

BS"D



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ON VAYECHI - 5765

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: December 23, 2004 To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYechi

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYechi -

The Connection between Livelihood and Redemption

There is a well known pasuk [verse] in this week's parsha beginning with the words: "The Angel who redeemed me from all evil will bless the children" [Bereshis 48:16]. The Medrash comments on this pasuk, and compares salvation with making a living. "Just as redemption is a wondrous phenomenon, so too earning a living (parnassah) is a wondrous phenomenon. Just as earning a living is a daily occurrence, so too, redemption (geulah) is a daily occurrence."

This second statement of the Medrash should give us pause. We know of certain historical periods that we associate with redemption (geulah). But what is the meaning of the statement of the Medrash that geulah comes every day and is necessary every day?

The Medrash is teaching that, in fact, every day, unbeknownst to us most of the time, there are salvations that occur to us and for us daily. We say in our prayers "concerning your miracles that are with us on a daily basis."

There was an incident a number of years ago where there was a bombing in front of a Jewish school in France. A terrorist planted a car bomb to go off exactly at the moment when the school was scheduled to be emptying out of children at the end of the school day. For some unknown reason the clock that controlled the school bell system was several minutes late, causing the dismissal bell to ring a few minutes after it was supposed to. The bomb went off as scheduled and there was nobody there in front of the school building. This was a miracle. "And He brings redemption to the children of their children" [Liturgy]. Just as parnassah is a daily occurrence, so too, geulah is a daily occurrence.

We typically don't even think about it, but when we are performing ordinary activities such as driving on the road, there are so many close calls that we survive -- "near misses". Just as parnassah is a daily occurrence, so too geulah is a daily occurrence. These are just some examples of things about which we are somewhat aware. But the Medrash is pointing out that we need redemption and salvation every single day of the week and the salvation does in fact occur -- we are just not cognizant of it.

The Uniqueness of Ephraim and Menasheh

In another well known pasuk from Yaakov's blessing to his grandchildren, the Torah records "So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you shall Israel bless saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Menasheh'" - and he put Ephraim before Menasheh." [Bereshis 48:20]. This is the source of the custom in many communities for parents to bless their children on Friday night with these very words.

Out of all the outstanding personalities in Jewish history, our blessing to our offspring is that they should be like Ephraim and Menasheh. We have discussed many times over the years why these two sons of Yosef became the paradigm of what we want our children to become.

This year, I would like to offer two additional interpretations of this question. The first I heard from Rav Mayer Bergman. There is a concept known as "yeridas hadoros" [the spiritual deterioration of the generations, beginning at Sinai and moving on through our own time]. Yehoshua was not Moshe Rabbeinu and the Elders who followed Yehoshua were not on par with Yehoshua. There has been a steady decline in Torah knowledge. The further we travel away from Mt. Sinai, the less we can expect of the leaders of a generation. We sometimes complain that we miss "the gedolim of the previous generations." This is part of the inevitable "yeridas hadoros."

When a person gives a blessing to his children that "the L-rd should make them like Ephraim and Menasheh," it is because Ephraim and Menasheh are the exception to this rule. Even though they were the generation after Yosef, they took the rightful place of their father amidst the other Tribes. Yaakov equated their generation with the generation of his own children. There was no "yeridas hadoros" when it came to Manasseh and Ephraim.

I heard the second interpretation from Rav Chaim Shapiro, Z'L, the author of "Go My Son". Rav Chaim Shapiro once told me that at the Novardok Yeshiva, they used to interpret this blessing differently. The classic insight taught at that mussar Yeshiva was that Ephraim and Menasheh symbolized excellence in character traits (middos). When Menasheh, the older brother, saw that the younger Ephraim was given precedence and was thus destined to take on the role of first-born in the family, he did not react with protest or resentment.

Anyone who has children has heard innumerable times the complaint "Hey, I'm older. It's not fair!" Menasheh does not say, "I'm older." He was quiet. Then when Yosef tried to intercede and switch the hands of his elderly father, Ephraim does not pop up and interject "Hey if this is what Zeidei wants to do, let him do it!" Ephraim was ready to forgo the privilege that his grandfather had already bestowed upon him, if that would be what his father preferred. This attitude -- on the parts of both Menasheh and Ephraim -- represent exemplary behavior. It is a lesson in good middos -- in how not to have sibling rivalry.

If there is any blessing that parents want to see in their children it is that G-d make them like Ephraim and Menasheh. They should remain calm and happy if their sibling gets first or more or better. What bigger blessing could there be for parents?

