



Wembley Synagogue

וַיֵּצֵא

Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Vayetze

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שֵׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָן - Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and went to Charan (28:10)

Rashi says that the Torah need only have said "and Yaakov went to Charan" why does it mention his departure from Be'er Sheva? Rashi answers that this teaches us that the departure of a tzaddik – a righteous person- from a place, makes a deep impression. For at the time the person is in the city, he is its magnificence, he is its splendor and he is its grandeur. Once he departs, its magnificence has gone away (פָּנָה הַדָּרָה), its splendor has gone away (פָּנָה זִינָה), and its grandeur has gone away (פָּנָה הַדָּרָה). Rashi's words are alluded to by way of gematriya (numerical value):

If we take Yaakov out of Be'er Sheva, that is if we subtract the numerical value of the word Yaakov (182) from Be'er Sheva (575), we are left with the number 393 – the exact numerical value of the words "פָּנָה הַדָּרָה, זִינָה, וְהַדָּרָה" – its magnificence, splendor and grandeur have gone away!

(Source: A Shabbos Vort)

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שֵׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָן - Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and went to Charan (28:10)

Rashi poses the following questions: Why is it necessary for the verse to state "Yaakov departed from Beer Sheva"? The fact that Yaakov left Beer Sheva is obvious from the statement, "he went to Charan". In order for Yaakov to have gone to his destination, Charan; he must have left his starting point, Beer Sheva. The phrase "Yaakov departed from Beer Sheva" is explained by Rashi to mean that his departure was made an impression. This town had lost the splendor it had enjoyed as the dwelling place of a righteous man. Rashi's explanation puts this verse into its proper perspective as, one takes note of a righteous man's (i.e. Yaakov's) departure. However, this now poses another question. When Avraham left Charan (Gen. Chapter 12 vs. 4) the Torah makes no mention of Charan's diminished glory. Why? Notwithstanding the similarity between the episodes, a clear distinction may be made between them. In Avraham's case, the people of Charan were not righteous and they were not sensitive to the spiritual vacuum left in the wake of his departure. Consequently, the Torah does not emphasize Avraham's exit from Charan. In contrast, Yaakov's departure did not go unnoticed by Yitzchak and Rivkah. Besides being his parents, they were sensitive to spiritual and moral issues and they were aware of this dimension of loss from Yaakov's departure. (Source: Chasam Sofer)

וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשָׂם מִרְאֲשׁוֹתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּלָּח וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא - He took of the stones of the place, and he placed them around (under) his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. (28:11)

Why did Yaakov rest his head on a stone?

The *Gemara* (*Bava Kamma* 30a) says: "He who wants to be a *chassid* (devout person) should observe the laws of *nezikin* — damages" (being careful not to hurt anyone or damage property). Rava says that he should follow the teachings of *Avot* (Book of Ethics), and others say that he should be observant in the laws of *berachot* (recognising the supremacy of Hashem and thanking Him for everything). The word "even" — "stone" — is an acronym for "*avot, berachot, nezikin*."

As Yaakov was preparing to enter the "outside world," his first resolution was to be a *chassid*. The placing of these three stones as the guidepost for his "head," was, as though to say, that his thoughts would always be directed to excelling in these three matters. The three stones united to emphasize that each approach is equally important and that through these three things one can make the world a "*beit Elokim*" — a "house of G-d." (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא - and he lay down in that place to sleep. (28:11)

Before Yaakov went to Padan-Aram, he first stopped off to study at the Yeshiva of Shem V'Eiver for fourteen years. Now, in continuing his journey after those fourteen years, Yaakov "lay down." The Midrash Bereshit Rabba (68:11) explains that all the while Yaakov was learning in Yeshiva, he was so utterly immersed in Torah study that he never lay down to sleep.

Why now did Yaakov lie down and not engage in Torah study? Yaakov's lying down may be attributed to his desire to receive *nevuah* – prophecy. *Rambam* (*Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah* 7:2) writes that all prophets, with the exception of Moshe, saw prophecies only when asleep. Hence Yaakov viewed sleep as a prerequisite to prophecy.

