Immediately after man’s creation, the Torah proclaims the fundamental rule for a successful marriage: לע ולך יפ ויהי את אביך ואת אםך ואת אשתך – “so a man should leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife.”

The focus of one’s identity moves from being the child of one’s parent to being a person in his own right. He must “leave” his childhood identity and emerge as an independent adult, ready to join another in the sanctity of marriage.

This leaving is fundamentally a psychological/emotional process. There are times however when a person must physically leave their family in order to establish their own identity. We see for example that leaving their home before or after marriage is a repeated motif of the Avot and Imahot. One might suggest that Yitzchak too becomes ready to marry only after undergoing the transforming experience of the Akeida. Through that experience he emerges as a new individual with a new independent identity. He is then ready to marry Rivka.

Rivka grew up in the house of Lavan. She understood that Esav would never accept Ya’akov’s ownership of olam haba. He would fight to control both worlds. Had time allowed, the Malbim explains, Rivka would have spoken with her husband, but Yitzchak acted unexpectedly without consulting her. He asked Esav to prepare a meal for him in order to bless him. Rivka had no time for discussions. She had to act. In this situation, fraught with danger to the future of Am Yisrael, she turned to her experience growing up in the house of Lavan. She knew how to act with subterfuge in order to ensure that what was vital would come to fruition. She acted outside the usual acceptable rules of openness and understanding to ensure that G-d’s Will would succeed. Yitzchak’s response, when he became aware of the subterfuge, showed that he accepted that Rivka’s actions, carried out by their son Ya’akov, were correct.

Rav Kook teaches us that all middot are intrinsically good. In addition, all experiences, even the most difficult, contain the potential to enrich us to serve our desire to fulfill G-d’s will. Our middot and our experiences serve as the basis of our actions. We must always act carefully, only after deep consideration of the consequences of our behavior. But both our natural middot, as well as the lessons we have learned from our experience growing up in our parents’ home, can be used to enrich our lives and deepen our wisdom in the ways we express G-d’s Will.

Most of us have been blessed by parents who did all they could to enrich our lives, to teach us to walk in the ways of G-d, to develop our potential to bring out the fundamental good that G-d implanted in our souls. It is there inside us. Our responsibility is to use all we have inherited from them in ways that help us achieve what is important.

Rivka, growing up in the house of Lavan, learned about subterfuge. While deception is a totally unacceptable basis for normative human interactions, in the unique situation in which Rivka found herself, even subterfuge became the vital vehicle through which G-d’s Will was achieved.

Marriage entails a fundamental “leaving” of our parents. This leaving has two elements. The first is the need to ground one’s identity in oneself, not in our family of origin. The second element which we learn from Rivka is that all we inherit from our parents, even those negative elements – which must be expressed only in a unique situation and in the most vigilant way – can be used to further G-d’s Will in the world.