

ב"ה **Torah Tidbits**

ISSUE 1637

NOV. 29TH 2025
ט' כסלו תשפ"ו

פרשת ויצא
PARSHAT VAYEITZEI



United
We Stand

OU
ישראל



Non-Kosher Ingredients
Rabbi Ezra Friedman
Page 60



**When the Heart Connects
but the Eyes Hesitate**
Aleeza Ben Shalom Page 88



ושמרני בדרך הזה אשר אנכי הולך
בראשית כ"ח:כ'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT VAYEITZEI ZMANIM

CANDLES 3:59 PM • HAVDALA 5:15 PM • RABBEINU TAM 5:52 PM



Table of Contents

04	Dear Torah Tidbits Family Rabbi Avi Berman	64	Vayeitzei: A Walking Mirror Rabbi Judah Mischel
08	The Foundation Stone and the Future of the Jewish People Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt"l	66	Ya'akov's Mapping of Galus Rabbi Moshe Taragin
14	Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary Rabbi Reuven Tradburks	72	The Roar of Redemption Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman
20	"The Thankful Jew" Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Weinreb	74	Inspired by the Faith of Tzadikim (Midot Hara'aya, Emunah piska #32) Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
28	Ecountering God Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l	80	Forgot to Remove <i>Tefillin</i> Before <i>Musaf</i> of Rosh Chodesh Rabbi Daniel Mann
36	Probing the Prophets Rabbi Nachman Winkler	82	Mutual Support Rabbi Gideon Weitzman
40	A Stone or a Pebble Rabbi Shalom Rosner	86	Yaakov Avinu's Dreams of Return – And Ours Rebbetzin Mindy Marcus
44	Consequential Conversation Rebbetzin Shira Smiles	88	When the Heart Connects but the Eyes Hesitate Aleeza Ben Shalom
48	Schedule OU Israel	90	The Y-Files Comic Netanel Epstein
58	Simchat Shmuel Rabbi Sam Shor	92	Torah 4 Teens by Teens Michael Glazer // Amichai Goldstein
60	Non-Kosher Ingredients Rabbi Ezra Friedman		



COVER IMAGE Photographed by Howard Cohen

We are in our flat in Netanya presently, and live in the UK. We are in the process of making Aliyah to this most beautiful country. We were on our way to Eilat and saw these goats at Muchtesh Ramon and the story of the Akeidah came to mind - albeit two weeks later!



We continue to pray for the return of all the kedoshim from Gaza.



IMPORTANT REMINDERS

 Kiddush Levana

7 Days After Molad: 8 Kislev/ Thurs. night Nov. 27

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Kislev/Thurs. night Dec. 4

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Nov. 26 - Dec. 6 / 6 - 16 Kislev

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:23-5:30
Sunrise	6:17-6:25
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:51-8:57
Magen Avraham	8:13-8:19
Sof Zman Tefila	9:43-9:48
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:26-11:30
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	11:56-12:00
Plag Mincha	3:31
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:39



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	Vayeitzei		Vayishlach	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	3:59	5:15	3:59	5:15
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:18	5:18	4:18	5:18
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:18	5:16	4:17	5:16
Gush Etzion	4:15	5:15	4:15	5:16
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:15	5:15	4:15	5:16
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:15	5:15	4:15	5:16
Netanya	4:15	5:15	4:15	5:15
Be'er Sheva	4:18	5:17	4:17	5:18
Rehovot	4:16	5:16	4:16	5:16
Petach Tikva	3:59	5:16	3:59	5:16
Ginot Shomron	4:14	5:15	4:14	5:15
Haifa / Zichron	4:03	5:14	4:03	5:14
Gush Shiloh	4:14	5:14	4:13	5:14
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:16	5:16	4:16	5:16
Givat Ze'ev	4:19	5:15	4:19	5:15
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:16	5:16	4:15	5:16
Ashkelon	4:18	5:18	4:17	5:18
Yad Binyamin	4:16	5:16	4:16	5:17
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:05	5:12	4:05	5:12
Golan	4:11	5:12	4:11	5:12
Nahariya/Maalot	4:12	5:13	4:11	5:13
Afula	4:13	5:13	4:12	5:13

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Vayeitzei - 5:52 PM • Vayishlach - 5:52 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: Zevachim 76



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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Since Isru Chag Sukkot not an hour goes by without me mentioning, thinking about or discussing the former OU Executive Vice President, Rabbi Moshe Hauer Zt"l. After his shocking passing on Simchat Torah, we at the OU are constantly thinking hard about how to express his legacy and vision. How does one encapsulate in words someone who was larger than life? How does one memorialize an individual for whom every moment was about making a Kiddush Hashem, uniting Klal Yisrael more, and making us more passionate about our Judaism and our love for each other? Rav Hauer's passing was such a loss to not only his family, but to each and every Jew in the world.

The last email that Rabbi Hauer sent Rabbi Yaakov Glasser, the Managing Director for Community Engagement at the OU, was a list of institutions, communities and personalities in America. He wanted us to bring Roshei Yeshiva, dayanim and rabbanim from Israel, on a Torah mission of unity that he had worked on with us for the past 18 months.

When we got back to the office after chag, he was no longer with us. The email he sent Rabbi Glasser was kind of tzava'ah, a will, of something that we know was very important to him. He had been visiting Israel several times over the last few years, speaking to great leaders of the Dati Leumi world and elsewhere, and he began to realize over the course of this that there was very little awareness and connection between the Dati Leumi / Chardal worlds and the world of North

American Jewry. The Dati Leumi community at large in Israel is probably the closest to Modern Orthodoxy in America, and yet, there are still many divides. Rabbi Hauer started to think of ways that he could put these two groups together and help leaders from both sides of the Atlantic meet each other and start to understand each other. Given the OU's strong presence in both Israel and North America, and that OU staff have a deep understanding of both societies, we feel that we are well-positioned to lead this mission.

The idea was about getting the rabbanim here in Israel to understand Jewish life in America, including the many different facets that the OU is running in North America. This would not only give them a greater appreciation of what the OU is, but more so to get them to understand North American Jewry, their needs, their challenges, and their great contributions to Judaism, Israel, and Zionism. Obviously, we all daven three times a day, "Tekah b'shofar gadol l'cheiruteinu, v'sa neis l'kabeitz galuyoseinu" - our hope and prayers is for every Jew to be living in the Land of Israel. But until then the reality is that only a few thousand olim make aliyah every year. Millions aren't moving here right now. There is, therefore, a value to recognizing and understanding Diaspora Jewry for Jewish leaders in Israel.

So, over the last few months, Rabbi Hauer began talking about what was necessary to help this happen. A plan began to take form of bringing leaders to America to give them a

deeper understanding of the lifestyle of American Jews so that they, as the heads of Jewish dati leumi organizations, could be able open up their world to American Jews - to create programs in Israel within their institutions to accept more english speakers, to help their children get into schools that, maybe, until now they weren't as accepted, and to be more welcoming to olim and understand where they are coming from. Most importantly, we wanted to give them the insight necessary to help them ensure that the klitah of olim is done in a way that enables them to thrive here in Israel.

I consider myself part of many different worlds here in Israel. But the majority of my life has been spent in the Dati Leumi world. I went to Dati Leumi yeshivot. My children and grandchildren go to institutions like Merkaz HaRav and other Yeshiva high schools and Hesder yeshivot led by Merkaz HaRav graduates. And so, I understand the disconnect that can be felt between the world that I live in in Israel and the world that I visit when I go to America. This is true in many places. I've spent Shabbatot in many different communities in North America, the Five Towns, Teaneck, Bergenfield, Los Angeles, Florida, Toronto, Vancouver and many more; no matter where I am in North America, I have communities that Baruch Hashem I'm extremely connected to, with incredible friends that I love dearly. And yet, I can see that when I discuss the dati leumi nuances they don't fully "get" it. For that matter, the dati leumi community here in Israel don't fully understand what North American Jewry is all about. I am convinced that many of you who spend time in the respective communities know exactly what I am referring to.



Therefore, Rabbi Hauer and I began to discuss this idea of bringing a small but quality group of Rabbanim to America to give them more exposure to North American Jewry - a way of bridging these two worlds I find myself in. This can only lead to the growth of a bond and a connection between these two different worlds.

So, after Simchat Torah, we decided to fulfill

In Memory of our dear Mother

רחל בת יצחק הלוי ע"ה

Rachel Gutman ש"י

אשת חיל

On her 50th yahrtzeit

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*Her children, Grandchildren
and Great grandchildren*

Tzippy Grunstein and family

Eli Gutman and family

Tova Hoffman and family

Frieda Brodsky and family

this dream of Rabbi Hauer. Together with Rabbi Hauer, we had already approached an organization called Rabanei Eretz HaTovah and asked them to please help us arrange such a mission, which they did so beautifully, pulling together three other organizations (Geshet, Igud Rabbanai Kehilot and Sifra) and an incredible group of Rabbanim, Dayanim, and Roshei Yeshiva, who all came and gave eight days of their time and attention in order to understand North American Jewry. We took the Rabbanim on this mission led by the Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz Harav Harav Yaakov Shapira Shlita to Shuls, Yeshivot, schools and chesed institutions in the Five Towns, Teaneck, Lakewood, Monsey, to the Syrian community in Flatbush, to the OU Eruv conference in Edison, the RCA Rabbanus conference, New Square, YU, Washington DC, AIPAC, meeting Nathan Diamant, the OU representative in Washington and his team, and hearing about the great work that they're doing to help support the Orthodox community in America. They met with the remarkable Israeli ambassador to the United States Yechiel Leiter. I saw the Rabbis' hearts grow so large after meeting and learning about their fellow Jews around the world.

This past Shabbat, we were hosted by



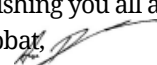
different wonderful families in Teaneck. During the week, we heard from the leaders and rabbis of the community, the different principals in the schools, the different Roshei Yeshiva, and we began to understand North America that much better. We also spent an entire day in the OU hearing about all the different OU programs. The Oneg Shabbat on Friday night in Teaneck was just amazingly uplifting. Everybody sat together singing and talking Torah. They especially spoke about the Torah of Rav Kook, and about Torat Eretz Yisrael. It was fascinating seeing all of the American Rabbanim agree about the thirst that North American Jewry has for such Torah. It was mesmerizing, uplifting, and truly exciting.

It is too early to tell what the effects of this mission will be but like I told the mission Rabbanim after Shabbat, the real mission starts now - coming back to Israel. I told the Rabbis that the real work is how we take these brand new relationships that were built in America to the next level. We spoke about the need to create real programs that will connect the two communities, the Zionist Modern Orthodox communities of North America and the Dati Leumi communities of Israel. B'ezerat Hashem, this connection will continue growing together and making Klal Yisrael a much better, more unified world.

October 7th and everything that happened afterward have taught us that we truly know how to unite as a Jewish people when we are under attack. But the beauty of what happened this past week was that we created a dialogue that brought together the connection of the hearts and the connection of leaders not as a defense but in peace and brotherhood. Instead of each leader releasing

statements to the media, we brought them together behind closed doors to discuss their differences and come a bit closer to understanding each other. Rabbi Hauer would always say that that is the best way to create understanding - bring everyone together face to face. Our conversations within the Chareidi world were also extremely fruitful. And while I can't go into full detail, I will tell you that it was beautiful seeing Rabbanim from Merkaz HaRav and other Dati Leumi Yeshivot sitting with Rabbanim from the Chareidi world in America, the Rosh Yeshiva of Lakewood, Rav Malkiel Kotler, with the Skverer Rebbe, Rabbi David Twesky, along with the Rosh HaYeshiva of Ner Yisroel, Rabbi Aharon Feldman and Rav Elya Brudny Rosh Yeshiva of Mir - Brooklyn. I saw them interact with such a tremendous amount of respect. They might not have agreed on everything, but they listened to each other, with a calm and open demeanor. I know that Rabbi Hauer would be truly proud of this unique moment, of us sitting all together, talking in a respectful way, and bringing more and more unity to Klal Yisrael.

This week's Parsha is Vayeitzei. Rashi writes that yetziat tzaddik min hamakom osah roshem, that when a tzaddik leaves a city it makes a major impact. I find myself very apropos writing about Rabbi Hauer z"l who was without a doubt a tzaddik. His leaving of not only this city, but this world, leaves an impact on all of us. May we continue to walk in his footsteps and bring more unity and Torah to Klal Yisrael.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

 Rabbi Avi Berman
 Executive Director, OU Israel



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The Foundation Stone and the Future of the Jewish People

At the heart of the Jewish nation lies a rock.

It was not always that way. Originally, the center point of our nation - the inner sanctum (*kodesh hakadashim*) of the *bait hamikdash* (temple) contained the Holy Ark that held within it the *luchot* and the Torah that had been written by Moshe. The Jewish people were a nation defined by G-d and Torah. That came to an end when the *aron hakodesh* was hidden away in anticipation of the Babylonian conquerors entering and destroying the *bait hamikdash*. During the period of the second *bait hamikdash*, that ark remained hidden and what lay in its place was a rock that was known as the *even shetiya*, the foundation stone of the world (see Yoma 53b).

How did a rock come to replace the Torah

as the heart of the Jewish nation?

