

Then the remaining camp shall survive. (32:9)

Yaakov *Avinu's* plan to save his family was based on a three-pronged preparation: battle, prayer, tribute. On the surface, these courses of action appear to be incongruent to one another, with aggression and servility sending contradictory messages. Obviously, prayer is first and foremost – and the only effective means of success. Without Divine intervention, we have no hope for success. Nonetheless, Yaakov took a practical approach to his encounter, knowing full-well that Eisav was angry and that he felt his anger was justified. Our Patriarch was, however, acutely aware that practical solutions succeed only when it is the will of Hashem that they succeed. He, therefore, knew that, without prayer, his practical solutions were worthless.

Yaakov sent an impressive material tribute to Eisav, in the hope of assuaging his anger. By doing this, Yaakov was conveying his *daas Torah*, wisdom based upon the Torah, regarding how his descendants should act when they confronted gentile rulers who would not be sympathetic to them. Even, at times, when we feel our cause is just and that bowing down seems obsequious, the Jew must circumvent direct confrontation at all costs. Jewish life is sacrosanct and takes precedence over everything. No one wants to denigrate himself, especially to an enemy who is uncouth and evil, but, if that is what it takes to save a life, to obviate a serious confrontation, then, by all means, give him the “check” and “bow down” as you give it. Our identity is neither based upon, nor established by, what the gentiles think of us. It is only based upon Hashem's opinion of us.

Sforno teaches that Eisav's change of heart occurred as a result of Yaakov's (perceived) submission. He adds that had the trouble-makers who lived in the time of the Second *Bais HaMikdash* acted likewise, the *Bais HaMikdash* would not have been destroyed!

The differing ideologies came into play once again during the Holocaust years. The Orthodox Jewish rescue group lived by the axiom of *pikuach nefesh*, the preservation of Jewish life, as the highest priority. The secular Jewish groups were violently opposed to our form of *shtadlanus*, intercession. While the Orthodox ignored the gentile's humiliation and anti-Semitic diatribe, the secular Jew cringed and fought back. He could no longer psychologically tolerate the second-class status to which we had been relegated throughout the millennia. It is not as if it did not bother us. Certainly, it troubled us to be treated as parasites – but life is more important. We were not about to sacrifice our own lives to assuage our ego. The gentile does not define us. A dog barks; a Nazi screams: What really is the difference? The Russians, the Poles, the Germans: they are all the same. If we can buy them off by bowing down, then so be it. What they think of us is only an indication of their lack of intelligence. As long as we can serve Hashem and live in peace as observant Jews, we really do not care what they think of us. If we can appease Eisav by bowing down, if a check will do the trick and we can go back to serving Hashem – then all we need is the address.