

"A man wrestled with him until the break of dawn"
The Struggle between Eisov's Ministering Angel
and Yaakov Ovinu Concerning the Minor Mitzvos
which People Are Lax about

In this week's parsha, parshas Vayishlach, we learn about the difficult struggle waged between Eisov's ministering angel and Yaakov Ovinu—which concluded in a resounding victory for Yaakov Ovinu. How difficult this struggle was in the material realm, and no less so in the spiritual realm, can be appreciated from the following elucidation in the Gemoreh (Chullin 91a) focusing on the possuk (Bereishis 32, 26): **"ותקע כף ירך יעקב"** **"בהאבקו עמו - מלמד שהעלו אבק מרגלותם עד כסא הכבוד"**—they wrestled so viciously that they raised dust all the way up to the Throne of Glory. [Translator's note: the elucidation is based on the similarity between the word employed by the possuk **בהאבקו**, meaning when he wrestled, and the Hebrew word **אבק**, meaning dust.] Let us begin by reviewing the sacred pesukim describing this momentous event (ibid. 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 כי עלה השחר, ויאמר לא אשלחך כי אם ברכתני, ויאמר אליו מה שמך ויאמר יעקב, ויאמר לא יעקב עוד שמך כי אם ישראל, כי שרית עם אלהים ועם אנשים ותוכל"—**"--"א"ו** And Yaakov remained alone and a man wrestled with him until dawn; upon realizing that he could not overcome him, he struck a blow to the ball of Yaakov's thighbone and it became dislocated as they wrestled. He said, 'Release me, for the dawn has arrived.' He (Yaakov) replied, 'I will only release you if you bless me.' He asked him, 'What is your name?' He answered, 'Yaakov.' He said, 'Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisroel; for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed'.

Rashi, citing our blessed sages, provides us with the identity of Yaakov's assailant; their source is the Midrash (B.R. 78, 3): **"שרו"** **"של עשו היה"**—he was none other than Eisov's ministering angel. In fact, the Midrash Tanchume (Vayishlach 8) goes so far as to provide his actual name: **"ויהאבק איש עמו, זה סמאל שרו של עשו"**—

Yaakov's wrestling opponent was indeed Eisov's ministering angel known as Samael. Similarly, the Zohar hakodesh explains (Vayishlach 170a): **"וההוא מלאך שרו של עשו היה ואיהו סמאל"**—that angelic adversary was Eisov's ministering angel and he is none other than Samael.

Now, it is well-known that we, the children of Avrohom Yitzchok and Yaakov, are known as "Yisroel". This is the name given to Yaakov after defeating Eisov's ministering angel. In defeat, the angelic foe proclaimed: **"לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל, --"כי שרית עם אלהים ועם אנשים ותוכל"** Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisroel; for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed. Hence, we must examine the following: (a) what were these two opposing forces—Yaakov and the "samech-mem"—fighting over? What is the significance of Yaakov's victory over this angel? By understanding its significance, we can strive to apply the gains achieved by Yaakov to our daily lives. (b) What is the meaning of our sages' comment: **"שהעלו"** **"אבק מרגלותם עד כסא הכבוד"**—they raised dust from their feet up to the Kisei HaKovod. Clearly, this statement is not to be taken at face value.

Additionally, despite Yaakov's victory, Eisov's ministering angel succeeded in inflicting damage to Yaakov's thighbone. As we learn in the parsha (32, 32), Yaakov's injury caused him to limp: **"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 provides the following clarification based on an aggadic Midrash: **"ומדרש"** **"אגדה ויזרח לו לצרכו לרפאות את צלעתו, כמה דתימא (מלאכי ג-כ) [וזרחה לכם יראי שמי] שמש צדקה ומרפא בכנפיה"**—the implication of the possuk is that the sun rose in order to heal Yaakov's limp. We must endeavor to explain the practical significance of the damage caused by the "samech-mem" to Yaakov's thigh. Secondly, how was Yaakov healed by the rising sun?

