



# OHHEL SARA PRESENTS

בס"ד

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## WEEKLY TORAH NEWSLETTER

Parshat Vayishlach

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Week of Dec. 4, 2011

L'iluy Nishmat

ר' עובדיה בן שלמה מנשה (ע"ה)

&

אסתר שרל בת ר' משה (ע"ה)

### PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

In Parshat Vayishlach, we learn of the difficult struggle between Esav's ministering angel and Yaakov Avinu (a"h). This historic battle left its mark on Yaakov, his descendants and all future generations. As a consequence of this struggle, we are prohibited to eat the "gid ha'nasheh" – located near the socket of the thighbone. Let us examine the pesukim that describe this monumental event

"And Yaakov remained alone and a man wrestled with him until 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 fought with (an angel of) G-d and with men (Lavan and Esav) and you have triumphed...' Therefore the Children of Yisrael shall not eat the sciatic nerve (of an animal) which arises by the hip joint (the "gid ha'nasheh") to this very day; for (the angel) he touched the joint of Yaakov's hip on the sciatic nerve" (Bereishit 32:25).

Although the narrative does not identify Yaakov's combatant for us,

Rashi Ha'kadosh (a"h) teaches us, in the name of our chachamim: That this man was "Esav's ministering angel." The Zohar Ha'kadosh specifically identifies the angel as Samael. Why did Esav's ministering angel chose to strike a blow to the joint of Yaakov's hip upon realizing that Yaakov could not be defeated or harmed? What did that blow accomplish and what damage did it cause to Yaakov and his descendants? There must be a reason that the Torah prohibits us to this very day from eating the "gid ha'nasheh."

Let us begin by introducing a well-known principle taught in the Zohar Ha'kadosh. Our chachamim explain that the intent of Esav's ministering angel was to inflict a blow to those that support the study of Torah, "Tomchei-Torah." These individuals are "Rageli Yaakov - Yaakov's legs," - because all advances in Torah rest upon them. Even so, why did he choose to strike a blow specifically to the joint of the hip in the location of the "gid ha'nasheh" that thereby resulted in the biblical prohibition not to eat from that sinew? One answer lies in the Zohar's explanation concerning the name, "gid ha'nasheh":

"And why is it called 'gid ha'nasheh?' Gid, because it causes a person to forget to his service to his Master. And in that

place the yetzer hara lies... And from that place, the yetzer hara attacks a person. And for this reason the Torah commanded that Bnei Yisrael should not eat the gid ha'nasheh."

In other words, this sinew causes one to forget his Creator. The word "ha'nasheh" comes from the same root as the word "nasheni" found in the pasuk in Breishit, "Ki nasheni elokim mi'kol amalai - G-d has made me forget all of my hardship." We see that "ha'nasheh" corresponds to forgetfulness. The Torah then explicitly warns us in Sefer Devarim, to avoid the pitfall of becoming haughty and taking personal credit for our material, worldly gains.

We are admonished never to forget that Hashem is the source of all blessings. This clearly sheds light on why Esav's ministering angel wished to inflict damage on those who support Torah study, those who are the "legs of Yaakov." It is apparent that these askanim (businessmen), who give tzedakah to Torah scholars possess a keen awareness that Hashem is the source of all wealth. Due to this awareness, they have complete faith that Hashem will provide them with a plentiful income so that they will be able to continue to support Torah.

It is for this reason that Esav's ministering angel directed his

assault on those that support Torah study, "Yaakov's legs." He specifically targeted the "gid ha'nasheh," the sinew that causes one to forget one's proper duty to his Creator. This can cause one to chas v'shalom forget that Hashem is the source of all material gains and can lead to haughtiness and the misguided belief that our material gains are entirely due to our own skills and efforts.

As a result, the businessman may then be reluctant to support Torah scholars. Therefore we are warned: "...the Children of Yisrael shall not eat the displaced sinew of the joint of the hip (gid ha'nasheh) to this very day." The continuation of the pasuk then explains the reason for this prohibition: "ki naga b'kaf yerech Yaakov, ba'gid ha'nasheh - because the "samechem," chose to strike this specific site which causes one to forget Hashem.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

## OHEL SARA SHIURIM

Kineret Cohen will be giving a Shiur and in Brooklyn, NY. Please bring as many friends as you want! You can also watch shiurim on-line by logging onto [www.arachim.co.il](http://www.arachim.co.il).



