

Everything

What does it mean to live in a consumer culture? You look around you, and everywhere, there are things that attract you, things you like and could use, all ready for delivery to your doorstep if you can come up with the cash, check or credit card. Could anyone living in our world look at his own four walls, his own limited selection of belongings, and say "I have everything?"

Our forefather Yaakov teaches us that this is the outlook toward which we should strive. When Yaakov and Eisav met each other after their years of estrangement, each was

well endowed with material possessions. But the Chofetz Chaim points out the difference in the way each of them described their wealth. "I have a lot," said Eisav. "I have everything," said Yaakov.

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said Yaakov."

The view of Eisav is that of the perennial consumer. He has a lot, but there's a lot more still to be had. Yaakov, on the other hand, feels complete. Whatever is in his possession at that time is, in his view, everything. Even when he was

robbed of everything including the shirt on his back, he kept before him the goal of performing Hashem's will. He understood that Hashem apporions

the world's riches according to each person's real, spiritual needs.

Certainly, the Torah does not forbid us from enjoying the material world. We even acknowledge the joy of owning new clothing with the brachah "shehechyanu." Yaakov doesn't teach us to give up the material world. But he does teach us that, rather than looking at what we don't have and longing for it, we must focus our eyes on what we do have, and appreciate it as the portion perfectly suited to our unique service to Hashem.

Shabbos Table Discussion:

How do you know if you're grasping for too much?

Adapted from "Growth Through Torah," by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin with permission from the author

Friends

Continued from front

silent. Once the purchase had been made, there was no constructive purpose to his comment. He only succeeded in angering Reuven and then fanning the flames, all in the guise of protecting his friend's best interests.

Shabbos Table Discussion:

When would it have been helpful and appropriate for Shimon to advise Reuven?

Adapted from "The Chofetz Chaim: A Daily Companion," by Michael Rothschild with Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, with permission from Mesorah Publications

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Your Honor

Rabbi Mordechai Schwab would give everyone, even a simple Jew, the title "Reb." This habit was even reflected in his personal phone book, in which each entry was titled "Reb." He was once asked what purpose was served by carrying this formality into his phone book. Those addressed in person in a respectful manner would naturally be pleased by the title, but what did they gain by being honored in a phone book they would never see?

Rabbi Schwab explained that the listings were not written in this way for the sake of those listed. "I am writing it for myself. I need to know that the individual is a 'Reb,'" he explained. In this way, he kept the mitzvah of Kovod Habriyos—honoring a fellow man—which he said extends not only to how you treat a person, but to how you think of him as well.

Shabbos Table Discussion:

What does a title of respect accomplish? Why are people less inclined to use them today?

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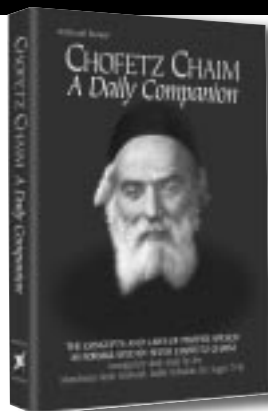
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