Eisov's Angel Wished to Eliminate the Name Yaakov Entirely

Let us begin with the illuminating words of our great teacher, the Chasam Sofer. In his own inimitable way, he addresses a striking curiosity concerning the "samech-mem"'s submission to Yaakov. He was seemingly extremely generous, conceding something that Yaakov did not even request of him: **"לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי"** -- Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisroel; for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed.

The Chasam Sofer explains this curiosity based on his careful analysis of the language employed by the possuk found later on in our parsha (Bereishis 35, 10). There HKB"H announces to Yaakov that he will be called Yisroel: **"ויאמר לו אלקים שמך יעקב לא יקרא"** -- Then G-d said to him, "Your name is Yaakov; your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but rather Yisroel shall be your name". And He called his name Yisroel. It is necessary to explain why HKB"H prefaced His announcement with the two seemingly superfluous words: **"שמך יעקב"** -- your name is Yaakov. It would have sufficed to simply say: **"לא יקרא שמך עוד יעקב כי אם ישראל"** -- your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but rather Yisroel shall be your name.

We learned in the Gemoreh (Berachos 12b): **"לא יקרא שמך עוד יעקב כי אם ישראל יהיה שמך, לא שיעקר יעקב ממקומו, אלא ישראל עיקר ויעקב טפל לו"** -- not that the name Yaakov will be uprooted, but rather Yisroel will be the primary name and Yaakov will be secondary to it. This explains why HKB"H prefaced his announcement with the words: **"שמך יעקב"** -- your name is Yaakov. Thus, HKB"H made it clear that even in the future, the name Yaakov would remain in effect; however: **"לא יקרא שמך כי אם ישראל"** -- it would not remain the primary name; **"עוד יעקב"** -- Yisroel would become the primary name and Yaakov would assume a role of secondary significance.

Eisov's ministering angel, however, cleverly omitted the two prefatory words **"שמך יעקב"**. Instead, he stated directly: **"לא יעקב"** -- Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but rather Yisroel -- because he intended to uproot and replace the name Yaakov completely. He wished that the name Yaakov would no longer remain in effect but would be replaced for all practical purposes by the name Yisroel. Here the Chasam Sofer provides us with the explanation. For, the two names **"יעקב" ו"ישראל"** together possess a numerical value equivalent to the words **"קרע שט"ן"** -- alluding to the fact that these two names in conjunction possess the

power to destroy and eliminate the soton. Therefore, the "samech-mem" wished to eliminate the name Yaakov completely, so that in the future he would only be called Yisroel. Notwithstanding, the words of the righteous Chasam Sofer still deserve further clarification. Why do the two names Yaakov and Yisroel in conjunction possess the power to eliminate the soton whereas the name Yisroel -- alluding to the exalted status of: "for you have engaged the Divine and men and you have triumphed" -- alone does not?

Eisov's Ministering Angel Fought to Trip Yisroel up by Means of the Minor Mitzvos

It appears that this entire matter can be explained based on an incredible principle that we have learned from the wonderful commentary of the Megaleh Amukos on this week's parsha. He teaches us that the main focus of the struggle between Eisov's ministering angel and Yaakov concerned the performance of seemingly minor, lesser Mitzvos -- an area in which Bnei Yisroel do not exhibit sufficient diligence. Let us refer to Rashi's commentary on the possuk in parshas Eikev (Devorim 7, 12): **"והיה עקב תשמעון"** -- according to Rashi this possuk impresses upon Yisroel the importance of not being lax in the performance of Mitzvos which people might view as less significant; Rashi describes these Mitzvos as commandments that a person "tramples with his heels". [Translator's note: the Hebrew word for heel is "akeiv", **עקב**.] This, in fact, was the accusation presented by Eisov's angel; he claimed that Yaakov was destined to father a people that did not pay adequate attention to the performance of minor Mitzvos.