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 443 - Aveilus Issues. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrاند, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

RABBI DR. JONATHAN SACKS

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[from 2 years ago]

Vayechi

Ephraim and Manasseh

The drama of younger and older brothers, which haunts the book of Bereishith from Cain and Abel onwards, reaches a strange climax in the story of Joseph's children. Jacob/Israel is nearing the end of his life. Joseph visits him, bringing with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. It is the only scene of grandfather and grandchildren in the book. Jacob asks Joseph to bring them near so that he can bless them. What follows next is described in painstaking detail:

Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh is his left hand towards Israel's right, and brought them near him. But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. . . .

When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. Joseph said to him, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations." He blessed them that day, saying:

"In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'" So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. (48: 13-14, 17-20).

It is not difficult to understand the care Joseph took to ensure that Jacob would bless the firstborn first. Three times his father had set the younger before the elder, and each time it had resulted in tragedy. He, the younger, had sought to supplant his elder brother Esau. He favoured the younger sister Rachel over Leah. And he favoured the youngest of his children, Joseph and Benjamin, over the elder Reuben, Shimon and Levi. The consequences were catastrophic: estrangement from Esau, tension between the two sisters, and hostility among his sons. Joseph himself bore the scars: thrown into a well by his brothers, who initially planned to kill him and eventually sold him into Egypt as a slave. Had his father not learned? Or did he think that Ephraim - whom Joseph held in his right hand - was the elder? Did Jacob know what he was doing? Did he not realise that he was risking extending the family feuds into the next generation? Besides which, what possible reason could he have for favouring the younger of his grandchildren over the elder? He had not seen them before. He knew nothing about them. None of the factors that led to the earlier episodes were operative here. Why did Jacob favour Ephraim over Manasseh?

Jacob knew two things, and it is here that the explanation lies. He knew that the stay of his family in Egypt would not be a short one. Before leaving Canaan to see Joseph, G-d had appeared to him in a vision:

Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes. (46: 3-4)

This was, in other words, the start of the long exile which G-d had told Abraham would be the fate of his children (a vision the Torah describes as accompanied by "a deep and dreadful darkness" - 15: 12). The other thing Jacob knew was his grandsons' names, Manasseh and Ephraim. The combination of these two facts was enough.

When Joseph finally emerged from prison to become prime minister of Egypt, he married and had two sons. This is how the Torah describes their birth:

Before the years of the famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh, saying, "It is because G-d has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." The second son he named Ephraim, saying, "It is because G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." (41: 50-52)

With the utmost brevity the Torah intimates an experience of exile that was to be repeated many times across the centuries. At first, Joseph felt

relief. The years as a slave, then a prisoner, were over. He had risen to greatness. In Canaan, he had been the youngest of eleven brothers in a nomadic family of shepherds. Now, in Egypt, he was at the centre of the greatest civilization of the ancient world, second only to Pharaoh in rank and power. No one reminded him of his background. With his royal robes and ring and chariot, he was an Egyptian prince (as Moses was later to be). The past was a bitter memory he sought to remove from his mind. Manasseh means "forgetting."

But as time passed, Joseph began to feel quite different emotions. Yes, he had arrived. But this people was not his; nor was its culture. To be sure, his family was, in any worldly terms, undistinguished, unsophisticated. Yet they remained his family. They were the matrix of who he was. Though they were no more than shepherds (a class the Egyptians despised), they had been spoken to by G-d - not the gods of the sun, the river and death, the Egyptian pantheon - but G-d, the creator of heaven and earth, who did not make His home in temples and pyramids and panoplies of power, but who spoke in the human heart as a voice, lifting a simple family to moral greatness. By the time his second son was born, Joseph had undergone a profound change of heart. To be sure, he had all the trappings of earthly success - "G-d has made me fruitful" - but Egypt had become "the land of my affliction." Why? Because it was exile. There is a sociological observation about immigrant groups, known as Hansen's Law: "The second generation seeks to remember what the first generation sought to forget." Joseph went through this transformation very quickly. It was already complete by the time his second son was born. By calling him Ephraim, he was remembering what, when Manasseh was born, he was trying to forget: who he was, where he came from, where he belonged.

Jacob's blessing of Ephraim over Manasseh had nothing to do with their ages and everything to do with their names. Knowing that these were the first two children of his family to be born in exile, knowing too that the exile would be prolonged and at times difficult and dark, Jacob sought to signal to all future generations that there would be a constant tension between the desire to forget (to assimilate, acculturate, anaesthetise the hope of a return) and the promptings of memory (the knowledge that this is "exile," that we are part of another story, that ultimate home is somewhere else). The child of forgetting (Manasseh) may have blessings. But greater are the blessings of a child (Ephraim) who remembers the past and future of which he is a part.

