

## When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born... it is acceptable for a fire-offering to Hashem. (22:27)

The *Yalkut Shimoni* teaches us why the above three animals (ox, sheep, goat) were selected to serve as *Korbanos*, sacrifices. The ox was chosen in the merit of Avraham Avinu who, in the course of preparing dinner for his “Heavenly” guests, ran to bring for them an ox. [*V’el ha’bakar ratz Avraham*, “And to the ox Avraham ran” (*Bereishis* 18:7)]. Yitzchak Avinu’s *z’chus*, merit, catalyzed the designation of the sheep as a sacrifice. [*Va’yar v’hinei ayil neechaz ba’svach b’karnav*, “And he raised his eyes and saw, and behold! A ram, afterwards caught in the thicket” (*Bereishis* 22:13)]. When Yaakov Avinu appeared before his father to receive the blessing, bringing with him dinner made of goat meat, he paved the way for the goat to be used for *korbanos*. [*V’kach li misham shnei gedeyei izim tovim*, “And take for me from there two choice young kids of the goats” (*Bereishis* 26:9)]. Interestingly, this same *Midrash* is quoted by the *Targum Yerushalmi* – but with a twist concerning the goats. The *Targum* posits that it was the fact that Yaakov covered his arms with goat hair when he brought his father dinner that served as the merit for goats to be placed on the *Mizbayach*, Altar, as a sacrifice. This appears strange, since for all intents and purposes, when Yaakov appeared before his father clothed in goats hair, it was not his finest moment. The entire scene was beguiling, so that Yitzchak would think that before him stood Eisav – not Yaakov. Why would an act of deception be worthy of merit – let alone catalyze the goat as a standard for sacrifice? One would think that it would be quite the opposite.

In his *Iyeh HaYam*, **Horav Yehudah Leib Edil, zl**, offers an inspiring explanation. When Rivkah *Imeinu* instructed Yaakov to take Eisav’s place, the Patriarch shuddered at the thought of being complicit in an act of prevarication. How could he deceive his father? Yet, with great trepidation, he went forward and presented himself as Eisav to his father. There was a physical issue that had to be resolved. Eisav was hairy – Yaakov was not. This created a serious problem for Yaakov. What if, for some reason, Yitzchak would want to embrace his son, only to discover that his once hairy son was now smooth as silk? Yaakov’s deception would be discovered, and he would be eternally condemned by his father. One does not lie to Yitzchak, the *Olah temimah*, perfect offering.

We forget, however, that the only reason Yitzchak asked his son to “come closer” was because of the way he spoke, alluding to G-d, that had paved the way for his good fortune. This was not Eisav’s style of speech. He never mentioned G-d – period. Eisav was a self-made man, the archetype agnostic. There was no place in his life for a Higher Power. In other words, Yaakov Avinu brought the “lie” upon himself. Had he spoken like Eisav: “I did it,” “I found it,” – all “me,” then Yitzchak would never have suspected that something was amiss. If, for once in his life, Yaakov would not have attributed his success to Hashem, Yitzchak would not have questioned him. Our Patriarch was not prepared to turn his back on Hashem, to falsify something in which he believed with all his heart and soul. This remains Yaakov’s distinctive merit for which we “collected” when we would offer a goat on the Altar.

Perhaps we might suggest an alternative approach which follows along similar lines. When Yaakov was instructed by his mother to present himself as Eisav, he was taking an enormous chance. True, his mother told him, “Do not worry,” but to lie was acting against his grain. Yet, his mother told him to do it. How could he disagree with his mother? From a spiritual vantage point, she was right “up there” with Yitzchak. When *gedolei hador*, the preeminent Torah leaders of our generation, issue a call, impose a decree – we listen; we follow. We trust in our *chachamim*, Torah scholars – even when their instructions do not conform with our line of thinking. This is the *z’chus*, merit, of the goats and why we need them today more than ever.