



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

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ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



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Parashat Vayeitzei **A Tzaddik Lives With His Faith**

The *parasha* opens with the *pasuk* (28:10), "*Vayeitzei Yaakov me'Be'er Shava vayeilech Charana*, And Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and he went to Charan."

Questions:

- 1 – The commentators ask why the Torah must state both "*vayeitzei*, [Yaakov] left," and also "*vayeilech*, [Yaakov] went." If he went to Charan, he obviously left Be'er Sheva. Why must the Torah state it explicitly?
- 2 – *Parashat Vayeitzei* is a *parasha setumah* [lit., a "closed *parasha*"]. There is no space between any of the *parshiot* that comprise this *parasha* – why is this so?
- 3 – Later in the *parasha* (31:3-15), when Yaakov informs his wives, Rachel and Leah that the time has come to leave Lavan's house, he explains his reasoning at length. This is very, very perplexing. Why must Yaakov provide such a lengthy explanation? All he needed to say was that Hashem commanded him to go and that's all. Would his wives not fulfill the Will of Hashem, Heaven forbid?
- 4 – Rachel and Leah responded, "*Ve'ata kol asher amar Elokim eilecha asei*, And now, all that *Elokim* says to you we will do." Previously, they began to answer Yaakov by telling him that they were very unhappy living in Lavan's domain. If so, what does "*ve'ata*, and now" mean? Does it imply that only *now* that they were unhappy living with Lavan, that they would be willing to listen to Hashem's command? Could it be?

The Answer of Rashi and the Alshich

Our first question was already addressed by Rashi, who writes that the word *vayeitzei* is meant to teach us a lesson. It teaches us that when a *tzaddik* is in a city, he is its splendor, luminance, and glory. But when he leaves, the splendor, luminance, and glory leave with him. The Alshich answers that there were actually two times that Yaakov left. First he left Be'er Sheva and studied Torah in the *beit midrash* of Shem and Ever for 14 years, so that Esav would be unable to find him. He then left the *beit midrash* to go to Charan; that did not involve leaving Be'er Sheva, so it is simply referred to as "going," but not as "leaving."

Answer of the Dubno Maggid and the Beit Halevi

The Dubno Maggid and Beit Halevi answer that an individual generally goes somewhere for one of two reasons: There are those who go to flee the particular place in which he is found. In such an instance, the main part of his journey is simply leaving the place that he is presently in. Yet there are those who journey with the intention of achieving something in their future destination. In that instance, the primary aspect of the journey is not from where one is leaving, but rather, to the place that one is travelling. By Yaakov, his journey combined both aspects. On one hand, he wished to fulfill his mother's command to flee from Eisav. The second purpose in leaving was to fulfill his father's command to go to Charan and marry. Therefore the Torah not only mentions the place from where he left, but also his destination, since each one had its own distinct purpose.

An Additional Reason: The Journey is Itself an Ends to a Means

I think we can add the *Ben Ish Chai's* comments on the Gemara *Berachot* 3a. The Gemara quotes R' Yosi as saying, "One time I was walking on the way [*mahaleich ba'derech*] ... and I entered because of the passersby [*ovrei derachim*]." In his *sefer*, *Ben Yehoyada*, the *Ben Ish Chai* asks why one time R' Yosi uses the expression *mahaleich ba'derech* and one time, *ovrei derachim*. Why two different expressions for what is seemingly the same action? He explains that there are two types of individuals: There is one individual who believes that all of his steps are taken with Divine Providence; they are for his benefit and for the sake of rectifying his soul. Therefore travelling to the other city is not what is primary; rather all of the travelling along the way is an ends in and of itself. This individual is referred to as a *mahaleich ba'derech*, because he understands that the entire journey is for his ultimate benefit. However, there are individuals who think that the main purpose for travelling is in order to



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achieve something in another city. He is called an *oveir derech*, because he is only looking ahead to his destination. He does not see the benefit in the actual travelling. With this, we can understand why with Yaakov, the Torah first states *vayeitzei*; this implies that Yaakov understood that besides for actually reaching Charan for the purpose of getting married, simply setting out on the journey was to his benefit. This is the intention of the blessing we recite each morning, "*ha'meichin me'tzadei gaver*, Who prepares the footsteps of man." In other words, each one of man's footsteps is prepared and directed by Divine Providence.

