

"And he (the angel) saw that he could not prevail over him (Yaakov), and he touched the hollow of his thigh." (32:26)

Yaakov *Avinu* and the angel representing Eisav were locked in battle the entire night. Perceiving that he could not prevail over Yaakov, the angel unleashed his most powerful weapon, one that would surely disrupt Yaakov's concentration. The *Sforno* explains that the angel showed him an image of the future leaders of *Klal Yisrael* sinning. Yaakov's resulting concern caused him to momentarily lose focus, enabling the angel to strike him in the hollow of his thigh. Since Yaakov's strength was derived from his complete focus upon the Almighty both in thought and speech, the moment this connection was undermined he became vulnerable to Eisav's angel.

We must endeavor to understand the angel's particular selection of future tragedy that he chose to demonstrate to Yaakov. Unquestionably, the iniquities of the future leaders of *Klal Yisrael* is cause for grave concern. Does it compare, however, to our tragic history marred with such unprecedented calamities as the destruction of the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*, the Inquisition, or the Holocaust? Would not showing Yaakov his children's devastating misfortunes have a greater effect than their leaders' iniquities?

In responding to this question, *Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, Shlita* explains that Eisav's angel understood that the key to Jewish survival is the *gedolei Yisrael*, the *Torah* leaders. The most devastating blow to Jewish survival is the impairment of *Torah* leadership. The mere thought of this occurrence unsettled Yaakov more than any physical disaster. After a physical catastrophe we are confronted with extreme depression, desolation and hopelessness. Nevertheless, a foundation on which to regroup and rebuild still exists. We have only to look at the rebuilding of our people and the rekindling of the spark of *Torah* that was all but extinguished during the cataclysmic tragedy of the Holocaust.

The *Torah* leadership of *Klal Yisrael*, however, is the foundation upon which the entire nation rests. They are the upholders of our future. Without the leaders to impart and dictate *Torah* law to the next generation, to serve as role models to young and old alike, to battle any infraction from within and without, we have no future. The leaders are the mainstay of our national and spiritual existence. The slightest indiscretion on their part harms the entire nation eternally.

Horav Leibowitz implies two inferences from the *Sforno*. First, he underscores the enormous responsibility resting upon the shoulders of our *Torah* leaders. Since the future of our people is contingent upon them, any activity on their part which is inconsistent with such a standard will have a dreadful effect upon *Klal Yisrael*. Second, we now gain a more profound insight into the type of reverence to be accorded a *gadol b'Yisrael*, a *Torah* leader. He is the embodiment of the *Torah* in our midst.

This respect goes beyond our own personal obligation to appreciate the role our *Torah* leaders play

in our lives. We must inculcate this recognition into the minds and hearts of our children by ensuring the continued growth of quality *Torah chinuch*. Only vibrant *Torah chinuch* will produce such leaders by personally demonstrating our love and reverence for *talmidei chachamim*. Children emulate what they see at home. A home which supports *Torah* institutions and teaches reverence for its disseminators creates the environment in which children can learn the value of *Torah* and its leadership. They will, in turn, as they mature, carry on the banner of *Torah* and perpetuate its values.