

Torah Tidbits

י"ח שבת תשפ"א 21ND JAN 2021 ISSUE 1401

פרשת ויחי

PARSHAT VAYECHI - SHABBAT CHAZAK



**PROBING THE
PROPHETS**
Rabbi Nachman (Neil)
Winkler
page 20



**HEALTHY WATER
- MIKVEH USE
DURING CORONA**
Rabbi Gideon
Weitzman
page 48

וישאו אתו
בניו ארצה כנען
ויקברו אתו במערת
שדה המכפלה

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ב"ה

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לכבוד בחידר האבות יעקב אבינו עליו השלום להגלות דוד ומוגלות סייט המון הי"ו

By David & Marjorie Sitt



YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYECHI

Candles 4:11PM • Havdala 5:27PM • Rabbeinu Tam 6:05PM

WEEKLY INSPIRATION

Were I to acquire the greatness of the Vilna Gaon - not in the words he spoke but in the words he did not speak - that would be enough for me. As our Sages declared, "Silence is a fence for wisdom" (Avot 3:17)

Rav Ayreh Levin, the Tzaddik of Yerushalayim ('A Tzaddik for Eternity' p.427)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

04 Dear Torah Tidbits Family
Rabbi Avi Berman

06 Parshat Vayechi Sedra Summary
Rabbi Reuven Tradburks

12 The Horse Thief
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

16 Moving Forwards
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

20 Probing The Prophets
Rabbi Nachman Winkler

22 Going the Extra Mile
Rabbi Shalom Rosner

24 The Efficacy of Blessing
Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

26 A Tale of Two Cities
Rabbi Judah Mischel

30 Simchat Shmuel
Rabbi Sam Shor

32 OU Israel
Virtual Schedule

38 Sharp Food in Halacha (continued)
Rabbi Ezra Friedman

40 My Homeland Is Calling
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

44 Bringing Light into the World
Menachem Persoff

46 Eating Meat On Shabbat
Rabbi Daniel Mann

48 Healthy Water
Rabbi Gideon Weitzman

50 ישתבח
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski

52 Midreshet Harova
Rabbi Dovid Milston

56 Digital Tu BiShevat Seder
Rabbi Moshe Bloom

58 Torah 4 Teens By Teens
Albertz Katz // Ranan Lustman

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	VAYECHI	HAVDALA	SH'MOT	
			Candles	Havdala
4:11	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	5:27	4:16	5:33
4:29	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	5:30	4:34	5:35
4:30	Beit Shemesh / RBS	5:28	4:35	5:33
4:26	Gush Etzion	5:28	4:32	5:33
4:26	Raanana/ Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	5:28	4:32	5:33
4:26	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	5:28	4:32	5:33
4:26	Netanya	5:28	4:32	5:33
4:29	Be'er Sheva	5:30	4:34	5:35
4:27	Rehovot	5:29	4:33	5:34
4:11	Petach Tikva	5:28	4:16	5:33
4:25	Ginot Shomron	5:27	4:31	5:32
4:14	Haifa / Zichron	5:26	4:20	5:32
4:25	Gush Shiloh	5:26	4:30	5:32
4:27	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	5:28	4:33	5:34
4:26	Giv'at Ze'ev	5:27	4:31	5:33
4:27	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:28	4:32	5:33
4:29	Ashkelon	5:30	4:34	5:35
4:27	Yad Binyamin	5:29	4:33	5:34
4:18	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	5:24	4:23	5:29
4:22	Golan	5:24	4:28	5:29

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 6:05 PM • next week - 6:10 pm

Times According to My Zmanim (20 min. before sundown in most cities,
40 min. in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva, 30 min. in Tzfat/Haifa)

OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

**RANGES 11 DAYS WED - SHABBAT
15-25 TEVET (DEC. 30 - JAN. 9)**

Earliest Talit and Tefilin	5:43 - 5:45am
Sunrise	6:38 - 6:40am
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema (Magen Avraham: 8:31 - 8:34am)	9:10 - 9:13am
Sof Z'man T'fila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	10:00 - 10:04am
Chatzot (Halachic noon)	11:41 - 11:46am
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:11 - 12:16pm
Plag Mincha	3:41 - 3:48pm
Sunset (counting elevation)	4:50 - 4:57pm

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Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

Over the weekend I received two very moving phone calls. The first was on erev Shabbat when a long-term participant of our Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center reached out for advice. She told me that she had some time to call because she was doing office work for the day rather than her usual active border patrol duty in the IDF. When I asked her if everything was ok, her response inspired me greatly: “My supervisor knows that I’m fasting today [10 b’Tevet], and so I was assigned to work in the office.”

This is a young woman who “on the outside” may not look religious. Yet, here she was fasting on a Tzom Kal while following a rigorous army schedule. We

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grandfather, and great-grandfather

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Norma Chiott

Felix, Chiott, and Graber Families

often speak of the at-risk youth we work with as “diamonds in the rough” who need unconditional love and support in order to actualize their potentials and shine. To me, this was a beautiful example reminding us to always judge others favorably and to never lose faith in people’s desires to do the right thing.

The second call which I received on Motzei Shabbat was from a woman I had never met. She called to thank me for the messages I share here in Torah Tidbits about the incredible programs that OU Israel is *zoche* to run throughout the country, and she asked how she could make a donation to partner with us to support our activities. This conversation led to her and her husband coming to my house later that night to hand deliver a donation. Since we were being cautious due to Corona, we all stood outside in the cold to introduce ourselves, and they shared a bit about themselves.

This incredible couple made aliyah over 15 years ago and told me that they love participating in OU Israel Center Shiurim, which fill their lives with Torah. I was very impressed by this couple and saw once again, firsthand, the people that enjoy Torah Tidbits and our OU Israel Center programs. It gave me such an incredible feeling to know that we are servicing the salt of the earth, the most incredible people.

I'd like to publicly thank them and thank our other friends and partners who in the recent months have heeded our call to support our programs, through our Annual Torah Tidbits Appreciation Campaign, our current campaign to support our virtual OU Israel Center Shiurim and special programming (www.upreaching.com/ouisrael/support-ou-israels-on-line-programming), and our emergency crowdfunding campaign this summer to help at-risk Israeli youth in our 21 OU Israel Youth Centers.

As I have written about previously, the financial challenges of Covid-19 meant that we have received limited funding from some of our key supporters this past year, and as such we embarked on crowdfunding campaigns we have not run previously. As we end the fiscal year, I want to give all of our supporters a tremendous Yasher Koach! You are the reason we are able to continue publishing Torah Tidbits each week despite a decline in advertising, run multiple online Shiurim each and every day, and support tens of thousands of Israeli teens with nobody else to help them. Thank you. Toda raba raba!



Avi
Executive Director, OU Israel

Condolences to the family of
Ahuva Meisels a"h
on her passing

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VAYECHI

ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



Rabbi Reuven Tradburks
Director of RCA
Israel Region

Vayechi means life, yet the parsha begins with talk of death and ends with death. Yaakov demands to be buried in Israel. Yosef swears he will. Yaakov elevates his grandchildren, Ephraim and Menashe to be equal to his children as tribes settling the land of Israel. He blesses Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov calls all his sons and blesses each of them. Yaakov dies. He is buried amidst great honor in Maarat HaMachpela. The brothers are afraid that now Yosef will exact revenge. Yosef reassures them. Yosef asks to be buried in Israel when the Jewish people return. He dies and is placed in a coffin in Egypt. The beloved book of Breishit is concluded.

1st Aliya (47:28-48:9) Yaakov asks Yosef to



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swear that he will not bury Yaakov in Egypt but rather with his forefathers. Yaakov falls ill. He tells Yosef that G-d appeared to him in the Land of Israel; he was told his descendants would have a permanent hold in the land of Israel. Ephraim and Menashe will be treated as equal tribes in dividing the land. Rachel died on the way into the land and I buried her there.

The Jewish people are ensconced in Egypt. And that is precisely the theme of this parsha. Yaakov is fighting, pushing, perseverating on one theme; this is not home. All he talks about is the land of Israel: don't bury me in Egypt, Ephraim and Menashe will be equals in dividing the land, may they prosper in the land (of Israel); he blesses the sons emphasizing their locale in the land.

Yaakov is insisting: we are here but we're going to be there.

In fact, were I choosing where to begin this parsha, I would have backed up one verse. (Though the word "Vayechi" has a nice ring to it). The last verse of last week's parsha is: Yisrael dwelt in the land of Egypt, Goshen, held it, and were exceedingly prosperous.

That is the exact same verse (almost) of the beginning of Vayeshev. There, Yaakov wanted to settle, take root, build a nation in Israel. Now, here he is doing exactly that; settling, taking root. But in the wrong place; in Egypt, not Israel.

Why does Yaakov mention that Rachel died suddenly and was buried on the way to Beit Lechem? Perhaps this is a tender moment of father and son. He is speaking

to Yosef. "Yosef, you lost your mother tragically, suddenly. Rachel, my dear wife. Your mother. You, so young, it was all so sudden, you did not have a chance to bury your mother in the way I am asking you to bury me. You and I shared that tragic time. Now, it is so different. I elderly. You, a grown man, of great success. Maybe we would have had more children. In her memory, in her honor, your 2 sons take their place as full sons of mine, to fill the void that might have been."

A wistful, tender, shared moment, amidst instructions of national import.

2nd Aliya (48:10-16) Yaakov cannot see. He hugs and kisses Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov places his right hand on Ephraim, the younger; left hand on Menashe the older. G-d before whom my forefathers walked and Who protected me, bless these. And may they increase in the land.

You can't but hear echoes of Yaakov's father Yitzchak: blind, gave the bracha to the younger, not the older. But here Yaakov does not bless just one. He blesses both with the same bracha. That changes everything. The era of one is in and one is out is over. All are part of the Jewish people. And this is grandchildren. Grandchildren means long term, future, legacy, all the children.

3rd Aliya (48:17-22) Yosef does not like the switch of hands. He corrects Yaakov. Yaakov demurs. Both will be great, though

Condolences to **Neville Gatoff** and family on the passing of his **MOTHER a"h**

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the younger will be greater. He blessed them both: The Jews will bless with “May G-d make you as Ephraim and Menashe.”

Yosef suffered by his father’s favouritism of him. He does want the same for his children. But Yaakov insists. Because there is a difference between exclusion and distinction. Yaakov is not excluding anyone. Both are in. Both are blessed. Jews in the future will bless with both Ephraim and Menashe. But Yaakov tells Yosef: while from now on all Jews are part of the Jewish people, while all are in, they are not identical. Some will be greater, some less great.

4th Aliya (49:1-19) Yaakov calls his sons to tell them what will occur with them. He addresses them individually. Reuven, my

first born. Shimon and Levi, due to your anger, do not associate my honor. Yehuda, you saved my child from destruction; authority will not depart from you. Zvulun will dwell on the coast. Yissachar is a powerful worker; he will see the land’s goodness and beauty. Dan, the nation’s judge. G-d, we wait Your salvation.

