

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1641



נ
ישראל

DEC. 27TH 2025

ד' טבת תשפ"ו

פרשת ויגש
PARSHAT VAYIGASH

Forgiveness: A Jewish Value

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

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What's in a Name?

Mrs. Leah Feinberg

Page 74



ויבאו ארץ כנען בראשית מ"ה:כ"ה

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT VAYIGASH ZMANIM

CANDLES 4:06 PM • HAVDALA 5:23 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:00 PM



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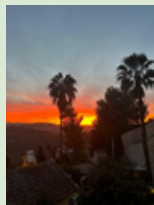


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To read this week's articles by **Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman** and **Rabbi Daniel Mann** please see: www.TorahTidbits.com > Individual Articles



COVER PHOTO Photographed by Robin and Mikey Rendel

We made Aliyah on Rosh Chodesh Kislev - November 2020, during corona. They took our temperature to get on the flight which was barely full. This photo was taken from our balcony in Ramot, Jerusalem. Like וּלְאִלּוּמֵי אֶחָד מִיְּמֵינוּ a moment of drawing close that ultimately leads to unity and redemption, this view feels like a dream fulfilled. Living here, in our ancestral homeland, we sense the quiet beginnings of geula. It's something we cherish and feel grateful for every single day. We are so grateful for Torah Tidbits enhancing our Shabbat every week. And also special thanks to TT for leading me on a new career path.



We continue to pray for the return Ran Gvili, last of the Kedoshim held in Gaza



IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Kiddush Levana

🌙 7 Days After Molad: 8 Tevet/ Sat. night Dec. 27

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Tevet/ Sat. night Jan. 3



Asara B'Tevet is observed on Tuesday December 30th.
The fast begins at 5:20 am and ends at 5:04 pm (Jerusalem).

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Dec. 24 - Jan. 3 / 4 - 14 Tevet

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:41-5:44
Sunrise	6:36-6:39
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:07-9:11
Magen Avraham	8:28-8:32
Sof Zman Tefila	9:58-10:01
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:38-11:43
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:08-12:13
Plag Mincha	3:37-3:43
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:45-4:51



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	Vayigash		Vayeichi	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:06	5:23	4:11	5:28
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:25	5:26	4:30	5:31
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:25	5:24	4:09	5:29
Gush Etzion	4:22	5:24	4:27	5:28
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:22	5:24	4:27	5:28
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:22	5:24	4:27	5:28
Netanya	4:22	5:24	4:27	5:28
Be'er Sheva	4:25	5:26	4:29	5:30
Rehovot	4:23	5:25	4:28	5:29
Petach Tikva	4:06	5:24	4:11	5:29
Ginot Shomron	4:21	5:23	4:26	5:28
Haifa / Zichron	4:10	5:22	4:15	5:27
Gush Shiloh	4:21	5:22	4:26	5:27
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:23	5:24	4:28	5:29
Givat Ze'ev	4:26	5:23	4:31	5:28
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:23	5:24	4:28	5:29
Ashkelon	4:25	5:26	4:29	5:31
Yad Binyamin	4:23	5:25	4:28	5:29
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:12	5:20	4:17	5:24
Golan	4:18	5:20	4:23	5:25
Nahariya/Maalot	4:18	5:21	4:23	5:26
Afula	4:19	5:21	4:24	5:26

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Vayigash - 6:00 PM • Vayeichi - 6:04 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 104



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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When parents give their children names, it is never a simple decision. There is always deliberation, going back and forth, thinking about what is most appropriate, whether there is someone to name after, and trying to make the name as meaningful as possible. *Baruch Hashem*, my wife and I have been blessed with nine children, and with each one, we went through this process.

Our third son was born in the month of *Iyar*, and his *brit milah* fell out exactly on Yom Yerushalayim. We decided to give him the name Tzvi Yehudah, after the son of Rav Kook. My own name is Avraham Yitzchak, and at that moment, we felt it appropriate as Jews living in the Land of Israel, following Torat Eretz Yisrael, to highlight the influence of Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, the first civilian rabbi to be at the Kotel after its liberation, and someone who spent his entire life spreading Torah about the importance of the whole Land of Israel.

My wife and I thought about whether we

would call him Tzvi, or his full name, Tzvi Yehudah. I know for myself that although I go by Avi, it warms my heart every time my mother calls me by my full name, Avraham Yitzchak, because I know that on some deep level, my true identity is Avraham Yitzchak. When I read the stories in the Torah about Avraham and Yitzchak, I relate to them personally. So it gives me great *nachat* that our son Tzvi Yehudah decided to go by his full name - even in the army, where his commanders call him Tzvi Yehudah. While Tzvi is a beautiful name, Yehudah is such an important name in the Torah. Besides the simple fact that the *Shem Hashem* is contained within Yehudah's name, Yehudah's entire story and personality teach us such important lessons about what it means to be a Jew.

Have you ever asked yourself why we call ourselves "*Yehudim*," and not "*Reuvenim*" or "*Shimonim*" or "*Yissacharim*"? And if the answer is derived from Judea, the province in Eretz Yisrael, how did the name stick to the Jewish people throughout the centuries? A common answer is to look at the source of Yehudah's naming. Leah says, "*Hapaam odeh et Hashem* - this time I will thank Hashem" (Bereshit 29:35). Judaism places supreme importance on *hakarat hatov* and thanking *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for everything He gives us, whether it be a child, a job, good health, a comfortable place to live, good friends - for all of these, we must thank Him. One of Chanukah's greatest themes is giving thanks - Chazal say the holiday was established "*lehodot u'lehallel*," to give thanks



**The OU Israel Family wishes
a warm Mazal Tov to
Stuie & Claire Herskowitz
OU Israel President
and to Jonathan & Abby Kaplan
and families
on the birth of their grandson
son of Moriah & Ezra Kaplan**

and sing Hashem's praises.

This past Shabbat, I opened a *sefer* on the *parsha* called *Divrei Yaakov*, authored by Rav Yaakov Bender, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, New York, and someone who I had the privilege of meeting when we brought a mission of *Rabbanei Eretz Yisrael* to America. In this *sefer*, he adds another reason for how Yehudah's name became synonymous with Bnei Yisrael.

Yehudah's redemption arc is found in taking responsibility for his brothers. In last week's *parsha*, Yehudah comes over to Yaakov and takes responsibility for Binyamin. He tells Yaakov, "*Anochi e'ervenu, miyadi tevakshenu* - I will be his guarantor; from my hand you may demand him" (Bereshit 43:9). In this week's *parsha*, we are told at the very beginning that, "*Vayigash eilav Yehudah*" - Yehudah goes before Yosef, whom he does not know is his brother, but he knows is second in command in the greatest superpower of the world of that time, and thus very dangerous to challenge. Nevertheless, he takes responsibility and stands up to Yosef. Yes, he knew he had the other brothers, including Shimon and Levi, behind him, ready to defend him. But that only made his resolve stronger, and his willingness to take responsibility greater.

Rav Bender states that at that moment, Yehudah was instilling into the *neschama* of every single Jew that we have an *achrayut*, we have a responsibility, an emotional connection, a great and overwhelming love, towards each and every single Jew in the world. And that we should always have each other's back, just as the brothers had for Yehudah.

This is part of what it means to be Jewish. When one of us laughs, we all laugh together.



And when one of us hurts, we all hurt together. The outcry and the outpouring of grief and support for the Jews of Bondi Beach in Australia by Jewish people around the world last week shows this inner unity of *Yehudim*. That feeling that we as *Yehudim*, as Jews, have a deep place inside our heart where we care for each and every Jew, where we show endless love to each and every Jew - that is a feeling we get from Yehudah. The fact that we call ourselves *Yehudim* means that we want to be in the place where we are taking *achrayut* for each and every Jew, that we care for each and every Jew, and that we love each and every Jew.

We feel it when our brothers and sisters are yelled at in the subway in New York City, or when Jews are attacked in California. We felt it when our brothers and sisters were taken hostage in Israel. We still feel it as the body of one hostage - Ran Gvili - remains in Gaza. This *achrayut* is what gives me and so many of my OU colleagues around the world the strength to work hard to help the Jewish people grow and prosper. Whether it is the staff of NCSY or JLIC going out to campuses and public schools, or those staying up until 3:00 in the morning working with teens at risk in low socioeconomic periphery neighborhoods here in Eretz Yisrael, or those spending a Shabbat in Katzrin or Pardes Chana or Nahariya to bring programming to our English-speaking brothers and

sisters who have made *aliyah* to communities where they are thirsty for more Torah.

I want to publicly, because I am a Jew, because I am a *Yehudi*, thank Yehudah for showing us that this is the way to behave - to always recognize the goodness of the *Ribono Shel Olam* and to always take responsibility to strive toward helping our brothers and sisters. It is therefore quite logical that Yehudah's tribe should produce not only David and his dynasty, but that the future *Mashiach* will come from a descendant of Yehudah. Why? Because Yehudah takes responsibility, and a king must take the greatest responsibility - for all of *Klal Yisrael*. To love each person as a brother and sister, not as a stranger.

As we come towards the end of the calendar year, I want to publicly thank all those who have supported our initiatives here at OU Israel. We greatly appreciate your support. It is your support that enables us to do what we do with the heart and passion that we have. While Yehudah gets the credit in this week's *parsha*, it is the fact that he knows he has his brothers standing right behind him that gives him the *koach* to stand up and deal with the challenge before him. So too, when we see donations coming

in, whether of 18 shekels or 10,000 shekels, it means the world to us and gives us strength to continue. *Be'ezrat Hashem, na'aseh v'natzliach.*

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and *besorot tovot* to all of *Klal Yisrael*,


Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

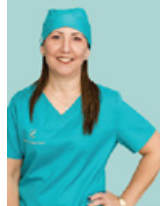
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RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"l

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Tzedakah U'mishpat Then and Now

Tzedakah u'mishpat, charity and justice. These are concepts that are now part of our Western cultural vernacular after having been introduced to the world and championed by Avraham, regarding whom Hashem said (Bereishit 18:19), "I have known him to instruct his sons and his household after him that they should keep the way of Hashem to perform charity and justice." Avraham lived up to Hashem's assessment as evident in his demand from G-d in the name of justice that He must spare any righteous people in Sodom and then pleaded that G-d charitably spare the entire city in the merit of ten righteous residents (18:24-25).

