

## And Yaakov departed from Beer-Sheva and went to Charan. (28:10)

The Torah underscores Yaakov *Avinu's* departure from Beer-Sheva. This emphasis begs elucidation, because we know that Yaakov left Beer-Sheva. It is the place in which he was living. Obviously, when one leaves – he leaves from home. *Rashi* explains that when a *tzaddik*, righteous person, leaves a community, it is no ordinary departure. It is a major event, because the community will never be the same. The departure of a *tzaddik* creates a stir and leaves an impression. When a *tzaddik* is in a city, he is its glory, its splendor, and its beauty. When he departs, these qualities leave with him.

In reviewing this *Rashi*, **Horav Avraham Pam, zl**, asks a penetrating question. We can understand that a *tzaddik* plays a pivotal role in the community in which he is active. As its leader, he is truly the community's glory, beauty, and splendor. Yaakov, however, played no active role in directing the community of Beer-Sheva. It is not as if he were the *rav* of the city. A city without a *rav* to guide it is not much different than a child without a father. Yaakov was neither involved in any form of outreach, nor did he run a *chesed* organization, as did his grandfather, Avraham *Avinu*. If Avraham would have left Beer-Sheva, it would have impacted the city due to his enormous outreach – both materially and spiritually. When Yaakov left, he was a sixty-three year old *yeshivah* student, who had spent his days and nights doing nothing but immersing himself totally in the sea of Torah study. Hardly anyone had known that he existed. Does such conduct impact a city?

In *Shabbos with Rav Pam*, Rabbi Sholom Smith cites the venerable *Rosh Yeshivah*, who derives specifically from here the compelling impact that a person who studies *Torah lishmah*, for its own sake, has on his surroundings – even if he has no personal interaction with the members of the community. His devotion to Torah serves as a symbol of the significance of the Torah in the life of a Jew. By his embodiment of Torah ideals through his 24/7 dedication to it, his mere presence impacts the moral compass of his community, becoming a deterrent against sin. The aura that encompasses someone whose devotion to Torah study is consummate is palpable. People take notice when a great person resides in their midst. When they see a man of elevated spiritual stature, they sense that they are in the presence of an unusual human being. This is true, even when: the person does not hold a rabbinical position; is not a *Rosh Yeshivah*; or is not involved in the spiritual or material assistance of Jews in need of either of these mainstays of life.

As an example of such an individual, *Rav Pam* points to the *Chazon Ish*. At his *bar-mitzvah*, he vowed to spend the rest of his life engrossed in *Torah lishmah*. Indeed, when he reached marriageable age, he was offered girls from the spiritual and material elite. He demurred interest in these *shidduchim*, matrimonial matches. When he heard of a young woman from a distant town whose love for Torah was peerless, however, he showed an interest in meeting her. They met, and after a while, they discussed marriage. The *Chazon Ish* was honest and straightforward. He told her, "If you think that I will one day become the *rav* of a community, you are mistaken. I am neither

interested in such a position, nor am I interested in becoming a *rosh yeshivah* or any other public position involving Torah. I am interested only in spending the rest of my life studying Torah for its sake – nothing else.” The young woman, of course, agreed and married the man who would become the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah leader of his generation.

Six decades went by before the name of the *Chazon Ish* became known in the Torah world. For sixty years, he spent his entire day and night engrossed in Torah. Sadly, he and his *rebbetzin* were not blessed with biological progeny, so their home was one of solitude, where the primary sound that one heard was the *Chazon Ish* learning or his *rebbetzin* reciting *Sefer Tehillim*.

When he moved to *Eretz Yisrael* in the early 1930's, his fame began to spread with the publication of his treatise, *Mitzvos HaTeluyos Ba'Aretz*, the proper fulfillment of those *mitzvos* that apply specifically to the Holy Land. In the last decade of his life, his sparse apartment in Bnei Brak became the pulse of the Torah world, with people descending on him from all over the world. In a short span of time, he became the address to which every Torah Jew turned for guidance. Despite all of this fanfare, the *Chazon Ish* remained an intensely private person whose devotion to Torah study was transcendent.

The relationship of the *Chazon Ish* with the nascent secular government of the State of Israel concerning Torah issues was uncompromising. Torah reigned supreme, and any law that undermined or placed Torah observance in peril was a law against the Jewish people. While the *Chazon Ish* was usually quiet, keeping a low profile, if he felt that Torah Judaism was being attacked, he fought back by galvanizing the Jewish community's support in opposing the implementation of the law.

When the *Chazon Ish* passed away, he was mourned by all of the members of the Jewish community. Even those whom he opposed respected his integrity. Indeed, he earned his position as one of the most beloved figures in Jewish life. When he passed from this world, not only did Bnei Brak – and *Eretz Yisrael* in general – lose its splendor, glory and beauty – but all of the Jewish world was affected by the tremendous void left by his demise. He was no *rav* – no *rosh yeshivah* – no *kiruv* professional – no philanthropist. He was a Jew who devoted his entire life to *Torah lishmah*, Torah study for its own sake. We now have an inkling of the awesome power of the Torah.