

A PEACEFUL RETIREMENT

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And Yaakov settled in the dwelling-place of his father, in the land of Kena'an." [37:1]

The *Medrash* says that *Yaakov* wanted to settle down, into a "satisfied peace." Anyone who has read through *Yaakov's* life could understand why this might be so. He grew up with a murderer for a brother, from whom he eventually was forced to flee. He then went to his uncle, *Lavan* the idol-worshipper, where he worked seven years to get married, only to be tricked into marrying the wrong sister and working seven more years for the younger one. Then he continued to work, until fear for his life caused him to run away once again. Finally, his wife *Rachel* died bearing her second child. At this point, we might understand his interest in relaxing with his family!

But the *Medrash* says that G-d looked at *Yaakov*, and said, "Is it not enough for the righteous that the World to Come is prepared for them, that they also desire to dwell in satisfaction [in this world]?"

The *Chassam Sofer*, Rabbi Moshe Sofer, asks a variant of the classic question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" If G-d is good and beneficent, he asks, then why should it bother Him that a *Tzaddik*, a righteous person, should have peace?

In order to explain this, the *Chassam Sofer* analyzes the verse in Psalm 145, "You open up Your hand, and satisfy every living thing with '*Ratzon*' [desire]." We usually understand this to mean that G-d gives every living thing according to its needs and wants. The *Chasam Sofer* offers a new insight.

We know, says the Rabbi, that one who receives everything she wants without limit [and has nothing left to strive for], eventually is disgusted with her very life. It is very important for a person to have wants and desires. In addition, it is obvious that one who feels that he lacks something, and desires it, is a thousand times happier to finally receive it than is one who never desired it or felt the lack in the first place. This, then, is the meaning of satisfying every living thing with "desire" - that with all that G-d gives a person, He ensures that it is with desire - meaning that the recipient still desires other things. Further, G-d gives the desire in the first place, in order that we rejoice when we attain our goals.

So too, says the *Chassam Sofer*, is it important that the righteous recognize that there is no peace and satisfaction, no completion and no perfection, in this world. If they did not feel a lack in this world, then they could not fully understand or rejoice in the greatness of the World to Come. This is

why G-d said, "It is not enough for the righteous that the World to Come is prepared for them; rather, they must desire to dwell in satisfaction!" It was not a rhetorical question, but a statement: because of their very righteousness, they must desire the rest available in the World to Come, meaning that they must see the lack of it in this world. Then, concludes Rabbi Sofer, they will rejoice and celebrate in the great things given to the House of Israel, all of whom have a share in the World to Come!

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