

# ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1546

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PARSHAT VAYECHI



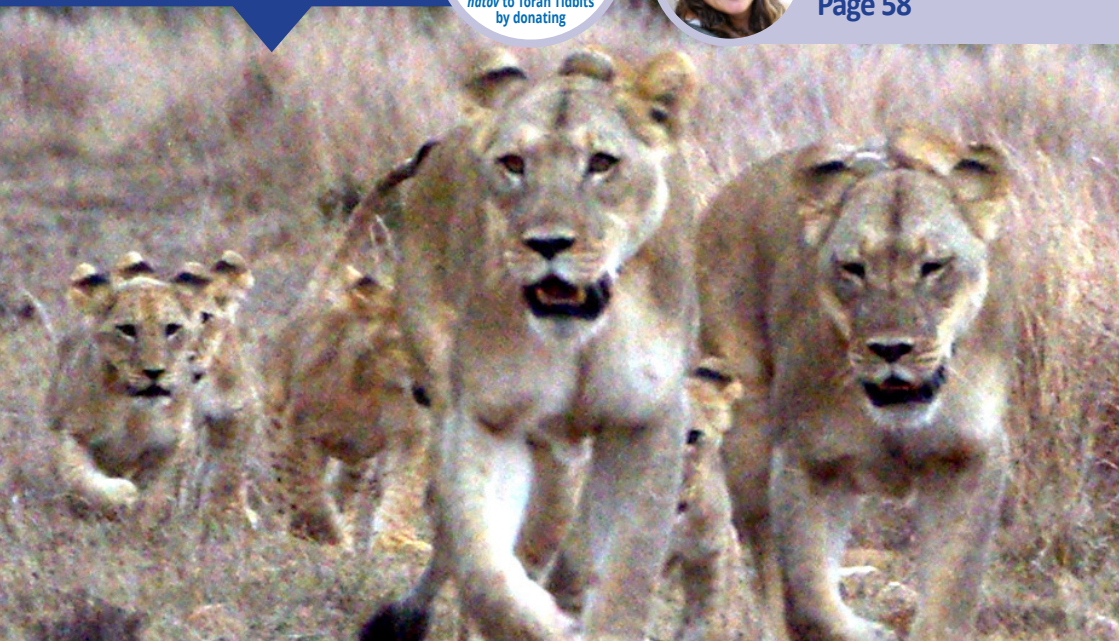
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Simchat Shmuel  
Rabbi Sam Shor  
Page 38



The First Synagogue  
Rivi Frankel  
Page 58



גור אריה יהודה מטרף בני עלית  
בראשית מ"ט:ט'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYECHI ZMANIM  
CANDLES 4:08 PM • HAVDALA 5:25 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:01 PM



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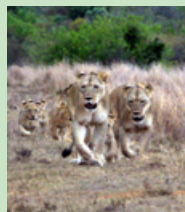
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# Table of Contents

- 04** Dear Torah Tidbits Family  
Rabbi Avi Berman
- 08** From Other to Brother  
Rabbi Moshe Hauer
- 10** Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary  
Rabbi Reuven Tradburks
- 16** Each One Is One of a Kind  
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb
- 18** Grandparents  
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l
- 24** Probing the Prophets  
Rabbi Nachman Winkler
- 26** Chesed & Emet  
Rabbi Shalom Rosner
- 28** Source of Salvation  
Rebbetzin Shira Smiles
- 32** Schedule  
OU Israel
- 34** Gather Round  
Rabbi Judah Mischel
- 38** Simchat Shmuel  
Rabbi Sam Shor
- 40** Why is Moshiach  
Nicknamed Shiloh?  
Rabbi Moshe Taragin
- 44** Writing an Ethical Will  
Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman
- 46** Shalom Aleichem  
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski
- 48** The Scaly Armor of Fish  
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
- 52** A Kohen Becoming Right-Handed  
Rabbi Daniel Mann
- 54** Separating Terumot & Ma'aserot  
from Fruit in Home Gardens  
Rabbi Moshe Bloom
- 56** The Long Path  
Rabbi Gideon Weitzman
- 58** The First Synagogue  
Rivi Frankel
- 62** Torah 4 Teens by Teens  
Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg

## THIS WEEK'S COVER PHOTO

Photo taken by **Shlomo Gherman** on a safari on South Africa. Shlomo Gherman made aliyah with his wife from East Meadow N.Y. and they live in Jerusalem. The photo captures the might and courage of Am Yisrael which is the theme of Yaakov's blessing to Yehudah.



## A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES

Rav, Beit Kneset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

"Zevulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea" (49:13)

"Yissachar is a large-boned donkey" (49:14)

Why when addressing Yissachar and Zevulun, did Yaakov first refer to the younger one, while when Yaakov instructed his blessings on the rest of his children, he did so according to their chronological birth sequence? Why did he reverse the order by Yissachar and Zevulun?

The Rashbam (Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, grandson of Rashi 1085-1158) points out (as referred to by Rashi) that Zevulun engaged in trade using ships to bring wares from abroad. It was Zevulun who provided sustenance for the tribe of Yissachar, allowing the latter to be engaged in the study of Torah. This is why Zevulun is mentioned before Yissachar, for he made it possible for Yissachar to go unscathed and devote himself to Torah. Yissachar's reward for his unwavering study of Torah was shared by both.

Shabbat Shalom

זבולון לחוף ימים ישכן (מט:יג)  
יששכר חמר גרם (מט:יד)

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



## OTHER Z'MANIM



	VAYECHI		SHEMOT	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	4:08	5:25	4:13	5:30
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:26	5:28	4:31	5:33
Beit Shemesh / RBS	4:26	5:26	4:31	5:31
Alon Shvut	4:24	5:25	4:29	5:30
Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	4:24	5:25	4:29	5:30
Modiin / Chashmonaim	4:24	5:25	4:29	5:30
Netanya	4:23	5:25	4:29	5:30
Be'er Sheva	4:26	5:27	4:31	5:32
Rehovot	4:25	5:26	4:30	5:31
Petach Tikva	4:08	5:25	4:13	5:30
Ginot Shomron	4:23	5:24	4:28	5:29
Haifa / Zichron	4:12	5:24	4:17	5:29
Gush Shiloh	4:22	5:24	4:27	5:29
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:24	5:26	4:29	5:31
Givat Zeev	4:28	5:25	4:33	5:30
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:24	5:26	4:29	5:31
Ashkelon	4:26	5:28	4:31	5:32
Yad Binyamin	4:25	5:26	4:30	5:31
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:14	5:21	4:19	5:26
Golan	4:20	5:21	4:25	5:26
Nahariya/Maalot	4:20	5:23	4:25	5:28
Afula	4:21	5:23	4:26	5:28
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 6:01 PM • Next Week - 6:06 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 58

## JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat  
Dec. 27 - Jan 6 / 15 - 25 Tevet

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **5:42 - 5:45**  
Sunrise **6:37 - 6:40**  
Sof Zman Kriat Shema **9:08 - 9:12**  
Magen Avraham **8:29 - 8:33**  
Sof Zman Tefila **9:59 - 10:03**  
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)  
Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **11:40 - 11:44**  
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **12:10 - 12:14**  
Plag Mincha **3:39 - 3:45**  
Sunset (Including Elevation) **4:46 - 4:53**



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## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN  
Executive Director, OU Israel

A few weeks ago in these pages, I wrote about my tremendous optimism for the future of our youth. Since my professional career has been involved in working with youth for decades, over the years I find myself being asked sharp questions about the current state of our youth and engaging in conversations centered around concerns parents and educators are facing with the younger generation.

The most common concerns center around children being addicted to their smartphones and glued to their screens, being an “instant gratification” generation, lacking respect towards their elders, and how they dress. I hear a lot of these concerns, and the reality is that these are indeed valid concerns. These are real issues. One concerning fact to point to is that we’ve seen a significant drop in Israeli teens enrolling in the IDF upon graduating high school, an area our organization focuses on heavily in our work with the OU Israel Youth Centers and NCSY Israel. It is thanks to the tremendous efforts of our staff that *Baruch Hashem* 94% of our graduating seniors attend pre-army *mechinot*, *Yeshivot/ Midrashot*, IDF service or *sherut leumi*.

People are worried about the future of the Jewish people. We all feel the responsibility of making sure the next generation will be ready to keep our nation secure, to be our next generation’s rabbis, doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, accountants, librarians, politicians and so on. With so many parents and educators concerned about the

youth we wonder how the next generation will stand up to the task?

In this week’s parsha we see how Yaakov Avinu, on his deathbed, asks his children to promise that he would be taken back to the Land of Israel after he dies, to be buried next to his forefathers in Chevron. Why was he so concerned about where he was buried? I believe it is because he wanted to show them, by example, that while he could have stayed in Egypt, the link to his father and grandfather was everything. It’s what consumed him in his dying wishes. He wanted to maintain that connection, to his family and to Eretz *Yisrael*.

What those parents, teachers, and youth professionals are worried about, I worry about too. Then I ask myself, were we so much better when we were younger? True, we didn’t have smartphones and social media, but we were also teenagers. We had our fair share of problems and attitudes. What I advise parents today is to lead by example. Be like Yaakov Avinu who led by example and showed his children what our priorities must be – to our family, to

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be in loving memory of  
and עלוי נשמת

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**יצחק בן צבי ז”ל**  
ט”ו טבת Yarzeit

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our Land. We must *show* the next generation what to do, not *tell* them what to do.

As I wrote in this column several weeks ago, we *Baruch Hashem* have a lot to be optimistic about. What I've seen come from our youth in terms of volunteering, activism, and unity has been nothing short of amazing. If anything, our youth these last three months have been showing us, the adults, what to do, and not the other way around. I've been so inspired by what I've seen coming from the youth today. They have shown us that they do love this Land. That they are anything but lazy. They are willing to risk their lives every single day for their fellow Jews, whether they know them or they don't. I'm very optimistic.

Where did such passion come from that hundreds of soldiers are being recorded declaring aloud "*Shema Yisrael*" in preparation to go into Gaza? When they sing proudly as they leave Gaza, "*Ani maamin* - I believe in perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even should he tarry I await for him every day"? Where they stand in uniform and unity at their friends' funerals? Where they help take care of the families at the *shiva* houses and beyond? Where the roads are lined with youth holding Israeli flags as families go to bury their loved ones? Despite all the challenges, we're seeing our youth at their very best. How can we explain it? What is it that

is connecting our youth in such an incredible way to its Torah, its people, and its Land?

Regarding the Torah, just look at the amount of *yeshivot* and *midrashot* opening in Israel every year. It's absolutely phenomenal to see how many young women are taking off a year or more to attend *Midrasha* before or after their *Sherut Leumi*. We see so many boys finishing high school and going to *yeshiva gevoha*, *yeshivot hesder*, or *mechinah*, for a year or more before going to the IDF. When there are so many young men and women enriching themselves in Torah learning, it's only natural that there will be a greater connection to Hashem across the board in the army.

