TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



ויחי

לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

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ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

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ויחי

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")

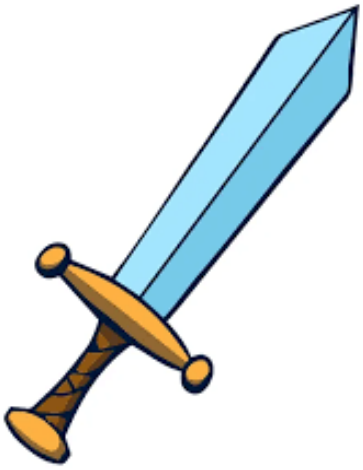
וַאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ שְׁכֶם אַחַד עַל־אַחֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחַרְבִּי וּבְקַשְׁתִּי

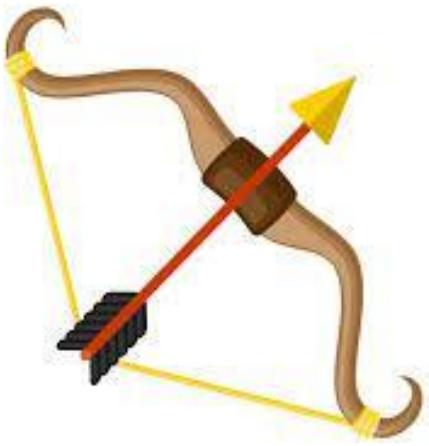
"And as for me, I have given you Shechem — one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Emorite with my sword and with my bow." (48:22)

The Aramaic translation and commentary Targum Onkelos, as well as the Gemara (Bava Batra 123a), interpret "With my sword and with my bow" as "**בִּצְלוֹתִי וּבְבָעוּתִי** " — two different words for prayer.

R' Mordechai Rokeach z"l (1902-1949; rabbi of Bilgoraj, Poland; father of the current **Belzer Rebbe**) explains in the name of his father **R' Yissachar Dov Rokeach z"l** (1851-1926; Belzer Rebbe): There is a type of prayer called **צדיק גוזר והקב"ה מקיים** - "a Tzaddik decrees and G-d fulfills." Such prayer is like a sword–extremely

accurate but requiring one to get very close to the target. Prayer that is like a sword is effective only in the near term [and only from a Tzaddik who is very close to Hashem].





A second type of prayer is like a bow and arrow-less accurate but having greater range. Such prayer makes a long-term impact, but it does not necessarily bring about exactly what we are praying for. Often we feel that our prayers are not being answered. In fact, say our Sages, every prayer has a positive effect; it just may not "hit the target" that we intend.

When Yaakov prayed at Shechem after Shimon and Levi killed its inhabitants, he prayed for immediate salvation–like a sword. In addition, Shechem has played a significant role throughout Jewish history, which in Yaakov's time was in the distant future. Yaakov prayed regarding that also–like a bow and arrow. (*Parashat Mordechai* p.172)

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים *"Yaakov called for his sons and said, 'Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the End of Days'." (49:1)*

Rashi z"l writes: "He wished to reveal to them the 'End,' but the Shechinah departed from him and he began to speak of other things instead."

R' Yehuda Loewe z"l (Maharal of Prague; died 1609) writes in Netzach Yisrael (ch.44): No person can know when the "End" (the Redemption) will be. Yaakov knew, but he was not allowed to reveal it. Therefore, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 97b) curses those who

attempt to calculate the "End." From this you know, writes Maharal, that everything our Sages say about when Mashiach will come is meant as a possibility or as a "not before" date, not that he will come at or by a certain time.

R' Moshe Schwerd shlita (Queens, N.Y.) adds in the name of **R' Zev Leff shlita** (rabbi of Moshav Mattityahu, Israel): The "End" cannot be revealed, because there is no fixed time; it is up to us. Therefore, instead of telling his children when Mashiach will come, Yaakov assigned them–and us, as their descendants–each a personal role in bringing about that day. (*Az Yashir: Bein Ha'meitzarim, Petach Davar* p.1-2, 9)

אִם־נָ֣א מָצָ֤אתִי חֵן֙ בְּעֵינֶ֔יךָ שִׂ֥ים־נָ֖א יָדְךָ֣ תַּ֣חַת יְרֵכִ֑י וְעָשִׂ֤יתָ עִמָּדִי֙ חֶ֣סֶד וֶאֱמֶ֔ת אַל־נָ֥א תְקָבְרֵ֖נִי בְּמִצְרָֽיִם "***Please, if I have found favor in your eyes, please place your hand under my thigh and do kindness and truth with me–please do not bury me in Egypt.***" (47:29)

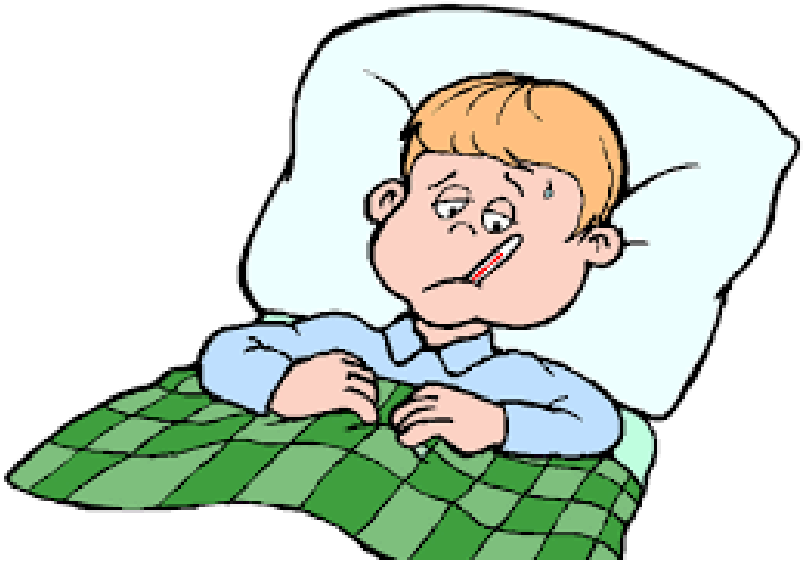


Midrash Rabbah teaches that Yaakov knew that the soil of Egypt was destined to turn into lice during the Ten Plagues; therefore, he did not want to be buried there.

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes: Yaakov was not worried that his remains would turn to lice. Rather, he was worried that the holiness of his remains would prevent the soil in which he was buried from turning into lice. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)

There's an easy way to tell if your mission in life is over. If you're breathing, it isn't.

וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־רֹאשׁ הַמִּטָּה "***Then Yisrael prostrated himself towards the head of the bed.***" (47:31)



Rashi z"l writes: "He turned towards the Divine Presence. Our Sages infer from this that the Shechinah is above the head of an ill person."

Why is the Shechinah found above the head of an ill person?

R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; died 1986) explains: The term "Shechinah" refers to Hashem's "presence" in our lower world, which is dependent on whether we make room for Him to be revealed here.

Specifically, the degree to which the Shechinah rests upon a person is dependent on the degree to which he humbles himself, as we read (Yeshayah 57:15), כִּי־כֹה אָמַר רָם וְנִשָּׂא שֹׁכֵן עַד־מָרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ שְׁמוֹ מָרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ אֶשְׁכֹּן וְאֶת־דַּכָּא וּשְׁפַל־רוּחַ לְהַחֲיוֹת רוּחַ שְׁפָלִים וּלְהַחֲיוֹת לֵב נִדְכָּאִים "- *'I abide in exaltedness and holiness–but I am with the contrite and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite'.*"

Since a person who is ill is more likely to feel humble and subdued than is a healthy person, the Shechinah is more likely to be found at a sickbed than elsewhere. (Derech L'Chaim Al Derech Hashem p.241)

וַיַּגֶּד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בִנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה "***Yaakov was told, 'Behold! — your son Yosef has come to you.' So Yisrael exerted himself and sat up on the bed . . .***" (48:23)

וַיְכַל יַעֲקֹב לְצַוֹּת אֶת־בָּנָיו וַיֶּאֱסֹף רַגְלָיו אֶל־הַמִּטָּה "***When Yaakov finished instructing his sons, he drew his feet onto the bed . . .***" (49:33)

R' Yechiel ben Shlomo Maharich z"l (Poland; 19th century) writes: This teaches that when a person has something important to say, he should adopt a respectable posture. He should not sit haphazardly nor lay on a bed until he has finished what he has to say.



הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים "***Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the End of Days***." (49:1)

Rashi comments: "He wished to reveal to them the end of Yisrael's exile, but the Shechinah departed from him, and he began to speak of other things." - Why couldn't Yaakov reveal when the exile would end?

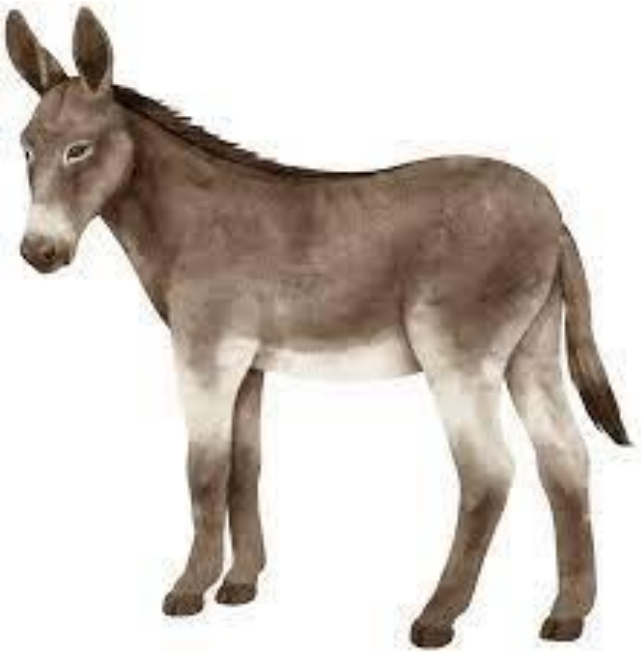
R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869) explains: Not knowing when the exile will end gives a person the ability to bear the pain, for he can believe, "Tomorrow we will be redeemed." In turn, this prevents people from losing their faith in Hashem because of their suffering.

R' Kluger continues: In this light, we can understand why the Midrash Tanchuma connects our verse with the verse (Yeshayah 43:22), וְלֹא־אֹתִי קָרָאתָ יַעֲקֹב כִּי־יָגַעְתָּ בִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל "*You did not call to Me, Yaakov, for you grew weary of Me, Yisrael*." - It is as if Hashem said to Yaakov, "You are not doing Me a favor by revealing the End of Days to your children. To the contrary, you will cause them to grow weary of Me." (Dimat Ha'ashukim p.6)

[Rabbi Shlomo Kluger was born in Komarow, Russian Poland. From the earliest age he learned Torah with extreme diligence and rose to become one of the leading halachic authorities of his time. He was the Rabbi and Dayan in several communities, but for more than 50 years he was the Rabbi of Brody Galicia. He was a prolific writer, writing more than 160 books, but not all of them were printed.



יִשָּׂשכָר חֲמֹר גָּרֶם רֹבֵץ בֵּין הַמִּשְׁפְּתָיִם "***Yissachar is a strong-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries***." (49:14)



Why did Yaakov call his son Yissachar, the leading Torah scholar among all of Yaakov's sons, a "donkey"?

R' Moshe David Valle z"l (Italy; 1697-1777) explains that the word "chamor" / "donkey" is an allusion to "chomer" / "material" (as in "materialism"). The word "garem," usually translated "strong-boned," also can mean "breaking." Yissachar, through his Torah study, breaks materialism. Without Torah study, writes R' Valle, there is no way to overcome materialism.

R' Valle continues: The inclination for materialism "rests between the boundaries." This indicates that the moment one leaves Torah study, materialism is ready to grab hold of him; one does not even need to travel a distance from the bet midrash to be ensnared.

Letters from Our Sages

This letter, printed in Igrot R' Chaim Ozer (Vol. II, p.483), was written by **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzenski z"l** (1863-1940), unofficial rabbi of Vilna for 55 years and among the foremost leaders of Lithuanian Jewry until the Holocaust. The recipient was the author of the popular mussar work, **Michtav M'Eliyahu**.

'*With G-d's help, Wednesday, 12 Tishrei 5696 [1935], Vilna To the son of my brother-in-law, the rabbi and gaon,* ***Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler****, may his light shine, Your precious letter reached me. For naught you worried about my blood pressure, which I had mentioned*

to you. I have had this condition for more than 18 years, and in recent years it has improved. However, when I was in Druskininkai [a spa town in southern Lithuania], I had the misfortune to meet a young doctor who frightened me and commanded me to rest and not to write. This caused me to become depressed, for I am from the natives of Mechoza who, if they do not work, become weak [a play on the words of Bava Metzia 77a, describing the porters in that Babylonian town who require constant work to stay fit]. All of my problems come from acting weak when I need to act strong. I have been this way for a long time. If I am busy with my work all day, I forget my ills, which is not the case when I am commanded to rest.

I am sorry that my friend, his honor, had heartache over this. The holy fast day [Yom Kippur] passed in peace, and the fast was easy for me. I wanted to let you know this as soon as possible.

May you celebrate the holidays with joy and a good heart as is your desire and the desire of the one who seeks your well-being. Your friend…

Chaim Ozer Grodzenski'

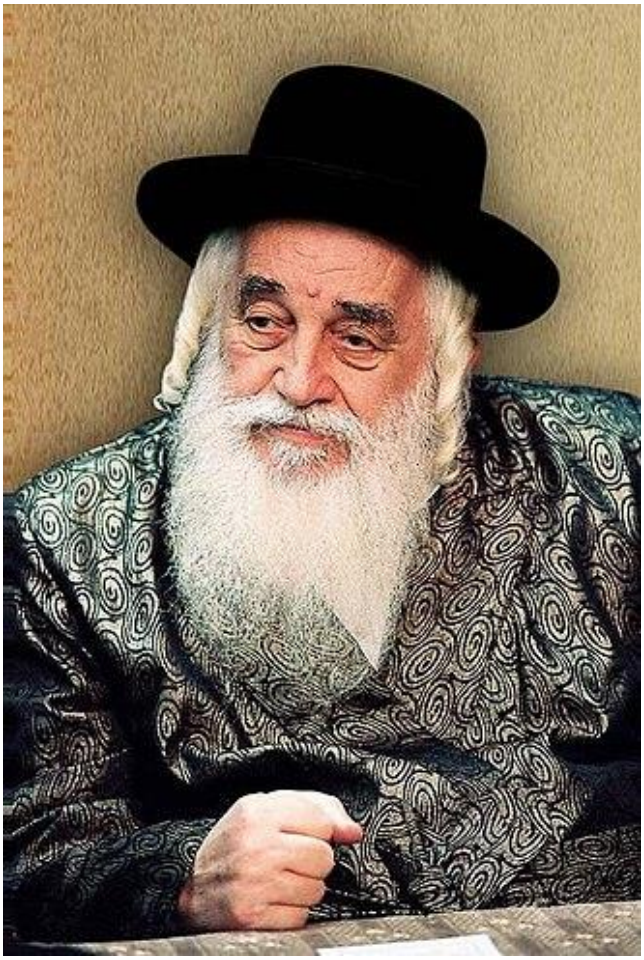


וַיִּשְׁלַח֩ יִשְׂרָאֵ֨ל אֶת־יְמִינ֜וֹ וַיָּ֣שֶׁת עַל־רֹ֣אשׁ אֶפְרַ֗יִם וְה֤וּא הַצָּעִיר֙ וְאֶת־שְׂמֹאלוֹ֙ עַל־רֹ֣אשׁ מְנַשֶּׁ֔ה שִׂכֵּ֖ל אֶת־יָדָ֑יו כִּ֥י מְנַשֶּׁ֖ה הַבְּכֽוֹר "*Yisrael extended his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and his left hand on Menashe's head. 'Sikail' / He maneuvered his hands, for Menashe was the firstborn." (48:14)*

The Aramaic translation, Onkelos, relates the word "sikail" to "seichel"/ "intelligence," i.e., Yaakov's hands behaved with intelligence.

This requires explanation, notes **R' Moshe Yehoshua Hager z"l** (1916-2012; **Vizhnitzer Rebbe**), for how can one attribute intelligence to a body part? It would seem that intelligence is in the

brain, and the hands are merely tools for implementing the brain's will!



He explains: We read (Bereishit 22:10), וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־ הַמַּאֲכֶלֶת לִשְׁחֹט אֶת־בְּנוֹ "***Avraham sent out his hand, and took the knife to slaughter his son.***"

Why did Avraham have to "send out" his hand, implying that a specific act of will was required?

The answer is that Avraham had purified himself to such an extent that his body automatically did G-d's Will, which, in this case, was to not slaughter Yitzchak. Thus, Avraham, who did not know that, needed a conscious act of will to override his hand's "intelligence," in order to pick up the knife.

This is alluded to in our verse as well: Yaakov, also, purified himself to the extent that his hands had their own intelligence, i.e., they knew that G-d's Will was to give the primary blessing to the younger son, Ephraim, not to the older son, Menashe.

How can a person in our times aspire to such a level, asks the Vizhnitzer Rebbe?

By studying works of mussar such as Chovot Ha'levavot and Reishit Chochmah. Unfortunately, he adds, the yetzer ha'ra also knows this and therefore encourages us not to study such works. (Yeshuot Moshe: Ma'adanei Shulchan)

וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־רֹאשׁ הַמִּטָּה ***"Then Yisrael prostrated himself towards the head of the bed."*** *(47:31)*



Rashi explains **שֶׁהֲרֵי יוֹסֵף מֶלֶךְ הוּא, וְעוֹד שֶׁנִּשְׁבָּה לְבֵין הַגּוֹיִם, וַהֲרֵי הוּא עוֹמֵד בְּצִדְקוֹ** - that Yaakov bowed to show his gratitude to G-d that Yosef had remained a tzaddik despite being a king and growing up in captivity among gentiles.

R' Shlomo Ganzfried z"l (died 1886; author of Kitzur Shulchan Aruch) asks: Why did Rashi mention the two events in Yosef's life out of order? In fact, first he grew up in captivity, and only afterwards he became [deputy] king!

R' Ganzfried explains that sometimes Hashem tests a person with poverty and sometimes He tests a person with wealth. Which is a greater test?

Wealth is, because a poor person will by nature be humble. Therefore he is less likely to rebel against G-d.

Yosef was tested with both wealth and poverty. Because wealth is the greater test, Rashi mentions it first. (Apiryon)

"Bitachon is not about removing our fears, but about feeling secure in Hashem's embrace, even amidst our fears." ~ Rabbi Avraham J Twersky.

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים *"Yaakov called for his sons and said, `Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will happen to you in the End of Days'." (49:1)*



In the verse that follow, Yaakov does not tell his sons what will happen to them in the "End of Days." Rather, he blesses them.

Chazal explain **בִּקֵּשׁ לְגַלּוֹת אֶת הַקֵּץ וְנִסְתַּלְּקָה מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁכִינָה וְהִתְחִיל אוֹמֵר דְּבָרִים אַחֵרִים** - that Yaakov wanted to reveal the "**קֵץ**" / the time for the arrival of mashiach," but the Shechinah left him, so he changed the subject.

R' Yishayah of Tirani z"l (Italy; 13th century) asks: Why did Yaakov think that his sons were worthy of knowing about the End of Days? Because they were free of sin, i.e., among the names of the twelve sons of Yaakov, there is no letter "**ח**" or "**ט**." Thus, there was no "**חט**" / "sin" among them.

Hashem responded: There also is no letter "**צ**" or "**ק**" among the names of Yaakov's twelve sons. Thus, there is no "**קץ**" that can be revealed to them. (Nimukei Chumash Le'Rabbeinu Yishayah)

"Hashem's presence is not limited to the heavens but is found in every heart that seeks Him." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמַר הָאֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְּכוּ אֲבֹתַי לְפָנָיו אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק הָאֱלֹקִים הָרֹעֶה אֹתִי מֵעוֹדִי עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה *'And he blessed Joseph and said, "G-d, before Whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, walked, G-d Who sustained me as long as I am alive, until this day.'*

R' Simcha Zissel Ziv z"l (the "Alter of Kelm"; died 1898) once wrote to his son: "I have never heard anybody say, 'Thank G-d I had enough to eat this year.' I have only heard people say, 'Thank G-d, I managed to put away some money this year to support me in the future.'

I was therefore amazed that Yaakov, a wealthy man, the son and grandson of princes of the land, said הָאֱלֹקִים הָרֹעֶה אֹתִי *'The G-d who watched over me'* (48:15), a phrase which Onkelos renders: ה' דְּזַן יָתִי *'Hashem who fed me.'*

"I continued to be amazed until I looked at the bentching/Birkat Hamazon, and then I became amazed at myself instead. I have been saying the words but not realizing what I was saying! After all, the entire Birkat Hamazon expresses our thanks for the gift of food which G-d gives us.

We are impressed by the miracle of the mahn that rained down on Bnei Yisrael, yet we are not moved when our sustenance comes to us every day. What fools we are!" (Ohr Rashaz, paragraph 177)

We would appreciate the miracle of our sustenance more, observed **R' Yisroel Reisman shlita**, if we looked at it from the perspective of someone who grew up on mahn. To such a person, the falling mahn was a natural occurrence; after all it happened very dependably every day. On the other hand, when this person arrived in Eretz Yisrael and saw that a seed placed in the ground can grow into a tree — that, he thought, was a miracle!

יִשָּׂשכָר חֲמֹר גָּרֶם רֹבֵץ בֵּין הַמִּשְׁפְּתָיִם ***"Yissachar is a strong-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries."*** (49:14)



"A strong-boned donkey" – a strong-boned donkey who bears the yoke of Torah, like a strong donkey on whom they load a heavy burden. - "He rests between the boundaries " – like a donkey that walks day and night and never rests indoors. When it wants to rest, it rests between the boundaries, on the outskirts of the cities to which it carries merchandise. (Rashi)

Our Sages teach that the tribe of Yissachar produced a disproportionate share of the members of the Sanhedrin and other Torah scholars. Yaakov's blessing to the progenitor of that tribe alludes to the reason for that tribe's success, as **R' Yisrael Meir Kagan z"l (the "Chafetz Chaim")** explains:

A talmid chacham/Torah scholar, like a donkey, toils day and night and does not rest or pursue physical pleasures. When does he rest a little bit?

When he finishes a tractate, then he observes a yom tov [i.e., makes a siyum]. Afterward, he immediately returns to toiling in his studies, just as a donkey that has rested briefly on the outskirts of the city immediately returns to bearing its heavy burden.

The gemara (Avodah Zarah 5b) teaches: "One should always act in relation to his Torah studies as an ox to the yoke and a donkey to a burden."

We have already seen what characteristic of a donkey the Torah scholar should emulate, but what about an ox?

The Chafetz Chaim explains that just as an ox plows the ground, so a Torah scholar should strive to break new ground. One should not think that any portion of the Torah has already been examined so thoroughly that there is nothing else to discover in it. Rather, one should plow it again and again.

Another characteristic of a donkey is its ability to carry a large burden. After one has discovered the depths of Torah, he must carry the Torah with him in his heart, as it is written (Devarim 6:6): **וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל־לְבָבֶךָ** -"***And these matters that I command you today shall be upon your heart***."

R' Yosef Chaim of Baghdad z"l (died 1909) writes that the ox, which plows, represents studying in depth, while the donkey, which carries a large burden, represents amassing extensive knowledge.

Why, he asks, didn't the gemara use a mule as its metaphor since a mule can carry more than a donkey?

Because the mule is the product of kilayim/a mixture of two species, while Torah study must be pure of ulterior influences or motives. (Ben Yehoyada)

Letters from Our Sages

This letter is a congratulatory letter from five of Lithuania's leading rabbis to **R' Samson Raphael Hirsch z"l** on his appointment as rabbi of the Orthodox congregation in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

Thursday, 22 Iyar 5621, Vilna [May 2, 1861]

May you carry away the blessing of "a thousand times" [see Devarim 1:11] from the G-d of the campaign [possibly referring to R' Hirsch's battle against the reform movement] . . . To the honorable rabbi who is renowned for his Torah knowledge and his fear [of Heaven] which

precedes his Torah knowledge; his name is great among Yisrael, our rabbi and teacher, Shimson, may his light shine, who is called "Rav Hirsch," the av bet din/chief rabbinical judge and resh matah/town rabbi of Congregation Kehal Adat Yeshurun that is concerned with the word of Hashem and His holy Torah in Frankfurt am Main:

Greetings as are due to a trusted friend of the loyal congregation of Bnei Yisrael. You know well that although the mountains and hills and seas and rivers separate between us, but the souls of the children of Yaakov are bound together. [We wish] a life of contentment and much success and satiation of joy on your head . . .

Our friend! We have heard a great deal of your wisdom and your good deeds in sowing righteousness, after which salvation grows, through your efforts on behalf of the holy flock. More than that, we heard from our friend, the famous rabbi and gaon, Rabbi Gershon Tanchum of Minsk, of your talents – how you developed wondrous strategies and brought about salvation through your great efforts and strength, that you do not rest and are not silent [in your effort] to bring to light [which] will strengthen the faith of our holy Torah.

Therefore, we, the community of Vilna, the most loyal and the oldest among the loyal cities of Bnei Yisrael, find ourselves obligated – because one is forbidden to have pleasure in this world without a blessing – to thank and praise Hashem that we have merited that even in this lowly generation there is a loyal shepherd to oversee in detail the good of our brethren Bnei Yisrael . . .

[Signed:] [R'] Shlomo Zalman Ze'ev [the Maggid of Vilna]
[R'] Yosef son of R' Meir of Slutsk [i.e., R' Yossele Feimer]
[R'] Yehoshua Isaac of Slonim [i.e., R' Eizele Charif]
[R'] Eliyah Shick of Lida
[R'] Yitzchak Elchanan son of R' Yisrael Isser [Spektor]

Letters from Our Sages



The following letter was written by **R' Shimshon David Pincus z"l** (1945-2001; rabbi of Ofakim, Israel) in response to someone who complained that his prayers were not being answered and he had therefore lost the urge to pray.

I received your letter, thank you. You asked: What is the precise application of the teaching, "Whoever prays for his friend is answered first"? I don't think there is a way to explain it precisely, other than to take the words at face value.

Regarding your specific problem, I don't know what advice to give. This is because prayer is "service of the heart," and the heart is very personal. How is it possible to give advice when no two hearts are the same? Nevertheless, I will try to dissect the problem.

The problem is that we view prayer as a wonderful "spiritual" experience. I am not saying that this is wrong; sometimes it is so. But, besides this, there is something more fundamental and wonderful–prayer is a chance to speak to G-d. It's as simple as that.

It all begins with Emunah / faith. Emunah means knowledge of the simple fact that there is a G-d. Just like there are tables and chairs, there is a G-d. I don't say that you should know this because it is a lofty level or, conversely, because one who doesn't know it is lowly or a heretic or anything else. It's just a fact. And, since He exists, it's possible to talk to Him, even without having a spiritual experience.

When you wrote me a letter, was that a spiritual experience? Not at all! Rather, it's a fact that there's a man in Ofakim named "Pincus."

It's also a fact that that man [referring to himself] wrote a book about prayer. And, it's a fact that there is a postal service. Therefore, it's possible to write to him; maybe he can help. In the same way, it's a fact that there's a G-d; that He hears everything; that He created everything; that He is extremely pleasant to deal with; and that He cares about me and is concerned about my welfare even more than I am. Therefore, it is possible to turn to Him, whether one feels it in his heart or his mind, or feels nothing at all. A fact is a fact, reality is reality, and that's all!

And yet, granted that it's possible to speak to Him, but sometimes, G-d forbid, a person does not feel like he wants to speak to Him. At such times, one must turn to the reality that was just mentioned. One does not cut off his nose to spite his face; certainly, one will not throw away his life out of spite. . . .

In short, make peace with G-d. Though He is very great–capable, for example, of making a camera, the human eye, with an incredible number of parts–nevertheless, He does not hold a grudge. Rather, He is waiting longingly and with open arms for your return. . .

I add my own blessing of a simple person that G-d will fulfill your desires in the best way.

Shimshon David Pincus (Nefesh Shimshon: Igrot U'Ma'amarim p.44.)

"Imagine if you once received a personalised gift from the king of the world. How honoured and thankful would you be? In truth, Hashem sends us gifts at every moment of our lives – many of which we are unaware of.

If only we focused on these gifts, we would be filled with gratitude and love for Hashem." ~ Rabbi Zamir Cohen.

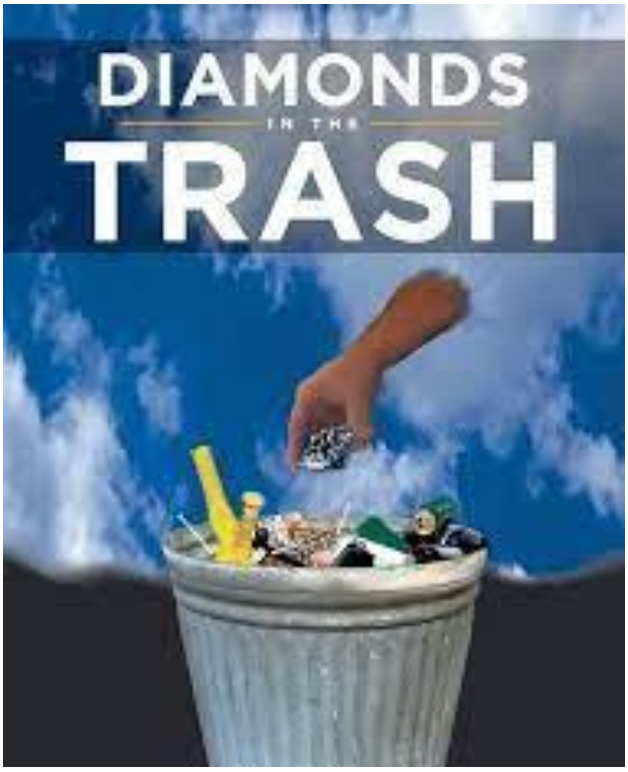
וַיְבָרֶכְךָ בִּרְכֹת שָׁמַיִם מֵעָל בִּרְכֹת תְּהוֹם רֹבֶצֶת תָּחַת... בִּרְכֹת אָבִיךָ גָּבְרוּ עַל־בִּרְכֹת הוֹרַי *"He will bless you with blessings of heaven from above, blessings of the deep crouching below . . . The blessings of your father surpassed the blessings of my parents* . . ." (49:25-26)

R' Yehonasan Eyebschutz z"l (Germany; died 1764) writes that it is more amazing when Hashem interacts with the world without performing a spectacular miracle than when He performs a miracle.

Given G-d's greatness, one might have expected that He would not concern himself with "the little things." However, one of the wonders about G-d is that He lowers Himself to be involved in a world as small as our own.

It follows that Hashem's powers are revealed more when He acts within nature than when He changes nature. (Ya'aros Devash, I,3)

אָרוּר אַפָּם כִּי עָז וְעֶבְרָתָם כִּי קָשָׁתָה אֲחַלְּקֵם בְּיַעֲקֹב וַאֲפִיצֵם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל *"Accursed is their rage for it is intense, and their wrath for it is harsh." (49:7)*



Rashi z"l comments: Even when Yaakov rebuked his sons, he cursed their anger, not them.

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005; a leading teacher of mussar) writes: **R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l** (Mashgiach Ruchani of the Mir Yeshiva; died 1936) was asked whether one is permitted to hate a Jew who acts contrary to the Torah?

R' Levovitz answered that it is forbidden, saying that [we may not even hate the evil-doer's deeds since] the ordinary person is incapable of distinguishing between

hatred for the deeds and hatred for the person. Yaakov Avinu was able to make that distinction.

R' Wolbe continues: R' Levovitz used to say that a Jew with bad character traits is like a crate full of diamonds, with one mouldy potato mixed in. Would one think for even a second of discarding that entire crate? After all, it is full of valuable diamonds! (Shiurei Chumash)

Blessing the Children



There is a widespread custom that a father blesses his children, and a teacher blesses his students upon returning home from shul on Friday night. To boys one says, יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה "***May Elokim make you like Ephraim and like Menashe***." (This berachah originates from Yaakov Avinu's blessing to Yosef's children in our parashah (48:20) בְּךָ יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר -"***By you shall Yisrael bless saying***, יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה - `***May Elokim make you like Ephraim and like Menashe***'.") - To girls one says, יְשִׂמְךְ אֱלֹקִים כְּשָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה - "***May Elokim make you like Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah***." Thereafter, both sons and daughters are blessed with the three verses of Birkat Kohanim / the Priestly Blessing.

Why are the children blessed at this time?

R' Chaim ben Betzalel z"l (1515-1588; rabbi of Friedberg, Germany; commonly known as "R' Chaim brother of the **Maharal of Prague**") writes: At this time, the "pipelines" that bring blessings from

Heaven are open, and one should never take lightly any blessing, even of an ordinary person. [In other words, since the blessings are flowing, any person can draw them to his family even if he is not a Torah scholar.]

Also, because Friday night is the beginning of the week in the sense that all of the blessings of the coming week flow from Shabbat, we bless our children at this time to counteract any anger we may express toward them during the coming week. (Sefer Ha'Chaim III, ch.6)

R' Yaakov Emden z"l (Germany; died 1776) writes: Since the blessings from Heaven are flowing at this time and young children do not know how to draw these blessings to themselves, we bless them. It is customary to bless older children too.

R' Emden adds: One should place both of his hands on the child's head, as Moshe Rabbeinu did when he blessed his student Yehoshua (Bamidbar 27:23). This indicates a more generous blessing than using one hand. - Why then did Yaakov Avinu place only one hand on Ephraim's head and one on Menashe's head (as in our parashah)?

He had no choice, since the two of them were presented to him simultaneously, R' Emden explains. (Siddur R' Yaakov Emden)

Perhaps, he adds, Hashem brought this about because he wanted Yaakov to bless Ephraim and Menashe less generously due to the unworthy men– Yerovam and Gidon–who would descend from them.

Some add the following, which is a paraphrase of Yeshayah 11:2, **וְנָחָה עָלָיו רוּחַ ה' רוּחַ חָכְמָה וּבִינָה רוּחַ עֵצָה וּגְבוּרָה רוּחַ דַּעַת וְיִרְאַת ה'** -"***May there rest upon you a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of Hashem.***" (Otzar Ha'tefilot p.624)

וַיְצַוּוּ אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אָבִיךָ צִוָּה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר... כֹּה־תֹאמְרוּ לְיוֹסֵף אָנָּא שָׂא נָא פֶּשַׁע אַחֶיךָ וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי־רָעָה גְמָלוּךָ ***"They instructed that Yosef be told, 'Your father gave orders before his death, saying – Thus shall you say to Yosef: Please, kindly forgive the spiteful deed of your brothers and their sin for they have done you evil'."*** (50:16-17)



Rashi z"l writes: **שִׁנּוּ בַדָּבָר מִפְּנֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם, כִּי לֹא צִוָּה יַעֲקֹב כֵּן, שֶׁלֹּא נֶחֱשַׁד יוֹסֵף בְּעֵינָיו** - *They altered the facts for the sake of peace, for Yaakov had given them no such command since Yosef was not suspect in his eyes.*

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (Yerushalayim; 1910-1995) asks: How can Rashi write that Yosef's brothers merely "altered the facts" when it seems they told an outright lie?

This is not like other cases where the Torah "altered the facts" for the sake of peace, for example, when Sarah said (18:12), "my husband is old!" and Hashem altered it (in the next verse) to, "I [Sarah] am old!" There, Sarah had also said (verse 12), "After I have withered, shall I again have delicate skin?" She did allude to her own old age. Here, Yosef's brothers made up a story!

R' Auerbach answers: "Your father gave orders" does not have to mean that Yaakov literally spoke the words that follow. If the words contained a message that was consistent with Yaakov's way of life and with which he would have agreed, it is only "altering the facts," not an outright lie, to say that he had said these words. (Minchat Avot p.39)

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָבִיו לֹא־כֵן אָבִי כִּי־זֶה הַבְּכֹר שִׂים יְמִינְךָ עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ ***"Yosef said to his father, 'Not so, my Father, for this is the firstborn; place your right hand on his head'." (48:18)***



R' Menachem Mendel of Strzyzow z"l (1788-1831; chassidic rebbe) writes: Logically, the phrases should be reversed–"*Place your right hand on his head, for this is the firstborn.*" However, that would have been disrespectful, as he would have been telling Yaakov to do something other than what he was doing.

Instead, Yosef phrased his statement as if were giving Yaakov information he might not have known: "*For this is the firstborn.*" And, once you possess that information, you presumably will want to "place your right hand on his head."

This, continues R' Menachem Mendel, sheds light on Yaakov's response (verse 19), **יָדַעְתִּי בְנִי יָדַעְתִּי** -"***I know, my son, I know***; . . . - **גַּם־הוּא יִהְיֶה־לְעָם וְגַם־הוּא יִגְדָּל וְאוּלָם אָחִיו הַקָּטֹן יִגְדַּל מִמֶּנּוּ** – ***he too will become great. Yet, his younger brother will become greater than he***."

Yaakov meant: I do know who is the firstborn. But I also know that the younger brother will be greater than the older one. (Sova Semachot)

"A person who lives with Emunah and Bitachon will have salvations in ways they never imagined." ~ Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz Zt'l.

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָבִיו בָּנַי הֵם אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן־לִי אֱלֹקים בָּזֶה *"Yosef said to his father: 'They are my sons whom G-d has given me by this'." (48:9)*

Rashi writes: הֶרְאָה לוֹ שְׁטָר אֵרוּסִין וּשְׁטָר כְּתֻבָּה - "This", refers to Yosef's marriage document, and Yosef showed the document to Yaakov.



R' Yosef Grunwald z"l (the Pupa Rav; died 1980's) explains: Yaakov wondered how Yosef married in Egypt without halachically valid witnesses. However, according to **Rabbenu Nissim z"l** (14th century), witnesses are required only if one marries a woman using a ring or another items of value. However, if he marries her through a shtar / document, no witnesses are required.

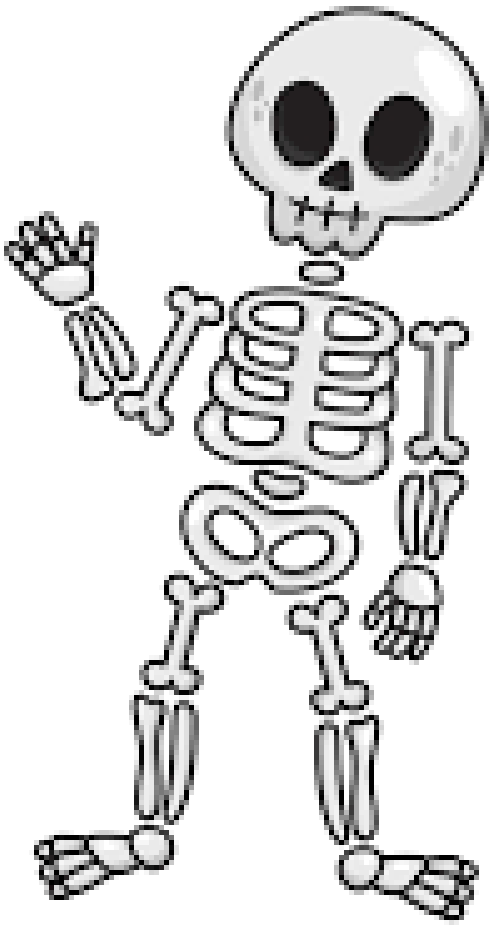
Thus, Yosef told Yaakov, "This is my שְׁטָר אֵרוּסִין." (Vayechi Yosef)

An Astonishing Midrash (Midrash Yehonatan)

The students asked the Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi (known simply as "Rebbi"), "Why was Yosef buried in Shechem?"

Rebbi responded, "Since he was kidnaped from Shechem, they returned him to Shechem."

The students refused to accept this answer until Rebbi showed them the verse [in this week's parashah] in which Yosef said, וְהַעֲלִתֶם אֶת־עַצְמֹתַי מִזֶּה - "*You must bring my bones up with you.*" (50:25)



R' Yehonatan Eyebschutz z"l explains: The halachah is that a thief must return the object which he stole. If the object no longer exists or no longer exists in its original form, the thief cannot return it and he cannot achieve full atonement.

This was the objection raised by Rebbi's students: Since Yosef was taken from Shechem as a living person and was returned as a corpse, how can that be considered to be a true return?

The answer is as follows: The halachah also provides that even if the stolen object is changed, so long as it has the same name in its original and present forms, the thief can return it for full atonement.

Thus, Rebbi answered, "Even in Yosef's lifetime he referred to himself (in the quoted verse) as 'bones.' Therefore, when his body was returned to Shechem, it is as if the stolen object was returned."

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים "***Then Yaakov called for his sons and said, "Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the End of Days.***" *(49:1)*

Rashi comments: **בִּקֵּשׁ לְגַלּוֹת אֶת הַקֵּץ וְנִסְתַּלְּקָה מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁכִינָה וְהִתְחִיל אוֹמֵר דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים** "*He wished to reveal to them the end of Israel's exile, but the Shechinah departed from him, and he began to speak of other things.*"

R' Yechezkel Abramsky z"l (prominent scholar from the non-chassidic "school"; died 1976) once asked **R' Yisrael Alter z"l (the**

"Gerrer Rebbe"; died 1977) why Gerrer chassdim constantly sing joyous tunes, even during the High Holiday prayers. The Rebbe answered by referring to the above comment by Rashi, and explaining it as follows:

Why did the Shechinah have to depart from Yaakov? the Rebbe asked. If G-d did not want the time of the redemption revealed, why didn't He simply command Yaakov not to reveal it?

The answer is that G-d did not remove His Presence from Yaakov. Rather, when Yaakov looked prophetically at the dark days that would precede the final redemption, he became saddened.

When one is sad, the Shechinah leaves on its own. And that being the case, we must sing joyously if we want the Shechinah to remain with us when we pray. (Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)



וַיַּרְא יוֹסֵף כִּי־יָשִׁית אָבִיו יַד־יְמִינוֹ עַל־רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם וַיֵּרַע בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּתְמֹךְ יַד־אָבִיו לְהָסִיר אֹתָהּ מֵעַל רֹאשׁ־אֶפְרַיִם עַל־רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה... וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָבִיו לֹא־כֵן אָבִי כִּי־זֶה הַבְּכֹר שִׂים יְמִינְךָ עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ

"Yosef saw that his father was placing his right hand on Ephraim's head and it displeased him; so he supported his father's hand to remove it from upon Ephraim's head to Menashe's head. And Yosef said to his father, `Not so, Father, for this is the firstborn; place your right hand on his head'." *(48:17-18)*

R' Eliyahu Capsali z"l (Crete; early 17th century) observes: The Torah does not suggest that Ephraim objected to or resisted his father's attempt to deprive him of Yaakov's primary blessing.

Remaining silent would be a challenge for most people. Thus, this demonstrates the extent to which Ephraim excelled in observing the mitzvah of **כיבוד אב ואם**/ honoring parents.

This may be the reason that Ephraim's descendant, Yehoshua bin Nun was chosen to lead the war against Amalek. Amalek was a descendant of Esav, who also excelled at honoring his father.

Only someone who shared in the merit of honoring parents could overcome the protection that Esav enjoyed because of that mitzvah. (Me'ah She'arim: end of Sha'ar 26)

From the Haftarah . . .

וְעַתָּה֙ אַל־תְּנַקֶּ֣הוּ כִּֽי־אִ֣ישׁ חָכָ֔ם אָ֔תָּה וְיָדַעְתָּ֗ אֵ֚ת אֲשֶׁ֣ר תַּעֲשֶׂה־לּ֔וֹ וְהוֹרַדְתָּ֥ אֶת־שֵׂיבָת֖וֹ בְּדָ֑ם שְׁאֽוֹל

"But now, you are not to hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man, and you will know what you are to do to him, and you are to bring down his white hair to the grave in blood." (Melachim I 2:9)

How are we to understand King David's final words to his son and successor, Shlomo? These words seem more appropriate to a coarse individual than to a tzaddik.

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz z"l (1902-1979; Rosh Hayeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva) explains: There are two kinds of revenge. One is the coarse emotion with which most people are familiar, and which is prohibited by the Torah. However, there is another kind of revenge – it is the feeling experienced by tzaddikim who yearn to see Hashem's honor defended through the elevation of the righteous and the downfall of the wicked. It was this latter feeling that motivated these words of King David.

The Gemara (Sotah 13a) says that just as Yaakov's sons prepared to bury him, Esav appeared and challenged Yaakov's right to the last available plot in the Cave of Machpelah. Immediately, Yaakov's grandson Chushim, the son of Dan, slew Esav.

At that moment, Yaakov opened his eyes and smiled, to fulfill the verse (Tehilim 58:11), יִשְׂמַח צַדִּיק כִּי־חָזָה נָקָם פְּעָמָיו- "***The righteous will rejoice when he sees vengeance***." This, too, refers to the type of revenge which is proper – seeking the downfall of the wicked. (Sichot Mussar 5733 No. 12)

וַיַּגֶּד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בִנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה "***Yaakov was told, 'Behold – your son Yosef has come to you'***." (48:2)



This verse implies that it was unusual for Yosef to visit Yaakov. Why was this the case?

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (19th century) explains that Yosef's stature as deputy king of Egypt might have required Yaakov to stand when Yosef entered the room. Yosef did not want Yaakov to stand for him, so he did not visit Yaakov. (Yaakov could, of course, visit Yosef.)

Only now, when Yaakov lay on his deathbed, could Yosef be sure that Yaakov would not stand for him, and therefore he visited Yaakov. (Imrei Shefer)

"Emunah is the courage to embrace the unknown, knowing that Hashem is with us every step of the way." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

Shabbos

R' Eliyahu E. Dessler shlita (Mashgiach Ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; not to be confused with his cousin and namesake, the Michtav M'Eliyahu) writes: We know that Shabbat is a "great and holy day," as we say in Birkat Ha'mazon. More than that, however, we must know that, on Shabbat, every single person has the potential to rise to great heights.

Of course, this cannot come about without investment on our part. Attaining these spiritual heights requires making ourselves into receptacles to receive what Shabbat offers.

For some reason, R' Dessler continues, even those who spend a substantial amount of time preparing for the festivals–studying the laws of Teshuvah or Megillat Esther or the Pesach Haggadah, for example–spend little or no time preparing for Shabbat. The fact that Shabbat comes every week tends to lessen its specialness in our minds.

Let us stop a moment and think, suggests R' Dessler.

- Aside from studying Shabbat's many laws, which certainly is our first obligation, have we ever asked ourselves: What exactly does the Torah want from me when it tells me to refrain from work on Shabbat?
- Have we ever asked ourselves whether we are satisfied with Shabbat-observance habits we have developed since childhood, or whether more is expected of us?
- Do we know what tools we have with which to invest in Shabbat?
- Do we really know how different Shabbat is from other days?

These are some of the questions we must examine. (*Sha'arei Ha'zemanim: Shabbat* p.5)

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְּכוּ אֲבֹתַי לְפָנָיו אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק הָאֱלֹקִים הָרֹעֶה אֹתִי מֵעוֹדִי עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה... הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל־רָע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־ הַנְּעָרִים וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ ***"He blessed Yosef and he said, 'The Elokim before Whom my forefathers Avraham and Yitzchak walked – Elokim Who shepherds me from my inception until this day. May the angel who redeems me from all evil bless the lads . . ." (48:15-16)***

Midrash Rabbah comments: **מַה גְּאֻלָּה כִּפְלַיִם אַף פַּרְנָסָה כִּפְלַיִם** - "***Just as redemption involves* פְּלָאִים / *wonders, so receiving sustenance involves* פְּלָאִים**."

R' Bezalel Ashkenazi z"l (1520-1594; Chief Rabbi of Egypt; author of Shitah Mekubetzet) asks: Why did the Midrash use the word "Pela'im" / "wonders" instead of saying that it is a "**נֵס**" / "miracle"?

Just as the redemption from Egypt involved many miracles, as we say in the Pesach Haggadah - **כַּמָּה מַעֲלוֹת טוֹבוֹת לַמָּקוֹם עָלֵינוּ** . ., so it is with our sustenance, though it may seem to come naturally.

We read (Tehilim 147:8-9), **הַמְכַסֶּה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים הַמֵּכִין לָאָרֶץ מָטָר הַמַּצְמִיחַ הָרִים חָצִיר... נוֹתֵן לִבְהֵמָה לַחְמָהּ לִבְנֵי עֹרֵב אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאוּ** - ***"[G-d,] Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who makes mountains sprout with grass. He is the One gives to an animal its food, to young ravens that cry out*."**

It is a miracle that clouds appear in the sky. But not all clouds produce rain, so rain, too, is a miracle. And not all rain helps crops grow – another miracle. If there are not enough crops for both animals and humans, there will be competition, but – another miracle. He gives animals their food. He even feeds the helpless baby ravens, a fifth miracle. - So many wonders!

R' Ashkenazi adds: Those who earn their living through trades, rather than farming, also can find multiple wonders in their sustenance. (*Derashot Rabbi Bezalel*)

During the Creation of the world, Hashem created six days, and each day had twenty-eight hours. The days stood before Hashem and said, "Master of the Universe, for everything You created in Your world, there is a king. The lion is the king of the animals, the eagle is the king of the birds, etc. But the days have no leader or king." The days stood before Hashem and demanded a king over them. Hashem said to them, "Each day will contribute four special hours, and together, multiplied by six, we will have twenty-four sacred hours, with the strongest powers from all the days of the week. This is the great day, our Holy Shabbat."
~ Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto





How do I deal with the fact that I keep failing in things that I want to accomplish in עבודת ה' ? I try but it doesn't go. I feel like I just want to give up already.

