

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)

The dialogue between Yaakov *Avinu* and Eisav’s angel begs elucidation. It appears that Yaakov sought to secure the angel’s approval to validate his receipt of the blessings. This would teach us that consent and approval carry weight; they can elevate or diminish the value of

one’s deeds. Since when does Eisav’s or his angels’ approval determine the appropriateness of Yaakov’s actions? Who cares if they scream “foul”? *Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl*, explains that man is often misled by certain actions and activities, because externally they bespeak compassion, mercy and observance. Appearances, however, are deceiving. It may look good; it may even smell good, but, in truth, beneath the façade can be the greatest form of cruelty.

Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, explains that one must approach every decision with *seichel ha'yashar*, honest and penetrating thought, accompanied by serious common sense. Superficial reasoning is dangerous, for it can conceal cruelty under a veil of kindness. Only through deep reflection, powered by the inner truth of Torah, can one achieve true perfection in his actions. *Ki he chochmaschem u'binaschem l'einei ha'amim*, “For it is your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of the people” (*Devarim* 4:6). We must act in a manner that even the goyim, gentile nations, will agree is perfect. *Chazal* echo this principle. The *Gemora* (*Avodah Zarah* 2b) tells us that, in the future, the nations of the world will come before Hashem to claim reward: “Did we not build bridges, markets, bathhouses?” Hashem will respond: “All that you did, you did for yourselves: bridges to collect tolls; bathhouses for your own pleasure; markets as a place for immorality.” What may appear noble on the surface is exposed for its self-serving core. All actions must be rooted in truth and integrity.