



TORAH LISHMA

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayeitzei 5781

One of the most well-known commentaries of *Rashi* on *Chumash* can be found at the very beginning of this week's *Parsha*. It is studied by children in their early years in elementary school and seems to convey a very simple, straightforward message. The *Pasuk* tells us (*Bereishis 28:10*) that *Yaakov Avinu* went out from *Beersheva* and traveled to *Charan*.

Rashi questions why the *Pasuk* doesn't just tell us that *Yaakov* went to *Charan*. Of what significance is it that he left *Beersheva* in order to go to *Charan*? The point of importance is that he went to *Charan*! *Rashi* explains that the Torah is teaching an important idea, namely that when a *tzaddik* is in a place, he makes a great impression. Therefore, when he leaves a place, the glory, splendor and honor of the place is diminished and, so to speak, departs along with the *tzaddik*.

...what role did Yaakov play in Beersheva that his departure was so acutely felt?

HaGaon HaRav Avraham Pam zt'l, quoted in *Sefer Noam Avraham on the Torah* (pps. 57-59) analyzes this insight of *Rashi* in greater depth. He asks, what role did *Yaakov* play in *Beersheva* that his departure was so acutely felt? Was he the *Rav* of the city, whose leaving would have been felt, because a city without a *Rav* is like an orphan without a father? Was he involved in *Kiruv Rechokim* or did he run a major *Chessed* organization which offered free meals and lodging like his grandfather *Avraham Avinu*? If *Avraham* left a town, his (lack of) presence would be felt, because the great influence he had on the inhabitants would become diminished.

Why would *Yaakov's* departure be felt? At this time, he was a 63 year-old *Bachur* who spent his days and nights immersed in the study of Torah. He had little if any contact with the townspeople around him. Who was aware of his presence when he was there that they would miss him after his departure?

...his mere presence impacts on the moral behavior of those around him.

Rav Pam explains that *Yaakov Avinu* is an illustration of the profound effect of *Torah Lishmah* (for its own sake) on its surroundings. Even in the absence of any interactions with the people around him, he becomes a living symbol of Torah and *Mitzvos*, and his mere presence impacts on the moral behavior of those around him. Even if he is not a *Rosh Yeshiva* or *Rov*, does not give public shiurim and lectures or head any major *kiruv* or *chedsed* organization, he nonetheless has a profound influence on the people around him.

This concept of *Torah Lishmah*, the value and power of Torah for its own sake is not a simple concept, and is lost on many people. Nevertheless, it is the logical conclusion for one who believes that the Torah is the expression of *Hashem's* will and wisdom. One who is completely immersed in Torah is automatically exerting a profound, positive influence on the world.

We need to internalize this message and share it with our children. No matter what profession or vocation our children ultimately pursue, the foundation of their lives needs to be rooted in *Chashivus* (significance of) *HaTorah* and *Torah Lishmah*. The most powerful force in this world is the unadulterated study of Torah, for its own sake. To whatever degree we can impress upon our children through our words, and more importantly our deeds, that Torah learning is the most important activity in life, we will be instilling within them an appreciation and understanding of the most potent ingredient of a successful and meaningful life.

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Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos* ,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann