

Our *Parashah* opens: "Vayeishev / Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan." *Rashi z"l* comments: Yaakov wished to live in tranquility, but this trouble in connection with Yosef suddenly came upon him. When the righteous wish to live in tranquility, *Hashem* says of them, 'Are not the righteous satisfied with what is stored up for them in the World-to-Come that they wish to live in tranquility in this world too?!" [Until here from *Rashi*]

But why would *Hashem* object if Yaakov had lived in tranquility in this world also? R' Avraham Zuckerman z"l (1915-2013; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Bnei Akiva Kfar Ha'ro'eh and chairman of the network of Bnei Akiva *Yeshivot*) explains:

On the one hand, a person who lives in tranquility may have an easier time serving *Hashem* consistently. As we know, it is difficult for a person to keep up a regular schedule of studying Torah, praying with a *Minyan*, and performing *Mitzvot* when he is constantly on the move. On the other hand, a person who sits in one place will find it more difficult to impact others--which was the Patriarchs' mission. Moreover, if Yaakov remained in one place, he would not be asserting his right to *Eretz Yisrael* (compare *Bereishit* 13:17).

Also, perhaps, Yaakov was not allowed to rest because *Hashem* chose him from among the Patriarchs to be the one who would begin the exile in Egypt. Why? Because Yaakov had demonstrated while living with Lavan that, even in exile, he could raise a family that would be loyal to *Hashem*. "This trouble in connection with Yosef" (in *Rashi's* words) was the first step toward that exile. (*Luchot Aven*)

Shabbat

Halachah states that in addition to the *Shabbat* candles that are lit in one's dining room, a person should have lights on in the other rooms of his house as well so that people will not "trip over a stick or a stone." R' Moshe Roth *shlita* (rabbi in Brooklyn, N.Y. and Meron, Israel) was asked how this applies in our times, when we have finished floors. He replied:

"From your question, it appears that you are taking 'tripping over a stick or stone' literally, which today is virtually unheard of because our floors are smooth and clean. However, the real concern is '*Shalom Bayit*.' This does not refer to harmony between husband and wife (the usual meaning of '*Shalom Bayit*'), but rather, that a person should feel calm, tranquil, and at rest. If it is dark in the house, a person does not have those feelings. (As for 'a stick or a stone,' that is a borrowed term, since, in the days of our Sages, floors were made of dirt and there definitely could have been sticks and stones on them. However, the sticks and stones are not what cause a lack of restfulness; it is the darkness itself that causes that feeling.")

He continues: "Another reason [for having lights throughout the house] is that doing so brings *Kavod* / honor to *Shabbat* and is part of the *Mitzvah* of '*Oneg Shabbat*' / delighting in the Sabbath. Even if a person feels at rest, it is preferable that there also be 'honor' and 'delight'..."

R' Roth concludes by explaining that this obligation of *Kavod* and *Oneg* explains why one can say the blessing upon lighting *Shabbat* candles even if there are already electric lights in the dining room--i.e., because the candles add 'honor' and 'delight' to the *Shabbat* [besides giving off light].

(*Mar Mi'dli* 10:1)

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 23b) teaches: "Rav Huna said: 'If one is meticulously careful in lighting candles, he will merit having sons who are Torah scholars.'" *Rashi z"l* explains: "This is based on the verse (*Mishlei* 6:23), 'For a *Mitzvah* is a candle and Torah is light'--through the *Mitzvot* of *Shabbat* and *Chanukah* candles comes the light of Torah."

Many people light *Shabbat* and *Chanukah* candles, observed R' Kalman Winter z"l (died 2012), yet relatively few have children who are Torah scholars! Why? Because Rav Huna's promise is addressed only to those parents who want their children to be Torah scholars!

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“As she was taken out, she sent word to her father-in-law . . . And she said, ‘Recognize, please, whose are this seal, this wrap, and this staff.’” (38:25)

Rashi z”l explains: “Recognize, please--an expression of entreaty, meaning, “I beg of you to recognize your Creator and not to destroy three lives.” [Until here from *Rashi*. As for the reference to “three,” commentaries differ about whether she knew she was carrying twins, or whether the third live was Yehuda’s own.]