Date: Shabat - Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>  
Parshat Yitro  
Place: Rabbi Bick  
19th Ave Corner of 52<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Time: 3:15pm

Date: Shabat - Mar. 17<sup>th</sup>  
Parshat Vayakhel-Pikudei  
Place: Rabbi Bick  
19th Ave Corner of 52<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Time: 3:15pm

Date: Shabat - Apr. 28<sup>th</sup>  
Tazria-Metzora  
Place: Rabbi Bick  
19th Ave Corner of 52<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Time: 4:00pm



## RIDDLE

Trains travel from one town to another all day. They are always on the same track and always going non-stop and at the same speed. The noon train took 80 minutes to complete the trip. But the 4pm train took an hour and 20 minutes.

Why?

(Answer on Page 5)

## LAPS

It was a bright Sunday morning and the young man dashed across the street towards the shul. He always made it a point to daven with a minyan - and Sundays were not different. In fact, on his day off from work he made sure to daven at an early hour so that he could get in some extra Torah learning, which his busy weekday schedule did not allow. When he was done, he headed home to pick up his kids to go to the park.

The sunshine lured all kinds of people out of their homes and into the park, and everyone found a way to enjoy the fresh air. The grassy areas and lakes were encircled by a road, usually open to vehicular traffic, which was closed to traffic on Sundays so that park-goers could enjoy bicycling, jogging, rollerblading and walking. It seemed as if hundreds of urban dwellers were doing laps around the park.

Life was not created for going around in circles. The gift of life was created to give people an opportunity to grow and achieve. Doing laps may be healthy for the body, but it may be hazardous to the soul.

Over the years you have probably developed certain routines you follow every day. Very often you do something simply because it is what you have always done. Consider whether what you do out of habit is really just going around in circles or are you moving forward towards a worthwhile goal?

It takes a little more mental exertion, but it is much more productive to set a course towards improvement rather than comfort. Learn to use that minute of assessment and benefit for years to come.

## HALACHA CORNER



**Question:** What constitutes an "elder"?

**ANSWER:** The Torah Hakedoshah introduces the mitzvah of "Mipenei Seva Takum Ve'hadarta Penei Zaken," which is a law that requires us to; stand in the presence of, and give respect to, Torah scholars and elders. This means that when a Torah scholar or elder comes within four Amot (6-8 feet) of a fellow, the fellow must stand and remain standing until the scholar or elder leaves his four-Amot radius.

What constitutes an "elder" for purposes of this halachah? At what age do we consider one an "elder" insofar as the obligation to stand in his presence and afford him honor is concerned?

The Bet Yosef (a"h) and most Poskim are of the opinion that a person becomes an "elder" at age seventy. The Ben Ish Chai (a"h) cites the Arizal (a"h) as claiming that the obligation applies already from the age of sixty. Strictly

speaking, halachah follows the view of the Bet Yosef and most other Poskim, that the mitzvah applies only to those aged seventy and above. But, halachah says of one who wishes to be stringent and follow the Arizal's view, "Tavo Alav Beracha" - he is deserving of blessing.

Very often, one sees an older person but cannot ascertain whether or not he is older than sixty or seventy. What should one do in such a case?

Ha'Rav Ovadiyah Yosef applies the principle of "Safek D'orayta L'chumra," meaning, when an uncertainty arises concerning a Torah obligation or prohibition, one must act stringently. In this situation, when the Torah obligation of "Mipenei Seva Takum" is at stake, one must stand, even though he is unsure whether the older person has reached the age at which this obligation applies.

Therefore, for example, if a person sits on a bus or train and an older person walks within four Amot of him, he must stand. It should go without saying that if the older person has no other seat, one must stand and offer his seat. Though this might seem obvious, unfortunately, in today's culture of selfishness, many people lack this basic ethical principle, and do not offer their seat to an older person.

By the same token, we must train our children to show respect to not only those over the age of sixty or seventy, but to adults in general. Every so often there is overcrowding in the shul or at community functions, and there are more people than seats. Parents should train their children to stand and allow an older person to have their seat. But when it comes to people above the age of seventy, or, according to the Arizal, above sixty, there is an

actual Torah obligation for even grownups to stand and offer the older person his seat, and whoever does so first is credited with a mitzvah.