Regarding the people of Israel, I think we all felt what it meant to be disunified and

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**Upon their yahrzeits**

**By the Weiner, Miller,  
Solomont, & Saar families**

divided in the months leading up to *Sukkot*, but *Simchat Torah* was an end to that. Yes, some people today want to go back to that lack of unity, with protests and general division, but the vast majority of this country has declared that they are done with the fighting. Our youth see that. They see the unity. If we want to continue to have our youth support us, we need to show them we are committed to that unity. That we are one nation, one family, and that we stand together.

Regarding the Land of Israel, the rise in antisemitism that we have seen around the world has cemented in our minds the need for our Jewish Homeland. However, while antisemitism can scare us, there is something deeper connecting us to *Eretz Yisrael*. What we're seeing is what I saw on Chanukah. My family had many ideas for the day I was off for Chanukah. But my kids all said, let's volunteer. Let's go to a farm to help and connect to the Land. It reinforced in my mind what I've been seeing in our youth - how they desire this Land so much. How even though they only had two days off from school for Chanukah, they wanted to spend it helping Israeli farmers.

Remember, it had just rained on Chanukah. The fields were full of mud, but that didn't deter them one bit. We all went, and we got full of mud. We got on our hands and knees, picking weed after weed after weed, between roses and kohlrabi growing. To have dirt and mud between our fingers, connecting to the Land in such a sensory way, walking its rows and working its fields, there is nothing like it.

We saw endless lines of cars of people coming to volunteer in all the *moshavim* down south, to help those farmers. We met people who had been working this

Land their entire lives. We met workers, Thai workers as well, who stayed. But to see our kids, the youth of today, go over to the farmers just to thank them for this opportunity, to see that was truly beautiful. It was remarkable to see our youth connect and to see how we are all in this together.

So, there is no reason for any of us to be surprised when our younger generation steps up, because they are looking at us. They see full buses leaving from the OU Israel Center, the JNF, and so many other wonderful organizations, to go to volunteer and help out in the fields, the hospitals and the *shiva* houses. And now we are looking to them, where we see such passion, such inspiration, and we are inspired, we are made passionate through them. So many adults today are learning from our youth about how to sacrifice for the Jewish people, for its Torah, and its Land.

That blessing we received from Yaakov Avinu, which many of us sing to our children every night, goes, "*Hamalach hagoel* - the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, may He bless the lads, and let them carry my name, along with the names of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak. May they increase in the Land like fish." This blessing connects us to the generations of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. We know that we will increase and multiply. We understand that we will be blessed. And we understand that we will be connected, to each other, to our Land, and to our heritage.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

  
Rabbi Avi Berman

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## FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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# From Other to Brother

How do we overcome apathy and hostility and instead solidify our commitment to each other?

The city of Shechem symbolizes the complexity of that challenge. That is the place where we saw within the Jewish family both the apex of compassion and the nadir of cruelty. The same Shimon and Levi who destroyed Shechem's inhabitants as an act of revenge on behalf of their sister, Dina, would later plan in that very same place to kill their own brother Yosef. And again, generations later, the split of the Jewish people

into two kingdoms – the ultimate division of the Jewish family – would also occur in Shechem (see Rashi to Bereishit 37:14).

How does that happen? How could Shimon and Levi live such a contradiction? How could a nation split in two?

Sadly, we do this all the time, by defining a brother or sister as an outsider.

As Yosef was approaching Shechem (see Bereishit 37:16-17 and Rashi there), he encountered a man/angel to whom he turned to for direction, *et achai anochi mevakesh*, "I am seeking out my brothers." The guide informed him that they had "moved on" from seeing him as one of them, *nasu mi'zeh*, "they have traveled from this, meaning they have removed themselves from feeling brotherhood." They spoke of him as "that dreamer" rather than as "our brother." One who casts his brother as a stranger can quickly turn from his guardian to his enemy.

This is what Yaakov made clear to Shimon and Levi when he addressed them in his final words (Bereishit 49:5), saying, "Shimon and Levi are brothers who have weapons as their tools of enmity." The term the Torah uses is *m'cheiroteihem*, a term that plays on a classic Hebrew contranym, *nachar*, a term associated with both recognition and estrangement. As fiercely committed as Shimon and Levi were to their family (Yaakov refers to them as "brothers!"), it was their ability to go cold on their own brother that enabled their actions against him. And it was that same transformation

**May the Torah learned  
from this issue of Torah Tidbits  
be in loving memory of  
לעילוי נשמת**

**My dear husband, Our father,  
grandfather, and great grandfather**

**HAROLD CHIOTT ז"ל**

**צבי בן דוב שלום ז"ל**

**On his fourth Yahrzeit – י"ח טבת**

*Norma Chiott*

*Iris and Shimon Felix and family*

*Irv and Debbie Chiott and family*

*Pammy and Glenn Graber and family*

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of brother to other that divided the unified Jewish people into two warring kingdoms.

Yaakov granted Yosef the city of Shechem, where he would eventually be buried. Yosef travelled the very opposite road of Shimon and Levi. When the brothers first came to Egypt (Bereishit 42:7), *"vayitnakeir aleihem"*, he presented as a stranger, but eventually that stranger emerged as a caring and dedicated brother.

We are all brothers and sisters, each and every member of Klal Yisrael, whatever our observance, belief, or appearance. *Kulanu b'nei ish echad nachnu*, "we are all the children of one man (Bereishit 42:11)." Yet, far too often we appear to each other - or choose to look at each other - as strangers. We must instead deepen our familiarity and embrace of each other, building our commitment to and compassion for each other, *b'ahava v'achva v'shalom v'reiut*, with love, brotherhood, peace, and friendship. ■

**Condolences to  
Mrs. Gayla Greenspan  
and to Dr. Ari Greenspan  
and Dena Lehrman and families  
on the passing of her husband  
and their father**

**Rabbi Alan Greenspan z"l**

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## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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### PARSHAT VAYECHI

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



#### 1ST ALIYA (47:28-48:9)

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

The Jewish people are ensconced in Egypt. And that is precisely the theme of this parsha. Yaakov is fighting, pushing, perseverating on one theme; this is not home. All he talks about is the Land of

Israel: don't bury me in Egypt, Ephraim and Menashe will be equals in dividing the Land, may they prosper in the Land (of Israel); he blesses the sons emphasizing their locale in the Land.

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

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

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

Why does Yaakov mention that Rachel died suddenly and was buried on the way to Beit Lechem? Perhaps this is a tender moment between father and son. He is speaking to Yosef. "Yosef, you lost your mother tragically, suddenly. Rachel, my dear wife. Your mother. You, so young, it was all so sudden, you did not have a chance to bury your mother in the way I am asking you to bury me. You and I shared that tragic time. Now, it is so different. I elderly. You, a grown man, of great success. Maybe we would have had more children. In her memory, in her honor, your 2 sons take their place as full sons of mine, to fill the void that might have been."

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



## 2ND ALIYA (48:10-16)

Yaakov cannot see. He hugs and kisses Ephraim and Menashe.

Yaakov places his right hand on Ephraim, the younger; left hand on Menashe the older. G-d before whom my forefathers walked and Who protected me, bless these. And may they increase in the Land.

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



## 3RD ALIYA (48:17-22)

Yosef does not like the switch of hands. He corrects Yaakov. Yaakov demurs. Both will be great, though the younger will be greater. He blessed them both: The Jews will bless with "May G-d make you as Ephraim and Menashe."

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



## 4TH ALIYA (49:1-19)

Yaakov calls his sons to tell them what will occur with them.

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

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

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



## 5TH ALIYA (49:20-26)

Yaakov's address to each son continues. Gad, a legionnaire. Asher, bread and delicacies. Naftali, a swift messenger. Yosef had adversity but with G-d's

help prevailed and was enormously blessed.

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

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



#### 6TH ALIYA (49:27-50:20)

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

Yaakov's burial in the Land of Israel is the final expression of the message he has been hammering home to his family; Egypt is where we are, but Israel is where our legacy is.



#### 7TH ALIYA (50:21-26)

Yosef counters that G-d has brought them to Egypt so that they may survive. Yosef sees his great grandchildren in Egypt. Yosef has the brothers promise to bring his bones to Israel when they are redeemed.

Yosef is both generous and pious: you, my brothers, did not sell me here. Rather, it was G-d's plan to save our people, placing me in the position to save you all. That is

both generous to his brothers and pious in seeing G-d's Hand saving the people.

Only problem is that he is wrong.

You can't fault Yosef. He is correct in what he sees. But he doesn't see what we see. He sees the little picture. We have the benefit of the big picture. We know what happens next. Many years in Egypt, massive growth, Paro, enslavement, suffering, and finally, redemption. Sure, the descent of the Jewish people to Egypt was G-d's plan. But it wasn't just to save the family. It was much bigger than that. It was the big plan, the dramatic plan that ends with the Exodus from Egypt.

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

When it comes to understanding the ways of the Divine, human beings suffer from severe myopia. Even one as great as Yosef. He is certain that his descent, and then his family's descent to Egypt is designed from Above to save his family. But he too suffers from myopia. Not because he lacks expansive vision. Rather, because the human condition, by nature, can only see what lies in front of it. Oh, what caution we need to exercise when pronouncing with certainty our understanding of His Ways. At best we are myopic visionaries.

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## HAFTORAH - 1 KINGS 2:1-12

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

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

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

Finally, the haftorah concludes with the death of King David. He is buried in the City of David. Shlomo takes his father's place and the kingdom of Israel remains firmly established. ■

### STATS

12th of 54 sedras; 12 of 12 in Bereshit.  
Written on 148.33 lines (rank: 45th).  
12 parshiot, 7 open and 5 closed.  
In addition, the first part of the sedra is the end of the previous parsha from Vayigash. Vayechi is the only sedra that does not begin at a parsha break.  
85 pesukim - 44th.  
1158 words - 44th.  
4448 letters - 43rd.  
Shortest sedra in Bereishit

### MITZVOT

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

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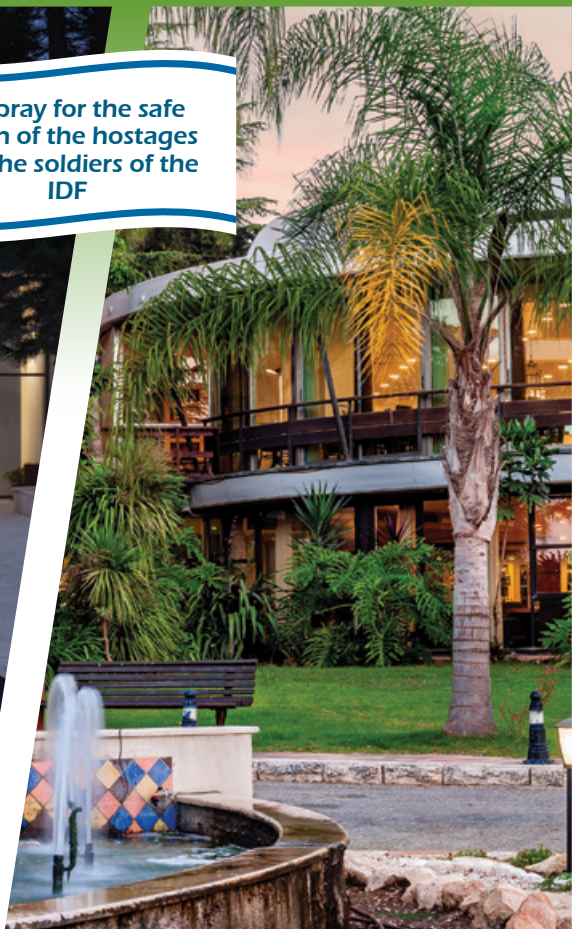
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## THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB  
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

# Each One Is One of a Kind

I was very embarrassed by her sharp rebuke. But looking back, I realize that the lesson I learned from her brief criticism was more valuable than most of my other training experiences.

