

WHEN IT DOESN'T...

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Yaakov was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he saw that he could not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his hip, and the socket of Yaakov hip became dislocated as he wrestled with him. (Breishis 32:25-26)

A few weeks ago my wife and I were away at a Shabbaton for Shabbos and the reader of the Torah was late in arriving. As a time filling tactic the Gabai floated a darling question with a charming answer. It was a cute idea at first, but like a cork screw the more I turned it and turned it since, the deeper it has entered my mind. Why was that Parsha called "Toldos"? ! Following the pattern of Parshas Noach, it should rather be called, "Yitzchok". Alternately, Parshas Noach should be called, "Toldos". They both begin the same, "These are the generations of... Noach or Yitzchok" Why is one about the man Noach and the other about generations- Toldos? He said that Noach was an individual and he happened to be a bridge to Avraham. The "generations of Noach was Noach". The patriarchs, however, were pioneers. Their whole life was not about them for themselves but rather for the future, for generations- Toldos. That's why they were Avos! They didn't happen to become Avos afterwards looking back. They lived forward like Avos, totally dedicated to Toldos!

Therefore, whatever we know about the activities of the Avos is a strong indicator about the children. We are not learning about Avraham Avinu, or Yitzchok Avinu, or Yaakov Avinu. We are learning something critical about ourselves. "Ki Hem Chayeinu" – Because they are our life! Whatever happened to them- hem- is not just history, it's our life! If Yaakov wrestled a whole night long and he was injured in the process, if a spiritual giant like him struggled and sustained losses on his way to ultimate victory then why should we expect a smooth ride!? It is important for us to know that simple fact. Life is not easy. There are constant internal and external battles. Not everything goes as we would hope or expect at first. These are facts of life's script. Expecting perfection and anticipating that everything will be our way is a recipe for disappointment and certain surrender.

Probably one of the most valuable pieces of unsolicited advice anybody ever shared with me was delivered on the eve of my oldest son's wedding. I don't recall who it was that said, "Reb Label, expect 30 things to go wrong!" I was mortified. After months of detailed planning, that sounded like a curse! Came the day of the wedding and not one thing had gone awry. I dropped off all the kids and my wife at the hall, make-up done, dressed in matching gowns and new suits. Then like Yaakov Avinu I returned home- alone to get myself ready for the big event. Looking through the closet I could not find one clean white shirt. It was too late to buy one. I did find one shirt but it was in the

reject department because it had buttons on the collar and that was not my style. There was no choice and so I reluctantly wore it. There it was- number 1! 29 more to go!

At the hall guests were now coming to greet me at the Chosson's Tisch. For each person I stood and across the table gave an awkward hug. One zealous fellow knocked over the tall candle which was loaded with wax. It spilled onto my black suit jacket. He apologized and I shrugged it off, number 2, as I wiped it with a napkin. I discovered that the more I wiped the wax the more it created this white creamy stain that was spreading in an obvious way. Number 3! The next twenty people who approached me discreetly reminded me to take it easy on the cake, politely pointing out how it was getting all over me. The irony is that I don't even eat that stuff, and I didn't have time or patience to explain after the second person. By then I was all the way up to number 25 or so. There it remained and the rest of the night went remarkably problem- free for me and everyone else Thank G-d. It was even a slight relief and a comfort to realize that I had been spared 5 or more mishaps.

The greater a thing is the greater its opposition. If you are doing something important, expect things to go wrong. If you are ready in advance it takes away the element of surprise. You will never be disappointed or discouraged. Your tolerance and patience will become lengthened and strengthened. You will feel serenity when stuff happens and gratitude **when it doesn't...**