

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

DOUBLE DUTY

“And Yaakov left Beersheba and went to Charan.” (25:10)

G-d blesses the righteous that their physical actions effect the maximum spiritual impact. Rashi asks on the above verse why the Torah related from where Yaakov left. What difference did it make from where he came? Isn't the destination all that's important?

Sometimes, when we leave one place and go to another our intention is to leave where we are, and sometimes it is to reach where we're going. Here, however, Yaakov had both of these intentions in mind.

His mother Rivka told him to flee Be'er Sheva to

escape the murderous intentions of his brother Eisav, and therefore Yaakov's intention was to fulfill his mother's command and leave Be'er Sheva. On the other hand, his father Yitzchak sent Yaakov to Charan to find a wife from amongst the daughters of Lavan and not from the daughters of Canaan, and thus Yaakov's intention was not to leave but to arrive.

Thus Yaakov was able to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring both his father and his mother in two different ways with one and the same action.

• Source: Beit HaLevi in *Mayana shel Torah*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation, and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah

bears four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and, in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. G-d finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

ISRAEL Forever

DEPARTURE AND DESTINATION

“Yaakov departed Be'er Sheva and went towards Charan.” These opening words of this week's Torah portion capsule the history of our people for the last two thousand years.

Whatever happened to the Patriarchs, say our Sages, was repeated in some form in the lives of their descendants. Yaakov's departure from Eretz Yisrael for a foreign land was a preview of the exile of his descendants from their Land.

The mention of both the departure and the destination

in this opening passage suggests a double purpose for exile. When Jews proved unworthy of living in the Holy Land because of their sinful ways, it was necessary for Heaven to arrange their departure from it. In order to be worthy of returning they had to endure the difficulties of exile, which would atone for their sins and arouse them to repentance.

Both departure and destination thus serve the purpose of achieving a return to our ultimate destination of Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

MIGDAL AND THE MENORAH

Remains of a synagogue from the period of the Second Beit Hamikdash have been discovered at Migdal on the shore the Kinneret.

What is particularly impressive in this discov-



ery is the imprint of an ancient Menorah. The leader of the archeological team that dug up the Menorah speculated that the artist who chiseled it into stone had copied it from the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash, which he had seen with his own eyes.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with *shalom*." What did he mean by "*shalom*"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why did Rachel, and not her brothers, tend her father's sheep?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
9. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
10. How old was Yaakov when he married?
11. What did Rachel find enviable about Leah?
12. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
13. Who was Leah's handmaiden? Was she older or younger than Rachel's handmaiden?
14. How do you say *dudaim* in Arabic?
15. "G-d remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. G-d forbade Lavan to speak to Yaakov "either of good or of bad." Why didn't G-d want Lavan to speak of good?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
9. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
10. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
11. 30:1 - Her good deeds, thinking they were the reason Leah merited children.
12. 30:5 - Dan.
13. 30:10 - Zilpah. She was younger.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked G-d for another son in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:24 - Because the "good" that comes from wicked people is bad for the righteous.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahaduta*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

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BAVA BATRA 100 - 106

- The rights of the public to a road they have been using
- Whether walking on a property finalizes a transaction
- Some funeral customs of Talmudic times
- How many graves in a burial cave
- The ramifications of finding a dead body on the road
- What is considered part of a field sold or consecrated
- When the buyer of earth is shortchanged or receives too much
- Conflicting statements made by the seller
- The margin of error when land sold is marked with boundaries
- How heirs divide the inherited property

HOW ERETZ YISRAEL WAS ACQUIRED

“**A**rise, walk about the Land through its length and breadth, for to you will I give it.” (*Bereishet* 13:17) This command of G-d to the Patriarch Avraham is cited by Rabbi Elazar as a source for walking in an acquired property constituting a *kinyan* which makes the transaction final and irreversible.

His position is challenged by the other Sages who contend that Avraham’s walking throughout Eretz Yisrael promised to him and his descendants was only a symbolic way of preparing the future conquest of the Land by Yehoshua and his Jewish army. The position of these Sages is that walking on land does not serve as a *kinyan*, and another expression of mastery such as improvement of the property is required

to finalize a transaction.

Although no mention is made in our *gemara* as to what did serve as a *kinyan* for Avraham according to these Sages, there is an interesting suggestion made by the *Ohr Hachayim* commentary on *Bereishet*.

Two passages before the one quoted above, Avraham is told, “Raise now your eyes and look out from where you are: northward, southward, eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and your descendants.”

Human vision is limited, so that in order for Avraham to see the entire Land from where he stood it was necessary for G-d to miraculously bring all of the Land to him. Such a phenomenon of the Land coming to Avraham was certainly a supreme expression of mastery which gave our forefather absolute title to Eretz Yisrael.

• *Bava Batra 100a*

What the SAGES Say

“One cannot take away from the public a road on his property which he has allowed them to use.”

