Dvar Torah

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VAYEITZEI

Makom and Machanayim - The Transition

There is something intriguing if one is to look at these two episodes, found at opposite ends of our sedra:

One - Yaakov "leaves" his father's house and "goes" towards Charan. He arrives at the place of the Mikdash and makes a statement of discovery, defining what he had witnessed - it is the House of G-d and the gate of heaven. Then he gives the place a name, calling it the "House of G-d".

Two - Yaakov "leaves" Lavan's house and "goes" his own way. Angels of G-d arrive and meet Yaakov. He makes a statement of discovery, defining what he had witnessed - it is an encampment of G-d. Then he gives the place a name, calling it the "paired encampments".

The striking similarity of these two segments only serves to accentuate the differences between them. In both segments, Yaakov is leaving one place and going somewhere else, but in the first segment we are told explicitly that he is going to a specific location, namely Charan. In the second segment, we are only told that Yaakov was going on his own way, B'DARKO. The Torah does not speak here of his precise destination, which we already know. What the Torah wishes to tell us is that Yaakov is traveling on his own, unique path. It is this path which defines Yaakov's journeys in life regardless of his destination.

In the first segment, Yaakov is moving, and the place is stationary. Yaakov goes to the place. It is he who goes up to the Mikdash. In the second segment, at the end of the sedra, the order is reversed. Yaakov is encamped, wherever he is, and the angels of G-d come to him.

These two segments, so essentially similar, yet so strikingly different, were meant to be compared. We are being offered two distinct perceptions of the "Divine Presence" - the Sh'china. When he left his father's house, Yaakov, the "dweller in the tents" of Torah, had known and understood that one must ride up and reach out to the Sh'china. There are places, loci of the Divine Presence, which one must enter in order to embrace G-d. Yaakov chances upon that special place, we call it Yerushalayim, which is totally suffused with G-d's presence. It is the House of G-d which is fixed and rooted in one place. After his travails with Lavan, Yaakov emerges unscathed. He has

seen corruption and impurities and has remained true to G-d. IM LAVAN GARTI, V'TARYAG MITZVOT SHA-MARTI - He has succeeded because he has internalized the Sh'china and offered It an abode in his own heart. Wherever Yaakov goes, the Sh'china goes with him. No longer do we hear of BAYIT, the House of G-d, but of MACHANEH, the encampment of G-d. The Divine Presence travels with Yaakov. This Yaakov calls MACHANA-YIM.

Yaakov begins his great sojourn in the Galut of Charan with a vision of a fixed place for the Divine Presence, but he comes away with a vision of a Divine Presence that is forever with him, wherever he may go. Herein lies the key to our survival these thousands of years. G-d comes to us. Each one of us embarks on his own journey - B'DARKO. If one can internalize what one gains from his Torah studies and his religious experiences, then one can create a dwelling place for the Sh'china within us.