The period of the first *bait hamikdash* represented our ideal state, with Torah at its center and the tangible presence of G-d in our midst. This was lost as we slipped into behaviors that violated the Torah, including immorality, murder, and idolatry (see Yoma 9b and 21b). During the period of the second *bait hamikdash*, Hashem's presence was less pronounced such that the dominant role of the *mikdash* was as the unifier of the Jewish nation rather than as the residence of G-d. It is for this reason, explained Maharal (Netzach Yisrael ch. 4) that what led to the building of the second temple was the unity of the Jewish people generated by the Purim story and what destroyed it was the disintegration of that unity via *sinat chinam*, vain hatred and divisiveness.

That unity is symbolized by the rock. Midrash (Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer ch. 35) notes that this was the rock that Yaakov designated at the outset of our Parsha as the future house of G-d, and it tells us as well that what ultimately appeared as a single rock had originally been twelve separate stones (Bereishit Rabba 68:11).

Rabbi Yehuda said: He took twelve stones.

In Loving Memory of

Elisheva (Gralla) Pokroy a"h
ישפה אלישבע בת נחמיה ע"ה

**Beloved Wife, Daughter, Mother,
Grandmother, Sister, Aunt
On her 2nd Yartzheit - 9 Kislev**

***Pokroy, Gralla, Rappaport, Strausz,
and Harris Families***

The Holy One blessed be He had decreed that He would produce twelve tribes. Yaacov said: 'Avraham did not produce them and Yitzchak did not produce them. If these twelve stones join with one another, I know that I will produce twelve tribes.' When the twelve stones joined together one to another, he knew that he would produce twelve tribes.

From its inception, this rock represented the vision of a unified Jewish nation, fusing together individual tribes and groups who could be as hardened in their separateness as rocks but who could transcend their divisions and fuse together into a single nation. That unity is not a slogan but the foundation of our being and the core and essence of what defines us until we mature further and restore G-d and His word to their rightful place as the core of our national identity. As Rav Yitzchak Hutner taught, the words *Shema Yisrael*, "Hear O Israel", are not just an introduction but an essential part of the Jew's declaration of faith: our connection to G-d is built on our connection to each other (Pachad Yitzchak, Chanukah, 13:3).

Klal Yisrael has experienced an awakening of both national unity and spiritual connection. This sense of connection is essential to building Jewish identity across our people, including those close to and distant from Torah and its observance. This sense of connection was stirred by our concern for our brothers and sisters taken hostage and is a reawakening of the feelings experienced during the struggle for Soviet Jewry, an entire segment of our people held captive. Then as now, Jews close to and distant from Torah awakened their feelings of national connection.

We pray that then as now our genuine tears of connection will be transformed into joy.

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Shir Hama'alos. When Hashem brought back the captives of Zion, we were like dreamers. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then they said among the nations, Hashem has done great things for them. Hashem has done great things for us; we are joyous. Bring back our captivity, Hashem, like the streams in the Negev. They who plant in tears shall reap in joy. He who goes weeping on his way, bearing a bag of seed, shall come back with a joyful shout, carrying his sheaves. ■

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

Ruti Isaacs a"h
on her 1st Yartzheit

greatly missed by Yehudit Lipman



OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

Beit Gujo – OU Israel Youth Centers' Ethiopian Heritage Home

OU Israel's 18 Teen Centers across Israel serve thousands of at-risk Israeli teens every week. Many of our groups are comprised of immigrant populations, including Ethiopians, Bnei Menashe Olim from India, Russian-speakers and others. Our advisors help these teens acclimate into Israeli society while being respectful of the many beautiful customs they brought to Israel. Our advisors hear many challenging stories these teens, especially the Ethiopian-Israelis, experience. How do we educate teens about their Ethiopian-Israeli peers and the tremendous sacrifices they made to come to Israel? How do we increase and teach tolerance?

Chaim Pelzner, Program Director, developed a unique idea and together with the staff and teens in our Kiryat Gat Youth Center, they built Beit Gujo - a genuine Ethiopian hut home - with their own hands. Beit Gujo provides an experiential education opportunity for groups to come learn about Ethiopian culture and the Jews of Ethiopia living in these huts as part of their commitment to avoid assimilation. In Beit Gujo, there are several activities: building with mud like they did in Ethiopia, trivia about Ethiopian-Israeli culture and the journey to Israel, pita making with Ethiopian coffee and a traditional ceremony.

To book a visit to Beit Gujo: Beitgujo@gmail.com or contact Guy at 054-3115982

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BY RABBI CHANOKH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

ויקח מאבני המקום מראשתיו (כח"א)

"And he took from the stones of the place and placed (it) under his head" (28:11)

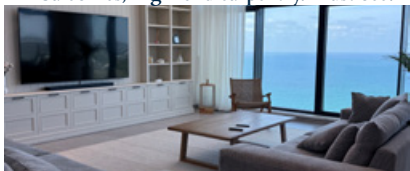
Rashi, quoting from the Talmud Chulin 91b, describes the quarrel that ensued between the stones. "One saying, upon me should the righteous man place his head." While the other stone said, "Let him lay upon me". Immediately, G-d made them into one stone and for that reason it is stated upon arising in the morning, "And he took the stone (in the singular) that he had placed under his head." (28:18)

Yet, the Admor, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter from Gur (1865-1948, Poland-Jerusalem) questions, setting this aside, what has been resolved by this miracle for Yaakov?

The message to Yaakov is very pertinent. While Yaakov placed his head on this transformed "pillow", he could expect that the different segments of this stone would continue to argue who was closer to Yaakov's head. This lesson was conveyed to Yaakov that once unity is accomplished there is no longer the threat of infighting and jealousy. This was the message to Yaakov before embarking on forming a large family. - Shabbat Shalom

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PARSHAT VAYEITZEI

Our parsha begins with Yaakov fleeing the Land of Israel from Esav's murderous intent and it concludes with his return to the Land of Israel. He dreams as he leaves of a ladder reaching to Heaven with G-d promising that He will bring Yaakov back in peace. Yaakov meets Rachel at the well in Charan, marries Leah and Rachel, 11 of the 12 sons and Dina are born. Lavan and Yaakov bicker. Yaakov earns his wages through animal husbandry. Angels greet Yaakov on his return to Israel.



1ST ALIYA (28:10-22)

Yaakov flees the Land of Israel. He dreams: a ladder with angels, G-d at the top. G-d reiterates to Yaakov the promise of the Land of Israel and of numerous descendants. And that He will protect Yaakov and bring him back to the Land. Yaakov makes a monument at that spot and declares that upon his safe return he will come back and make this spot a house of G-d.

Yaakov has a dream, being assured of Divine protection. But why did he need this

assurance? What was on his mind?

We must read the stories in the Torah in real time. While *we* know how the stories develop, the figures in the Torah do not. Their lives play out as if on a stage with the backdrop of the various prophecies and promises that their forefathers received.

What is going through Yaakov's mind as he is fleeing the Land of Israel?

There is one dominant theme in Breishit. Who is in. And who is out. Who is part of the grand promise to Avraham that his descendants will inherit the Land of Israel? Because some are in and some are out. Yitzchak in. Yishmael out.

And even were he to be in, what about the terrible prediction given to Avraham at the Brit bein HaBetarim, the covenant made with Avraham, that his children will be strangers and afflicted in a foreign land for 400 years. That's bad. And scary. Because it means that the family will end up out of Israel and endure suffering. For a long time. That scary prophecy must hover over Yaakov like a dark cloud. When will this happen? Will I be the exile, suffering in a foreign land?

Now, he did have a blessing from his father Yitzchak, that he will dominate his brother. And a further blessing, often overlooked, at the end of last week's parsha that G-d will give him the blessing of Avraham, to inherit this Land.

But he has to wonder: are Yitzchak's blessings determinative? After all, Avraham never gave his son a blessing. G-d gives blessings. What meaning does a blessing from Yitzchak

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have? Ok, it could be what he wishes it will be. But who knows if his blessings are just wishful thinking or real?

So, Yaakov looks at his circumstances. I deceived my father. And I am being sent away. Perhaps I erred. And I am being banished. Like Yishmael was banished by Avraham, I am being banished.

After all, my father is sending me away from the Land of Israel, when he himself was commanded not to leave. Doesn't the one who is part of the covenant to settle the Land need to live there, in the Land?

And even if I am the next of the Avot, the next generation of the Jewish people, is my leaving the Land perhaps the beginning of exile for 400 years? An exile of suffering in a foreign land?

These are Yaakov's fears. Have I, by stealing the blessings, brought Divine wrath upon myself? Am I undeserving? And am I, by leaving the Land of Israel beginning that long exile of 400 years of suffering?

G-d reassures him – I will give *you* the Land and bring you back. This is an overwhelming assurance. It was one thing for his father to assure him that he will be the continuation of Avraham's legacy, but it is another to hear it from G-d Himself. Yaakov cannot but respond magnanimously; upon my return I will make this a house of G-d.



2ND ALIYA (29:1-17)

Yaakov arrives in Charan. He converses with shepherds at the well. They are waiting for a crowd of them to remove the stone over the well. He inquires of Lavan; that is Rachel, daughter of Lavan, coming now. Yaakov removes the heavy stone of the well, gives Rachel water. He tells her he is Rivka's son. Rachel runs to tell her father;

Lavan runs to greet Yaakov. Yaakov stays with them for a month.

If Yaakov is looking for a sign that he is taking up the legacy of his family, continuing their legacy, here it is. But not following in his father's footsteps. But in his mother's. This story is an exact parallel to Eliezer finding Rivka at the well. Except in reverse. Rivka drew the water for Eliezer and his camels; Yaakov draws the water for Rachel and her animals. Rivka was superhuman and drew water for 10 camels (@100 liters per camel); Yaakov is superhuman and removes the massive stone by himself. Eliezer asked Rivka who she was; Yaakov tells Rachel who he is. Rivka ran home to her mother; Rachel runs home to her father. Eliezer was seeking a wife for Yitzchak and returning to Israel; Yaakov is seeking family but not returning. Yet.



3RD ALIYA (29:18-30:13)

Yaakov loves Rachel. When Lavan inquires how he can compensate Yaakov for his work, Yaakov offers to work 7 years to marry Rachel. At the end of that time, Lavan makes a celebration. He gives Leah to Yaakov. In the morning Yaakov realizes. Lavan remarks that here we don't switch younger and older. Yaakov marries Rachel and works another 7 years. Leah has 4 children: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda. Rachel is upset, as she is barren. She gives Yaakov Bilhah, her maidservant. She has Dan and Naphtali. Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, has Gad and Asher.

Echoes of the past dominate. Rachel is barren, an echo of Sarah who was barren. Rachel gives her servant to Yaakov to bear a child, as Sarah gave Hagar to Avraham to bear a child.

And a more sinister echo. My father couldn't see and was tricked; it was night and

I couldn't see and was tricked. I, the younger, took the place of the older. Here, the older, Leah, takes the place of the younger.

Yaakov must be thinking "I got what I deserve". And may interpret it as a Divine punishment. In spite of the blessing of his father and in spite of the assurance from G-d that He would return him to the Land of Israel, maybe Yaakov is having some niggling uncertainty. Am I getting a message that Divine judgement has rendered me undeserving of those blessings?



4TH ALIYA (30:14-27)

Reuven brings jasmine, a fertility enhancer to Leah. Rachel asks for it and in exchange Leah conceives and has Yissachar, followed by Zevulun. Rachel bears Yosef. Yaakov asks Lavan permission to return home.

And another perhaps sinister echo. 11 of the sons of Yaakov and his daughter Dina have been born. The bearing of 12 children is an echo of those *excluded* from the Jewish people. Nachor had 12 children, Avraham 8. Yishmael had 12 children, Yitzchak only 2. Yaakov has 12 children. Is he following in the footsteps of those not a part of the Jewish people? Nachor and Yishmael?



5TH ALIYA (30:28-31:16)

Lavan asks Yaakov what his wage is for all the work he has done. Yaakov asks that he be allowed to select and breed certain animals as his wage. He is wildly successful and becomes laden with livestock. Lavan's sons become jealous. Yaakov knows it is time to leave. He carefully explains to Rachel and Leah that he is worried as Lavan has not been honest with him. And that the angel has told him it is time to return to the Land. They agree that

whatever G-d says they must do.

This description of Yaakov's cleverness in animal husbandry is curious. What is its place in the story? It could be that this enormous wealth is another indication that he follows his father's footsteps: Avraham had great wealth, Yitzchak was blessed with "meah shearim", a 100-fold bounty of agriculture.

Or perhaps it is an answer to Yitzchak's blessing. Yitzchak loved Esav because he had *ציד בפיו* – cunning. Yitzchak thought: we are on the cusp of building the Land of Israel. We need a leader with cunning. He thought Esav had that. But Esav had chicanery; deception and folly. Real leadership demands resourcefulness, imagination, ingenuity, problem solving. Yaakov here is proving himself capable of the type of resourcefulness needed to lead his people; just what Yitzchak was looking for.