One word is missing from Yaakov’s address to each of his sons: G-d. The Torah does not say he blesses his sons. Blessings are from G-d. Yitzchak blessed his son: May G-d give you of the dew of the heavens... Even Yaakov himself just blessed Ephraim and Menashe: May G-d before whom my forefathers walked bless these young men. And Yaakov told Yosef the Jewish people will bless: May G-d bless you as Ephraim and Menashe.

Blessings are from G-d. Why does Yaakov not mention even one time G-d’s name in his address to his sons? Because he is not blessing them. He is describing them. He is emphasizing to them, as he is about to die, that their place is not in Egypt. Their place is in the land of Israel. And they will get there, with all their varied talents. To build a nation. A nation needs leaders, merchant marines, hard working agriculture, justice. Yaakov is stating as a matter of fact to his sons what the state of the Jewish people in the land of Israel will look like. You will all be included because all your talents will be needed. And you are all different and essential.

5th Aliya (49:20-26) Yaakov’s address to each son continues. Gad, a legionnaire. Asher, bread and delicacies. Naftali, a swift

OU Israel
mourns the passing of 

Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin zt"l

Rabbi, posek, and gentleman,
respected for his scholarship,
sensitivity, and empathy.

His responsa *Benei Banim*, and his
many *piskei Halacha*, books and
articles confronted the challenges of
the day with erudition and insight.

We extend heartfelt condolences to
his wife, *Rabbanit Chana Henkin*,
their children and families.

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה

messenger. Yosef had adversity but with G-d's help prevailed and was enormously blessed.

With the description of Binyamin in the next aliya, the descriptions are complete. The Jewish nation will be built in the land of Israel as a result of all of you. None are out, all are in. It will be a nation of agriculture, military, leadership, bounty, justice, commerce, and trade. It will be a colorful, diverse and successful nation.

Yaakov is driving hard, fighting, persevering in his message: we are only here in Egypt temporarily. The land of Israel is where we will be.

6th Aliya (49:27-50:20) Yaakov's end is near. He commands his sons to bury him in Maarat Hamachpela, describing in detail Avraham's acquisition of it and the burial there of all the avot and imahot. Yaakov dies. Yosef gets permission from Paro to bury Yaakov in Israel. A great procession accompanies his burial. Upon the return to Egypt, the brothers tell Yosef that Yaakov commanded them to tell Yosef to bear the sin done to him by them. Yosef cries upon hearing this.

Yaakov's burial entourage is full of honor

The Torah learned through these pages of TT for Parshat Vaychi should be a zechus לעילוי נשמת הרב אפרים שמואל ב"ר יהודה ז"ל נפטר יט טבת תשס"ח
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and respect to him. The Jewish people have earned great fame. At the same time, the end of the book of Breishit finds the Jewish people settled in Egypt, with no end in sight.

7th Aliya (50:21-26) Yosef counters that G-d has brought them to Egypt so that they may survive. Yosef sees his great grandchildren in Egypt. Yosef has the brothers promise to bring his bones to Israel when they are redeemed.

Yosef haZaddik views his fortunes as G-d's Hand. What is G-d's plan? To save the Jewish people from the famine. But, by this time the famine is long over. The parsha began by saying that Yaakov was in Egypt for 17 years. The famine lasted only 5 of those. And Yosef sees great grandchildren? Yosef is 39 when the family comes to Egypt. He is 110 upon his death. The family did not return to Israel.

Yosef has unwittingly been the cause of the descent of the Jewish nation to Egypt. He thought it was G-d's plan to save the family. But it is really G-d's plan to ensconce the entire Jewish people in Egypt. For it to grow to a nation. Then to redeem the entire Jewish people from one place at one time. Yosef didn't know what was to come. But we do; because we know what lies ahead in Sefer Shemot. ■

Sincere condolences to
 Mrs. Miriam Rhine and family
 on the passing of
 חיים ישראל בן אליעזר וגושה ריין ע"ה
HOWARD I. RHINE
 תהא נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים
Rav Nachman and Feiga Kahana

HAFTORAH

1 KINGS 2:1-12

In this week's relatively short haftorah reading, King David conveys a message from his deathbed to his son and successor, Shlomo. The words of the haftorah echo this week's reading of the Torah in the sense that Yaakov also offers his parting blessings and guidance to his sons.

The King of Israel exhorts his son Shlomo to remain loyal and be steadfast in his dedication to Hashem and to abide by His word. If he follows in this path he will surely see success in all his undertakings and moreover will be a link in the chain to ensure the continuity of the Davidic Dynasty.

King David also details specific guidelines regarding various people that need to be punished or rewarded for their actions. ■

STATS

12th of 54 sedras; 12 of 12 in B'reishit
Written on 148.33 lines (rank: 45th)
12 parshiot, 7 open and 5 closed

In addition, the first part of the sedra is the end of the previous parsha from Vayigash. Vayechi is the only sedra that does not begin at a parsha break.

85 p'sukim - 44th
1158 words - 44th
4448 letters - 43rd
Shortest sedra in B'reishit

MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Vayechi. One of 17 sedras without mitzvot.

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January 16 - "... International Recognition"

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January 30 - "... the Spread of Jewish Knowledge Among Jewish People"

February 6 - "... Israeli Contributions to the General World"

February 13 - "... the Struggle Against Antisemitism"

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THE PERSON

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

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IN THE PARSHA

The Horse Thief

They called him a horse thief. That was the worst possible epithet that one could hurl at a young man in the early 19th century *shtetl*, or village, of Czernovitz. Back then, a horse was a very necessary item, and many of the townspeople spent all of their hard-earned savings to procure one. Losing one's horse often meant losing one's livelihood.

Truth to tell, he really was a horse thief, and he had other "virtues" as well. He desecrated the Sabbath regularly in a community where such desecration evoked horror. He was also a womanizer, a drunkard, and a gambler to boot.

The townspeople regularly attempted to have him expelled from the *shtetl*. But he had a powerful ally who blocked every

attempt that the townspeople made to rid their community of this rascal. That ally was his father.

You might wonder why his father had such an influence in the small town. The answer is quite simple. His father was the Rabbi of Czernovitz, and no ordinary rabbi at that. He was Reb Chaim, one of the earliest Chassidic masters, who came to be known in later generations by the title of his commentary on the *Pentateuch*, *Be'er Mayim Chaim*.

One year, on the eve of Yom Kippur, the townspeople had had enough. They approached the three most influential citizens of the town: Yankel, the Chief of the City Council; Berel, the Sexton of the synagogue; and Moshe, the Cantor.

The entire town clamored around the three and insisted that they must confront the Rabbi and demand that he banish his son from the *shtetl*. The Councilman, the Sexton, and the Cantor had no choice but to proceed to the Rabbi's home and tell the Rebbetzin that they must have an appointment with her husband, even if it meant intruding upon his Yom Kippur spiritual preparations.

The Rebbetzin politely requested that they be seated in the anteroom of the Rabbi's modest study. "The Rabbi is praying to the

May the Torah learned from this issue

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my dear father

חיים בן משה הלוי וויליג ז"ל

on his 19th yearzeit

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Creator,” she explained. “He will certainly come out to see you when he is through.”

The wall between the anteroom and the Rabbi’s study was paper thin. Yankel, Berel, and Moshe could not help but overhear every word of the Rabbi’s conversation with the Master of the Universe. At first, they were unperturbed and remained adamantly committed to demanding that the Rabbi send his son away.

Then they heard the specifics of the Rabbi’s prayer: “Oy, dear Father in Heaven,” he cried. “Yom Kippur, the day You sit in judgment, is almost here. I beseech You to have mercy upon the leaders of our little community. First of all, there is Yankel. He is in a position where he is tempted daily to take bribes, and he frequently submits to these temptations. Secondly, there is Berel, who regularly dips into the *tzedakah pusha*, the charity box, thereby stealing alms from the poor. There is also Moshe. I can’t even bring myself to speak about his many misdeeds, any one of which would disqualify him from serving as our cantor. I know that You, dear God, have good reason to expel them from this world and could justifiably punish them severely.”

At this point the three gentlemen felt thoroughly ashamed and prepared to retreat from the Rabbi’s ramshackle abode one by one.

But then they heard the Rabbi conclude his entreaty: “But remember, dear God, that I, too, have a son who has failed me in so many ways. I have good reason to disown him and chase him from my home. I have not done so because I am a merciful

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father. Yankel, Berel, and Moshe are Your children, and if I can show mercy to my child, then surely You, the most Merciful One, must pardon them.”

You know the rest of the story. The horse thief remained in the *shtetl* with no further protest from Yankel, or Berel, or Moshe, or anyone else.

I have often felt that Reb Chaim of Czernovitz learned the proper behavior of a good father from the patriarch Jacob in this week’s Torah portion, *Vayechi* (*Genesis* 47:28-50:26).

In this *parsha*, the Torah narrates the story of Jacob’s final words of blessing to his sons.

Jacob had sufficient cause to withhold his blessing from quite a few of them. Besides Benjamin, they had all participated in the sale of Joseph, deceiving their father and causing him many years of grief and worry. Reuben was far from perfect—just turn back the pages to *Genesis* 35:22 to recall how he interfered with his father’s marital relationships. And Simon and Levi disappointed him greatly with the violent act that they committed, an act he never completely forgave.

Jacob does indeed rebuke them in his words of farewell. But he never rejects them totally. He sends none of them away.

He criticizes Reuben for being as “stable as water” and tells him explicitly, “When you mounted your father’s bed, you brought him disgrace.”

To Simon and Levi, he directs these words:

“Cursed be their anger so fierce, and their wrath so relentless.”

But the Bible ends the poignant episode of Jacob’s parting words to his sons with this assertion: “All these were the tribes of Israel, twelve in number, this is what their father said to them as he blessed them, giving each one his own particular blessing.”

He blessed all twelve. He disowned no one. He offered fair words of criticism, but uttered no words of rejection.

Jacob taught a lesson to all parents for all time. Never close the door, no matter what faults you find in your child.

Reb Chaim of Czernovitz learned that lesson, as we saw in the story of that Yom Kippur Eve approximately two hundred years ago.

He also recorded it so touchingly in his masterwork, *Be’er Mayim Chaim*, commenting near the end of this week’s Torah portion: “Jacob began his blessings with the words, ‘Assemble and hearken, O sons of Jacob. Hearken to Israel your father.’ He wanted them to listen well and feel assured that each of them, individually, had the spiritual vigor necessary to absorb and put to good use the blessed rays of light that he conveyed to them from the blessed lights of the Living God.” ■

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COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Former Chief Rabbi of the
United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

May the learning of these Divrei Torah be לעילוי נשמת

HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt'l

The following dvar Torah was submitted to Torah Tidbits from Rabbi Sacks before his passing.

