

Parsha Q's – VaYeishev

“A man found him (Joseph) wandering in the field. The man asked him: “What do you seek?”
He replied: “It is my brothers that I seek. Tell me, please, where they are shepherding.”
The man said: They have left here, for I heard (them) say: “Let us go to Dotan”.
Joseph followed his brothers and found them in Dotan.”

Question: This entire episode seems superfluous. What matters is that Joseph followed Jacob's orders and reached his brothers, with the well-known consequences – why should we be interested in his need to ask directions along the way?

In apparent response to this difficulty, but in many ways intensifying it, the midrash identifies the man who found Joseph as an angel, although there is controversy as to whether it was Gabriel, Rafael, or a posse of three angels. This gives the man significance, but why was this episode so important as to warrant angelic intervention?

Three answers found in rishonim:

- One) Rashbam – to show us how committed Joseph was to fulfilling his father's orders – he looked for them even after they were not where he was originally sent
- Two) ? – to show us that there is no possibility of avoiding G-d's plan – His angels made sure that the brothers and Joseph would meet
- Three)