

Enough of your circling this mountain; turn yourselves northward. (2:3)

After thirty eight years in the wilderness, *Klal Yisrael* was once again at *Har Seir*. The nation was now instructed to turn to the north. The *Kli Yakar* interprets the word "*tzafonah*," which usually means "north," in its alternative definition, "hidden." Accordingly, Hashem was telling *Klal Yisrael*, "Turn inward, hide yourselves." He was implying that a Jew should maintain a low profile among his gentile neighbors. There is no reason to arouse their envy. This is similar to what Yaakov *Avinu* told his sons when he sent them to Egypt to purchase food, even though they had food at home. Yaakov said, "*Lamah tisrau?*" "*Why should you make yourselves conspicuous?*" (Bereishes 42:1). Why should the pagans that surround us become jealous of the prosperous Jews? Let them think that we are in as bad a situation as they are.

It is not entirely foreign to hear such an accusation leveled at us. The *Kli Yakar* lived in the beginning of the seventeenth century. How much worse have things become? We live in a world that is far from sympathetic to the Jewish way of life. Is there any reason that some of us feel it is necessary to "*shtech ois di oigen*," "pierce out the eyes," of our neighbors? Do we have to have the fanciest homes or drive the fanciest cars? Would it be such a tragedy if we would not call so much attention to ourselves? Is it necessary to make the gentiles around us envious of the "prosperous Jews"? Furthermore, what about the insecure Jew who spends much more than he actually possesses just so that he can impress those around him?

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, once cited a similar idea from *Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl*. In a number of places, *Chazal* compare *Klal Yisrael* among the nations to, "a single sheep among seventy wolves." Simply, the analogy is that as a sheep among so many menacing wolves is in a perilous position, so, too, is *Klal Yisrael* in a dangerous situation. We can rely only on Hashem to protect us. *Rav Elchanan* suggested an additional message to be derived from *Chazal*. If a sheep is attempting to hide from seventy wolves, it would certainly try to call as little attention to itself as possible. It would look for every avenue to remain inconspicuous. One thing it would surely not do: is to jump up and down, it would not make all kinds of noises in attempt to taunt and enrage the wolves. Hence, the *Midrash* is teaching us how to act as one sheep/nation among the many wolves/nations of the world. We should maintain a low profile, not acting in such a manner that those around us will be "incited" against us.

There are people who will read this and remark that such a statement might be appropriate for the *shtetl* in Europe, but in our progressive, modern society it would be demeaning to live simply and unobtrusively. We should take pride in our accomplishments, and let the world around us acknowledge us. To paraphrase *Horav Solomon*, "To live quietly is not a *galus* complex; it is rather a *galus* code of behavior." Our mistake is thinking that the gentiles have changed. They have not. They have only changed their methods. *Eisav* remains *Eisav*. Regrettably, some of us do not want to remain Yaakov.