There's a certain Rebbe, **the Breslover**. So, in one of his **ספרים** he writes as follows. He himself writes this – about himself. He says, "When I was younger, I tried to serve Hashem. I tried, and

sometimes I fell down a hundred times. And each time, I got up again and tried again."

That was his stubbornness. He got up and he fell down. He didn't succeed. He was **נכשל**. He got up again. A hundred times.

"I got up," he says. "And in the end, I remained standing."

That's the lesson. It's a **נסיון**, a test, and you have the **בחירה** to pass that **נסיון**. You keep on trying and the end is that you will surely succeed.

There's no such thing as not succeeding. You keep on trying and **הבא לטהר מסעיין לו**. If you are actually coming to succeed, if you really want to succeed – that's what **הבא לטהר** means – then you will remain standing in the end. The first times, the first ninety-nine times, are just a test to see if you are a weakling.

That's what they're there for! To see if you're a weakling or if you're serious about it. And if you overcome the first ninety-nine times, then you're on the way. Then you're on the road to greatness.



Someone told me that there's a basis for the idea that the world is really much older than 5,000 years because there's a Medrash that says Hashem created other worlds before He made this one. What do you say about that?

Now here is a Medrash that bothers some people unnecessarily. The Medrash states that before this world Hakadosh Baruch Hu was creating and destroying worlds.

Now, that doesn't mean He was creating physical worlds and destroying them but even if it did mean that, if He destroyed those worlds then Hakadosh Baruch Hu did a good job on destroying the

world, which means that nothing remained of it. Just as He created the world, He destroyed it. Nothing remained. And so when He created this world, even if you'll take it in a material sense that there were actually worlds before this world, but this world is ***the*** world, and therefore this world is only as old as it is. You can't add to this world the age of worlds that didn't exist when this world came into existence. - You understand that.

So, if He made worlds – I don't believe that the *ma'amar* means that at all; I think it refers to *olamos elyonim* of *ruchniyus* – but even if you'll say it meant physical worlds then the worlds are finished already, and nothing remains of them. No stars, no planets. And then when He said "***Yehi***"- this universe came into being as it is. And therefore the universe is only *taf shin lamed tes*. That's all.



What advice should I give to a boy who is of age to get married but doesn't feel ready for it?

You have to tell him that he's never going to feel ready for it, so he might as well plunge in. It's like a man has to go to the mikveh on erev Yom Kippur and it's freezing cold. Some mikvehs are hot but let's say in the country, the mikveh is cold and he's standing on the brink contemplating what to do. So give him a little friendly push on the back. Once he's inside, he'll enjoy it. - And marriage too; it doesn't pay to contemplate – you just have to dive in.

Once there was a rosh yeshiva who said marriage is like a pill in a capsule; a tasteless capsule. But inside, it's a very bitter medicine. So, if you swallow the capsule, it will be good; but if you start opening up the capsule and tasting what's inside, you'll spit it out and never swallow. And so don't examine it too closely. Don't examine the

institution of marriage too closely and don't examine the kallah too closely. If she comes from a frum family and she's a frum girl, and she's healthy, and she means business – she wants to have a lot of children, and she wants to be a housewife, not a career girl, and she wants to be frum and she shares your ideals, so dive in and Hakodosh Boruch Hu will help you.

Once you start examining too much, if her nose is the right length, then you'll never find anyone who will suit you.



What's this big deal that people are making about the new year of 2000?

B'etzem, in reality, there's no such thing as the year 2000. It's two thousand years since lo klum, since nothing.

Some historians says that *oso ha'ish* was never even born. He didn't exist. So it's two thousand years of counting years from nothing. And even if he did exist, it's also from nothing. However, resha'im could always take advantage of this propaganda. That could be. They might riot, those resha'im. Since they hear so much propaganda, they might think to make use of the opportunity to make trouble.

They do that, you know. They're good at looking for opportunities to make trouble. And that's why, it would be a good idea to stay home.

If resha'im might look to make trouble, then your responsibility is to make sure that you and your family are safe. Make it your business to stay home that night. No reason to be outside on that night. What do you need with people – low people – who are wasting their lives celebrating nothing?! It's nothing at all.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu should be matzil es kol am'cha beis Yisroel from all troubles, from all the goyim, the resha'im, who are looking for opportunities to make trouble.



What can we say to a couple who are fighting all the time and are now talking about a divorce?

And the answer is – ach, wouldn't it be good if you could give a simple answer to that?

The answer is they should go not to a marriage counsellor. I know a case of a woman who goes to a marriage counsellor. So I asked, who is it? It's a she. Is she married? No. So what kind of marriage counsellor is it? It's like taking driving lessons from somebody who never drove a car. And sometimes it's even a failure in marriage, a divorcee. And even if she's successful in her marriage, it's usually an ignoramus who studied some theories from books and has unrealistic approaches to life.

And so my advice is go to an older talmid chacham. That's not me – I'm not old and I'm not a talmid chacham. My telephone is already ringing all day long because of this. And I don't advertise. There are good people to go to. Not me.

Choose an old talmid chacham. You should pay a generous fee. Some of them who won't take anything, but you can give it to their charities, their yeshivos. And they will give you a little bit of time, a few minutes, and that's more precious than sitting for an hour at a silly marriage counsellor. - And it can be pointed out to these people that no matter what, divorce is always going to turn out worse. It's only because the grass seems greener further on. After it's all over, they look back and regret.

How many divorced women and divorced men have spoken on the telephone to me! And I ask them, "Will you reconsider the first one? Would you like to remarry the first one?" And they said, "I would like to but it's too late." And therefore, the time to reconsider is before you do it.



How does one gain self-esteem?

Oy! Who said you have to gain self-esteem? It's a foolishness.

The psychologists and the therapists are *dreying ah kop*. How do you gain self-esteem? Who needs self-esteem?!

On the contrary, get rid of self-esteem. Say, "I'm nothing, I'm a nobody. I have to work hard to become a somebody!"

Let's say you learned half of shas already; say, "I'm a nobody. I don't want any self-esteem, I have to know the whole shas; half a shas is nothing yet."

Give up your self-esteem. All these things you have to know are phrases which come from the outside world, and we are slaves to our environment. We listen to the talk of the world, and we believe that psychologists have a Torah that we didn't know before.

The Torah of the character is found in the seforim, in our mussar seforim and the Gemara. If you look carefully, you'll find all the psychology that's true, it's there already. - What's not there, you know is not true.

It's the imagination of two apikorsim; one of them was named Freud; Sigmund Freud was an *oisvurf*. The other was Carl Jung. Two people. And what they said is worthless. You might say how do I know it? I know all about it. What I tell you, I know what I'm talking about.

All true psychology is found in our seforim. The gedolei Yisroel have practiced it in all generations. My rebbes in Slabodka were tremendous chachmei hanefesh. Tremendous chachmei hanefesh! They studied character; they knew people from the way they smiled, the way they talked. They were experienced; they dealt with hundreds and hundreds of bochurim for many years, and they learned all the seforim and thought into the things. They had the true chochmas hanefesh.

And therefore, if you want to know about the truth of the knowledge of character, don't go to the *umos ha'olam*. It's found in our own Torah more than any place else.

Toras Avigdor Snippets



The Function of Regret

When a person has regret for the past, when he's full of sorrow about the things he did or didn't do – that's the first step to achieving in the future. We must learn from the past, from our past and the past of others or what the Torah teaches us and make use of the emotion of regret and sorrow to make changes in our lives.

So tomorrow morning, as you get up in the morning, make it your business to do that, to make a little time for regret.

"Ah! Yesterday! How much more I could have accomplished had I put my mind to it."

And a little bit of regret before you go to sleep the previous night won't hurt you at all. And then when you get up in the morning you're thinking, "I'm going to the *beis haknesses*. I'm going to daven *tefillah b'tzibur* today. And I'm going to put in effort to pray properly. And I'm going to try to live like a model Jew in everything in good character, in *yiras Hashem*."

You made mistakes yesterday? You ran through the *davening* and the whole time you were on a safari in Africa? You didn't open a *sefer* during those few extra minutes you had? You said something sharp to your spouse? So you have *charatah* for that and you make every day a new beginning.

Every husband can wake up in the morning and feel regret for what he did the day before and for what he didn't do as well. That itself is a *tikkun*. And then he makes up his mind to make today a better day.

"Starting today I will try to live in complete harmony with my wife. I won't hurt her feelings, and I'll try always to honor her and make her happy."

A wife too; if she feels genuine regret about the past, she'll be sure to make today a much better day. - She should think, "My regret for the past means a new start to my life. I'm going to try to make my husband happy and never say anything mean to him. I'm not going to ask him for too many things for myself or for my house. I'll try to limit myself to make it easier for him."

And when a person lives like that, his happiness only continues to increase because every day becomes a better day. The regret he feels becomes a constant dynamo for perfection and living successfully; it only adds to his happiness. Every time he falls down he gets up again and takes another step forward.

Peace of Mind



The last thing Yaakov Avinu said to Reuven was, "Don't do things in haste! You should have done nothing! And because you were פַּחַז כַּמַּיִם- you did something in haste like water, you won't excel, you won't become great." And then Yaakov passed away.

That was the last thing that Yaakov spoke to his son Reuven; the last words that went into his heart. And it's in the Torah because it's talking to us too: "You want to become somebody? You want to be lifted up and to live successfully? - You must have a calm personality. That's the path to success."

What the Torah is teaching us here is actually the subject entitled menuchas hanefesh, to have calmness of mind as much as possible. That's the path to success.

And it's very important because everyone to a certain extent is a פַּחַז כַּמַּיִם. I say "everyone" because it's not an accident – it's one of the stratagems of the yetzer hora, to make you nervous and confused.

People don't know about this. It's important to understand that one of the tricks of the evil inclination is to make you frightened, mixed up. - It's one of the objectives of the yetzer hora against you, to upset your menuchas hanefesh and to cause you to act in haste.

Personalities and Growth

The children of Yaakov were very different. So the Medrash tells

us that Yaakov looked over his sons who were gathered around his deathbed and he said: "What's going to happen after I leave this world? What's going to be when I'm not here anymore? Who will keep the holy nation together? – Hashem, we need a big *yeshuah*, a big salvation."

So, at that time, when Yaakov Avinu cried out to Hashem, the brothers said to him: *Shema Yisroel* – "Listen, Yisroel our father; it's true – we're very different one from each other. But we have something that unites us. *Hashem Elokeinu* – Hashem is our G-d; we're all *avdei Hashem*. *Hashem echad* – There's one Hashem who we're all serving and that's going to keep us together despite the differences in our nature.

Whatever differences there may be that seem to pull us in different directions, they're all overcome by the glue of *avodas Hashem*. We're all connected to each other in the bond of serving Hashem Echad — it's Hashem that makes us one people.



And that's why we identify with all observant Jews, whether they're Jews in Teiman or Lakewood or Lubavitch or Bnei Brak or in Boro Park or Baltimore. Wherever they are, we identify with them because we're one with them.

Whether they're Sephardi Jews, whether they're Syrian Jews, whether they're Egyptian Jews. All the Jews who are loyal to the

Torah, that's our people. That's the Am Echad of the Hashem Echad and we have to identify with them – you can't feel like he's an outsider.

A Galicianer can't think, "I'm a stranger to a Hungarian Jew." - No, we're not strangers to anybody if they're loyal Jews.



וַיִּרְאוּ אֲחֵי־יוֹסֵף כִּי־מֵת אֲבִיהֶם '***Yosef's brothers perceived that their father was dead***…' (50:15)

Yosef's brothers felt that now that their saintly father, Yaakov Avinu, was gone, their protection from what they felt would be Yosef's wrath had also come to an end.

It seemed to them that Yosef's attitude toward them had abruptly changed. No longer were they the beloved family whom he invited to dine with him in the palace. They feared that it was all because their father had been alive. Now that he was gone, Yosef's lingering animosity toward them was becoming apparent. (This was in their perception. It was not true.)

Indeed, Yosef had a reason for everything he did (or did not do). When Yaakov was alive, he would grace the head of the table. Now that he was gone, Yosef felt awkward taking the place that rightfully belonged to Reuven and Yehudah. On the other hand, as viceroy of Egypt, it would be a violation of protocol for him not to sit at the head of the table.

Anxious about Yosef's feelings of (perceived), animus, they said that their father had asked that, he forgive them for what they did to him. (They felt that it was permissible to alter the truth in order to promote peaceful relations.) - We see that they were now preoccupied with how Yosef was treating them.

The Midrash Tanchuma teaches that it was not only the lack of invitations for dinner that caused them angst. It is what preceded this change that troubled them.

Apparently, on their return from their father's funeral, they passed the site (the pit) in which they had originally placed Yosef, prior to their selling him to the Midyanim. Yosef halted the group, so that he could go over to the pit and recite the brachah, **שעשה לי נס במקום הזה**, "***Who made a miracle for me in this place***." Yosef paid gratitude to the Almighty for sparing his life.

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, wonders why they were so concerned. After all, he was simply following the halachah that instructs us to bless and pay gratitude for Hashem's favor. The Rosh Yeshivah explains that the brothers were well aware that to make hodaah, praise and give gratitude properly, one must reflect and reiterate his reflections concerning what could have happened and how he was spared.

The brothers feared that too much delving into the near-tragedy of Yosef's sale might arouse Yosef's original feelings of pain, fear and deprivation. This would in turn arouse antipathy toward them. (I reiterate again that this was perceived by the brothers. It was not a reality.)

This is a powerful observation concerning hakoras hatov. Most people are not ingrates, but do we take the time to truly acknowledge the favor? Do we think it through in such a manner that we ask ourselves: What if? What if we would not have been beneficiaries of his favor? Where would we be today?

Our hakoras hatov must be commensurate with the favor. To do this we must reflect upon the favor. Those who fail to do so, likewise, fail to execute the obligation of hakoras hatov properly.



קָחֶם־נָא אֵלַי וַאֲבָרְכֵם - '***Bring them to me, if you please, and I will bless them***.' (48:9)

Yaakov Avinu wanted to bless Yosef's sons. We do not find him blessing any of his other grandchildren. Perhaps, since it was his plan to grant Menashe and Ephraim Shevet/Tribe status, it was necessary to meet in order to bless them.

Chazal give many explanations for Yaakov's decision to make Menashe and Ephraim the paradigms of Jewish blessing: **יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה**. Something was special about these two young men and the manner in which they were raised, special enough that Yaakov wanted every Jewish father throughout the millennia to bless his children in a similar manner. Why?

The continuity of Klal Yisrael is based upon our success in transmitting the mesorah, tradition, from generation to generation. Avraham Avinu succeeded in doing so with Yitzchak Avinu. He did not succeed in imbuing his many students in a like manner. Therefore, their commitment did not endure past the first generation.

Our educational role as parents is of paramount significance. No one is able to transmit the mesorah as effectively as a parent. When a child grows up in an environment in which not only do his parents educate him, but he has the added support of grandparents, he sees the mesorah playing itself out in a multi-generational setting.

When a child who has not had the benefit of having the educational impact of a grandparent grows up to be a consummate ben Torah, it is a tribute to his parents (who received their education from their parents). This is what impressed Yaakov about his "Egyptian born and bred" grandsons. Apparently, what Yosef had imbibed from his

father prior to his being sold as a slave was sufficiently compelling to carry over to Menashe and Ephraim.

Yaakov Avinu knew that in the future bitter exiles to which our people would be subjected, there would not always be grandparents, or even parents, who would be capable of readily transmitting the mesorah. Thus, he established the blessing, **יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה**; "*May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe*," because they represent a more challenging level of commitment.



Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, posits that marriage and passing down our tradition to the next generation comprise the essence of our nation's survival. He quotes the **Tzvi l'Tzaddik, zl**, who related the following parable prior to his son's marriage:

There was once a person who had a fierce love for his king. He sought an opportunity to develop a closeness with the king, but this could not be done unless he had an opportunity to be in the palace.

One day, he saw an advert that announced that the palace was in need of a skilled worker to manage the wood fireplace. It was not a difficult job. One had to place the wood in the fireplace when needed, and one had to know how much wood to place at a time. - He took the job and threw himself into it with zeal, to ensure that it would always be his.

The king eventually heard about the palace's devoted fireplace worker, and why he had taken the job. The king was impressed with this man's devotion, so he summoned him to his private chamber. After praising his devotion, he asked how he could reward him. The man's response was unusual, but quite easy to accommodate.

He wanted access to a small window that looked into the king's room. This way, whenever he could, he would gaze at the king whom he loved so much.

No one remains young forever. As the fireplace worker aged, the job that used to be so simple became increasingly difficult for him. In due time, he realized that he required a qualified replacement.

He interviewed a number of applicants. While many of them seemed satisfactory in terms of performance, none of them manifested an exuberance toward doing the job. It is one thing to work, it is totally another to maintain a zest for the job throughout the day.

They each had requirements which precluded them from accepting the position. One sought higher pay; another said he would rather heat his own house. The worker finally realized that in order to find a proper replacement who would have the correct attitude, he would have to marry and have a son. He would then educate his son from the very beginning to love the king and, thus, understand the importance of serving him. In this manner, he would ultimately cultivate the right replacement.



After concluding the story, the Tzvi L'Tzaddik turned to his son and said, "This is the purpose of marriage. We marry and hopefully raise children, instilling within them the importance of loving and serving Hashem." We are the only ones who can imbue the next generation with the feelings that have been imbued in us. We receive from the previous generation, and then we serve as the link to pass it on to the next generation.

We must underscore one caveat. In order for all of this to work, for the son to adhere to and accept his father's lessons, it is crucial that he develop a strong sense of **כיבוד אב ואם**, honor for his father and mother. One can hardly learn from – nor accept – the lessons transmitted by parents whom he does not respect. - One must honor parents, even if he finds it difficult to respect them.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that this is the meaning of **כַּבֵּד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמֶּךָ**, honor your father and mother. **כַּבֵּד** is the same spelling and is related to **כבד**, heavy. One must "add weight" to his parents. Even if in his estimation there is "little weight" / light weight (very little about them to respect); he must make it his business to build them up, raise their esteem in his eyes, thus lending /adding weight to them. This is how one fulfills the mitzvah of **כַּבֵּד** /honor.

Stories abound concerning the significance of – and the reward for – honoring parents. I recently came across the following inspiring story concerning **Horav Yehoshua Neuwirth, zl**, author of the highly acclaimed and widely read '*Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah*':

Rav Neuwirth had an elderly mother who spent her twilight years as a resident in Shomrei Hachomos, a home for the aged, in Sanhedria. Rav Neuwirth lived in Bayit V'Gan, which was quite a distance by foot. Nonethelesss, he would take the one-hour walk every Shabbos to make Kiddush for her, and to take her for a short walk.

She cherished these Friday night visits with her illustrious son. Indeed, the visit transformed her entire week. One Friday night, Yerushalayim was inundated with torrential rain. It might be a great blessing for the world (Vayikra 26:4, Rashi's commentary), but, for Rav Neuwirth, it presented a dilemma. On the one hand, how could he walk one hour (each way) in this weather? On the other hand, his visit meant so much to his mother. How could he disappoint her?

He asked **Horav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zl**, for advice. What should he do?

Rav Shlomo Zalman said that he was not obligated to go, and it would be best that he visit her Motzei Shabbos.

Rav Neuwirth was very forward, so he asked whether the Rav's halachic decision was a command or whether he could he take it as good advice.

Rav Shlomo Zalman replied that he was simply offering his advice, emphasizing that he was by no means under any halachic obligation to go.

Rav Neuwirth mulled it over and decided that disappointing his mother was more important than getting wet (soaked). Despite the pouring rain, he set out toward Sanhedria. He later attributed this specific act of honoring his mother as the possible reason for the widespread acceptance of his sefer on Hilchos Shabbos throughout the ranks of Klal Yisrael!

The reward for honoring one's parents is **אריכות ימים**, longevity. What greater form of longevity is there than one's chiddushim being read and reread by generations of Jews. - This is the epitome of **שִׂפְתוֹתָיו דּוֹבְבוֹת בַּקֶּבֶר** - "***his lips speak in the grave***." (Yevamos 97a)

L'Maaseh

Late one night, **R' Moshe Feinstein's** phone rang and a close talmid of his answered the phone in an effort to screen the calls. The woman on the other end asked if she could give her baby formula without a hechsher because he wasn't feeling well.

Not wanting to disturb the rosh yeshiva, he asked her to please call back in the morning. When R' Moshe heard this, he quickly inquired as to the nature of the call. When he heard what the question was, he grabbed the phone, because "how could you make a Jewish mother wait anxiously a whole night?!!!"

וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת 'And the days of the death of Yisrael drew near.' (47:29)

The "days" of Yaakov's death drew near. A person does not die over a period of days; he dies in a moment. - **The Zohar** wonders what is the meaning of the "days of death"?

The Zohar explains that when the time for a person to pass from this world arrives, all of his days (which he has lived) are calculated and assessed. Each day that was spent in the service of Hashem, committed to mitzvah observance, Torah study and performance of acts of lovingkindness – is considered a day worthy of being counted. Other days, which are found lacking in these qualities, are isolated and not included in the "day count."

The days of the righteous, which the Torah aptly describes as days of "drawing near," refer to those days that involve a connection with the Creator. Each and every one of these days is considered worthy of being presented to Hashem.

Each of us is granted a certain amount of time/days to spend on this world. We are to fill those days with mitzvos. Days filled with sin are discarded. They have no value; they are not worth saving. Furthermore, a wasted day is not wasted for one day – it is wasted forever, for eternity.

When a person utilizes a day properly to connect with Hashem, when his time is used wisely for the true purpose of his creation, it will be accredited to his eternal account in Olam Habba.

We can go through life merely existing, and at the end of the day, we will have nothing to show for our existence. A long life is not measured by age, but by how many actual days we have accrued. Living without accruing days is like earning money and allowing it to fritter away in the wind.

And as for me, I have given you Shechem – one portion more than your brothers, which I took…with my sword and my bow. וַאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ שְׁכֶם אַחַד עַל־אַחֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחַרְבִּי וּבְקַשְׁתִּי' (48:22)



בְּחַרְבִּי וּבְקַשְׁתִּי, with my sword and with my bow. Rashi interprets sword and bow as: הִיא חָכְמָתוֹ וּתְפִלָּתוֹ - *sword – sharp wisdom; bow – prayer.* -Targum Onkelos translates it as בִּצְלוֹתִי וּבְבָעוּתִי; *with my prayer is my supplication.*

Thus, Yaakov Avinu's strength lies not in his physical prowess, but rather, in his spiritual potency. Yaakov's prayer was much more effective than his physical strength. - This is true for all of us. Our strength is in our spirituality. We vanquish the enemy with our supplications, not with our guns.

Horav Shimon Pincus, zl, observes that during an עֵת צָרָה, period of tribulation, when the numbers are against us and the enemy's weapon is far more advanced than anything we have, we emerge triumphant because we have the power of prayer.

Rav Pincus explains that Hashem runs towards us. As the Psalmist (Tehilim 91:15) says, עִמּוֹ אָנֹכִי בְצָרָה, "***I am with him in his troubles.***" Hashem shares with us the tzaar, pain and anguish. It may appear that we are running towards him, but, in essence, He is running towards us.

A person travels in a car; it seems as if the buildings that he passes are moving towards him, while he stands still – when, in fact, it is the opposite. - We think that we are running to Hashem, when, in fact, the moment that we turn to Him, He "comes running." We do not

realize that Hashem is present, ready and willing to help. We do not ask, because we do not think.

A chassid once came to **Horav Mendel, zl, m'Kotzk**, and lamented his bitter circumstances. "Rebbe," he cried, "my cupboard is bare. I have a houseful of children and nothing to feed them." He then broke down in bitter weeping.

The Rebbe looked at him and said emphatically, "Pray to Hashem! He will sustain your family."

"But Rebbe," the chassid cried, "I do not know how to pray."

"If this is the case," retorted the Rebbe, "you have a greater problem than a lack of livelihood!!"

A Jew must be acutely aware that his success (as part of Am Yisrael) is through the medium of prayer. His "mouth" is his greatest and most effective tool for catalyzing salvation/deliverance. - Yaakov Avinu alluded to the power of prayer and supplication.

The Kotzker explains that the efficacy of a sword is determined by how the soldier prepares it prior to battle. He sharpens it razor sharp. Likewise, in order for the arrows to reach their distant target, the soldier's bow must be prepared by tightening it.

Prayer is no different. One must prepare himself prior to Tefillah. This is why the early Chassidim, pious Jews (Talmud Berachos 30A) put their minds and hearts in order, so that they could focus properly on the prayers before them.

I guess this means that they did not just run in a minute before Barchu and leave after Kedushah. They took the time they spent speaking with Hashem seriously.

The Baalei Mussar offer an insightful analogy to a fellow traveling in a wagon. At one point, the driver ties the reins around the horse that is pulling the wagon. The driver then proceeds to go to sleep.

The bewildered passenger asks the driver, "What gives?" The driver's response is: "Do not worry. The horse knows the way. He knows when to stop for water. 'We' will get you to your destination in time."

Our davening is often like that of the horse who knows when to stop for water. When we finish "reading the words," we know that davening is over; we have reached our destination. It is now time for water.

Everyone knows that tefillah is required as a tool for extricating oneself from a tzarah, trouble. When someone is in need of a refuah, healing, brachah, blessing, any form of yeshuah, he knows that tefillah is the address to which he should turn. It is the most effective medium for reaching Hashem, Who is the only responder.

There is something else for which we must daven, something that might ruffle some readers' sensibilities: I refer to the tefillos parents must offer that their children grow up in the Torah way and be a source of nachas to them, Klal Yisrael and Hashem – not necessarily in that order.

Some parents might neither agree that this warrants serious tefillah, nor will they acquiesce that the qualities that Chazal consider important are to be the objectives of our prayer service.

The Mishnah Berurah (47:10) (quoted by **Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita**) writes: "The tefillos of a father and mother should always be fluent in their mouths, davening that their children learn Torah, become tzaddikim, righteous people, and have good middos, character traits."

This, explains the Mashgiach, is at the very heart of success in chinuch. Tefillah! A faithful Jew understands that absolutely nothing is in his hands. He can – and should be – mishtadel, endeavor, but he must reiterate in his mind that only Hashem can affect the

outcome. There is no kochi v'otzem yadi, "my power and the strength of my hand," that sees the achievement through to fruition.

If one understands this verity, then he will daven – and daven, for his children's success. Parenting techniques are hishtadlus, but, at the end of the day, without tefillah, one does not show that he really cares.

When parents are successful in raising a beautiful family which gives them much Torah nachas, satisfaction, it is because they are the beneficiaries of Hashem's blessing. Those who have missed achieving success, is because Hashem withheld the gift of success from them. They must ask, plead, beg for it. It is the most effective thing that they can do.

This is what we should ascribe and adhere to. **The Chafetz Chaim** did not become the spiritual leader of his generation overnight. It was the attitude and focus on the manner in which he was raised that set the trajectory for his spiritual evolvement.

He would often talk about his mother's siddur. The Chafetz Chaim' s mother passed away when he was a young child. Many years later, someone brought to the Chafetz Chaim the siddur from which his mother had davened. The sage took the siddur in his trembling hands, kissed it and began to weep incessantly over it. - "Can you imagine how many tefillos my mother davened and how many tears she shed, so that her young Yisrael Meir should grow?"

It all begins and ends with tefillah. Obviously, issues arise, and interventions are necessary, but that is all part of hishtadlus. - Without tefillah, first and last, one has nothing.

"Life is not about giving and taking, it's about giving and giving." ~ Rabbi Shimon Shwab.

שִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי אַחִים כְּלֵי חָמָס מְכֵרֹתֵיהֶם... כִּי בְאַפָּם הָרְגוּ אִישׁ וּבִרְצֹנָם עִקְּרוּ־שׁוֹר - '***Shimon and Levi are brothers; their weaponry is a stolen trade…Cursed is their wrath for it is intense and their age for it is harsh.***' (49:5,6)



The greatest blessing a parent (or anyone, for that matter) can confer upon a child is to tell him the truth about himself. If the subject of the blessing suffers from a shortcoming, his/her parent should note it and advise him/her about how to address the issues arising from this failing.

Some parents and mentors shy away from relating the truth for fear of a negative reaction. This alone is proof that something is very wrong and should be addressed.

Yaakov Avinu showed us the way, as he admonished his sons while he blessed them. After all, what value can a blessing have that ignores the negative character traits of the individual whom he is blessing?

Yaakov addressed each son individually, except when he spoke to Shimon and Levi, the two brothers who in the course of avenging their sister, Dinah, destroyed the captors and their entire city.

Rashi observes that Yaakov did not curse them; rather, he cursed their failing. **אֲפִלּוּ בִּשְׁעַת תּוֹכֵחָה לֹא קִלֵּל אֶלָּא אַפָּם** (49:7)

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, relates that **Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl**, was once asked if it was permissible to disdain and even dislike a Jew who is unobservant.

The Mashgiach replied that for most people, such behavior is prohibited, because the average person has difficulty distinguishing between the person (he dislikes) and the negative character traits which provide the reason for the animus. Hence, rather than hating

the traits, he ends up hating the person, which is not permissible. Only a great person can make the distinction in order to hate the traits, while continuing to love the person who falls prey to his negative traits.

Rav Yeruchem was wont to embellish this thought. A person who is plagued by bad middos, deficient character traits, can be compared to a closet filled with pearls and diamonds in which a rotten apple is wedged in its center. Certainly no one who is in possession of his faculties would consider disposing of the millions of dollars worth of jewels just because a rotten apple is in the closet. Get rid of the apple! Keep the diamonds!

Likewise, every individual has an intrinsically high value. Negative character traits should not be ignored, and, indeed, should be dealt with. They, however, do not diminish the positive value of the person.

If we internalize this concept, making it a part of our outlook on people, our whole attitude is apt to change.

We are used to viewing a person's value through the lens of his character deficiencies. Thus, if he is imperfect, our attitude towards him is likewise. We must look at the person, while simultaneously regarding his negative traits as qualities which we must address.

It takes an astute educator, a loving parent, an individual endowed with common sense, to ignore the mouldy apple in the middle of a closet of diamonds. In other words, it takes effort on the part of the judge of character – a commodity which is in serious deficiency.

"The past is no more, the future is not yet, and the present is as fleeting as the blink of an eye." ~ Chochmah Umussar.

וְשַׂבְּעֵנוּ מִטּוּבֶךָ - And satisfy us from Your bounty



Satisfaction is elusive for some people. In Pirkei Avos, the Tanna extols one who is שָׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקוֹ, happy with his lot. This means that he does not determine financial success by how much he has accrued, but, rather, by what he has – period. He understands that he is blessed according to what Hashem has determined his needs are.

Everyone receives from Hashem enough to meet his needs. Many of us are dissatisfied with just having our "needs" filled. We also want to satisfy our "wants."

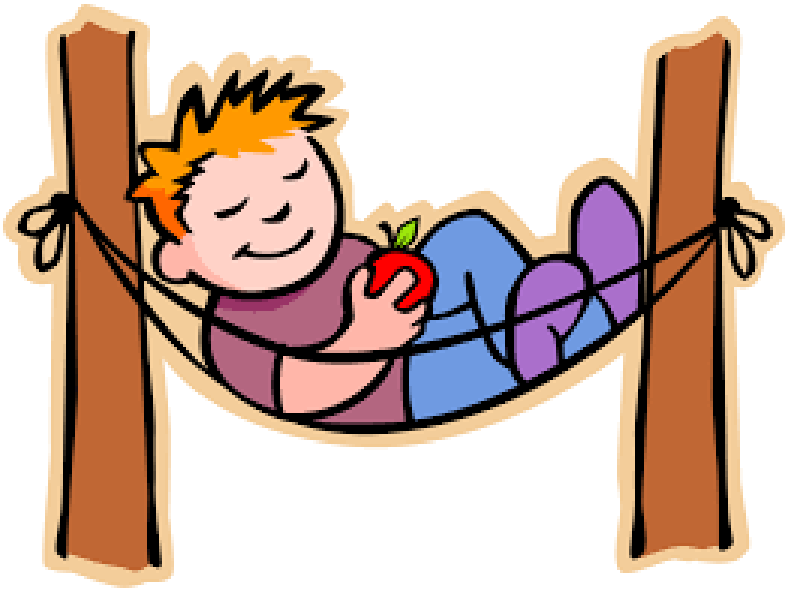
It does not work that way. A truly wealthy person is a satisfied person. Thus, we ask Hashem to "satisfy us from Your bounty." We should be tzufreeden, happy, with what we have because that is what we need.

First, we ask Hashem to give us; then we ask Him that what He gives us should satisfy us. We ask Him to grant us the ability to be happy with what we have.

In his Yaaros Devash, **Horav Yehonasan Eibeshutz, zl**, defines **טוּבְךָ**, Your goodness/bounty, as that which Hashem considers good, a specific reference to kosher food. It is possible to err and ingest foods that are either actually not kosher or have come into our possession by means that are not kosher.

We know that mistakes occur. Therefore, we ask Hashem to watch that what comes into our mouth be food that is worthy of being consumed by a Jew.

וַיַּ֤רְא מְנֻחָה֙ כִּי֙ טֹ֔וב וְאֶת־הָאָ֖רֶץ כִּ֣י נָעֲמָ֑ה וַיֵּ֤ט שִׁכְמֹו֙ לִסְבֹּ֔ל וַיְהִ֖י לְמַס־עֹבֵֽד׃ ***'He saw that serenity is good… He bowed his shoulder to bear.'*** (49:15)



When one peruses the brachah given to Yissachar, it appears as a lesson in contradiction. Yissachar symbolizes the ben Torah who devotes himself to Torah study under all circumstances.

One would think that, if he is confronted with peace and serenity, it would be an opportunity for relaxation and rejuvenation; rather, the Torah tells us that the peaceful repose is not Yissachar's reaction to serenity. Instead of rest, Yissachar girds himself for hard work. Is this not counterproductive?

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, explains that, if one wants to raise a healthy, content, and happy child, showering him with material bounty and giving in to his every whim and fancy are ineffective; these approaches will succeed in actually hindering the desired goal which he seeks to achieve.

Catering to a child's desires creates a dangerous dependence, because the child becomes accustomed to getting what he wants – or he will not produce. The moment that he is not satisfied, that he feels lacking, he experiences pain and turmoil, and he becomes disjointed.

The road to contentment is achieved by becoming accustomed to not getting what one wants, to not having much of anything. The less one needs to survive, the easier it is for him to endure. This lack of neediness makes life peaceful. This is how soldiers are trained to survive under adverse conditions, under the most difficult circumstances. - War is not fun. A soldier must focus on the battle,

ignoring everything else. The ben Torah must learn Torah without distractions.

Yissachar observed that serenity allows one to study Torah unimpeded, giving him the opportunity to grow and thrive in Torah. In order to realize this, he must bend his shoulder and tolerate any annoyance. Additionally, he must avoid material pleasure and be oblivious to pain and discomfort. Once such self-control is achieved, he is able to sit and learn, in serenity and happiness, for nothing fazes him. He has transcended the hindrances to his success.

In his hesped for **Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl, Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl**, said, "I have never met an oveid Hashem (with such extreme devotion) as Rav Chatzkel, the Mashgiach (Mir, Ponevez)."

Afterwards, his students asked him, "Did the Rosh Yeshivah not meet the **Chafetz Chaim, zl, and Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, zl?**" (Certainly, their service of Hashem was without peer). Rav Shach replied, "Every tzaddik has his individual unique approach to serving Hashem. The Mashgiach had an approach that was unlike any other I had ever seen.

His avodah was such that, when he wanted something, he did not do it; when he did not want something, he did it." In other words, Rav Chatzkel went against his own will. Those endeavors which went against his grain, which he did not enjoy doing – those he did. Conversely, those endeavors which he did enjoy doing – those he did not do. He refused in any way to defer to his desires.

A person should acquire the habit of constantly repeating "Whatever the Almighty does is for the good." ~ Shulchan Aruch – Orach Chayim 230:5.

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וַיְהִי יְמֵי־יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חַיָּיו שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמְאַת שָׁנָה - '***Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt… and the days of Yaakov – the years of his life.***' (47:28)



The popular adage, "***Today is the first day of the rest of your life***," rings true in the ears of the committed who are acutely aware of the meaning of every moment of G-d-given life. We have no guarantees. Life is short, and it is up to each and every one of us to make the most of every minute. - This is unlike the attitude of some who believe that everything belongs to them.

Parashas Vayechi deals primarily with the last mortal days of Yaakov Avinu: how he prepared for death, and the blessings he gave his children before he left this world. It is, therefore, surprising that a parsha which deals with death should be called **וַיְחִי** – "***And he lived***!"

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, suggests that the Torah alludes to the notion that the greatness of a tzaddik in life is his ability to focus on his own death. A great person understands that true life is not lived in this world, which is only a vestibule to Olam Habba, the World to Come. That is where life is lived – in the world of truth. Thus, Yaakov's entire life was spent in preparation for the moment of death, when he would enter into true life.

This teaches us that true life is a life in which one prepares himself for his Heavenly meeting with the Almighty. One who lives without giving a second thought to his ultimate demise is not really considered to be living. - Thus, the parsha which addresses Yaakov Avinu's death is called, **וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב**, "***And Yaakov lived***."

When the Torah mentions Yaakov's age, it says, **וַיְהִי יְמֵי־יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חַיָּיו**, "***And the days of Yaakov, the years of his life***." If the Torah is interested in relating Yaakov's age, why does it mention the "days" of his life? Would not his age in "years" be more appropriate?

Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz explains that the Torah is teaching us an important principle. Despite the Patriarch's advanced age, every day of his life had great significance to him.

Contrary to popular opinion, one should not question the value of "another day" once someone has attained longevity, since every day that one is granted by G-d is a precious treasure of incalculable value. It must be appreciated, valued and utilized appropriately.

Veritably, when a person reaches a point in life during which he begins to realize that his days are numbered, he becomes less focused on the affairs of this world, as he transitions to thinking primarily about his "future" in Olam Habba.

Rav Gamliel quotes **Horav Gershon Shtamer, zl**, who says that a person thinks when he approaches old age and eventually takes leave of his mortal self, that this is his moment of death. The truth is, that from the very moment of birth, with every day that passes – another day of his life has died. Man dies daily! It is just that when the final moment arrives, his mortal remains are interred in the ground. This is his final moment, but, actually, we die a little every day. Yesterday is gone. We can do nothing about it.

Time is a gift that, if wasted, can never be returned.

When writing about life and death, I feel it incumbent on me not to end on a somewhat morbid note. Thus, I take the liberty of quoting a story which, although it ends in death, is the kind of story that makes one proud to be a Jew:

It was common knowledge that those who were sent on the transports to Auschwitz were forbidden to take any seforim, Hebrew books, with them. There was a certain Jew who obstinately

refused to part with a small Sefer Torah that he kept with him, even as he was being taken to the transport train.

When the Nazi fiend saw that this man was not giving up his scroll, and that he obviously was not smuggling in anything, he let him go. After all, he knew exactly where this Jew was going to end up.

Upon arrival at Auschwitz, everyone was told to leave all of their possessions on the cattle cars which had served as their transport. This Jew was not waiting for them to search him, so he immediately ran off the train with his precious Torah scroll in his arms.

He ran right into the furious opposition of a group of German officers. They reviled him, cursed him, beat and mocked him, but he seemed oblivious to everything. He completely ignored them, as he embraced the scroll in his arms.

At this point, another soldier came over, took out his revolver and pointed it at the man's heart, threatening to shoot him unless he gave up the Torah.

The Jew continued ignoring him, absolutely refusing to be separated from his Torah. If he would be shot as a result of this – so be it. He was not frightened. Without the Torah, his life was not worth living. He was prepared to die.

The soldiers looked at each other and shrugged, as if to say, "Let him keep his Torah. It will not be for much longer." Indeed, the Sefer Torah never left his embrace until he entered the gas chamber.

A Jew who had long been alienated from Torah and mitzvos viewed this scene and the impression left such an impact on him that, from that moment on, he changed his mind about the "Orthodox fanatics." He now understood why they would never forgo any point of the Torah. He joined the faith that he had reviled for most of his life, asking for his Creator's forgiveness for his errant ways and resolutely committed himself to a life of Torah and mitzvos.

One Jew died – one Jew returned to life: One Jew proudly left a world of falsehood and entered a world of truth; another Jew returned to the world of falsehood, armed with the truth.

יִשָּׂשכָר חֲמֹר גָּרֶם רֹבֵץ בֵּין הַמִּשְׁפְּתָיִם... וַיַּרְא מְנֻחָה כִּי טוֹב וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ כִּי נָעֳמָה וַיֵּט שִׁכְמוֹ לִסְבֹּל וַיְהִי לְמַס־עֹבֵד - '***Issachar is a strong-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries. He saw tranquility that it was good… yet, he bent his shoulder to bear and he became and indentured laborer***.' (49:14,15)



The Torah's characterization of the talmid chacham using the simile of a strong-boned donkey, implies Yissachar/the Torah scholar's spiritual role as the bearer of the yoke of Torah and the cultivator of the nation's spiritual treasures. As the donkey toils day and night without resting its weary body, so, too, does the Torah scholar incessantly apply himself to his books.

The Chafetz Chaim explains that the donkey never tires to the point that it lay down in such a manner that it must have its load removed. It sleeps standing, with its bags still on it. Likewise, the Torah scholar devotes himself constantly to the Torah, never allowing for a well-deserved rest.

בֵּין הַמִּשְׁפְּתָיִם, '*resting between the boundaries*', is a reference to the talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who, upon concluding a Meseches, Tractate, celebrates the milestone with other scholars – and then moves on to the next Meseches.

The next passage, **וַיַּרְא מְנֻחָה כִּי טוֹב... וַיֵּט שִׁכְמוֹ לִסְבֹּל**, "***He saw tranquility that it was good… yet, he bent his shoulder to bear***,"

presents us with an anomaly. Why would we think that Yissachar views his Torah obligation as some kind of load which he must bear?

The Torah's wisdom is as sweet as the sweetest honey. No true Torah scholar views the time he spends studying Torah as toil, as a load he must tolerate. Torah study is the sweetest thing in life to him.

Furthermore, as the Chafetz Chaim notes earlier, the Torah characterizes Yissachar as a strong-boned donkey who rests under the most difficult circumstances.

Now, Yaakov implies that the Torah is a heavy load which Yissachar is committed to carrying. If he seeks tranquility, why is he carrying a heavy load?

The Chafetz Chaim elucidates this by employing an analogy. There was a wealthy man who made his fortune through the sale of precious stones. He took a business trip to a far-off country, taking with him 3000 rubles with which to purchase jewels. He took another 400 rubles for traveling expenses.

He concluded his business and was prepared to return home when he met another broker who had an excellent purchase for him. He explained to the broker that despite the wonderful opportunity, he had used up all of his money; all he had left was his traveling money, an amount with which he could not really part if he wanted to return home.

The broker explained that the government was after him on some trumped-up charges. If he did not get rid of the stones now, he would lose them along with everything else. He was prepared to take a monetary loss on the stones, but he needed to do so immediately. The wealthy jeweler replied that, while it was true that he could not pass up a good deal, he had only 200 rubles left from his original expense money. He was willing to invest 180 rubles in the broker's stones, leaving him only twenty rubles with which to return home. He

would be relegated to sitting in the cattle car with the other poor folk, but it was worth it, if he would realize a handsome profit.

The broker agreed, and they closed the deal. The return trip was rough. He was used to sitting in a lounge car, sleeping on a bed, and eating the finest foods on exquisite dishes. Now, he sat on the floor of the cattle car, ate whatever scraps he could scrounge, but, in his mind, it was worth it. Once he returned home, he would sell the jewels, and he would have his heart's desire.

At one of the stops, he met one of his associates, also a wealthy man, who was shocked to see his friend descending from the cattle car. -"What are you doing here with the poor people?" he asked.

The jeweler replied, "It is true that now I am having it quite rough, and I am relegated to sitting with the poor, but just wait a few weeks. I will be richer than ever."

"This may be true," the other man countered, "but for a man who is used to the finer things in life, how do you tolerate the poverty and hunger to which you are being subjected?"

"You are absolutely correct," the jeweler said. "I do have pain and I miss being in the lap of luxury, but every time I open up that box of precious stones which I purchased for almost nothing and realize the great profit I will make when I return home, I am able to live with the poverty and hunger."

The Chafetz Chaim continues, "True, the Torah is of greater value than the most enviable riches. It is more precious than the most precious stones. There is one catch, however. In order to succeed in Torah study, one must relinquish a life of luxury in this world. He must toil day and night, plumb its profundities and delve into its intricacies. Yes, he must be like the donkey who rests only between the boundaries.

Veritably, such self-abnegation, such renouncement of this world's material/physical pleasures, provides nothing for one's neshamah,

spiritual soul. What about his guf, body? Man has a physical dimension that seeks enjoyment, that craves pampering. How is man to remain satisfied? How is he to deal with the inner conflict raging within him?

The answer is that he sits back and realizes that it is only for a short while; it is only during his present sojourn of life in this world that he must relinquish his luxuries. In the next world, he will be duly rewarded manifold for his patience.

"Thus, Yaakov told Yissachar, 'Be patient. Think about the eternal rest you will enjoy. Think about Gan Eden, that little box of precious stones which will bring you great reward. This will keep you focused even in this world.'"

We might add that it requires someone like Yissachar, who understands the value of Torah, to maintain his spiritual focus in this world. Imagine a person who has no idea concerning the value of jewellery. He will look at this box of stones and say, "I would rather have a nice bologna sandwich."

Only someone who is astute and knows value when he sees it relinquishes temporal physical pleasure for a first-class seat in Gan Eden.

"These days, the Talmidei Chachamim are like the Prophets of the past. They are Tzofim- the ones who see.

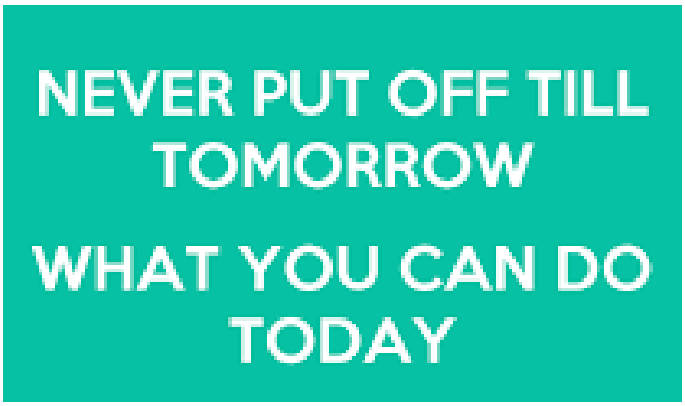
In every town, each Talmid Chacham is obligated to warn the people in his vicinity and make them fear for their lives, because of the explicit verses in the Torah and Prophets that foretell woe for all who turn away from the Torah. - He must make sure that no one regards these verses as a joke!" – The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir HaKohen of Radin.

וַיְבָרְכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּךָ יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל - '***So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you shall Yisrael bless***.' (48:20)

And so, it has become the case throughout the generations. Parents bless their children; Menasheh and Efraim serve as the paradigms of blessing.

Does בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, "***that day***," refer to a specific time?

'That day' means that any day on which parents bless their children, Menasheh and Efraim will be their example.



Horav Asher, zl, m'Karlin, interprets בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא homiletically. Yaakov Avinu blessed his grandchildren that they should focus their endeavors on "that day." Never push off until tomorrow what can be done today.

The yetzer hora, evil inclination, senses a person's enthusiasm, his excitement, his inspiration, and he attempts to cool it off by employing the time-honoured ruse of "tomorrow." The next day, the endeavor has already lost some of its inspiring allure.

This is what the yetzer hora wants. He wants our service to Hashem to be insipid, cold, detached, almost as if we are compelled to do the mitzvah.

Yaakov Avinu intimated to his grandsons that success in avodas Ha'Kodesh, service to Hashem, is incumbent on היום, today. When the inspiration comes, one must immediately act. Deferring it to a later – more convenient – time, distorts and downgrades the entire service. The emotion and enthusiasm are just not present. That is exactly what the yetzer hora seeks.

**אֶפְרַ֥יִם וּמְנַשֶּׁ֖ה כִּרְאוּבֵ֣ן וְשִׁמְע֑וֹן יִֽהְיוּ־לִ֖י... בְּךָ֣ יְבָרֵ֔ךְ יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל לֵאמֹ֑ר... יְשִׂמְךָ֣ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַ֖יִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁ֑ה וַיָּ֥שֶׂם אֶת־אֶפְרַ֖יִם לִפְנֵ֥י מְנַשֶּֽׁה "*Ephraim and Menasheh shall be mine like Reuven and Shimon… By you shall Yisrael bless… 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menasheh.'*" (48:5,20)





At best, Ephraim and Menasheh are considered equal to Reuven and Shimon, two of the Shivtei Kah, Tribes. However, when fathers and mothers bless their children, they do not bless them, "May you be like Reuven and Shimon" (or any of the other Shevatim). Why, then, do Ephraim and Menasheh serve as paradigms for blessing? Surely, they were not better people than Reuven and Shimon.