It happened about forty years ago. I had the good fortune to attend an intensive workshop which was designed to teach young mental health professionals the basic skills of the method known as psychodrama. The workshop leader was a world famous psychodramatist, expert in both the complexities of the human psyche and the art of improvisational theater.

Psychodrama is a technique whereby a person's inner emotional conflicts are acted out in dramatic fashion under the direction of a skilled clinician. It is similar, but much more powerful, than what is known as role-playing.

Early on the second day of the workshop, I volunteered to play the therapist for another member of the group—let's call him Charles—who played the patient. Charles told of the challenges he was facing with certain key persons in his life. I suggested that he act out one of these conflicts in a particular fashion. I, of course, was convinced that my suggested strategy was brilliant and insightful,

until, only about two or three minutes into the exercise, the workshop leader thundered: "That's your psychodrama! That's not Charles' psychodrama!"

At that precise moment, I learned to appreciate that what was going on inside of me was based upon who I was, and was very different from what was going on within Charles' mind. Those words of rebuke taught me a lesson to remember forever: I am different from you, and you are different from me. We are all very different from each other, exquisitely and irrevocably different.

This lesson was well understood by our forefather, Jacob. In this week's Torah portion, *Parshat Vayechi*, just before Jacob dies, he blesses all of his sons and two of his grandsons. He bestows these blessings upon them separately, fully aware that no one blessing fits them all.

The Torah sums up the entire deathbed drama with these words: "...their father spoke unto them and blessed them; every one according to his blessing, he blessed them." (*Genesis 49:28*) No two blessings were alike.

I have often thought that the greatest blessing that they each received was the message: "You are special. You are not the same as your brother. You have different personalities, different strengths, different talents, and therefore you each have a different destiny."

When I read this week's Torah portion, I am struck with wonder by the dazzling array of metaphors which Jacob uses:



“unstable as water...weapons of violence...a lion’s whelp...a colt bound to a tree...the blood of grapes...the shore of the sea...a large boned donkey...a hind let loose...a bowed shoulder...a judge...a serpent on the road...a troop upon their heel...fat bread.” Diversity, uniqueness, complexity, individuality. That’s the message.

Every parent and every teacher must learn this basic lesson. Teachers and parents must treat each child individually, and must assure that each child comes to know his or her specialness.

Our sages throughout history have imparted this lesson to us. For example, Maimonides, in his fascinating review of the early life of Abraham, writes: “...and he reasoned with each and every person according to that person’s intelligence, until he convinced him of the truth.” (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Avodah Zara*, 1:3) Again, when instructing us of our duties at the Passover *seder*, he tells us that it is a *mitzvah* to relate the story of the Exodus to each child according to his or her intellectual ability. A very young child must be told stories, one with limited mental capacity must be given concrete examples, older and wiser children can be taught in a more abstract fashion. “Everything must be done according to the particular intelligence of the child.” (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Chametz U’Matza*, 7:2)

Among my favorite essays on the subject of education was the one written by the late Rabbi Elimelech Bar Shaul, once the Rabbi of Rehovot. He wrote, “If we give more to one who is only capable of receiving less, then we have given him nothing. And if we give less to one who can receive more, we have failed our mission, and worse—the

student may come to think that there is no more, or that there is no more for him.”

Giving too much to one with a lesser capacity can frustrate him irremediably. Giving too little to one with a greater capacity shortchanges him and cheats him, and worse—may alienate him forever.

Jewish mystics see human differences as but part of the Almighty’s cosmic design. Thus, Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap, a mystic in the tradition of his master, Rav Kook, writes: “There is no duplication in the universe. Just as no two people are perfectly alike, so there are no two things, in all of the universe, that are alike. Each person, like the grains of sand on the seashore, has a special quality and a special novelty.”

Mystic or realist, appreciating our differences is our vital task as Jews, as human beings, and as residents of the Almighty’s cosmos. ■

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THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

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## Grandparents

Every Friday night we re-enact one of the most moving scenes in the book of Bereishit. Jacob, reunited with Joseph, is ill. Joseph comes to visit him, bringing with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob, with deep emotion, says:

"I never even hoped to see your face... But now God has even let me see your children." (Gen. 48:11)

He blesses Joseph. Then he places his hands on the heads of the two boys.

He blessed them that day and said, "[In the time to come] Israel will use you as a blessing. They will say, 'May God make you

like Ephraim and Manasseh.'" (Gen. 48:20)

So we do to this day, with these very words. Why this blessing above all others? One commentator (Yalkut Yehudah) says it is because Ephraim and Manasseh were the first two Jewish children born in exile. So Jewish parents bless their children asking God to help them keep their identity intact despite all the temptations and distractions of Diaspora life.

I heard however a most lovely explanation, based on the Zohar, from my revered predecessor Lord Jakobovits of blessed memory. He said that though there are many instances in Torah and Tanach in which parents bless their children, this is the only example of a grandparent blessing grandchildren.

Between parents and children, he said, there are often tensions. Parents worry about their children. Children sometimes rebel against their parents. The relationship is not always smooth.

Not so with grandchildren. There the relationship is one of love untroubled by tension or anxiety. When a grandparent blesses a grandchild they do so with a full heart. That is why this blessing by Jacob to his grandchildren became the model of blessing across the generations. Anyone

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from this issue of Torah Tidbits  
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who has had the privilege of having grandchildren will immediately understand the truth and depth of this explanation.

Grandparents bless their grandchildren and are blessed by them. This phenomenon is the subject of a fascinating difference of opinion between the Babylonian Talmud and the Talmud Yerushalmi. The Babylonian Talmud says the following:

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said, "Whoever teaches their grandchildren Torah is regarded as if they had received the Torah from Mount Sinai, as it is said, 'Teach your children and your children's children.'" (Deut. 4:10-11; Kiddushin 30a)

The Talmud Yerushalmi puts it differently. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi used to listen, every Friday, to his grandson reciting the weekly parsha. One week he entered the bathhouse, and after he had begun bathing he remembered that he had not yet heard the weekly parsha from his grandson. So he immediately got up to leave the bathhouse... They asked him why he was leaving in the middle of his bathing, since the Mishnah teaches that once you have begun bathing on a Friday afternoon, you should not interrupt the process. He replied, "Is this such a small thing in your eyes? For whoever hears the parsha from his grandchild is as if he heard it directly from Mount Sinai" (Yerushalmi Shabbat 1:2).

According to the Talmud Bavli, it is a great privilege to teach your grandchildren Torah.

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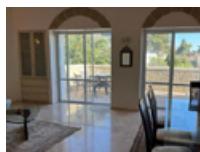
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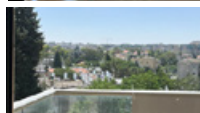
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According to the Talmud Yerushalmi, the greatest privilege is to have your grandchildren teach Torah to *you*. This is one argument about which no grandparent will have the slightest difficulty saying that both are true.

My late father, of blessed memory, had to leave school at the age of 14 to begin working to support his family, and as a result he never had the full Jewish or secular education that he would have wanted. I remember from my childhood that - as we walked home from shul on a Shabbat morning - I would be full of questions. "Dad, why do we do this?" "Why did we do that?" My father always gave me the same answer, and that was the answer that changed my life. He said, "Jonathan, I didn't have a Jewish education, so I can't answer your questions. But one day, you will have the education that I didn't have. And when that happens, *you* will teach *me* the answers to those questions."

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The greatest gift you can give a child or a grandchild is what you empower and allow them to teach you. As parents, we strive to give our children everything. There's one thing we sometimes forget to give them which is the chance for them to give something to us. And that, frankly, is the most important thing there is.

Give your children and your grandchildren the space to give to you. Let them become your teachers and let them be your inspiration. In doing so you will help them become the people that they were destined to be, and you will help create the blessings God wants them to become.

With an exquisite sense of symmetry, just as we begin Shabbat with a grandparent's blessing so we end it, in Maariv, with the words:

May you live to see your children's children - peace be on Israel. (Psalm 128:6)

What is the connection between grandchildren and peace? Surely this, that those who think about grandchildren care about the future, and those who think about the future make peace. It is those who constantly think of the past, of slights and humiliations and revenge, who make war.

Jacob lives a life fraught with conflict and troubles. He knew of revenge and war, of grudges and strife. But he died serene, and full of blessings. And before he died, he blessed his children and grandchildren.

To bless grandchildren and be blessed by them, to teach them and to be taught by them – these are the highest Jewish privilege and the serene end of Jacob's troubled life. ■

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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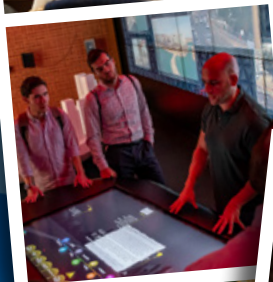
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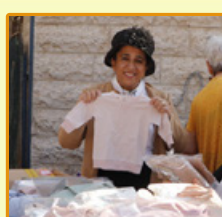


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# “Bechorah” or “Beracha”

The completion of Sefer Breishit marks the conclusion of an era - the era of the patriarchs. And, together with that we find the resolution of the book's family struggles of b'chirah, b'rachah and b'chorah – who would be chosen, the one to carry on the Abrahamic blessing and the one to don the leadership mantle of the firstborn. Ya'akov's brachot resolves those struggles, clarifying that, in actuality, ALL of his sons would be chosen and ALL would carry on the Abrahamic blessing. But what about leadership? What about the bechorah? Would it be Reuven, Jacob's first-born? Would it be Yosef, Rachel's firstborn? Or would it be one of the other sons who were firstborn to their respective mothers?