6TH ALIYA (31:17-42)

Yaakov and the family leave without telling Lavan. Rachel steals Lavan's idols. Lavan pursues. G-d tells him not to harm Yaakov. Lavan berates Yaakov for his deception, not allowing him to kiss his children. Were it not that G-d instructed him otherwise, he would be justified in harming Yaakov. He searches for his idols but does not find them. Yaakov is fed up. He berates Lavan for his lack of appreciation of all of Yaakov's hard work, changing his wages 10 times. But G-d saw my oppressive work and rewarded me.

Another sinister echo. In the prophecy to Avraham that his children would be exiled in a foreign land and afflicted, the Hebrew word for affliction is "eenu". And this affliction would be for 400 years. And then they would return with great wealth. Yaakov uses that very word to describe his hard work for Lavan "G-d saw my hard labour – an'ee".

Perhaps, Yaakov wonders, I am that Jewish people. Foreign land. Afflicted. I have been here 20 years, a long time – seems like 400. Leaving with great wealth.

Oh, how difficult it is in real time to see which prophecies are being played out.



7TH ALIYA (31:43-32:3)

Lavan and Yaakov part amidst a parting ceremony. A marker and stones are placed as testimony that Lavan will not approach Yaakov, nor Yaakov approach Lavan. Lavan returns home. Angels encounter Yaakov as he returns to the Land.

The angels greet Yaakov. Angels when he left and angels when he returns. Another sign of Divine favor that he will continue the legacy of the Jewish people.

Yaakov perceives conflicting indicators: of favor and disfavor, of parallels and contrasts, of promises and punishment.

Perhaps this description of the life of our forefather, the forefather for whom our people is named, Yisrael, perhaps this creates a paradigm of Jewish experience. Jewish experience is promises and uncertainty. We see favor and disfavor. We have prophecies but perhaps are undeserving.

Yaakov, the recipient of a dream of prophecy, even Yaakov is uncertain of his fate. The Jewish people receive many prophecies. Knowing with certainty when those prophecies are playing out is oh so elusive. Especially we, who are privileged to walk in our Land, we need to be vigilant against overzealous certainty. If Yaakov lived with uncertainty, we too would be wise to temper our zeal with caution. Certainty is not the stuff of Yaakov's life. We need to be vigilant to exercise prudent caution when it comes to seeing our history as the fulfillment of prophecy.

HAFTORAH: HOSHEA 12:13-14:10 (ASHKENAZ)

This week's *haftorah* makes direct mention of Yaakov's flight from home to the "field of Aram," which is a critical episode recounted in this week's Torah reading.

The *haftorah* states Hoshea's rebuke of the Jewish people for their sin of forsaking Hashem. However, Hoshea assures the people that Hashem will not abandon them: "How can I give you, Ephraim, and deliver you [to the hands of the nations]? . . . I will not act with My fierce anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim."

The *haftorah* proceeds to discuss the transgressions of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the future demise of the Kingdom of Judea. The *navi* makes a comparison between this generation and the behavior of their forefather Yaakov who was faithful and dedicated to God and prevailed against his enemies

The *haftorah* optimistically highlights the eventual ingathering of the exiles which will occur at the Final Redemption: "They shall hasten like a bird from Egypt and like a dove from the land of Assyria; and I will place them in their houses, says the Lord." ■

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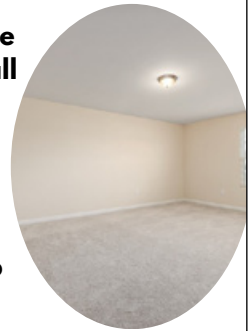
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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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“The Thankful Jew”

He may or may not have been an anti-Semite, but he sure was an abrasive personality. He was my seat mate on an Amtrak train, returning to Baltimore from New York some years ago.

As I recall, it was at the end of a particularly long and grueling day for me. I had a series of rabbinical meetings, delivered a talk during lunch which provided me no opportunity to eat, and was involved in an unsuccessful attempt to keep the marriage of a young couple from breaking up. I was looking forward to the respite of some quiet time on the return trip to my home in Baltimore, but even that luxury was denied to me that evening.

I sat down, as I always try to do, in the window seat. This fellow entered the railroad car and walked past me in search of a seat for himself. There were several seats that he could have chosen, but for some reason he returned to where I was sitting, glared at me, and sat down with a gesture of dissatisfaction.

I immediately sensed that I would not experience the peaceful train ride that I had anticipated. I tried burying my head in the book I was reading, but that was not sufficient insulation from my neighbor's insistence upon conversation.

"You are obviously Jewish," he began. "Your yarmulke, for one thing, is a dead giveaway. Plus, I see that you are reading a Hebrew book."

Of course, I admitted to being Jewish and slanted my book in his direction so that he could verify that it was indeed in Hebrew. I asked him, as I typically do in such conversations, whether he was Jewish.

I can only describe his instant response by saying that he snorted. "Look, buddy," he growled. "I've got my bunch of problems and burdens, but being Jewish is thankfully not one of them."

I was at a loss as to what to say next, but there was something about his use of the word "thankfully" that prompted me to comment to him: "But surely you have other things to be thankful for besides not being Jewish."

He seemed to be taken aback, having expected some defensive statement on my part, or perhaps some indication that I was offended. I was hoping that I succeeded at changing the topic from my Jewishness to his life and the things he had to be thankful for.

It worked. That is, at least for a while. He went on to say that he didn't have much to be thankful for, although he was happily married, had several children, and held a well-paying job. He also insisted that these beneficial facets of his life were merely the result of good fortune and did not call for any expression of thanks on his part.

He then pressed on with his almost obsessive interest in my Jewishness. "You seem to be proud of the fact that you are a Jew. Why?

What is it about you Jews that makes you want to wear your Jewishness on the outside? Why do you dress so differently, and why you persist in reading those old-fashioned books in that outdated language?"

I was about to launch into a major lecture but restrained myself from doing so, knowing full well that my efforts would be in vain. As I hesitated, pondering my next move, he surprised me.

"Forget those questions," he said. "Instead, give me an answer to the following question. It is one that I've asked many Jews before, but none were able to give me a satisfactory answer. My question is: What does the word 'Jew' mean? What is its origin, and what is its significance?"

Once again, the word "thankful" proved useful. I responded that the word "Jew" in English is related to the word "Jude" in German, which in turn derives from the Hebrew word "Judah," one of the ancestors of the Jewish people.

I then asked him whether or not he was familiar with the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. His face, which up until this point projected hostility, suddenly took on a different aspect. His facial muscles seemed to relax at first, and then his eyes clouded over with tears.

"Are you kidding? I was the child of a preacher whose father was a preacher before him. We read from the Bible at the dinner table and studied it regularly every single day. I grew up resenting the Bible and all that it stood for, although I remember much of it against my will. I guess one can't forget words that were ingrained in him since his childhood."

I now had my opening. And this is the connection to this week's Torah reading,

Parshat Vayeitzei (Genesis 28:10-32:3). "Then you must remember the stories of *Genesis*. Do you recall the passage in which Leah names her children? Do you remember the name she gave to her fourth son?"

The words came out of his mouth as they would from a recording: "Genesis 30:35: And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'This time I will praise the Lord.' Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing."

He looked at me with a big grin, his face finally indicating a small measure of friendship. "Impressive, wouldn't you say? I remember every word. I even remember Grandpa explaining that 'Judah' sounds like the Hebrew for 'praise.'"

I responded by congratulating him for his excellent memory and further remarked that he had his old Grandpa to thank for his biblical expertise. I indicated that Leah's reaction to her fourth child's birth was usually translated in our tradition as, "This time I will *thank* the Lord".

"Now you have your answer. We are called Jews because of our ancestor, Judah, whose very name means to praise, or to thank. By definition, the Jew is a person who feels thankful, who expresses gratitude for all his blessings to the Almighty, who provides those

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blessings to other humans without whose help those blessings would never be realized."

He didn't seem convinced. "Why then," he pressed on, "is it so hard to feel thankful and ever so much more difficult to express it?"

I told them that to answer that question, I would have to give him a further lesson in the Hebrew language. I explained to him that the word *hoda'ah*, while it is the Hebrew word for thanks, it is also the Hebrew word for admission or confession. I went on to explain something to him that I had learned in the writings of Rabbi Isaac Hutner, who taught that when we are thankful to another person, we are in effect admitting that we couldn't do it alone but were dependent upon the other person for the favor.

Gratitude to God entails the recognition of one's own insufficiency and the confession that without God, we would not have achieved that which we are grateful for.

"It is difficult to be thankful," I concluded, "because it is difficult to admit to ourselves that alone we are inadequate and must always rely upon the Divine or the human to achieve whatever we wish to achieve in life. We don't like to admit that we need another, that we can't 'go at it alone.'"

At that point, the train was fast approaching Wilmington, Delaware. My companion was about to get off. He didn't say goodbye and certainly did not thank me for my words.

But he did give me a small bit of satisfaction. He said: "You're different from other Jews. You actually make sense."

I spent the rest of the train ride pondering the adequacy of my responses to this stranger and feeling thankful to the Almighty for giving me the words I needed to earn this dubious compliment. ■



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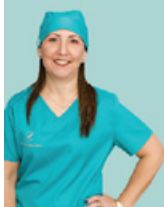
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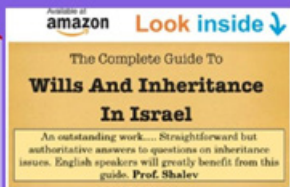
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Encountering God

It is one of the great visions of the Torah. Jacob, alone at night, fleeing from the wrath of Esau, lies down to rest, and sees not a nightmare of fear but an epiphany:

In time he [Yaakov] chanced upon a certain place [*vayifga bamakom*] and decided to spend the night there, because the sun had set. He took some stones of the place and put them under his head, and in that place lay down to sleep. And he dreamed: He saw a ladder set upon the ground, whose top reached the heavens. On it, angels of God went up and came down. The Lord stood over him... (*Gen. 28:11-13*)

Then Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, "Truly, the Lord is in this place - and I did not know it!" He was afraid and said, "How full of awe is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this the gate of the Heavens!" (*Gen. 28:16-7*)

On the basis of this passage, the Sages said that "Jacob instituted the evening prayer." The inference is based on the word *vayifga* which can mean not only, "he came to,

encountered, happened upon, chanced upon" but also "he prayed, entreated, pleaded" as in Jeremiah, "Neither lift up cry nor prayer for them nor make intercession to Me [*ve-al tifga bi*]" (Jeremiah 7:16).

The Sages also understood the word *bamakom*, "the place" to mean "God" (the "place" of the universe). Thus Jacob completed the cycle of daily prayers. Abraham instituted *shacharit*, the morning prayer, Isaac initiated Mincha, the afternoon prayer, and Jacob was first to establish Arvit, also known as Maariv, the prayer of night-time.

This is a striking idea. Though each of the weekday prayers is identical in wording, each bears the character of one of the patriarchs. Abraham represents morning. He is the initiator, the one who introduced a new religious consciousness to the world. With him a day begins.

Isaac represents afternoon. There is nothing new about Isaac – no major transition from darkness to light or light to darkness. Many of the incidents in Isaac's life recapitulate those of his father. Famine forces him, as it did Abraham, to go to the land of the Philistines. He re-digs his father's wells.

Isaac's is the quiet heroism of continuity. He is a link in the chain of the covenant. He joins one generation to the next. He introduces

nothing new into the life of faith, but his life has its own nobility. Isaac is steadfastness, loyalty, the determination to continue.

Jacob represents night. He is the man of fear and flight, the man who wrestles with God, with others and with himself. Jacob is one who knows the darkness of this world.

There is, however, a difficulty with the idea that Jacob introduced the evening prayer. In a famous episode in the Talmud, Rabbi Joshua takes the view that, unlike Shacharit or Mincha, the evening prayer is not obligatory (though, as the commentators note, it has become obligatory through the acceptance of generations of Jews). Why, if it was instituted by Jacob, was it not held to carry the same obligation as the prayers of Abraham and Isaac? Tradition offers three answers.

The first is that the view that Arvit is non-obligatory according to those who hold that our daily prayers are based not on the patriarchs but on the sacrifices that were offered in the Temple. There was a morning and afternoon offering but no evening sacrifice. The two views differ precisely on this, that for those who trace prayer to sacrifice, the evening prayer is voluntary, whereas for those who base it on the patriarchs, it is obligatory.

The second is that there is a law that those on a journey (and for three days thereafter) are exempt from prayer. In the days when journeys were hazardous – when travellers were in constant fear of attack by raiders – it was impossible to concentrate. Prayer requires concentration (*kavanah*). Therefore Jacob was exempt from prayer, and offered up his entreaty not as an obligation but as a voluntary act – and so it remained.

The third is that there is a tradition that, as Jacob was travelling, “the sun set suddenly”



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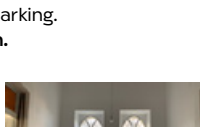
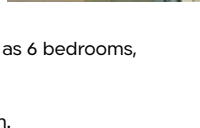
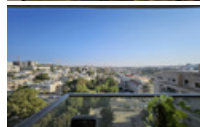
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– not at its normal time. Jacob had intended to say the afternoon prayer, but found, to his surprise, that night had fallen. Arvit did not become an obligation, since Jacob had not meant to say an evening prayer at all.