In this manner, the Megaleh Amukos goes on to explain why the "samech-mem", Eisov's ministering angel, dealt a blow to Yaakov's thigh area. First, he explains the practical significance of HKB"H's statement to the primeval serpent, the "nochosh hakadmoni", that caused man to sin with the Tree of Knowledge (Bereishis 3, 15): **"הוא ישופך ראש ואתה תשופנו עקב"** -- he will pound you on the head and you will hiss at his heel. In other words, man will kill you by stomping on your head; and you will kill him by biting his heel. This possuk alludes to the tactics employed by the "nochosh hakadmoni" -- who is none other than the yetzer hora -- in his interactions with mankind. HKB"H informs the nochosh that man will succeed in overcoming and resisting its means of persuasion by means of **"ראש"** -- the performance and observance of the primary, important and more stringent Mitzvos; nonetheless, you, the nochosh, will succeed in trapping mankind and causing him to fail by means of **"עקב"** -- the performance of the lesser Mitzvos which man treats more laxly, which "he tramples with his heels".

With this introduction, the Megaleh Amukos enlightens us regarding the historic battle that took place between Eisov's ministering angel and Yaakov. Now, Eisov's ministering angel, who is the "samech-mem", constantly acts in the role of Yisroel's prosecutor. He wrestled with Yaakov, accusing him and his descendants of belittling the importance of the minor Mitzvos. Based on the merits of this argument, he sought to kill Yaakov—insinuating that he was unworthy of fathering the holy nation.

Despite his efforts and accusations, the Torah provides undeniable testimony regarding Yaakov's character and worthiness: **"וירא כי לא יכול לו"**—Yaakov's heavenly adversary realized that he could not succeed in finding fault with Yaakov himself. For he was equally diligent in his performance of all of Hashem's Mitzvos, be they major or minor. In fact, he exhibited this flawless character from the very moment he emerged into the world, as it states: **"וידו אוחות בעקב עשו"**—and his hand grabbed hold of Eisov's heel. This possuk indicates that he accepted upon himself not to fall prey to "Eisov's heel"—not to be remiss in the performance of minor Mitzvos, alluded to by the heel, because man tramples them with his heels.

Realizing that he was unsuccessful in defeating Yaakov himself, the "samech-mem" adopted an alternative plan: **"ויגע בכף ירכו"**—he struck a blow to his thigh region. In other words, he struck a blow directed at Yaakov's descendants. They would fall into his trap and be guilty of treating the lesser Mitzvos less stringently. Concerning this injury to Yaakov's thigh area, to his future offspring, the possuk states: **"ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבוק עמו"**—and the ball of Yaakov's thighbone became dislocated as he wrestled with him; and later it states: **"והוא צולע על ירכו"**—and he was limping on his hip. This is the gist of his holy words with some added explanation.

They Raised Dust from Their Feet up to the Kisei HaKovod

Now, based on the Megaleh Amukos's commentary, we can begin to appreciate Chazal's statement mentioned above: **"ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבוק עמו - מלמד שהעלו אבק מרגלותם עד כסא הכבוד"**—the possuk "and the ball of Yaakov's thighbone became dislocated as he wrestled with him" teaches us that as they wrestled, they raised dust all the way up to the Kisei HaKovod. In truth, the yetzer desires to cause man to transgress all of the major seemingly more stringent aveiros. Yet, knowing full well that a person will not heed his words concerning the transgression of the major aveiros, he cleverly begins by persuading the person to first become lax in his performance of the minor Mitzvos. Seeing

as one aveireh ultimately leads to subsequent aveiros, he slowly but surely gets the person, chas v'cholileh, to transgress all of the major aveiros as well.

This is the message conveyed by the following Gemoreh (Shabbos 105b): **"המקרה בגדיו בחמתו, והמשבר כליו בחמתו, והמפזר מעותיו בחמתו, יהא בעיניך כעובד עבודה זרה, שכך אומנתו של יצר הרע, היום אומר לו עשה כך ולמחר אומר לו עשה כך, עד שאומר לו עבוד עבודה זרה והולך ועובד"**—if one tears his garments in his anger, breaks his utensils in his anger, or scatters his money in his anger, he should be in your eyes as one who is performing idolatry. For thus is the craft of the yetzer hora: Today it tells him, "Do this", and the next day it tells him, "Do this", until it tells him, "Perform idolatry"; and he goes and performs it. It is ever apparent how important it is to avoid underestimating, chas v'cholileh, the significance of the minor Mitzvos. To emphasize this point, let us quote the Mishnah (Ovos 4, 2): **"בן עזאי אומר, הוי רץ למצוה קלה כבחמורה, ובורח מן עבירה—העבירה, שמצוה גוררת מצוה ועבירה גוררת עבירה"**—Ben Azai says: One should run to perform a minor mitzvah just as he would to a major mitzvah, and he should flee from performing an aveireh; for one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and one aveireh leads to another aveireh.