The Reason Why the Entire *Parasha* is *Setumah*

This is also the theme of *Parashat Vayeitzei*, about which the *Baal Haturim* writes is different from every other *parasha* in the Torah. It does not contain within it even one *parasha* that is *petucha* [open] and not *setumah*. The truth is that the "closed *parshiyot*" already begin from *Parashat Toldot* – from the episode of Yitzchak's blessings, and conclude with Yaakov's encounter with Eisav, when the two made peace. I saw the *Lekach Tov*, quoting R' Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l, explain the Torah's intention in arranging the *parshiyot* in such a manner. He explains that the Torah wishes to teach that all of these events are truly one extended episode. Therefore, they are not divided up, so that the individual can understand that the events are connected. We learn that what occurred to our forefathers is a sign for what will occur to us as well. Each individual has a Waze from Heaven which directs his footsteps, journeys, and actions throughout his life. Everything is directed with the utmost exactitude, and it is impossible for something to have occurred by accident or by chance. Rather, there is a complete plan for each and every man on the face of the earth, and it is all for his benefit. We cannot always see the final outcome, and when viewing only half a picture, man can certainly be fooled. However, "*Tzaddik be'emunato yichyeh*, A *tzaddik* lives with his faith," believing that beneath the surface, everything is for the best. The story is told of a pauper, who was once intended to be the victim of a devious plot. A pit was dug precisely where he intended to walk, with the hopes that he would not see it and fall inside. As he was walking, he remembered that he had left something in his house. He returned home, and by doing so, was saved from the plot. In other words, it was not that he merely made a mistake or forgot; rather, it was orchestrated by Hashem for his benefit. This is how the *pasuk* is explained, "All of the Nations will praise Hashem, for His kindness has overpowered us."

If we contemplate this extended *parasha*, we will recognize that this is a story which spans 25 years, over which many events occurred: 1- Yaakov's blessing; 2- Yaakov's leaving Be'er Sheva and journeying to Charan; 3 – Elifaz's stealing from Yaakov on the way; 4 – going to the *beit hamidrash* for 14 years; 5 – marrying Leah and Rachel; 6- Lavan's cheating Yaakov with his livelihood; 7 – Yaakov's fleeing Lavan and their meeting; 8 – Eisav's meeting Yaakov. Everything was planned by Hashem. So too, with each individual; he experiences many events and he does not understand what the connection is between them. However, the Torah wishes to teach that man's life is similar to a chain, with each link connected to the next. Despite the fact that there is a space between one link and the next, together they form one chain. Therefore, an individual must strengthen himself with trust and faith in Hashem, and to know that everything occurs with the utmost precision and is not mere happenstance. Unfortunately, in present times, the media and newspapers are filled with various different commentaries on each event that transpires in the world. By doing so, they calm themselves. Woe is to the eyes that see this and to the ears that hear this. By doing so, they uproot the foundation of our entire Nation. As our Sages teach, Chabakkuk encapsulated the Torah in one theme – *emunah*, faith. Without it, the entire Nation crumbles. Since we always hear events reported in such a fashion, we have already grown accustomed to it. If an individual gets sick, Heaven forbid, the explanations begin right away – how it happened, etc. Or if an individual died in a car accident, the questions begin immediately – How did it happen? Why was he not careful? Everyone forgets the Providence of Hashem, that everything is directed by Him, up until the most minute detail. He forgets that everything is decreed from Above. This is to the extent that our Sages have said that an individual does not bump his finger in this world, unless it was decreed from Above. This means that an individual who was not careful when moving his hand, if he got a small bruise, it was a decree from Heaven. It is not because he was negligent and was not careful. From this, an individual should learn a lesson regarding even more serious suffering, i.e., that



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it's all brought with Providence from Heaven. It is for both the public's benefit as well as the individual's. Similarly in our times, the masses do not grasp the true reason for the various nations rising in power, and they attribute it to lack of proper leadership in the land and the like. Rather, it is one of the signs of the redemption which is soon to arrive, when the misfortune of the Jewish Nation will increase so that it repents from its wicked ways. Then we will merit the redemption.

