

# DIVREI TORAH BULLETIN

National Council of Young Israel  
Shlomo Z. Mostofsky, National President  
Rabbi Pesach Lerner, Executive Vice President

דברי  
תורה

*A project of the NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL*



*Also available on our website: [www.youngisrael.org](http://www.youngisrael.org)*

**GUEST RABBI**  
Rabbi Pesach Lerner  
Executive Vice President  
National Council of Young Israel

**PARSHAT: Vayetzei**  
**7 Kislev 5772**  
**December 3, 2011**  
**DAF YOMI: Bechorot 19**  
**NACH YOMI: Joshua 10**

Rashi in Parshat Vayetzei (Bereisheet, 28:11) informs us that our Patriarch, Yaakov, spent fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Ever and that during those fourteen years Yaakov never laid down to sleep. (See also Rashi, Toldot 28:9 and Talmud Megillah 17A) After growing up in the house of his grandfather, Avraham and his father Yitzchok and learning "their Torah", why was it necessary for Yaakov to dedicate fourteen more years in the Yeshiva of Ever; why was Ever's Torah different than that of Avraham and Yitzchok?

\*\*\*\*

"And Yisrael (Yaakov) loved Yosef more than all his sons because he was "ben zekunim" - a child of his old age (Bereisheet, Vayeishev 37:3). Rashi, quoting Targum Onkelos, explains that "ben zakunim" means a wise son. All that Yaakov learned from Shem and Ever, he transmitted to Yosef (see also Ramban and Baal HaTurim).

Why did Yaakov teach the Torah of Shem and Ever only to Yosef? Why not to all his sons? Why was Ever's Torah different than that of Yaakov and Yitzchok (who was still alive at the time)?

\*\*\*\*

Let us analyze the environment in which Shem and later, Ever, lived. Shem lived during the time of the Mabal, the Great Flood. People of that generation were guilty of immortality and idolatry. They sinned and were corrupt. Ever, Shem's great grandson, lived during the time of the generation of the Tower of Babel and the Dispersion.

The Torah of Shem and Ever was acquired within an environment that was estranged from morals,

honesty and an appreciation of the Creator. Living a G-d-fearing life in such an environment required special and specific methods, including an understanding of how not to be influenced by one's surroundings. The Torah of Shem and Ever, therefore, was the Torah for generations - of how not to be affected by one's circumstances, by one's surroundings - this Torah was different than the Torah of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov who lived in quieter times, often separate and distinct from their neighbors and their influence.

Now we can understand why Yaakov needed the Torah of Shem and Ever before he went to the house of Lavan. Now we can understand how Yaakov was able to say, "Im Lavan garti v'taryag mitzvot shamarti" - with Lavan, the evil one, I have lived and still I kept all the Mitzvot and I did not learn from his evil ways (Rashi on Bereisheet, VaYishlach 32:5). It was the Torah Yaakov learned in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever - that Torah that taught him how not to be affected by his environment - that protected him, and those special and specific methods were not part of Avraham and Yitzchok's Torah.

Yosef, also, alone amongst his brothers, was taught the Torah of Shem and Ever by Yaakov because Yaakov knew that Yosef would need those special and specific methods (of Torah) so as not to be influenced by the environs of Mitzrayim.

Perhaps that is the meaning of the Talmud's message, that Yosef resisted the advances of Potiphar's wife upon seeing a vision of his father, Yaakov (see Rashi, Bereisheet, Vayeishev 39:11).

Yaakov was reminding Yosef that with the Torah of Shem and Ever he knew how not to be influenced

and affected by his surroundings, by the environment he now finds himself in.

And with that special Torah of Shem and Ever we understand the Medrash that says, "And Yisroel (Yaakov) said, how great, my son Yosef still lives- (Bereisheet, VaYigash, 45:28) - How great are the strengths of Yosef, that with all the trials and tribulations that he went through, he still maintained his righteousness.

\*\*\*\*

There is another time that we find the Jewish nation needed special Torah education and experience to better survive the galut?

"And Yaakov said to Yosef, and He (G-d) blessed me. And He (G-d) said to me: Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous; I will make you a congregation of nations."

"And now, your two sons who were born to you in the land of Egypt, before my coming to you in Egypt, shall be mine. Ephraim and Menashe will be mine like Reuven and Shimon." (Breisheet 48:3-5)

Just a few psukim further (49:1) the Torah informs us that Yaakov gathers his sons and wishes to reveal to them "the end of days" - the coming of mashiach - but the Divine Presence deserts Yaakov; G-d did not want that specific time revealed to the Jewish nation (see commentary of Rashi).

Yaakov wishes to reveal "the end of days" because he saw what the future held for the Jewish People - the galut, that Bnei Yisrael would be scattered to all corners of the globe, the pogroms and anti-Semitism, the difficult times. Yaakov saw the assimilation and intermarriage, the ignorance and the apathy, and he wanted to tell his children - there is a finality; mashiach will come, just maintain the faith until he arrives.

But Yaakov did not only wish to give his children

hope, he needed to give them the tools, the ability to withstand the trials and tribulations of the galut.

And Yaakov tells Yosef, "G-d told me 'be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a congregation of nations shall descend from you' (Bereisheet 35:11)"

The Jewish People is a "nation and a congregation of nations of all different characteristics - farmers and merchants, scholars and scribes. It is this mix that makes up the "persona" of Am Yisrael.

But how can a nation that lived in a Jewish ghetto withstand the forces of the greater world? The patriarchs and the twelve tribes were shepherds, farmers. What did they know of the world of the non-Jew?

And Yaakov remembered the sons of Yosef - Ephraim and Menashe, sons of the viceroy of Egypt.

Ephraim and Menashe, who grew up in the palaces of Egypt, who had exposure to all Egyptian culture, etc., still came often (if not daily) to Goshen, the Jewish ghetto, to learn Torah from their grandfather Yaakov.

It was these two sons of Yosef who were able to live in the galut within the "best" the non-Jewish world had to offer and still remain "erliche Yiddin" - faithful Jews (see Ozneyim L'Torah of Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, Breisheet 48:20).

Yaakov made Ephraim and Menashe like Reuven and Shimon - part of the persona of the Jewish People. The Jewish People now had that complete personality - shepherds and scribes, scholars and sailors and individuals who can live in the galut and remain true to their faith.

Yaakov has completed his nation and community of nations. The Jewish nation had hope and the ability to survive as the Jewish People, the People of G-d.

Shabbat Shalom.

To receive a free e-mail subscription to NCYI's weekly Divrei Torah Bulletin, submit your e-mail address at the following Webpage: <http://oi.vresp.com/?fid=cb1b062c4d>