

# NOT GOOD ENOUGH

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

And Yaakov remained alone and a man wrestled with him until break of dawn. And he saw that he could not defeat him so he grabbed him in the hollow of his thigh and he dislocated the hollow of Yaakov's thigh with his wrestling with him. And he said, "Send me because the dawn has broken." And he said, "I will not send you unless you bless me." And he said to him, "What's your name?" and he said, "Yaakov!" And he said, "No long will your name be Yaakov but rather Israel, because you struggled with the Divine and man and you prevailed." And Yaakov asked and he said, "Tell me please, what your name is?" And he said, "Why is it that you ask for my name?" And he blessed him there. (Breishis 32:25-30)

This is a very odd dialogue. After wrestling an entire night, the man that Yaakov wrestled with became desperate to leave. Yaakov refused to let him go without first receiving his blessing. The man tells him that his name is no long Yaakov but rather Israel. Why does Yaakov demand a blessing from his opponent? Why does he accept a change of his name as a blessing? What does that mean? Who was the person with whom Yaakov struggled all night long?

I'm not such a numerologist. Numbers go through my system like diet soda. I like chunky calorie rich ideas. However with regard to Yaakov and his name change there is an amazingly instructive way of appreciating what happened with a few simple calculations. The numerical value of the name Yaakov (Yud-10+Ayin-70+Kuf-100+Beis-2) equals 182. Our sages inform us that Yaakov was victorious that night against not less the "yetzer hora" - the negative inclination. Another name for that opposing force in Hebrew is Satan. The name Satan when spelled out numerically (Sin-300+Tes-9+Nun- 50) equals 359. It is a curious fact that Yaakov (182) plus Satan (359) together add up to Yisrael (Yud-10+Sin-300+Reish-200+Aleph-1+Lamed- 30=541). What are we to make of this discovery, not my own?

The sages offer a curious comment on the verse, "And G-d saw all he created and behold it was very good!" (Breishis 1:31) Why did everything suddenly improve from good to "very good"?

The simple answer, we would think of, is that after all the good quality ingredients are harmoniously blended together a new synergistic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts emerges and that is what is "very good". Our sages say, "Very good! This is the evil inclination!" Whoa! What a shocker! What does that mean? Let us try two approaches.

1)It could be that as Reb Tzadok HaKohen wrote that wherever we struggle the most, wherever the

Yezter Hora has invested so much energy, there in that spot, is the where our greatest potential lies. If we would peak into the Kremlin during the cold war and observe that they have a thousand warheads aimed at some benign location on the plains of Kansas where there sits an elderly man on his front porch smoking a corncob pipe and rocking in his chair while his old hound Boo slumbers, we may wonder, "What's he got in that pipe?" However, when we dig a few stories beneath the surface we discover America has a secret silo with thousands of weapons pointed at strategic locations in Russia.

It's not unusual that in the overcoming of a given difficulty a person can make his greatest achievements. I know of a man of with a great record of helping people that testified that he has a cruel streak and in curing himself from that tendency he found the milk of human kindness buried beneath the shale of his callous nature.

2) Imagine that the Israeli army has chased the Syrian army to the Golan and their soldiers have abandoned their tanks as they scramble back to Damascus. Would the Israeli army just leave all that valuable equipment there? No! They would incorporate them into their own arsenal.

So too Yaakov was not going to send away his negative inclination in defeat. He was now ready to subjugate and sublimate all worldly forces in the service of HASHEM. This signals a grand expansion of potential for Yaakov, and such a major merger calls for a new name. With the surrendered weapons of the Yeter Hora in his employment the promise for Israel is no longer a life of mild goodness. However good it is, it's **not good enough**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](http://Torah.org).