

Midrashim on the Weekly Parsha:
Vayeshev

The Rav Speaks

Abraham's definition of his dual status [as a resident-alien], we believe, describes with profound accuracy the historical position of the Jew who resides in a predominantly non-Jewish society. He was a resident, like other inhabitants of Canaan, sharing with them a concern for the welfare of society, digging wells and contributing to the progress of the country in loyalty to its government and institutions. Here, Abraham was clearly a fellow citizen, a patriot among compatriots, joining others in advancing the common welfare. However, there was another aspect, the spiritual, in which Abraham regarded himself as a stranger. His identification and solidarity with his fellow citizens in the secular realm did not imply his readiness to relinquish any aspects of his religious uniqueness. His was a different faith and he was governed by perceptions, truths, and observances which set him apart from the larger faith community. In this regard, Abraham and his descendants would always remain 'strangers.'

The Star of Redemption, Franz Rosenzweig

His story begins, as the Holy Books recount it, with the divine command to go out of the land of his birth and to go into a land that God will show him. And the people becomes the people... [in] exile, the Egyptian one as later the one in Babylon... [Moreover,] for the eternal people the homeland never becomes its own... The land is in the deepest sense its own only as a land of longing, as—*holy land*. And this is why for it, even when it is at home, again differently from all peoples of the earth, this full proprietorship of the homeland is disputed; it is itself only a stranger and tenant in its land. "The land is mine," says God to the people...

Genesis 37:1

וַיָּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מְגוּרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:

And Jacob settled in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

Bereshit Rabba 84:3

אמר רב אחא בשעה שהצדיקים יושבים בשלום ומבקשים לישב בשלום בעולם הזה השטן בא ומקטר, אמר, לא ידעין שהוא מתקן להם לעולם הבא אלא שהם מבקשים לישב בשלום בעולם הזה. תדע לך שהוא כן, יעקב אבינו על ידי שבקש לישב בשלום בעולם הזה נדחג לו שטנו של יוסף. וישב יעקב (איוב ג, כו) לא שלותי ולא שקטתי, לא שלותי מעשו, ולא שקטתי מלבו, ולא נחתי מדינה, ויבא רגז, בא עלי רגזו של יוסף.

Rav Acha said: As soon as the righteous dwell in tranquility, and seek to dwell in tranquility in this world, Satan comes and prosecutes, and says, "Is that which has been prepared for them in the world to come not enough, that they should seek to dwell in tranquility in this world too?!" Know that this is so. As soon as Jacob our father sought to dwell in tranquility in this world, Satan came upon him [in order to instigate the trouble] with Joseph. "And Jacob dwelt". "I had no tranquility, no quiet, [no rest, and trouble came]" (Job 3:26). "I had no tranquility" from Esau. "I had no quiet" from Laban. "I had no rest" because of [what happened to] Dina. "And trouble came" - the trouble [surrounding] Joseph came upon me.