

Parshat Vayishlach: Sinew's Significance

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

In Parshat Vayishlach we read how Yaakov wrestled with the angel of Esav until the break of dawn. When the angel perceived he could not overtake Yaakov he struck the socket of his hip and dislocated it. The story concludes, "Therefore the Jews are not to eat the displaced sinew." This is the source for the prohibition of *gid hanashe*.

The Ramban writes that the struggle between Yaakov and the angel of Esav symbolizes the ongoing struggle between good and evil. Rav Wolbe notes that because this was the place where impurity touched Yaakov we may not eat it for all generations. *Nashe* comes from the root word *menashe*, to forget. The mystics teach that one who eats the *gid hanashe* will forget Hashem and Torah. In the same vein, one who is careful not to eat it will merit to connect to spirituality.

The Leket V'halibuv explains the verse in Amos, "When he will flee from the lion the bear will eat him. He will come home and the serpent will bite him." This refers to the times before *Mashiach*. The Maharasha says it will be a period of ongoing tribulations without time to catch our breaths between them. When Yaakov sent gifts to Esav he said, "Let there be a break between each set of gifts." Chazal say it was as if Yaakov hinted to Hashem, "If there will be suffering don't bring them one after the other. Give my children time to breathe between one and the next." When tragedy strikes we need to think how can we grow and change and what can we learn from it. If we allow ourselves to just go on with life then Hashem says, you don't need time to contemplate, your ignoring it all. Suffering is meant to awaken us to *teshuva*. The Navi Yeshaya says, "Sycamores have been cut down but we shall replace them with cedars. The people do not return to the one who truly strikes them and they do not seek Hashem." The Gemara links these verses to the *gid hanashe*. Rav Moshe Breslover asks, what is the connection? The Metzudos David explains that when the enemy comes and destroys, the people will say, "It's by chance.

We'll rebuild and return even stronger." They will fail to see the hand of Hashem. Esav and Amalek's essence is denying Divine Providence. In contrast, a fundament of our *emunah* is that no one snaps a finger down below if it wasn't decreed above. It's wasn't a coincidence that Yaakov's sinew was dislocated. Rav Yehoshua says that Yaakov and the angel fought until the dust rose to the Divine throne. The Klei Yakar explains that the dust tried to blind Yaakov's eyes so he wouldn't see Hashem in his life. This is the war of Amalek. We may not eat the *gid hanashe* to remind us that everything that happens in life is divinely ordained. The Esav in the world tries to dislocate us from our connection to Hashem. We must not let ourselves be blinded. We must reveal Hashem's presence.

Rav Hirsh explains that the *gid hanashe* symbolizes submission and powerlessness. When the sinew was dislodged, the muscles were no longer able to control the hip bone. Throughout their long struggle the angel of Esav was unable to defeat Yaakov, but he was able to dislocate his sinew weakening his physical strength. The descendants of Yaakov will become Yisrael precisely through this weakness. When they sit down to eat they will willingly forego this symbol of physical power to Esav. They must not think they need this to face the enemy. The strength of *Yisrael* is dependent on higher powers over which the angel of Esav cannot prevail. If Yaakov falls, it's not because of his limited physical strength, but because he failed to merit Hashem's protection. Conversely, if *Yisrael* stands firm, it's not because of his physical prowess but because Hashem bears him aloft. The drama of the battle of Yaakov and the subsequent *mitzvah* of *gid hanashe* was meant to underscore Hashem's presence in our lives. It's not us, but the Almighty who is fighting for us.

Rabbi Leff notes that the difference between angels and humans is that angels don't have a hip joint. They don't sit. They are never overwhelmed or depressed. They are always running to complete a mission. The angel

struck Yaakov in the hip. Yet he continued to struggle because he knew that he would and could overcome Esav. A *tzaddik* falls seven times and gets up. The *gid hanashe* must be discarded to remind us never to be overwhelmed by adversity.

Every prohibition in the Torah is connected to a different day in the year. The *gid hanashe* corresponds to *Tisha B'Av*. The Chofetz Chaim says the Oral Torah's continuation is motivated by the force of darkness. We flourish in the pain of exile. We may limp, but in the end we will be healed. The word *ra* (evil) can be rearranged to read *ah'ir* (to awaken). Setbacks arouse the potential within us. The greatness of *klal Yisrael* is to get up and continue to struggle even when we are wounded. We must use the wisdom and inspiration of Torah to build despite the darkness. We must never allow our failures to keep us down. When Yaakov showed Hashem he could persevere, He took out the sun and healed him. This signifies our ultimate healing in the future world.

The *gid hanashe* teaches us that when a Jew wanders away from Judaism it is only a temporary dislocation. We are eternally connected to our Creator. At times we may be totally overcome by Esav, but then it becomes Penuel, we merit to see the face of Hashem. The Leket v'halibuv writes that Yaakov called the place Penuel because he saw the *penimiyut*, the essence of the angel. He realized that all his inducements and enticements were in fact empty. And that is how he was able to win over him. When we recognize that the lures and temptation of Esav are meaningless, then we can merit to see the true *penimiyut* of life. The Gemara says the *gid hanashe* is tasteless and is meant to remind us that the *yetzer hara* is just an illusion. Yaakov is given the name Yisrael which can be rearranged to read *li rosh*. If we open our minds and see through the false allures of Esav, we can merit to attain the level of *Yisrael*.



