



The Wonderful Connection between Parshas Ki Savo and the Month of Elul

The Tefillin shel Yad Is Aimed at Subduing the Overt Yetzer the shel Rosh Is Aimed at Subduing the Covert Yetzer Who Disguises an Aveirah as a Mitzvah

In honor of the fourth Shabbas of the month of Elul that approaches auspiciously, it is fitting that we establish a connection between the parsha, parshas Ki Savo, and this month of teshuvah. We will focus on the text related to the kedushah of the “tefillin shel rosh.” It states (Devarim 28, 10): “ויראו כל עמי” —**then all the people of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will be in awe of you.** We find the following teaching in the Gemara related to this passuk (Menachos 35b): “רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר, אלו תפילין שבראש” —**Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: These awe-inspiring objects are the tefillin worn on the head.** How did Rabbi Eliezer deduce that this passuk is speaking about the mitzvah of “tefillin shel rosh”?

We find a plausible explanation in the commentary of the Ba’al HaTurim. He writes that the “tefillin-shel-rosh” are alluded to in the passuk as follows: **The first letters of שׁם יי** שׁם יי **spell ניקרא**, referring to the “shin” of the tefillin. He is referring to the following teaching in the Gemara (ibid. 35a): **“The letter “shin” of the tefillin (shel-rosh) is mandated by a halachah given to Moshe at Sinai.”** In other words, the leather of the housing of the “tefillin-shel-rosh” is creased on each side to form a letter “shin.” In a similar vein, Rabeinu Bachaye wrote: **Here is a reference to the letter “shin” that is a halachah transmitted to Moshe at Sinai; it is as if the passuk says: “All the people of the earth will see that the ‘shin’ is upon you, and they will be in awe of you.”**

Clearly, several points deserve further clarification: (1) What is so unique about the letter “shin” embossed on the “tefillin-shel-rosh” that it instills fear and awe in the other

nations? (2) The passuk states explicitly that their fear and awe are due to the name **Havaya** that rests upon us. Where do we find that this name is alluded to more so by the “tefillin shel rosh” than by the “tefillin shel yad”? (3) Since the passuk draws a connection between the sacred name **Havaya** and the letter “shin”; we will endeavor to explain this connection.

With regards to the letter “shin” on the “tefillin shel rosh,” Tosafos (Menachos 35a) write in the name of the Shimusha Rabbah that the “shin” on the right side of the housing is a normal “shin” with three heads; while the “shin” on the left side of the housing is formed with four heads. This accords with the ruling in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 32, 42): “שי”ן של תפילין הלכה למושה מסיני, שיעשה בעור הבתים של ראש כמין שי”ן בולטת מקמטי העור, אחד מימינו ואחד משמאלו. של ימין המניח של ג’ ראשים, ושל שמאל המניח של ארבע ראשים.”

The Rationale for Donning the Tefillin shel Rosh prior to the shel Yad

We will begin our discussion with an illuminating insight from the Chasam Sofer, zy”a, (Devarim, Likutim). He explains the teaching in the Gemara (ibid. 36a): “כשהוא מניח, מניח של יד ואחר כך מניח של ראש, דכתיב וקשרתם לאות על ירך, והדר והיו לטוטפות בין עיניך. **When he puts them on, he puts on the “shel yad” first and then puts on the “shel rosh”; for, it is written (Devarim 6, 8): “And bind them as a sign upon your arm,” and subsequently: “and let them be totafos (tefillin) between your eyes.”** Here are the sacred words of the Chasam Sofer:

First, we don the “tefillin shel yad,” opposite the heart, and recite the berachah “I’haniach” (to place); then we don

the “shel rosh” and recite the berachah “ahl mitzvas”—because it constitutes the completion of the mitzvah. Let us suggest an analogy. The people of a certain province wished to appoint a king over themselves. He (the king) said to them: “First, imprison so-and-so in chains, the one who opposes the kingship; then empower me to be your king.

Here, too, the reshaim are ruled by their hearts; they are controlled by their evil inclinations. The hearts of the tzaddikim are ruled by their intellect and by their neshamos. Therefore, before donning the tefillin—as a crown over the brain, to sanctify it as a Holy of Holies—it is imperative to imprison the one challenging the kingship in chains, namely the heart. Hence, one must place the tefillin opposite one’s heart, so that it will be bound and shackled with the chains of kedushah. Only then is it appropriate to complete the mitzvah by donning the “shel rosh” atop the brain.

