

TORAH THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

PARSHAS VAYISHLACH

“The Fight!”

“Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.” (Gen. 32:25)

"Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn." The Midrash explains that this man was really Eisav's guardian angel, otherwise known as the Satan (the representative of the spiritual forces of evil). Why did this angel only pick a fight with Yaakov - why didn't he attack Avraham or Yitzchak?

Avraham represented gemillus chassadim (kind acts) and Yitzchak represented avodah (service of God through prayer and offerings). Gemillus chassadim and avodah are two of the three pillars on which the world stands,(1) but the third pillar, Torah, which Yaakov represented, is the most crucial one for the Jewish nation's success in carrying out its mission on earth. The Satan was aware of this, and therefore only attacked Yaakov. He knew the most effective way to harm the Jewish people would be to deter them from learning Torah.(2)

A person may feel that he is not cut out for learning, and would rather do anything but learn. He would rather do acts of kindness all day than sit down and learn. Furthermore, when one finally 'sits down' to learn he suddenly remembers everything that he has to take care of, and he has to take care of it NOW. This is the Satan's approach - he is doing everything he can to prevent you from learning! The evil inclination doesn't mind if a Jew fasts, prays, and gives charity all day long, provided that he does not learn Torah. This is because the Torah is what gives us the energy to help us overcome our instincts and climb the spiritual ladder towards perfection.

NOTES

1. Pirkei Avos 1:2.

2. Chofetz Chaim