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תשפ"ה RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS VAYISHLACH
THE MALACH'S RENAMING OF YAAKOV

In this week's *parsha* we have the battle between Yaakov and the angel of Aisav. Yaakov took hold of the *malach* and would not let him go unless he gave Yaakov a *beracha*. The *malach* acquiesced and said לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל כי שרית עם אלהים ועם אנשים ותוכל. Your name will no longer be Yaakov which suggests trickery but rather Yisrael. Because you have fought with an angel of Hashem, with Lavan and Aisav, and you have overcome them all.

At first sight it sounds like a nice *beracha* from a defeated and surrendered enemy. However the Panim Yafos explains just the opposite. When the *Malach* realized that he could not defeat Yaakov with his original plan, he strategized a new scheme to defeat him. We say in *Maariv* ומאחרינו שטן מלפנינו ומאחרינו we ask Hashem to remove the Satan from before us and from our backs. The *Yetzer Harah* can confront us openly and try to seduce us into transgressions that are explicitly forbidden. If that does not work he can come from behind with a scheme which is more subtle and unnoticeable.

For the *Malach's* second attempt to topple Yaakov he sought to make him into a *baal gaavah* full of haughtiness due to his incredible spiritual victories over evil. The *Malach* executed the plan by praising him "שרית" you defeated not only angels but the mighty warriors and infamous scammers. The *Malach* understood very well "Oh Vey" to the one who possesses conceit, Hashem refuses to dwell with him, even though with sinners of other sorts it is written השוכן אתם בתוך טומאתם.

It is unimaginable the lofty degree of success that Yaakov acquired in this battle with the defeat of the *Malach*. After the *malach* could not escape, it came time for him to sing *shira* in *shamayim* which only occurs when a *malach* completed his mission. No one before Yaakov ever attained this feat. The effect of this battle reached the *Kisay Hakavod* the highest of the high and it was therefore a must that Yaakov had to win and he did. So because of Yaakov's insane rare victories it was a tremendous test for him not to feel even the slightest experience of *kovod*.

To make things even more challenging with this new ploy, Yaakov was exceedingly humble in his character. His name יעקב means heel the lowest part of the body. Yaakov says when *davening* to Hashem to protect him from Aisav, קטנתי מכל החסדים which is interpreted by the Chozeh from Lublin to mean that the reason why I am so humble is because of Hashem's *chesed* to me, and not that I through my *avodah* became so. Even when it comes to Yaakov's humility he refuses to accept any responsibility for its success. According to this pshat we can interpret the Mishna in Pirkei Avos 4,4 מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח a person should be extremely humble. Why the double *lashon* of מאד? Not only is it requested from an individual to actually be humble, but the next *madraigah* is to be humble about your humbleness by saying that Hashem gave it to you as a gift.

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We can add another example of Yaakov's humility. When Yaakov awoke from sleeping at the place of the *Beis Hamikdosh* he remarked (Bereishis 28,16) **אכן יש הויה במקום הזה ואנכי לא ידעתי**. After realizing Hashem's *Shechina* was right there with him the entire night, he said **ואנכי לא ידעתי** the "ו" and love of myself was not affected at all by this experience (Bereishis 18,19 Rashi **ואנכי לא ידעתי** love). I did not view myself more loved and greater self esteemed because of my achievements.

Rav Ahron Kotler ztl brings another example from *Avraham Avinu* after the *Akaidah* when Avraham returned to his lads Yishmael and Eliezer. The *passuk* says **ויקומו וילכו ויבאו אל באר שבע** what does it mean they went together to B'air Shevah. It is to convey that even after such an incredible ordeal which he passed and achieved a record score of **נשבעתי** from Hashem, he didn't feel any entitlement of reward, nor the key to the city, not even recognition with a Fifth Avenue Parade and *kovod* by receiving a medal of honor. The *passuk* portrays Avraham's humbleness with the words that all three Avraham, Yishmael, and Eliezer walked together. This is to be interpreted to mean that just as Avraham's entourage thought nothing of the *Akaidah* because they were totally unaware of it taking place, so too Avraham who was the spiritual hero of the event did not feel any extra pride and greatness owed to him because of his loyalty, righteousness, and *mesiras nefesh* to Hashem.

