

# A FULL TIME JOB

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

*Yitzchak sent Yaakov on his way. [Yaakov] headed towards Padan Aram, to Lavan the son of Bethuel the Aramite, the brother of Rivka, Yaakov and Esav's mother. (Bereshith 28:5)*

Rashi comments, "I don't know what these words [Yaakov's and Esav's mother] come to teach us." There are those who say that Rashi's "explanation" is superfluous. After all, since Rashi could not fathom the reason these words appear in the Torah, if he had simply omitted any commentary on them, would it not have been self-evident that he did not understand the words' intent?

Rashi's purpose was much deeper than merely offering a disclaimer. He was well aware that these words have been explained in a number of ways, but Rashi's approach is always to seek the pshat (i.e., the most straightforward explanation) of the Torah's words. Since he could not find a pshat that satisfied him, he commented that he did not know what we are to learn from this.<sup>1</sup>

A job interview is an especially challenging situation in which people often are tempted to create an inflated impression of themselves, in the hope of improving their chances of being hired. On a practical level, it is unwise to give a potential employer a false impression, since one may win the job based on that impression, in which case one will be forced to "live a lie," for the duration of one's employment.<sup>2</sup> It is certainly forbidden to produce false credentials, and whoever does so and is hired on these grounds is guilty of having stolen from his employer.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, honesty and reliability are sometimes the very traits that make the best impression, and are often just what an employer is looking for. During his very first job interview, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was asked an unusually complex and difficult question which he did not know how to answer. Rather than trying to cover up his ignorance in the matter, and without offering any excuses, Rav Shlomo Zalman simply confessed that he did not know the answer, for he was altogether a man of truth.

When he returned home, Rav Shlomo Zalman told his wife that he was convinced he had not won the job, since he had responded, "I don't know." He was surprised therefore when his prospective employers called him back and told him that they had decided to hire him. It was the fact that he had put his own honor aside in admitting that he did not know the answer that had so impressed them!<sup>4</sup>

---

1. *Sifthei Chachamim on Bereshith 28:5.*

2. Heard from Rav Moshe Meiselman.
3. Responsa Igroth Moshe, Choshen Mishpat 2:30.
4. Pe'er HaDor.

---

Priceless Integrity, Copyright © 2001 by Rabbi Daniel Travis and Torah.org.

Subscribe to *Priceless Integrity* and receive the class via e-mail.