Thus we have learned that this is the strategy of the nochosh—who is the yetzer hora. He begins by convincing a person to belittle the significance of seemingly minor Mitzvos, in keeping with HKB"H's pronouncement: **"ואתה תשופנו עקב"**—and you will hill at his heel. We can even suggest that is why HKB"H hinted to the "nochosh hakadmoni" (Bereishis 3, 14): **"ועפר תאכל כל ימי חיך"**—and you shall eat dust all the days of your life—and why the prophet states (Yeshayah 65, 25): **"ונחש עפר לחמו"**—and the nochosh's sustenance is dust. For, the nochosh's function and purpose is to trick man and persuade him to discount the significance of minor Mitzvos and become lax in their observance. From those minor Mitzvos that a person tramples with his heels and from the dust he raises in the process, the nochosh is sustained.

As a consequence of trampling these minor Mitzvos with one's heels and raising dust from the ground, the dust rises little by little heavenward—the result of one aveireh leading to another. Ultimately, man is persuaded to transgress major aveiros involving his faith and belief in Hashem. The effect of these transgressions, unfortunately, reaches all the way to the Kisei HaKovod, upon which HKB"H sits.

We have now shed some light on the meaning of the statement: **"ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבוק עמו - מלמד שהעלו אבק"**

"and the ball of Yaakov's thighbone became dislocated as he wrestled with him". It teaches us that as they wrestled, they raised dust all the way up to the Kisei HaKovod. For, Eisov's ministering angel raised dust—created from the minor Mitzvos which man tramples with his feet—all the way up to the Kisei HaKovod, as an accusation against Yaakov and his descendants. In response, Yaakov—who was extremely diligent even in the observance of minor Mitzvos—fought back valiantly. He countered that Bnei Yisroel, left to their own devices, are careful concerning the observance of minor Mitzvos, due to their tremendous love of Hashem. It is only due to the actions of Eisov's ministering angel, the "samech-mem", trapping them in his web, that causes the dust from the transgressions that they trample beneath their heels to rise up to the Kisei HaKovod. Thus, both combatants caused the dust to rise up to the Kisei HaKovod—Eisov's ministering angel with his harmful accusations and Yaakov with his defensive arguments.

The Name Yaakov Is Associated with the Minor Mitzvos while the Name Yisroel Is Associated with the Major Mitzvos

Continuing onward and upward along this exalted path, let us address the issue of the two names. HKB"H chose to leave the name Yaakov in place, while adding to it the name Yisroel. In contrast—as we have learned from the writings of the Chasam Sofer—Eisov's ministering angel wished to eliminate the name Yaakov completely, leaving only the name Yisroel in its place. For, the name Yaakov reflects the fact that a person does indeed observe the minor Mitzvos, which some trample with their heels—belittling their significance. As indicated, this is the reason he was given the name Yaakov: "וידו אוחזת בעקב עשו". Recall that the Megaleh Amukos taught us that the name Yaakov indicates that he was constantly on guard not to fall into Eisov's trap—aimed at causing him to be negligent and fail in the observance of the minor Mitzvos associated with the heel.

