

Heroes Who Limp

Angels have no leg joints:

וְכִי יֵשׁ יְשִׁיבָה לְמַעְלָה? לֹא כֵן אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל: אֵין יְשִׁיבָה לְמַעְלָה, שְׁנֵאמַר: "וְרַגְלֵיהֶם רַגְלֵי יִשְׂרָה" (יחזקאל א:ז). אֵין לָהֶם קָפִיצִים.

Is there any sitting in heaven? There is not, said Rabbi Shemuel: There is not sitting in heaven, as it is said: *Their legs were rigid legs* (Ezekiel 1:7). (Genesis Rabbah 65:21)

Jacob limped on account of his hip:

וַיִּזְרַח לוֹ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָבַר אֶת פְּנוּאֵל וְהוּא צָלַע עַל יָרְכוֹ (בראשית לב: לב).

The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel and he was limping on account of his hip (Genesis 32:32).

The sages' interpretation healed Jacob:

וַיִּזְרַח לוֹ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ - אָמַר רַבִּי בְּרַכְיָה: וְלָמִי לוֹ זָרְחָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ? אֵלֶּא "לוֹ" לְרַפּוּאָתוֹ.

The sun rose upon him- and upon whom did the sun not rise? Rather, for him there was a special result; namely, to heal him. (Genesis Rabbah 78:5)

He arrived safely in Shechem:

"וַיָּבֵא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן בְּבֵאוֹ מִפַּדָּן אֶרֶם וַיַּחֲנוּ אֶת פְּנֵי הָעִיר" (ברשית לג: יח).

Jacob arrived safely [shalem] in the city of Shechem in the land of Canaan--having come from Padan Aram--and he encamped before the city (Genesis 33:18).

Healed in body:

"וַיָּבֵא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם" (בראשית לג: יח) - שָׁלֵם בְּגוּפוֹ, לְפִי שְׁכָתוֹב: "וְהוּא צָלַע עַל יָרְכוֹ" (בראשית לב: לב).

And Jacob arrived safely [shalem] in the city of Shechem (Genesis 33:18)- He became whole [shalem] of body, in light of the verse: *he was limping on account of his hip* (Genesis 32:32).

Rashi says perhaps healed, perhaps not:

וַיִּזְרַח לוֹ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ - לְשׁוֹן בְּנֵי אָדָם הוּא: כְּשֶׁהִגַּעְנוּ לְמָקוֹם פְּלוּנֵי הָאִיר לָנוּ הַשֶּׁחַר, זֶהוּ פְּשׁוּטוֹ. וּמְדַרְשׁ אַגְדָּה וַיִּזְרַח לוֹ - לְצַרְכּוֹ, לְרַפְאוֹת אֶת צִלְעָתוֹ. כְּמָה דְתִימָא: "וַיִּזְרַח לְכֶם יְרָאֵי שְׁמֵי שְׁמֵשׁ צְדָקָה וּמְרַפָּא בְּכַנְפֵיהָ" (מלאכי ג: כ).

The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel- This is how people speak: "By the time we reached such-and-such a place, the sun rose upon us." This is the straightforward meaning. But a midrash says that *the sun rose upon him* means that it rose to benefit him, to heal him of his limp.

As it says: *The sun of righteousness shall rise upon you [or, for you,] who revere my name, with healing in its wings* (Malachi 3:20). (Rashi on Genesis 32:32)

But Rashbam asserts that Jacob continued to limp:

"וְהוּא צִלַּע עַל יָרְכוֹ" (בראשית לב: לא) - עָתָה כְּשֶׁהָיָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ זוֹרֵחַ רָאוּהוּ צוֹלַע עַל יָרְכוֹ.

He was limping on account of his hip (Genesis 32:32)- Now that the sun had risen, everyone could see that he was limping. (Rashbam on Genesis 32:32)

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi walked with grandfather Jacob's limp:

"וְהוּא צִלַּע עַל יָרְכוֹ" (בראשית לב: לב) - רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי הָיָה סָלֵק לְרוּמֵי וְכִיּוֹן דְּאַתָּא לְעַבְדוֹ נִפְקַ רַבִּי חֲנִינְיָא לְקַדְמוּתֵיהָ, אֲשֶׁכַּח מְטַלַּע עַל יָרְחוֹ וְאָמַר לוֹ: דְּמִי אֶתְ לְסַבְדָּ, "וְהוּא צִלַּע עַל יָרְכוֹ."

He was limping on account of his hip (Genesis 32:32)- Rabbi Joshua ben Levi had gone to Rome. When he returned to Akko, Rabbi Haninah went to Akko to meet him. Rabbi Haninah found him limping on account of his hip and said to him: You resemble your grandfather who also *was limping on account of his hip*. (Genesis Rabbah 78:5)