

# ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1545

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PARSHAT VAYIGASH



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Achdut or Kedushat Yisrael?  
Rabbi Moshe Taragin  
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Shoshana Judelman  
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ויעלו ממצרים ויבאו ארץ כנען  
בראשית מ"ה:כ"ה

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIGASH ZMANIM  
CANDLES 4:03 PM • HAVDALA 5:21 PM • RABBEINU TAM 5:57 PM



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To View Rabbi Moshe Hauer's Article Please See:  
[TorahTidbits.com](http://TorahTidbits.com) > Individual Articles

## HELPFUL REMINDERS



**The fast of 10th of Tevet is observed on Friday December 22.** Fast ends at 5:00pm (Jerusalem).  
We wait for kiddush to conclude the fast unless there is an urgent need to end earlier.



### KIDDUSH LEVANA:

**7 Days After Molad:**

9 Tevet/Wed. night Dec. 20

**Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana Until:**

15 Tevet/Tues. night Dec. 26

## THIS WEEK'S COVER PHOTO

Glossy ibises flying at sunset near the Hula Valley, not far from our home in Tiberias.

**Photographed by Julian Alper**



## A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

ולא יכול יוסף להתאפק לכל הנצבים עליו ויקרא הוציאו כל איש מעלי ולא עמד איש אתו בהתודע יוסף אל אחיו (מה:א)

"Then Yosef could not refrain himself before all of them that stood by him; and he cried: Every man needs to go out from me. And no man stood with him, while Yosef made himself known to his brothers" (45:1)

Why at that time Yosef could no longer refrain himself from divulging who he was?

The Shem Meshmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornshtain 1856-1926) explains that all of Yosef's intentions were that the brothers should surrender their hearts and repent for selling him. Now that he heard Yehuda claim "Now, let your servant be instead of the lad" (44:33), Yosef registered Yehuda's remorse and regret of the original sale of Yosef.

Rabbi Avraham Mordechai from Gur (1865-1948) feels that Yosef was waiting for the brothers to submit to his authority as his initial dream hinted to them. When Yehuda responds, "Let your servant, I pray, speak a word in the ears of my master" (44:18), it was clear that Yehuda and brothers had surrendered themselves and accepted his authority.

Now Yosef can announce to them that he is Yosef, their brother.

- Shabbat Shalom

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



## OTHER Z'MANIM



	VAYIGASH		VAYECHI	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	4:03	5:21	4:08	5:25
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:22	5:23	4:26	5:28
Beit Shemesh / RBS	4:22	5:21	4:26	5:26
Alon Shvut	4:20	5:21	4:24	5:25
Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	4:20	5:21	4:24	5:25
Modiin / Chashmonaim	4:20	5:21	4:24	5:25
Netanya	4:19	5:21	4:23	5:25
Be'er Sheva	4:22	5:23	4:26	5:27
Rehovot	4:21	5:22	4:25	5:26
Petach Tikva	4:03	5:21	4:08	5:25
Ginot Shomron	4:19	5:20	4:23	5:24
Haifa / Zichron	4:08	5:19	4:12	5:24
Gush Shiloh	4:18	5:20	4:22	5:24
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:20	5:22	4:24	5:26
Givat Zeev	4:24	5:21	4:28	5:25
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:20	5:21	4:24	5:26
Ashkelon	4:22	5:23	4:26	5:28
Yad Binyamin	4:21	5:22	4:25	5:26
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:10	5:17	4:14	5:21
Golan	4:15	5:17	4:20	5:21
Nahariya/Maalot	4:16	5:19	4:20	5:23
Afula	4:17	5:19	4:21	5:23
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 5:57 PM • Next Week - 6:01 PM				

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;  
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

**Daf Yomi: Bava Kama 51**

## JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat  
Dec. 20 - 30 / 8 - 18 Tevet**

Earliest Tallit and Tefilin **5:39 - 5:43**  
 Sunrise **6:34 - 6:38**  
 Sof Zman Kriat Shema **9:05 - 9:10**  
 Magen Avraham **8:26 - 8:31**  
 Sof Zman Tefila **9:55 - 10:00**  
 (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)  
 Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **11:36 - 11:41**  
 Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **12:06 - 12:11**  
 Plag Mincha **3:35 - 3:41**  
 Sunset (Including Elevation) **4:43 - 4:48**



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## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN  
Executive Director, OU Israel

Life can be very hectic. Our day to day responsibilities include family, work, learning, *davening*, and everything else that keeps us busy. The current situation has certainly made many of our schedules and our responsibilities much more intense. Some people have described that their lives are so much more “stretched” nowadays. Everyone wants to go and volunteer, donate, and help in any way possible. We also have our personal worries including us or our loved ones fighting, missiles falling, us or our loved ones being displaced, the safety of our soldiers and the captives, and all the other things that are happening to us in this wartime.

In times like these, it is important to appreciate that there are things in our lives that stay steady and give us a sense of stability. Torah Tidbits is one such example. Every week, it goes out to shuls across Israel, without fail. We get a tremendous sense of accomplishment when we make it across the finish line and the final copies are in our hands, yet again, week after week.

I can tell you personally that it takes time and effort every week to think of what should go in my column this week and what I want to write about. What kind of message will be relevant and timely for this week? What will inspire? It's challenging, but a challenge I enjoy because of the feedback I receive from you, my dear readers.

This week, I received a meaningful message from our Torah Tidbits cartoon artist and creator, Netanel Epstein, who is currently in *miluim*. He told me that he works on his cartoons each week between guard shifts, calling it his *mesirat nefesh* for the community, during his precious downtime. He shared that the reason he does this is because “*Am Yisrael* needs things that bring joy to our lives, that bring us optimism, that make us smile. Every week, on Friday night in the *Beit Knesset*, people open up to find out what happened after last week's episode. I take this responsibility to produce these cartoons week after week, because I don't want a person who had a hard week to come to open the Torah Tidbits, hoping to find something happy through my cartoon, something that will give him strength, and find out instead that there is no cartoon this week. This is the responsibility I have taken upon myself.”

Every one of our writers feel similarly.

**In loving memory of our dear Father,  
Grandfather & Great-Grandfather**

**Jack Beer z"l**

**עקב שמואל זנוול בן צבי אריה ז"ל**  
**on his 34th Yahrtzeit - א"א טבת"**

**May the Torah learned  
from this issue be לעילוי נשמתו**

**Cooki & Howie Maisel, Efrat**  
**Lenny & Penny Beer, Cleveland**  
**Ester Sarah Carroll, Norfolk**



They take a tremendous amount of effort to make sure they submit their column on time every single week. Our on-staff team of editors and designers - Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider, Ita Rochel, and Yael Krieger work around the clock to ensure it goes out on time each week. Thank you!

We also have an incredible team of dedicated volunteers led by Toni Chernofsky, who come to the OU Israel Center to package and deliver the Torah Tidbits from the second they arrive Wednesday morning until they reach your shul before Shabbat. They work hard to make sure that Torah Tidbits gets delivered everywhere it should be, asking in volunteer groups: Who's going south? Who's going to this *yishuv* or that *yishuv*? We have a group of wonderful people who stop by the OU to pick up the boxes and get them to where they need to be. This box is going to Modiin, this box is going to Netanya, this is going to Beer Sheva, this is going to Haifa, etc.

The amount of effort that goes into getting Torah Tidbits out each week is tremendous. We all understand how important it is for people to get their Torah Tidbits, each and every week. To find stability in the chaos we find ourselves in. To depend on. To get their special dose of Torah. To read their inspiration of the week. To share *divrei Torah* at their Shabbat tables. To enjoy Torah and enlightenment from our incredible writers.

One of my favorite hobbies is to ask people which Torah Tidbits writer is their favorite. What I have realized is that almost everyone has one particular column that they gravitate and read first and most consistently. Since we have so many



different voices, everyone can find what resonates with them.

Our goal is to continue to inspire *Klal Yisrael*, through the many programs and initiatives that OU Israel runs. Torah Tidbits is a beloved publication which helps us with this goal. We have seen it grow in demand over the last few years, and go to more shuls than ever before, which is absolutely wonderful. However, in order to continue this important task, we need your help. Expenses have increased. The printing cost has gone up more than 50% in recent months.

Every year, around Chanukah we ask every one of you, our readers, to help us defray some of these costs by donating

**May the Torah learned  
from this issue of Torah Tidbits  
be in loving memory and לע"נ**  
**ESTHER REISMAN SPIGELMAN ע"ה**  
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**Mom, you are truly missed  
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and supporting, so we can continue to bring Torah joy and inspiration to so many. There are many ways to donate. Some people sponsor Torah Tidbits throughout the year in memory of a loved one or in honor of a *simcha*. Some do a simple one-time donation. Every bit helps. I recognize that now our hearts and donations are focused on our brave *chayalim* and evacuees, but I encourage you to consider supporting Torah Tidbits before the end of the calendar year, as you have done so generously in past years. By doing so, you show your *hakarot hatov* and how valuable Torah Tidbits is to you, and partner with us in the important mission of publishing Torah Tidbits every single week.

See the ad in this week's Torah Tidbits with 4 ways to donate: website ([www.ouisrael.org/ttcampaign](http://www.ouisrael.org/ttcampaign)), QR code, mail or phone. Thank you in advance.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

  
Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel  
[aberman@ouisrael.org](mailto:aberman@ouisrael.org)



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עשרה בטבת - on his 14th Yahrzeit

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יהי זכרו ברוך

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## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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### PARSHAT VAYIGASH

The parsha begins in the middle of the story. Yosef has just told Yehuda and all the brothers that Binyamin, the thief, will become a slave to Yosef. All the others are free to leave. Our Parsha begins with Yehuda's long and impassioned plea to Yosef to allow Binyamin to return home, while Yehuda will assume his place as a slave. Yosef is overcome. He orders all to leave. And tells his brothers, "I am Yosef". He instructs them to bring Yaakov. Paro sends the brothers home with wagons to bring Yaakov and the rest of the family. Yaakov reunites with Yosef. The entire family settles in Goshen. Yaakov meets Paro. The famine gets worse. Yosef acquired all of Egypt for Paro.



