



**“When he perceived that he could not overcome him, he struck the ball of his thighbone”**

## **Yaakov Avinu Corresponds to the Third Beis HaMikdash the Balls of His Two Thighbones Correspond to the Two Batei Mikdash that Were Destroyed**

This week's parsha is parshas Vayishlach. So, it is fitting to focus on the momentous struggle that took place between Eisav's guardian angel and Yaakov Avinu. Although Yaakov Avinu was the decisive victor, the malach struck a damaging blow to Yaakov's thighbone. Here is the pertinent text (Bereishis 32, 25): **“ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר: וירא כי לא יכול לו ויגע בכף ירכו ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו: ויאמר שלחני ויאמר לא אשלחך כי אם ברכתנו.”** **Yaakov was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he perceived that he could not overcome him, he struck the ball of his thighbone; and the ball of Yaakov's thighbone became dislocated as he wrestled with him. Then he said, “Let me go, for dawn has broken.” And he said, “I will not let you go unless you have blessed me.”**

Rashi (in the name of our Rabbis of blessed memory) identifies Yaakov's mysterious, intrepid, nocturnal adversary as Eisav's guardian angel (B.R. 78, 3). In fact, the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayishlach 8) and Zohar hakadosh (170a) identify Eisav's guardian angel as none other than **סמא"ל**.

The timing of this struggle is definitely curious and surprising. Undoubtedly, Eisav and his malach harbored animosity toward Yaakov for taking Eisav's Berachos from their father Yitzchak by means of a ruse. That, however, took place thirty-six years earlier when the brothers were sixty-three years old. Then, Yaakov was sequestered in the Beis Midrash of Eisav for fourteen years; after that, he was in Charan living with Lavan HaArami; he married Leah and Rachel and fathered the

shevatim of Yisrael; twenty-two years passed until he actually returned to Eretz Yisrael. So, why did Eisav's guardian angel wait until this time to contest the matter?

Furthermore, before fleeing to Charan, HKB"H assured Yaakov Avinu (ibid. 28, 15): **“והנה אנכי עמך ושמרתיך בכל אשר—תלך—behold, I am with you; and I will guard you wherever you go.** With this divine protection, it is not surprising that Eisav's malach could not defeat Yaakov. Nevertheless, how was he able to strike a blow to Yaakov's thighbone that caused him to limp and required healing? As it states (ibid. 32, 32): **“ויזרח לו השמש כאשר עבר את פנואל והוא צולע על ירכו”**—**the sun rose for him as he passed Penuel, and he was limping on his hip.** Rashi comments: **And an aggadic Midrash explains, “The sun rose for him” implies that it rose for his needs, to heal his limp.**

### **Yaakov Avinu's Reconciliation with Eisav Was a Preparation for the Future Geulah**

Let us begin by examining Yaakov Avinu's tactics. He was willing to place himself and his entire household in danger in order to meet up with Eisav and appease him. This was no simple feat. In fact, we learn that Yaakov Avinu was terrified prior to this encounter (ibid. 8): **“ויירא יעקב מאד ויניצר: לו, ויחץ את העם אשר אתו ואת הצאן ואת הבקר והגמלים לשני מחנות, ויאמר אם יבוא העם אל המחנה האחת והכהו והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה.”** **And Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him. So, he divided the people with him, and the flocks, and**

**the cattle, and the camels, into two camps. And he said, “If Eisav comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the remaining camp will survive.”** Seemingly, it would have been much better and safer if he had simply remained in Eretz Yisrael and not arranged for a meeting with his brother.

It appears that we can explain the matter based on a wonderful insight gleaned from the Zohar hakadosh (Vayeitzei 148b). It teaches us that the departure of Yaakov Avinu from the site of the Mikdash to go to Charan symbolized the churban of the Beis HaMikdash and the exile of Yisrael to the diaspora to live among the nations of the world. Additionally, we are taught in the Midrash (B.R. 68, 13) that Yaakov Avinu’s return from Charan to Eretz Yisrael symbolized the return of Yisrael from the diaspora to Eretz Yisrael at the time of the future geulah.

