

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

Rashi states that it was not necessary for the *Torah* to mention Yaakov's departure. It would have been quite sufficient to state his intended destination. The *Torah* is emphasizing an important point – that the departure of a *tzaddik*, righteous person, makes an impression upon the entire community. During the time that a *tzaddik* resides in a city/community, he constitutes its glory, its splendor and its crown. When he departs, however, these noble attributes are sorely lacking in the community. Consequently, his departure creates a significant void in the community.

Many lessons can be derived from *Rashi* regarding the character of the righteous and their impact on a community. The question upon which most commentators focus is: What about Yitzchak (and Rivkah) who remained in the community after Yaakov left? Are we to ignore their presence and impact? Each in his own inimitable style, the commentators respond to this question. *Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger Shlita*, offers the following novel approach to the matter. Each one of the Patriarchs personified a specific attribute which served as his vehicle to serve Hashem. The *Mishnah* in *Avos 1:2* states that the world stands on three things: *Torah*, its study and scholarship; *Avodah*, prayer, worship and service to Hashem; and *Gemillus Chasadim*, acts of loving kindness. Undoubtedly, the Patriarchs exemplified all of these attributes. Each individual Patriarch, however, embodied a specific attribute by maintaining a greater focus on it.

Our first Patriarch, Avraham, introduced the notion that one must serve Hashem not only in the *Bais Ha'midrash* or *shul*. Rather, he must serve the Almighty wherever he may be by helping others. Avraham was the paradigm of *Gemillus Chasadim*. Performing acts of kindness, teaching others about Hashem, reaching out to the homeless and destitute, helping the frail and unhealthy, all constitute service to Hashem.

Yitzchak personified *Avodah*, prayer and worship, under the greatest duress. He was the embodiment of *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, and total obedience to Hashem as attested to by the *Akeidas* Yitzchak. He taught the importance of serving Hashem with total devotion under all conditions.

Yaakov was an "*ish tam yoshev ohalim*," a simple wholehearted man dwelling in tents. This is interpreted as referring to the various tents/*yeshivos* of *Torah* in which he studied and championed the cause of *Torah* study. He was the quintessential *ben Torah*, exemplifying the ideal of *Torah* study in every place, all of the time, even under the most trying conditions.

Never did Yaakov deviate from *Torah* study. It was the breath of life which sustained his entire being. When he left his parents' home, he first went to the *yeshiva* of Shem and Ever to study *Torah* for fourteen years. He slaved for Lavan for so many years, but he never neglected his *Torah*. Prior to relocating his family in Goshen, Egypt, *Chazal* say he sent Yehudah down to

establish a *yeshiva*, so that his family would have a fountain of spiritual sustenance. Yaakov *Avinu* was the complete embodiment of *Torah*.

Let us return now to our original question. The ideals that Avraham and Yitzchak originated are not easily bequeathed to all Jews. These attributes are the inheritance of a select few individuals, who are able to attain the sublime level of service to Hashem under all conditions to the point of self-sacrifice. The path charted by Yaakov *Avinu* is the *derech Ha'Torah*, the *Torah* way of living. Adopting a lifestyle of *Torah* study and *mitzvah* observance is available to all Jews who seek to fulfill Hashem's mandate of *וַיִּבְחַר חַיִּים*, "*You should choose life.*" Consequently, Yaakov's influence was felt more strongly than the influence of the other Patriarchs. It is for this reason that his departure left such a great void in the community.