

From the Ohr HaChayim

by Jacob Solomon

There was a famine in the Land... G-d appeared to Yitzchak and He said: "Do not go down to Egypt... live in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for I will give all these lands to you and to your descendants" (26:1-3).

The Ramban (to 12:6) presents and reiterates the fundamental theme of *ma she'ira l'avot siman l'banim*: what happened to the Avot indicates what will happen to their descendants. For example Avraham and Sarah left Canaan and made their way to Egypt because of the famine, Sara was taken captive, G-d plagued Par'oh and his household, and then he and his people loaded Avraham with wealth and urged him out of the country. Similarly Ya'akov and his family were to move to Egypt for the same reason, Par'oh and his people would take them as captives and then enslave them, G-d would impose the plagues, and then the Egyptians would load the Israelites with their wealth and urge them out on their way with all possible speed.

Likewise, as the Ramban elaborates, G-d told Yitzchak to "live in this land" (which today would correspond to coastal areas including Ashdod and Ashkelon) that was then under Philistine rather than Canaanite control, as it was in due course to

become part of Eretz Israel. It may be suggested that Yitzchak's settling there was also a sign to the Israelites in the future; that they were to inhabit all areas of Eretz Israel, not just those lands that were nearest to the "place that G-d chooses" (D'varim 12:5). Even that region, where "the land is difficult and the indigenous population is difficult" (Rashi to 26:12).

The Ohr HaChayim follows the approach of the Ramban, adding that Yitzchak's farming that land was performing a *kinyan* (an act of acquiring it) for the future. Indeed, this is the only time that Avot left their traditional occupation of pastoral nomads and actually farmed the land: "Yitzchak sowed in that land, and in that year he reaped a hundred-fold; and G-d blessed him" (26:12). The Ohr HaChayim explains that the blessing not only included the extraordinarily rich harvest, but other good things as well: that the produce wouldn't suffer the consequences of the envy of the local populace, and that it would fetch a good price on the market (Meiri).

Following *ma she'ira l'avot siman l'banim*, it can also be suggested that Yitzchak's experience indicated what was to happen in the future: when the Israelites would keep the Torah, G-d would "... command the blessing for you in your grain storehouses and in whatever you do"

(D'varim 28:8). And today, those in Jerusalem doing their Friday shopping in the Shuk continue to experience just that as a weekly reminder. Indeed, many people living in Israel on very modest incomes do not understand how they nevertheless manage to keep going from week to week in the face of the realities of prices and sudden expenses. Perhaps indeed: "And G-d blessed him" includes his descendants, many of us included. 📖