
פרשת ויצא

פרק לא פסוק ג

וַיֹּאמֶר יְ-הוָה אֶל-יַעֲקֹב שׁוּב אֶל-אֶרֶץ אַבְרָם וְלְמוֹלְדֹתָּהּ וְאָהֳיָה עִמָּךְ:

רש"י

שוב אל ארץ אבותיך. וְשָׁם אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ, אֲבָל בְּעוֹדָהּ מִחֶבֶר לְטָמֵא אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִשְׁרֹת שְׁכִינָתִי עָלֶיךָ.

מושג

בְּעוֹדָהּ מִחֶבֶר לְטָמֵא אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִשְׁרֹת שְׁכִינָתִי עָלֶיךָ.

Translation:

As long as you are connected to impurity I cannot rest my Shechinah on you.

Explanation:

While Hashem told Yaakov before he went to Lavan's house that He would be with him, אהיה עמך, this meant that Hashem would protect him. However, Hashem could not truly be with Yaakov, to appear to him and rest his שכינה on him, until he separated from the impure environment of Lavan's house. Since Hashem's blessings are dependent on Hashem's presence, Yaakov could not be blessed until he left the house of Lavan and returned to the holy environment of the land of his forefathers..

Looking in the Pasuk:

Our Musag comes to explain an apparent contradiction in Hashem's promise to Yaakov. During the dream of the סולם Yaakov is told that Hashem will be with him. And now, in our Pasuk, Yaakov is told that he must return to his homeland if Hashem is to be with him. The difference between the use of the word ויאמר ה' or וירא אליו ה' also requires explanation. Our Musag teaches that while Hashem will talk to Yaakov and protect him even in the house of Lavan, he will only appear to him and bless him once he returns home.

NOTES

Rashi's source is a fascinating מדרש תנחומא on our פסוק:

ויאמר אלהים אל יעקב שוב אל ארץ אבותיך: ילמדנו רבינו נר שיש עליו צורת עבודת כו"ם מהו שידליק ישראל ממנו את הנר כך שנו רבותינו נר שיש עליו צורת עבודת כו"ם אסור לישראל להדליק בו, לפי שנאמר (דברים ז) ולא תביא תועבה וגו' שאין השכינה שורה בבית שיש בו צורת עבודת כו"ם שנא' (שמות כ) בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיך. תדע לך שכל זמן שהיה אברהם דבוק ללוט לא היה הקדוש ברוך הוא נגלה עליו, כיון שפירש ממנו נגלה עליו, מנין א"ר אלעזר בן פדת משום רבי יוסי בן זמרה שנאמר (בראשית יג:יד) וה' אמר אל אברם אימתי אחרי הפרד לוט מעמו. וכן יעקב כל זמן שהיה בבית לבן לא היה הדבור נגלה עליו, אע"פ שהבטיח ואמר לו הנה אנכי עמך אמר הקב"ה איני יכול לטמא את כבודי בבית לבן הרשע אלא מה אני עושה משעה שהוא פורש ממנו אני מקיים את דברי ואהיה עמך. והיה יעקב מהרהר בלבו ואומר לא כך אמר לי כי לא אעזבך? א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא מבקש את שאהיה עמך צא מבית לבן ושוב אל ארץ אבותיך:

Taken at face value, the Midrash is very difficult to understand. The Midrash begins by teaching us that Hashem does not rest his שכינה in a place of idol worship. It then brings a proof from the fact that Hashem does not speak to אברהם until he separates from לוט. The Midrash continues and brings a further proof from יעקב. In our Pasuk, Hashem tells יעקב that He will be with him only once he leaves the house of לבן. However, continues the Midrash, we have a problem. For Hashem had previously promised יעקב on his way to the house of לבן that He will be with him! And יעקב himself was bothered by this contradiction in Hashem's words. According to the Midrash, Hashem seems to answer, "I know I promised but I just can't." How are we to understand this?

We will begin to answer by asking two questions that arise from the Midrash:

1. If Hashem could not appear to יעקב until he left the house of לבן, how does Hashem come to him and tell him to leave and to return home?
2. If Hashem will not speak to Yaakov when he is connected to לבן, how does Hashem speak to לבן himself at the end of the Parsha?

