

And (he) lay down in that place. (28:11)

Rashi notes that *ba'makom ha'hu*, in that place, is an expression of exclusion, implying that it was only in that place that he lay down. During the fourteen years that he spent in the *yeshivah* of Eiver, however, he did not lay down at night, because he was occupied with the study of Torah. Previously, in *Parashas Toldos*, *Rashi* explained that when Yaakov *Avinu* left Be'er Sheva, he did not immediately go to Charan. He took a fourteen-year hiatus in the *yeshiva* of Eiver to study Torah. The **Oztrovitzer, zl**, wonders why Yaakov *Avinu*, who was sixty-three-years old when he left home and had certainly spent his entire life studying Torah in *the ohel ha'Torah*, the *yeshivah* of Shem and Eiver, felt it necessary once again to return to the *yeshivah*.

The *Oztrovitzer* explains that, prior to leaving his father's home, Yaakov *Avinu* had learned from Shem and Eiver how a Jew living among Jews maintains himself as a *ben Torah*, committed, devoted, vibrant in his belief and observance. Now, he was leaving this utopian environment to deal with the "elements" – a negative spiritual environment, steeped in immorality and unethical behavior. It was an entirely new enterprise. Living among Lavan and his ilk could prove to be an overwhelming challenge for the *yeshivah* man who had never been exposed to such a prurient environment.

In the *Sefer Alufei Yehudah*, the author cites the *Ostrovitzer*, who applies this idea to the opening *pasuk* in *Parashas Vayeishev*, "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock" (*Bereishis* 37:2). Why does the Torah emphasize Yosef's age? The *Ostrovitzer* explains that Yaakov saw through *Ruach Ha'Kodesh*, Divine Inspiration that Yosef would one day leave home and be compelled to live among pagan degenerates. How was he to cope with the constant spiritual challenges he would be forced to confront? His father decided that he would transmit to him the Torah that he had studied in the *Yeshivah* of Eiver for fourteen years. Since the commencement of Torah study occurs at age three, we have only to do the math – three plus fourteen equals seventeen. Hence, the Torah underscores Yosef's age at the time of his forced departure from home.

Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zl, supplements the above, explaining that Shem and Eiver were most suitable to teach Yaakov the necessities for survival in an adverse spiritual climate. Shem survived the generation of the Flood. He not only was spared physically, but he also emerged spiritually strong and unaffected by the pervasive influence of the members of that generation. Eiver was born during the *dor Haflagah*, generation of the Dispersal, whose members built the Tower of Bavel with the explicit purpose of rebelling against Hashem. He also emerged physically unscathed. These two *Roshei Yeshivah* were ideally suited to impart the lessons they had learned in coping with spiritual adversity.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* applies this thought to explain *Chazal's* statement in the *Talmud Megillah* 16b: "The study of Torah is greater than the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents." The entire fourteen years that Yaakov spent away from home, engrossed in Torah study, was not considered a

blemish on his respect for his parents. For fourteen years, Yaakov did not actively honor his parents; yet, he was not punished. Why? Torah study takes precedence. We still must rationalize why Yaakov absconded on his *mitzvah* of *Kibud av v'eim*, exchanging it for fourteen years of Torah study.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that Yaakov's fourteen years of Torah study was actually an inextricable, inseparable component of the honor he gave his parents. Clearly, Yitzchak and Rivkah had no great desire to send their son to the wicked Lavan, unless he was strong enough to survive in that challenging environment. If Yaakov could not proclaim, *Im Lavan garti v'taryag mitzvos shomarti*, "I lived with Lavan, but I still remained committed to the 613 *mitzvos*, I did not learn from his ways"; going there would pose a serious spiritual threat. In order to do this, Yaakov needed his fourteen years of preparation.

