



December 2, 2023



Parshas Vayishlach

19th of Kislev 5784

The Blessing of War

Parshas Vayishlach contains in it the epic showdown between Yaakov and the angel of Eisav. It would go on to be the most famous boxing match in the history of humanity. But upon further glance the fight seems strange. Why did the angel start up with Yaakov right as he was on his way to make peace with Eisav? Why then specifically? He was off to make peace! Why was the angel stopping him? Secondly, the Gemara in Chullin (91a) says that the dust created by that fight rose all the way up to Hashem's throne in Heaven. Why is that? Thirdly, when the fight is finally over, Yaakov turns to his opponent and asks for a beracha. Now why would he ask his opponent, whom he just battled, to bless him? Shouldn't he punch him in the face? Moments prior, the angel had severely wounded Yaakov. Why did he ask him for a farewell blessing? Perhaps the answers lie in the following:

I was once walking in Lakewood, and across the street I spotted Reb Dovid Schustal, the Rosh Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha. He was walking alone, so I decided I would ask him something. It was a few days before Chanukah, and I posed the following question to him: Why is it that on Chanukah we thank Hashem for the **milchamos**? For the wars? We thank Hashem in Al Hanisim for the nisim, the gevuros, the yeshuos, the salvation, the miracles, and the strength He displayed for us. Why do we then go ahead and thank Hashem for the war itself? What are we thanking Him for? Wouldn't we have been a lot better off if we didn't need to go out and battle the notorious Greek army? It's like after the Six Day War, thanking Hashem for the miracles and the salvation and then also thanking Him for bringing the war itself. Why would we do that?

The Blessing Storehouse

He looked at me and said, "That's a great question and I have an even better answer." The Chasam Sofer teaches a powerful concept. Each and every person has a huge storehouse of blessing and shefa waiting for him in Heaven, and the only way to access it is by going through some sort of test or hurdle, proving to Hashem that you care. You need to first prove that you are loyal to his Torah. Pass the test and get the blessings. Don't, and the blessing remains isolated in Heaven. Reb Dovid continued. Before Avraham got berachos, he went through a "Lech Lecha" and an akeidah. Before there was a Yitzchak, there were years and years of Sarah being barren. Before Yaakov was born, there were years and years of Rivka being barren. Before Yosef Hatzadik was born, there were years and years of Rachel being barren. Before we received the Torah, we went through the travails in Egypt. Before we got the land of Eretz Yisrael, we had to deal with Amalek. Before the Beis Hamikdash, there were the Plishtim. Before the second Beis Hamikdash, there was Haman. So on and so forth. When we thank Hashem for the milchamos of Chanukah, we are thanking Him for the test He gave us, to deem us worthy of the blessings He then bestowed upon us.

Now, we understand that Yaakov wasn't merely on his way to say hello to Eisav and to ensure that Eisav didn't slice off Yaakov's head. Yaakov was going to appease Eisav and retain the firstborn status, thus ensuring that the power of spirituality remained in Yaakov's hands. This was a pivotal moment where Yaakov would retain full ownership of spiritual matters for mankind. He would become the official paradigm of what morality, peace, and purity is to look like. He was about to embark on a journey with his twelve sons that would lead to a nation that would bring more light to the

World than would all the other nations combined. You better believe there would be an angel there trying to stop him. Not because the angel wanted him to fail, but because the angel knew that in order to receive all this, Yaakov first had to go through a test. He needed to show Hashem that he was willing to fight for it, literally.

Holy Dust

So precious was this fight to Hashem that He collected the dust of the fight and adorned His throne with it. And when the fight was over, Yaakov asked the angel for a beracha, for there was no ill will. There was no animosity. Yaakov knew this was for his own good. And what did the malach say? He said to Yaakov, "Your name will now be Yisrael." This means you fought with an angel of Hashem. You are a warrior, and no matter how many tests Hashem will throw at you, you will pass them and thus be worthy of unimaginable blessing.

How encouraging this is to us. How many times do we seem to go through rough patches in our life and wonder why this is happening? What is Hashem doing to me? The answer is He is lovingly giving you the gift of opportunity. He is giving you the key to unlock the blessing waiting up above.

I was once walking on a rainy day in downtown Atlanta. I came across a man with a guitar sitting on the side of the road. Drenched. He looked up at me with a smile and said, "Listen here, son, from the showers come the flowers; from rain comes champagne."

How right he was. How right he was.