

And Yaakov went out from Be'er Sheva and went to Charan. (28:10)

In a well-known statement, *Rashi* teaches that the departure of a *tzaddik* from a community leaves a void. When the righteous person is in town, he comprises its glory, beauty and glow. When he leaves, its glory, beauty and glow leave with him. This is derived from the word, *Vayeitzei* (Yaakov), and “he (Yaakov) went out (from Be'er Sheva).” It is not necessary to write his point of departure. That is obvious, since he had been there until this point. All that is required for the reader to know is his destination – unless his departure creates a void. The question is: although, undoubtedly, Yaakov’s departure from Be'er Sheva impacted the community, what about Yitzchak and Rivkah? They were both holy people who remained in Be'er Sheva. Yaakov was one out of three. *Rashi* seems to be ignoring the fact that these two giants remained in Be'er Sheva. Simply, we must say that each and every *tzaddik* contributes to a community’s beauty. While two *tzaddikim* remain, the presence of one less holy person leaves an impressionable void.

Horav Gedaliah Shorr, zl (quoted by *Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl*), offers another explanation which provides us with a window on how to survive spiritually in a world whose moral compass is antithetical to Torah dictate. The *Rosh Yeshivah* made this observation at a time when the entire world was focused on the moon landing. It was a sensational moment in history, as man finally conquered space. Did he really, however, conquer it? Nothing about the moon had changed – it was still not human-friendly. Indeed, the only reason the astronauts were able to maneuver and survive in its hostile environment was that they brought a “mini-earth” with them: oxygen and food upon which to subsist. They brought pressurized spacesuits, weighted boots, and a whole array of scientific data-collecting devices, just for the short time that they would be there; without their complex life-support systems, they certainly would have died.

In other words, the astronauts brought earth up to the moon. This is exactly what Yaakov *Avinu* was compelled to do if he were to survive in the spiritually hostile environment of Charan. The members of Rivkah’s family were idol worshippers. Her brother was the paragon of a swindler. How could Yaakov maintain his spiritual status quo in such a place? Only if he brought Be'er Sheva’s *hod*, glory; *hadar*, beauty; and *ziv*, glow, with him. Yaakov’s body was in Charan, but his mind was ensconced in Be'er Sheva.

This is what *Rashi* means when he writes that when Yaakov left, he took the city’s *hod*, *hadar* and *ziv* with him. He had to! Thus, he was able to build a spiritual cocoon around himself, so that he could survive Lavan’s spiritual onslaught. As a result, Be'er Sheva was left devoid of these qualities.

Is it any better in our lives, when we leave the protection of our homes, our *shuls*, our *yeshivos* and enter the secular world that surrounds us? While I will not identify exactly how the secular world differs from our lifestyle, because this *dvar Torah* is read by a vast audience, everyone has his or

her opinion concerning what defines “secular” and what dictates “modern”; therefore, it is best left unsaid. Nonetheless, we must maintain a semblance of vigilance in our relationship with the outside world in order to protect ourselves and our children. We must monitor this exposure by “wearing” the proper protective gear, so that the far-ranging effects of contemporary secular society does not leave us spiritually traumatized.