

Then he said, “Let me go, for dawn has broken.” And he said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” (32:27)

What was the purpose of the debate/fight that took place between Yaakov *Avinu* and Eisav's guardian angel? Perhaps the answer lies at the end of the narrative when Yaakov refused to allow the angel to leave unless he would first bless him. The commentators explain this blessing as a demand from Yaakov that the angel concede to him that he had received Yitzchak *Avinu's* blessings by right. Once and for all, Eisav's complaint that Yaakov stole the blessings must be quieted. While it may be a nice gesture, what was to be gained by the angel's blessing? Was this the purpose of their battle? The blessings were granted by Yitzchak and would, thus, take effect regardless of the angel's blessing.

Horav Michael Peretz, Shlita, explains that there is a great benefit to be derived from the blessing of Eisav's guardian angel. He was Yaakov's greatest combatant, his most serious adversary. To receive a concession from one's antagonist is the greatest approbation one can obtain. Indeed, one's actions should be on the level that he receives acclaim even from those who oppugn his way of life, who are opposed to his level of observance.

Having one's friends and supporters defend him and justify his every action is not an indication of his praiseworthiness and appropriateness. It is when the accolades are sung by his detractors that we see the true success of an individual. Indeed, it is the perspective of those distant from him, of those who are not subjective, that counts the most. They have a better opportunity to grasp the larger picture, to see from a distance what is often overlooked when up close. When Yaakov received the blessing from Eisav's angel, it carried incredible weight, because it demonstrated to the world that he was acting appropriately.

If we keep this principle in mind, we can understand why it was Yaakov's lot in life to fall under the radar of Lavan's evil web of deceit and moral bankruptcy. Think about it: “Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents” (*Bereishis* 25:27) – the tents of Torah. He devoted his life to Torah study, to self-betterment, to achieving an exalted level of spirituality. So, why was he relegated to living for twenty years with such a roguish person?

Rav Peretz explains that good is best discerned and enhanced when it is contrasted with evil. Hashem created evil, so that good could be appreciated and intensified. From the negative, one sees the positive; in darkness, one achieves a greater perception of light. Yaakov achieved a greater level of purity and holiness as a result of his exposure to his evil brother and wicked uncle. He saw the “pits” and was, thus, able to attain greater appreciation of the “fruit”.

Eis tzarah hee l'Yaakov u'mimenah yivashea, “It is a time of travail for Yaakov, and from it he will be saved” (*Yirmiyahu* 30:7). The travail itself will be the source of Yaakov's salvation. It will bring about an otherwise difficult to achieve salvation. Indeed, the wound itself provides the remedy.

Yaakov saw the positive in every situation, the silver lining in what seemed to be a distressing challenge. As Rachel *Imeinu* was about to take leave of this world during childbirth, she named the child whom she would sadly not raise, Ben Oni, the son of my pain. She saw the pain associated with his birth, the tragedy that accompanied his entrance into this world. Yaakov also named this child. He called him Binyamin, the son of my right hand, the child of strength. The Patriarch understood that with the increased distress would come greater strength and ennoblement.

At times, when one is up against a stone wall, he works harder to either scale it or break through. This individual would otherwise never have attempted to achieve what had earlier been considered an impossible task. *Rav Peretz* underscores this idea with the following story: A young man, a *baal teshuvah*, penitent, who had experienced much hardship in his life, was confronted with yet another challenge. He had finally met a young woman who was nice, a *baalas middos*, possessing good character traits, who was deeply committed to a Torah life. The young man finally had a chance to move on with his life, to eschew the past and look forward to the future.

There seemed, however, to be a problem. The *Rav* whom he had engaged to be *mesader kiddushin*, perform the marriage ceremony, had questions concerning the young woman's pedigree. He felt that there were certain *Halachic* issues which needed to be clarified. The young man was crestfallen. He felt his life coming to a bitter end. Everything he attempted seemed to fail. He could not even get married.

He approached the *Rosh Kollel* in his community to ask for help. The *Rosh Kollel* listened to the young man's story and immediately cloistered himself in his study in order to clarify the *halachic* questions that had arisen. Two hours later, he emerged with a number of dispensations which allowed the young man to move on with his marriage. Regrettably, the rabbi refused to budge. The *Rosh Kollel* turned to the preeminent *poskim*, *halachic* arbiters, in *Eretz Yisrael*, who agreed with his ruling. The wedding took place two weeks later. The young man had risen from the depths of depression and was now a different person.

The *chassan's* anguish spurred the *Rosh Kollel* to delve deeper into the *halachah*, to plumb its depths and emerge with a *halachic* dispensation that would otherwise have been overlooked. Adversity created the opportunity for spiritual growth. From amidst the darkness and gloom, there shone forth brilliant light.