

## Yaakov was left alone. (32:25)

Our Patriarch was left alone on that fateful night. What does “alone” really mean? *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 77:1) cite the *pasuk* in *Yeshayah* (2:11), *V’nisgav Hashem levado*, “And Hashem alone will be exalted,” which the commentaries explain, “There are no other gods, as everyone in the world will come to recognize on that day – so too, was Yaakov *Avinu* among men alone in a category all to himself. His spiritual level and strength catapulted him over everyone.”

*Levado*, alone, has a few interpretations, based upon circumstances and the individual. It can be defined as lonely, hopeless, without physical, moral and emotional support. It can also mean that one is in a league of his own, untouchable by others. *Chazal* are teaching us that Yaakov *Avinu’s levado* was an exalted *levado*, having reached the point that he towered above all men in terms of the criteria that count. Indeed, Eisav’s angel was unable to prevail over him.

The real question is whether *levado* means “alone” or “lonely.” One who is “lonely” is usually in a state of sadness and isolation, desiring social connection and companionship. On the other hand, one can be “alone” by choice and far from lonely. He seeks solitude for peace of mind and productivity. Conversely, the lonely person can be surrounded by people and still feel alone, if he lacks meaningful contact with those around him.

*Horav Zev Weinberger, zl*, cites the well-known *pesukim* which describe these two experiences/people: *Hen am levadad yishkon u’bagoyim lo ischashav*, “Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations” (*Bamidbar* 23:9). *Eichah yashvah badad*, “Alas, she sits in solitude!” (*Eichah* 1:1).

Ostensibly, *am levadad yishkon* describes *Klal Yisrael’s* superiority over the nations. We do not require world support and acceptance. We answer to a Higher Authority, to Whom our moral, spiritual lives matter. On the other hand, the solitude referred to in *Megillas Eichah* is Yirmiyahu’s lament over what transpired with the Jewish nation, their downfall and eventual exile from Yerushalayim. The people were suffering from a negative sense of solitude. They were alone, and no one cared.

The *Sefas Emes* notes that *badad* has the same three Hebrew letters: *bais, daled, daled*, as the first letters of the words: *b’chol derachecha Dei’ehu*, “In all your ways know Him” (*Mishlei* 3:6). These words encourage us to recognize and acknowledge Hashem’s Presence in all aspects of our lives and to maintain a spiritual connection with Him, regardless of the circumstances that we confront.

As an aside, concerning the *pasuk*, *Eichah yashvah badad ha’ir rabasi am*; “Alas, she sits in solitude, the city of many people.” *Horav Yehoshua m’Kutna, zl*, offers an insightful commentary. During the *churban*, destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*, *Klal Yisrael* was plagued by *sinaas chinam*, unwarranted hatred, which was rampant in the community. Indeed, this hatred led to the

*churban*. As a result of the hatred, people refused to have anything to do with one another. Thus, the city that was filled with people was actually empty and void of meaningful relationships. The city of many was now a city of strife, with everyone sitting *badad*, alone, by himself – without friends. It was this self-imposed curse of loneliness that was the precursor to the exile which we are still experiencing. We await the day when our *tzaros*, troubles, will come to an end and our relationships will be rejuvenated.