

THE WHOLENESS OF ALONENESS

by Rabbi Yisroel Roll

If we look at the *Avos—Patriarchs*, we find that every one of them experienced and lived in a state of *aloneness*—each experienced being "a stranger in a strange land." Avraham stood alone against a world of idol—worship; Yitzchak was alone on the *mizbach* at the *Akeidah*; Yaakov was alone when he wrestled the angel; Yosef was alone in prison in Egypt. The Jewish nation was alone, trapped at the Sea of Reeds between the sea and the advancing Egyptian army; Moshe Rabeinu was alone on Mount Sinai when he received the Torah; Aharon Hakohein was alone in the Holy of Holies when he prayed for the nation on Yom Kippur; Pinchas was alone when he stood up to kill Zimri and Cazbi; Yehoshua was alone on the edge of Mount Sinai as he waited for Moshe Rabeinu to return with the Ten Commandments. Shmuel Hanavi was alone as he traveled throughout the country to judge the nation; King David was alone in his rejection by his family; King Solomon was alone when he dedicated the Beis Hamikdash; Eliyhau Hanavi was alone when he confronted the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel; Elisha was alone after his rebbe, Eliyahu Hanavi, was taken to Shamayim in a fiery chariot; Yonah was alone in the belly of the whale. Chizkiyahu was alone in his illness; Chananya, Mishael, and Azaria were alone in the fiery furnace; Daniel was alone in the lion's den; Mordechai was alone in refusing to bow to Haman; Ezra was alone in his return from Bavel and in confronting a wayward nation.

When we look at the lives of the *Imahos—Matriarchs*, we see that they, too, were alone. Sarah was barren and alone in her tent when the angels came to visit; Rivka was alone in leaving her home, traveling to Canaan at a young age to marry Yitzchak; Leah was alone as an apparently unloved wife; Rachel was alone in her barrenness and is buried alone on the side of the road in Beit Lechem. Miriam was alone as she watched over Moshe in the Nile, and was again alone when she was banished from the camp; Channah was alone in her barrenness and in her prayer; Esther was alone in the palace of the Achashverosh; Ruth was alone as she left her family and people and joined Naomi and the Jewish People.

How did our *Avos* and *Imahos* cope with their challenges of *aloneness*?

In the serialized excerpts of this book, *Alone Against the World*, we will journey together through the Torah and Tanach, and discover a *mehalach*, an approach to *aloneness*, that our *Avos* and *Imahos* are teaching us. As we explore and experience their challenges, we will discover and reveal the Torah antidote to loneliness.

The Midrash comments on the encounter between Yaakov and the angel as follows: Just as it says

about Hashem,

The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. (Isaiah 2:11).

So too it states about Yaakov,

And Yaakov was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until dawn. (Breishis 32:25)

The medrash states:

And Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him (Breishis 32:25). It is written: there is none like God, O Yeshurun; He rides across heaven to help you (Devraim 33:26). R. Berachya said in the name of R Yehudah the son of Shimon: There is none like God; But who is like God? Yeshurun is. Yeshurun refers to the pleasant and praiseworthy ones. You find that everything that the Holy One Blessed be He is destined to do at the time of Mashiach, He has already done in This World through the righteous. The Holy One blessed be He, is going to revivify the dead and we find that Elihayu revivified the dead; The Holy One blessed be He, withholds the rains, and we find that Eliyahu withheld the rains; the Holy One Blessed be He is going to bestow a blessing upon a minute quantity and cause it to increase in size, and Eliyhau similarly bestowed a blessing upon a minute quantity and caused it to increase in size; The Holy One blessed be He, is going to revivify the dead and Elisha revivified the dead; The Holy One blessed be He, remembers and heals barren women and Elisha remembered the barren; the Holy One Blessed be He is going to bestow a blessing upon a minute quantity and cause it to increase in size, and Elisha similarly bestowed a blessing upon a minute quantity and caused it to increase in size; The Holy One blessed be He, is going to sweeten the bitter and Elisha sweetened the bitter; The Holy One blessed be He, sweetens the bitter with something bitter and Elishah sweetened the bitter with something bitter; R. Berachya said in the name of R Shimon: There is none like God; But who is like God? Yeshurun is. Yisrael our Grandfather, as it says: and the LORD alone shall be exalted (Isaiah 2:17), so too Yaakov Avinu, as it says: And Yaakov was left alone (Breishis 32:25)



Ashed Hanechalim^[1] explains: The verse states: And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man

with him until the breaking of the day. Breishis 32:25. In what way is the word "alone" used in connection with Yaakov, comparable to the word Alone, used in connection with God Being Alone? Yaakov used his efforts in his battle with the angel of Esav to quiet and overcome all of the lofty powers of temptation and evil which were sent to oppose him and to cause him to veer of his path, which powers were represented by the angel of Esav and all its resources. For it is known that evil opposes goodness, and when the good exerts itself, it vanquishes evil itself. And in the World to Come, all the forces of evil which entice man to sin will be destroyed, and only the Name of God Alone will remain, for everyone will recognize only the Kevod Hashem, the honor of God, and there will no longer be any evil in the Upper World or the earthly world, or in the heart of man. Yaakov embodies this singular goodness in this world, and in this Yaakov is alone. And the verse *And Yaakov was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until dawn*, is an expression of the principle of Klal U'prat—a general principle followed by a particular detail, in that the verse states the general principle that Yaakov remained alone and vanquished the power of evil, and then the verse expresses the particular detail that a "man wrestled with him" and Yaakov vanquished him.

The *aloneness* of Yaakov parallels and mirrors the Aloneness of Hashem in representing God's Goodness. God Being Alone means that Hashem is the Source of Good and Desires to Bestow that Goodness on the world, therefore He Created the world in order to receive His Goodness.^[2] God only creates Good, whereas evil is a product of man's own inappropriate exercise of his Free Will. Yaakov Avinu, in bringing to the world the *middah* of emes—truth, opposes evil represented by Lavan and Esav. Yaakov is God's representative in this world, and that is why Yaakov's face is engraved on the Throne of Glory.^[3]

1. Rabbi Avraham Shick of Slonim
2. Ramchal, Derech Hashem 1:2
3. Ashed Hanechalim, Breishis Rabba

This essay is an excerpt of a new book by Rabbi Yisroel Roll, entitled *Alone Against the World--the Torah Antidote to Loneliness*. Feldheim Publishers. For details [click here](#).