

Parshas Vayishlach – Michael Aziz (reprinted)

י"ד כסלו תשע"ה – 5 December 2014 – שבת פי' וישלח

The well known phrase in chapter 32 verse 12 of this week's sedra reads as follows: "Save me please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisov".

Rashi comments "from the hand of my brother who does not treat me like a brother - but like Eisov the wicked one". This follows on from an earlier verse (chapter 32 verse 7), where the Angels say "We came to your brother to Eisov". Rashi there writes "for you would say that he is my brother, but he acts towards you like Eisov the wicked one".

The Ohr Hachayim (Rabbi Chayim ben Attar) takes a different approach here. He mentions that verse 12 would lend itself more to Rashi's explanation had it just said "from the hand of my brother Eisov" - the word "brother" being superfluous there. He therefore offers a different explanation and suggests that Yaacov prayed for salvation because there were two facets to Eisov's character. Firstly, Eisov was a son of Yitzchok and Yitzchok's merits would aid him in his ambitions. Secondly, he was a mighty and powerful person in his own right - and it would require great strength to be saved from his attack. This is why Yaacov said "save me please from the hand of my brother", ie. although he is my brother.

Regarding the fact that Eisov was a strong enemy in his own right, Yaacov prayed "please save me from Eisov". Yaacov also had in mind that Eisov might trick him, and use the fact that he was his brother to launch an attack on him after pretending to be brotherly. He wanted Hashem to save him from this scenario, and he also needed Hashem's help if Eisov was overtly hostile towards him.

The words "from the hand of my brother", also accentuates the magnitude of Eisov's crime were he try to murder his own brother. Surely the prospect of such an evil crime would be reason enough for Hashem to humble Eisov. In addition, Eisov's intrinsic wickedness (notwithstanding the fact that this was his own brother), would merit Hashem's intervention to help Jacob.

The Baal Haturim has a further insight on verse 12. The verse opens with the words "save me please from the hand". The first Hebrew letters from each of these three words (hey, nun, mem) come together to make the word Haman . The verse ends with the phrase "lest he come and strike me, mother and children". He suggests that this is an allusion to Haman who we know from Megillas Esther (Chap 3 Verse 13) wanted to do exactly the same to the Jewish people. This again gives us some idea as to the type of enemy Eisov was and the different approaches needed to thwart his evil intentions.