



## MY MINDERS & YOUR MINDERS

Heads of state work in stages. Only after their officials have hammered out an agreement do the principals come together with the television cameras watching, shake hands and have an official signing of whatever treaty is on the table.

One might say this is a practical way of dealing with matters which must have been worked out at some point in the history of diplomacy. The earliest precedent, however, appears to be in the Bible, in this week's sidra.

Yaakov sends messengers (the Midrash, followed by Rashi, says they were angels) in advance of his fateful meeting with his brother Eisav (B'reishit 32:4). He wanted to ascertain how Eisav was likely to receive him. If an angry, hostile reception appeared likely there was still time to pull back and escape.

The sages see in the Biblical text an indication that Yaakov had three options: prayer, gifts and weapons. He prayed that God would make things go well, but if this did not succeed he was ready to load his

brother with presents. As a last resort he was willing to fight.

Fortunately the first method worked, and Eisav was prepared to greet him with some cordiality. The gifts were now unnecessary, though later they were accepted. The fighting was forgotten.

## OBEDIENCE IN ADVANCE

A Hebrew rhyme says IM LAVAN GARTI V'TARYAG MITZVOT SHAMARTI - "With Lavan I dwelt and I kept the 613 commandments."

Lavan had little connection with God and religion. It was a triumph for Yaakov to keep the mitzvot in his house.

It happens today even more: people who keep up religious observance regardless of the indifference or active opposition of the family.

The Yaakov story has an extra problem - why keep commandments which were not yet officially given?

Some people have the instinct to discern the will of God even without being told - truly a high rank in spirituality. **OZ**