From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Thursday, December 23, 2004 9:02 AM To: tw534@torahweb.org Subject: Yosef's Life: The Fitting Conclusion to Sefer Braishis - Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org for anything else, email: torahweb@torahweb.org <http://www.torahweb.org>
RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

YOSEF'S LIFE: The Fitting Conclusion to Sefer Braishis

Sefer Braishis begins with the creation of the world and ends with the final words of Yosef to his brothers and his subsequent death. The life and death of Yosef are a testament to the opening words of Sefer Braishis.

The first Rashi in Braishis is bothered by the necessity of Sefer Braishis. If the Torah is primarily a book of mitzvos, then the Torah could have begun with the first mitzvah given to Bnai Yisroel. Rashi concludes that the primary purpose of Sefer Braishis is to validate the claim of Bnai Yisroel to Eretz Yisroel. Only the Creator can determine who is entitled to which land. Sefer Braishis which establishes Hashem as the Creator, also establishes as a corollary that Eretz Yisroel was given by the Creator to Bnai Yisroel.

These two fundamental beliefs, the existence of Hashem and the unique relationship between His people and His land are the two truths that Yosef expresses throughout his life and even after his death. In the

house of Potiphar, Yosef is described as "Hashem itto" - Hashem is with him (Braishis 39:3). Rashi interprets this to mean that he constantly had the name of Hashem on his lips. Rashi's interpretation is borne out many times throughout the story of Yosef. Trying to convince the wife of Potiphar why he can not succumb to her temptations, Yosef concludes by saying, "v'chatasi l'Elokim" - it will be a sin against Hashem (Braishis 39:9). Before interpreting the dreams of the Sar Ha'mashkim and Sar Ha'ofim he informs them "ha'lo l'Elokim hapisonim" - Hashem grants the interpretations (Braishis 18:8). Even standing in the presence of Pharaoh, Yosef concedes "Elokim ya'ane es shlom Pharaoh" - Hashem alone can answer the request of Pharaoh (). The constant evoking of the name of Hashem as the One to whom man is accountable and as the source of all wisdom stemmed from the firm belief of Yosef in the Borai shomayim va'aretz.

It was this belief that enabled Yosef to make sense of the otherwise incomprehensible events that occurred to him. How could he have been sold by his brothers and subsequently rise to power? Immediately after revealing himself to his brothers, Yosef presents them with his analysis of the past twenty-two years. In five pesukim (45:5-9) he mentions four times that it was clearly Divine providence that enabled these events to occur. As he had done in jail and now before Pharaoh, he views himself as merely an agent of the Creator. It is this belief that enables Yosef to forgive his brothers; although they had wanted to wrong him, "Elokim chashava l'tova" - Hashem had planned everything for the good (50:20). The second firm commitment of Yosef which he never swayed from was his connection to Eretz Yisroel. Even as a prisoner in Mitzrayim far from his homeland, he still identifies himself as one who came from "Eretz Yisroel" - the land of the Hebrews." Chazal note that it was these words that enabled Yosef to be buried in Eretz Yisroel. Although Yosef had not lived in Eretz Yisroel since he was seventeen years old, his final words consisted of his plea to his brothers to make certain he would be buried there. His connection to Eretz Yisroel that never waned throughout his years in galus stemmed from his powerful faith in Hashem. As a believer in the Borai shomayim va'aretz he was able to appreciate that it was Hashem who gave Eretz Yisroel to His people and this gift was a source of pride and had to be treasured.

The relationship between emunah b'Hashem (faith in G-d) and Eretz Yisroel goes in two ways. A deeper belief in Hashem will enhance appreciation for Eretz Yisroel. Similarly, an appreciation of Eretz Yisroel will strengthen one's emunah b'Hashem. "Eretz asher Hashem Elokecha doresh ossa" - "A land which Hashem, your G-d, looks after" (Devarim 11:12). Rashi explains that although Hashem watches over the entire world, His primary concern is for Eretz Yisroel. The Ramban (Vayikra 18:25) elaborates on the unique level of Divine providence that exists in Eretz Yisroel. Being attuned to the special spiritual quality of Eretz Yisroel enables one to experience this closer connection to Hashem. Eretz Yisroel can enhance one's belief in Hashem because His providence is more apparent there.