Upholding those values has remained a core mission of Klal Yisrael, most vividly in the climax of the story of Yosef and his brothers. Yosef had been maintaining a charade for twenty-two

years as he awaited the fulfillment of his dreams that first his eleven brothers would bow down to him and then his parents would do so as well. As Ramban explained (Bereishit 42:9), that is why he never sent a message to his father to inform him that he was still alive, and why when the ten brothers came to Egypt he hid his identity and compelled them to come back with the eleventh so they could all bow before him in fulfillment of the first dream. Presumably when he planted his goblet in Binyamin's bag his plan was to then hold Binyamin prisoner, compelling Yaakov to come down to Egypt to seek to see his precious youngest son and to plead with and bow to Yosef in fulfillment of the second dream. Yet before that could happen, Yosef abandons the plan (Bereishit 45:1): "Yosef could no longer contain himself in the presence of all his attendants." Could Yosef simply no longer control his emotions? After twenty-two years of patient restraint, was Yehuda's speech so compelling that he finally broke?

Meshech Chochma suggests otherwise. What moved Yosef to stop the charade and reveal himself was a very conscious and deliberate choice that in the presence of his attendants he could not allow himself to maintain his hardened resistance to Yehuda's pleas for compassion lest he appear to them as cruel and uncaring. Yosef was so fundamentally committed to representing justice and charity that he had no choice but to abort the plan

In Loving Memory of

Arlene Sevrinsky z'l

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in her memory on this day

Always in Our Hearts
The Sevrinsky Family

he had been patiently executing for decades even as it was so close to being completed.

Remarkably, Yosef maintained this commitment in Egypt, a land that was consistently foreign to Jewish mores and never adopted the values of justice and charity. This is clear throughout Egypt's biblical history, from Avraham to Moshe, as the case for justice or charity never played a role in their relationships with the Egyptians. Avraham made no such claim when Sarah was kidnapped (in contrast with his claim to Avimelech), and Moshe – throughout his demands and negotiations with Pharaoh – never asked Pharaoh to resolve the injustice of their slavery and never pleaded for compassion; he simply conveyed G-d's demand that Pharaoh let His people go. Yosef did at one point raise those values when asking the butler to charitably advocate to Pharaoh for his freedom as he had been unjustly sold into slavery and imprisoned (Bereishit 40:14-15), but Yosef was faulted for doing that as those values were so foreign to Egypt that his attempt to invoke them was clearly a desperate act that betrayed a lapse in Yosef's faith in Hashem. Yet, despite the Egyptians' absolute cultural rejection of the values of justice and charity, Yosef was willing to pay a huge price to uphold and represent those same values to them.

We find ourselves today in a different land and a very different situation. *Tzedakah u'mishpat*, charity and justice, are indeed part of our Western cultural vernacular, but they have been culturally appropriated and often deployed against religious values generally and the Jewish people specifically. Yet no less than in Yosef's time it is our charge and privilege as the descendants of Avraham and the heirs of Yosef to not surrender the moral high ground and to stand firmly and consistently for true justice and charity. Much of our Western world distorts

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those values just as Yosef's Egypt rejected them, but we like Yosef will resolutely stand up for them knowing that they represent our core mission since Avraham taught his children the way of charity and justice, and until Zion will be redeemed with justice and its returnees with charity (Yeshayahu 1:27).

We know what justice and charity really mean and we will never fail to uphold and represent them. ■

לעילוי נשמת

SHLOMO TZVI DANCZIGER ז"ל

שלמה צבי בן

ישראל יעקב ורבקה ז"ל

On his 10th yahrtzeit - ח' טבת

In loving memory
The Dancziger Family



OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

Women's Hub - Creating a Torah Community for Jewish Women

OU Israel's Women's Hub, located in Rechavia is a bustling center of activity, the Women's Hub is a place where women of all ages and stages can drop in every Monday for their weekly dosage of community, friends, inspiration, and spiritual growth. The Women's Hub offers both set weekly programs and monthly programs, such as top-notch shiurim, the Bat Mitzvah program, mother-daughter pre-holiday learning events, the Dorot intergenerational women's choir, parenting classes, pre-wedding *kallah* classes, and the ATID midrasha evenings for young women, chesed opportunities, and much more. Each week, the building holds around 150 participants spread throughout its four-story building who have come to take part in Hub activities and programming.

The Hub creates a space where women can connect while learning and experiencing Torah-oriented events. By offering programs at the same time and place, OU Israel is building connections between women at different life stages and strengthening the OU Israel community.

Each week we will share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English speaking *olim* with their *klita* and impacting Israeli society.



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PARSHAT VAYIGASH

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



1ST ALIYA (44:18-30)

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

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

Yehuda earns leadership by this dramatic moment. He is assuming responsibility. He hasn't said it yet, but he will in the next aliya – he will do anything to ensure Binyamin's return home. His entire argument is one of concern

for his father. His father will die of a broken heart, losing the only 2 sons from his dear wife.

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

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

Yehuda's speech to Yosef is like drawing open the curtain – Yosef is now privy to what his father thought happened to him, how much his father loves Binyamin, who is like a replacement of Yosef to Yaakov. Dramatic is the moment when Yosef tells the brothers who he is; but this moment for Yosef is equally so. It is a glimpse into the home of his father, a home he has known nothing of for 22 years. This is the first time he hears that his father was heartbroken at what he thought was Yosef's death. He didn't seek me because he thought I was dead.

While we all like to ask why Yosef didn't call home, Yosef wonders why Yaakov never called him. How could a father not try everything to find his son? Well, Yosef now finds out why; because

Yaakov thought Yosef was dead. For Yosef, this changes everything. What relief and joy to now hear that he was not abandoned by his father, after all.



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

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

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

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



3RD ALIYA (45:8-18)

Yosef continues: G-d has sent me

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

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



4TH ALIYA (45:19-27)

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

family to Egypt. He settled them successfully; perhaps too successfully?



7TH ALIYA (47:11-27)

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

The irony continues. Yosef creates a hugely powerful Paro; money, livestock, food stores, slaves. Control over all of Egypt. What irony; Yosef has created the two ingredients for the first chapter of the Egypt story; a hugely powerful Paro. And the entire Jewish people in Egypt.

Remember Yosef Hatzadik, so called because he saw G-d's plan. As he told his brothers, "G-d has placed me here to save you in the time of famine." Well, Yosef was wrong. He only saw what happened to him, but could not see the impending slavery of the people in Egypt.

The real story is that G-d has placed me here to bring you all to Egypt, to solidify the power of Paro. Which will result in the entire Jewish people being enslaved. And leaving Egypt amidst signs and wonders. Yosef **is** a pawn. But in a much bigger story; the story of enslavement and ultimately, the Exodus from Egypt.

HAFTORAH VAYIGASH YEchezkel 37:15-28

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

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

The great prophet Yechezkel shares a communication he received from God in which he was instructed to take two sticks and write on one, "For Yehuda and the children of Israel his

companions” and on the other, “For Yosef, the stick of Ephraim and all the house, his companions.” After doing so he was then told to put the two sticks near one another - and the Almighty fused them together into a single stick.

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

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



STATS

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



MITZVOT

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



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A SHORT VORT

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

"And his brother is dead." (44:20) - ואחיו מת (מד:כ)

Why did Yehuda lie about Yosef being dead, when approaching the Viceroy of Egypt, while he knew that Yosef was sold and not killed?

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomi Yitzchaki 1040-1105, France) points out that Yehuda was fearful that perhaps if he were to say to the Viceroy that Yosef is alive, he would command him to bring and present him.

The Meshech Chochmah (Rabbi Meir Simcha Dvinsk 1843-1926, Latvia) legitimizes Yehuda's statement of Yosef being deceased. He claims that Yehuda did not deliberately fabricate. Yehuda was aware of the intense relationship between Yosef and his father, Yaakov. Had Yosef still been alive, there was no doubt that Yosef would have found a way to contact his beloved father. Since, until this time, no connection was ever made, Yehuda assumed that he was no longer alive.

The Meshech Chochmah quotes the Talmud Ketubot 22b as proof for this sureness on the part of Yehuda. Rashi points out that in certain cases a woman can be confident that her husband has passed away by saying "I am convinced that he has expired, for if not, he would have returned by now."

Shabbat Shalom

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

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

Forgiveness: A Jewish Value

This has got to be one of the oldest "rabbi" jokes in the entire repertoire of American Jewish humor.

It tells us of a young rabbi, fresh from rabbinical school, who addresses his first several sermons to his new congregation on the varied subjects of meticulous Sabbath observance, refraining from malicious gossip, honesty in business, and the avoidance of inappropriately familiar behavior with other men's wives.

After these first several homiletic salvos, the president of the congregation approaches him with the suggestion that these topics are much too sensitive and have upset many of the synagogue's members. The president urges us the rookie rabbi to try to find some more acceptable topics to speak about.

The rabbi objects, and asks, "But what, then, do you suggest that I speak about in my sermons?"

To which the president replies, "Judaism! Why not just talk about Judaism?"