Regarding the time of the geulah, the navi prophesied (Yeshayah 11, 6): **“וְגַדְי יִרְבֵּץ:”**—**the wolf will live with the sheep, and the leopard will lie down with the kid.** The Rambam addresses the implications of this prophecy (Hilchos Melachim 12, 1):

**Do not presume that in the days of the Mashiach any facet of the world’s nature will change or there will be innovations in the work of creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its pattern. Although it states in Yeshayah: “The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the young goat,” these words are a metaphor and a parable. The interpretation of the prophecy is as follows: Yisrael will dwell securely together with the wicked gentiles who are likened to a wolf and a leopard, as it says (Yirmiyah 5, 6): “A wolf from the wilderness shall spoil them and a leopard will stalk their cities.” They will all return to the true faith and no longer steal or destroy. Rather, they will eat permitted food at peace with Yisrael as it states (Yeshayah 11, 7): “The lion will eat straw like an ox.”**

From the Rambam’s interpretation of this prophecy, we learn that the good constituents of the nations of the world will perform complete teshuvah and will unite with Yisrael in keeping with the words: **“The wolf will dwell with the lamb.”**

Furthermore, the navi prophesies that le’asid la’vo the goyim will attend to the needs of Yisrael, as it is written (Zechariah 8, 23): **“כֹּה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה, אֲשֶׁר יִחַזְקוּ עִשְׂרֵה אַנְשִׁים מִכָּל לְשׁוֹנוֹת הַגּוֹיִם, וְהַחֲזִיקוּ בְּכַנְף אִישׁ יְהוּדִי לֵאמֹר נִלְכָּה עִמָּכֶם כִּי שָׁמַעְנוּ אֲלֵכֶיךָ עִמָּכֶם.”** **Thus said Hashem, Master of Legions: In those days, it will happen that ten men, of all the different languages of the nations, will take hold, they will take hold of the corner of the garment of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that G-d is with you!”**

Thus, we have achieved a better understanding to some degree of Yaakov Avinu’s strategy and intent. Just as his departure to Charan exemplified the principle of “ma’aseh Avos siman la’banim”; so, too, did his return to Eretz Yisrael from Charan. Whereas the former symbolized the churban of the Beis HaMikdash and the exile of Yisrael among the nations of the world, the latter symbolizes the future geulah. For this reason, Yaakov chose to meet with Eisav HaRasha in an attempt to placate him and make peace with him. He performed a symbolic gesture—“po’el dimyon”—in preparation for the future geulah, when the good, meritorious portion of Eisav’s descendants are destined to unite with Yisrael, as per the prophecy: **“The wolf will dwell with the lamb.”**

### **A Man Wrestled with Him until the Break of Dawn of the Future Geulah**

Based on what we have learned, we can comprehend why HKB”H arranged for Eisav’s guardian angel—who is also the yetzer hara and the Satan—to wrestle with Yaakov, even though it was unable to overpower him. On the contrary, Yaakov subdued it and defeated it, as Eisav’s guardian angel concedes to him (Bereishis 32, 29): **“כִּי שָׂרִית עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַם אַנְשִׁים וְתוֹכַל:”**—**for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed.** As explained, all of these events were symbolic gestures foreshadowing details of the future geulah. For, we learn in the Gemara (Succah 52b): **“לַעֲתִיד לְבוֹא מִבְּיַאוֹ הַקָּב”ה לִיצֵר:”**—**le’asid la’vo, HKB”H will bring the yetzer hara and slaughter it in the presence of the tzaddikim and the reshaim.** According to the Shela hakadosh (Chayei Sarah), this signifies that HKB”H will remove its evil component, leaving just its good component.

HKB”H alludes to this in the holy Torah as follows (ibid. 25): **”ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר:”—and Yaakov remained alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.** This teaches us that our struggle with Eisav’s ministering angel will only last until **”the break of dawn”**—alluding to the future geulah, of which it says (Yeshayah 58, 8): **”אז יבקע כשחר אורך:”—then Your light will burst through like the dawn.** In fact, Eisav’s malach alludes to this himself when he beseeches Yaakov (Bereishis 32, 27): **”Release me, for dawn has broken.”** In other words, you have already performed the “po’el dimyon” and preparation for the future geulah.

An elucidation in the Midrash on this passuk provides us with definitive support for this understanding (B.R. 77, 1): **”ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו, (דברים לג-כו) אין כאל ישורון רוכב בו שמים בעזרך... אין כאל, ומי כאל, ישורון, ישראל סבא, מה הקב”ה כתוב בו.”** The Midrash associates Yaakov’s struggle with the malach with a passuk related to the future geulah, when (Yeshayah 2, 11) **”Hashem alone will be exalted.”** In similar fashion, after subjugating his opponent, Yaakov stood alone triumphant, signifying the dawn of a new era, the time of the future geulah, when we will no longer struggle with the descendants of Eisav and his guardian angel.

