



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT VAYETZE

Yaakov's Recipe for Success

This week's Parsha prefaces (Gen. 28:10): "And Yaakov went from Be'er Sheva and traveled to Haran." Given that, a few verses earlier (at the end of Parshat Toldot), the Torah already narrated that Yaakov was sent away from home to find a wife by Lavan, this introductory verse appears repetitious!

We know that the Torah not only uses extreme precision, but also contains lessons that are relevant throughout the ages – and this is no exception. Through expending ink on writing out the names of the locations, the Torah is communicating a deeper, symbolic message. The name "Be'er Sheva" – where Yaakov came from – has two historical origins. First, from when Avraham and Avimelech established a treaty together; second, when Yitzchak's servants dealt with Avimelech [1]. In any event, it resembles an aura of peace and tranquility – both because of its name, which was given in the context of establishing covenants, and because of the immense presence of the *Shechinah* present, as Avraham and Yitzchak, spiritual giants, dwelled there. His destination, Haran, on the other hand, was just the opposite, as *Chazal* expound on the word 'Haran/חרן' to be referencing "חרון אף של עולם" – a wicked place, igniting fierce anger from Heaven (see Rashi's exposition on Gen. 11:32). Therefore, the Torah is not just informing us of the geographical locations marking Yaakov's journey, but highlighting the metaphoric contrast between his hometown and where he was headed.

Why was this so significant, though?

We find much more emphasis in the Torah on Yaakov's life than that of Avraham or Yitzchak. *Chazal* explain that whereas both Avraham and Yitzchak bore children that chose an evil path (Yishmael and Esav), all of Yaakov's children came out righteous. Therefore, Yaakov was considered more pure in a sense – the perfect blend between the attributes of his ancestors [2] – and the Torah emphasizes much of the sequence of events in his life to showcase the proper conduct befitting *Am Yisrael* in its purity. In our case, we are being

given a glimpse into the big mystery: why, after all, did Yaakov indeed merit having all his children come out virtuous?

The answer is within the verse being discussed. As long as Yaakov was still young – before he was to fulfill his destiny of establishing the Jewish Nation – he was able to dwell in "Be'er Sheva"; i.e. he needed an environment of tangible G-dliness, where, in such a pure atmosphere, fulfilling mitzvot was easy and it was more difficult, if anything, to rebel and sin. However, when the time came for Yaakov to get married, he was commanded to go on a journey, leaving "Be'er Sheva" and the yeshiva of Shem and Eiver to go to "Haran." In order to build a Jewish home – what would become the House of Israel – Yaakov first had to leave his bubble in Be'er Sheva and enter a place where the Divine was more hidden and concealed; a place such as Haran, out in the 'real world,' where evil is stronger and doing the right thing comes with more of a test. This factor was crucial for Yaakov Avinu to create the Jewish Nation, because it was precisely this – overcoming the many challenges that would be thrown his way – that would allow him to raise all his children upright. [3]

The lesson for each of us couldn't be more powerful. The next time we are faced with any challenge or spiritual test, let us internalize that it is specifically through facing and overcoming such difficulties that we merit to build a true Jewish home – one that radiates warmth and light.

[1] In both instances, the word "באר" was a reference to the wells of water. By Avraham, "שבע" connoted the oath (שבועה) that he had made with Avimelech; by Yitzchak, "שבע" referred to the seven (שבעה) wells he had dug. See Genesis 21:31 and 26:33.

[2] In Jewish thought, Avraham characterized *chesed* (mercy/kindness) and Yitzchak exemplified *gevurah* (strictness/might); Yaakov embodied *tiferet*, which was a delicate balance between the two.

[3] This essay is based on a talk from the late Lubavitcher Rebbe; found in *Otzar Likutei Sichot*.

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida	Rachamim Ben Shifra	Yitzhak Ben Naama	Chaya Hadas Bat Tova Esther
Frida Bat Yafia	Yisrael Ben Miriam	Shlomo Zalman Ben Miriam	Miriam Bat Bakol
Tzvia Bat Tzipora	Yisrael Ben Yocheved	Ehud Ben Miriam	Dora Devorah Bat Marusia Mazal
Uriel Ben Chana Batya	Zecharia Ben Tzipora	Esther Bat Frida	Noah Yisrael Ben Victoria Yafia

"When babies take their first step and then fall on their bottoms, we praise the first step. We don't criticize their fall. As adults, too, we should spend less time criticizing our falls and more time applauding our small steps."