The answer is¹ that there are two different meanings to Hashem's promise of עמך. One is that I will be with you and protect you, the other is that my presence will be with you and will bring you blessing. Therefore, when Hashem told Yaakov before he went to the house of Lavan that He would be with him, what Hashem meant was that He would protect him. This can be proven from the wording of the Pasuk (כח:טו) where Hashem initially promises: וְהָיָה אֲנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וְשָׁמְרְתִיךָ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר- וְהָיָה אֲנֹכִי עִמָּךְ. What Hashem is telling Yaakov now is that He cannot bring a בְּרָכָה to his possessions when Yaakov remains in Lavan's home. Hashem is telling Yaakov to return home so that He may bless him. This also can be proven from the wording of the Pasuk (לב:י):

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-לְהִי אֲבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֶל-לְהִי אָבִי יִצְחָק וְהָיָה הָאֱמֶר אֲלֵי שׁוֹב לְאֶרְצָךְ וְלִמְלֻכְתָּךְ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ:

While Hashem's control over nature allows him to protect, it is the presence of Hashem that brings blessing. This is spelled out in the Pasuk (שמות כ:כא) brought by the Midrash:

בְּכָל-הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּר אֶת-שְׁמִי אֲבֹא אֵלָיְךָ וּבְרַכְתִּיךָ:

Hashem tells Yaakov that He will not defile His honor by resting his שכינה in a place where there are idols. Nor will He 'appear' to אברהם when לוט is near, nor to יעקב while he is still connected to Lavan. This does not mean that Hashem will not speak to them, as He does speak to both יעקב and even to לבן in these impure environments. Rather, He will not show His *presence* in these situations, not allowing for blessings to come. This is why the Midrash does not say לא היה מדבר, but rather, לא היה הדיבור נגלה עליו. This is reflected in the wording of our Musag as well, which does not say Hashem will not speak to Yaakov while he is connected to Lavan, but rather that Hashem is not willing עליך להשרות שכינתי עליך.

This distinction is displayed in the wording of the Torah when describing Hashem's speech to Yaakov. When Hashem speaks to him in the house of Lavan, the word used is ויאמר; however when

¹ See (לב:יא) כלי יקר, who makes this distinction.

Hashem speaks to Yaakov after leaving Lavan and returning to ארץ אבותיו (לה:ט) the word used is וירא. The word וירא refers to Hashem revealing his presence to Yaakov, while the word ויאמר is speech alone. For this reason after the Torah tells us וירא, it tells us ויעל מעליו אלקים (פסוק יג) proving that Hashem did not simply speak to him but rather rested his שכינה upon him. Additionally, after Hashem speaks to Yaakov in the house of Lavan we do not find that Yaakov is particularly impressed by this encounter with Hashem, for he builds no monument to mark the event. Only when Hashem 'appears' to him does Yaakov erect a מצבה to remember this encounter. And finally, we see clearly that only when Hashem rests His presence upon Yaakov do we find that the Pesukim speak of blessings² (פסוקים יא ויב), whereas no such blessings are mentioned when Hashem spoke to Yaakov earlier in Lavan's home.

While the מדרש תנחומא speaks of Hashem's refusal לבן כבודי בבית לבן, it seems quite clear that this 'no שכינה zone' is not only in the house of Lavan, but any time a Jew is מחובר לטומאה, as the wording of our Musag infers. This may very well apply to all of חוץ לארץ. From the fact that Hashem does not tell Yaakov to simply distance himself from Lavan, but to return to the land of his fathers, we would conclude that to receive the blessings that result from Hashem's presence Yaakov was required to return to ארץ ישראל. This idea is expressed by the מדרש רבה on our Pasuk which reads:

ר' אמי בשם ריש לקיש אמר נכסי חוצה לארץ אין בהם ברכה אלא משתשוב אל ארץ אבותיך אהיה עמך.

According to the above, one's very presence in חוץ לארץ is considered מחובר לטמא and precludes the possibility of השרת שכינה. Just as one's presence in ארץ ישראל is in itself a spiritually uplifting experience, as he or she can feel the holiness in the land, so too one's presence in חוץ לארץ has the opposite effect, as the גמרא in (ק:;) teaches: כבוד עבודת כוכבים. Therefore it is only when Yaakov crosses the border into ארץ ישראל and thus truly leaves ביתו של לבן, is Hashem's full blessing of עמך אהיה finally fulfilled.

Questions for Further Thought:

- a. Why do you think Hashem will not appear in places where there is impurity?
- b. The Midrashim criticize both אברהם for not trying to be מקרב Lot, and Yaakov for not trying to be מקרב Eisav. How could they be expected to connect to these רשעים if it would result in a loss of connection to Hashem? How does our Musag affect all those who try to be מקרב others?

² For example, even after his return to ארץ ישראל when Hashem only 'speaks' to Yaakov no blessings are mentioned (see לה:א).