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Shvilei Pinchas

"And Yaakov remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn"

The Guardian Angel of Eisav Fought with Yaakov Avinu over the Tikun of the Midah of "Hod" Related to the Miracle of Chanukah

This week's parsha is parshas Vayishlach. I would like to focus on the grueling struggle fought by the guardian angel of Eisav with Yaakov Avinu (Bereishis 32, 23):

"ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר, וירא כי לא יכול לו ויגע בכף ירכו ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו. ויאמר שלחני כי עלה השחר ויאמר לא אשלחך כי אם ברכתני. ויאמר אליו מה שמך ויאמר יעקב. ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל כי שרית עם אלהים ועם אנשים ותוכל... ויברך אותו שם".

And Yaakov remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. Upon realizing that he could not overcome him, he struck a blow to the ball of Yaakov's thighbone, and it became dislocated, as they wrestled. He said, "Release me, for the dawn has arrived." He (Yaakov) **replied, "I will only release you if you bless me." He asked him, "What is your name?" He answered, "Yaakov." He said, "Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael; for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed." . . . And he blessed him there.**

In this essay, we will address the following questions: What was this mysterious struggle about? What is the significance of the malach adding the name Yisrael to Yaakov's original name? Why did Yaakov Avinu refuse to release Eisav's guardian angel until the malach blessed him? Although Rashi explains that the malach conceded to Yaakov the berachos that Yitzchak had bestowed upon him, the language of the passuk—**"and he blessed him there"**—suggests that the malach gave him an entirely new berachah.

"ויגע בכף ירכו" Alludes to the One Hundred Men It Was Going to Kill Daily

We will begin with an illuminating teaching from the great luminary, the Chasam Sofer, zy"a, in his Derashos (Part I, page 83). He explains the damage Eisav's guardian angel inflicted on Yaakov based on a teaching in the Gemara (Menachos 43b): **"תניא היה רבי מאיר אומר, חייב אדם לברך מאה ברכות בכל יום, שנאמר "ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך."** **It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Meir used to say: A person is obligated to recite one hundred berachos daily, as it states** (Devarim 10, 12)**: "And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you."** Rashi provides the following clarification: **In the phrase "מה ה' אלקיך", do not read "מה"** (what), **but rather "מאה"** (one hundred)**.** In other words, instead of reading: **"What does Hashem want,"** we are to read it as **"Hashem wants one hundred."** Citing Rashi, Tosafos explain that this implies that we are obligated to recite one hundred berachos.

Both the Midrash Tanchuma (Korach 12) and the Midrash Rabbah (Bamidbar 18, 21) explain that David HaMelech instituted the practice of reciting one berachos every day; they expounded on the passuk (Shmuel II 23, 1): **"נאום דוד בן ישי ונאום הגבר הוקם על משיח אלקי יעקב ונעים זמירות ישראל"—this is the speech of David ben Yishai, and the speech of the man who was established on high, the anointed one of the G-d of Yaakov, and the pleasing composer of the songs of Yisrael."** The Tur (O.C. 46) explains the matter in greater depth.

Regarding these final words of David HaMelech, the passuk says **"הוקם על"** . The gematria of the word **ע"ל** is 100,

alluding to the 100 berachos. In the times of David HaMelech, one hundred Israelites were dying each and every day—the reason for these deaths was unknown. After investigating the matter, David HaMelech divined the remedy and instituted the recitation of one hundred berachos; as a result, the plague ceased. Hence, Chazal instituted as part of a Jew's daily routine that one should complete a complement one hundred berachos on a daily basis.

With this in mind, the Chasam Sofer asserts that this is the injury the guardian angel of Eisav caused to Yaakov. It hinted to him that a time would come when it would kill one hundred of Yaakov's descendants each day—the numerical value of the word כ"ף. This is implied by the words of the passuk: **"He struck a blow to the כ"ף of Yaakov."** Afterwards, however, his adversary revealed the remedy to him: **"And he blessed him there"**—the one hundred deaths could be halted and prevented by reciting one hundred berachos every day.

