

# FOUNDATIONS PART II

*by Rabbi Daniel Travis*

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

The previous essay related that Yaakov's desire that the foundations of the Temple be one hundred percent free of any trace of dishonesty brought him to personally plant the trees that would be used for its construction. His message is as relevant today as it was then.

All institutions should be run honestly, but institutions of Torah learning are like the Temple, and therefore should be built on even more scrupulously honest foundations. For this reason, it is forbidden to report to the government that more students are registered at a school than are actually studying in that particular institution. That would lead to additional funding which the institution does not deserve, which would be considered theft, and is forbidden under all circumstances. In a response to a question on the subject, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l stated, "There is absolutely no room for leniency regarding this issue."<sup>1</sup>

Because he wanted to avoid dishonesty at all costs, Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l was wary of reporting the number of students studying in his yeshivah unless he was sure that the number was exact. Once two brothers came to Rav Aharon Kotler's fundraising staff and offered a very large donation to the yeshivah, on the condition that a specific individual would also donate a certain sum of money to the yeshivah. The person the brothers mentioned had never been a very generous supporter of the yeshivah, so the staff was skeptical about approaching him for the specified sum. They asked Rav Aharon Kotler whether they could say that the individual had actually donated the money to the yeshivah if he helped raise the sum that the brothers were stipulating. Rav Aharon responded that this would be deception, and therefore it was absolutely forbidden. He added that under no circumstances would his yeshivah, whose cornerstone was the absolute truth of Torah, be built with funds raised through deception. "In a yeshivah run by money gained dishonestly," Rav Aharon said, "no matter how diligent the students are in their studies, they will not remember what they learn." <sup>2</sup>

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1. *Igrot Moshe, Choshen Mishpat 2:29.*

2. *MiDevar Sheker Tirchak*, p. 146.

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