

# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM  
THE TEACHINGS OF **RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l**

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה  
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

## PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

## Changing With the Times

וַיִּשְׁאַל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּידָה נָא שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשְׁמִי: (בראשית לב, ל)

Yaakov asked, saying, “Please now tell your name.” He answered, “Why do you ask about my name?” (*Bereishis* 32:30)

“Why do you ask” – We [angels] don’t have fixed names. Our names change according to the *mitzvah* of the service for which we are sent to perform. (*Rashi*)

Here we see that *malachim* don’t have fixed, permanent names. By contrast, the *malach* blessed Yaakov, saying:

– לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל –  
Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael.<sup>1</sup>

Yaakov merits a permanent name by which he will be known. There is a wondrous idea here. The ruling angel of Eisav, who is none other than the *Sitra Achara* himself, informs Yaakov that he doesn’t possess a name. In other words, his name changes all the time.

<sup>1</sup> *Bereishis* 32:29.

There were times when he was called *avodah zarah*, but the lust and drive for idolatry was “slaughtered” and done away with. Later he was called Philosophy. But this, too, fell out of fashion. Then came a period when he was called *Haskalah*. *Haskalah* came to an end, and the *Sitra Achara* got a new name: Communism. His essential name is Samael, but he changes his name now and then, according to the spirit of the times.

However – the angel goes on to say – You are called Yaakov and Yisrael. That is what you will be called from now on, forever. Your name will never change.

The *Yetzer Hara* of nowadays is the same *Yetzer*

*Hara* of olden times. Just like the *Yetzer Hara* wreaked devastation on the Jewish people in the period of the *Haskalah*, so he seeks to devastate us all today as well. Nowadays the *Yetzer Hara* has a different name, but the problem is, until we figure out the current name of the *Sitra Achara*, sometimes

it is too late. The name of the *Yetzer Hara* cannot be known because his name changes. But his nature remains the same. He is an awful, terrible force that seeks to pull people off the right path, off the path of Torah and *mitzvos*. We need to be alert to this, and guard ourselves from him. ●



## It's Good To Be Alone

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֶק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר: (בראשית לב, כה)

**Yaakov remained alone and a man struggled with him until dawn. (*Bereishis* 32:25)**

*Chazal* say that the “man” who struggled with Yaakov that night was the ruling angel of Eisav.<sup>1</sup> We see that Eisav’s angel picked the time when Yaakov was all alone to fight with him. This is when Eisav’s angel does everything he can to battle Yaakov and make him falter.

Why does being alone arouse the fury of Eisav’s ruling angel so greatly? What is the special, eminent quality of being all alone?

כי בְּיָהּ ה' צוֹר עוֹלָמִים – With *yud* and *heb*, *Hashem* created worlds.<sup>2</sup>

*Chazal* comment on this verse as follows:

These are two worlds that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created, one with the letter

*heb* [of His Name], and the other with the letter *yud* [of His Name].... This world was created with *heb* and the next world was created with *yud*.

Why was this world created with *heb*? Because the *heb* [is completely open on the bottom and thus] resembles an open porch. Whoever wants to leave, may leave. And why is the leg of the *heb* hanging, [thus leaving an opening between it and the top of the letter]? Because if a person does *teshuvah*, he is brought back in....

Why was the next world created with *yud*, [the smallest of letters]? Because there are few *tzaddikim* in it.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Bereishis Rabbah* 77:3.

2 *Yeshayahu* 26:4.

3 *Menachos* 29b.



Out of all the *tzaddikim* who fill this world, how many of them will get to *Olam Haba*? Very few. This is what *Chazal* are saying here. *Olam Haba* was created with *yud*, the smallest of letters, “Because there are few *tzaddikim* in it.”

This calls for explanation. How could such a thing be? We know that *Chazal* said:

All Jews have a portion in the world to come.<sup>4</sup>

This implies that all the *tzaddikim* here in this world, within the *heb*, should get to *Olam Haba*. Yet, *Chazal* tell us that from all the *tzaddikim* in the *heb*, only a few get to *Olam Haba*. Very puzzling!

