

## **“You shall make the planks of the Mishkan of shittim/acacia wood, standing erect.” (26:15)**

Rashi tells us that the *shittim* wood had been set aside for quite awhile for this unique purpose. Yaakov Avinu planted these cedar trees in Egypt because he anticipated that the wood eventually would be needed. Prior to his death, he instructed his children to take them along with them when they left the Egyptian exile. Hashem would one day command *Klal Yisrael* to erect a *Mishkan*, Tabernacle, in the desert – specifically from *shittim* wood, and these would serve that purpose. These *shittim* trees had a history. They were originally planted by Avraham Avinu in Be'er Sheva. When Yaakov left to Egypt, he first went to Be'er Sheva to cut them down, and then took them with him to Egypt.

We wonder why Yaakov had to make such elaborate arrangements. He could simply have planted trees in Egypt upon arriving there. Why did he go to Be'er Sheva to get Avraham's trees, cut them down, and transport them to Egypt? *Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky, z.l.*, explains that Yaakov understood that unless his descendants would have something tangible in which to believe, they would give up hope of ever leaving Egypt. All they had were promises. They needed some type of proof, something that served as a constant reminder that they would one day be able to leave this bitter exile. Yaakov brought Avraham's *shittim* trees in order to emphasize that they would not remain in Egypt forever. One day they would leave. The *shittim* trees served as their reminder, a sign that they would be redeemed.

We know now why Yaakov brought the *shittim* trees with him. He needed to allay his and his children's fears as they were leaving for Egypt. Why, however, did he have to take Avraham's trees? Why could he not settle for taking his own trees? Was there something special about Avraham's trees? *Rav Yaakov* explains that the *Mishkan* was to be built from “scratch” with *kedushah*, holiness and *taharah*, purity, untainted and unblemished. Yaakov Avinu was acutely aware that Be'er Sheva was the place where Avraham Avinu called out *b'shem* Hashem, in the name of Hashem. It was the place which was considered by the Avos, Patriarchs, as the center of *kedushah*. The *Mishkan* was to be built from one hundred percent purity. This could be found only in Be'er Sheva.

Alternatively, we suggest a profound lesson is being conveyed. If one seeks to imbue his children with the significance of remembering the past by taking the wood bequeathed them by their grandfather, Yaakov, then Yaakov has to set the standard by himself taking from his grandfather. I take my grandfather's trees, because I want you to do the same. If parents forget about their parents, how do they expect their children to remember them?