

A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller Zt'l



Did Yaakov tell the truth when he answered Yitzchak that he was Esav his firstborn?

And the answer is... I'll tell you a little story. **Two** stories.

First story is, in Europe years ago, they used to send money by messengers from town to town. They didn't have any armored cars, and so they picked a husky Jew and they gave him a big stick and they gave him a belt, and the money was in his belt. And he walked from town to town, bringing the money. So as Yaakov was walking from one town to the other, this Jew, a messenger carrying the money, all of a sudden Esav appears on the road, and the Esav has a gun; and he says, "Give me your money."

So the Jew said, "You're ruining my name, because when I come back nobody will believe me, there was a hold-up. They'll say, 'Where did you hide the money?' So do me a favor. Here's my coat, shoot a bullet through my coat so I can at least show the bullet hole as evidence."

So Esav complied and he shot a bullet through. So Yaakov said, "One bullet is not enough, shoot another one." So Esav said, "I don't have any more bullets, I have no more bullets."

"Aha!" said Yaakov. So he picked up his heavy staff, and he brought it down on Esav's head, and as Esav was lying on the ground, he took back the money belt and walked off. That's not the end of the story.

So Esav, lying on the ground, takes him two days to get up, and he's muttering, "That crooked, dishonest Jew. A lying Jew."

Story number two.

When I was in Sladboka there was a *histadrus ha'musar*, a *mussar* association. At that time, they came together in the house of Rav Avraham Grodzinski *zichrono livrocho*, he was the *mashgiach* and *menahel* of the Yeshiva, and the Roshei Yeshivas were sitting there, and also the chief talmidim, former talmidim of the Yeshiva. And the question was brought up: On what *middah* of *mussar* should we work? People have character traits, and *mussar* is supposed to improve your traits. So the whole association was thinking, "What should they choose to work on?"

At that time, there was a man who was an *ex-mashgiach* of the old Volozhiner Yeshiva, who was present, also a talmid of the Yeshiva, an elderly man, and he spoke up and said, "We should work on the *middah* of *emes*, speaking the truth. We should choose especially one day in the week to concentrate only on truth."

At that time, Rav Avraham spoke up and said, "We have to know what *emes* is," he said. "If you're going to speak indiscriminately just about saying the truth, you won't be working on *emes*, you'll be working on *shtus*, foolishness. Because you cannot say the truth always."

And I'm going to explain to you what he meant. *Tono Rabonon, keitzad m'rakdim lifnei hakallah?* How do you dance before the kallah? Now how do you dance? You dance with your legs. But Rashi says, "*Ma oimrim lah?*" What do you say? It depends what you say when you dance in front of the kallah.

Beis Shammai said, "You say, '*Kallah ke'mo sh'he.*'" The kallah, just as she is, that's to say the truth. So you praise the kallah for what she is. But Beis Hillel said, "Suppose she was *sumah*," suppose the kallah has one eye. So you're going to praise, "Oh, her beautiful right eye. She has a right eye, oh beautiful right eye." Or she has one leg, the right leg. "How graceful her right leg is." No! You have to say, "For all kallahs, *kallah noeh v'chasudah*, a beautiful and a gracious kallah." **That's for all kallahs.** Because what's kindly, that's what's true: what's wicked, that's what's false.

And therefore, we learn that *emes* means what comes for a good purpose. And therefore, if Esav wants to deprive you of what belongs **to you**, wants to take away your money belt, you have a right to tell him... but you're not telling him a lie, you're telling him the truth. When Yaakov said, "*Ano'chi Esav bechorecha*," he was saying it because Esav had sold the *bechorah*, and therefore the blessings belonged to him. To get his rightful blessings, he had a right to say anything. It wasn't any deceit. And therefore, truth means what's righteous.

Of course, this shouldn't open the doorway to all kinds of wickedness and treachery; a person has to have an honest heart.

Rabbi Miller on the Parsha

ויגל את־האבן *And he rolled off the stone.*
(ויצא כטי) (*Vayitzei 29:10*)

We note here that Jacob single-handedly removed the stone which ordinarily required the united efforts of a number of shepherds. Jacob was a mighty man, which makes his humility toward Esav and Laban even more remarkable. This was in addition to his exceptional beauty (Bava Metzvia 84A) which he inherited from his mother (24:16)