Those of us with experience in the pulpit rabbinate typically do not find this story very funny. Each of us has, on more than one occasion, taken on causes in our sermons that our audiences have felt were not in our rabbinic purview, and indeed were somehow "not Jewish".

One of my favorite examples of this phenomenon in my own career has been my attempts, in sermons to the entire congregation, and in more intimate counseling sessions, to encourage forgiveness. I will never forget the first time I made forgiveness the theme of one of my sermons, only to be accused by one of the more prominent members of my congregation of preaching Christianity. I urged people to forgive those who have offended them, only to find that, for many Jews, forgiveness is a Christian, not a Jewish, virtue.

Of course, this is not true. Forgiveness is a major teaching of our own faith. We are encouraged to forgive others who may have sinned against us, and we must seek forgiveness of those against whom we have sinned.

In this week's Torah portion, *Vayigash*, we have an outstanding Biblical example of forgiveness. Joseph, after putting his brothers through tests and trials, finally cannot contain himself. He exclaims, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt." And immediately after identifying himself, he unequivocally forgives them: "Now, do not be

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from this issue of TT
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distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither... it was not you who sent me here, but God..."

It is true that the brothers wore "blown away" by this unanticipated revelation of the true identity of their tormentor, and even more astounded by this assertion of total forgiveness. But this is not the first example of human forgiveness that we find in the Bible. Joseph may have learned about this value from his great-grandfather Abraham's precedent. Abraham, back in *Genesis* 20:17, not only forgives his adversary, Avimelech, but offers prayers on his behalf.

What, then, can be the basis for the misconception that forgiveness is a Christian virtue and is not preached by Judaism? I think that the answer can be found in a precious book called *The Sunflower*, by Simon Wiesenthal.

Wiesenthal relates his personal experience of when he was brought to the bedside of a dying Nazi officer by the officer's own mother, who pleaded with him to forgive her son for killing Jews. Wiesenthal had been an eyewitness to this officer's murderous brutality. He found himself confronted with a moral dilemma. Could he deny a mother's tearful entreaties? On the other hand, could he possibly forgive such unspeakable cruelty? And could he forgive on behalf of other victims?

I will leave it for you, dear reader, to discover for yourself what Simon Wiesenthal actually did. But long after the event, he submitted this excruciating dilemma to several dozen philosophers, writers, and political leaders, asking them what they would do. Some of his respondents were Christians, some were Jews, and I believe one was a Buddhist.

The results were astounding. By and large, the non-Jews were able to find justification for forgiveness. On the other hand, most of the Jews

could not express forgiveness for this soldier's heinous crimes, convinced that certain crimes were not subject to forgiveness.

For me, the lesson here is one that Judaism teaches well. Forgiveness must be earned, it must be deserved, it must be requested, and above all, it can only be granted by the person who was offended. I cannot forgive you for a sin you've committed against my brother.

In a sense, Joseph goes beyond the call of duty in expressing forgiveness to his brothers. They did not even know who he was, let alone beg forgiveness from him. But he knew from close observation of their concern for each other that they had long transcended their previous petty jealousies and rivalries. He was convinced that forgiveness was in order.

Joseph is an exemplar of how important it is for each of us to forgive those who have offended us. Forgiveness is a practice for all year long, and not just for the season of Yom Kippur. After all, it is not just on that one sacred day that each of us stands in need of the Almighty's forgiveness. His forgiveness is something we need at every moment of our lives.

The prophet Micah (7:18) says:

"Who is God like You,
tolerating iniquity
and forgiving transgression..."

Upon which the Talmud comments (*Rosh Hashana* 17a):

"Whose iniquities does God tolerate?

He who forgives the transgressions of another." ■

**Condolences to
Connie Abramson and family
on the passing of her husband**

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THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

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FORMER CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED HEBREW
CONGREGATIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

לעילוי נשמת
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד איז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטר ע"ה

Choice and Change

The sequence from Bereishit 37 to 50 is the longest unbroken narrative in the Torah, and there can be no doubt who its hero is: Joseph. The story begins and ends with him. We see him as a child, beloved – even spoiled – by his father; as an adolescent dreamer, resented by his brothers; as a slave, then a prisoner, in Egypt; then as the second most powerful figure in the greatest empire of the ancient world. At every stage, the narrative revolves around him and his impact on others. He dominates the last third of Bereishit, casting his shadow on everything else. From almost the beginning, he seems destined for greatness.

Yet history did not turn out that way. To the contrary, it is another brother who, in the fullness of time, leaves his mark on the Jewish people. Indeed, we bear his name. The covenantal family has been known by several names.

One is *Ivri*, “Hebrew” (possibly related to the ancient *apiru*), meaning outsider, stranger, nomad, one who wanders from place to place. That is how Abraham and his children were known to others. The second is *Yisrael*, derived from Jacob’s new name after he “wrestled with God and with man and prevailed.”

After the division of the kingdom and the conquest of the North by the Assyrians, however, they became known as *Yehudim* or Jews, for it was the tribe of Judah who dominated the kingdom of the South, and they who survived the Babylonian exile. So it was not Joseph but Judah who conferred his identity on the people, Judah who became the ancestor of Israel’s greatest king, David, Judah from whom the Messiah will be born.

Why Judah, not Joseph? The answer undoubtedly lies in the beginning of Vayigash, as the two brothers confront one another, and Judah pleads for Benjamin’s release. The clue lies many chapters back, at the beginning of the Joseph story. It is there we find that it was Judah who proposed selling Joseph into slavery:

Judah said to his brothers, “What do we gain

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by killing our brother and covering his blood? Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not harm him with our own hands. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. (*Gen. 37:26-27*)

This is a speech of monstrous callousness. There is no word about the evil of murder, merely pragmatic calculation ("What will we gain?"). At the very moment he calls Joseph "our own flesh and blood" he is proposing selling him as a slave. Judah has none of the tragic nobility of Reuben who, alone of the brothers, sees that what they are doing is wrong, and makes an attempt to save him (which fails). At this point, Judah is the last person from whom we expect great things.

However, Judah – more than anyone else in the Torah – changes. The man we see all these years later is not who he was then. Then he was prepared to see his brother sold into slavery. Now he is prepared to suffer that fate himself rather than see Benjamin held as a slave. As he says to Joseph:

"So, please, let your servant stay as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I could not bear to see the misery that would overwhelm my father!" (*Gen. 44:33-34*)

It is a precise reversal of character. Callousness has been replaced with concern. Indifference to his brother's fate has been transformed into courage on his behalf. He is willing to suffer what he once inflicted on Joseph so that the same fate should not befall Benjamin. At this point Joseph reveals his identity. We know why. Judah has passed the test that Joseph has carefully constructed for him. Joseph wants to know if Judah has changed. He has. This is a highly significant moment in the history of the human spirit. Judah is the first



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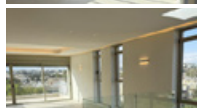
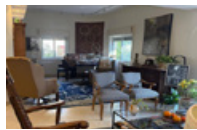
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penitent – the first *baal teshuvah* – in the Torah. Where did it come from, this change in his character? For that, we have to backtrack to chapter 38 – the story of Tamar.

Tamar, we recall, had married Judah's elder son, who died, and then married his next son, who also died, leaving her a childless widow. Judah, fearing that his third son would share their fate, withheld him from her – thus leaving her unable to remarry and have children. Once she understands her situation, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute. Judah sleeps with her. She becomes pregnant. Judah, unaware of the disguise, concludes that she must have had a forbidden relationship and orders her to be put to death. At this point, Tamar – who, while disguised, had taken Judah's seal, cord and staff as a pledge – sends them to Judah with a message: "The father of my child is the man to whom these belong."

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Judah now understands the whole story. Not only has he placed Tamar in an impossible situation of living widowhood, and not only is he the father of her child, but he also realises that she has behaved with extraordinary discretion in revealing the truth without shaming him (it is from this act of Tamar's that we derive the rule that "one should rather throw oneself into a fiery furnace than shame someone else in public").

Tamar is the heroine of the story, but it has one significant consequence. Judah admits he was wrong. "She was more righteous than I," he says. This is the first time in the Torah someone acknowledges their own guilt. It is also the turning-point in Judah's life. Here is born that ability to recognise one's own wrongdoing, to feel remorse, and to change – the complex phenomenon known as *teshuvah* – that later leads to the great scene in Vayigash, where Judah is capable of turning his earlier behaviour on its head and doing the opposite of what he had once done before. Judah is *Ish Teshuvah*, penitential man.

We now understand the significance of his name. The verb *lehodot* means two things. It means "to thank," which is what Leah has in mind when she gives Judah, her fourth son, his name: "this time I will thank the Lord." However, it also means to admit, to acknowledge. The biblical term *vidui*, "confession," – then and now part of the process of *teshuvah*, and according to Maimonides its key element – comes from the same root. Judah means "he who acknowledged his sin."

We now also understand one of the fundamental axioms of *teshuvah*:

Rabbi Abbahu said: In the place where penitents stand, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand. (Brachot 34b)

His prooftext is the verse from Isaiah:

"Peace, peace to him that was far and to him that is near." (Isaiah 57:19)

The verse puts one who "was far" ahead of one who "is near."

