



Yeshivat Ma'alot
Parashat Va'yetze
Rav Yehoshua Weitzman shlit"a

ישיבת מעלות
פרשת ויצא
הרב יהושע ויצמן שליט"א

Means to an End

One of the main themes in this week's parasha is how Ya'akov Avinu worked for Lavan in order to marry his daughter Rachel. The Torah describes the time that Ya'akov worked for Rachel in a very interesting way. "And Ya'akov worked for Rachel seven years, and they seemed in his eyes as single days because of his love for her."¹ It appears that Ya'akov's feelings towards Rachel defy simple human nature. Usually when a person loves something, the journey or means to reach the goal seem much longer than they objectively are. How was it then that the time that Ya'akov spent in Lavan's home felt like a matter of days and not decades upon decades?

The answer to this question lies within the point of view of the individual. Typically, when a person longs for something, he can only focus on that specific object; the only thing that interests him is the goal, and not the means by which he reaches it. As a result, a person has no joy or happiness in the path leading to his destination, the time that passes seems prolonged and unnecessary because he is only focused on the end, the outcome.

Ya'akov Avinu thought differently. Because the goal had such great value and importance, this importance radiated and influenced his journey; the journey became *part* of the destination.

The idea that purpose influences the means by which one reaches a destination is expounded upon in the Talmud Yerushalmi². Rabbi Ba says that one who builds for himself a succah says the bracha "La'asot Succah", "to build a succah." When one builds a succah for others he says the bracha "La'asot lo Succah", "to build him a succah". When one comes to sit in the succah he says the bracha "Leshev Basuccah", "to sit in the succah". Rabbi Ba emphasizes that not only does one make a bracha on the mitzvah that is preformed but also on the steps leading up to the mitzvah; the means by which the mitzvah is reached also has intrinsic holiness and value. (Today we don't accept this ruling as practical halacha, yet the foundation of the idea is still correct and we can still learn a lesson from it.)

Harav Kook in Orot Hatshuvah³ explains that this idea is the foundation of creation. In the ideal form in which the world was created, any means was imbued

¹ Beresheit 29,26

² Brachot 9,2

³ Orot Hatshuva 6,7

with qualities of the goal or purpose that it leads to. Therefore, man was happy not only when he reached his objective or fulfilled his purpose, but also on the way there. However, this is not human nature, and consequently man does not naturally taste the taste of the end before he reaches it. The hope and the longing for the future, for the fixing of the world, for the elevation of physicality to a higher spiritual state is fundamentally linked with the hope and longing to see the day when man will taste the sweet taste of his purpose and goal while he is still on the path to achieve it.

Chazal learn in Masechet Megillah⁴ that anyone who says Torah in the name of the person who originally said it brings redemption to the world as the pasuk states “and Esther told the king in the name of Mordechai.” One who quotes Torah in the name of the person who originally stated it understands that an integral part of understanding what he is saying is to know how and through whom the idea has developed. The Torah is not simply a book of rules, explaining to mankind how to act and behave. Rather the Torah is called “divrei Elokim Chaim”, the word of the Living God. Therefore, it is important not only to know what is said, but also how it is said; the means lead to the actual revelation Hashem’s will in this world.

The same is true with regard to the Geula, the final redemption. The Geula isn’t going to surprise us as it comes down from the heavens. On the contrary, the Geula is intrinsically connected to and influenced by all of history that precedes it. In order to bring the Geula, one must internalize the fact that the path towards it is also important and necessary, and not just the goal itself.

This outlook on life gives man happiness in all that he does. Instead of all the time looking somewhere beyond one’s self, man is able to connect the means to the end, and this in and of itself uplifts and elevates. We learn from Ya’akov Avinu how to find joy and fulfillment even before we reach our goals- “and they seemed in his eyes as single days because of his love for her.”

⁴ Megillah 15,1