

He charged them, saying, “Thus shall you say, ‘To my lord, to Eisav, so said your servant Yaakov.’” (32:5)

A number of ambiguities seem to surround the meeting between Yaakov *Avinu* and his brother, Eisav. *Midrash Rabbah* posits that Eisav was not on his way to confront Yaakov; rather, our Patriarch instigated the meeting. Yaakov is compared to one who grabs the ear of a dog (*Mishlei* 26:17) and, as a result, the dog bites him. According to the *Midrash*, Hashem said to Yaakov, “Eisav is journeying along his way, and you initiate a meeting with him by sending him a message implying that you are his servant, Yaakov.”

Chazal indicate that Yaakov erred by getting involved with Eisav. “Let sleeping dogs lie”: If Eisav is not bothering you, ignore him and be thankful. In another *Midrash*, *Chazal* state that, when Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi* would have to go to Rome to discuss the government’s treatment of the Jewish religion and its effect upon the Jews of the Holy Land, he would study *Parashas Vayishlach*, using it as a guide on how to deal with the government. This would seem to indicate that Yaakov’s behavior was laudable.

The *Ramban* explains that *Parashas Vayishlach* was termed *parashas ha’galus*, the *parsha* dealing with the exile. Thus, Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi* followed his holy grandfather’s advice on how to deal with a gentile. This idea is reiterated by the *Shlah Hakadosh*, applying the notion, *Maase avos siman labanim*, “The actions of the fathers are a portent for their sons,” as to how to act. Just as Yaakov prepared himself with *doron*, a gift; *tefillah*, prayer; *milchamah*, for war, if necessary; likewise, should we make similar preparations when it is our time to meet with the gentile rulers. Apparently, Yaakov’s intentions and manner of preparation for his meeting with Eisav take on a new perspective if they are to serve as the road map for our encounter with the Eisavs of our time. One question concerning Yaakov’s behavior stands out: Why did the Patriarch act obsequiously by referring to himself as, “your servant, Yaakov.”

In his *Shevilei Pinchas*, **Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita**, presents us with an entirely new scenario, based upon the illuminating expositions of the *Chassidic* Masters. He begins with a question concerning the *pasuk*, *Vayitzav osam leimor*, “He charged them, saying.” The word *leimor*, saying, appears to be superfluous. Usually this word is used when one expresses his intention concerning what to say to someone. Yaakov, however, already did this with the words – “Thus shall you say.” This question is posed by the *Agra D’Kallah* who quotes the following *Midrash* to explain the *pasuk*.

“Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi* asked Rabbi Efes to pen for him a letter to the Antoninus (Marcus Aurelius) Caesar. He first wrote: “From Yehudah *Nesia* (the Prince) to our master, King Antoninus.” Rabbi Yehudah tore up the letter, feeling that the greeting had been improperly written. Finally, he wrote, “From your servant, Yehudah, to the master, King Antoninus.” Rabbi Efes questioned this greeting. “Why are you denigrating yourself before the king?” Rabbi Yehudah

replied, “Am I better than my grandfather (Yaakov) who said to Eisav, ‘From your servant, Yaakov?’”

We derive from *Chazal* that the *moreh derech*, guide, for Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi* in his dealings with Antoninus was none other than Yaakov *Avinu*. *Rebbi* (as he is referred to in the *Talmud*) had no problem denigrating his status of *Nasi*, because Yaakov appeared to have done the same in preparing for his encounter with Eisav. Thus, the **Agra D’Kallah** interprets the word *leimor*, saying, as a portent for future generations, indicating that, upon addressing gentile rulers, we should follow Yaakov’s directive. *Leimor* – as he said it then, so should his descendants follow suit.

For the next frame in his presentation, *Rav* Friedman quotes the **Megaleh Amukos**, who cites the opening *pasuk* of *Parashas Va’eschanan* (*Devarim* 3:23), *Va’eschanan el Hashem ba’eis ha’hi leimor*, “I implored Hashem at that time, saying,” He renders a brilliant insight into *Moshe Rabbeinu’s leimor*. Our leader, Moshe, saw *b’ruach ha’kodesh*, through Divine Inspiration, that one day *Rebbi* would redact the Six Orders of *Mishnayos* which serve as the foundation for *Torah She’Baal Peh*, the Oral Law. Although this seems to be a violation of Torah law, which prohibits the dissemination of the Oral Law in written or fixed form, *Rebbi* did this with virtually unanimous consent from all of the Sages at the time. It had become clear that the structure of the Jewish world was about to change. Jews were migrating away from the centers of Torah and would soon lose contact with one another, causing Torah scholarship to inevitably decline. The nation, under pressure of various cultures, would variably disintegrate as a Torah entity. Applying the rule, *Eis laasos l’Hashem heifeiru Torasecha*, “It is a time to act for the sake of Hashem; they have overturned Your Torah” (*Tehillim* 119:126), we derive from this *pasuk* that it may, at times, become necessary to exert certain flexibility concerning the letter of the law, so that it may be preserved and the larger principle be protected.