There is, however, a more profound explanation. A different linguistic construction is used for each of the three occasions that the Sages saw as the basis of prayer. Abraham “rose early in the morning to the place where he had stood before God” (Gen. 19:27). Isaac “went out to meditate [*lasuach*] in the field towards evening” (Gen. 24:63). Jacob “met, encountered, came across, chanced upon” God [*vayifga bamakom*]. These are different kinds of religious experience.

Abraham initiated the quest for God. He was a creative religious personality – the father of all those who set out on a journey of the spirit to an unknown destination, armed only with the trust that those who seek, find. Abraham sought God before God sought him.

Isaac’s prayer is described as a *sichah* (literally a conversation or dialogue). There are two parties to a dialogue – one who speaks, and one who listens and, having listened, responds. Isaac represents the religious experience as conversation between the word of God and the word of humankind.

Jacob’s prayer is very different. He does not initiate it. His thoughts are elsewhere – on Esau from whom he is escaping, and on Laban to whom he is travelling. Into this troubled mind comes a vision of God and the angels and a stairway connecting earth and heaven. He has done nothing to prepare for it. It is unexpected. Jacob literally “encounters” God as we can sometimes encounter a familiar face among a crowd of strangers. This is a meeting brought about by God, not

man. That is why Jacob’s prayer could not be made the basis of a regular obligation. None of us knows when the presence of God will suddenly intrude into our lives.

There is an element of the religious life that is beyond conscious control. It comes out of nowhere, when we are least expecting it. If Abraham represents our journey towards God, and Isaac our dialogue with God, Jacob signifies God’s encounter with us – unplanned, unscheduled, unexpected; the vision, the voice, the call we can never know in advance but which leaves us transformed. As for Jacob, so for us. It feels as if we are waking from a sleep and realising, as if for the first time, that “God was in this place and I did not know it.” The place has not changed, but we have. Such an experience can never be made the subject of an obligation. It is not something we do. It is something that happens to us. *Vayifga bamakom* means that, thinking of other things, we find that we have walked into the presence of God.

Such experiences take place - literally or metaphorically - at night. They happen when we are alone, afraid, vulnerable, close to despair. It is then that, when we least expect it, we can find our lives flooded by the radiance of the Divine. Suddenly, with a certainty that is unmistakable, we know that we are not alone, that God is there and has been all along but that we were too preoccupied by our own concerns to notice Him. That is how Jacob found God – not by his own efforts, like Abraham; not through continuous dialogue, like Isaac; but in the midst of fear and isolation. Jacob, in flight, trips and falls – and finds he has fallen into the waiting arms of God. No one who has had this experience, ever forgets it. “Now I know that You were with me all the time, but I was looking elsewhere.”

That was Jacob's prayer. There are times when we speak and times when we are spoken to. Prayer is not always predictable, a matter of fixed times and daily obligation. It is also an openness, a vulnerability. God can take us by surprise, waking us from our sleep, catching us as we fall. ■

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 for more.

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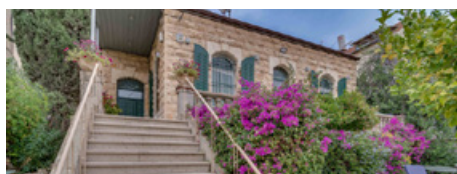
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Beresheet officially opened

An exciting evening in the Jerusalem hills

When more than 400 residents and families gathered last Tuesday to celebrate the official opening of Beresheet, it was clear that this was much more than a festive event. The families already knew each other, had already celebrated grandchildren's birthdays together in the hospitality halls - the community was already here.



On Tuesday, November 11, the official opening event of "Beresheet" took place in the Jerusalem hills. The festive evening included Mayor Moshe Leon, Rabbi Shlomo Moshe Amar, who set the mezuzah, and a moving performance by singer Yuval Dayan. "Seeing how families who were strangers to each other just a few months ago are already sitting together, laughing together, feeling at home - this is exactly what we dreamed of," says Yossi Liczek, one of the owners of Beresheet.

40 years of experience come to Jerusalem

Beresheet is the Liczek family's first flagship home in Jerusalem. "We have been operating a network of medical centers in central Israel for 40 years," says Yossi Lichak. "We have seen thousands of residents and learned that services are important, but what really matters is the sense of belonging, the connection with family, the opportunity to continue being active. That is what we took with us to Jerusalem." "Many people who grew up in Jerusalem were forced to leave and dreamed of returning. Others want to be close to children who have moved to the area. The special location in the Jerusalem hills combines the quiet and nature with accessibility to the city."

A historic day for Jerusalem

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Mayor Moshe Leon emphasized, "This is a historic day for Jerusalem. Beresheet is an innovative model for

quality of life in old age, and I am proud that such a project is being built in our city. The spectacular location in the Jerusalem hills will transform the place into a cultural and community hub." Rabbi Shlomo Moshe Amar: "A place that cares about a high quality of life and respect for old age is a blessed place."

A new standard: the facilities and spaces

The new community is spread over a large area in the heart of the breathtaking landscape of the Jerusalem Mountains, and includes 264 spacious apartments. The facilities include, among others: a semi-Olympic indoor and heated pool with a panoramic view, a fully equipped fitness center with professional trainers, multi-purpose cultural halls, Mehadrin kosher restaurants and cafes, the community garden - a green space where residents can grow vegetables and flowers and admire the spectacular view, and free hospitality halls for families. "After 40 years in the field, we have learned that what really makes a place a home is the little things," says Yossi Liczek. "The hospitality halls that are open free of charge to families. The grandchildren are celebrating their birthdays here. That's what creates the magic."

Salt of the Earth from all over the country

The residents came from all over the country - some to be close to their children who moved to the area, some to return to Jerusalem, where they had

always dreamed of living. "We are nature lovers, lovers of Jerusalem, people who want to continue living a full life." "We didn't come here to 'grow old'," emphasizes one of the residents, "We came here to live with a culture of a different standard. We are looking for people to grow up with, share experiences, and build friendships". Yossi Lichak, 68, not only runs the place - he himself is moving to be a resident here. "I believe in this place and want to be a part of it." The opportunity to comfortably host the children and grandchildren has created a reality in which family ties are strengthened. "I see my daughter and grandchildren more than when I lived in the center," says one resident. "They love coming here. It's not just a visit - it's a complete family experience."

An unforgettable evening

At the opening event, with the moving performance of Yuval Dayan, you could see the residents and families talking, laughing, and hugging. It was a family celebration of a community that already existed. "When we planned Beresheet, we imagined a community," says Yossi Lichak. "But what has been created here exceeds all expectations. 40 years in the field, but what is happening here in Jerusalem is something special. This is not just a residential community - it is truly a shared home for families from all over the country, who chose to grow up together, in the Jerusalem hills, at a different standard."



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Faith in Times of Challenge

“Sifrei Nevi'im Acharonim”, the books of the later prophets, do not often recount events of the earlier patriarchs, those found in Sefer Breishit. This is quite understandable as these books record the words of those nevi'im, from Yishayahu to Malachi, that were addressed to generations living at least one thousand years after the era of the forefathers. Their prophecies, admonitions and consolations were crafted to be timely lessons for those living at that time and place.

Given that truth, it is curious to find the opening words of our haftarah, those spoken by the navi Hoshe'a, to be those recalling

Ya'akov's flight to Aram, where he was constrained to work in order to win the hand of his wife. This first verse grants us an obvious connection to the weekly parasha – but, ostensibly, has little connection to the very community which the navi hopes to impact with his message.

In order to understand the significance of the haftarah's introductory words and why Hoshe'a evokes the experience of Ya'akov for his own generation, we must first recognize the haftarah's first words are not the opening of the prophet's message! Indeed, the preliminary p'sukim are taken from the *final* three verses of the perek and, therefore, are linked to the navi's message, found in the earlier p'sukim.

When we look back to the opening of the prophet's message, we read Hoshe'a's words censuring Israel for their deceitful ways and foretelling the inevitable punishments that Hashem would bring down upon them. He especially underscores the perfidious behavior of Israel toward their Heavenly Father, reminding Israel of how their Heavenly Father had remained **faithful to Ya'akov and saved him from harm**.

This mention of G-d's encounters with Ya'akov introduces the prophet's portrayal of the suffering that Israel would undergo, but is meant to ensure the nation of Hashem's ongoing protection and eventual salvation. And it is this theme that opens our haftarah. **Consider: the verses that open our haftarah with the description of Ya'akov's [Israel's]**

Mazal Tov to
Daniel & Gabriella Sopher
and family on the engagement
of their son, Aharon

difficult years of slavery in Aram, close with the depiction Israel's [Ya'akov's] release from difficult years of slavery in Egypt – all due to G-d's salvation!!

Through understanding the opening of the haftarah and its connection to the earlier p'sukim, we can better reveal the overall theme of the message of Hoshe'a and, consequently, the lesson to be learned. The bulk of this reading is taken from the thirteenth perek of Hoshe'a and its focus is one of contempt and censure of Israel. Hoshe'a addresses the northern kingdom of Israel, a realm that, since the rule of their first king, Yerov'am, had been guilty of improper worship of Hashem, outright idolatry and the adoption of abominable pagan practices from the cultures that surrounded them. And yet, the idolatry was less an act of rebellion against G-d as much

as a reflection of their fear of conquest, a fear brought upon by their lack of confidence in G-d's abilities and His faithfulness to them.

It is for this reason that the navi tells of the struggles of Israel, the man, and Israel, the nation. Despite the seemingly impossible challenges that faced them and despite the improbability of resolving them, they believed and trusted in Hashem's power and His promises to His nation. And, as a result, remained faithful to Him.

It was a crucial message to send to Israel of Hoshe'a's time....and, given the overwhelming challenges we have been facing over these many months, it is a welcome message for our generation, as well. ■

Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>



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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7TH, 2025 / 17 KISLEV 5786



RABBANIT RACHELI SPRECHER FRANKEL

Nishmat Educator

Lighting Inwards, Lighting Outwards

9:00-10:00am



RAV PESACH WOLICKI

Executive Director of Israel 365

"A Light Unto the Nations": Chanukah and the Universal Mission of Israel

10:10-11:10am



RAV DA'VID SPERLING

Nishmat's Rosh Beit Midrash

The Halachot of Chanuka

11:20am-12:10pm



RABBANIT NAVIT TZADIK

Director of Nishmat's Online Beit Midrash

The Miracle of the Oil or the Maccabean Victory:

Between Exile and Redemption

12:20-1:20pm

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A Stone or a Pebble

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא נוּכַל עַד אֲשֶׁר יֵאָסְפוּ כָּל-הַעֲדָרִים וְנִגְלְלוּ
אֶת-הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וְהִשְׁקִינוּ הָצֹאן:

They replied, “We cannot water the flocks until all the flocks are rounded up and all the shepherds can roll the boulder off the opening of the well together. Only then can we water the animals.” (Bereshit 29:8)

In Parshat Vayeitzei, we are told of a seemingly simple but deeply symbolic encounter between Yaakov and a group of shepherds near a well. Yaakov, arriving from his journey, notices the shepherds sitting idly beside the well. He questions them: why are they wasting precious time rather than removing the stone from the mouth of the well to water their flocks?

Their answer is straightforward yet telling: “*Lo nukhal*” – “We cannot.” The stone is too large, too heavy, too impossible. But

then Yaakov approaches the well, and singlehandedly rolls away the stone that they insisted could not be moved.

Imagine the astonishment of the shepherds. The same stone they viewed as an immovable obstacle, Yaakov removed with ease. What gave Yaakov such power—physical or otherwise—that they lacked?

Rabbi Norman Lamm, in his *Drashot L’Dorot: A Commentary for the Ages*, offers a profound interpretation. Throughout rabbinic literature, the well represents different spiritual realities: Zion, Mount Sinai, or the miraculous well that accompanied Bnei Yisrael in the desert. In each case, the well symbolizes a source of divine life, creativity, and potential—the wellspring of the Jewish soul.

The stone covering the well, then, represents whatever blocks that inner source from flowing freely. For some, it is a massive boulder; for others, merely a pebble. **The difference lies entirely in attitude.**

There are people whose wells remain sealed their entire lives. They possess deep reservoirs of talent, passion, and holiness—but they remain untapped. Something, a fear, a doubt, a sense of limitation, covers the opening. Whether that obstacle feels like a boulder or a pebble depends on how we see it.

The shepherds in the story were not physically weak; they were *mentally defeated*. They declared “*lo nukhal*”—it cannot be done—and so it wasn’t. Their conviction in failure became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Yaakov,

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Rachamim & Rosie Bastiker
of Mitzpeh Ramon and to
Sara & David Bedein
of Efrat, on the birth of
Shira Rachel in Hevron**





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by contrast, approached with confidence. He *believed* he could—and so he did.

Later in Yaakov’s life, the Torah echoes this contrast. When Yaakov wrestles with the angel, the pasuk states: “וַיִּתְּכֵל” – **“And he prevailed.”** (Bereshit 32:26). Yaakov possessed the spirit of *nukhal*—the belief that one *can*. The angel, by contrast, is described as seeing that “he could not prevail” – “לא יכול לוֹ.” Once he believed he could not win, defeat was inevitable.