The answer is that in *Olam Haba* there are many levels, one beyond another. There is being inside, and there is further inside, and there is even further inside than that. To appreciate this point, let us consider the following.

On our verse, “Yaakov remained alone,” the *Midrash* says:

Everything that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is destined to do in the future, He already did, by means of the *tzaddikim* in this world.... Just as it says about *Hakadosh*

*Baruch Hu*, וְנִשְׁגַּב ה' לְבַדּוֹ – “*Hashem* will be exalted alone” (*Yeshayahu* 2:12), so it was with Yaakov: “Yaakov remained alone.”<sup>5</sup>

One of the Thirteen Principles of Faith is, “I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be He, is the first and the last.” In other words, before there was anything at all, He alone existed. And He created the world for a certain purpose. Until this purpose is achieved, there is a lot of accounting to be made, a lot of reward and punishment, a lot of worlds and a lot of *Olam Haba*, in which each and every Jew has his portion.

But the day will come, about which is written, “*Hashem* will be exalted alone.” Because “the Creator, Blessed be He, is the first **and the last**.” So to speak, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will once again be alone. This is the day about which *Chazal* said, “The next world was created with the *yud*.” On that day, בְּיוֹם הַהוּא, there will be very few *tzaddikim* left. That day is the ultimate goal of it all. On the day of וְנִשְׁגַּב ה' לְבַדּוֹ, only the few who themselves possess this quality of being alone, of “Yaakov remained alone,” will be there. ●

4 *Sanhedrin* 90a.

5 *Bereishis Rabbah* 77:1.

## PARSHAH TOPIC

## Supporters of Torah

כִּי לֹא יָכַל לוֹ וַיִּגַע בְּכַף יָרְכוֹ וַתִּקַּע כַּף יָרְדָּי יַעֲקֹב בְּהֶאֱבָקוֹ עִמּוֹ: (בראשית לב, כה)

**He could not overcome him, so he touched the socket of his hipbone, and Yaakov’s hipbone dislocated as he wrestled with him. (*Bereishis* 32:25)**

Our *parshah* describes the struggle between Yaakov and Eisav’s ruling angel. This was a struggle between giants, a tremendous war. *Chazal* say they threw up dust all the way to heaven. They threw up

so much dust, it still exists today.

Just to get some idea what it means to fight with Eisav's ruling angel: The *Tanach* recounts that *David Hamelech* in his old age was cold even when covered by garments. *Chazal* say that one of the reasons for this was that David once saw the sword of the *Malach Hamaves*, and he shook and shivered so much that he lost his body heat.

Simply seeing the sword of the *Malach Hamaves* made David, who was a valiant warrior, shiver until his last day. Yaakov fought face to face with the same angel.

What was the fight about?

*Yaakov Avinu* fought tooth and nail over each and every point of *Yiddishkeit* for all generations. He fought for Torah schools, for *tzniyus*, for *yiras Shamayim*. And he completely overcame Eisav's ruling angel. Except for the thigh. This is the one place that Eisav managed to touch. As a result, Yaakov limps on his thigh "until sunset," i.e., until the coming of *Mashiach*.

As a result of Yaakov's successful struggle, the Jewish people, his descendants, remain whole, and so we will be until the end of time. Except for one defect: the "thigh." We limp a little bit.

What is this limp all about?

The legs are the "supporters" of the body, and the supporters of Torah are the "legs" of the Jewish people's Torah learning. This implies that the "body" of the Jewish people is healthy, and only the legs have a limp.

In other words, the *beis midrash* goes as it should, but there is a problem with meeting financial obligations, with the supporters of Torah.

This teaching comes as quite a surprise. Is the only problem in *K'lal Yisrael* connected to the supporters of Torah?! On the contrary, the reality seems quite different, at least superficially: in our generation, people donate enormous amounts of money to support Torah. People build *batei midrash*, finance *yeshivos* and *kollelim*. Where do we see a defect with the supporters of Torah?

The "thigh" is the part that supports man's body. Accordingly, "supporters of Torah" are the base, the foundation, on which the Torah stands. In other words, a supporter of Torah is someone that the Torah rests on. The Torah is on his heart. Indeed, in our generation there are *tzaddikim* and great *baalei chesed* who donate very large amounts of money to the Torah world. However, it seems that only a few among them feel a responsibility for the continued existence of Torah.