Yosef spent his youth in Eretz Yisroel learning the lessons of brias ha'olam from his father. His firm belief in Hashem together with his appreciation for Eretz Yisroel remained with him throughout his life. He imparted these truths to Bnai Yisroel as he died. He firmly believed that Hashem would redeem His children and return them to His land. The opening words of Braishis are the legacy of Yosef. It is his last words of belief in Hashem and love of Eretz Yisroel that echo the opening of Sefer Braishis - "Braishis bara Elokim es hashomayim v'es ha'aretz."

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Sent: Thursday, December 23, 2004 4:40 PM To: Peninim Parsha

PENNIM ON THE TORAH

BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

PARSHAS VAYECHI And he said to Yosef: Behold, your father is ill. (48:1)

Visiting the sick and inquiring about their continued welfare comprise a meaningful mitzvah which helps not only the patient, but also has a positive influence on the benefactor. The Mishnah in Meseches Shabbos 127a relates, "Visiting the sick is a mitzvah from which man enjoys the fruits in this world, while the principle remains set aside for him in the World to Come." It is a mitzvah that does not demand much from the benefactor and, at the same time, can do so much to uplift the spirits of those who are ill.

Horav Levi Yitzchak, zl, m'Berditchav, would make it his business to inquire concerning the health of every ill person in his community. He would spend much of his precious time visiting them, giving them encouragement and hope. He could not alleviate the source of their pain, but he could ameliorate the way they reacted to it. He once visited a man who was gravely ill. Noticing that the man was agitated, Rav Levi Yitzchak asked him what was wrong. The man replied, "Rebbe, I sense that my time is short, that my days on this world are numbered. I fear what I will have to face in the world of Truth. Whatever accomplishments I have merited pale in comparison to what is expected of me in the Eternal world. I shudder at what will be my fate when I face the Heavenly Tribunal."

Rav Levi Yitzchak arose from his chair, proclaiming, "I am granting you my entire portion in Olam Habah, the World to Come. You no longer have anything to worry about." Immediately, they prepared a kinyan, act of acquisition, and it became a "done deal."

One of Rav Levi Yitzchak's disciples, who witnessed this interchange, was shocked and asked his rebbe, "How could the Rebbe give away his most prized possession? Obviously, the Rebbe wanted to encourage him and make him feel good, but he has so little time left, is it worth it?"

Rav Levi Yitzchak's response should leave a powerful impression on all of us. He said, "It is worth it for me to give away my entire Olam Habah to spare a sick Jew even one moment of pain."

This is the essence of the mitzvah of Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick, sparing another some of his pain, letting him know that he is not alone, empowering him with hope and courage to battle the illness that is ravaging his body.

Regrettably, many people who are capable, shy away from this mitzvah with clichéd answers such as: "I do not know how to help; "I do not know what to say;" "I feel uncomfortable."

I recently came across a book that develops suggestions for dealing with these issues. I have taken the liberty to glean from a list of some forty suggestions in order to present to the reader a concise and abbreviated approach to fulfilling the mitzvah of Bikur Cholim.

The Oros Chaim writes, "Visit the sick and lighten their suffering. Pray for them and leave. Do not stay too long, for you may inflict upon them additional discomfort. When you visit the sick, enter the room cheerfully."

Additionally, we cite the following guidelines one should implement when carrying out the mitzvah of Bikur Cholim. Regardless of whom one is visiting, he should demonstrate respect, maintaining the individual's self esteem. One should be sincere in his visits, acting naturally, focusing on the patient, his life and interests. The most important aspect of a visit is one's presence, not the material gifts he brings. Give the patient the opportunity to share his life with you. Make him feel comfortable, so that he knows in his heart that he is not alone.

Upon visiting a patient in a semi-private room, do not ignore the roommate. This causes a chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name,

and makes a person feel bad for no reason. Let the patient do the talking by giving him the opportunity to speak about his life and family. Remember, you might be the only one that is spending time with him. Tragically, the nursing homes are filled with parents whose children do not always find the time to adjust their priorities; their parents, unfortunately, are not at the top of the list. Do not share your personal problems with the patient, unless informing him of your personal plight gives him a sense of importance. Listen, encourage and reflect hope, emphasizing the positive. Preserve his dignity. Above all, do not let the patient down. If you make a commitment to someone, if he has become attached to you, follow up. Do not ignore him. Nothing can be more devastating to a patient than a visitor who patronizes him. He wants love and attention, not patronage.

Last, check on the patient's needs: Are they being addressed? Pray for him and with him. Nothing makes a person feel better than finally connecting with Hashem. The Berditchever taught the overriding significance of visiting the sick. He was willing to give up the merit of an entire lifetime to ease the emotional pain of a sick Jew. Are we prepared to do the same?

For in their rage they murdered people, at their whim they maimed an ox. (49:6)

Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, explains that Yaakov Avinu was taken aback by the paradox that confronted him in his sons' behavior. On the one hand, the compassion they demonstrated for their sister engendered a sense of righteous indignation, which motivated them to destroy an entire city. On the other hand, they were the individuals who had suggested that Yosef be thrown into the pit. Where was their compassion for Yosef? Yaakov understood that the difference lay in their rage. The anger they directed towards Yosef overwhelmed whatever sense of compassion they were capable of manifesting. Yaakov, therefore, cursed Shimon and Levi's anger, because he knew that their uncontrollable rage had catalyzed the tragedy of Yosef.

Veritably, everything the brothers did was in accordance with their understanding of the halachah. They felt that a Jewish girl must be protected and not allowed to be treated as a wanton woman. Concerning Yosef, they felt that he was a navi sheker, false prophet, who should be put to death. Yaakov viewed their actions in Shechem as an act of extreme piety. This produced the question: Why were you so pious when it came to your sister, but forgot your piety when it concerned your brother?

We derive from here an important lesson. A person cannot vacillate in regard to piety and zealousness. One must be consistent in his beliefs and behavior. To be a kanai in regard to one area and to remain complacent in another undermines his motives and misrepresents his intentions. This is what bothered Yaakov: inconsistency. One who acts with resolve and is undeviating from his position, whose piety is not simply something he "wears" out of convenience or as a result of peer pressure, will receive Divine assistance to attain success in his endeavors.

Accursed is their rage for it is intense;... I will separate them within Yaakov and I will disperse them in Yisrael. (49:7)

Rashi explains that Shimon's descendants were scattered throughout Klal Yisrael according to their vocation. They were the poor, the scribes, and the teachers of young children, individuals who, in search of a livelihood, were relegated to travel from place to place. We must endeavor to understand Yaakov Avinu's intention. He cursed Shimon's intense anger, placing upon him the role of Torah teacher to young children. We wonder why Yaakov would place Shimon, an individual who had demonstrated his capacity for rage and vengeance, in the role of Torah teacher to inspire the hearts and minds of our youth?

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, takes a practical approach towards resolving this. He explains that while Yaakov was certainly perturbed over the fact that his sons did not seek his counsel before they acted so harshly against the men of Shechem, they did, however, demonstrate enormous self-sacrifice and zealotry in order to preserve the integrity and dignity of Klal Yisrael. When they saw a perversion of justice, they were intolerant. When they were confronted with an infidel who impugned the honor, integrity and purity of their people, they were willing to risk their lives to uphold the foundations and principles that have sustained our nation throughout the millennia. Yes, they were the ideal individuals to disseminate Torah to the masses. The brazenness which Shimon manifested in Shechem is a necessary component in the makeup of a rebbe. He must stand firm in the face of a challenge, resolute in confrontation with those who could impugn the integrity of Torah, uncompromising when Torah standards are undermined. The Torah teacher must remain firm in his commitment to teach each and every student, regardless of the child's ability, motivation, or family dynamics. He has one goal and one mission: to inspire the hearts and minds of his young charges.

Teaching is not a profession or a vocation. It is a passion. A teacher must sacrifice - not merely time and money, but, in some situations, his life. He is a counselor, mentor, friend, surrogate parent and much more. Teaching is the most challenging, yet most rewarding, pursuit. Its material remuneration may not be significant, but the psychological and emotional rewards are immense. Chazal teach us that one who teaches Torah to a student is compared to a parent who begets the child. A rebbe has the power to inspire his student in such a manner that he will be reborn. He can resuscitate a lost soul and breathe new life into a depressed being. With such an enormous responsibility, is it any wonder that Yaakov chose the son who would not cower from adversity, not shy away from challenge, and not bend to pressure?

A great rebbe never gives up. His student is his life. There is no dearth of rebbe/talmid stories. I found a short vignette in Rabbi Yechiel Spero's *Touched by a Story 2* that I find especially meaningful. It concerns Horav Ezra Attia, zl, the venerable Rosh Hayeshivah of Porat Yosef, who was a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, with an encyclopedic knowledge of all areas of Torah. His personal piety and exceptional love of and devotion to his students were legendary. Indeed, his special care made the difference which catalyzed the success of many students. This story is about one of them, today's leader of Sephardic Jewry, Chacham Ovadiah Yosef, Shlita.

As a young student, the chacham exhibited unusual acumen and diligence in his learning. It was obvious that he was on the road to achieve greatness in Torah. Therefore, when a number of days went by and the young student did not appear in the yeshivah, Rav Ezra became concerned and decided to pay a visit to the boy's home. The Rosh Hayeshivah was shocked by the extreme poverty in which the boy's family lived.

