

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Vayeitzei

November 16, 2018

A Taste of Torah

Security Code

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

If you calculate the years of Yaakov's life, based upon the events described in the Torah and their timing, you will discover that there are fourteen years missing. Where did they go? Rashi tells us that they were spent in the *bais medrash*. At the close of last week's parsha, Yitzchak orders his son Yaakov to flee from his murderous brother Eisav and make his way to Charan, his mother Rivka's hometown. There, says Yitzchak, he should take a wife from his mother's family and remain there until things have calmed down. But a funny thing happened on the way to Charan. Yaakov stopped off at the yeshiva of Shem and Ever to study - and stayed there for fourteen years. After spiritually fortifying himself for the arduous journey ahead, he continued on to Charan.

If you're paying attention, you know that Yaakov was supposed to get out of town ASAP so as to avoid ending up on the business side of Eisav's sword. Stopping off for a quick *mincha-maariv* prayer service and a short *shivur* may not have derailed that endeavor, but delaying for fourteen years isn't exactly sticking with the plan. How could Yaakov expose himself for so long? And, indeed, why didn't Eisav track him down?

The Talmud (Shabbos 30a) relates that when the time for King David's death arrived, he was deeply involved in Torah study. The Angel of Death wanted to take his life, but found himself unable to do so due to the protective power of the Torah with which King David had enveloped himself. The Talmud continues

that the Angel of Death created a disturbance that succeeded in distracting King David for a second. In that moment of cessation from study, David died. The Talmud discusses other Torah sages who also held the Angel of Death at bay through their study of Torah. It is thus clear that if one wants to cheat death, engaging in in-depth Torah study is a great way to do so.

Yaakov was also well aware of this protective power of Torah study, and he relied on that to save him from the nefarious plans of Eisav. So long as Yaakov remained devoted to his studies, Eisav could not get to him.

Rashi tells us that during the entire fourteen-year period of Torah study, Yaakov did not sleep. Sounds physically impossible? It is. Rashi is telling us that Yaakov did not leave his studies to sleep at any point - he would catch a brief nap as he learned, without really taking a break from his studies. Thus, at every moment, he was engaged in Torah, rendering him impervious to attack. (It is interesting to note that the Talmud [Brachos 3b] tells us that King David, who, as mentioned, was protected for a time by his Torah study, would nap only for very short periods, as well.)

This reality seems to have been understood by none other than Eisav himself. The Torah (Bereishis 27:41) tells us that Eisav said in his heart that he would kill Yaakov during the days of mourning following his father Yitzchak's death. Why did Eisav specifically mark this as an auspicious time to murder his brother? One approach is that a mourner may

Stories for the Soul

No Doze

Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsberg (1726-1778) and his brother, Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz (1731-1805; known as the Baal Hafla'ah) were both very great Torah scholars who studied Torah incessantly, day and night.

It happened once that Reb Shmelke came to visit his illustrious brother. Upon arriving at his home late at night, he knocked on the door, knowing his brother was no doubt still awake and studying Torah. He waited a bit, but no one came to the door. He resumed knocking, but to no avail. Reb Shmelke began to worry that perhaps something was amiss inside. He soon found an open window and climbed in. Going to his brother's study, he found him on the floor, sleeping soundly with his head on his arm.

Reb Shmelke began to kick Reb Pinchas while shouting, "Get up, you lazy one! Have you nothing better to do than sleep?!"

Reb Pinchas, now wide awake, protested, "Of course I was learning! Can't you see that I simply collapsed here from exhaustion?!"

"Yes," replied Reb Shmelke, "but you had enough strength to place your arm under your head!"

Yaakov spent 14 years learning Torah night and day, devoting every bit of strength to in-depth study, napping in place only when he could no longer keep his eyes open. While that may be a bit much for most of us, going the extra mile for Torah study is a very worthy endeavor.

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Kollel Happenings

LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING THIS THURSDAY

Start your day off on the right foot with Torah study! Join the Kollel for learning at three locations around Denver: At the Kollel West Denver Bais Medrash and Aish Denver, shacharis at 8 am followed by breakfast and learning, and at EDOS, shacharis at 7:30 followed by breakfast and learning. The study session will focus on *Close Up Shop: The Issues of Purchasing an Item Someone Is Already Looking to Buy*. Class prepared and learning sponsored in memory of Tzivia Masha bas Yehudis by the Freeman family.

RABBANIT MIZRACHI AT THREE LOCATIONS!

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel presents a video class for women by Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi, *Kislev - Month of Rededication*. Three locations! **Sunday**, Nov. 25 at the Fine home, 1664 Wolff St.; **Monday**, Nov. 26, at the Stern home, 391 S. Leyden St.; **Monday**, Nov. 26 at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.. Doors open at 7:45 pm, presentation at 8 pm. No charge, suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights, 8:15-9 pm, at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: When may one use an incomplete loaf for *Hamotzi* at a Shabbos meal although a complete loaf is available?

A: I. According to many authorities (including the Vilna Gaon), at the Pesach Seder, the broken matza is used as one of the two breads although it is incomplete. This is done even when it is Shabbos. This is due to the preference for *lechem oni*, pauper's bread, at the Seder. Those who follow the custom of the Vilna Gaon place only two matzos on their Seder table, even though they will subsequently break one of them, as there is no need for two complete loaves when reciting

the blessing on them. (See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 473:4, Biur Hagra ibid. and Ma'aseh Rav 187.) II. The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, 1816-1893) penned an interesting responsa (Meishiv Davar 1:21) arguing that even a slice of bread can be considered a *shaleim* (complete) and used for *lechem mishna*, as long as the bread wasn't sliced in the presence of the person making the blessing! It seems that most halachic authorities rejected his ruling.

This week's question: How many times each Shabbos is there a requirement of *lechem mishna*?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the Chasam Sofer - Part XX

Upon meeting the Chasam Sofer, Emperor Franz Josef, knowing it was Shabbos, handed the Chasam Sofer a cigar as a sign of favor. The Chasam Sofer placed the cigar in his pocket. The emperor, who knew the great rabbi would not light the cigar on Shabbos, challenged him, "Herr Rabbiner, won't you smoke the emperor's cigar?" "Should I simply smoke away the honor bestowed upon me by the emperor?" replied the Chasam Sofer. The esteem in which the Chasam Sofer

was held by the government paid other dividends, as well. A rabbi could not be hired in a community without a letter from the Chasam Sofer certifying that this individual was, indeed, a rabbi. This helped ensure that the rabbinate remained faithful to traditional Judaism. The Chasam Sofer had many of his disciples appointed to the rabbinate in communities throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He directed them to open a yeshiva in their locale, thus creating a network of yeshivos throughout the Empire.

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not study Torah in-depth during the *shiva* (though studying the laws of mourning and similar subjects is permitted). During the *shiva* period for Yitzchak, Yaakov would be deprived of his greatest weapon - toiling in Torah! Eisav saw this as the perfect opportunity to avenge himself.

The upshot of all this is that Torah

study is not only a tremendous mitzvah. It is not only a way to connect with G-d and the entire Jewish People and its millennia-old history. It is not only a way to free oneself of the pull towards this physical world. Besides all those great attributes, Torah has another wonderful advantage: It may well save your life!