

## **Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. (32:25)**

*Rashi* cites the *Talmud* in *Chullin 9A* that says that Yaakov had forgotten some *pachim ketanim*, small earthenware pitchers, and had returned to retrieve them. *Chazal* derive from the fact that Yaakov returned for some inexpensive vessels that "to the righteous, their money is dearer to them than their bodies. Since they earn every penny with great diligence, their integrity is impeccable, everything they own is very dear to them." *Chazal's* words obviously reflect a deeper meaning. We do not venerate an individual for exhibiting greater care for his material possessions than for his own body.

*Horav Simcha Zissel M'Kelm* compares this to soldiers who are permitted to take a number of sets of clothing with them during peace time. In contrast, during wartime, they must travel light. They leave behind anything that might restrict or hamper their movement. Thus, they are careful in the maintenance of their garments. This is all they possess, and they cannot afford to lose them. The same idea applies to the righteous. In their never-ending battle with the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, they have little time or patience for mundane and material possessions. They take along only those articles that facilitate their spiritual development. Hence, they are diligent in caring for their material possessions. If they lose something, the time they use to replace it will interfere with their spiritual enhancement.

*Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita*, cites the *Yalkut Meom Loez* and *Horav Chaim Vital, zl*, who emphasize the fact that the righteous acknowledge the source of their material possessions - Hashem. Appreciating their source increases their value. *Horav* Solomon offers a profound parable that sheds greater light on this idea. There was once a poor man who literally had nothing. Yet, despite his abject poverty, he continued to observe the *mitzvos* meticulously. He needed one item, however, in order to appropriately perform the *mitzvah* of *Netillas Yodayim*, washing his hands - a cup and bowl. Once, this man dreamed that the Almighty had noted his great poverty and extreme devotion to *mitzvos* and had given him a new cup and bowl for *Netillas Yodayim*. In the morning, the man woke. To his surprise, he noticed a brand new cup and bowl next to his bed. Words cannot describe the overwhelming joy that he had, knowing that Hashem had responded to his request. Before long, this poor man was blessed, and his material assets multiplied. He became a wealthy man. He purchased expensive furniture and precious objects, filling his house to capacity. He decided to move out of his modest home into a house more becoming his present financial position. After the move was complete, the workers came to him to be paid. He first went through his entire house, taking inventory to make sure that everything had been transferred from the old house. Suddenly, he began to scream and berate the workers, "I am missing a very special vessel," the man complained. "Impossible," the workers responded, "we took everything from the house." The man would not listen. He returned to his home to look for his precious *Netillas Yodayim* cup. He searched for awhile until finally, to his excitement, he found his cup. The workers were naturally amazed by the wealthy man's reaction to finding this simple,

inexpensive cup. "For this you made such a commotion? It is nothing more than a simple cup!" the workers exclaimed. "To you it may be a simple cup, but to me it is invaluable because I received it directly from Heaven. Indeed it is worth more to me than all my possessions!" responded the wealthy man.

The lesson of this parable is apparent. The *tzaddik* understands clearly that everything he possesses is a direct gift from the Almighty. He realizes the true source of everything he owns. He is aware that whatever he has is there for a specific purpose - to serve Hashem. Is it any wonder that he takes such extreme care of his material possessions?

*Horav* Solomon presents this idea as the basis for the difference in outlook between Yaakov and Eisav. He cites the *Tanna Dvei Eliyahu* that relates that while Yaakov and Eisav were still in the womb, they "divided" their inheritance of the two worlds, *Olam Hazeih*, this world, and *Olam Haboh*. Eisav chose *Olam Hazeih* with its material/physical responsibilities and benefits. Eating, drinking, marriage and children were just the beginning of the fruits of "this world." *Olam Haboh* has none of these, but that did not deter Yaakov. When Eisav met Yaakov he encountered a man who had succeeded in this world. He had a large family, wealth, servants, all the signs of one who seemed to be enjoying this world. Eisav demanded an explanation from Yaakov. *Olam Hazeih* was Eisav's realm. This was not Yaakov's bailiwick. Yaakov explained that his possessions were gifts from the Almighty in order to facilitate his spiritual observance.

Eisav sought *Olam Hazeih* as an end in itself. Yaakov made use of *Olam Hazeih* only to further advance his spiritual development. Indeed, Yaakov has no right to appropriate *Olam Hazeih* for personal reasons, only to foster greater spiritual growth. When Eisav's guardian angel noticed Yaakov returning for the *pachim ketanim*, little pitchers, he thought that he might convince him that he is expending too much effort on behalf of his *Olam Hazeih*. He did not succeed - completely. He did blemish one area -- the *gid ha'nashe*, sciatic sinew -- symbolizing movement. As long as we move in the direction of our ancestor Yaakov, as long as *Olam Hazeih* remains only a vehicle for fulfilling our spiritual mandate, Eisav will have no power over us. If, however, we veer from Yaakov's perspective, if we move in the path forged by Eisav, squandering the material for personal use, we fall prey to Eisav.

*Horav* Solomon contends that this was Yaakov's message when he journeyed to *Succos*, a place named for the temporary shelters that he erected for his livestock. *Targum Yonasan* explains that first Yaakov built a *Bais Hamedrash*, a place for *Torah* study, which was the prime focus of his life. He then made temporary dwellings for his livestock, to imply that the material assets are only temporary. They have no permanence in our lives. We control our material possessions only as long as they are subordinated to our spiritual goals. Otherwise, our material resources control us.

We now understand why the *Tur* writes in *Hilchos Rosh Chodesh*, in the name of his brother, that the Three Festivals correspond to the *Avos*. *Pesach* is connected to Avraham Avinu, who baked *matzos* for the angels that visited him on *Pesach* night. Yitzchak, who was replaced on the

*Akeidah* by a ram, corresponds with *Shavuos*, during which a *Shofar*, ram's horn, was sounded during the Giving of the *Torah*, commemorated by the festival of *Shavuous*. *Yaakov Avinu's* act of building *succos*, temporary dwellings for his livestock, relates to the festival of *Succos*.

Although Avraham and Yitzchak's relationship with their corresponding festival is apparent, one might question the relationship between *Chag Succos* and Yaakov's shelters for his livestock. With the above appreciation of Yaakov's perspective on life in mind, we can now understand Yaakov's message to his children when he built the *succos*. *Olam Hazeih* exists only to enhance *Olam Habah*. Our relationship to the material and mundane is temporary. During the festival of *Succos*, we move out of our permanent homes and dwell for the duration of the festival, in makeshift huts which are nothing more than temporary shelters. This teaches us the transitory nature of the material world. *Yaakov Avinu's* lesson is commemorated in the festival of *Succos*.