He was greeted by the boy's father, who was embarrassed that the Rosh Hayeshivah came all the way to his home to inquire about his son. The father explained that his son was well, but needed at home. The family had a small grocery, which was their source of livelihood, and they needed Ovadiah's help. Rav Ezra attempted to explain to the father the importance of Torah over everything else, but was unsuccessful. As he was about to leave, he noticed Ovadiah standing in the corner, broken-hearted and embarrassed that his father had not relented his decision. The next morning, when Ovadiah's father entered the store, he was shocked to behold the Rosh Hayeshivah himself wearing an apron! The father was appalled, "What is the Chacham doing here?" the father asked, incredulously. Rav Ezra replied that he had come to the store early in the morning and noticed his student preparing to open up. He informed the boy that he had found a replacement worker who was

willing to work without pay. He should, therefore, return to the yeshivah where he belonged.

"You said that you needed someone to help and could not afford to pay. I am that someone. Your son's learning is more important than my time!" The Rosh Hayeshivah had made his point, and Ovadiah was allowed to return to the yeshivah, where he grew into the Torah luminary that he is today. This was all because an astute and devoted rebbe cared enough to prevent adversity from standing in the way of his student's success.

Zevulun shall settle by the seashores. (49:13)

Yaakov Avinu bestowed his blessings on each of his sons in accordance with the individual role he was to play in the future scheme of life. Rashi notes that although Yissachar was older, Yaakov, nevertheless, gave precedence to Zevulun, since his engagement in commerce provided for Yissachar's Torah study. One who spends his days immersed in spiritual pursuit can hardly earn a livelihood. Thus, the Torah supporter plays a crucial supporting role in this endeavor. This is one circumstance in which the supporting role takes precedence. I have always been bothered by this exposition. It is true that without the support of Zevulun, Yissachar could not have spent all of his time studying Torah, but did this make Zevulun more significant? This question applies to any endeavor. The work of the doctor whose research saves lives is made possible through the support of well-meaning people. After all is said and done, however, the actual success is achieved by the physician who dedicates himself to the goal, who spends a lifetime in the laboratory performing experiments. Why should the individual who writes the check receive greater honor?

I think the answer lies in the words of the Zohar Hakadosh who explains why Zevulun precedes Yissachar. He asks why Yissachar, who studies Torah, should follow after Zevulun. Does not the actual study of Torah precede every other endeavor? He replies that Zevulun would "take the bread from his own mouth and put it into the mouth of Yissachar"! We should consider two aspects of this statement: he took the bread from his own mouth, the bread that was for him, his own portion; he placed it into Yissachar's mouth. He fed Yissachar his personal portion! That is support of Torah at its apex. He valued Yissachar's Torah study so much that he was willing to forego his own portion in order to share it with Yissachar. Furthermore, he wanted the privilege of personally feeding Yissachar. When the support of Torah is based upon such appreciation and reverence, then the supporter deserves special recognition. He does more than support Torah study: he enables it.

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From: RAV KOOK LIST [RavKookList@gmail.com] Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2004 5:42 AM Subject: Rav Kook dvar Torah - Vayechi: Jacob Did Not Die
Vayechi: Jacob Did Not Die

"Rabbi Yochanan stated, 'Our father Jacob did not die'. Rabbi Nachman asked, 'Was it in vain that they eulogized Jacob and embalmed his body and buried him?' Rabbi Yochanan responded, 'I derive this from a verse: 'Fear not, Jacob My servant ... for I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity.' [Jeremiah 30:10] The verse likens Jacob to his offspring: just as his offspring lives, so Jacob lives.'" [Ta'anit 5b]

What did Rabbi Yochanan mean that 'Jacob did not die'? If he intended to say that Jacob's soul is still alive - for that, no verse is needed. The souls of all righteous people are eternal. And if he meant that Jacob's body did not die, several verses explicitly state that he died (for example, "Joseph's brothers realized that their father had died" [Genesis 50:15]).

The medieval commentary Tosafot explains that, when describing Jacob's death, the Torah only writes that he 'expired', not that he 'died' [Genesis 50:33]. We need to examine the difference between these two verbs.

Also, why did Rabbi Yochanan only make this claim of eternity regarding Jacob, and not for Abraham and Isaac?

Two Aspects of Death

When a person dies, two things happen. First, the bodily functions (breathing, pumping of the heart, and so on) cease. This is called "geviya" (expiring). The natural cessation of bodily functions is a sign of a virtuous, well-lived life, since an unhealthy and profligate lifestyle brings about an early demise of the body.