This pattern is timeless. Each of us stands before our own well—our inner source of meaning and purpose—and each of us faces stones blocking the way. To some, those stones appear immovable; to others, merely small obstacles on the path to greatness.

Yaakov teaches that true strength is not measured in muscle but in *mindset*. His victories—over Esav, over Lavan, and even over the mysterious angel—were born not of

physical might but of determination.

We, too, are called to embody Yaakov’s strength. The “stone” before us—whether fear, failure, habit, or hesitation—need not remain a boulder. If we approach it with faith, courage, and the conviction that *nukhal*—we *can*—then the wellspring of our own divine potential will burst forth.

Every generation faces its own stones covering the well—the barriers that keep the Jewish soul from flowing freely. Some see them as too heavy, too entrenched, too impossible to move. But the secret of Jewish endurance, from Yaakov onward, has always been the same: we believe that we can.

Faith transforms impossibility into possibility. What appears to the world as a boulder, Am Yisrael lifts as though it were a pebble—because we know that beneath it lies the eternal source of strength that has sustained us through for generations. ■



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Consequential Conversation

When Yaakov Avinu arrives in Charan looking for the home of his uncle Lavan, we become privy to a conversation that seems, at first glance, quite mundane. Yaakov Avinu attempts to engage a group of shepherds in conversation while they are waiting for more shepherds to arrive so they can take a large rock off of the well to water the sheep.

Yaakov asks the shepherds where they are from. They reply, "Charan." He then asks them whether they are familiar with Lavan, and they reply in the affirmative, "*yadanu* — we know [him]." He further speaks to them, inquiring as to Lavan's wellbeing, and they respond, "[Things are going] well, and behold, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep." (*Bereisheet* 29:2-5) At this point, Yaakov reprimands them, telling them the

day is yet long, they ought to water the sheep and take them back out to pasture. Why does the Torah relate such a prosaic conversation? What are we to learn from this exchange?

Although simple, we can learn several important lessons from these verses, most significantly, the art of rebuke. The Malbim notes that Yaakov Avinu begins by asking the shepherds where they are from. He attempts to judge them favorably, assuming that they must be from a distant place and unaware of the local mores. Further, Rav Kahaneman *zt"l* notes that Yaakov Avinu addresses them as "*achai* — my brothers." To successfully reproach another, one must first convey a sense of true caring and interest. By calling them his "brothers," Yaakov Avinu tries to establish friendship and connection, dispelling any feelings of defensiveness or negativity.

Rav Nissan Alpert *zt"l* in *Limudei Nissan* observes a growing momentum as one reads the verses, and he perceives that there is an astute approach directing us how to admonish another. Yaakov Avinu's first three questions are preceded by the words, "*vayomer lahem* — and he spoke to them." Yaakov Avinu endeavors to engage them in pleasant conversation; one must establish a rapport and affinity in order to share words of admonishment.



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Mira & Menachem Higani of Holon
and to Sara & David Bedein of Efrat
on the birth of Neri Yosef
in Kibbutz Mefalsim.**

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Yet, we find that the shepherds respond to Yaakov Avinu with a curt, one- or two-word answers. With each question though, Yaakov Avinu tries to draw them out and create a deeper sense of camaraderie. Finally, they not only respond, but they share additional information as well, telling him that Rachel is coming with the sheep. Yaakov Avinu now sees that they are beginning to recognize and accept his overtures of friendship. It is only at this point that he shares his rebuke with them. However, here too, he conveys his message with subtlety, doing his utmost to preserve their dignity. When Yaakov Avinu tells them, “The day is yet long...water the sheep go, pasture,” (*Bereisheet* 29:7). The verse relates, “*Vayomer* — and he said,” as opposed to, “*vayomer lahem* — and he said to them,” as relayed previously. This may imply that Yaakov Avinu was commenting out loud to himself, noting that the day is yet young, there is plenty of time for the sheep to continue grazing. It is only when the shepherds don’t seem to comprehend, that Yaakov Avinu is more direct, effectively saying, “Why not water the sheep now and return to pasture?” Yaakov Avinu communicates his censure by degrees, treating the shepherds with courtesy and respect.

The sensitivity of our Avot is legendary, modeling for us valuable lessons in our social milieu. We learn the importance of relating to others as kinsman and allies and giving people the benefit of the doubt. Further, when sharing reproof, we learn that it is essential to speak in a way that one’s message is understood by implication to preserve the other’s dignity.

How amazing it is to find a world of *derech erez* in artless conversation and simple fellowship. ■

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THIS WEEK'S INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING

**SUNDAY
NOV 30**

7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner
7 Hartum Street,
2nd Floor



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**MONDAY
DEC 1**

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men) - Semichat
Chaver Program Rav Elyada
Goldwicht@ **Bet Knesset**
Ohel Yitzchak
Keren Hayesod St.



OU Israel | Women's Division
2 Radak St., Rechavia

6:00-10:00PM

ATID Midrasha
(women in their 20's)

7:00-9:00PM

Dorot Choir Session with
Hadassah Jacob

8:00-10:00PM

NextGen Pre Chanukah Evening

**TUESDAY
DEC 2**

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COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila
Rabbi Yossi Goldin

11:25 AM

Pshat in the Parsha
Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:15 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

9:15AM

Torah Tapestries Parsha Shiur
Mrs. Shira Smiles

10:15AM

Sefer Bereishit:
Exploring the Middot of the Avot
Mrs. Leah Feinberg

MODIIN-THE BAIS

Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel,
Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

10:00AM -2:00PM

Weekly Kollel Boker-Instructors include
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Rabbi Ian Shaffer

Rabbi Aschi Dick

Rabbi Avi Herzog

1:00PM- NEW!!!

Modiin Lunch and Learn with **Rabbi Aschi Dick** - Masamerica Offices,
28 Dam HaMacabbiim St, 3rd Floor, Shiur followed by mincha at 1:45pm

7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **MODIIN** Rabbi Phil Schajer

7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **BEIT SHEMESH** Rabbi Elie Levi

This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

WEDNESDAY DEC 3

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Holy Poetry

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 AM

Contemporary Issues in
Halacha and Hashkafa

Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM

Modern Masters

Rabbi Sam Shor (Rabbi Aaron
Goldscheider will resume Dec. 10)

12:30PM

Jews in the Middle Ages:
External Threats and Internal
Development

Dr. Deborah Polster

THURSDAY DEC 4

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon,
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua

Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:30AM

Parashat Hashavua

Rabbi Baruch Taub

8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies- (the Bais)

Rabbi Aschi Dick @ Bet Knesset
Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod
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TORAH TIDBITS LIVE!

in Pardes Hanna *with* **Rabbi Sam Shor**

Shabbat Parshat Vayeishev | Dec 12-13

FRIDAY :

7:30 PM Oneg Shabbat - Welcoming Remarks
Aleeza Ben Shalom, Torah Tidbits contributor, followed by Tisch, Wine-Tasting, Niggunim & Shiur: *Noach, Yaakov and the Chashmonaim-The Backstory of the Nes Pach HaShemen*. @Ben Shalom Residence, Alon 33

SHABBAT DAY:

12:00 PM Community Kiddush and Shiur: *Sod HaSevivon*
Followed by Community Lunch @Heichal Yehudit, near 38 Hatzfira St.

MOTZA'SH:

7:30 PM Melava Malka and shiur: *Tashlich in Tevet: Unlocking the Spiritual Potential of Chanuka* @ Neve Michael, near Hadarim St. 43

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- **Yerushalayim** (Women's Hub) - Monday Dec 8
- **Beit Shemesh** (Carlebach) - Tuesday Dec 9
- **Chashmonaim** (Rimon Shul) - Tuesday Dec 9
- **Ramot YM** (Private Home) - Wednesday Dec 10
- **Modiin** (Darchei Tzion) - Thursday Dec 11
- **Pardes Chana** (Klal Yisrael) - TBD

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Paint Night and Shiur

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DEC. 1 @ 8PM

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

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

Our *Sedra* this week, *Parshat Vayeitzei* of course recalls the familiar account of *Yaakov Avinu* departing from *Be'er Sheva* as he flees the potential danger and retribution at the hands of his brother *Eisav*, following *Yaakov's* having received the *bracha* from *Yitzchak*.

As *Yaakov* lies down to rest under the stars the *pasuk* tells us:

Vayachalom v'hinei sulam mutzav Artza, v'rosho magia haShamaima- And he dreamt, and suddenly before him was a ladder that leaned toward earth, and its top rose to Heaven.

What exactly is the message this dream is meant to convey to *Yaakov Avinu*? What is the eternal message and relevance of *Yaakov's* dream for each of us? What does the imagery of the ladder which is grounded on Earth and ascends to the Heavens, meant to convey and teach us?

Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch *zt"l* points out that the ladder, which represents the link between heaven and earth, was placed from

above by *Hashem*. However the verse reads that the ladder's top reached the heavens. The ladder's purpose, explained *Rav Hirsch*, was not descent from the heavens, rather to inspire spiritual ascent, to direct our thoughts and actions toward the heavens.

The *Sefat Emet*, the *Gerrer Rebbe* *zy'a* explains that the image of the ladder represents a person's spiritual journey, where the body is grounded, but the soul reaches heaven.

Similarly, the great Chasidic Master, *Rebbe Aharon of Karlin* *zy'a* suggests that the imagery of the ladder which is placed from above with its peak reaching the heavens, is meant to emphasize

that each and every human being was placed here from above, and that each of us has the potential to ascend emotionally, spiritually and morally to reach the highest levels of refinement of character and elevated consciousness.

The *Netivot Shalom*, the *Slonimer Rebbe* *zy'a* offers a different interpretation on the imagery represented by the ladder. A ladder offers the capacity both to climb, as well as to descend. It is important for us to realize that in life even our descents occur within the framework of that proverbial ladder. Even as we may have come down a rung on that ladder, we continue to have the ability to climb back up, and ascend even higher than before!

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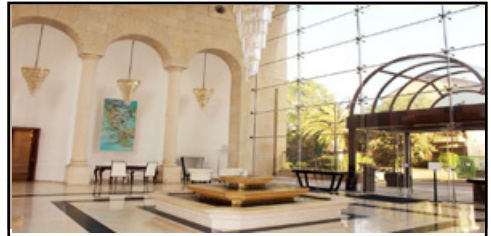
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Kook zt'l, offers a similar interpretation of the imagery of the ladder. The ladder is meant to teach us that sometimes our descents are necessary temporary steps, that actually serve as the impetus to propel us to climb even higher up that proverbial ladder, to reach even higher heights in our *Avodat Hashem*. Taking the time periodically to take a step back to gather our thoughts, to prepare ourselves to move forward, can indeed be the key to even greater accomplishments.

Yehi Ratzon, May each of us be blessed both to dream, to seek to ascend higher in our *Avodat Hashem*, as well as to have the strength and perseverance to bounce back from our temporary descents and setbacks, have the capacity to recalibrate our thoughts, and to move forward and achieve even greater clarity and growth each and every day. ■



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Non-Kosher Ingredients

Kosher ingredients form the foundation of kosher certification. Because ingredients today are sourced globally, extracted through various methods, and processed in diverse ways, determining whether an ingredient is kosher-compatible requires extensive expertise. To help navigate this complexity, the OU developed a system that classifies ingredients into six numerical groups, ranging from 1 to 6. The lower the number, the less sensitive the ingredient is from a kosher-certification perspective, allowing companies and food-service providers greater flexibility in sourcing.

GROUP 6

Non-kosher ingredients remain common in the food industry. Many animal-derived products continue to play essential roles in manufacturing. Examples include widely used ingredients such as glycerin and gelatin (which will be discussed in future articles), as well as more complex components like certain shortenings and emulsifiers.

Non-kosher animal-based ingredients may originate from inherently non-kosher animals such as pigs. They may also come from species that are kosher by nature—such as cows or sheep—but were not slaughtered according to halachic requirements. It is important to emphasize that even when these

ingredients are technically capable of being produced from kosher-slaughtered animals, such sources are not used in the commercial market. As a result, all animal-based products available commercially—whether derived from kosher species or not—are considered non-kosher.

Another major category of non-kosher ingredients includes grape-derived products. According to halacha, any grape product produced by non-Jews is classified as *stam yeinam*, a rabbinic prohibition applying to wine or grape derivatives handled by non-Jews. Therefore, all liquid grape products—such as wine, grape flavoring, and balsamic vinegar—are considered non-kosher unless they are produced under reliable kosher supervision and sealed accordingly.

GROUP 6 IN PRODUCTION FACILITIES

There are cases in which Group 6 ingredients or products may be present in a facility without compromising the kosher program. In large plants, it is common to maintain completely separated sections—one dedicated to non-kosher production and another fully detached area reserved for kosher production. This setup is found, for example, in certain large fish-processing facilities, where kosher and non-kosher species are handled in different areas. OU supervisors ensure that systems are in place to prevent any possibility of cross-contamination.