Sefas Emes explains the distinction. Although Ephraim and Menasheh were "second generation," and therefore at birth were not on the same spiritual plateau as the Shevatim, they achieved their elevated status by developing themselves to reach Shevatim status. In other words, while it is true that they did not have a higher status than the Shevatim, they developed themselves to equal them.

Considering that Menasheh and Ephraim started out light years behind Reuven and Shimon, achieving Shevatim status was an exceptional feat.

This is the blessing of spiritual growth which every parent gives his children: "May you be like Ephraim and Menasheh – in other words, "May you grow spiritually from strength to strength." The Sefas Emes is teaching us that we have "natural" strengths – physical

attributes with which we are born and upon which our natural potential is established. A human being born with these physical qualities is capable of achieving just so much. Then he has the spiritual ability to transcend this potential by pushing harder, working more, exerting himself so that he makes an impact.

Hashem listens and grants him the ability, the strength, the wisdom to develop further, deeper, higher. This is the blessing of **יִשֶּׂשכָר בְּאָהֳלֶיךָ**: You should not be impeded by arbitrary boundaries. **אֱלֹקִים יַפְתְּ לְיֶפֶת וְיִשְׁכֹּן בְּאָהֳלֵי שֵׁם**. Just as Ephraim and Menasheh superseded their physical capabilities and achieved Shevet status, so can you. Just as they did it on their own through exceptional motivation and work, so must you. - You do yours – Hashem will do the rest.

הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים – '***And he [Yaakov] said, "Gather yourselves together and I will tell you that which will befall you in the end of the days***.' (49:1)

Rashi tells us that Yaakov Avinu wanted to reveal to his children the time of the Final Redemption, but the Divine Spirit suddenly left him. - **בִּקֵּשׁ לְגַלּוֹת אֶת הַקֵּץ וְנִסְתַּלְּקָה מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁכִינָה**

Why did Hashem remove His spirit from Yaakov? While it may be true that Hashem had no desire that the time of the Geulah Ha'asidah, Final Redemption, be revealed, this is no reason to remove His spirit from him. He could have simply not disclosed this date to Yaakov. Why did He remove his prophetic powers?

The Radomsker Rebbe, z.l., gives a profound explanation for Rashi's statement. He says that actually Hashem did not revoke Yaakov's powers at all. On the contrary, Yaakov saw only too clearly what the future would bring. He saw both from a physical and spiritual vantage the events that would precede Redemption; the terrible ordeals that his descendants would endure; the cataclysmic destruction that

they would sustain, the near decimation of European Jewry, and its ensuing tragedies.

This prophetic vision saddened him to such an extent that Yaakov lost an essential prerequisite for receiving Nevuah, Divine Prophecy. He lost the attribute of simchah, joy.

Chazal tell us in the Talmud Shabbos 32b that the Shechinah, Divine Presence, rests on a person only amidst joy. The absence of simchah negates Ruach HaKodesh, Divine Inspiration.

The message is clear: We must learn to triumph over adversity, or we may lose what Divine Inspiration is still within us.

In a way, we have an advantage over Yaakov Avinu. We experienced what he viewed prophetically. We survived, endured, and continued on. We searched for strength, groped for inspiration, found it, and kept going. We lost six million brethren, an entire Jewish culture and lifestyle, yeshivos, gedolei Yisrael and their Talmidim. Yet, we persevered and rebuilt.

We had the advantage of learning from Yaakov our ancestor that, if we will permit adversity to crush us, we may lose whatever Divine Inspiration we possess, and without the Divine – the inspiration is worth very little.

Our strength lies in our obstinacy, in our refusal to capitulate and yield to those who would destroy us. It is this obstinacy that gives us the fortitude to maintain joy in our hearts and express it, even though it follows devastating losses. - Yaakov Avinu taught us well.

"Imagine you could open your eyes to see only the good in every person, the positive in every circumstance, and the opportunity in every challenge." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל־רָע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק – '***May the angel who redeems me from all evil bless the lads, and may my name be declared upon them, and the names of my forefathers, Avraham and Yitzchak***.' (48:16)

Why does Yaakov mention his own name before he mentions his father and grandfather? Why does he not demonstrate the mitzvah of Kibud Av, honoring one's father?

Horav Dovid Feinstein, Zt'l, suggests a practical reason for this omission: Yaakov was saying that his grandsons should be a source of such nachas that not only should I be pleased, but even my forefathers will be filled with nachas.

Kol Yehudah suggests that Yaakov was referring to the attributes represented by each of the Patriarchs.

Avraham Avinu devoted himself to the middah of chesed. He reached out with kindness to an entire world. He was the epitome of altruism. - Yitzchak Avinu symbolized the concept of avodah, service to Hashem, through prayer and devotion. - Yaakov Avinu was the symbol of Torah.

Together, the Avos represent **תורה עבודה וגמילות חסדים**, which are the three attributes which support and maintain the world.

We now understand why Yaakov placed his name prior to that of his father and grandfather. He blessed his grandsons that they should merit to grow in Torah. It should be their prime focus and direct their lives. Afterwards, once they would have become suffused with Torah, he mentioned **וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי** '*and the names of my forefathers*'. - They could then focus on avodah and gemilus chasadim.

One will attain the attributes of avodah and chesed from Torah; from the chesed and avodah, one does not necessarily achieve involvement in Torah.

כָּל־אֵלֶּה שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר... וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כִּבִרְכָתוֹ בֵּרַךְ אֹתָם - '***All these are the twelve tribes of Yisrael...He blessed them each according to his special blessing.***' (49:28)

Rashi explains that Yaakov Avinu gave each of his sons his individual blessing, uniquely cogruous with his individual nature and personality. He then gave a collective blessing to all of them together. - **בְּרָכָה הָעֲתִידָה לָבֹא עַל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד**

Horav Eli Munk, zl, explains that the Jewish nation is founded on the principle of unity in plurality. Each tribe is called upon to perform its particular function, based upon its specific character trait. Hence, each tribe constitutes a unit by itself. Why, then, did Yaakov bless them collectively afterwards?

Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl, derives a significant lesson from this pasuk. It is important for everyone to utilize his individual abilities and attributes for the betterment of the klal, wider community. The blessing of individual talents carries with it a requirement that the person contribute these assets to the tzibur, congregation.

Furthermore, when each person acts in the collective interest, in harmony with others, everyone becomes enriched. Thus, each tribe gained by the others' involvement. Each tribe merged its attributes with the traits of the other tribes. - Yaakov Avinu sought this symbiotic unity when he blessed all of his sons together.

In the not Jewish world, they say happy new year while we say Shanna Tova, a good year. This is because as Jews we only want good things in our lives, and we understand that not everything will always be happy per se.. And if we focus on the good things - all that will turn into happy things 😊

May this year be filled with lots of good and many yeshuos ❤️

וַיִּבְכּוּ אֹתוֹ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעִים יוֹם – '***And the Egyptians wept for Yaakov***.' (50:3) - Rashi comments that the Egyptians wept for Yaakov because they recognized the material blessings that were manifest as a result of his presence in their country. Indeed, the seven-year period of hunger which was destined for Egypt ended five years prematurely with Yaakov's arrival in Egypt. The Nile River, which is Egypt's prime source of irrigation, was also unusually blessed.

Horav Moshe Rosenstein, z.l., comments upon the Egyptian reaction to the void left by a tzaddik in contrast to our recognition of the value of a tzaddik's presence in our midst.

Yosef was the viceroy of Egypt. It was within his power to sustain the entire world with the vast stores of food which he had accumulated. Yet, he could not put an end to the hunger. Money and power may be able to create a panacea for a difficult situation. They may be able to temporarily address a crisis. They cannot, however, solve the source of the problem. - It was Yaakov's presence in Egypt that brought a satisfactory conclusion to the famine that was jeopardizing the country.

Do we properly acknowledge the presence of a tzaddik in our midst? Horav Rosenstein makes a profound, analogy to illustrate our unawareness of the tzaddik's inestimable value to our community.

A wealthy man makes a large contribution to a hospital, financing thirty additional beds for the critical care unit. Imagine the wonderful accolades which will be conferred upon this philanthropist. - The tzaddik, however, who is regrettably ignored or at best taken for granted, is the one in whose merit thirty people will not become sick!

If we would only realize what good is engendered by the tzaddikim of our generation, we might learn to accord them the special reverence which they deserve.

וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְמִינוֹ וַיָּשֶׁת עַל־רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם.. וְאֶת־שְׂמֹאלוֹ עַל־רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה..
וַיִּתְמֹךְ יַד־אָבִיו לְהָסִיר אֹתָהּ "***And Yisrael stretched out his right hand and placed (it) upon Efraim's head . . . and his left (hand he placed) on Menashe's head . . . and he (Yosef) held up his father's hand to remove it.***" (48:14,17)

Why did Yaakov not change Menashe and Efraim's position, thereby avoiding the necessity of crisscrossing his hands over them?

Horav Chaim M'Volozhin zt,l offers a profound insight into Yaakov's behavior. The nature of a person is to minimize his friend's virtues, while simultaneously exaggerating his failings. This represents an unconscious attempt to allay one's own insecurities. - One foolishly thinks that he improves himself by denigrating others.

This characteristic becomes manifest when two people stand facing each other. The right hand of one is across from his friend's left hand and vice versa. One's right hand, the stronger one, stands in readiness, focusing upon his friend's weakness, symbolized by the left hand. Conversely, one's left hand, the weaker side of man, confronts his friend's virtue, implying man's lackadaisical attitude towards appreciating his friend's good qualities.

Yaakov Avinu, the proverbial **איש אמת**, desired to maintain the status quo in which the older son coincided with his left side. His goal was to teach his children not to exaggerate their friend's shortcomings and to avoid detracting from their friend's good deeds.

One should train himself so that his right side parallels his friend's "right side," and his left side coincides with his friend's "left side."

"It is in the darkest moments of our lives, when everything seems lost, that our unwavering faith in Hashem truly shines." ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein Zt'l.

וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ "***And like fish they shall multiply in the midst of the earth***." (48:16)




Rashi explains כַּדָּגִים הַלָּלוּ שֶׁפָּרִים וְרָבִים וְאֵין עַיִן הָרָע שׁוֹלֶטֶת בָּהֶם that the word יִדְגּוּ originates from the word דג (fish). Thus, the blessing was that Efraim and Menashe should multiply and grow just as fish multiply and grow without the evil eye affecting them.

This part of the blessing was so basic that the fish symbol served as the emblem on the banner of the tribe of Efraim.

Even today the fish emblem serves as a talisman against the effect of the evil eye. This effect stems from the occult power of the jealousy, hatred, and envy of others.

The Sefas Emes states that if Yosef and his offspring were to be shielded from the effects of the evil eye, it was in the merit of Yosef closing his eyes to Potiphar's wife. Yosef deserved the title of "tzaddik" because of the "sanctification of his vision" which he had achieved.

We may suggest that Yaakov may have had a different reason for invoking the symbol of fish. We have seen that throughout Yaakov's life journey, he tended to lead a solitary life: He always kept distant from the native population, forever seeking to raise his children in a homogeneous milieu, sheltered from foreign culture.

Accordingly, when he blessed his children, he saw before him the image of the aquatic world. Fish live their own lives in an element apart, in calm, and in depths unseen. And humanity, inhabitants of a completely foreign element to their own, hardly suspect this joyous,

carefree, and serene existence of theirs which endures from generation to generation.

This is how the Patriarch wanted his descendants to live, but in the midst of the land. they were to flourish in security and happiness in an element which was their very own. They were to be unencumbered by the outside world, which cannot appreciate the significance of their lives. - This is truly the greatest blessing - to live among the people in a world all our own.

The Weekly Vort

● **וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם** ***Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt*** (47:28).

The Zohar says that the years that Yaakov lived in *Mitzrayim* were the best years of his life. In fact, this is the only time the Torah says that Yaakov *lived* in a certain place. Elsewhere it says **וישב יעקב**, *Yaakov settled*. Now is the first time that Yaakov truly lived.

This is striking, since Yaakov was in *galus* – a setting not exactly conducive to a person having the best years of his life. But Yaakov, through *ko'ach haTorah*, was able to transcend *galus*, creating an extension of Eretz Yisroel there.

These four words, **ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים** should give us great *chizuk*. We live in difficult times, in a bitter *galus*, but if we hold fast to the Torah we too can transcend the troubles we face, and live life to the fullest. (**Novominsk on Chumash**)

● **וַיִּרְאוּ אֲחֵי־יוֹסֵף כִּי־מֵת אֲבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוּ יִשְׂטְמֵנוּ יוֹסֵף וְהָשֵׁב יָשִׁיב לָנוּ אֶת כָּל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר גָּמַלְנוּ אֹתוֹ** – ***'Yosef's brothers saw their father died. They said, 'What if Yosef is holding a grudge [against us]? He will surely pay us back for all the evil we did him.'*** (50:15).

Rashi asks why the brothers thought that Yosef hated them, and answers that as long as Yaakov remained alive, he and all of his sons ate at the table of Yosef. After Yakov's death, Yosef did not invite

his brothers anymore. Understandably, the brothers thought that perhaps Yosef truly hated them, and would finally avenge their treatment of him years earlier.

The Sifsei Chachomim questions why Yosef stopped inviting them to his house. As long as Yaakov lived, he told Yosef to sit at the head of the table. Yosef was obligated to listen in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of honoring his father. However, after Yaakov died, Yosef no longer wished to sit at the head of the table. After all, Reuvein was the firstborn, and Yehuda descendants would be kings.

On the other hand, as king of *Mitzrayim*, Yosef did belong at the head. Since neither choice seemed optimal, he stopped inviting his brothers to his table altogether. (**A Gut Vort**)



The Insulted Philanthropist

"Mussar." We are all aware of the Mussar Movement, which transformed the entire Torah world by introducing the need to stress character improvement as part of one's *avodas Hashem*. Its founder, **R' Yisrael Salanter**, traveled across Europe to encourage people from all walks of Yiddishkeit to learn and live Mussar. What's the story behind his fiery passion? The story is as follows:

In a particular town, there was a shoemaker who won the lottery and overnight gained a sizable sum of money. He took some of it and put it into lucrative investments, which soon made for him great profit. He left behind his previous work making shoes and went into the

diamond industry. His wealth went from good to great, to better and beyond.



Sometime later, when it was time for him to seek a shidduch for his daughter, he searched for someone befitting his stature. Baruch Hashem, he found the perfect boy, and they were engaged. For the *chasunah*, the happy father of the *kallah* arranged a superb wedding, calling in party planners and experts to cater the lavish affair.

In his town, however, were former friends of his, craftsmen who hadn't made it as well as he had, and they were quite envious of the former shoemaker's rise to fame. They coveted his ability to throw such a feast, and their jealousy ate them up. It brought them resentment, bitterness and hatred, to the point that they plotted how they could aggravate him in the worst possible way.

One of them figured out how he would best get back at the former shoemaker. Right in the middle of the *chasunah*, as the father of the *kallah* was on a high, greeting everyone with a delightful smile, radiating the greatest joy of marrying off a child, his "friend" made his move.

He entered the dancing circle, motioned that he was going to do some "shtick," and got everyone's attention. After a few moments of dancing, he pulled out a tattered pair of old shoes and started stitching them in front of everybody!

Everyone instantly understood the "joke," though the shoemaker didn't take it very lightly at all. The embarrassment was so much that he dropped to the floor and passed away on the spot. When R'

Yisrael saw this, he concluded that something must be done to change people's attitudes, and that change was Mussar.

Most think that what prompted R' Yisrael was his realization of how dirty, immoral, and terrible a person's *middos* can be. However, **R' Nuta Freund**, one of **R' Gamliel Rabinowitz**'s *rebbeim*, thinks that wasn't what R' Yisrael concluded. R' Yisrael wouldn't have started a whole movement to repair the destroyed *middos* of such a "friend." Instead, it was the reaction of the shoemaker that brought him to change the world!

The shoemaker had been a poor craftsman, and within a short amount of time he was granted great wealth. Instead of becoming greatly embarrassed by the reminder of his past, he should have instead thought about the great *brachah* Hashem had sent him. "That was me not so long ago, and now look at what type of *chasunah* I'm able to make! I must be very grateful for what I have been given."

Seeing what a dire situation he had been in and the change in his fortune should've made him dance with even greater excitement and enthusiasm, sparing him any aggravation but instead bringing him much joy and celebration. Mussar would have directed his thoughts to appreciation and humility, and he certainly wouldn't have died from them.

This teaches us an incredible lesson: Mussar teaches us how to think. In this case, it would've given him the thought of properly appreciating the *brachah* he had received. (*Tiv Hischazkus, Hallel V'Hodaah*, p. 387)1

R' Yisrael started from seeing this wealthy man's lack of appreciation, but we don't have to be wealthy to be appreciative. Everyone in his own situation has what to appreciate.

R' Yechezkel Abramsky was once staying at an inn overnight. From the other side of the wall, he overheard someone saying: "Thank you,

Hashem, for my health. Thank you, Hashem, for my family. Thank you, Hashem, for my children," and so on. R' Abramsky was very interested in knowing whom this person is.

The next morning, he approached the front desk and asked who his neighbor had been. The response? None other than the great **Chofetz Chaim**!

What was the Chofetz Chaim doing? Thanking Hashem for all the *brachah* that Hashem gave him in his life. That was what he was busy with.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Handshakes



It is commonplace to have agreements and pledges among other things done with a handshake. But do we see any places involving a handshake in the Torah?

In five places, Yaakov's name is written full, with the letter ו - **יעקוב**, while Eliyahu is spelled missing a ו in five places -**אליה**.

Yaakov took a letter from Eliyahu's name as security so that Eliyahu will come and herald the redemption of Yaakov's children. The Maharal explains that the giving of a security was sealed by a handshake. [See Mishlei 6:1,3].

The letter ו resembles a finger, so five of them represent the hand, which finalizes the giving of security. By taking the ו from Eliyahu five times, Yaakov took his "hand" as a security to ensure that he

would redeem his children. This is also alluded to through the fact that the numerical value of ו is six and five multiplied by six is 30. This leads us to the Mishna [Ohalos 1:8.] that says that the hand is composed of thirty segments.

Where do we find in the Torah a source for shaking a person's hand when you greet them?



R' Dessler (1892-1953) once explained that greeting and blessing someone (when you greet a person with *shalom*, it is a form of bracha) with a handshake is sourced in the Torah.

Why did Yaakov need to put his hands on Efraim and Menashe when giving them a bracha?

The answer is that when there is a connection between the one giving the bracha and the one receiving it, through the hands, at the time of the giving of the bracha, the bracha has a stronger effect.

Similarly, the **Tiferes Shlomo** (1801-1866) says that the hands serve as the conduit for the bracha. This is why people greet each other with a handshake.

"The key to reaching greatness is to utilize those minutes which others allow to go to waste." Chasam Sofer

"Pray for the welfare of others even when they are not aware you are praying for them." ~ The Chofetz Chaim.



חֲזַק חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזֵּק

As we finish Sefer Bereishis this Shabbos, let us all go M'chayil el chayil and be zoche to start and finish many more Seforim in the coming days, weeks and years, ad bias goel tzedek bb"a!

It's interesting to think that Sefer Bereishis ends in a state of limbo with Yosef Hatzaddik having just passed away. In fact, he wasn't even been buried and we all jump up and excitedly sing "Chazak! Chazak! V'nischazek!" Why is that?

I saw an interesting answer from **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky shlit"a** who says that Yosef was the ultimate provider in the family caring for all and seeing to everyone's needs. Therefore, he was left unburied and in a box as a declaration to Klal Yisroel that even as their painful exile was beginning, he would be there with them and not find his final resting place until they would be redeemed.

It is a message for all generations. It is a message for all times. When we read how Yosef's soul was willing to endure the torture of being left unburied we see the hope that lies therein. The hope and faith that Yosef Hatzaddik declared to his children: "Do not bury me now, as you surely will be remembered one day. - My hope is your hope."

"There is nothing in the world from which you cannot learn a way of serving Hashem." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.

הוא היה אומר

הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־

יִקָּרֵא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים - "***Yaacov called for his sons and said, "Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days.***"

R' Naftali Tzvi Hurvitz *zt"l* of Ropshitz (Zera Kodesh) posits: The *Gemara (Shabbos 30b)* states that the *Shechinah* reveals itself to a person only when one is in a joyous and happy spirit, and not when one is sad and grieving.

If Yaakov was ready to reveal the time of the coming of *Mashiach*, obviously it was permissible. However, the reason why he didn't was because as he was about to reveal it, he saw *Chevlei Mashiach* - the extreme pains and suffering that the Jewish people will endure in the future, prior to the revelation of *Mashiach*.

- This caused Yaakov much grief and thus the *Shechinah* withdrew from him."

משל למה הדבר דומה

חכלילי עינים מיין ולבן שנים מחלב ... (מט-יב)

There is a *Rav* in *Bnei Brak* who is well-known for helping couples with *shalom bayis*. One day he approached a particular young man and congratulated him. "Well done! You succeeded in making *shalom bayis* in so-and-so's home, something which I was unsuccessful for a long time!"

The young man was certain that the *Rav* was mistaken and had approached the wrong person, however the *Rav* was insistent. He smiled and and explained:

"Some years ago, there was a young *yeshivah bochur* who learnt assiduously. You approached his father, tapped him on the shoulder with a big smile and said to him, "Ahhh! What a son you have! He is such a diligent learner, a true *masmid*. Happy are the parents who merited to bring up such a child!"

The young man thought for a few seconds and remembered the incident in question.

The *Rav* continued and said to the young man, "You should know my friend, that these few nice words that you said to the father, re-established his *shalom bayis*. And without intending to, you merited to fulfill the great *mitzvah* of establishing peace between a man and his wife. If only more people would realize what a few kind words can do," said the *Rav*, "I would be out of business!"

Chazal explain the *posuk*, *"His teeth are whiter than milk,"* as follows: *Rebbi Yochanan said, "Greater is one who whitens his teeth to his friend than one who gives him milk to drink."*

This means that a person who smiles at his friend, (revealing the white of his teeth), and through his smile lights up his face to his friend, and relates to him with a friendly appearance, is greater than a person who gives a glass of milk to his friend.

You never know what you can accomplish with one good word and one broad smile!

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO דרגה יתירה

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם... וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בֶּן־מֵאָה וָעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים וַיַּחַנְטוּ אֹתוֹ וַיִּישֶׂם בָּאָרוֹן בְּמִצְרָיִם – (47:28, 50:26)

The *parshiyos* in *Chumash Bereishis* depict the lifespan of a person. ***Bereishis*** is the beginning, when a baby is born. ***Noach*** means to rest, which is what a baby does most of the day, sleeping and resting his tiny body. ***Lech Lecha*** is when that baby begins to walk and pitter patters around taking his first baby steps. ***Vayera*** is when he begins to see and makes his appearance as he grows into adulthood. ***Chayei Sarah*** is the *parsha* of *shidduchim* when he finds his *bashert* and settles down. ***Toldos*** is when he starts having children and begins to raise a family. ***Vayeitzei*** is when he starts to go out and make a

parnassah. ***Vayishlach*** is when he marries off his own children and sends them to build homes of their own. ***Vayeshev*** is when he retires and settles down in his older age. ***Mikeitz*** is the end of his life. ***Vayigash*** represents his meeting with *Hashem* and the *Bais Din shel Maalah*. And finally, *Parshas* ***Vayechi***, the last *parsha* in *Sefer Bereishis*, represents that his soul lives on forever.

Why is *Vayechi* the *parsha* which lives on if it is the *parsha* when *Yaakov Avinu* physically dies? Let it be called *Parshas Vayamas*. The *Parsha* of Death.

But that is just the point. *A yid* never dies. His deeds and *mitzvos* live on forever. A person will come up to *Shamayim* after 120 and will be shocked at the number of good things he has done. He will see for the first time, the amount of people he influenced, not by anything "earth shattering" that he accomplished, but just by being himself and doing something that to him seemed small, but to someone else was huge and actually changed his life!

Parshas Vayechi concludes all the amazing stories about our *Avos* and *Imahos*, the last chapter of the "*Avinu* family"! But it is called *Vayechi* because it is the beginning of life. It is the beginning of the birth of an entire *Am Yisroel*. The smallest actions of our forefathers, shaped the entire nation of Jewish People.

We, too, are the moulders and shapers of the next generation. May all of our wonderful deeds live on forever and may we all be *zoche* to greet *Moshiach Tzidkeinu B'mhera B'yameinu*.

"Hashem helps at the moment when a person doesn't see any natural means for their salvation, because that is when they place their full trust in Hashem." ~ The Chazon Ish.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

אָנֹכִי הֹלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְחָזַקְתָּ וְהָיִיתָ לְאִישׁ - ***'I go the way of all the earth; you shall be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man.'***



With *Dovid Hamelech* laying on his deathbed, he instructed his son Shlomo to remain steadfast in his belief in *Hashem*, as well as to ensure the continuation of *Malchus Bais Dovid*.

Dovid Hamelech praised Shlomo's wisdom and encouraged him to ***"be strong and be a man."***

Rabbeinu Azariah Figo *zt"l* (Sefer Binah Le'itim) writes that obviously a person is obligated to strive to achieve perfection on his own, but the merit of his ancestors can definitely help him reach that goal.

He explains that one's **זכות אבות** - ancestral merit, is like a platform upon which he stands. Depending on the extent of the merit, that platform can be higher or lower, and aside from the fact that he can benefit from that high spiritual status, he must be wary lest he falls from that elevated platform.

Therefore, while there are surely many benefits to having ancestral merit, there are always risks involved as well, for when falling from a higher platform, the fall can be more catastrophic than falling from a lower platform.

Shlomo HaMelech - the next link in the Davidic Dynasty, had an obligation to follow the **דרך הישר**- the straight path, so that he would not detract from his father Dovid's, values.

As a result, *Dovid HaMelech* imparted this message to Shlomo and commanded him to remember this lesson for all time and always refer to himself as the "Son of Dovid" since that will always oblige him to strive to be like him - a lesson we can surely take to heart as well.



Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface by R' Shmuel Winzelberg

וַיְבָרְכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּךָ יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם לִפְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה – *'So, he blessed them that day, saying, "By you shall Israel bless saying, 'May Hashem make you like Ephraim and like Menashe'", and he put Ephraim before Menashe*.' (48:20)

Seemingly, this is problematic. Why are we accustomed to blessing the sons that they should be like Ephraim and Menashe, which is a level that is not possible to attain? It would have been better that the sons should be like the wise men of the generation who are living at that time!

Apparently, one must know that there are various levels of spirituality, and we must strive to reach a very high level. By doing this, one is guaranteed to reach a level that is the best for him. But, if at first he only tries to reach a low level, then he is not guaranteed for anything that he might eventually be. (**Kol Ram – Rav Moshe Feinstein**)

L'Maaseh



A few years after **Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zt"l**, arrived in Eretz Yisroel, and was a Maggid Shiur in the Mirrer Yeshivah, he began experiencing pain in his throat every time he spoke. At first he dismissed it as simply a sore throat, but when the pain became increasingly sharp and it began to affect his ability to deliver his Shiurim in Yeshivah, he went to see a doctor.

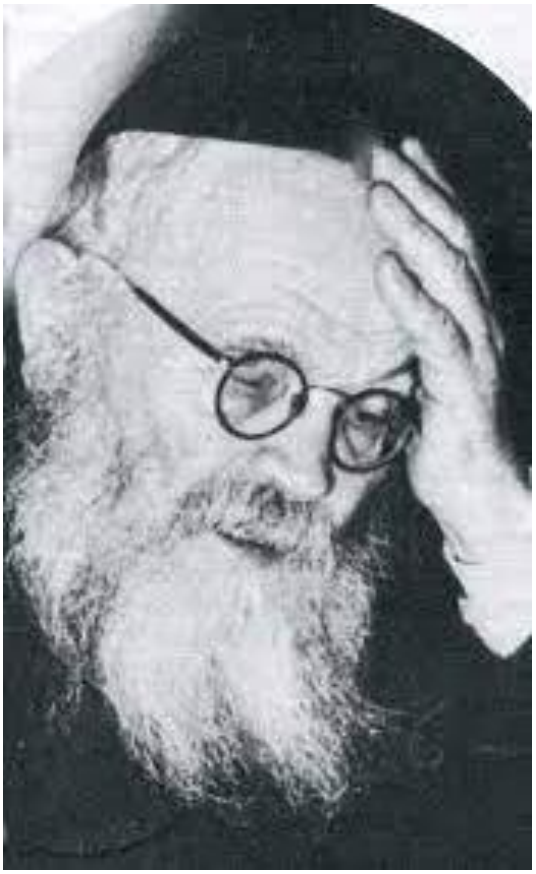
He was sent to one of the most knowledgeable specialists in the field who conducted a very thorough examination, and he also did some testing on the Rav's throat. When the results came back, the doctor informed Rav Chaim and his family that he was suffering from a malignant disease in his throat, R"L.

Rav Chaim's family took the news very hard and questioned the specialist about the various options and treatments. The doctor, attempting to break the difficult news easily, explained to them, "I can operate to remove the growth from the Rav's throat, and this will hopefully save his life. However, it is fairly certain, that even if the surgery is a complete success, he will never be able to speak properly again."

Rav Chaim listened to the doctor's words and understood the ramifications of what he was being told, but he refused to give up hope.

He went to speak with the great Mashgiach, **Rav Elya Lopian, zt"l**, to seek his guidance and advice. Rav Elya listened carefully as Rav Chaim told him what the specialist said. Rav Chaim said, "What

should I do? Right now, I have great pain when I speak, and it is very difficult. But I am still able to speak! If I do this surgery, the doctor believes that I will no longer be able to talk at all!"



Rav Elya responded without hesitation. "I cannot imagine that the **Ribono Shel Olam would take away the ability of 'Rav Chaim** Stutchiner' to continue to say Shiurim to his Talmidim." – [Rav Chaim came from the town of Stutchin and was known to many by this name, Rav Chaim Stutchiner.]

Rav Elya continued, "There is still so much Torah and Mussar that you still have to give over to this world. My opinion is that you do not do this operation."

The words were said with such certainty, that Rav Chaim fully accepted his decision. Rav Elya asked for Rav Chaim's full name and his mother's name, and promised that he would Daven for him to have a complete and speedy recovery.

Rav Chaim returned to his normal routine, and over time, Baruch Hashem, the pain in his throat started to get better. He later came back to the specialist to inform him of his decision to not go through with the surgery. However, as soon as the doctor saw Rav Chaim, even before he had a chance to say anything to the doctor, the specialist decided to take another quick look into his throat, to see how urgent the situation was, and how soon the operation to save his life was to be performed.

But what the doctor saw shocked him. Rav Chaim's throat was absolutely clear! There was no trace of any disease to be found, and Rav Chaim even said that his throat wasn't even sore anymore!

Eight years later, when Rav Elya Lopian passed away, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz was one of the people who gave an emotional Hesped. Rav Chaim cried bitter tears, and he cried out, "When I became deathly ill eight years ago, it was none other than Rav Elya who saved me and returned me to be among the living!

There is no doubt that it was due to him that I am here today. I wish to take this opportunity to publicly offer my most sincere and heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the great Tzadik Rav Elya Lopian!"

The Siddur Speaks

Towards the end of the **Steipler Gaon's** life, zt"l, people around the world Davened for him to have a Refuah Sheleimah and that his energy should be returned to him. However, this was not meant to be, and the Steipler passed away.

Rav David Ashear writes that someone remarked to his son, **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l**, that all the Tefilos that had been said for his father were useless.

Rav Chaim replied, "Chas V'Shalom! I know for a fact that a terrible decree that would have affected a large number of people was avoided because of all those Tefilos!"

Rav Ashear commented that every word of Tefilah helps, and every word is a source of salvation!

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt"l, once said, "**The Maharal of Prague, zt"l**, created a Golem, and this was a great wonder. But how much more wonderful is it to transform a real human being into a Mentch!"

Parshah Thoughts – Ideas and Reflections – Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת אַל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרָיִם - Yaakov asked Yosef to perform a kindness for him and bury him appropriately, according to his wishes (47:29).

The Chidushei HaRim (Likutei Yehuda) observes that the last Mitzvah a person is involved with in this world is when he is buried. At this time, the Niftar becomes the object of the Mitzvah of Levaya, accompanying the deceased.

He adds that at this juncture, where the deceased can no longer perform Mitzvos, he becomes the object of a Mitzvah, and brings merit to others by enabling then to perform Mitzvos with him.



Acquiring Bitachon

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky zt'l and a Lubavitcher chasid were detained in a Soviet prison. One day, an officer informed them that in another twenty-four hours, they would be hung r"l.

Reb Yechezkel was very afraid, but the Lubavitcher chasid remained calm. He asked Reb Yechezkel why he was so worried. Reb Yechezkel replied, "Why shouldn't I be worried? The clock is clicking, time is moving along…!"

The chasid replied, "The clock is ticking, and time moves on, but the Ribono Shel Olam is always here!" - They were saved. Advocates from different countries pressured the Russian government to free these two men.

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky would say that he learned bitachon from this Lubavitcher chasid.

The root of the word **בטחון** is the three letters **בי״ת טי״ת חי״ת**. **The Bas Ayin** (Bamidbar) notes that all three letters have the letters **י״ת** in them when they are spelled out in full.

The gematriya of **ת״י** is 410 - **קדו״ש** , so **בט״ח** hints to **קדוש** . It tells us that with bitachon one can achieve kedushah.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l teaches: "Someone who lives with emunah and bitachon will have yeshuos in ways he never imagined."

Tefillah b'Tzibbur

Moments before Yaakov Avinu's petirah, he gathered his children and said (49:1) **האספו** - "***Assemble yourself***..."

The *Zohar* (*Bereishis* p.234.) says that Yaakov instructed his children to assemble and daven with a minyan. - There are many benefits earned from davening with a minyan.

One benefit is that it is mesugal for parnassah. It states in parashas Mikeitz (42:3) **וַיֵּרְדוּ אֲחֵי־יוֹסֵף עֲשָׂרָה לִשְׁבָּר בָּר מִמִּצְרָיִם** "*Yosef's brothers – ten of them – went down to buy grain from Mitzrayim.*"

Rashi asks why the Torah tells us that there were ten brothers. We can figure out, on our own, that ten brothers went down to Mitzrayim!

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzitz *zy'a* answers: The purpose of this trip was **לשבור בר** , to bring back food and parnassah for their families, and they knew that the success of their mission was dependent on their *tefillos* with a minyan because davening with a minyan is mesugal for parnassah.



It states (Shemos 23:25) **וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֵת ה' אלוקיכם וּבֵרַךְ אֶת־לַחְמְךָ וְאֶת־מֵימֶיךָ וַהֲסִרֹתִי מַחֲלָה מִקִּרְבֶּךָ** - "*You shall worship Hashem your G-d and He will bless your bread and your water, and I shall remove illness from your midst.*"

The Rebbe of Radishitz zt'l teaches that **ועבדתם** means tefillah with a minyan. (That's why it is written in plural tense.) The pasuk says that davening with minyan results in parnassah and health.

The Meor VeShemesh writes, "The primary way to serve Hashem is together with the congregation. This applies to all avodas Hashem aspects: Torah, tefillah, etc … In particular, one must be cautious to daven with a minyan. If he does so, he is guaranteed abundant *parnassah*, and there will be *brachah* in everything he does."

Another benefit of a minyan is that Hashem is there wherever there is a minyan. Perhaps the most significant benefit of all is that the tefillos are answered.

The Beis Aharon *zy'a* writes, "*Tefillah b'tzibur* can help for all matters, just like the tefillos of the *tzaddik hador*."

The Chofetz Chaim (Nidchai Yisrael 5) writes: "Due to our many sins, some people daven at home during the weekdays because they don't appreciate the great mitzvah of davening with a minyan.

Therefore, I feel obligated to write before all about this great mitzvah.

When one davens with a minyan, in addition to increasing Hashem's honor, when he davens with a minyan, he performs several other mitzvos, such as answering Barchu and Amen yehei shmei rabba, and Kedushah. These are so great and very precious before Hashem. These arouse Hashem's love for Yisrael, reminding Hashem of their galus and hastens their redemption.

Chazal say, 'Whoever answers Amen yehei shmei rabba with all his concentration, I will rip up harsh decrees.' In addition, when one davens with a minyan, he performs tens of mitzvos each day because he will answer amen to all the brachos he hears…

Another great benefit is that when he davens with a tzibur, his tefillah is more likely to be answered. As the Gemara (Brachos 8a) states, **"וַאֲנִי תְּפִלָּתִי לְךָ ה' עֵת רָצוֹן". אֵימָתַי עֵת רָצוֹן — בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁהַצִּבּוּר מִתְפַּלְּלִין** - "When is it an eis ratzon for tefillah? It is when the tzibur davens."

Reb Yoel R. On The Parsha - רבי שאול בראך

וידגו לרב בקרב הארץ "…***and they should multiply like fish in the midst of the land***." (48:16)

Rashi explains that Yaakov gave his children the *berachah* that they should multiply like fish in the ocean. Yaakov chose to use fish as the vehicle to bless them to teach us a crucial lesson.

At the time when the Roman government strictly banned Torah learning, Rabbi Akiva continued to teach Torah. When Papus ben Yehuda asked Rabbi Akiva why he wasn't scared for his life, Rabbi Akiva answered with the following *mashal*: A fox was strolling on a riverbank when he saw fish swimming frantically in the water. The fox asked the fish, "Where are you swimming to?"

"We are afraid of the fisherman's net that can catch us," the fish answered back.

"If you come up on the land, I'll protect you," said the fox.

"We can't do that," the fish explained. "If we leave the water we will certainly die."

The Torah is for us like the water is for the fish—our source of life—and without it, we will surely die. While the Romans presented a possible threat, forsaking the Torah meant certain death.

◊◊◊◊ ◊◊◊◊ ***The more Torah, the more life***.

BITACHON POWER!

Rabbi Chayim Tzvi Blau

I heard the following story from **HaGaon HaRav Avraham Chaim Foyer Shlita**:



The Skullener Rebbe was once in jail together with his son. They were stripped from all their Yiddishkeit related possessions. They did not even have their Yarlmuka.

In the jail, the Rebbe turned to his son and told him to come next to him. The Rebbe showed his son that inside of his long jacket there was the letter א sewn in to it. [Perhaps his personal tailor stitched it into his jacket since that was the first letter of the Rebbe's name]

The Rebbe said to his son, "Teffillin, we don't have. Seforim, we don't have. Even a yarmulka we don't have. Hashem, however, did not leave us with nothing, we have the letter "א". Hashem is **אחד**, He is **אלופו של עולם** – He is **מושל** on the entire universe."

The Rebbe continued, "We can still connect ourselves to Hashem even through this little "א".



יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה

The blessing that Yaakov gave them was, "Through you, shall the People of Israel bless saying, '***May Hashem make you as Ephraim and Menashe***…'".

Many parents bless their sons/daughters with this bracha on Friday night (there is a different, befitting blessing for girls).

Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l (in Daas Torah, quoted by **Rav Pam** says that Yaakov filled this bracha with so much blessing that it overflowed.

Accordingly, when one blesses his children with this bracha, it is more than a bracha from parent to son. The bracha is also infused with the power of Yaakov's bracha to Ephraim and Menashe. - We should say this bracha with great concentration to maximize its effect.

"When your heart is heavy and full of anxiety, you can lighten it with enthusiastic prayer to the A-lmighty." ~ R' Bunim of Parshischo zt"l.



Horav Mordechai Gifter זצ"ל

Once during a shiur, **Horav Mordechai Gifter זצ"ל** found a new chiddush that helped everyone understand the Gemarah better. Rav Gifter excitedly said that this is real enjoyment!

The bochurim asked Rav Gifter ifthey can dance because **Rav Simcha Zisel Ziv זצ"ל** always used to dance when he enjoyed a new chiddush.

Rav Gifter agreed, and they all got up and danced in the room. The noise of the dancing was heard in the Bais Medrash, and everyone went to see Rav Gifter and his talmidim dancing from the joy of Torah.

SEFAS TAMIM FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Yisroel Hager ZT"L, the third Rebbe of Vizhnitz, was the son of the saintly Rabbi Baruch of Vizhnitz. He was born on August 20, 1860 and was known as the "Ahavas Yisroel".

In 1893 he was appointed as Rebbe in Vyzhnytsia. He invigorated the Vizhnitzer dynasty and attracted many more followers from the surrounding provinces. He established many Talmud Torahs (small institutions for students with modest backgrounds), and a Yeshiva which was one of the largest dormitory Yeshivas in Europe to which he appointed his son Rabbi Menachem Mendel as Rosh Yeshiva.

He was known for being very careful to always tell the truth. He was also a remarkable Ohaiv Yisroel - a man whose love of people knew no bounds. Once he had to write a response to an inquiry from a

particular Rabbi. When writing a response to a Rabbi, the custom was to address the Rabbi with certain honorifics (e.g. "Our Master", "The Brilliant One", etc.) However, Rav Hager felt that one of the honorifics that he was expected to use did not apply to this particular Rabbi. What should he do? On the one hand, calling the Rabbi by a title that did not apply was not Emes. On the other hand, the Rabbi may be insulted if the honorific was not used.

Rav Hager decided not to respond to the Rabbi in a letter through the mail, but rather to respond by telegram. In this manner, the Rabbi would be honored that a response to his inquiry came so quickly via telegram, and at the same time, the lack of honorifics would not be insulting because the Rabbi would assume that the honorifics were not used, because of the significant expense that would be incurred for each additional word in a telegram.

In this manner, he was able to fulfill both ideals – not hurting another's feelings and always telling the truth.

Rabbi YY Jacobson - Twelve Seconds

Avremi Fizm is eight and a half years old. He lives in Sderot, southern Israel, at the border of Gaza. His parents and grandparents are the Chabad Shluchim in Sderot.

Some weeks ago, he came to the United States to explain to thousands of people in his audience what it's like to grow up in Sderot when thousands of rockets are launched incessantly at your homes and schools, gardens and backyards and streets, and you have 12 seconds to run and find cover. 12 seconds that can distinguish between life and death.

He spoke of the thousands of times in his eight short years when he made it to the bomb shelter after hearing the sirens, and many other times when he could not find cover and had to fall to the ground and protect his head with his hands. Avremi addressed the

thousands of guests at the international banquet of Chabad Shluchim.

"I want to ask you for a small favour," he said. "Close your eyes for twelve seconds. I'll ask to turn off the lights and… let's begin."

…11… 10… 9… 8… 7… 6… 5… 4… 3… 2… 1…0

But then he shocked his audience. Instead of sharing the depth of the fear and anxiety during those 12 seconds, he told the audience how over these years of experiencing these 12 seconds thousands of times, he discovered the power and potential contained in 12 seconds. What can be achieved in 12 seconds?

"I'm sharing this with you," Avremi said, "to inspire growth and for the sake of learning—cherish these 12 seconds!"

In 12 seconds, Avremi said, you can smile from ear to ear toward a fellow human being. In 12 seconds, you can uplift another soul with a loving word or gesture. In 12 seconds, you can recite a blessing with another Jew. In 12 seconds, you can embrace your fellow Jew, bring them joy and offer support and love. In 12 seconds, you can give him or her back their soul and breathe new life into them. And in 12 seconds, as you lay on the ground and protect your head, you can pray that the rocket does not fall on an innocent human being.

In the Jewish tradition, the first thing we say when we wake up every morning takes 12 seconds and consists of 12 words. The first thing we upon opening our eyes is, " **מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיָּם שֶׁהֶחֱזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחֶמְלָה, רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתֶךָ** — '***I thank you, living and eternal King, for You have graciously returned my soul to me, abundant is Your faith in me***.' - You have given me another day. Thank you.

In our personal lives, the enemy within often sends rockets of destructive thoughts and feelings into our hearts. Self-loathing, anger, fear, shame, insecurity, guilt, negativity, toxicity. We have less than 12 seconds to decide if these thoughts will take us over and wreak havoc in our mind and relationships, or our life is too

dignified and precious for us to allow ourselves to be derailed from love and light.

חֲזַק חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזֵּק – "***Be strong, be strong and let us be strengthened.***" Thank you, Avremi, for this priceless and life-changing lesson. We love you.

Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro - Which Mesechta?



I have the privilege of giving a nightly Gemara shiur. A number of years ago, we finished learning one *mesechta* , and we didn't know what the next *mesechta* should be.

With a number of us in the chabura (learning group) in need of *shidduchim* for our children, I was encouraged to ask **Rav Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l*** what *mesechta* is a merit to finding a *shidduch* for our children. Between all of us, there are about fifteen to seventeen members on a given night. I personally had a daughter who was looking for her *bashert*, as did several other members of the shiur.

Along with Rav Nosson Yaffe, I approached Rav Chaim and asked his opinion. Rav Chaim replied, "Mesechta Kiddushin (the tractate which primarily deals with marriage)." Then Rav Chaim added, "But in one day!"

In the most respectful way I could, I explained that there's no possible way that we could learn the entire *mesechta* as a *chabura* in one day. To this, Rav Chaim responded, "It's a kleine mesechta (small mesechta), only 81 blatt."

Rav Chaim, though, had more to add. "But with Tosafos (the running commentary on the side of each page)." I didn't know what to do at this point. Learn the entire mesechta in one day with all of Tosafos?

Rav Nosson Yaffe at this point helped me.

Turning to Rav Chaim, he asked, "But can the Rav say that if they start learning Kiddushin, the *beracha* will work and take effort even if they don't finish in one day?" (Parenthetically, it took us about two years to complete the entire *mesechta).*

Rav Chaim responded, "Yes, the beracha takes effect just for starting." Along with this, Rav Chaim gave us all a tremendous *beracha* for shidduchim.

That year, 13 of us made weddings for our children—myself and 12 others— and the next year, I was asked to tell Rav Chaim the end of the story.

The power invested in the words of Hashem's Torah is as real as can be. Invest in it, and it will invest in you.

"Physical pleasures - more than they nourish the heart, they nourish the eye of one's fellow." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.

Parsha Pearls *(Da'as Zekeinim mi'Ba'alei Tosfos)*

● Ya'akov Exerts Himself

וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה ***"And Yisrael exerted himself, and he sat up on the bed***" (48:2).

Yaakov did not want to bless them lying in bed, says the Da'as Zekeinim M.T., so that they should think that he was a *'shechiv-mera'* (a dying man), whose words cannot be taken too seriously. So he sat on the bed (with his legs over the side, as is evident from the Pasuk at the end of the Parshah 49:33).

● Reuven the Firstborn

רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹרִי... פַּחַז כַּמַּיִם ***"Reuven, you are my firstborn … Hasty like water*** … " (49:3/4).

With one hasty act, Reuven lost just about everything - the birthright, the throne and the priesthood (See Rashi).

All that remained was that the sons of Ya'akov always begin with him. That, says the Da'as Zekeinim M.T., is why Ya'akov Avinu compared him to water. When one pours water out of a vessel, a few drops remain. Had he compared him to something solid, of which nothing would remain in the vessel, then he would not have retained even the little that he did.

● Easy Access for the Ships

זְבוּלֻן לְחוֹף יַמִּים יִשְׁכֹּן וְהוּא לְחוֹף אֳנִיֹּת ***"Zevulun shall dwell by the seashore, and he shall be at the ship's harbour***." (49:13).

To explain the apparent repetition in the Pasuk, the Da'as Zekeinim M.T. points out that many cities are situated by the sea-shore, but they are some distance from the actual harbour, making access to them from the sea difficult, with the result that the ships prefer to dock in a different port. - So, what the Pasuk is telling us here is that with Zevulun, the city will be built on the sea front, giving easy access to the ships.

● The Prophetess Devorah

נַפְתָּלִי אַיָּלָה שְׁלֻחָה הַנֹּתֵן אִמְרֵי־שָׁפֶר ***"Naftali is a hind let loose, who delivers beautiful sayings"*** (49:21).

The first letters of the last three words **הַנֹּתֵן אִמְרֵי־שָׁפֶר**, says the Rosh, spell '**אשה**' (a woman). This he says, hints at Devorah who descended from Naftali, and who sang beautiful words of praise (in the form of Shiras Devorah).

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

לְכוּ נְרַנְּנָה לה׳ - O' come, let us sing to Hashem.

We begin Kabbolas Shabbos with the recitation of six perakim, psalms, of Tehillim. The number six is, of course, an allusion to the six workdays which lead up to Shabbos. The theme of these psalms is the advent of Hashem's kingdom on earth when the entire world will enjoy **יוֹם שֶׁכֻּלּוֹ שַׁבָּת וּמְנוּחָה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָמִים**; "***The day which be completely a Shabbos and rest day for eternal life***." - This world-wide Shabbos will outshine the Shabbos which we experience weekly after a six-day work week. In the time of Moshiach, it will always be Shabbos.

Yalkut Me'am Loaz posits that **לְכוּ נְרַנְּנָה** addresses the days of Moshiach, once we are rid of our enemies and life is tranquil. We then sing out of gratitude. Alternatively, the commentators feel that Lechu Neranenah addresses the period of Kibutz galiyos, ingathering of the exiles, which precedes Moshiach. Thus, this psalm encourages the exiles not to worry, but rather, to adhere to the Torah, so that the galus in which we live will come to a speedy end.

Horav Moshe Kordovero, zl, the author of Tomar Devorah (and other Sifrei Kabbalah) organized the six psalms and initiated them as part of welcoming the Shabbos Queen. He was the brother-in-law of **Horav Shlomo Alkabetz, zl**, author of the Lecha Dodi piyut. He was also the Rebbe of the **Arizal**.

