

I HAVE IT ALL!

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week's parsha, Vayishlach, begins with Yaakov's preparations to meet his brother Esav. Fearful of this encounter, Yaakov prepares in three ways. He prays to Hashem to save him, he sends Esav very expensive gifts and he prepares for the possibility of battle.

Interestingly, when he prays he asks Hashem (G-d), "hatzilainee na miyad achi, miyad Esav (32:12)" - please save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav. Being that he only had one brother, why was there a need for this redundancy of "the hand of my brother, the hand of Esav"?

The Beis HaLevi explains that Yaakov was worried about two different, dangerous aspects - the 'brother' aspect and the 'Esav' aspect. Yaakov realized that this meeting would presumably lead to one of two situations. Esav would either remain angry and try to kill him or would calm down and want to build a brotherly relationship. Yaakov's prayer was not redundant at all - he was asking to be saved from both of these possibilities.

The 'brotherhood' of Esav was fraught with danger. The incessant influence of a close relationship would have affected Yaakov's level of service to Hashem. This posed a very serious spiritual danger to Yaakov. The crazed, murderous 'Esav' posed a serious physical danger to Yaakov. If Esav was planning to make good on his promise to murder Yaakov, there wouldn't be much time left for any spiritual aspirations to be realized!

Ultimately, Yaakov's prayer was answered. Esav's original intention was to murder Yaakov but he soon calmed down. Esav then suggested that they travel together. Yaakov offered a reason why this wouldn't be feasible and Esav assented. As the passuk states: "Esav continued on that day to Seir (33:16)". They didn't even remain together for one day.

The Beis HaLevi adds that this encounter epitomized the dangers that we, the descendants of Yaakov, would face during our present galus (exile) of Edom (Esav). During the start of the galus the danger would be physical - many attempts would be made to totally annihilate us. An even cursory view of our history leading up to the time of the Holocaust clearly confirms this. The galus would then switch gears to the spiritual dangers of acceptance and 'brotherhood'. Being welcomed into our host societies and our subsequent desire to 'fit in' has caused a spiritual vacuum and unfamiliarity that has distanced millions.

During this encounter, there was a very revealing exchange between Yaakov and Esav. Esav, upon

seeing the gifts that Yaakov had sent asked who is so worthy in your eyes to deserve such a gift. Yaakov answered that I sent it to you to find favor in your eyes.

"Vayomer Esav 'yesh li rav' (33:9)" - And Esav said: I have much - keep that which is yours. Yaakov replies, please accept my gift, "v'chi yesh li kol (33:11)" - I have all.

The Kli Yakar explains that Esav claimed to have much. Those who are bent on physical and materialistic pleasures never feel they have it all. I recall a survey in Reader's Digest of the amount that people in different earning brackets felt they needed in order to be truly happy. The results uncannily backed up the words of chaza"l who state that "if one has one hundred, he wants two hundred, if he has two hundred, he wants four hundred".

Yaakov, on the other hand, had a very different approach - "yesh li kol" - I have it all. Those who set their sights on spiritual growth and accomplishment understand that, in terms of their materialistic standing, Hashem has sent them exactly what they need. Yesh li kol! As we say in our daily morning blessings: "she'asah lee kol tzarchee" - You have given me all of my needs. Happiness and satisfaction result not from what we have but rather, from how we deal with and view that which we have.

At the end of The Grace After Meals we state that the "dorshay Hashem lo yachs'ru kol tov" - those who seek Hashem are not lacking 'any good'. At first glance, this seems quite difficult to understand. We see many 'seekers of Hashem' who, in fact, are lacking much!

Rav Lopian explains this with a parable of a person who visited a friend's home. This friend immediately began to boast about a very valuable collection that he had managed to gather. With a flourish he opened the medicine cabinet and proudly displayed the contents - an astounding collection of varied medications. Explaining that his doctor had warned him to take these many medications in order to stay alive, he gloated about the price of each medication and the difficulties he had surmounted in order to amass such a world-class collection. The more the owner spoke of his wealth, the more the guest felt relieved that such a 'fortune' wasn't his. In the place of the usual pangs of jealousy upon seeing that which others have, he felt an overpowering sense of relief and satisfaction.

We don't state that they have 'all good'. We say that they aren't lacking 'any good' - they, being satisfied with their lot, feel no sense of lacking at all. Yesh li kol.

The story is told of a student who approached the Maggid of Mezeritch with a difficulty. The Talmud in Berachos states that "one must bless Hashem for bad in the same way that he blesses Hashem for good". We can try to accept that which comes our way... but how can we bless for bad the same way that we bless for good!?

The Maggid directed him to a certain Rav Zushia who would explain the gemara to him. Upon

approaching Rav Zushia, the student explained that he had a difficulty with a certain gemara and the Maggid had sent him to receive an explanation. Rav Zushia demurred saying that if the Maggid didn't have an explanation, there was no way that he could properly explain it. The student insisted and was finally able to pose the question.

Upon hearing the question, Rav Zushia, who was a desperately poor man and had endured a tragic and painful life, laughed out loud and recounted his disbelief that the Maggid could have ever sent him such a question. "That, you'll have to ask someone who has encountered bad in his life. I, thank G-d, have had only good and blessings since the day of my birth. How could I know about accepting bad with happiness?!"

With that, the student obtained a very clear understanding of the words of the gemara. Yesh li kol.

I recall hearing a story of two terminally ill patients confined to beds in a hospital room. One was next to a window and able to see outside while the other patient was not. All day long he would recount to his friend the beauty outside. The majestic trees overlooking the sparkling lake where the rowboats rippled through the water. The ball games on the fields next to the children frolicking on the grass.

The fellow at first enjoyed the descriptions but soon became overcome with jealousy. Why is he able to see it and I'm not. I want his bed!

A few nights later he heard his friend struggling in his sleep. He knew that he should ring the bell, alerting the nurses, but his hand didn't move. In the morning, as the nurse was removing his friend, she asked if he'd like to be moved next to the window. He said he would and his bed was wheeled over.

As soon as the nurse left the room, he excitedly perched himself up on one elbow to look out the window and finally see the wondrous sights for himself. He quickly discerned the dirty gray wall of the adjacent apartment building.

Happiness is not what we have but how we deal with what we have. May we all strive to become true descendants of Yaakov Avinu - people of yesh li kol.

Good Shabbos.

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