As the Talmud makes clear, however, Rabbi Abbahu's reading is by no means uncontroversial. Rabbi Jochanan interprets "far" as "far from sin" rather than "far from God." The real proof is Judah. Judah is a penitent, the first in the Torah. Joseph is consistently known to tradition as *Ha-Tzaddik*, "the righteous." Joseph became *mishneh le-melech*, "second to the king." Judah, however, became the father of Israel's line of kings. Where the penitent Judah stands, even the perfectly righteous Joseph cannot stand. However great an individual may be in virtue of his or her natural character, greater still is one who is capable of growth and change. That is the power of penitence, and it began with Judah. ■

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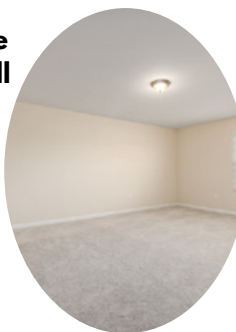
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BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER
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Bringing Dry Bones to Life

A strange title, I know. After all, this week's haftarah does not even mention Yechezkel's well-known prophecy of "the dry bones"! It is, however, the "sequel" to the prophet's nevu'ah, an "extension", if you will, of the better-known divine message. This selection is taken from the latter part of thirty-seventh perek of Sefer Yechezkel, a continuation of Yechezkel's vision of the valley of the dry bones. The opening prophecy focuses upon Hashem's promise to bring the "dry bones" – the despondent recently-exiled Jews - back to "life", infusing them with hope for the future, by guaranteeing their *eventual* return back to their land. On the other hand, the latter message, that of our haftarah, describes the glorious future that awaits the people *after* their homecoming to their beloved land – and it is this second prophecy that links

us to Parashat Hashavu'a.

In this later vision, G-d commands the navi to take two sticks/branches and write the name of Yehuda, representing the Southern Kingdom, on one stick and the name of Yosef, synonymous with the Northern Kingdom (Efrayim) on the other stick. Yechezkel is then told to bring these two sticks together as one in his hand upon which Hashem will miraculously fuse them into one stick.

The powerful message to be taught to the nation is precisely a message we learn from the parasha itself. Recall how the rapprochement of the brothers that we read of in the outset of the parasha came about through the entreaties of Yehuda to Yosef. This reunion of the two "leaders" in the house of Jacob, of he who suggested the sale of his brother with him who was sold, led to the mending of the twenty-two-year breach in the family.

Similarly, G-d teaches the exiled nation that their return to the land, essential as that would be, will not be the final stage of their redemption. After the "dry bones" are brought back to life, after they return to their land, they would still have to mend the tear that had divided the nation. And, more importantly, they had to realize that it would not be Hashem who would repair the rift! G-d demanded that Yechezkel **take** the sticks and **place** them in his **own** hand and **put** them together. Only after the navi's efforts to draw the sticks to each other would G-d perform the miracle and combine the two. Without the efforts of the navi – of one who was **part** of *klal Yisra'el* - no miracle would have

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The message of both the parasha and the haftarah speaks loudly to us today. Our return to our land was but a first step - essential, but only a beginning.. It is now our challenge to take the different “sticks” from all over the world and place them in our hand. Only when we make the effort to bring the disparate parts of our nation together, whether they be in Israel or in the Diaspora, will Hashem perform the miracle to make us truly one.

The House of Jacob could not become the Nation of Israel until Yehuda and Yosef agreed that they were part of one whole.

And the same is true of us today. ■

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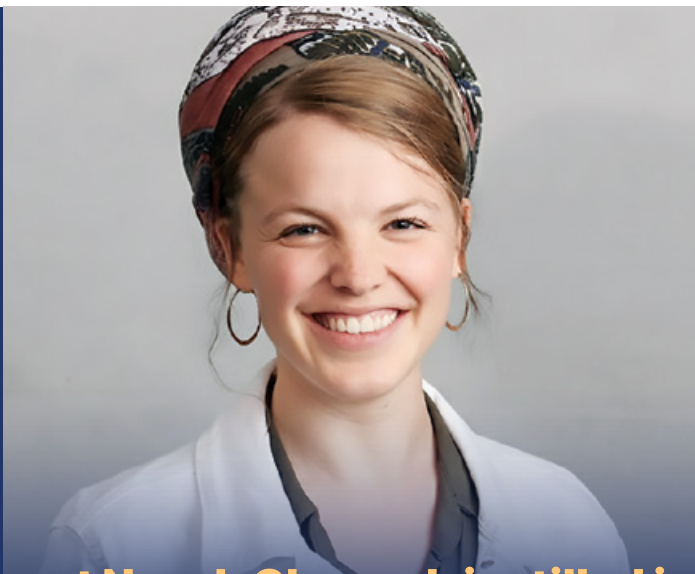


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Meeting of Two Kings

At the beginning of *Parashat Vayigash*, we encounter a dramatic and fateful meeting between Yehuda and Yosef. The Midrash describes this confrontation as **a meeting between two kings**. On the surface, this may seem puzzling. Yosef's royal status is clear — he is the viceroy of Egypt, ruler over the land and savior of nations. But Yehuda? At this point, he stands before Yosef humbled and desperate, pleading for the release of Binyamin. What, then, is “royal” about Yehuda in this moment? How does this episode sow the first seeds of *malchut Beit David*, the eternal kingship that will descend from him?

Rav Blumensweig (*V'hithalachti B'tochechem*) offers a profound explanation. Yehuda's speech to Yosef, one of the longest in Sefer Bereishit (44:18-34) seems, at first glance, to be merely a repetition of facts Yosef already knows. Yet

beneath the surface, something transformative is taking place. Yehuda is not pleading for forgiveness, nor defending himself or his brothers. Instead, he does something entirely different: **he offers himself** — his very life and freedom — in place of Binyamin.

This moment reveals two key shifts within Yehuda.

First, Yehuda says to Yosef:

וְעַתָּה יְשִׁב־נָא עַבְדְּךָ תַּחַת הַנֶּגֶר עִבְדָּ לְאֹדְנִי וְהִנֵּנִי
עַל עַם־אֲחֵי:

So now, please let me, your servant, remain as a slave in place of the lad, and let the lad go back up with his brothers. (Bereshit 44:33)

Yehuda offers himself in place of Binyamin. This seems like a simple substitution, but for Yehuda it represents a deep act of *teshuva*. The Rambam defines complete repentance as being in the same situation yet acting differently. Once, Yehuda had initiated the sale of a brother into slavery; now, faced with the same test, he refuses to repeat his mistake. Rather than selling a brother, he is prepared to sell himself. This act of self-sacrifice marks Yehuda's spiritual transformation.

Second, Yehuda articulates a new understanding of his father's pain:

וַיֹּאמֶר עַבְדְּךָ אֲבִי אֵלֵינוּ אַתֶּם יֹדְעִים כִּי שְׁנִים
יָלְדָה־לִּי אִשְׁתִּי:

Your servant, my father, then said to us, You well know that my wife Rachel bore me two sons. (Bereshit 4:27).

In referencing Rachel as *my wife*, Yehuda acknowledges something the brothers had long resisted — that Rachel was Yaakov's chosen

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partner, and her sons, Yosef and Binyamin, were especially beloved. This truth, once the source of the brothers' jealousy and strife, is now accepted with humility and clarity. Yehuda has moved beyond rivalry and resentment; he now empathizes with his father's love and his brother's status. In this moment, Yosef recognizes that the circle is complete. That the hatred that once divided them has healed and he can finally reveal himself.

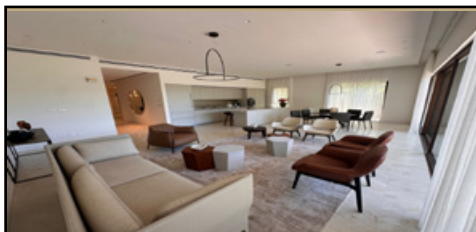
Yehuda's greatness, then, lies not in his authority but in his **empathy**. He has learned to listen, to see the pain of others, and to take responsibility even at personal cost. That is true *malchut*. Leadership that serves, leadership born of humility and compassion.

Yosef's leadership sustained the world materially — he provided food for nations. But Yehuda's leadership nourished the soul. Yehuda restored broken hearts and repaired relationships. Yosef built the outer structure of survival; Yehuda built the inner world of connection and meaning.

THE HEART OF KINGSHIP

We are not kings in the formal sense, yet each of us is granted moments of leadership — within our families, communities, and workplaces. At times, we hold influence; at times, others look to us for guidance. In those moments, the Torah teaches us that true greatness does not lie in power, prestige, or control. It lies in Yehuda's courage to step forward, his humility to admit wrong, and his compassion to feel another's pain.

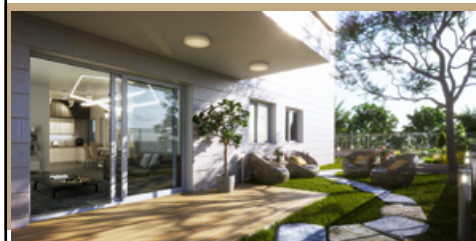
To lead, in the Torah's sense, is to serve — to sense what others need and to give of ourselves for their sake. That is the *malchut* we can all strive for: not the crown upon our heads, but the kindness in our hearts. May we merit to internalize both aspects of leadership — the strength of Yosef and the empathy of Yehuda. ■



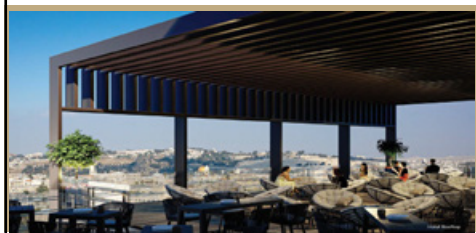
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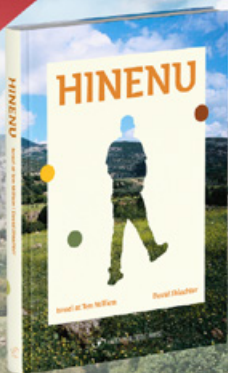
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Critical Crying

In one of the most poignant moments in Tanach, Yosef Hatzadik and his brothers reconcile with one another. “*Vayinashek lechol echav vayeiv’k aleihem* - And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them.” (*Bereisheet 45:15*) The Midrash notes that just as Yosef appeased his brothers through tears, Hashem will redeem us through tears, “*Bevechi yavo’u u’vetachanunim ovileim* - with weeping they will come, and with supplications I will lead them.” (*Yirmiyahu 31:18*) We must understand the significance of these tears. Why was it that only Yosef Hatzadik cried and not his brothers? Further, why will there be tears at the time of redemption, will it not be a time of rejoicing?

