

SEEKERS OF HASHEM

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Yaakov made an oath saying, "If You will be a G-d with me and protect me on this path that I am going and give to me bread to eat and clothing to wear and I will return in peace to the house of my father ..." (Breishis 28:20-21)

Bread to eat: Like it is written in the promise of an earlier verse, "I will not abandon you". One who looks for bread (food) is called abandoned, as it says in Tehillim (37:28): "I was young and now I am old and I never saw a Tzadik abandoned and his children in search of bread..." (Rashi)

Why does Yaakov need to specify that bread is for eating and clothing is for wearing? What are the other options? Is there perhaps clothing that's for eating and food for wearing? Of course not! Why the extra verbiage?

The Mesilas Yesharim states, "The desire for honor tugs at a person's heart more than any of the other longings and desires in the world. If not for concern over his honor, a person would be content to eat whatever was at hand, to clothe himself with whatever would cover his nakedness, and to dwell in a house which would afford him protection from the elements. He would obtain his livelihood with little effort and would feel no need to exert himself to become rich. But so as not to see himself as lower and lesser than his friends, he places a yoke upon his neck, and there is no end to all his labors."

Reb Gifter ztl. explained the Yaakov's use of language, "bread to eat" and clothing to wear" that he was not looking for elaborate gourmet banquet food to gain high praise from society or clothing so ornate and fancy to impress the eyes of onlookers. No, Yaakov wanted food not for show but to eat. He requested food not for display but for eating, which allows more time, energy, and resources to devote to Torah study!

In that verse from Tehillim quoted by Rashi, where Dovid HaMelech declares that in all his days he never saw a Tzadik abandoned and his children searching for bread", a major question leaps into the minds of many a good reader. Of course we have heard of people, perhaps during the Holocaust or the depression, who are presumed to be Tzadikim and yet they and their children were left to search desperately for bread!

Reb Moshe Feinstein was oft quoted as decrying a common Yiddish phrase he claims broke the spirit of many a Jewish home. "Shver Z'zein a Yid!" - "It's hard to be a Jew!" He would correct it, "It's beautiful and wonderful to be a Jew!" Many families who gave up their jobs each week to maintain the integrity of Shabbos struggled financially for that sacrifice and with a sigh they would say, how hard it is to be a Jew. That statement left a bitter flavor in the mouths of their children who then moved away from Jewish centers or life, making "materialism" - "the search for bread" - the main goal in life. Then the large house in the burbs became their measure of success. That sigh sent a generation running!

Now we can revisit the word of King David who testifies that in all his years he never witness a Tzadik, a truly righteous person who, when he was "abandoned" and without bread complained in such a way that his children then became "seekers of bread". Rather, "yismach lev m'vakshei' HASHEM!" - "Happy is the heart who seeks HASHEM!"

Reb Simcha Zissel zl, the Alter from Kelm said, that usually a person is not content until he finds what he is looking for but when it comes to searching for HASHEM a person is happy and satisfied even with the search! Those authentic Tzadikim who endured even temporary abandonment, their children remained **seekers of HASHEM!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.