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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת ויחי

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂר שָׁנָה. (בראשית מז, כח)

Yakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim seventeen years. (Bereishis 47:28)

This week's *Sidrah* begins with Yakov Avinu sensing that his end was near. He called for Yosef and asked him to promise that he would take him to Eretz Yisroel for burial in Mearas HaMachpelah in Chevron. After Yakov was *niftar*, Yosef kept his commitment. Following a period of national mourning, he led a grand burial procession, accompanying Yakov's body to Eretz Yisroel for burial.

The opening *possuk* of the *parshah* begins, וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂר שָׁנָה, *Yakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim seventeen years*. It is noteworthy that the Torah describes Yakov's place of residence as "the land of Mitzrayim" instead of specifying the more particular location of Goshen. This raises the question: why is his dwelling referred to in broader terms as being in Mitzrayim?

The Meshech Chochmah addresses this question, providing a fundamental insight. He explains that some individuals live their lives focused on themselves, their families, or their hometowns. These people navigate life with a limited influence, leaving an imprint only on themselves or those close to them. However, there are others whose impact is more significant, with their presence shaping the entire world in a profound way.

The existence of Yakov Avinu was not confined to his hometown or to Goshen; rather, he lived for all of Mitzrayim. His merit was felt throughout the entire land. When Yakov blessed Pharaoh upon arriving in Mitzrayim, the famine came to an end. Conversely, when he passed away, the famine returned, as indicated by the *possuk*, אָבִל כָּבֵד זֶה לְמִצְרַיִם, *This is a grievous mourning for Mitzrayim* (50:11). Yakov's impact was immense, leading to national mourning, not just among those in his immediate vicinity. This concept is also reflected in the *possuk*, וְצַדִּיק יְסֻד עוֹלָם, *A righteous one is the foundation of the world* (Mishlei 10:25). Indeed, Yakov was fundamentally influencing the entire world, although this influence was most apparent in the land of Mitzrayim, which had been blessed with sustenance due to his presence.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that the concept of a *tzaddik* having an impact on his surroundings can be understood further. While the Meshech Chochmah described the *brochah* that comes through the *tzaddik*, their influence extends beyond that as well. A righteous individual serves as a role model for noble behaviour, inspiring those around him. They directly and indirectly encourage others in their vicinity to conduct themselves in a commendable manner.

The Rosh Yeshiva adds that the influence of a *tzaddik* extends beyond merely offering blessings and positive effects, with his presence impacting the world in an extremely significant manner. The closing statement of Koheles (12:13) states, סוּף דְּבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמַע, אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים יְרָא וְאֶת מִצְוֹתָיו שֹׁמֵר, כִּי זֶה כָּל, הָאָדָם, *The sum of the matter, when all has been considered: Fear Hashem and keep His commandments, for that is man's whole duty*. Simply understood, the phrase כִּי זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם indicates that Shloime HaMelech is expressing that all of humanity was created solely to serve Hashem.

The Gemara (*Berachos* 6b), however, presents alternative interpretations to clarify this phrase. Ben Zoma explains that this *possuk* conveys the message that all of humanity was created simply to assist and accompany the great *tzaddik*. The purpose of creation was for the *tzaddik*, described as the *יִסוד עוֹלָם*, *the foundation of the world*, and everything else was created to support him. Thus, the *tzaddik* does not just offer *brochah* and positive influence to those around him; rather, he provides the rest of the world with meaning and reason for their existence!

The *possuk* (*Tehillim* 1:4) states: *לֹא כֵן הַרְשָׁעִים, כִּי אִם כַּמּוֹץ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְפֶּנּוּ רוּחַ*, *Not so the wicked; rather they are like chaff that is driven away by the wind*. The Malbim explains this phrase by comparing the existence of the *tzaddik* to *בֶּרֶךְ*, *grain*, while those around him are likened to *מוֹץ*, *chaff*. Although the chaff protects the grain by surrounding it, it is the weight of the grain that protects the chaff, preventing the lightweight chaff from being swept away by the wind. Consequently, the wicked, who do not support the righteous, lose their right to exist. Unprotected, they become like chaff, which, devoid of substance, is easily blown away.

As expanded elsewhere (See *Vayechi* 5784), the Rambam (Introduction *Mishnayos Zeraim*) explores the purpose of creation and humanity. He notes that early philosophers extensively examined this topic and concluded that everything in existence has a purpose; nothing was created in vain. All plants and animals were designed to serve human beings, each fulfilling a unique role - providing sustenance, medicine, or transportation, for example.

The Rambam further elaborates that if all creations were made for mankind, we must reflect on the reason for our existence. Considering the various aspects of humanity, we conclude that there is one primary objective for everyone, while other aspects merely provide support. Our purpose in life cannot simply be to eat, drink, build a family, or create a house or empire, as these activities do not transform a person but are merely tasks he engages in. Rather, the true function of humanity, which sets us apart from animals, is our intellect. When we focus our intellect on recognising the Oneness of Hashem and understanding all Divine knowledge, we align with the intent behind all Creation. Everything else serves to assist us in this extraordinary endeavour.

He expands this idea further, referencing the Gemara mentioned above, stating that the entire universe may exist solely for the benefit of a select few who achieve perfection and *sheleimus* in their intellect and behaviour. While most of humanity, influenced to some extent by their physical desires, will receive rewards for their efforts, they primarily exist to support and assist this choice minority.

Let us learn from this insight the greatness of the *tzaddik*. The *tzaddik* serves as the foundation of the world in many ways. He not only brings blessings and a positive influence to the world, but also offers something even more essential. *צְדִיק יְסוּד עוֹלָם* - The *tzaddik* is crucial for the world's existence, and the merit of our survival depends on the support we grant him.