The Ketav Sofer *zt”l* shares a moving interpretation. Obviously, when Yosef first went down to Egypt, it was very difficult for him to be separated from his father’s house and

his father’s teachings. However, as time wore on, Yosef became more accustomed to living in a foreign environment. We see from the name he gave to his first child Menashe, “*ki nashani Elokim et kol amali ve’et kol beit avi* - God has caused me to forget all my toil and all my father’s house,” (*Bereisheet 41:51*) that slowly, Yosef began to forget the impact of his ancestral home.

Now, however, when he saw his brothers, he sensed the intensity of *kedushah* surrounding them and realized to what extent he had been living in a land of such moral depravity. He suddenly remembered the beauty and holiness of his father’s house; thus he cried for all that had been lost throughout these 22 years. The brothers, however, were filled with joy upon discovering that Yosef was alive and well and had no reason to shed tears.

Likewise, notes the Ketav Sofer, we are so accustomed to living our lives in *galut*, surrounded by physicality and hedonism, that we don’t even realize what it is like to live with a full manifestation of Hashem’s Presence. Only when the redemption comes will we understand the contrast and will weep for all that we had been missing through the whole of exile.

Rav Pincus *zt”l* takes it one step further. At the time of redemption, we will realize the terrible effect of *galut* on us all, individually and collectively. This awareness will move us to tears, realizing how many people could have grown and developed more spiritually but such opportunities were lost because of the conditions of living in exile.

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We find a similar parallel in *Sefer Ezra*, as it describes the conditions when the second Temple was built. The older people wept uncontrollably, while the younger generation celebrated and rejoiced. The elders knew that the new Temple paled in comparison to the first Temple and cried because the younger people were not even aware of what they were lacking.

A fast day commemorating the destruction of Yerushalayim and the Beit Hamikdash allows us the opportunity to pause and reflect upon what is incomplete in our lives. When we can imagine what the world must have been like with Hashem's Presence fully expressed, we can yearn for this revealed state once again. May our tears this *Asarah be'Tevet* be a precursor to the tears we will shed with the coming of Mashiach and the ultimate redemption. ■

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Women's Asara B'tevet Tiylul



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**MONDAY
DEC 29**

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men) - Semichat
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7:00-9:00PM

Dorot Choir Session with
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8:00-10:00PM

NextGen: Chocolate Workshop

**TUESDAY
DEC 30**

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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
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@ 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

Mussar and Self Improvement:
A study of Rav Kook's sefer
Midot HaRayah **Rabbi Aaron
Goldscheider**

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Jews in the Middle Ages: External
Threats and Internal Developments
Dr. Deborah Polster

**THURSDAY
JAN 1**

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

11:25 AM

Trailblazing the Text of
Tanach **Rabbi Neil Winkler**

12:20 PM

Modern Masters
Rabbi Sam Shor

8:00 PM

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is no coincidence that for each of the rabbinic fasts, we fast to commemorate the specific tragedies that have befallen us on these dates, as our tradition teaches us that there were additional earlier tragic events which transpired on these dates, as if each of these days was

*pre-determined to be a day of national pain and mourning. But what earlier event transpired to determine this date of the tenth of *Tevet* as a day destined for tragedy? Perhaps we could suggest that the sale of *Yosef* occurred on this date of the Tenth of *Tevet*-as the zodiacal sign of the month of *Tevet* is the goat, and the goat is an allusion*



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to the sin of the sale of Yosef, as the brothers slaughtered a goat, and dipped Yosef's cloak in its blood....As the Talmud teaches us-HaShem shall make an atonement for the sin of the "Kid" I gathered...This is an allusion to the Fast of the Tenth of Tevet containing within it, a tikun for the sin of the sale of Yosef...

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

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

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

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

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

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Vayigash: Shanah Tovah

The streets beyond the shtetl were loud—music, drunken laughter, shouts that rose into the cold sky. Fireworks lit up the dark. A night of noise, of escape, of people losing themselves in the revelry of escapism and partying. In the big city, it was rumored that a giant mirrored ball made of crystals and reflective glass would be lowered from the sky, a sphere of descending light. Taverns were full of merrymakers, and peasants by the thousands gathered to prepare for the *Różana Miska*, the great ‘Rose Bowl’ athletic competition on the morrow.

Inside, in the warm glow of the *beis medrash*, the chassidim of the Ohev Yisrael of Apta sat bent over their *sefarim*, trying to drown out the obnoxious sounds of the outside. As the windows panes shook, the pressure of the raucous sounds pushed inward, until suddenly the *tzadik* entered.

Without a word, the Ohev Yisrael walked to the frost-covered window, opened it a crack, and let the noise pour in. The chasidim were startled. Why allow the disruptive, impure

tumult of the street into the fortress of sanctity, their beloved *beis medrash*? The Rebbe stood still, eyes half-closed, smiling, as if he were listening for something deeper beneath the chaos. After a long pause, the Ohev Yisrael closed the window gently and turned to his chasidim:

“Kinderlach...do you hear them celebrating? This is how the nations begin their year — noise, confusion, intoxication and escape. And look at us: when a Yid begins the year, he stands in awe. He prepares with a full month of focus, *selichos* and listening to the wake up call and cry of the Shofar. He pours himself into *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, *tzedakah*. With a trembling heart, he embarks on a journey across the seas of the world to his Master, to coronate the *Mel-ech*, electrified by the lofty atmosphere of the Yamim Nora'im, the Days of Awe!”

The Rebbe paused, the silence of the study hall suddenly overpowering the noise outside. “When you hear their shouting,” he said softly, “let it remind us of who we are!”

The noise outside then dropped, becoming a background to a different kind of sound: the quiet pulse of Jewish life, the heartbeat of a people carrying the privilege and responsibility of a covenantal life of holiness and obligation, as they pass through a world that often forgets its own.

The proprietor of Hecht’s *sefarim* store on Coney Island in Flatbush, Rav Sholom Hecht, once entered into a Yechidus (private meeting)

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with the Lubavitcher Rebbe on the morning of January 1st. At some point during the Yechidus the Rebbe wished him “a happy new year”. Rabbi Hecht was very surprised. The Rebbe informed him that on the secular new year, the *heilige* Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev would bless his *kehillah* with such a greeting”, and explained the Berdichever’s practice as based on “*Kapitel Pey Zayin*” in Tehillim:

ה' יספר בכתוב עמים זה ילד-שם סלה

“[When] Hashem counts in the script of the peoples forever, [He will say,] ‘This one was born there.’” (*Tehillim*, 87:6)

Rashi explains that in the future, when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* inscribes the nations for *dira'on*, an abhorrence, He will count the Jews who are assimilated among them and those who were coerced to abandon Judaism among them, and extract them from their midst. “Then (Hashem shall) say, ‘This one was born of those of Zion,’ and He will choose them for Himself.... taking those assimilated among them and bringing them for a tribute... there will be among them Kohanim and Levi'im who are unrecognizable, ‘but they are revealed to Me’, for הנסתרות לה' אלקינו, ‘The secret things belong to Hashem, our God (*Devarim*, 29:28).”

Rama (149:12 in non-censored editions) suggests that practically, most people do not associate New Year's with any specific religious observance, and are not even aware of its religious history. Indeed, for the majority of the westernized world, it is simply a day to celebrate the start of the new year on the calendar, make new year resolutions, purchase a gym membership and enjoy sales at department stores and online. For Yidden, however, January 1st actually marks the culmination of a wondrous *tekufah* of giving and generosity, since practically every Jewish institution, yeshivah and organization, has sent



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out 'last licks' fundraising emails encouraging end-of-year tax deductible charitable giving. And that alone is a *sibah l'mesibah*, 'a valid reason to celebrate this day'.

One of the most moving and powerful *nigunim* of the Kedushas Levi, a love song to awaken merit for Klal Yisrael, begins with the words, *Lomir dertzeilen di mailehs fin Yiddishe kinder*, “Let us relate the positive attributes of the Jewish People...” It has been a long December, and there's reason to believe that *b'ezras Hashem*, this year will be better than the last. As the civil calendar shifts to 2026, let us resolve to “relate the positive attributes” of our nation, to remember all the good times and hold on to these moments as they pass, counting these final moments toward *Geulah*.

May this be a *good g'bentched yohr* for Am Yisrael and all the good people of the world! *L'chaim!* ■

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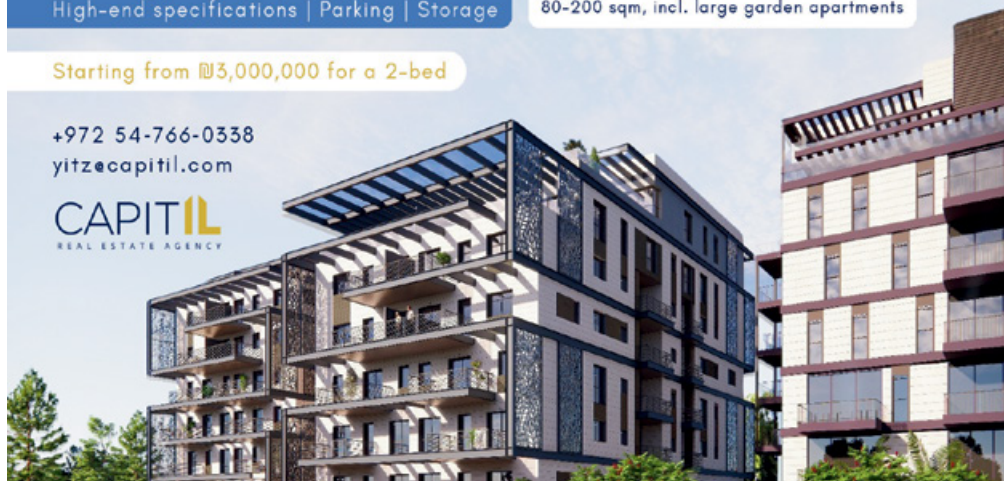
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Kosher Glycerin

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. Although ingredients are constantly changing, certain components remain integral to modern food production. Kosher certification agencies continuously research and establish policies through ongoing review of such ingredients. One of the most common and complex of these ingredients is glycerin.

