

# TO STRUGGLE, OR NOT TO STRUGGLE, PART 2

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

This week's parshah sheet is dedicated for the sake of a quick refuah shlaimah to Raphael Dovid ben Brochah, a young boy who is now recovering from a coma after a serious car accident about two months ago, and his sister, Tehillah, who was also injured in the same accident. The father I have known for years, and the family I met one Shabbat many years back, and it did not take long to realize the specialness of the entire family. This has been a tremendous test for them, a real struggle, but they are dealing with it in true "Yisroel" fashion, but they can use your prayers just the same.

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*And Ya'akov settled...* (Bereishit 37:1)

In lieu of the discussion of the previous Perceptions, we can appreciate a somewhat difficult Rashi at the beginning of this week's parshah:

*And Ya'akov settled...* (Bereishit 37:1)

Ya'akov wanted to settle down in tranquility, yet this trouble with Yosef jumped upon him. When the righteous wish to leave at ease, The Holy One, Blessed is He, says to them, "Are not the righteous satisfied with what is stored up for them in the World-to-Come that they wish to live at ease in this world as well! (Rashi)

Notice that the posuk uses the name "Ya'akov" and not "Yisroel", as opposed to at the end of his life when it writes:

*And the day of Yisroel's death approached...* (Bereishit 47:28)

Ironically, this was at the end of the seventeen years that Ya'akov had spent in Egypt, precisely the age of Yosef at the beginning of this week's parshah. The question is, what was wrong with Ya'akov's retirement plan? It certainly wasn't early since he was, at that time, 108 years old. And what a life he had! Chased away from home by Eisav, robbed blind by Eliphaz, cheated countless times by Lavan; surely he was entitled to settle down after all of that! But no, he had to struggle for an additional 22 years... because, that is what is meant for a Yisroel... struggling with angels and with humans... and then prevailing.

The question is, why must it be that way? The answer is that a Yisroel is a work in progress. Indeed, as long as a Jew is alive in this world he can assume that he is still here because he hasn't yet

become his personalized version of a Yisroel. He's still a Ya'akov. And, we have to keep coming back until we actually achieve our personally-possible Yisroel-self.

In other words, any Jew can be a "Ya'akov", but not every Jew attains the status of a "Yisroel". How can they if they don't ever approach their own personal "Yabok River"? For, the Yabok River that Ya'akov Avinu crossed to fight with the angel was not incidental; it was an integral part of his process of transformation from a "Ya'akov" to a "Yisroel", a pattern we are meant to imitate, even without traveling to the Jordan River tributary and to cross it. And, even if we did, chances are there won't be an angel waiting there for us with which to fight with and to conquer!

Then, to what do we refer? The answer is this:

A man who only performs (Positive) Mitzvot merits the Nefesh called "Asiyah" (Action). However, he is similar to a woman whose husband has gone overseas and has left her without clothing, food, or drink. He is like the Shechinah that sits in exile and darkness while Her House lays in ruin. That is what a Nefesh of a person is like without a Ruach, which is its husband, so-to-speak: without light and intelligence for understanding.

If this person then tries to learn Torah, constantly learning it and teaching Oral Law for altruistic reasons, then he will merit Ruach from Yetzirah. He will be like the woman whose husband has arrived to live with her forever in her house: clothing her, feeding her, giving her to drink, and bringing her to a higher level. Such is a person to whom Ruach comes and dwells within his Nefesh, filling it with the spirit of wisdom, and elevating the Nefesh from Asiyah to Yetzirah. If a person then endeavors to learn the "Hidden Wisdom" — the secrets of Torah, then he will merit to receive a Neshamah from Beriyah, and it will give off light from within the Ruach, and cause even more elevation. Then he is called "Adam Shalaim" (Complete Man) to which the posuk refers when it says: G-d made man in His image (Bereishit 1:26). The sod is as follows: when a person only possesses Nefesh, then he is only affected by the Name [of G-d], Aleph- Dalet-Nun-Yud. When he learns Torah altruistically, then he merits Ruach which comes from the Name spelled Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh. When he learns the mysteries of Torah, then he merits Neshamah, and he will draw down strength and blessing from the Name, Aleph-Heh-Yud-Heh. When all three Names come together in the person, they total the gematria of "yabok" (Yud- Bait-Kuf). With respect to him it says, "G-d save! May the King answer us on the day we call!" (Tehillim 20:10), [the last three Hebrew words of which] have the roshei teivot which spell "yabok". (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 18)

## **SHABBAT DAY:**

*And Ya'akov came to the city of Shechem complete...* (Bereishit 33:18)

What does this mean? First of all, no matter what a person desires first and foremost is sh'laimut (personal completion), or in the words of the Arizal, he wants to become an "Adam Shalaim" (a complete person). There is no greater source of pleasure than this for any human being. The only confusion is with regard to the definition of what this means. This confusion has resulted in

TRILLIONS of wasted "dollars" and who knows HOW MANY lives.

