

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Medium Rare Please

I once heard a thought from a Rabbi Goldschmidt of Har Nof, Jerusalem. He related that he stopped in at the home of Rav Chaim Kanievisky Shlit"א for a blessing before a fundraising trip. Rav Chaim explained the symbolism found in the fact that the angel of Eisav was able to harm Yaakov Avinu in the area of the body that provides support for the upper half, namely the dislocation of the thigh bone. Rav Chaim noted that Yaakov Avinu is constantly referred to as the representative of *emes*, truth, and therefore representative of the concept of "Torah" which is the embodiment of truth. The angel was not able to overpower the Torah. He was, however, able to damage the support for Torah, creating an eternal spiritual challenge to furnish support for Torah learning.

There is a *mitzvah* that is the result of the altercation between Yaakov and the angel. This is the prohibition of eating the *gid hanasheh*, the sciatic nerve. I would like to suggest that this *mitzvah* is not only an outgrowth of the altercation between Yaakov and the angel, rather it contains the remedy to heal the damage done. Our Sages relate an axiom, "*Im ain kemach, ain Torah*," which loosely means, "no bread, no learning." I imagine this fact is not necessary in the immediate sense to be communicated to those who learn. They are acutely aware that their learning is contingent on having food to eat. However, for those with "the bread," the Sages felt the need to point out this relationship. When we study Jewish history, we often find that the issue crystalized in

the words from *Parshas Ha'azinu*, "the Jews became fat and bucked," is a problem we struggle with. I personally find it difficult to open my *Gemara* and delve into a difficult topic immediately following a smorgasbord experience. The prohibition to eat the *gid hanasheh* has put a damper on enjoying the finer things in life. The prized filet mignon known to meat lovers the world over as the most exquisite cut of beef is a problem, whether it means hiring a *menaker* (kosher meat splicer) or just not eating it. The reality remains that it's a frustrating experience. When the material world is too physically enjoyable, we forget the spiritual. We know "*Im ain kemach, ain Torah*," but we need a constant reminder. When we struggle in the mundane, the part of our existence we need for our bodies, we turn heavenward to beseech the Master of the Universe. We try to find favor in His eyes by adjusting our priorities to fit His. Then we remember "*talmud Torah k'neged kulam*," the study of Torah is equal to all the *mitzvos*, and "*im ain kemach ain Torah*." In so doing, we defy the angel of Eisav, and help form a complete Yaakov. 🌟



RABBI
EZRA
STETTIN



THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCHAK PREIS

Q) Why do the Rabbis assume that the "ish" (man) who attacked Yaakov was an "angel"? And if this was in fact an angel, why did it attack Yaakov at this particular juncture?

A) Imagine you're jumped by some big goon and thankfully, manage to fight him off. I'm guessing that as he's about to flee, you would not demand, "STOP! You didn't give me a blessing!" But Yaakov did just that. Why? And how did this "man" know to share, in his response, the heads up that Yaakov will soon be granted the name "Yisroel"? Clearly, this was no ordinary dark alley brawl. (The oral traditions that accompany the text are certainly reason alone to believe this being was an angel; as we are pointing out, there is, as is generally the case, textual indication supporting those traditions.)

Now, let's examine why this "Heavenly-being" is attacking Yaakov now. Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlit"א shares perspective: Yaakov was in the process of retrieving small jugs. This can be understood to reflect the regard that the righteous have for material goods which can be channeled into service of Hashem. The *Medrash* describes the attacker as the heavenly representation of the forces of Eisav. To Eisav (and his heavenly representation), the material world is a goal in its own right; in fact, it is the goal, divorced from any spiritual inclinations. Observing Yaakov's

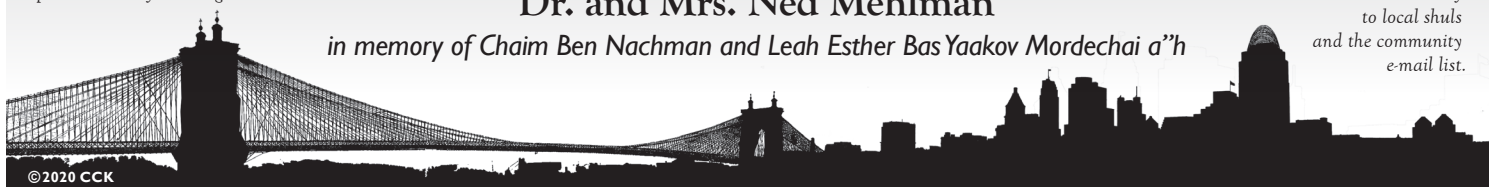
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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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behavior from that perspective yields a misinterpretation: Yaakov seems to share Eisav's materialism! Were this in fact to be the case, Yaakov would be guilty of abandoning his spiritual aspirations and encroaching on Eisav territory, thereby leaving him defenseless. But this was not the case. The angel eventually recognized that Yaakov's appreciation of the material had been a function of his quest to maximize the spiritual. At that point, the angel had to give up the idea of stifling Yaakov himself; he settled for a blow to the thigh, representing Yaakov's progeny, the future nation of Yisroel. At times, future generations might make the tragic mistake of developing Eisav-like materialism which leaves them open to further attack. Learning about this hazard should help steer us clear of this mistake! 🤖