The Gematria of ישרא"ל Equals אמ"ת Plus One Hundred

Based on this, the Chasam Sofer interprets the malach's remark to Yaakov: **"Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael."** As we know, Yaakov is associated with the midah of **"emes,"** as it is written (Michah 7, 20): **"תתן אמת ליעקב"—grant "emes" to Yaakov.** Now, when the malach hamaves takes a Jewish life on account of his sins, chas v'shalom, it removes the letter **"aleph"** from the word **"אמת",** leaving only the letters **"מת".** This is how it takes the Jew's life.

The one hundred berachos, however, annul this process by restoring the letter **"aleph"** to the word **"אמת".** Thus, **100** added to "אמת" (441) equals ישרא"ל (541). This then is what the malach of Eisav hinted to Yaakov—the paradigm of **"emes"**—with the remark above: By reciting one hundred berachos daily, they will add **100** to אמ"ת resulting in the gematria of "ישראל"—your new name.

It gives me immense pleasure to interpret the narrative based on the comments of the Chasam Sofer: **"And Yaakov remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. Upon realizing that he could not overcome him, he struck a blow to Yaakov's כ"ף."** Since Yaakov was extremely holy and righteous, the malach was incapable of harming him personally. So, it sought an alternative tactic—it struck a blow to his loins, his descendants, who would not be as completely holy and righteous as Yaakov himself. It would kill one hundred of them each day, the numerical equivalent of **כ"ף.**

Nevertheless, HKB"H performed a chesed on behalf of Yaakov Avinu—He made sure that the wrestling match continued until the break of dawn. At which time, the malach beseeched Yaakov: **"Release me, for the dawn has arrived." He replied, "I will only release you if you bless me."** In other words, Yaakov did not agree to release the guardian angel of Eisav until it revealed to him the key for counteracting its ability to kill one hundred of Yaakov's descendants each day in the future.

This compelled the malach to reveal the remedy as follows: **He asked him, "What is your name?" He answered, "Yaakov." He said, "Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisrael."** As explained, the name **ישרא"ל** (541) alludes to the addition of **100** berachos to Yaakov's midah of **אמ"ת** (441). How did Yaakov earn this distinction? **"For you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed"**—with the name **Yisrael,** Yaakov Avinu triumphed over the "samech-mem"—the malach hamaves—preventing it from killing one hundred Jews per day. How so? By reciting 100 berachos daily, This is the deeper meaning of: **"And he blessed him there"**—the malach revealed this auspicious remedy to Yaakov.

To summarize, we learned from the Chasam Sofer that the name **Yisrael** alludes to the cessation of the one hundred daily Jewish deaths. We can suggest that this is actually alluded to in the passuk which Chazal expounded to derive the practice to recite one berachos daily: **"ועתה ישראל"**—since you are called **Yisrael**—you will realize **"מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך"**—what Hashem requests of your—do not read the word as **"מה"** but rather as **"מאה"**—He wants you to recite **100** berachos.

Based on this, we can explain why David HaMelech deserved the designation **"נעים זמירות ישראל"—Yisrael's sweet psalmist** (composer of songs)—in the very same passuk that alludes to the fact that he instituted the practice of reciting one hundred berachos per day: **"נאום דוד בן ישי ונאום הגבר הוקם על משיח אלקי יעקב ונעים זמירות ישראל".** Recall that they noted that the

gematria of the word **ע"ל** is 100; thus, the passuk states that he established the practice of 100. Additionally, he his described in the passuk as the **"mashiach of the G-d of Yaakov,"** since the secret of the one hundred berachos that was revealed to Yaakov Avinu was also revealed to David Hamelech (the future Mashiach). For this reason, David is described as **"נעים זמירות ישראל",** because he is responsible for Yisrael singing and reciting one hundred berachos a day to Hashem equivalent to the name **ישרא"ל.**

This coincides beautifully with the comment of the Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (139). He asserts that this is why David HaMelech established as Psalm 100 in sefer Tehillim: **"מזמור לתודה הריעו לה' כל הארץ"—a psalm of thanksgiving, call out to Hashem, all the earth.** He wanted to teach us that we are obliged to thank and praise Hashem every day with one hundred berachos. As we have learned, this practice is attributable to David HaMelech—**Yisrael's sweet psalmist.**

Yaakov Avinu Retrieved the Small Vessels in Preparation for the Miracle of Chanukah

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to embellish the sacred teaching of the master, the Chasam Sofer, zy"a. What prompted the guardian angel of Eisav to choose that specific moment to strike the thigh area of Yaakov, hinting to the fact that it was going to kill one hundred Jews a day in the future for their failure to recite one hundred berachos a day? Additionally, why is the obligation to recite one hundred berachos daily alluded to specifically by the thighbone of Yaakov Avinu rather than some other body part such as the mouth with which we articulate our berachos to Hashem? Indeed, the gematria of **כ"ף** is one hundred, but that still does not explain the deeper connection between these berachos and Yaakov's thighbone.

