

Be Prepared

The scene was tense. Yaakov had not seen his brother Eisav since that fateful event, 34 years ago, when Yaakov tricked Yitzchak into giving him Eisav's beracha. For this, Eisav swore to kill Yaakov. Yaakov fled - first to the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, and later to Lavan's house. Now he was coming back home with his large family and herds of cattle.

How would Eisav greet Yaakov? Did he still want to kill him? Or had his anger subsided. Yaakov was prepared for both possibilities. Rashi (Bereshis 32:9) explains that Yaakov prepared himself in three ways. He sent many gifts to appease Eisav. Two hundred female goats, twenty male goats, two hundred and twenty rams, etc., a huge offering (Bereshis 32:15-22). Yaakov prayed to Hashem. "(Hashem) rescue me please from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav" (Bereshis 32:12). Finally, Yaakov readied his group for war. "He divided the people with him, the flocks, cattle, and camels into two camps. He said, 'If Eisav comes to the one camp and strikes it down, then the remaining camp shall survive'" (Bereshis 32:9). Yaakov was prepared for all of the possibilities.

Kinderlach . . .

You have an errand to do for Imma. You hope things will go smoothly, but maybe they won't. You may be stuck waiting in line for a long time. Be prepared. Bring a sefer to learn while you are waiting. Time is precious. Don't waste it. Imagine another situation. You want to ask your brother to help you with your homework. Maybe he will agree, maybe he won't. Be prepared for either answer. Then you won't get upset if he says no. Kinderlach, Yaakov Avinu teaches us an important lesson: be prepared for anything.

"Kotonti" (1)

Yaakov was about to meet Eisav and he was afraid. Afraid? Yaakov had tremendous *emunah* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust) in Hashem. What was he afraid of? "Kotonti (I have been diminished) by all of the *chasodim* (kindness) and by all of the *emes* (truth) that You have done for Your servant" (Bereshis 32:11). Rav Leib

Chasman, zt"l in his sefer, *Ohr Yohel*, illuminates this verse. Yaakov was concerned. He was the recipient of many acts of kindness from Hashem. Perhaps he had received all of the reward for all of his mitzvos, and he had no merits left. Was that really possible? After all, Yaakov Avinu had learned Torah for 14 years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. He kept all 613 mitzvos in the house of Lavan the trickster. Could he really have no merits left? Yet, that is how Yaakov looked at life. He knew that there was always room for improvement in spiritual endeavors. Perhaps his mitzvos were lacking in quantity and quality. Yet, in the area of physical blessings, he felt that he had received more than he deserved.

What about us? We are satisfied with so little spirituality. "I prayed *shemoneh esray* in five minutes. What more does Hashem want from me?" On the other hand, in the area of comfort, we demand full rights. We are the ones who must say "kotonti". Do we appreciate the kindness?

What is the *emes* that Hashem performed for Yaakov Avinu? Every act of kindness from Hashem, when properly appreciated brings truth into a person's heart and soul. Hashem spills barrels of truth upon us daily. As the *Mesillas Yeshorim* states in Chapter 8. When a person sees and appreciates all of the acts of kindness that the Almighty performs for him every moment of every day, he feels a tremendous debt to the Creator for all of the good. That motivates him never to be lazy or weak in his service to Hashem.

Kinderlach . . .

Let's make a simple calculation. Three meals a day, 365 days a (solar) year equals 1,095 meals a year. If you are ten years old then Hashem has provided you with 10,950 meals. That is awesome! Your heart beats 72 times per minute. Multiply that by 60 minutes per hour, 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, and you have 37,324,800 beats per year. If you are ten years old then Hashem has made your heart beat over 370 million beats. Astounding! If you are awake for 16 hours a day, 365 days per year, then your eyes are seeing for 5,840 hours per year. That is 58,400 hours of vision in ten years! We have so much to thank Hashem for! It's almost beyond comprehension.

"Kotonti" (2)

The Keli Yakar zt"l offers another beautiful explanation of this verse. "Kotonti (my powers are too small to have caused) all of the *chasodim* (kindness) and all of the *emes* (truth) that You have done for Your servant" (Bereshis 32:11). Yaakov Avinu alone could not have amassed all of the wealth that he now possessed. "For with my staff I crossed this Jordan (River)" (32:11). I owned nothing but a stick when I came here. "And now I have become two camps" (32:11). Just now, in a very short time, Yaakov's wealth increased dramatically. He worked for Lavan for twenty years: seven for each daughter and another six tending Lavan's sheep. He received no wages for any of this and was just as poor as when he came. Only at the very end, when he asked Lavan to pay his wages, did his flocks increase in number supernaturally. It was apparent to Yaakov that the Hand of Hashem was at work here. No human being could amass so much wealth so quickly. Hashem made him rich in the blink of an eye.

Kinderlach . . .

We have mentioned two important points. In serving Hashem, we must be prepared. We never know what challenges He will present to us. Secondly, we should never be satisfied with our spiritual accomplishments and always strive to do better. Now we come to a third point. Success. It is so sweet. We want to enjoy it and we should. However, we must realize that it is The One Above, who gave us that success. Kinderlach, you should all be very successful in life, and realize Where the success came from.

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