

**"And Yaakov was left alone, and there wrestled a (man) with him... and he touched the hollow of his thigh... Therefore the Bnei Yisrael do not eat the sinew of the thigh vein."
(32:25-33)**

This narrative raises many questions. First, why was Yaakov alone, without his wives and children who had already crossed the river? *Chazal* respond that he had forgotten small jars and returned to retrieve them. Secondly, who was this "man" that wrestled with Yaakov? *Chazal* respond that this was Eisav's "guardian angel". We may also question the significance of the damage inflicted upon the thigh muscle. As a remembrance of this physical damage, we are forbidden to eat the sinew of an animal's thigh muscle.

We may suggest that the *Torah* is illustrating the effect of *Am Yisrael's* exile upon us. Having withstood the evil influence of his wicked father-in-law, Lavan, Yaakov was prepared to meet the challenge of his brother, Eisav. Eisav's guardian angel was searching for an opportunity to find fault with Yaakov and demonstrate that he was not worthy of the birthright. When he saw Yaakov risk his life for a few small jars, he was finally able to libel Yaakov, claiming that Yaakov showed an avaricious interest in his material possessions. The argument between the two continued on through the night. Eisav's angel claimed that Yaakov had exchanged his lofty ideals for material gain, while Yaakov insisted that he still maintained his attribute of truth with all its consequences. Finally, the angel was able to find a weakness in one of Yaakov's limbs, the thigh muscle. The thigh muscle controls the movement of the body. An impairment in this muscle symbolizes an imperfection in one's ability to "move forward". Because of Yaakov's ability to cope with Lavan's evil influence, he had adopted an attitude of complacency. He did not seek to escape from Lavan's midst as soon as possible. This attitude represented by the ability to adapt to *galus* (exile) and "accept" its ramifications is symbolized by the disfigured thigh muscle. Consequently, we are forbidden to eat the *gid hanashe* (sinew of the thigh muscle). This prohibition serves as a constant reminder that we must not be relaxed and complacent as we await the advent of *Moshiach*.