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\*\* "You can't do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth." \*\*

\*\* "If you do not hope, you will not find what is beyond your hopes." \*\*

\*\* "If the going is real easy, beware, you may be headed down hill." \*\*

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### TODAY IN JEWISH HISTORY 13-14 Kislev

#### Yahrtzeit Of Ravina (a"h) & Talmud Completed

In the first decades of the 5th century, Rav Ashi (a"h) and Ravina I (a"h) led a group of the *Amoraim* (Talmudic sages) in the massive undertaking of compiling the Babylonian Talmud - collecting and editing the discussions, debates and rulings of hundreds of scholars and sages which had taken place in the more than 200 years since the compilation of the Mishnah by Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Nasi in 189.

The last of these editors and compilers was Ravina II, who passed away on the 13th of Kislev of the year 4235 from creation; after Ravina II, no further additions were made to the Talmud, with the exception of the minimal editing undertaken by the Rabanan Savura'i (476-560). This date thus marks the point at which the Talmud was "closed" and became the basis for all further exegesis of Torah law.

#### Reuven Born

Reuven, the eldest son of Yaakov Avinu and Leah (a"h), was born in Charan on the 14th of Kislev of the year 2193 from creation. As Yaakov's firstborn, he was initially entitled to the leadership of Yisrael and to a double portion in Eretz Yisrael, but these privileges were taken from him (and given respectively to Yehudah and Yosef) because he sinned by "violating the bed of his father."

Reuven unsuccessfully tried to prevent the persecution of Yosef by his brothers in 2216 and subsequently berated them for selling him into slavery. In 2238 he relocated to Egypt together with his father, brothers and their children, where he died on his 125th birthday in 2318.

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#### THOUGHT OF THE DAY

We should develop a love of Hashem that makes us feel that we want to serve Him rather than are forced to serve Him. This feeling should even go so far as to override the attempts of others who try to stop us from serving Hashem. A person who reaches this level of love for our Creator will perform the commandments joyfully.

A good prompt to arouse these strong feelings is to say to yourself: "Who am I? I am just an animal with lowly bodily functions. How fortunate I am to have the opportunity to serve the King!"

(Pirkei Avot 2:4)

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#### PARSHAT VAYISHLACH CONTINUED...

Let us discuss the amazing yet alarming words of the Zohar Ha'kadosh that are not well known and which it is our obligation to publicize. We are told that the ministering angel of Esav is the very same primeval serpent that

caused Adam and Chava to sin by partaking of the Etz Ha'daat. As punishment for his malevolence, his legs were cut off. "Hashem said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, you are more cursed than all of the animals and all the beasts of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life.'"

Rashi comments: "It had legs and they were cut off." Therefore, based on this understanding, the Zohar reveals a tremendous insight. Esav's ministering angel, who is none other than the nachash from Gan Eden, directed his blow at the joint of Yaakov's hip, attacking the benefactors of Torah study. For, if those that constitute "the legs of Yaakov" do not support Torah study, the evil nachash can then "steal" their legs - allowing him to stand and walk on them.

We find a beautiful elucidation of this in the pasuk in Sefer Iyov from the great Reb Aryeh Leib Tzintz (a"h): "It happened one day; the angels came to stand before Hashem and the Satan, too, came among them. Hashem said to the Satan, 'Where have you come from?' The Satan replied to Hashem and said, 'From wandering about the earth and walking on it'" (Iyov 1:6).

The redundant language of the pasuk, "from wandering about the earth and walking on it" requires an explanation. The explanation, however, is that this is the Satan's method of finding fault with Yisrael. When he wishes to wander among Hashem's creatures to check if they are meritorious or not, he must do so on his belly, since he lacks legs to walk around on. If, however, he finds that Bnei Yisrael, chas v'shalom, are not engaging in proper Torah study - due to a failure on the part of the benefactors of Torah study, known

as "Yaakov's legs," he is then able to steal those legs for his own needs and to actually walk about the earth.

Therefore, when Hashem inquires of the Satan: "Where have you come from?" His response constitutes an indictment against Bnei Yisrael: "At first I set about my excursions among the creatures of the lower world to see if they were meritorious or not but was limited due to my lack of legs; however, once I found that they did not properly support Torah study, I was no longer restricted to 'wandering around on my belly' but was now able to actually 'walk around the land.' How so? Because I succeeded in confiscating 'Yaakov's legs' that were remiss in their support of Torah study and I was able to use them for my own needs."