It is also worth noting that kosher-for-Passover products may occasionally bear allergen warnings such as “may contain wheat.” This

The OU Israel Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education was created to raise awareness and educate the public in all areas of kashrut. Rabbi Ezra Friedman, Deputy Rabbinic Administrator for OU Kosher Israel is the Center's director.



does not compromise their Passover status; it simply reflects the presence of a separate, unrelated production area elsewhere in the facility. The kosher-for-Passover lines are properly kashered and operate under full-time supervision.

THE PREVALENCE OF NON-KOSHER INGREDIENTS

A common misconception is that if a product does not list an overtly non-kosher ingredient—or is not known to contain one—it is safe to consume. In reality, many items contain non-kosher components that are not obvious to consumers.

Examples include:

Kalamata olives in Greece, which are often processed with wine vinegar—even when not listed—because they may be brined in it prior to packaging.

Fish oil: can be derived from non-kosher species and may appear in dairy products or even eggs.

Red food coloring: sometimes sourced from insects; this coloring, known as carmine, often appears on labels as E-120.

Given these complexities, it is crucial for consumers—especially those traveling internationally—to consult knowledgeable halachic authorities or kashrut professionals regarding which products are permissible to purchase. ■

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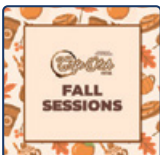
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Vayeitzei: A Walking Mirror

Word of the terrible tragedy spread like wildfire across Europe: the great author of the “Ohr Sameach” and “Meshech Chochma”, Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, had been murdered in an anti-Semitic attack. The *olam haTorah*, and the Jewish community worldwide, were shattered. Across continents, communities organized massive *hespeidim*, public eulogies, to honor the fallen *gaon* and guiding light.

As grief-stricken rabbanim began gathering in Eretz Yisrael to mourn together, the organizers turned to Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap, the Rav of Shaarei Chessed in Yerushalayim, devoted *talmid* of Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook, and also Rosh Yeshivah of Merkaz haRav. They pleaded with him to join and deliver words of *hesped*, inspiration and comfort, but to their great dismay, Rav Yaakov Moshe refused. Again and again they pressed him — and again he declined.

Soon after, the news broke: to everyone’s shock and relief, it was ‘fake news’, a false report. *Baruch Hashem*, Reb Meir Simcha was alive and well, sitting in Dvinsk, learning and teaching Torah! The organizers then ran to ask Rav Yaakov Moshe why he had refused to participate. How could he have known?

Where did his apparent *ruach ha-kodesh* come from?

The Rav explained simply: “Even after hearing the initial terrible news, I sensed no change in the world at all! Everything felt exactly as it had before. Had it truly been the case that Reb Meir Simcha, the *tzaddik* and *gaon*, the brilliant author of the Meshech Chochma and Ohr Sameach on the Rambam, had left this world, we would have certainly *felt* it inwardly. There would have been a noticeable change in the spiritual air. Since I felt no such shift, I was certain there had been a mistake.”

...ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה

“And Yaakov left Be’er Sheva and went to Charan...”

The Torah does not waste a word or even a letter, and we already know that Yaakov had been at his parents’ home by the small cluster wells of Be’er Sheva; here the *pasuk* could have just said ‘And Yaakov walked to Charan.’ Rashi explains why this *pasuk* points out the place that Yaakov “left”:

מגיד שיציאתו של צדיק מן המקום עושה רושם שבזמן שהצדיק בעיר, הוא הודה, הוא זיווה והוא הדרה. יצא משם, פנה הודה, פנה זיווה ופנה הדרה.

“When a *tzaddik* departs a city, he leaves an impression. While the *tzaddik* is there, he is its glory, its splendor, its beauty. When he leaves, its glory, its splendor and its beauty depart.”

The Maharal (*Netzach Yisrael*, 24) expands this idea. A *tzaddik* is not just a private

individual but a *merkavah*, a vehicle for Divine Presence in the world. His soul is elevated, aligned with God's will, and thus he becomes a conduit through which *shefa*, Divine blessing and vitality, flows into Creation. Because he unites the spiritual with the physical through his devotion, his very being sustains and uplifts the world around him.

Sfas Emes (Vayeitzei 5631) explains Rashi's comment in a different, more personal light: When the Torah emphasizes "*Vayeitzei Yaakov*" — that Yaakov's departure from Be'er Sheva made an impression — it is teaching us something about how a tzaddik functions within a community. Beyond manifesting *hod, ziv, hadar*, "glory, splendor and beauty" in an abstract sense, the presence of the *tzadik* awakens those of us around him to recognize the inner *hod, ziv, hadar* - within ourselves. By being near a tzaddik, we can sense our own soul; we can come alive. The *tzadik* is a mirror, reflecting back the Divine image within us. So when he departs, people sense that something has dimmed — not just outside, but *within ourselves*. Thus, when we feel the mirror's absence, we must turn within and learn to uncover our own inner light, our own Divine image, directly.

Maharal emphasizes the metaphysical reality of a tzaddik as a *conduit of shefa* — literally changing the spiritual landscape of a place. The Sfas Emes highlights the fact that a tzaddik elevates *others*, drawing out their latent greatness.

This helps us re-hear Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap's response when asked why he did not join the *hespedim*: "*I sensed no change in the world.*" If Reb Meir Simcha had truly left this world, not only would there have been a cosmic diminishment, the souls of Jews

everywhere would have felt dimmer, heavier, less alive. There was shock and grief, but no dimming of the Jewish soul was perceptible. The news could not be true.

Parshas Vayeitzei invites us to take our internal spiritual pulse: are we attuned enough to notice when true *tzidkus* and authentic *kedushah* are present? Are we striving to be such conduits ourselves, to let our own lives, in whatever measure, become righteous sources of blessing for the world around us? Or are we dependent on outer mirrors to reflect our light back to us?

In our own lives, we can become so desensitized by 'headlines' and 'fake news' that we may miss the deeper shifts of the spirit. Our sedra reminds us to tune in to a deeper level of reality and sense the holiness and spiritual impact of the tzadikim on our lives and communities. May we merit to see a living model of a life of Torah and Mitzvos, God-awareness and goodness, uplift us and the world with glory, splendor, and beauty. May we also, from time to time, turn from the outer mirrors, look inward and recognize these holy qualities deep within ourselves. May we allow ourselves to shine and to leave a lasting positive impression on our own city or town — or small cluster of wells. ■

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Ya'akov's Mapping of Galus

Each of our Avot represents a different stage of Jewish history. Their lives set patterns that guided the unfolding of our history.

Avraham was a pioneer, and his story mirrors the early chapters of Jewish history - from his selection, through the miracles in Mitzrayim, to our first entry into Eretz Yisrael. These were the formative years, when our identity was forged and our people first took shape.

Yitzchak carved the pattern for the intermediate stage of our history - the golden age of Jewish sovereignty, when we lived with autonomy in our own Land. He never left Eretz Canaan, and his life reflects that long, radiant era of nearly a thousand years, when Jewish civilization flourished in its homeland.

PATTERNS OF EXILE

Ya'akov left the Land of Israel twice - once fleeing the murderous rage of his brother,

and once drawn down to Egypt by tensions that erupted in Yosef's sale and disappearance. His life reflects the third stage of Jewish history: the long, wandering saga of exile.

We still await the fourth stage - our full geulah. Yet the details of that future remain deliberately concealed. Unlike the earlier stages, we possess no clear roadmap and no personality in Sefer Bereishit to model this final chapter. It remains hidden in the will of Hashem, who guides history toward its end.

Now that we have begun our return to Jewish history and our return to redemptive history, we can finally look back at exile with clearer eyes. Exile was not a pause in our story, nor a long interval in which our history felt muted. In the thick of that darkness, perspective was impossible; suffering rarely grants us the luxury of reflection.

But as we ascend from those challenging journeys, and as Jewish history regains momentum, we can begin to study the third stage of our history - the past 2,000 years - with deeper understanding. Ya'akov's life becomes our prism, allowing us to trace the trials and triumphs of one of history's great human miracles - the survival and endurance of a nation scattered across the world yet never erased.

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he receives the famous vision of the ladder, with Hashem standing above it and promising protection, sustenance, and an eventual return. Avraham had no such moment before his own descent into exile.

We take the notion that Hashem protects us in exile for granted, but Ya'akov could not. Until that vision, it was reasonable to imagine that divine providence was bound to the Land of Israel - that Hashem's presence could be fully encountered only in His Land.

Hashem's promise from atop the ladder reshapes our understanding of His presence. Though that presence is encountered most intensely in Israel, He assures Ya'akov that His protection will accompany him even in distant lands. It is the first message of exile: we may walk foreign roads, but never alone.

On the eve of Ya'akov's second descent - this time into Egypt, as recorded in Vayigash - Hashem introduces an even bolder idea. Not only would Ya'akov be protected in Egypt; the Shechinah itself would go with him. By this point, the bond between Hashem and His emerging nation had already grown stronger. Wherever we wandered, Hashem would share our journey.

As Hashem assures Ya'akov:

אֲנִכִּי אֵדָד עִמָּךְ מִצָּרִימָה וְאֲנִכִּי אֵעֲלֶךְ גַּם־עֲלֶיהָ

Across the long night of exile, this promise became our hidden anchor. Even as we were expelled from Israel, we never lost divine supervision. And we knew that the Shechinah traveled with us into galut. When we prayed for redemption, we prayed not only for our people to return home, but for the Shechinah to return to its place in Israel.

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delivers prosperity: he reaches the well, rolls the massive boulder on his own, and enables the gathered shepherds to water their flocks. Likewise, during his twenty years in Lavan's home, Lavan's fortunes soared. Even Lavan admitted that his newfound wealth flowed from Ya'akov's long stay. Part of his hesitation to release Ya'akov was simple fear of what his departure would mean for Lavan's future.

Across generations, Jews have lived this pattern. Even in exile and cast as outsiders, we consistently contributed to the economic, social, and moral fabric of the lands in which we dwelled.

For thousands of years we did so quietly, from the margins, shut out from the full avenues of civic life. Over the past two hundred years, as we were gradually welcomed into broader society and granted equal opportunity, our contributions became far more visible.

This shift enabled us to more fully embody the promise that Hashem articulated to Avraham - *ve'hyei beracha* - to serve as a

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wellspring of blessing. For generations this blessing unfolded quietly; in the modern era it has surfaced more openly.

SHIFTING WINDS

Yet the story of galut is never one-dimensional. No matter how deeply we enrich our surroundings, there comes a moment when jealousy and resentment flare. Admiration turns sour, and the esteem in which we were once held is eclipsed by anger. Eventually even Lavan could no longer tolerate Ya'akov; he whispered accusations to his shepherds and stoked suspicion. Sensing the shifting winds, Ya'akov fled before the situation spiraled beyond repair.

So, too, with our long journey through exile. Jewish life in any host nation is always temporary. Eventually hatred takes root so deeply that it veers into the irrational: even as societies acknowledge how much Jews contribute, they cannot bear our presence.

Sadly, the pattern repeats itself. Empires that cast us out often tumble soon after - partly because they have discarded a remarkable human resource, and partly as a consequence of their hostility toward the nation of Hashem.

GUARDING OUR BOUNDARIES

Faced with these cycles of deceit and

simmering hostility, Ya'akov responds with deliberate separation. Though he lived under Lavan's roof, he clearly preserved distance. He built his own household and spiritual world, keeping his family and flocks distinct from Lavan's. The sheep stayed apart - and so did the shepherds and families. Though Lavan hosted him, Ya'akov ensured that his cultural and religious identity remained intact.

Throughout our long exile, even when we were transplanted into foreign cultures and participated in the civic life around us, we maintained a measure of insularity. At times this separation protected us from religious dilution and assimilation. At other times it safeguarded our national spirit, preventing us from absorbing the cultural norms of the lands in which we lived. Across generations, Bilaam's haunting description - *hen am levado yishkon* - echoed through Jewish history, shaping our fate and preserving our identity.

PERILOUS COMFORT

Still, life in exile offers opportunity as well as dangers.

While in galut, Ya'akov is anything but passive. He builds a large family - four wives, eleven children - and accumulates considerable wealth.

In many ways it is easier to raise a family outside the spiritual turbulence of the Land of Israel. Hashem's Land is charged with divine energy, often marked by conflict and upheaval. Any nation that lives there senses - openly or subtly - the Land's sacred weight.

In the relative calm of Aram Naharayim, away from the turbulence of Eretz Yisrael, Ya'akov is able to raise his family in peace. But this comfort threatens to ensnare him. He nearly becomes trapped by his own



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success. At the beginning of the parsha he dreams of heavenly angels ascending a divine ladder; twenty years later, his dreams revolve around sheep. Life in chutz la'aretz has absorbed him so completely that he almost doesn't make it back. Angels must visit his dreams and command him to return before it is too late.

When he finally reenters the Land, he immediately confronts Esav, who is determined to bar his reentry and avenge the loss of the *bechorah*. Despite Esav's many flaws, he has lived in Eretz Yisrael for the past twenty years, and that spiritual standing terrifies Ya'akov far more than Esav's physical strength.

After escaping Esav, Ya'akov then faces the upheaval of Shechem. His family is unprepared for that upheaval. They grew up quietly on the sidelines in Aram Naharayim and had not been hardened by the tumult and moral intensity of life in the Land of Hashem.

