

“Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him, so he divided the people with him.” (32:8)

Should Yaakov *Avinu* have been scared? Should the person with whom Hashem spoke and promised that He would be with him and guard him wherever he went be afraid? Should the individual who was greeted by guardian angels be distressed? There is a reason why even the great saint Yaakov should fear – “he divided the people with him.” There was a rift among his people. This gave Yaakov reason to fear. If there was no peace among his people, they would become easy prey for Eisav. As long as a unified front prevailed, as long as harmony reigned in the Jewish camp, Yaakov feared neither Yishmael nor Eisav.

Horav Mordechai HaKohen notes that when Lot was taken captive by the four kings, Yaakov’s aged grandfather, Avraham *Avinu*, did not think twice about gathering together his “small army” to pursue Lot’s captors. He was not afraid, and he triumphed, rescuing Lot. Yet, Yaakov was afraid of his brother. The grandfather had no army; yet, he had no fear. The grandson, however, was terribly distressed.

Yaakov was – in reality – no different than his grandfather. He was courageous, strong and willing to fight. He also would have taken on the four kings in order to save Lot. There was a fundamental difference between the two battles, however. Yaakov had no problem battling enemies from without, strangers who were dedicated to destroying him and his family. This time, Yaakov was up against a formidable enemy: the enemy from within, his own flesh and blood, his brother. He prayed to Hashem, “Rescue me, please from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav.” There is no more bitter battle than a war between brothers.