

# FOUNDATIONS PART I

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

*"Yisrael traveled, taking all his possessions, and he arrived in Be'er- Sheva..." (Bereshith 46:1)*

Why was it necessary to make a detour to Be'er Sheva on route to Egypt? Yaakov knew via prophecy that when his descendants would be redeemed from Egypt they would be commanded to build a sanctuary in the desert. Although they would have all of the gold, silver and cloth required for constructing it, there was one material that they would be lacking: wood from a Shitim tree. Since this was not readily available in the desert, Yaakov went to Be'er Sheva to obtain Shitim trees to plant when he reached his destination. <sup>1</sup>

This incident took place at a crucial point in Yaakov's life, when he was being reunited with his son Yosef after twenty two years and moving his entire household to a foreign country. One would think that he could have delegated the task of securing this wood to one of his children or grandchildren. Alternatively, he could have asked Yosef, the second most powerful figure in Egypt, to arrange this after his arrival. There must have been a special impetus pushing him to take care of this himself. Our Sages tell us that when Rav Chiyah went to build a yeshivah, he made everything from scratch. He grew flax to make nets, hunted animals, and worked the hides in order to make parchment. The purpose of doing all of these tasks himself was so that his endeavors would find favor with God. Since the Divine Presence does not rest on stolen property or on actions done with improper intentions, he felt that the only way to assure success was to take care of everything himself.<sup>2</sup>

If this was true about a yeshivah, how much more reason there is to be concerned about the sanctuary, the designated place in which the Divine Presence would dwell. Yaakov, the pillar of truth, knew that if he himself prepared the wood for the future Temple then it would have a solid foundation. Therefore, before entering the exile in Egypt, Yaakov laid the groundwork for its construction.

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1. *Rashi on Shemoth 25:5, based on the Midrash Tanchuma, Terumah 9.*

2. From the beginning of the Vilna Gaon's commentary on Tikunei Zohar.