

## Vayetze

“*Vayetze Yaakov Mi'Be'er Sheva Vayelech Choronoh*” — And Yaakov went out from Beer Sheva and went toward Haran.

(*Genesis 28:10*)

The Sidrah continues to describe the touching episode of Yaakov's flight from the evil designs of his brother Esau. This flight takes him away from the warm spiritual environment of his parents Yitzchok and Rivkah to the bleak, unethical and irreligious atmosphere of his uncle Lavan; a veritable exile, a *golus*!

In a beautiful *Midrash* our *Chazal* (Sages) remark that fourteen long years elapsed from the time Yaakov Avinu took leave of his parents until he actually left Eretz Yisroel (Israel). Where, asks the *Midrash*, was Yaakov during this time? The answer is that Yaakov studied in the Yeshiva of Shem and Eber, day and night for fourteen years, before taking leave of Eretz Yisroel.

Considering the above *Midrash* it is certainly appropriate to ask the following question: Why was it so unusual for Yaakov Avinu to have studied in the Yeshiva of Shem and Eber during those (additional) fourteen years after he took leave of his parents? Indeed, in the preceding *Parsha* of *Toldoth*,<sup>1</sup> Yaakov is described as an “*Ish Tam*,” a plain man who dwelt in the tents. *Rashi* immediately comments that this means the tents of Shem and Eber, the Yeshiva!

The answer to this question is most interesting because it reveals the tremendous insight of our Patriarch—Yaakov Avinu. Yaakov realized that departing from Eretz Yisroel was more than a geographical relocation. Our ancestor Yaakov was moving away from the strong Torah *S'vivah* (environment) of a Yitzchak and Rivkah, from the holy soil of Eretz Yisroel, to the land of his mother's family (Haran), a place where the tactics of a Lavan *Ha'arami* were in vogue. A polluted atmosphere stronger than the smog of the big city filled with deceit and secularism, devoid of the beauty of Torah Yiddishkeit. A dark and foreboding *Golus* (exile).

It was because of this that Yaakov knew that the Torah he

## Vayishlach

“And (when) he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Yaakov’s thigh was strained as he wrestled with him.” (Genesis 32:26)

The mysterious struggle that ensues between our forefather Yaakov and the angel (*Sar Shel Esav*) in this Sidrah contains the ingredients of the dynamic future of *Klal Yisroel*—the Jewish People. Yaakov who returns to his encampment for a few jars he left behind is faced with an extraordinary enemy. The *Sar Shel Esav* (Angel of Esav) seeks to defeat Yaakov once and for all. What follows is an incredible struggle between man and a *Malach* (angel), one in which the *Sar Shel Esav* cannot prevail. Instead, Yaakov’s thigh is strained. Yaakov is temporarily moved off balance. Strange indeed!

*Nachmanides* explains that since the angel could not prevail and obliterate Yaakov he touched all the righteous people in future generations. Elements of persecution would continue to beset Yaakov’s descendants (Jews) in each period of history; yet, they—the Jews—will prevail!

The *Chofetz Chaim*, quoting *Zohar* on this *Posuk*, says that dislodging Yaakov refers to the “*Tomchey HaTorah*,” the supporters of Torah. The idea here is that support and supporters of Torah are critical to the survival of Yiddishkeit. There will always be circumstances that will try to deter and undermine support of Torah. Puzzled, not plausible? Pause for a moment and ask yourself how many Jewish people see support of Torah as a priority? How often do we discover that the very Jewish people who hope, with undying fervor, for Jews and Judaism to survive, view support of Torah unimportant!

We need to reexamine with clear vision and honest determination where our priorities lie. Without support and supporters of Torah how long can Yiddishkeit really survive? How long, indeed, before the forces of assimilation, ignorance and increasing indifference