

Parshas Vayishlach

This week's Parsha Vayishlach continues recounting the interaction between Yaakov and Esav. The Torah details these interactions to emphasize the triumph of good over evil and light over dark. Yaakov models for all future generations the relationship between himself and his adversaries. Yaakov's mission and fear of survival wasn't a fear of loss of his physical life but rather a spiritual battle. We see this because he was fearful and wanted to split the camps, not for death (although Rashi explains it this way).

The Rebbe explains that this spiritual journey manifests from the words Vayishlach, the mission of Shlichus. This Shlichus comes from our Neshamos, who are enclothed in our physical beings to accomplish spiritual goals on this earth and triumph over good over evil. This is a reason why the Torah exacts so many details. The Rebbe further explains this from the method by which Yaakov sends gifts, angels, and kind words because Yaakov knew that his triumph over Esav wasn't a physical one but a spiritual triumph.

This is further elucidated by the fact that once Yaakov triumphed over the angel who battled him at the river and Yaakov's name was changed to Yisrael, Esav was no longer part of the story. At that moment, Yaakov showed his ability to bridge the spiritual world through his righteousness with the physical world we live in.

Generally, a person is named at their bris (or for a girl at the Torah) by divine providence. Rabbi Holzberg in our shiur asked why Yaakov's name would be changed. Unlike

Avraham, who was given a new name after his bris, and Yitzchak, whose name never changed, Yaakov was given a second new name; wouldn't this contradict the divine inspiration of his first name? First, even though the angel named Yaakov- Yisrael, later in the Parsha, Hashem reinforced this. This means Hashem was renaming Yaakov, which would trump his first name. The second point is that Yaakov was first renamed after he triumphed over the angel of Esav. This was a pivotal moment in Yaakov's life; it was as if he was reborn. His worry about Esav conquering him was over; he truly manifested the triumph, and therefore, it was a perfect time to usher in a new era for Yaakov and, with it, a new name.

Yaakov's battle and triumph of good over evil applies to us, his great-grandchildren, all these years later. Ramban explains that Yaakov's fighting with the angel alludes to our exile's suffering. The Torah joins good and evil (such as the twins Yaakov and Esav and multiple other places in the Torah) to show us and guide us through our battle between good and bad. This war wages on, and we feel it now, in our generation more than in the previous 75 years since the Holocaust.

All through this war, which is a spiritual one, it is targeted at breaking our spirit as Jews and targeting us through our religion. We have the solution: connecting to the Torah and Hashem. Through this, we will triumph, especially as we celebrate 19 Kislev and the upcoming Holiday of Chanukah. 19 Kislev represents the bursting forth of the wellsprings of Chassidus. Chassidus is a tool to understand the world better and be used

in the spiritual uplifting and enlightenment of ourselves and the world around us. The miracle of Chanukah is the holiday of lights, whose message is simple. Shine the light of Godliness and spread goodness and kindness because light triumphs over dark, good over evil, and truth over lies.

Good Shabbos.