The second aspect of death concerns the soul. After the sin of Adam, the first man, death was decreed in order to allow the soul to recover from its contact with the body's physical drives and desires. Death purges the soul of those sensual influences that distance one from true closeness to G-d. The aspect of death that cleanses the soul is called "mita".

Thus, Solomon wrote, "For love is strong as death." [Song of Songs 8:6] How is love like death? Just as death purifies the soul from the body's physical wants, so too, a truly intense love for G-d will overwhelm any other form of desire.

The Impact of Intermediate Actions

All actions that we perform during our lifetime make a deep impression on our soul. The human soul is influenced not only by our ultimate goals, but also by the intermediate actions that we take to achieve those goals. Sometimes, these actions are themselves worthy means for attaining our goals, and their impact on the soul is a positive one.

On other times, we achieve a specific goal by utilizing means that contradict our overall objective. This is like scaffolding that is erected when building. The scaffolding is needed to aid in the construction, but is removed once the building is complete. So too, these temporary means will be canceled after the goal is attained, and their impure influence on the soul must be purged.

Jacob's Family was Complete

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are called the "Avot" (Forefathers), since the main objective of their lives was to father the Jewish people, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". [Exodus 19:6]

Abraham and Isaac's efforts towards achieving this goal required using means that must be relinquished once the objective is attained. They bore and raised Ishmael and Esau. Even though these offspring contested the true goal of the "Avot", they were needed in order to accomplish their overall aim. Therefore, the Torah uses the word "mita" to describe Abraham and Isaac's death. It was necessary to purify their souls' ties to the fathering and raising of these gentile nations, since this occupation conflicted with the inner mission of their souls.

But while the souls of Abraham and Isaac required the cleansing effect of "mita", Jacob's 'bed was complete'. All of his children were included within the people of Israel. Jacob did not need to occupy himself with any transitory means. All of his efforts were eternal, cleaving to the essence of G-d's design for His world. Therefore, the verse says, "For I, G-d, change not; and you, the children of Jacob, are not consumed." [Malachi 3:6] The eternal nature of the Jewish people is particularly bound to Jacob.

In certain respects, Jacob did in fact die. But this was only in personal matters, due to the baseness of the physical world and its negative influence upon the human soul. Yet, that was not the true essence of Jacob's soul. When the Torah describes Jacob's passing, it does so in terms of his true value, as the father of the Jewish people. The Torah does not use the word 'death', since there was no need to purge his soul of its ties to worldly occupations.

This explains why we don't find in the Torah that Jacob's sons eulogized their father. Only the Egyptians did so - "A profound mourning for Egypt". [Genesis 50:11] Jacob had assisted the Egyptians by ending the

years of famine early and blessing Pharaoh. From the standpoint of the Egyptians, Jacob had died, and the connection of his soul to these matters was severed. Therefore, the Egyptians had reason to mourn. But Jacob's sons, who knew that Jacob was still alive with them, had no need to eulogize their father.

[adapted from Midbar Shur pp. 242-251]

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<http://ravkook.n3.net> - Rav A.I. Kook on the Weekly Parasha

From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: December 23, 2004 5:12 PM To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Vayechi WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5765

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics.

For final rulings, consult your Rav

GIVING GIFTS DURING THE NON-JEWISH HOLIDAY SEASON

QUESTION: Is it permitted to buy a non-kosher bottle of wine in order to give it to a non-Jew as a gift?

DISCUSSION: This should be avoided. Wine that was produced without the supervision of an observant Jew is called *stam yeinam* which is forbidden to drink. Whether or not it is permitted to "derive benefit" (i.e., to profit monetarily, to gain from it or enjoy it in any possible way) from *stam yeinam* nowadays, when wine is no longer commonly used for *avodah zarah* worship, is a subject of debate among the *Rishonim*. The *Rama*(1), who quotes both views, rules that it is best to be stringent unless a substantial financial loss is involved.(2) It is therefore inappropriate to buy non-kosher wine for gift giving, since one is "deriving benefit" from *stam yeinam*.

Moreover, even one who received a non-kosher bottle of wine for a present may not give that wine as a gift to a non-Jew, since he will then be "deriving benefit" from *stam yeinam*, which according to the stringent view cited above is prohibited. If a substantial financial loss is at stake, one should consult a *rav*.(3)

QUESTION: Is it permitted to buy an assortment of non-kosher meats or fish in order to give it to a non-Jew as a gift?

