

Maamarei Mordechai

הסביר לפי ממש פשטו

Parshas Vayetzei 5786

Mordechai Schlachter

Yaakov starts a new chapter in his life.

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה:

“And Yaakov went out from Be’er Sheva and he went towards Charan.” (Bereishis 28:10).

Where was Yaakov going out from? Why did the Torah say he went out when it already said Yitzchok sent him? What did Yaakov leave behind?

The Torah is a divine document that is super-efficient in its wording that requires the reader to use extensive exegesis and hermeneutics to decipher its meaning. The Torah does not spend paragraphs on giving unnecessary details. Yitzchok sent Yaakov to Charan (ibid 28:5), and Yitzchok was living in Be’er Sheva at the time (ibid 26:33), so it is obvious that when Yaakov went, he left Be’er Sheva. Yet, the Torah felt it important to include that detail.

Yaakov was already wealthy before he left town. We know this because Yitzchok blessed him with wealth. (Ibid 27:28). He then gave him a second set of brochos, at a later time, before sending him to Charan. (Ibid 28:3). The first brochos were for wealth, which is why Eisav—who was so inclined to think that life ends at death—was upset for not receiving it. The primogeniture brochos was something Yitzchok gave to Yaakov because Yaakov did not take wives from the Canaanites. That is why Yitzchok gave him those brochos and then immediately sent him to find a wife from the house of Besuel. (Ibid 28:2).

In the meantime—between both brochos—Yaakov became very wealthy. Yaakov became so wealthy that he and Eisav could not reside in the Land together. (Ibid 36:7). Therefore, Eisav up and left and went to Seir. (Ibid 36:8). We know that this happened—this accumulation of wealth—before Yaakov left to Charan because when Yaakov returned, it says that Eisav was coming from Sier. (Ibid 32:4). If the accumulation of wealth occurred after Yaakov returned, Eisav would still be in Canaan. Thus, they accumulated a mass amount of wealth, the Land could not support both of them, so Eisav went to Seir, and then Yaakov went to Charan.

If Yaakov was so wealthy before he left, and certainly Yitzchok was wealthy before he sent Yaakov, then how come Yaakov went to Charan emptyhanded? The answer is in the contrast between how Avraham sought a wife for Yitzchok and how Yitzchok sought a wife for Yaakov. Avraham sent a trusted servant with a load of wealth on ten camels to obtain a wife for Yitzchok. (Ibid 24:10). Upon seeing the correct girl, the servant gave her jewelry. (Ibid 24:47). Then, when the betrothal was finalized, there was haste to return her to Yitzchok forthwith. (Ibid 24:56). Yaakov was older than Yitzchok was, he went himself, and he went without wealth. He also stayed a month before even engaging in any talks about marriage. (Ibid 19:14). Why the great contrast?

The Gemara says that Elifaz, son of Eisav, robbed Yaakov on the way to Charan. (Nedarim 64b). However, the term “and he went out” implies that Yaakov already left without wealth. He left and brought nothing with him. He left all of Be’er Sheva and all his wealth behind. Midrash says one of the reasons Yaakov cried upon seeing Rochel (ibid 29:11) is because he had nothing to give her. (Midrash Rabbah 70).

The Torah uses “and he went out” when the person leaves all he has behind. Cain left his birthright behind and traveled to Nod. (Ibid 4:16). Noach left the teiva and that destructive world behind. (Ibid 8:18). Similarly, Moshe left the comfort of Pharaoh’s household behind to go explore his roots to his kin. (Shmos 2:11).

Be’er Sheva received its name twice. First when Avraham made a treaty with Avimelech. (Bereishis 21:31). It was named again after Yitzchok made a similar treaty with Avimelech, and the fights over the wells ceased. (Ibid 26:33). Be’er Sheva was a place where the avos made treaties with the locals to live in peace. It centered around sustenance of life—the well—and about living in an area in peace. However, owners assert their land rights. Avraham and Yitzchok did not assert their rights to the Land because the Land was promised to them but not yet given.

However, Yitzchok understood that Yaakov’s children would be the fourth generation based on the promise given to Avraham. It would be his children that would start to be entitled to actual ownership in the Land. One condition was that Yaakov not take a wife from Canaan. However, Yitzchok could also not take a wife for Yaakov, like his father did. Yitzchok was a conduit between Avraham and Yaakov. Yaakov had to be the father of a nation. He would have to earn everything on his own. To nation-build, it would not suffice to simply inherit wealth and be given a spouse. He had to teach his children how to live in the Land, settle it, and protect it. He had to select the correct spouse who would be the mother of a nation; the mother of the future kings and people of Israel.

Hashem says to Yaakov, “when you fled from Eisav.” (Ibid 35:1). He did not flee out of fright. Yes, Eisav promised to kill him, but that was a vow only to be fulfilled after Yitzchok passed. (Ibid 27:41). Yitzchok was still alive and yet, Yaakov returned. Eisav already calmed down and did not object when Yaakov received the second brochos. (Ibid 28:6). Yaakov fled from Eisav’s mentality. Eisav as the paradigm attendant to his father. He took care of his father, managed his affairs, and fed him delicacies. When their wealth was too much for the Land, though, Eisav chose to leave. He did not respect the Land or the birthright. Yaakov fled that. When he cried upon seeing Rochel, he was davening for the success of their marriage and in raising their children. Yaakov fled the peacemaking mentality and already accumulated wealth status of Be’er Sheva. He left to be his own man. He specifically went without his wealth to show that any woman he marries he will have earned her hand from scratch and they will build a nation together, from the ground up. He was now in nation building mode. That required him to work for the mother(s) of his children. (He agreed to work for Rochel again, and did not object that the first seven years went to Leah). He left all else behind and started anew, as a self-made man, and man who earned his own bread, promises, prophecy, family, and nation.