Therefore, *Rebbi* used the guidelines of the *pasuk*, *Eis laasos l’Hashem*, as his directive for writing down the Oral Law. *Rebbi* did this with incredible *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, because he knew it was the only way to save the Oral Law from extinction. This was carried out at a time when relations between Rome and *Eretz Yisrael* were, at best, tenuous. As a result of *Rebbi’s* incredibly close relationship with Antoninus, a moratorium on Jewish persecution seemed to prevail. It was Antoninus who granted *Rebbi* the necessary permission to redact the *Mishnayos*.

This, explains the *Megaleh Amukos*, was Moshe’s prayer: *Va’eschanan*, represents: *vov* – six (orders of *Mishnayos*) *eschanan* – “I implored.” Moshe prayed for *Rebbi’s* success in redacting the six (*vov*) orders of *Mishnayos*. *Ba’eis ha’hi*: This was done as a result of the dispensation, *ba’eis hahi*, which is a reference to *Eis laasos l’Hashem*, “It is a time to act for Hashem.” The word *leimor* is a *nutrekon*, abbreviation, for: *lamed*: *l’yemos* (in the days); *aleph*: Antoninus; *mem*: *melech* (king); *reish* (Rome).

We now have two meanings for the word *leimor*. A) for future generations to follow suit; B) abbreviation indicating that Yaakov was heralding *Rebbi’s* redaction of the *Mishnayos*. The

Megaleh Amukos adds that *Rebbi* was a *gilgul*, reincarnation, of Yaakov *Avinu*, and Antoninus was a *gilgul* of Eisav. Indeed, he explains that this was why *Rebbi* was called *Nasi*, which is an abbreviation for *nitzutz* (spark) *shel* (of) Yaakov *Avinu*.

What prompted Yaakov to arouse the spark of decency within Antoninus, somehow so that *Torah She'Baal Peh* would be preserved? *Rav Friedman* shows us that our Patriarch received a Heavenly indication that this was appropriate. Yaakov sent *malachim*, messengers, to Eisav. *Rashi* explains that these were no simple messengers, but rather, *malachim mamash*, real, authentic, Heavenly Angels, whom our Patriarch dispatched.

The **Yismach Moshe** explains who these *malachim* were. There are two forms of *malachim*: those who were created by Hashem during the Six Days of Creation; those who are created as the result of a person's Torah study and *mitzvah* observance. The primary difference between these two types of Angel is their creation in relation to the righteous person whose positive action catalyzes their creation. Obviously, those Angels who were created during the creation of the world preceded man, while the other ones are predated by man.

Ki malachav yetzaveh lach lishmarcha b'chol derachecha, "He will charge His Angels for you, to protect you in all your ways" (*Tehillim* 91:11). In his *Maggid Meisharim*, **Horav Yosef Karo, zl**, explains that this *pasuk* refers to the Angels that are created by a person's *mitzvos*. They accompany him at all times. Yaakov *Avinu* did not want to dispatch the Angels that were always with him as agents to go to Eisav. He felt that, by doing so, Eisav would be benefiting from his Torah. Hashem sent another group of Angels – those who were created during the Six Days of Creation. Thus, when Yaakov saw them, he declared, *Machaneh Elokim zeh*, "This is a G-dly camp" (*Bereishis* 32:3). These were not Angels whose usual job it was to accompany. Therefore, he called the place *Machanayim*, "Two Camps," alluding to the two camps of Angels who were present.

When Yaakov observed the new group of Angels who were Heaven sent, he realized that Hashem wanted these Angels to be his agents to go to Eisav. Who were the Angels? *Rav Friedman* points to the *Tefillas HaDerech*, wayfarers' prayer, in which we recite the above *pasuk* recording Yaakov's encounter with the Angels and his statement upon seeing them: *Vayomer Yaakov Kaasher raam*, "And Yaakov said upon seeing them; this is a G-dly camp." The letters which comprise *Raam*: *Reish* – Raphael; *Aleph* – Oriel; *Mem* – Michael, with *Machaneh Elokim* representing – Gavriel. Thus, the four Archangels which we mention during *Krias Shema al ha'mitah*, prior to going to sleep, who protect us then, also accompany us on our journey.

Last, we have the brother of the *Maharal m'Prague*, who writes in his *Igeres Ha'Tiyul* that the word *Gemorah* (*Talmud*/Oral Law) is an abbreviation for the names of these four Angels. *Gimmel* – Gavriel; *Mem* – Michael; *Reish* – Raphael; *Aleph* – Oriel. This teaches us that one who studies *Gemorah* is surrounded by the four Heavenly Archangels, who are present to protect him.

In summation, Yaakov sent the four Heavenly Angels (who were sent to him by Hashem) to Eisav, because by appeasing Eisav, he would arouse the spark of Antoninus residing deep within Eisav, so that he would assist *Rebbi* (Yaakov's descendant) to redact the Oral Law. These Angels represent the letters of *Gemorah*, which is the ultimate culmination of the Oral Law begun by *Rebbi*. We now understand why *Rebbi* would always study *Parashas Vayishlach* prior to visiting Antoninus in Rome. It was in this *parsha* that *Rebbi* saw how his saintly grandfather, Yaakov, set the stage for his spiritual success. I have condensed this thesis for the sake of brevity; however, it gives the reader a small window into the secrets of Torah whose surface we barely penetrate.