This clarifies Eisav’s remark to Yaakov after their reconciliation very nicely (Bereishis 33, 12): **”ויאמר נסעה ונלכה”—and he said, “Travel on and let us go; I will proceed alongside you.”** Rashi comments: **”בשוה לך”—in line with you.** Upon seeing that Yaakov had defeated his guardian angel and had even succeeded in appeasing him, Eisav thought that the time of the geulah had arrived, when they could finally walk together side by side. Hence, he says, **”I will proceed alongside you,”** suggestive of the way it will be at the time of the future geulah, when ten non-Jews of various nations will grab unto a Jew’s garment.

Yaakov, however, realized that all that had transpired was merely a preparation and “po’el dimyon” for the future geulah. But in reality, the time of the geulah had not yet arrived; it was not yet time to unite with Eisav. For, the evil part of him still beat within him like a poison that was liable to infect Yaakov’s offspring. Therefore, he responded unequivocally to Eisav

(ibid. 13): **”אדוני יודע כי הילדים רכים והצאן והבקר עלות עלי, ודפקום:”—my lord knows that the children are tender, and the nursing flocks and cattle are upon me; and they will drive them hard for one day, then all the flocks will die.** In other words, Yaakov was expressing his fear that Eisav might corrupt his children and turn them into reshaim, who are considered dead even while they are still alive (Berachos 18b).

Therefore, Yaakov suggested an alternate plan (ibid. 14): **”עבר נא אדוני לפני עבדו, ואני אתנהלה לאטי לרגל המלאכה אשר לפני ולרגל”—let my lord go ahead of his servant; I will make my way at my slow pace according to the gait of the work that is before me and to the gait of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir.** According to Rashi, Yaakov was hinting to Eisav that he would, indeed, come to Seir **in the times of the Mashiach, as it states** (Ovadiah 1, 21): **”And saviors will arise upon Har Tziyon to mete out justice to Har Eisav.”** Yaakov was informing him that at that time, HKB”H would judge him and eradicate the evil part of him, leaving only the good part that would then unite with Yisrael and attend to them.

### They Fought over the Third Beis HaMikdash

We will now address the issue of why Eisav’s guardian angel chose that particular juncture to combat Yaakov Avinu—when Yaakov was returning from Charan and on his way to appease Eisav. Let us refer to the Gemara (Pesachim 88a):

**”מאי דכתיב והלכו עמים רבים ואמרו, לכו ונעלה אל הר ה’ אל בית אלקי יעקב וגו’, אלקי יעקב ולא אלקי אברהם ויצחק? אלא לא כאברהם שכתוב בו הר, שנאמר אשר יאמר היום בהר ה’ יראה, ולא כיצחק שכתוב בו שדה, שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה, אלא כיעקב שקראו בית, שנאמר ויקרא את שם המקום ההוא בית אל.”**

**What is the meaning of the passuk (Yeshayah 2, 3): “Many nations will go and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the Mountain of Hashem, to the House (“בית”) of the G-d of Yaakov, etc.”? Why specifically the G-d of Yaakov and not the G-d of Avraham and Yitzchak? Not like Avraham, who called it a “mountain” (Bereishis 22, 14) . . . And not like Yitzchak, who called it a “field” (ibid. 24, 63) . . . Rather, it is like Yaakov, who called it (ibid. 28, 19) a “house” (“בית”).**

In his commentary on Maseches Avos, Derech Chaim (5, 4), the Maharal explains that this teaches us that the three Batei HaMikdash are in the merit of the three holy Avos.

The Alshich (Vayikra 26, 13) explains that the first Beis HaMikdash stood in the merit of Avraham Avinu; it was destroyed by our enemies because of Yishmael who was fathered by Avraham. The second Beis HaMikdash stood in the merit of Yitzchak Avinu; it was destroyed by our enemies, because of Eisav who was fathered by Yitzchak. The third Beis HaMikdash, however, will stand in the merit of Yaakov Avinu “whose bed was perfect”—meaning that all of his children were tzaddikim. Hence, it will endure uninterrupted forevermore.

It is worth noting that Yaakov calls the third Beis HaMikdash **“Beis El”—the House of G-d**—when he awakes from his sleep at the site of the future Mikdash. As it is written (ibid. 18): **“Yaakov arose early in the morning and took the stone that he had placed around his head and set it up as a monument; and he poured oil on its top. And he named the place Beis El.”** In keeping with our current discussion, we can explain the sequence of events as follows: When Yaakov awoke, he realized that he had slept on the site of the Mikdash; he then perceived that his departure from that site to Charan symbolized the future galus; similarly, he realized that his return home would symbolize the future geulah when the third Beis HaMikdash would be built. Hence, he called the place **“Beis El”—the House of G-d**. In a sense, he was providing a remedy in advance of the ailment.