The name Yisroel, on the other hand, reflects the fact that he rose from level to level, constantly striving to perform Mitzvos in the most ideal manner possible—in order to achieve the greatest spiritual heights. Yet, specifically when one achieves the greatest heights must he be doubly careful not to fall prey to the yetzer's trap. For, one is liable to belittle the significance of the minor Mitzvos, if one thinks that he is serving Hashem on such a high level. In fact, we find that this was precisely Dovid HaMelech's fear according to the following Midrash Tanchume (Eikev 1):

"יתברך שמו של הקב"ה שנתן תורה לישראל, שיש בה תרי"ג מצוות ויש בהן קלות וחמורות, ומפני שיש בהן מצוות קלות שאין בני אדם משגיחין בהן, אלא שמשליכין אותן תחת עקביהן כלומר שהן קלות, לפיכך היה דוד מתיירא מיום הדין ואומר, רבונו של עולם איני מתיירא מן מצוות החמורות שבתורה שהן חמורות, ממה אני מתיירא מן מצוות הקלות, שמא עברתי על אחת מהן אם עשיתי אם לא עשיתי מפני שהיתה קלה, ואתה אמרת הוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבמצוה חמורה".

HKB"H gave Yisroel the Torah containing 613 Mitzvos—some minor and some major. Consequently, some people are negligent with regard to the minor Mitzvos, and toss them under their heels in a manner of speaking. Therefore, Dovid HaMelech feared the judgment day declaring: "Master of the Universe, I am not worried about the Torah's major Mitzvos, because of their gravity and stringency. I am, however, concerned about the minor Mitzvos. Perhaps I transgressed one of them, because they seemed easy or less significant. For, You have warned us to pay equal attention to a minor mitzvah as we would to a major mitzvah".

This is why HKB"H insisted that the name Yaakov should remain in effect even after he merited the name Yisroel. So that even though He would rise spiritually to fulfill Mitzvos on higher levels and with loftier intent commensurate with the name Yisroel, he would take care to continue fulfilling even the lesser Mitzvos that a person tramples with his heels. On the other hand, Eisov's ministering angel wished to uproot the name Yaakov completely, leaving in its place only the name Yisroel. For he knew that if he successfully tripped Yaakov up with the minor Mitzvos, he would eventually succeed in causing him to transgress the major Mitzvos as well, chas v'cholileh. This is the significance of the Chasam Sofer's exposition. The two names Yaakov and Yisroel together possess a numerical value equal to **קר"ע שט"ן**—indicating that a person who serves Hashem on both levels is guaranteed to overcome the soton.

Yaakov Took the Letter Yud from Eisov

I was struck by a wonderful idea for those who appreciate the dimension of "remez". Based on our discussion thus far, we can better appreciate what the Megaleh Amukos writes on this week's parsha regarding the possuk: "ויגע בכף ירכו"—he struck the ball of his thighbone. He addresses the question raised by the commentaries on the possuk (Bereishis 25, 26): "ואחרי כן יצא" "ואחיו וידו אוחזת בעקב עשו ויקרא שמו יעקב"—after that, his brother emerged and his hand was grasping onto Eisov's heel; and he called his name Yaakov. According to Rashi, it was HKB"H who named him Yaakov. If he was named for the act of grasping onto

Eisov's heel, he should have been named **"עקב"**. Where did the letter "yud" in the name **"יעקב"** come from?

He provides an answer based on Rashi's comment concerning the name Eisov (ibid. 25): **"לפי שהיה נעשה כגון שנים הרבה"**—he was born fully formed and hairy like a much older child. The Rashbam adds that the name **"עשו"** is a derivative of the word **"עשוי"**—implying that he emerged fully formed like an older child. If indeed this is the source of his name, why wasn't he named **"עשוי"**, with a letter "yud" added at the end? In fact, his name should have been **"עשוי"** with a "yud" at the end; however, Yaakov snatched the "yud" away from him and added it to his own name—leaving his brother's name as merely Eisov.

This event is actually alluded to in the text: **"וידו אוחזת בעקב עשו"**—and his hand was grasping onto Eisov's heel. The word **"עקב"**, meaning heel, refers to the end or last part of something. Thus, the possuk informs us that Yaakov's hand grasped onto the end of Eisov's original name **"עשו"**, the letter "yud", and snatched it away. This is also inferred by the word **"יד"** which is an anagram for **"יד"**, the letter which Yaakov extracted from Eisov's heel. Therefore, the possuk concludes: **"ויקרא שמו יעקב"**—HKB"H named him **"יעקב"**—combining the letter "yud" which Yaakov had seized with the letters **"עקב"** meaning heel. This concludes the exposition of the Megaleh Amukos. Nonetheless, it is still incumbent upon us to explain the practical significance of this letter "yud" that Yaakov extracted from Eisov and which was incorporated into his name **"יעקב"**.