Spiritual Serenity: Receiving The Shabbat #2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The Rambam writes that as *erev Shabbat* draws to a close, one should wrap oneself in a talit and wait with longing to receive the Shabbat just as someone waits with a special kind of yearning to catch a glimpse of a king. He writes of the age old custom of the Sages tracing back to the Gemara. On *erev Shabbat*, they would don their *Shabbat* clothes and *taleitim* and gather their students and sing, "*Boi v'netzei l'krat Shabbat*." Let us go out to greet the Shabbat queen. The Kabbalists in Tzefat introduced the custom that has been accepted around the world to welcome the *Shabbat* queen with *Kabalat Shabbat*. Six special chapters of *Tehilim* are recited along with the *Lecha Dodi* song composed by Rav Shlomo Alkabetz. *Shabbat* is the marriage between the Jewish people, the groom, and our beloved bride, the *Shabbat* queen.

The Gemara brings a disagreement between the Amoraim. Some say, "*Boi v'neze*," let us go out and greet the queen. Others say, "*Boi kallah*," let the bride come in. The Maharasha attempts to align both opinions. In the waning moments before *Shabbat* begins, we say "*Boi v'neze*," in keeping with the age old custom that the groom would go out to greet his bride. Then when *Shabbat* comes in we say, "*Boi kallah*," we invite the bride to come in. The song of *Lecha Dodi* follows this pattern. In the beginning stanzas we say, "*Likras kallah lechu v'neilcha*," Let us go toward the bride. When she arrives we say, "*Boi kallah*," as we welcome in the bride. *Boi kallah* is said twice corresponding to the two stages of the marriage ceremony, *kedushin* and *nesuin*.

Some say it three times to include the third stage of *yichud*. When *Shabbat* comes, we unite with it and it becomes a part of our soul, just as marriage forges a unity between the bride and groom.

On *erev Shabbat*, many recite *Shir Hashirim*, the passionate song of love between Hashem and the Jewish people. The Nesivos Sholom explains that love is expressed in two different ways. When there is togetherness, the love is expressed as a passionate, strong, close, relationship. When there's separation, the love is expressed as a longing for that attachment. When the *beit hamikdash* stood, the love was passionate and expressed. But now in exile we are distant from Hashem. The love we have for Him is a longing and a desire. The more we love him, the more we want to find Him. This yearning is described in *Shir Hashirim* and is fundamental to further love. If we experience that longing for the holy day on *erev Shabbat*, we can achieve true closeness when it arrives.

The Or Hachaim tells a parable. There was once a king and a queen who got embroiled in a disagreement and decided to divorce. Their son who wanted his parents to reconcile, came up with a plan. He asked his father, "Do you miss mother?" He shed a tear and said, "I miss her very much." He then went to his mother and asked, "Do you miss father?" She nodded and began to sob. So the son composed two poems, one expressing his father's love for his missing wife and another expressing his mother's love for her missing husband. He delivered the two letters and they reconciled.

This is *Shir Hashirim*, a song of two songs. It is a song of Hashem's love for us and our love for Him and it is the song of *Shabbat*- our yearning for the *Shechina* and Her yearning for us.

The Nesivos Sholom explains the verse, "*V'shamru bnei Yisrael et ha'Shabbat lasot et ha'Shabbat*." How do the Jewish people keep and make *Shabbat*? If we protect *Shabbat* in our mind and heart by longing for it all week, then it is as if we make every day a kind of *Shabbat*. A trace of the spirit of *Shabbat* remains with us throughout the week. The Gemara says that when Mashiach comes it will be yom *sh'kulo Shabbat*. That eternal *Shabbat* will be the fulfillment of all the desires and longing of untold Jews who kept *Shabbat* alive in their heart. This is why the Torah gave us the *mitzvah* of *zachor*. Every day when we remember the *Shabbat* we keep the yearning for it burning within us.

The Nesivos Sholom brings the Zohar that the letters of *Shabbat* spell *boshet*, to be embarrassed. We must prepare for *Shabbat* by examining our deeds, repenting, and purifying our souls. Much like the *kohen gadol* who would do *teshuva* and immerse himself in the *mikva* before going into the Holy of Holies, every Jew should have this feeling of entering something holy and special on *Shabbat*. The Gemara says that on *Shabbat* it should be as if, "*Kol melachta asuya*," all work has been completed. On this day of joy and peace, we enter the inner sanctum of Hashem and become one with Him.

Ask the Dayan 2 Part 4

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

Question:

The Goldstein family lives on the ground floor. Their neighbors, the Cohens, built an extension above their courtyard. Mr. Cohen met Mr. Goldstein and said, "If you decided to expand your home and use my roof, I want 20,000 shekels." Mr. Goldstein agreed but said he would need to make a more definite calculation to see how much of the roof he would actually use. He came home and told his wife about the discussion. Mrs. Goldstein reacted with dismay, "You agreed to pay the Cohens? They owe us money for putting pillars all over our courtyard to hold up their extension. Besides, half of our

apartment belongs to me and I never agreed to pay them anything." Is Mr. Goldstein responsible to keep his word?

Answer:

A verbal agreement is not binding in *beit din* until there is a *kinyan* (an act of acquisition). However someone who goes back on his word is considered in Jewish law *mechusarei emunah*, an untrustworthy person. According to some opinions he cannot be accepted as a valid witness. The Shulchan Aruch rules that when a husband does business for his wife he must have permission from her. If he doesn't, any

agreement he makes on her behalf is invalid. Even if she does appoint him as her agent, if he does anything to her detriment, the transaction is invalid. However if he lets the other side believe that he has full authority, although he cannot bind his wife, he accepts upon himself an obligation to stand by his word. Therefore it could be that Mr. Goldstein is personally obligated to honor the agreement. However this only applies when a deal was completely finalized. In this situation where there wasn't a final agreement, Mr. Goldstein is not considered *mechusarei emunah* and may continue negotiating with his neighbor.