

“So Yisrael set out with all he had and he came to Beer-Sheva.” (46:1)

Yaakov *Avinu* was on his way to Egypt to finally be reunited with his long lost son, Yosef. Why did he stop in Beer-Sheva? It should not normally have been a part of his itinerary. The *Midrash* replies that Yaakov stopped to cut down cedar trees that had originally been planted by Avraham *Avinu*. Yaakov knew that one day *Klal Yisrael* would be liberated from Egypt, and they would build a *Mishkan*, Sanctuary, in the desert. These cedar trees would serve as the lumber for the *Mishkan*. What is the significance of these cedar trees and why was it crucial that they be the ones that were planted by Avraham *Avinu*?

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, explains that people by nature attribute their success to their own endeavor, “*kochi v’otzem yadi*,” “my power and my strong hand.” “I did it without anyone’s help” is the prevalent attitude among so many people. People forget that they are part of a historical continuum, that there were others before them who laid down the foundation for their success. The *Talmud* in *Taanis* 23b relates how Choni *Ha’magal* once questioned an old man who was planting a carob tree, “Why are you planting a tree that will not produce fruit for another seventy years?” The man responded, “My ancestors planted carob trees for me to enjoy. I am doing the same for my descendants.”

Yaakov was teaching his children an important lesson. History does not begin today. It is a continuation of events dating back in time. Just as the wood that they would use for the *Mishkan* was derived from trees planted generations earlier by their grandfather, Avraham, so, too, do their own roots date back to another time. They must build upon the foundation of the past, so that their future will be one of stability. Indeed, what they have was prepared for them by the blood, sweat and tears of their predecessors. This timeless lesson applies accordingly today as well.