Let us expand on this wonderful insight by introducing what they expound in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 22, 9) on the passuk (Koheles 10, 2): **“לב חכם לימינו ולב כסיל לשמאלו - לב חכם לימינו, זה יצר טוב שהוא נתון בימינו, ולב כסיל לשמאלו, זה יצר הרע שנתון בשמאלו.”** **“The heart of a wise man is to his right; while the heart of a fool is to his left.”** **“The heart of a wise man is to his right”** refers to the yetzer tov, which has been placed on his right side, while **“the heart of a fool is on his left,”** refers to the yetzer hara, which has been placed on his left. This is the source for what the author of the Tanya explains at length in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 9). He writes that the yetzer hatov is located in the right cavity of the heart, whereas the yetzer hara is located in the left cavity of the heart. It is incumbent upon us to fortify the yetzer hatov on the right to overcome the yetzer hara on the left. This, in fact, is the implication of the elucidation (Berachos 54a): **“ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך, בשני יצריך”**—**“you shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all of your heart,”** with your two yetzers, the yetzer tov and the yetzer hara. For, as we have learned, both yetzers are located in the cavities of the heart.

This then is what the Chasam Sofer is teaching us. First, it is necessary to don the “tefillin shel yad” on the left arm, near the left side of the heart, to constrain the yetzer hara located in the left cavity of the heart with the kedushah of the tefillin. For, it attempts to fill our hearts with improper desires, and opposes

the sovereignty of HKB”H. Once we have accomplished this feat, we don the “tefillin shel rosh” near the brain to accept the sovereignty of HKB”H.

Let us add a precious point. It is for this reason that we wrap the “tefillin shel yad” on the left arm with the right hand, which is opposite the right side of the heart, where the yetzer hatov is seated. Thus, we perform a symbolic act demonstrating the subjugation of the left-sided yetzer hara by the hand of the right-sided yetzer hatov, preventing it from entrapping a person in its treacherous net.

This explains very nicely our minhag—brought down by the Magen Avraham (O.C. 25, 18) in the name of the Arizal—to wrap the straps of the “shel yad” around the forearm seven times prior to donning the “tefillin shel rosh.” This coincides magnificently with the teaching in the Gemara (Succah 52a): **“שבעה שמות יש לו ליצר הרע”**—**the yetzer hara has seven appellations.** The Maharsha (ibid.) explains that these refer to seven distinct aspects or forces of the yetzer hara. Therefore, when we don the “tefillin shel yad” opposite the left side of the heart—to shackle and constrain the yetzer hara—we wrap the strap of kedushah around the arm seven times to constrain the yetzer’s seven forces of tumah.

The Tefillin shel Rosh Negate the Yetzer that Disguises the Nature of an Aveirah

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to latch onto the coattails of the brilliant Chasam Sofer and embellish this sacred insight. We will endeavor to explain the relationship between the “tefillin shel yad” and the “tefillin shel rosh,” which are donned immediately afterwards, based on what the Orach L’Chaim (Lech Lecha) brings down in the name of the holy Ba’al Shem Tov, zy”a. He addresses the Gemara (Shabbas 75a): **“שוחט משום מאי מחייב, רב אמר משום צובע”**. The Gemara inquires as to when the “melachah” of slaughtering was performed during the construction of the Mishkan and what is the nature of the liability? According to Rav, the slaughterer is liable for dyeing. Tosafos, however, interpret this statement as a reference to the notorious, ubiquitous yetzer hara that harasses mankind: **“אשוחט דעלמא קאי”**. According to the Ba’al Shem Tov, the “slaughterer” at large in the world is none other than the yetzer hara. He slaughters mankind by enticing them and encouraging them to commit aveiros.

Elsewhere, we learn in the Gemara (Succah 52a): **“לעתיד לבא”** **“מביאו הקב”ה ליצר הרע ושוחטו—le’asid la’vo, HKB”H will hold the yetzer hara accountable and slaughter it.** So, now, we can interpret the Gemara as follows: Why is the yetzer hara—the “shochet of the world”—guilty and deserving of the death penalty le’asid la’vo? After all, wasn’t it created for this purpose—to trap people and persuade them to transgress? To which Rav answers: **“משום צובע”**. Here a play on the word **“צובע”** is employed. Rather than translating it as “dyeing,” it is translated as “being deceitful” and portraying (coloring) something as something else; it colors the truth. In other words, HKB”H created the yetzer hara initially with a specific purpose. Its job was to tempt mankind openly to commit aveiros—not to conceal its intent or employ deceptive tactics. It is easier for a person to arm himself and combats a yetzer hara whose intent is overt.

