

EISAV HAD IT EASY. YAAKOV TRAVELS A DIFFERENT PATH

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 394, Accepting Tzedaka from Women. Good Shabbos!

Eisav Had It Easy. Yaakov Travels A Different Path

The first Rashi in the parsha notes that the pasuk [verse] beginning "And Yaakov departed" appears to be a little out of place. At the end of Parshas Toldos, the pasuk already said, "So Yitzchak sent away Yaakov and he went toward Paddan-Aram to Lavan, son of Besuel, the Aramean..." [28:5].

Parshas Vayietzei should not begin with Yaakov's itinerary, because we already know where he was going. The parsha should begin with the pasuk "He encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set..." [28:11]. What is gained by repeating that which we already know?

Rashi explains that the pasuk had to "reset the narration," so to speak, because it was sidetracked at the end of Toldos. Eisav saw that Yitzchak sent Yaakov away from home to find a wife because he was not pleased with his Canaanite daughters-in-law whom Eisav had married. Therefore, Eisav went to marry his cousin, Machlas the daughter of Yishmael [28:9]. This tangential story diverts our attention from the main narrative of Yaakov's journey, making it necessary to repeat the basic details of that journey before continuing on with the story.

But we must stop and ask ourselves, why did we get off the track? This story was not narrated by a speaker departing from his prepared text. The narration comes from the Master of the World. There must be an important reason for inserting the detail regarding Eisav's marriage to Machlas at precisely this point.

Rav Yosef Salant provides an interesting insight in his sefer, Be'er Yosef. Our patriarch Yaakov is the prototype of exile [galus]. As we have quoted on many occasions, "What occurs to our forefathers foreshadows that which will occur to their descendants." The children are able to persevere in difficult circumstances by virtue of the fact that their ancestors already successfully experienced -- to some extent -- the same trials and tribulations.

As Jews of the exile, Yaakov Avinu -- more than any of the other Patriarchs -- is really our role model. He lived the life of a Jew living in exile -- outside the Land of Israel. He lived a life of constant troubles, one thing after another happening to him and his family. Yaakov's departure from the Land of Israel began in this parsha when he left Be'er Sheva. Since this parsha represents the beginning of the exile and the beginning of the troubles for Yaakov, the pasuk emphasizes: This is where it all began.

Eisav and Yaakov were brothers. They received a similar upbringing. They both had righteous parents. Eisav wanted to find a match. What did he do? He went to his uncle Yishmael, he married Yishmael's daughter Machlas. It went one two three. He had it easy.

Yaakov Avinu wanted to find a match. He had to travel a great distance to reach his uncle Lavan. Lavan forced Yaakov to work for seven years for the wife that he wished to marry. Then after the seven years, Lavan switched sisters and forced Yaakov to work for another seven years. Yaakov had trouble with shidduchim [match making]. It took him years to marry the woman he wanted to marry.

This was the beginning of Yaakov's sojourn in exile. Therefore the pasuk interrupts the narration to contrast how easy it was for Eisav to be able to marry the woman who he was seeking, compared with how difficult it was for Yaakov to marry the woman who he was seeking. In spite of all the troubles, Yaakov accepted his lot. He never bemoaned the fact that his lot was a much more difficult one than that of his twin brother. He never questioned G-d's justice; rather he accepted it with love.

Rav Matisyahu Solomon adds a further insight to the words of the Be'er Yosef: Where do we see that Yaakov did not bemoan his lot and willingly accepted what G-d had in store for him? Rav Solomon says this is explicit in the first pasuk of this week's parsha: "And Yaakov departed from Be'er Sheva and went to Charan."

The Haftorah of this week's parsha describes what actually happened to Yaakov a bit more bluntly: "And Yaakov fled (vaYivrach Yaakov) to the field of Aram..." [Hoshea 12:13]. It was not really "Vayetzei Yaakov" implying that he leisurely left Be'er Sheva. No! It was "VaYivrach Yaakov." Yaakov was fleeing for his life. Even in the Torah itself, when Rivkah told Yaakov to leave, she did not say "Go have a nice trip". She said "Arise, run for your life!" (kum, berach lecha) [Bereishis 27:43]. That described the actual situation.

But how did Yaakov view the event? "And Yaakov went out (vaYietzei) from Be'er Sheva and he journeyed (vaYelech) to Charan." He went, at his own pace, with confidence that G-d would watch over him. This is the key to Yaakov's existence in Galus. It may appear like he had to run for his life, and that is in fact what happened. But he did it with calm and equanimity, knowing that he would be protected by G-d. It is that faith that has stood us well through these long years of exile.

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