This explains the pesukim that follow magnificently (ibid. 20): **“וידר יעקב נדר לאמר אם יהיה אלקים עמדי ושמרני בדרך הזה אשר אנכי הולך... ושכתי בשלום אל בית אבי והיה ה' לי לאלקים, והאבן הזאת אשר שמתי מצבה יהיה בית אלקים.”** Then Yaakov took a vow saying, **“If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me on this way that I am going . . . and I will return in peace to my father’s house, and Hashem will be a G-d to me—then this stone which I have set as a monument shall become a house of G-d.”** Rashi explains that this is precisely what Yaakov did upon returning from Padan Aram, as it is written (ibid. 35, 14): **“ויצב יעקב מצבה במקום אשר דיבר אתו מצבת אבן ויסך עליה נסך ויצוק:—עליה שמן, ויקרא יעקב את שם המקום אשר דיבר אתו שם אלקים בית אל”** **Yaakov erected a monument at the place where He (G-d) had spoken with him—a monument of stone—and he poured a libation on it, and poured oil on it. Then Yaakov**

**named the place where G-d had spoken with him Beis El.** In short, he performed a symbolic gesture for the building of the third Beis HaMikdash, which he called Beis El.

We can now begin to comprehend why Eisav’s guardian angel, the yetzer hara, did not combat Avraham Avinu or Yitzchak Avinu but only Yaakov Avinu upon his return home from Charan with his sons, the holy shevatim. For, it knew full well that it had nothing to fear from them; the Beis HaMikdash built in Avraham’s merit and the Beis HaMikdash built in Yitzchak’s merit were both destined to be destroyed on account of their respective sons—Yishmael and Eisav.

It did, however, have legitimate cause to fear Yaakov Avinu. As explained, his return from Lavan’s home in Charan symbolized the future geulah. At that time, the third Beis HaMikdash will be built and will stand forever, since his children were all tzaddikim. Also, we are taught in the Gemara (Succah 52a): **“לעתיד לבוא מביאו הקב”ה ליצר הרע ושוחטו בבני הצדיקים:—וכפני הרשעים”** **le’asid la’vo, HKB”H will bring the yetzer hara and slaughter it in the presence of the tzaddikim and in the presence of the reshaim.** This means that at the time of the future geulah, Eisav’s ministering angel will cease to exist. Therefore, it fought specifically with Yaakov Avinu upon his return from Charan to prevent the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

This then is the message conveyed by the passuk: **“And Yaakov remained alone.”** After the first two Batei HaMikdash—built respectively in the merits of Avraham and Yitzchak—will be destroyed, only the third Beis HaMikdash, which will be built in the merit of Yaakov, will remain—**“ויותר יעקב לבדו”**. Therefore, **“a man (Eisav’s guardian angel) wrestled with him,”** attempting to kill him and prevent the building of the third Beis HaMikdash. Notwithstanding, **“he perceived that he could not overcome him,”** because Yaakov was protected by HKB”H to ensure that the third Beis HaMikdash would be built in his merit.

### **Eisav’s Guardian Angel Damaged the Balls of Both of Yaakov’s Thighbones**

Now, we asked how Eisav’s guardian angel managed to inflict harm on Yaakov; after all, HKB”H assured Yaakov that He would accompany him and protect him: **“והנה אנכי עמך”**

”גיד הנשה נוהג בארץ: ובחוצה לארץ, בפני הבית ושלא בפני הבית, בחולין ובמוקדשין, ונוהג בבהמה”. **The prohibition of eating the “gid ha’nasheh” applies both in Eretz Yisrael and outside of Eretz Yisrael, in the presence of (i.e., the time of) the Temple and not in the presence of the Temple, and with regard to non-sacred animals and with regard to sacrificial animals; and it applies to domesticated animals and to undomesticated animals—to the thigh of the right leg and to the thigh of the left leg.** In fact, the Rambam (Hilchos Ma’achalot Asurot 8, 1), the Tur, and the Michaber (Y.D. 65, 5) all rule accordingly.

Now, the Zohar hakadosh (Vayishlach 170b) teaches that a human body possesses 365 sinews (“gidim”) corresponding to the 365 days of a solar calendar-year. The “gid ha’nasheh” (literally: “the displaced sinew”), which was targeted by Eisav’s guardian angel corresponds to Tishah B’Av—the day on which both Batei Mikdash were destroyed. For this reason, Jews are prohibited from eating the “gid ha’nasheh,” since Eisav’s guardian angel—the “samech-mem”—prevails on this day. We find a “remez” to this in the following passuk (ibid. 32, 33): **”על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה אשר על כף הירך עד היום הזה כי נגע בכף ירך יעקב בגיד הנשה—therefore, Bnei Yisrael are not to eat the “gid ha’nasheh,” which is on the hip joint, to this very day; because he struck Yaakov’s hip joint on the “gid ha’nasheh.”** The term אֶת in this passuk is interpreted as an acronym for תִּשְׁעָה אִבּ—**the ninth of Av**—the day that this evil force prevailed over the Batei Mikdash and destroyed them.