#### 1ST ALIYA (44:18-30)

Yehuda pleads with Yosef: this is our father's dear child. While you asked us to bring him here, we told you that leaving his father would break our father's heart. When we needed to buy food, our father told us that if anything happened to Binyamin, he would descend to the depths. And now, if I return to my father without the boy, and his soul is bound to his....

The aliya ends suspended in air. Yaakov and Binyamin, their souls are bound... There could be no better way to convey the drama; ending the aliya with their bound souls.

Yehuda earns leadership by this dramatic moment. He is assuming responsibility. He hasn't said it yet, but he will in the next aliya – he will do anything to ensure Binyamin's return home. His entire argument is one of concern for his father. His father will die of a broken heart, losing the only 2 sons from his dear wife.

Now, while Yehuda is the only actor in this aliya and while his actions are heroic and of powerful substance, there is a silent actor; Yosef. Let's place ourselves in Yosef's shoes. Yehuda's words are familiar to **us**, because **we** know the whole story until here. **We** were there when the brothers returned home, **we** heard the interactions with Yaakov, his anguish at the thought of Binyamin leaving.

**Yosef** knows nothing of this. Everything that happened after he was thrown in the pit is a blank to **him**. Is my father alive? What did he know about what happened to me? Why didn't he come seeking me? What happened when I never returned home? Was my father pained? Did he miss me? **We** know Yaakov was inconsolable when the brothers brought the bloody coat. But **Yosef** doesn't know.

Yehuda's speech to Yosef is like drawing open the curtain – Yosef is now privy to what his father thought happened to him, how much his father loves Binyamin, who is like a replacement of Yosef to Yaakov. Dramatic is the moment when Yosef tells the brothers who he is; but this moment

for Yosef is equally so. It is a glimpse into the home of his father, a home he has known nothing of for 22 years. This is the first time he hears that his father was heartbroken at what he thought was Yosef's death. He didn't seek me because he thought I was dead.

While we all like to ask why Yosef didn't call home, Yosef wonders why Yaakov never called him. How could a father not try everything to find his son? Well, Yosef now finds out why; because Yaakov thought Yosef was dead. For Yosef, this changes everything. What relief and joy to now hear that he was not abandoned by his father after all.



#### 2ND ALIYA (44:31-45:7)

Yehuda continues: I guaranteed Binyamin's return. I will not be able to bear seeing Yaakov's pain. I will stay in his stead as a slave. Yosef cannot bear this any longer. He orders all the others out. Alone with his brothers he states: I am Yosef your brother. Is our father still alive? The brothers are dumbstruck. He reassures them that his sale to Egypt was G-d's plan in order to save the family through this famine.

What did Yehuda say that Yosef could no longer bear? The commentators read this in the context of Yosef's intent throughout this story. Why did he accuse the brothers of being spies? And demand they bring Binyamin? And plant his goblet in Binyamin's bag? It would seem he is trying to recreate the scene of the crime. They sold Yosef as a slave. Would they sell Binyamin as a slave again; or have they repented? Yehuda's offer to stay in Binyamin's stead is a victory, teshuva.

It could be understood entirely differently. We know that Yaakov loved Yosef. With Yosef's disappearance, that love for Yosef is now transferred to his brother, Binyamin. Binyamin is Yosef's replacement in the family. With Yosef gone, Binyamin assumes his place. When Yehuda relates how much Yaakov loves Binyamin, Yosef is not hearing Binyamin, he is hearing Yosef. Binyamin is a substitute Yosef to Yaakov. Yaakov's love of Binyamin is really his love of Yosef in Yosef's absence. Yosef, hearing of his father's love for him is overcome. He needs to not only hear, but to see his father. And that is what he tells his brothers.



#### 3RD ALIYA (45:8-18)

Yosef continues: G-d has sent me to be a master in Egypt. Quick, go tell our father that Yosef is a ruler in Egypt. And to come. You will settle in Goshen. Tell our father, bring our father. He hugs and kisses Binyamin, hugs and kisses the brothers. Paro hears and is pleased. He helps facilitate Yaakov's journey.

Yosef is called Yosef Hatzadik not just because he withstood the advances of Potiphar's wife. He mentions G-d 4 times. He speaks of G-d and he believes all his travails are G-d's plan. He overlooks his personal travails by peering into the Divine. His ascent to rule in Egypt is not him; it is G-d's plan. He does not deny his powerful position, but views himself as but a pawn in the Divine Hand to help his family survive.



#### 4TH ALIYA (45:19-27)

Paro gives wagons to bring Yaakov. Yosef gives his brothers food and clothing; to his father, animals laden with provisions. The brothers tell Yaakov that Yosef is alive, ruler in Egypt. His heart



skips a beat. Yaakov's spirit revives.

Why does Yosef give his brothers clothes? And why, if Yaakov is to come quickly to Egypt, why send him animals laden with food?

The brothers took Yosef's coat; Yosef gives the brothers clothes, a form of forgiveness.

And the dreams. Yosef dreamt of sheaves of wheat bowing to him. And of the stars bowing to him. Agriculture and power. Yosef sends word to Yaakov; I am the ruler. And look at the agricultural bounty. The dreams came true. But not in the Land of Israel. In the land of Egypt.



#### 5TH ALIYA (45:28-46:27)

Yaakov offers offerings in Beer Sheva. G-d calls to him; Yaakov, Yaakov. And he says, Hineni. Don't be afraid. I will go down with you and I will bring you back up. The entire family descends. The Torah lists the genealogy of the family; the 70 souls who came to Egypt.

In this simple aliya everything changes. The twists and turns of the story of the brothers is now seen in wide angle; the camera moves from close up, to a wide lens. Yaakov is thinking Jewish history. Avraham was told his children will be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years. Yaakov, while anxious to see Yosef, is nervous about moving his entire family to Egypt. Will they ever return? Is he complicit in abandoning the promise that the Jews will live in the Land of Israel?

G-d calls him with that phrase that rings of drama: Yaakov, Yaakov. Hineni. G-d reassures him; I will bring you back.

And in the next paragraph, the genealogy begins and ends with the same phrase:

these are the Bnei Yisrael that came to Egypt. Jewish history now leaves the Land of Israel. And will not return for the entire rest of the Torah. Yaakov was justified in his fear. This is the moment of exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel. The entire rest of the Torah is the story of exile; journeying to the Land, but falling short of entering it.



#### 6TH ALIYA (46:28-47:10)

Yaakov and Yosef reunite, with hugs and tears. Yosef plans carefully with the brothers. They are to tell Paro they are shepherds. They will settle in Goshen. Paro agrees to what Yosef has planned. Yaakov blesses Paro.

The dramatic reunion is 2 verses. Somewhat anticlimactic. Yosef successfully arranges for his family to be preserved; both materially and by remaining together and away from the Egyptians.

Oh, what a bitter irony. Because we know what comes next. The Torah has moved on from the story of Yosef and his brothers and his father. The Torah is now describing the story of the Exodus from Egypt. You know how the Exodus story began? Yosef moved his whole family to Egypt. He settled them successfully; perhaps too successfully?



#### 7TH ALIYA (47:11-27)

Yosef supports his family. The food in Egypt becomes scarce; all is precarious. Yosef acquires gold, livestock and land for Paro. Save the land of the priests. The people become slaves to Paro. Yaakov and the family dwell in Goshen, take root there and prosper.

The irony continues. Yosef creates a hugely powerful Paro; money, livestock,

food stores, slaves. Control over all of Egypt. What irony; Yosef has created the two ingredients for the first chapter of the Egypt story; a hugely powerful Paro. And the entire Jewish people in Egypt. Remember Yosef Hatzadik, so called because he saw G-d's plan. As he told his brothers, "G-d has placed me here to save you in the time of famine." Well, Yosef was wrong. He only saw what happened to him, but could not see the impending slavery of the people in Egypt. The real story is that G-d has placed me here to bring you all to Egypt, to solidify the power of Paro. Which will result in the entire Jewish people being enslaved. And leaving Egypt amidst signs and wonders. Yosef **is** a pawn. But in a much bigger story; the story of enslavement and ultimately, the Exodus from Egypt.

## HAFTORAH VAYIGASH YEchezkel 37:15-28

This week's haftorah highlights the unification of the kingdoms of Yehudah and Yosef that will ultimately transpire in the Messianic Era.

This theme clearly echoes the beginning of this week's parsha: "And Yehuda approached Yosef."

The great prophet Yechezkel shares a communication he received from God in which he was instructed to take two sticks and write on one, "For Yehuda and the children of Israel his companions" and on the other, "For Yosef, the stick of Ephraim and all the house, his companions." After doing so he was then told to put the two sticks near one another - and the Almighty fused them together into a single stick.

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God explains the meaning of the symbolic gesture. These sticks represent the warring kingdoms within the House of Israel. The fusing of the sticks represent the merging of the kingdoms that will transpire during the Messianic Era. The Mashiach, a descendant of David, will arrive and lead the unified people of Israel.

The haftorah ends with a promise from Hashem that "they shall dwell on the Land that I have given to My servant, to Yaakov, wherein your father lives; and they shall dwell upon it, they and their children and their children's children, forever and My servant David shall be their prince forever." ■

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# Reconciliation

I have known more than my share of families that are torn by discord. I think most of us, perhaps even all of us, are familiar with families in which brothers and sisters have not spoken to each other in years, sometimes even having forgotten the original reason for the destruction of their relationship. My background and experience in the field of family therapy has given me even broader exposure than most to this unfortunate phenomenon.

Colleagues of mine in the practice of psychotherapy will concur that overcoming feelings of hatred and urges toward revenge is one of the most difficult challenges that they face in their practice. Reconciling parents and children, husbands and wives, is a frustrating process for those of us who counsel families. The successful reconciliation of ruined relationships is a rare achievement, especially after the misunderstandings have festered for years.