Secondly, it means that becoming a "Yisroel" is exactly the same thing, which is why the Torah wrote: And Ya'akov came to the city of Shechem complete... (Bereishit 33:18)

Thirdly, there is only one way to achieve this "shlaimut". That's right, only ONE way, and that is to perfect one's Nefesh, then his Ruach, and finally his Neshamah. Doing so brings increasingly greater levels of spiritual light to him, causing his elevation from level to level until he is as perfect as he can become — an Adam Shalaim. To do this is to cross one's personal "Yabok" and to become a "Yisroel".

The Arizal goes one step further by explaining what this process entails: 1) the performance of Positive Mitzvot to merit the Nefesh, 2) the constant learning of Torah and the teaching of Oral Law for altruistic reasons brings Ruach, and 3) learning Sod merits a person to receive his Neshamah.

And, number 4) not only does a person become a "Yisroel" as a result of completing this process, but he becomes the type of person G-d had in mind for him to become when He first fashioned man, before man ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Therefore, as to be expected, this process also represents the return, at least on a spiritual level, from the reality of Ketonet Ohr (Ayin-Vav-Raish) — the skin that Adam received as a result of the sin, to Ketonet Ohr (Aleph-Vav-Raish) — the skin of light in which he and Chava were created with.

This brings us to the concept of "aiyekah", the question posed to Adam HaRishon by G-d after he ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It means "Where are you?", but not in terms of physical location, for both G-d and Adam already knew the answer to that question before it was asked. Rather, it really meant "Where is the Adam HaRishon that I created? The one I made," G-d lamented, "shone with light. You are now opaque and quite physical!"

Thus, the gematria of "aiyekah" is 36, the number of candles that we light throughout the eight days of Chanukah, and the total number of years Ya'akov was away from home (14 at the yeshivah of Shem and Eiver, 20 years with Lavan, and 2 years to get home) along his path to becoming a "Yisroel". Therefore, Aiyekah was the question; Yisroel is the answer, as the prophet said:

"He cried (Bait-CHOF-HEH) and pleaded (vayitchanain) with him (LAMED-VAV)" (Hoshea 12:5). (Rashi, Bereishit 32:28)

This posuk from Hoshea recounts the struggle between Ya'akov and the angel, and that is obviously why Rashi has referred to it. However, and amazingly, the Hebrew words can be read as: Bait-CHOF-HEH — on the TWENTY- FIFTH... there was a chayn of THIRTY-SIX. Now, this interpretation of the posuk might have seemed a little far-fetched except that the Maharil added the following:

The sun shone for him (Lamed-Vav) as he passed Penuel and he was limping on his hip. (Bereishit 32:32)

The word "lo" (Lamed-Vav) refers to the THIRTY-SIX candles of Chanukah. (Maharil, Avodah Zarah

3b)

All of a sudden, the concepts of personal perfection, crossing the Yabok, and becoming a Yisroel are all inextricably tied up with the holiday of Chanukah, and just in time for the holiday as well.

### **SEUDAT SHLISHIT:**

*Ya'akov heard that Dinah his daughter had been defiled, but while his sons were with his herds in the field; he said nothing...* (Bereishit 34:5)

Hence, there are three parts to the equation, two of which we have defined. We know what the goal is, and we know what to cross to get there. However, it is not just a matter of arriving "shalaim", but of arriving at "Shechem" shalaim, at least figuratively speaking. For, just like the Yabok River was not incidental to the process of transformation from a Ya'akov to a Yisroel, neither was Shechem, and just like everyone must cross their own personal Yabok to become a "Yisroel", so too must each Yisroel arrive at his own personal "Shechem" — the gematria of which is 36 times 10 — shalaim, in order to complete the process.

Thus, we find that the roshei teivot of the crucial words, "Boruch Shem kevod Malchuto l'olam va-ed" are: Bait-Shin-Chof-Mem-Lamed-Vav, which spell: b'Shechem, thirty-six. In Shechem is thirty-six, perhaps hidden, but 36 is there. No wonder it wasn't until after Ya'akov survived the struggle of Shechem that his name change was confirmed by G-d Himself:

G-d appeared to Ya'akov again when he came from Padan Aram and blessed him. G-d said to him, "Your name is 'Ya'akov', but no longer will your name be 'Ya'akov' but it shall be 'Yisroel'. And He called him 'Yisroel'." (Bereishit 35:10)

Before Shechem, Ya'akov had struggled with an angel and prevailed. After having survived the episode of Dinah and not losing his spiritual composure, he had struggled with man and prevailed as well, a much harder test to pass. For, when one fights with an angel — symbolic of test that is clearly from Heaven — one knows that he is struggling against Heaven to prove himself. However, when Heaven takes us on through the guise of other human beings, it is easy to see people and not the hand of G-d, as Ya'akov did, but rather, Yisroel did.

