

# Battle Plan

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Ever since Jacob had “stolen” the right of the firstborn and its inherent blessings, Esau waited ever so patiently for his father Isaac to pass away so that he could avenge Jacob’s deception. That moment had finally arrived and Esau planned to kill his brother Jacob. “Jacob became very frightened and it distressed him. So he divided the people with him... He said, ‘If Esau comes to the one camp and strikes it down, then the remaining camp will survive’” (Genesis 32:8-9).

The Midrash (*Bereishit Rabbah* 76:3) interprets Jacob’s strategy as applying to the future as well. It specifically refers to a time when the Romans had conquered the Land of Israel and most of the Jews were living in Babylonia. Those remaining Jews in Israel were under a constant threat of persecution; the Jews of Babylon would fast on Mondays and Thursdays for their well-being. The Midrash understands that although there will be many times that Jews are persecuted, there will always be a group that survives.

Reb Noson interprets Jacob’s strategy in another way, as a battle plan against the personal spiritual “holocaust” that each of us face on a daily basis.

The evil inclination is once again overpowering us and it seems as if we just don’t have the strength to hold our

ground. We try different tactics and make new resolutions, but alas, it seems that nothing is working and the battle is being lost.

When the going got tough, though, Jacob did not turn back. He divided his assets into two camps and soldiered on.

Even if our overall plan seems to be failing—we can't seem to study more, to pray better, to correct our misdeeds—we can use all our remaining strength to salvage the little bit that we can hold on to. Even if we didn't end up having proper concentration in prayer, we can beseech God afterwards for help in a few meaningful words. If that doesn't work, we can try to study a little (or a lot) of Torah. And if that tactic fails as well, the main thing is to remain steadfast in your desire to become close with God. At any moment, a Jew can scream out to God and ask Him to please save him and help him. Should things digress to the point where you just don't know what to do anymore, forget about whether you made the right choice or not and concentrate on doing even the small things that will bring you closer to God right now, wherever you may be.

Rashi explains that the remaining camp will survive against Esau because Jacob will do battle against him and Esau will be forced to let them go. By following the advice of the tzaddik and doing battle against our own evil inclination, by utilizing whatever little good we can, we will insure that at least those actions and desires will survive and that we will once again emerge victorious.

Based on Likutey Halakhot,  
Hilkhos Rosh Chodesh 7