The great eighteenth century moralist,

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, contends that these difficulties are intrinsic to our human nature. Thus, he writes:

“Hatred and revenge. These, the human heart, in its perversity, finds it hard to escape. A man is very sensitive to disgrace and suffers keenly when subjected to it. Revenge is sweeter to him than honey; he can not rest until he has taken his revenge. If, therefore, he has the power to relinquish that to which his nature impels him; if he can forgive; if he will forbear hating anyone who provokes him to hatred; if he will neither exact vengeance when he has the opportunity to do so, nor bear a grudge against anyone; if he can forget and obliterate from his mind a wrong done to him as though it had never been committed; then he is, indeed, strong and mighty. So to act may be a small matter to angels, who have no evil traits, but not to ‘those that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust.’” (Job 4:19) (*Mesilat Yesharim [The Path of the Upright]*, Chapter 11)

Granted that one must approximate the angels in heaven in order to overcome the natural human inclinations to hate and take revenge. How, then, do we explain the astounding reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, which occurs in this week’s Torah portion? (Genesis 44:18-47:27)

Joseph’s brothers came to hate him because of what they saw as his malicious arrogance. Joseph certainly had reason to hate his brothers, who cast him into a pit full of snakes and scorpions. We can easily

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understand that he would attribute his years of imprisonment to their betrayal of him. And yet, in last week's Torah portion, we learned that they came to regret their actions and to feel guilty for what they did to him. "Alas, we are at fault...because we looked on at his anguish, yet paid no heed as he pleaded with us." (Genesis 42:21)

It is in this week's parsha that we learn of the forgiveness that Joseph demonstrated toward his brothers. We read of a dramatic reconciliation—a total triumph over hatred and revenge. What inner strengths enabled Joseph and his brothers to attain this rare achievement?

I maintain that quite a few such strengths help Joseph's brothers to rejoin him harmoniously. One was their ability to accept responsibility for their actions. Over time, they reflected introspectively and concluded that they were indeed wrong for what they did. Self-confrontation, and a commitment to accepting the truth when it surfaces allowed them to forget whatever originally prompted them to hate Joseph.

I further maintain that the underlying dynamics of Joseph's ability to forgive were very different. He came to forgive his brothers because of two fundamental aspects of his personality: his emotional

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sensitivity and his religious ideology.

Joseph's sensitivity becomes apparent to the careful reader of this and last week's Torah portions. The most reliable indication of a person's sensitivity is his ability to shed tears of emotion, his capacity to weep. Joseph demonstrates this capacity no less than four times in the course of the biblical narrative:

Subsequent to his initial encounter with his brothers, we read that "he turned away from them and wept..." (Genesis 42:24); when he first sees his younger brother Benjamin, "he was overcome with feeling...He went into a room and wept there..." (ibid. 43:30); unable to contain himself after Judah's confrontational address, "his sobs were so loud that...the news reached Pharaoh's palace..." And finally, as we will read in next week's Torah portion, this is Joseph's response to his brothers' plea for explicit forgiveness: "and Joseph was in tears as they spoke to him." (ibid. 50:17).

No doubt about it. The biblical text gives us conclusive evidence of Joseph's emotional sensitivity. But there is another secret to Joseph's noble treatment of his brothers. It relates to his philosophy, not to his emotional reactivity.

If there is one lesson that Joseph learned from his father Jacob during his disrupted adolescence, it was the belief in a divine being who ultimately controls man's circumstances and man's destiny. When a person wholly has that belief, he is able to dismiss even the most painful insults against him. He is able to attribute them to God's plan and

not to blame the perpetrators of that insult. Thus was Joseph able to say, "So, it was not you who sent me here, but God..." (ibid. 45:8)

The power of genuine faith to instill the awareness that even hurtful circumstances are part of the divine plan is, in my opinion, best described in this passage from the anonymous thirteenth century author of *Sefer HaChinuch*, in his comments on the commandment to desist from revenge:

"At the root of this commandment is the lesson that one must be aware and take to heart the fact that everything that happens in one's life, whether it seems beneficial or harmful, comes about because of God's intervention... Therefore, when a person is pained or hurt by another, he must know in his soul...that God has decreed this for him. He should not be prompted to take revenge against the perpetrator, who is only indirectly the cause of his pain or hurt. We learn this from King David who would not respond to the traitorous curses of his former ally, Shimi ben Gera."

The author of *Sefer HaChinuch* sees King David as the exemplar of this profound religious faith. In these final Torah portions of the Book of Genesis, we learn that Joseph was King David's mentor in regard to the capacity to rise above the misdeeds of others and to see them as but part of God's design.

It is not easy for us lesser believers to emulate Joseph and David, but we would be spared much interpersonal strife if we would at least strive to do so. ■

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## STATS

11th of 54 sedras; 11th of 12 in Bereshit.  
 Written on 178.07 lines (ranks 34th).  
 Vayigash is composed of 3 parshiyot, all closed,  
 one VERY closed. Actually, Vayigash has only 2.89  
 parshiyot; it ends after 34 pesukim of a 38-pasuk  
 parsha; Vayigash is the only sedra that does not  
 end with a parsha break. (This shows up in a  
 printed Chumash by there not being a PEI-PEI-  
 PEI or SAMACH-SAMACH-SAMACH between  
 Vayigash and Vayechi.)  
 106 pesukim - ranks 28th; tied with Toldot and Bo.  
 It is much smaller than Bo, a bit larger than Toldot.  
 1480 words (30th); 5680 letters (29th).  
 9th (of 12) in Bereshit in all 3 categories.



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# The Space Between

“What do porcupines do in winter?” asked Schopenhauer. How can they stay warm? If they come too close to one another, they will injure each other. If they stay too far apart, they will freeze. Life, for porcupines, is a delicate balance between closeness and distance. It is hard to get it right, and dangerous to get it wrong. And so it is for us.

That is the force of the word that gives our parsha its name: *Vayigash*. “And he came close.”

Then Judah came close to him and said: “Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself.” Gen. 44:18

For perhaps the first time in his life, Judah came close to his brother Joseph. The irony is, of course, that he did not know it was Joseph. But that one act of coming close melted all of Joseph’s reserve, all of his defences, and as if unable to stop himself, he finally disclosed his identity:

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am

Joseph! Is my father still alive?” Gen. 45:3

How can we be sure that *Vayigash* is the key word? Because it contrasts with another verse, many chapters, and many years, earlier.

But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. Gen. 37:18

Right at the beginning of the story, when Joseph was sent by his father to see how the brothers were doing, tending the sheep, they saw him from far away, from a distance. Imagine the scene. They cannot see his face. All they can see is the richly ornamented cloak, the “coat of many colours,” that so upsets them. This coat acts as a constant reminder that it is he, not they, whom their father loves most.

From far away, we don’t see people as human beings, and when we stop seeing people as human beings, and they become instead symbols, objects of envy or hate, people can do bad things to one another. The whole tragedy of Joseph and his brothers was distance. They were too far apart in every way.

Which is why it was only when Judah came close to Joseph – *vayigash* – that the coldness between them thawed, and they became

brothers, not strangers to one another.

Too much distance and we freeze. But if we get too close we can injure one another. That was the story of Jacob and Esau. Think about it. Jacob bought Esau's birthright. He stole his blessing. He wore Esau's clothes. He borrowed his identity. Even when they were born, Jacob was clutching Esau's heel.

It was only when there was a distance between them – the 22 years in which Jacob was away from home, with Laban – that the relationship healed, so that when they met again, despite Jacob's fears, Esau embraced and kissed him and treated him like a brother and a friend.

Too close and we hurt one another. Too distant and we freeze.

How then do we make and sustain relationships, if the balance is so fine and it is so easy to get it wrong? The Torah's answer – already there in the first chapter of the Torah – is: first separate, then join. The verb *lehavdil*, "to separate," appears five times in the first chapter of Bereishit. God separates light from darkness, the upper and lower waters, sea and dry land. Separation is at the heart of Jewish law – between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden.

In Judaism *kadosh*, holy, means separation. To sanctify is to separate. Why? Because when we separate, we create order. We defeat chaos. We give everything and everyone their space. I am I and not you. You are you and not I. Once we respect our difference and distance, then we can join without doing damage to one another.

First separate, then connect. That seems to be the Jewish way.

Heartwrenching separations also appear



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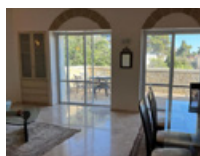
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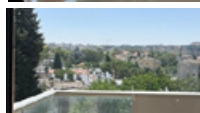
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at both ends of the Abraham story. At the beginning of his mission, Abraham was told to separate himself from his father, to leave his home and journey to a new land, faraway. Towards the end he was told to separate himself, in different ways, from each of his two sons. These painful episodes represent the agonising birth-pangs of a new way of thinking about humanity. But ultimately, we see his sons standing together again, and he is reconciled with both.

That is how God created the universe, and that is how we create real personal relationships. By separating and leaving space for the other. Parents should not seek to control children. Spouses should not seek to control one another. It is the carefully calibrated distance between us in which a relationship allows each party to grow into full individuals. And then to be seen, when we stand back and really look at them – but not too far back.

The most beautiful symbol of the problem and its resolution is the ceremony of havdallah at the end of Shabbat and especially the havdallah candle. The wicks are separate but the flame they make is joined. So it is between husband and wife. So it is between parent and child. And so it is, or should be, between siblings. Distance damaged the relationship between Judah and Joseph. *Vayigash* – Judah's act of drawing close to his brother – restored it. ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks** zt"l are part of his 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit [www.RabbiSacks.org](http://www.RabbiSacks.org) for more.



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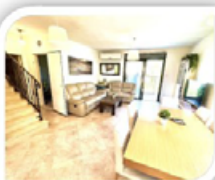


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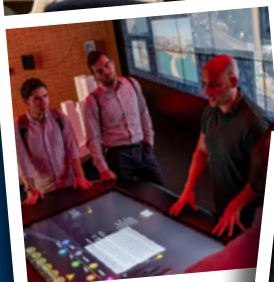
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One of the best known prophecies in all of Tanach is “The Vision of the Dry Bones,” found in the 37th chapter of Sefer Yechezkel. In it, the prophet describes a valley filled with lifeless dry bones that, at the command of Hashem, come back to life, with sinew and flesh placed upon them and with breath blown into them. G-d explains to the navi that these bones represent “kol Bet Yisrael”, the entire house of Israel, who believe that they are no more than “dry bones”, a nation with no future and one who, as they themselves bemoan: “avda tikvateinu”, we have lost all hope. However, the prophecy does not close before Yechezkel shares Hashem’s comforting words with the nation, reassuring them that, like the dry bones, G-d will “resuscitate” the despondent people, breathing life into them once again.