The Chatam Sofer (a"h) expands on this concept and he addresses the issue of why Yitzchak Avinu (a"h) wished to bestow the berachot upon Esav rather than Yaakov, even though he was well aware that Yaakov was engaged in constant Torah study. Yitzchak was of the opinion that Esav would fulfill his task of supporting Yaakov, the representative and pillar of Torah; he thought that they would function like Yisaschar and Zevulun.

The Chatam Sofer then adds that the purpose of creation was that Yaakov Avinu and his descendants, should act as a nation of priests and a sanctified people - all of them engaging in the study of Torah like Yisaschar. On the other hand, Esav and his descendants, (the nations of the world), would serve the function of Zevulun—supporting Yaakov and his descendants so that they could devote their time to Torah study and the service of Hashem in a leisurely fashion.

We can now understand the events surrounding the birth of Yaakov and Esav. It is written: "And the first one emerged all red resembling a hairy mantle; and they named him Eisav; afterwards, his brother emerged with his hand grasping onto Esav's heel; and He named him Yaakov" (Bereishit 25:25).

In truth, Esav was meant to function as "Yaakov's legs," supporting Yaakov's life of Torah. However, due to his extreme wickedness, he refused to fulfill this sacred mission. Therefore, Yaakov acted appropriately as he emerged into this world, grasping onto Esav's heel with his hand. He seized from Esav the power and function of the "legs" - to be the benefactor of Torah study. And due to this crucial act of seizure, he was Yaakov.

Rashi states that Hashem himself, named him Yaakov. This was a divine indication that Hashem was in agreement with Yaakov seizing the sacred role of being the benefactor of Torah study from Esav. Consequently, Hashem arranged, for Yaakov to receive the berachot from Yitzchak instead of Esav.

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## A CUTE STORY



There was a famous doctor, an old man and a boy scout on an airplane with engine failure. Unfortunately, there were only two parachutes. The quick thinking doctor said, "I am the smartest man here and all over the world." He proceeded to jump out of the plane!

The old man said, "My time has been good and the end is near. You go little boy and take the second parachute." The boy scout smiled and said, "No that's okay. The smartest man in the world just jumped out with my knapsack."

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### ANSWER TO RIDDLE

80 minutes is the same as an hour and 20 minutes.

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### THE BOY WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

One mother's beloved son had been getting thrown out of every school due to his unruly behavior. Then, one day, this desperate mother saw something that filled her with hope. She noticed how, in the past several months, the boys in her neighborhood spent hours a day building a fort for themselves out of boxes and pieces of discarded wood.

One morning, the sanitary workers came and tore down the entire fort - throwing the boxes and wood into the garbage. The mother prepared herself to see how broken the boys would be, when they returned home from school and discovered the destruction of their dear fort that they played in every day.

But when the boys returned, the mother saw something that took her by surprise. Without missing a beat, the boys ran straight to the garbage bins, and started putting the fort back up. The mother approached them and asked, "Don't you know that the sanitary department will come back and tear your fort down again?! Why are you bothering to put in so much effort? It's all going to go to waste."

And the words that one of the boys told her never left her heart; he

said, "It doesn't matter what THEY do. Our job is to keep on building."

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### PARSHAT VAYISHLACH CONTINUED

We can now understand why it was necessary for both names, Yaakov and Yisrael, to remain in effect. Klal Yisrael is composed of two distinct factions working together as partners like Yisaschar and Zevulun. We have demonstrated that the name Yaakov derives from the fact that Esav refused to accept his role as a benefactor of Torah study. Clearly, this name represents the aspect of Zevulun, the merchant supporting his brother's Torah study.

On the other hand, an amazing allusion is found in the very name Yisrael to the second partner, the brother immersed in Torah study. The name "ישראל" can be broken down to two words: "ראש" - "ל", which translates loosely as "the head is mine." We find a reference to the talmid chacham whose head and intellect are occupied day and night with Torah study. This is the aspect of Yisaschar.

The Chatam Sofer points out that the numerical value of the two names "Yaakov" and "Yisrael", equals the numerical value of the words "עש קר"טן, which means eliminating the satan. The message is clear; both names, Yaakov and Yisrael, are necessary to defeat the Satan, the ministering angel of Esav. Both the aspects of Zevulun and Yisaschar, the benefactor of Torah study and the Talmid chacham, are required for the survival of Klal Yisrael and the Torah.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin discusses the cost to the world as a result of the serpent losing its legs: "Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya says: 'It is unfortunate that a great servant was lost from the world.