Glycerin (or glycerol) is a widely used and safe food additive that functions as a humectant (moisture retainer), sweetener, thickener, and solvent. It is found in many products, including soft candies, chewing gum, dried fruits, energy bars, frostings, beverages, marshmallows, and sauces. Glycerin helps retain moisture

and prevents sugar from crystallizing. Its use in the food industry is widespread across all continents and has been a staple of large-scale manufacturing for generations.

Glycerin is typically derived from oils, which may be either animal-based or vegetable-based. There are two primary methods used to extract glycerin from oils. The first is saponification, commonly used in soap production, in which oils react with lye (sodium or potassium hydroxide). This reaction breaks down triglycerides, producing soap and crude glycerin. The second method is hydrolysis, in which oils are heated with water under high pressure and temperature. This process splits triglycerides into fatty acids and a glycerin-water solution, often referred to as “sweetwater.”

THE KOSHER CONCERN

These production methods are critical when assessing the halachic status of glycerin. Glycerin produced from vegetable oils, in its pure form and manufactured in a facility dedicated exclusively to vegetable glycerin, is permissible for use in kosher products. In fact, much of the kosher-certified glycerin on the market today fits this description.

The primary question arises regarding the status of glycerin produced from animal-based fats and oils. Some *poskim* viewed the saponification process as a *shinui* (a significant

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transformation). The *Sridei Aish* (2:21) and *Tzitz Eliezer* (6:16) write that since glycerin undergoes a chemical change and is transformed into a new substance, it may be considered an *issur she'nishtaneh* (a prohibited substance that has changed form which makes it permissible). There is a halachic concept—discussed more fully in other contexts—that when a prohibited food undergoes a drastic chemical transformation, it may lose its original prohibited status.

However, the *Tzitz Eliezer* applies this leniency only in cases involving a sick person (*Choleh She'ein Bo Sakanah*) when kosher alternatives are unavailable, and the *Sridei Aish* is lenient only when the glycerin is nullified (i.e., present in a ratio of less than 1:60).

It appears that much of this discussion among the *poskim* focused on the first method of glycerin extraction. It should be noted that in earlier times, lye and salts may not have been fully removed from the glycerin, leaving it with a foul taste and resulting in crude glycerin. In contrast, modern food-grade glycerin is highly refined, pure, and has a sweet, pleasant taste. Moreover, the hydrolysis method involves merely heating fats until they separate, followed by filtering and refining. In this process, there is no significant chemical transformation that would constitute a halachic *shinui*.

THE KOSHER CONCLUSION

Although some responsa suggest limited leniencies regarding glycerin, all reputable kosher certification agencies uniformly maintain that glycerin derived from animal-based fats is non-kosher. Furthermore, since glycerin is often an essential component in food

products, many authorities hold that it is not subject to nullification, even when present in minute quantities. Consequently, food products containing animal-based glycerin are considered non-kosher and prohibited for consumption. ■

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Late in Life, the Journey Still Calls

The reunion of Ya'akov and Yosef is one of the most dramatic and heart-stirring moments in Sefer Bereishit. It captures the ache of long separation—twenty years shaped by fraternal jealousy, years that will not return.

The pain deepened with uncertainty. Ya'akov lived for two decades somewhere between hope and fear, unsure whether his son still lived and, if he did, what his life had become. Yosef too may have wondered whether his father had played a role in his disappearance. Ya'akov had sent him toward Shechem knowing the brothers' hostility, and Yosef could not be sure what that decision meant.

The years apart were marked by uncertainty on both sides. Ya'akov did not know his son's fate, and Yosef did not fully know his father's intent.

Armed with the news that Yosef was alive, Ya'akov begins the journey to Egypt to see the son he has not seen in decades. Yosef prepares for the meeting from the other direction. Though surrounded by attendants, he personally harnesses his own chariot and rides out to greet his aging father, refusing to let intermediaries stand between them.

When they finally meet, they fall into one another's arms. It is a quiet meeting after years apart—a mixture of relief, gratitude, and the simple recognition that their lives can now continue together.

Chazal observe that this welcoming delegation for Ya'akov did not consist merely of Yosef and his household. Word spread quickly through Egypt that the father of the man who had saved the empire from starvation was approaching. Witnessing Yosef's enthusiasm, the Egyptians streamed out in droves to greet Ya'akov. He was received as a national hero—a fitting honor for a man who had endured so much fracture and turmoil across a long and battered life.

REUNIONS

The Midrash Tanchuma (Vayigash 7) draws a striking parallel between Ya'akov and of all people...Yitro. Just as Yitro traveled to the wilderness of Sinai to meet Moshe and was welcomed with honor, so did Ya'akov journey to Egypt and receive a celebratory welcome.

The similarities run deep. In each scene, an older man suddenly learns of a world-re-shaping event he had never imagined. Ya'akov discovers that Yosef lives. Yitro "hears" of Yetziat Mitzrayim and the splitting of the Yam



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Suf. Each revelation is powerful enough to summon an aging patriarch into a long and arduous journey.

In both instances the journey helps repair a fractured family. Ya'akov's household, strained by rivalry and jealousy, now begins to come together as the unified clan he had long hoped for. His arrival signals that long-awaited cohesion.

Likewise, Moshe's wife and children had been left behind in Midyan during the dangerous confrontation with Pharaoh; it was simply too perilous for them to remain in the line of fire. Only after Am Yisrael escapes Mitzrayim and marches toward Sinai can Yitro return with Moshe's family—restoring wholeness to a home that had been scattered.

CLOSURE FOR THE RESTLESS

Beyond the technical parallels between their arrivals, the storylines of Ya'akov and Yitro share a similar human arc. Both men carry long histories of struggle and restlessness, and in each case the public welcome they receive serves as a fitting closure—an earned moment of recognition after a lifetime of turbulence. Ya'akov endures an ongoing series of trials—from Esav's hostility to Lavan's deceit, to the mysterious nighttime battle. He faces the crisis of Dina. Most painful of all, he confronts the rivalry among his sons that ends with Yosef's disappearance. His arrival in Egypt, met with honor, offers a settled conclusion to a life marked by endurance and faith. It grants him recognition and a degree of tranquility after years of difficulty.

Yitro's hardships are less explicit in the Torah, but Chazal help fill in the picture. A priest with persistent intellectual curiosity, he sought religious truth across cultures. That search left him marginalized—perhaps explaining why his daughters were mistreated by local

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shepherds. In time he discovers the Ribbono shel Olam, and his journey to Sinai—likely to witness Matan Torah—brings a measure of completion to a life spent searching. Standing at the edge of Sinai becomes a fitting outcome for a man who resisted the pagan world around him.

KIBBUD AV VA'EIM OVERRIDES EGO

A second parallel links Ya'akov's arrival with Yitro's. In each scene, a figure of great stature sets aside rank in deference to an elder. Yosef personally prepares his own chariot rather than leaving the task to servants. Chazal describe this unusual impulse as *ahavah mekalkeles et ha-shurah*—love setting protocol aside. Instead of considering questions of status and decorum, Yosef lets years of longing and respect for his father guide him.

Moshe responds in a similar way. On the eve of ascending the mountain for forty days and nights of divine study, he could easily have

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sent others to endure the heat of the desert and greet Yitro. Instead, gratitude moved him. Yitro had given him shelter when he fled Pharaoh's reach, and Moshe felt obligated to show respect in person.

Each story becomes a living illustration of *kibbud av va'eim*. In both scenes, a figure of great authority sets aside public image in service of familial respect. *Kibbud av va'eim* is not mastered by reading Shulchan Aruch alone. Family relationships are layered and emotional, and halachic detail does not ensure thoughtful practice. The mitzvah needs living models. Yosef and Moshe provide them—reminding us not to let status or ego get in the way of simple attention and care for our parents.

HISTORY CALLS

However, Chazal would not link Ya'akov's arrival to Yitro's merely to note technical overlap or shared gestures of *kibbud av va'eim*. By placing Ya'akov alongside Yitro, they draw attention to historical features in *Ya'akov's* story that are harder to notice on their own. The comparison points to themes that stand out more clearly in the account of *Yitro* and helps bring them into focus in *Ya'akov's* journey.

History demanded that both Yitro and Ya'akov undertake difficult journeys late in life. Matan Torah could not unfold while Moshe remained separated from his wife and children. The Torah does not present Moshe—the central

figure at Sinai—as a solitary bachelor; such a portrait would misrepresent a tradition that values marriage and family. That principle had to be visible before revelation could proceed. Sinai had to wait until Yitro restored Moshe's household. Though the desert was no place for an aging man, forces larger than comfort drew him forward. History carried Yitro to Sinai.