Although this remarkable nevu’ah is NOT part of our haftarah, it is, however, the preface to this week’s reading. And, to better understand our haftarah, we need to better understand its preface.

Most commentators see Yechezkel’s vision as one directed to the newly exiled Jews of the **Southern** Kingdom, words of encouragement meant for the Judeans who recently arrived to the Babylonian Diaspora. Rav Yoel bin Nun, however, makes a powerful argument that this prophecy was actually addressed to the exiles of the **Northern** Kingdom,

Shomrom, who had been torn from their land by the Assyrians some 150 years earlier. In arguing for this approach, Rav bin Nun, points to the navi’s reference to the exiled people - those who saw themselves as “dry bones” - as “Kol Bet Yisrael”, the entire “House of Israel”. Now, the prophecy that immediately follows the vision of the dry bones, the continuation of perek 37, is that of our haftarah reading. In it, the navi receives Hashem’s directive to take two branches (sticks, wood) – one to be inscribed with the words “For Yehudah and ‘B’nei Yisra’el’, his comrades” and, on the other, the inscription “For Yosef, the branch of Ephrayim, and ‘Kol Bet Yisrael’, the entire “House of Israel, his comrades”.

The significance of identifying the **North-ern** kingdom as those “dry bones” is the realization that even those deported from their land some 150 years earlier, had an ongoing connection to their people. These “Israelites” (as opposed to “Judeans”), despite their long exile, had not been totally assimilated and still were regarded as part of Israel. It was **this** community that regarded itself as lifeless, hopeless and without a future (and not those who were exiled only some years earlier), and yet Hashem sent His word of hope to them.

They may have been distanced from their brethren, they may have lost much of their ancient traditions and forgotten many of their laws – perhaps, some part of their



culture might have been lost or changed –but, in G-d's eyes, they were still “Kol Bet Yisrael”, part and parcel of His people!!

And this is the essence and the importance of this week's haftarah. Hashem's charge to Yechezkel is one that must echo in our ears today! There may be some who have lost ancient traditions or parted from the culture, yet G-d still sees them as His nation and, therefore, requires both branches to join together as one.....and to remember that both branches are part of one tree.

It is only then, when WE accept the “other” as being “us”, when WE ignore our differences and focus on our oneness, only then will Hashem's promise in our haftarah to unite Yehuda and Yosef together into one kingdom, forever, ...only then will enjoy the eternal “brit shalom”. ■

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# Living in Three Dimensions – Past, Present and Future

אֲדֹנֵי שָׂאֵל אֶת עֲבָדָיו לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ לָכֶם אָב אוֹ אָח.  
(בראשית מד: יט)

*My master asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' (Bereshit 42:19).*

In Masoret Harav, Rav Joseph Soloveitchik recalls an incident that he experienced in *heder* during his youth in Russia. He had a Chabad Rebbe who asked the class a question based on the *pasuk* above.

## DO YOU HAVE A FATHER?

What kind of question did Yosef ask his brothers? הֲיֵשׁ לָכֶם אָב? – Do you have a father? Of course they had a father! Everyone has a father! The only person who did not have a father was Adam. Everyone else born into this world has a father. What was the purpose of this inquiry? If the intention was that Yosef wanted to know if their father was alive, the question should have been phrased more clearly – is your father alive?

The Rebbe explained that Yosef inquired as to whether the brothers were still attached to their father. Do you see your father as the foundation of your existence? Do children look in a condescending manner at their father – who grew up in a previous generation and is unfamiliar with modern technology and is not with “the times”? Or, do we accept the superiority

and authority of our father, who transmits the *Mesorah* (tradition) from previous generations? When we recognize the supremacy of our father, then, ipso facto, we accept the supremacy of our Universal Father in Heaven.

## DO YOU HAVE A BROTHER?

Similarly, the second question – do you have a brother, may be understood on a deeper level. Yosef wanted to know if their awareness of time stops at the present moment, or do they consider future generations as well? The brother's reply- yes, we have an elderly father and a younger brother. A Jew does not just live in the present. Rather, he connects the past and future to the present.

## THREE EYES?

We mentioned an idea in the past in connection with the holiday of Succot. We shake the *daled minim*, which, according to a midrash, correspond to different parts of our bodies. The *lulav* represents the spine; the *hadasim*, the eyes; the *aravot*, the lips; and the *etrog*, the heart. The Shemen HaTov wonders about a discrepancy in this comparison: Three out of the four species matchup numerically with the specified parts of our body. We have one heart and one spine, like one *etrog* and one *lulav*,

respectively. There are two *aravot*, like our two lips, but there are three *hadasim*, while we have only two eyes.

The Shemen HaTov explains that a Jew really has three eyes: the past, present, and future. He connects this to a mishna in *Pirkei Avot* (3:1): "Know from where you came, where you are going, and before Whom you will ultimately give an accounting." We must know our past, present, and future.

### ERETZ YISRAEL

The Rav then explains that this is the root of our connection to Eretz Yisrael. We fight for the possession of the land and continue to sacrifice young lives for it because we connect to Avraham who was granted the land and who infused it with Kedusha. It is our duty to continue that legacy for future generations. Our link to Eretz Yisrael is three dimensional.

As Yosef inquired of his brothers - may we all be cognizant of every act in which we engage so it can positively impact not only our present – but connect our past to help create a brighter future for our children. ■

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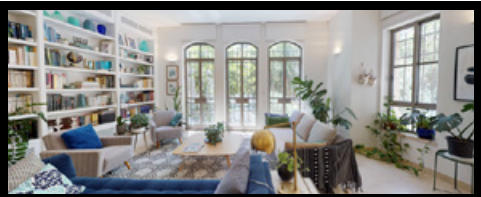
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## Special Speech

In probably the most emotional reunion in Tanach, Yosef Hatzadik reveals himself to his brothers. He says, “*Ve’henei eineichem ro’ot ...ki pi hamedaber aleichem* – You ... can see with your own eyes that I myself am speaking to you.” (*Bereisheet* 45:12) How did they see that it was him? And what does it mean that they “saw” him “speaking”?

*Yefe To’ar* takes this phrase literally. Just as at Har Sinai *Am Yisrael* was able to supernaturally see Hashem speaking to them, likewise, the brothers were able to “see” Yosef Hatzadik’s speech. This was an indication that he had maintained his exalted level of righteousness, truly their brother.

Rashi explains that Yosef Hatzadik proved his identity by speaking *loshon hakodesh*. Commentators question this as many people in the region were familiar with the language of the Hebrews. Rav Schorr in *HaLekach Vehalebuv* explains that it was not simply the words he used, but rather the manner in which he spoke. The *seforim hakedoshim* speak about the correlation between speech and brit milah; one who is careful in one area will be careful in the other area as well. We find that the generation of Noach was not careful with their word, dispensing empty promises and false talk, and they ultimately fell into promiscuity. Yosef Hatzadik was telling the brothers

that he was in full control of both his speech and his morality. Thus, explains Rav Shternbach in *Ta’am Veda’at*, this is the deeper meaning of the midrash that tells us that Yosef Hatzadik “showed” his brothers that he was *mahul* as proof of who he was. By calling attention to his speech, he was emphasizing that he was able to be careful in both areas and was allaying their concern about going down to Mitzrayim. He encouraged them that they too could successfully guard their morality and values.

Rav Schorr further expounds how speech includes refinement in one’s speech in the way one relates to another. The Torah teaches that Hashem removes His Presence from *Am Yisrael* when there is promiscuity. Chazal explain that “*ervat davar*” includes “*ervat dibur*.” When one speaks in a coarse and unrefined way, it creates distance and disconnect from the *Shechinah*. This is an area that we Jews must uphold while in *galut*. Indeed, we know that the Jewish people did not abandon their holy tongue when they were in Egypt. Not only did they speak their own language, but they were also careful to speak with sensitivity and refinement to one another.

As Hashem’s chosen nation, we must activate and maintain this quality to ensure our dignity and uniqueness that will take us toward our final redemption. ■

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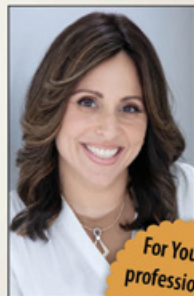
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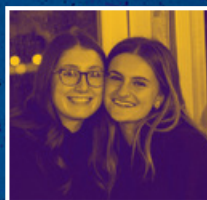
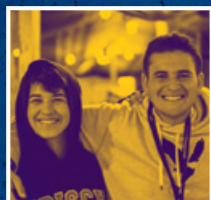
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## Dear Friends,

In Rabbi Berman's recent Torah Tidbits message, the various challenges that have held us back from offering regular on-site programs at the OU Israel Center in the current circumstances were mentioned. B'Ezrat Hashem we intend to do our best to begin to gradually bring back as many of our beloved shiurim and programs as possible as we work to overcome those challenges in the weeks ahead.

There are now multiple ways to be kept up to date about virtual programs as well as in-person programs (which will be offered on-site at the OU Israel Center and in additional locations). In addition to advertisements for programs here in the pages of Torah Tidbits, we will also send periodic email newsletter updates. We also recently launched the OU Israel Community on WhatsApp, which allows those who join our WhatsApp community to access general program updates, as well as to join specific groups for many of our regular classes and programs.

To join the OU Israel WhatsApp community, enter this link into the browser on your phone:  
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To view the updated schedule of all OU Israel Virtual and In-Person Programs, please visit  
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We will continue offering two daily chizuk Zoom sessions. To access these sessions:



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## RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL

Executive Director, Camp HASC  
Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of  
Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

# Hashgacha

For eighteen years, Rabbi Chessed Halberstam was one of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's personal attendants. He also had a unique *shlichus*: each day, he had the privilege of driving Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, a'h, the Lubavitcher Rebbetzin, to a park on Long Island. There she would enjoy some fresh air, feed the birds, and enjoy some desperately needed private down-time.

One day, as they neared their exit on the Long Island Expressway, they found that their regular route was closed off due to construction. The side streets were congested and the traffic moved very slowly. As they were driving, they noticed a group of people gathered outside a house and a number of people crying.

