

How to Confront an Adversary

Genesis, Chapter 29

4. *Jacob sent angels* ahead of him to his brother Esau, to the land of Seir, the field of Edom.

5. And he commanded them, saying, "So shall you say to my master to Esau, "Thus said your servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and I have tarried until now.

6. And I have acquired oxen and donkeys, flocks, manservants, and maidservants, and I have sent to tell [this] to my master, to find favor in your eyes.' "

7. The angels returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother, to Esau, and he is also coming toward you, and four hundred men are with him."

8. *Jacob became very frightened and was distressed*; so he divided the people who were with him and the flocks and the cattle and the camels into two camps.

9. And he said, "If Esau comes to one camp and strikes it down, the remaining camp will escape."

10. And Jacob said, "O G-d of my father Abraham and G-d of my father Isaac, the L-rd, Who said to me, 'Return to your land and to your birthplace, and I will do good to you.'

11. *I have become small from all the kindnesses* and from all the truth that You have rendered Your servant, for with my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.

12. Now deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him, lest he come and strike me, [and strike] a mother with children.

13. And You said, 'I will surely do good with you, and I will make your seed [as numerous] as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of multitude.'"

14. So he lodged there on that night, and he took from what came into his hand *a gift* for his brother Esau:

Jacob sent angels (29:4)

Rashi

He sent real angels.

Midrash

Jacob's emissaries were human. *Malachim* can be rendered either as angels or human emissaries.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

What can we derive from Jacob's dispatching angels when most of us do not have angels at our disposal? Angels are non-corporeal beings. To reach unbiased conclusions, we must detach ourselves from the process and "dispatch" only the external dimension of ourselves in order to assess our involvement. Being confronted with an opportunity does not imply that G-d wants us to involve ourselves in it. We



פרק לב

ד. וישלח יעקב מלאכים
לפניו אל עשו אחיו ארצה

שעיר שדה אדום:

ה. ויצו אתם לאמר פה תאמרון לאדני לעשו פה

אמר עבדך יעקב עם לכן גרתי נאחר עד עתה:

ו. ויהי לי שור נחמור צאן ועבד ושפחה ואשלקה

להגיד לאדני למצא חן בעיניך:

ז. וישבו המלאכים אל יעקב לאמר באנו אל אחיך

אל עשו וגם הלך לקראתך וארבע מאות איש עמו:

ח. ויירא יעקב מאד ויצר לו ויחץ את העם אשר

אתו ואת הצאן ואת הבקר והגמלים לשני מחנות:

ט. ויאמר אם יבוא עשו אל המחנה האחת והכהו

והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה:

י. ויאמר יעקב אלקי אבי אברהם ואלהי אבי יצחק

ה' האמר אלי שוב לארצך ולמולדתך ואיטיבה

עמך:

יא. קטנתי מכל החסדים ומכל האמת אשר עשית

את עבדך כי במקלי עברתי את הירדן והנה ועתה

הייתי לשני מחנות:

יב. הצילני נא מיד אחי מיד עשו כי ירא אנכי אתו

פן יבוא והכני אם על בנים:

יג. ואתה אמרת היטב איטיב עמך ושמת את

נרצף כחול היס אשר לא יספר מרב:

יד. ויגן שם בלילה ההוא ויקח מן הבא בידו

מנחה לעשו אחיו:

may be presented with a temptation just in order to walk away from it.

Jacob became very frightened and was distressed (29:8)

Rashi

He was frightened that he would be killed and he was distressed that in defending himself and his family he might kill others.

Ralbag

Distress is a stronger emotion than fear. The prospect that he might be forced to kill was more disturbing to Jacob than the possibility that he might be killed.

I have become small (32:11)

Rashi

My merits have been diminished by all the kindness You have shown me, and that is why I am afraid. Since Your promise to me, I may have become soiled by sin and not deserve to be delivered from Esau's hands.

Ramban

In Jacob's humility he declared, "I am unworthy", he felt that he had never been worthy of all the kindness that G-d had done to him.

Iggeret Hakodesh

When G-d granted Jacob remarkable success, he did not respond with arrogance, but with humility. Jacob recognized G-d's kindness as an expression of his love for him. G-d was drawing him close. And the closer he was drawn to the infinite G-d, the more he appreciated his own finiteness and smallness.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Jacob overcame his aversion and followed a three phased plan, each requiring three very different types of behavior.

1) *Battle*: Although Jacob was afraid of being killed and even more of killing others, he overcame his fear and prepared for war. Battle uses the power of *aggression*. 2) *Prayers*: Although Jacob was afraid he was not worthy of G-d's protection, he reached out to G-d in prayer. Prayer evokes *mercy*. 3) *Gifts*: Although Jacob didn't want to take these measures, he did so. Gifts are an act of *kindness*.

SUMMARY

When confronted with an opportunity that may challenge, tempt or oppose your beliefs or goals:

- Send messengers: View the situation from an unbiased perspective.
- Prepare for battle: Do not shy away from strongly defending your goals.
- Pray: Bonding with your Creator will provide you with inner strength to take the necessary practical steps.
- Give a gift: Ask yourself how you can remain strong to your morals while searching for a conciliatory tone of resolution or a means to appease the temptation.
- Attitude: Feel humbled, not entitled, to the successes that G-d grants you. This is your opportunity to increase your level of commitment to reach ever higher.