"Don't consider any deed small, because what is small to you, is enormous in Hashem's eyes. - We can compare it to the sun. We see the sun moving a small distance in the sky, but it is actually moving a far greater distance in heaven." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

Parsha Pearls



Chazal guide us in how one should make a *bracha*: **וְלֹא יְזָרוֹק בְּרָכָה מִפִּיו** - "***And a person should not throw a blessing out of his mouth***." [Brachos 47a]

Based on these words of our mesorah, the *Mishna Berura* (5:1) explains how a Jew should make a *bracha*: **כמו שאחז"ל [ברכות מ"ז] שלא יזרוק הברכה מפיו אלא יכוין בעת האמירה ויברך בנחת** "*...as our sages of blessed memory said that one should not throw a blessing out of his mouth. Rather, he should direct his heart at the time of saying it, and he should* ***say the blessing slowly***."

In this week's parsha, Yaakov Avinu blesses Naftoli in the following way: **נַפְתָּלִי אַיָּלָה שְׁלֻחָה הַנֹּתֵן אִמְרֵי־שָׁפֶר** – '*Naftoli is a deer that was sent to run; he delivers* ***words of beauty***.' (Bereishis 49:21). - What are these "words of beauty"?

Targum Onkolos translates this verse in the following way: "*Naftali - in a good land his lot fell; and his inheritance will produce fruits; they will thank and bless [HaShem] for them*." Hence, Naftoli's "**words of beauty**" are the *brachos* on fruits that he will say before eating them.

What a *beautiful* lesson the Torah is teaching us here! When we make *brachos*, they are "words of *beauty*" in the eyes of *HaShem*! - If so, let's make sure to say our *brachos* in a way that they will truly deserve that title.



The Lists - The Power of Simchah by Rabbi Meyer Yedid

Years ago, I attended a very powerful lecture that has resonated with me until today, and I would like to pose the same challenge to each reader that the speaker posed to the audience back then:

Stop reading for a moment and take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns. In the right column, write down as many things you can think of that you do have in life. If your parents are alive, put that on the list; if only one parent is alive, write that down. Write about your children, friends, eyes, legs, fingers, knees… Then you can move onto your house, job, car, and all other material possessions. - Obviously, one column on a paper will barely hold all of it, but it is a good start. - When you finish with that list, use the left column to record the things you are missing in life.

The speaker predicted something amazing back then, and I suspect the same thing happened with all of you: For every member of the audience, the column on the right was endless, while the column on the left had only a few entries. For some people, it might have been five or ten things, for some a bit more, but no one had a long list. But it wasn't only that the list on the left was shorter. The items on the left side of the list were far less significant as well.

Take a look at the lists you drew up. What did you have on the list of things you're missing? $20 million in your bank account?

Now look at the right side of your list. How much is each eye worth? If eye transplants were possible, and a blind rich person offered you $20 million for your eye, would you give it up?

Every item on the right side of your list likely eclipses the items on the left in a one-for-one comparison. And, the speaker said, if you have all those items on the right side of your list and you are still not happy, why would you think that adding just one item from the left side of the list will suddenly change things for you?

Our emotions might tell us that it's that one thing that will make us happy, but intellectually, it's ridiculous.

Ne'arim - Rav Chaim Kanievsky on Chumash compiled by Rabbi Shai Graucher

הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל־רָע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ *'May the angel who redeems me from all evil bless the lads, and my name be declared upon them, and the names of my forefathers Avraham and Yitzchak, and may they proliferate abundantly like fish within the land.' (48:16).*

A simple calculation can tell us that Menashe and Ephraim were, at this time, 22 years of age:

• Yosef was 30 years old when he was brought before Pharaoh (41:46). That marked the beginning of the seven years of plenty.

• Yosef was 34 years old when Menashe and Ephraim were born (*Sefer HaYashar*). Obviously, when the years of famine commenced, they were three years old.

• Yaakov came down to Egypt following two years of famine (45:6). Menashe and Ephraim would then have been 5.

• Yaakov lived in Mitzrayim for 17 years (48:28). Therefore, Menashe and Ephraim were now 22 years old.

In *Midrash Mishlei* (1:4), Rav Yishmael says that the appellation **נַעַר** - a young man, can only be applied to someone who is under the age

of 20. After that point, he can no longer be called *naar*. - How could Yaakov have referred to his 22-year-old grandsons here as **נְעָרִים**?

Rav Chaim explained that we find elsewhere that older people are referred to as **נְעָרִים**. The *pasuk* in *Yehoshua* (6:23) says, **וַיָּבֹאוּ הַנְּעָרִים הַמְרַגְּלִים**, *So they entered, the ne'arim, the spies*."

One of those spies was Pinchas, who was certainly considerably older than 20 by that time, yet they are called *ne'arim*.

Rashi there explains: **כָּאן הָיוּ צְרִיכִים זֵירוּז וְנַעֲשׂוּ כִּנְעָרִים זְרִיזִים** "***Here haste was needed, and they acted with alacrity, like ne'arim***."

While the word **נַעַר** indicates youth, it can also be applied allegorically, for someone who acts with the speed or strength associated with the young.

Here too, said Rav Chaim, Yaakov referred to his grandsons as *ne'arim* not because of their age, but because of their penchant to eagerly and rapidly rush to honour their grandfather.

A Lesson Can Be Learned From…….

One of the followers of **R' Aharon of Karlin** complained constantly that his wife demeaned him and made his life miserable. Finally, when he appeared to have reached his "limit", the Rebbe gave him a brocho. When he arrived home, all was well – no nagging or criticizing. The man was overjoyed.

However, the next day, a wagon-driver started yelling at him on the street, and the next day, a strange woman accused him of bad behavior.

When he came to Karlin next, the Rebbe asked him: "Wasn't it better to get all your Bizyonos at home, in private?"



A תַּלְמִיד in the Telz יְשִׁיבָה had decided that the time had come for him to leave יְשִׁיבָה to go to college. He passed by a room where **R' Mordechai Gifter** זַצַ"ל had just finished learning, and saw how the ראֹשׁ יְשִׁיבָה kissed his גְּמָרָא with tremendous love and גְעֶשמאַק.

The בָּחוּר later related that after witnessing this beautiful display of אַהֲבַת הַתּוֹרָה, he thought, "If someone could love תּוֹרָה so much, how could I leave יְשִׁיבָה"?

Sage Sayings

Source: Article in Yated Ne'eman

R' Mordechai Gifter זַצַ"ל would often shout something encouraging when he saw the boys playing ball. When they looked at him in surprise, wondering why the ראֹשׁ יְשִׁיבָה was cheering them on, he would explain: " אַ מענטש דאַרף אַלץ טאָן מיט זיין גאַנצע כּחַ! — A person must do everything he does with all of his strength! אַזוי דאַרף זיין אין לעבן! — This is the way it must be in life!"

Many times, Rashi writes in his interpretation: "I do not know what this teaches us." - Would it not have been preferable for him to have written nothing? We learn from this, if you do not know the meaning of something that you need, say so. ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.

powerful PRAYER

BIRKAS HAMAZON: EATING TOGETHER

The Mishnah tells us that three people who have eaten together must make a *zimun*. Rav Hirsch gives a reason: The struggle for *parnassah* can turn a person egoistic and competitive. Thus, the Rabbanim emphasized communal meals. When three or more eat together, one must invite the others to *bentch*. Thus, the idea is impressed upon them that Hashem is the sustainer of life, and He is equally close to all of them. Jealous competition vanishes, and brotherhood takes its place. We no longer see our neighbor's good fortune as decreasing our own—we know that our Father has enough love for all of us to have what we need.

Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM
Lights Of Our Righteous

Gedolim Be'Masayhem
Stories & Anecdotes

Rav Yaakov Horowitz Zera Yaakov (Teves 19)

● Next Year In Jerusalem

On Pesach he had the custom to take the afikoman wrapped in a white napkin over his shoulder and recite the pesukim related to the way that Bnei Yisroel carried their matzos wrapped on their backs.

He walked this way for dalet amos (four cubits) and those seated asked him: "From where do you come? And he answered: I come from Mitzrayim (Egypt). And then they asked him, "And where are you

headed?" He answered: "Yerushalayim"—to which they would all answer: "Next year in Jerusalem!"

● The Celestial Snuffbox

The Melizter had the custom to spin his large snuffbox seven times around in a circle before taking a pinch of snuff. His father, the **Ropshizter** used to say: "When my son spins his snuffbox around seven times, he is controlling the orbits of the seven planets."

● The Tzadik Whose Clothes Rejected Him

The Melizter Rebbe had a unique stringency. He would not wear any article of clothing before it had been toiveled (immersed in the mikvah). Only after it was toiveled, did the rebbe wear it. Not only did the tzaddik adhere strictly to this custom, the rebbe could detect when any clothing offered to him had not yet been toiveled. If he was handed a new beketshe or challatel (the satin house robe worn at meals-- as opposed to the silk robe called a "kaftan" or "beketshe" worn for prayers) which was not purified in this manner, he was simply unable to put them on. How could he tell?

It once happened that the Melizter traveled to Zavna for Shabbos. The family was hurrying to leave and somehow in the rush, the gabbai forgot to take the rebbe's new challatel to the mikvah to be toiveled! The gabbai reasoned that there was no time now and he simply tossed the robe in with the rest of the clothes onto the wagon as they headed off to spend Shabbos in Zavna.

Friday night, when the Leil Shabbos tisch commenced, the rebbe finished reciting Kiddush and removed the beketshe. As was his custom, he prepared to don his challatel, wash to say haMotzi, and begin the meal.

As the gabbai handed the rebbe the new challatel to wear, a strange thing happened. Try as he might, the rebbe failed again and again to get his arm into the robe. After this occurred several times and the

rebbe saw that he simply could not put the challatel on, he turned to his gabbai and asked, "Was this challatel toiveled in the mikvah?"

The embarrassed gabbai admitted that it had, in fact, not been immersed. "So sorry rebbe, but there just wasn't any time to toivel it," he said. The rebbe just chuckled and put his kaftan back on. That meal, the Melizter sat in a kaftan instead of the challatel that had never been in the mikvah waters.

The incident should have ended there, but there in attendance, were the sons of Rav Mordechai Dovid of Dombrova. "Do you mean to tell us that the rebbe doesn't wear clothing that hasn't been toiveled in the mikvah?" they challenged. "Do you expect us to believe he can actually tell this somehow? What does he have-- ruach hakodesh?"

The gabbai had explained to them that not only did the rebbe somehow know that the clothes were not immersed in the mikvah, he couldn't wear them. It was as if he was repelled or repulsed by them.

"We for ourselves have to see this work!" they concluded. They contrived a test to see if it was true.

They secretly took the new challatel and hid it beneath the pillow of the rebbe's chair back at his hotel room. When the rebbe concluded his tisch, they asked to accompany him and he gladly agreed.

When the tzaddik entered his hotel room he attempted to sit on the chair and conduct the second peiros tisch where he distributed fruits for dessert, but he couldn't do so. He kept getting up as if somehow the chair rejected him.

"Why can't I sit in this chair?" wondered the rebbe out loud. He began to move the chair around the whole while searching among the cushions and pillows until his hand touched a length of material folded among them. He grabbed hold of his find and said, "Aha I have you now!" the rebbe snapped his fingers in a winning gesture, "Here is the culprit! This challatel was not yet in the mikvah. So strange; how did it get mixed among the cushions and pillows of the

chair?" He removed the offending garment and sat down with a sigh and proceeded to conduct the tisch to the astonishment of the Dombrover's sons.

Still, somehow not entirely convinced, the brothers thought up another trial to verify what came across to them as unbelievable. "Let's see one more time if he discovers it," they reasoned.

This time they hid the untoiveled challatel among the straw of the Melizter's bed. When the tzaddik attempted to lie down to rest, at the behest of the Dombraver's sons, he could not do so. Again, the bed seemed to repel him. Repeatedly, the Melizter Rebbe tried to lie down and rest-- and with each attempt, he sprung up as if rebuffed.

The rebbe began to search the straw beneath the mattress to see what was going on when he found the challatel buried in the straw, "Aha here is the problem!" the rebbe snapped his fingers victoriously. "Out with you! This explains why I couldn't rest; the challatel that didn't make it into the mikvah is here.

Removing the offensive item, the rebbe said, "Now I can rest." The tzaddik now comfortably positioned himself on his bed while the Dombrova's sons finally admitted that they had witnessed the impossible.

"The Melizter Rebbe really could not wear or bear any garment that had not been immersed in the mikvah," admitted one.

"He must be a holy tzaddik," agreed the others. "Hashem watches over His chassidim!" they fervently concluded.

● The Passing Of The Meilitzer Rebbe

It was on Shabbos Kodesh parshas VaYechi as the Melizter sat with the chassidim at the shalosh seudos tisch when he said on the pasuk: Bereishis 49:1 "And Yaakov called his sons and said, 'Gather 'round and I shall reveal to you what will happen at the end of time.'" He

then said, "Yaakov (referring to himself) called out to Hashem and asked him to serve as The Father for his young children."

With these final words of Torah, he passed away on 19th Teves during the auspicious time of shalosh seudos.

Divrei Torah, Ba`er Heitev. באר היטב פרש"י בע' לשון. דברי תורה, שמחה וחיזוק.

בס"ד פרשת ויחי - תשפ"ד

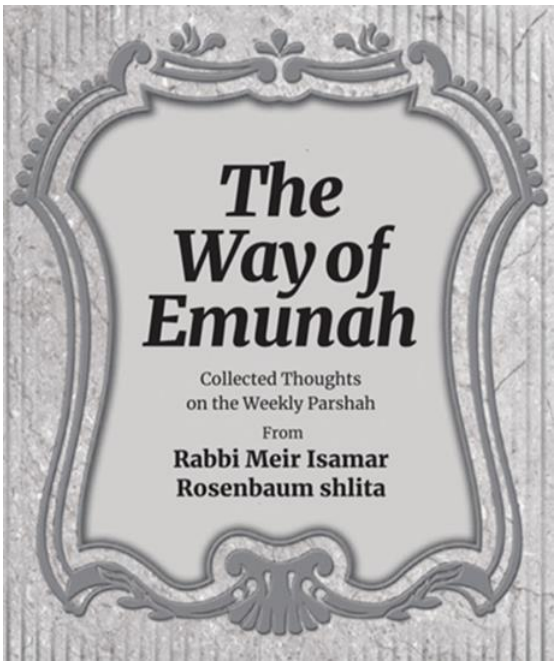
PARSHAS VAYECHI 5784 Vol. 15 No. 12



Rav Avrohom Elimelech of Karlin Zy"a Hy"d, on one of his four travels to Eretz Yisroel was traveling with his Chossid **Rav Zalmen Brizel Zy"a**. It was a hot dry day, and the Rebbe was very thirsty. Reb Zalmen had a bottle of water, but they did not have a cup to drink from. Understandably, the Rebbe would not drink straight from the bottle. Reb Zalmen had an '*ugerkeh*' – cucumber with him. He hollowed out the cucumber and the Rebbe was able to drink.

From the above directions and actions of our Tzadikim we must learn to serve Hashem in every aspect of our lives.

"Speaking hurtfully to someone is worse than hitting him. When you hit someone, you affect his body. Words go much deeper. Moreover, bruises eventually heal. But the negative effects of words may never be healed." ~ The Vilna Gaon.



וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת 'And the days for Yisroel to die drew close...' (47:29)

● A Person's Days are Calculated

The Zohar Hakadosh asks: A person only dies on one day. Why does it say that the "days" for Yisroel to die were drawing close (with "days" being in the plural)?

The Zohar answers that when Hashem determines that it is time for a person to leave this world, all of the days of the person's life come close to Him and they are all calculated. - It concludes, "*Fortunate is a person if all his days come before the King with no shame or embarrassment, so that none of them are rejected. Such days are 'drawn close' by Hashem. Woe to the wicked people. Their days are full of sins and cannot be drawn close to Hashem.*"

Accordingly, it is stated that the days of Yisroel were being drawn close to Hashem as he prepared to die. This is not referring to the day of his death. Rather, it means that all of his days drew close to Hashem at this time.

Sefer Otzros Hatorah relates that **Rav Moshe Leib of Sosov zy"a** once traveled to raise funds for a mitzvah and was away from home for quite a while. When he finally got home, his children surrounded him and asked, "Tatte, what gift did you bring back for us?" - Since he had nothing to give, he tried to push them off but when they continued to plead with him for a gift, he suddenly fainted.

When he was revived, he was asked why he had such a reaction. Why did his children's request for a present cause him to collapse?

He answered, "I didn't faint because of their request. Rather, they caused me to think about how it will look when I go 'home' from my long journey in this world and meet my Father in Heaven. He will ask

me, 'What did you bring Me from your long trip? How much Torah and mitzvos did you bring for Me?'

It will be so embarrassing if I don't have much to give Him…"

● Bringing a "Shmek Tabak" to Olam Haba

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l grew up in the city of Zhetl, which was near Vilna. In Vilna, there lived a man of limited intelligence who would trek several miles on foot to Zhetl every day in order to get a pinch of snuff (a "shmek tabak") from the gabbai of the shul. He would then turn around and walk back home to Vilna.

The Chofetz Chaim would relate this story as an analogy for our lives on this world. He would say that when we go to the World of Truth, we will be asked what we brought from our long journey of so many years on this world. At that time, we will realize that all we managed to get from our trip was "a shmek tabak"!

● Aren't You Worried About How You Will Die?

It is related that when the **Alter of Novardhok, Rav Yoizel Horowitz zt"l**, was a young man, he once met **Rav Itzele Blazer of Petersburg zt"l**. This occurred after the Alter's father-in-law stopped supporting him and he was forced to spend a lot of time engaged in business.

Rav Itzele asked him, "Why did you leave your studies and enter the world of commerce?" The Alter replied, "I have a big family. If I don't work, how will I live."

Rav Itzele said, "And aren't you worried about how you will die?"

This question found its mark in the Alter's heart and led him to return to his learning and to his ascension to greatness.

Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend.

One Can Accomplish Much Good When He Visits The Sick

וַיַּגֶּד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בִנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה

'Behold, your son Yosef is coming to you. And Yisroel strengthened himself and he sat on the bed.' (48:2)



Tzadikim famously say that when one visits a sick person, he can daven for him, even if he does not know his name. This is learned from Moshe Rabeinu, who asked Hashem to heal Miriam without mentioning her name (Bamidbor 12:13).

Since the Shechinah is there, the visitor can accomplish both great things for the sick person and for himself, as he can ask the Shechinah for whatever he needs.

מֵאֵ-ל אָבִיךָ וְיַעְזְרֶךָּ וְאֵת שַׁ-דַּ-י וִיבָרְכֶךָּ...

'From the G-d of your father, and He will help you, and with the A-lmighty, and He will bless you...' (49:25)

● One Who Believes in Hashem Merits Receiving His Help

Sefer Divrei Yisroel translates the verse as follows: "Mei'al avicha" – when one believes and trusts that everything is from our Father in Heaven, and everything is orchestrated with Divine Providence. "V'ya'azrecha" – then He will help him and send His salvation.

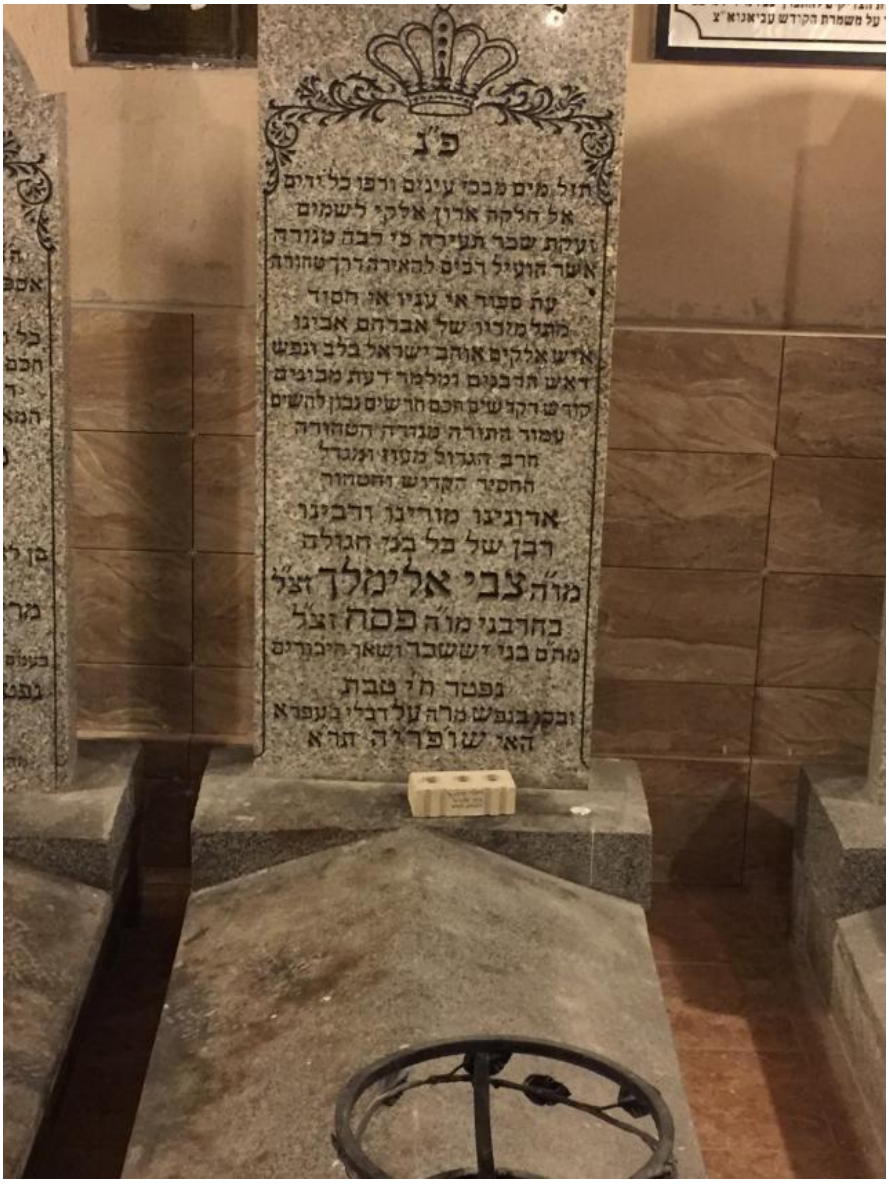
● One Who is Satisfied with Little Receives a Lot

Alternatively, the **Divrei Shmuel** explains: "Mei'al avicha" – if one recognizes that Hashem is his father who certainly wants to help

him like a father desires to help his son. "V'ya'azrecha" – he will then receive His help.

"And Shakai will bless you" –the name "Shakai refers to the trait of being satisfied with little (Chagigah 12A; Zohar Hakadosh Pinchos 251B). When a person is happy with what he has, Hashem will provide him with a lot of blessings.

18 Teves, The Yahrzeit of the Bnei Yissochor Rav Tzvi Elimelech ben Rav Pesach of Dinov Zy"a



● Meriting the Revelation of Eliyahu

The Tosher Rebbe zy"a (quoted in Sefer Avodas Avodah) related that the father of the Bnei Yissochor zy"a, **Rav Pesach zt"l**, was a poor man who made a living by hiring himself out as a melamed. He would travel to far-flung towns to teach children for several months and would then return home for yomtov with some money to support his family.

One year, Rav Pesach was on his way home for Pesach when he passed through a certain village. In that village, he heard that the innkeeper

was behind on his rent, and the local landowner was planning on imprisoning him in a pit as punishment.

Rav Pesach felt so bad for the man that he gave the Poritz all the money he had earned over the course of the winter in order to redeem the innkeeper, leaving himself penniless.

When he arrived in his town, he did not want to go home emptyhanded, so he wandered the streets.

His family heard the news that their father had come to town but was embarrassed to come home, so they sent a messenger to tell him that he need not be ashamed because they trusted that Hashem would help them and that He would provide for them for yomtov.

The Bnei Yissochor, who was a young boy at the time, walked together with the messenger to look for his father. They found him and the three began walking home together.

As they walked, a Poritz passed by in a fancy carriage. As he whipped his horses, a bag fell from his hand and landed on the ground. The Poritz did not notice and continued on his way. Rav Pesach picked up the bag and found that it was full of money.

The young boy said to his father, "Maybe we shouldn't take the money. The Poritz will come back and he will lock us up for stealing his money!"

His father told him, "Don't worry. Hashem will help us. Take the money and use it to make yomtov."

At the Seder, when they reached the time to open the door for Eliyahu, Rav Pesach asked the Bnei Yissochor to open it.

When he opened the door, he exclaimed, "Tatte! The Poritz is here. He came for his money!"

The "Poritz" actually was Eliyahu Hanavi, who had come to help them in their time of need.

● Two Minds, to Listen and Write

There was a certain woman who would come to the Bnei Yissochor from time to time to bemoan her plight in life and ask for his bracha. He would always give her a warm blessing.

After his petirah, the woman began to go to the **Tzemach Tzadik, Rav Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz zt"l**. When she came to the Tzemach Tzadik for the first time and handed over her kvitel and pidyon, the Rebbe gave her his blessings. She then said to him, "That's not how my old Rebbe did it…"

The Tzemach Tzadik asked what she meant, and she said, "My old Rebbe would write down whatever I asked for in his notebook…It is known that he had two brains. That is how he was able to write chidushei Torah while he simultaneously accepted kivtlach and listened to requests for brachos. And I knew that his blessings would always be fulfilled."

She related that another woman once came to him and told him all her problems. As she spoke, he continued writing his chidushei Torah, and she thought that he wasn't listening to her. This caused her to start crying and she asked, "Why doesn't the Rebbe want to help me?"

He told her, "I heard everything you said. If you want, I can repeat every word you said to me over the past 10 years back to you!"

● Answering a Fool

The Bnei Yissochor first official position was as Rov of the city of Ribititch. It was very difficult to obtain this position as all applicants had to pass a test from the Rosh Hakahal.

This man was very smart, but he also was completely ignorant in regards to Torah. He would ask very clever questions that were based on a complete lack of knowledge and, therefore, were unanswerable. Therefore, he rejected applicant after applicant. When the Bnei Yissochor went to be tested, the Rosh Hakahal asked

him, "Are you a lamdan? Do you know how to learn?" He answered that he was.

The Rosh Hakahal then asked, "Do you know what sedrah we will be reading this week?"

The Bnei Yissochor answered that it was Parshas Yisro.

The man then asked, "Who was Yisro?"

The Bnei Yissochor replied, "He was the head priest of Midyan."

"How many daughters did he have?" the Rosh Hakahal asked.

"Seven," the Bnei Yissochor answered.

The Rosh Hakahal then asked, "If he was a priest, how could he have seven daughters? Priests don't get married, so how could he have children?"

The Bnei Yissochor immediately answered, "This was before Matan Torah. At that time, it was still permitted for them to marry."

The Rosh Hakahal liked this answer and he proclaimed, "You really are a lamdan. You will be our Rov."

He accepted that position and served as Rov of the city for a number of years.

● *A Chasid Needs Extra Protection from the Yeitzer Hara*

The Modzhitzer Rebbe zy"a (Sefer Divrei Yisroel, Parshas Vayeitzei) related the following vort that he heard in his youth from a chasid who heard it directly from the Bnei Yissochor:

The pasuk in Tehillim states (86:2): שָׁמְרָה נַפְשִׁי כִּי־חָסִיד אָנִי -"***Protect my soul because I am a chasid***." Does only a chasid need protection?

The answer is seen from Chazal (Kiddushin 30B), who say that if one meets the "menuval" (the yeitzer hara), he should drag him into the bais medrash. This is referring to times when the yeitzer hara tries to seduce a person to do an aveirah by trying to convince him that it is, in fact, a mitzvah. Chazal advise us to drag him into the bais

medrash and to say, "You claim that this is a mitzvah. Show me in the Shulchan Aruch where this mitzvah is listed."

For a simple person, this plan is sufficient. But if the individual is a chasid, the yeitzer hara will tell him, "It isn't a mitzvah in the Shulchan Aruch. It is lifnim m'shuras hadin! - Since you are a chasid who goes beyond the letter of the law, you have to do it."

The only solution at this point is to turn to Hashem and beg Him, "Protect me from the yeitzer hara because I am a chasid."

● The Hidden Power of Holiness in His Words

The Vayechi Yosef of Pupa zy"a (quoted in the introduction to Sefer Vayaged Yaakov) related the following in the name of **Rav Yaakov Yichizkiya of Chustz zt"l**:

Rav Yaakov Yichizkiya once entered the room of **Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz zy"a** and gave the Rebbe a kvitel. There also was another chasid in the room who handed the Rebbe a kvitel, upon which was written that his name was "Tzvi Elimelech."

The Rebbe asked the man, "Who are you named after?" The man answered that he was named after Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov.

The Belzer Rebbe then asked him if he learned his namesake's sefarim, and the man replied that he learned Sefer Bnei Yissochor.

The Rebbe then said, "I would advise you to learn Sefer Igra D'Kallah because those are the words that he said in front of crowds of Yidden and there is a great power of holiness hidden within them."

● Ruach Hakodesh Emanating from the Bais Medrash

Rav Hertzka of Ratzfort zy"a once entered the room of his Rebbe, the **Sanzer Rov zy"a**, right before tekiyas shofar, and he found the Rov learning Sefer Bnei Yissochor, which had just recently been printed. He was surprised that his Rebbe would be learning a new sefer at such a solemn time and expressed his puzzlement.

At his tish that night, the Rov explained, "How am I supposed to deal with the chasidim of today? They peak to see which sefer the Rebbe is learning. Why can't they understand that if the Rebbe is learning a sefer, it can be assumed that the author possessed ruach hakodesh."

● The Body Rose from the River

A tragedy once occurred when a man named R' Avrohom drowned in a river. The Chevrah Kadisha arrived and searched for the body for several hours, but they could not locate it. They went to the Bnei Yissochor and asked him what to do.

He went with some of his chasidim to the river and said, "River, what do you think? Do you think we can't do what Rav Pinchos ben Yair did? Do you think we can't split the waters? I command you to spit our R' Avrohom! If you don't, I will decree that you should dry up and never flow again!"

As soon as he finished speaking, a wave arose from the river and threw R' Avrohom to the shore, thus allowing the Chevrah Kadisha to bring him to his final resting place.

● Opening a New Road for His Rebbi, the Chozeh of Lublin

When the Bnei Yissochor was a young man, he would frequent the home of the Chozeh of Lublin zy"a. One time, he was on his way to Lublin when he came upon a carriage being pulled by four horses.

The rich man who was riding in the carriage saw a young man walking on the side of the road, he asked him, "Yungerman, where are you headed?"

The Bnei Yissochor replied that he was going to see the Rebbe of Lublin and the rich man said, "Very good. I am also going to see him. Climb aboard my carriage."

The Bnei Yissochor took the ride and got on the carriage. After he boarded, the rich man noticed that he looked hungry and tired, so

he took out some whiskey and honey cookies and offered them to him.

After eating and drinking, the Bnei Yissochor said, "You have revived me. I will repay you by speaking on your behalf to the Rebbe."

The rich man found this humorous. He thought to himself: I am a wealthy man, and this guy is young and poor. Does he really think I need him to speak to the Rebbe on my behalf?

When they arrived in Lublin, they parted ways. The rich man went to his hotel and the Bnei Yissochor went to his boarding house. The Bnei Yissochor then went to the Chozeh, with the wealthy man coming to the Rebbe a few hours later.

When he got there, he found the door to the Rebbe's room locked. He peaked into the keyhole and saw that the Rebbe was sitting with the young man he had given a ride to and conversing with him. He was amazed by this because he had assumed that he was a simple man.

When the door was opened for him, the rich man entered and handed his kvitel and pidyon to the Chozeh. He wrote that he had not yet been blessed with children and asked for a bracha for a yeshua.

When the Chozeh read the kvitel, he said, "I see that you will have children, but they will not live very long."

The man began to tremble and he almost fainted from shock. He turned to the Bnei Yissochor and motioned to him for help. The Bnei Yissochor then said, "Rebbe, please read the kvitel again."

The Chozeh read it a second time and repeated the same thing. The Bnei Yissochor then asked him to read it a third time. He did so, and again said the same thing.

The Bnei Yissochor then said, "If so, the Rebbe should daven to Hashem and arrange for the children to live long lives."

The Chozeh replied, "I see that you have opened a new road for me with your words. With this road, Hashem will grant him children who will live long."

And so it was. The Chozeh gave his blessing, and it was fulfilled.

● **He Had the Ability to Hasten the Redemption**

The Munkatcher Rebbe zy"a (Sefer Divrei Torah, Mahadura 6, Ois 111) writes as follows: My grandfather, Rav Tzvi Elimelech zy"a, author of Bnei Yissochor, once sadly said, "Ribono Shel Olam, You know well that if we wanted to bring close the ultimate geulah, we could break through the walls and tear them apart. But what can we do? You made us promise not to cause the redemption through strength. But we do have to daven for the geulah!"

May his memory be a blessing for all of Klal Yisroel.



A person who seeks to grow in Torah isn't holding on the same level one year later. Although delving deeper and fine-tuning one's skills is certainly a part of this growth, it is mostly accomplished by simply learning more.

R' Shimshon Pinkus explains that growth in the avodah of tefilah is very much the same. Although part of it is fine tuning one's approach to tefilah, meaning his kavana and relationship with Hakadosh Boruch Hu, however, much of the avodah is simply davening in any and all circumstances, despite the difficulties and challenges. In short, the way to shteig in tefilah, is to just daven, daven, daven!

Maasei Emunim

A Story About Amen and Tefillah

Tefillah in the Inferno



The shul in Kibbutz Be'eri

Amidst the horrific tragedy that struck our nation on that black day, Simchas Torah 5784, and among the chilling stories that froze the heart of every human being, there were also many wondrous accounts of people who were spared the inferno with unbelievable Hashgachah pratis.

Among the stories of miracles and yeshuos that gave chizuk and brought people closer was that of the Fricker family, from Kibbutz Be'eri. Many residents of the kibbutz were murdered on that day, and the family was miraculously spared, while blood and smoke and fire raged around them.

Mrs. Fricker is an unusual figure in Kibbutz Be'eri. As a believing woman who is strict to uphold Jewish traditions, she worked with determination but with charm, to bring the light of Hashem to the kibbutz. She worked tirelessly and after many years, was able to realize her dream of having a shul in Kibbutz Be'eri. Although there was a lot of pushbacks by some members of the kibbutz to having a shul, after it opened, it became evident that there was a deep-rooted desire for a shul in the kibbutz.

If at first, she thought that the shul would serve as a spiritual home for the few families that had been interested in the first place, she later found out how many more people had a desire to connect with something holy. In the years since the shul opened, it has been full on Shabbos and chaigim. If that was not enough, the shul that was built with love and dedication, also drew many people who needed yeshuos to the kibbutz. They came to the shul, davened there, and in many cases, saw exceptional yeshuos.

Mrs. Fricker invested her heart and soul into caring for the shul, both externally and spiritually. And as it turned out, there was truth to the words that its entire existence depended on her, and her existence depended on it…

Simchas Torah: At 6:30 in the morning, after a joyous and exciting night at the shul, the Fricker family woke up, like millions of residents of Israel, to the familiar yet chilling sound: air raid sirens. As residents of the Gaza Envelope region who are used to such sirens, they ran to their reinforced room, knowing that within a few minutes they could emerge and hurry to the davening and hakafos of Simchas Torah that would take place on the kibbutz's shul, with the Sefer Torah that had recently been donated.

But a few minutes after they entered the room, the family realized that something was different. The frequency of the explosions, the unusual sounds of gunfire, along with frantic messages from the kibbutz headquarters slowly drew a picture of the horror story that will be forever etched in the history of Am Yisrael, written in the blood of some 1,500 Jews who were slaughtered for belonging to the Jewish people.

From the frantic messages, the family realized that in the natural course of things, within minutes, the terrorists would burst into their home. They realized the tremendous danger they were in, and all they could do was remain barricaded into the reinforced room, and with their bit of strength, to grip the doorknob in a desperate

effort to prevent the terrorists from opening it. At the last moment, they managed to bring into their home a neighbor who was frightened and alone. So, they were six people in a small, crowded room, without food or water, waiting in terror for what was to come.

Through the closed door, the family heard the terrorists tearing into their yard, as they hollered frightfully, shooting in every direction, and sowing destruction wherever they went.

If that was not enough, because Mrs. Fricker's home is in a strategic point in the kibbutz, and from its roof, one can look out to the roads in the area, Hamas decided to turn it into an operations' base. Toward that end, they knocked down the pergola at the front of the house, and climbed onto the roof, where they stood, shooting and murdering, and directing their comrades into nearby homes.

It's not necessary to describe the feelings and emotions of the Fricker family trapped in their reinforced room. They understood very well that their bit of strength would not be able to withstand armed terrorists, who declared their intentions by tossing a grenade at the window of the reinforced room. But Mrs. Fricker was enveloped with emunah and bitachon, and did not stop saying Tehillim for one minute.

Mrs. Fricker later related: My grandmother taught me to pray and to plead. Speak to Hashem, He hears the tefillah of every mouth, she always encouraged me. At that time, I raised my eyes Heavenward and asked: Ribbono shel Olam, if You have decreed me to die today, I accepted Your decree with love. You have already granted me, in Your compassion, many good years. But I plead with You to have mercy and save my young children.

The tefillah that emerged from the depths of her heart aroused Rachamei Shamayim. With Hashgachah pratis, and with Divine protection, all six people in that reinforced room were rescued safe and sound. In the houses nearby, people were killed and kidnapped,

but the Fricker family was spared, and two days later, celebrated the birth of their first grandchild.

There is no explanation for the fact that while the terrorists came to every house, and the first thing they did was break into the reinforced room, in the Fricker home they didn't even go to that room, even though they knew the residents were hiding in it.

For many hours, the fighting continued around them. The house was burned and destroyed. The smoke began to seep under the door and the family waited for the worst to happen. But remarkably, throughout those hours, the reinforced room remained fully intact. Only after twelve hours of being trapped in the reinforced room, praying from the bottom of their hearts for Hashem to save them, did the rescue forces come and rescue them under fire.

Days passed until the family was allowed to go back to visit what remained of their home. When they arrived, they were stunned at the sight of their beautiful home in ruins. The entire house – except the reinforced room – was decimated. They rejoiced to see that the tefillin and other tashmishei kedushah in the house had also survived intact. But the biggest wonder was that the spacious sukkah, built outside the house, had remained intact, white as snow, even though it was so prominent and visible.

Mrs. Fricker hurried to the shul that she had established, to see what had happened to it. She was stunned to see that it was still standing – and had not been touched. Her eyes filled with tears to see how it was filled with mispallelim, as many people who were in the area in their capacity of their jobs, visited there to daven.

She raised her eyes On High again and this time, in gratitude: "Ribbono shel Olam, You took my home, and it was burned to the ground, but the most important thing to me, the shul, You left unharmed. Thank You for everything."

Shaarei Yeshuah

The Segulah of Answering Amen

The Amen Trap

This story appeared in the Kol Beramah periodical and was heard a second time from the person it happened to. It describes a remarkable miracle that happened to a family from Rechasim in the merit of them taking on to become stronger in the mitzvah of answering amen with all its halachos:

A number of years ago, the pediatrician, Rabbi Dr. Yeruchem Asher Bental, zt"l, passed away. In his final years, he served as the director of the neonatal unit at Laniado Hospital in Netanya and Maayanei Hayeshuah Hospital in Bnei Brak. Many babies owe their lives to him.

Aside for his exceptional professionalism, Dr. Bental was known for his yiras Shamayim. Despite his expansive knowledge in the field of medicine, he consulted every step of the way with his rabbanim. They, in turn, treated him with great warmth and fondness, and they also consulted him with crucial questions that they were presented with from time to time.

In the final period of his life, he suffered tremendously, but he did not desist from his dedicated work to save as many babies as he could, and to help parents establish future generations. During those difficult months, his family sought to strengthen their answering of amen with kavanah, as a zechus for his refuah. Toward that end, they prepared a large poster, featuring the halachos of kavanah when answering amen, each brachah according to its subject. Each brachah had a different number and color. The poster also featured a large mosaic, whose squares were marked with different numbers. Every member of the family who answered amen with kavanah that

was suited for the brachah he had answered to, placed a sticker in the right square. As the sign slowly filled with brightly colored stickers, a mosaic of words and phrases relating to amen emerged. This intensified the enjoyment of the challenging campaign.

The campaign generated a lot of chizuk in the whole family, and when their grandfather passed away some time later, the children chose to continue this campaign as an aliyah for his neshamah.

During the shivah and after, word of the poster got around. As many people wanted to take on this mitzvah, and to use the poster to help them, it was copied a few dozen times, and distributed at cost price to anyone who asked for it.



A few weeks later, on a Motzaei Shabbos, the phone rang in the Bental home. On the line was a woman who lived in their neighborhood. She sounded very excited as she asked to share a miracle that had occurred in her house:

"Two weeks ago," she related, "we purchased your poster. One of the children pasted it to the wall of the children's room with big pieces of wide type. They followed the halachos, and at this point, the poster's mosaic was about half filled, and some of the words concealed in it began to emerge, much to my children's excitement.

"On Shabbos morning, we all woke to the sound of a terrible cry from the children's room. When we ran into the room, one of the children pointed in horror to the poster on the wall.

A quick glance made the miracle very clear: Stuck to one of the pieces of tape that hold up the poster was a snake. The snake's head had become stuck on the tape, and miraculously, although it was trying with all its might to break free, it was not able to.

"One of the neighbors, who is a snake expert, was summoned. He glanced at the snake and then cried: 'It's a dangerous, poisonous snake. I cannot explain how it was not able to break free from that piece of tape, and why it didn't harm one of your children before it crawled onto the poster. There's no doubt this was an open miracle!'

"We stood stunned in the face of this unbelievable miracle we had experienced. We didn't need any more explanations. We were sure without a doubt what is the merit that protected us from the frightening snake. - The colorful poster, which was partially torn because of the snake's battle to break free from the tape, was more than a thousand witnesses."

וַיַּ֣רְא מְנֻחָ֔ה כִּ֥י טֹ֖וב '***He saw a resting place, that it was good.***' (49:15)

The Rebbe Reb Bunim of Parshischa ZY"A explains the Possuk as follows: The qualification for a person who desires to achieve tranquility must accept every situation that comes his way. Every situation – good or (seemingly) bad, must be equal in his eyes.

If a person acts with this trait, then he will always have tranquillity.

"Our sages recommended that a father should spend less than his means on food, up to his means on dress, and beyond his means for his wife and children." ~~ Rambam

It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.

Stay Put

The Chofetz Chaim wanted to live out his final days in Eretz Yisroel, but **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzenski** told him he was not permitted to leave Europe. R' Chaim Ozer asked, "What will happen to all the Jews in Europe without you?"

The Chofetz Chaim responded that he was already an old man who could not go around and speak to people and have an impact. "I can no longer do any good for anybody in Europe."

R' Chaim Ozer answered with a parable from **R' Yisroel Salanter** who said, "when the grandfather sits at the head of the table, everyone at the table acts and behaves differently."

"The grandfather does not need to raise his voice or threaten "I'm going to send you to your room." The mere presence of the grandfather at the head of the table influences everyone."

R' Chaim Ozer continued: "We need you in Europe — not to speak, not to write, not to give classes, but we need you to sit at the head of the table." - The Chofetz Chaim stayed in Europe.

Grand Rabbi Moshe Biderman (1776-1851) of Lelów was the 2nd Rebbe of the Lelov Hassidic dynasty. Teves 13, 5611.

◣ A young man who wanted to travel to Germany on business came to ask R' Moshe for his blessing. Instead, R' Moshe opened his desk drawer, handed him a small wooden shot glass, saying, "Take this cup with you when you leave on your business venture. It will bring you protection and success."

The surprised young man took the cup and packed it with his belongings. He borrowed money to buy merchandise and set off on the road alone. En route, he was attacked by a fierce bandit. With a trembling heart, the young man handed over his purse. "Now I have

to kill you," said the bandit, brandishing his sword, "so you do not go running to the police."



The young man begged for his life, to no avail. Suddenly, he remembered R' Moshe's wooden shot glass "for protection." He thought, "What does one do with a shot glass?"

He turned to the bandit and said, "You would not refuse the last request of a dying man, would you? I have a flask of whiskey in my bag. Let us drink a glass together before I die!"

The bandit could not refuse. The young man filled the wooden shot glass with liquor from his pack. As he did, he whispered a silent prayer, "Holy Rebbe, you blessed me with protection and success. Please, I need protection now, more than ever."

R' Moshe's holy visage swam before his eyes. The young man felt as though R' Moshe was standing fright in front of him. A sense of great serenity enveloped him. He was certain that Hashem was with him.

The smell of the whiskey intoxicated the robber. He grabbed the shot glass and downed its contents in a single gulp. The young man quickly, with all his strength, rammed the shot glass deep into the robber's throat. It wedged there and the bandit began to gasp for air. He stumbled around helplessly, and finally fell lifeless to the ground.

Afraid that the rest of the gang would soon appear, the young man lifted the corpse onto his wagon and covered it with straw. He then emptied the robber's bag into his own, regaining his stolen funds, and set off. "Once I get to a Jewish settlement, I will figure out what to do," he thought.

At the very next village, he found the townsmen standing around a large poster. It was a notice from the king promising a rich reward to whoever helped to capture a dangerous highwayman, dead or alive. The young man immediately recognized the description and headed for the local authorities. He showed them the dead highwayman in his wagon and received the reward. He now had the reward money, his own money returned, and the spoils he found on the robber.

In the blink of any eye, he had become a wealthy man, all through R' Moshe's blessing and his little wooden shot glass.

When the Jews of the town heard of this miracle, they offered a tremendous sum for the shot glass – even the local authorities wanted to purchase it for their museum – but the young man refused.

He drove his wagon to the local fair, purchased the highest quality goods, and returned to his town to make a hefty profit.

As for the shot glass, he passed it down to his descendants as a family heirloom. The *tzaddik* R' Shimon Biderman, a descendant of R' Moshe of Lelov, heard the story many years later and was shown the shot glass by one of the man's descendants.

◣ R' Moshe was a recognized *ilui* (genius) from his youth. His father, R' Dovid, spared no effort in developing his mind.

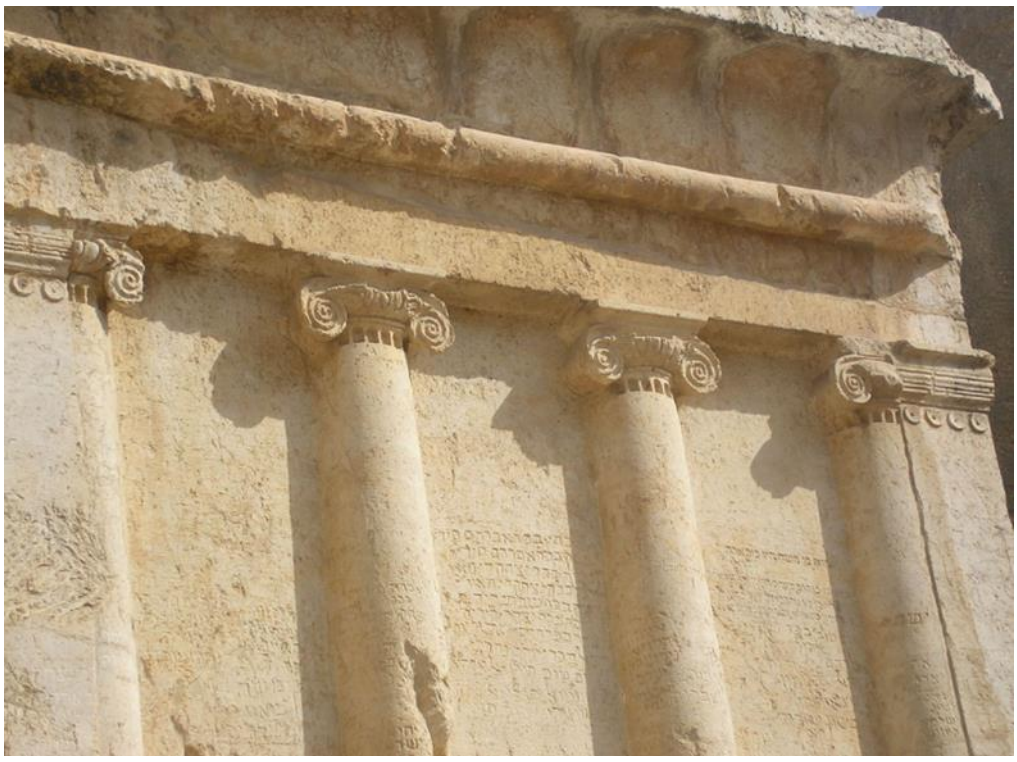
During the winter when R' Moshe was 8 years old, their home was freezing as they could not afford firewood and warm clothing. His father put him in a barrel of feathers up to his neck, and then taught him the *Gemara* with all the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*, so that the cold not deter him from his studies.

R' Dovid guarded the purity of his son's soul by protecting him from impure sights. When R' Moshe was between 11-13 years old, his father would tie a cloth around his eyes and guide him to his destination whenever he left the house.

Before Rabbi Moshe of Lelov made aliyah to the Eretz Yisrael, he journeyed to many tzaddikim in Poland to receive their farewell blessings. One of his most important stops was to visit the illustrious **Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin**, who rabbi Moshe considered his rebbe—even though rabbi Moshe himself was a rebbe.

Before Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin bade rabbi Moshe farewell, he remarked to his disciples that the chassidim of Poland are foolish for allowing their beloved rabbi Moshe to leave them. He quoted the Mishnah in the tractate of Shabbat, **אֵין פּוֹלִין וְאֵין קוֹרִין לְאוֹר הַנֵּר** - "***it is prohibited to check for lice by the light of the candle*** [on shabbat]" (shabbat 12a). - But in Hebrew the word for "checking lice" is "**פּוֹלִין**," which is also the Hebrew and Yiddish names for "Poland." Thus, the words can mean, "***Poland is not by the light of the candle***."

Rabbi Yisrael used this play on words to conclude that apparently, Poland was not worthy of the light of its candle, Rabbi Moshe of Lelov.



Zechariah's Tomb, next to which Rebbe Moshe is buried

Rabbi Moshe's chassidim escorted him to the train station as he departed for the Holy Land. Before he boarded the train, he said to them: "take a long, deep look at my face. Remember my face always (photographs were uncommon then).

This will be a segulah that will last your entire life so that you will benefit in both the material and spiritual realms."

Rebbe Moshe of Lelov was the son of Rebbe Dovid of Lelov and the second Rebbe in the Lelov dynasty. He married the daughter of the "Heilige Yid" of P'shischah. All his life, Rebbe Moshe yearned to make aliyah to the Land of Israel.

In the year 5610 (1849), Rebbe Moshe began his journey to the Land of Israel, reaching its shores in the month of Tishrei 5611 (1850). He lived 74 days in the Land of Israel, equivalent to his number of years at the time. Before he died, he gave instructions to bury him adjacent to the grave of the prophet Zechariah ben Berechiah.

On the 13th of Tevet, when he saw that his illness was worsening, he asked to be carried in his bed to the Western Wall. However, as his entourage approached the Wall, Arabs pelted them with rocks, forcing them to retreat. (nothing has changed much!) Rebbe Moshe passed away later that day. - Rabbi Moshe Biderman is buried on the Mount of Olives. May his merit protect us all.

Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein zt"l - To The Last Minute

If you look through the life of Yosef HaTzaddik, the way he relates to his brothers is hard to fathom. These were the brothers who wanted to kill him, sell him, who put him in jail and who sold him into slavery to Egypt where he'd had no minyan or yeshiva. There, in Egypt, he was surrounded by the worst people in the world. And yet, instead of getting angry and taking revenge, he was the one who fed them, built up their city, took care of them and said, "Don't worry… I love you." He accepted them.

The final Parsha in Sefer Bereishis, Vayechi, is a Parsha of acceptance and forgiveness. What greater way is there to end the book of Bereishis in which Hashem created the world and created

man than discuss a man who represented acceptance, forgiveness, love and breaking his nature.

When we read the final words, "And he was buried in Egypt," we say the words, 'Chazak, Chazak V'nischazek.' Yosef never forgot the love that he had for his brothers. Even to the last minute he took care of them.



Rabbi Daniel Rowe

וַיְבָרְכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּךָ יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם לִפְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה – '***So he blessed them on that day, saying, "With you, Israel will bless, saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh,' " and he placed Ephraim before Manasseh***.' (48:20)

Jewish parents traditionally bless their children that they should be like Ephraim and Menashe.

Why specifically those two?

When Yaakov was on his deathbed, he calls his grandchildren, but he switches his hands, so that his right hand goes over the younger child Ephraim, and his left hand goes over the older child Menashe. This symbolized that Ephraim was going to grow up to be the greater child who would rule over the central tribe in the northern kingdom.

But it's even more profound than that. You see, that throughout the sefer Beraishis, it has always been about the younger child who has received the better blessing. Whether it is Hevel instead of Kayin, Yitzchok instead of Yishmael, Yaakov instead of Esav, Yosef instead of his brothers. - And the response has always been jealousy and hatred.

Over here, is the first time in history where there is no jealousy and hatred. Moreover, in next week's sedra, it will go even one step further when Moshe Rabbeinu is appointed leader over Klal Yisrael, and not his older brother Aaron.

Aaron is not only not jealous, but he actually rejoices and is happy for his younger brother!

And that's the secret of Yaakov's bracha, teachings and the secret of life. If we are jealous, the world falls apart. On the other hand, if we learn to be joyful with each other's success, then true greatness will come about, and great blessings will come about.



Rabbi Dessler

Seventy years since the passing of the genius chassid, Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, known as the "Michtav M'Eliyahu" (Letter from Eliyahu). By: Rabbi Yaakov Rosenfeld – Ganzach Kiddush Hashem

On the 25th of Tevet 5714 (Dec. 30th, 1953), exactly seventy years ago, the soul of Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler z"l ascended to Heaven.

Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, overseer at the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. Rabbi Dessler, the revered overseer of the Ponevezh Yeshiva, was a guide to thousands, the remnants of the giants of glorious Lithuanian Jewry, whose teachings were compiled in the popular series of books "Michtav M'Eliyahu" which have been used for decades as foundational books for morality, faith, and worldviews, and are the glory of every Jewish book collection around the world.



Rabbi Dessler was born in 5752 (1892) in Gomel (also known as Homyel) to his father, Rabbi Reuven Dov – a distinguished student of the "Saba Mi'Kelm," Rabbi Simcha Zisel Ziv. His mother, Mrs. Chana Freidel, was the daughter of Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Grodzinski, the son-in-law of Rabbi Israel Salanter – the father of the mussar (morality) movement.

His uncle, the son-in-law of the elder Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer, the great Rabbi Chaim Ozer z"l, called him as a child a "wonder child" and he was referred to as "Eli'yinka HaMatmid" (Eli the diligent student) in the famous yeshiva of Kelm, the one whose bitter end was written in letters of fire in the pages of the history of Lithuanian Jewry that came to the fore in the years of wrath.

On Av 5, 5700/1940, the Lithuanian auxiliary police under the command of the Gestapo in Kovno, marched the yeshiva students and the Jews out of the town in order to murder them there. The yeshiva students marched in rows, with the prayer "Aleinu Le'Shabayech" (It Is Our Duty to Praise) on their lips. It is said that on the way, they sang the song "Ashereinu Ma Tov Chelkeinu" (We Are Happy. How Good is Our Lot). The Nazis murdered them and most of them were buried in a mass grave on the Gruzenbisky farm.

In 5674 (1914), upon the German's conquest of Kelm, he returned to Homyel and studied at the yeshiva his father founded for war refugees. Homyel, a distinct chasidic city, had a great influence on

Rabbi Dessler, and the writers of his history speculate that this is where his attachment to chasidic teachings came from, which was a rare phenomenon among the follows of the musar movement and in Lithuanian yeshivas.



In 5678 (1917), when the Bolsheviks expanded their world, his family lost its wealth (since faithful to the method of the Saba Mi'Kelm, members of the Dessler family did not take on any rabbinical positions, but earned livings from trade, and over the years G-d's blessing poured out on the works of their hands, and they were awarded with greatness) and thus began the chapter of their wanderings.

The same year, after he married his rebbetzin, Bluma, his uncle, Rabbi Chaim Ozer, begged him to take a rabbinic position in the city of Vilna, but Rabbi Dessler refused and went to Riga to try his luck in commerce there. The attempt, unfortunately, was not successful, and for years he struggled to pay off his debts down to the last penny.

In 5687 (1927), Rabbi Dessler moved to England, where he spread Torah and musar to the students. Years passed, and he raised his only son and sent him to Vilkomir in Lithuania. On the eve of the outbreak of World War II, his wife and daughter went to Lithuania to visit family members, and to their dismay, the war that broke out closed in on them and they remained in Lithuania while Rabbi Dessler was in England.



Rabbi Dessler, a man of emotion and sincerity, was left alone, and it is not difficult to describe his feeling in that time – a period of uncertainty and terror; piercingly concerned for those dear to his heart who were under siege and despair. But his sorrow and grief remained only in his heart. On the outside, he eschewed an abundance of peace and relaxation, and he served as a "wall of tears" for Eastern European refugees whose family members remained somewhere unknown.

There were no shortage of good reasons to sink into sadness and worry, but the rabbi, a man of faith and thought, a giant of morals and virtues, decided to sink into action. One question preoccupied his mind, the one that years later was a central paragraph in his well-known article "And let it be after the destruction": **for what purpose did the Almighty G-d leave us alive…**

When he (Rabbi Dessler) was in England, he would always ask Him "why did I remain alive?" If he had returned home during the war, he would have been killed like everyone, this is saying that he obersved that it was decreed that all the Jews of Kelm (where his father-in-law Rabbi Nachum Ze'ev, the son of the Saba Mi'Kelm, lived) would pass to the Next World at a very young age, so why do we live? Why were we not privileged to be so holy like them, we probably have the possibility to do a good thing that only a living person can do.

"What can we do afterwards?" he said – to revive the dry bones, from the ashes to collect sparks and rekindle the light of the fire

of Torah. He said, "if so, I don't live for myself." He was a lonely man with no family there. At the same time, a young man came to England as a refugee from the Holocaust, and someone else arrived, so he said, "let's build a beit midrash (study hall) where they will study the Torah day and night as they learned before the Holocaust" (from the book "Ohalei Yaakov" about Rabbi Yaakov Edelstein).

Building Torah in Gateshead

In the year 5700 (1940-1), in the midst of the evil days, the rabbi founded a kollel (yeshiva for adult men) in Gateshead – for the refugees of the Torah world who were in England. The rabbi was already fifty years old at the time, he was not a particularly healthy and strong man, and by nature he was also modest and shy. These traits should have discouraged him to approach this project in the midst of the war, when London's rich either ceased to be rich in the difficult times, or dispersed to the villages and suburbs from the terror of the bombings that destroyed London, or, those who did remain in their place and status, did not understand the benefit of the matter and did not appreciate at all what the new institution sought to instill in the younger generation.

The rabbi took upon himself this great burden with the belief that this is what G-d wanted from him at this time. From the things he carried out then, the buds of his method emerge, the one that came later in his books:

For those whose desire to teach comes from an inner degree of kindness, for him, the smaller the students, the greater the value of kindness, and the greater his devotion to his purpose. But the one who lacks inside, and in his ambition to teach is also involved "not for the sake of (G-d's) honour" etc., the older the students are, the better, because he will be built up from the students…

For four years he dedicated himself to raising flocks of young Torah believers in the Gateshead Kollel, and did not take a single penny as

a reward for his work. He earned his living in other ways, mainly from private study with students in various places to which he traveled frequently.

During these years when he was alone, far from his wife and children, he devoted himself to writing many letters to those who asked him something. His letters are wonderful and full of priceless content. His thoughts mixed from the teachings of musar, Kabbalah and chasidism was a cure for thousands in those days of disaster and destruction.

As is known, the rabbi was separated from his family during the Holocaust, and did not know at first what happened to them, and that they fled to distant Australia. After that, their contact was renewed by letters until the family was reunited at the end of the war. And here, in one of his conversations, the rabbi talked about Jacob our forefather, who recited the Shema prayer at his meeting with Joseph, as explained by the Sages, and they explained that Jacob did not want the love of his son to prevail in his heart over the love of G-d. And the rabbi said to his students: "When I receive a letter from my family in distant Australia, and I long so much to read their words and silence my longing for them, then I remember the words of the Sages and reply to my heart: 'How righteous Jacob our forefather was…" (from his student, the genius Rabbi Yarkoni)

Over the years, Rabbi Dessler's kollel became a spiritual Jewish center for English Jewry, from which institutions for boys and girls branched out; yeshivas and community centers. Rabbi Dessler's circle of students and admirers kept growing, and he far exceeded the boundaries of Gateshead and its surroundings.

At some point, he learned that his wife and children had managed to escape from Lithuania to Australia. His joy knew no bounds, but the sorrow of distance and separation continued to oppress him until the end of the terrible war, when the family was reunited, and in 5708

(1948) he immigrated to the Land of Israel together with his wife, while his son and daughter settled in the United States.



Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the head of the Ponevezh Yeshiva, conversing with the spiritual overseer, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, while surrounded by the yeshiva students

In Israel, he served as the spiritual overseer of the Ponevezh Yeshiva, and herewith he acceded to the plea of the genius Rabbi Kahaneman z"l. In Ponevezh, he spoke and raised a glorious generation of students faithful to the Torah and musar.

Rav Dessler taught Torah in Eretz Israel for six years, working with superhuman force, until he fell ill. He was struck by a heart attack, and on Tevet 25, 5714 (1953) he rendered his soul to his Creator.

Thus ended the life of one of the great men of Mussar of the previous generation, may his soul be bound in the light of life.

After Rav Dessler's death, his students gathered his writings and teachings in a work called Michtav Me-Eliyahu in five volumes.

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From our Sages

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה – *'Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years.' (47:28)*

These seventeen years were the best years of his life—years of prosperity, goodness and peace; his other 130 years were filled with toil and pain. ~ (**Midrash; Baal HaTurim**)

וַאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ שְׁכֶם - *'I have given to you Shechem.' (48:22)*

As it is written, **וְאֶת־עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר־הֶעֱלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם קָבְרוּ בִשְׁכֶם** -"**Joseph's bones . . . they buried in Shechem.**" (Joshua 24:32).

This is analogous to thieves who stole a barrel full of wine; when the owner found them, he said: "Be so kind, when you finish drinking up the wine, to put the barrel back in its place." So too, Joseph was kidnapped by his brothers in Shechem, and to Shechem they returned his bones. ~ (**Daat Zekeinim**)

אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחַרְבִּי וּבְקַשְׁתִּי – *'..which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.' (48:22)*

Why is prayer like a bow?

Just like a bow, the more a person draws the bowstring to himself, the further the arrow flies, so it is with prayer: the deeper one delves into one's own heart, the higher one's prayer ascends . . . ~ (**The Rebbe of Kotzk**)



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● **What was so unusual about Yosef visiting his father?**

וַיַּגֶּד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בִנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה (48,2) "***And (someone) told Ya'akov and said: Behold, your son Yosef is coming to you. And Yisrael summoned his strength and sat up on the bed.***"

The word "behold" implies that something new was happening here, implying that Yosef was accustomed never to go to his father.

We can explain why this was so from what the poskim write about the Maharam from Rottenburg, that from the day that he rose to prominence as a great sage he did not visit his father, nor did he wish that his father should visit him. The reason was because his father was an ordinary person, and it is a disgrace to the Torah for a great Torah sage to stand up for someone who is not a Torah sage, and not everybody who might see him stand for his father would know that it was his father.

But in our case, Yosef's father, Ya'akov, was a great person. However, Yosef was concerned that if he came to his father, his father would want to honour him as befits a king, and to stand before him. Indeed, we see here that when Ya'akov was told of Yosef's imminent arrival, he struggled to sit up. Therefore, Yosef refrained from coming to his father, in order that his father would not need to honour him each time. But on the other hand, he loved for his father to visit him, because his father was a great Tzaddik, and it was fitting for Yosef to honour Ya'akov by standing for him.

Therefore, whenever Ya'akov needed Yosef, he would go to him, and not the other way round. But now Ya'akov was ill and could not go to Yosef, and so Yosef was forced to go to him. Therefore it says "and

it was told to Ya'akov: Behold" - Look! Something new! - "your son Yosef is coming to you", something that has never happened before, since Yosef was not accustomed to come to Ya'akov.

● **When did Ya'akov start 'living'?**

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וַיְהִי יְמֵי־יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חַיָּיו שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמְאַת שָׁנָה (47,28) "***And Ya'akov lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years, and Ya'akov's days, the years of his life, were a hundred and forty seven years***."

It is very unusual to find in the Tanach the words 'he lived' used in connection with a place or a country. It is usually used by itself, like in parshas Noach "So-and-so lived after he had begotten…". The normal word to use with places is 'dwelling', and so it should have said "Ya'akov dwelled in the land of Egypt seventeen years".

However, in the gemora Yoma 71a Chazal asked on the posuk in Mishlei 3:2 "For length of days, and years of life and peace, they shall add to you" - are there then years of life and years not of life? Said R. Elazar, these refer to the years of a person's life which are changed from bad to good. Therefore, since Ya'akov's life until now had not been called 'life' due to all the hardships he had suffered, and only now, from the time he dwelled in Egypt, did he start 'living', therefore the Torah used the language "And Ya'akov lived ", instead of dwelled, to teach that his life began now, "in the land of Egypt".

A rabbi who replies to people's questions works harder than a doctor dealing with a case of life and death. The doctor is responsible only to the patient, but the rabbi is responsible to G-d. ~ R' Moshe Feinstein

Avichai's Blessing – Rabbi Shlomo Landau



"It was a beautiful day in central Israel as I was walking down the street. As I got near a bus stop, I could make out a figure standing near the bus-stop holding a stick in his hand. Oh, it was Avichai – everybody knows and loves Avichai. Although he's blind, the simchas hachaim and joy for life that he exudes, is legendary.

'Shalom Avichai', I cheerfully remarked. 'What are you doing here'?

Avichai smiled. 'I'm waiting for a bus to Tel Aviv.'

'You know what', I said, 'I'll wait here with you, and let you know when the bus is coming.'

Avichai replied, 'You know, when you said the words that you will wait here with me and let me know when the bus is coming, you reminded me of an unbelievable story, with exactly the same words.'

'You see, about 15 years ago, I was standing at a bus stop, when an avreich, a Kollel fellow noticing that I was blind, said to me – 'I'll wait here with you, and let you know when the bus is coming.'

'As we waited, we started chatting, and in the course of the conversation, he told me that he and his wife had been married for a few years and had not yet been *zoche* to have any children.'

'Suddenly, he turns to me and says, 'Please give me a bracha to have children.'

'I replied, 'Listen, I'm no miracle worker, but I give you a bracha that you should have children in the near future, and that those children

should be good kids, just like their father who is helping me right this minute.'

Avichai continued with his incredible story: 'Last week, I was returning from a speech in Bnei Brak, when I bumped into a young boy.' – 'Please help me and lead me to the closest bust stop.'

'Of course', he said, and happily began walking me to the bus stop.

As we approached the bus stop, you will never believe who was standing there –- it was the boy's father. And, he was non other than the man who had assisted me at a bus stop 15 years earlier!

When the fellow saw me, he immediately recognized me, and was moved to the core of his being. What's even more unbelievable is the fact that it was parshas Vayechi, and immediately I quoted the pasuk that popped into my mind - **רְאֹה פָנֶיךָ לֹא פִלָּלְתִּי וְהִנֵּה הֶרְאָה אֹתִי אֱלֹקִים גַּם אֶת־זַרְעֶךָ** - "***I had not expected to see [even] your face, and behold, Hashem has shown me your children too***." (48:11)

You helped me 15 years ago, and I blessed you that you should have children. Today I was *zoche* to not only meet you again, but also to meet your child who assisted me."



Lilmode Ul'lamed (Rabbi Mordechai Katz) - "And He Lived".

Why isn't the word "death" used in connection with Yaakov? In fact, the Parsha, which recounts Yaakov's death, is entitled "Vayechi" ("and he lived").

Taanis 56 teaches that there are two deaths — a physical death and the end of one's influence and impact on the world. For many people, the two are simultaneous. However, in Yaakov's case, he accomplished so much

during his lifetime that his influence and impact survive even to this day. We should strive to accomplish something worthwhile during our lives so that our achievements will live on.

Love Thy Neighbor (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin) -True kindness is helping someone without any ulterior motive.

Yaakov told his sons "If I have found favor in your eyes . . . seal me with kindness and truth and bury me not in Egypt". Rashi comments that kindness to the dead is true kindness, for one who does such kindness doesn't look forward to any payment.

Whenever we do something for others, we should emulate this kindness and have their, not our own, benefit in mind.

Smile at others.

Yaakov blessed Yehudah that "your eyes will be red with wine and your teeth white with milk" (i.e., the land will be fertile so that it would produce an abundance of wine and milk).

The Talmud teaches that "teeth white with milk" can be read to mean that when one shows his teeth (by smiling) to another, it is better than giving him milk; while milk nourishes the body, a smile enters the mind and body.

"There is no such thing as a lonely Jew. Wherever there is a Jew, there too is hashem." ~ The Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760)

"The only possessions we can truly call our own are the ones we give away to others. Only they escort us to the next world." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (1804-1886).



◣ Eternal Life - Lubavitcher Rebbe

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם - "*And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt*..."

Although the Sidra begins with "Vayechi" (And he lived), it really speaks of the death of Yaakov. - As the reading shows, Yaakov's life was one of connection to G-d that transcended the material world. Since he shared this quality with his descendants, it was perpetuated beyond his mortal lifetime. As our sages say, "Yaakov, our ancestor, did not die. As his descendants are alive, he is alive."

The vitality we experience in our Divine service today is made possible by the life of Yaakov.

◣ Source Of Strength - Alshich Hakadosh

הִנֵּה בִנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה - "*Behold, your son Yosef comes to you. And Yaakov strengthened himself and sat upon the bed.*" (48:2)

Anyone who visits a sick peer takes away 1/60th of his illness. (Nedarim 39) Although Yosef was Yaakov's son, he was considered his peer, for it is written that G-d had said: "All that I will show to Yaakov I will also show to Yosef" (Rashi 37:2). Therefore, when Yosef came to visit Yaakov, Yaakov's illness was diminished by 1/60th and Yaakov gained the strength to sit up in his bed.

◣ Asking For Today - Reb Moshe Leib Sassover

וַיְבָרֲכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר - *"And he [Yaakov] blessed them [Efraim and Menashe] on that day, saying..."* (48:20)

Why does the pasuk mention that Yaakov blessed them "on that day"?

Yaakov was teaching his children a lesson that when you pray for your needs, you should pray only for that specific day's needs. You should not worry about what will be in the future; just focus "on that day" in conformance to the famous dictum: The past is done, the future is yet to come, the present is like the blink of an eye. - If so, what is the point of worrying?

◣ Think It Through - Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz

פַּחַז כַּמַּיִם אַל־תּוֹתַר - *"[Yaakov said to Reuven,] 'Unstable as water, do not take more.'"* (49:4)

The Torah does not usually speak in metaphors. However, Yaakov is teaching Reuven, and all of us, the evils of impulsivity. - Just as water flows quickly, so does the behavior of an impulsive person who acts quickly without thinking. - One who does not weigh the consequences of his actions will make harmful mistakes which can cause much damage.

The Torah's metaphor of water serves as a constant reminder of the dangers of being impulsive, so when one sees water, he will know that he must slow himself down.

"This is the entirety of man: not for himself was man created, but instead to help others to the extent of his ability to do so."
~ Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1720-1797)

◣ How To Be Heard - Mishmeres Itamar

הִקָּבְצוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב וְשִׁמְעוּ אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיכֶם - "***Gather together and listen, sons of Yaakov; listen to Yisrael, your father.***" (49:2)

When you will be united and remain close with one another, then Hashem, your Father, will listen.

◣ Teaching Patience - Divrei Avraham

אָרוּר אַפָּם - "***Accursed is their [Shimon and Levi's] rage…***" (49:7)

In Pirkei Avos we are taught: "The angry person cannot teach." - Rashi tells us that Shevet Shimon later became the schoolteachers of Bnei Yisrael. For this reason, Yaakov cursed their anger because had they remained with their anger, they never would have been able to become schoolteachers!

◣ Selfish Considerations - Yismach Moshe

וַיִּבְכּוּ אֹתוֹ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעִים יוֹם - "***Egypt bewailed him for seventy days.***" (50:3)

The Egyptians did not go into deep mourning out of love for Yaakov. However, they remembered that when Yaakov came to Egypt, the Nile River overflowed into the fields and the hunger ceased.

With the death of Yaakov, the Egyptians feared that the river would return to its previous state and a period of hunger would again return.

"There is no such thing as a lonely jew. Wherever there is a Jew, there too is hashem." ~ The Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760)

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

It is not very often that we hear/read a 'panoramic story' celebrating the lives of two people – father and son, and the impact it has had to so many lives, and the *Hashgacha* involved.

Yehuda Yitzchak Neuman was a young man when he was drafted into the Polish army during World War 1. Still, he was fortunate in that he wasn't sent to the front to serve as cannon fodder, and he somehow became a guard at a Polish POW camp for captured German soldiers. This afforded him the ability to practice *Yiddishkeit* to a certain extent, but sometimes he was assigned tasks that were more than a Jewish soul could bear.

The hatred between the Poles and the Germans knew no bounds, and the Poles would routinely starve and torment their German prisoners. One day, the commanding officer of the camp caught one of the inmates stealing a loaf of bread. The prisoner, a German named Hans, had pilfered the bread because he was starving, but the penalty was death. The commander gave Yehuda Yitzchak Neuman the job of carrying out the punishment. "Take this man out into the forest and shoot him," he said.

The young Jewish guard trudged out to the forest with the prisoner, accompanied by two Polish soldiers to make sure the deed was done. He knew it was against the rules of war to shoot a POW for stealing bread, but he also knew that if he didn't carry out the order, he would take the German captive's place in front of the firing squad.

As they entered the forest, Hans whispered to him, "You're Jewish, aren't you?"

"How do you know?" Yehuda Yitzchak asked.

"I see you praying every day," the German explained, and he then began to plead for his life. "Please! I only stole the bread because I was starving and need something to eat. Please don't shoot me! Have pity on my wife and children!"

Yehuda Yitzchak somehow managed to persuade the two Polish soldiers to go back to base, assuring them that he would finish the job. He then told the prisoner to take off his shirt, and he slashed the man's arm with his bayonet, letting the blood flow onto the garment and spreading it around. He then took the rifle and shot several bullets through the shirt. "Run quickly!" he ordered the POW. "Get as far away as your feet will take you!"

The German thanked him with tears in his eyes and asked for his name.

"My name is Judah Neuman," he replied, "and you are right that I am a Jew."

The German fled into the forest and escaped. Yehuda Yitzchak took the bloodied shirt back to the camp, and his superiors were pleased.

The story doesn't end here

After the war (WW1), Yehuda Yitzchak Neuman became a successful businessman. He got married, had children, and like many other at the time, decided to move to Germany, where there were even more opportunities (and relative freedom) for Jews. His business flourished even more.

Then came the rise of Hitler Y"S, and in 1938, Kristallnacht. Hitlers first objective was to send all the Polish Jews back to their country of origin. The Neuman family, including Yehuda Yitzchak's eight-year-old son Moshe, soon found themselves about to be shoved onto a train headed for Poland.

As they were boarding, a shout came from the group of German officers. "Neuman!" Take your family and get off the train! You are wanted at police headquarters!"

Mr Neuman couldn't figure out how any of the German soldiers would have known his name. But then he saw a face that he had seen in a forest some two decades earlier. It was Hans, the German POW whose life he had saved.

Hans instructed the Neumans to follow him to headquarters, where he gave them, papers allowing them to depart Germany, travel through France and leave Europe via Normandy. "I remember what you did for me," Hans told him. "Just sign these papers and get out of here."

However, it was Shabbos, and Mr Neuman refused to sign. "Its Shabbos," he explained.

Hans said, "Sign these documents or I can't help you. You'll go back on the train, and G-d knows what will happen to you."

"I'm not signing," Mr Neuman insisted.

The Gestapo officer standing next to Hans became frustrated. He pulled out his gun and pointed it at Mr Neuman's chest. "If you don't sign," he shouted, "I'm going to shoot you right now!"

Mr Neuman opened up his shirt and calmly said, "Shoot me if you wish, but I'm not signing. It's my Sabbath."

Thinking quickly, Hans turned to the officer and said, "Can't you see that this man is crazy? I'll sign the papers for him." Hans then handed the papers to Mr Neuman and told him to leave as quickly as possible.

The story doesn't end here, either

The family escaped Nazi Germany and eventually arrived penniless in the United States, where young Moshe Neuman went to Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. One of his dearest *rebbeim* was Rav Sholom Shachna Zohn, zt"l, who had come to America as a young boy but later returned to Europe to learn in the Mir, spending a year and a half in *kollel,* learning under the tutelage of Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz, zt"l. His love for his *talmidim* know no bounds.

One day in class, he was discussing the Rambam and the three sins for which a Jew must give up his life: *giluy arayos, shefichas damim* and *avodah zarah*. There is no mitzvah to give up one's life in order

to keep Shabbos or kosher, the *rebbe* explained. In fact, doing so is wrong. [Ed: This is according to the Rambam, but see Kesef Mishnah for circumstances where it is allowed and may even be meritorious].

Learning this was very disturbing to Moshe, who was then in high school. The image of his father telling the Nazi to shoot him because he refused to desecrate Shabbos was seared in his memory. But according to what his *rebbi* was telling him, his father should have signed the document. After all, wasn't it a situation of *pikuach nefesh?*

That night he said to his father, "We learned today that the Rambam says you're supposed to desecrate Shabbos rather than be killed. Why were you willing to be shot in Germany rather than sign those documents on Shabbos?"

His father said, "I didn't know about this Rambam. All I knew was about Shabbos."

When Moshe told his *rebbi* the story, Rav Zohn embraced young Moshe and replied, "What the Rambam said is true, but the love and *mesiras nefesh* your father had for *Shabbos Kodesh* was more powerful than you can find anywhere."

For over 50 years Rav Moshe Neuman instilled that undying *emunah* in generations of Jewish girls as the *Menahel* of the Beis Yaakov Academy of Queens. He was recently niftar at the age of 96.

יהי זיכרונם ברוך - Good Shabbos

"To be kind is more important than to be right. What people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks but a special heart that listens." – Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

Confronting Challenge

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה - ***"And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt…"*** (47:28)



This week's Parsha says that Yaakov lived 147 years. Yaakov should have really lived much longer but Hashem punished because of a lapse in Emunah. During their very first encounter. Pharaoh asked Yaakov a very personal question. As the pasuk says (Bereishis 47:8), "*Vayomer Pharaoh el Yaakov, kamah yemei shenei chayecha.*"Pharaoh asked Yaakov, "How old are you?"

Yaakov answers, "*Me'at v'raim hayu yemei sh'nei chayai* – Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life." Yaakov tells Pharaoh that his days were full of agony. He was implying to the Egyptian king that he looked much older than he actually was.

Why was Yaakov Avinu deprived of 33 years of his life? If you study the exchange between Pharaoh and Yaakov, it contains precisely 33 words. Yaakov was severely chastised for complaining about his life. This resulted in a punishment. He would lose 33 years of his life.

Hashem was upset at Yaakov: How can you complain? I rescued you from the enmity and hatred of your brother Eisav. I liberated you from the bondage of Lavan. I returned your captured daughter Dinah to you. And I restored Yosef to you. How bad is that?

Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita explains: Any rational human being might respond, yes, but you put me in harm's way countless times! Hashem could respond, Life means – If you're a human being – confronting challenges. Confronting challenge is how you grow close to your Creator. We see Yaakov lost 33 years of his life because he complained since he did not have sufficient Emunah (faith) to understand that whatever Hashem did to him was for his best, which was precisely what he needed to become a greater person.

No matter what occurred, Yaakov should have demonstrated equanimity, serenity, and peace. We see from here how important it is to maintain our Emunah, no matter how difficult the challenge. Hashem knows better than us and is guiding our lives.

In Lashon HaKodesh (the Hebrew language) the word for worry is *Daagah* (דאגה), which is spelled Daled (ד), Aleph (א), Gimmel (ג), Hey (ה). The Meforshim (commentaries) point out that the word *Daagah*, worry, has all the beginning letters of the Aleph Beis from Aleph to Hey, except for one. It is missing the Beis (ב), The Beis stands for *Bitachon*. This teaches us that it is the absence of *Bitachon*, trust in Hashem, that causes worry. When a person has trust, he doesn't have to worry!

"Knowing where an act of kindness will lead is impossible. One cannot possibly trace its progress through the world as it spreads goodness through the many lives intertwined in the fabric of humanity. No one can see what Hashem sees as the effects of one kind act mounts higher and higher. No one, therefore, can imagine the immeasurable reward he earns for his act of kindness. A person can only know that the good he has done is no doubt far greater than the good he thinks he has done." ~ Chofetz Chaim, Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933)

Brotherly Love

There is a perplexing episode recorded in the middle of this week's Parsha: **וַיְבָרְכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּךָ יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם לִפְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה** – '***And he blessed them that day – saying, 'By you shall Yisroel invoke blessings saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe." And he put Ephraim before Menashe***." (Bereishis 48:20)

Although Yosef's children gave him tremendous nachas, why were they chosen as the model for all future sons to emulate?

In order to fully appreciate the answer, we must first comprehend an incredible story shared in Rabbi Spero's Warmth and Wisdom Cloaked in Humility (p. 411):

When a boy asked **Rav Scheinberg** - the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Ore- about why he wears so many pairs of tzitzis, the sage told him a story.

Rav Moshe Ashkenazi, a student of the **Vilna Gaon**, was unable to find employment in his hometown and was forced to become a tutor in a village quite far from his family. Though the tutor could not afford to travel home to his family most of the year, he would save enough money to return for Yom Tov.

Although Rav Moshe was devoted to all of the mitzvos, there was one mitzva he was especially connected to: tzitzis.

When Rav Moshe was once traveling home by wagon, his tzitzis tore after getting caught in the wheel's spokes. Since they were no longer kosher and he was far from the nearest city, he immediately offered the driver payment to return to the village, retrieve another pair of tzitzis, and bring them back to Rav Moshe. The driver refused each offer until the tutor proposed giving his entire salary from the previous few months - an incredible sum to pay for a mitzva, but he felt too connected not to. Rav Moshe sent the driver off to retrieve a new pair of tzitzis and waited on the side of the

road, but the driver never returned. The poor tutor gave away all his money, received nothing in return, but was elated he sacrificed so much for this mitzva that was so dear to him. He waited until another wagon driver came along who kindly agreed to go to the next town to obtain a pair of tzitzis for Rav Moshe.

A few months later, the tutor was in the middle of teaching his young students when a messenger burst into the room, "Your brother Rav Yitzchak suffered a stroke!"

Rav Moshe immediately traveled to his brother's bedside and asked everyone to leave the room. Rav Moshe stood over his brother's still body, whispered words of Tehillim, removed his own tzitzis and spread them over his brother's body saying, "Master of the world, not only have I dedicated my life to performing your commandments, but I have sacrificed all my money for the sake of tzitzis. Now I am prepared to give up my reward if you will restore my brother's health." - His brother lived for another half a decade!

Rav Mordechai Ilan beautifully explains in the Mikdash Mordechai (p.73) that Yaakov recognized every previous brotherly relationship seemed rife with conflict: Kayin & Hevel, Yitzchak & Yishmael, Yaakov & Esav, and Yosef & his brothers - until now.

When Menashe's firstborn rights were transferred to Ephraim without any jealousy or complaint, our forefather wished all future generations of children would share the same affection. Although it may be difficult to move past the pain inspired by those closest to us, we cannot forget the profound power of brotherly love.

"In times of trouble, strengthen your heart... Wounded lions still know how to roar." ~ Shmuel Hanagid (933-1056).

The Weekly Vort

The addition of the numerical values of the first letters of the words following the names of the *shevatim* in each *bracha* yields the sum total of 365 – the number of days in the solar year. Furthermore, the addition of the last letters in each *bracha* yields the total 354 – the number of days in the lunar year.

Yirmiyahu HaNavi said in his *nevuah* (Yirmiyahu 31:35-36) that just as the cosmic laws will never cease, so the nation of Yisroel shall endure forever. (Baal Haturim) (Torah Treasures)

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Breathing



The Midrash Breishis Rabba 14:9 tells us that a person must praise Hashem **על כל נשימה ונשימה**, for each breath. Breathing, often overlooked, can serve many profound functions in our lives. While most people rarely give breathing much thought, it can be a versatile tool with numerous applications.

Before davening, conscious breathing can help focus the mind and get us to become present prior to entering the words of tefillah. Deep breathing can alleviate stress and calm the mind, making it a valuable resource for navigating life's challenges. Deep breaths can also energize the body before exercise, while calming breaths can be beneficial before difficult conversations. Mindful breathing

techniques can also assist in managing anxiety. Slow, deep breaths can prepare the body for restful sleep.

In light of these insights, we can understand a deeper meaning in the directive of the Midrash to praise Hashem **על כל נשימה ונשימה**. It can be understood that one should praise Hashem not only for the mere act of breathing but also for the diverse ways breathing can enrich and positively impacts our lives.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman



Home of the first Boyaner Rebbe, the Pachad Yitzchok, in Boyan

Around 150 years ago, among the followers of the **Pachad Yitzchok – the Boyanar Rebbe**, there was a wealthy man by the name of Hershel'e Kovner. Whenever Hershel'e arrived in Boyan, the people got excited. They knew that they could hold a Shabbos gathering or special event, and Hershel'e would sponsor it, as he sponsored all the expenses in Boyan. And that's what they did.

Hershel'e was not a learned man. He was barley able to read a pasuk in Chumash. Hershel'e himself, remained off to the side. During that

gathering, there was a lot of discussion about Hashgacha Pratis (Divine Providence).



As they were talking, Hershel'e turned to the crowd and said, "Listen to me all of you – my wealth is spread over various industries like oil and real estate amongst others. But let me tell you… It is not Hashgacha and it's not Pratis – It is only Hashem! Hashem does everything!"

A person is sure that he does this and accomplishes that, and only when something goes wrong, he comforts himself with the fact that it's Hashgacha Pratis. But in truth, it's run by Hashem all along! - Hashgacha Pratis means that Hashem does everything! Every single occurrence happens by Hashgacha Pratis! – Everything is controlled by Hashem.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

The Gvirim from Chicago and Paris

Rav Efraim Schwartz,* rosh kollel of a large and well-reputed institution in Elad, felt his cell phone vibrate. Reaching into his pocket to answer, he glanced at the number flashing on the screen and saw that it was an international call.

"Hello," he greeted the anonymous caller pleasantly.

"Hello, I'm calling from Yitzchak D.'s office," replied a voice in heavily American-accented Hebrew, "regarding the request you submitted several months ago for funding at a sum of thirty-five thousand dollars." "Yes?" Rav Efraim's heart fluttered in nervous anticipation.

"We'd like to schedule an appointment to meet you in person. This Wednesday, six p.m.?"

"Sounds perfect," he replied, knowing that whatever it took, he would make it work.

"Great. So I'm pencilling you in for Wednesday, six p.m., in Mr. D.'s office in Chicago's Golden Towers, sixty-seventh floor, room 413. We look forward to meeting you in person and filling your request."

The call ended before Rav Efraim could even begin expressing his thanks to the secretary, leaving him equally astounded and delighted. For months, he'd been hoping and praying for this meeting, sending several messengers to entreat on his behalf, and now it seemed his prayers had been answered!

He immediately called his travel agent, who apologized that he couldn't get him on a direct flight to Chicago but booked him a flight with a several-hour layover in Paris.

Early Wednesday morning, the rosh kollel landed in Paris, and with several hours to spare, set out for the city center in search of a shul where he could daven Shacharis with a minyan before continuing on the next leg of his journey to Chicago. It wasn't long before he found himself in a stately shul building, but he was disappointed to see that he'd already missed the first minyan, and the next wouldn't be starting until quite a bit later.

Still, he had a long stretch of time before his flight, so he resolved to wait while using the time to learn. The minutes ticked by, and the hour of the supposed minyan came and went without the requisite quorum of men to fill it. The rosh kollel's eyes flitted back and forth between his watch and his sefer, wondering how much longer before a minyan formed for Shacharis.

At long last, the tenth man entered shul, and davening began. To Rav Efraim's consternation, precisely that day the chazzan was an elderly man who had yahrtzeit for his father, and he led the tefillah

exceedingly slowly, carefully enunciating every word and dragging out every syllable. Rav Efraim felt his heart rate pick up; boarding time was swiftly approaching, and they weren't even up to Shemoneh Esrei. He briefly considered finishing davening on his own, but, glancing around, he realized that they were exactly ten, which meant he would be abandoning the men without a minyan in the middle of davening.

He forced himself to linger and tried to concentrate on the precious words, yet concentration was beyond him. All he could think of was whether to leave or not. On one hand, he was in a terrible rush; his flight was departing in a little over an hour, and a huge sum of money for the kollel was at stake. On the other hand, he was always careful to daven with a minyan, and he couldn't bear the thought of forfeiting the zechus-especially on a day as auspicious as this.

It'll be fine, he consoled himself. In the zechus of davening with the minyan, I'll make the flight.

Davening moved along at a snail's pace, but Rav Efraim overcame his inclination to slip out and remained until after Aleinu. Every time the yetzer hara tried to worm its way into his conscience and convince him to leave, he would forcibly eject the thought from his mind and return his focus to tefillah.

With his carry-on in hand, he flagged a cab and begged the driver to hurry. Alighting at Charles de Gaulle, he entered the terminal at a run and headed straight to security and then to passport control. As he heard the final boarding call for flight 847 to Chicago announced on the loudspeaker, he desperately beseeched the travelers waiting ahead of him on line to allow him to pass, since his flight was taking off any minute. He sprinted the distance to the gate and arrived breathless at the counter, where he presented his ticket and passport to the airline representative, who treated him to a funny look.

"Flight 847 to Chicago?" she asked.

"Yes, please!" Rav Efraim replied, gasping for breath.

"I'm sorry, sir, but the plane just left the gate one minute ago," she replied, pointing to the large glass windows and a plane taxiing toward the runway.

"No!" Rav Efraim was unable to believe his eyes. Despite his efforts, the plane was taking off without him! He stood there watching in shock and horror as the plane reached the runway, accelerated, and lifted gracefully into the sky, leaving him in Paris-along with his dream of thirty-five thousand dollars for his beloved avreichim. He'd been so certain that the zechus of tefillah b'tzibbur would guide his success, and now nothing remained of his hopes and dreams.

Rav Efraim understood that failing to arrive at the meeting would be a grave show of disrespect to the philanthropist, and he wondered if there was any way to make amends. He considered calling Chicago to explain his predicament, but a quick calculation reminded him that it was still the middle of the night there. He guessed it wouldn't be easy to reschedule an appointment. Inquiries at the ticket desk revealed that there were no other flights direct to Chicago that day, which meant his only real option was to return home to Eretz Yisrael.

With a heavy heart, the rosh kollel asked if he could advance his return ticket to that day, and a chipper airline representative informed him that she could book him on a flight to Tel Aviv in eight hours. Rav Efraim determined to return to the shul and use the time to learn, daven Minchah, and perhaps immerse in the mikvah, which he hadn't yet managed to do that day.

Arriving in the same shul, he stowed his carry-on in the coatroom and went upstairs in search of the tearoom, realizing it had been hours since he'd eaten or drunk anything. Walking up the stairs at his side was a tall, distinguished-looking gentleman who looked vaguely familiar. Rav Efraim greeted him with a polite nod. The man cradled his tefillin bag, and when Rav Efraim glimpsed the name

embroidered in gold thread upon the dark velvet, his heart skipped a beat. - It was none other than one of the greatest contemporary tomchei Torah!

This is my chance! the rosh kollel thought. This man is almost impossible to get on the phone, and it's even harder to schedule a meeting with him. But here he is! It's now or never.

"Shalom aleichem." Rav Efraim stuck out his hand to the gvir, who returned the handshake with a friendly smile. Taking a deep breath and knowing he couldn't afford to forfeit this stroke of fortune, Rav Efraim introduced himself and, in brief, described the kollel, its avreichim and goals in learning, and the remarkable atmosphere of joy and camaraderie that prevailed in the beis medrash. To his relief, the gvir did not rebuff him or ask him to contact his secretary to schedule an appointment, but rather listened in genuine interest and asked several questions.

Without his imposing office and secretaries, without phones and faxes, the French gvir was happy to listen and hear about every detail of Rav Efraim's kollel. Then, he mentioned that he'd just landed in Paris to attend his grandson's bris, scheduled for the next morning. Since he was to be honored as sandek, he was seeking a special gift to give the infant. "I think a donation on his behalf to your kollel would make an excellent gift, a zechus for the rach hanolad," announced the gvir. With that he removed an elegant leather-bound checkbook and gilded pen from, his pocket, wrote out a check, signed it, and presented it to the rosh kollel with a flourish.

Rav Efraim's eyes traveled down briefly to the check, and his eyes widened in disbelief. The sum was more than double that which he'd requested from the foundation and had planned the trip to America in order to collect!

The French gvir patted him on the shoulder. “It should be a zechus for me and my grandson that he should grow to be a tzaddik and

talmid chacham!" With that, the two men shook hands again and parted in friendship.

The rosh kollel watched the gvir go and stood there for a long moment, as thrill, amazement, and inexpressible gratitude vied for his attention. By nature he was methodical and deliberate, and he never dared approach donors spontaneously without calling or arranging a meeting in advance. He couldn't believe that he'd had the guts to approach the Frenchman right there in shul, and even more unbelievable were the results!

It wasn't me at all, he reflected. My hishtadlus had nothing to do with it. This is the reward for tefillah b'tzibbur, for refusing to compromise on my values, my tefillos, and the tefillos of others.

Overcome with joy and gratitude, he sat down in the beis medrash and learned enthusiastically for six hours straight before returning to the airport-not downcast or disillusioned as before but beaming triumphantly with a seventy-two-thousand-dollar check in his pocket and awed by the wondrous ways of Hashem. He had ostensibly forfeited a large sum in donations, and there was no way to know if he could reclaim it, but he had received an even larger donation instead.

When he landed in Israel and turned his cell phone back on, Rav Efraim saw that he had a voice message. Pressing the button to hear, he was surprised when he heard a familiar voice speak in heavy American- accented Hebrew.

"Hello, I'm calling from Mr. D.'s office. We hope it's not too late, and we apologize profusely, but Mr. D. won't be able to meet with you this Wednesday, after all. Since we do not wish to inconvenience you again, we'll be sending you the check in the mail."

Less than one week later, Rav Efraim found a cream-colored envelope with American stamps and English writing in his mailbox. Slitting it open, he was ecstatic to see the promised thirty-five

thousand dollars— which now meant he had over three times what he'd planned on receiving when he first set out to Paris en route to Chicago.

"Tefillah b'tzibbur requires dedication, commitment, and sometimes very late or predawn hours. It can become urgent while hurrying to work, in the midst of a hectic workday, or while on the road. It often means inconveniencing oneself and going out of one's way to find a minyan, but it's all worthwhile!" shared the rosh kollel. "It's impossible to describe the disappointment and humiliation I felt as I watched the plane lift off, but I was rewarded for my commitment to daven with a minyan! In this case, I was fortunate to see Hashem's hashgachah and brachos guiding me.

"Yet even when we don't see the immediate reward, we must always remember that every tefillah and every mitzvah is invaluable-in This World and the Next. Tefillah b'tzibbur encompasses all bounty, blessings, energy, joy, and wealth!"



Extended Blessing

The Zaloshitzer Rebbe*Hyd is bothered why Yaakov crossed his hands and didn't just tell Efraim and Menashe to simply change positions?

The gemara (Succah 8a) tells us that the diagonal of a square is 1/3 times the size of the square. Consequently, Yaakov crossed his hands diagonally so that the bracha he was about to give would be increased by 1/3. [Ohalei Shem]

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets





Yaakov Calls The Shevatim Wild Animals

When Yaakov Avinu sat up on his deathbed in order to praise his sons and to bless them for the last time, we note something very queer. Because what we find is that he compared the *shevatim* to some of the most dangerous animals; animals that make a man's hair stand on end. Everyone knows that a snake is one of the most abhorred creatures; some people even feel like vomiting when they see a serpent. And the wolf and the lion are certainly not beloved creatures. And yet, when Yaakov Avinu was giving this blessing to his children, we find it quite remarkable that it is these animals that Yaakov chose to identify with his children.

He said גור אריה יהודה, Yehudah is a young lion. Now to compare a tzadik to a lion is something we wouldn't do. We are afraid of a lion. It is certainly not kind-hearted, and not humble either. A lion is not a kosher animal. And it is *tamei*! You can't offer up a lion as a *korban* on the *mizbeach*.

Why didn't Yaakov say Yehuda is a *sheep*, or a *calf*? Or at least an ox he could have said. And still, Yaakov Avinu preferred to see Yehuda *as a lion. Gur aryeh*, he should be like a *lion.*

Wolf On The Shidduch Resume?!

Then there's Binyomin, the beloved *shevet* of Binyomin. What did Yaakov wish upon the *shevet* of Binyomin? Yaakov compared him to a wolf: **בנימין זאב יטרף** – Binyomin is called a wolf, a hungry wolf that rips at its prey. "I see Binyomin as a wolf tearing at its prey." A wolf is not a complimentary title, you know. If you would inquire about a *shidduch* for your daughter, and you're told that the boy is like a wolf, that means no shidduch! It's off! If we would say that this *tzadik* is like a wolf, it would seem to be a paradox. We would never say such a thing.

And Don is a *sh'fifon*, he's compared to a poisonous serpent lying on the road. A snake?! A snake you could say on a traitor, maybe a sinister fellow with hateful attributes. If a man would describe his neighbor to you and say, "You know my neighbor Dan? He's a poisonous serpent!" so you'd get a certain picture of him in your head.

And yet here we find the *tzadikim* being praised with these models. You'll note that never does Yaakov compare them to lambs, to sheep. No, they're compared to wild, fierce animals. And these are remarkable comparisons that are intended for us to study and to understand.

What's The Tzad Hashaveh of The Shevatim?

Now when we study these descriptions we should ask ourselves, what is the common denominator, the *tzad hashaveh sh'bahen*? What is there that is equal in the lion and the wolf and the snake? Now you could say **שכן דרכן להזיק**, all of them are injurious, they're dangerous. That's true, but the question is *why* are they dangerous? What is it that makes them *darkan l'hazik*? And the answer is because they have in them the quality of vigor, the *middah* of energy. It's *the energy* by which they do certain things. And so it seems that it is *the quality of energy, of verve and vigor* that Yaakov wanted to see in the future of his children.

And so we begin to see that when Hakodosh Boruch Hu looks over the sea of Mankind and says "Who is the one who will serve Me best? Who is the one who will find the most favor in my eyes?" so it's the energetic ones that find most favor in His eyes.

Now that's not what we might have thought. We might have pointed at that quiet tzadik in the corner, "Maybe that man, the nice quiet fellow. He's mild and easygoing; people don't suffer much from him. That's Hashem's man!" But Hashem passes him over, "No, that's *not* the man I'm looking for! I have a place for him in the World to Come, certainly. I will reward him for being *no'ach labriyos*, for getting along with everybody, of course. A kind-hearted man, a fine quiet fellow. That's wonderful. But he won't become great however. He's not the most successful one.

What *does* Hakodosh Boruch Hu say? "I'm looking for people who will *do* something in this world, who will be energetic to accomplish! People who will stand strong for the *dvar Hashem*. When I send you down to this world, says Hashem, you're an emissary for a certain purpose.

Hashem Doesn't Want Weaklings

So we must pay closer attention now to those models that Yaakov Avinu wanted for the Bnei Yisroel because it will give us a clue to what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from *us*. Yaakov wasn't talking only to his sons; he was revealing to us some of the secrets of what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from the Bnei Yisroel, from all of us. What we're learning now is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants people to be strong and not weak. If you know anything about the lion, you'll remember that he's the king of the jungle. He likes *tzaddikim* to be like lions, not afraid of anybody.

And it's not only the lion that Yaakov Avinu wanted to see in his descendants. **בנימין זאב יטרף**. *Ovdei Hashem* should be angry, vicious, like wolves. When the time comes to tear their prey, they do it. **ובערת הרע מקרבך** – And you should destroy the wicked from your

midst. A servant of Hashem is not a weakling, a pushover; he's a fighter. He'll tear his prey when he has to. And don't forget the **שפיפון עלי דרך**, the sneaky snake on the path. Hakodosh Boruch Hu also wants *tzaddikim* to be poisonous like a snake. An *eved Hashem* should have a poison in him – it means a poison of energy.

Be Energetic and Poisonous

Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants *tzaddikim*, not *lemechlach*. He wants you to be active, strong, confident, energetic, resolute and even poisonous. You should have it in yourself, a certain *eres*, a poison. When there's something that has to be done, you should carry it out!

The man who is a servant of Hashem is a *zariz*, a mover, a doer. It doesn't say **הוי גיבור כשה**, be strong like a lamb, or **כעגל**, be like a calf – no, it doesn't say that. **הוי גיבור כארי לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים** – "Be strong *like a lion*", it says, "to fulfill the will of Hashem." And that's what Yaakov was telling his children, that this is what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from the *Bnei Yisroel*; that they should be strong, courageous and energetic in the service of Hashem.

Rise To The Occasion

It's a very important lesson we're learning here. Of course, the Am Yisroel is compared to *tzon,* to sheep. **ואתן צאני צאן מרעיתי** – "You are My flock" (Yechezkel 34:31). We are compared to kosher sheep, oh yes. All the good qualities of a sheep we have to have – quiet, humble, submissive. Absolutely. The Klal Yisroel has all the good middos. But they have to have within them a certain ability to rise to the occasion and personify the qualities that Hashem saw in these three creatures, the qualities of energy, vibrance, power and action.

Now, it's important to make note of the following: You'll notice something interesting when you study these three animals. Yes, you might be impressed by their energy and how dangerous they may be; however the truth is that when a lion sees a man, he prefers to hide. Unless he needs food to survive, unless he needs to protect his turf

or himself, he goes on the side; he doesn't show himself. He doesn't look for trouble just for trouble's sake. Snakes also, they don't want people to be in their path. They run away. If you step on a snake, that's something else. But otherwise, he tries to avoid people. And the wolf certainly hides from people.

So once again, the *tzad hashaveh*, the common denominator in these three is that as much as they are energetic, full of life, actually they only use their energy when needed. Only when you instigate them, or when you try to subdue them; if you come too close to them and they feel threatened, then their nature asserts itself.

The Telzer Rav Is Maspid An Apikoris!

I'll tell you a little story. Once there was the Telzer Rov, Rav Yosef Leib *zichrono li'vracha*. Now the Telzer Rav was a sweet hearted fellow. Those who knew him well said he was honey; he would do anything for you – he'd give you the shirt off his back if you needed it. Now in Telz not all the Jews were *tzaddikim*. And the powerful Jews, some of them, were Zionists, Hebraists.

So when *Achad Ha'am* passed away – *Achad Ha'am* was a writer; he wasn't a *tzaddik*, not at all. But he was a hero for the low people, the ignorant and the *resha'im*. So the leaders of the *kehillah* came to Rav Yosef Leib, and they asked him to make a *hesped*. He should make a *hesped* on the *Achad Ha'am*. So the Telzer Rav said, "I'll make a *hesped*, yes, I'll do it."

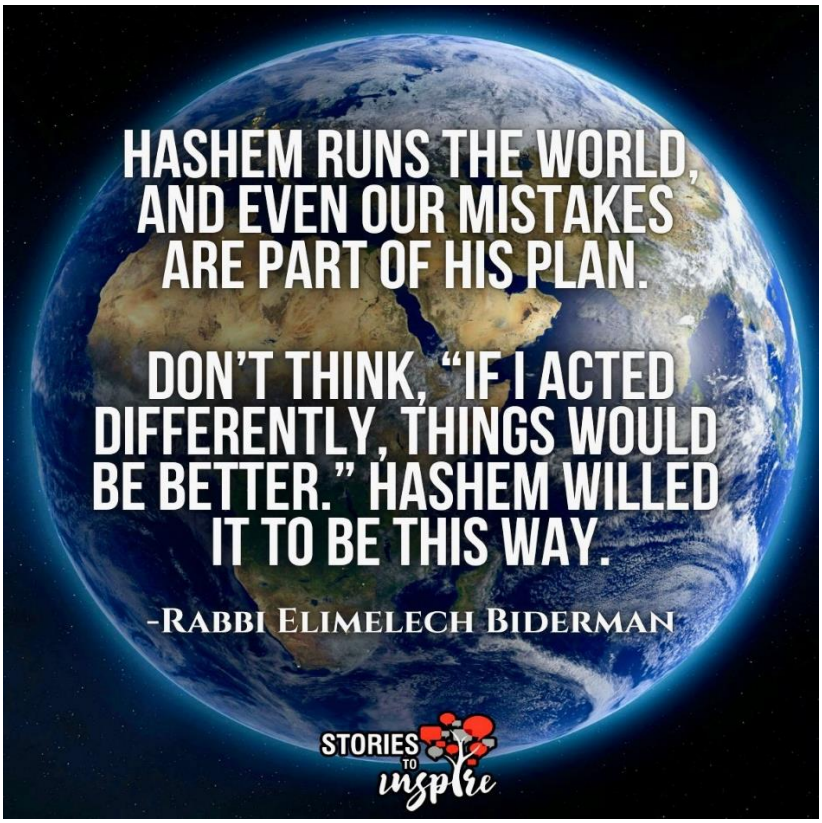
So he went out onto the balcony – on top of his house there was a porch, a balcony – he went out on the balcony with a Rambam in his hand and looked out at the people who had gathered to hear the Rav be *maspid* the *Achad Ha'am*. And he said from the Rambam like this:

"When a Beis Din is *dan* the *resha'im* and they put the *resha'im* to death, so the relatives do not practice any kind of *aveilus* at all. They don't mourn for them. *Elah oichlim v'shosim u'smeichim* – instead they have to eat and drink and celebrate; *sh'ne'emar ba'avod*

resha'im rinah – like it says in the possuk, 'When *resha'im* go lost it's a time for singing.'" And the Telzer Rav shut the Rambam and went back inside. That was the *hesped*. Because he was a *gibor*! He was like the **שפיפון**, like the poisonous serpent, because sometimes that's what is needed! He wasn't a little *shepseleh*, a little quiet sheep. He had power in him to stand up for Hakodosh Boruch Hu in this world.

The Satmer Rebbe Gains Enemies

Rav Aron Kotler and the old Satmerer Rebbe *zichronom li'vracha* were people of great kindliness. They were both the place that people in need turned to. And nobody was ever turned down by these *tzadikim*. And yet they both gained a number of enemies because they were outspoken. They were sweet like honey, but they weren't sheep. Actually they *were* sheep, but they knew how to be lions as well. And many people who didn't understand that *tzadikim* also have to be lions and wolves and serpents, looked at these great men askance.



נִיצוֹצֵי שִׂמְחָה
Sparks of Simcha

Taanis: Ultimate Gardener

There is a perplexing statement made in the middle of the Haftorah: " כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵרֵד הַגֶּשֶׁם וְהַשֶּׁלֶג מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁמָּה לֹא יָשׁוּב כִּי אִם־הִרְוָה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְהוֹלִידָהּ וְהִצְמִיחָהּ וְנָתַן זֶרַע לַזּוֹרֵעַ וְלֶחֶם לָאֹכֵל – '***For just as the rain and snow descend from heaven and will not return there, rather it waters the earth and causes it to produce and sprout, and gives seed for the sower and food to the eater***...' (Yeshayahu 55:10)

What is the meaning of the prophet's metaphor that Heavenly water makes the earth bring forth vegetation?

Rav Dovid Altschuler beautifully explains in his magnum opus Metzudas Dovid (Yeshayahu 55:10) that the Almighty is teaching us that just as the Heavenly water sent to the earth takes time until the seed eventually blossoms into a sapling, helping others grow takes patience, persistence, and prayer. Although it may be difficult to remain determined when we don't see the fruits of our labour immediately, we cannot underestimate the profound power of helping cultivate another's greatness.

"Stories that Tug at the Jewish Heart" by Rav Binyomin Pruzansky ArtScroll / Mesorah Publications

Eli studied the museum's artifacts of Saragossa, capital of the ancient kingdom of Aragon. He hoped to find some hint to the booming Jewish community that existed in Spain. Most moving of all were the many relics and illustrations depicting the Spanish Inquisition.

Eli sensed someone standing behind him and turned around to see a tall, dark-haired man standing close behind him, looking over his shoulder at the same painting he was viewing. "*Excuse me,*" the man said. "*If you would like, I would be happy to serve as a tour-guide*

for you…no charge. I just love this city and know a lot about it. It's my pleasure to share my enthusiasm with others."

Eli felt that the man was sincere, so the two men continued touring the museum and walked around the city. They saw the palaces built for the royal Aragon families, the exquisitely detailed Moorish palace constructed when Spain was under Arab rule, a famous stone bridge first constructed under the Roman Empire, and a bathhouse, called the Arab baths. The guide explained, "*Some people say it was actually a Jewish bathhouse. It is very close to where a great synagogue used to stand.*"

At the mention of a shul, Eli pressed further. "I would like to see this bathhouse. I came here to learn about Jewish life before the expulsion."

Now the guide's interest was piqued. "*Are you Jewish?*" he asked excitedly. "*Do you read Hebrew?*" Eli confirmed and asked why. The guide explained, "*There are no Jews living in Saragossa. There haven't been any for 500 years since they were expelled, but I've been trying to find someone who could help me. Would you be so kind as to come with me to my home? There's something I want to show you.*"

The hopeful look on his guide's face was as innocent as that of a child asking a grownup to help him cross the street. Eli followed his guide down the old city alleys until they reached a modest apartment filled with bulging stacks of history books and an array of photographs depicting the city's ancient sites. He thrust a fragment of yellowed parchment toward Eli with urgency, as though it were a gift he'd been waiting a lifetime to open.

Eli carefully unrolled the parchment, so stiff with age that he feared it might crack. "Yes, it's Hebrew," Eli answered quietly, his voice was choked with emotion. "It was clearly written by someone before the expulsion."

The guide urged Eli to read it. Eli's hands trembled: "*I, Moshe, the son of Avraham, forced to break all ties with my people and my faith, leave these lines to the children of my children and to theirs, in order that on the day when Israel will be able to walk again, its head high under the sun, without fear and without remorse, they will know where their roots lie.*"

A sob caught Eli's voice as he read the final line: "*Written at Saragossa, this ninth day of the month of Av, in the year of punishment and exile.*"

This document was written by broken-hearted Jew who held onto the hope that someday, his descendants would re-embrace their faith.

The guide was shaking his head. "*This is unbelievable. My family has had a tradition of passing this letter down from father to son, believing it was an amulet for good fortune. Whoever loses it would be stricken with a curse…So I am the grandchild of the Jews. It is not a pretty word in Spain. To many, it still means 'the devil.' But these are my roots. I must find out more.*"

They sat for hours together as Eli described the great successes and eventual expulsion of Spanish Jews until they warmly parted…

Years later, Eli was traveling again, this time in the streets of Geulah in Israel, where he was taken to yet another unremarkable apartment, though this time filled with Jewish children, pictures of Rabbis, and a silver frame holding a familiar yellowed parchment. His old friend had moved to Israel. "*Like my great ancestor, my name is Moshe ben Avraham.*"

"Shabbos is the antidote to the frenetic pace of modern life, inviting us to slow down and savour the sacredness of time." ~ Rabbi Avraham J. Twerski (1930-2021)

Short Story of The Week by Yoni Schwartz

Years ago, a certain Australian bachur went to the Ponevezh Yeshiva and developed a deep connection with **Rav Elazar Shach, ZT"L**. After getting married and struggling to have children for years, everyone was elated when his wife became pregnant with twins. After the two boys' birth, he cheerfully approached Rav Shach, asking if he would be the Sandak for one of the boys while his father would be the Sandak for the other.

Rav Shach's response shocked him. "Either your father will be the Sandak for both boys or I will."

Confused, the man asked, "Why doesn't the Rav do one and my father do the other?"

Insisting, Rav Shach responded, "Either your father or me - this is the only way; and if you're going to give it to one person, shouldn't it be your father?"

The man left feeling slightly heartbroken. In the end, the father insisted that Rav Shach be the Sandak.

Later, the man asked Rav Shach to explain why he wanted only one person to be the Sandak.

The Rav explained that if he were one Sandak and his father were the other, the twins might grow up with tension. One boy might feel superior because the gadol hador was his Sandak, while the other might feel resentful.

"I don't want to be part of any situation where one brother may be jealous of the other."

After hearing this, the man felt enlightened by Rav Shach's wisdom and foresight.

The End

Rashi asks - **לָמָּה פָּרָשָׁה זוֹ סְתוּמָה** and answers **שֶׁבִּקֵּשׁ לְגַלּוֹת אֶת הַקֵּץ לְבָנָיו, וְנִסְתַּם מִמֶּנּוּ** – *'That he (Yaakov) attempted to reveal the End [of the exile] to his sons, but it was "closed off" (concealed) from him.'*

The Sfas Emes explains the significance of not knowing the keitz as follows: the purpose of galus is to wipe away and atone for our sins, in order to be the recipients of good. If the date of the redemption is known, it would not allow the bitterness of the exile to be felt. This is because a difficulty whose date of expiration is known isn't as difficult a **צרה**. - That is why Yaakov was prevented from revealing the **קץ**.



How the Doctor from Minnesota Won His Friday Night Bet with the Yerushalmi Yid

There is a widespread *minhag* throughout the Jewish world to bless our children on Friday night. We bless our sons with the famous blessing (from this week's *parsha*): "May Elokim make you like Ephraim and Menashe." (*Bereishis* 48:20) and we bless our daughters with the blessing "May Elokim make you like Sorah, Rivka, Rochel, and Leah."

I would like to share with you an incredible story I recently heard from R' Frand:

There was a medical conference in Yerusholayim that brought together experts from all over the world on the topic of epilepsy. A doctor from Minnesota, who was a world-renowned expert in this

field, came to the conference. He met there a Yerushalmi looking Jew who was participating in these meetings.

This was not the type of person who looked like a doctor (although today it is not always easy to tell). The doctor asked him, "Nu, is your medical expertise in the field of epilepsy?" The Yerushalmi said, "No. I am not a doctor at all, but I have a child who has epilepsy. Many times, I have travelled all over the world to conferences on this condition to hear what is new in the field. I want to know if there are any new medications or new treatments. Now there is an epilepsy conference in Yerusholayim, so certainly I came."

The Yerushalmi then invited the doctor, the epilepsy expert, to his home for Shabbos dinner the Friday night after the conference concluded. The doctor accepted the invitation.

As the guest entered the house, the host told him (in private), "I have five daughters. One of them has epilepsy. I bet you won't be able to tell which of the five has epilepsy. Her epilepsy is for the most part under control, and my daughter is perfectly normal. She is not self-conscious about her condition. I bet you won't be able to tell which daughter has epilepsy."

The doctor responded, "Listen, I am a world class expert in epilepsy. I will be able to tell which daughter it is."

Throughout the entire meal, everything was fine. There were no outward manifestations of her illness at all. After the meal, the host asked the doctor, "So tell me: Which is the one that has epilepsy?"

The doctor said "It is that one!" The host was astonished. He said "You are right! How did you possibly figure that out? She behaves exactly the same as all of her sisters! How did you know?"

The doctor explained: "Do you know how I knew? It was because when you benched your daughters before the meal, I saw that your heart rate increased when you benched her."

When we sit at our Shabbos tables Friday night and we bench our children, in our minds we think "What do I want from this child? What do I want this child to be? What do I want this child to become?" As much as this father knew his daughter's illness was under control, still, her condition affected his heart strings. It affected his heart rate. That is how the doctor knew.

The moment when we bless our children Friday night is really special. We have a unique ability to connect with each child, and then give each a *berachah* asking that they become like Ephraim and Menashe or like Sorah, Rivka, Rochel and Leah. This is a most emotional moment. Perhaps the outer manifestations of these emotions are not visible to the average person. Perhaps this is not even something we are ourselves aware of — but these subconscious expressions of *berachah* come from the deepest place in our heart.

Parshah Pearls - Strangers & Brothers

"Please forgive now the sin of your brothers ... And now please forgive the sin of the servants of the G-d of your father" (50:17). אָנָּא שָׂא נָא פֶּשַׁע אַחֶיךָ... וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא לְפֶשַׁע עַבְדֵי אֱלֹקי אָבִיךָ

It is easier, says **R. Aharon Levine**, to forgive a stranger than it is to forgive a brother. Indeed, says the Medrash, when one bangs on gold, it produces a barely audible sound, whereas when one bangs on iron, the noise can be deafening. That is because one tends to bang on gold with a hammer that is not made of gold, whereas one tends to bang on iron with an iron hammer.

The sale of Yosef contained both aspects of wrongdoing: selling anybody is wicked enough, but they did worse; they sold their brother! Both aspects are mentioned in the Pasuk.

I would have explained the Pasuk a little differently. It is evil for someone to sell his brother, I would have said, but it is equally evil for a G-d-fearing person to sell anybody. Yosef's brothers were

asking him for forgiveness on both scores, one as Yosef's brothers, and the other, in their capacity as G-d-fearing men.

Keep smiling



In this week's parasha, Yacov blesses his children before he passes away. Each tribe received a blessing from Yacov to strengthen and direct them according to their nature and abilities.

Yehuda's blessing - וּלְבֶן־שִׁנַּיִם מֵחָלָב - "***white toothed from milk***" (49:11) Better to smile at someone than to give them milk. All we need is to know that G'd is happy with us. A smile is more valuable than any other effort to accept and acknowledge others.

Anyone who deprives others of the pleasantness of their cheerful face is a thief. Everyone appreciates and feels good about receiving a smile. The smile has the power to elevate, encourage, and please the recipient. - Anyone can with a smile acknowledge the other person's existence and approve of the person's actions. It is the easiest and cheapest way of accepting and approving others and it is more valuable than any other effort.

Good morning!

We all know the difference it makes how we are greeted when we meet or call someone on the telephone. It can make or break the day. A cheerful "good morning" can put us in a good mood; whereas, the opposite can spoil our good mood. Just like little infants respond to a smile by smiling back, so too every adult appreciates and feels good about receiving a smile.

Smile power

The smile has the power to elevate, encourage, and please anyone who receives it. This is one of the final messages we received from our patriarch Yacov. And it was recorded in the holy Torah to emphasize that this relates to all of us at any time. Keep smiling, and the world will smile back at you.

A Remarkable Modern-Day Story On Asara B'Teves – Rabbi Shlomo Landau



Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein walks into the waiting room of a hospital. He sits down to wait, and he notices that periodically, the staff comes out from the ward, and they go over to a particular fellow to try to reassure him. He realizes that after a while, what must have happened was that the fellow was supposed to have a particular test, and he wasn't allowed to eat or drink from the night before. It seems that there was some kind of problem with the hospital equipment that they were trying to fix.

In the meantime, the fellow was famished and extremely hungry and thirsty and wanted to break his fast, but the staff kept coming over to him to reassure him that they were doing everything they could to fix the machine, and it wouldn't be too much longer.

The fellow was getting more and more irritated.

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein went over to the fellow to give him encouragement. "Listen, Hashem sometimes throws tests at us, and Im Yirtze Hashem, everything will be ok. I'm sure everything will progress really soon."

The fellow looks at Rav Zilberstein and says, "Rabbi, you don't have to make me feel good – I know exactly why this is happening."

Rav Zilberstein said, "What happened?"

He said, "I used to be shomer Torah U'Mitzvos, and I walked away. Do you know how many fast days that I have not observed? Hashem is punishing me saying, 'If you're not going to fast on My terms, I'm going to force you to fast on My terms!' – That's why Hashem is taking away the ability from me to eat and drink today."

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein looks at the fellow and says, "I'm going to share something with you that's going to shock you."

"What?"

"Today is Asara B'Teves – today is a fast day!"

The fellow broke down crying. He said, "You see, Hashem is giving me a direct message. I got it – I understand."

What was fascinating was that afterwards the fellow did have the procedure and decided that he wanted to complete the fast!

What are the chances that the machine wouldn't be working on a fast day itself?!

"Hashem takes special pride in each individual, regardless of their spiritual standing. There is something unique Hashem loves about you that only He knows about." ~ Based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810).



In this week's Torah portion, the verse states, גּוּר אַרְיֵה יְהוּדָה... כָּרַע רָבַץ כְּאַרְיֵה וּכְלָבִיא מִי יְקִימֶנּוּ "Yehudah stooped down; he crouched as a lion…" (Bereishis 49:9)

Yehudah's outstanding quality is that even if he falls, even when he is bowed low, he remains as firm and fearless as a lion. Even when he must kneel, he does so with pride.

For this reason, the Jewish people are referred to as Yehudim.

Yehudah never succumbs to despair; Yehudah never stays down. Like the lion, Yehudah – and the Jewish people – always gets back up. ~ Chiddushei HaRim, Reb Yitzchak Meir Alter (1799-1866)

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Asara B'Teves marks the beginning of Nevuchadnetzar's siege of the first Bais HaMikdash which culminated in the Temple's breach and destruction three years later on 9 Tammuz/Av. We fast even on Friday, a day we do not normally fast, because it is the beginning of tragedy, and represents all that comes after it. It also commemorates the tragedy of the Septuagint. The Egyptian-Greek king Ptolemy kidnapped 72 Jewish sages and locked them in separate rooms with orders to translate the Torah into Greek. Miraculously, all 72 of them came up with identical translations, even making the same changes to the text to avoid offending Ptolemy. (Megilla 9b)

Despite the open miracle, Chazal say this day was as bad for the Jews as the day the Golden Calf was made. This is because it enabled people to misuse the Torah by "studying" it without the guidance of a proper teacher. Without the Mesorah, the tradition from Sinai, it could be (and has been) twisted to say things Hashem and the Torah never intended.

Chizuk - Inspiration

One winter evening in Vilna, **Rav Yisrael Salanter ZT"L** was walking home late at night after teaching at the Yeshiva. He noticed that a store's exterior rolling shutter had been left open, likely forgotten by the shopkeeper. It had started to snow quite heavily, and the precipitation was beginning to seep into the store, threatening to damage the merchandise.

Many people would have simply continued walking - after all, it was late, cold, and the shopkeeper's carelessness wasn't their responsibility. Not Rav Salanter though, he spent several hours that night carefully removing merchandise from the areas of the store that could become wet from the snow.

The next morning, when the shopkeeper arrived, he was surprised to find that his merchandise was not damaged and that a note had been left explaining what had happened, signed by Rav Salanter. As an aside, Rav Salanter left a note detailing what he had done, likely to fulfill the Halacha that if one does a kindness to his friend without him knowing, he should inform his friend that he did the kindness. This serves to foster peace and harmony within Bnei Yisrael.

What makes this story particularly notable, is that the shopkeeper was known in the community (and to Rav Salanter) as one who had previously spoken negatively of Rav Salanter and his teaching methods. Despite this personal slight, Rav Salanter chose to spend hours in the cold to protect this man's merchandise and livelihood.

When later asked about his actions, Rav Salanter simply explained that protecting another person's property is not dependent on how he treats you - it is simply the right thing to do.

This story, which is well-documented in Jewish historical accounts, exemplifies the integrity in doing what is right regardless of personal feelings or convenience. It would become a teaching moment that his students would reference for generations to come about how true ethical behavior means doing what is right even when no one is watching and there is no personal benefit to be gained.



My Mother's Parting Letter By Rabbi Elie Feder, Ph.D

Her pearls of wisdom conveyed profound lessons for anyone seeking joy in the face of life's challenges.

At the funeral of my mother, Shani Feder, of blessed memory, my father recounted a regular occurrence during her short yet joyful 57 years. Whenever a new doctor requested her medical history, my mother would launch into a detailed account. After detailing her five major illnesses, twelve major surgeries, over 100 medical procedures, and over 200 hospital nights, the bewildered doctor would reply, "But you look good?" She would invariably respond, "I feel great!"

Despite my mother's cheerfulness, there wasn't a day in her last two decades when she wasn't in pain, yet she never complained. Always happy and bringing joy to those around her, she left us all wondering: How did she do it? What was her secret to happiness in the face of adversity? To convey her wisdom, she wrote the following heartfelt letter to my siblings and me just before another life-threatening surgery:

Just a Happy Mother's Day note from Dear Old Mom (although I decided not to send on Mother's Day):

I am awed by watching the miraculous order of G-d's nature unfolding in my backyard — you can see throughout nature, a mother's job is to give her child wings, teach them to fly, and watch them soar. Each year I watch the swans hatch ugly ducklings, teach them to hunt for food and — when strong enough — teach them to fly. Then they turn into beautiful swans and fly off to start their own lives (so it seems). Fortunately, children may leave the nest — but don't always leave the neighborhood. And I have really had the merit to watch you all soar.

I just have a few words of motherly advice, as you soar.

Enjoy and cherish every day — don't worry so much about tomorrow, on what might or might not happen. Do the best you can — but if you focus your worry on tomorrow, it makes you lose today and tomorrow. If something bad is going to happen, it will happen. You won't be able to deny it. At least you have today — and so many wonderful things happen in today.

If something bad or unexpected happens, you will deal with it — you are stronger than you think — and maybe some good will even come from it. Only G-d knows what lies ahead, what's just around the corner. We cannot write the script. We don't even always know what is good or bad. Sometimes it's a matter of a person's perspective on life and what's truly important to them. One can only strive for the best Torah life.

Always thank G-d for all the good that you have (and for the bad that you don't have). Nothing is a given. Appreciate it all — but try not to judge people who don't seem to. You never really know what their true circumstances are. But, do try to treat them as you would like them to treat you (G-d created all of us).

And of course, try to do things with a smile. Nobody likes a grump; your words of wisdom (and even help and criticism) are better accepted if given with a smile.

OK, enough preaching. I could keep going — but as you realize, that's not the point of this message. (I can take lessons from you all on these topics.) As I hope you realize, the point of this all is to simply say, I thank G-d every day that I am truly blessed with happiness (to be clichéd, Yiddishe nachas).

Bumps in the road are just that and make me appreciate what I have more. I am sorry for how they affect you and your father. My wings may be clipped for a short time but G-d willing all will be well (even better, I hope and pray — no pain no gain, as they say).

So shut off this computer and go teach my grandchildren to fly … With G-d's help, I will be there very soon to help.

Love,

The Tough Old Bird

Thank G-d, my mother lived for two more years after this surgery. While her moving letter offered insight into how she maintained her positivity despite her illnesses, I yearned for a deeper understanding. It slowly became clear to me that while my mother's happiness was truly remarkable, it wasn't purely her own; it was the happiness of a life deeply rooted in Jewish values and principles. As my mother intuitively sensed the Torah's lessons about happiness, she built her life around them. Since these lessons empowered her to face her challenges with joy, she carefully crafted her letter to show us how to follow in her footsteps.

Each year, as I prepared for a talk in honor of her yahrzeit, I would study my mother's letter in combination with associated words of our Sages. The more I analyzed her letter, the more I appreciated its depth. Over time, I came to see each part of my mother's letter as a pearl of wisdom that guided me in living a joyous, Jewishly observant life. I realized that her words held profound lessons for anyone seeking joy in the face of life's challenges.

Project Mesorah – Rabbi Paysach Krohn

In this week's sedra, we have one of the greatest lessons in chinuch:

We all know the story that Yaakov put his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Menashe. Yoseph complained to Yaakov, and said, "Tatty, you're doing the wrong thing." And Yaakov answered, "Don't worry - **וַיְמָאֵן אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר יָדַעְתִּי בְנִי יָדַעְתִּי** – '*I know what I'm doing.*' - **אָחִיו הַקָּטֹן יִגְדַּל מִמֶּנּוּ** – '*His younger brother will be greater than he.*' (48:19)

There is a fabulous **Kli Yakar** that says:

כי הקב"ה בוחר ביותר בקטנים, וכל אדם שיש בו צד קטנות אז ביותר הקב"ה מגביהו לשיתו לאלפי רבבה – '***Hashem especially chooses the small ones, and elevates them to greatness***.'

That's what Hashem does – In a family or a classroom, don't give up on any child… you think nothing can become of this kid – Hashem picks out those that people think will remain small, and makes them into leaders!

If we remember this lesson – that's how we will have pride and joy from all our children!

"Each good point within you, every mitzvah and good deed you do is like a musical note. These notes come together to create exquisite songs – your own beautiful melodies." ~ Rabbi Lazer Brody.

"Prayer doesn't change Hashem's mind; it changes us. Through prayer, we elevate ourselves and become a new person. The original decree was never meant for this renewed version of ourselves." ~ The Bnei Yissaschar.



In this week's Parsha, Yaakov Avinu's astonishing life is about to come to an end. Before his ultimate demise, Yaakov asks for all of his sons to gather around his sickbed so that he can bless them. The blessing that he gives to his first-born son, Reuven, seems rather strange. Yaakov tells Reuven "You are impetuous like water, and you moved my bed…" Yaakov is referring to the incident in which Reuven rearranged his father's bed so that he would be dwelling in Leah's tent instead of Rachel's.

The Midrash elaborates on Yaakov's "blessing" by saying that although the right of kingship and the right of the Kehuna should have been given to Reuven, the one true firstborn, he lost these precious gifts because of his impetuous behavior.

This Midrash seems somewhat strange. Firstly, the Gemorah in Shabbos (55) says that anyone who thinks that Reuven sinned is gravely mistaken. Why then did he lose these valuable gifts? Secondly, even if there was some slight sin involved, Reuven was only looking out for his mother's honor. This was certainly a noble intention. So even if he did act a bit too hasty, was his punishment really commensurate with his actions?

R' Reuven Fein offers an interesting possibility to explain these two difficulties. He begins by substantiating the Gemorah and saying that there was certainly no sin – in the proper sense of the word – on Reuven's part. Instead, R' Reuven explains, there was a slight lack of refinement in the arena of patience which Reuven was expected to have. R' Reuven goes on to explain that although every Jew is required to have this attribute, a leader of the Jewish people is

required to excel in this trait in order to properly serve his charge. If he cannot, he will not be successful as a leader.

With this explanation, we can now answer our two difficulties. Firstly, Yaakov's punishment was not a personal vendetta or an act of anger, rather it truly was a blessing. By Yaakov telling Reuven what he was destined for, he blessed his son with the best blessing that a father can offer – clarity. And secondly, Yaakov's prophecy for Reuven was indeed not overly harsh, but rather it was perfectly commensurate with his actions. Because Reuven had a slight hindrance in the attribute of patience, he was not an appropriate candidate for the leader of the Jewish people.

I would like to now demonstrate how this attribute of serenity and not acting impetuously is integral for every Jew. **R' Chaim Vital**, in his renowned Kabbalistic work, explains in great detail how every action we take, even the most seemingly minute ones such as simple verbal exchanges we have with our acquaintances on a daily basis, must be well though out and not performed hastily in any way. The Yalkut in Parshas Nasso adds that when the verse in Mishle (6:18) says not to rush to do a sin, what the verse is really saying is that when a person rushes, he will inevitably sin! If one would merely contemplate the detrimental effects of his proposed sin for a few moments and weigh out the pros and cons in a level headed way, he would inescapably come to the conclusion that it is not worth it. But the Yetzer Hara is very crafty and designs ways to make us think that if we don't make our decisions quickly we will lose out in some way or be thought of as stupid.

If one looks at the various "big" sins that have been recorded in the Torah, one notices that a common thread in many of them is this attribute of impetuousness. When Adam ate from the tree of life, had he only waited two more hour that very tree would have been permitted to him and he would have been able to partake of its delights legally. Similarly, when the Jews sinned with the Golden

Calf, one of their main dilemmas was the fact that they expected Moshe to return already and his absence represented a challenge for their faith. But had they only waited a few more hours, their doubts would have been resolved and they wouldn't have sinned at all. We see from these two examples that patience is an integral attribute in preventing sin.

I feel it important to point out that one shouldn't make the mistake of confusing this lethal attribute of impetuousness with the concept of alacrity which Chazal very much laude. There is a very fundamental difference. The Mesilas Yesharim says that alacrity can come only after one has carefully weighed out the pros and cons of his proposed course of action. Only then can he begin to implement his alacrity. Before that, he would be acting simply out of impetuousness and will probably err.

Perhaps we could conclude with the enigmatic Gemorah in Eruvin which relates that R' Preidah had a student who was so thick that he often had to repeat the same Gemorah for this student no less then 400 times in order for the student to get it. Well one day, after the usual 400 time lesson, the student had a lot on his mind that day and was unable to concentrate, so R' Preidah gingerly offered to repeat the lesson another 400 times. In lieu of his tremendous self-sacrifice, a voice came out from the heavens and offered R' Priedah either another 400 years on his life, or that everyone in his generation should be let into Gan Eden. He chose the latter. The voice responded that since he chose the latter, he would be granted both.

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz asks on this Gemorrah, how could R' Preidah have agreed to give up so much of his time for one student. Wouldn't this have constituted Bitul Torah and a misallocation of his resources? R' Chaim answered that the time it took to teach this student, albeit did not grant R' Preidah a better understanding of the Gemorah, but it allowed him to develop this integral trait of

patience and level-headedness which was crucial to his development as a growing Torah scholar. Indeed we see that not only did he not lose out from his judgment, but he was granted an extra 400 years to make up for any time he may have lost!

May we all be successful in inculcating this integral attribute of patience and level-headedness in our daily decisions!



The Essence of a Jew: "I Have More Than My Share"

In this week's Parsha, the blessing given to Yehuda reads, [Bereishis 49:8] "Yehuda — your brothers will praise you…" (yoducha achecha). This is the simple translation of the verse, that the word 'yoducha' comes from 'l-hodos,' meaning to thank or to give honor.

However, the **Daas Zekeinim m'baalei HaTosfos** bring an alternative interpretation of these words. They say that the blessing of Yaakov was that "All Jews will be called after your name" — i.e. Jews (Yehudim) from Judah (Yehuda).

As we all know, this is true in many languages. The name for Jew in German, which unfortunately was rubbed in our faces, is Jud — from Judah. The name 'Yid', is from Yehuda. The name 'Jew' is from Judah, as well.

The question, however, is: why? What is it about the name Yehuda, and the nature of this name, that it should be chosen to define what the essence of a Jew is for all eternity?

If we look in Parshas Vayetze [29:35] when the children were born, we find, "she conceived again and bore a son and declared 'This time

let me gratefully praise Hashem (O-deh es Hashem),' therefore she called his name Yehuda…" [from the same root as O-deh].

Rash"i asks, "What does Leah mean, 'let me praise Hashem'?" He explains that she received more than her "fair" allotment of sons. If the Twelve Tribes were destined to descend from four Matriarchs, based on an equal share basis each mother would have had 3 sons. Leah, who was already the mother of Reuvein, Shimeon, and Levi said that with the birth of Yehudah, "I now have more than my share."

The Chidushei HaRim says that the statement, "I have taken more than my share," sums up the Jewish attitude to life. "I have more than I deserve" is the essence of what a Jew is supposed to be. That is why we are called by the name Yehuda.

Esav said "I have a lot" [33:9]. That means there is always more to have. The philosophy of Yaakov is "I have everything" [33:11]. If one has everything, there is nothing more to have. This is to be the Jewish philosophy — I have more than I deserve; I don't deserve even this. That is why we are called by the name Yehuda.

A Request of Mercy: Bring Sickness Into the World

We hear, unfortunately all too frequently, of tragedies where airliners suddenly explode in the sky. In discussing such a tragedy, I once heard a woman on a radio talk show express a thought which she felt was semi- consoling in the midst of the great misfortune.

"Thank G-d they didn't know what hit them. A bomb goes off at 31,000 feet, one doesn't have a chance to think. One is just dead. They died without pain or anguish. They didn't think 'I am going to die'. They were spared from that trauma."

I want to suggest that this is not a proper attitude. I want to bring as a proof from a Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer on this week's parsha.



On the verse "Behold your father is sick" [48:1] the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer comments, that from the time the world was created until Yaakov, no one ever got sick and died. A person would be fit as a fiddle until one day, all of a sudden, he would sneeze and his soul would depart through his nostrils.

Regarding this situation, Yaakov our Patriarch came and asked 'Mercy from G-d' that people should get sick, so that they would have an inkling that death was approaching: "Please do not take away my soul until I have a chance to command my children and my household."

Yaakov told G-d, "I want to get my house in order; I want to get my own thoughts in order; I want to talk to my children."

And G-d responded, "Behold your father is sick." This was a condition about which all of humanity was amazed, since nothing like this had ever happened since the creation of Heaven and Earth.

What we see from this Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer is that it is not good to just die without warning, and to be suddenly taken from this world. People need time to put their own thoughts in order and to put their houses in order. They need time with their children. They need time with their spouses.

As much as we suffer from disease, at least we have a warning — and that is a blessing. People who die 'without knowing what hit them,' are not 'fortunate;' they are 'deprived.'

'Wisdom Among the Gentiles should be believed' [Eicha Rabba — 2:9]. After the Challenger disaster, there was a tumult as to whether the

astronauts did or did not know of their pending doom. When they finally found the tapes and heard that their last words were "Uh-oh,!" their lawyers wanted to sue N.A.S.A. because they suffered 'extra trauma,' because they 'knew.'

A non-Jewish columnist wrote, at that time, "Does it necessarily follow that it would have been more merciful that death come so instantaneously that the final conscious emotion was a sense of exhilaration, or does such an end rob a person of the right to reflect, even if only for a few precious moments, on those things that made life worth living."

I think that it's true. A person needs time. He needs time to do Teshuva [return to HaShem]. He needs time to make peace — if with no one else, then at least with his Creator. We need time. That is what the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer is saying. Let it be a moment, but we need time.

Every Rule Has Its Exception

Yaakov Avinu told Yosef that his children — Menashe and Ephraim would have the status of Yaakov's own children, Reuvain and Shimeon. They would be considered like sons. Yaakov positioned Menashe opposite Yaakov's right hand, thinking that his firstborn should receive the "stronger" blessing. However Yaakov crossed his hands, placing his right hand on Ephraim who was at his left side and placing his left hand on Menashe who was at his right side. [48:13-14]

I saw an insight in the name of **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt"l**. The Gemara says [Shabbos 10b] that a person should never show favoritism among his children, because the entire incident of the sale of Yosef and its entire aftermath — leading to the exile in Egypt — all came about because Yaakov showed favoritism to his son Yosef. If there is anyone who should have learnt his lesson from the pitfalls of such favoritism, it is Yaakov. Why does Yaakov appear to be

making the very same mistake all over again on his deathbed? Was he not showing favoritism to Yosef's grandchildren over his other grandchildren, just as he had showed favoritism to Yosef over his other brothers many decades earlier? Why is he now saying: "All other grandchildren are only grandchildren, but these grandchildren are like children?" History seems to be repeating itself!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky offers an amazing chiddush [novelty] in raising children: The rule is that a person should never show favoritism among children. But the Rule of Rules is that "to every rule there is an exception." Rav Yaakov insists that there are exceptions to the rule that one should not show favoritism to any of his children. There are sometimes that one child requires more time, more effort, or more concern than another child.

Anyone who has more than one child knows that different children require different things. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky says that when a person sees that for whatever reason, be it physically, emotionally, psychologically, or just natural disposition — one child requires more than another, the parent has to do what he has to do for whatever that child needs.

Yaakov saw clearly that Ephraim and Menashe had to be treated differently than the other grandchildren.

Why did they need to be treated differently? The other grandchildren grew up in a support system. They all had uncles and aunts and cousins. They all had a Zeida (grandfather). They had a reinforcing family environment. Ephraim and Menashe were out there alone, two children in Egypt. They were the only Jews in town. It's like trying to raise a Jewish family in Great Falls, Montana. There is nobody there. Kids that grow up in Great Falls, Montana are different than kids who grow up in Baltimore, Maryland.

This explains the special treatment given to Yosef's children over the other grandchildren. What about the special treatment given to Ephraim over Menashe?

Ephraim needed to be handled differently than Menashe. If he was not given this special kind of treatment, Yaakov Avinu suspected that something could happen to him. He therefore made the calculation and said that Ephraim had to be given added support. Consequently "he crossed his hands."



Yosef Had to Be Told His Father Was Sick?

The *Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos* comments on the *pasuk* "And it was after these matters, it was told to Yosef 'Behold your father is sick.' He took his two sons with him, Menashe and Ephraim." [48:1] Yosef hears that his elderly father is on his death bed and goes to see him, taking along his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim.

Let us ask a question: If someone is on his death bed, isn't it likely that the son will know about it without needing to be told? What kind of son would not know what kind of condition his father is in and need to be told by others "Behold, your father is sick"?

The *Daas Zekeinim* infers from this narration that Yosef did not visit his father frequently. Yosef was not there on a regular basis and therefore he did not know Yaakov's condition and consequently, he needed to be informed by others that the end was near. The *Daas Zekeinim* suggests a reason why this may have been the case: Yosef did not want to spend time with his father alone because he was afraid his father would ask him how it was that he wound up in Egypt.

This is an incredible idea. Yaakov was in Mitzrayim for seventeen years. He had not seen Yosef for twenty-two years prior to that. There was a dramatic meeting between the two of them in last week's parsha. They had been so close during Yosef's youth in Canaan. Can it be thought that now, after their initial dramatic reunion, that Yosef, the "heir apparent" to the patriarchal legacy, does not go back to visit with his father on a frequent basis?

According to the *Daas Zekeinim*, as hard as it is to imagine, and as difficult personally as it must have been for Yosef, he kept his distance. Yosef feared that moment of privacy with Yaakov when his elderly father would say to him "Yossele my dear son – tell me: what really happened? How did you ever wind up here in Egypt?" The truth would have caused Yaakov great aggravation and anger at his other sons. Yosef did not want to be the cause of that aggravation and family strife.

sefer Avir Yaakov asks the following question: Yosef did not see his father all these 17 years when they were both in Mitzrayim. It was painful to Yaakov and it was painful to Yosef. Why? Yosef wanted to avoid the question "What happened to you?" However, there is a simple resolution to this problem. It is called "Lie through your teeth." There are plenty of stories Yosef could have told Yaakov to explain his disappearance without incriminating his brothers. "I was **kidnapped** by these Yishmaelim" is a very plausible story. It is not true, but perhaps Yaakov would have believed it. If there ever was an example of "one is allowed to extend the truth to preserve peace" (*M'shaneh b'ad ha'Shalom*) [Yevamos 65b] – this was it!

The Avir Yaakov offers an answer to this question. He suggests that even though Yosef may have been allowed to lie, he just could not bring himself to deceive his father. Maybe that is because Yaakov personified the attribute of truth more than anything else. If you know your father values truth over every other human characteristic – you just cannot lie to him. Despite both Yosef and Yaakov suffering for all of these years, Yosef could not lie to his father and violate the paramount value in his life.

"Let the Good in me connect with the good in others, until the world is transformed through the compelling power of love" – Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

Invoking The Imagery of Hashem

We have a Biblical command to try to emulate any attribute that the Almighty demonstrates to us. "And you shall walk in His ways." [Devorim 28:9]. The Almighty is an empathizer who cares about others, so too, we need to do the same. This is something that every one of us must work on: Think about somebody else. Human beings are by their very nature wrapped up in themselves. They are self-focused. It is man's spiritual challenge to think about others.

When you meet someone, do not just tell him where you are holding and what you are doing. Ask him about himself, his family, where is he holding and what is he doing. Think about the other person!

Rabbi Luban told me an interesting story. There was a rabbi in Pittsburgh in the 1930s who was the Chief Rabbi of the city. I looked him up on a website called Kevarim.com, which has short biographic sketches of Rabbinic personalities who are buried in America. There is a little bio on this Rabbi Moshe Zinnes. Rabbi Zinnes received semicha from Rav Eliezer Gordon; he received semicha from Rav Yitzchak Elchanon; he wrote a sefer on the *Yerushalmi*. Like many Litveshe Rabbanim, he came to America and wound up in a small Jewish community. Rabbi Luban learned in the Kolel in Pittsburgh in his younger years and heard stories about this Rabbi Zinnes.

There came a time when Rabbi Zinnes's family did not let him walk out alone in the winter, because he would invariably see a shivering person who did not have a coat and would take off his own coat, give it to the other person, and walk home without a coat. He would come back frozen. He went through many winter coats this way. The family made up that whenever he went out in the winter someone had to go with him to make sure he did not give away his coat.

This is the attribute of being a *Ro-eh*, having the attribute of empathy. When you see somebody suffering, you feel "I have to take care of him". We are not at the level of giving away our winter coats

to every person in the street who is shivering, but to think about somebody else – to at least see his downcast expression and ask "what's bothering you?" – that is something we should all be able to strive for. This is something about which we are not only capable; it is something we all need to do.

Humility Protects Against the Evil Eye

When Yaakov gave his Bracha to Ephraim and Manashe he said, "May they reproduce abundantly like fish within the land." [Bereishis 48:16] The expression "*v'yidgo l'rov*" [may they reproduce abundantly like fish] is a strange expression. Rashi explains: "And may they reproduce like these fish that proliferate and become numerous and the evil eye has no effect on them."

Why are fish not affected by the evil eye (*Ayin haRah*)? The Gemara says in Tractate Brochos [20a; 55b]: "Just as fish are covered by the sea and the Evil Eye cannot rule over them, so too the Evil Eye will not be able to rule over Yosef's descendants. Yosef and his descendants have the bracha of "*alei ayin*" [Bereishis 49:22] – they are above the eye and not affected by *Ayin HaRah*.

The Chidah believes that a person with humility can escape the Evil Eye. Someone who is humble does not prance around and try to attract attention to himself. It is specifically such attention-grabbing actions that attract the Evil Eye. The Chidah points out that the Hebrew word *Anavah* (*ayin nun vov hay*) has the same numeric value as *Ayin* (*ayin yud nun*) plus one, indicating that *Anavah* (modesty) transcends the (Evil) "*Ayin*" (Eye). The *Gematria* of *Ayin* is 120; that of *Anavah* is 121. Thus, the Chidah says that one with *Anivus* "is above" the (Evil) Eye!

Time Flies When You're Spiritually Productive



The parsha begins, "And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt for 17 years and the days of Yaakov were the years of his life (yemei Yaakov sh'nei chayav) one hundred and forty seven years" [47:28].

The author of "VaYaged Moshe" comments on the peculiar language of this pasuk [verse] – "the days of Yaakov, the years of his life." The VaYaged Moshe explains that the years do not drag on for a person who leads a busy and meaningful spiritual life, filled with Torah and Mitzvos and kindness — the years fly by, almost seeming like days. This is the message of our pasuk. The years of Yaakov's life were like days in his eyes.

The author cites an incident involving the Bnei Yissaschar who once went to the marketplace in Munkatch. The Bnei Yissaschar saw people in the market standing around talking idly and not doing anything productive. He asked them what they were doing. They answered, "we're killing time." He told them, "do me a favor, don't kill the time, give some of it to me because I don't have enough time."

This is the lesson of the opening pasuk of the parsha. When one is productive in the Service of G-d, time literally flies. Only when a person sits and stares and does nothing, does life become boring and time seem like an eternity.

Ethical Wills

Our Sages teach that Yaakov our Patriarch was the first person in the world to get sick before his death. Until that time, people would be healthy right up until the time of their death. Yaakov asked G-d that he should become weak before his death. The reason for this request was so that he would have the opportunity to give his children final instructions prior to his departure from this world.

Rav Pam (1913-2001) cites a number of ethical wills that great men of Israel wrote for their children before they died. He says that a number of great men of Israel specifically commanded their children not to eulogize them.

Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, though, the head of the Yeshiva in Volozhin, told his children that he did want them to eulogize him. He writes that there is no reason for us to try to be 'more religious' than the Amoraim of the Talmud who allowed themselves to eulogize one another.

Rather, the Netzi"v stipulated as follows to his son, Rav Chaim Berlin: "I know that you are an eloquent speaker and that you will want to honor me and try to give me an elaborate and lengthy eulogy. You will no doubt want to spend much time preparing it and much time saying it. You should know, my son, if you would choose to spend that same learning over several pages of Talmud, I would receive far more spiritual satisfaction in the upper worlds than I would receive from you spending that same time preparing and delivering the eulogy." In other words, "Cut the hesped to ten minutes, and spend the rest of the time learning Torah!"

This was the message that the Netzi"v left for his son Rav Chaim Berlin before he died: It is better to learn a few pages of Gemara – that is the best thing you can do for me.

Where Is Yaakov's Negotiating Technique?

Yaakov Avinu asks that he be buried in the Machpelah Cave – "in the grave that I bought for myself (asher karisi li) in the Land of Canaan" [Bereishis 50:5]. Rash"i comments that the word 'karisi' is understood in the Medrash to share a common etymology with the word 'kur' (a pile).

When Yaakov Avinu purchased Eisav's right to be buried in the Machpelah Cave, he took all the money that he had acquired in Padan Aram and he made a pile (k'ri) of gold and silver. He said "Eisav, here is the whole thing — all the money that I made outside the Land of Canaan (Chutz L'Aretz). Take it! It means nothing to me. Just sell the Cave of Machpelah to me."

The question can be asked: We all know that Yaakov Avinu was, to say the least, an astute businessman. Any person who could negotiate with Lavan was certainly wise to the ways of business. When negotiating on a piece of property, one does not put out all his money and say, "Take it."

Standard procedure would dictate that Yaakov make an opening offer, say 500 Dinar of gold. Eisav would counter "No way! A thousand Dinar of gold is appropriate". Yaakov would counter "750". They would shake hands, say "Mazal and Bracha" and we would all respond Amen.

Here, Yaakov Avinu gives everything he has as his opening offer. Is this the way to negotiate?

Yaakov had a reason for acting this way. Chazal say on the verse "And Yaakov feared greatly and he was troubled" [Bereishis 32:8], that what Yaakov feared was the two merits (zechusim) that Eisav had in his favor. The two things Eisav had in his favor were the Mitzvah of Inhabiting the Land of Israel (Yishuv Eretz Yisroel) and the Mitzvah of Honoring his Father and Mother (Kibud Av V'Em). For the 20 years that Yaakov was living in Padan Aram he

could fulfill neither of these commands, while Eisav was able to fulfill both of them.

Because of these two mitzvos that Eisav possessed, Yaakov was afraid. Somehow, Yaakov had to negate and show that he was not lacking in either the Mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisroel or in the Mitzvah of Kibud Av V'Em. How did he do this? How did he show that Love for the Land of Israel was still a part of his body and soul? How did he show that Kibbud Av v'Em was important to him?

By telling Eisav — Take all the money I made in Chutz L'Aretz, just so I can have an inheritance in the land of Israel. Let me be buried in Eretz Yisroel and let me buried in Kever Avos — next to my parents.

Thus in one fell swoop, Yaakov Avinu showed that both the Land of Israel and Honoring his parents were crucial to him. By contrast, Eisav in the same fell swoop, showed how insignificant Eretz Yisroel and Kibbud Av were to him. For a pile of gold, he was willing to give up not only Kever Avos, but burial in the Land of Israel.

That is why Yaakov Avinu, despite his business acumen, says, "Take it all". He wanted to prove to Eisav and to everyone the importance of the Land of Israel and the importance of the Ancestral burial plot.

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." [Bereishis 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?

Never Forgetting to be Appreciative

The *pasuk* says "The eyes of Israel were heavy because of age; he was not able to see and he brought them near to him and he kissed them and hugged them." (Bereshis 48:10) Yosef came into his father with his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. "Yaakov told Yosef, 'I did not ever expect to see your face (again) and now *Elokim* has shown me also your children.'" (Bereshis 48:11)

However, it is striking to realize that this is occurring seventeen years **after** Yaakov Avinu was reunited with Yosef, upon his arrival in *Mitzrayim*! Yet seventeen years later, Yaakov Avinu is still commenting to Yosef that he never expected to see him. In Parshas VaYigash, Yaakov tells Pharaoh he is 130 years old (Bereshis 47:9). Yaakov is now 147. So why is Yaakov suddenly saying here "I did not even expect to see you, *Hashem* has been so good to me that He has shown me also your children"? That is old news! Why does he mention it now?

The answer is that for most people, something that happened seventeen years ago is old news. Despite how great an experience may have been, as time goes on, our nature is to forget favors. People forget how amazed and thrilled they were at the time when good things happened to them.

Do we remember our weddings and how grateful we were that we got married? Do we remember the birth of our first child? Do we remember how thrilled we were when we were *zoche* to march our children down to the *chuppah*? Yes, we remember, but it becomes old news. Perhaps these events come to mind on an anniversary, but the excitement of the moment certainly fades with time.

The *pasuk* is saying that for Yaakov Avinu, despite the fact that this happened seventeen years ago, he was in constant thanksgiving mode to the *Ribono shel Olam* every single day. He is still thanking *Hashem* for what happened when he first came to Egypt. It was constantly on his mind!

The Three Treasures Yosef Hid Away in Egypt

The Talmud [Sanhedrin 110a] teaches that Korach was a very wealthy individual. There is a Yiddish expression used to indicate that a person is rich: *Ehr is reich vi Korach* [he is as rich as Korach]. Where did this expression originate? It comes from this Gemara, which tells us that Korach was very wealthy.

A few lines later, the Gemara mentions that Yosef HaTzadik hid three treasures while he was ruling Egypt. One of the treasures was found by Korach; one treasure was found by Antoninus (the Roman general and politician, contemporary of Rav Yehudah HaNassi); and one is hidden away for the righteous, in the world to come. On a literal level, this Gemara is saying that of the three fabulous treasures that Yosef hid away (which he presumably acquired as

Viceroy of Egypt) Korach found one, Antoninus found one, and the Tzadikim will find one in the Messianic era.

A fascinating **Pardes Yosef** at the end of Parshas Vayechi has an entirely different take on this Gemara. According to his approach, the Gemara is not speaking about wealth at all. The Pardes Yosef says that the treasures that Yosef buried in Egypt had nothing to do with money, but rather, Yosef's life embodied three fundamentals of living that he figuratively hid away for future generations to rediscover.

The first "treasure" was the fundamental principle that if the Almighty wants you to be elevated to a position of leadership, you will achieve that position regardless of anyone else's attempt to halt your rise to power. You can have all the enemies in the world, and the plotters who are against you can rise to the top, but you will still prevail. They will not be able to stop you!

Korach discovered this treasure (the hard way)! Korach had argued that "the entire congregation is holy." He challenged the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu. "I want to be the leader." He tried his hardest to wrest power from his cousin Moshe. However, in his time – once again – it was revealed from Heaven that if the Almighty wants someone (i.e., Moshe) to be the leader, his leadership is inevitable.

The second "treasure" of Yosef's life, writes the Pardes Yosef (who lived into the twentieth century), has to do with anti-Semitism. Some think that what causes anti-Semitism is the fact that we act differently, and if we would act more like the Gentiles, they would accept us and not be anti-Semitic. We know that this is not true.

The righteous Yosef was a religious and observant Jew in Egypt. The Egyptians and their religious practices were diametrically opposed to the lifestyle practiced by Yosef. One would think, "How could he achieve a position of authority? He is a Jew." Anti-Semites say, "We hate Jews. Jews are disloyal. Jews are pushy. Jews are aggressive. Jews are this. Jews are that." The popular maxim of

this philosophy is, "If you want to be successful in life, you need to give up your Yiddishkeit." Yosef disproved this philosophy. He showed that it was not true by remaining Yosef the Righteous in Egypt and nevertheless rising to the very pinnacle of Egyptian authority. Pharaoh accepted him as he was.

This lesson, that one can remain "Jewish" and achieve respect from Gentile society regardless of one's religion, was the second treasure that Yosef "hid away for future generations to rediscover."

Yosef proved this in the time of Pharaoh, and it was "rediscovered" in the era of Antoninus and Rebbi. One can achieve success in society at large, if one sticks to his principles. We see that today too. There are observant Jews in every area of government and industry, in positions of great prominence. They do not need to compromise their religious principles to achieve success and respect.

The third "treasure" that Yosef showed us is that we think there is absolutely no solution to the problem of "hatred between brothers" (*sin'as achim*). We have almost become resolved to the idea that inner-communal jealousies, rivalries, and hatred *was* with us, *is* with us, and *will always be* with us. The story of Yosef proved that despite the tensions and the bitter events that transpired between them, it was possible to put those differences behind themselves and reach a level of brotherly love (*aha'vas achim*).

We look at the controversies and tensions that exist within the Jewish people today, and we ask ourselves "How is Moshiach ever going to come?" This "treasure" of Yosef, the Gemara admits, is still hidden away; it has not yet been "rediscovered." However, the Gemara assures us that the *Tzaddikim* in the world of the future will one day find it, and then true brotherly love — Yosef's "third treasure" — will once again reign within our nation.



Yaakov Avinu senses that the end is near. He's about to depart from the world. He calls his children in one by one to give each of them a bracha. The Torah clearly says - וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כִּבִרְכָתוֹ בֵּרַךְ אֹתָם - *'Yaakov blessed them; each man, according to his blessing, he blessed them.'* 49:28.



Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky asks, "Where's the bracha? If you go through the pesukim one by one, you won't find a single bracha!"

All Yaakov Avinu did was to point out the individual attributes and character traits of each son. – But there are no brachos there!

Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky concludes that there is no greater blessing then pointing out to others their great and unique strengths. – This is what Yaakov Avinu did before leaving this world.

All of us in our lives are in positions of influence. Whether we are parents to children or rabbeim to talmiddim, friends or family, we all have the opportunity to give other people the greatest blessing of all. – And Yaakov Avinu teaches us exactly that.

Point out somebody else's attributes and strengths. That will give them the greatest blessing. - Have an amazing Shabbos.

SHABBOS STORIES

Rav Gustman's Wife By Rabbi Yitzchak Hisiger



In Sivan, 1941, the city of Vilna fell to the Germans. At this time, Horav Yisroel Zev Gustman zl, his rebbetzin and daughter were living there. [The word "living" is perhaps a euphemism, since they suffered immeasurably. Indeed, they were the beneficiaries of countless miracles during their stay in Vilna and during the rest of the war.]

The Gustmans escaped and, for a while, were hidden in a pit belonging to a kindly non-Jewish farmer. When it was no longer safe even there, they fled to the forest and joined a group of partisans. This is how they were able to exist for the next few years. They had run out of food and now subsisted on grass.

The Rosh Yeshivah realized that they must leave the forest before they died of starvation. Unsure whether the Nazis were still in Vilna, they took their chances. Who knows? Perhaps they would experience another miracle.

The Rav and his family were desperate, so they knocked on the door of the first house. When the woman of the house saw who stood at her door, she immediately slammed the door in their faces. She was not allowing a Jew to cross her threshold.

The owners of the next two homes responded in a like manner. It was the owner of the fourth house who opened his door to them. [We can only begin to imagine the incredible merit that person had for playing such a crucial role in saving such a brilliant Rosh Yeshivah and his family.]

When Rav Gustman looked inside the house, he was astonished to see an Aron Kodesh, siddurim and other sifrei kodesh. Apparently, since the shul was housed in a nondescript house with no mezuzah on the door, the Nazis had no reason to believe that Jews were its residents. He was about to turn around and leave in search of food, when his Rebbetzin blocked the door. She firmly asserted, "For two years, we were on the run. You did not have a sefer from which to learn. Here you have a house filled with sefarim. Sit down and learn for an hour. We can wait one more hour to search for food!"

This tzadekes had her priorities straight. [Not that the Rosh Yeshivah did not. He probably felt that sustaining his wife and daughter took precedence over his learning. Indeed, both Rav Gustnan and his Rebbetzin had their priorities in order.] What mattered most to her was her husband's Torah study.

This eishes chayil personified the true Jewish woman of valor. She was on a mission to glorify Hashem, and no greater avenue exists than Torah learning. Food would have to wait. It was not part of their mission. Is it any wonder that Rav Gustman once commented that his yeshivah, his talmidim and whatever he merited to accomplish in Torah, were in the z'chus of this extraordinary woman?

It Depends on the Question By Shmuel Himelstein

A man came to Rabbi Yehuda Assad for advice. "Rabbi," he said, "I want to buy a certain run-down store, which will give me the opportunity to support my family and myself comfortably. What do you suggest?" Rabbi Assad told him not to buy the store.

The next day, another man came to ask Rabbi Assad for advice. "Rabbi," he said, "if I buy this store, I will, with the help of Hashem, be able to fix it up and earn a decent living." This time, Rabbi Assad urged the man to go ahead.

When the first man heard the Rabbi's advice to the second, he grew furious and ran to him. "Rabbi, yesterday I asked you about buying the same store, and you told me not to. Why did you tell the other man to buy it?"

"It's very simple," said Rabbi Assad. "You wanted to take on the task of running a run-down store all by yourself, and I felt that it was too much for one person. The other man, on the other hand, stated, 'with the help of Hashem.' With a partner like that, I felt he has an excellent chance of making a go of it." (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book - Words of Wisdom, Words of Wit)

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Successful Child Raising



The sons of Yosef, Menashe and Efraim, were raised in Mitzrayim.

The Yalkut Yehuda says this is the reason why we give the Bracha **ישמך אלק-ים כאפרים וכמנשה** - *may Hashem make you like Efraim and Menashe*. Not only were they the first ones to be raised in Galus but were also raised in Egyptian aristocracy. In spite of this they came out a success as they became Shevatim as it says **אפרים ומנשה כראובן ושמעון**.

In regard to Yosef it says **ויהי איש מצליח** - he was successful. A deeper meaning is that he was successful in raising his kids even though they were brought up in Mitzrayim. This is hinted to in **אִיש מַצליח**, as its initials are **א** and **מ** - **אפרים** and **מנשה** .

Number 400

How many times can we find the number 400 in the Torah?

1) Avraham bought the **מערת המכפילה** for 400 Shekel from Efron. This was because of Efron's **עין רע**. Indeed, **עפרן** yields a Gematria of 400, the same sum as **עין רע**



2) The brothers of Yosef had a 'bad eye' (**עין רע**) to Yosef and were jealous of the **כתנת פסים**; fine woollen tunic. Due to this, they descended to Mitzrayim and were there for 400 years.

3) Naval had a **עין רע**. Dovid therefore came with **כארבע מאות איש**



4) Esav had a 'bad eye' to Yaakov and was jealous over the Brachos his father gave his brother. We know that Esav came to Yaakov with 400 men. In fact, Esav is compared to **קש** as it says in **ובית עשו לקש**; the house of Esav for straw. The sum of **קש** is 400. Yaakov said **יש לי כל** . Adding up this phrase we notice it totals 400, counteracting Esav's 400 men. Yaakov married four women. What is the Gematria of **400 ? נשים!** Our Parsha begins by telling us Yaakov lived until 147. 147 is the same equivalent as **עין טוב**.

Yaakov and R' Akiva

Did you ever wonder who Yaakov was reincarnated as? The answer is R' Akiva. The following are some of the hints to this:

1) The letters of **אביר יעקב** rearranged spell **רבי עקיבא**

2) R' Akiva was by **נחום איש גם זו** for 22 years. This is the same number of years Yaakov was away from his father, and that Yosef was separated from Yaakov after his brothers sold him.

3) The first letters of **יַעקב קוּם עַלה בַּית אַל**; Hashem told Yaakov, arise- go to **בית אל** and dwell there, spell **עקיבא**.

4) Both Yaakov and R' Akiva married wives named **רחל**

5) At the time of his **death**, R' Akiva recited **שמע** . We know Yaakov also recited **שמע** when he saw Yosef and then said **אמותה הפעם**; I can **die** this time. We also know that his sons recited Shema prior to his death.

6) Each of them are known for their humility. Yaakov said **קטנתי**... and R' Akiva submitted himself completely to Hashem at the time of his death. Thus, the root of each of their name is **עקב** which symbolizes humility as in **עקב ענוה**.

Yaakov, Truth and No Death

The Gemara tells us **יעקב אבינו לא מת** Yaakov didn't die. Indeed, this is why our Parsha is titled **ויחי** ; he lived. Here are some interesting facts connected to this statement:

1) Yaakov rectified the sin of Adam and as the Gemara connects them two as in **שופריה דיעקב**...; the radiance of Yaakov was a semblance of the radiance of Adam. As a result, **יעקב אבינו לא מת** just as Adam was before the sin.

2) Rearranging the words **אמת ליעקב** we notice it spells **יעקב לא מת.**

3) Yaakov returns for the small jugs. That which has a connection to Yaakov doesn't die as he makes use of it all.

4) In **הבו לה' בני אלים**; render to Hashem honour and might, **אלים** is an acronym for **יעקב אבינו לא מת**.

5) Yaakov embodies the trait of **אמת** and it says **שפת אמת תכון לעד**; true speech is established forever.

6) The 36 Krisos (premature death) in the Torah correspond to the 36 crowns on Yaakov's coffin. It comes as no surprise that **כרת** and **כתר** (crown) are composed of the same letters. This is in accordance with **יעקב אבינו לא מת** since he is the opposite of **כרת**

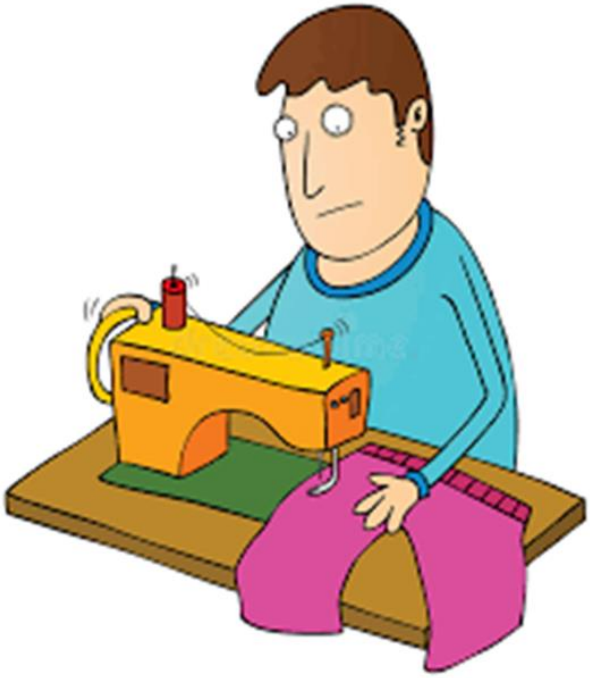
7) **The Maharal** comments that the 3 Avos correspond to the 3 Batei Mikdash. Yaakov- the third of the Avos- corresponds to the third. Just as the life of Yaakov was filled with troubles, similarly the generation of the 3rd Beis Hamikdash is filled with troubles. However, just as Yaakov didn't die likewise the third Beis Hamikdash will be eternal.



8) The Gemara says that one who delights in Shabbos receives a **נחלה בלי מצרים** (boundless heritage) as it says **אביך אז יעקב... תתענג**. This is because Shabbos is eternity and **יעקב אבינו לא מת**. The 3 meals of Shabbos correspond to the 3 Avos. Consequently, Shalosh Seudos parallels Yaakov. Many prolong this meal to fulfil Tosefes Shabbos. Consequently, measure for measure **נחלה בלי מצרים** since they extended the boundary of Shabbos.

Parshas Vayechi begins **ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים. מצרים** is rooted in the word **מצר** ; boundaries. Yaakov is eternal; boundless, **בלי מצרים** and is therefore one who can live and thrive in a place such as Mitzrayim. We possess this trait in our genes and are thus able to thrive even in places that are filled with impurity as we see today.

Interpret, Sewing, Cows



Yosef was one who always connected events to Hashem. This feature plays itself out in that Yosef was an interpreter of dreams as this is connecting a dream to its interpretation. For this reason, **פתר**; to interpret, is composed of the same letters as **תפר**; to sew, as sewing is connecting two ends. In a similar fashion, the letters **פרת**; cows, which were in Yosef's dream is also comprised of these letters. Is it any wonder that it states in connection to Yosef

בין פרת יוסף בין פרת עלי עין as **פרת** also consists of these letters.

Divrei Torah Ba'er Heitev

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וגו׳ *Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim etc.* (47:28) Yaakov is Meramez - hints to the Midoh of Emes – conduct of truth, as it says **תתן אמת ליעקב**. With the Midoh of Emes one can live through all hard times and difficult situations. • *Chidushei HaRim – Der Torah Kvall*

Genuine Truth

Yaakov possesses the trait of **אמת** as it says **תתן אמת ליעקב** He is also known as the pillar of Torah- which is called **תורת אמת** Indeed, the Gemara teaches that **אמת** refers to Torah. In fact, we see this literally as it says **ראש דברך אמת** ; *the beginning of your words are true*. That is, the **עשרת הדברות** begin with **אָנכי ה' אלקיך** - , Mishnayos starts **מַאמתי** and Gemara with **תַּנא** , thereby spelling **אמת** .



אמת is that which is totally true, flawless. Thus, its letters range from the beginning-**א**, middle-**מ** and end-**ת** of the **א- ב**. This is in contrast to the letters of **שקר** which are at the end of the **א-ב** in addition to that its letters are not in sequence. For this reason, it contains the same letters as **קשר** ; knot, that which is jumbled together. This is also why the letters of **אמת** have a firm base on which they stand since truth lasts and as in **שפת אמת תכון לעד תורת אמת וחיי עולם ראש דברך אמת ולעולם** and as the Gemara says **קושטא קאי**.

Now we can grasp a deeper meaning in **יעקב אבינו לא מת** as it refers to the trait of Yaakov- **אמת**, as it never dies rather it is everlasting. This is unlike **שקר** which stands on only one leg since it doesn't last as in **ארגיעה לשון שקר** ; a false tongue is only for a moment. Similarly, it says **שקר אין לו רגלים** ; falsehood has no feet.

The Zohar teaches **ישראל ואורייתא קודשא בריך הוא חד** the Jews, Hashem and the Torah are one. By each of these we find **אמת** since the world needs all three. In regard to Hashem it says **ה' אלקים אמת** - Torah is called **תורת אמת**.

Finally, we inherited **אמת** in our genes from Yaakov whose trait is **אמת**. If one of these is missing, the world can't exist: the Gemara teaches that if there is no Torah, the world can't exist. Obviously, without Hashem there is no world. Lastly, Rashi says the world was created for us.



Just as the Torah is **אמת** so is each of its letters as well as its crowns on the letters. Hence, there is no extra letter in the Torah. Now we can appreciate the prohibition of **בל תוסיף** and **בל תגרע**; don't add or subtract from the Torah. For this reason, even the crowns of the letters are expounded upon. It follows that a Navi is forbidden to innovate without basis.

The word **אמת** yields a sum of 441. Adding up these digits we arrive at a total of 9 (4+4+1).40 It is because of this that we see unique qualities with this number:

A) When we multiply a number by 9 and add up the digits of the sum, it will always equal 9. To illustrate: 9 multiplied by 3 is 27 and 2 added to 7 is 9. 11*9 is 99. 9+9 is 18 and 1+8 is 9. 25*9 is 225 and 2+2+5 is 9.41

B) Let's take a random number- for example 13. 1+3 is 4. 4 subtracted from 13 is 9! Let's pick another random number: 167. 1+6+7 is 14 and 14 subtracted from 167 is 153. 1+5+3 is 9!

C) Invert any random number. Take the number 523. Subtract 325 (invert) from 523 and we get 198. 1+9+8 is 18 and 1+8 is 9! One last example: invert 61 to 16. 61-16 equals 45, and 4+5 is 9!

We should all merit to see the truth of the Torah!

Healing a deadly nosebleed



It was in the 1700s when the following incident took place. There was a person who was had blood pouring from his nose uncontrollably. His condition continued to deteriorate to the extent that the doctors gave up hope. There was someone who saw this person's condition when he was already on the throes of death. He quickly ran to obtain some wine where he took a measure of good strong wine and instructed the sick person to drink non-stop. Upon drinking the wine, he immediately was healed, and the blood stopped. The doctors were astonished.

When word reached **R' Pinchas Koritzer** (1726-1791), he showed that this is hinted to in the Torah in **ובדם ענבים סותה** as **סותה** is a term for healing as in **אסותא**. It thus reads that wine can heal from the sickness where blood is coming out.

Proper Respect For Sefarim, by Rav Doniel Neustadt

Sifrei kodesh, sacred scriptures, vary in their degree of kedushah, holiness, and consequently, one accords them varying degrees of honor. A Sefer Torah is given the most honor, followed closely by other Sifrei Tanach written on parchment.

All other sefarim, including the Talmud, its commentaries and codes, do not have the level of kedushah that a Sefer Torah has, but still they must be treated with respect and dignity. In many cases, the Rishonim rule that sefarim are to be accorded the same level of respect and honor as tefillin.

With the advent of the printing press in the fifteenth century, the Torah authorities of the time debated whether printed sefarim had the same level of kedushah as handwritten works. The consensus of the poskim was that a printed sefer is to be treated no differently from a handwritten one.

The Taz, one of the great Torah luminaries of the time, warned that one who demeans the holiness of printed sefarim will suffer the consequences in the World to Come. With few exceptions, this has become the accepted halachah.

During the following days we will review some of the halachos that pertain to the proper treatment of sefarim.



Sefarim are treated with dignity and respect. Thus:

•A sefer should be handed from one person to the other; it may not be thrown or tossed around.

•A sefer should not be placed face down. If it is found in this position it must be turned face up.

•A sefer should not be stood upside down. If it is found in this position, it must be stood right side up.

•A sefer may not be placed, either lying or standing, directly on the floor.

•A sefer that fell to the ground must be picked up immediately, even if one will have to interrupt his Torah learning to do so. If a sefer falls to the floor during Shemoneh Esreh and that interferes with one's concentration, he may pick it up after finishing the blessing that he is reciting, even if it entails taking a few steps. If, however, the fallen sefer does not disturb his concentration, then he may not pick up the sefer during Shemoneh Esreh.

•One may not sit or lie on a chair, bench, couch or bed if a sefer is lying (or standing) directly on it. If, however, the bench or couch is made of "split (separate) seats" it is permitted to sit on any seat other than the one that is holding the sefer.

•Some poskim prohibit sitting on top of a bench, chest or chair that has sefarim stored underneath, while other poskim permit it. In order to satisfy both opinions it is recommended that there be at least a tefach of space between the seat and the sefer.

•One should not place any other sefer on top of a Chumash, or any sefer other than a Chumash on top of a Nach. All other sefarim and siddurim, however, are permitted to be placed randomly.

Sefarim are treated with kedushah. Thus:

•It is prohibited for males (over the age of nine) or females (over the age of three) to be completely unclothed in the presence of a sefer. But it is permitted to learn from a sefer in an area where there is a swimming pool.

•It is prohibited to enter a restroom or a washroom with a sefer in hand, unless the sefer is concealed in at least one covering. Preferably, the sefer should be inside two coverings, e.g., one bag encased in another bag, or an envelope inside an attaché case.

•A child should not be diapered or toilet-trained in a room full of sefarim. But it is permitted to diaper or train a child in a room where there is an occasional sefer or bentscher, etc.

Sefarim are for the purpose of learning only; they may not be used for other purposes. Thus:

•It is prohibited to place anything, except chidushei Torah, inside a sefer or on top of a sefer.

•When learning from a sefer, it is permitted to use another sefer (of equal or lesser kedushah) to raise the height of the sefer one is learning from.

•It is prohibited to use a sefer for personal protection, e.g., to shield oneself from the sun's rays, or to block another person's view. However, one is permitted to cover his face with a sefer so as to block a forbidden sight from his eyes.

•It is permitted, when no other item is available, to use another sefer to block the sun from shining on a sefer from which one is learning.



•When needed, it is permitted to use a sefer as a hard surface for writing Torah-study notes.

•One may not place a sefer on his lap and lean on it with his elbows. One should also not lean or sleep on top of a sefer.

After learning is over…

•It is prohibited to use a sefer as a bookmark by placing it inside another sefer.

•Some poskim permit folding a page-corner of a sefer so that it serves as a bookmark, while other poskim forbid it.

•One should avoid leaving a sefer open if he is leaving the room for an extended period of time because it is considered degrading to the sefer. In addition, the poskim quote the chachmei ha-Emes as saying that doing so may cause one to forget his learning.

•Although there is no known source in the poskim for the practice of kissing a sefer after learning from it, this custom is brought down in sifrei Kabbalah.

•When a sefer ages and is no longer usable, it must be put aside in a safe place or buried in the ground. It may not be burned or thrown out.

I know better



When Yaakov was blessing the sons of Yosef, he put his right hand on Efraim and the left on Menashe. Yosef reacts and says **לא כן אבי**... ; not so father for this is the Bechor, put your right hand on his head. Yaakov responds **ידעתי**... ; I know…. This alludes to the fact that the younger generation thinks they know better than those older. However, the older generation knows better (in general).

It is a good idea to ask those older than us for advice before we act and as it says **שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך** ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you. **R' Isser Zalman Meltzer** (1870-1953) once told a Bar Mitzvah boy who later became a Gadol- *'I will give you a gift that will last you all your life. Many old people say had they known when they were young what they know now, they would have acted differently. Therefore, my advice to you is always ask older people for their advice. Then you will have no regret. This is my gift of a lifetime to you.'*

People think that when something unusual happens, that's called hashgachah pratis. But the truth is, everything is hashgachah pratis — the ordinary as much as the extraordinary. Every breath, every encounter, every delay is deliberate. ~ R' Yerucham Levovitz (Daas Torah).

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport



ויאמר השבעה לי וישבע לו וישתחו ישראל על ראש המטה (47:31) When Yaakov realized that the time of his death was near, he called in Yosef, who wielded power in Egypt, and asked him to ensure that he would be buried with his forefathers in Ma'aras HaMachpeila.

When Yosef swore that he would fulfil his father's request, Yaakov prostrated himself toward the head of his bed. Rashi explains that this was his way of expressing his gratitude that his bed was whole, meaning that all of his children remained righteous. Why did Yaakov wait to acknowledge this point specifically at this time instead of doing so when he was reunited with Yosef 17 years earlier and saw that his piety was fully intact?

The Meshech Chochmah, R' Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk ZT"L makes a brilliant calculation to explain the timing of Yaakov's decision to show his appreciation for his virtuous and upstanding children. When Yosef was brought to Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, he was 30 years old (41:46). Yaakov came to Egypt in the second year of famine, which followed seven years of plenty, in which case Yosef was 39 when his father arrived. Since Yaakov lived in Egypt for 17 years before his death (47:28), Yosef was 56 when his father summoned him to discuss his burial request.

Yosef died at the age of 110 (50:26), in which case he had just begun the second half of his life when he came to Yaakov at the age of 56. The Gemora (Yoma 38b) teaches that if a person lives the majority

of his years without sinning, he will be protected from ever sinning for the rest of his life. Thus, Yaakov wasn't merely conveying that he was grateful that his most vulnerable child was currently a tzaddik, but now for the first time he was sure that Yosef would remain a tzaddik forever.

Concepts in Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וַיְהִי יְמֵי־יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חַיָּיו שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמְאַת שָׁנָה 47:28



The Baal HaTurim says: Parshas Vayigash ended with the words **וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד**. When added to the first two words of this week's parsha - **וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב** - the gematria totals 485, which is the exact numerical value of the words, **ראה ס' ריבוא** - "He (Yaakov) saw 600,000." He saw the future doros of Klal Yisroel and it gave him chiyus - inspiration to carry on and live. What an amazing gematria and the intent is crystal clear. Parents, Rabbeim and teachers, may have chalishas hadaas (disappointment) wondering if all the time and effort they expend teaching our youth is worth sacrificing their own spiritual growth. But when they see the development of the future doros; when they see first-hand the fruits of their labour, that is the greatest nachas, and their worries melt away. Thus, says the posuk **ויחי** - and they will live! Ultimately, all the efforts are kdai.

The Baal HaTurim further states that the 17 years of Yaakov's life mentioned in the posuk, correspond to the 17 years that Yaakov sustained Yosef in his home before he was sold. Seventeen years in Mitzrayim to repay his father for those seventeen years at home. This machshava complements the prior one. As children, we must

recognize how much our parents are moser nefesh for our upbringing, constantly instilling in us a "bren" for Yiddishkeit. When they get older, or pass on, it is our turn to ultimately provide for them in either a physical or spiritual way.

As the Zaida zt"l (Baal Machsheves Haleiv) would often say - our fathers and Zaidas are growing through our maasim tovim. Additionally, Yaakov Avinu lived with Yosef for 34 years (17 in Canaan and another 17 in Mitzrayim) which is the numerical value of **ויחי**. This teaches us that only through a life of Torah study - especially with our children and students - do we live. Chazak Chazak V'nischazek!

Tefila from pain



We know Yaakov had lots of **צרות** - Lavan, Esav, Rachel, Dina, Yosef, Shimon and Binyomin. It is especially in times of pain that one should daven and as the Shulchan Aruch writes that just as the public fasts and davens on the communal pain, so too everyone should fast and daven on his personal pain. It could be that Hashem sent the suffering in order for the person to daven and as the Midrash says Hashem made the **אמהות** barren because He yearns for their Tefila.

Which Tefila did Yaakov institute? Maariv- the nighttime Tefila. This also refers to the Tefila for the dark times in one's life as was the case with Yaakov, the one with tremendous pain in his life.

Who was the first person to get sick?



The Daas Zekanim asks how could Chazal say until Yaakov there was no sickness when we are taught that Yishmael got sick with a fever through an **עין הרע** from Sarah? **The Kehilas Moshe** points out another case where illness preceded Yaakov- by Avraham where Hashem came **לבקר את החולה** ; to visit the sick on the 3rd day of his Mila?

One answer given is that no fatal illness existed prior to Yaakov. However, a sickness because of something else such as **עין הרע** and from Mila did exist before Yaakov.



When one sneezes we have a custom to respond "life" which is our equivalent of 'Gesundheit' or 'G-d bless you.' Pirkei Drebi Eliezer explains this originates from the following: prior to Yaakov's time no one would take ill rather one who was walking on the road or in the marketplace would sneeze and his soul would exit through his nostrils.

R' Yehonasan Eibshitz (1690-1764) explains **וישתחו ישראל על ראש המטה** ; *Yaakov bowed to the head of the bed in a different light*: Yaakov was bowing since he was the first to get sick before he died Thus, after this it says he told Yosef **אביך חולה** ; your father is sick since this was something that never happened before.

וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְמִינוֹ וַיָּשֶׁת עַל־רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא הַצָּעִיר וְאֶת־שְׂמֹאלוֹ עַל־רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה שִׂכֵּל אֶת־יָדָיו כִּי מְנַשֶּׁה הַבְּכוֹר: *But Yaakov crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys' heads. He put his right hand on the head of Ephraim, though he was the younger boy, and his left hand on the head of Menasheh, though he was the firstborn. (48:14)*



When Yosef heard that Yaakov was ill, he brought his two sons Menashe and Ephraim to his father so that he could bless them before his death. Because Yaakov was no longer able to see clearly, Yosef placed the older Menashe on Yaakov's right and the younger Ephraim on his left. However, as Yaakov prepared to bless them, he famously switched his hands, placing his right hand, which signifies power, on the head of Ephraim and his left hand on the head of Menashe.

Although Yosef attempted to protest, Yaakov stood his ground and explained that he prophetically recognized that Ephraim's descendants would be greater than those of Menashe and therefore warranted the primary blessing. This is still difficult to understand. Even if Yaakov wished to bestow the main blessing upon Ephraim, why did he cross his hands instead of simply asking Ephraim and Menashe to trade places, which would save Yaakov from needing to adjust his hands?

Rav Chaim Zvi Senter points out that when two people are standing opposite one another, each person's right side is across from the other person's left side. Symbolically, this demonstrates that when we look at others, our default mode is to focus on their areas of weakness and place them opposite our strengths. We often feel threatened and challenged by other people, so we strive to reassure

ourselves by seeking out their faults and areas in which we are superior to them. On the other hand, when we look at ourselves in a mirror, our right side is opposite our right, not our left. This alludes to the fact that when we look at ourselves, we naturally emphasize our positive qualities and minimize our weaknesses.

For this reason, Yaakov specifically insisted on switching his hands instead of the positions of his grandchildren because by placing his stronger right hand on the child who was on his left side, he was hinting to them – and to us – that the key to building successful relationships is focusing on other people's strengths and talents. Rav Senter adds that perhaps this explains why we are accustomed to bless our sons on Friday night that they should grow up to be like Ephraim and Menashe, for they were the first siblings in history who learned and implemented this lesson. By always focusing on each other's positive attributes, they created an atmosphere of peace and harmony, a model that we hope our children will emulate.

(49:14) יששכר חמור גרם רובץ בין המשפתים *Issachar is a bony donkey, lying between the boundaries*

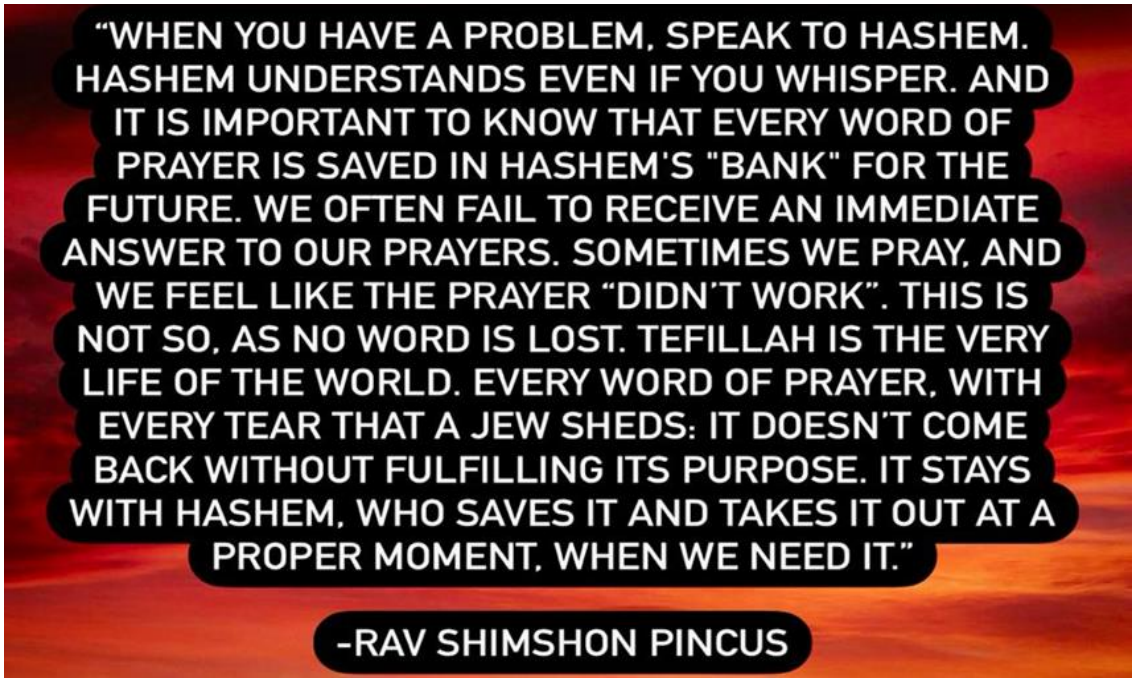


Parshas Vayechi contains the final blessings that Yaakov gave to each of his sons prior to his death. In his blessing to the tribe of Yissochar, whose descendants are known for their dedication to Torah study, Yaakov described him as a strong-boned donkey who rests between the boundaries. Why did he specifically compare Yissochar to a donkey, as opposed to any other animal?



Rav Tzvi Markovitz explains that while Torah scholars also "carry a load" similar to a donkey, this parallel is insufficient, as there are other animals – such as horses – which are also capable of transporting heavy burdens. Rav Markovitz points out that although all animals carrying loads must inevitably stop to rest, there is a critical difference in how they do so. When horses stop for a break, their burden must be removed until they are ready to continue. Donkeys, on the other hand, are able to lie down and rest even while still carrying the weight on their backs.

It is specifically to donkeys that the tribe of Yissochar is compared, as those who "carry the load of Torah" must also periodically stop to recharge. The distinguishing characteristic of true B'nei Torah is that they conduct themselves in accordance with their year-round behavior, never casting off their "burden" for even a moment.



Ephraim and Menashe: Role Models For The Jews Of Sioux City, by Rav Yissochor Frand



In this week's parsha, Yosef brings his two children to his father Yaakov for a bracha. Yaakov gave Yosef's children a tremendous bracha: "By you shall Israel bless saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh'" [Bereshis 48:20]. What a bracha! In the future, whenever the Jewish people would bless their sons, they would invoke the prayer that they should be like Yosef's two sons: Ephraim and Menashe.

A very obvious question is asked. Yaakov had twelve illustrious sons. Why didn't Yaakov say, for example, that the perennial Jewish blessing would be "May you be like Yehudah and Yosef" or "like Yissachor and Zevulun"? Why did Yaakov single out these two grandchildren to be the prototypes of blessing?



Several meforshim [commentators] offer the following explanation, which I saw most recently from **Rabbi Eliyahu Munk, zt"l**. Yaakov saw a special quality in Ephraim and Menashe that he did not have the opportunity to see in his own children. Yaakov's own children were raised in the best of environments. They lived in the Land of Israel, in the house of the patriarch Yaakov, insulated from any bad environment.

Granted, it is not trivial to raise good children even in the best of circumstances. However there is nothing novel in the fact that Yaakov's own children turned out well.

It is no surprise if a child who is raised in Bnei Brak or Meah Shearim grows up as an observant Jew. However if people raise a child in a city such as Sioux City, Iowa — where their family is, perhaps, the only observant Jewish family in town — and the child is subject to foreign influences from all of his surroundings — and nonetheless, the child turns out a faithful Jew, that is truly a great accomplishment.

The Patriarch Yaakov, perceiving that generations of Jews would spend so much of their time in Exile, formulated the greatest blessing that the Jewish people could give over to their children. "May they be like Ephraim and Menashe". Ephraim and Menashe were raised in the Sioux City, Iowa of their time. They were the only Jews in the entire country! They had to grow up knowing that many things that they saw around them were not right, not the way things should be. Despite this, they turned out just like Yaakov's own children. This is the special blessing that the Jewish people would need — the ability to be raised in a non-Jewish environment and yet turn out to be good and honest Jews.

Concepts in Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

וַיַּ֣רְא יוֹסֵ֔ף לְאֶפְרַ֖יִם בְּנֵ֣י שִׁלֵּשִׁ֑ים גַּ֚ם בְּנֵ֣י מָכִ֔יר בֶּן־מְנַשֶּׁ֖ה יֻלְּד֥וּ עַל־בִּרְכֵּ֖י יוֹסֵֽף
50:23

The posuk tells us that Yosef was zoche to see three generations of grandchildren from Ephraim and Menashe. The posuk uses the odd words, **יֻלְּד֥וּ עַל־בִּרְכֵּ֖י יוֹסֵֽף** - that they were raised on Yosef's knees. Rashi says this lets us know that Yosef was mechanech them as they were growing up. **Targum Yonason**, however, explains that Yosef was the sandek at the bris of his grandchildren, and as we know, a sandek

holds the baby on his lap while the mohel performs the Bris Milah. We see from here that Yosef was the sandek not by one, but by all of his great-grandchildren.



The RM"A writes that a sandek is compared to the kohen who brings the ketores (spices) in the Bais HaMikdash. We have a custom not to choose the same sandek more than once. The reason is because whoever brought the ketores would become rich, and it's good to spread the wealth. This minhag is seemingly not in line with the Targum Yonoson and Yosef Hatzaddik. **The Yad Shaul** derives from here that a grandfather or great-grandfather is different, and can be sandek for more than one child and perhaps for all of them, since he is the head of the family and is compared to the Kohen Gadol.

I once asked **R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l**, about being sandek at more than one child's bris, and he said it is okay because he was sandek many times and he never became a millionaire! A shaila was once asked to **R' Chaim Kanievsky shlit'a** regarding a Zaida being sandek at more than one grandchild and he quoted the Terumas Hadeshen who writes that one who is sandek by a great-grandchild has a "non-stop ticket to Gan Eden" and therefore everyone should follow the minhag where feasible to always honor a great-grandfather to be sandek. It seems to reason that a great-grandmother is included in this zechus as well and together with her husband will travel "in first class" straight into Gan Eden! My beracha is that we should all be zoche to such wonderful promises ad meah v'esrim shana.

אָרוּר אַפָּם כִּי עָז וְעֶבְרָתָם כִּי קָשָׁתָה ***"Accursed is their rage for it is intense, and their wrath for it is harsh." (49:7)***



Rashi z"l comments: Even when Yaakov rebuked his sons, he cursed their anger, not them.

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005; a leading teacher of mussar) writes: **R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l** (Mashgiach Ruchani of the Mir Yeshiva; died 1936) was asked whether one is permitted to hate a Jew who acts contrary to the Torah. **R' Levovitz** answered that it is forbidden, saying that [we may not even hate the evil-doer's deeds since] the ordinary person is incapable of distinguishing between hatred for the deeds and hatred for the person. Yaakov Avinu was able to make that distinction.



R' Wolbe continues: R' Levovitz used to say that a Jew with bad character traits is like a crate full of diamonds, with one moldy potato mixed in. Would one think for even a second of discarding that entire crate? After all, it is full of valuable diamonds!

A smile is the light in your window that tells others that there is a caring, sharing person inside.

R' Chaim Stein zt"l (Rosh HaYeshivah of Telshe) would say: **וַאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ שְׁכֶם אַחַד עַל־אַחֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחַרְבִּי וּבְקַשְׁתִּי**: 48:22- Literally, these words mean "with my sword and bow." The Targum, however, explains these words "Tzlosi U'bausi" - a reference to Tefillah. If Yaakov was indeed referring to Tefillah here, why did he not say so explicitly? Because Yaakov Avinu was teaching us the proper perspective regarding Tefillah. The impact of Tefillah is as real as a sword and bow; so long as we are mispallel with proper kavana we are assured that our Tefillos will be answered. Hashem in His kindness, has granted us this incredible gift of Tefillah and the ability to request of Him for our needs. Often, it is simply on account of our failure to fully believe in the power of Tefillah that we refrain from maximizing the many opportunities."



Chacham Rabbi Chayim Palagi zt"l (Ginzei Chayim) would say: **מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֶנָה לַחְמוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי־מֶלֶךְ**- 49:20 . It is known that Asher ben Yaakov stands at the entrance to Gehinnom and rescues anyone who has learned Mishnayos. As it says, **מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֶנָה לַחְמוֹ** - the word **שְׁמֶנָה** has the same letters as **משנה**. He will come to the aid of those who learn Mishnayos, **וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי־מֶלֶךְ** - he will get them into Gan Eden (**מַעֲדַנֵּי**) as a reward."

יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק 48:16

Toward the end of his life, a great weakness descended upon the **Chazon Ish, R' Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz zt"l**, and he was bedridden until his final day. His sister, **Rebbetzin Kanievsky a"h**,





wife of the **Steipler Gaon zt"l**, took care of his needs and brought him his sustenance. On the Friday before his passing, a woman arrived and asked the Rebbetzin to go into her holy brother and ask for a beracha for her sick child. The doctors were saying that he had a congenital heart defect, and the prospects were not good.

The Rebbetzin asked the woman to write the child's name on a paper. She wrote down, "Eitan ben Chaya" and handed it to her. The Rebbetzin walked into her brother's room and explained that a woman with a sick child was asking for a beracha. The Chazon Ish looked at the paper, and dismissed it saying, "There is no such name." The Rebbetzin walked out and told the woman what the Chazon Ish had said. The woman could not understand. Her son was called Eitan and her name was Chaya. The Rebbetzin went back in and tried to explain to her brother that this is the child's name, but he shook his head and said again, "There is no such name."

This time, the woman needed to be sure. She asked her husband who told her that at the bris, he had added 2 names and the child is "Yissachar Dov Eitan ben Chaya"! She had never known - but the Chazon Ish did! This time she went back in with the correct name and the Chazon Ish gave a warm blessing for the health of the child, and he was indeed healed!

The importance of a Jewish name is stressed in this week's parsha, as Yaakov blessed all his children, but he specifically noted that Yosef's two sons, Menashe and Ephraim, should be "called by my name and the name of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchok."

A name is not merely a title - it is a reflection of one's inner spark, and although in this world, one's name is how he is referred to, in the next world, one's name is an identification of what he represented here.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

שִׂכֵּל אֶת־יָדָיו כִּי מְנַשֶּׁה הַבְּכוֹר 48:14



When Yaakov blessed Ephraim and Menashe, he crisscrossed his hands in order to give Ephraim the right hand and Menashe the left hand. Why didn't he simply change their positions so that he could place his hands upon them in a normal way?