A deceitful yetzer hara, however, is more dangerous and difficult to combat. It knows that if it approaches a Jew openly to tempt him to commit an aveirah, the Jew will ward it off with disdain. Therefore, it schemes to trap the Jew in its net by disguising the aveirah as a mitzvah. It employs all sorts of persuasive arguments to convince a person that he is doing the right thing—that he is actually performing a mitzvah and not an aveirah. Extra caution is required to protect oneself from this type of yetzer hara, since a person might perceive it to be a yetzer tov, who is trying to help him better serve Hashem.

HKB”H created the yetzer hara to function in such a way that man could exercise his freedom of choice. However, we can describe this yetzer hara as a rogue agent; it betrays HKB”H and chooses to operate in a manner that it was not authorized to operate. It deceives mankind by portraying an aveirah as a mitzvah. Therefore, HKB”H will slaughter it in the future as punishment for its treachery. In the words of Rav above, it deserves to die **“משום צובע”**.

The “Shin” on the Right Side Represents the Yetzer Tov the “Shin” on the Left Side Represents the Yetzer HaRa

Now, I would like to propose a novel idea based on the sacred insight of the Chasam Sofer. We don the “tefillin shel yad” on the left arm, in proximity to the left cavity of the heart, to subjugate the overt yetzer hara. Nevertheless, there is still a legitimate concern regarding the other type of yetzer hara—the one that fools us into believing that an aveirah is actually a

mitzvah. It is so convincing that we may even perceive it to be a yetzer tov assisting us to perform mitzvos.

Therefore, after negating the influence of the overt yetzer hara with the “tefillin shel yad,” we ascend to the next level of kedushah; we don the “tefillin shel rosh” related to the brain to negate the influence of this deceitful, more dangerous yetzer hara. In the merit of the sacred names in the “tefillin shel rosh,” HKB”H opens the eyes of our mind and intellect to discern who is the true yetzer hatov—whose voice we should heed—and who is the imposter.

This explains magnificently the rationale for the halachah transmitted to Moshe at Sinai to emboss on the housing of the “tefillin shel rosh” two types of **“shin.”** For, the gematria of the letter **“shin”** (300) is equivalent to the gematria of **יצר** (300). Furthermore, the **“shin”** on the right side of the tefillin alludes to the yetzer hatov that resides in the right cavity of the heart; while the **“shin”** on the left side alludes to the yetzer hara that resides in the left cavity of the heart. This, indeed, is the auspicious, beneficial function of the “tefillin shel rosh”; it provides a person the intelligence and common sense to recognize and discern between the right-sided yetzer hatov and the left-sided yetzer hara.

Based on what we have learned, we can also explain why the **“shin”** on the right is shaped like a normal **“shin,”** with three projections, whereas the **“shin”** on the left is unusual, having four projections. We can suggest that the **“shin”** with four projections is a normal **“shin”** with the addition of a **“vav.”** As we know, the letter **“vav”** at the beginning of a word is a connector. In the words of the Gemara (Pesachim 5a): **“וי”ו מוסיף—על ענין ראשון”** **“the letter “vav” adds to the previous subject.** In other words, a **“vav”** is added to the **“shin”** on the left side of the “shel rosh”—symbolizing the yetzer hara—to allude to the fact that it attempts to provide Jews with additional mitzvos by disguising aveiros as mitzvos.