Ironically, as we look back upon Sefer Breishit, we realize that the ongoing struggle for the b'chorah had, in the end, no impact upon the choice of leadership whatsoever! Neither Avraham's first son nor Yitzchak's eldest was granted that role. And, in this week's parasha, Ya'akov, too, carries on that “tradition” when he blesses a “non-bechor”, his fourth son, Yehuda, with the promise of “Lo yasur shevet m'Yehuda” – “the ruling scepter will never depart from Yehuda.”

The events depicted in this week's haftarah reflect the same ongoing struggle that went through Sefer Breishit, i.e., who would don the mantle of leadership? But in our haftarah, the

question was not “who would “eventually” lead” or “whose family would, in the future, become the prominent one”. The decision as to who would lead was one of immediate consequence. The “leader” now would become the next King, the successor to David. And, as such, it was the entire nation that would be affected and the entire nation that needed to know who the next ruler would be.

No one knew for sure.

So, consider the following: David himself was not the firstborn; he was, in fact, the youngest of Yishai's sons. David's firstborn, Amnon, who was assumed to be heir to the throne, ravished his own (half?) sister, Tamar, and was never punished or chastised. Avshalom, David's next eldest son (of his mother), avenged the rape of Tamar by murdering Amnon and, subsequently, fleeing Jerusalem. Yet, some years later, Avshalom was brought back to the city and soon gathered supporters, plotting to remove his father from the throne. After his successful coup, he took his father's wives for his own and pursued the escaping (former) King, hoping to assassinate him. It was during that civil war, a battle to murder David, that Avshalom was killed. And yet, that was not David's final familial struggle for, as our haftarah relates, David faced the challenge of his next of the firstborn sons, Adoniyah, who had gathered his own supporters and proclaimed himself the new King.

So, if you were David, would you look for another firstborn to succeed you?

Please note - the haftarah depicts the palace intrigue caused by the fact that very few were



aware of the King's – and Hashem's - promise to place Shlomo upon the throne. I would submit that David's reluctance to publicize this choice of Shlomo may well have been the result of David's fear of yet another uprising from within the royal family. Ironically, the very uprising he feared was realized **because** of the secrecy of David's choice of successor. It explains explain why Avshalom was able to gather a large following, including many of David's officers, to crown Avshalom - an act which, had David's decision been known, would have been an act of treason, "mored bamalchut", a crime punishable by death! Indeed, when they DID hear of David's decision to have Shlomo anointed, the bulk of Avshalom's followers scattered and supported the new King.

The haftorah's clear message for the future, and one we learn from the haftorah the parasha as well, is that birth does not confer leadership. Leaders must be those who care about the nation more than the self, one who weighs the opinions of others but can decide firmly and one who recognizes their own limitations and their own mistakes.

Leaders might be chosen by G-d...or not, they might be divinely inspired...or not, or they might simply be caring individuals who rise to leadership.

But they do not become leaders merely through birth.

In the age of democracy, it is essential for those who are led to recognize what makes a leader.

And to choose wisely. ■

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# Chesed & Emet

וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת אֲלֵנָּה תִּקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרַיִם  
(בראשית מז:כט).....

.....and you shall deal with me with lovingkindness and truth; do not bury me now in Egypt. (Bereshit 47:29).

Prior to his death, Yaakov Avinu instructs Yosef to bury him in Israel. Notwithstanding that Yaakov buried Yosef's mother Rachel in Bet Lechem, Yaakov asks Yosef to bury him in Me'arat Ha'Machpelah. The language Yaakov uses seems a bit strange. He says – וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת - *deal with me with lovingkindness and truth*. Usually, *chesed* and *emet* are mutually exclusive characteristics. Emet is truth. Chesed is when someone acts sympathetic to another. Although we may deserve a punishment, we ask God to overlook the truth and treat us with *chesed*. To have mercy on us – *lifnim meshurat hadin*.

If that is so, then why does Yaakov ask Yosef to perform both *Emet* and *Chesed* for him simultaneously?

## RASHI – CHESSED SHEL EMET

Rashi interprets that pasuk as referring to an act of lovingkindness that is performed on behalf of a dead person. Such an act is referred to as *חֶסֶד שֶׁל אֱמֶת*. It is a sort of “true” act of *chesed*, because there is no expectation of anything in return. When one does a favor for another, he may expect that if he is in the same predicament in the future the other individual would return the favor. He sort of “owes me one”. However, when an act is performed for the deceased, there is no expectation of any “payback”. It is therefore the truest form of *chesed* - *chesed shel emet*.

## DUBNER MAGGID

### – CHESSED TRANSFORMED TO EMET

The Dubner Maggid has another suggestion. In Micha there is a pasuk that states:  
תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם..... (מיכה ז:כ)

You shall give the truth of Yaakov, the loving-kindness of Avraham..... (Micha 7:20).

Yaakov is known for his *midah* of *emet* (truth) and Avraham is known for his *midah* of *chesed*. What is the meaning of this pasuk? In his typical form, the Dubner Maggid offers a *mashul* to reveal his intention. There was a rich man who wanted to provide his poor friend with a thousand gold coins. However, the wealthy individual was concerned that when it comes time to pay, he may change his mind. In order to ensure that he would carry through with his good intention, the rich man signed a contract



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where he committed to pay the poor individual the thousand gold coins. This is an event that was initiated with *chesed* - providing charity to a poor individual, but then he obligated himself contractually, and he converted the voluntary charitable contribution, an act of *chesed* into *emet* - truth- since such a payment is now a contractual obligation that is legally binding.

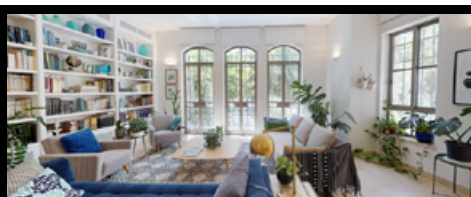
This is what God did to Avraham and Yaakov. Hashem told Avraham that he will receive Eretz Yisrael. That was an act of *chesed*. God was not obligated in any way to grant Avraham anything. Later God promises Yaakov that Eretz Yisrael will belong to his offspring *והאדמה אשר אתה שוכב עליה לך אתננה ולירעך*. God now turned his good intentions (*chesed*) into a promise – a binding commitment – of *emet*.

Back to our pasuk - Yaakov asked Yosef to bury him in Eretz Yisrael, as a *chesed*. Yosef did not have to carry his father's body from Egypt to Israel. This was indeed a favor that Yaakov desired of Yosef. However, Yaakov then asks Yosef to promise that he will not bury him in Egypt. Yaakov makes Yosef promise so that it becomes an obligation and Yaakov will be sure that his request would be fulfilled.

The Dubner Maggid cleverly explains how Yaakov can request that Yosef perform both *chesed* and *emet* on his behalf. It also provides us with a new insight into a pasuk we recite in *ובא לציון* on a daily basis. *תתן אמת ליעקב חסד לאברהם*. May we emulate our Avot and internalize these two characteristics of *chesed* and *emet*. ■

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## Source of Salvation

Before Yaakov Avinu takes leave of this world, he blesses each of his sons with powerful prophetic words. Yet there is one verse that clearly stands out of context. At the end of the *brachah* to Dan, Yaakov Avinu offers a tefillah, “*Li’shuatcha kiviti Hashem* -I hope for your salvation, O Hashem.” What is the significance behind this cryptic statement?

Rashi understands that the *brachah* Yaakov gives to Dan includes a reference to Shimshon and the experiences that he will undergo. When Yaakov Avinu prophetically saw the end of Shimshon’s life, he offered this prayer in hope that Hashem would come to his aid.

Midrash Rabbah similarly explains that Yaakov Avinu felt that Shimshon had the potential to be the Mashiach. When Yaakov saw Shimshon’s tragic end, he davened for the Jewish people’s ultimate salvation. Indeed, we have been directed to follow Yaakov’s example as the *Gemara (Shabbos 31a)* notes that a person will be asked after 120 years whether he anticipated the final redemption. Rav Goldstein in *Sha’arei Chayim* explains that what a person yearns for reflects his core values and indicates what is most important to him. One who yearns for *geulah* sees the world as moving

towards the goal of bringing Hashem’s glory into this world, and his every action and behavior will express this momentum.

The Tosher Rebbe in *Avodat Avodah* offers an explanation based on the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. Not only did Yaakov Avinu want to reveal the time of the *geulah*, but he also wanted to teach us how to achieve that ultimate objective. Both of these desires were withheld from Yaakov Avinu. Nevertheless, he was able to share one means of attaining this goal – that of yearning for redemption. This *pasuk* is Yaakov Avinu’s gift to us, both on a national and on an individual level as well. One who seeks redemption must yearn for it.

Every day, in the *Shemoneh Esrei*, we say, “*et Tzemach David ... ki li’shuatcha kivinu kol hayom* – may the offshoot of Your servant David soon flower ... for we hope for your salvation all day.” *Be’er Heitiv* shares a teaching of the *Arizal* - one should feel a longing for the *geulah* when saying these words. This is a fulfillment of the Talmud’s dictum to long for redemption on the simplest level. He further cites the *Mahari Tzemach* who directs anyone who is experiencing a particular difficulty to have it in mind when saying this tefillah as well. Every personal challenge is the outgrowth of our *galut*, echoing that we are not living in the ideal redemptive reality. This section in our tefillah helps us to focus on directing our longing toward Hashem, realizing that He is the only source of salvation and redemption. ■





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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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## RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL

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

# Gather Round

Rav Yisroel Belsky, Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaath, was a leading halachic authority and hands-on *posek*, a talented musician, well versed in “secular” knowledge, and saw Hashem’s wisdom expressed in all areas of human inquiry and creativity. He interpreted everything through the prism of Torah, and vibrant, alive Yiddishkeit.

Once, Rav Belsky was on a *tiyul* with a group of students to Niagara Falls, and they were standing on the deck at the Cave of the Winds, gazing at the unbelievably massive torrents of water and the pools below. A *talmid* turned to the Rav and asked for a *Torahdik* interpretation of what they were beholding: “Rebbe, what should a ben Torah be thinking right now?” The other *talmidim* gathered around to hear the Rav over the roaring falls, and he began to speak with great earnestness: “Well, that depends! If you’re a *Litvishe bachur*, you might look at the pools below and ask yourself if these waters are *kosher l’tevilah*, halachically fit for ritual immersion.

“If you’re a *Chassidishe bachur*, and are more mystically inclined, you might hear the waters singing *shirah* to Hashem — “*Mikolos mayim rabim...*” Or perhaps you’d imagine the *mayim rabim*, the ‘many waters’ described in *Shir HaShirim* that can never extinguish the love between the

Ribbono Shel Olam and Klal Yisrael.

“If you’re a *talmid* who is inclined toward the study of *Mussar*, you might be focusing on the fact that on the surface, the waters attract a lot of attention as they are moving wildly and making a lot of noise, but below the surface, where the water is very deep, it is silent and still.” With a big smile, Rav Belsky concluded, “That’s what a ben Torah should be thinking about!”