I had a wonderful idea! Regarding the words **"ויותר יעקב",** Rashi comments: **He forgot small jars, and he returned for them.** We find an incredible, illuminating chiddush in the works of two great luminaries—the Megaleh Amukos and the Shela hakadosh. They explain that Yaakov went to such great lengths that night to retrieve the small jars he had forgotten, because he was preparing for the miracle of Chanukah, which involved a jar of pure oil. Here is what we are taught in the Gemara (Shabbas 21b):

"מאי חנוכה, דתנו רבנן בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון דלא למספד ודלא להתענות בהון, שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל, וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד, נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים, לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה".

What is the reason for the festival of Chanukah? As the Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: On the 25th of Kislev, the days of Chanukah commence. They are comprised of eight days, on which it is prohibited to eulogize or fast. For, when the Greeks entered the Heichal, they contaminated all of the flasks of oil that were in the Heichal. And when the royal Chashmonai house prevailed and defeated them, they searched and found only one flask of oil that was concealed with the seal of the Kohen Gadol; it contained only enough oil to light the Menorah for one day. However, a miracle was performed with it, and they lit with it for eight days. In the following year, they established and rendered these eight days permanent festival days, celebrated with the recital of Hallel and the expression of gratitude.

HKB"H performed the miracle of Chanukah for Yisrael with a solitary flask of pure oil that increased miraculously to provide kindling for eight days. In a sense, it was as if they actually found eight small jars of oil. This gibes nicely with the explanation of the Beis Yosef (O.C. 670) that the miracle was that the flask replenished itself every night with new oil. These were the **small jars** that Yaakov went back for in preparation for the miracle of Chanukah.

This also explains why Yaakov went back for them specifically at night. After all, the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah lamps is specifically at night, after sunset. This symbolizes the illumination of the spiritual darkness that the Greeks wished to impose on the Jews. In the words of the Midrash (B.R. 2, 4): **"Darkness" represents the exile of Greece, whose decrees thrust Yisrael into a spiritual darkness.**

This also explains why Yaakov was not afraid to go alone at night. For, we have learned in the Gemara (Pesachim 8a): **"שלוחי מצוה אינן ניזוקין"—those sent to perform a mitzvah are not harmed**—and, as explained, Yaakov's actions were for

the sake of a mitzvah, preparing for the miracle of Chanukah. Yet, he did suffer a minor injury at the hands of Eisav's malach. This can be explained based on the Gemara's teaching (ibid.) that even those sent to perform a mitzvah must be careful in places where danger and harm are likely. Nevertheless, HKB"H healed his limp, in keeping with that which is written (Bereishis 32, 32): **"ויזרח לו השמש כאשר עבר את פנואל והוא צולע על ירכו"—the sun rose for him as he passed Penuel, and he was limping on his hip.** Rashi comments: **And an aggadic Midrash explains, "The sun rose for him" implies that it rose for his needs, to heal his limp.**

"ויזרח 'לו' השמש" Alludes to the 36 Chanukah Candles

We will now bring sources to support this notion beginning with the Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (66). **Moshe foresaw what would happen in the times of the Chashmonaim . . . At that time, the midah of "hod" associated with Yaakov's thighbone would be rectified by means of the flask (jar) of oil; this is the underlying significance of Yaakov's small jars; and the miracle lasted eight days.** Additionally, in parshas Mikeitz, the Megaleh Amukos writes: **Therefore, they established it as a time to express gratitude and to praise, since "hod" was rectified at that time . . . for, Yaakov limped on his thigh, when he endangered himself for the sake of the flask of oil. "The sun rose for him": Surely** (Yeshayah 6, 2)**, "Seraphim were standing above, at His service."**

He is apparently teaching us two chiddushim. Firstly, Yaakov returned for the small jars in preparation for the miracle of Chanukah with the jar of oil. Secondly, he implies that Eisav's guardian angel fought with Yaakov to prevent the miracle of Chanukah. Upon realizing that it could not defeat him, it struck a blow to his thighbone to damage the midah of "hod" associated with the left leg. As we will explain in the name of the Arizal, Matityahu the son of Yochanan, the kohen gadol, rectified the midah of "hod" during the eight days of Chanukah.

