

Parshat Vayeshev 5779

In the Land of Canaan This Shabbat is a significant milestone in the history of Ner Yisrael. It is an opportunity for the Kehilla to come together on this special celebration Shabbaton to honour our Rav and Rebbetzin as they finalise their plans to make Aliyah, It is a bitter-sweet moment for the community as we applaud the incredible contributions of Rabbi Kimche and the Rebbetzin over some double-Chai years of devoted service and we prepare to say Lehitraot as they plan the next chapter of their lives in Eretz Israel.

I will leave the valedictories to those far better qualified than me. I did feel I wanted to find a link between this week's sedra and our own communal activities this Shabbat. I didn't have to go beyond the opening sentence of the sedrah: "*Ya'akov settled in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan*" Vayeshev (37:1) Many commentators ask why the Torah felt it necessary to tell us where Ya'akov dwelled. In Vayishlach (35:27) we learn that: "*Ya'akov came to Yitzchak, his father, to Mamrei Kiryat Arba, that is Chevron, where Avraham and Yitzchak sojourned*". Commentators point out that there is no evidence that Yitzchak left that place. It is also not clear why the verse has to remind us of something we knew already, that 'Yitzchak sojourned in the land of Canaan'.

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin (1881-1966) - the Lutzker Rav - in his sefer, Oznayim LaTorah, provides a clear explanation based on a midrash from last week's parshah, Vayishlach: "The Midrash lists two merits that Esav possessed, which caused Ya'akov to fear that his brother might be able to defeat him. They were: *dwelling in Eretz Israel and honouring his parents.*" According to Rabbi Sorotzkin the first verse of this week's parshah emphasises that Ya'akov sought to correct his shortcomings when he returned home. The phrase **Ya'akov settled in the land where his father sojourned** suggests that he settled there in order to honour and care for his ageing father - to compensate for the 22 years that he was unable to do so. **In the Land of Canaan** suggests that he dwelt there to make amends for neglecting to fulfil the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael all those years.

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (1816-1893) - The Netziv - in his sefer Ha'amek Davar adds to this perspective. The Netziv writes that: Ya'akov settled there because it was **the Land where his father sojourned** and it had been sanctified with Torah and divine

service. And even though Ya'akov and his sons became a holy congregation wherever they dwelled, establishing Torah institutions, nevertheless that cannot be compared to a place already rooted in sanctity.

He goes on to say: **In the Land of Canaan:** "This is a further reason why Ya'akov settled there - Dwelling there fulfils the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael", adding: "and it is more conducive to sacred purity than any other land."

The importance of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael is reiterated throughout Tanach. The Gemara (Sotah 14a) says: "R Simlai asks: Why did Moses our teacher desire to enter Eretz Israel? Did he need to eat of its fruit or did he need to sate himself with its bounty?" He answers: "There are many Mitzvos that the Jewish people have been commanded that cannot be fulfilled except in Eretz Yisrael."

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein (1933-2015) in his Sichah of the Roshei Yeshiva (5758 - 1998) said: "The most striking example of the halakhic significance of Eretz Yisrael is the position of the Ramban (Vayikra 18:25) that the observance of any mitzvah in Eretz Yisrael is qualitatively different than that outside of Israel. He holds the radical opinion that mitzvah observance in the Diaspora is only a preparation for coming to Eretz Yisrael, where mitzvot acquire their full significance."

Rav Lichtenstein also quoted Hilkhos Ta'anuyot, in which he says: "The Rambam lists a series of distressing occurrences, including lack of rainfall, for which we declare a public fast. Later he has a separate chapter about fasting for lack of rain in Eretz Yisrael. Rav Soloveitchik asks why this is the case in Shiurim Le-zekher Abba Mari vol 1? He quotes a Gemarah in (Ta'anit 10a) stating: "Ha Kodosh Baruch Hu personally waters the land of Israel but all the rest of the world drinks from the remnant water of the clouds" That being the case, The Rav's thesis is that when there is a lack of rainfall in Eretz Yisrael, this represents Hester Panim, the hiding of G-d's face."

So as Rabbi Kimche and the Rebbetzin, who have invested so much of their lives building this Kehilla as a Torah Institution in Chutz La Eretz, prepare for the next chapter of their lives **in the land of "Canaan"** . Thus- fulfilling the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael - we wish them Hatzlacha Raba. We pray that we should all be Zocheh to experience this next level of Avodat Hashem in Eretz Hakodesh. In the powerful words of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, may our mitzvot acquire their full significance.