In the dramatic, final moments of Yaakov Avinu’s life, our forefather gathers his children and delivers a timeless, parting message that remains relevant today. Instead of having a few quiet, private moments with each of his children, Yaakov makes the point of blessing, rebuking and addressing all of the *Shevatim* publicly, in front of each other. Each one of the *Shevatim* not only heard an assessment of their own strengths and weaknesses, but also became aware of their siblings’ specific *tafkid*, their personal role in Klal Yisrael.

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֶאֱסֹפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם  
אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֲתֶכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים:  
הִקְבְּצוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב וְשִׁמְעוּ אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֲבִיכֶם:

“Yaakov called for his sons and said, ‘Gather together and I will tell you what will happen to you at the End of Days... Sons of Yaakov, gather round and listen; listen to Yisrael your father.’” (49:1-2)

According to the students of the Holy Ba’al Shem Tov, the double language

used by Yaakov Avinu in our Parsha to instruct the *shevatim* to הקבצו, “gather together,” stresses the fact that Yaakov Avinu wanted to use this powerful moment to instill in his children, and in all of us, a critical message: the individual contribution of every member of Klal Yisrael is significant, and no one *shevet*, person or group, is more important than another.

Reb Nosson of Breslov in *Likutei Hala-chos* (Shomer Sachar, 2) taught:

ומיזם בריאת העולם לא היו עדן שני צדיקים וקשרים אמתיים שנים לגמרי בכל תנועותיהם אף על פי ששניהם הולכים בדרך אחד ויונקים מר אחד, אף על פי כן יש חלוקים רבים בדרךיהם והנהגותיהם.

“Since the Creation of the World, there were no two *tzadikim*, or true, upright Jews, who were completely identical in all their actions, even when the two walked on the same path and derived nurture from one *rav*. There are nonetheless many differences in their paths and customs.

Reb Nosson then describes great *tzadikim*, students of the same Rebbe (the Baal Shem Tov)... who argued much about their paths. One would travel to the city and preach to the public and another would sit in his home. One would greatly extend his davening and cry out with fiery excitement. The other would daven quietly with the congregation as most people do. One would study Torah abundantly, while the other would be involved in abundant acts of *tzedakah* and freeing captives. Each served Hashem according to his own spiritual characteristics and the root of his soul. ...וזה עקר שעשועיו יתברך שיש לו צדיקים וקשרים הרבה בעולם שכל אחד ואחד עושה לו נחת רוח ותענוג ושעשוע מיוחד מה שאין בחברו,

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עם ישראל חי

**db**  
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שזהו בחינת ישראל אשר בך אתפאר שהם כלולים מגוון סגיאין. כי אין הקדוש ברוך הוא עושה שני דברים שוין רק כל אחד יש לו דרך ונתיב כפי שרשו בראון העליון

“...God’s greatest delight is that He has so many *tzadikim* and good Jews in the world, each one giving Him special pleasure not found in the next. This is the meaning of the *pasuk*: “Israel, in whom I am adorned” (*Yeshayah*, 49:3). Jews are composed of such a spectrum of colors. God does not make the same thing or person twice. Every individual has his own path according to the root of his soul in the Supernal Will.”

May we recognize the uniquely delightful Godliness of every Jew — including ourselves — and may we always have the blessing of unity within our diversity, as children gathered around our one Father. *Od Avinu chai; Am Yisrael chai!* ■

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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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הודו לה' כי טוב

## Real Life Rescues



## Saving A Member of My Shul From Cardiac Arrest

An Ashdod man in his 60s suffered a sudden cardiac  
arrest at his residence on Tuesday afternoon.  
Relatives quickly called emergency services.

United Hatzalah volunteer EMT Shlomo Moskovitz  
was at his home nearby when he received the  
alert on his communications device. He swiftly  
responded in his car and arrived at the house in  
under 2 minutes.

Upon finding the man, whom he recognized as  
a fellow congregant at his shul, slumped on the  
couch without a pulse, Moskovitz expertly moved  
him to the floor and retrieved his defibrillator.  
Directing United Hatzalah EMT David Shtisel, who  
had just arrived, to initiate chest compressions,  
Moskovitz attached the defibrillator to the patient.  
The defibrillator did not recommend a shock, so  
Moskovitz delivered rescue breaths to the patient  
via a bag-valve mask and oxygen while Shtisel  
continued administering chest compressions.  
Together, they continued CPR, alternating with other  
first responders who arrived shortly thereafter.

After 25 minutes, an Advanced Life Support  
ambulance team arrived and connected a heart  
monitor, but still, no shock was advised. The  
paramedic administered medications while the  
volunteers continued CPR. Thankfully, after 45  
minutes of intense effort, the patient's pulse  
returned. Subsequently, the patient was rapidly  
transported to the hospital for further care.

Reflecting on the incident, Moskovitz expressed  
how glad he was to assist the patient. "It is  
always gratifying to save a life, but it is especially  
rewarding to do what I can to help a congregant in  
my shul, from a family I know very well."







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# SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Our Sedra opens with Yaakov Avinu imparting a sacred request of Yosef.

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂר שָׁנָה וַיְחִי מִי־יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חַיָּי שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמָאתַיִם שָׁנָה וַיִּקְרָבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוֹת וַיִּקְרָא לְבָנוֹ לְיוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם־נָא מָצְאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׁים־נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יָרְכִי וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וְאָמַת אֶל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְשִׁכַּבְתִּי עִם־אֲבֹתִי וְנָשְׂאתָנִי מִמִּצְרַיִם וַתִּקְבְּרֵנִי בְּקִבְרֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵנֹכִי אַעֲשֶׂה כְּדִבְרְךָ:

*And Yaakov lived seventeen years in the land of Egypt, so that the span of Yaakov's life came to one hundred and forty-seven years. (29) And when the time approached for Yisrael to die, he summoned his son Yosef and said to him, "Do me this favor, place your hand under my thigh as a pledge of your steadfast loyalty: please do not bury me in Egypt. (30) When I lie down with my fathers, take me up from Egypt and bury me in their burial-place." He (Yosef) replied, "I will do as you have spoken."*

The *Daat Zekeinim* cites an interesting Midrash, in explaining this exchange between father and son.

אֲנִי אַעֲשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֶךָ, "I am going to do in accordance with your instructions." According to the Midrash, Yaakov's request to be buried in the land of Canaan inspired Joseph to make the same request of his brothers when the time came for him to die- אֲנִי אַעֲשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֶךָ - I too, will do in accordance of your words- I too, will insist to be buried in Eretz Yisrael. We find that Joseph indeed made his brothers swear that his bones would be taken with the Jewish People at the time of the redemption,

*and Moshe personally, was involved in locating his casket which was carried with the Jewish People for 40 years until eventually being interred near Shechem in the tribal territory of Ephraim, one of his sons...*

Many have questioned this midrashic interpretation. Here, Yaakov is making a solemn request of his beloved son, his son who is now in a position of influence, to ensure he will be interred in Eretz Yisrael, and rather than simply agree to his father's request, Yosef adds - I too will request and insist that my brothers' families will bring my bones to be buried in Eretz Yisrael. Why does Yosef leave this instruction for his brothers and their families and not for his own children? Furthermore, why does Yosef specifically instruct that his bones be brought to Eretz Yisrael and not simply say bury me in Eretz Yisrael?

**Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, *shlita*** offers a very interesting explanation of this insight of the *Daat Zekeinim* which addresses each of these questions. Rav Wolfson points to numerous *maamarei Chazal* that state that there are three partners in the creation of life - *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is the source of the *neshama*, the mother is the source of the flesh and tendons, and **the father is the source of the bones...**

Rabbi Wolfson explains that when Yosef

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HaTzadik answers that he, too, will do as his father instructed, that he will insist that his bones are interred in Eretz Yisrael, he is in essence declaring to his father, that since his bones emanate at their source from his father, that his bones represent an extension of his father's *guf*, and therefore when his father asks him to promise that Yosef will see to it that Yaakov is interred in Eretz Yisrael, Yosef not only promised that his father's own remains will be taken up to Eretz Yisrael, but that his own bones, which are in essence an extension of Yaakov's body, will also be interred in Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Wolfson explains that Yosef therefore instructs his brothers and their descendants to ensure that his bones are buried in Eretz Yisrael, as just as he has a mandate to honor his father's wishes, that mandate of *Kibud Av* applies to each of the brothers as well!

Just as they must honor Yaakov by interring his own body in *Ma'arat Hamachpeila*, they must follow suit, and their bones, which are an extension of Yaakov must also be interred in Eretz Yisrael as the ultimate act of complete *Kibud Av*.

Rav Wolfson concludes that each of us must realize the extent to which the mandate of honoring our parents extends, and strive to fulfill this sacred call. ■

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## GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

# Why is Moshiach Nicknamed *Shiloh*?

Addressing the Messianic era, the Rambam cautions against extensive inquiry of its details: “the specifics of Moshiach will be evident only after he arrives. [Furthermore] these matters should not dominate our thoughts or study as they don’t augment deeper religious feeling (such as ahavat Hashem or yirat Shamayim) ...instead [of probing Messianic details], a person should wait patiently for Moshiach’s arrival.” As the specific details of Moshiach are murky, and additionally, do not deepen personal piety, they should remain peripheral to more substantive religious thought and Torah study.

The Rambam’s aversion to probing Messianic details is based, in part, upon his general rationalist tendencies. As the chief rationalizer of Torah, the Rambam also adopted a “rational” view of the Messianic era. The final chapter of history will evolve progressively, rather than bursting upon history through an apocalyptic overhaul. Additionally, the Messianic period itself will not be fundamentally different from our own. For the Rambam, studying Messianic details was not a central feature of religious identity. Unwavering belief in Moshiach yes, analysis and exploration of details no.

In general, independent of the Rambam,

our Mesorah frowned upon excessive scrutiny of Messianic matters. Too much focus upon the future can lead to runaway Messianic fervor and can also raise unrealistic expectations which, when unfulfilled, can be dispiriting.

### YA'AKOV'S BLIND SPOT

This tradition discouraging meticulous study of the Messianic experience stems from the story of Ya'akov on his deathbed. Gathering his children for a final meeting, Ya'akov explicitly declares his intent to provide a roadmap about the end of history or אחרית הימים. Yet, despite his ambitions, his final oration omits any direct Messianic reference.

Commenting on this discrepancy, Chazal remarked **ביקש יעקב לגלות את הקץ ונסתם ממנו**. Ya'akov's aim to map the Messianic era was foiled. His prophetic spirit faded.

### A NICKNAME

Though, ultimately, Ya'akov didn't supply specific details, he did provide one oblique reference to Moshiach. He blessed Yehuda with enduring Jewish monarchy **לא יסור שבט מיהודה**. Once Dovid Hamelech ascended the throne, intrusion by non-Yehudah tribes is considered illegal usurpation. In fact, according to the Ramban, the Chashmonaim heroes of Chanukah gravely sinned



by unlawfully ascending the throne, and were severely punished.