The Letter "Yud" Represents Chochmah

It seems that we can explain the matter based on the foundation we established above. The yetzer hora knows full well that a person will not obey its wish that he transgress major aveiros. Therefore, he cleverly persuades the person initially to be remiss regarding minor Mitzvos. Then, little by little, by means of the process of **"aveireh goreres aveireh"**--one transgression leads to another--the yetzer ultimately gets the person to transgress, chas v'cholileh, all of the major aveiros.

Knowing that this is how the yetzer operates, it would seem that the best way to avoid this undesirable outcome is to act wisely by anticipating the consequences of our actions. We must always remember that the yetzer's true goal is to cause one to transgress the major aveiros. To achieve this goal, it begins by enticing a person to commit minor aveiros. To convey this point, the Gemoreh teaches us (Soteh 3a): **"אין אדם עובר עבירה אלא אם"**

"כן נכנס בו רוח שטות"—a person only commits an aveireh if he was temporarily possessed by a whim of insanity. In other words, had he anticipated the consequences of committing minor aveiros and to what ends they might lead, he would have avoided them with all his might.

Now, the Zohar hakodesh (Pinchos 232a) states: **"י' חכמה"**—the letter "yud" represents "chochmah", wisdom. Additionally, we have learned in the Gemoreh (Tomid 32a): **"איזהו חכם הרואה"** **"את הנולד"**—who is considered a wise man, he who foresees the consequences. Seen in this light, we can better appreciate why Yaakov grabbed hold of Eisov's heel—which symbolizes, according to the Megaleh Amukos, the minor Mitzvos which people trample with their heels and which the yetzer utilizes to trip people up. Anticipating this tactic, Yaakov wisely snatched from Eisov the letter "yud"—representing "chochmah"—and attached it to his name to form **"יעקב"**. By this clever act, he wished to insure that he would behave like a "chochom" and anticipate the consequences of his actions. In particular, he would be aware that the transgression of minor aveiros ultimately leads to the transgression of major aveiros.

This also explains why Eisov's ministering angel chose to battle Yaakov specifically during the darkness of night. As daylight broke, he pleaded with Yaakov: **"שלחני כי עלה השחר"**—Release me for dawn has broken. For, his main battle with Yaakov—concerning the performance of the minor Mitzvos—is only relevant during the darkness of night--when man doesn't see things clearly and doesn't foresee the consequences of his actions. When the light of day illuminates matters, however, the yetzer is no longer in control. Being able to discern matters clearly, man realizes that being remiss with regards to the minor Mitzvos carries with it dire consequences.

Continuing on in the text, the possuk reads: **"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: **"לרפאות את צלעתו"**—the sun rose specifically to heal his limp. This possuk teaches us that HKB"H provided Yaakov and his offspring, Bnei Yisroel, the light of the sun with which to see future consequences—in order to heal his limp. For, we have learned that he limped on his hip due to his offspring's laxity regarding the minor Mitzvos. As explained, this impairment can be remedied or even prevented by utilizing the letter "yud"—representing "chochmah"—from Yaakov's name to anticipate future consequences.

This then is the implication of the possuk regarding HKB"H's pronouncement to the nochosh: **"הוא ישובך ראש"**—he shall pound your head. Man will defeat you by means of his wisdom: **"החכם עיניו בראשו"**—a wise man's eyes are in his head--by realizing from the start (mei'rosh) that if he follows the advice of the nochosh concerning minor matters, he will eventually come to transgress major aveiros. Nevertheless: **"ואתה תשובנו עקב"**—you shall hiss at his heel. You shall succeed in defeating man by means of the **"עקב"**—by persuading him to commit minor aveiros which man tramples with his heels. For, if he fails in this regard, he will ultimately fail with regard to the major, more stringent Mitzvos themselves, chas v'cholileh.