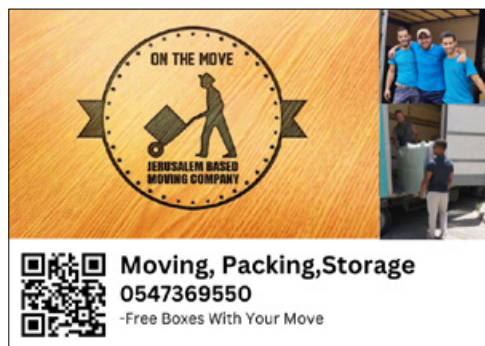
So too, history required Ya'akov's descent to Egypt. The template of Jewish destiny had been set years earlier, when Hashem informed Avraham that his descendants would become strangers in a foreign land, endure persecution, and ultimately be redeemed. Ya'akov knew the prophecy but did not know whether he would live its opening stage. He approached Be'er Sheva with trepidation, unsure whether he should cross into Egypt. In a nighttime vision, Hashem assured him that the Shechinah would accompany him into exile and that the ancient prophecy was now ready to unfold.

Ya'akov's journey becomes the hinge of the next era of Jewish history. It may have run against his desire to remain in the land of his parents, but history pressed him forward. This is the deeper reason to read Ya'akov through the lens of Yitro: both men were drawn by destiny into steps they would not have chosen on their own—steps that moved Jewish history into its next chapter.

NOT FOREVER

There is another layer to the comparison between Ya'akov and Yitro. With Yitro, the Torah makes it clear that he is a guest—honored, but not part of Israel's lasting story. Moshe invites him to stay, yet Yitro eventually returns to Midyan. He stands at the foot of Sinai and witnesses revelation, but he does not join the covenantal future. His time in the camp is brief and purposeful, and then it ends.

So too with Ya'akov. In Be'er Sheva, Hashem



assures him that Egypt will not be permanent, that the Shechinah will accompany him into exile and one day ascend with him in redemption. His descent to a foreign empire is not a change of identity, not an investment in the Egyptian future. It is a temporary sojourn, demanded by history but never mistaken for home.

Yitro and Ya'akov: Reunions, repairs, respect for parents, reluctant journeys; none of it was incidental. Each created the conditions for history to move. Jewish destiny advances when people step forward even when they would rather remain where they are. ■



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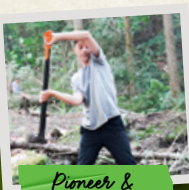
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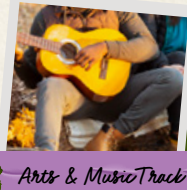
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Eating to Raise Holy Sparks

(Midot HaRa'aya - "Raising Sparks," piska # 6)

"Eating in proper measure and in a holy disposition sanctifies the person and the world, and lends joy to life. Sadness induces overeating; the act of eating then takes on heaviness and expresses anger and despair. The holy sparks fall to a depth more dark than they were before, and the soul is aggrieved." (*Midot HaRa'aya, Ha'alat Nitzotzot, piska 6*)

In his collection of mussar teachings, Rav Kook addresses the ideal way in which a Jew should engage in the act of eating. Eating is a physical activity, closely tied to basic human desire and the simple need to satiate hunger. It is therefore an area that requires a distinct religious perspective—one that emphasizes spirituality and the beauty of living a transcendent life.

Rav Kook employs the language of the Kabbalists, using a term common in their discussion of food and eating: "*raising the sparks.*" While this concept carries deep and esoteric meaning, on a basic level it suggests that when one eats or drinks, one has a choice. The act can be transformed into something uplifting, meaningful, and spiritually elevating—or it can be done in a way that leads to sadness and despair.

Rav Kook reminds us of the importance of

eating in a manner that "*lifts the sparks.*" This is achieved by eating in proper measure and with a "*holy disposition.*" Although Rav Kook does not specify precisely what it means to eat in holiness, the halachic framework surrounding food offers a clear path. The blessings recited before eating and drinking, words of Torah shared during a meal, and Birkat HaMazon recited afterward all provide a sacred structure that elevates what could otherwise remain a purely physical act.

Beyond these well-known practices, there are several lesser-known halachic enactments that further sensitize a person to eat with intentionality, religious awareness, and spiritual depth.

TO'AMEAH - EREV SHABBAT EATING

There is a minhag—one that has grown more popular in recent years—known as *to'ameah*. Early sources dating back to the students of Rashi (cited in *Machzor Vitri*) teach that one should taste the food prepared for Shabbat on Friday afternoon. The Chafetz Chaim, in the *Mishnah Berurah* (Hilchot Shabbat, siman 250), describes this practice explicitly as a mitzvah.

On a basic level, tasting the food ensures that it is properly seasoned and enjoyable for Shabbat. However, Chassidic writings offer a



deeper, more spiritual dimension. One who eagerly anticipates Shabbat begins to welcome it even before its formal onset. Tasting the food becomes a symbolic *taste of Shabbat* itself.

Just as *Tachanun* is omitted at Mincha before Shabbat because the sweetness of Shabbat has already begun to permeate the day, so too does tasting Shabbat food express a yearning to absorb the sanctity of the coming holy day. The custom of *to'ameah* is thus a powerful example of eating in a meaningful way—one that uplifts the sparks embedded within the mundane aspects of life.

BIRKAT HAOREI'ACH - BLESSING THE HOST

The Talmud instructs that a guest should recite a special blessing for the host at the table. This blessing is a prayer that God shower goodness and success upon the host who has graciously opened their home. The Rambam, in *Mishneh Torah* (Hilchot Berachot, ch. 2), records a formal text for this blessing and adds that one may expand upon it in one's own words.

Pausing one's eating in order to acknowledge the kindness of the host is itself an act of spiritual elevation. It transforms the meal from a self-focused experience into one rooted in gratitude and recognition of others.

Rav Kook offers a beautiful insight on this teaching. He explains that blessing the host reminds us that we are always guests at the table of the ultimate Host in Heaven. Our sustenance, material comfort, and physical blessings are all divine gifts. Even when eating alone, a Jew can take a moment to recognize this truth, thereby infusing the act of eating with sanctity.

SACRED FRUITS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL

The blessing *Al HaMichya*, recited after eating fruits associated with the Land of Israel, includes the phrase: "*Let us eat of its fruit and be satisfied by its goodness.*" The Tur (*Orach Chaim* 208) questions whether this phrase should be

included, arguing that one should desire the Land of Israel for its spiritual value rather than its physical produce.

Rabbi Yoel Sirkis—the Bach—disagrees. In his commentary *Bayit Chadash*, he insists that the phrase should indeed be recited. When we thank God for the fruits of the Land, he explains, we are not merely appreciating their physical sweetness. The holiness of the Land itself is absorbed into its fruits. The Shechinah that permeates Eretz Yisrael is embedded within its agricultural produce.

This idea highlights a unique opportunity when eating fruits grown in the Land of Israel: to consciously recognize the spiritual nourishment and *holy sparks* contained within each fruit and vegetable.

LIFE LESSONS

- When eating at another person's table, express appreciation for their kindness and food, and offer them a heartfelt blessing.
- When consuming produce grown in the Land of Israel, pause to reflect on the unique spiritual qualities embedded within it.
- Shabbat—and even *erev Shabbat*—is a time to eat with heightened intentionality, allowing each meal to deepen our connection with one another and with the Almighty. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aaaron@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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RABBI GIDEON WEITZMAN

Machon Puah for Fertility and
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

When the Miraculous Becomes Commonplace

Last time we saw that since the first baby, Louise Brown, was born through in-vitro fertilization, in 1978, over 13 million children have been born using this technology. IVF has become an extremely common and widely used procedure.

While it was seen as miraculous a few decades ago, it is considered as normal today. While newspaper cover stories on July 25th, 1978, claimed that Louise Brown was a “super-babe”, the babies born today after IVF are just like any other baby.

Sir Robert Edwards, the Nobel Prize winning scientist, who performed the first successful IVF, told me that in their first paper in the prestigious academic journal, Nature, they already claimed that this would change the world. He is quoted in newspapers of the day saying that he was confident that many other women would profit from their work. And, they were right. 13 million children later, IVF is the norm.

What impact does this have on the halachic approach to such fertility treatment?

When IVF was first invented it was not initially accepted by the halachic authorities, this was in part due to a concern that mistakes would occur in the laboratory. There would be no way of ascertaining that a child born was in fact related to the “parents”. Children would be born who were not Jewish, or people could

end up marrying family members.

Halachic supervision, developed and provided by PUAH, was sufficient to convince most poskim that IVF could be performed with confidence that mistakes would not occur. Subsequent to supervision becoming available worldwide, many couples have utilized IVF, assured that the child born is definitely their child.

As IVF becomes more common, it is even more essential to have the proper supervision. Clinics are busier than ever, and the increased demand requires a higher level of vigilance to ensure that mistakes cannot happen.

Another halachic concern relates to the commandment to procreate. Does a couple who conceive and deliver a child through IVF fulfill their obligation to “be fruitful and multiply”?

It would appear that the answer is very clear; the mitzvah is to have children, therefore, if a child is born, they have fulfilled the mitzvah, simple as that. It is irrelevant how the child was conceived. The mitzvah is not to conceive; the mitzvah is to have children.

But can we fulfill this, or indeed any, mitzvah in an unusual or “unnatural” way?

More on this next time. ■

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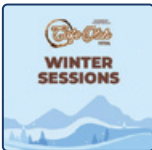


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A few days ago, I was walking with my daughter when we passed a man sitting on the sidewalk asking for help. I instinctively reached into my bag, and realized I had no cash on me. For a split second, I considered just walking past. But my daughter was watching.

So we stopped. I bent down, looked at him, smiled, and said, "Hi, I'm so sorry, I don't have any money on me today." He looked at us, broke into the widest smile, and said: "העיקר היחס" – It's the care that counts. It's all about the way you treat someone.