We Require Hashem’s Assistance to Overcome the Deceitful Type of Yetzer HaRa

It gives me immense pleasure to now focus on the passuk: **“Then all the people of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will be in awe of you.”** And they expounded in the Gemara: **“This refers to the tefillin worn on the head.”** Now, the Arvei Nachal (Ki

Seitzei) finds a contradiction in the Gemara. Initially, HKB”H tells Yisrael (Kiddushin 30b): **”כְּנִי בְרֵאתִי יֵצֵר הָרַע וּבְרֵאתִי לּוֹ תוֹרָה: וְאַתָּה עוֹסֵקִים בְּתוֹרָה אֵין אַתָּה נִמְסָרִים בְּיָדוֹ—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.** Further on, however, the Gemara says: **”יֵצֵרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם מִתְגַּבֵּר עָלָיו בְּכָל יוֹם וּמִבְקֵשׁ הַמֵּיתוֹ... וְאֵלְמֵלֵא הַקֶּב”ה: ”עוֹזֵרוֹ אֵין יִכּוֹל לוֹ—Man’s yetzer overwhelms him every day and attempts to kill him . . . And if not for HKB”H, Who aids him, he would be unable to withstand it.** According to the first statement, we possess the ability to overcome the yetzer hara on our own through Torah-study; according to the second statement, it is impossible for us to overcome the yetzer without divine assistance.

We can reconcile this apparent contradiction very nicely based on what we have just learned. The first statement made by HKB”H to Yisrael: **”My son, I have created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote”**—refers to the yetzer hara as it was originally created by HKB”H, authorized only to tempt man openly to commit an aveirah, without disguising it as a mitzvah. Hence, HKB”H specifies the yetzer hara that **”I have created,”** before it went rogue and deviated from its role. For that yetzer hara, **”I have created Torah as its antidote”**—i.e., you have been given the means to overcome it.

The Gemara’s second statement, on the other hand: **”Man’s yetzer overwhelms him every day and attempts to kill him . . . And if not for HKB”H, Who aids him, he would be unable to withstand it”**—refers to the other yetzer hara that portrays an aveirah as a mitzvah. Torah-study alone does not suffice to combas this yetzer hara, because it blinds a person to the truth, duping him into believing erroneously that he is serving Hashem by performing His mitzvos as prescribed by the Torah. Therefore, in addition to studying Torah, we require special assistance from HKB”H to withstand its deceit.

It is with great joy that we can now interpret the passuk: **”וּרְאוּ כָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שָׁם ה’ נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ וִירָאוּ מִמֶּךָ**, and the Gemara’s elucidation: **”רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַגְּדוֹל אוֹמֵר, אֵלוֹ תַפְּלִין שְׁבֵרָאשׁ”**. As we have explained, the reason for donning the “tefillin shel rosh” after the “tefillin shel yad” is to also subjugate the yetzer hara that deceptively portrays an aveirah as a mitzvah. This can only be accomplished with the assistance of HKB”H as we are taught in the Gemara: **”And if not for HKB”H, Who aids him, he would be unable to withstand it.”** Thus, when we don the “tefillin

shel rosh,” it becomes evident: **”That the name of Hashem is proclaimed upon you”**—that HKB”H is assisting us to also overcome and negate the second type of yetzer hara.

The Tefillin shel Rosh Represent Yaakov Avinu

Following this line of reasoning, we will now proceed to explain convincingly how Yisrael merit divine assistance to overcome this second type of yetzer hara—who portrays an aveirah as a mitzvah—by donning the “tefillin shel rosh.” We will begin by introducing what the Rokeiach writes in the sefer Sodei Razaya. He asserts that the “tefillin shel rosh” represent Yaakov Avinu. Here is a translation of his sacred words:

Why is there a “shin” on the housing of the tefillin “shel rosh”? Because it represents Yaakov, as it is written (Yeshayah 49, 3): “Yisrael, in whom I take glory (אתפאר),” and tefillin are called “פאר” (magnificence, majesty), as it says (Yechezkel 24, 17): “Don your majesty (פאר).” At the time of the churban, He threw them down to earth, as it is written (Eichah 2, 1): “He cast down from heaven to earth the glory (תפארת) of Yisrael.” Therefore, on Tisha B’Av, we place ashes on the site of the tefillin. And regarding the times of the Mashiach it says (Yeshayah 61, 3): “To give them ‘פאר’ in place of ashes.” Additionally, a “shin” has three branches corresponding to his three names—Yaakov, Yisrael, and Yeshurun. Surrounding the “shin” on the tefillin are twelve stitches corresponding to the twelve shevatim.

