

## VAYISHLACH - 5712

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

Ya'akov Avinu demonstrates in this week's parsha that he is a true *einikel* [grandson] of Avraham Avinu. He understood the lessons taught by his *zeida* and follow in that path of life.

Avraham told the Bnei Cheit when he confronted them regarding the purchase of Me'arat HaMach'peila for the burial of his wife Sarah, that his relationship with them was on the level of a "Ger" and a "Toshav" [23:4]. That he was both a stranger and a regular citizen living among them and he must relate to them in a dual capacity. In many ways he is ready work with them as a full partner in improving society and the environments, but at the same time he conducts his life differently than theirs.

Ya'akov Avinu follows that same model. Upon returning to Eretz Yisrael he "encamped" [va'yichan] on the outskirts of the city of Shechem [33:18]. The Gemara Shabbat [33a] comments that in addition to camping there he improved and "beautified" the city, by instituting a coin system [to facilitate commerce], he built public bath houses [hygienic reasons] and a shopping mall. The Midrash [cited by Meshech Chachma] adds that in addition to above he established his *techum* for Shabbat purposes. According to Halacha at the start of Shabbat each person has to determine where "his home" is, and has a very limited area where he may roam about outside "his home". Ya'akov established his "home" and his "life" and determined where his limited area of involvement would be.

We, the descendents of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov are always challenged to relate to the outside world in a dual fashion. In many areas we work along with everyone else as full partners. We all use the world around us together and have a reciprocal obligation towards each other to make it more livable and comfortable. When we were born we entered into a world full of beautiful trees, a world with hospitals and medications. Therefore, we all have an obligation to provide for such conveniences and necessities for the next generation. We are obligated to participate in all civic, scientific and political enterprises which will enrich the entire community.

But at the same time, we, the religious Jews have our own unique outlook on life and style of living. Not only do we lead our lives differently from them but even in death, we have our own Jewish cemeteries and our ways of mourning differ from the rest of the world. Therefore, Ya'akov Avinu teaches us that because we are so involved with society that we must chart out our *techum*, indicating that we cannot "go out of the box" to mingle freely with all of our neighbors. We are absolutely unique and alone, and that's how it should be.