לעילוי נשמות

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Moving Forwards

The book of Bereishit ends on a sublime note of reconciliation between Jacob's sons. Joseph's brothers were afraid that he had not really forgiven them for selling him into slavery. They suspected that he was merely delaying his revenge until their father died. After Jacob's death, they express their concern to him. But Joseph insists:

“Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, do not be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Gen. 50:19-21)

This is the second time Joseph has said something like this to them. Earlier he spoke similarly when he first disclosed that he – the man they thought was an Egyptian viceroy called Tzophnat Pa'aneach – was in fact their brother Joseph:

“I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.” (Gen. 45:3-8)

This is a crucial moment in the history of faith. It marks the birth of forgiveness, the first recorded moment at which one person forgives another for a wrong they have suffered. But it also establishes another important principle: the idea of Divine Providence. History is not, as Joseph Heller called it, “a trash bag of random coincidences blown open in the

wind.”¹ It has a purpose, a point, a plot. God is at work behind the scenes. “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,” says Hamlet, “rough-hew them how we will.”²

Joseph’s greatness was that he sensed this. He saw the bigger picture. Nothing in his life, he now knew, had happened by accident. The plot to kill him, his sale as a slave, the false accusations of Potiphar’s wife, his time in prison, and his disappointed hope that the chief butler would remember him and secure his release – all these events that might have cast him into ever-deeper depths of despair turned out in retrospect to be necessary steps in the journey that eventuated in his becoming second-in-command in Egypt and the one person capable of saving the whole country – as well as his own family – from starvation in the years of famine.

Joseph had, in double measure, one of the necessary gifts of a leader: the ability to keep going despite opposition, envy, false accusation and repeated setbacks. Every leader who stands for anything will face opposition. This may be a genuine conflict of interests. A leader elected to make society more equitable will almost certainly win the support of the poor and the antagonism of the rich. One elected to reduce the tax burden will do the opposite. It cannot be avoided. Politics without conflict is a contradiction in terms.

Any leader elected to anything, any leader

1 Joseph Heller, *Good as Gold* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 74.

2 Hamlet, Act 5, scene 2.

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more loved or gifted than others, will face envy. Rivals will question, “Why wasn’t it me?” That is what Korach thought about Moses and Aaron. It is what the brothers thought about Joseph when they saw that their father favoured him. It is what Antonio Salieri thought about the more gifted Mozart, according to Peter Shaffer’s play *Amadeus*.

As for false accusations, they have occurred often enough in history. Joan of Arc was accused of heresy and burned at the stake. A quarter century later she was posthumously declared innocent by an official court of inquiry. More than twenty people were put to death as a result of the Salem Witch Trials in 1692-3. Years later, as their innocence began to be perceived, a priest present at the trials, John Hale, admitted, “Such was the darkness of that day... that we walked in the clouds, and could not see our way.”³ The most famous false accusation of modern times was the trial of Alfred Dreyfus, a French officer of Jewish descent who was accused of being a German spy. The Dreyfus affair rocked France during the years 1894 and 1906, until Dreyfus was finally acquitted.

Setbacks are almost always a part of the life-story of the most successful. J. K. Rowling’s initial Harry Potter novel was rejected by the first twelve publishers who received it. Another writer of a book about children suffered twenty-one rejections. The book was called *Lord of*

3 Quoted in Robert A. Divine et al., *America Past and Present, vol. I* (Pearson, 2001), 94.

the Flies, and its author, William Golding, was eventually awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

In his famous commencement address at Stanford University, the late Steve Jobs told the story of the three blows of fate that shaped his life: dropping out of university; being fired from Apple, the company he founded; and being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Rather than being defeated by them, he turned them all to creative use.

For twenty-two years I lived close to Abbey Road in North London, where a famous pop group recorded all their hits. At their first audition, they performed for a record company who told them that guitar bands were “on their way out.” The verdict on their performance (in January 1962) was: “The Beatles have no future in show business.”

All this explains Winston Churchill’s great remark that “success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”

It may be that what sustains people through repeated setbacks is belief in themselves, or sheer tenacity, or lack of alternatives. What sustained Joseph, though, was his insight into Divine Providence. A plan was unfolding whose end he could only dimly discern, but at some stage he seems to have realised that he was just one of many characters in a far larger drama, and that all the bad things that had happened to him were necessary if the intended outcome was to occur. As he said to his brothers, “It was

not you who sent me here, but God.”

This willingness to let events work themselves out in accordance with providence, this understanding that we are, at best, no more than co-authors of our lives, allowed Joseph to survive without resentment about the past or despair in the face of the future. Trust in God gave him immense strength, which is what we will all need if we are to dare greatly. Whatever malice other people harbour against leaders – and the more successful they are, the more malice there is – if they can say, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good,” they will survive, their strength intact, their energy undiminished. ■

Questions (Around The Shabbat Table)

- How easy do you find it to trust that God is looking after you when things seem to be going terribly wrong?
- Does this idea of Divine Providence give you the strength to forgive those who you feel may have acted against you?
- Which of the lessons in leadership from Bereishit’s Covenant & Conversation pieces have most resonated with you?

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PROBING

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

THE PROPHETS

Throughout my years of studying and teaching the second perek of Sefer M'lachim, the chapter from which this week's haftarah is taken, the most common question that is posed, in fact, probably the question that is always posed, is how we can understand the harsh message that David HaMelech delivers to his successor, his son Shlomo, before David dies.

He warns the newly anointed King to deal harshly with two individuals who, we would think, were not deserving of such treatment. In fact, David says clearly “lo tarid seivato b'shalom sheol”, not to allow Yoav ben Tzruya, David's former chief of staff, to die of old age but, rather “v'asita k'chochmatecha”, use your wisdom, or better, your cleverness, and find a reason to put him to death!! David then goes on to use almost the exact wording in charging Shlomo how to handle Shim'i ben Geira, a leader of the tribe of Binyamin! Now, if these charges are not difficult enough to understand, consider the fact that we read this haftarah on Shabbat Vayechi, the parasha in which we hear the loving blessings that Ya'akov gave HIS sons before his death. It just doesn't seem to be fitting for a personality such as David, the “n'im zmirot Yisrael”, the “sweet singer of Israel”. We sense no sweetness in the message he leaves his son.

The truth is that I have addressed this question in past articles but I believe that there is yet more to be said to explain David and, hopefully, to better appreciate why he addresses Shlomo as he does.

When teaching this chapter I have explained, over the years, the danger that these individuals were to the reign of the young regent. The harsh message left by David was meant to make Shlomo aware of the threat that these, seemingly supportive individuals, posed to Shlomo. I still believe that this was certainly an important factor that contributed to David's “uncharacteristic” final words. But I think that there is yet another underlying reason that will help us understand this difficult portion.

Among the traits for which we often praise David is his military prowess. David was Shaul's chief of staff at a young age. His legendary defeat of Golyat (Goliath) was but the beginning of his many exploits. He defeated the enemies of Israel who surrounded and threatened them including the Plishtim, Moavim, Aram Tzovah, Aram Damesek, Edom and Ammon. The text itself states that David brought “salvation” to Israel wherever he went. Indeed, David was never defeated in battle.

And yet, what most people fail to realize, is

that David was not a militant. He eschewed violence in taking the throne. He twice refused to kill Shaul who was pursuing David in order to kill him; he punished the two men who assassinated Shaul's successor (Ish Boshet) in an attempt to place David on the throne; he publicly cursed the murderer of Avner, military leader of Shaul and Ish Boshet who, at the time, was arranging for a peaceful transfer of power to David. David even refused to punish Shim'i who publicly cursed David and he refused to forcefully take back his throne waiting, instead, for the tribes to invite him back.

But his general Yoav, the man whom he said was a danger to Shlomo, believed differently, preferring might over diplomacy. So, who was it who urged David to kill Sha'ul, and who wanted to kill Shim'i and who murdered Avner?? Yoav, who believed that military strength should be used to solve problems. And, in fact, who was one of the leaders who supported Adoniya in his attempt to replace Shlomo and take over the throne? Yoav!

But he was not a threat to Shlomo alone. Rav Moshe Lichtenstein argues that

behind it all was David's commitment to Hashem's promise of establishing a Davidic dynasty over all of Yisrael. David did not see these men as political enemies but rather as spiritual ones. They did not pose a danger to the new king but to the very spiritual destiny of all of Israel. Ignoring the menace posed by Yoav would encourage opponents who would agree with him to deny that Shlomo was the chosen son of David through which the dynasty would flourish. Ignoring the actions of Shim'i, an opponent of David and a member of Sha'ul's family, would allow people to believe that the true dynasty should have continued through Sha'ul and his tribe and not David and his tribe.

David was far more than a military hero, more than a righteous king, more than a unifier of Israel and a sweet singer of Israel. He was a man of peace who worried about the spiritual future of his beloved nation and, therefore, passed on that concern to his son. ■

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וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֶךָ׃ וַיֹּאמֶר הֲשִׁבְעָה לִּי וַיִּשְׁבַּע לוֹ׃׀׀׀
(בראשית מז: כט-לא)

In the opening *pesukim* of the *parsha*, Yaakov conveys to Yosef his request to be buried in the land of his forefathers. Yosef agrees, yet Yaakov is not satisfied with his reply and demands that he promise to fulfill his request to be buried in Israel. Yosef indeed takes an oath to fulfil his dying father's request. ("*hishava li, vayishava lo*" – Bereshit 47:31).

Why did Yaakov demand that Yosef take an oath to fulfil his request to be buried in Israel? Was Yosef's word not enough? *Yosef Hatzadik* is one of the few Biblical figures with the term "Hatzadik" attached to his name, surely his word can be trusted. Why did Yaakov require Yosef to promise to fulfil his demand?

Rav Yosef Soloveitchik in *Mesoras HaRav*, offers an explanation based on a similar scenario that transpired not long ago. Edmond de Rothschild, the well-known French philanthropist requested to be

buried in Israel. Due to hostilities in the region at the time, due to the 1948 War of Independence, his request was unable to be fulfilled at the time of his death. At a later date, his children requested from the French Ministry to have his body reinterred in Israel. For some reason the ministry's reply was delayed. After inquiring, the family was told that the French President De Gaulle himself had delayed the reply. He was troubled by the request. He had respected the Rothschild family and had viewed Edmond as loyal Frenchmen, whom he would have expected to desire to be buried in his homeland of France. A true Frenchman is born, lives and is buried in France. Although he eventually acceded to the family's request, his opinion of the Rothschild family as loyal Frenchman was irrevocably diminished.

At this juncture, Yosef may have faced severe backlash had he explained to Pharaoh that he wanted to bury his father in Israel. It would portray a certain betrayal of his allegiance to the land of Egypt. By being able to place his request on the desire to fulfill his promise to his father, Yosef is not depicted as a traitor, but rather as a faithful son.

Rav Frand offers another explanation. The Ramban uses language that seems somewhat troubling. The Ramban suggests that Yaakov demanded that Yosef take an

oath because that would require Yosef to try harder to fulfil the promise - יצטרך יותר - להשתדל בענין מפני השבועה.

