

"Give (me) my wives and my children for whom I have served you and I will go." (30:26)

Yaakov did what few people ever do. He literally slaved for fourteen years to acquire his wives and, ultimately, his children. He never broke down in desperation or depression. He kept on going, resolutely warding off the temptations of his environment. He never deferred to deep-seated anger at his father-in-law for cheating him. He raised a decent family and infused in them a nobility of spirit and pride in being the sons of Yaakov, the future progenitors of *Am Yisrael*.

The interesting point to note is that when it was all over and Yaakov was preparing to leave, with what was he left? What had he acquired during all the years of hard labor? What did he have to show from his "tenure" in the house of Lavan? He had his family! He had the love and respect of his wives and children. He had the knowledge that he had imparted a *Torah* legacy to children who would carry on his work. This is indeed a remarkable acquisition.

The narrative of Yaakov in the house of Lavan is the story of life. We enter this world with nothing, and we leave with nothing. Our material acquisitions are for naught. Only our spiritual assets have value. Our families whom we cherish, whom we have reared in the *Torah* way, remain ours. These are our only real achievements and possessions. If we have transmitted a legacy of *Torah* to our children, then we are eternally attached to them. They become our link to the future. It is imperative for us to make every effort to see to it that our children receive the proper and correct spiritual upbringing, so that they remain ours!