

# THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

## Background

The Medrash tells us that HASHEM found fault with Yaakov's answer to Pharaoh. HASHEM said, "Here I saved you from Lavan and Aysav, I returned Dina and Yosef to you, and you are complaining?" It seems clear that Yaakov's response was inappropriate, and for that response, he was punished.

## Questions

Pharaoh was a very powerful, well-connected monarch. He had constant visitors from people from all walks of life and all parts of the world, yet when he met the father of his viceroy, a man with a reputation for being a venerated sage, he asked him, "How old are you?" The reason he asked this, as the *Dos Zakainim* explained, was that Yaakov looked unusually old. The Ramban explains that in all of his life, Pharaoh had never seen anyone so ancient looking, so he asked out of astonishment, "How old are you?!" Yaakov answered, "It's not that I am so old. Rather, the suffering that I endured in my lifetime caused me to age prematurely."

This response seems normal and appropriate. If so, why does HASHEM have a complaint against Yaakov. It wasn't how he would normally respond: it was the correct answer to the question. Suffering caused him to age prematurely. So what is the complaint against Yaakov that cost him 33 years of his life?

### ספר בראשית פרק מז

ז) וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת יַעֲקֹב אָבִיו וַיַּעֲמְדֵהוּ לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וַיְבָרֵךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת פַּרְעֹה

ח) וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל יַעֲקֹב כַּמָּה יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֶּיךָ

ט) וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל פַּרְעֹה יָמֵי שְׁנֵי מַגֻּרֵי שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה מֵעַט וְרַעִים הָיוּ יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיָּי וְלֹא הִשְׁיָגוּ אֶת יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיָּי אֲבֹתַי בְּיַמֵּי מַגֻּרֵיהֶם

*And Yosef brought this father, Yaakov, and he stood him before Pharaoh, and Yaakov blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Yaakov, "How many are the years of your life?" And Yaakov answered, "The years of my wanderings are 137. Little and bad were the years of my life, and they did not reach the years of my fathers in their wanderings."*

### דעת זקנים מבעלי התוספות על בראשית פרק מז פסוק ח

ח) כמה ימי שני חיך - פשט לפי שראהו זקן מאד ושערות ראשו וזקנו לבנות מרוב הזקנה שאל כן והוא ענהו ימי מגורי שלשים ומאת שנה מעט ורעים כלומר מעטים הם שנותי אלא מתוך רעות שהיה לי קפצה עלי זקנה. מדרש בשעה שאמר יעקב מעט ורעים היו אמר לו הקב"ה אני מלטתך מעשו ומלבן והחזרת לי דנינה גם יוסף ואתה מתרעם על חיך שהם מעט ורעים חיך שמנין התיבות שיש מן ויאמר עד בימי מגורי כך יחסרו משנותיך שלא תחיה כחיי יצחק אביך והם ל"ג תיבות ובמנין זה נחסרו מחייו שהרי יצחק חי ק"פ שנה ויעקב לא חי אלא קמ"ז

*Dos Zakainim- How many are the years of your life – Because Yaakov looked very old, and the hair of his head and beard were white from old age, Pharaoh asked him this question. And Yaakov answered, "The days of my wandering are 137," meaning, "They aren't that many, but because of the suffering that I endured, old age jumped upon me. The Medrash teaches us that when Yaakov responded this way, HASHEM said, "I saved you from Aysav and Lavan. I returned Dina and even Yosef to you, and you are complaining that the years of your life were few and bad? The letters of the words that you have spoken will be taken from your life. You will not live as long as your father Yitzchak who lived to be 180." Those 33 letters were the years taken off of Yaakov's life. Yitzchak lived 180 years, and Yaakov lived only 147 years.*