



RABBI GROSSMAN ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA



Self-Sacrifice in the Rebbe's Room Parshas Vayishlach

It was a difficult period. Jewish survivors arrived in the country, remnants of the Holocaust. Their single desire was to rebuild their lives. No one had the desire, power or time to worry about the future of Judaism in the country. One of the few who fought back against attempts to efface the Jewish heritage was my Father, Rabbi Yisrael Grossman OBM.

It began with a battle for the Tehran Children, continued with the battle for the Yemenite children, and then with his efforts to establish Jewish schools around Israel.

He was fighting against dangerous trends and movements that desired to rid the Jews of their roots and history.

During those days, the battle for the Tehran Children was underway. The Brisker Rebbe organized a petition, which was signed by several leading rabbis. It became apparent that the Gur Rebbe had not signed the petition, and that someone did not want him to sign it.

The Brisker Rebbe turned to my father for help. "Without the Gur Rebbe's signature, the petition is worthless. You are the only one who can get him to sign it," he told my father.

My father went right away to see the Gur Rebbe. He told the Rebbe's Gabai, sexton, that he had come to speak to the Rebbe privately and was admitted into his room. Father presented it with the petition. The Rebbe read it quickly and approved the text.

Father left the room quickly and excitedly, while the Gabai began to chase him through the streets of Jerusalem.

In our weekly parsha we read about the battle between Yaacov and Esav's angle.

"And he [the angle] said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have commanding power with [an angel of] G-d and with men, and you have prevailed.'"¹

Yaacov inquires about the angel's name, but does not receive an answer. "And Jacob asked and said, 'Now tell me

your name, and he said, 'Why is it that you ask for my name?' And he blessed him there."

If the angle admitted that he had been defeated by Yaacov, how dare he not provide Yaacov with an answer? Why does he refuse to disclose his name?

A man's name alludes to his essence. Therefore, a person's name given to him by his parents is of great significance. The name serves as a reminder for the path the man must march on, and if he is named after one of the greats, his path is well charted.

When the angle blesses Yaacov with his new name he is implying to the deep change that is taking place. "You have commanding power with [an angel of] God and with men, and you have prevailed," Yaacov's fundamental nature has changed, and he is now Israel.

The angle has no real inner essence, he is merely a messenger. When Yaacov asks him about his essence he replies accurately: I have no self-standing essence. My name is "Why is it that you ask for my name," for that is an angle's real existence, one of changing missions.

When one executes a mission accurately and to its full extent, his name is of no significance. Father knew that he was fulfilling the order of a leader, and therefore it was not he who convened with the Gur Rebbe, but rather he who sent him.

The Gabai's rage was so great that even many years later, even when he was bound to a wheelchair, father still feared to approach him.

The Gur Rebbe subsequently signed the petition himself. He signed it at the end, and not the first as his status demanded, and that was because he joined the petition only after my father's campaigning.

Several of the Tehran children became G-d fearing Jews, who grew in such a way thanks to the battle on their behalf by the leaders and in merit of father's dedication.

¹ Beresheit 32:29-30.