

OUR ORIGINAL IRON DOME

PARSHAS VAYETZE

HaRav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l asked, "What is true life? The Torah and mitzvos are our life and length of our days. Torah is the genuine life of a Jew".

In 1955, Lazer M. traveled from Switzerland to Israel to enroll in the great Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. The yeshiva already had 1,000 students. The yeshiva did not accept Lazer. Politely, he asked to be taken to meet the Rosh HaYeshiva's wife, Rebbetzin Kahaneman. The staff members acquiesced. When Lazer saw her, he took out a letter from his pocket and showed it to her.

She read the letter and told everyone to come with her to see the Rosh HaYeshiva. When Rav Kahaneman read the letter, he embraced Lazer and said that he was accepted into the yeshiva. The staff members were astonished. What was written in that letter? The

story of the letter had taken place 10 years earlier. At that time, Rav Kahaneman had undergone an operation and had gone to Switzerland to convalesce. The hotel that he had gone to only had a third-floor room available. There was no elevator and it would have been difficult for the Rav to walk up and down the stairs. Six-year-old, Lazer, and his mother had a room on the first floor. When asked, they both graciously agreed to switch rooms and give the Rav their room on the 1st floor. Rav Kahaneman's wife was very appreciative. She wanted to show her appreciation to the little boy, Lazer. She offered to buy him chocolate or a toy, but he said that it was not necessary to give him anything. When the Rebbetzin insisted, Lazer said, "I just gave my bed to the Ponevezher Rav. I would hope that if I ever come to the Ponevezher Yeshiva, the Rav would give me a bed in his yeshiva." The Rebbetzin was stunned at the maturity and love of Torah that young Lazer exhibited. She wrote and signed a note. The Rosh HaYeshiva signed the note as well. The note granted Lazer a place in the Ponevezh yeshiva. Lazer's

"He [Yaakov] reached the place and spent the night there and lay down [to sleep] in that place." (28:11)

parents saved this note for more than 10 years. This was the note that Lazer had presented to the Rosh HaYeshiva and the Rebbetzin, to gain entrance into the yeshiva. Lazer continued to learn in the yeshiva for more than 10 years. (Echoes of the Maggid by Rabbi

Paysach Krohn)

Our forefather, Yaakov, left his parents' house at age 63 to run away from Esav and to find a wife. He arrived in Charan at age 77. What took him so long to reach Charan? The **Midrash** (Rabba 68:5) says that Yaakov made a detour. He went to learn in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, before continuing to Charan. Yaakov learned there for 14 years, with extreme diligence! During that time, Yaakov barely slept. He did not sleep in a bed. He merely took short naps, as needed. As **Rashi** explains (based on Bereishis Rabbah 68:11) that the word, הַיָּוֵהוּ, [in] that place, teaches us in that place he lay down to sleep. However, during the previous fourteen years, when Yaakov learned in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he never slept regularly at night. He was consistently engaged in the study of the Torah.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l (Shmiras Halashon Sha'ar Torah; 9) asks, was this the proper time for Yaakov to be learning in yeshiva? He was already 63 and he knew that he was destined to father the 12 tribes. It was a

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very important mitzvah for Yaakov to go to Lavan's house immediately to get married! The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l answers that Yaakov knew Lavan would not give his daughters in marriage without receiving a lot of money in return. Meanwhile, Yaakov was penniless since Elifaz, Esav's son, had taken all his money. Yaakov knew that he would have to remain in Lavan's house for a long time, working for him, to earn the privilege of marrying Lavan's daughters. Yaakov feared, correctly, the challenge of staying with Lavan for an extended time. Lavan was dishonest, deceptive, and his house was full of idols. Yaakov was concerned about the challenge of living in this impure and unholy place. Obviously, Yaakov had no choice but to stay there. Yaakov was anxious about the influence it

would have on him. Yaakov knew that his only protection was to diligently learn the holy Torah. He would be unable to do so in the house of Lavan. Therefore, Yaakov stopped enroute to learn Torah with intensity and extreme diligence. He learned in this manner for 14 years, corresponding to the time that he knew that he would have to live in Lavan's house.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l teaches us a lesson from Yaakov's actions. Every father should ensure that his son be accustomed to learn Torah & perform mitzvos. The holy Torah will protect his son from impure influences. If his son would later have to serve in the king's army, and not be able to learn, then Hashem would ensure that he would be successful and that the government officials would treat him favorably.

We live in a world and at a time in which impure influences are many and are strong. We are different than the others. We are Hashem's chosen, holy people!

How can we safeguard our holy souls from such filth and such influences?

Diligent Torah learning is the Iron Dome that will protect us from those impure influences around us.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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