In Sifsei Kohen (Vayishlach), the divine kabbalist Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen, a young disciple of the Arizal, elaborates on the significance of the “gid ha’nasheh.” Here is a translation of the excerpt:

**I found it written that there are 365 “gidim” in the human body. Each one reigns on its respective day; the “gid ha’nasheh” reigns on Tishah B’Av. Hence, the Bayis—the first and the second—was destroyed on Tishah B’Av—corresponding to the right and left “gidim.” This accords with the ruling of the sages who said that it applies to both of them. For this reason, we fast on it with five afflictions**

**to weaken its power. Anyone who consumes it, it is as if he did not fast on Tishah B’Av; and anyone who eats on Tishah B’Av, it is as if he consumed the “gid ha’nasheh” and gives it power to prosecute and rule on its day. For this reason, we fast with afflictions so as not to afford it any power.**

### **The Third Beis HaMikdash Will Incorporate the First and Second Batei Mikdash**

Continuing on this sacred, sublime journey, we will elaborate further on the passuk: **”ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר, וירא כי לא יכול לו ויגע בכף ירכו בהאבקו עמו”**. We will begin with an important, illuminating teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Pinchas 221a). In relation to the third Beis HaMikdash, it is written (Tehillim 147, 2): **”בונה ירושלים ה”**—**the builder of Yerushalayim is Hashem.** This passuk relates to the third Beis HaMikdash le’asid la’vo that we await with great anticipation. It will not be built by man—for then it will not endure—but rather by HKB”H. Furthermore, the third Beis HaMikdash will incorporate both of the previous Batei Mikdash. HKB”H will bring them down together from above. The second Beis HaMikdash will stand upon the ground in its full glory and splendor in full view, while the first Beis HaMikdash will stand concealed on top of it—like clouds of glory surrounding and illuminating it. The artistry of HKB”H will be on display for the whole world to see.

With this understanding, we can suggest a very nice interpretation of the continuation of the passuk cited by the Zohar hakadosh: **”בונה ירושלים ה’ נדחי ישראל יכנס”**—**the builder of Yerushalayim is Hashem; the outcasts of Yisrael, He will gather in.** This implies that the third Beis HaMikdash will **“gather in”**—i.e., incorporate—the two Batei Mikdash, **“the outcasts,”** that were built by the hands of Yisrael and were consequently destroyed (cast out). In other words, the third Beis HaMikdash will be all-inclusive.

Let us now interpret the passuk: **”ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר, וירא כי לא יכול לו ויגע בכף ירכו בהאבקו עמו”**—**Yaakov was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he perceived that he could not overcome him, he struck the ball of his thighbone. We**

have learned from the Zohar hakadosh that Yaakov's return from Charan represented a symbolic gesture alluding to the future geulah. At that time, **Yaakov will remain alone** in the third Beis HaMikdash, which will be built in his merit, since HKB"H is going to slaughter the Malach Hamaves—one of the personas of Eisav's guardian angel—at that time. This is why it combatted Yaakov Avinu to prevent the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

But when all was said and done, it realized that its efforts were in vain—"וירא כי לא יכול לו"—HKB"H intended to build the third Beis HaMikdash to endure forever and ever. Therefore, it adopted a plan B: "ויגע בכף ירכו"—it struck a damaging blow to both of Yaakov's thighbones—representing the first two Batei Mikdash. It was consoled by the fact that it would at

least succeed in destroying them. Notwithstanding, Yaakov Avinu himself represented the third Beis HaMikdash. Not only would it be built and stand forever, but it would include both the first and second Batei Mikdash, as described above.

This explains fabulously how HKB"H's assurance to Yaakov Avinu will be fulfilled: **"Behold, I am with you; and I will guard you wherever you go."** This assurance applied to Yaakov Avinu himself representing the third Beis HaMikdash that will endure for all eternity. This made it impossible for Eisav's guardian angel to harm and defeat Yaakov himself; however, it was able to inflict damage to the right and left thighbones representing the first two Batei Mikdash corresponding to Avraham Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu.



Our thanks and blessings are given to those who donated for the publication of our weekly dvar Torah for the merit of **אחינו בני ישראל**

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