



Dear Parents,

Erev Erev Shabbos Parashas Mikeitz Shabbos Chanuka Rosh Chodesh Teves 5780

Living among and interacting with the non-Jewish world has been a struggle for the Jewish people for the entirety of our existence. The perils and pitfalls seem to have become even more pronounced in the recent past. We lay claim to equal rights and privileges as other citizens of our respective countries, while at the same time recognizing the precariousness of our standing as supposed equals to our non-Jewish neighbors. We are blessed with unprecedented affluence while we confront a world-wide increase in anti-Semitism.

We have co-religionists who openly flaunt their financial success, seemingly unaware of the potential to arouse jealousy among our fellow citizens. Some of them consider themselves to be above the law and line their pockets with questionably acquired profits, employing various rationalizations to justify their behavior. Is this really OK?

What can we learn from our great ancestors in this regard? The *Pasuk* tells us in this week's *Parsha* (*Bereishis 42:1*) - *And Yaakov saw that there was food in Egypt, and he said... Why do you make yourselves conspicuous? Rashi explains this to mean: Why do you show yourselves to the sons of Yishmael and Esav as if you have food? (Because at this time, Yaakov's family did still have food.)*

Rashi's comment is based on the *Gemara* in *Taanis* (10B) which says – *Don't make yourselves appear satiated before them, for perhaps they will become jealous. Rashi points out that the entire reason the brothers were sent to buy food at that time, was in order not to appear well fed and well situated while their non-Jewish neighbors were suffering.*

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This is difficult to understand. If a person has something precious, such as a nice house or nice car and others do not, one is not obligated to throw that item away because others are feeling jealous about it. We know that feeling jealous is inappropriate and it should be the other's responsibility to work on addressing those feelings.

Nevertheless, we see how *Yaakov Avinu* reacted when anticipating jealousy on the part of *Esav* and *Yishmael's* descendants. He instructed his sons to embark on a dangerous journey to Egypt to buy food, which was essentially unnecessary, in order to mitigate the pained feelings of his neighbors. There undoubtedly were many ways that *Yaakov* could have justified doing nothing to help his non-Jewish neighbors deal with their inappropriate jealousy, but he is teaching us the profound level of sensitivity we need to have for those around us, even and perhaps especially non-Jews.

We need to internalize this nuanced approach and to pass it on to our children. Our existence in an increasingly hostile non-Jewish world calls for deep insight into human behavior and the teachings of our *Chazal*. We do not live in a vacuum and our words and actions are under increasing scrutiny. We need to develop the sensitivity of *Yaakov Avinu* and keep in mind constantly the impact of what we do and say is having on the world around us.

Mastering this balancing act will, with Hashem's help, assure our safety and the well-being and successful future of our children.

As we celebrate *Chanuka*, which itself is another link in the chain of the Jewish people's ongoing confrontation with the non-Jewish world, we need to focus on finding the balance between strengthening ourselves and our communities, while being ever conscious that we are visitors on others' turf. Mastering this balancing act will, with Hashem's help, assure our safety and the well-being and successful future of our children.

Best wishes for an inspiring Shabbos and illuminating Chanuka,