In delivering monarchy to Yehuda, Ya'akov extends this award until the arrival of Moshiach, whom he cryptically refers to as *Shiloh*

עד כי יבוא שילה ולו יקהת עמים

Ya'akov affirms that the tribe of Yehuda will enjoy Jewish monarchy up until, and including the era of Moshiach, whom he labels as *Shiloh*. Ya'akov's fascinating nickname for Moshiach encodes various Messianic messages.

### DEBUNKING FALSE PROPHETS

Unfortunately, Ya'akov's prediction that Jewish monarchy extends until Moshiach, was appropriated by Christianity in support of their spurious claim that "Yoshke" was the Messiah. Historically, Jewish monarchy terminated right around the time that Christianity emerged. For Christians, this pasuk from the "Old Testament" certified that the Messiah had already arrived.

Throughout the medieval period this pasuk was a focus of heated theological debates between Christian and Jew, and many Rishonim debunked this false reading. For example, the Rashbah proved that the Christians were employing improper grammar: עד כי יבוא שילה doesn't mean that Jewish monarchy will extend *until Shiloh* arrives, implying the juxtaposition of Moshiach with the discontinuation of Jewish monarchy. Instead, the term עד כי יבוא שילה, connotes that *Shiloh's* Messianic reign will last *eternally*. The word "עד" should be read as "לעד" meaning that Messianic monarchy will last forever. The term עד doesn't denote *when* the Messianic era will commence but rather its *duration*. The Rashbah's response

defused the erroneous Christian reading, but didn't directly *refute* it.

Others deciphered the actual word *Shiloh* in a manner which directly contradicts Christian misreading. For example, the S'forno associates the word *Shiloh* with the similar term of שלווה which portrays tranquility and calm. Moshiach or *Shiloh* will launch an era of universal peace, leading to a complete cessation of hostilities. The rise of Christianity certainly did not silence warfare. If anything, it detonated centuries of holy wars and horrible bloodshed in the name of religion. The *Shiloh* of international serenity has, obviously, not yet arrived.

Alternatively, a midrash links the term *Shiloh* to the image of a womb. The related word שליה literally means a placenta, but is often employed as a general reference to childbirth. This meaning of *Shiloh* suggests that Moshiach will be born of a womb or, through natural childbirth. This *Shiloh* allusion repudiates any crazed notion of supernatural conception of Moshiach.

### A POWERFUL BUT DANGEROUS IDEA

Judaism introduced the notion of redemption to human consciousness. History has a *beginning* and an *end*. It begins with creation and concludes with the terminus we call the Messianic era. This powerful idea stoked the human imagination and galvanized progress and achievement. Our world isn't static, but can be redeemed- both spiritually and materially.

As the first person to explicitly mention אחרית הימים and to introduce the notion of historical transformation, Ya'akov also opened a can of worms, allowing other religions to depict their self-announced prophets as Messiahs. The powerful concept

of Messianic redemption enabled other cultures to distort the Torah's intent. To counter this danger, and to renounce these false claims, Ya'akov coins the phrase *Shiloh* as a nickname for Moshiach. This phrase insinuates that Moshiach will launch an era of peace and, also, that Moshiach himself will be born through natural conception. The name *Shiloh* is an abiding reminder that Moshiach has yet to arrive. Religions which claim otherwise are fraudulent.

### INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM

Additionally, by referring to Moshiach as *Shiloh*, Ya'akov wasn't merely disavowing false religious claims. He was also describing the nature and texture of the Messianic era. This final chapter of history will be characterized by peace and cooperation rather than violence and hostility. The only letter missing from the body of Ya'akov's blessings is the letter "ז". As Rabeinu Bachye, the 13th century Spanish student of the Rashbah claimed, instruments of war or כלי מלחמה will go extinct during the peaceful utopian Messianic period.

Moreover, an additional gist of the word *Shiloh* depicts the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the Messianic era. Rashi associates the word *Shiloh* with the phrase "*Shai-lo*" which refers to the gifts or adoration which Moshiach will receive from a world which suddenly appreciates the Jewish mission. Essentially, the period of Moshiach will be characterized by *Shalva* or complete cessation of hostilities, as well as

by *Shai-lo* or universal acknowledgement of our people and its divine message.

### DON'T HATE

Though Ya'akov broadcasts to eternity, he also speaks directly with his children, who are about to begin a harsh exile. They will face genocidal hatred and horrific violence. The criminal perpetrators of these horrible crimes will be erased from this earth and swallowed by the sea. However, his children must not become misanthropic or disdainful of humanity. The end of days does not produce the extinction of the human race, but rather its redemption. *Shiloh* will launch a world which clearly sees Hashem, recognizes us as His chosen people, and lives in peaceful coexistence.

Currently, we face a similar challenge. We were victimized by horrific and ghastly violence, suffering a one-day Shoah. Baruch Hashem we have responded and are gradually eliminating the horrible barbarians who committed these crimes.

This war has uncovered many enemies of our people- from the battlefields of Azza to USA campus squads, to the capitals of Europe. We cannot let their vicious hatred fill us with contempt for humanity. If this war will help us secure our presence in our Homeland and will advance the Messianic era we so dearly covet. The murderers and their accomplices will be eliminated. The rest will be reeducated.

Moshiach will come. *Shiloh* will come. We will wait. ■

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## HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA  
SHMIDMAN



# Writing an Ethical Will

HAFTORAH VAYECHI

1 KINGS 2:1-12

In this week's Torah reading and Haftorah we read of the directives of dying parents to their children. In the parsha Yaakov Avinu blesses his children while in the haftorah King David delivers parting words to his son Shlomo. In today's vernacular we call these deathbed directives "ethical wills". The content of an ethical will strives to offer cross-generational messages to loved ones in effort to carry one's own mission forward and leave a living legacy behind.

The words of Yaakov and David were meant not only for their children but for their descendants generations later, namely messages for us. Thinking of their words as a message in a bottle, their messages surface thousands of years later. These are ideas that we can tap into as we try to find resilience and strength in our life journey today.

In our Haftorah, we read about David's parting words to his twelve year old son.

King David first addresses the reality of loss to his soon-to-be grieving child. He shares the realities of life but in doing so, provides strength and encouragement. One can understand the following verse descriptively rather than as a directive. *אֲנֹכִי הֵלֶךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל-הָאָרֶץ וְחִזְקָתָהּ וְהִי יֵת לִאִישׁ: I am going the ways of the land and you will be strong and you will be a man.* Knowing that someone believes in you and anticipates your success provides strength and encouragement at a point of loss and struggle. "You got this, you will pull through" is a message that Shlomo could hold on to as he was thrust into his new role as king.

Many years ago Rabbi Frand gave a teshuva lecture in the Young Israel of Flatbush and encouraged the participants to write an ethical will. A couple in the audience, Belle and Hilbert Chasky took up the charge and wrote a letter to their children and grandchildren.

The letter they wrote demonstrates their unswerving commitment to Yiddishkeit in a beautiful, profound and uplifting way. Their ethical will was shared with me by their grandson, Dr. Moshe Chasky when his Grandpa Hilbert passed away. We had the good fortune of hosting Grandpa Hilbert in our home and saw his faith in and love of Yiddishkeit firsthand. Below are some of his heartfelt words:

*We feel that we are blessed with children and their spouses and grandchildren who are going in the right derech and will*

♥ Mazal Tov to ♥

**David & Sarah Maslow and family**  
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*continue to make us proud, knowing that the baton will be carried into the next generation. This is what happiness is all about - not only material wealth - but the desire to use your assets and spend wisely.*

*We have always tried to show you how to run and do a mitzvah like enjoying going to minyan and preparing for Shabbat and lighting the Shabbat and Yom Tov candles with love. Children, as you struggle through life, you will encounter many temptations and challenges and will have to make many decisions. In order not to fall into the Yetzer Hara trap of misdeeds, just think of a respected rabbi or aged grandparents and their image will assist you in making the correct decision.*

*The Ribono Shel Olam guides us every day and we hope that you continue to emulate those Torah values that we hold so dear and that you will be happy and satisfied with your achievements.*

In a time when we feel unmoored in a very unstable world, thinking through our core values and transcendent life messages can anchor us and provide the grounding we need. Taking the time to write messages to future generations will not only prove vital in years to come, but exceptionally valuable today. ■

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# TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SHABBOS

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI  
Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



## Shalom Aleichem

*Occasionally, it happens. My daughters and I haven't quite finished setting the table for Shabbos yet and my husband is about to return from shul. We quickly lock the door and rush to get the table ready. When we hear a knock on the door, one of the younger kids runs to tell Abba that he can't come in yet, we need a few more minutes. One might ask - why can't he just come in and help? But he can't ... because there are two malachim (angels) escorting him and we wouldn't want them to see that we are not ready for Shabbos.*

When you think about it, this is a very intriguing idea. What exactly does this mean? Not only that - when we finally do allow everyone to come in, we sit down at the Shabbos table and begin to sing a song to welcome these *malachim* – Shalom Aleichem. Written in Tzfat in the 1600's, Shalom Aleichem is a beautiful nostalgic song that takes us right into the Shabbos meal. But if you take a moment to think about the words, the words are a bit perplexing – ברכוני לשלום - how can we ask *malachim* to bless us? צאתכם לשלום - Why do we tell them to leave just a few minutes after we just welcomed them?

Let's start at the beginning. **Gemara**

**Shabbos 119b** explains that two *malachei hasharet* escort a person home from shul to his house – one good and one bad. When they arrive at his home, if they find the candles lit, the table set, and the beds made, the good *malach* says – יהי רצון שתהא – כן לשבת אחרת, may it be Hashem's will that next week your Shabbos should also be like this, and the bad *malach* is forced to answer Amen. If on the other hand, the house is not ready for Shabbos, then the bad *malach* says may it be like this next Shabbos as well and the good *malach* is forced to answer Amen.

While on the surface, this seems like a cute children's story, it actually contains some very deep messages. Who are these escorting angels? According to many, a person is always surrounded by escorting angels who protect him on a daily basis. But just like Yaakov Avinu received new escorting *malachim* as he left Eretz Yisrael and when he returned to Eretz Yisrael, we too, need new *malachim* as we enter into the realm of Shabbos. The job of these *malachim* is to ease us into this new level of Kedusha. They enter into our home and we welcome them – שלום עליכם מלאכי השרת - we are so happy that you have helped us to enter into this special realm.

בואכם לשלום מלאכי השלום – May your coming be in peace, *malachim* of peace. May you find that our home is peaceful.

ברכוני לשלום - We then ask the *malachim* for a bracha. While the song of Shalom

Aleichem is quite widespread, there are actually some poskim who forbid singing this song because it is problematic to beseech *malachim* instead of turning to Hashem. But others explain that there is no issue here – we are turning towards the *malachim* as the emissaries of Hashem. ממלך מלכי המלכים - the extra מ here is to remind us that everything that the *malachim* do for us is coming directly from the Source, from the King of kings.