• *Rabbi Yehuda in the name of Rabbi Eliezer - Bava Batra 100a*

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A LIFE FOR A LIFE

based on a real-life Ohr Somayach "Ask" dialogue

From: Jonathan in MA

Dear Rabbi,
My Mom suffers from diabetes and it has now destroyed her kidneys. The tests have been done and I am an excellent match to donate my kidney to her, but someone told me that it was against the Jewish religion (note: both my Mom and Dad are Jewish). My question is: 1. Is this Jewish law true? 2. If so, what's the reason? 3. Even if it is against the Jewish law, why would G-d make me an excellent match for my Mom? If you could answer my questions when you get a chance, I would appreciate it. Thank you, Rabbi.

Dear Jonathan,

It is permitted and a mitzvah in your case to donate to your mom. What has happened since you wrote this?

Dear Rabbi,
As far as what's going on, my Mom got some sort of shot at the end of June. The shot takes 90 days to work. Then we can plan a date to have the surgery. We should get a call from the doctor anytime now.

The most miraculous thing about this is that I'm adopted! Although it doesn't surprise me. Ever since I volunteered to donate my kidney, I've prayed to G-d that this would all work out. I'm also very spiritual and have gotten a sense from Him that I'm destined for something big (in addition to giving my Mom my kidney). I don't know what yet, but I'm willing to wait. It should be noted that I'm part Native American, and also Jewish (Jewish because of my adoption), so maybe that's why I'm so spiritual! Thank you so much Rabbi! I hope you have a happy and healthy New Year!?

Dear Jonathan,

Thanks for your response. I hope all goes well. And to think, that as an adopted son, your kidney is compatible is really a miracle. Clearly, G-d brought you where you are for a higher purpose. And this may be not only to save your mother, but also to bring you to Judaism. It's for this reason that I want to address a sensitive issue.

Your spiritual journey is very inspiring, and I appreciate your sharing it with me. I encourage your interest in Judaism, and because I care, I want to clarify something with you, in case you don't know. A person born to a non-Jewish woman, even if adopted by Jewish parents who become his adopted father and mother, needs halachic conversion to be Jewish. If this situation applies to you (meaning if your natural mother was not Jewish and you did not convert according to Jewish Law) it affects you.

You probably know this, but just in case it wasn't clear, I want to spare you from any potential problems, which could

be big ones, in the future. Please forgive me for being forward.

Dear Rabbi,
Thanks, I hope all goes well, too! I'm curious about the halachic conversion. However, I can't do it at this time. Between the operation coming up soon and my grandmother's illness, it will be hard to find the time. Anyway, most likely, my biological mom wasn't/isn't Jewish. I was born in Central America and am half Native American and half Spanish. But, as I said, I am curious about the halachic conversion. What is this? What do I have to do? What does this entail? Please email me, at your convenience, and let me know.

Dear Jonathan,

I'm sorry to hear about the difficult health issues in your family. I pray that all will be well. Regarding conversion, now that you mention you are part Spanish, perhaps the hand of G-d here is even more pronounced. Who knows, you might even be a descendent of Spanish Jewish conversos?

[The correspondence continues to discuss halachic conversion to Judaism.]

Dear Rabbi,
Thanks for explaining what a halachic conversion is. We'll see what happens if and when my grandmother gets better and after my Mom's and my surgery.

I also have great news! The doctor called my Mom and told her the kidney transplant is a go! We will set up an appointment this Tuesday!

Thanks again Rabbi.

Dear Jonathan,

That's fantastic! Thanks for the great news. I pray all goes well, and let me know when you can how things went.

Dear Rabbi,

I wanted to let you know the surgery went extremely well! Mom and I are recuperating at home now. People were amazed so much about this that we were on the news twice. If you'd like to see it, here are the links:

YouTube - Woman's Adopted Son Is 'Miracle' Organ Match

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LNLDIZOICk>

WBZ-TV Video Archive - wbztv.com

<http://wbztv.com/video/?id=82338@wbz.dayport.com>

I would like to thank you for all your help regarding this matter. I greatly appreciate it! This situation is a total miracle! I would like to continue emailing you about religious and spiritual questions. Again, thanks for all your help.

Dear Jonathan,

Thanks for the great news. May it get even better! And may G-d continue to give you and your family physical and spiritual healing.

GUARDING THE TONGUE IN THE OFFICE

Question: In the office where I work there is a great deal of gossip among the employees about the office manager who is feared but not very well liked. I am aware that it is forbidden to speak ill about someone else and even to listen to such talk. How can I avoid getting caught up in this kind of talk without alienating my fellow workers?

Answer: Your situation is unfortunately a very common one and it presents a real challenge. The only solution is

to take the initiative of approaching each one of your fellow workers who is likely to draw you into such forbidden conversation and ask him or her to do you a favor and leave you out of such talk. You can explain your request as based on a resolution you have made to avoid talking about people.

It is likely that you will be branded as being sanctimonious but this is preferable to violating the command against *lashon hara*.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

TOO BIG A KIPAH

A renowned secular Jew once decided to “observe the natives” by placing himself on the corner of a busy street in an Orthodox neighborhood of Jerusalem.

“*Bist a yid* (are you Jewish)?” asked an Orthodox youngster who wondered what a bareheaded person was doing in the area.

“Of course,” answered the visitor in perfect Yiddish.

“Then where is your kipah head-covering?” asked the youngster.

“See the sky above?” was the sly response. “That is the covering of my head.”

“That is too big a kipah,” came the clever rejoinder, “for so small a head!”

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