

And Yaakov went out from Beer Sheva. (28:10)

When Yaakov *Avinu* fled his father's home, he was sixty-three years old. He was a wholesome, G-d-fearing Torah scholar whose entire life was devoted to studying Torah. Yet, prior to arriving in Lavan's home, he had *chopped arein*, grabbed, another fourteen years of Torah study in the *yeshivah* of Shem and Eiver. *Rashi* writes that during those fourteen years our Patriarch was glued to the *sefer*. He did not lie down in bed to go to sleep the entire time he was there. Why? He was preparing himself for his entrance into the outside world. Imagine, if this was Yaakov *Avinu's* attitude, what ours should be. One question needs to be addressed: If these fourteen years of Torah study were so critical, why are they not mentioned in the Torah? The Torah seems to gloss over this significant period of time.

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, explains that the Torah is teaching us that, while it is of the greatest significance, Torah study must be a natural occurrence for a Jew. No pat on the back is received for doing exactly what is expected of us. One is not over-extending himself by learning "extra." There is no category of learning extra. Torah study is a Jew's *raison d'être*. It defines us. Yaakov's fourteen years of Torah study need not be mentioned. It was like breathing. The Torah does not mention breathing either.

Horav Benyamin Zev Chashin, zl, cites the *Zohar HaKadosh* that illuminates the reason why Eisav did not attempt to harm Yaakov during this entire period of time. Who was going to protect Yaakov? The *yeshivah bachurim*? Yet, Eisav stayed away, because he was well aware of his father's blessing. As long as the *kol Yaakov*, the sound/voice of Torah emanating from the Patriarch, is in full force, Eisav stands powerless. Eisav, thus, decided to wait until Yaakov left the *yeshivah* and moved in with Lavan. Then, the *kol Yaakov* would cease to sound. During the stillness that would prevail, Eisav would make his move.

Eisav erred. He made the same mistake that is made by so many others like him, who have no idea of the power of Torah or of the value of a Torah education. Yaakov's preparations in the *yeshivah*, the strengthening of his character and refinement of his *middos*, character traits, were not for naught. Even in the house of iniquity that personified

Lavan's home, one can survive – if he has filled himself with Torah. The plateau of *kol Yaakov* achieved in the *yeshivah* will carry over to the outside world – when necessary. This is what Yaakov implied to Eisav, when he said, *Im Lavan garti*, "I lived with Lavan" (*Bereishis* 32:5). *Rashi* adds, *V'taryag mitzvos shomarti*, "And I (still) kept the 613 *mitzvos*." Even after the "Lavan years," Yaakov maintained his original plateau. That is the power of Torah study.

Some individuals are in a rush to jump headfirst into the allure of the outside world. Others are forced to leave *yeshivah* prematurely by well-meaning parents and in-laws. What they all fail to understand is that every bit of time spent in the *yeshivah* provides an inoculation against the pressures and influences of Eisav's world. One can make it "out there," as long as he is

protected.