When they stopped at the traffic light, the Rebbetzin turned to the driver and asked him to return to the spot where the people had gathered. They turned around and arrived at the scene. Movers were shlepping furniture and loading up a truck belonging to the county marshal. Rabbi Chessed found out what was happening: a poor Russian family was being evicted from their home because they were in arrears for the rent.

The Rebbetzin inquired how much the woman owed, and if the marshal would accept a personal check. The sum that the family owed was \$6,700. When the marshal

confirmed with the bank that the check was covered, the Rebbetzin wrote out a check for the full amount, gave it to the bailiff, and asked him if the same men who took the furniture out of the house could please bring it back in. She then quickly took leave of the scene before the family would recognize who their benefactress was.

As they made their way to the park, Rabbi Chessed couldn't contain himself and asked the Rebbetzin what had prompted her to give such a large sum to a total stranger: "When I was a little girl, my father (the Frierdiker Rebbe) told me that anytime something causes us to deviate from our normal routine, there is a Divinely ordained reason. When I saw the detour sign instructing us to deviate from our regular route, I remembered my father's words and immediately thought to myself: every day we drive by this street; suddenly the street is closed off, and we're sent to a different street. I realized that we had been sent along this route for a purpose?"

Cast into a pit, sold into slavery, imprisoned in a dark, underground dungeon, Yosef remained aware that Hashem had a reason. Who could have predicted his awe-inspiring ascent to the highest echelons of Egyptian power? Another seeming deviation: regional famine, gnawing hunger, forces Yosef's brothers to Mitzrayim in search of grain. After decades of distance, the estranged brothers are shocked to find themselves face to face once again. And



instead of voicing vengeance, or even a hint of resentment, Yosef haTzadik, the viceroy of the greatest world power, speaks with sweetness and compassion:

וְעַתָּה אֶל-תַּעֲצְבוּ וְאֶל-יָחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי-מָכַרְתֶּם  
אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִי לְמַחֲיָה שָׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם לִפְנֵיכֶם... וְעַתָּה  
לֹא-אַתֶּם שָׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִי הָאֱלֹקִים...

Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you...

So, it was not *you* who sent me here, but God... (45:5, 8)

Overcoming and transcending all personal emotions, Yosef thus reassures his brothers with his absolute faith in *hashgacha pratis*: 'My entire experience, with all its ups and downs, pains and disappointments, was all part of God's plan. Nothing that happened was because of you! Every step along the way was decreed on High and designed with absolute precision by the Master Planner.'

*Ba-derech*, on the road, we are often focused on the logistical and technical side of our travel. We get caught up in all the externals of the trip, the deal, the hustle, the business class upgrade, the destination. We imagine that it is we who control and determine the trajectory of our efforts; we feel sure that our input leads to the output, on a linear path of reasonable expectations. We may even become upset with people who seem to stand in the way: 'You're going to make me miss my flight!' But how often does reality conform to our thoughts?

In reality, מִהֲרַחֲמֵי יָדָיו וְאֲדָם מִהֲיָבִין דְּרָכּוֹ, "A man's steps are decided by Hashem;

What does a man know about his own way?" (*Mishlei*, 20:24). We travel the roads He lays, according to the timing He arranges; all our experiences, travails

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(Gemara *Sukah*, 53a)

Reb Zev Wolf of Zhitomer teaches us that when it comes to the detours of our lives, ה' יודע לתקן עניינו יותר ממנו, "Hashem knows how to repair a matter more than we do." May we open our minds in *bitachon*, and allow Hashem to sweeten our paths. And may all the *tikunim* we are meant to undertake be accomplished with Divine *chesed* and *rachamim*. ■

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### Saving A Life During The Erev Shabbat Rush

On a recent Friday at around 2 P.M., a woman in her 90s experienced cardiac arrest at her house in Carmiel.

Yisrael Frankel, a volunteer EMT with United Hatzalah, was in the midst of last-minute Shabbat shopping when he was alerted to a nearby emergency. Without hesitation, he abandoned his shopping and rapidly responded on his ambucycle. Frankel expertly navigated through traffic, arriving at the patient's residence in an impressive under three-minute response time.

A concerned relative led Frankel to the room where the woman was lying motionless, gasping for air, and without a pulse. Moshe Cohen, another United Hatzalah volunteer EMT, arrived moments later and corroborated the absence of a pulse. The duo promptly initiated CPR and communicated the critical situation to United Hatzalah's Command and Dispatch Center.

A paramedic and an advanced life support ambulance team soon arrived at the scene as the volunteers were performing chest compressions. Confirming the absence of a pulse, the paramedic instructed the team to persist with CPR while she connected the heart monitor.

After a few rounds of CPR, the monitor detected that the patient's heart had restarted, initially showing a pulse of around 30 beats per minute, which gradually increased to approximately 60 beats per minute. Although the patient's breathing also resumed, it remained slow and irregular, with an oxygen saturation of about 75%. To support respiration, the medical team administered oxygen. With a restored pulse and assisted breathing, the team maintained vigilant care during the transfer of the patient to the intensive care ambulance, which



promptly transported her to the hospital for further treatment.

"I am so grateful that we were able to revive the patient," expressed Frankel after the incident. "Even though I wasn't able to buy what I needed, going into Shabbat after helping to save a life is an incredible privilege."



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## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

This Friday, *Erev Shabbat* corresponds to the 10th of *Tevet*. *Asara B'Tevet* is significant as on this date the Babylonians laid siege over *Yerushalayim*, setting the stage for *Churban Bayit Rishon*, on *Tisha B'Av*.

*Asara B'Tevet* is unique among our minor fast days, as it is the only one of the minor fast days that we actually commemorate the fast on a Friday, the other fasts either cannot fall on a Friday, or the fast is moved so as not to be commemorated on Friday. So why is it that this Friday we actually fast? What is different about the nature of the fast of *Asara B'Tevet*, that one is required to fast on this date, even if it falls on a Friday?

*The Beit Yosef*, cites the *Abudraham* in explaining why *Asara B'Tevet* is different from all other fast days (in that if it falls on Friday, we fast on Friday), citing the verse in *Yechezkel* 24:2 - *The essence of that very day* - (the very same expression we see in the *Torah's* description of the fast of *Yom Kippur*)....

*The Chatam Sofer* explains this idea. In (each) year that the Temple was destroyed and remained in ruins on the 9th of *Av*, the

decree for this to occur was already made from the 10th of *Tevet*. So too each year, on the 10th of *Tevet* it is decreed, whether we will continue to mourn on the 9th of *Av* in that year, or whether we'll experience redemption. We know that most fast days cannot occur on Friday or *Shabbat*, as most fast days recall a tragic event of the past, and therefore would not push aside the sanctity of *Shabbat*. But since the fast of the tenth of *Tevet* contains within it, this power of determining or foreshadowing the end of future pain, it therefore has an aspect of pleasure, and therefore we can fast on Friday which is the tenth of *Tevet*.

The great *Dayan* and *Mekubal Rav Shlomo Fischer*, *zt"l* offers a fascinating insight regarding the significance of *Asara B'Tevet* in *Drashot Beit Yishai*:

*It is no coincidence that for each of the rabbinic fasts, we fast to commemorate the specific tragedies that have befallen us on these dates, as our tradition teaches us that there were additional earlier tragic events which transpired on these dates, as if each of these days was pre-determined to be a day of national pain and mourning. But what earlier event transpired to determine this date of the tenth of Tevet as a day destined for tragedy? Perhaps we could suggest that the sale of Yosef occurred on this date of the Tenth of Tevet-as the zodiacal sign of the month of Tevet is the goat, and the goat is an allusion to the sin of the sale of Yosef, as the brothers slaughtered a goat, and dipped Yosef's cloak in its*

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**blood....**As the Talmud teaches us-HaShem shall make an atonement for the sin of the "Kid" I gathered...This is an allusion to the Fast of the Tenth of Tevet containing within it, a tikun for the sin of the sale of Yosef...

**Rabbi Baruch Simon**, in his incredible **Sefer Imrei Baruch**, brings this all together:

All that ultimately transpired on the tenth of Tevet, is rooted in the hatred that the brothers had toward Yosef, that led to his being sold... And because of our inability to fix this great tragedy, of unwarranted hatred, we have yet to merit to see the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash, which was also destroyed due to unwarranted hatred. Ultimately, the way to atone for the sin of the sale of Yosef, is through Ahavat Yisrael and Unity, because in essence each one of us is part of one collective eternal soul.

In conclusion, let's heed the beautiful words of **Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, shlita** :

We read the conclusion of this story of Yosef and his brothers, as we enter into the days surrounding the tenth of Tevet. One must believe and never give up, that even as we enter the winter months of darkness and exile, we should know that Hashem is there with us in our exile...Even in our dispersion, we are able to positively influence all whom we come to meet, and bring them closer to this knowledge of Hashem, and through this sacred unity we build, may we merit to see the transformation of these days of fasting and mourning into days of great joy....

Over these past many months, Am Yisrael, has seen an incredible ,perhaps unparalleled level of *achdut*. Yehi Ratzon, may that *achdut* continue to grow as we fast this Asara B'Te-vet, and may this finally be the year when we will celebrate united as one on the 9th of Av, in the Beit HaMikdash as one. ■



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## GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

# Achdut or Kedushat Yisrael?

Sefer Breishit is an ongoing saga of family rivalries framed within a process of historical selection. During the initial stages of our nation-building unwanted siblings, such as Yishma'el and Eisav were discarded so that Jewish destiny would be carried by its rightful heirs.

During the second phase of nation-building in Bereishit, the selection process concludes, as the family shifts into a second stage of inclusion and solidarity. As all of Ya'akov's 12 children are to be incorporated within a larger nation, none are dismissed. The shift from selection to inclusion isn't easy. Transforming a family or a clan into a nation is a tricky and thorny process. It takes the brothers some time to realize that selection has concluded, and that a future nation can only be forged by unifying rather than by excluding different brothers. Not only will Yehuda and Yosef play roles in the new nation, but every brother and every tribe will have a place and a function.