The Megaleh Amukos provides us with a wonderful "remez" from the passuk: **"ויזרח לו השמש".** The term **ל"ו**, whose gematria is **36,** alludes that the magnificent light that shone on his behalf and healed him was associated with the thirty-six (**ל"ו**) Chanukah candles that his descendants would light in the future on Chanukah.

We find this same "remez" in the passuk (ibid. 25): **"ויאבק איש עמו...וירא כי לא יכול לו".** The malach struggled to take the small jars away from Yaakov which were a preparation for the miracle of Chanukah. Upon realizing that it could not succeed, **"ויגע בכף ירכו"**—it struck a blow to Yaakov's left leg symbolizing the midah of "hod." Consequently, Yaakov limped due to this injury. In the end, however: **"ויזרח לו השמש"**—the concealed light of the **ל"ו (36)** Chanukah candles shone on him; it healed his limp and provided a tikun for the midah of "hod."

The Damage to the Midah of "Hod" and Its Tikun during the Eight Days of Chanukah

Following this path, we will now explain the connection between Yaakov Avinu preparing for the miracle of Chanukah and the damage Eisav's malach inflicted to Yaakov's left leg corresponding to the midah of "hod." Our sacred sefarim discuss at length in the name of the Arizal (Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar HaChanukah) the rationale for designating the eight days of Chanukah as a time for praise and thanksgiving, as taught in the aforementioned Gemara: **"קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה".** It is because Matityahu rectified the midah of "hod" during the eight days of Chanukah.

We learn in the Zohar hakadosh (Bereishis 26b) that Eisav's guardian angel is none other than the "samech-mem." Also, man's right leg is associated with the midah of "netzach," and his left leg is associated with the midah of "hod." This is consistent with the statement in the passage of Pesach Eliyahu in the Tikunei Zohar (Intro. 17a): **"נצח והוד תרין שוקין".** Thus, when the "samech-mem" struck Yaakov's left thigh, it damaged the midah of "hod."

A similar teaching is found in the gloss Nitzotzei Oros (1) from the Gaon Chida, ztz"l: **From here it is evident that the malach grabbed Yaakov on his left thigh, which corresponds with "hod."** The Tikunei Zohar (28b, 29a) goes one step further: **"Hod" is the eight days of Chanukah.** This is because "hod" is the eighth midah counting from the top down: **כתר, חכמה, בינה, חסד, גבורה, תפארת, נצח, הוד.**

Accordingly, the Shela hakadosh (Chanukah) explains that this is why Chazal instituted that **"על הנסים"** be inserted

in Shemoneh Esrei specifically in the berachah of gratitude **"מודים אנחנו לך".** When reciting this berachah, we bow down to HKB"H with both legs, corresponding to the midos of "netzach" and "hod." This constitutes a tikun for any defects in those midos. Obviously, the two legs are related, seeing as it is impossible to walk on only one leg. Thus, when the left leg is damaged so is the right leg. Therefore, when uttering this expression of gratitude, we bow down with both legs—"netzach" and "hod."

Expressing Gratitude to HKB"H Abolishes the Klipah of "כוחי ועוצם ידי"

So, why was it so important for Eisav's malach to confront and fight with Yaakov Avinu over the small jars related to the miracle of Chanukah? Then, when it realized that it could not eliminate them, it struck Yaakov's thighbone, corresponding to the midah of "hod," as an alternative. To explain the matter, we will refer to a line in the formula of **"כשעמדה מלכות :"על הנסים" יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשכיחם תורתך"—when the evil Greek regime rose up against Your people Yisrael, to make them forget Your Torah.** The commentaries are puzzled by this statement. After all, memory is something that is in a person's mind. So, how could the Greeks force a person to forget something that is ingrained in his memory?