Many in our generation face a similar dilemma. In countless ways, it is easier to raise a family and secure financial stability outside the intensity of life in Israel. Life in this Land presents financial strain, political insecurity, and spiritual challenges that are felt far less acutely abroad. Some even argue that they prefer remaining in chutz la'aretz because, on the surface, it seems easier to raise children there.

Yet despite the allure of that choice, many who remain and thrive in Chutz La'aretz face two real risks: becoming too rooted in exile, and arriving in Israel unprepared for the struggles, tensions, and demands that life in the Land of Hashem inevitably presents.

AFTER GEULAH BEGINS, STRUGGLES

All of this leads naturally to the final lesson.

The pace of redemption is rarely swift. Lavan deceived Ya'akov at the very outset of his marriage, slipping Leah in place of Rachel. Years later, after Yosef was born, Lavan swindled him yet again. Chazal view this pattern as a foreshadowing: "before our redeemer arrives and even after his birth, our nation will continue to endure persecution and domination."

Yosef would redeem the family and one day redeem our people. Yet even his birth did not end Lavan's deceit.

We, too, have begun our redemption. But many imagine - naively - that once the geulah begins, our struggles will evaporate and our adversaries will vanish. Ya'akov's odyssey teaches otherwise. Even after Yosef's birth, even after redemption begins to dawn, the hardships persist.

Ya'akov fashioned many of the great templates of Jewish history. His twenty years in Lavan's home remain one of the clearest models of Jewish life in exile - and of the long, uneven road toward redemption. ■



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The Roar of Redemption

We usually think of a lion's roar as something frightening — a sound that makes you recoil, not gather. So why does the Navi describe Hashem's call to redemption as the roar of a lion? Wouldn't that push us away?

The Radak reframes the entire image. A lion's roar does not only scatter; in the animal world, it also draws the creatures toward him, because he is king. כְּאַרְיֵה יִשָּׂאג, *He will roar like a lion* - just as the lion's roar asserts authority and gathers the animals, so Hashem's roar is the sound that gathers His people. It is the voice that reminds us who leads us, who watches us, who calls us home. The Radak explains that this roar comes through a moment of revelation — through a prophet, a sign, or a wonder that breaks through the noise of exile and says: Return.

The Malbim deepens this image. He distinguishes between two kinds of Divine

roar. In exile, Hashem does not roar with His full, overwhelming Divine voice — kol Elokim — because we could not withstand it. Instead, He “roars like a lion”: He clothes Himself in the events of history, guiding us through natural means, bending the hearts of kings, softening decrees, and preserving us through hidden providence. It sounds like the roar of empires, but beneath it is the quiet Voice of Hashem.

But, says the Malbim, a time will come when that hidden roar will give way to the true roar — the unmistakable voice of Hashem performing wonders “כִּי־יִמְיָ קָדָם.” In that moment, וְחִדְּרוּ בְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם, *even the children of the West, scattered far from the land, will tremble* not in fear but in recognition. They will hurry toward the call they have been waiting to hear.

Together, the Radak and Malbim reshape our understanding. Hashem's roar is often hidden, softened, disguised in the noise of history. But the day will come when that quiet, protective roar becomes the full, unmistakable Divine voice. At that moment, even those scattered far away will tremble — not in fear, but in recognition — and will hurry toward Him.

The roar is not a sound that drives us off. It is a sound that calls us home. ■

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Inspired by the Faith of Tzadikim

(Midot Hara'aya, Emunah piska #32)

"The great spirits of the world raise *emunah* (religious faith)...This is the vocation of the great *tzaddikim*, the world's mighty men of righteousness - to raise religious faith from its lowly state, to purge it of its dross, and to bring it to its authentic character." (Midot Hara'aya, Emunah #32)

In the above passage from *Midot Hara'aya* Rav Kook emphasizes the distinctive role of the *tzaddik* (saintly individuals) who is the paradigm of faith and "the entire world is illuminated by his glory." (Ibid)

The first time that the Torah records a person's *emunah* is in regard to Avraham: *Ve'he'emin b'Hashem* - "And he believed in the Lord" (15:6). This is also the first time the word *emunah* appears in the Torah. Avraham epitomizes deep devotion. God's command to leave his birthplace for a foreign land and to offer his beloved son as a sacrifice are two exquisite examples of our forefather's willingness to surrender his will to the will of the Almighty.

AVRAHAM'S FAITH ILLUMINATED THE WORLD

Avraham is a paradigm of genuine faith.

Rabbi Yitzchak Twersky zt"l, the Talner Rebbe and the eminent son-in-law of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik zt"l emphasized Avraham's



Rabbi Isadore Twersky zt"l

remarkable devotion to God's command. At the Third Meal on Shabbat in his Beis medrash in Brookline, he cited the verse in Yeshayahu (51:2) "Look to Avraham your forefather...". Simply put, we are charged to emulate Avraham. (Torah of the Mind, Torah of the Heart, Divrei Torah of the Talner Rebbe, Twersky, p. 43-45)

Rabbi Twersky also cited the Rambam's Mishne Torah (*Hilchot Teshuva* 10:2) in which Avraham's love of God and deep faith is considered to be the gold standard which a Jew must strive to emulate: "Whoever serves God out of love, occupies himself with [the study of] Torah and [the fulfillment of] mitzvot, and walks in the paths of wisdom impelled by no external motive - prompted by neither the fear of calamity nor the desire to obtain benefit; rather, he does what is truly right because it is truly right... This standard is indeed a very high one; not every sage attains it. It was the standard of **Avraham Avinu**, whom God called His lover

because he served only out of love...”

The Rambam depicts Avraham Avinu as the quintessential believer in God. In a similar vein, The Talner Rebbe offered a novel interpretation to the Mishna in Avot (Chapter 5):

Avraham Avinu was tested with ten trials and says the Mishna, *amad bekulam* - “he withstood all of them.” The Talner Rebbe suggested that the word *amad*, is also a term for prayer, like *amidah* recited daily. The Mishna is teaching that Avraham prayed to God as he confronted his many challenges - indicating the degree of his love and faith in God. (Torah of the Mind, Torah of the Heart, p. 45)

RABBI AKIVA’S PHENOMENAL FAITH

Of the many eminent sages who dot the pages of the Talmud, the personality of Rabbi Akiva is arguably the most enthralling and inspiring. The Talmud debates the issue of including the book of *Shir Hashirim* in the Tanach. Apparently the Sages grappled with the explicit language and erotic allusions found in the holy book. Rabbi Akiva argued in favor of including *Shir Hashirim* in the Tanach (*Yadayim* 3:5). Rav Kook, in his introduction to *Shir Hashirim* (*Olat Re’iyah* 2:3ff) points out that Rabbi Akiva’s love of God and profound faith had the capacity to transcend the personal and the scope of his love was all inclusive. Rav Kook urges us to recall the martyred Rabbi Akiva whose love of Torah transcended fear of death and whose love of God transcended the pain of torture so that as he declared God’s unity he was able to let go of his worldly life (*Berachot* 61b). This is Rabbi Akiva, overflowing with love that transcends his personal situation, who sees holiness in every word of *Shir Hashirim*.

One of the most striking stories in the life of Rabbi Akiva was the time that he was able

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to laugh when peering at the ruins of the Beit Hamikdash. His heart was filled with faith and he held fast to a vision of a blissful future when Israel would return to glory and the love that filled his heart could transcend the present sorrow and desolation (*Makkot* 24b).

RAV KOOK’S PROFOUND FAITH

Rabbi Akiva’s remarkable ability to see sparks of redemption even in times of darkness was also a hallmark of Rav Kook’s outlook. In one of Rav Kook’s most well-known dictums he teaches that a Jew always forges ahead with optimism and the confidence to make things better and more holy:

“The purely righteous do not complain about wickedness, they increase righteousness; do not complain about heresy, they increase faith; do not complain about ignorance, they increase wisdom.” (*Arpilei Tohar*)

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Rav Kook didn't just "talk that talk - he walked the walk." He moved to Israel in 1904. He took a small rabbinic post in Yaffo and took responsibility for addressing the multiple needs and issues facing the fledgling Jewish community throughout Palestine.

Not only did Rav Kook believe with his heart and soul that the prophecies of the *Tanach* were tangibly unfolding in his time, he took the notion of prophecy a step further. He deeply believed that the pipelines of prophecy that had been blocked for so long in the long-draw-out exile were now being renewed and revitalized with the return of the people of Israel to her homeland.

"The imagination of the Land of Israel is pure and clear and suited for the appearance of decisive truth, for garbing the lofty, exalted will of the ideal direction that is at the height of holiness; **ready for explication of prophecy** and its light for the shining of divine inspiration and its brightness." (Orot pp. 91-92 in Naor, English translation)

STRIVING TO BE A TZADIK

With a sense of deep humility, Rav Kook, in a letter to an eminent rabbinic colleague, writes that he considers himself to be on the level of a *beinoni* (a Jew who is neither a *rasha* (wicked) nor reaching the level of *tzadik*) and strives to achieve the coveted level of being a *tzadik*.

"Due to my imperfection, I do not deserve the name *Tzadik*. If only God would give me the ability to say with sincerity: "For example,

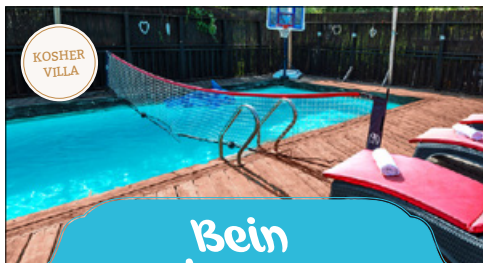
I am a *Beinoni* / ordinary person" (*Berachot* 62b). Nonetheless, there is no doubt that with the help of God the way that I am trying to follow is the path of *Tzadikim*. Those who follow me and connect to me in the way they study Torah and serve God; those who follow me sincerely with a real faith in the Sages, will eventually merit to see the light and truth within this righteousness." (*Igrot Ha'raaya* 2, p. 197, translation The Spiritual Wisdom of Rav Kook, Schwartz, p. 98) [This excerpt is taken from a letter written to the Ridvaz, Rabbi Yaakov David Wilovsky, a renowned Talmudist, author educator and Rosh Yeshiva in Tzfat, June 9, 1912].

Rav Kook is encouraging each Jew to strive for living righteously and embody the spiritual life delineated by the Torah. There is indeed a "Tzadik" within each individual waiting to be uncovered. For Rav Kook, the word "Tzadik" should not be seen as some lofty unreachable title, but rather used as an archetype and ideal way of living that each individual can and should aspire toward.

Life Lessons:

- Make a commitment to saying even one line of prayer (for example *Poteach et yadecha* from the *Ashrei* prayer) with proper intention.
- Read biographies of Gedolei Torah which will inspire you to lead a richer Jewish life.
- Become a role model. Grow yourself for the sake of the world and inspire others. ■



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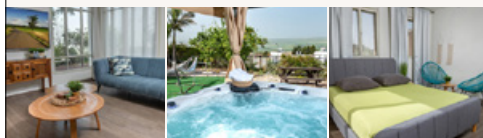
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Forgot to Remove *Tefillin* Before *Musaf* of Rosh Chodesh

לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: *Davening Shacharit* at home on Rosh Chodesh, I realized during the first *beracha* of *Musaf* that I forgot to remove my *tefillin* and took them off before the next *beracha*. Was that correct?

Answer: We have to investigate two independent topics, and then be practical about preferences in navigating the “conflict.”

Removing *tefillin* before *Musaf*: The idea of taking off *tefillin* before *Musaf* appears in the Beit Yosef (Orach Chayim 25) as a *minhag*. He does not cite a source, and in looking for a reason, proposes that since *Kedusha* of *Musaf* is introduced (for Sephardim and Nusach Sephard) with a reference to Hashem’s *keter* (crown), it is inappropriate that we should be wearing our “crown” – *tefillin*. He cites *Chol Hamo’ed*’s lack of *tefillin* as a similar idea. The Rama (ad loc.) says that it although it follows that in places that do not recite “*Keter* ...” in *Kedusha*, one should leave his *tefillin* on, the

minhag is still to take them off. The same should apply to one who is *davening* without a *minyan* and thus *Kedusha*. The Taz (ad loc. 16) does not find the *minhag* compelling because *Musaf* should not elevate more than *Chol Hamo’ed*, and still many have the *minhag* to don *tefillin* then. The Levush (ad loc. 13) says that it is because *Musaf*, which mentions the day’s special *korbanot*, gives it an aura of *Yom Tov*. (I will add a supplementary point. Since we are careful to have *tefillin* on only for *Kri’at Shema*, *Shemoneh Esrei* (=SE), three *Kedushot* and four *Kaddeishim* (see Rama ibid.), by *Musaf*, there is little need to keep them on (see Mishna Berura 25:55).). Most *poskim* treat removing *tefillin* before *Musaf* as a not very important *minhag* (ibid. 61), despite strong Kabbalistic sources (see Kaf Hachayim, OC 25:94) that elevate its importance.