And what is the bracha that they give us? Not a bracha of health or wealth, but a bracha that we should continue in the direction that we are going in. Ultimately, whether we are able to experience the kedusha of Shabbos, is all in our hands. If we put in the correct efforts and get ready for Shabbos properly, that kedusha can come in. And the biggest bracha that we can receive is the strength to continue this way next Shabbos.

To illustrate, I'll bring in a personal story. One of my children has been having some trouble in school - he's been getting bored, misbehaving, and not doing his school-work. I had a talk with him about the importance of doing well and succeeding in life and then we made a chart together to make sure he does everything he needs to do every day. At the end of each day, we review the chart together.

What's his bracha/prize? I could give him a treat or a toy (and I will, just to keep him on track) but that's not the real prize. The bracha I give him every day is that he should be able to take what he's accomplished and to do it again tomorrow. Ultimately, whether he succeeds is in his hands. He just needs some סייעתא דשמיא

to give him the strength and resolve to get to his goal.

The *malachim* could give us a different bracha for having gotten ready for Shabbos properly, but the ultimate bracha is the ability to continue what we've started, and bring the Shabbos kedusha in every single week.

צאתכם לשלום – Once we've gotten this motivational push from the *malachim*, it's time for them to move on. We don't need them anymore because as we said before, this is really about us. The *malachim* escorted us in but now we can continue from here on our own Shabbos journey. ■

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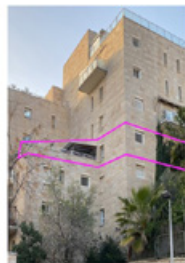
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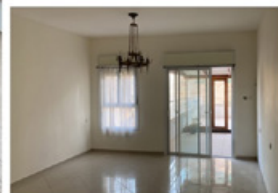
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## The Scaly Armor of Fish

Of all the episodes recorded in the first book of the Torah, the story of Yosef is accorded the most length and detail. The fraternal conflict, the stints of imprisonment, and the sudden rise to power, and the dreams of many personae span almost a third of the Book of Genesis. No single Patriarch or Matriarch is allotted nearly that much space. Yosef's tragedies and triumphs must have great relevance for our own lives.

One of Yosef's essential characteristics is revealed in the blessings his father bestows on Ephraim and Menashe:

He blessed Yosef and said, "...may the angel who redeems me from all evil bless the youths. May they be called by my name and the name of my forefathers Avraham and Yitzchak, and may they multiply abundantly like fish, in the midst of the Land." (Genesis 48:15-16).

On the interesting mention of fecund fish, Rashi cites the opinion that fish are "unaffected by the evil eye."<sup>1</sup> In the original, the Talmud explains that fish in the ocean are covered by water so that the evil

eye does not affect them.<sup>2</sup> What exactly is this evil eye, and why are Yosef's progeny impervious to it?

While some commentators explain the evil eye in mystical terms, the mystic Rav



Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook somewhat unexpectedly presented a rational account. As social beings we are hard-wired to constantly assess how we are faring in the estimation of others, and consciously or subconsciously adapt. Those around us, particularly those people we associate with regularly, partially shape our decisions and behavior. Rav Kook teaches that these detri-

mental social pressures, often communicated with stares or glares, winks or wincing, are the "evil eye." They induce or force us to follow the crowd rather than stand by our own principles or deeply held beliefs.<sup>3</sup>

Fish live their entire lives under the waves, unmoved by the storms above or terrestrial goings-on. Yosef was similarly self-assured and determined. His self-esteem helped him weather the withering

2. *Berachot* 20a.

3. *Ein Ayah*, *Berachot* 9:62.

1. Rashi on Genesis 48:16, s.v. וַיִּדְגּוּ.



judgment of others and the active opposition they mounted. He persisted in the face of his brothers' ridicule, resisted the sweet nothings of Potiphar's wife, and assisted his fellow inmates with their troubling dreams. He dared to interpret Pharaoh's dreams when everyone else had met with failure. His accomplishments are a testament to the calm of an inner world, on which cutting glances made no impression. Yaakov blessed his grandsons to be like Yosef, so that they would not feel the irresistible gravitational pull of those in their orbit or be affected by the "evil eye" that demands conformity.

In our age, it is common knowledge that healthy self-esteem is crucial to physical wellbeing and mental health. Low self-esteem contributes to doubting our ability to succeed, and in a cruel, self-filling prophecy, often hamstringing us and keeps us from success. It stirs up anger, resentment, fear, anxiety, and more. The late, celebrated psychiatrist Rabbi Doctor Avraham J. Twerski once quipped that the sixty-plus books he authored were all variations on the same theme: self-esteem.

Throughout his writings, Rav Kook consistently underlined the importance of possessing a robust sense of self-worth. Here is one of many examples:

Smallness of faith and man's distance from the supernal holiness is a result of his failure to elevate his own self-worth, to inculcate in his heart the lofty idea that he is worthy of divine greatness.<sup>4</sup>

For personal religious growth, self-worth is essential. We are all made in God's image. Whoever believes in themselves

will strive for more.

When we encounter pressures from various quarters trying to persuade us to act this way or that, when we come face to face with the evil eye, we should say: "I come from the stock of Yosef."<sup>5</sup> When we hold fast to our inner convictions and are unbuffeted by the prevailing winds, we are tapping into the spark of Yosef within us. Fish are denizens of the deep, unaware of what happens elsewhere. We do not have the luxury of sticking our head in the sand, but we can, as Rav Kook wrote so beautifully, soar on high:<sup>6</sup>

עֲלֶה לְמַעַל עֲלֶה

Rise up, rise,

כִּי כַחַץ עוֹלָךְ

For you have fierce power;

יֵשׁ לְךָ כֹּנָפֵי רוּחַ

You have spiritual wings,

כֹּנָפֵי נְשָׁרִים אֲבִירִים

Wings of majestic eagles.

אַל תִּכְחַשׁ בָּם

Do not deny them,

פֶּן יִכְחֹשׁוּ לְךָ

Lest they deny you;

דִּרְשׁ אֹתָם

Seek them out,

וְיִמָּצְאוּ לְךָ מִיָּד

And they will be readily apparent. ■

5. *Berachot* 55b.

6. *Orot ha-Kodesh*, 1:83–84.

**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.

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4. *Orot Yisra'el*, 160, §8.

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# A Kohen Becoming Right-Handed

**Question:** I am a left-handed *kohen*. In anticipation of the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash*, realizing that a left-handed *kohen* cannot do *avoda* (service), I want to train myself to be right-handed. Is there anything I need to know?

**Answer:** Yours is a beautiful approach to our glorious national future and your *kehuna*, but I feel a need to flash a “yellow light” regarding your efforts to become right-handed (or ambidextrous).

A left-handed person may not do *avoda* (Bechorot 45b). The Rambam (Bi'at Hamikdash 8:11) categorizes him as a *ba'al mum* (blemished), by *kohen* standards. Rashi (Bechorot 45b) considers him lacking a “right hand,” which is needed for *avoda* (see Chazon Ish, Bechorot 26:13). We accept the opinion among *Tannaim* (Bechorot 45a) that an ambidextrous person is fit for *avoda* (Rambam *ibid.*). There is discussion of doing things to remove disqualifications (*ibid.*), and your idea might logically work. However, Eliyahu Hanavi or the like will make the decisions on if

and how (e.g., which hand functions) training would help. I will not venture a guess on such a matter.

So “why not try?” My hesitation concerns your *tefillin* status. Presumably, you put your *tefillin shel yad* on your right arm (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 27:6), although some arguable lefties place *tefillin* on the left arm because they do many things with the left hand but some with the left. This depends on a *machloket* throughout millennia (see Menachot 37a; Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*; Be'ur Halacha *ad loc.*) on whether we follow strength, the ability to write, or some combination (see Living the Halachic Process, II:G-12).

Does learning how to use the other hand change the *halacha*? The Mordechai (Tefillin 969) brings a *machloket* about the arm upon which a righty who made his left hand dominant puts *tefillin*. The more accepted opinion is that he can switch his status (Mishna Berura 27:22). However, if he only changed to writing left-handed but continues to use his right hand for most activities, the Magen Avraham (27:10) rules that he remains a halachic righty because of two doubts – a. Which function is more important?; b. Does training change the *halacha*?

You are asking about a lefty who trains himself to be a righty. Rav Feinstein (Igrot Moshe, OC III:2) did not distinguish between the direction of the right-left switch and based on the Magen Avraham, posited that if a born lefty switched only




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his writing, he would retain his old status due to double doubt. Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo (I:11) says that the doubt about changing is countered by the fact that the standard person (including the ambidextrous) is considered a righty, and he would place *tefillin* on his left arm. Rav Frank (Har Tzvi, OC I:26) agreed in principle with Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo but was unhappy with a boy putting himself into even a single doubt (if writing or strength is more important). He also argued that to qualify even as ambidextrous, one must write with his right as well as with his left, which is difficult to learn. Therefore, he instructed a twelve-year-old who was training to write with his right hand to restore his left-handed dominance to remove doubt.

This background demonstrates that you will enter some doubt about your status after making the change. In fact, depending on what changes you make (writing's critical importance is probably unique to *tefillin* (see Menachot 37a), not *avoda*), your status could be unclear. Furthermore, **during** the transition process, there will certainly be times when you won't know which side of "the line" you are on. (There are rabbis who, in some cases, instruct to put *tefillin* on both arms (at different times)). I would not **recommend** getting into such dilemmas without sufficient justification.

Whether we will build the *Beit Hamikdash* or it will descend intact from Above, people will need time to learn the



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intricacies of *avoda*. At that time, many may do a course on becoming a righty. We recommend funneling your beautiful dedication to **improving** right-hand usage, while remaining more proficient with your left hand temporarily. ■

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# Separating *Terumot* & *Ma'aserot* from Fruit in Home Gardens

**Question:** I have several citrus trees in my garden – oranges and clementines. I heard once that if I eat the fruit outside I don't need to take *terumot* and *ma'aserot*, and the obligation only applies once I bring the fruit inside the house. Is that so?

**Answer:** In general, in most cases, *terumot* and *ma'aserot* need to be taken from any fruit before eating it. What you mentioned is true, however, under the following conditions:

The garden is not private (ex. the yard of an apartment building) and anyone can enter without being asked, “what are you doing here?” Private homes gardens **do not** fall into this category.

Each time, you only pick and eat one fruit at a time (one grape, one cherry, etc.).

This is true only for fruits that are generally eaten completely by one person in one sitting.

Oranges and clementines are composed of units (slices), so when you pick even one fruit it becomes obligated in *terumot* and *ma'aserot*. The same holds true for grape clusters and pomegranates.