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincykollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Little Moshe Sherer was burning up with fever. The doctor came for a visit and diagnosed him with strep throat and gave his mother a prescription, warning her that she must act fast so that it did not develop into rheumatic fever. Mrs. Sherer checked her pocketbook, gathered up all the available money in her home, and ran out the door to the pharmacy. Finding the assistant in the pharmacy and the owner out, she poured out her heart to the assistant asking that he make up the prescription and promising to come back to pay the difference if the money she brought with her did not cover it. The assistant graciously made up the prescription for her and told her that he would speak with the boss, assuring her that he would take what she brought with her and it would be enough. Mrs. Sherer was very thankful and upon receiving the medicine rushed out of the pharmacy to return home. In her rush she tripped and fell not far from the pharmacy. The bottle containing the precious medicine was flung from her hand and smashed upon impact with the concrete sidewalk. She stared as the running medicine stained the sidewalk. Tears sprang from her eyes as she picked herself back up and did the only thing she could. She ran back to the pharmacy and meeting the pharmacist at the door immediately began to beg to be given the medicine. "I'll sweep and mop for you as long as you want to pay for it; just please let me have the medicine for my son!" The pharmacist tried to calm her down and asked her to start from the beginning. After the hearing her story, he assured her she could again take the medicine on credit.

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

After Eisav invited Yaakov to travel together with him, Yaakov responded that he will travel at his own pace "*Ad asher avoh el adoni Se'ira*" meaning until he will reach Se'ir, the home place of Eisav. Our sages say this means in the time of the Messiah, as it says in Ovadiah, "*V'alu moshi'im b'har Tzion lishpot es har Eisav*," "and the saviors will go up Zion to judge the mountain of Eisav." *Ba'al Haturim* shows us this is hinted to in the words "*avoh el adoni Se'ira*," in which the first letter of each of these words in Hebrew spell the word "*Elyah*," which is another spelling of Eliyahu the prophet, and that the numerical value of the word "*avoh*" is 4, meaning after the four exiles (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome) Eliyahu will come and then we will ascend the mountain of Eisav. 🤖

Yaakov ben Asher, known as the *Ba'al Haturim*, was a scholar and biblical commentator who lived most of his life in Spain from approximately 1275 to approximately 1340. His classic commentary is printed in many editions of the *Chumash*.

Minutes after instructing the assistant to make up a new prescription, the assistant came out of the back white as a sheet. "Lady," he said, "Your G-d is watching over you! I gave you the wrong thing before! It would only have aggravated your son's symptoms." Quite abashed the assistant gave over the new prescription, now free of charge. 🤖

THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

DAVID AL-DOJI (PART II)

David Al-doji was a determined fellow. He quickly left Caucasia and headed south to the land of the Kurds in northern Iraq. The Kurds were in the midst of a war and because of suspicious behavior, Al-doji was arrested and brought before the Kurdish king. After being interrogated and claiming to be king of the Jews, David Al-doji was sentenced to life imprisonment in a dungeon prison cell a few kilometers away. Three days later, David magically resurfaced in the king's palace. When the king inquired who had let him out of prison, David swiftly responded that he had utilized the "upper spiritual powers" to set himself free. Infuriated by David's audacity, the king ordered that David be seized and brought back to his cell. But the security guards only heard David's voice; his body had magically vanished. David announced that he was leaving and confidently marched out of the palace. The king and his entourage followed David's voice until he arrived at the banks of a river. Suddenly he reappeared. All eyes were set on David to see how he would cross the wide waterway. David removed his shirt, spread it over the water, and tip-toed across the river. David was simply invincible.

News of David's miraculous escape from the clutches of the Kurdish king captured the hearts and souls of the Middle Eastern Jews. David and his followers seized the opportunity to revitalize their Messianic movement. New letters were sent out to Jews as far as Spain, and many responded that they were making the final arrangements to sell their properties.

Meanwhile back in the Kurdish mountains, David officially announced the exact date of the redemption and urged his followers to prepare themselves. When night arrived, families ascended to their rooftops with eager anticipation of the glorious arrival of the Messiah. But the hours of that fateful night slowly ticked by and nothing occurred. David was thus exposed to the masses as a complete phony and liar.

Ultimately, the Kurdish king demanded David Al-doji's body, dead or alive, or the Jews of his kingdom would be condemned to utter annihilation. Fortunately, a neighboring king who was friendly with the Jews had a friendly relationship with David's father-in-law. He convinced David's father-in-law to assassinate his son-in-law and assured him a great deal of money. David's father-in-law conceded and, after a lavish feast of meat and wine, David was decapitated while in a drunken stupor. Although the Messiah hadn't arrived, at least the Jews of the Middle East were spared. 🤖