To explain the matter, we must acknowledge that the basis for observing the mitzvos of the Torah is our gratitude to HKB"H for taking us out of Mitzrayim. This is evident from the fact that HKB"H began the Aseres HaDibros with the commandment (Shemos 20, 2): **"אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים"—I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Mitzrayim, from the house of slaves.** Rashi comments in the name of the Mechilta: **The taking out is sufficient reason for you to be obligated to Me.**

This teaches us a vital principle. Jews are obligated to observe the Torah and its mitzvos, because we must be grateful to HKB"H for purifying our neshamos by extracting us from the forty-nine levels of tumah we were mired in in Mitzrayim. This is the message conveyed by HKB"H's pronouncement (Yeshayah 43, 21): **"עם זו יצרתי לי תהילתי יספרו"—this people which I fashioned for Myself that they might declare My praise.** According to Rashi, this means that HKB"H created Yisrael to speak His praise. Thus, the purpose of creation is for Yisrael to extol the praise of Hashem. By so doing, we express our gratitude and recognition to Hashem for all the good He has done for us in His infinite mercy and kindness.

Now, the Torah admonishes us (Devarim 8, 11): **"השמר לך פן תשכח את ה' אלקיך לבלתי שמור מצותיו ומשפטיו וחוקותיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום. פן תאכל ושבעת ובתים טובים תבנה וישבת. ובקרך וצאנך ירביון וכסף וזהב ירבה לך וכל אשר לך ירבה. ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה' אלקיך המוציאך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים... ואמרת בלבבך כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה. וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל".** **Take care lest you forget Hashem, your G-d, by not observing His mitzvos . . . lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle, and your cattle and sheep increase, and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything that you have will increase—and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery . . . And you may say in your heart, "My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!" Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, for it is He Who gives you strength to make wealth.**

This teaches us in no uncertain terms that the root of the klipah causing us to forget HKB"H and His Torah is the arrogance the yetzer hara infects us with based on the mistaken belief of **"כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה"—my strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!** Hence, it is crucial to constantly remind ourselves of the command: **"וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל"-- you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it is He Who gives you strength to make wealth.**

With this perspective, we can explain the formula: **"When the evil Greek regime rose up against Your people Yisrael, to make them forget Your Torah."** They opposed the virtue of being grateful to Hashem; they instilled in Yisrael the blasphemous attitude of **"כוחי ועוצם ידי"—my strength and the might.** As explained, this attitude undermines all the mitzvos of the Torah, which are based on our gratitude to HKB"H.

This explains why Yaakov went back to retrieve the small jars related to the miracle of Chanukah. He felt it necessary to inculcate in every Jew the necessity to thank Hashem for everything He does for us, since this is the foundation of the entire Torah. This also explains why Eisav's malach fought so

hard to take the small jars away from Yaakov. Yet: "**וירא כי לא יכול לו**"—when the malach realized that it could not prevent the miracle of the **ל"ו** Chanukah candles; "**ויגע בכף ירכו**"—it resorted to an alternative strategy—to strike a blow to the midah of **"hod"**—to make a Jew forget the necessity to thank and praise Hashem for everything in life. But HKB"H came to Yaakov's rescue: "**ויזרח לו השמש**"—He healed the damage inflicted on Yaakov's hip and the midah of "hod" by providing illumination from the concealed brilliance of the **ל"ו** Chanukah candles.

This enlightens us as to the reason Eisav's guardian angel fought so vigorously against the one hundred berachos a Jew recites daily. It understood that if we thank Hashem every day for all the good He bestows upon us, we will be obligated to observe the entire Torah. Hence, it tried to cause permanent damage to Yaakov's left hip, the midah of **"hod,"** to deter Jews from bowing down to Hashem and expressing their gratitude—thereby eliminating their sense of obligation to fulfill all the precepts of the Torah.

As we know, Yaakov Avinu triumphed: "**ויזרח לו השמש**"—he succeeded in laying the foundation for all future generations to be illuminated and elevated by the miraculous **ל"ו** Chanukah candles. In this merit, we bow down to HKB"H when we recite the berachah of "**מודים אנחנו לך**" and are privileged to observe the entire Torah out of a sense of gratitude to HKB"H.

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