This explains magnificently the structure of the tefillin “shel rosh.” A strap emerges from each side of its housing—one from the right and one from the left; they are joined together in the back by the knot of the tefillin. They represent the two facets of Yaakov’s midah of “Tiferes,” which is a combination of both Avraham’s right-sided midah of “chesed” and Yitzchak’s left-sided midah of “din,” but with a predilection for “chesed.” We can suggest that this explains the minhag (based on the words of the Raiya Mehemna, Pinchas, 228b) to make the right strap longer than the left strap; because we wish to prioritize the power of “chesed” over that of “din,” to accurately represent the midah of “Tiferes.”

Please Save Me from My Brother Eisav

Upon careful scrutiny, we find that Yaakov Avinu actually formulated a special tefilah to be spared from the deceitful

yetzer hara that portrays an aveirah as a mitzvah. When he went to appease his brother Eisav, he beseeched Hashem (Bereishis 32, 12): **הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אֶחָי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי יִרָא אֲנֹכִי אוֹתוֹ פֶּן יָבוֹא וְהִכְנִי אִם עַל: "הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אֶחָי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי יִרָא אֲנֹכִי אוֹתוֹ פֶּן יָבוֹא וְהִכְנִי אִם עַל: "save me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav; for I fear him lest he come and strike me, mother and children. Rashi explains that Yaakov said both "from the hand of my brother" and "from the hand of Eisav," which seems redundant. He was expressing the fact that he was not confronting someone behaving like a brother but rather Eisav HaRasha.**

The great Rabbi from Berditchev, zy" a, in Kedushas Levi, and the great Chozeh of Lublin, zy" a, in Zikaron Zos teach us that Yaakov Avinu prayed to HKB" H to rescue him from Eisav's ministering angel, the yetzer hara. Outwardly, he presents himself as **"my brother,"** as if he intends to help me serve Hashem. In reality, however, he is secretly plotting to trap me in his web. Consequently, Yaakov says: **"כי ירא אנכי אותו—for I fear him—**since it is exceedingly difficult to guard oneself against this type of yetzer—who comes deceitfully, pretending to help a person serve Hashem.

Let us embellish this thought. As explained above, it is impossible to overcome the deceitful yetzer hara, who portrays aveiros as mitzvos, with the power of Torah alone. Torah is only the antidote for the yetzer hara who acts overtly. To overcome this more treacherous yetzer hara, divine assistance is required. So, even though we are taught by the Zohar hakadosh (Vayeitzei 146b) that Yaakov Avinu was the pillar of Torah, notwithstanding, he prayed to Hashem: **"Save me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav"**—help me avoid the trap of the yetzer hara, who pretends to be my brother.

Understood from this vantage point, we can suggest a wonderful interpretation of the dream Yaakov Avinu had when he fled from Eisav on his way to Lavan HaArami. It says (ibid. 28, 12): **וַיַּחְלֹם וְהִנֵּה סוּלָם מוֹצֵב אֶרֶצָה וְרֵאשׁוֹ מְגִיעַ הַשְּׁמַיִמָה, וְהִנֵּה: "וַיַּחְלֹם וְהִנֵּה סוּלָם מוֹצֵב אֶרֶצָה וְרֵאשׁוֹ מְגִיעַ הַשְּׁמַיִמָה, וְהִנֵּה: "And he dreamt and behold! A ladder was set earthward, and its top reached heavenward; and behold—G-d's malachim ascending and descending on it. And behold! Hashem was standing over him. Rashi explains that it was necessary for HKB" H to stand over him to protect him.**

HKB" H wished to inform Yaakov that Olam HaZeh is analogous to a ladder. If a person is meritorious, he can

ascend from its mundane, material existence to great spiritual heights. But HKB" H added a critical warning: **"Behold—G-d's malachim."** There is a yetzer hatov with other holy malachim, who assist it. But there is also a yetzer hara, with an entourage of destructive malachim. They are **"ascending and descending on it."** The yetzer hatov and its associates from the realm of kedushah help a Jew ascend heavenwards via the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos. In contrast, the yetzer hara and its evil cohorts seek to drag a Jew downwards by enticing him with aveiros. Hence, HKB" H informs Yaakov Avinu that if he makes a valiant effort to combats the yetzer hara, **Hashem will stand guard over him** to protect him from the yetzer hara that portrays an aveirah as a mitzvah.