***Hefsek* (interruption) in *tefilla*:** While *hefsek* in SE is severe (Berachot 33a), there are different levels of *hefsek*. The most severe is to speak, whereas walking to a different place is more lenient and permitted for significant but modest need (Mishna Berura 104:10). While performing actions can be even more lenient, it depends how involved the action is. It seems clear that certain actions are too trivial to require special permission (e.g., wiping off some sweat). The Shulchan

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Aruch (OC 97:4) allows adjusting one's *talit* but not returning it if it fell (unless the situation harms his concentration – Mishna Berura, ad loc. 16; see also Mishna Berura 96:7 regarding picking up a *siddur* that fell to the floor). Taking off *tefillin* thus seems to require real need.

There is a *machloket* among *poskim* if one can do actions to enhance *tefilla* that if not done, will not cause a critical lacking in it (see Ishei Yisrael 32:21 regarding going to get a *siddur* to help with *Al Hanisim*; *SE* is valid without it). One could then say that if *tefillin* on during *Musaf* has some sort of negative impact on *SE*, then it should be appropriate to remove them within it, to fix the rest of *SE*. If it is just a mild preference to take them off and especially if the issue relates more to the *tefillin* than to the *tefilla*, then it is no worse than the *siddur* on the floor, and one should remove it only after *SE*. While one can bring arguments one way or the other, the Mishna Berura (25:61) states clearly that since removing the *tefillin* is just a *minhag*, one who forgot does not remove them during *SE*.

After the fact, do not be too concerned that you removed them. Simple, well-intentioned *hefsek* does not disqualify *SE* (Shulchan Aruch, OC 104:6; see Mishna Berura ad loc. 25). Furthermore, it is possible that in your lack of certainty, you were considered one whose concentration is affected (see Mishna Berura 96:7, Ishei Yisrael 32:5; see Piskei Teshuvot 25:28 regarding this case). A compromise semi-removal, which some

Acharonim advocate in borderline cases (see Kaf Hachayim, OC 25:99) would have been even easier to justify. One can move the *tefillin shel rosh* out of a position of *mitzva* relevance and slip a sleeve or cloth under the *shelyad* to make a *chatzitza*. This is likely not a *hefsek* (see above). ■

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Mutual Support

Last time we saw that Rabbi Henkin discussed the presence of the husband in the room when his wife gives birth. His responsa appears in his book, *Bnei Banim*, which is now being published in English, after having been translated by his wife, Rabbanit Chana Henkin, the acclaimed founder of *Nishmat*.

Rabbi Henkin points out that some poskim permitted doing certain acts in accordance with the woman giving birth's requests, but these must only be done in an unusual manner, called *shinui*. This implies that the woman giving birth is the same as any other ill person with the same set of halachot. Performing the act in an unusual way is necessary to decrease the halachic severity of the potentially forbidden action.

Rabbi Henkin disagrees with this position; he claims, as we saw last time, that the woman giving birth is a unique case. The Rabbis viewed her as needing the support and this is essential to enable her to survive the process of birth. The importance that the Rabbis and the halacha showed towards the woman giving birth's mental state and the need to ensure that she would remain as calm as possible and need not worry unnecessarily, is unique and unlike any other sick individuals.

This brings us back to the question of the husband's presence in the birthing room. Despite the halachic problems that can arise due to the wife's halachic status, that we have discussed previously, it would appear that the husband plays a vital role.

In many cases, the husband would be the perfect person to calm his wife and afford her the mental and psychological support that she needs at this critical time. Just his presence and her knowledge that he is there, can calm the wife and enable her to relax to some degree as she enters the final stages of delivery.

Rabbi Henkin in his responsa determines that if the husband plays no role in a particular case then he should remain outside the room. But if the wife requests that he attends the birth, not only is it permitted for him to do so, rather, it is an obligation. This is similar to the permissibility and obligation to light the candle on Shabbat when the woman makes such a request.

I would add that this has become the norm in many hospitals, and husbands and wives widely celebrate the moment of birth together. This is a blessing and they offer mutual support and encouragement. ■

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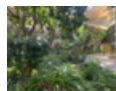


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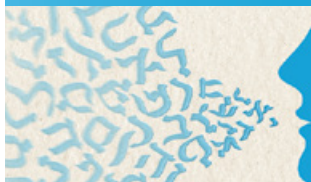
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FROM HIS DAUGHTER ON HIS FIRST YAHRZEIT

Yaakov Avinu's Dreams of Return – And Ours

The haftara of Parashat Vayeitzei, excerpted from Hoshea, begins with Yaakov's departure to Aram and continues with the section "Shuva Yisrael," famous as the haftara for Shabbat Shuva read on the Shabbat between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

How is Yaakov's story in this week's Parsha connected to Hoshea's call to Am Yisrael to return to Hashem?

At the beginning of the Parsha, after departing from his father's home in Beer Sheva, Yaakov articulates his deep desire to "return in peace to my father's house and Hashem will be for me a God." Rashi says that Yaakov's wish is to come back from Lavan's house, complete, without sin, with his sterling character untainted, and Hashem's name made known in the world through him and his descendants.

Yaakov comes to the well where he meets Rachel and the Midrash Breishit Rabba tells us that Yaakov is overwhelmed with a glimpse of his majestic future which is to come from him: twelve tribes, Kohanim, Leviyim, dynasties with Ruach Hakodesh, Matan Torah, the Sanhedrin and the Beit Hamikdash.

Yaakov had left Eretz Yisrael physically, but his heart and soul are focused and consumed by his resolve to return and actualize his aspirations and Divine promise for Am Yisrael, and the parsha ends with Yaakov returning to Machanayim, as the proud and regal Patriarch of our nation.

Can we, his spiritual heirs follow Yaakov's lead and after a detour from our destiny, find our way back?

Hoshea informs us that Bnei Yisrael have been gifted with a "navi mishamer," we are protected by the Navi Eliyahu who arouses Divine Mercy by mentioning the merits of our forefathers, specifically those of the twelve Shevatim. The Midrash Pesikta Rabati says that the miracles that will be done for Yisrael are in the merit of the twelve tribes. In Sefer Melachim, when Eliyahu wanted to bring Am Yisrael back to Hashem, he takes twelve stones and builds an altar

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hu Haelokim" and their sincere resolve of commitment to Hashem is accepted.

Hoshea's Nevua takes place before the exile of ten of the twelve tribes, Malchut Yisrael. Hoshea tells Bnei Yisrael how far they have strayed from Yaakov's aspirations and the subsequent consequence of being driven from the Land, solidifying the rift and division within Am Yisrael.

Towards the end of his nevua, however, Hoshea is uniquely encouraging: Shuva Yisrael! Yes, you have stumbled and sinned, but you are still Hashem's beloved Yisrael. Your Teshuva can reach up to the Kisei Hakavod! Hoshea not only urges us to do Teshuva, but tells us how to do so:

Don't be disillusioned by the distance your sins have created between you and Hashem, your confession and desire to change will restore the relationship.

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Realize the power of the "voice of Yaakov." Use your speech for words of prayer and Torah study and reaching out to create bonds with others.

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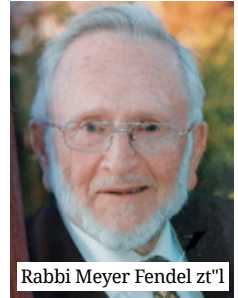
Hoshea instructs us to ask Hashem to take our good deeds and let them replace our destructive ones, urging us to focus on grabbing opportunities to do mitzvot, acts of loving kindness and concern for others, and get back on track.

Just like Yaakov Avinu lays down on one stone, comprised of 12 stones which united under his head, so, too, must we join, with our different roles, strengths and weaknesses and vow to maintain the integrity and indivisible unity of the twelve sons of Yaakov and show our unshakeable devotion to Hashem. In this merit, may we see the Beit Hamikdash restored,

our whole nation back in our Father's Home.

This haftara was read last year on Shabbat morning when my father, Rabbi Meyer Fendel, zatzal, left this world. His legacy of bringing back so many to Hashem, His Torah and Land with complete Ahavat Yisrael is legendary and continues to guide and impact us profoundly, especially in our times.

Together with my mother, Rebbetzin Goldie Fendel, a"h, who passed away a day before Shabbat Shuva, their joint haftara echoes with the messages of their life's journey and mission. ■



Rabbi Meyer Fendel zt'l

Rabbi Meyer Fendel, ztl, started day schools across the United States for Torah Umesorah in the 1940s and then founded the Orthodox community of West Hempstead, NY and the Hebrew Academy of Nassau County, which he led for over three decades. He and his Rebbetzin made Aliya in 1985 and continued to educate and inspire at Camp Nvei Ashdod, Midreshet Moriah, and in their open home. The Fendels impacted thousands of lives and are survived by their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, all living in Israel.

Mrs. Mindy Marcus, youngest of the four Fendel children, has enjoyed teaching Tanach for over thirty years in Ahavat Yisrael Banot and other venues.

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When the Heart Connects but the Eyes Hesitate

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Daniel asks:

Aleeza, my candidate, often faces this situation. I would love to hear your advice. What do you do when there's a really good connection between two people, but one side just doesn't feel physically attracted to the other? Personality-wise it's a great match, they get along, share values, and feel comfortable, but the attraction just isn't there. Should they keep trying or move on?

Aleeza answers:

This is one of the most common and delicate questions I hear, and I understand why it's so confusing. When the heart says yes but the eyes say *I'm not sure*, it creates an emotional tug-of-war. You don't want to

force something that isn't there, but you also don't want to walk away from something that could grow into something beautiful.

There are many kinds of attractions. Some people feel instant chemistry; others develop attraction over time, as emotional connection deepens. Both paths are possible. The question is not "*Am I attracted right now?*" but "*Is the attraction growing more or less over time?*"

Physical connection matters, it's part of building a marriage, but it doesn't need to be fireworks from the first moment. Sometimes, when we feel safe, respected, and emotionally seen, our heart starts to open, and what once saw as neutral begins to look beautiful. I've seen it happen often: the person who didn't "fit the picture" at first becomes the person you can't imagine life without.

At the same time, we don't want to deny reality. If after several dates, you feel absolutely nothing, not even warmth, comfort, or curiosity, that may be Hashem's way of saying this isn't your match. But before deciding, give it a fair chance. See the person in different settings. Notice how you feel *around* them and notice if how they look shifts slightly for the good after a date. Sometimes, attraction hides behind friendship

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And if you're the one who feels rejected please know it's not about your worth or beauty. Everyone has their own "match of the eyes" just as they have a "match of the soul."

Sometimes a match will shift and you'll see and feel something you didn't feel at first. Other times someone will just feel like a good friend with no romantic potential. An extra date or few will help you to know the difference.

May you have patience through the process and you come to clarify.

Aleeza ■

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GUARDING THE MIND: YAAKOV'S STONES

The Lubavitcher Rebbe asks: Why did the stones surround only Yaakov's head and not his entire body?

Quoting Rashi, the Rebbe explains using a verse from Tehillim - "גִּיעַ כַּפִּיךְ כִּי תֵאָכֵל" - which teaches that a person must use his *hands* to work, but must protect his *mind*.

This teaches us that while hard work is important, we must not allow it to dominate our thoughts or distract us from our connection with Hashem. Yaakov was about to face years of intense labor in Lavan's house, and he needed to remain spiritually strong.

That is why the stones protected his head - symbolizing the need to guard our thoughts, values, and spiritual clarity. When we keep our minds focused on holiness and purpose, our actions naturally follow. The Rebbe reminds us that true success is not only working hard, but keeping our minds centered on what truly matters.



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At the beginning of the parsha, we read about Yaakov's dream of a ladder standing on the ground and reaching the heavens, with angels going up and down. Hashem then promises Yaakov that his children will inherit the land.

The dream is clearly meaningful to Yaakov, but the symbolism of the ladder and the angels is not immediately clear. One explanation is that the ladder represents the connection between the person on the ground, Yaakov, and Hashem above. The angels moving up and down symbolize the ongoing relationship between the physical and the spiritual.

A ladder can only stand if it has a firm base. So too, our connection to Hashem can only be fully realized through the **Land of Israel**. Hashem's promise teaches Yaakov that the land beneath him, Eretz Yisrael, will be inherited by him and his descendants, and that this land is the foundation for a deep, lasting connection with Hashem. ■

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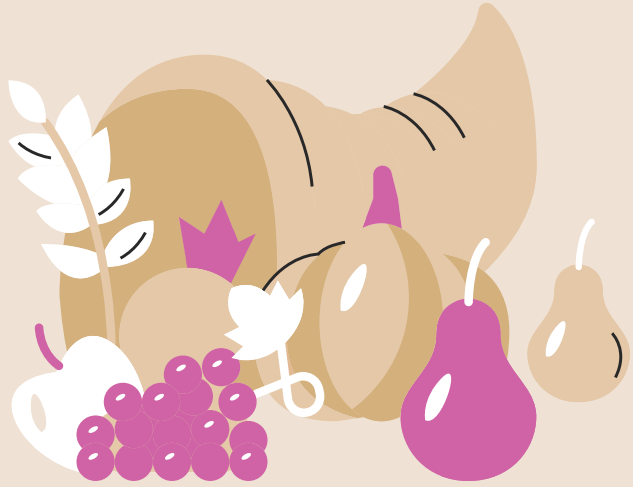
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