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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

THE BEST BUSINESS DEAL!

PARSHAS EIKEV

I want to share a beautiful dvar Torah from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**.

Yaakov Dovid Wilovsky was born in the Russian town of Kobrin in 1845. When he was six years old his father hired a private tutor to learn Torah with him. The learning went well. After a few months, Yaakov Dovid's father, who was very poor, was no longer able to afford to pay tutor. The tutor continued learning with Yaakov Dovid for another few months. Then the tutor sent a message that, regretfully, he would be unable to continue tutoring unless he got paid. Yaakov Dovid's father was distraught that his son would have to stop learning Torah with the tutor, but he had no money to pay him. That night in shul, Yaakov Dovid's father heard a rich man say that he was building a home but was unable to find bricks to build the chimney. Yaakov Dovid's father went home, dismantled the bricks from his own chimney, and sold them to the wealthy man for a large sum of money. Then Yaakov Dovid's father hurried to the tutor and paid what he owed him in addition to a salary for the next 6 months. It was a cold winter, but Yaakov Dovid's father could not light a fire without a chimney. The family suffered from the cold, but Yaakov Dovid's father was happy. He felt that he had made a good deal and that the suffering was worth it if it meant that Yaakov Dovid could continue learning Torah.

Needless to say, this **love for Torah** made a strong impression on the young Yaakov Dovid. He advanced in his Torah learning and became well-known as the Ridvaz. He wrote many sefarim, held rabbinic positions and attained a full understanding of both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud.

The **Yalkut Shimoni** relates that once Rabbi Yochanan and Rav Chiya bar Abba were walking together. They passed a field, an olive grove, and a vineyard. At each stop Rabbi Yochanan remarked that he used to own each of them but sold them to be able to learn Torah. Rabbi Chiya started crying, sad that Rabbi Yochanan did not leave anything to support himself in his old age. Rabbi Yochanan responded that his actions were an indication of the great business deals that he had made. 'The world was created in only six days, but the Torah was given in forty days and forty nights. I sold something created in six days and bought something that took forty days to be given.'

The **Yalkut Shimoni** teaches us that **trading physical possessions for Torah is the greatest business deal that one can make!**

"At the end of forty days and forty nights, Hashem gave me the two stone tablets, the covenant tablets." (Devarim 9:11)

Rabbi Yochanan and the Ridvaz's father both illustrated such love for learning Torah. What can **we** do to show how much we love Torah? **Rabbi Frand** gives a great example. Imagine if your boss asked if this one time you are able to stay a few hours late, at three times your regular salary. You would most

likely jump at the opportunity. What if that would mean that you would miss your Daf Yomi shiur or that you would miss learning with your chavrusa? Would it still be worth giving that up even one time, for the extra money? (Obviously, at times, there are different considerations.)

Another example could be if there was a suit sale and you could save \$100 on a suit. However, it would require you to stop your regular learning schedule one hour early. Would it be worth it? If you do go, you are valuing your one hour of learning at a mere \$100. Yet, every single word of Torah learned is a new mitzvah and is priceless. In one hour, you can speak thousands and thousands of words of Torah. Is it worth trading something so priceless for a mere \$100? ([Rabbi Frand on the Parashah 2](#))

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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