

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Vayetzei 5784

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Yaakov leaves his home and heads north.

וַיָּבֹא בַמָּקוֹם וַיִּלֶךְ שָׁם כִּי-בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשֶׂם מִרְאֲשֵׁיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא:

“And he reached the Place and he lodged there, because the sun came in, and he took from the stones of the Place, and he placed them from its head, and he lied down in that place.” (Bereishis 28:11).

This is one of the most oversimplified translated pesukim in the Torah. Many translate it simply as “And he arrived at the place and lodged there because the sun had set, and he took some of the stones of the place and placed them around his head, and he lay down in that place.” However, this misses a few important points. First, it says he lodged there and then it says he lied down. That seems out of order. Second, it repeats “the place” three times in the pasuk. It could have said “He reached the place, lodged there...took stones and lied down.” Why does the pasuk specifically repeat “the place” two extra times? Further, what does the Torah mean by “the sun came in?” If it simply meant nightfall, it could have said as the sun set or as night fell.

מָקוֹם “The place” is referring to a specific place. Yes, the term “the place” is referred generically sometimes. (Ibid 26:7). However, in this context, it is a specific place. וַיִּלְךְ לְמִסְעָיו “And he traveled from the south until Beth El, until the Place that he had set up his tent originally.” (Ibid 13:3). This is referring to Avram returning from Mitzrayim. Originally, he had set up a mizbeach at Beth El. (Ibid 12:8). The Place refers to where Avram first built a mizbeach after receiving Word from Hashem. From “the Place” Avram was instructed to lift his eyes in all directions and see the land Hashem would give his children. (Ibid 13:14). After Hashem destroyed Sodom and its several neighboring cities, Avram traveled from Chevron to Beth El – “to the Place” – to witness the destruction and talk to Hashem. (Ibid 19:27).

Then Avraham went to bind his son. “And he got up and he went, to the Place, that the Lord told him.” (Ibid 22:3). On the third day “he saw the Place from afar.” (Ibid 22:4). Avraham knew where to go because Hashem told him וְלָךְ אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמְּרִיגָה “And go for yourself to the land I will appear to you.” (Ibid 22:2). This is almost the exact expression as וְלָךְ אֶל-אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה: “Go for yourself ... to the land I will show you.” (Ibid 12:1). Just as there Avram went from Charan to Eretz Canaan and ended up in Beth El (Ibid 12:8), so too, when Hashem said “go for yourself to the land I will appear to you” Avraham knew it was Beth El, it was “the Place.” This explains a pasuk in the Akeidas Yitzchok. וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר-לָוּ הָאֱלֹקִים וַיְבִנּוּ שָׁם אֲבָרָהָם אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת-הָעֵצִים. “And they came to the Place that the Lord said to them, and he built there a mizbeach, and arranged the wood.” (Ibid 22:9). Why does it say “they came” but “he built?” Also, why does it say

“he built” and “he arranged?” Clearly, if Avraham built a mizbeach he arranged the wood as the Torah said they took wood with them. If they both came why did only Avraham build the altar? The clarification is that both Avraham and Yitzchok came to the place that Avraham had previously built a mizbeach. This was Beth El, or the Place. All Avraham had to do now was arrange the wood. Another clue that they are the same place is that it says “Avraham called the Place, Hashem Appeared.” (Ibid 22:14). Earlier, it says he built a mizbeach “to Hashem that appeared to him.” (Ibid 12:7). They are the same location called “the Place.” Yaakov got up and affirmed, “Hashem is in the Place. I did not know.” (Ibid 28:16). He then acknowledges “How awesome the Place is...it is the gateway to heaven.” (Ibid 28:17). Yaakov did not know that Hashem was in the Place – or that he arrived there – and that he could get prophecy from it.

כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ “Because the sun came in” is more than the sun beginning to set. It means prophecy was in that place. Hashem spoke to Avram, either, through a dream or a malakh, and told him to arrange the animal halves. (Ibid 15:9). “The sun came in and Avram fell into a deep sleep.” (Ibid 15:12). This is either giving the next stage of the prophecy or explaining how Hashem communicated with Avram. Either way, to receive prophecy, it required Avram to fall into a deep slumber. The Torah uses the term “the sun came in” to indicate this. “The sun came in and there was a thickness there...on that day Hashem cut his covenant with Avram.” (Ibid 15:17-18). The sun setting does not usher in thick darkness. However, the “sun came in” indicates prophecy and then the pasuk describes what Avram saw. Similarly, Moshe’s arms were heavy during the first war with Amalek. “And it was the hands of faith, until the sun came in.” (Shmos 17:12). The war was done. The war did not cease when sun set and then continued the next day. It was not a specific time of day that “the sun came in” but that Moshe received the prophecy of protection. His hands indicated Hashem’s faithfulness and Yisroel were victorious. He raised them until the prophecy of victory resulted in actual victory.

With this the pasuk is explained. “And he reached the place and lodged there.” He reached the Place, that same location Avram first received Word of Hashem in Eretz Canaan and where he built a mizbeach. It was the same place he met and brought Yitzchok to, when tested by Hashem. He lodged there for the night. The Torah will now describe the nature of his lodging.

“Because the sun came in.” He ended up stopping there and sleeping there because this was the place of prophecy. This is also the likely place where the covenant of the pieces (Bereishis 15:9) took place. Yaakov was traveling and then he was overcome by sleep because he was about to receive prophecy.

“And he took from the stones of the Place.” He saw there was a used mizbeach. He took some stones from around the Place, on the ground near it.

“And he placed them from its head.” He put them on the mizbeach. He erected his own matzeiva – monument – there.

“And he lied down in that place.” “Lied down” so often means marriage. Here it means he fell into a deep sleep and received the prophecy that followed with “he had a dream.” (Ibid 28:12).