Story With Dr. Bernhard

There is an amazing story quoted in the *sefer Me'sod Siach* about the *tzaddik*, Rebbe Chayim David from Piatrikov zt"l from Poland. He had previously been called Dr. Bernhard. In the beginning of his journey, he had been an assimilated Jew, and he was considered one of the most esteemed doctors in Eastern Europe. One Yom Kippur, he was summoned to the bed of a Polish count who was near-death. As expected, he rode on his horse, but when he arrived, he was informed that the count had already died. He then asked himself if he had rode there on Yom Kippur for no reason at all. He therefore decided to return home and travel through the city of Lelov. When he was spotted, he was immediately asked to examine the daughter in law of Rebbe David of Lelov zt"l, who was in a life threatening situation. He went and treated her, and *baruch Hashem*, managed to save her. The Rebbe, when he saw this, blessed the doctor that in the merit of this mitzvah, he should be forgiven for all of the sins that he committed up until that point. Meanwhile the Rebbe sat with him and spoke to his heart. He concluded by saying sincerely, "David Chayim, if you would repent, you have no idea what type of gratification you would bring to your Father in Heaven." The words struck the doctor's heart, and he repented fully. So, too, had it been with him – he thought that he was going to heal the count and that since he had died, he had gone for naught. But it was not so; on the contrary, by going, he fulfilled his purpose in life.

Everything is for the Best

Now we can understand the continuation of the *parasha* and answer the questions that we asked. The Forefathers are teaching us a great lesson on the topic of placing our trust in Hashem. Yaakov fled from Eisav since he wished to kill him. Then he travelled to Lavan and succeeded greatly in earning a livelihood, to the extent that he became a very rich man. This is as is stated in *Midrashim*, that Yaakov earned a good name, as people said that his property was blessed. Everyone was ready to give him slaves, maidservants, donkeys, and camels in exchange for Yaakov's sheep, so that they, too, would incur blessing. Now, once Yaakov had so established himself in this place and truly achieved his main goals in life – he married, had children, grew wealthy, and was saved from Esav – how could he leave such a place? Apparently, this was something that would cause him great damage. Not only to leave the place where he had grown successful, but to now go to the place where Eisav and his enemies were located. It would appear on the surface, that this commandment of Hashem was something that appeared to be to his detriment. **However our forefathers wished to teach** how it is possible to explain that each commandment of Hashem is only for man's benefit. Therefore Yaakov, when he called to Rachel and Leah, explained this and made it clear to them that Hashem's command was only for their benefit, even though it goes against their father. They answered Yaakov similarly, stating that they were certain that this was for their benefit, even though they were leaving their father. They therefore responded, "And now" – i.e., **now** that we know that it is for our benefit – we must certainly fulfill Hashem's command. We see, therefore, that they have taught us that everything Hashem does is for the best.

Words of Mussar

You have now learned that a *tzaddik* lives with his faith. For all of man's life is one unit and a *parasha setumah* from beginning to end. Everything is planned by Hashem according to each individual's specific purpose in life. Various reasons are presented to man in order to lead him to different places. Each journey is for a specific spiritual purpose that Hashem had planned. Every man must believe that there is a Waze in Heaven that guides and directs each of his footsteps in life and that all is for his benefit. Even at times when it appears that the opposite is true, it is because we see only half of the picture and not the full picture. This is as it states in *Tehillim* (perek 19), "The judgments of Hashem are true, totally righteous." The commentators explain that when all



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events are seen together, in totality, then and only then, can we understand that the judgments of Hashem are righteous. However, when we only see half a picture, we do not understand, and err regarding Hashem's Providence. Hashem should help us merit that all of our steps are taken to perform his Will. This is as David Hamelech stated in *Tehillim* (perek 59), "I considered my ways, and returned my legs to your testimonies." Amen ve'amen.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka