

And Yisrael journeyed with all that he had, and he came to Beer-Sheva." (46:1)

The decision to travel to Egypt had been made, but before embarking on the journey, Yaakov first detoured to *Beer-Sheva*. The *Midrash* explains that he cut down the cedar trees which his grandfather, Avraham, had planted, and carried them with him to Egypt. This act was the product of a prophetic vision in which he foresaw his descendants later needing the cedar wood for the building of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). What is the significance of Yaakov's detour, and what lesson may be derived?

When Yaakov heard the incredible news that Yosef was still alive and had attained a significant position in Egypt's hierarchy, he was cautious in responding. Should he immediately depart for Egypt with his family, forsaking the security of his homeland for an amorphous foreign country? Even in the sheltered environment of his home, he almost tragically lost a daughter. How could he protect his family from the negative influences of the immoral Egyptian society? On his way to Egypt, he paused in *Beer-Sheva* to take the trees which his grandfather had planted for the building of the *Mishkan*. The whole family waited while Yaakov interrupted his journey to chop down the trees. These were no ordinary trees, however. These were the seedlings of an earlier generation. These were going to serve as the foundation for the spiritual center of the future. By maintaining his relationship with the past and simultaneously building this past heritage into the future, he would be able to withstand the uncertainty of the future. Unless the spiritual life of today is rooted in the seedlings planted by our previous generations, they might also be swept away by the winds of change and assimilation. This was Yaakov's message to his children. The strong cedar trees which our ancestors planted must be integrated into the edifices of the future.