We can accordingly begin to develop some idea of Yaakov's Torah study. During the fourteen years that Yaakov had dedicated himself to uninterrupted Torah learning, he was so utterly immersed in Torah that he did not even interrupt his learning for prophecy! Only after completing those fourteen years of absolute study did Yaakov allow himself to lie down and receive prophecy. (Source: Pirkei Torah)

וַיַּחְלֵם וְהִנֵּה סֹלֶם מְצֹב אֶרְצָה וְרֵאשׁוֹ מְגִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאָכִי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ - And he dreamt, and behold! A ladder was standing on the ground with its top reaching to the heavens and behold, angels of Hashem were going up and coming down. (28:12)

The commentators remark that the order of this verse seems to be reversed. Since angels reside in Heaven, they must first “come down” before they “go up.” Why then does the Torah tell us that they “were going up and coming down?”

Rabbi Chaim Berlin explains that the rising and descending are not absolutes. Rather, what is considered rising and descending is determined in reference to the point of destination. By way of illustration, consider a shul: the east wall is considered the “front” for that is where the ark stands. But were the ark to move, for some reason, to another wall, then that wall would become the “front.”

Similarly when angels are “rising” or “descending” is determined by the location of the Divine Presence. Drawing closer to the Divine Presence is considered rising, and moving away, descending. At the time of Jacob’s dream, the Divine Presence was on the earth, as the following verse tells us (“and behold, Hashem was standing beside him” 28:11). Therefore the angels going from Heaven to earth were considered to be “going up” while the angels returning to Heaven were considered to be “going down.” (Source: The Parsha Anthology)

The Chofetz Chaim sees the ladder as a metaphor for life. A person is always on the ladder of life. Either he goes up or he goes down. He never stands in the same place. (Source: Chofetz Chaim)

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein says that that the lesson of Yaakov’s dream was that Hashem showed Yaakov that no matter where a person may be on the earth, it is always possible to reach the heavens. All that is necessary is the proper ladder. If one has a ladder that is firmly grounded in a foundation of learning and adherence to the mitzvot, one will always be able to use it to ascend to higher levels of closeness to Hashem. (Source: Darash Moshe)

וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן לִי עֹשֶׂר אֶעֱשְׂרֶנּוּ לְךָ - *All that You will give me, I will repeatedly tithe to You (28:22)*

Traditionally, the word “all” indicates an inclusion above and beyond the scope of what has been mentioned already. If so, the Chida (Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai) points out, Yaakov was promising to return a tenth not only of “what You give me” but of “all that You give me.” What did he mean to add by this inclusion?

Every Jew is obliged to give a tenth of his earnings to charity. There is, however, a difference of halachic opinion with regard to how this tenth is calculated. Some maintain that a tenth must be deducted from the full amount a person earns, his gross income; others, that he must only take a tenth of what remains after having covered his basic expenses, his net income. This, says the Chida, is what Yaakov was saying. He would deduct a tenth of his gross income, “all You give me.” (Source: the Parsha Anthology)

Verses 20-22 “Yaakov made a vow saying, ‘If Hashem will be with me and He will guard me on this route in which I am going and He will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear, and if I return in peace to my father’s house and Hashem will be my G-d, then this stone, which I have placed as a monument will be a house of Hashem and I will definitely separate tithes for You from everything that you give.’

Paneach Raza and Maskil LeDavid question why Yaakov made a conditional promise to Hashem, when a Jew is supposed to serve Hashem without contemplating the benefits that might result from this observance. Maskil LeDavid answers that Yaakov was not expecting Hashem to reward him for his observance of the mitzvot, but for his additional promises that extended beyond the basic obligations of Jewish law. Therefore Yaakov attached conditions only to his additional promises to Hashem which he expected to yield fruit. However, such an act appears to be out of character with the moral caliber of the Patriarchs. The Rabbis teach that the Patriarchs were so devoted to Hashem, at the expense of any personal agenda; they are compared to a “chariot” which follows the direction in which it is led without deviating from side to side (Bereshit Rabbah 47:6). Thus, it is somewhat unsatisfying to conclude that Yaakov would have made any conditions in his service of Hashem, even in the matters he was not strictly obligated in.

Rather, it would appear that Yaakov was not demanding rewards from Hashem; he was merely requesting the necessary working conditions to fulfill his promise. In other words, to build a “house of Hashem” and perform the mitzvot properly, Yaakov would need Hashem’s protection, provision of food and clothing, assistance to return back to the Land of Israel and assistance to build a family. Thus Yaakov was merely requesting from Hashem the necessary means to be able to serve Him. (Source: Likutei Sichos Vol 15)

Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts 3.40pm



Shabbat ends: 4.48pm