

Yaakov was left alone. (32:25)

Rashi cites *Chazal* (*Chullin* 91a) who posit that Yaakov *Avinu* had forgotten some *pachim ketanim*, small earthenware pitchers, and he returned for them. Clearly, these pitchers had inconsequential value. Yet, to Yaakov, they were valuable enough to return for them, even if it meant exposing himself to danger. From this, *Chazal* derive that to the righteous (not only Yaakov), their money is dearer to them than their bodies. Our Sages explain that since the righteous are meticulous in avoiding any form of dishonesty, their money represents integrity at its apex. Thus, it is dear to them. Wealth earned through honesty is unique; to the *tzaddik*, there is no other wealth. Thus, its spiritual value is significant. Yaakov's pitchers were vehicles of sanctity, which is a difficult concept to grasp, especially in context of today's materialistic society.

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, notes that the *tzaddikim* whom he had met had no use for money. The *Chazon Ish*, for example, would take every penny given to him and immediately give it away to those in need. The *Satmar Rav* acted similarly. Those *gedolim*, Torah leaders, who appear to live more conspicuously are "victims" of *chassidim* and *talmidim* who provide for them in accordance with their personal perspective. The *gedolim* have no use for the material opulence that often surrounds them. I remember visiting *Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl*, and pointing out to my grandson how the pulse of our nation beat from such spartan quarters. We were simultaneously taken aback and impressed by the austerity. From his white plastic chair, to his simple card table and bed, his "office" was the paradigm of ingenuousness. With this in mind, why do *Chazal* state that the material possessions of the righteous are of greater value than their bodies, when, in fact, their material assets mean nothing to them?

Rav Karlinstein explains (in the name of the *Arizal*) that when one asks the average person about a material possession, he might say, "Where did you get this hat (or any other object)? The response will likely be "the hat store, etc"; "I received it as a gift." Concerning the *tzaddik*, the feeling is that he has received everything in his possession from Hashem as a gift. "Where did you get this pen?" "*Baruch Hashem*, I received it from Hashem." By what means did he receive this gift from Hashem? He earned some money, and he purchased it at Walmart. That is the vehicle, the medium by which Hashem gave him the pen, but, as far as he is concerned, the pen was given to him by the Almighty.

When a *tzaddik* eats, he feels that Hashem has provided this food for him. Everything that the *tzaddik* has in his possession is a gift from Hashem; thus, it is dear to him due to its Source. Yaakov valued the small pitchers not because of their intrinsic value, but because of what they represented: a gift from Hashem. Imagine receiving a gift from a great leader. It would be precious. One would never take his eyes off it, protecting it to the best of his ability.

Chazal say that *tzaddikim* appreciate their material assets because they never steal. Their money represents the height of integrity. The *Maggid* explains that money which comes into the possession of a person through inappropriate/questionable means – or, worse, blatant theft – is not

money from Hashem. The Almighty does not gift a person money that is stolen. This is money that the individual appropriated on his own. The *tzaddik* is careful to take only such money that he is certain has Hashem's blessing.