For, had the serpent not been cursed, each and every one of Yisrael would have had two good serpents as servants; one he would send to the North and one he would send to the South to bring him gems, precious stones and pearls."

The nachash could have chosen not to rebel against Hashem in Gan Eden. He could have chosen an honorable role in creation and put his legs to good use, assisting Bnei Yisrael in their Avodat Hashem. While they sit in the Bet Midrash learning Torah, they could have sent the serpent out to perform their required daily chores. From here we learn that the nachash himself, was supposed to function as "Yaakov's legs," assisting and providing for the Torah scholars. Instead, he instigated man to sin.

Therefore, Hashem confiscated the serpent's prestigious role as "Yaakov's legs," and he lost his legs as a punishment, dooming him to slither on his belly. This is the meaning of Hashem's rebuke to the nachash: "He will pound you on the head, and you will hiss at his heel" (Bereishit 3:15). In other words, man will be able to crush the serpent's head with his legs, providing that he engages in Torah study and is supported by willing benefactors serving as sacred legs. On the opposite side of the spectrum the serpent will kill man by biting him on the heel, by persuading the possible benefactors not to support Torah study.

(Continued On Page 8)

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### PARSHAT VAYISHLACH CONTINUED

We find a fascinating Targum Yerushalmi. The Targum teaches us that Esav had the symbol of a serpent on his thigh - alluding to the fact that he represented the primeval serpent. Just as the

serpent was created with legs in order to serve and support those engaged in Torah study, so, too, Esav was supposed to function as “Yaakov’s legs” and support his brother, the Talmid Chacham. Unfortunately, both the serpent and Esav forsook their designated roles.

We can better understand the difficult battle waged by Esav’s ministering angel, the primeval nachash whose legs were cut off after his involvement in the sin of the Etz Ha’daat – with Yaakov Avinu. Yaakov Avinu had seized Esav’s heel upon realizing that Esav refused to fulfill his function as “Yaakov’s legs,” a benefactor of Torah scholars. The satan’s first strategy was to strike a blow to Yaakov directly, preventing him from engaging in Torah study.

Nevertheless, he soon realized that Yaakov’s kedushah was too great; thus, eliminating any possible success with his first line of attack. Therefore, he resorted to a different strategy involving an indirect line of attack. He struck a blow at his hip, the “gid ha’nasheh,” - those that support the Torah study of Yaakov and his descendants. This is the sinew that causes forgetfulness. By causing the supporters of Torah to forget that Hashem is the true source of their material wealth, they will withhold their support of Torah study, allowing the satan to achieve his ultimate goal – to weaken, chas v’shalom, the institution of Torah amidst Klal Yisrael.

There is a question that needs to be addressed. Why did Hashem signify with the rising sun that Yaakov and his descendants would enjoy success in worldly matters? Would it not have been more appropriate for all of Bnei Yisrael, without exception, to occupy themselves in the study of

Torah?

The answer lies in the words of the pasuk: "וַיִּזְרַח לְיוֹהָשֻׁעַ" - The sun rose for him." Hashem signified to Yaakov with the rising sun, the success in matters of this world, since Yaakov, the pillar of Torah was “limping,” on his hip due the absence of Torah benefactors to serve as his legs. Therefore, Hashem shone the sun of success upon Yaakov’s descendants, so that they would be able to support the study of Torah in the manner of Yisaschar and Zevulun.

In addition, due to the fact that Yaakov had taken the berachot from Esav in order to accomplish the learning of and supporting of Torah - he required Hashem’s special protection. This, then, is implied in the pasuk: "וַיִּשָׂא יַעֲקֹב רַגְלָיו" - And Yaakov lifted his legs." Whereupon, Rashi comments: "Once he received the good news that he was promised protection, his heart lifted his legs and it became easy to walk."

In other words, upon receiving the good news that Hashem had accepted his prayer, assuring him that there would be benefactors of Torah study among his descendants, he lifted up his legs, (those that support Torah study), for all to see how important they are in Hashem’s eyes. After all, the sustained existence and observance of Torah is in their merit.

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*Ohel Sara wishes all  
its readers a  
Successful week and a  
Shabat Shalom!!*

Candle Lighting: 4:11 pm  
NY TIME