



NEFESH SHIMSHON

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

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

What's Your Name?

וַיִּשְׁאַל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּידָה נָא שְׁמְךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשִׁמִּי: (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 we are sent to perform. (*Rashi*)

The *malachim* themselves don't have fixed, permanent names. However, the *malach* blessed Yaakov, saying:

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

The angel gives Yaakov a permanent name by which he will be known from now on.

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.

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* petered out, 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.

Yet, the angel goes on to say that 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 really 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

¹ Bereishis 32:29.

all today as well. Nowadays the *Yetzer Hara* just goes by a different name.

The problem is that by the time we figure out the current name of the *Sitra Achara*, sometimes it is too late; he got us already. 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. ●



Personalized Expectations

כִּי נִבְלָה עֲשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְגו' וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה (בראשית לד, ז)

Because he committed an abominable act in Yisrael... and such a thing may not be done. (*Bereishis* 34:7)

There is a story about R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the *Beis HaLevi*. Once, in the deep of winter, the *Beis HaLevi* knocked on the door of a Jewish innkeeper late at night. It was terribly cold outside. The innkeeper at first did not want to let him in at all. In the end he agreed to let him in, but did not want to go through all the trouble of setting him up in a regular room. He just told him to lie on the floor next to the oven.

A while later, there was another knock on the door. One of the great Chassidic Rebbes of the generation had arrived. The innkeeper immediately ushered him in, lit all the lights, and prepared a nice, hot meal for him and his Chassidim. In the middle of the meal, the Rebbe noticed a Jew sleeping on the floor next to the oven. He told one of the Chassidim to go over and invite the poor fellow to the table. The Chassid crouched next to the stove and discovered that

the man was none other than the illustrious *Beis HaLevi*. He cried out in shock.

The innkeeper immediately begged the *Beis HaLevi's* forgiveness: "I'm so sorry; I didn't know you were the *Beis HaLevi*!!"

The *Beis HaLevi* responded, "Listen to this: After Shechem took Dinah, the *pasuk* says: 'The sons of Yaakov came from the field... and they were very angry because he did an abominable act in Yisrael... and such a thing may not be done – וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה'.¹ What is implied by, 'And such a thing may not be done'? It means that even the non-Jews of those times had accepted upon themselves not to commit indecencies such as that perpetrated on Dinah."

The *Beis HaLevi* continued, "The sons of

¹ Bereishis 34:7.



Yaakov therefore answered Shechem as follows: Had it been acceptable to treat an ordinary girl in such a way, then you would not be held responsible for what you did, as you did not know she was a daughter of Yaakov and must be treated with extra respect. But even an ordinary girl may not be treated in such a way, so you are held liable for wronging the daughter of Yaakov!

“And so,” concluded the *Beis HaLevi*, “had it been acceptable to treat a simple Jew as you treated me, and only for an important *Rav* would such treatment be deficient, you would not be held responsible for what you did. But in fact, even a simple Jew should not be treated like this! Therefore, you are held liable for mistreating the *Beis HaLevi*.”

This story offers us an awesome insight. We believe that each one of us will, at the end of his lifetime, ascend to the Heavenly court of justice. And they will say to us, “Okay, go ahead, start with the first *Mishnah* in *Maseches Berachos*.

“Ah, you don’t know *Maseches Berachos*? So start with *Maseches Shabbos*.”

And so forth. He doesn’t know *Shabbos* either? So start with *Eruvin*, with *Pesachim*, with *Shekalim*...

If he doesn’t know any of them, he will be held responsible for all of them. He should have learned all of *Shas*, and this is the truth.

But why? How can *Hashem* expect us to know everything? The Torah was given to the lofty generation of the *Midbar*, and then to the great Torah personalities of the subsequent generations, to the *Tannaim* and the *Amoraim*, and then to R. Akiva Eiger and other *Gedolim*. How can we little people be expected to keep the same *mitzvos* that were required of them? How can we be held to the same standard??

The answer is as we said. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will say, “Okay, go ahead, start with *Berachos*.” And the person will answer, “But I don’t have the abilities that R. Akiva Eiger had, or that the Chofetz Chayim had. I don’t know entire *masechtos* by heart.” So *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will say, “Okay, so what level of ability do you have? What are you capable of?”

This is the rub. If a person in fact did what he could, but was not capable of doing the rest, he is exempted from the rest. He is not held responsible for what is beyond his ability. However, if he didn’t even do what he can, he is held responsible for the entire Torah. ●

PARSHA TOPIC



Supporters of Torah

כִּי לֹא יָכַל לוֹ וַיִּגַע בְּכַף יָרְכוֹ וַיִּתְקַע כַּף יָרֵךְ 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 is still in the air 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 felt chilled 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" of this world, 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, thus 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, inside the *beis midrash*, the learning is intact, but there is a problem with meeting financial obligations, with the supporters of Torah. This is where the "limp" is.

Such an idea is at first quite surprising. Is the only problem in *Klal Yisrael* connected to the supporters of Torah?! On the contrary, the reality is ostensibly just the opposite: 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 regarding the supporters of Torah?

The "thigh" is the part that supports a person'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. This implies that the Torah is on his mind. Indeed, in our generation there are *tzaddikim* and great *baalei chesed* who donate very large amounts of money to the Torah world. But not so many of them feel a true responsibility for the continued existence of Torah.

How so? What does this mean?

For a *yeshivah* in a tough situation, let's say your average Torah supporter will give \$25 when approached for a donation, 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 squarely on his shoulders. When it comes to the *yeshivah*, it is not his personal responsibility.

This is the defect that was created in *Klal Yisrael* by "he touched the socket of his thigh." There is hardly anyone who feels that the continued existence of Torah 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. It is not enough digits for that.

If we would ask the donor, "Why didn't you make sure the problem really gets solved?" he would answer, "Look, 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 wellbeing. If he has a broad heart, he gives more, and if not, less, but either way, he does not feel a personal responsibility for the *yeshivah's* continued existence. True, this person gives *tzedakah* for Torah learning, and this

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* comes to 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 a *mehudar esrog*, \$200 to buy the finest *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*, if we rectify it. The one is linked to the other. The day we feel responsibility for Torah, and we support Torah as we should, *Mashiach* will come.

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, she was mother to 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. ●