

מוקדש לע"נ נחמה איטה מיה בת חיים טוביה ע"ה

Small is Big

Hashem had been very kind to Yaakov Avinu. He made him a wealthy man. Yaakov's flocks of sheep miraculously multiplied toward the end of his service to Lavan. Yaakov merited marrying two tsadikot, Rachel and Leah, and raising a family that would become the twelve tribes of Israel. What was his reaction to all of this blessing? "I am small from all the kindness and truth that you have done with your servant" (Bereshis 32:10). The Ramban explains that Yaakov felt undeserving of all the good that Hashem bestowed upon him. Undeserving? Yaakov? Our holy forefather had withstood several tests, including danger to his body and soul. He bravely captured the *bechora* and its *bracha* from his evil brother Eisav. Then he fled for his life to the home of Lavan, a treacherous schemer who tried to destroy him. He married his wives with great *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice), working seven years for each of them. He educated his children in this hostile environment. Who had more merits than Yaakov? Yet, he saw himself as unworthy. What was the secret of his humility?

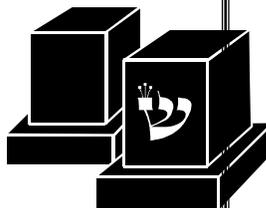
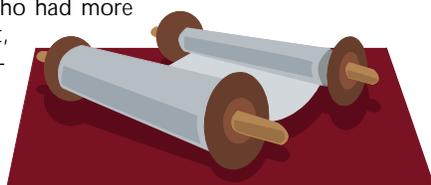
"If Hashem will be with me, will guard me on this way that I am going; will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear" (Bereshis 28:20). This was Yaakov's request from Hashem as he was on the way to Charan. The Shelah HaKadosh comments that it is not fitting for a person to get excited about wealth. Rather he should be satisfied with the minimal material needs. As we see, Yaakov Avinu only asked for the basics – bread to eat and clothing to wear. How did Yaakov view his possessions? "I have everything" (Bereshis 33:11). "Everything that I need," explains Rashi. This was Yaakov's view of the material world. He only asked for the minimum, and was satisfied with what Hashem gave him. He viewed his service to Hashem as a privilege and an obligation. He did not feel that passing the tests that Hashem gave him deserved any special material reward. Therefore, when Hashem blessed him with great wealth, much more than his basic needs he felt undeserving.

"Ben Zoma says ...'Who is rich? One who is happy with his portion'..." (Pirkei Avos 4:1). Yaakov Avinu was truly

wealthy. He requested the minimum, and was so happy with it, that he felt he did not deserve more.

Kinderlach . . .

We can all learn a lesson from Yaakov Avinu. What do we expect? The nicest newest clothes? The fanciest food? A beautiful big home with luxurious furnishings? A comfortable car to take us everywhere that we want to go? Vacations to far away places? Lavish weddings and bar-mitzvahs? If we do, we are headed for trouble. We must take a lesson from our forefather Yaakov and lower our expectations. He just asked for the basics. Clothes to wear. Bread to eat. One who lowers his material ambitions will become very easily satisfied. He will be grateful to Hashem for everything, just as Yaakov was. He will be only too happy to do Hashem's will, as a small repayment for all of the good that he has received. That will make him a truly happy person. Small is big. Small material expectations lead to big spiritual accomplishments.



How will we do it? Will we let them overcome us and drag us

downward?

Kinderlach . . .

The lure of the physical world confronts us every step of our lives. Sumptuous food, fancy clothing, prestigious job, and super-technology, are all very attractive. It is a real battle to keep them under control.

Or, will let our neshama (soul) be the boss and use them properly for Avodas Hashem (Serving Hashem). Allow the ruchnius (Torah and mitzvos) to guide the gashmius. This is the battle that Yaakov Avinu won. In doing so, he instilled within us the power to win. We can overcome Eisav. Choose the ruchnius. Yaakov will prevail.



Wrestling Match

The two men struggled mightily. Each was very strong, a formidable opponent. On and on they fought, throughout the entire night. Neither could gain the upper hand. This was no ordinary wrestling match. This was the battle between Yaakov and the angel of his twin brother Eisav. This was the prelude of a struggle that continues to this very day.

The Malbim explains that Yaakov is the power of *ruchnius* (spirituality) in this world. Opposing him is Eisav, the embodiment of all that is *gashmius* (physical). The two forces combine in the body and soul of a man. And so, the struggle continues within each individual person, to subjugate the spiritual to the physical. The same conflict exists between these two nations. When the Jewish people, the descendants of Yaakov, choose the

Parasha Questions

- Where is Shaoul first mentioned in the Tanach?
- How does Timna teach us about the greatness of Avraham? (Rashi 36:12)
- How old was Yaakov when Yitzchak died? (Rashi 35:29)
- How many twin daughters did Yaakov have? (Rashi 35:17)
- What are the meanings of the names Yaakov and Yisrael? (Rashi 35:10)
- What did Yaakov do with the idols captured from Shechem? (35:4 and Rashi)