

"And Yaakov said to Pharaoh... few and unhappy have been the days of the years of my life." (47:9)

The *Daas Zekeinim* cite the *Midrash* that states that Hashem shortened Yaakov's life-span as compared to Yitzchak's because of this remark. Hashem told Yaakov, "*I saved you from Eisav and Lavan and returned Dinah and Yosef to you, and yet you complain that your life has been short and unhappy. You shall not live as long as your father did!*" Horav Benzion Bruk, z.l., in a thesis on the depth of judgement which Hashem applies to the righteous, cites this *Midrash* as the source of a great moral lesson for us. Imagine, if you will, one who has suffered overwhelming pain and suffering and has undergone severe tribulation. He is cut off from his beloved son, and he has even mourned him as dead. Somehow he survives these tragedies to be reunited in his homeland with his long lost son. By heavenly grace, he is able to aspire to a future of health, happiness, and tranquility. This person has experienced both aspects of life: pain and suffering, as well as joy and serenity.

When this individual begins retroactively to complain about his past suffering, he will be soothed by the current reality. True, he was at death's door and suffered great indignations, but now he is alive. He should be happy with his lot. He should not prolong the past, but rather he should focus upon the satisfaction of the present. Yaakov endured enormous suffering throughout his life. Now, however, he was at peace, surrounded by his entire family. Rather than reminisce about the pains to which he was subjected, he should have rejoiced in his survival.

How important it is for us to open our eyes and experience the goodness which Hashem grants us! Everyone has his own "baggage" of hardships. To allow ourselves to be completely overwhelmed by troubles, never thinking about the good moments which we are accorded, is wrong. A malcontent attitude to life is not only self-destructive, but it is not a Jewish orientation.