

Yaakov returns to the land of his birth, and his fathers.

**וַיָּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מְגֹרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:**

“And Yaakov settled in the land that in which his fathers sojourned, in the Land of Canaan.” (Bereishis 37:1).

The Torah states Yaakov settled in the land but only generally. Why did it not say where he settled? Is the Torah telling us something else about his settling in the Land? We know that his fathers lived in the Land of Canaan. Why did the Torah here emphasize both where his fathers sojourned and that it was the Land of Canaan? Also, it already said he was in Chevron. (Ibid 35:27). What is the Torah adding?

*Gemara Sanhedrin 106a says, Rabbi Yochanan says, “everywhere that it is stated: ‘And he dwelt,’ it is nothing other than an expression of pain. The episode of Yoseph disappearing follows.*

*Rashi points out that after giving Eisav’s lineage it then says Yaakov settled and talks about Yoseph. It specifically mentions Yoseph because Yaakov saw how powerful Eisav had become but Yoseph was the power that could destroy Eisav.*

When reviewing Tanach, however, there is not much issue or contest between Seir and Yisroel. The two resided side by side for more than a thousand years.

*Ibin Ezra clarifies, Eisav resided in Seir and Yaakov was in the chosen land.*

*Ramban elaborates, Eisav conquered his land. Yaakov settled in a land that was not his, following the prophesy given to Avraham and Yitzchok that their children will dwell in a land not theirs.*

*Sforno says, this is the same region that Avraham and Yitzchok resided.*

*Avraham and Yitzchok resided in Chevron, at least a while. (Bereishis 35:27).*

*Chizkuni says, the Torah had to write both “the land where his fathers sojourned, the Land of Canaan” because just writing “his father sojourned” one would think maybe it was Ur Kasdim where Avraham lived many years. If just “the land of Canaan” one would not know which city.*

The Chizkuni’s answer is wanting on both grounds. First, Yitzchok is never recorded to having dwelt outside of the Land of Canaan. It says “fathers” not “father.” It could not be Ur Kasdim. Second, the Torah just talked about how Yaakov returned to the Land of Canaan, why would the reader think he returned north? Third, as for the city, it could have been many cities that Avraham and Yitzchok shared like Gerar and Beer Sheva. It is not obvious at all from the pasuk until the Torah says Yoseph left from there. (Ibid 37:14). If it was about a specific city, it already said Kiryas Arba. (Ibid 35:27).

To understand this pasuk we introduce its context first. Hashem tells Avraham that his children will possess the entire Land of Canaan. (Ibid 12:7, 17:8). However, first they will have to be strangers for four hundred years. (Ibid 15:13). Then the fourth generation from Avraham will return and possess the Land. (Ibid 15:16). Hashem renewed that promise with Yitzchok. (Ibid 26:3). Then Yitzchok gives Yaakov a bracha that Yaakov will possess the Land he lives in. (Ibid 28:4). It says: וַיְתֵן־לְךָ אֶת־בְּרִכַּת אַבְרָהָם לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אֲתָךְ לְרִשְׁתָּךְ אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִגְדֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן אֱלֹקִים לְאַבְרָהָם “And may He give you the brochos of Avraham to you and to your children with you, to possess the land that you dwell in, that the Lord gave to Avraham.” (Ibid). When Yaakov returned from Charan he sends a message to calm Eisav. עַם־לָבָן גָּרְתִּי וְאַחַר עַד־עַתָּה “With Lavan I dwelled, from then until now.” (Ibid 32:5). This was meant to calm Eisav because Eisav knew that Yaakov was blessed to gain from the land he lived in. It was important that Eisav hear that Yaakov gained all his wealth from Charan and the northeast. It was *dwelling with Lavan* that made Yaakov rich. Eisav could then be calmed and satisfied that Yaakov did not possess nor gain wealth from the Land of Canaan. That was Yaakov’s message to Eisav.

Yaakov knew of the promises to Avraham and Yitzchok and he knew his children were the fourth generation. He believed Yoseph, the one with the prophetic dreams and the rightful primogeniture (if not for Lavan’s trickery), was the one to possess it with his brothers.

This also explains a few questions. Why were the brothers thought to be shepherding in Shechem if they ran from the place after looting it? Why did they take revenge for Dinah by saying “this was a scandalous act in Yisroel” when Hashem had not yet named Yaakov that name? Why were they so bloodthirsty, primed to kill, when Yoseph came looking for them? Also, how can Shimon and Levi, who were no older than 12 and 11 (this is 13 to 14 years after Yaakov married Leah) and his brothers (who were even younger) take on an entire fortified city of Shechem, even when the inhabitants were ailing? And if they were so young, why would Yaakov hold the sin against them if they were before manhood, the age of responsibility?