DISCUSSION: This is strictly forbidden, since it is forbidden to profit from most(4) Biblically forbidden non-kosher(5) food items. Since, as we explained earlier, one "profits" by giving a gift to an employee or an associate, the *poskim*(6) agree that buying a Biblically forbidden non-kosher item in order to give it to a non-Jew is prohibited.

But if one received an assortment of meats or fish as a present, he may give that assortment to a non-Jew as a gift. This is because unlike the case with *stam yeinam*, it is permitted to "profit" from a non-kosher food item that came into one's possession "by chance", unintentionally; this is not considered "doing business" with non-kosher items.(7)

QUESTION: Is it permitted to buy an assortment of non-kosher cheeses in order to give it to a non-Jew as a gift?

DISCUSSION: This is allowed, because it is permitted to do business with Rabbinically forbidden non-kosher food items. Since the requirement that cheese be supervised is Rabbinical in origin, one may do business with unsupervised cheese. It is, therefore, permitted to be bought and given to a non-Jew as a gift.(8)

FOOTNOTES: 1 Y.D. 123:1. 2 Note that the *Levushei Serad*, quoted (partly) in *Pischei Teshuvah* 123:1 and (completely) in *Darkei Teshuvah* 123:3, totally permits deriving benefit from *stam yeinam* nowadays. According to him, even a G-d fearing person does not have to be stringent. Note, though, that his discussion focuses on Jews whose livelihood depends on dealing with *stam yeinam* - unlike our case which is limited to gift-giving. 3 See *Chochmas Adam* 75:14, *Maharam Shick* Y.D. 150, and *Darkei Teshuvah* 123:3. 4 Some notable exceptions are: Non-kosher fats of a kosher animal; blood of a kosher animal; *Eiver min ha-chai* (a limb of a kosher animal which was severed while the animal was alive); wormy

fruits. All these foods are Biblically non-kosher and may not be consumed, yet one may do business with them. 5 "Non-kosher" includes both *treifos* (rendered non-kosher due to terminal illness) and *neveilos* (rendered non-kosher at the time of slaughter). 6 *Shach* Y.D. 117:3; *Pri Chadash* 117:3; *Darkei Teshuvah* 117:29; *Kaf ha-Chayim* 117:28. 7 *Rama* Y.D. 117:1. An exception would be if the non-kosher item contains a cooked meat and milk mixture, since one may not "derive any benefit" from *basar b'chalav*. 8 Y.D. 117:1 and *Darkei Teshuvah* 60. If, however, the non-supervised cheese is known to contain Biblically prohibited non-kosher items, then one may not be the cheese in order to give it to a non-Jew.

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From: ohr@ohr.edu Sent: Tuesday, December 21, 2004 1:31 AM To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Vayechi

TORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 25 December 2004 / 13 Tevet 5765 - from *Ohr Somayach* | www.ohr.edu

-- Parshat Vayechi <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1979>

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

OVERVIEW After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the *Machpela* cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of first-born from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of *Eretz Yisrael* and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving Hashem. Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the cave of *Machpela* in *Chevron*. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Ephraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that Hashem will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends *Sefer Bereishet*, the first of the five Books of the Torah. *Chazak!*

INSIGHTS

On Our Way Home

"...please don't bury me in *Mitzraim*." (47:29)

Over the millennia, the constant hope of the Jew was to return to *Eretz Yisrael* - and if not while alive, then suffice it at least that our physical remains should be interred in its holy soil.

The source of this desire comes from this week's Torah portion.

Why did Yaakov so desire to be buried in *Eretz Yisrael*? There were several reasons:

The mystical sources teach that those who are buried in Eretz Yisrael will be the first to arise at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead. For those who are buried in the Diaspora, G-d will create special tunnels. Through these tunnels a person's body will roll until it reaches Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov wanted to spare himself the pain of rolling through these tunnels.

Another consideration was that the Egyptians might turn him into a god posthumously. If he were buried in Egypt the chance of them worshipping his remains was that much higher.

Also, Yaakov foresaw the Ten Plagues that would afflict Egypt, and he knew that the plague of lice would infest corpses as well as the living. He did not want G-d to perform a miracle for him to escape that fate.

However, the reason that speaks to us most loudly across the millennia is that Yaakov did not want to be buried in Egypt because he was concerned that the generations that came after him might surmise that if Yaakov was buried in Egypt, the land of Egypt must also be a holy place. We are the descendents of Yaakov. It was the wish of our great ancestor that however comfortable we may become in our exile, we should never forget that there is nothing holy about the soil of Sydney, Paris or Boro Park.

They are just temporary stops on our way home.

- Source - Bereshet Rabba, Rabbeinu Bachya

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