R’ Uri Weisblum *shlita* (*Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Nachalat Ha’levi’im in Haifa, Israel) elaborates: Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z”l (1210-1263; Spain) writes that the first essential component of *Teshuvah* is regret. A person should say to himself, “The Creator blew a life-giving soul into my nostrils and gave that soul wisdom and intelligence to recognize Him, to revere Him, and to rule over one’s body and its actions. Since I have done the opposite, what is my life worth?!” [Until here from R’ Yonah’s *Sha’arei Teshuvah* (1:10)]

R’ Weisblum continues: A person was given physical senses, such as sight, with which to recognize his friend. Similarly, a person’s soul, used properly, is the tool with which one can recognize *Hashem* and revere Him. The foundation of regret for a sin is acknowledging to oneself that he has not used his soul as intended and, therefore, he has not ruled over his body and its actions as he should. In this way, recognizing the Creator leads to changing one’s actions for the better, concludes R’ Weisblum.

(*He’arat Ha’derech: Mo’adim* p.2)

R’ Yaakov Solnick z”l (17th century; rabbi of Podhajce, Poland) offers another interpretation of Tamar’s message: “Recognize your Creator.” She was saying: Clearly, what you did was out of character for a righteous person such as yourself. Therefore, recognize the Hand of your Creator in this event, for what occurred could only have been the result of His decree, rather than your free choice. And, therefore, do not be ashamed to admit that the pledge I am holding is yours.

(*Nachalat Yaakov*)

“She caught hold of him by his garment . . . But he left his garment in her hand, and he fled, and went outside.” (39:12)

R’ Nachman of Breslov z”l (1772-1810; Ukraine) observes: The *Yetzer Ha’ra* grabs a person by his clothes--*i.e.*, it causes him to worry about fashion or whether his clothing is fancy enough. In this way, a person is distracted from focusing on serving *Hashem*. But a G-d-fearing person does not allow himself to be trapped. He leaves his clothing in the hands of the *Yetzer Ha’ra* and he flees--*i.e.*, he does not give any thought to his clothes. Instead, he serves *Hashem* with whatever he has in the best way that he can.

(*Sichot Ha’Ran* #100)

“Yaakov settled in the land of his father’s sojournings, in the land of Canaan.” (37:1)

R’ Eliyahu Ha’Tzarfati z”l (1715-1805; rabbi of Fes, Morocco) writes: The Torah is highlighting that Yaakov wished to live near his father Yitzchak so that he could learn from his good deeds and his Divine service. Yaakov also wished to remain in *Eretz Yisrael* because it is the Holy Land, whose very air bestows wisdom on a person and assists him in serving *Hashem* properly.

In pointing this out, the Torah is contrasting Yaakov with his brother Esav, about whom we read in last week’s *Parashah* (36:6, 8), “Esav took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household--his livestock and all his animals, and all the wealth he had acquired in the land of Canaan--and went to [another] land because of his brother Yaakov . . . So Esav settled on Mount Seir; Esav, he is Edom.” Esav distanced himself from his father and chose a land where he believed he would prosper financially. This, the Torah points out, had a negative impact on his descendants--as if the verse says. “He, Esav, was the father of the evil nation of Edom.” (*Eliyahu Zuta*)



“Then the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers recounted his dream to Yosef and said to him, ‘In my dream--behold! there was a grapevine in front of me’.” (40:9)

Midrash Rabbah comments: “A grapevine”--this refers to *Yisrael*. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

What does the cupbearer’s dream have to do with the Jewish People? asks R’ Yosef Konvitz z”l (1878-1944; rabbi in Newark, NJ; President of the Agudath HaRabonim of the United States and Canada). He answers:

Yosef sat in jail with two of Pharaoh’s chamberlains--one, the cupbearer, a good-natured person, and the other, the baker, a nasty person. Yosef interpreted their dreams, and his interpretations came true; the “good” cupbearer was restored to his position as Yosef had foretold. The cupbearer promised to remember Yosef, but, once he was out of prison, he forgot him.

Our Sages say, “Whatever happened to Yosef happened to Zion.” In our exile, explains R’ Konvitz, we are like a prisoner. Sometimes, we encounter noblemen and world leaders who likewise are in a bind, and they make all kinds of promises in order to gain our support. Once they no longer need us, however, they forget those promises. For example, R’ Konvitz writes, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917 to win Jewish support during World War I. Once that war was over, however, the government “forgot” its support for establishing a Jewish homeland and instead actively opposed and prevented Jewish immigration to *Eretz Yisrael*. Even the “good” officials, like the cupbearer, behave this way.

This, concludes R’ Konvitz, is what the *Midrash* is teaching us. In their time of need, the likes of the cupbearer think about *Yisrael*. But just as quickly, they forget.

(*Divrei Yosef*)