The Device of Kal Vochoomer Teaches Us to Treat Minor Matters as Stringently as Major Matters

Based on the present discussion, I would like to propose my own interpretation of an enigmatic possuk that appears in our parsha immediately after Yaakov's victory over Eisov's ministering angel (Bereishis 33, 20): **"ויקרא לו אל אלקי ישראל"**—and He called him "El", the G-d of Yisroel. The Gemoreh expounds on this possuk (Megillah 18a): **"מנין שקראו הקב"ה ליעקב א"ל, שנאמר: ויקרא לו א"ל אלקי ישראל"**—from where do we know that HKB"H called Yaakov "El"? For it says: "And He called him 'El,' the G-d of Yisroel". The holy Maggid, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsch, zy"a, in Ohr Torah, explains this Gemoreh based on the well-known fact that the thirteen "midos horachamim" correspond to the thirteen midos used to elucidate and interpret the Torah (the thirteen hermeneutic principles).

According to the Arizal's scheme, the first two names—"Hashem, Hashem"—are not counted among the thirteen "midos horachamim", but are actually the source of the "midos horachamim". According to this format, the first of the "midos" is **א"ל**, the second is **"רחום"**, and so on and so forth. It turns out, therefore, that the name "El" corresponds to the first hermeneutic principle, "kal Vochoomer" (**"קל וחומר"**). So, the holy Maggid explains that this is why HKB"H called Yaakov "El"—to infer that He was implementing the methodology of a "kal Vochoomer". If it is possible for a person to elevate sparks of kedushah from material—"chomri"—matters and activities, it is obvious that he can do so when occupied with spiritual—"kal"—matters.

In his sefer Beit HaOtzar, the great Rabbi Yosef Engel, ztz"l, addresses the concept of (Sanhedrin 54a, Temureh 9a): **"אין עונשין מן הדין"**. In other words, the death penalty and lashes are not meted out for transgressing a prohibition which is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah but is only derived by dint of a "kal Vochoomer". The commentaries struggle to explain the rationale behind this principle. After all, a "kal Vochoomer" is one of the thirteen methods by which the Torah is expounded. Yet, as explained, since the method of "kal Vochoomer" corresponds to the name "El", which represents chesed—kindness—hence, it is inappropriate to punish a person based on this methodology. (The association between the name "El" and chesed is derived from the possuk (Tehillim 52, 3): **"חסד אל כל היום"**—the kindness of "El" is all day long.)

In any event, we must endeavor to explain the importance and significance of a "kal Vochoomer". After all, HKB"H chose it as the first of the thirteen "midos" used to elucidate and interpret the Torah. Additionally, it possesses the power to invoke the first of the "midos horachamim", "El", which signifies chesed: **"חסד אל כל היום"**-- the kindness of "El" is all day long. Based on our present discussion, let us propose a novel idea. The premise of a "kal Vochoomer" is to compare something that is stringent—"chomur"—to something that is less stringent—"kal". It allows us to apply a stringency to something that is considered "chomur" based on the fact that this stringency is found in something related that is by comparison "kal". For, if the stringency applies to this less stringent matter, it seems obvious that it should also apply to the more stringent matter, all the more so.

We can now appreciate the tremendous importance of the method known as "kal Vochoomer". For, we learn from it that it is prohibited to differentiate between minor Mitzvos and major Mitzvos. We must fulfill all Mitzvos equally! For this reason, HKB"H referred to Yaakov as "El"—the "midah" corresponding to "kal Vochoomer"—after he defeated Eisov's ministering angel. For, it was apparent that from the moment of his birth, he was already careful to observe the minor Mitzvos and the major Mitzvos equally, as alluded to by the possuk: **"ויידו אוחות בעקב עשו"**. In his sacred service of Hashem, he adopted the method of "kal Vochoomer"—treating the "kal", the minor matters, and the "chomur", the major matters, alike.

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