Once again, we have cause to rejoice! Seen in this light, we can better comprehend the elucidation of Rabbi Eliezer the Great of the passuk: **וִירָאוּ כָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עֲלֵיךְ וִירָאוּ מִמֶּךָ, אֱלֹהֵי תִפְלִין שֶׁבְרֵאשׁׁ: "וִירָאוּ כָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עֲלֵיךְ וִירָאוּ מִמֶּךָ, אֱלֹהֵי תִפְלִין שֶׁבְרֵאשׁׁ: "Seeing the "tefillin shel rosh" causes the people of the earth to be in awe of us, because they elicit the kedushah of Yaakov Avinu, who prayed: **"Save me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav."** He implored Hashem to save him from the yetzer hara who disguises itself as a brother to help him better serve Hashem. Earlier, HKB" H had assured him: **"וְהִגַּד ה' נִיצֵב עֲלַי: "וְהִגַּד ה' נִיצֵב עֲלַי: "that Hashem would watch over him and protect him from this yetzer hara. Therefore, in the merit of the "tefillin shel rosh": **"All the people of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you"**—namely, the name **Havaya** that stood over Yaakov to protect him; **"and they will be in awe of you"**—implying that the yetzer hara and its forces would be wary not to disguise aveiros as mitzvos.****

Yaakov Snatched the Month of Elul from Eisav

My dear brothers and friends, let us conclude this sacred journey by explaining how this exalted subject relates to the month of Elul, the month of teshuvah. We have presented in previous essays what the Bnei Yissaschar (Tamuz-Av 1, 6) writes in the name of the Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (107). They cite the teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Yisro 78b) that Yaakov and Eisav divided up the months of the year. Yaakov Avinu took the first three months of the year—**Nissan, Iyar, and Sivan**—for the realm of kedushah. Eisav in turn took the following three months—**Tamuz, Av, and Elul**—as his portion.

Eisav was overjoyed to have the month of Elul in his possession, since it would enable him to prevent Yisrael from returning to Hashem by performing teshuvah prior to the Days of Judgment. This prompted Yaakov Avinu to wage a tactical war with Eisav, and Yaakov successfully took possession of the month of teshuvah. Nevertheless, the months of Tamuz and Av remained in Eisav's possession, the months related to the churban of both Temples. Seeing as the two brothers divided up the months of the year equally, how did Yaakov manage to seize the month of Elul which rightfully belonged to Eisav?

It appears that we can explain the matter based on what we learned above from the holy Ba'al Shem Tov. In reality, the yetzer hara was only created to entice Jews overtly to commit aveiros. It betrayed its Creator by trapping Jews in its net by disguising aveiros as mitzvos. Consequently, HKB"H will punish it appropriately le'asid la'vo: **"ואתא הקב"ה ושחט למלאך** "המות". As we know, Eisav's guardian angel and the yetzer hara are one and the same. That is what prompted Yaakov Avinu to implore Hashem: **"Save me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav"**—save me from this deceitful betrayer, who is pretending to be my brother, claiming to want to help me better serve Hashem.

It is easy to comprehend why Eisav was ecstatic when the month of Elul fell to him. As long as a Jew is aware and recognizes that he has sinned against his Creator, he will want to make amends and to return into the good graces of his Father in Heaven. Unfortunately, Eisav's ministering angel, the yetzer hara, confounds our perception and intellect by portraying aveiros as mitzvos. It does such a good job that a person is liable to think that he is serving Hashem properly and all of his deeds are meritorious and upright. In that case, it may appear to him that there is no need to perform teshuvah.

We can now appreciate why Yaakov Avinu saw fit to contest the division of the months with Eisav. He did not want to afford Eisav the opportunity to use the month of Elul as an obstacle to teshuvah. Because Yaakov took Elul as part of his portion, Yisrael are guaranteed that HKB"H will fulfill the promise of Yaakov's dream—**"Behold! Hashem was standing over him."** He protects us from the duplicitous yetzer hara that pretends to be our ally and portrays aveiros as mitzvos. Thus, Yisrael can perform proper teshuvah during the month of Elul and make amends for all of their sins and wrongdoings.

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Sponsored by Philippe Bloch in memory of his beloved Grandmother, Mrs. Jana Schupf (Yocheved bas Shimon a'h), on her yahrzeit, 16 Elul. Philippe feels very fortunate to be zoiche to learn Torah in the sacred traditions of the Belz and Shinov Hasidim, which her family in Poland belonged to.

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