



So, what is one to do to appease an enemy? Or should one even consider doing that in the first place? For we are surely bewildered when we read in our Parsha that Yaakov sent messengers ahead to Eisav, addressing himself to his old adversary as, "Your servant" - no less than eight times! And we are perplexed that Yaakov Avinu, whom G-d had promised to protect, should have feared Eisav at all!

Indeed some commentators saw in Yaakov's behavior cause for disdain and criticism:

How do you lower yourself before your adversary? Moreover, they saw in Yaakov's concession to Eisav the beginning of the slippery slope that generations later served as an example to the Hasmonean dynasty that made an accord with Edom (Rome) that, in turn, led to the eventual destruction of the Second Temple.

Others, however, see in Yaakov's appeasement a positive virtue. For did not R. Yehuda HaNasi, according

to the Midrash, cite Yaakov's precedent of lowering his honor in order to find favor in the eyes of the Emperor Antoninus, addressing him as "Your servant Yehuda"?

As for Yaakov's fears: Our rabbis explain that Yaakov, the Tzadik, understood that Hashem's promises to protect him were dependent on his actions: He was genuinely afraid for his life (as any general entering battle), but more so, he felt undeserving of G-d's protection on account of possible sins on his part. So, whether or not we would follow Yaakov's example, for sure we might want first to check on the status of our personal virtues... **MP**