

Vayishlach

The Sedra Va'Yishlach relates Jacob's preparation for the expected encounter with Esav. Jacob prepares himself in 3 ways: He sends a lavish gift to Esav in the hope that this would appease him. He prays to G-d for Divine deliverance. He mobilizes his family and company and plans a battle strategy.¹

In his prayers to G-d he says:² "Save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav."

This seems to be repetitious, and *Rashi* comments: 'From the hand of my brother who is not acting to me like a brother but rather as Esav the wicked.'

There still remains an unanswered question: That Esav not behaving as a brother was clear from the preceding passages about Esav advancing with an army of 400 men to fight Jacob. The angels that Jacob sent to Esav came back with an ominous report telling Jacob,³ 'You thought he's your brother, but he's acting like Esav the wicked.' Why then does Jacob have to mention in his prayer to Hashem: "From the hand of my brother who is not behaving like my brother, but rather like Esav the wicked." It would have been sufficient if Jacob said: 'Save me from the hands of Esav!'

The Torah teaches us here a very important lesson.

It is bad enough when we are confronted by an enemy who wants to destroy us. We certainly must take all measures to fight off the enemy and insure our defense.

However, when that enemy is a brother, when there is notion that the enemy might not be an enemy after all, we need greater protection and must pray harder for G-d's salvation. "BROTHER" enemies are more dangerous than "STRANGER" enemies. When we are dealing with a "BROTHER" enemy, we are apt to be misled, to reduce our defenses and weaken our resistance and this can lead to our defeat, G-d forbid.

Esav was a "Brother" enemy.

There is, however, an "enemy" brother who only appears to be an enemy, but is really a brother and a true friend. King David says in Psalms:⁴ "When they speak with the enemies in the houses of learning." When Scholars are engaged in the study of the Torah they argue with each other over the points of Torah so heatedly that they appear as enemies. But in truth they are devoted and loving brothers.

This teaches us a very important lesson—without Torah, brothers can become deadly enemies.

With Torah, the worst enemies are but friendly loving brothers. Torah study unites, while the lack of it invites division and hatred.

FOOTNOTES

1. Rashi, Bereishis 32:9
2. Ibid 32:12
3. Rashi, ibid 32:7
4. 127:5. Talmud Kiddushin 30b