That is the reason for the ongoing struggle. It is not about struggling with angels or people, but about struggling to rise above them, spiritually-speaking. Since having left the Garden of Eden, it has been all about struggling to return from Ketonet Ohr with an Ayin to Ketonet Ohr with an Aleph, from the skin of flesh to the skin of light. Though it may be hard to fathom how, all of life's difficulties, from the simplest to the most complex, from the most basic to the most frightening are all just to facilitate this process.

That is why, as long as the struggle is still meaningful, Eretz Yisroel is acquired through yesurim (difficulties) (Brochot 5a). If G-d runs the world, can He not make life in Eretz Yisroel just as easy as it might be in America or some other foreign country? Of course He can, but He doesn't, because it is

Eretz YISROEL, the land of Yisroel, the place to become a Yisroel. Anywhere else is simply Eretz Ya'akov, or Eisav — his twin brother — for that matter.

Thus, whereas Purim is the holiday given to us to send us back to Eretz Yisroel in order to rebuild the Temple and bring the Final Redemption, Chanukah is the holiday that was given to us to survive the long, dark exile in foreign lands (including our own land under the rule of foreign governments). It is our yearly reminder of the need to struggle in order to prevail, and that success is not merely about being a "Ya'akov", but about being a "Yisroel" with all that it entails.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

Nefesh HaChaim, Ch. 13

The same is true of the effect that speech has above, as alluded to by the words of Amos the prophet, "He creates mountains and He creates the wind, and He tells (u-maggid) man what he spoke" (Amos 4:13).

The Zohar (Lech-Lecha 86b) teaches that the language of haggadah alludes to a hidden meaning, which in this case serves as a warning to man: though you are now in a lowly world from within which you cannot see the worlds above and grasp what is being built or destroyed, G-d forbid, by each of your words, do not think to yourself, "What difference do my words and wanton speech make to the world?"

On the contrary, it is an indisputable fact that each word and trivial conversation, anything that comes from your lips, does not simply vanish or go to waste, G-d forbid, as confirmed in Sabbath: Even the breath that comes out of the mouth has a room and a place, and The Holy One, Blessed is He, makes what He will from it; even a man's word, even the voice does not go to a void, but has a room and a place. (Zohar 2:100b)

And here:

Every word that leaves a man's mouth goes up and breaks through heavens and enters the place... (Zohar, Metzora, 55a)

And here as well:

The word is that which goes out of the mouth of man and up and breaks though heavens and stands in the place... (Zohar 3:55a)

Thus, all that emanates from a man's mouth has an impact and arouses the forces above. Positive speech adds strength to the holy forces, as it says, "I will place My word in your mouth... to plant Heaven" (Yeshayahu 51:16). And as the Zohar says:

One who says a holy word, a word of Torah, produces a "voice" that ascends and "awakens" the holy things of the King above, crowning Him, which results in joy above and below. (Emor 105a)

How awesome and wondrous is the effect of speaking holy words of Torah; each world is illuminated by their joy, and they bring joy and gladness to the holy courtyards above, crowning them with holy crowns. (Vayakhel 217a. see at length; see the Zohar on Kedoshim 85a, as well.)

The same idea is found in many places in Tikunim, that every word, voice, and even breath of Torah or prayer, creates many holy angels.

The opposite is also true: impure speech, G-d forbid, builds heavens and worlds of waste for the Sitra Achra, G-d should save us, and causes the worlds and the Order of the Merkavah to suffer destruction, G-d forbid, at least to the degree that they relate to the root of speech. The Zohar warns:

Woe to those that see but don't understand what they see; there is no word without a place and, "The bird of heaven will bring the voice" (Kohelet 10:20); How many thousands of winged beings gather it and bring it before the Judge who judges it for good or G-d forbid, for bad...

This is also mentioned in Lech-Lecha 92a; elsewhere it says:

Many damaging angels join up with a man's voice until they arouse the place of the great void... And how they instigate against that man ... Woe to the one who allows an evil word to pass from his lips! (Kedoshim 85a; see there.)

This is why Kohelet wrote, "Why should G-d become angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands?" (Kohelet 5:5). And this is what the rabbis meant when they taught, "Greater is the one who speaks than the one who performs an action" (Arachin 15a), and "Anyone who reverses his word is as one who worshipped idols" (Sanhedrin 92a).

Therefore, the verse, " And He tells (u-maggid) man what he spoke" (Amos 4:13), means that at the time that a man will stand in judgment to give an accounting before the Blessed One, He will reveal to him the hidden effect his words had on the worlds above. (As mentioned at the beginning, the word "hagaddah" implies the revealing of something which is hidden).

Have a great Shabbat,  
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