

## "And He called the name of that place Bais El." (28:19)

The name Bais El means "the house of G-d." It was the *m'kom Ha'Mikdash*, the designated place for the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*. The *Midrash* notes the disparity between the way each one of the *Avos*, Patriarchs, expressed themselves in regard to this special "place". Avraham *Avinu* referred to it as the "*Har*," mountain; Yitzchak *Avinu* referred to it as *Sadeh*, field, while Yaakov referred to it as "*Bais*," house. What perspective regarding this holy center and its function is reflected by these disparate terms?

*Horav Mordechai Ilan, z.l.*, suggests two approaches towards understanding these metaphors. In his first explanation, he focuses upon three ways for promulgating the concept of *emunah*, belief in the Almighty, throughout the world. Avraham viewed the center of spiritual sanctity as a mountain, tall and expansive. He felt it would be able to encompass a remarkably vast area, unlimited by any boundary. Avraham reached out to an entire world; he went wherever his message could be heard. Yitzchak, in contrast, perceived the *m'kom Ha'Mikdash* to be a field which, albeit wide open, has clearly defined boundaries. The field encompasses those who are within its confines. It represents a certain amount of restriction, limiting where and how far one can go in spreading the spiritual word. Yaakov called the "place" a house, implying ultimate confinement. He reached out to others from **within** his insular environment. It is noteworthy that only regarding Yaakov is it written, "*And you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south*" (28:14).

Jewish outreach must come from within, with the light of *Torah* emanating from a central point outward. This does not mean that one should cloister himself within the confines of his home and disregard what is occurring on the outside. It simply defines the area of focus from within, expanding outward while maintaining a strong connection to the source of holiness.

In his second interpretation, *Horav Ilan* suggests that the three different views represent the varied levels of hardship the Patriarchs endured in order to establish a *Torah* nation. Avraham had an uphill climb all of the way, constantly waging battle against the pagan culture and its exponents. He, therefore, called this place a mountain. Yitzchak came on the scene after Avraham had initially paved the way for him. Indeed, his struggle was not uphill; it was like an open field. Due to its open expanse, however, a field is subject to winds and constant climatic changes from all directions. Yitzchak was not "secure" in realizing his spiritual goals, since his successes were constantly exposed to the winds of change and harassment from those who sought to undermine his belief.

Yaakov was the one who was destined to build his "house" upon the solid foundation laid by his father and grandfather. Yaakov took with him the cedars that had been planted by his grandfather, so that they would later be used for the foundation of Hashem's "house" in the desert -- the *Mishkan*. Each of the Patriarchs named the *m'kom Ha'Mikdash* in terms commensurate with his personal struggle in reaching out to a spiritually alien society. Through their combined efforts the "House" was built. May we learn from their actions, so that it will be speedily rebuilt in our days.