

"And I have acquired oxen and donkeys." (32:6)

"Oxen, this refers to Yosef; donkeys, this refers to Yisacher (Midrash Rabba).

Yaakov sent a message to Eisav informing him of his vast wealth, in order to impress him, so that he may thereby gain favor in his eyes. This *Midrash* comments that Yaakov's reference to his ox and donkey is a metaphor for Yosef and Yisacher. This seems puzzling! Yaakov's intention is to impress Eisav with his strength and power. Why then does he set forth the two sons who represent the spiritual dimension of the twelve tribes? Yosef who is famous for being the great *tzadik* and Yisacher who represents the epitome of *Torah* study, should not be the ones who should impress Eisav, the great warrior. He should be impressed by seeing those sons who are physically strong and outwardly impressive.

This *Midrash* teaches us that when one wishes to impress the wicked by being pretentious and acting like them, speaking their language, dressing in their fashion, feigning agreement with their misguided philosophies, he is fooling only himself. The most corrupt individual will not be impressed by an imposter. On the contrary, these actions will only alienate him. Yaakov is showing how one speaks to a wicked person. He says to Eisav, *"My lifestyle is very different than yours. It is guided by the Torah, its values and heritage. I have raised my children to follow in the paths of their ancestors whose every moment was spent serving Hashem and fulfilling His mitzvos. I therefore hope that by being honest and straightforward with you, I will find favor in your eyes."* By having self-respect one achieves the respect and admiration of others.