

## 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

seep in through the cracks and crevices of our communities caused by the void of Torah and its practice?

There is a famous vort (word) that was said in the name of the Sage of Navardok. This Sage tells us that the *Tomchey HaTorah*—supporters of Torah—refers to those who are the “*Sameach B’chelko*”—rejoice in their portion. One who is satisfied with the portion the A-mighty gives him has time and perspective to view the importance of Torah learning. To have *Bitachon*—faith and trust—to be content with one’s lot and hoping to constantly improve, is characteristic of one who learns Torah. One who is hurried with day-to-day living will find it at best difficult to see the priority of Torah support and study. Indeed, we find all too often in our decade a hunger and thirst, not for food or drink, but for words of Torah (Prophet Amos).

The *Chofetz Chaim* says it perhaps best of all when he tells us that if we make time for Torah we will have time for other matters when needed. Allow me to share one final and yet dramatic thought. The *Malbim* asks an intriguing question: “Why was the *Malach* unable to defeat Yaakov and succeeded only in injuring him?” Says the *Malbim*, that our father Yaakov’s *nefesh* (Jewish soul) was so dynamic that even an angel was no match for a Yaakov Avinu. Were it not for the earthly attachment that Yaakov had, however slight, he would not have been injured at all. Indeed, Torah is food for our souls as well.

An authentic story is told of Rav Yechezkel Abromsky (O.B.M.), who, being taken to a Soviet labor camp, managed to conceal one book, a volume of the *Josefta* (additions in the Talmud). While a logger in Siberia he studied the piercing inspiring wisdom of the *Josefta* on the Talmud. To this Torah giant the Talmud was as dear as food or water, and as the very air he breathed.

We have all heard of a coffee break. CBS even has a news break—why not take a “Torah Break” today? You’ll be glad you did!