When someone understands there is more at stake, it does not suffice to say: "I tried"

Perhaps the Ramban is alluding to the fact that when a person knows that more is at stake, they don't take no for an answer. If Pharaoh would have restricted Yosef from leaving Egypt to bury his father, perhaps Yosef would have said – "hey, I tried, what more can I do." For Yaakov, that would not have sufficed. By taking an oath, Yaakov created a situation where Yosef would be required to go above and beyond to fulfill Yaakov's request. When someone understands there is more at stake, it does not suffice to say: "I tried". One has to try even harder! To go the extra mile to accomplish his mission.

Often in sports games, during the last two minutes of a game when both teams understand that the game is on the line, is when athletes give it their all and perform at the top of their game. When one is in a do-or die situation, it often spurs greater effort and achievement in many areas in life.

Unfortunately, there are times where we rationalize when we cannot achieve a goal, although we tried. It may be too easy for us to find an excuse to miss a minyan or attend a shiur. When we realize that more is at stake, we will be amazed to see how much we can truly accomplish. Yaakov understood this, and empowered Yosef to achieve what may have seemed at the time, a challenging feat. ■



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The Efficacy of Blessing

The brachot Yaakov Avinu bestowed upon Ephraim and Menashe model for us the dynamics of how to give and receive brachot. The Torah's details are instructive for our lives, enabling us to maximize the power of brachot.

What enables a person to give a brachah? Seforno, in commenting on the blessing Lavan gave his grandchildren, teaches that each person's 'tzelem elokim' infuses him with this power. Man's uniqueness is his Divine soul within and is manifested in the power of speech. Therefore, one who has developed and refined his soul, such as a tzaddik, has a greater power of blessing. Likewise, when a blessing comes from a deep place of connection, like the blessing of a father to a child or

a grandfather to a grandchild, it too has a greater power.

Rav Rice in *Merosh Tzurim* expands this idea further and adds that this is why even a simple person's blessing has inherent power. Nonetheless, Chazal teach that one should be careful with the wording of a brachah. For example, one should say 'lech leshalom,' as opposed to 'lech beshalom' for there a nuanced difference in the two expressions. The sefer *Chovot Ha'adam Beolamo* stresses that each time we greet another, even with a simple 'good morning', it is really a form of brachah, thus one should have the intention to bestow goodness on the other. It is told of the Saba of Slobodka that when he would pass the homes of other *rabbanim*, he would say 'good morning' even when no one was there. He explained that when he passed their house, he thought of them and wished them well.

Rav Michlenberg in *Haketav VeHakablah* notes that the recipient of a blessing must be brought closer to the one bestowing the blessing, whether physically or emotionally. The recipient should make

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himself a receptacle to accept brachah. Accordingly, Ephraim received Yaakov Avinu's right hand since he had the *kaoch* to make himself a greater vessel to receive.

Rav Miller in *Shabbat Shiurim* quotes the *Dibrot Shlomo*, who underscores the importance of believing in the brachah one receives. We find that Yaakov Avinu blesses Ephraim and Menashe twice. Interrupting these two brachot is Yosef Hatzadik who intercedes and points out that Yaakov's hands are in the wrong position. Since Yosef Hatzadik questioned the authenticity of the brachah, Yaakov Avinu had to bless them again. When one goes to a tzaddik for a brachah, he must believe that the tzaddik has the power to bless and believe in the brachah given.

Why do parents bless their children to become like Efraim and Menashe specifically on Friday night? Rav Yaakov Emden notes that this is an auspicious time since it is a time of simchah. During the week parents may become frustrated with their children and say things they regret. Shabbos is a time to turn this negative speech into blessing. Indeed, he notes, one should utilize this time to give blessings to one another, relatives to relatives and friends to friends. Each of us can bless with a full heart and open ourselves to receive blessing with a full heart, extending the power of blessing further and beyond. ■

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A Tale of Two Cities

The Frierdiker Rebbe, R' Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, zy'a, fled Soviet Russia and temporarily settled in Riga, Latvia. Two Lubavitcher chassidim from Odessa managed to travel to Latvia and arrived for *yechidus*, private audience with the Frierdiker Rebbe, one after the other. After addressing the first petitioner's questions and offering a warm blessing for success, the Rebbe inquired as to the wellbeing and goings on in the *kehillah*, the Jewish community in Odessa.

The chasid answered with exuberance, "*B'chasdei Hashem*, Jewish life in Odessa is thriving. The beis medrash is filled with the sounds of davening and learning, and while many are not yet connected to the Kehillah, there are so many opportunities to share the light of *Yidishkeit* and the beauty of *Chasidus* with others. Slowly but surely, we are making great progress, and things are improving all the time."

The Frierdiker took out a ten ruble coin,

warmly blessed the chasid again, and thanked him for coming and sharing such a wonderful report. When the chasid came out of the Rebbe's room, he met his travel companion and related all that had happened.

When the second chasid had his turn for *yechidus*, the Rebbe answered his questions and blessed him as well, and once again, asked for an update and report on Jewish life in Odessa. The second chassid replied, "Rebbe, I have to be straight with you: Odessa is not such a great place to be for a chasidishe yid. While there is a minyan and some shiurim, the davening lacks fire, and the learning is on a low level. More people are interested in the local culture and entertainment, and spiritually speaking, it is a dark place."

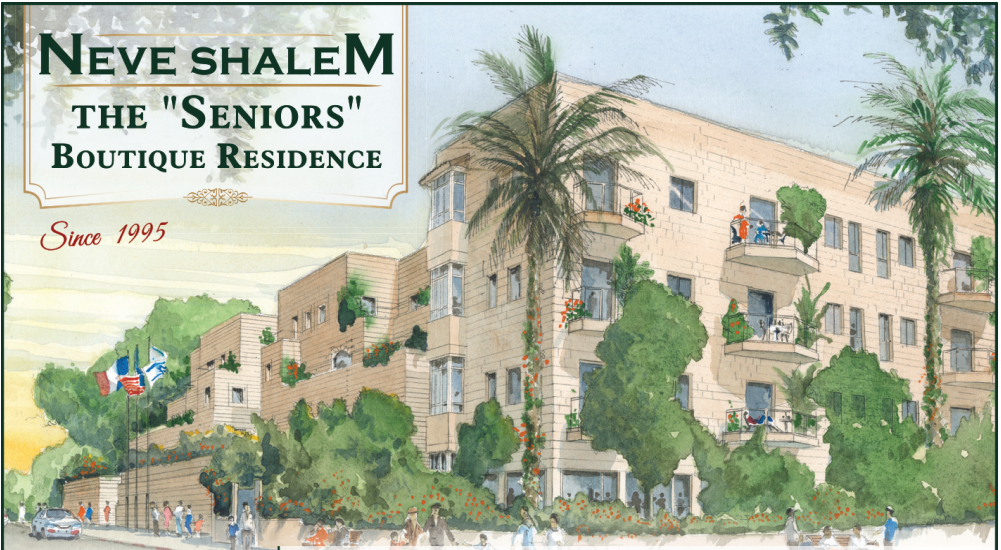
The Frierdiker Rebbe thanked him for his report and handed him a one ruble coin, indicating the *yechidus* was over. The visiting chassid was perplexed, and expressed his surprise: "Rebbe! Why should I be punished for being honest! My friend painted an unrealistic and rosy picture of our *kehillah*, and was rewarded handsomely for his exaggeration. I told the Rebbe the hard truth about what is happening in Odessa, and only get a ruble?"

The Rebbe looked the second visitor in

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the eye: “Do you think I really needed you to tell me about what is happening in Odessa? You don’t even realize there are two Odessas — what I wanted to find out is which one you are living in! I know exactly what is going on in Odessa; what I wanted to hear is what’s going on with *you*.”

.....

Our sedra describes the final days of Yaakov Avinu’s life, and the blessings, messages and lessons our forefather seeks to impart. “And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt for 17 years, and Yaakov’s days, the years of his life, were 147 years... and the time drew near for Israel to die...” (47:28-9)

Yaakov Avinu chose to see this last chapter of his difficult life through the lens of *ayin tovah*

It is ironic that the portion describing the death of Yaakov begins with *Vayechi*, “And he lived.” The *Baal haTurim* teaches that these 17 years — 17 being the numerical value of *tov*, ‘good’ — were the best years of Yaakov Avinu’s life.

Egypt was a place of the 49th level of *tumah*, impurity, and it was called *Ervas ha-Aretz*, the obscenity of the earth. The fallen spiritual environment there was so low that Yaakov didn’t recognize his own grandchildren, nor did he even trust that they had been born within the context of Jewish tradition. This drove the *ruach ha-kodesh* away from him (48:8). Rashi says that Yosef needed to show Yaakov his document of *eirusin*, betrothal and his

ketubah, in order to prove that the children were indeed his own and that they were born as Jews.

Taking all of this into account, how could it be that Yaakov Avinu’s ‘best years’ were the years he lived in Mitzrayim, a place of exile, spiritual darkness and Jewish suffering?

Rebbe Shneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe, explains: since the family of Yaakov internalized his life lessons and were committed to living with Jewish values, including *ahavas Yisrael* and learning Torah, even in the lowly land of Egypt, *vayechi Yaakov*, Yaakov “lived”. His life was vibrantly alive, full and rewarding. Yaakov Avinu chose to see the challenging environment as an opportunity for growth, and for revealing G-dliness in a foreign, dark place.

Much like the assimilation and spiritual challenges in Odessa in the days of the Frierdiker Rebbe, the impurity and moral corrosion of Egyptian society was real. And there was also an ever-growing spark of vibrant Jewish life, family connectivity and faith. Yaakov Avinu chose to see this last chapter of his difficult life through the lens of *ayin tovah*, and encouraged his family to make the most of the challenging environment they were in. This is why he “lived”, and why his seventeen years in Mitzrayim were his best.

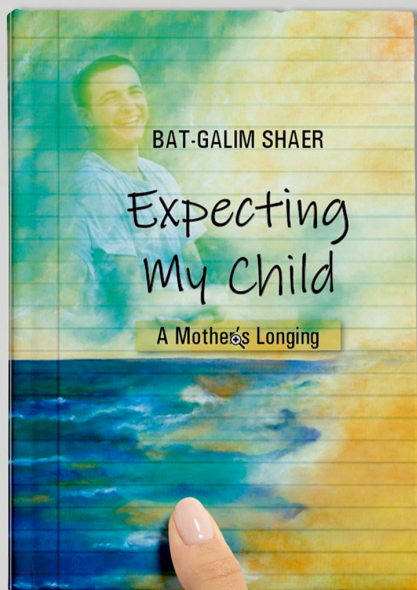
Wherever we are, as well, the proverbial cup is indeed both half empty and half full.

There are two Odessas — but only one choice. *L’chaim!* ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

As we conclude this year’s reading of *Sefer B’reishit* this *Shabbat*, I feel my heart and thoughts being drawn to the beautiful introduction to *Sefer B’reishit* penned by the *Netziv*, *Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin zt”l*.

