etched on the Kisei HaKavod.**

To better comprehend this phenomenon, it is essential to introduce a concept taught in our sacred sefarim. All the neshamos of Yisrael are hewn from the bottom of the Kisei HaKavod. The source for this teaching is the Zohar hakadosh (Tzav 29b): **All of the neshamos are hewn from beneath the Kisei HaKavod.** This explains very nicely why the image of Yaakov Avinu is etched on the Kisei HaKavod. After all, all Jewish neshamos emanate from him. Hence, they are all offshoots and branches of Yaakov that are hewn from beneath the Kisei HaKavod.

Now, we know that sometimes the Jewish people are associated with the name **Yaakov**, as it is written (Devarim 32, 9): **“כי חלק ה' עמו יעקב חבל נחלתו”**—**for Hashem's share is His people; Yaakov, the portion of His possession.** Yet, the majority of time the Jewish people are associated with the name **Yisrael**. In parshas Vayechi, Rabeinu Bachayei explains that when Yisrael are on a low spiritual “madreigah,” they are called **Yaakov**; but when they are on a high spiritual “madreigah,” they are called **Yisrael**. With this understanding, he interprets the words of the Navi (Yeshayah 43, 22): **“ולא אותי קראת יעקב כי יגעת בי ישראל”**—**but you did not call Me Yaakov, because you wearied of Me, Yisrael.** He writes: **“יאמר כשאתה יעקב ונמשך אחר החומר ועסקי הגוף, לא אותי קראת, אבל כי יגעת בי והשתדלת בעסקי הנפש, אתה נקרא ישראל—when you are on the level of Yaakov and are preoccupied with material and physical matters, you do not call upon Me; but when you occupy yourselves with Me and pursue matters of the soul, you are called Yisrael.**

We can now rejoice; for we can now better understand the practical significance of the device **יעקב**. Since it possesses the same gematria as **השטן**, it possesses the capacity to drive away the Satan and its negative, evil forces. Let us explain this based on our current discussion. Every Jew, even if he is on a low spiritual level—associated with the name **Yaakov**—must strive to connect with the root of all Jewish neshamos—the image of **Yaakov** etched on the Kisei HaKavod. By establishing this connection, a Jew is assisted by the kedushah of Yaakov Avinu to combats and annul the power of the Satan.

Connecting with the Neshamah of Yaakov through Torah-Study with Ahavah and Yirah

It appears that we can explain how to connect with Yaakov's image etched on the Kisei HaKavod in greater depth. Let us refer to a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Vayeitzei 146b): **The world stands on three things** (it is supported by three pillars)—**on the Torah, on religious service and on the performance of acts of kindness. The (pillar of) Torah is Yaakov; (the pillar of) religious service is Yitzchak; (the pillar of) acts of kindness is Avraham.** Thus, we learn that Yaakov Avinu is the pillar of Torah.

Furthermore, we are taught in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 10, 25b): **“אורייתא בלא דחילו ורחימו לא פרחת לעילא”**—**Torah without fear and love does not ascend upwards.** Also (ibid.): **“תורה ומצוה בלא דחילו ורחימו לא יכולת לסלקא ולמיקם”**—**Torah and mitzvos without fear and love cannot go and present themselves to G-d.** In other words, “yirah” and “ahavah” are like two wings that transport our Torah and mitzvos to the heavens.

Additionally, all of our sacred sefarim explain that Yaakov's midah is “Tiferes,” which combines the “chesed” of Avraham—the love of Hashem—with the “yirah” and “gevurah” of Yitzchak—which the Torah refers to as “פחד יצחק” (Bereishis 31, 42). In the words of the Imrei Yosef (Lech Lecha): **“כי יעקב מודתו תפארת שכולל חסד וגבורה אהבה”**—**Yaakov's midah of “Tiferes” incorporates “chesed,” “gevurah,” “ahavah,” and “yirah.”**

Accordingly, every Jew, who is described as **Yaakov**, who studies Torah with “ahavah” and “yirah,” merits having his Torah ascend upwards all the way to the Kisei HaKavod. In this manner, he connects with the neshamah of Yaakov whose image is etched on the Kisei HaKavod. This creates the union of **יעקב יעקב** that negates **השטן**. This coincides with what we have learned in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b) that HKB”H says to Yisrael: **בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי**—**My son, I have created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand.** In other words, Torah-study is a bona-fide, proven method for warding off the yetzer hara and its negative influences.

This provides us with a wonderful explanation for the following statement in the Gemara (Yoma 86a): **גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד**—the power of teshuvah is so great that it reaches all the way up to the Kisei HaKavod. In keeping with this discussion, we can explain this statement as follows: When a Jew sins, he creates a barrier separating him from the Yaakov below and the image of Yaakov etched above on the Kisei HaKavod. In that situation, he cannot ward off the Satan, who is the yetzer hara, with the union

of Yaakov-Yaakov; hence, it will continue to entice him to commit aveiros. The remedy is to perform teshuvah for all of his transgressions. For: **Teshuvah is so great that it reaches all the way to the Kisei HaKavod.** His teshuvah will reconnect the Yaakov down below with the Yaakov etched above on the Kisei HaKavod, reestablishing the union of **יעקב יעקב** that wards off the Satan.

We can now appreciate the profound words of Chazal: **“A man wrestled with him,” this teaches us that they raised the dust from their feet up to the Kisei HaKavod.** In reality, Eisav’s guardian angel fought with Yaakov to totally eliminate the name Yaakov to prevent Jews from unifying the Yaakov below with the Yaakov above—**יעקב יעקב**. This coincides magnificently with the explanation of the Shela hakadosh regarding the passuk: **ותקע כף ירך יעקב**—that Yaakov’s heavenly adversary struck a blow to the **כף** of the word **ירך** symbolizing the **כסא הכבוד**. The true goal, however, is to strive to achieve the status of **ישראל** whose gematria equals the sum of **יעקב** plus **שטן**—to convert the yetzer hara into a yetzer tov so that it ceases to exist completely as it will at the time of the future geulah—swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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