

Parsha Ponders

Vayeitzei | November 12, 2021 | 8 Kislev 5782

*Good intentions*¹

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה

Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and went to Charan²

After successfully preventing Eisav from receiving Yitzchak's blessings, Yaakov had to flee for his life. His parents instructed him to go to his relatives in Charan, where he'll find refuge, and perhaps even a wife. The thing is, our Sages inform us³ that he took a not so slight detour. He spent fourteen years in the yeshiva of Shem and Eiver before finally journeying to Charan. How did they know this?

They knew this because fourteen years of his life are unaccounted for. We know that Yishmael, the son of Avraham, lived 137 years⁴. We are also taught that, immediately after Yaakov received the blessings, Yishmael died⁵. Since Yishmael was 14 years older than Yitzchak⁶, and Yitzchak was 60 when Yaakov was born⁷, that means when Yishmael died, and Yaakov received the blessings, he was 63. We know that Yaakov worked for Lavan for 14 years before Yosef was born⁸, and that Yosef was 30 when he became viceroy in Egypt⁹. This means Yaakov should have been 107 at that point. When Yaakov went to Egypt and told Pharaoh he was 130 years old¹⁰, seven years of plenty and two years of famine had transpired¹¹.

By our calculations, Yaakov should have been 116 when he went to Egypt, not 130. That means 14 years are unaccounted for. Therefore, we derive he was in the yeshiva of Shem and Eiver for fourteen years before journeying to Charan¹². However, this creates a problem. The verse tells us that after leaving his parents, Yaakov went to Charan. We derived that this is an untrue statement, since before going to Charan he went to the yeshiva. As well, his parents expressly told him to go to Charan. How could Yaakov ignore their instructions and go on a detour?

Our Sages present¹³ a debate regarding the proper course of action in one's life. Should a person study first, and then get married? Or should they get married first, and then study. Some say one way, and others say the other way. The conclusion however is that there is no dispute. It depends on one's

¹ Based on Divrei Mahari" a to Genesis 28:10, by Rav Yehuda Asad (19th century Hungary), also known as the Mahari Asad. I originally heard this from Rav Daniel Glatstein in the name of the Chida in his Penei Dovid, but I couldn't find it in any of his works

² Genesis *loc. cit.*

³ Megillah 17a, brought by Rashi to v. 9

⁴ Genesis 25:17

⁵ This is derived from v. 9, which describes Eisav marrying Basmas, the daughter of Yishmael. It superfluously refers to her as both the daughter of Yishmael and the sister of Nevaos. This is to teach us that Nevaos married her off, since Yishmael had just died

⁶ Ibid 17:24,25 and 21:5

⁷ Ibid 25:26

⁸ Ibid 30:25 and 31:41

⁹ Ibid 41:46

¹⁰ Ibid 47:8-9

¹¹ Ibid 45:6

¹² While this demonstrates fourteen years are missing, who says it means he was in a yeshiva? This isn't clarified. Some commentaries provide various allusions to this. See Penei Dovid Vayeitzei § 14, who points out the last letters of שבע מבר שבע יעקב spell out עבר, and the numerical value of the first letters of וילך חרנה equals 14

¹³ Kiddushin 29b

situation¹⁴. If a person is wealthy, it would be better to get married first, and then study. This way they will benefit from everything that marriage provides, and they don't have to worry about supporting themselves. However, if a person is poor, they should study first, before they accept the responsibilities of supporting a family. Only then should they get married.

When Yaakov left his parents house, he was exceedingly wealthy. We know that Yitzchak was very wealthy¹⁵, and Yaakov surely had a share in the wealth. As such, his original intention was to go to Charan like his parents requested, and find a wife. Afterwards, he planned to head to the yeshiva of Shem and Eiver. However, we are taught¹⁶ that Eliphaz, the son of Eisav, came and stole everything Yaakov had. He was left penniless. As such, he had to change his course of action. Now that he was poor, he would study first, and only then go to Charan to get married. The introductory verse of this *parsha* then is perfectly accurate. When Yaakov left Be'er Sheva, it was with the intent to go to Charan. It was only on his way that his plans changed, and he had to delay going to Charan for fourteen years.

Good Shabbos

¹⁴ The following is Tosafos *ad. loc.* s.v. לך היא explanation. Cf. Rashi *ad. loc.*

¹⁵ See Rashi to Genesis 26:13, quoting Bereishis Rabbah 64:7. The Netziv also says in many places that Yitzchak's unique attribute was פרנסה. For example, see HaEmek Davar to Genesis 24:6, 28:13, 31:42, 46:1,3, Exodus 3:6,15, and Harchev Davar to Genesis 34:1 and Exodus 1:1. He says in HaEmek Davar to Genesis 24:63 that Yitzchak's attribute of עבודה is the root of פרנסה. For more on that see his commentary to *ibid* 2:5

¹⁶ Bereishis Rabbasi p. 117 by Rav Moshe HaDarshon, brought by Rashi to Genesis 29:11