The *Netziv* writes that our Sages referred to *Sefer B’reishit* as *Sefer Yesharim* - the book of the ethical ones, the book of the ‘mentsches.’ The *Netziv* explains that our *Avot* and *Imahot* are indeed considered to be *yesharim*- ethical and morally straight individuals.

“This is a great praise for the Avot (and Imahot) - that beyond their righteousness and holiness and devotion and love for Hashem, we could describe them even more so that they were yesharim - they dealt fairly and treated all humanity with love, dignity and respect, as each and every human being is one of Hashem’s creations....”

The *Netivot Shalom*, the *Slonimer Rebbe zy”a*, asks an interesting question. If indeed this entire book of the Torah, is considered to be the book of *Yesharim* why does it include the very real human

stories, and family dynamics and personal struggles of the *Avot* and *Imahot*; what value or message are we meant to gain or glean from these detailed accounts?

The *Slonimer Rebbe* explains that in order for one to truly become a *yashar* - a truly fair, just, ethical human being, we must constantly work to refine our character. This first *sefer* of the *Torah*, which recalls the earliest giants of humanity and *Am Yisrael*, presents us with the most fundamental blueprint to living a life of *Kedusha*, the refinement of character, growth and spiritual maturation that each of us must strive for, to emulate our *Avot* and *Imahot* and truly become *yesharim*.

Yehi Ratzon, as we bid farewell for now to *Sefer B’reishit*, may each of us continue to be inspired by the legacy of our *Avot* and *Imahot*, and may we strive each and everyday to emulate their conduct, and live a life of *Yashrut* and *mentschlichkeit*... ■

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Tehillim – Divine Poetry
<https://zoom.us/j/92253147141>

10:15 AM

Rabbi Aharon Adler

The Giants Who Shaped
Modern Orthodoxy <https://zoom.us/j/403831319>

11:30 AM

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

Mishlei: Wisdom for Life
(L'Ayla) <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82280847618>

2:00 PM

Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld

Men's Gemara Chabura S,T,TH
<https://zoom.us/j/887981820>

4:30 PM

Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

Men's Gemara B'lyun
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<https://zoom.us/j/86466998217>

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MON, JAN 4

9:15 AM

Mrs. Pearl Borow

Sefer Ezra (L'Ayla) <https://zoom.us/j/144986284>

10:30 AM

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

Rav Soloveitchik on the Parsha
<https://zoom.us/j/700303855>

11:45 AM

Rabbi Shmuel Herschler

Ethics, family and society in the writings of Rav irsch, Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik <https://zoom.us/j/81925157325>

4:30PM

Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

7:00 PM

Rabbi Baruch Taub

Parshat HaShavua
<https://zoom.us/j/888974573>

9:00 PM

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9:00 AM

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

Minchat Chinuch
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9:15 AM

Mrs. Shira Smiles

Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)
<https://zoom.us/j/98629920642>

10:30 AM

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

Parshat HaShavua
<https://zoom.us/j/195174554>

2:00 PM

Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld

5:00 PM

Mrs. Sylvie Schatz

Chazal: Insights Into Our Times (L'Ayla)
<https://zoom.us/j/85177782268>

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WED, JAN 6

9:00 AM

Rabbi Shimshon Nadel

Halacha and Medina <https://zoom.us/j/6878683646>

10:15 AM

Rabbi Anthony Manning

Contemporary Issues in Halacha and Hashkafa <https://zoom.us/j/460662359>

11:30 AM

Rabbi Alan Kimche Great

Jewish Thinkers <https://zoom.us/j/772450422>

4:30PM

Rabbi Hillel Ruvell [https://](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/709706986?pwd=bDN2aW1uTU0xyRWZwaGw0OXhJc0NiQT09)

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7:00 PM

Rabbi Baruch Taub

Halacha <https://zoom.us/j/709706986>

8:30 PM

Rabbi Ezra Friedman

Practical Kashrut <https://zoom.us/j/698124792>

8:30 PM

Rav Meir Goldwicht (Hebrew)

Parshat Hashavua <https://zoom.us/j/2244321902>

Passcode: 18

THURS, JAN 7

9:00 AM

Rabbi Ian Pear

Meaning in Mitzvot <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83538640996>

10:15 AM

Rabbi Baruch Taub

Parshat HaShavua <https://zoom.us/j/615813416>

11:30 AM

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal <https://zoom.us/j/488542635>

2:00 PM

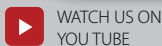
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4:30PM **Rabbi Hillel Ruvell**

8:00 PM

Rabbi Ari Kahn

Parshat HaShavua <https://zoom.us/j/2624570009>



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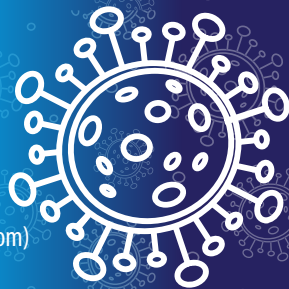
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Sharp Food in Halacha (continued)

Flavor which is absorbed into a utensil has halachic significance only for the first twenty four hours following the cooking process. After twenty four hours, the flavor becomes distasteful and no longer prohibits any food subsequently cooked in the utensil. For example, if a meat pot was left idle for 24 hours (*eino ben yomo*) and then milk was accidentally cooked in the same pot, the milk would remain kosher. Even though it is strictly prohibited to intentionally cook milk in such a utensil, *ex post facto* (*bediavad*) there is room to be lenient. However, sharp foods, such as onions, horseradish, jalapeño peppers, garlic, and others, have a different status. As a result of their strong flavors, they do not follow the same 24-hour rule. Instead, they revive the previously distasteful flavor latent in the utensil. Thus, if onions and butter were inadvertently cooked in a meat pot that was *eino ben yomo* (not used within the last 24 hours), the entire dish and pot would be not kosher as a result of the sharp food. In this article, we will

discuss other aspects of sharp foods in kashrut.

Cooking during the twenty four hour timeframe

Regarding milk and meat pots, the twenty four hour waiting time is not altered by cooking water or other *parve* foods in the pot. As such, if twenty four hours have passed since milk or meat was cooked, the utensil still remains *eino ben yomo*. Regarding sharp foods, later authorities dispute if the clock is restarted for sharp food cooked in a *ben yomo* pot. In other words, is *eino ben yomo* counted from the new sharp food or from the previous food cooked. If so, this would affect anything else cooked in the pot after the sharp food. The *Shach* (YD 122:2), based on the *Issur VeHeter*, is lenient. According to the *Shach*, the strong flavor of sharp food only effects the sharp food itself, as well as anything that was cooked together with it. However, the strong flavor does not have the potency to change the utensil.

At first glance, this seems illogical. Once the sharp food has received flavor from the pot, it returns to the pot as fresh flavor during the cooking process, rendering the pot *ben yomo*. Accordingly, there should be no difference between the pot and the food cooked in the pot. Certain authorities try to reconcile this issue (see



Chavot Da'at 96:6, *Mateh Yonatan* 122:3), while most others disagree with the *Shach* completely (*Nekudot Hakesef* 122:1, *Dagul Mervava* 122:3). Based on this, it would seem that there is reason to be stringent (see *Ma'adnei Asher* 72), and whenever a sharp food is cooked in a pot, the twenty four hour clock restarts. For this reason (among others), many families purchase separate parve utensils. (A future article will discuss in detail the subject of parve utensils.)

Waiting between milk and meat sharp foods

Later authorities discuss the question of waiting between milk and meat with regard to sharp foods. As explained above, when sharp food receives flavor from meat or milk utensils that flavor becomes fresh and strong. According to this, if sharp foods were cooked in a milk utensil, would one be able to eat them after having meat? Similarly, would a sharp food cooked in a meat utensil be considered meat and require waiting before eating dairy? The *Pri Megadim* (OH 494:6) maintained that one should be strict and consider sharp foods cooked with milk or meat as the actual food itself, and as such require waiting between meals. However, the overwhelming accepted opinion is to be lenient about waiting (see *Ohel Yaakov* 89:49). Among those poskim, Rebi Akiva

Eiger (89:3) writes explicitly that even though sharp foods can revive flavors that have been absorbed, in no case would that render the food itself milk or meat for the purpose of waiting. In short, the accepted opinion is that sharp foods that are cooked in utensils do not render them milk or meat regarding waiting between meals.

To summarize:

Sharp foods revive distasteful flavors making them tasteful. As such, *eino ben yomo* flavor becomes *ben yomo* when cooked with sharp foods.

Regarding a new dish containing sharp food that was cooked in a pot previously used to cook milk or meat in the past twenty four hours, the twenty four hour period is counted from the new sharp food rather than the previous dish.

Sharp foods cooked in a meat pot in the past twenty four hours do not hold the status of a meat food and do not require waiting in order to eat dairy food. Likewise, sharp foods cooked in a dairy utensil can be eaten after meat without any waiting period. ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?

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RABBI AARON

Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

My Homeland Is Calling

Yaakov is keenly aware that his final days are near. Yaakov calls his son Yosef and requests of Yosef to take an oath to bury him in the Land of Israel, in the city of Chevron.

At this point Yaakov brings up what is ostensibly a sore point from the past. When Yaakov's beloved wife Rachel, Yosef's mother, died, she was not buried in *Ma'arat Hamachpelah*. Yaakov now responds to what he perceives to be Yosef's resentment and unspoken complaint. He therefore conveys the following to his son, "Although your mother was buried on the road side please know that there were legitimate reasons for doing so. Please do not let this influence your decision concerning burying my body with the Patriarchs and Matriarchs (Rashi 48:7)."

This fact has perplexed the commentators. Why indeed did Yaakov not bury Rachel with the other Patriarchs and Matriarchs? Yaakov's explanation that "she died on the way" does not seem to justify his actions.

Ramban's Breakthrough

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik zt"l analyzed

the approach of the Ramban who grappled with this mystery (*Divrei HaRav* p. 263).

The Ramban's first answer is that Rachel was buried in this place due to the fact that in the future the Jewish people would be exiled from Jerusalem and would pass by her burial place. She will cry bitter tears for her children and those prayers will not go unanswered by the Almighty. This explains why the verse emphasizes *ba'derech*, 'on the path' two times (48:7).

The path is not just any road. It is the road that will be tragically taken during the exile from Jerusalem.

However, it is the second answer of the Ramban which fascinated Rav. "Yaakov's true intention in not burying Rachel in *Ma'arat Hamachpelah* was in order that two sisters would not be buried together, for he would thereby be embarrassed before his fathers." (*Ramban, Bereishit* 48:7) In other words, the forefathers who

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observed the Torah commandments would be embarrassed by the fact that Yaakov had not upheld a Torah prohibition by marrying two sisters.