This new collectivist identity is reinforced through their facing a common enemy. Initially, the brothers band together to fend off the false accusations of an aggressive and highly suspicious Egyptian tyrant. Without proper coordination all the brothers will end up behind bars. Ultimately, after Yosef's true identity

is disclosed, the entire family descends to Egypt for what will become a 210-year sojourn. Preserving Jewish identity amidst a powerful Egyptian culture will require unified effort rather than individual heroism or personal conviction. Facing external threats and challenges forces the brothers out of "selection mode" and into "solidarity mode", launching the new era of solidarity.

The current war in Israel is transforming our people and reshaping our idea of peoplehood. Under peaceful conditions we presumed to enjoy the luxury of living "internally", within our own very limited ideological circles and communities. We certainly valued "achdut", but were rarely forced to leave our comfort zone and collaborate with Jews of vastly different lifestyles.

This global war against our people and our Land can only be successfully waged as a collective nation. This battle is unifying us while redistilling our perspectives upon Jewish collectivism.

In Israel, secular and religious Jews have battled our enemies "shoulder-to-shoulder, while on the home front, the entire country has rallied to support soldiers, families of hostages and fallen soldiers, as well as the hundreds of thousands of displaced citizens. No one has made any distinctions between religious and secular soldiers or families in need. Outside

of Israel, across the Jewish world, a broad spectrum of Jewish communities assisted our war by securing political support, providing impressive material and financial assistance, and through their heartfelt emotional support. After a year of social discord and constant political bickering we have finally achieved the unity which, for so long, had eluded us.

We all sense new and unprecedented achdut. What are different forms of Jewish unity? How do Orthodox Jews in particular frame the experience of achdut? Is there a value which supersedes achdut?

### TWO FORMS OF ACHDUT

Achdut itself comes in different varieties. The most basic form is achieved when people who hold different beliefs coalesce around common interest and common purpose. The larger unifying goal is too important to allow smaller differences of opinion or ideology to thwart the larger purpose.

It is questionable whether those who supported judicial reform and those who opposed it have significantly changed their opinions over the past few months. However, the defense of our country and the eradication of pure evil are goals which dwarf the lesser issue of judicial reform. Political differences in Israel have been shelved so that a larger common purpose can be served. This baseline achdut, which can be coined “unity of purpose” takes wisdom and selflessness. The wisdom to properly discriminate between important issues and lesser ones and the courage to put aside bitter differences to achieve common goals.

A higher grade of achdut emerges when we learn to respect the manner by which different sectors of our people provide different vital services. No one community possesses sufficient resources to provide



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every service necessary for our nation. Different communities excel in particular areas and, collectively, we benefit from this form of communal specialization. This perspective may be coined the “Complementary achdut”. Our community is a puzzle of many interlocking pieces, and each society provides different pieces of the puzzle.

Often Orthodox Jews more easily appreciate complementary achdut in their perspective of other Orthodox communities. Despite important ideological differences, all Orthodox Jews share a common commitment to a lifestyle of Torah and mitzvot. Given this common denominator it is easier to appreciate the



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distinct roles that each community specializes in. In particular, the war has allowed Charedim who dedicate their lives to Torah study at the cost of army service to better appreciate the service and dedication of other religious soldiers who have served at the forefront of this war.

Likewise, the war in Israel should, hopefully, enable Orthodox Jews to better appreciate secular Israel. Though much of liberalism of secular Israeli culture is foreign to Orthodox belief, the patriotism and devotion which secular Israel has displayed in defense of our country should remind Orthodox Jews that, despite major cultural dissonances secular Israel society is built on solid values of land and heritage. Orthodox Jews believe in “Netzach Yisrael” or the eternity of our people because of the numerous promises and prophecies in the Torah. Evidently, secular Israel harbors a similar belief in the eternity of our people which stems from a primordial connection, lodged deeply within Jewish subconsciousness.

### KEDUSHAT YISRAEL

The war however is highlighting a value which far surpasses even the highest grade of achdut. By employing the term achdut to describe this condition, we obscure a more important and nobler value.

We typically associate the word kedusha or religious holiness with a religiously successful lifestyle: strict adherence to Torah and mitzvot constitutes kedusha. By articulating the theory of “inner” Jewish holiness, Chassidus revolutionized the concept of kedusha. Each Jew is gifted with an inner holiness, endowed directly from Hashem as part of what the Sefer HaTanya calls ממעל ממש or “part of Hashem’s essence”.

This divinely delivered innate holiness is

inalienable and survives regardless of religious success or malfunction. While achdut strives for unity of purpose or synchronicity between different groups, kedushat Yisrael demands deep and abiding respect and love for every Jew, regardless of their religious behavior. The concept of kedushat Yisrael breeds ahavat Yisrael and suggests that we should be inspired by the inner holiness of every Jew, even those who don’t accord with our religious lifestyles.

Chassidus articulated this inner holiness in the 18th century, but the two centuries that followed severely tested this theory. As masses of Jews defected from classic religious Judaism, and millions others walked out entirely on their Jewish identity it became challenging to trace the inner holiness that Chassidus has asserted.

Life in Israel, especially during the past few weeks has unveiled this inner holiness in full view. The dedication and self-sacrifice which religious Jews have demonstrated stems from religious roots, and is therefore understandable. However, the self-sacrifice of secular Jews speaks to a very different source. Their commitment is a manifestation of the inner holiness which Chassidus spoke of. Though that inner holiness has yet to manifest in religious expression, it burns deep and bright and inspires even non-religious Jews to the historical battle which we all are commonly waging.

In addition to our achdut, let us appreciate the kedushat yisrael which is on full display during this war. ■







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## HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA  
SHMIDMAN



# Out of the Woodwork

## YEchezkel 37:15-28

In this week's haftorah, Yechezkel depicts the symbolic fusion of two blocks of wood, representing the divided Jewish People embodied by Yehuda and Yosef. The ultimate redemption can only be achieved when these two branches unite.

Following the transmission of this prophecy, Yechezkel is told that the people will ask *הֲלוֹא־תִגִּיד לָנוּ מֵה־אֵלֶּה לָּךְ*, *will you not tell us what these things are to you?* It might seem perplexing why a message of unity requires clarification – isn't the concept self-evident?

Unfortunately, unity is not simple. When people are not physically together, they no longer share a common experience. Without the shared narrative, the points of connection diminish and they drift apart. So how then can the different groups be reunited, and what purpose would such unity serve?

The Radak proposes two possibilities in interpreting the imagery of wooden blocks fusing. Firstly, through sheer strength and persistent effort, these entities can be joined. Secondly, he suggests a thought from his father, that there is a miraculous fusion, creating a new entity – a complete piece of wood. Notably, this analogy implies that for two pieces of wood to become one, they

must originate from the same source.

Yechezkel's response to the people emphasizes that, despite the absence of a shared national narrative, they are fundamentally the same people, cut from the same original piece of wood. Reuniting is not about reinvention but returning to their shared essence. This message is remarkably relevant today, especially amidst a catastrophic war in Israel. Despite the fact that the Jewish nation is spread across the globe, we are united in our connection to the Land of Israel. In facing these challenges, we should find solace in the understanding that the return to our homeland is grounded in the recognition that, despite geographic divisions, we are one spiritual unit. Our connection transcends physical space, uniting us as one nation forever.

The prophetic words of the Haftorah underscore this unity, *וְעָשִׂיתִי אֹתָם לְגוֹי אֶחָד, בְּאֶרֶץ בְּהָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִלֶּךְ אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּם לְמִלְכָּךְ. וְלֹא יִהְיֶה-יְהוּדָה עוֹד לְשֵׁנִי וְלֹא יִחָצוּ עוֹד לְשֵׁנִי מִמְּלָכוֹת עוֹד בְּהָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמִלֶּךְ אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּם לְמִלְכָּךְ. וְלֹא יִהְיֶה-יְהוּדָה עוֹד לְשֵׁנִי וְלֹא יִחָצוּ עוֹד לְשֵׁנִי מִמְּלָכוֹת עוֹד בְּהָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמִלֶּךְ אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּם לְמִלְכָּךְ.* *I will make them a single nation in the land, on the hills of Israel, and one king shall be king of them all; they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms, ever again.* These words echo the timeless truth that our unity surpasses geographical boundaries, ensuring our perpetual oneness as a nation. ■

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## Our Brothers' Keeper

Yehudah's soliloquy is the moral climax of the entire Yosef story. Near the end, Yehudah says about himself, "your servant took responsibility for (עָרַב) the youth"—Binyamin—"from my father" (Genesis 44:32). This echoes the language of the actual promise he made to Yaakov in *Parashat Miketz*, "I will take responsibility for him (אֶעֱרְבֶנּוּ), you can demand him from me" (Genesis 43:9). The Lubavitcher Rebbe cited these verses as the earliest sources of the foundational principle of *arevut*, mutual responsibility, formulated in the Talmud as "all Jews are responsible for one another" כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל (עָרְבִים זֶה לָזֶה). But why did Yehudah use a financial term indicating a guarantee, and why was this language adopted in coining the broader principle?

The rebbe explained that the Hebrew term "*arev*" has a number of senses, two of which go beyond the financial one:<sup>2</sup>

(1) *Taking responsibility*: Yehudah uses the term to convey to his father Yaakov,

and later to Yosef, that it is his duty to care for Binyamin. All Jews have an obligation to care for one another physically and spiritually. If another Jew has strayed from the straight path, we reach out to them.

(2) *Sweetness*: Beyond duty, there is the sweetness that Jews display to one another. The fact that we are genuinely concerned for the wellbeing and happiness of our neighbor is what permits us to correct them when they are not living up to their religious responsibilities.



(3) *Mixture*: Physically the Jewish people consist of separate individuals, but our souls are interconnected, part of a single entity. That is why the Jewish people are called "brothers."<sup>3</sup> This inherent indivisibility is, in fact, implied by another word in *Parashat Vayigash*. Rashi calls our attention to the fact that the verse uses singular *ha-nefesh* to denote the "seventy souls" who descended to Egypt (Genesis 46:26), indicating that all individuals are in reality one.<sup>4</sup>

Concern for our fellow Jew goes beyond acting out of a sense of duty or love. The Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches that we are drawn to each other because our souls are intimately linked. This appears to be based on a well-known lesson of the Arizal. All the

1. *Shevu'ot* 39a.