Exactly what was the content of the lessons that Yaakov received in Eiver's *yeshivah*? The message would have to endure throughout our nation's exile, because we have yet to reach that utopian spiritual environment which encourages and empowers spiritual growth. **Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita**, cites a *yesod*, principle, stated by **Horav Yehoshua, zl, m'Belz**, which can be applied and viewed as the primary lesson Yaakov imbibed in the *yeshivah*.

How does a Jew live as a Torah Jew in a non-Jewish, morally depraved environment? The opening *pasuk* to *Sefer Shemos* reads: *V'eilah shemos Bnei Yisrael ha'baim Mitzraymah*. "And these are the names of the *Bnei Yisrael* who came to Egypt." A similar *pasuk* is to be found in *Parashas Vayigash* (*Bereishis* 46:8). There, *Rashi* comments, "Because of the moment, ie, in terms of the present in the narrative, the Torah call them *ha'baim*, 'coming.' Thus, no one should wonder why it did not write *asher ba'u*, 'who came.'" **Be'er Yitzchak** explains that it is quite common to narrate stories of the past as if they are unfolding in the present. With this commentary in mind, we question why the *pasuk* in *Sefer Shemos* also uses the word *ha'baim*, coming, when they were already there. Their coming had occurred many years earlier.

The *Belzer* explains that the Torah is not teaching us a history lesson concerning the Jews' arrival in Egypt; rather, the Torah teaches us what it was that had saved the Jews from total assimilation. What was it that protected them from Egypt's harsh spiritual environment? It was the fact that they viewed themselves as *ha'baim*, just now coming to the land. They were not Egyptians. They had a homeland for which they yearned. They had a way of life and culture that was antithetical to Egyptian culture. They aspired for their return. Now, they were just visiting.

Rav Friedman supplements this idea with the *Midrash* which attributes *Klal Yisrael's* redemption from Egypt to four reasons: they did not adopt Egyptian names; they did not accept the Egyptian language; they did not speak *lashon hora*, slander against one another; they maintained a high moral standard as befits a Jew. These protective safeguards against assimilation were the result of the fact that they had never accepted Egypt as their home. They were just "coming" to the land. They were not residents.

This, explains *Rav* Friedman, is the idea behind Yaakov's eschewing sleep for the fourteen years that he studied in Eiver's *yeshivah*. Sleep is a necessity, but sleep does not come easily to one who is tense, who is concerned about his well-being. Yaakov taught his descendants that we do not sleep while in *galus*, exile. Sleep equals complacency, and in exile we dare not become passive victims to the contemporary society's morally corrupt and ethically lacking culture.

Yaakov spent fourteen years studying with Yosef. Yet, we find that when Yosef was in Potifar's house, he began to care about his physical appearance by curling his hair. It was soon after this that Potifar's wife attempted to seduce him. In his *Divrei Yechezkel*, the **Shiniever Rav, zl**, asks how a *tzaddik* such as Yosef could have acted so inappropriately. How could someone on an elevated spiritual plane care so much about his physical appearance? He explains that wherever a *tzaddik* finds himself, the first question that he asks is: What can I do to repair, to embellish, to elevate the spiritual plane of this place? Thus, when Yosef found himself thrust into the licentiousness of the Egyptian lifestyle, he wondered how he could change things. The first step was to change his appearance. There was no way that anyone would give him the time of day if he stood out like a Jew with a beard and *payos*. His goals were on target, but he forgot his father's lesson concerning the distinctiveness of a Jew. He had to distinguish himself from the environment in which he found himself. He was protected only as long as he realized that he was different, that he was only visiting; he was not a resident.

Yosef almost gave in to the pressure and allure of Potifar's wife. He was saved because he saw *d'mus d'yukno shel aviv*, an image of his father. How did this save him? **Horav Yitzchak, zl, m'Vorka** explains that when he saw his father's image he once again realized how a Jew should appear to the world. He saw the "old fashioned" regal appearance of a Jew who took pride in his individuality and independence. He quickly understood the evil of assimilation, and he rejected it.