

In a wonderful ספר that I received from my אייניקל Ari, about רב לוי יצחק of Berditchev, there is a rather esoteric and profound discussion about the fight between the שר of עשו and יעקב אבינו. This מחלוקת, which revolves around great סודות of the בריאה, is a מעשה with tremendous implications for us and much to teach.

When הקדוש ברוך הוא created the world, there were three levels of existence. The upper world, known as the world of the שרפים, is inhabited by countless מלאכים. The intermediate world of גלגלים includes all the heavenly spheres, the heavenly bodies, the constellations, and everything we can discern in שמים. Finally, there is the lower world, which is the עולם הזה, the world of humanity.

These three different aspects of creation correspond, as רב לוי יצחק explains, to the human relationship with הקדוש ברוך הוא. Our head, מוחי, (which we mention in our davening every day), corresponds to the world of the מלאכים. This is because the head brings us closest to the בורא. The מלאכים are entirely רוחניות, unencumbered by any יצר הרע or the confusions of גשמיות. A person who focuses his מוח and שכל on הקדוש ברוך הוא can gain profound insights into the divine plan and the ultimate truths of the בריאה.

The heart corresponds to the world of the גלגלים, the heavenly bodies. It is brought down in the ספר יצירה that the heart and נשמה represent the constellations of the year. Reflecting on the orbits of the constellations and the wonders of שמים can give us an inkling of the tremendous דעת and wisdom that went into the בריאה.

Finally, the lower half of our body, our legs, represents the lower world. This is the עולם הזה, where, unfortunately, people often take the marvelous workings of creation in stride - they become so used to them. We take all the great wonders of העולם הזה for granted. Our גזונט, our כח, our ability to think, and our ability to use our body to do all the things that we do, are very much taken for granted.

Unfortunately, this also reflects on our ability to serve Hashem. Our אמונה becomes a matter of rote. The word רגל, which represents the leg, also alludes to the word הרגל, which means habit. This type of אמונה, based solely on habit, is unstable and can be easily undermined by even trivial נסיונות.

This was the essence of the struggle between יעקב and מלאך. Their fight that night was a struggle. In the end, the מלאך saw that he could not overcome יעקב, so he struck him on his leg, his thigh. The מלאך then asked יעקב for his name and told him, “Your name will no longer be יעקב, but ישראל, because you have struggled with both heavenly beings and with people, and you have prevailed.”

The name יעקב comes from the word עקב, the heel - the bottom of the רגל. It implies a relationship with Hashem that can easily become distorted and unstable. However, through his struggle with the מלאך, יעקב demonstrated that he could rise to the level of מוח - being guided by



הקדוש, the top level of קדושה - the head. This became dominant in his relationship with הקדוש, and so the מלאך changed his name to ישראל. ישראל, when rearranged, spells לי ראש.

The מלאך struck יעקב on his thigh to highlight the danger of letting faith become habitual and unstable. But in the end, the פסוק tells us that the sun was shining on יעקב because he had reached the true light of אמונה, the clarity and enlightenment that comes from the ראש, just as the sun illuminates the world. His name was changed to ישראל because his אמונה came from the ראש.

We have the ability to work on ourselves, to rise above habitual routine, and to serve Hashem with thought, intention, and awareness. For those of us who are FFBs - frum from birth - this is our נסיון, our challenge. It's interesting to note how בעלי תשובה are often so amazed and excited by the Torah and mitzvos they are learning - things we sometimes take for granted. We shouldn't take these things for granted. We should all strive to be בעלי תשובה, constantly working on ourselves to rise above הרגל and transform ourselves into a ראש.