2. Greenberg, *Iturei Torah*, 1:394–395.

3. See further *Tanya*, ch. 32.

4. See Rashi on Genesis 46:26.



souls of Israel can be viewed as one large, metaphysical body. Each soul performs its individual task, just as each limb of the body has its particular sphere of influence, range of movements, and specific functions.

The Talmud illustrates the mitzvah to love our fellow Jew with a parable. If you are cutting food with a knife and accidentally cut your finger, you do not slap the offending hand with your other hand.<sup>5</sup> We are all connected, part of the same spiritual body. For this reason, the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of *Chassidut*, stated that one must love another Jew even if one has never met him or her. This applies whether the distance is a problem of geography or of observance and belief. Even spiritually estranged Jews deserve our love.

Of course, “all Jews are responsible for one another” is not confined to the realm of aspirational ethics. On Shabbat day, we regularly see its halachic application, when people who have already discharged their obligation to say Kiddush repeat it for those who have not. Is this not taking God’s name in vain by making an unnecessary blessing, since these individuals could say it themselves? The Ritva elaborated that so long as others have not discharged their obligation, *no one* has fully done so.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, one can make Kiddush all day long for those who have not heard it yet. This is the power of “all Jews are responsible for one another”; we each have a personal stake in everyone else’s observance.

Yehudah, out of his deep love and loyalty for his youngest brother, personified *arevut*. It is up to us as a people to live up to

his example, by striving to go beyond the formal obligation and demonstrate genuine compassion. We must remember that in our unique spiritual fraternity, every one of us is literally our brothers’ keeper. ■

**Rabbi Goldscheider** is the author of the newly published book ‘Torah United’ (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.



## Be'er Tziporah a"h - Bottled Water Gemach



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peace and pursued peace.



Yoni thanks Hashem for having  
the opportunity of having Tziporah in  
his life, to learn of her caring, patience and  
happiness, to overcome her challenges. May  
Tziporah’s Neshama be a light onto the world,  
in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama  
shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with  
tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a  
crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

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5. Talmud Yerushalmi, *Nedarim* 9:4.

6. *Hilchot Berachot*, ch. 5 (beginning).

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## Getting a Sponge Wet on Shabbat

לעילוי נשמת  
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

**Question:** I keep my sponge (the type one may not use on Shabbat) hanging from a hook near the sink; when the faucet is on, some water generally splashes onto the sponge. May I leave the sponge there for Shabbat?

**Answer:** We will focus on **halachic permissibility**. (Some might convince you to find another place due to Shabbat aesthetics and practicality or hygienic considerations.)

One issue to explore is the concern that one might come to squeeze it out, which is prohibited in several cases of things getting wet. One of the *gemarot* is Beitza 30a – one should not cover an open barrel of water with a cloth, lest it get wet and one might squeeze out the water. One prominent case in *poskim* is the Magen Avraham (326:8) who says that one of the reasons not to allow swimming/bathing even in cold water (when it is not for a *mitzva*) is the concern that one might squeeze out water.

However, this will not be a reason to disallow the sponge to be near water, for **at least** two reasons. 1) Extending the prohibition to cases not discussed in *Chazal* is a new *g'zeira* (a prohibition not to do A lest

it lead to doing the forbidden B), which we do not create ourselves (see Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim II:34). 2) The Shulchan Aruch (OC 320:15), in the context of the cloth/barrel prohibition (above), permits hanging a cloth normally used for that purpose because one is not perturbed if it gets wet and we are therefore not concerned he will squeeze it out. In our case, since the sponge is in its regular place and there is no reason to think he will have an urge to squeeze it out, it is permitted.

The other issue is that putting water on an absorbent material can be a form of laundering (Zevachim 94b; Shulchan Aruch, OC 302:9). *Rishonim* deal with the fact that a few *gemarot* (see Yoma 77b; Beitza 18b) allow going into bodies of water with clothes on. Tosafot (Shabbat 111b) presents two distinctions that may reconcile the sources: 1. The Ri – it is permitted to get fabrics wet when they are “clean.” 2. Rabbeinu Tam – it is permitted when the exposure to water is *derech lichluch* (in a manner of dirtying). Is *derech lichluch* limited to cases in which the garment becomes dirtier than it was before (e.g., using a rag to soak up water from the floor)? Although we cannot give the matter




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.




sufficient clarity in this forum, the stronger approach is that *derech lichluch* means that this is not the way anyone would want to launder, even if it does get more clean – see Harchev Da'at, Melaben 3). After all, one of the permitted cases is entering a body of water with clothes on, and the classic sources do not limit this to unclear water. In this case, water from the faucet is clean, but no one would wash a sponge by having sink water splash on it from time to time.

There are different opinions as to whether one can be lenient based on either distinction or perhaps only the two together (Rama, OC 302:9-10). Some of those who are stringent may have low standards of what is considered a clean fabric (Orchot Shabbat 13:(56)). If not, one would have to inspect a towel to make sure it is truly clean before drying his hands on it, against common practice. It might vary from kitchen to kitchen whether a used sponge would be clean enough, but hopefully one's sponge left out for Shabbat would at least look clean from the outside. One should be able to rely on the leniency of *derech lichluch* (Be'ur Halacha to 302:9), especially when there is no intent to clean it now (see Tosafot Yeshanim, Yoma 77b).

While the sponge and faucet's positions are not described exactly, it is unlikely that there is certainty that each time you use the sink, a noticeable amount of water will hit the sponge. If so, beyond the aforementioned reasons for leniency, this is a case of a *davar*



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*she'eino mitkaven* (one does a permitted action (opening a faucet), that may or may not inadvertently cause a *melacha* (rinsing the sponge)), which is certainly permitted.

In short, leaving the sponge near the sink is always permitted according to most *poskim*, and often is indisputably permitted. ■

## Having a dispute?



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## HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

# Kibbutz Be'eri



I was in Kibbutz Be'eri last week.

I am still processing what I saw there.

I went because I thought it was important to be there before I go to Poland again.

Because how can I talk about loss and pain over there without exposing myself to the devastation that happened here.

The site has been sanitized by the army and the tzadikim of Zaka. The blood, shell casings, and other more visceral evidence has been removed. The Jewish people's respect for the dead dictates this situation. We don't expose the victims to salacious viewing, and we don't thoughtlessly

subject our eyes and thus our souls to scenes of wanton brutality.

And yet, all of my senses were engaged in Be'eri.

I saw destruction and violence, burned-out shells of houses.

I smelled the aftermath of the fires and gun battles.

The soundtrack in the background was the clatter of shattered roof tiles under our feet as we walked through broken homes.

And the overwhelming booms of Tza-hal's artillery in Gaza changing the reality on the ground. Causing me to flinch. Every. Single. Time. And to taste my own fear.

It was different from Poland. So different.

It was active and tangible in a way that the camps are not.

A single sneaker lying under a bush.

A sukkah, half fallen, still white. Breaking my heart in its desolation.

A blue rubber ducky. Covered in a layer of dirt and ash. My mind flashing briefly to years of bathtimes in my own house,

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where rubber duckies were held in small soapy hands full of life.

I stood in the ruins of the backyard of Chen and Rinat Even (Hy"ד) and listened as Naor Pakciarz, one of the resident heroes of Kibbutz Be'eri, told us their story.

Chen and Rinat were murdered on October 7 with their two older sons, Alon and Edo. After hiding in their safe room for hours, they climbed out of the window as terrorists set fire to their house. The family tried to stay out of sight in some bushes but were caught and gunned down. In a final act of self-sacrifice and love, Chen, Rinat, Alon and Edo used their bodies to shield the youngest members of their family, Tomer and Nir, from the bullets of the terrorists. Later, Tomer and Nir were able to climb out from under the bodies of their parents and brothers and find shelter in a neighbor's house until Tzahal arrived.

When we asked Naor if the house would be kept as a memorial, his response was, "no."

"This is about people," he said, "not houses."

"These were my friends and I know they would want us to rebuild, to live, to remember them with stories and laughter, not with broken buildings and ashes."

In answer to the astonishment shown by

our group, he stood firm. They will rebuild.

That is the difference. And it is everything.

80 years ago there was nothing left to stay for in Poland. The community was gone, the family was gone, the heart was gone. We did not rebuild.

But Eretz Yisrael is forever. We will not leave it.

Be'eri is not a museum. It is not an echo from the past. Life will return to Be'eri. Because Am Yisrael Chai.

Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael.

We will rebuild and we will live, and we will dance here again. ■



**Shoshana** teaches Chassidus for the Shirat David Community in Efrat as well as in Jerusalem for Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya. She is a guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisroel. Shoshana has also been a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.



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# The Inner Meaning of the Fast of Asara B'Tevet

The month of Tevet opened with the conclusion of Chanukah, and is now followed by the fast of Asara b'Tevet. The official event given by the Mishna for the fast of Asara b'Tevet is the siege of Jerusalem by Nevuchadnetzar three years before the actual destruction of the Holy Temple. On the face of it, this event lost its significance once the walls were breached, and the Temple eventually destroyed. And yet when it falls on Friday, as it does this year, we don't move the fast to another day, unique among all the fast days.

The Ba'al Halachot Gedolot describes an additional event connected to Asarah B'Tevet: "On the eighth of Tevet, the Torah was translated into Greek in the days of King Talmi. It was as grave a day for the Jewish people as the day the Golden Calf was made, for the Torah could not be adequately translated. And darkness descended over the world for three days."

Translating the Torah into Greek seems like a neutral act, possibly even a positive

one, enabling more people to have greater access to Torah wisdom. What was so terrible, and what darkness was created that it is compared to the making of the Golden Calf?

In the Greek world view, the only reality acknowledged is what is perceived with our senses and understood with the tools of human intellect. No "givens" precede or circumscribe man's perspective of reality, and understanding of Torah is also bound by that perspective.

But Torah is Divine wisdom, revealed to man by G-d, enabling man to have a glimpse of the "mind of the Creator," and the true purpose of creation. Man's understanding of the Torah must be within **that** framework, requiring great struggle, true striving for objectivity and character refinement.