In a deeper understanding of what transpired between Yaakov and the *Malach* of Aisav we have to return to *chait* of *Aitz Hadaas*. Our *sefarim* tell us that the *Nachash* had riding on its back the **מאמל** which is the *Malach* of Aisav. The **מאמל** possesses the *middah* of arrogance and it strives to hijack anything of *kedusha* from its closeness and relationship with Hashem. As the Avos D'rav Nasson 1 says that the tree of the *Aitz Hadaas* shouted to the *Nachash* **אל תגע בי** do not touch me. As the *passuk* says (Tehillim 32,12) **אל תבואני רגל גאווה** and the hands of evil push me to move away. We see from this that whatever the *Nachash* touches he injects with *gaavah*. According to *Chazal* the *Nachash* shook the tree until one fruit fell to the ground.

The acronym of the *passuk* is **אתרג** which follows the opinion that the *Aitz Hadaas* was an Esrog Tree. Interesting that of the four species the *esrog* is the object of *gaavah* and excitingly displayed by its owner. I wonder where that came from? Also the English equivalent in pronouncing the *Malach* of Aisav **סמאל** small. He tries to attack anyone who is **קטן** and humble in his eyes because it would cause an attachment to *kedusha* and Hashem.

The *Nachash* tells Chava that by eating from the Tree of Knowledge you can be like Hashem. The motivation to sin was spurned by *gaavah*. Yet *Chazal* call conceit a **תנועה** abomination (Mishlei 16,5). By eating from the *Aitz Hadaas* the poison of haughtiness

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entered their bodies. The only way to defeat the forces of evil is to have **ענוה** which is the same *gematriah* of **מאל** the *malach* of Aisav and serves as its antidote.

The *sefarim* tell us that Yaakov purified and refined his seven *middos* towards Hashem connecting each one to another name of **יהו'**. They write that seven times the name **יהו'** adds up to **יעקב**. In this state Yaakov was an **עניו** of the purest form and the **מאל** strove to break his *madraigah* by infusing him with the feelings of greatness in order to fall into *gaavah*. The **מאל** was up to his old tricks back in Gan Eden. It was there that the **מאל** and the *Nachash* ganged up together to seduce Adam to eat from the *Aitz Hadaas* and release in him the poison of conceit and entitlement and play an essential role in their lives distancing them and their *avoda* from Hashem.

When Yaakov in the *parsha* approached Aisav he bowed seven times. He was relating to Aisav that all his *middos* are perfected and subservient to Hashem. His bowing to Aisav is Yaakov's attempt that he should subjugate all of Aisav's seven bad *middos* to the righteous ones possessed by Yaakov.

When Hashem asked Chava why she transgressed the prohibition of eating from the *Aitz Hadaas* she used the expression **הנחש השיאני**. The *sefarim* write that the word **השיאני** is composed of two words **יש** and **אין**. The word **יש** symbolizes substance "there is" importance. In contrast the word **אין** means nothingness "there is not". By eating from the *Aitz Hadaas* I suddenly was transformed from a state of **אין** humility and *bittul* into a state of **יש** importance, *gaavah*, feelings of entitlement.

The *sefarim* write that in the Mishnah it states that Hashem will give to those who love me 310 worlds. Why this number specifically? The answer given is what a great *tzadik* Peri Haaretz condensed into the mission of life: Hashem created the world **יש מאין** and the end goal is to take the **יש** of this world and return it to **אין** its source - Hashem. The reward for transforming **יש** into serving spirituality is 310 worlds equal to its *gematriah*. When the *malach* Aisav praised Yaakov he said **כי שרית עם אלהים ואנשים**. The four letters of the word **שרית** are four letters in the first word of the Torah **בראשית** excluding the two letters of **אב**. Therefore it hints to Yaakov and the changing of his name which presents itself as the **אב** third father of Am Yisrael who achieved **שרית** you over powered the letters contained in the word **בראשית**. This that the Torah alludes to this episode in the first word, tells one that the fact that Yaakov overpowered the **מאל** was not because he himself was able to do the job but rather that Hashem who **בראשית ברא אלקים** who created the world and sustains it from nothing also gave you the power to overcome and achieve all hurdles in life.

Likewise why Yisrael will also have a **שארית** remainder of a nation and never become extinct like others, is because we are called **ראשית** the words of **אשרית** that you

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overpowered אלהים (malach) and אנשים (Lavan and Aisav). As the *passuk* in Michah says אפו שארית will remain in existence. Yaakov *Avinu* did not lose his עניוּת from the praises lauded upon him from the סמאל. He channeled all his praise to Hashem who created the ראשית of everything from complete nothingness. Yaakov with all his sensational victories finds nothing to be arrogant about since everything, including him, are recreated every second of existence. So what does Hashem actually owe you? Or better yet how much do you owe Him?

Rav Brazil,

Gut Shabbos