

Avraham is the first monotheist, the first man who befriended Hashem, and the forefather of our Torah and Halacha. Therefore, the question is how can we look at Avraham as a role model for our Torah learning today? The Talmud teaches us that Avraham was a man of Torah even before the giving of the Torah. How is it possible that he had the knowledge of the sages, well before they had arrived?

It is said that Avraham's very being was in connection to the *mitzvot* and he had an innate understanding of the laws that allowed him to keep them even generations before the Torah was given to the Jewish people. *Yoma* 28b teaches us, "Abraham was different because he was an Elder and sat and studied Torah in a yeshiva, where the Divine Presence rests. There he developed the expertise to determine the precise hour. As Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: From the days of our ancestors, yeshiva never left them." This quote is discussing how Avraham was a learned man, who studied in yeshiva all day. Yet, the term yeshiva in ancient Israel is not the same as we imagine today. In the times of the prophets, yeshiva was not a physical location, it was a mindset and environment created when like minded torah loving individuals sat together to engage in learning and teaching of Hashem's words. Yeshiva comes from the Hebrew word "*shev*" meaning sit, demonstrating that a yeshiva was created, when the prophets sat together to study torah.

This differs in today's world where a yeshiva is typically a physical center of higher learning. No longer does the yeshiva come to you, but you come to the yeshiva. I believe that physical yeshivot can sometimes be difficult to attend, individuals may face barriers such as cost, time, distance, etc. Yet, in this new age of the COVID-19 pandemic, one blessing that we have been granted is the advancement of technology, which has allowed us to return to bringing the yeshiva to the person, and not vice versa. As we can see in our own kollel, we have created access to Torah to many individuals who may not have had such opportunities in the past. This is what our forefathers envisioned when they sat in their "*yeshivot*." So let us remember and move forward in continuing to create spaces of Jewish learning accessible to all.

-Amin Yakov Abtahi-Shalom