

He said to him, “What is your name?” He replied, “Yaakov”... Then Yaakov inquired, and he said, “Divulge, if you please, your name.” And he said, “Why then do you inquire of my name?” (32:28,30)

Eisav's angel asked Yaakov *Avinu* for his name. It is not as if he did not know his name. He simply wanted to know the source of Yaakov's strength, his power. Our Patriarch replied, “Yaakov. My power is in the heel. I enter the fray from the side, unnoticed. This is how I succeed.” The angel said, “From now on, your name will be Yisrael, a name which implies strength. You will no longer have to come from the *eikav*, heel/side. You will come with strength.”

Our Patriarch seemed content with this new designation. He now said to the angel, “Since we are discussing ‘names,’ and you inquired as to the source of my strength, let me ask you the same question: ‘From where do you derive your power? What is your name?’ How do you succeed in ensnaring people, seducing the unsuspecting, and using your guile to entrap those who do not know better? How do you convince people to see darkness and call it light; to see evil and call it good; to see and taste bitter and call it sweet?”

The angel replied, “Why, then, do you inquire of my name? This is the source of my strength: no questions!” The unsuspecting do not question. They live life in the fast lane, without pausing to think, to ask if perhaps what they are doing is wrong, dangerous, spiritually foolish. When one does not bother to ask, then he cannot be told that it is wrong. Some are too busy to question; others are either afraid that the reply will be negative, or they do not care about the reply. They are having too much fun. Why stop to ask questions?

This is how the venerable *Maggid, Horav Shabsi Yudelvevitz, zl*, explains their dialogue. If we would just pause for a moment to digest these words, to permit them to enter our minds and permeate our hearts. The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination (represented by Eisav's angel), understands that if a person stops to think, to ask, he will receive a negative reply – and he will refrain from doing the wrong thing. Thus, the *yetzer hora* sees to it that there is no time to ask, no breaks: “Live your life; go about your merry way; eat, sleep, enjoy, waste every minute of your day, but, absolutely do not pause to think.” When one thinks, he questions – and the answers are not acceptable.

Question number one: What is my purpose in life? Why was I created? If we would even stop long to answer this question cogently, we would put the *yetzer hora* out of business. This is what Eisav's angel replied to Yaakov, “Why now do you have to ask? Do not ruin all of the fun.”