Rabbi Soloveitchik asked the following question: If it would be embarrassing to Yaakov marry two sisters, which is a Torah prohibition, why did he do so in the first place? It is here that the Ramban posits a most novel approach (see *Ramban, parshat Toldot* 26:5 for further elucidation). The forefathers kept the 613 mitzvot *only* when they lived in the Land of Israel, whereas Yaakov married two sisters while he was in *Charan*.

Now that Yaakov was burying his second wife Rachel in the land of Israel it would be an affront to the Forefathers, as well as the Jewish people for the rest of time, to have two sisters lie side by side in the place where every Torah command is observed in its completeness. The Ramban strikingly contends that it was for this same reason that Rachel had to die once she entered the borders of Israel.

Longing for the Land

This unique relationship the family of Israel forged with her Land is brought to light once again in the final episode recorded in the book of B'resheit.

“Yosef said to his brothers: I am about to die, but God will surely remember you and bring you out of this land to the land that

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he swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov (B'reishit 50:24).

Yosef was the viceroy of Egypt. A heroic figure in his country. Yet, Yosef's allegiance was to his precious and beloved homeland. He remained an *Ivri*, a *Hebrew*, rather than a *Mitzri*, an *Egyptian*. Echoing his father's request in the opening of the parsha, Yosef was insistent that his final resting place be in the Land of Israel.

The Rav cited a remarkable midrash which offers the reason why Yosef was privileged to burial in the Land. The Sages contrast Yosef and Moshe. Due to Yosef's fealty to the Land he merited to be buried in its earth. Moshe, on the hand, does not publicly identify with the Land and therefore does not merit this blessing (*Devarim Rabbah* 2): "Though in captivity, Yosef's very identity was tied to the land of Israel, as he proclaimed, "For I was stolen from the land of Hebrews." In contrast, when Yitro's daughters mistakenly identified Moshe as an Egyptian (*Shemot* 2:19), Moshe did not correct them. As a result of his omission, he did not merit burial in the Land of Israel." (*Chumash Mesoras HaRav*, p. 297)

In this context it is worth noting an intriguing question raised by the *Meshech Chochmah* regarding Yosef's burial request. Why did Yosef not turn to his own sons and ask that they take responsibility for his burial in Israel? What did he ask the brothers and their descendants? Rabbi Meir Simcha offers a fascinating answer. Yosef had the prophetic vision that his son, Menashe would settle half of his tribe in Transjordan, outside the actual borders of Israel. Menashe would desire to have Yosef's burial plot in his portion. Yosef, therefore, would not want to chance that his final resting place would be anywhere but the actual borders of Eretz Yisrael. He therefore did not ask his own children to be responsible for this task (*Meshech Chochmah* 50:25).

Reb Chaim's Dream

The Rav speaking personally described his upbringing where he was privileged to imbibe from his home a passionate longing for the Holy Land. He recounted this about his renowned grandfather Reb Chaim Soloveitchik:

"The Land of Israel occupied a major

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role in my house. My grandfather, Reb Chaim, was the first to halachically analyze, define, and conceptualize on an extraordinary intellectual level the topics pertaining to the Land of Israel. These included such topics as the sanctity of the Land, the sanctity of partitions, temporary sanctification and eternal sanctification of the Land of Israel.. These terms represented not only concepts, abstract thought, and formal insights, but they also reflected deep-rooted emotions of love, yearning and vision for the Land of Israel.

Discussions of the sanctity of the Land of Israel, the holiness of walled cities, the sanctity of Jerusalem, were my lullabies, my bedtime stories.

Reb Chaim was perhaps the greatest lover of Zion in his generation. He constantly delighted in the thought that after he married off all his children, he would transfer his rabbinate to one of his sons and then settle in the Land of Israel. There he would purchase an orchard and fulfill the agricultural laws which pertain to the Land of Israel.” (*The Rav*, Vol. 2, Rakeffet, p. 113)

The Only 'Parsha Stuma' In the Torah

As is well known, the first word of Parshat Vayechi is quite uniquely separated in a sefer Torah from the last word in Parshat Vayigash - it is separated merely by the space of one letter. Rashi famously calls attention to this oddity and provides an answer which suggests that it is symbolic of the bondage of Egypt that would soon be imposed on them.

Rabbi Meir Yechiel, the Ostrowczer Rebbe (1852-1928) is his sefer *Meir Eynei Chachamim*, offers a most original and poetic interpretation. In parshat Vayigash, we still find Yaakov residing in Eretz Yisrael, and in parshat Shemot, although the bondage is at its height, we can already perceive the faint glimmerings of the anticipated redemption. Only in Vayechi, our present parsha, is the exile total, for the parsha both commences and concludes with Yaakov's descent to Egypt. If parshat Vayechi were 'open', in the sense of being separated from Vayigash in the Sefer Torah in the conventional manner it would symbolize Jewish destiny in exile being permanently severed from any link to the Holy Land. Now, however, since the two parshiot are connected, we always retain that vital link to our beloved Land. The Rebbe explained that it is the cherished memories and inextinguishable yearning that gives us the faith and guarantees that we will be restored to the land permanently. Galut, the exile, is therefore but a station, rather than a destination. (*'Gevurot Yitzchak, Insights from Rabbi Isaac Bernstein'*, B'reishit, p. 81).

The bookends of *Parshat Vayechi* underline a single spectacular theme: The heart and soul of Jew perpetually perceives her motherland calling her back home. ■

*This week's dvar Torah is dedicated
in celebration of our son, Zvi Aryeh's
Bar Mitzvah. Mazel tov!*





Bringing Light Into the World

Writing this Devar Torah on Aseret Batevet – which marks the beginning of the exile and the destruction of Yerushalayim – brings to mind two aspects of the Galut in Egypt. The first is the journey that Yaakov and his sons made to Egypt, and how our Parsha opens up with the famous line that “Yaakov lived in the Land of Egypt.” The second inference relates to the names that Yosef gave to his two sons that reflect two approaches to one’s presence in the Diaspora.

The Ba’al Haturim notes that the seventeen years Yaakov spent in Egypt were, as we say colloquially, “the best years of his life.” For those of us who live in Israel, this comment does not fit well. Hashem had told Yaakov his ancestors would inherit Eretz Yisrael. There, God’s “eyes” do not cease to look down upon us (cf. Devarim

11:12). Eretz Yisrael is *Eretz Hakodesh*; the Land is replete with an inner soul. The Mitzvot associated with the Land uniquely bestowed upon us added merit. The “Air of Eretz Yisrael” makes us wise – and so the accolades pertaining to the Land can fill these pages and more.

Let us not be confused. The Rebbe is not advocating living in the Galut

Moreover, concerning Yosef’s choice of names for his children, Menashe and Ephraim, we note that Menashe, the first-born son, was so called because “God made me forget all my hardship and (all) my father’s household.” Ephraim was so named because “God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.” Could Ephraim’s name imply that Yosef was comfortably settled in the Land of Egypt? Moreover, in our Parsha, Yaakov prefers to bless Ephraim over Menashe. Does that inclination, too, indicate that Yaakov gave more consideration to material success in a foreign land than the affairs of his household in Eretz Canaan?

We can understand that Yosef’s naming Menashe indicated, in reality, that Yosef mourned the loss of his father’s home; he

pired for it but was destined to put his previous life behind him so that divine providence could take its path. But what of Ephraim's name and Yaakov's apparent need to bless the younger son over the first-born?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, from his perspective, gives us an insight and an answer to both conundrums. In Egypt, Yaakov's life was relatively calm. Following the Midrash Tanchumah, Yaakov learned in the Beit Midrash that Yehuda set up when he was sent as a vanguard to Egypt to pave the way for his father's transition.

On a deeper level, the Rebbe points out that to live a life of Torah in Galut is an immense challenge, and how much more so in a country, a world-power, infested with idol worship and evil practices. Not only was Yosef well off economically ("fruitful"), but also he maintained his spiritual and moral virtues, despite his marriage into Egyptian aristocracy. He brought up his two children in the spirit of his father's tradition, so much so that Yaakov incorporated them into the twelve tribes.

For the Rebbe, Egypt represents the ultimate "darkness." The iniquities of Mitzrayim and its vices were a supreme obstacle to spiritual growth – so much so that *Shemirat Hatorah*, one's commitment to the Torah in such a polluted environment, *overturns* the darkness. As a metal spring draws one down, so, on its release, it reaches higher than its original level. Thus with Ephraim: His name symbolized the ability to overcome obstacles, to bring light into the world, however severe the circumstances.

Let us not be confused. The Rebbe is not advocating living in the Galut. He praises those who maintain and practice their religious beliefs in the face of incredible adversity and seemingly irresolvable malevolent influences.

Notably, Yaakov beseeched Yosef to bring his bones back to Eretz Yisrael. As Rabbi Munk expressed, Yaakov, anticipating the eventual assimilation that would consume Bnei Yisrael, emphasized to his children that Eretz Yisrael is our heritage.

Politics, wars, in-fighting, hedonism: These are just some of the challenges facing us, even in our own country, Israel. But then let us learn from Yaakov and Yosef to be strong in our loyalty to Torah. Like our auspicious ancestors, let us maintain our sublime values and precious legacy, thus to overcome darkness and bring light into the world. ■

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Eating Meat On Shabbat When It Bothers His Wife?

Question: My wife and I are relatively newly married. I am used to having *fleishig* Shabbat meals, whereas my wife is disgusted by meat (including poultry, mainly by the smell). Is it right for us to stop having meat at Shabbat/Yom Tov meals or should we try to figure out an arrangement that my wife can live with?

Answer: There is a mandate of “*v'karata laShabbat oneg*” (you shall call Shabbat a day of indulgence) (Yeshayahu 58:13). The *gemara* (Shabbat 118a-b, as does the *pasuk* *ibid.*) promises great reward for those who indulge properly in Shabbat meals, and the Mishna Berura (242:1) cites opinions that the basic obligation is from the Torah.

The basic obligation of the two main meals of Shabbat is to have bread (Shulchan

רפואה שלמה
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Aruch, Orach Chayim 274:4) and [preferably wine for] Kiddush. But as far back as we know, it has been customary that the festivity of these meals includes meat, and meat features prominently in the sources. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 250:2) states: “He should have much meat, wine, and treats according to his ability.” While one should not normally nullify oaths on Shabbat, one may do so for a need of the day. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 341:1) gives an example of undoing an oath not to eat on that Shabbat, and the Mishna Berura (341:2) applies this even to an oath not to eat meat because “eating meat is a *mitzva* on Shabbat.”

However, there is strong evidence that there is no obligation to eat specifically meat (or poultry) on Shabbat. An *onen's* (one before the burial of a close relative) prohibition to eat meat or drink wine is suspended on Shabbat (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 341:1). Rabbeinu Yona (Berachot 10b), accepted by the Rama (ad loc.) and the Shach (ad loc. 7), says the *onen* is not required to eat meat if he does not want to because it is not an obligation to have specifically meat. The Mishna Berura (*ibid.*, in Sha'ar Hatziyun 341:4) said that the Shabbat need justifying nullifying oaths is not limited to meat specifically but to any food that makes Shabbat enjoyable.

