

## Yaakov departed from Beer Sheva. (28:10)

*Chazal* (*Talmud Megillah* 17a) deduce that Yaakov *Avinu* was sixty-three years old when he left his parents' home. Fourteen years later, when Yaakov was seventy-seven, Yosef was born. When Yosef stood before Pharaoh, he was thirty years old – making Yaakov one hundred and seven years old. We add to this seven years of plenty and two years of famine to reach a sum total of one hundred sixteen, which should have been Yaakov's age when meeting Pharaoh. When Yaakov stood before Pharaoh, however, he stated his age as one hundred and thirty – leaving us with a discrepancy of fourteen years. *Chazal* derive from this that Yaakov *Avinu* stopped at the Yeshivah of Shem and Ever for fourteen years of Torah study before moving on to the home of Lavan. These years were not included in the calculation. Why are the fourteen years spent in the *yeshivah* not mentioned in the Torah? One would think that these years would have been quite significant in the life of the Patriarch.

We find a similar query with regard to a statement that *Chazal* make in the *Talmud Yoma* (28b), *Avraham zakein v'yosheiv b'yeshivah hayah*, "Our Patriarch Avraham was an elder sitting in the *yeshivah*." In fact, *Chazal* go on to state that all of the Patriarchs spent their time studying Torah in *yeshivah* and disseminating it to the public. Would this not be of interest to those who study Torah? Should it not have been written explicitly in the Torah? Apparently, the Torah finds it of greater significance to devote space to the actions and good deeds of the *Avos*, Patriarchs, rather than their Torah study.

*Horav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, zl*, asks these questions and explains that the good deeds performed by the *Avos* resulted from their Torah study. Thus, the Torah mentions the primary consequence, the purpose of their Torah learning. He explains this based upon a question posed to *Chazal* (*Talmud Kiddushin* 40b), "What is more important, the study of Torah or the performance of *mitzvos*?" Rabbi Tarfon replied that *mitzvah* performance has greater significance. Rabbi Akiva contended that Torah study is more important. The *Tananim* that were present all spoke up and said, "The study of Torah is more important, because the study of Torah brings one to the performance of *mitzvos*." In other words, the result of Torah study is that it provides the benefit of both: study and performance. Without knowledge, man cannot properly perform the *mitzvos*. Once he has completed his studies (not that one ever completes studying Torah), he should engage in good deeds. (One option cited by *Tosfos*.)

We derive from here that the advantage/benefit of Torah study is that it incurs *mitzvah/maasim tovim* performance: *Talmud meivi l'yidei maaseh*; "Study brings about action." *Rambam* (*Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:5) asserts, "There is no *mitzvah* among all of the *mitzvos* that equals Torah study. *Talmud Torah* stands opposite all of the *mitzvos* because it catalyzes deed, i.e. *mitzvah* performance.

Thus, explains the *Rosh Yeshivah*, our Torah addresses that which is important. The deeds of the Patriarchs were the fruit of their devotion to Torah study. The Torah focuses on the product, the

finished fruit, but, without Torah, there can be no fruit.

The *ben sorer u'moreh*, wayward and rebellious son, is executed before he has committed a capital crime. *Chazal* (*Sanhedrein 72a*) say, *Yamus zakai v'al yamus chayav*; "Let him die while he is still innocent and let him not die guilty of a capital crime." *Chazal* explain that his present actions bespeak a boy out of control, one who will do anything – even commit murder – in order to satisfy his desires. The *Talmud Yerushalmi* reiterates the same fear for the boy's future, adding one more "ultimate" digression from the Torah way: "In the end, he will forget his learning." It would appear from the *Yerushalmi* that even worse than wanton murder to satisfy his needs, is the *ben sorer u'moreh's* divesting himself of his relationship with Torah. Is this true?

*Rav Ruderman* explains that as long as the boy (or anyone for that matter) has not severed his relationship with the Torah, hope remains that he could one day return to an ethical and moral path. Once Torah is completely out of his life, he has no spiritual anchor; it is over. No resources are accessible to bring him to the source of hope and return.