



November 25, 2023



Parshas Vayeitzei

12th of Kislev 5784

## The Proud Olive

After Yaakov has his famous dream about the ladder and the angels going up and down, the pasuk (28:18) says he built a matzeiva for Hashem. This was a monument memorializing the powerful spiritual experience he had undergone there. What happens next seems odd. He goes ahead and takes out a bottle of olive oil and pours it directly on top of the monument, until the very last drop. Ever wonder what is the significance of doing that? And it's not only Yaakov. He was just the start of the custom. Throughout our history we have been anointing monuments and kings by sitting them down and pouring a bottle of extra virgin olive oil on their heads. Why do we do this? And why specifically olive oil? Why not apple cider vinegar? Or red wine vinegar? Or just some good red wine?

### Rising to the Top

Reb Shmshon Rafaell Hirsch explains that there is a quality to oil that is rarely found in liquid. And that is that oil does not mix with other liquids. No matter how hard one will try to force it, oil refuses to mix. This, says Rav Hirsch, is the lesson symbolized by the oil. The Navi sits the new king down and tells him that his success is predicated on his ability to stay separate and proud. To resist the temptation of mixing with all the other cultures of the world. To overcome the urge to be just like all of them. Pride in being a Jew is the greatest tool a king can have, and we use oil to drive that message home.

Yaakov was doing the same. He was instilling into his very essence the need to remain separate, as he was about to walk into Lavan's house. He would need to remain strong. It is the only way.

### The Man at Penn Station

I was once standing on line at Penn Station in Manhattan, boarding a bus, when an African-American man walked up to me and said, "Sir, you're Jewish, correct?" He then said, "I have a question for you. Why is it that all you Jews are always well dressed? Always in those white shirts with a pressed suit? Or with a good-looking sweater on. Why is that?"

As my bus began boarding the last passengers, I turned to him and asked, "Why do secret service agents always dress nicely?"

He said, "Because they represent the President."

"Exactly!" I said. "And we represent God!" And with that I turned and boarded the bus.