

# **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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## **VAYISHLACH**

Names are essential in identifying who we are. They also contain much deeper meanings. The Kabbalistic Or HaChayim comments that a name represents one's soul. The renaming of Yaakov in Parsha Vayishlach takes on a whole new significance.

When born in Parshat Toldot, Yaakov is given his name because the child is holding on to his brother's heel - a seemingly uncomplimentary name. However, in this week's parsha, Yaakov is renamed after his victorious battle with an angel.

Upon request, the angel bestows a new name to Yaakov, he will now be called Yisrael. Yet, even after receiving his new name, the Torah continues to call him Yaakov. This doesn't change until G-d, later in the Parsha, appears to Yaakov and informs him of the name change to Yisrael. From this time on, both names will be used. The question is asked, why doesn't the Torah begin to call him Yisrael after the first time he is given this name?

The answer to this question can be found by studying Yaakov's life and relating it to the names he received.

The first part of Yaakov's life was one of deceit and trickery. He tricks Eisav to sell his birthright and then impersonates EISAV to receive the blessing. He tried to sneak away from Lavan, under the cover of night. The turning point in Yaakov's life is when he battles the angel. This is the first time he confronts his opponent head on and not in some stealthy way. The angel calls him by his new name because (32:29) "for you have contended with G-d and with the people and have won."

The great Onkelos translates IM ELOKIM not as "with G-d" but rather, "in front of G-d". Now that Yaakov confronts his problems head on, the name of Yisrael, then represents that G-d will fight besides and together with Yaakov.

Why then is he not called Yisrael immediately after this story?

The angel's refusal to divulge his name signifies that Yaakov has yet proven himself worthy of Yisrael, which includes G-d's name, as his name.

Only after Yaakov proves himself by confronting Eisav rather than avoiding him. He shows he has gained leadership qualities to himself. Also, after the story of Dina where he is upset over the trickery and deceit over the people of Shechem and disowns such behavior. Only after

Yaakov has proven himself in these two incidents, G-d appears to him and gives him his new name. To establish Yaakov's new name as Yisrael, G-d reveals his own name El-L SHA-DAI. Yaakov now truly deserves to carry the name of G-d within his own name of Yisrael.

Now G-d tells him that with his new name and his new identity, he now possesses the leadership skills necessary to build a nation. So too, we should not take our name at face value but rather, we should strive to reach the level where we, too, can be proud to carry the name of G-d in all our ways. 🏰