The Mishna Berura (242:1) posits that

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



the foods mentioned in the *gemara* as appropriate for Shabbat are examples based on their time and place, and that we generally assume that meat is festive in people's eyes, but that this need not be across-the-board. If any food preference (besides bread) is somewhat objective it is fish, as it includes a mystical element, and even there it is not required for those who dislike it (see *ibid.* 2).

So clearly, your wife should not eat meat if it bothers her in any way. But I understand your question not to be about your wife eating meat, but whether meat should be served for you or guests, who do appreciate it. Let us assume that you cannot find a technical system, such as your preparing a meat-based food whose smell does not offend your wife, but that she is capable of putting up with it with sacrifice (as she probably does as a guest of others or at *semachot*).

Lack of funds is grounds for having a simple meal, even if one can obtain more enjoyable food with sacrifice (Shabbat 118a; see details of prioritization in Mishna Berura 242:1). We also know that provisions to make the house more conducive for familial harmony (i.e., light in the house) are more important than either wine for *Kiddush* or Chanuka candles (Shabbat 23b). A husband should honor his wife, by fulfilling her needs and reasonable

desires, more than himself (Rambam, *Ishut* 15:19). Therefore, your position should be that meat should **not** be served at your Shabbat table. If your wife feels or received advice (do not wait for this to happen) that she should/wants to sacrifice for your Shabbat experience, then you are blessed with the type of disagreement we wish on couples. It is hard to know based on a short description who we think should "win this disagreement," and sometimes a compromise is best for all parties. As long as you are sincere about your willingness to forgo meat, things should work out fine. If, when you *im yirtzeh Hashem* have older children, they feel deprived, the matter can be revisited. ■

Eretz Hemdah has begun a participatory Zoom class - "Behind the Scenes with the Vebbe Rebbe" - an analytical look at the sources, methodology, and considerations behind our rulings, with Rav Daniel Mann. Contact info@eretzhemdah.org to join while places are open.

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RABBI GIDEON

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WEITZMAN

Healthy Water

Last time we saw that Covid 19 presents numerous challenges in all areas of our life including the halachic realm. One such area is the use of the mikvah.

At PUAH we received numerous calls from concerned women and couples as to whether it is safe to use the mikvah and whether there is any other alternative. We saw last week that the sea, or natural bodies of water, do not present an alternative to the mikvah. Someone even suggested that a large bath or jacuzzi could be used as a mikvah. But this is reliant on some very dubious halachic positions and most people do not have such a large bath in their homes. The

person suggested that this was an alternative for less religious women who would otherwise forgo visiting the mikvah altogether.

We do not believe that there is one set of halachot for religious people and another set for less religious people. There are halachic leniencies that can be used in special difficult circumstances, but there is not a separate Shulchan Aruch for traditional men and women, and a different one for the more religious. Either the halacha is valid or invalid, but it cannot be warped and twisted to be easier for those who are less committed. In the end the person basically retracted this suggestion.

After consulting with numerous doctors, it became clear that the virus cannot be transmitted in the waters of the mikvah. The chlorine is a blockage to infection and

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if the mikvah maintains high standards of hygiene the mikvah itself does not present any danger. One expert told me that even if two women were in the water at the same time, without touching, if one of the women was ill with Covid the disease would not be transmitted to the other woman. Of course, no one was willing to try this practically, but this was the clear medical opinion.

If so then the mikvah was safe and there was no problem with women going. However, the doctors were concerned with the waiting room and the surfaces that could pass the infection. The communal areas where women may see one another, and even the private areas used by one woman at a time, but are often used by several women over

the course of an evening, presented the possibility that women could be passing on the virus from one to the other.

These potential problems needed creative solutions. More on this next week. ■

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BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



ישתבח

Have you ever tried cleaning house when there's a lockdown and all of the children are home all of the time? It's quite a daunting task; in fact it's impossible, a mission that's doomed from the start. As soon as you clear away the table, it's time for the next meal; Put away one game, and out comes the next. Keeping the house in order seems insurmountable, beyond our capabilities, despite our best intentions.

This is exactly the emotion that is encapsulated in the Tefilla of ישתבח.

ישתבח is the closing bracha of Pesukei dZimra. We call it a bracha, but it doesn't seem like one as it doesn't begin with the typical ה' ברוך אתה. The reason for this is because in actuality, it is really a continuation of ברוך שאמר. All of the tefillot of Pesukei dZimra, from ברוך שאמר until ישתבח, are all considered to be one unit. Therefore, this bracha of ישתבח is considered a ברכה הסמוכה לחברתה (a bracha which is connected to the bracha before it) and so there is only a ה' ברוך אתה formulation at its conclusion. Incidentally,

because of this factor, it is assur to speak or have any interruption throughout Pesukei dZimra.

At the conclusion of the many paragraphs of praise of Pesukei dZimra, one might expect that we should feel like we've completed our mission. We've praised and praised and there is nothing more to say, so now it's time to move on to the next section of our Tefilla. But in fact, we express the opposite in this Tefilla. We say ישתבח שמך - the word ישתבח is written in the העל-התפעל reflexive form. Hashem's name is in a constant state of praise. He doesn't need our praise because it doesn't even scratch the surface of describing His essence. His name itself is in a constant state of praise though, without us adding our input.

We go on to say

כי לך נאה...שיר, ושבחך, הלל, וזמרה, עז, ומקשלה, נצח, גדלה, וגבורה, תהלה, ותפארת, קדשה, ומלכות, ברכות, והודאות

Hashem, you are worthy of every method of praise imaginable – whether it's song or Hallel, brachot or thanksgiving, it all befits You. We use 15 different words to describe

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the types of tribute we would like to lavish on HaKadosh Baruch Hu. This repetitive string of words serves to express what an enormous undertaking this is.

Hashem is מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל בְּתַשְׁבְּחוֹת, קל ההודאות, אֲדוֹן – He is the King of praise, the G-d of thanksgiving, the Master of wonders. Perhaps we should give up? We tried praising Him, we didn't quite succeed. We just couldn't fully express His greatness. Like we say so poignantly in the Shabbos davening –

אילו פינו מלא שירה כים, ולשונו רינה כהמון גליו, ושפתותינו שבח כמרחבי רקיע, ועינינו מאירות כשמש וכירח, וידינו פרושות כנשרי שמיים, ורגליו קלות כאיילות, אין אנחנו מספיקים להודות לפניך...

Even if our mouths were full of song like the sea, our tongues were full of songs of praise like the waves, our lips were full of praise like the depths of the sky, our eyes as bright as the sun and moon, our hands spread open like the eagles, and our legs as fast as gazelles, we still could not thank (or praise) You enough...

But we recognize at the end of the Tefilla that Hashem is also הבוחר בשירי זמרה –

despite it all, even if we don't do justice in our attempt of praise, regardless of the fact that Hashem's name is self-praising and He doesn't need our praise, time and time again, Hashem is בוחר בשירי זמרה, He chooses our inadequate words of praise, He wants us to continue trying our best and to connect to Him as much as we can, given our mortal shortfallings.

There's a beautiful idea brought down in the name of ר' בונים מפשיסחא that the words שירי זמרה can also be understood as שירי זמרה, the leftovers of the song of praise. He explains that often when we spend time singing and praising Hashem, our hearts open up and we are full of a desire to continue to sing and praise Him forever. This "leftover" feeling after a kumsitz or an inspired recitation of Pesukei dzimra is what Hashem chooses. הבוחר בשירי זמרה, Hashem doesn't care that our praise is inadequate, what He desires is that special feeling we are left with, of that endless desire to connect with Him.

May we be zocheh to truly feel that special "leftover" feeling at the end of our own Pesukei dZimra experience. ■

— Cut and paste into your siddur — — — — —



is the conclusion of the entire Pesukei dZimra. It is easy to get depressed and feel that our words or praise were inadequate, that we didn't do justice in describing Hashem's qualities. But we need to recognize that Hashem is הבוחר בשירי זמרה – regardless of the fact that we are incapable of sufficiently praising Hashem and the fact that Hashem doesn't need our praise, time and time again, Hashem is בוחר בשירי זמרה, He chooses our inadequate words of praise, He wants us to continue trying our best and to connect to Him as much as we can, given our mortal shortfallings.

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Rabbi Dovid Milston Rosh Midrasha



Switching Channels

If we cast our minds back to *Vayishlach*, (*Bereishit*, 34,) we remember a detailed description of the events that took place in Shechem. Shechem abducts Dina, Leah's only daughter, prompting negotiations for her release between his family and Ya'akov's sons.

It initially appears that agreement has



been reached and a covenant signed. The two families will apparently merge, on condition that Shechem, Chamor, and their whole town circumcise themselves. However, by the end of the episode, we see that the brothers had no intention whatsoever in making a deal with Shechem and Chamor. Circumcision was just a ploy to weaken them, so that Shimon and Levi could rescue Dina.

In parashat *vayishlach* - Ya'akov rebukes Shimon and Levi for their actions, though he seems more concerned with the timing of their act rather than the act itself. In our *parasha*, however, Ya'akov rebukes Shimon and Levi for their actions in Shechem:

“Shimon and Levi are brothers; swords are their instruments of cruelty....I will divide them in Ya'akov and scatter them in Israel.” (*Bereishit*, 49: 5-7)

Rav Ya'akov Kamenetsky explains:

Ya'akov's words (*Bereishit*, 49:7) regarding splitting up and separating the two brothers, seems to be a 'measure for measure' punishment - these two sons must be separated, because they inevitably cause harm when they are together. Thus, the tribe of Shimon has no inheritance of its own; they are absorbed into the area designated to Yehuda, and Levi has no physical inheritance at all; Hashem is their inheritance.

Rashi explains quite extraordinarily, that Ya'akov was in fact saying to Shimon and Levi that they would be scribes and teachers, who would need to be dispersed amongst their people in order to be effective. Rashi's words require explanation. Why should the future of our people, and its education system, be left in the hands of Shimon and Levi?

Clearly, Ya'akov saw something in Shimon and Levi that was lacking in the other brothers. When Ya'akov initially rebuked them in *Parashat Vayishlach*, they angrily retorted: "Should our sister be treated as a harlot?" (*Bereishit* 34:31)

Ya'akov understood that these two men had placed their entire reputation on the line, for the sake of their sister. All of the brothers knew what had happened, yet only Shimon and Levi actually acted.

Ya'akov perceived real potential that needed to be channeled correctly. Here were two men who felt their sister's pain as if it were their own. Their understanding of danger and the need to react swiftly made



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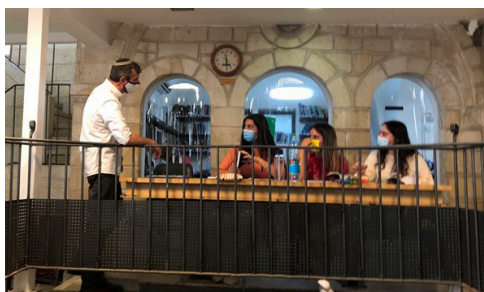
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them prime candidates to be the future educators of the Jewish people, if only the quality of their reaction could be refined. Their behavior on this particular occasion could not be commended, yet if channeled properly it could be of vital importance to the future of the people of Israel.

