

And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. (32:25)

Chazal (quoted by *Rashi*) say that the “man” who wrestled with Yaakov *Avinu* was no ordinary human; rather, he was the archangel of Eisav, who had been dispatched by Hashem to pave the way for the ultimate salvation of Yaakov and his descendants. We derive a portent for the future from their fight. Just as Yaakov was injured during the course of the struggle, but, nonetheless, he prevailed and went on to even greater achievements; so, too, will our People suffer losses in the future, but will emerge stronger, better, spiritually healthier – in preparation for our ultimate *geulah*, redemption.

Later on (*Bereishis* 37:15), Yosef *HaTzaddik*, upon searching for his brothers, encountered an *ish*, “man,” who *Rashi* identified as Gavriel, Hashem’s ministering Angel. The question that the commentators immediately ask is, “What is the criteria for defining *ish*?” Why is Yosef’s *ish* Gavriel, while Yaakov’s *ish* is identified as Eisav’s Angel?

The answer (which has been mentioned in an earlier edition of *Peninim*), as explained by *Horav Yechezkel, zl, m’Kuzmir*, is that Yaakov transformed himself into a bridge for helping others. He would take what he received in one place and give it/use to (help) others. When he asked the *ish* to stay and help him, the *ish* replied that he was late for singing *shirah* to Hashem. His time had come; his purpose in Creation had arrived. He could not be late. Only Eisav’s angel would employ his personal agenda as an excuse for not helping a Jew in need. When a Jew is suffering, when he is in dire need of assistance – one must come to his aid. Personal spiritual ascendance is not an excuse. It indicates a degree of selfishness, a deficiency in his spiritual integrity.

Yosef, on the other hand, was lost in the field. The *ish* took pity on him and asked him how he could help. Such an *ish* represents the highest form of *chesed*. He is someone who does not wait to be asked to help – but sees a need and immediately “rolls up his sleeves” and jumps in to help. Thus, he is identified as Gavriel.

Rav Yechezkel once sent a *shliach*, agent, to solicit funds from a certain wealthy man. When the *shliach* arrived at the home of the would-be benefactor, the man ignored him. Apparently, the man was in the middle of baking *matzos* for *Pesach*. He was just too busy to listen to anyone. “Take a number and come back” was probably his reply. The *shliach* returned to the *Rebbe* empty-handed and depressed. He was no *shmatte*. He was on a mission for his *Rebbe*. He expected a little common courtesy. When he related his experience to the *Rebbe*, the *Rebbe* remained silent. On *Shavuos*, however, when the wealthy man came to *Kuzmir* to spend *Yom Tov* with the *Rebbe*, the *Rebbe* shared the above *dvar Torah* with him.

I was thinking about this Torah thought today when a harmless, but bothersome, well-meaning, but annoying, person wanted me to drop everything to listen to him relate the latest antics of his granddaughter. At first, I was tempted to avoid him, but then I realized that he had only one granddaughter after waiting some time for his only son to get married. Most of his counterparts

have been blessed with many grandchildren. He has one – and his life revolves around her. Who was I to deprive him of his joy and *nachas*?

We think that our time, our *mitzvah* observance, our good deeds, take precedence over anything our friend or neighbor has to discuss with us. If it is important to him – it should be important to us (or at least we should act interested). I have a dear friend who has a puppy (I am scared of all animals – even goldfish.) Every conversation starts or ends with news about his puppy. This is important to him. Who am I to argue? It is not all about me. Eisav's angel indicated that his singing *shirah* took precedence over Yaakov's plea for help. The *Malach Gavriel* did not wait for Yosef to come over and ask for help. He reached out to him. We have before us two paradigms of behavior, two standards of service – two Angels: One represents Eisav; one represents Hashem. Do we really have a choice whom to follow?