That moment stayed with us, not because of what we gave, but because of what we *could* give even when we had nothing tangible to offer.

I think that sentence can also guide us in the world of matchmaking. So many people say, "I'd love to help, but I don't have any good ideas" Or, "I don't know who to set them up with." And that may be true. But ideas are not the only currency we have.

העיקר היחס.

When it comes to people building their lives - singles included - the most meaningful thing we can offer is not always a suggestion. Sometimes it's presence. Sometimes it's warmth. Sometimes it's letting someone feel thought of.

You don't need a perfect match in mind to care, and you don't need to be a professional Shadchan to show investment.

It can be a simple message that says, "I was thinking of you."

An invitation for Shabbat, just because.

Taking the time to note important milestones in your calendar - so you remember to follow up on a job interview, a *yahrzeit*, or a birthday.

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These gestures don't say: "I'm worried about you." They say: "You matter to me."

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- What's a small gesture that means a lot to you?
- Is there someone in your life who could use warmth and presence right now - even if you don't have an answer or solution for them?

Because in the end, whether on the street or at the table, in dating or in life:

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Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

ת"ד

What's in a Name?

"When a person is born and his parents call him by a name that arose in their minds, it is not coincidence or happenstance, rather HaKadosh Baruch Hu placed in their mouths the name that is meant for that Neshama..."¹ So teaches Rav Chaim Vital in the name of his teacher, the Arizal. Every person receives the name meant for him, a name that reveals the essence of his or her character. While the precept "כשמו כן הוא" - *as is his name, so is he* - appears in Sefer Shmuel², nowhere is it more evident than in Sefer Divrei HaYamim.

In Divrei HaYamim, we encounter many familiar figures referred to here by unfamiliar names. These names elaborate upon aspects of their characters or events in their lives only hinted at in earlier books. For example, the

midrash teaches that Miriam, sister of Moshe and Aharon, is alluded to in Divrei HaYamim by no fewer than six different names: "Efrat", from the root *lifrot*, to be fruitful, for her role as midwife to the Jewish women in Egypt;³ "Acharchel", hinting to Miriam's role in teaching the women - the *chel*, multitudes of women, followed after her (*achareha*) with their instruments to sing and dance in her wake as she sang praises of Hashem following the Splitting of the Sea. The remaining four names assigned to Miriam in Divrei HaYamim are related to Miriam's *Tzara'at*. She was called "Azuvah - the abandoned one", because she was sickly, therefore called "*Chelah*" (from *Cholah*, sick) and her face was as white as a sheet, hence "Yeri'ot", meaning sheets. Consequently, no man wanted to marry her and she was as if abandoned. Calev married Miriam despite her illness, and nursed her back to health, caring for her as if she were his child, providing her with food and medicine. Thereafter, Miriam was called "Na'arah", meaning a young girl, for it was as if her youth were restored to her.⁴ In a variant midrash, Miriam was called "Azuvah" because when she was stricken with *Tzara'at* she was considered as if she were dead, and Calev, to whom she was already married, left her. When she was restored to health, he remarried her with great fanfare, and her youth was restored, hence "Na'arah", and she bore him children.⁵ The event of Miriam's *Tzara'at*, though fleeting in terms of time, was clearly a very central one

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in her life and legacy.

The midrash further explains that a person bears not only the name assigned to him at birth by his parents, but the name he is called by others, and the name that reflects the vicissitudes of his or her life.⁶ Thus the two sons of Elimelech of Beit Lehem who fled famine in the Land of Israel along with him, are named in Megillat Rut as Mahlon and Chilyon. In Divrei HaYamim, they are referred to as "Yoash" and "Saraf".⁷ The Talmud explains that "*hitya'ashu - they despaired*" of the Redemption and therefore were condemned to "*sereifah - burning*", capital punishment at the hands of Hashem.⁸

As we study Divrei HaYamim, let us be mindful of how much information is deeply embedded beneath the surface of these deceptively simple lists of names. So too, the names we call one another conceal depths of character not always apparent on the surface. There's always more to another person than what we encounter at face value; let's take the time to value one another, to respect the life experiences that may have contributed to shaping the character of others and of which we may know but little. May the lingering light of the Chanukah candles illuminate both the darkness of exile and the obscurity that clouds our ability to appreciate the light radiated by the Neshamot surrounding us, leading to greater accord in place of discord, and ultimately contributing to the process of Geulah. ■

6. קהלת רבה ז

7. דברי הימים א ד:כב

8. בבא בתרא צא.

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program



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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
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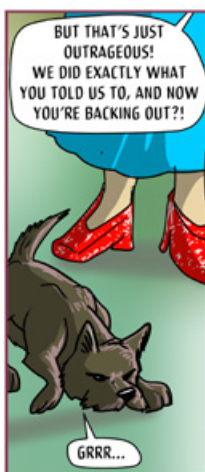
THE Y FILES

(*YERUSHALAYIM)

by
Netanel Epstein

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AND SO, DOROTHY, TOTO, THE SCARECROW, THE TIN-MAN AND THEN LION STOOD
BEFORE THE WIZARD OF OZ...







**ARIELLA SELTZER
MADRICHA**

RECOGNIZING THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH

Do you have a special gift or talent-whether in sports, art, dance, or singing?

In last week's parsha, Yosef says something remarkable before he interprets Pharaoh's dreams:

“בלעדי אלוקים יענה את שלום פרעה”

“Not I-Hashem will see to Pharaoh's welfare.”

With these words, Yosef attributes his wisdom and success entirely to Hashem. He does not take personal credit for his talent, but instead recognizes its true source. This reflects a powerful Jewish mindset: acknowledging that our abilities are gifts from Hashem, not achievements we own outright.

I learned from Rabbi Rosner's shiur at Machon Tal that we see this same theme echoed in the story of Chanukah. The Chashmonaim fought a physical war against the Greeks and emerged victorious. It would have been easy to attribute their success to strength, strategy, or bravery alone. However, the miracle of the Menorah reminds us that even victories that appear “natural” are truly from Hashem.

This idea is beautifully expressed by the Ramban, who teaches that even everyday occurrences are miracles. Often, people remember to thank Hashem only when something extraordinary happens. Yet we are meant to approach waking up in the morning, breathing, or watching a tree grow with the same awe and

gratitude as we would a supernatural event.

However, in this week's parsha, Yosef shows us an even higher level of recognizing Hashem in our lives. When he finally reveals himself to his brothers, they expect retribution-or at least a harsh critique-or selling him into slavery. Instead, Yosef responds:

“וַעֲתָה לֹא אַתֶּם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֵתִי הִנֵּה כִי הָאֱלֹהִים”

“And now, it was not you who sent me here, but God.”

Yosef recognizes Hashem in his suffering just as much as in his gifts. It is one level to recognize Hashem in the good; it is another to see Hashem through the darkness.

As Chanukah departs and the dark winter remains, let us remember that the good, the bad, and even the ugly all come through the light of Hashem.



**AVICHAI ROLLER
10TH GRADE, EFRAT**

FINDING THE MESSAGE IN THE WAGONS

After twenty-two years without contact, Yosef finally has the opportunity to send a message to his grieving father, Yaakov. Instead of writing a letter, Yosef sends wagons. Rashi, quoting the Midrash, explains that this was not a random choice. The final subject Yosef and Yaakov learned together before their separation was עגלה ערופה-the law of the decapitated calf.

By sending wagons (עגלות), Yosef hints to that shared learning, signaling to his father that he

was not only physically alive, but spiritually strong, still connected to the Torah they had studied together.

The Kedushat Levi offers an even deeper insight. He notes that the word עגל is related to עיגול, meaning a circle.

Yosef was sending Yaakov a message of reassurance. Yaakov was understandably anxious about leaving Eretz Yisrael and descending to Egypt. Yosef was telling him that although the situation appeared negative, it was part of a larger divine plan. Like a circle, what looks like a descent is often the beginning of a return. Through this journey, Yaakov's descendants would ultimately merit inheriting Eretz Yisrael.

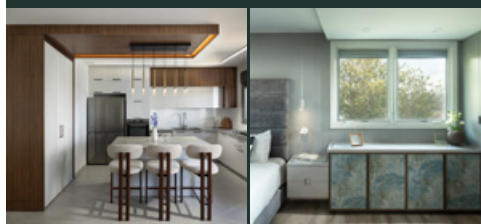
This message resonates far beyond the parsha. In life, we are sometimes placed in situations we would rather avoid and may even wish had never occurred. Yet the story of Yosef teaches us that Hashem's plan is often only visible in hindsight. When we place our

trust in Him, even moments of difficulty can become part of a greater, meaningful outcome.

Shabbat Shalom ■

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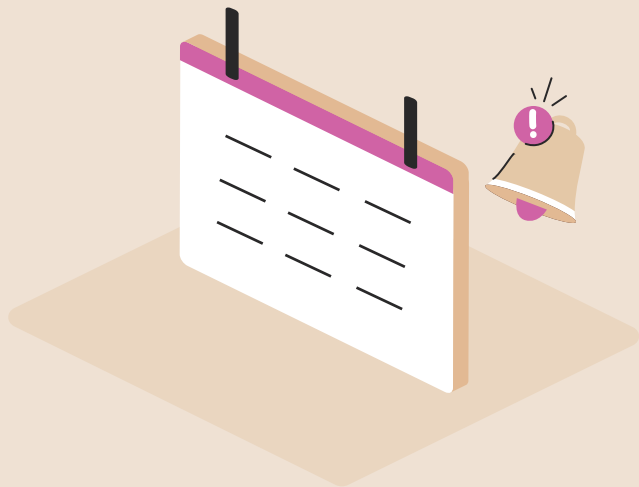
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