Therefore, Ya'akov's concluding words, "I will divide them in Ya'akov and scatter them in Israel," are not a curse, but a great blessing for *Am Yisrael*.



So what became of Shimon and Levi?

The tribe of Levi indeed fulfilled its designated role, while the tribe of Shimon failed.

The Levites repeatedly stood firm against the force of the people, for example during the Golden Calf episode, and at the time of Pinchas. Shimon's energy and zealotry eventually manifested itself in the negative actions of Zimri, the Prince of the tribe of Shimon.¹ In fact, at the end of *Parashat Balak*, we see those two inseparable brothers fighting each other, when Pinchas (Levi) kills Zimri (Shimon) as a direct result of his public act of desecration.

So why does Levi succeed where Shimon fails?

The Tribe of Levi was not enslaved in Egypt; they spent their time in spiritual matters. When zealotry is directed through the path of Torah it will lead to positive results. Thus, when Levi saw the *Chilul Hashem* at the Golden Calf, they reacted immediately. Similarly, Levi stopped *Am Yisrael* when they wanted to return to Egypt.

Throughout the time that passed, from Dina's rescue through to freedom from slavery, Levi's strengths were not simply retained; they were nurtured, refined, and directed in the proper manner.

Shimon did not follow the same course. The latent potential remained, but it was left to grow wild, without direction, without the refinement of Torah. And after years of spiritual neglect, it materializes negatively at *Ba'al Pe'or*, when the Prince of the tribe of Shimon publicly desecrates God's name.

Every human being has a purpose, and it is our duty to realize our goals; we all have strengths but they need channeling. We need direction, and refinement, when transforming our potential into positive action.

Excitement and enthusiasm are *middot* that can trigger light-heartedness and frivolity, alternately, they can lead to impressive accomplishments and success. We need to know exactly how to channel our skills.

Shabbat Shalom ■

1 See *Bamidbar 25: 1-15*.

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Digital Tu BiShevat Seder

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In another month we will celebrate *Tu BiShevat*, the day when we rejoice in the sanctity of the Land of Israel, its fruits, and working its soil.

How did Israel's famous Medjoul date palms make their debut in Israel? What are the benefits of eating pomegranates and how many seeds do they have? How do figs pollinate? What is the origin of the Tu BiShevat Seder?

In previous years we joined forces: the English Department of Torah VeHa'aretz Institute and the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora of the World Zionists Organization, and prepared a unique *Tu BiShevat Seder* activity kit.

The kit a runner for the Seder and an activity guide, which features introductions, explanations, and interesting information about *Tu BiShevat*, the seven species, and the special *mitzvot* tied to the Land of Israel (including answers to the questions above).

The kit is interactive, which means that by scanning the QR code with your smartphone (or clicking the header, if downloading the kit in PDF format) will bring you to a clip, quiz, or song. We

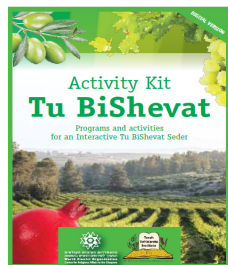
recommend also printing out the runner and placing it on your festive table.

We have several English pamphlets left for free distribution (pickup in Shavei Darom or Petach Tikvah). You can also order an activity kit for free (only postal fees are required). To order, please e-mail us: machon@toraland.org.il, or call: 08-6847325.

The activity kit files are also available as PDF files on our [website](#), and can be used directly from the computer or smartphone. The activity kit is perfect for the family, classroom, or community Zoom Tu BiShevat Seder. The files can also be printed from the website.

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Openings and Closings

The first nerves for any Bar Mitzvah boy leining begin as they are frantically trying to find where the leining begins. However, if one were to look in a Sefer Torah, they would notice pretty easily when a new Parsha begins. The reason it would be obvious is because new Parsha's begin with a Parsha Petucha; a big gap in the Torah that signifies a new beginning in the Torah. Therefore, the only Bar Mitzvah boys that should actually be nervous are the ones reading Parsha Vayechi as it is the only Parsha in the entire Torah that does not begin with a gap. There is no indentation whatsoever!

The Sefat Emet quotes Chazal and explains one of the reasons for the lack of indentation is because Yaakov Avinu dies in this week's Parsha. His death represents the beginning of our exile in Egypt. The question remains how does a lack of an indentation represent this idea that exile is beginning?

This lack of indentation can be compared to a Parsha that has many gaps and indentations in it. When Am Yisrael is freed from Egypt and redeemed, they sing a song. If one were to look in the Torah or any Siddur, they would notice this song, Az Yashir, is full of gaps. Why does the redemptive song have many indentations, yet the moment exile begins has no gaps?

In every sefer Torah there are two colors: black and white. The black ink are the letters of G-d and the white parchment receives these letters. When there is only black there is no room for man to be in the picture as the words are words of Hashem. When there is only black, man doesn't feel that he is a part of the story.

Life in exile is one where man feels that he is an outsider. In exile, there is no room for the individual. In exile there are no breaks. In exile there is a feeling that everything is going to collapse. However, in redemption, there is a place for man. In redemption, there are breaks (Shabbat)! In redemption man has the ability to fill in the empty spaces and create. In redemption we live a life where we feel there is space for each and every individual in the world.

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May we live a life where we never feel that there is no space for us but rather feel that we can fill the voids in the world. ■



Ranan Lustman
9th grade,
Chashmonaim,
Brotherly Love

I always love getting a blessing from my parents on Friday night.

ישמך אלוקים כאפרים וכמנשה.

As it turns out, that blessing is found in this week's Parsha of Vayechi when Yaakov gives this blessing to his grandchildren Efraim and Menashe. Why specifically does the blessing mention Efraim and Menashe? Aren't there greater tzadikim in the Torah like Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov Avinu that we should use instead in the blessing?

Rabbi Shalom Rosner gives a beautiful idea in his sefer, Shalom Rav. He quotes the Bnei Yissaschar and talks about the idea that Ephraim and Menashe were the first siblings in the Torah that had peace with each other. They really got along and respected each other. Many of the other gedolei tzadikim didn't really get along with their siblings such as Kayin and Hevel, Yitzchak and Yishmael, and Yaakov and Eisav. That's why it makes sense that Yaakov would pick Efraim and Menashe to be in this blessing as examples of a truly loving relationship. We should all love and appreciate our siblings especially in these harder times. Shabbat shalom! ■

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Yitzhak Sheinberg, a United Hatzalah volunteer from Haifa, works as a nurse's assistant for a local health clinic. He is married and has two children. Since the summer, Yitzhak has also been working as a Covid-19 test-taker and has been recognized as the medical technician who has collected more samples than anyone else in the country.

Towards the beginning of December, early one afternoon on HaHalutz Street in Haifa's Hadar neighborhood, a 45-year-old man was struck by a speeding E-bike. The pedestrian was violently knocked headfirst to the ground, sustaining severe traumatic injuries. Horrified passersby called for help and notified United Hatzalah dispatchers who instantaneously identified Yitzhak as the closest available medic and notified him of the incident.



Yitzhak was just getting home from conducting a series of Corona tests and upon receiving the alert, immediately set off towards the scene on his United Hatzalah E-bike, agilely racing through pedestrian-clogged narrow streets towards the victim's location.

Yitzhak and an additional EMT, also an electric bicycle rider from the organization who Yitzhak knows well, arrived at the scene and found the victim lying unconscious on the ground. The skilled EMT saw that the man had suffered a severe head injury as well as an injury to his abdomen and was having difficulty breathing. Yitzhak took vital signs and tended to the head wound and administered oxygen to improve the victim's breathing, while the other EMT bandaged the bleeding injuries from the man's limbs. An ambulance crew arrived a few minutes later, sedating and intubating the patient before evacuation to a nearby hospital.



Yitzhak spoke about the special bond that has been created among the United Hatzalah volunteers in Haifa. "I've been volunteering with United Hatzalah for the past three-and-a-half-years, and it has changed my life for the better. In addition to the terrific feeling of satisfaction I get whenever I help other people, I have received a new family. My wife and I had very few friends here in Haifa before I began to volunteer. Now we have an entire team of friends, both the EMTs who work with me, and their spouses, who have befriended both me and my wife. It is terrific. Last Shabbat we had 11 couples from all different backgrounds and segments of Israeli society over in our backyard, all of whom have at least one member of the couple who volunteers at United Hatzalah. We have become close friends, and that of course helps us communicate better and faster in the field so that we can more quickly assist those who need our help. I work in Meuchedet, one of the health maintenance organizations in Israel, and I have never before seen a close-knit group of medical workers and first responders as exist here in United Hatzalah. It is truly remarkable to be a part of this family."



SHIUR SPONSORS

Monday, Dec 28 - Rebbetzin Pearl Borow's shiur was sponsored by **Sheila and Warren Jacobsohn** in honor of their Granddaughters marriage, a grandson's engagement and the birth of a new great granddaughter

Monday, Dec 28 - Rabbi Taub's shiur was sponsored by **Alan and Esther Cohen** in loving memory of **Shlomo ben Yisroel z"l (Gabel)**, Esther's Father and **Devora bas Elchanan a"h (Cohen)**, Alan's Mother

Monday, Dec 28 - Rebbetzin Pearl Borow's shiur was sponsored by **Vivien & Nechemia Kleinman** in honor of the birth of a great granddaughter, **Hadassah** - who was born and named yesterday!

Monday, Dec 28 - Rebbetzin Pearl Borow's shiur was sponsored by **Murray and Meryl Goldwag** in memory of Murray's parents: **Yitzhak ben Meshulam Shraga z"l & Feige Soshe bat Yosef Yitzchak a"h** and Meryl's parents: **Harriet bat Moshe a"h & Chazkel ben Meir z"l**

Wednesday, Dec 30 - Rabbi Manning's shiur is sponsored in appreciation by one of his students

Wednesday, Dec 30 - Rabbi Manning's shiur was sponsored in memory of **Shaul ben Michael z"l** on the 60th Yahrzeit

Wednesday, Dec 30 - Rabbi Baruch Taub's shiur was sponsored by **Allan Teller** in loving memory of his Father on his yahrzeit
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Wednesday, January 6 - Rabbi Manning's shiur is sponsored by **Mark and Debra Zohar** in loving memory of Debra's mother **Bluma bat Yechiel a"h** - yahrzeit is **טבת ט"ב**

Rabbi Manning's shiurim for the 2021 academic year have been sponsored anonymously in the merit of an aliyat neshama for **Matisyahu ben Yisrael z"l**, **Aharon ben Menachem Lev z"l** and **Eliana bat Yaakov a"h**

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