

➤ AYSAV COMES TO KILL YAAKOV

The word came to Yaakov that his brother Aysav was coming to greet him, accompanied by 400 men armed to the teeth. It was obvious to all that Aysav intended to kill Yaakov. The *posuk* tells us that Yaakov feared greatly.

In Brachos 4a, Rebbe Yaakov Bar Idi states there is a contradiction between this *posuk* and an earlier one. When Yaakov was leaving his father's house, HASHEM promised him that he would be protected. If so, how is it possible that Yaakov was now afraid?

Rebbe Yaakov bar Idi answers that Yaakov was afraid that HASHEM's promise to guard him might have been based on the assumption that Yaakov would remain on the level he was on. Yaakov feared that he might have sinned and was no longer the same man he once was, so the promise no longer applied. Therefore, there is no contradiction. HASHEM's promise to guard him was based on his remaining on the *madreigah* that was then, and he was afraid that he had lost that level of purity. Therefore, he was now afraid of Aysav.

This Gemara becomes difficult to understand when we take into account that after all is said and done, Yaakov Avinu was still a human. No matter how great the Avos were, they were made out of the same flesh and blood that we are, had the same physical makeup that we do, and faced all the challenges of being a human being.

This means that Yaakov had that most difficult challenge of life: integrating his intellectual understandings into practice, of **believing and not believing**. Of course he knew that HASHEM promised to protect him, but here he was faced with a brother whose nature he knew quite well: a powerful, driven man who had a burning desire to settle an old grudge. This man didn't come alone; he brought with him an army to aid in what was his clear intention — murder. So why does Rebbe Yaakov bar Idi assume that it was impossible for Yaakov to be afraid? Maybe Yaakov was just scared — not because of any sin that changed his level, but because of the danger that he faced. Perhaps he was afraid of Aysav, afraid of being out there alone, and afraid of dying.

➤ HASHEM MADE THAT PROMISE 34 YEARS AGO

What makes this explanation even more plau-

HASHEM is Here

“And Yaakov feared greatly, and it caused him pain, and he split the nation that was with him, the sheep, cattle, and camels into two camps.”

— Bereishis 32:7 —

sible is that HASHEM's promise to Yaakov was made over 34 years before Aysav came to greet him. An awful lot of time passed since Yaakov left his parents' home. Maybe the trust in HASHEM's promise had faded over the time. Maybe Yaakov was ever so slightly affected by the ways of the world. Why does Rebbe Yaakov bar Idi assume that there must be some answer as to why Yaakov was afraid? The explanation might be quite straightforward: Yaakov hadn't heard this promise in many, many years, and he was simply afraid. Maybe Yaakov was much like us.

➤ YAAKOV WALKED WITH HASHEM

The answer to this question seems to be that there is a key distinction between Yaakov Avinu and the average person. Yaakov Avinu walked with HASHEM.

When he got up in the morning, he said, “Good morning, HASHEM.” When he went to sleep at night, he said, “Good night, HASHEM” because his Creator was directly in front of him. When he went about his daily activities, HASHEM was with him all day long. HASHEM was there as he walked, as he ate, and as he greeted people. Throughout his day, HASHEM was present and accounted for.

One of the reasons that we have such difficulties in trusting in HASHEM is that HASHEM isn't “here.” Perhaps HASHEM is some thirteen billion light years away, up in the heavens. But when I am walking on a cold dark street late at night, and a car stops, and three tough looking guys step out and approach me, I am alone. It is the three of them and me. So, naturally, I am afraid. Who wouldn't be?

➤ YAAKOV AVINU WAS NEVER ALONE

But Yaakov Avinu was never alone. His entire existence was focused on being close to HASHEM. HASHEM was present with him every moment of his day. When he went to the well to find a wife, HASHEM was right there arranging for Rochel to come with the sheep. When he went to the house of Lavan, HASHEM was right there protecting him from the scheming of a trickster. And now that he was preparing to meet his brother in what was likely to be mortal combat, he was not going out alone. He walked with HASHEM.

If Yaakov didn't have a reason to think that HASHEM's promise no longer applied, it would have been impossible for him to have feared being injured. It would be the equivalent of you or me being afraid of some high school punks while being escorted by the entire US Marine Corps. That is why Rebbe Yaakov Bar Idi asked, “How is it possible that Yaakov was afraid?” His answer is that Yaakov was afraid that the promise no longer applied. Maybe HASHEM no longer guaranteed to protect him. Otherwise, it would have been **impossible** for Yaakov to have feared danger.

➤ GROWING IN BITACHON MEANS SEEING HASHEM — RIGHT HERE

This concept that HASHEM is present and right here is the basis of all *bitachon*. If a person doesn't **know** that HASHEM is present in his life, any discussion of relying on HASHEM is foolish. How can I rely on HASHEM when He isn't even here? What good is trusting in HASHEM if HASHEM isn't on the scene, right here to watch over me? *Bitachon*, by definition, means knowing that HASHEM is here, supervising me and involved in my life.

While this may seem self-evident, in practice it is highly elusive. To truly **know** it requires much work, and to a large extent, this is the measure of a person's *ruchniyus*. However, it is also one of the easiest things to do — to simply remember that HASHEM is here. Right here. As I speak, as I think, as I read. Not some millions of miles away up there in the sky, but right here. This single cognition has a dramatic effect on my entire relationship to HASHEM, on all of my *Avodas HASHEM*, and ultimately on my entire life.

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