Beside most citruses (aside from kumquats and dwarf lemons), this also refers to large fruits: watermelons, pomegranates

and melons. Avocados and mangos are often cut up and eaten with other people. For this reason, it's best to be stringent and separate *terumot* and *ma'aserot* even if you eat them outside.

For most other fruits and vegetables, in public gardens they will be obligated in *terumot* and *ma'aserot* only if you pick two at a time (cherries, pears, dates, etc.). ■



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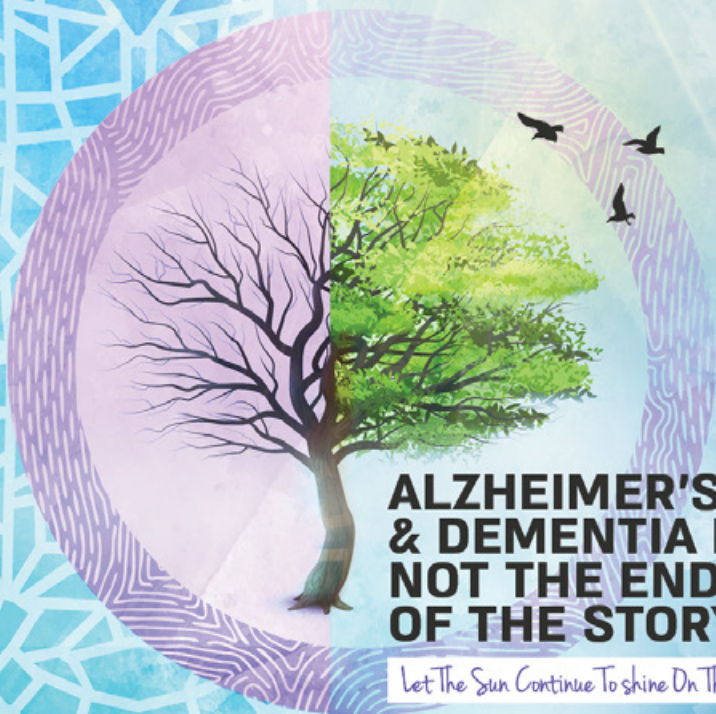
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## The Long Path

The popular song and declaration in Israel states that “The eternal nation is not afraid of the long path.” Our nation has undergone, and survived, countless attempts to destroy us and prevent us reaching our goal as Am Yisrael. Yet we have outlived and survived all of them. We know that the path to redemption is a long one, but we are not in a hurry. After all, we are the Eternal Nation.

We often see a microcosm of this tenacity in the face of lengthy and complicated journeys. This was the case with Yossi and Batsheva. When they came to PUAH they had already been told by several doctors that Yossi would never have his own biological children, and so the couple were exploring other possible options.

Rabbi Segev reviewed their medical files and suggested a novel treatment and a specific doctor who may be able to help. Yossi and Batsheva made an appointment and, for the first time on their fertility journey, they heard that there was hope, albeit somewhat remote. They decided to undergo surgery, and, with Divine help, the treatment was successful and Batsheva became pregnant. They were delighted to share the good news with PUAH and everyone was excited to hear.

But their journey was not yet at an end;

Batsheva started having contractions and came to the hospital to give birth. Instead of being straightforward, the birth became complicated and Batsheva was in labour for over 25 hours. The medical staff had to employ various instruments and procedures, but, eventually Yossi and Batsheva were able to hold their own little boy. He was slightly bruised and stunned from the ordeal of his delivery, but, otherwise, he was perfect.

Every child is a miracle, and the miracle of life itself is always amazing, but we can get used to these everyday miracles. Occasionally we experience a birth that is so unique and extraordinary that we all claim it to be miraculous. This sort of birth is usually preceded by a long, difficult and arduous journey. PUAH accompanies just journeys to ensure that the couple do not despair along the way, but persevere and are able to reach the best destination.

We are truly an eternal nation and we are not at all afraid of long paths. ■

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Here are 5 humorous short stories out of 27 from *Azazel and Other Jewish Stories* by Yaacov Peterseil, guaranteed to make you LOL.

**My Purim Surprise** – Uncle Heeby recounts a most surprising tale to his young protégé.

**Who Will Buy?** – Can you believe an Israeli "Rent-A-Child" program really exists?

**Achilles! Heal!** – For those who have ripped their Achilles heel, or any other part of their body.

**Constipation** – Morris survived concentration camp, but can he survive the source of his painful constipation?

**No Joking!** – What happens with a young man, with a sense of humor, tries to marry into a no joking family?



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## HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

RIVI FRANKEL



# The First Synagogue

There is a claim that the oldest Jewish synagogue in the world is in Tunisia. It is believed to have been built in 586 BCE, following the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash. In the 1800's a modern shul was built over its remains, called El Ghriba, meaning "the miraculous." Since this is beyond our scope, being outside of Israel, I won't expound here, but I encourage you to research their fascinating history and traditions.

Following the destruction of the Temples, one can understand why the Jewish people would build shuls, dedicated spaces that housed and encouraged communal worship. With the loss of the Beit HaMikdash, we not only lost the resting place of the holy Shechina, but also practically, the central, unifying location for religious practice. Most of the ancient synagogues we know of were built following the destruction of the second Beit HaMikdash. In Israel alone, hundreds of ancient synagogues dating back to this period were found, particularly in the northern regions of the Galil and Golan.

This is why it seems unusual that in Israel, the oldest shuls have been dated to the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE, meaning that they stood concurrent with

the Second Temple. Why would there be a need for these structures when there is a centralized place of worship?

It is true that even while the Temples stood, people would gather locally for Torah reading and other religious ceremonies. However, general community centers could have been used, so why would they have invested in building these special religious spaces at a time when this was not the custom? In the next few articles, we will learn about these shuls and uncover their unique stories.

Archaeologist Ehud Netzer claimed to have discovered the oldest synagogue in Israel in the Hasmonean Palaces in Yericho. Called the Yericho Synagogue (not to be confused with the nearby Yericho synagogue that dates to the 6th century CE) or the Wadi Qelt Synagogue, because of its proximity to the Wadi Qelt perennial stream, Netzer posited that the synagogue was built by the Hasmonean rulers between 70 - 50 BCE. He described in his findings a niche to house the Torah Ark, a place for geniza, and seating for approximately 70 people. The shul complex had other rooms, including a dining hall and a mikva. Why include this in the palace when the Beit HaMikdash was still standing? Perhaps the Hasmonean leaders felt that a palace of a Jewish king would not be complete without its own religious center. Being the king's winter palace, flooding in the rainy season might have made it challenging to travel to the Temple

while in residence. Having a designated shul area in the palace was important for when they could not access Jerusalem. Most other archaeologists answer this question by taking a completely different approach, saying the space was not a shul at all another machloket in Jewish discourse!

Next time we will explore Ehud Netzer's most famous archaeological dig, Herodian, and discuss the synagogue found there. Maybe we will be lucky enough to uncover more concrete (pun intended) answers. ■

**Rivi Frankel** is a sought after licensed tour guide in Israel for groups, families, and individuals of all ages. She is a Tanach lecturer, has run educational programing around the world, and currently lives in Jerusalem.

**Rivi is leading a Tu b'Shvat tour and seder together with expert photographer Rebecca Kowalsky on Thursday morning, January 25th. Please email [rivi@yeshisrael.com](mailto:rivi@yeshisrael.com) for more info and to register.**



Photo of Wadi Qelt

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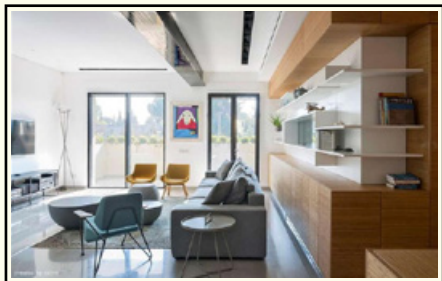


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## TORAH 4 TEENS BY TEENS

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This week's Parsha, Vayechi, marks the closing of Sefer Bereishit which began on that day of mourning and tragedy of this year's Simchat Torah.

One of the most dramatic moments in Jewish history occurs in this week's Parsha. Yaakov Avinu, the namesake for the nation of Israel, Am Yisrael, is on his deathbed. His children, our tribes and Yaakov's legacy, are asked to approach their father for his last parting words. Rashi tells us that Yaakov gathers them all together to tell them his most important secret. The answer to the question which every Jew has been asking from the beginning of our story and every day forward; When will Moshiach be here?! Yaakov opens his mouth and Hashem does not let his thoughts leave his mouth as other words come out and the secret remains a secret until this very day.

We know that Moshiach can come in one of two ways. Either we, the Jewish people, do Teshuva en masse and it will be here immediately (hopefully by the time this is published!). Or our time for Teshuva expires and Hashem brings Moshiach out of mercy for his children. It is clear that Yaakov's knowledge was of the Moshiach of mercy and not of our Teshuva since there is no specific time for that.

Why did Hashem grant Yaakov this knowledge without the ability to share it? What was its purpose if not for us?! The holy Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin זצ"ל brings up the embarrassment we would feel as a people if we couldn't do it ourselves. Imagine the feeling of generations

trying and trying and yet seemingly failing to bring the Moshiach, time after time. The Ruzhiner say that Hashem wanted us to know that there will be a time when His mercy will shine brighter, but even that time is because of US and our Teshuva and His love for his children. So, when that great day comes, even if out of mercy, the mercy will be for the Jewish people and who we are and what we've done. Like the parent who gives-in to giving a seemingly undeserved gift knowing that the child did his best.

Since the book of Bereishit has been opened this year, 50% of our NCSY Israel staff (including myself) have been on the front lines of Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria physically fighting to make that day come. The other 50% have been fighting on the front lines towards giving growth, meaning, and Jewish pride to the incredible teens of this country, our leaders of tomorrow. We at NCSY Israel are not just doing our best, but literally being Mesirat Nefesh at a time where we couldn't be needed more. Now it's YOUR chance to show mercy knowing that our staff and teens are doing even more than their best. NOW is the opportunity for YOU to support us when we need it most and help give our teens and staff a taste of that redemption.

As we close the book of creation and open the book of redemption, may we be zoche to see the days of redemption speedily in our times. Shabbat (with a lot of) Shalom ■

**Make your year-end tax deductible gift to NCSY Israel at [israel.ncsy.org/donate](https://israel.ncsy.org/donate).**

# NCSY ISRAEL

## ANSWERING THE CALL

Since the war broke out, NCSY Israel has quickly pivoted and organized the following special programs for English-speaking teens in Israel, even with over 25% of our staff called to serve in the army.



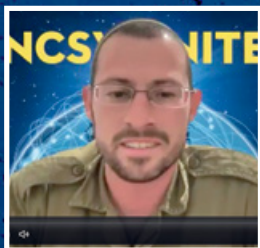
Carnival for evacuated families from the North and South staying in the Ramada Hotel in Jerusalem



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