

For you are aware of my service that I labored for you. 30:26)

Imagine in today's day and age, a man working for fourteen years – day and night – exposed to the elements – not for money to provide his family – but for the right to have a family! Yaakov *Avinu* slaved for fourteen years – not to provide for his family – but just so that he could marry Lavan's two daughters, who came to the table without any dowry. *Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl*, observes that those fourteen years serve as the bedrock, the foundation, upon which the national existence and family life of the House of Yaakov are rooted. These fourteen years did not constitute an act of chivalry or romance. They provided the shining gateway to that precious treasure of human achievement: the Jewish family. No more important unit in Jewish life exists than the Jewish family. That is where success begins, and, sadly, where a person's misfortune is rooted. A strong, happy, loving family breeds success. An unhappy family, marked by depression and strife, sets the stage for misfortune.

These fourteen years that Yaakov devoted to working are the highest tribute that a man can make to his wife. Yaakov taught us how a Jewish husband regards his wife by how he slaved fourteen years for a suitable partner in marriage. Yaakov's actions defy the inane prattle concerning Orthodoxy's degradation of the Jewish woman in marriage. Where else – what other religion – where, but in Orthodox Judaism, is the woman so venerated? At the end of fourteen years, Yaakov was back where he started – only now he had familial responsibilities. His cares had multiplied. Fourteen years earlier, when he was alone and penniless, he had made a commitment to Hashem. Now, fourteen years later, he was still penniless, but he had amassed the greatest Jewish treasure which money cannot buy: a family.

The *Mashgiach* considers this exemplary behavior to be a demonstration of true *l'shem Shomayim*, acting purely for Hashem's sake. *L'shem Shomayim* means that a person does not retain a vestige of personal interest for himself. Everything that he does is purely for the sake of glorifying Hashem. He applies the analogy of a community *darshan*, or *maggid*, who preaches weekly, neither for pay, nor for accolade, but simply to glorify Hashem. What would happen if another *darshan*, speaker, came to town and offered his services? Would the present *darshan* desist and embrace him with open arms – even if it meant having another voice in town? If the first *darshan* cried, "Foul," and refused to allow another speaker (truthfully this applies to another "entity": shul, minyan, school, business, etc.) It would indicate that his *l'shem Shomayim* was nothing more than a sham. He was acting purely for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. It is very much like the humble man whose humility seems to come into question when someone does not give him proper respect.

Our *Imahos* acted purely *l'shem Shomayim*. Certainly, they each desperately wanted to be the progenitress of as many *shevatim* as possible. Rachel sacrificed to procure the *dudaim*, fragrant flowers, from Leah, in the hope that, as a result, she would be blessed with child. Leah was willing to sell the *dudaim*, so that Yaakov would be with her that night. Nonetheless, they were each willing to give up their greatest yearning (to have another son), if it meant not hurting the other. Leah was

expecting a boy, but, if it were to cause an infringement on her sister's feelings, she did not want it. She would rather have a daughter than a son that would result in her sister's hurt feelings. Furthermore, Rachel had waited patiently for seven years to marry Yaakov, and, in a split second decision, she gave it all up just so that her sister, Leah, would not be hurt.

We all seek spiritual growth. We all want to glorify Hashem through *mitzvah* performance. We all want to perform good deeds, carry out charitable acts to help those in need and less fortunate. If our aspirations and goals, however, might impinge on those of someone else, who, as a result, will be hurt, then our *bein Adam la'Makom*, relationship with Hashem (*vis-à-vis* our spiritual activities), is at the expense of our *bein adam la'chaveiro*, relationships with man. Hashem does not want such activities from us, and neither should we.