The Greek perspective puts man, his goals and his understanding at the center of the stage, and understanding Torah is based on man's subjectivity. Translating the Torah into Greek gave the false sense of it being accessible with no need for the struggle and refinement that is required to access Divine Wisdom. But this leads to its misinterpretation, encapsulated in the critique that the Torah simply "could not be translated in an adequate way."

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The Torah provides man with the opportunity to illuminate the hidden realities of G-d's world. What King Talmi commissioned was a document to hide Divine illumination, replacing it with human limited understanding. Reality being replaced by illusion is the root of idol worship, and the "mother" of idol worship is the Golden Calf, thinking you are "seeing G-d" when you aren't. When the Torah you study has been "translated into Greek", emptied of its transcendent nature, you think you are understanding the world, but you are actually creating your own world.

The culmination of the three days of darkness coincided with the anniversary of the siege of Jerusalem by Nevuchadnetzar centuries earlier, the event for which the formal fast was legislated. The common denominator was the principle that things of value need protection. When not cared for properly, they deteriorate. Deterioration is a gradual process, and it may not be noticeable while it is happening. The fast of *Asara B'Tevet* was instituted to mourn deterioration, not actual destruction. The failure to perceive deterioration and protect against it is the first step towards destruction. Destruction is obvious. Deterioration is subtle, and not easily perceived, which is why the fast day for it takes on added significance.

In a world built on "Torah translated into Greek", fantasy overshadows reality, the shallow triumphs over depth, we value the surface rather than the substance. Without overtly destroying Torah, it leads to its deterioration. We are fasting to remind us that we must invest hard work in reversing the deterioration in our connection to and our understanding of the most precious gift that G-d has given us – His Torah. ■

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# Israel at War: 3 Special Stories

Ever since the war began, many special stories have been sent to me. Here are three of them:

**STORY #1:** For many weeks, members of Kibbutz Sa'ad on the Gaza periphery have been welcome guests at the Nevo Hotel on the Dead Sea. Yesterday they went out and bought food and cooked an elegant meal of sumptuous dishes in the hotel kitchen for the entire staff of 150. Upon entering the dining room, each employee was greeted by the kibbutzniks with loud applause.

**STORY #2:** Yishai Turgeman sent me a picture of soldiers putting on tefillin and explained as follows: Noam is a commanding officer of soldiers in a fighting unit. One day he did not have a chance to put on tefillin. As the sun was setting, even though his tefillin were only a few meters away, he could not put them on because of the state of alert that demanded his full attention. The other soldiers, however, felt his deep frustration and dismay. So what happened the next day? If, for just one day, it was impossible for one soldier to put on tefillin, then the next day every soldier in the unit, one after the next, religious or otherwise, would put them on.

**STORY #3:** Minister of Health Ariel Boso repeated what he heard from 72-year-old Adina Moshe from Kibbutz Nir Oz upon her release from captivity. A moment before her release, Adina had argued with a Hamas terrorist. She said it would be preferable that another woman, older and in worse shape than her, should be released first.

From a hotel kitchen to a pair of tefillin to the brave hostages emerging from terrorist tunnels, new chapters about loving-kindness and spiritual grandeur are being written every day. ■



Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.

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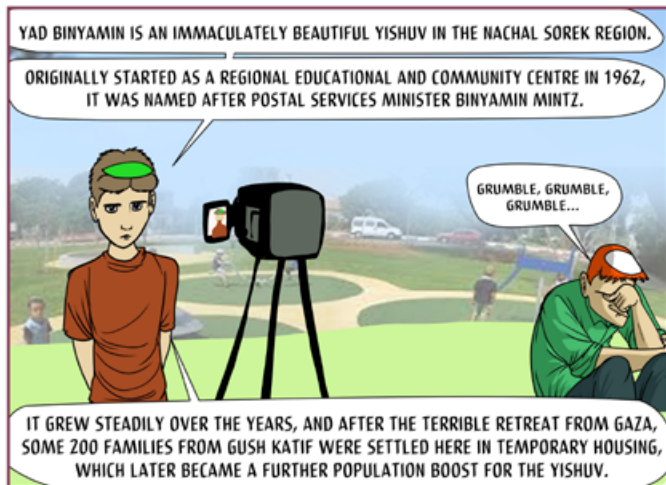
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## TORAH 4 TEENS

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### Being Real With Ourselves

In this week's parsha we read about the famous encounter when Joseph reveals his true identity to his brothers. The Beit Halevi teaches that when Joseph asked the brothers **אני יוסף העוד אבי חי** it was in essence a rebuke. Joseph was rebuking his brothers by pointing out the hypocrisy. "You tell me how worried you are for Binyamin and how much his loss would hurt your father. But for me, **אני יוסף**!

You caused your father such despair already when you sold me into slavery and faked my death. **העוד אבי חי**? Where was your concern back then?! Did he make it through all the pain from last time that you are all so worried not to hurt him once again?" The brothers were silent, they had no way to answer for themselves.

The medrash compares this experience of the brothers to that of the Neshama when it goes up before God **יום הדין**. So too, God will reveal our lies, our hypocrisy, the gaps in our Avoda and all our well thought out excuses will be useless.

I think if we bring this idea down to our level we can get a strong mussar lesson from it: No one wants to live life with double standards yet it could be that little manifestations of hypocrisy are found in the

way we speak, act or even think on a daily basis. For example, a beggar asks for tzed-daka yet we brush him off even though we just treated ourselves for some expensive smoothie. A person works out for 2 hours every day to build muscle and desired body structure yet when it comes to doing a 30 minute mitzva that requires heavy lifting - one is hesitant. Finally, a person wakes up 5am sharp for a flight to a vacation with friends but when it comes to waking up for 8am shachrit- there may be less motivation.

The message: We must strive to be real with ourselves. What are our real values? Are our actions based on our values or based on shallow instantaneous desires?

Perhaps we can also interpret this encounter in a different light to bring out some sweet chizzuk.

There's a side to say that really the brothers were expressing authentic concern when

lobbying for Binyamin and his welfare. The brothers in fact did teshuva and

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repented for their misconduct with Yosef. They regretted the grief they caused unto their father Yaakov and they just wanted to do something right this time. They would take back their cruel deeds from the past if they could!

Despite the grievous sin they did with Yosef the brothers show us the concept of **אין שום יאוש בעולם כלל** - that it's never too late to correct one's mistakes. To this Yosef responds to his brothers **ועתה אל תעצבו ואל** (5:45) **יחר בעיניכם כי מחרתם אתי** meaning "Yes, you sinned, did teshuva and now you are facing your past sin in the face... Don't let it bring you down!!"

We can learn from this momentous encounter that one can always learn from their mistakes, there's no such thing as giving up hope and that we cannot let the Yetzer Hara bring us down.



**Gershy Levy**  
**Raanana**  
**12th Grade**

## A Change in Yehuda

Our Parashah opens with the pasuk **ויגש** "אליו יהודה." Yehuda stands up to Yossef and tells him that they will not leave Binyamin behind. This contrasts with Yehuda's suggestion to his brothers in **פרשת וישב** where not only did he not stand up for Yossef but went as far as suggesting to sell him. What caused this change in Yehuda to go from someone who didn't care about his father's feelings, and willing to allow his brother's enslavement, to a defender and protector of both? It seems that Yaakov knew that Yehuda was up to the task and would be better than Reuven. How did he know this?

To see this difference let's contrast the two stories. During Yossef's sale, Yehuda thinks that what he's doing is justified. Thus he shows a lack of empathy by not taking Yaakov's feelings into account, but rather saying that "it's for the good of the family." By contrast, in our story with Binyamin, Yehuda thinks of his father's feelings first and is ready to sacrifice himself to set Binyamin free. So where did Yehuda change?

The answer lies in the story with Tamar. Yehuda admits that he's wrong and that not everything he does is perfect by saying **צדקך** "ממני" opening himself up to empathy and accepting the consequences of his actions.

This could be seen in Yaakov choosing Yehuda above Reuven, when Reuven tells Yaakov that he should be in charge of Binyamin and he says that if he fails then his sons could be killed. We could say that obviously Reuven didn't mean his sons would actually be killed but rather he is saying that he's sure that he is going to succeed. In contrast Yehuda said that if he fails then he's ready to take responsibility for his mistake and acknowledges that he could fail.

We should all learn from Yehuda and admit our mistakes and open ourselves up to empathy. Shabbat Shalom. ■

## Pinchus Klahr, MD

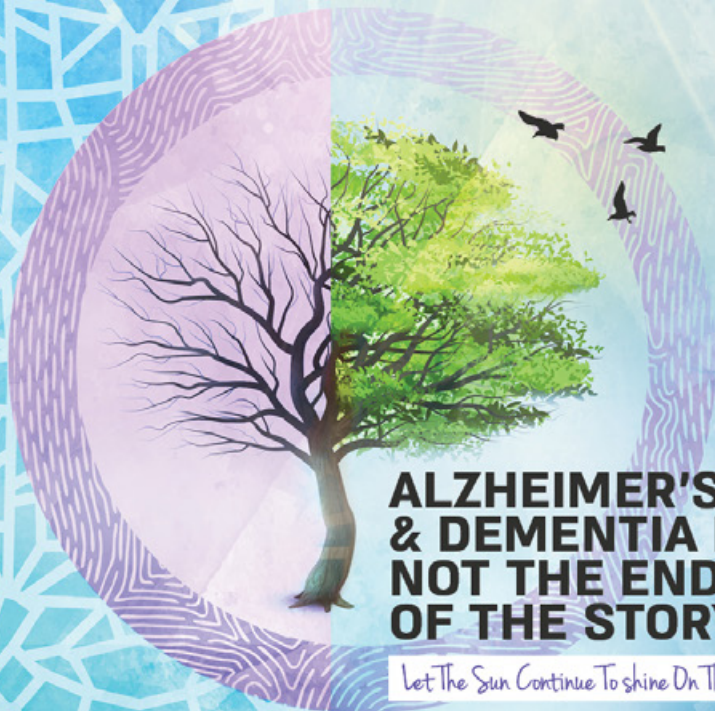
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