The entire parsha {o} break to {פ} is out of order, similar to how the episode of Yehuda and his wife and children is stuck in between Yoseph going down to Mitzrayim. The correct chronology is Yaakov’s party arriving in the Land of Canaan at Shechem (a popular border crossing). (Ibid 33:18). Then Hashem tells him to go to Beis El. (Ibid 35:1). Yaakov settles in Kiryas Arba. (Ibid 37:1). Years later, Dina goes out with the female residents of the Land, attracts the eye of Chamor, and that dreadful episode takes place. (Ibid 34 et seq.). The brothers were shepherding their sheep in Shechem. (Ibid 37:12). “And Yaakov’s sons came from the field and heard the news.” (Ibid 34:7). They came from the field where their sheep were. They refer to themselves as “Yisroel.” “This is a disgrace to Yisroel” (ibid) because this disgraced their father and the entire family, now referred to as Yisroel.

Hashem gives Yaakov the title Yisroel after the Torah records the incident with Dina. (Ibid 35:10). It says, “Don’t call your name anymore Yaakov, but Yisroel also will be your name.” (Ibid). “And He called his name, Yisroel.” (Ibid). When the attacker gave the name to Yaakov earlier, it says לא יַעֲקֹב יֵאמַר עוֹד שְׁמִי “No Yaakov, say further about

your name. Because a prince of the Lord are you." (Ibid 32:29). The attacker does not change Yaakov's name, nor does it say he was called Yisroel. Only, the attacker was acknowledging that Yaakov was indeed a prince of the Lord. Later, Hashem calls Yaakov by the name Yisroel. Therefore, if Dina's episode happened earlier, the brothers would not refer to themselves as Yisroel. They only did so after Hashem gives the title. They also did so because they were Yisroel, while Yoseph was the "dreamer" and the outcast. (See ibid 37:19). Yaakov scolds Shimon and Levi saying, "You have made a nuisance of me, to make me repulsive to the inhabitants." (Ibid 34:30). Yaakov thought and wanted to possess the Land by way of acquisition, *possession*, not with war. This is how the promise to Avraham was given. "To possess it" is not necessarily war. "I am few in number and they will now attack me." (Ibid). He had not yet reached "I will make your seed like the stars in heavens." (Ibid 15:5, 26:4).

Yaakov believed he would see that his children would possess the Land through growth. They were the fourth generation. He sent Yoseph to Shechem to check on his brothers after Yoseph had the dreams. He believed the dreams would be fulfilled shortly as they were in line with the promises. However, during this time, Shimon and Levi struck Shechem. They then moved on from Shechem to Dosan. (That is why they moved on, because they could not hang around Shechem anymore). With the booty in their possession, revenge on their shoulders, and blood on their hands, they were primed for more blood. When they see Yoseph their first instinct is "Here comes the dreamer...let us kill him." (Ibid 37:19-20). This also explains that Shimon and Levi were not youngsters, this episode took place after they matured.

"And Yaakov resided." Yaakov now resided. He was no longer intending to be a sojourner, like he was with Lavan in Charan. He was now intending to live in this Land and possess it. He was ready for the promises to be fulfilled.

"In the lands in which his fathers sojourned." They were sojourners per the promise that for four hundred years, for four generations, they would live in a land not their own. Yaakov calculated the four hundred years as the 100 years that Avraham lived in the Land of Canaan (from 75 to 175), the 180 years that Yitzchok lived in it (his entire life), and now Yaakov was 108 years old. (Yoseph was born when Yaakov was 91. Yaakov comes down to Mitzrayim when he was 130 and that was when Yoseph was 39 – 22 years after he left to find his brothers at the age of 17). Yaakov calculated that 388 years of the prophesy were already completed. The promise is about to fulfilled. Yoseph was having dreams, perhaps the 400 years were not exact. And even if exact, it was only another decade to go.

"In the Land of Canaan." Yaakov was specifically in the Land of Canaan because he was settling the land, fulfilling his destiny. The promise never mentioned Mitzrayim and never mentioned that the "living in a land not yours" had to be *outside* of the Land of Canaan. This is why "Yisroel loved Yoseph." (Ibid 37:3). *Yisroel*, the term for the nation, loved Yoseph, because of him being the *bechor*, just as Avraham loved Yitzchok, Yitzchok loved Eisav (thinking he was it) and Rivkah loved Yaakov (thinking he was it). "His father watched over the matter." (Ibid 37:11). Yaakov was calculating the years.