



## *Parshas Vayishlach 2023, strength and resilience*

*The Parsha Perspective is in honor of our homeland, Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers as they eradicate our enemies. May G-d save all the hostages in Gaza from harm and return them immediately. May G-d comfort all those who lost family or friends in the horrific attack. May G-d grant a speedy recovery to all those injured in the attack.*

Our Parsha begins with Yaakov Avinu returning home to Cana'an after over twenty years of absence. Still fearful of Esav, Yaakov sent messengers a message of reconciliation to him. However, they returned with a grim report; Esav was preparing to "greet him" with 400 men.

In response, Yaakov sent him an extravagant gift of hundreds of cattle, donkeys, and camels. He split his family into two camps so that if one were attacked, the other could escape. Finally, he turned to G-d to pray and begged for mercy.

The night before he met Esav, he moved his family and belongings across the Yabok River. After everyone had crossed except for him, Yaakov met an angel; they started to wrestle and fought until dawn when the angel wanted to go. But Yaakov refused to let him go until he blessed him, so the angel gave Ya'akov a new name, Yisrael, the prince of G-d.

After 20 years apart, Ya'akov and Esav finally meet once again. Yaakov bowed seven times and embraced Esav as they cried together. Esav asked Yaakov, "who are all these people with you"? He replied, "these are the children whom G-d has gifted your servant." (meaning himself)

Esav then asked, what were all the herds of cattle I saw before we met? Yaakov answered that they were all gifts for you. Esav responded I have more than enough; I don't need them, but Yaakov pleaded with him, and Esav ultimately accepted the

gifts. They eventually parted ways on good terms, Esav went to Mt. Seir, and Yaakov traveled back to Israel.

However, a question comes to mind: Before the angel begged Yaakov to release him, he injured Yaakov's hip and sciatic nerve. The Pasuk writes (32:26) *"When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he hit Yaakov's hip socket, so his hip would be strained as he wrestled with Yaakov."* But there are so many other body parts that are easier to injure than the hip area. Why did Esav's angel injure Yaakov's hip and sciatic nerve specifically? What is the reason the angel tried to hurt that area in particular?

The Ramban, Rav Moshe Ben Nachman, gives a deep explanation that is profound and relevant today. He writes that there was no chance encounter, nor was this angel random, this was Esav's personal guardian angel. When he injured Yaakov's hip area, he intended to harm his future generations. He tried to influence, control and affect all the descendants of Yaakov, the Jewish people.

The Ramban explains that the angel tried to injure Yaakov's hip to cause him to fall to the ground. Once he was on the ground, the angel could force Yaakov to surrender and relinquish the blessings he "stole" from Esav. Specifically, the blessing of mastery over his brother, which was the only blessing that really mattered to Esav.

But Yaakov stood firm and weathered the pain and suffering for his future generations; they will learn how to have faith despite their challenges. Accordingly, the angel gives Yaakov a new name, Yisroel, referring to the strength Yaakov exhibited during their altercation. His new name, Yisroel, is indicative of the power and resilience he demonstrated during his fight for survival.

This is why we are called the Beni Yisroel, the children of Yisroel, as we were given a part of that resilience as a gift and inheritance so we could fulfill G-d's promise to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. We will continue to thrive despite the challenges we face because of the covenant of our redemption.

As G-d said to Yaakov in last week's Torah portion, (28:13 - 15), *"The ground which you are lying on, I will give to you and your descendants. Remember that I am with you. I*

*will protect you wherever you go and bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised."*

The name Yisroel proclaims and state categorically that although others may have the numbers, the will not prevail, for G-d is not on their side. No matter what they does or how hard they try, the Beni Yisroel will not be conquered. I cannot think of a more relevant perspective than the Ramban's explanation on what Esav's angel hoped to accomplish when injuring Yaakov's hip.

Esav's angel tried to impact the Jewish nation as whole and eliminate the secret to our immortality. The name Yisroel demonstrates that our survival and existence does not rely on physical strength, but on G-d only. Our reality is innately G-dly and spiritual, the torah and its commandments are the secrets to our energy, consistency, and continuity. Our ability to adapt, survive, and endure is due to us surrendering to G-d and submitting to His will.

We are quickly approaching the holiday of Chanukah, this perspective seems more relevant. The story of Chanukah is an example of physical strength being defeated by a spiritual and G-dly force. A demonstration to those who seek to destroy us, you will never succeed, for G-d, His Torah, and love are on our side.

As anti-semitic rhetoric becomes mainstream and popular, know they don't stand a chance. They may be intimidating and frightening, but there is no way they will succeed in destroying the Jewish nation. They are not the first, nor will they be the last, who will attempt and try to eliminate G-d's chosen people. We must stay vigilant and prepared, but we must not live in fear, for G-d is on our side.

*מְסַרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חַלְשִׁים - You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak*

*וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים - Many into the hands of the few*

*וְטִמְאַתָּם בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים - Defiled people into the hands of the pure*

*וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צְדִיקִים - The wicked into the hands of the righteous*

*וְזֹדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתְךָ - Insolent sinners into the hands of those who keep Your Torah*

**בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה - In those days and in these times!**

-Part of the special prayer we say during Chanukah

*Have a meaningful Shabbos!*

*Rabbi Sholom Yemini*