The proof is that for a *yeshivah* in a tough situation, a Torah supporter will donate \$25, while to buy something for his home he will spend \$500. Why? The difference lies in the sense of responsibility. A person feels that when it comes to his wife and children, the responsibility for supporting them rests on his shoulders. But when it comes to the *yeshivah*, it is not his personal responsibility.

This is the defect that was created in *K'lal Yisrael* by "he touched the socket of his thigh." There is hardly anyone who feels that the continued existence of Torah among the Jewish people is his personal responsibility.

For example, let's say a *rosh yeshivah* pays a visit to a donor and describes to him the needs of the *yeshivah*: the *bachurim* need bread, there are bills to pay, there is a *kollel*, etc. He presents the problem.

What does the donor do? He writes out a check for \$5000. The *rosh yeshivah* thanks him profusely from the depths of his heart... but this sum surely did not solve the problem.

If we would ask the donor, "Why didn't you make sure the problem gets solved completely?" he would answer, "I am happy to help out, but it is not my problem. It is the *rosh yeshivah's* problem."

The *yeshivah* does not belong to the donor. He just contributes toward its support. If he has a broad heart, he gives more, and if not, less, but in any case, he does not feel a personal responsibility for the *yeshivah's* continued existence.

Indeed, this person gives *tzedakah* for Torah learning, which is a very great thing. But it cannot be said in the truest sense that he “supports” the Torah. He does not constitute a firm and stable base upon which the Torah is able to stand.

Today there are Jews who donate hundreds of thousands of dollars to *yeshivos*, even millions. But how many feel personally responsible for the *yeshivah* they support?

Let’s imagine a *yeshivah* is facing closure. The *rosh yeshivah* approaches the donor, who in the goodness of his heart agrees to donate ten thousand dollars. “But it is not enough!” pleads the *rosh yeshivah*. “I’m sorry, but I am not responsible for the *yeshivah*. Whoever is responsible will have to take care of it,” concludes the donor, who thereupon returns to his business.

This is a “limp”. There is not enough responsibility for the Torah. The one who is responsible, doesn’t donate. The one who donates, is not responsible. As a result, support for Torah “limps”.

It is not this way with practical *mitzvos*. There are lots and lots of people who feel a responsibility to fulfill every *mitzvah* themselves in the best possible way. \$100 for an *esrog*, \$200 for *Pesach matzos*... Why? Because he feels responsibility for it. Whereas to the *yeshivah* he donates a monthly sum of \$10, because he is not responsible.

All the *mitzvos* have legs; they don’t limp. The Torah limps. It has too few people who feel responsibility for supporting it.

*Parshas Vayishlach* teaches us that this matter is what hastens the *ge’ulah*. The one is linked to the other. The day we feel responsibility for the *Torah*, and we support Torah as we should, the *Mashiach* will come, with *Hashem’s* help.

The day we feel this type of responsibility for Torah and we decide to become the base and foundation on which it stands, we will merit seeing *Mashiach*.

Let us heal Yaakov’s limp. Let us become true supporters of Torah.

## Old-Fashioned Torah Supporters

The following story, which took place a hundred years ago, illustrates what it means to feel responsible for supporting Torah.

There was a certain woman married to a poor tailor, and mother of six children. At that time there were three “*perushim*,” three people dedicated to Torah learning, who sat in the local *beis midrash* and learned Torah all day. Others provided them with food.

This poor woman would slice her daily loaf of bread into eleven slices, instead of eight, since she felt an obligation and responsibility to support the learners of the Torah. She would divide her loaf of bread between the members of her family and the three *perushim* who learned in the *beis midrash*, each one receiving an equal amount.

This is an example of a true sense of responsibility for Torah. This is a person who is a real supporter of Torah.

This is where we are “limping.” If only we would feel responsibility for the Torah, if only we would feel an obligation to support *yeshivos* and Torah learners the way we feel responsibility to feed our family and pay the electric bill! We should see it as part of our basic expenses.

If we would act in such a way, *Mashiach* would come. When the limp ends, the “sun” will rise. ●