R' Shimon Schwab zt"l says that Yosef HaTzaddik was an exceptionally righteous and learned person and the spiritual leader of his household. But he was also an exemplary askan. He was the administrative advisor to Pharaoh, who controlled the economy for the entire country of Egypt. Both of

these traits are important and he passed them down to his children. Menashe was his father's right hand man in all administrative and political affairs. Ephraim, who learned Torah from his grandfather Yaakov, became a huge Talmid Chacham and was the leader of all spiritual matters in Yosef's house. Yaakov wished to put Ephraim first, before Menashe indicating that a Talmid Chacham and the power of spiritual leadership is paramount.

All other qualities, are secondary. However, Yaakov did not want to minimize the great importance of Menashe's position as "chief askan" and therefore he did not ask Yosef to change their positions. His message was, let each one be who he is and develop the great intrinsic qualities that Hashem blessed him with. He should not change himself, I will change MY hands to accommodate each one's unique contribution to Jewish life. The switching of his hands though was not only to teach us the importance of allowing every child to develop according to his nature and be the best he can be with his own individual traits. He was also bonding them together in a knot, a kesher shel kayama an everlasting unity.

We need our spiritual Torah leaders, and we also need our askanim/activists in all areas of Jewish life. But they must work TOGETHER! When there is a bond, respect, and achdus between all types of Jews, there will be great achievements in the Jewish world.

R' Shlomo Wolbe zt"l (Alei Shur) would say: וישתחו ישראל על ראש המטה - Yaakov Avinu bowing at the head of his bed teaches us that the Shechina is on top of the head of a sick person, as Yaakov was bowing down to the Shechina. A sick or vulnerable person feels his weakness and truly realizes that he is dependent upon Hashem's support and sustenance. Because a weak person feels wholly reliant on Hashem, Hashem in turn, comes closer and closer to him as well – **קרוב ה' לכל קראיו לכל אשר יקראהו באמת.**

וְלִבְנֵי בַרְזִלַּי הַגִּלְעָדִי תַּעֲשֶׂה־חֶסֶד (Kings 1 2:7)



As the sun begins to set on the reign of Dovid Hamelech, the King charged his newly crowned son, Shlomo, to "finish what he started." Shlomo was told of Barzilai Hagiladi who had come to his father's aid at a critical time and now Dovid asked that Shlomo remain close to his family and reciprocate that kindness. But why does he ask him to "do chessed" with them? Shouldn't it be Shlomo's duty to repay the kindness?

R' Gamliel Rabinowitz shlit"a (Tiv Haftoros) explains that in Dovid's instructions to Shlomo lie a valuable lesson. When Dovid was running away from Avshalom and was in need of support, Chazal continuously stress that what Dovid needed more than anything in the world was a real friend. Although he was a great monarch and enjoyed a flattering gathering, most of the nation was swept up in the excitement of Avshalom's rebellion and Dovid felt completely alone. Thus, when Barzilai appeared, he offered much more than food and drink; he displayed support and friendship towards Dovid. This gesture placed Dovid in a clearer frame of mind and helped him through his difficult time. Dovid's request to Shlomo was more than just returning an old favor; he wanted Shlomo to continue the familial friendship and expound on it. As he lay on his deathbed, Dovid Hamelech felt that this was a very important lesson to impart for generations to come, which is acutely understood in today's very polarized world.

Birchas Habonim



The two blessings of Yaakov Avinu in this parsha are very relevant. The beracha of **המלאך הגואל** is said every evening before we go to bed, while the beracha of **ישימך אלקים** is used to bentch our children on erev Yom Kippur (some do it on Friday night as well).

My machshava here is: What is so unique about Ephraim and Menashe that for millenium, we bless our children to be like them? Why do we not bless our children to be like the other shevatim, the righteous sons of Yaakov?

The Meforshim tell us that from the time of creation, every set of brothers that ever existed did not get along. Kayin and Hevel. Yitzchok and Yishmael. Yaakov and Esav. Yosef and his brothers. That is, until Ephraim and Menashe. Throughout his life, Yaakov Avinu witnessed the terrible consequences that jealousy and hatred can sow amongst siblings. Thus, when he saw the deep and pure love that Yosef's sons had for each other, he felt that they should reflect the ultimate blessing that a Jew will use when he blesses his own children. He was not afraid that they would fight for their connection was so deep.

In fact, the gematria of **מנשה אפרים** together is 726 - the exact gematria of **שים שלום**. Yaakov switched his hands and put his right hand on Ephraim instead of Menashe, who was the older son. He mentioned Ephraim's name ahead of Menashe's and said, "But the younger brother will become greater than (the older)."

Menashe could have jumped up at that moment and protested. "Zaidy, it's not fair, I'm entitled to that beracha! I want your right

hand to be placed on my head!" However, Menashe said nothing and Ephraim, too, never flaunted his status.

This is the type of relationship Yaakov Avinu wished on every Jewish family in the future. This was the message he wished to impart to his own children before leaving this world. When one loses a parent, **ר"ל**, he looks to do things in their memory, such as a Siyum Mishnayos. Yaakov's message is that the greatest **עלוי** for a parent's neshama is for his children to live in peace and harmony with one another like Menashe and Ephraim.

There was once a small town in Europe that had one doctor and one pharmacist. One day, the two "professionals" banded together and decided to hike up the prices for their services, since they were the only two in town.



The Zviller Rebbe, R' Gedalya Moshe Goldman zt"l, recalls what happened. The Jewish townsfolk got together and held an asifa (gathering) at which they discussed their options. After a boisterous and lengthy discussion, it was decided that in order to combat the nefarious schemes of the doctor and pharmacist, they would refuse to pay their exorbitant prices. If they caved into the pressure, who is to say they won't raise their prices again and again? Rather, if and when someone would get sick, the person and his family would focus on their tefillos and recite **רפאנו ה' ונרפא** with great intent, as well as the beracha of **אשר יצר** with special emphasis on the concluding words **רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות** - so that Hashem, the One and only Omnipotent Doctor, would perform a wonder (**פלא**) and heal him from his sickness.

And that is precisely what they did! Over the next year, the people took stock and realized that B'ezras Hashem, not one of the Jewish townsfolk died during the course of twelve months - except for the greedy doctor and the pharmacist - who both passed away from debilitating illnesses.



The Chizkuni writes that until the time of Yaakov Avinu, if a person sneezed, he would automatically die right after. Yaakov asked Hashem to change this, so that he would be able to make his last will and testament before dying. And Hashem answered his prayer. This is why it states, "It was after these words," after Hashem had consented to give Yaakov enough time to prepare for his departure from earth. Not only this, but all the kings of the earth became agitated, when they heard that Yaakov died only after having made all these arrangements about his forthcoming demise. Ever since, not only Jews, but believing people everywhere, pronounce a blessing when they hear someone sneeze. Hashem transformed what used to be a signal of death into continued life.

"Although the years that Yaakov spent in Egypt - seventeen years - were not years of happiness and enjoyment; rather, they were the beginning of the golus and ultimately the slavery in Egypt, Yaakov Avinu accepted them upon himself as **יסורים של אהבה** - 'Tribulations of love,' and he never complained.

As the posuk states: 'And Yaakov lived in Egypt seventeen years' - corresponding to the gematria of **טוב** - for all those years were good in the eyes of Yaakov." ~ **R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischa ZT"L**

R' Chaim Yosef Kofman (Machsheves Halev) would say: "Chayei Sarah and Vayechi, both names of parshiyos, describe the deaths of Sarah and Yaakov, even though the words **חיי [שרה] ויחי** - denote life. The first word **ויהיו** in Chayei Sarah is the gematria 37, noting that the only truly happy years of Sarah's life were the 37 years after she gave birth to Yitzchok and raised him together with Avraham Avinu. Yaakov Avinu had 34 happy years; the first seventeen years after Yosef's birth when he raised him and taught him Torah, and the last seventeen years after he was reunited with Yosef in Goshen. The gematria of **ויחי** is exactly 34. Hence the Torah describes the truly happy years of Yaakov were only when he was with his son Yosef for 34 years."



Chacham Rabbeinu Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulai (Chid'a) would say: **אפרים ומנשה כראובן ושמעון יהיו לי** - Many people come up with 'Gematriyos' that compare the numerical values of two different items, and quite often they are off by one number. And yet, we say the two are comparable as we add the 'kollel'.

The hint to this is here. The gematria of **אפרים ומנשה** is 732. The gematria of **ראובן ושמעון** is 731. Although they seem to be off by one number - **יהיו לי** - Yaakov Avinu shows us that they are all the same to him!"



Rabbeinu Bechaye ZT"L writes: "Rashi writes: 'Why is this parsha closed (סתומה)? Because, Yaakov attempted to reveal the end of the exile קץ to his sons, but it was 'closed off' (concealed) from him.' Yaakov saw that every letter of the Alef-Beis, is found in the names of his sons, except for 'ches' and 'tes.' He said, 'They have no sins (חט) and deserve to know the end of the exile.' Until the moment he was to reveal it and he realized that the letters ק and צ are also missing, and he was unable to do so."

Drush V'Chiddush וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְמִינוֹ וַיָּשֶׁת עַל־רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם 48:14



Have you ever wondered why two people shake hands upon meeting and greeting one another? It seems so common in all areas of society and yet, is there an actual reason why this is done? For example, when two men see each other, they say, "Shalom Aleichem" and shake hands. Or, when one goes to a Rav or a Rebbe, the petitioner will extend his hand and the holy man will grasp it and issue a heartfelt blessing. **The Ponovezher Rosh Yeshivah, R' Berel Povarsky Shlit'a,** recalls that in fact, **the Brisker Rav, R' Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik ZT"L**, would rarely extend his hand in

greeting, and if another person would stick his hand out, the Brisker Rav would barely even graze the other man's fingertips, almost never actually shaking the hand, for he felt that for the purpose of a blessing, shaking hands is unnecessary.

However, R' Berel further relates, when he discussed this with **R' Eliyahu Dessler ZT"L** (Michtav M'Eliyahu), he had a totally different approach to the matter. He cited the posuk in Parshas Vayechi that describes how Yaakov extended both his hands and placed them on the heads of Ephraim and Menashe, in order to bless them. He even switched his hands and put his right hand on the head of the younger boy and his left on the head of the older boy.

R' Dessler concluded that obviously Yaakov felt there definitely was a purpose to extending one's hand while blessing another, for it forms a bond of sorts between the blesser and the blessed. Furthermore, the right hand is deemed more important and worthy and that is why it is customary to bless someone with the right hand, as Yaakov did by placing his right hand on Ephraim, to indicate he is more worthy than his older brother.

"Achdus" and "Respect"

It was the coldest winter ever. Temperatures had dipped down to life-threatening conditions. In the forest, exposed to the elements, many animals could not survive because of the cold. It was every being for itself.

The porcupines, realizing the situation, decided to group together to keep warm. This way they covered and protected themselves; the heat of their collective bodies was what kept them alive. The problem was that the sharp quills of each porcupine wounded their closest companions. After a while, they decided to distance themselves, one from the other and they began to die, alone and

frozen. So from the other, so as not to hurt each other. But they began to die, alone and frozen.



They had to make a choice: accept the stabs of their companions or disappear from the Earth. Wisely, they decided to come back together. They learned to live with the little wounds caused by the close relationship with their companions in order to receive the heat that came with it. This way they were able to survive.

The best relationship is not the one that brings together perfect people, but when each individual learns to live with the imperfections of others and appreciates the other person's good qualities.

The message Yaakov Avinu wished to impart to his descendants before he left this world was "Gather together and listen." Survival depends on two things: "Achdus" - uniting together as one body with one heart, and "Respect" for one another by listening to what the other person has to say.

Yaakov did not speak to his sons individually. He spoke to each son in front of the others. Why? Because it is important for each son to recognize the positive and negative attributes of his brothers and learn to live with them in mutual respect and cooperation. Survival depends on it!

Although Yaakov Avinu was ill and in bed, he nevertheless managed to bow and prostrate himself **על ראש המטה** - at the foot of his bed. Rashi explains: "He prostrated himself to Hashem because his offspring were perfect, in so far as not one of them was wicked, as is evidenced by the fact that Yosef was a king, and furthermore, that (even though) he was captured among the heathens, he remained steadfast in his righteousness."

The Seforno provides a similar explanation that Yaakov Avinu bowed as a sign of thanksgiving to Hashem. Yaakov realized that Yosef's influence would be required for the removal of his body from Egypt for burial in the Land of Israel. Yosef had achieved authority and influence to fulfil his father's wish through Hashem's providence. Through bowing to Hashem, Yaakov expressed his appreciation for His guidance over Yosef's life. This was appropriate. Yaakov was now benefiting from this providence.



The following story was told over by **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein Shlit'a** (Barchi Nafshi) about a well-respected philanthropist who traveled to Bnei Brak to visit the headquarters of Ezra Lemarpeh, an organization which aids countless Jews in need of medical assistance, advice and referrals.

The philanthropist met with Reb Elimelech Firer, the renowned director of Ezra Lemarpeh and the two discussed several pressing matters, pertaining to numerous areas of Jewish assistance. The meeting ended quite late and on a whim, the two decided to travel to Jerusalem to daven by the Kosel.

They arrived after midnight and the cool night air was still. A constant hum from the trickle of worshipers could be heard. As they

approached the holy wall, they suddenly heard the piercing sound of sobbing coming from the plaza in front of the Kosel.

As they got closer, they saw a middle-aged Jew standing and leaning his head on the stones, crying unceasingly. When Reb Firer heard the sound of crying, he was unable to focus on his tefillos for alleviating the pain of another Jew is uppermost in his mind at all times. After a few moments, he turned to his wealthy companion and said, "It is clear that Hashem arranged for us to be here at this time for a reason. The reason is in order to hear the tears of this Jew and help him out.

I'll approach him and introduce myself and if he needs medical advice, I will aid him to the best of my ability. However, if he tells me that he is not in need of medical advice, but in need of financial help, you will enter the picture and offer your financial help."

The philanthropist happily agreed to the deal. Reb Firer approached the man, tapped lightly on his shoulder, and introduced himself. He then inquired whether he was in need of medical advice. The man replied, "No, no, I have no need for such help. Everything is fine, Boruch Hashem." Reb Firer asked if there were any medical issues that he was concerned with as he was able and willing to help out in this area, but the man assured him that he had no need. Reb Firer walked away convinced and told the philanthropist that it was now time for him to approach and offer his services, as this was most likely what was needed. The philanthropist approached the man and gently inquired whether he needed financial help. Once again, the answer was negative. "Hakadosh Boruch Hu has given me everything I have, and I'm not in need of anything," he answered.

The philanthropist reported back to Reb Firer and both of them were confused. If everything was fine, then why was he crying so loudly, affecting everyone around him?

Reb Firer decided to approach the man once again and clarify the matter. "If you must know, I'll tell you why I'm crying," said the man.

"Last night, I married off my youngest son, the last of the twelve children Hashem has given me. I came tonight to thank Him, the Creator of the World, for the great kindness He has shown me for so many years until I was zoche to bring my last child under the chuppah."

The man explained that just as he had come to the Kosel Hamaaravi over the years to plead with Hashem to help him marry off his children, now that all his tefillos have been answered, he has come especially to the Kosel this very night to thank Him. Reb Firer asked him why he was crying. The Yid looked at the two great patrons of chessed and asked, "Do you think it is possible to thank Hashem and praise Him for such great kindness without bursting into tears?"



Chacham Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai ZT"L would say: "Yaakov Avinu declares that Am Yisrael will forever bless their children with the blessing, 'May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe.' What lies within this blessing? Why not bless Jewish children that they should be like Reuven or Shimon, Levi or Yehuda? Ephraim was the Rosh Yeshivah of Yaakov's yeshivah, while Menashe was in charge of Yosef's home and was remarkably powerful. Indeed, this is the complete beracha - Torah, strength and wealth - which every parent wishes for his children. Yet, one must remember to place 'Ephraim' before 'Menashe' to wish him first and foremost greatness and success in Torah, with everything else subordinate to it."

Drush V'Chiddush וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ 48:16

Yaakov Avinu blessed his grandchildren: "May they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." The word וְיִדְגּוּ comes from the word דג - "fish" and the Medrash learns out from this that Klal Yisroel is compared to fish in the ocean, who thirst for each and every drop of water, by rising to the surface in the midst of a rainfall, to drink in the newly fallen water. Similarly, Klal Yisroel thirst for each and every drop of Torah and will rise up to achieve new heights in Torah.



A prominent Maggid Shiur once came to **R' Chaim Kanievsky Shlit'a** with the following question: "I have a fish tank at home and I change the water often. But not once did I ever see the fish rising to the top of the tank as I poured the water in. Quite the contrary, either they move away or they seem oblivious to the new water being added. If so, what then is the meaning of this Medrash?"

R' Chaim smiled and answered, "The Medrash does not speak of a fish tank; only of fish in an ocean and an ocean is strikingly different than a fish tank." R' Chaim stroked his beard and continued. "Fish in a tank see themselves as 'contained' - content with their water supply and unmoved by new water being added to their tank. Whereas fish in an ocean are surrounded by an endless, infinite amount of water. They never rest on their laurels and always thirst for 'new' water."

Said R' Chaim, "The Medrash is teaching us that there are two types of Yidden with regard to their relationship to Torah. Some Jews feels complacent and 'contained' with a mere 'Ein Yaakov' or 'Perek' shiur which they 'chap arayn' in-between Mincha and Maariv. Such a

fellow views a new sefer, or a new chiddush in a well-entrenched sugya, as redundant and superfluous.

On the other hand, someone who is immersed in the Yam HaTalmud, the endless sea of Torah study, and truly feels unsatiated with a mere minimum of Torah, will thirstily drink up every new idea and sefer which happens his way, and he'll read it again and again, excitedly, cover to cover!"

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo



As the entire entourage carrying the bier of Yaakov Avinu to his final resting place solemnly approached the Mearas Hamachpela to perform a final act of kindness for their holy Patriarch, the scene was suddenly interrupted. Esav, Yaakov's nefarious twin brother, showed up and insisted that the burial plot belonged to him! He refused to let his nephews bury their father.

The children of Yaakov began arguing with Esav until it was decided to send Naftali, who was swift as a deer, to run down on foot to Egypt and procure the necessary documents proving that Yaakov was indeed entitled to this auspicious plot next to his wife Leah.

Chazal relate that throughout this entire argument, one person - Chushim the only son of Dan - became extremely agitated at the tremendous lack of respect, even disgrace, that was afforded his holy Zaida Yaakov. Chushim was deaf, and it took him some time to understand what was going on. But when he finally did, he took matters into his own hands. Literally! He grabbed a club, hit Esav

over the head, and killed him on the spot. GAME OVER! Why was Chushim, the deaf son of Dan, the only one to stand up for the honor of Yaakov Avinu?

R' Henoch Leibowitz ZT"L answers that often in life people lose



sight of the **עיקר** because they get wrapped up in the **טפל**! Families or friends will argue about something small and insignificant, but the intensity of the fight causes them to lose sight of what is really important. Sometimes a family fight will continue for years, **ר"ל**, becoming a "Yerusha" for the next generation who isn't even sure what the fight is all about! R' Henoch says that in these kind of situations one has to make himself DEAF to simply ignore the nasty, hurtful or sarcastic remarks thrown about in anger, so as not to lose perspective and make the **טפל** into the **עיקר**. This is the message of Chushim, the deaf son of Dan: At times, we must "play deaf" in our relationships with others.

R' Gershon Stern ZT"L (Yalkut HaGershuni) would say: "On his deathbed, Yaakov brought **בני יוסף** - the two sons of Yosef. He saw that wicked men would descend from them, namely Yeravam ben Navat from Shevet Ephraim, and Yahu ben Nimshi from Shevet Menashe. Thus, he asked, '*Who are these?*' - who are these sons that do not deserve blessings? The letters of **בני** spell out the acronym for **יֵהוּא בֶּן נִמְשִׁי** and **יָרָבְעָם בֶּן נְבָט**. To this, Yosef responded, **בני הם** - they are my sons. Why look only at the wicked descendants with that acronym, see the righteous one who will descend from them, this being **יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בִּן נוּן**.



In many ancient European communities, there existed a "Pinkas" or "Sefer Kehillos" which collected documents, lists, personal memoirs - some in their original unedited form - historical accounts and essays devoted to the life of the Jewish kehillos, from antiquity until its demise. It attempted to illustrate the life that once was and is no more. Many people have found amazing stories and anecdotes about their towns and shtetls, as well as their families, friends and relatives, in these historical ledger books.

The Mashgiach, **R' Don Segal Shlit"a**, recounts a fascinating story that he found in the "Sefer Kehillos" of Vienna, Austria, when he visited the city a number of years ago. R' Segal read about a young girl with the surname Shiff who was said to have had an unusually beautiful singing voice. Her talent was nothing short of professional and she was legendary amongst her friends and family for her unique gift. However, for a religious girl in Vienna during the early half of the twentieth century, her stunning voice didn't afford her much opportunity.

That was, until one day when reports of her amazing potential and talent reached an agent of the famous Vienna opera, who heard her sing and immediately offered her a position in the opera. It was quite an honour for the young, impressionable girl, and she was thrilled beyond words. Her parents, however, did not share her sentiments and were increasingly troubled by the offer and their daughter's reaction to it. They were religious Jews and a career in the opera

world was not what they had in mind for their talented daughter. All of their efforts to convince her that the opera was no place for a Torah-observant girl fell on deaf ears. They were at their wits end and the thought of losing their daughter to this temptation gave them no rest.

Herr Shiff decided to take his daughter to their Rav, **R' Yosef Baumgarten ZT"L**, who tried to convince her that she should not accept the tantalizing offer of the gentile. But he, too, was unable to convince her. Finally, R' Yosef suggested to her father that he bring her to the **Kapischnitzer Rebbe, R' Yitzchok Meir Heschel ZT"L**, who was in Vienna at the time.

Immediately, father and daughter set out to visit the Rebbe. The young lady was unsure of how the Rebbe would react to the offer but to her surprise his reaction was not what she expected. After he heard the situation he remarked that he understood how hard it was for her and what a difficult predicament she found herself in. Then he asked her, "Tell me, why do you want to join the opera? Is it for the money?" She thought for a moment and then replied that it wasn't the money - but the opportunity for fame. If she joined the opera everyone would know her name.

The Rebbe closed his eyes, deep in thought, and then replied: "Listen closely, my daughter. It is the dream of every Jewish woman to merit a child who will illuminate the world through his Torah learning. I give you my promise that if you sacrifice this opportunity at fame with the opera, there will come a time when you will be blessed with a child who will light up the world. He will eventually become the one of the great halachic authorities of his time, a Posek Hador. My daughter, you will have fame. Your fame will come through him, the mother of a future leader of the Jewish people!"

The young girl wiped away her tears and thought deeply about the magnanimous promise the Rebbe had just made to her. She was an upstanding, religious girl and so, after considering the offer, she

accepted the Rebbe's proposition. She soon informed the agent that she was no longer interested in his offer. All of his cajoling and persuading could not shake her newfound adamant resolve. She forfeited the chance at fleeting fame for a guarantee of eternal nachas.

R' Don Segal read this story and was amazed. Who was this girl and what became of her son? Was he indeed a Gadol Hador as the Rebbe predicted? After doing some research he discovered that this girl eventually married and had a son by the name of Shmuel.



Today, he is **HaGaon, R' Shmuel Wosner Shlit'a**, Av Beis Din of Bnei Brak, author of the Shevet Halevi, and one of the outstanding halachic authorities of our time.

When R' Segal approached R' Shmuel Wosner to ask if the story was true, R' Wosner emotionally replied that his mother had never recounted this story to him. But, he said with tears in his eyes, it all made sense now. "When I left home to learn in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, my mother begged me to never stop learning and always remain an ehrliche yid. I remember her words. She told me, 'You cannot imagine what I sacrificed for you!'"

Lost wealth may be replaced by industry, lost knowledge by study, lost health by temperance or medicine, but lost time is gone forever.



R' Moshe Leib Sassover ZT"L would say: **ויברכם ביום ההוא לאמר** - 'And he (Yaakov) blessed them on that day saying ...'

Why does the posuk make mention that Yaakov blessed them 'on that day'?

Yaakov was teaching his children a lesson that when you pray for your needs, you should pray for that specific day's needs. One must not worry about what will be in the future; he needs to focus 'on that day' in conformance to the famous dictum: **העבר אין** - *'The past is done,'* **והעתיד עדיין** - *'the future is yet to come,'* **וההוה כהרף אין** - *'the present is like the blink of an eye.'* **אם כן דאגה מנין** - *'If so, what is the point of worrying?'"*

Torah Gems 49:1

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים

Right before his passing, Yaakov Avinu wished to reveal to his sons what will be their fate at the end of time (Moshiach), but the Divine Presence left him at that moment and he spoke of other things. (Rashi) If Hashem did not want Yaakov to reveal the future, why couldn't He have just commanded Yaakov not to talk about it? Why did He remove His Shechina from Yaakov's presence?

R' Tzvi Hirsch of Voideslav ZT"L answers that in order to know the fate of Klal Yisroel, Yaakov looked into the future and what he saw horrified him! All the decrees, expulsions, killings and holocausts - the untold millions of deaths, the endless pain and suffering - was too much even for Yaakov to bear, and his mind became saddened.

As such, the Divine Presence immediately left him for Chazal have told us: "The Shechina only rests on one who is happy."



One of the giants of Mussar once asked the **Gerrer Rebbe, R' Yisroel Alter ZT"L**, the following question: Why is it that on Rosh Hashana, when Yidden all over the world are steeped in the seriousness of the High Holiday prayers, which are often accompanied by beseeching tears and hours upon hours of contemplative austerity; however, in the Gerrer Beis Medrash, joyful songs and "marches" are sung continuously, even to the piyut of "Nesaneh Tokef"?

The Rebbe quoted a posuk from Eicha (3:8): "*As I cry and plead, my prayers remain shut out,*" and explained, "Where there is no joy or simcha, no amount of pleading and crying will break through the Heavens! We see this from Yaakov Avinu, who 'lost' the Divine Presence when he became momentarily sad, after seeing the terrible things that will happen to his children. However, if I can take these very same people who have seen and undergone these terrible events and through songs and 'marches' bring them to a level of simcha, there is no telling how high and far their prayers will go, and how much salvation they will receive!"

"Don't be afraid of discovering that the real you may be different from the current you." Rabbi Noach Weinberg

Torah Gems

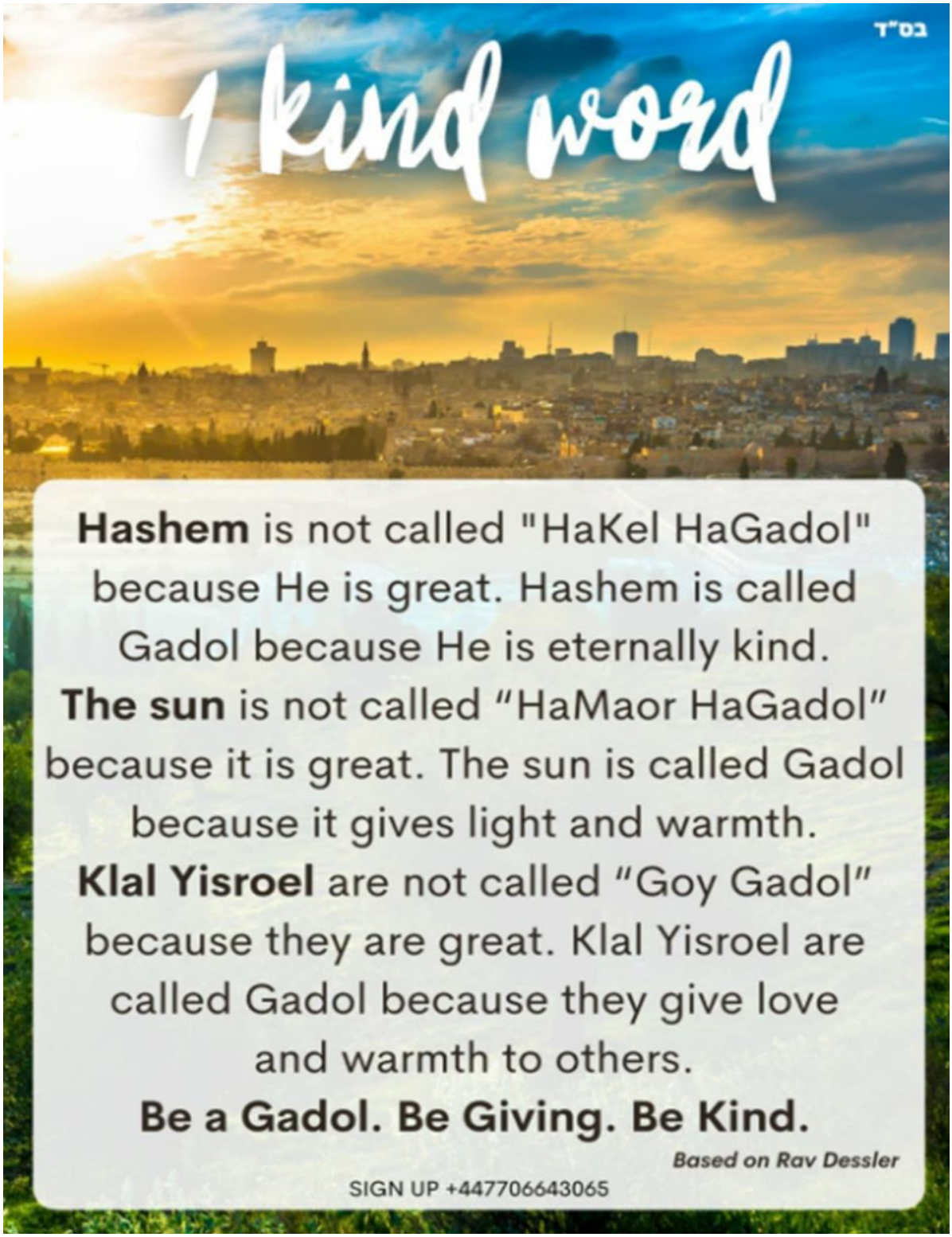
Yaakov Avinu gave two separate blessings, one to Yosef and one to his grandchildren, Ephraim and Menashe. What is interesting to note is that the blessing to Yosef is actually a blessing to Ephraim and Menashe, while the blessing to Ephraim and Menashe is in reality a blessing to Yosef.

The Torah states, "And he blessed Yosef," and concludes, "the angel that spares me from all evil shall bless the lads." The Torah tells us, "And he blessed them on that day," referring in the plural to Yosef's two sons, but ends in the singular, "In you shall Yisroel be blessed," addressing Yosef.



These blessings says **R' Yisroel Belsky Shlit'a**, touch upon the core of the parent/child relationship. The greatest blessing one can give a father is that he may have children of whom he can be proud; children who live up to his ideals and carry on his legacy. The greatest blessing one can give a child is that his parents are blessed because of him; that he is a source of pleasure and satisfaction in their eyes, and that others recognize the effort of his parents in raising him to be this way. **בך יברך ישראל** - *Klal Yisroel should bless **you***, Yosef, because of your exemplary sons. There is more to these blessings, however. It is unfortunate that parents often act in a way which interferes with the proper transmission of Yiddishkeit to their children. They may lack the emunah and bitachon, bequeathed to us by our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov, and thus, the continuity of the blessing is severed. Instead of a blessing, their children inherit a curse. This is what Yaakov Avinu set out to do with his unique

blessings to Yosef and his children. He blessed Yosef specifically through his children, that he - Yosef - should merit to transmit the spiritual inheritance of the Avos in its entirety, and that no evil shall interfere with this process.



Concern For Others



Concern for others and the fear of hurting another individual's feelings, was a trademark quality of the Rosh Yeshivah of Chevron, **R' Simcha Zissel Broide ZT"L**. He embodied the attributes of Yosef HaTzaddik who was a **מלך מושל בגדוד** - *"king who ruled the regiment"* of his limbs and emotions and made them do the will of Hashem.

It wasn't just the way he acted with respect to his peers, fellow Roshei Yeshivos and other honourable people in all walks of society. R' Simcha Zissel remained exactly the same in relation to his talmidim in the yeshivah as well.

The following episode in connection with the above was related by an old-time student of Yeshivas Chevron. It took place decades ago, when the yeshivah's main building was still located in the Geulah section of Jerusalem. On that fateful winter's day, there was a heavy snowfall in Jerusalem, and the entire city was blanketed with a sparkling white carpet of snow.

Snow is not a common occurrence in Jerusalem - nor in the entire country of Israel for that matter - and it quite often has the effect of "shutting down" the city. Buses do not operate on a routine schedule and many shopkeepers cannot get to their stores. The city literally slows down and takes on an almost festive holiday atmosphere, and nobody enjoys it more than the children. In fact, it is not unheard of for children from other cities that never experience the phenomenon of snow, to make their way to Jerusalem just to partake in a little winter wonderland. The younger "Yeshivah

Ketana" (High School) students of Chevron were no different in this respect.



That afternoon, during their "Bein HaSedorim", a group of students were entertaining themselves outside, frolicking in the snow and throwing snowballs at each other on the roof of the yeshivah building. It all seemed like harmless fun, until an event occurred which transformed the incident into an extraordinary experience. As the boys were entertaining themselves, another boy came onto the roof. Of course, immediately, he became the new target and one of the boys grabbed a huge chunk of snow, as much as his palms could pick up, made a large ball and propelled it in the direction of the newcomer. The boy saw it coming from a mile away and his instincts kicked in.

As the snowball was about to strike, he ducked and watched the snowball sail over his head. He laughed giddily and was about to throw his own ball of snow, when he noticed the look of horror on the faces of his companions. The snowball had flown over their intended target and then, to their indescribable horror, it kept on going and landed with a sickening thud on the head of the Rosh Yeshivah, R' Simcha Zissel, whose apartment was located on the roof of the yeshivah building.

No one had seen the Rosh Yeshivah enter the roof area - had they seen him they would have halted their activity immediately! Nevertheless, the intended flying missile missed the boy and struck the Rosh Yeshivah!

Needless to say, at that moment the boys felt like burying themselves in the snow out of acute embarrassment. They braced

for the tongue-lashing that they sorely deserved and would undoubtedly receive. To their amazement, however, the Rosh Yeshivah did not halt in mid-step, did not wipe the snow off his shoulders and head, and most amazing of all, did not even turn his head to see who the "sharpshooter" was! He continued walking quietly as if nothing had happened.

No matter how refined and virtuous a person may be, no matter how strong-willed in controlling his emotions a person may be, no matter how many works of Mussar a person may have imbibed, he could still be permitted to surrender to the legitimate reflexive instinct to turn his head towards the source of his sudden injury. But not R' Simcha Zissel!

Turning his head to see who the prankster was would result in the prankster's acute embarrassment. To hurt somebody else's feelings was not something that the Rosh Yeshivah would permit himself, even under extreme circumstances, to fall prey to. R' Simcha Zissel was an autocratic king and absolute ruler of his instincts and emotions.



A businessman from Brooklyn, NY, found himself stranded one night in a little town near Albany, NY. His business dealings had brought him to Albany, but when the proceedings lasted much later than he expected and a great tiredness fell upon him heavily, he had no choice but to cut his return drive home short and look for the nearest lodgings.

This presented a problem, since the late hour combined with the rural roads (he had already left Albany some time earlier) left him

with no place to stop in order to spend the night. After inquiring at the first gas station he came to, he was told that the only building in the immediate area was a nursing home.

He was so weary at this point that he could barely function and with what little strength he had left, he dragged himself into the nursing home and asked if they had a room where he could spend the night. Unfortunately, he was told, they didn't have any place for him, but one of the caretakers took pity on his exhausted soul and quietly informed him that there was one possible solution. A man had just passed away that evening and his room would not be cleaned out until the following morning. If he absolutely needed a place to sleep, he could use the deceased man's room for the night.

Reluctantly, and with exhaustion dictating his judgment, he agreed and within moments was plunged into a deep sleep. In the morning, before he left the room he looked around and noticed that the name of the previous resident had been David Schwartz. This struck him as odd, since the nursing home was not Jewish in any way and it was strange to find that a man with a Jewish name had been living there. He went down and spoke to the administrator of the home and learned that indeed David Schwartz had been Jewish, but with no relatives to see to his burial, he was scheduled to be laid to rest in the small Christian cemetery behind the home which was used for exactly these types of situations.

The businessman felt that it was clearly Divine Providence that had led him to this particular nursing home and he believed it was his sacred duty to see that this Jewish man receive a proper Jewish burial. At first, the administrator wouldn't hear of it, but after offering to take the dead man's corpse, as well as the responsibility, effort and expense of a private internment upon himself, the businessman succeeded in having the body released to his ward.

He and the late Mr. Schwartz drove out of the nursing home later that morning. The question now was what does one do with a dead

body in one's car? He drove all the way back to Brooklyn. Back home, he learned that in Washington Heights, there was a small area in the cemetery that was set aside for the burial of ten **מתי מצוה** people who have no one to attend to their internment needs.



He contacted the head of the Chevra Kadisha in Washington Heights and told him the story of how he came into possession of one such case. The Chevra Kadisha, of course, would not accept the corpse until they were able to verify the Jewish identity of the man and the fact that he had no other burial alternatives. A few phone calls later, however, and they were convinced.

The businessman now brought the remains of Mr. Schwartz to Washington Heights in order to perform the Tahara and the burial. As the process began to unfold, the head of the Chevra Kadisha peered into the face of the deceased and scratched his head. He had seen this man's face before but was having trouble placing it. He dashed off to check some records. Holding up some papers, he announced, "Well over twenty years ago, a man came to me and asked what is done with the corpses of Jews who have no one to care of them. At that time, we had no such contingency plan and the man immediately offered to pay for the plots and burials of ten such individuals. The man who paid for the ten burial plots is none other than our very own David Schwartz!"

"When you live with other people and you are content to make a mess in shared spaces, you dishonour the people you live with."

The Medrash famously recounts how Yaakov Avinu gathered together all his children by his deathbed and prepared to give them his final blessings and instructions. This included a revelation of the end of time - the advent of Moshiach - when all the pain and sorrow of the future exiles would cease. However, at that moment the Shechina left him and he was unable to say what he wanted to say. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, for such knowledge could have brought about an overwhelming despair to all future generations who would not live to see the ultimate redemption.

When the Nazi war machine began its blitzkrieg against London during World War II, civilian sectors of the city were being heavily bombed. Terror reigned throughout the city, for casualties were everywhere and no one knew who would be next. The Battle of Britain was long and drawn out and it took a heavy toll on the mental psyche of the population. Many moved out of the city to the countryside while others attempted to leave the country outright.



The esteemed Rov and Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Elyah Lopian ZT"L**, having moved to London in 1925, was in no less danger than anyone else but he never considered leaving the people who turned to him on a daily basis for advice and consolation.

Near his home in London lived a certain widow and her orphaned children. No matter how heavily involved R' Elyah was in his countless responsibilities, he always found time for her. He would always receive her politely, listen to her with great patience, and offer her his advice.

He had left standing instructions that whenever this woman or her children came to his house they were to be shown in immediately. Others could wait, but not this woman. He would always stop whatever he was doing or interrupt any meeting, conference or activity in which he was involved, in order to give her his full attention.

Early one Sunday morning, during the height of the incessant bombing, the widow who lived nearby came to R' Elyah's home in great anguish. She had an urgent matter to discuss with the Rov and, as always, she was immediately escorted in. Without preamble, she burst out, "Rabbi, there is a ship leaving this Wednesday morning for South Africa," she wailed. "I am afraid for my children and myself. Do you think I should arrange for passage on that ship in the hope of saving our lives? The bombs are falling everywhere. Who knows if we will all be killed?" The widow was extremely agitated, barely able to face the burden of responsibility for the safety of her household at so frightening a time as this.

An unusual silence settled on the room. Finally, R' Elyah looked up, and with a reply totally out of character, spoke with words she had never before heard from him. "I'm sorry," he told her curtly, "I cannot think clearly, and I don't know what to tell you. I don't have time now! Please come back later." Surprised, but with little recourse, the agitated woman left the house, her mind unsettled and fearful.

A few hours later, she returned and was again ushered into R' Elyah, but again he explained to her that she had come at a bad time, for he was amid preparing his shiur. He could not focus on her inquiry at this moment, and she needed to return later when he could give her proposal serious thought. She came twice more on that day, and five times on the following day, but amazingly, each time, R' Elyah just could not find the time to discuss the matter with her.



When she was turned away several times again on the next day, Tuesday, she stopped coming. Without a clear response from R' Elyah, she gave up the idea of leaving for South Africa, for she would never have made a decision without R' Elyah's sanction. The ship set sail for South Africa on schedule Wednesday morning, filled with people who hoped to be saved from the Nazi bombs.

On Thursday, the news reported the terrible tragedy: the ship had been sunk by a German U-boat that had been lurking in unsecured water. There were no survivors. The widow who, along with her children, was saved from tragedy because of her absolute faith in R' Elyah, was Rebbetzin Sternbuch, the mother of the Av Beis Din in Jerusalem today, **R' Moshe Sternbuch Shlit"a.**

R' Moshe of Premishle ZT"L (Mateh Moshe) would say: "Yaakov Avinu blessed his son Yosef with an extra portion which he took from the Emori **בחרבי ובקשתי** - 'with my sword and my bow.' Chazal tell us that this refers to Tefillah - prayer. Thus, all prayer incorporates both the 'sword' and the 'bow.' Like a bow and arrow, the pesukei d'zimra - preliminary psalms of praise, cut through all obstructions, preparing the way for the Amidah, which may then reach its mark with all the efficacy of a sharp sword."

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

Sefer Beraishis is known as "Sefer Hayashar" because it is filled with the lives and deeds of our Avos, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, who were called ישרים - "virtuous." This first Book of the Torah is not filled with mitzvos, but rather it teaches us the foundation of Jewish living - good Middos. For this very reason, Yaakov Avinu gave each of his sons a beracha according to his need.



R' Yeruchem Levovitz ZT"L explains that a beracha is a growth stimulus that enhances one's potential. Yaakov focused on the dominant trait of each son in order to show him where his strength lies and to help him grow and achieve his true potential. We, too, must focus on our unique abilities and allow them to grow. And we must identify our children's potential, their dominant traits and nurture them for maximum growth. It may be difficult, but if one focuses on his natural tendencies and stresses his dominant traits, he will gain the self-confidence necessary to improve.

The purpose of life is for spiritual growth - and we can trace the stages of life through the parshiyos in Sefer Berashis: ***"Beraishis"*** - In the beginning a baby is born .... ***"Noach"*** - the baby rests to build up strength. ***"Lech Lecha"*** - He begins to walk, to move .... ***"Vayera"*** - He begins to see, to understand the world around him. ***"Chayei Sara"*** ***"Toldos"*** - He marries and has children. ***"Vayeitzai"*** - He goes out to make a parnassah. ***"Vayishlach"*** - He marries off and sends his children on their way. ***"Vayeshev"*** - He retires from work. ***"Miketz"*** - He comes to the end of his life. ***"Vayigash"*** - He 'meets' his Creator in the next world. ***"Vayechi"*** - In the zechus of all his good deeds, he will live on forever in Olam Haba!

The Mirrer Mashgiach, R' Yeruchem Levovitz ZT"L (Daas Torah) would say:



פַּ֚חַז כַּמַּ֔יִם אַל־תּוֹתַ֖ר **"'*Unstable as water, do not take more.*'49:4.** The Torah does not usually speak in metaphors. However, Yaakov is teaching Reuven, and all of us, the evils of impulsivity. Just as water flows quickly, so is the behaviour of an overly impulsive person who acts quickly without thinking. One who does not weigh the consequences of his actions, will make harmful mistakes which can cause much damage. The Torah's metaphor of water serves as a constant reminder of the dangers of being impulsive, so when one sees water, he will know that he must slow himself down."



R' Mottel (Chaim Mordechai) Katz ZT"L (Rosh Yeshivas Telz) would say: **כי באפם הרגו איש** - 'With their anger they killed men.' The word **באפם** can also translate as '*with their nose.*' Quite often, just by turning up one's nose, belittling and humiliating another person, it can cause that person great harm. Even if he is not present, turning up one's nose at the mention of a name implies derogatory attributes and can cause someone to lose a job, to lose respect or even to lose a shidduch!"



MeOros Ha Tzaddikim

Every word in the Torah has a purpose and a meaning. There are no superfluous words in the Torah, and yet there seems to be a redundancy in the pasuk that describes how Yaakov blessed Ephraim and Menashe. He said, "May the Lord render you like Ephraim and Menashe." And then the Torah tells us that "he placed Ephraim before Menashe".

There is a deeper meaning here, explains **Rav Levi Yitzchok,** the Berditchever Rav. The Gemora tells us (Megilla15a): "Come and see how the Holy Blessed One's attributes differ from those of mortals.

Mortals place the pot on the fire and then fill it with water, but the Holy Blessed One fills it with water and then puts the pot on the fire." What does this mean? It refers to the preparation of the remedy before the affliction appears. The physical suffering is symbolized by the pot, and the divine kindness that restores health and serenity is symbolized by water. A person pours water into the pot after it has been placed in the oven; in other words, he is faced with an ailment and seeks water to pour over it. But Hashem begins with the water. He wants to do certain acts of kindness for a person, but the person may be unworthy; his pot may be too small, so to speak. So Hashem afflicts him. He breaks the little pot in order to remould it into a bigger pot that is worthy of receiving the kindness in store for him.

This holds true for any tragedy or calamity that befalls a person. Hashem has bounteous divine emanations prepared for him, but sometimes He must first shatter the small, constricted vessel that is incapable of receiving all the blessings in store for him. In other

words, the person may simply not be spiritually equipped to receive all the blessings awaiting him. Therefore, Hashem afflicts him and remoulds him spiritually into a form more suited to receive the divine emanations that have been prepared for him all along. This is what the Torah is telling us about Ephraim and Menashe. The name Ephraim alludes to bounteous blessing, fruitfulness, proliferation, while the name Menashe alludes to tragedies and calamities that are better forgotten. Yaakov "placed Ephraim before Menashe" to indicate that blessings come first, and suffering is only the precursor to the blessings that are already prepared.



A middle-aged man living in Israel was struggling to make ends meet. Debts were piling up and his family's needs were increasing. Traveling abroad to collect funds was too expensive and he decided to do the next best thing: Hit the hotel circuit during tourist season, where he knew he'd come across some of the wealthiest Jews from around the world. His decision brought him to the palatial lobby of the Sheraton Plaza hotel in Jerusalem, which was teeming with Yom Tov life and excitement. Gazing around the lobby for a few moments, he noticed a wealthy American man who had come to Israel with his family for Yom Tov.

Never having done this sort of thing before, he approached the man tepidly and asked if he could speak to him for a moment. The American looked up at him and after a second, nodded in agreement. The poor man introduced himself and then launched into a sincere and halting rendition of his life and the problems he was currently

dealing with. The wealthy man had heard many such stories before and generally was unfazed when approached by collectors with all sorts of needs, although he had given generously to many similar causes. This time, though, he listened intently as the other man spoke, staring deliberately at him, giving his full and undivided attention.

When he finished speaking, the rich man stood up and said, "Reb Yid, If you will come upstairs to my hotel room, I will give you a cheque." Once upstairs, the rich man took out his cheque book and wrote out a cheque for $20,000! Handing it to the speechless collector, he said, "And if you come back tomorrow, I'll give you another cheque."

Well, obviously he came back the next day, and the entire scene repeated itself. The rich man wrote out another cheque for $20,000! This was unbelievable and after administering a massive bear hug and sloppy kiss, the collector could not resist asking to what did he owe this amazing act of generosity.

Dousing himself with tissues, the wealthy man explained. "Many years ago, I was studying in a local American Yeshivah. My parents had died when I was young, and I was pretty much on my own. Boruch Hashem, I became engaged to a wonderful girl, but as I had no one to turn to for help and very little in the way of money, I realized that making my wedding on my own was going to be a tough go.

I budgeted the little money that I had and began to act. First, I approached a local catering hall and pled my case: I have a small, specific amount of money that I can pay out over a number of months. If they will be willing to work with me, I will make the wedding there. Amazingly, they agreed. Next, I spoke to a nearby florist and made the same offer. They, too, agreed. Finally, I entered a tailor shop and inquired about a chosson suit, with the identical pay-out plan, and the wonderful proprietors said sure, no problem."

The rich man reminisced wistfully. "A few days before the big day, I went to a friend's wedding and realized what I had forgotten. The band was so lively and entertaining, that I regretted not having any more money for music. I was bold and a bit inspired by my previous success.



I approached the keyboard player and asked him if he was available on the night of my wedding. I told him that I had no money to pay, that I was an orphan trying to make the wedding on my own, and if he wasn't busy that night, it would mean so much to my kallah and myself if he could enhance our simcha with his music. Noncommittally, he said he'd think about it and I thought that was that!"

The rich man's eyes shone with delight. "Wouldn't you know, the night of my wedding, when I came to the hall, he was already there setting up an entire sound system, speakers and all, and his inspired playing that night literally made the wedding!" Turning to face the spellbound collector, he exclaimed, "I can't tell you how thankful I am to you for that amazing act of kindness. All those years ago, you were that keyboard player!"

Even if a person does not have the merit of Torah study or good deeds, constantly thanking and praising Hashem can double one's livelihood. This is the key to success in life. ~ Sefer Tanna Devei Eliyahu.

Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff -Like Father, Like Son

For one father whose work had been going well and a decent income was coming his way, the tables turned when he was informed that he would no longer have a job. He returned home downcast with only a sliver of hope that he would sooner than later rebound and find a position to support his ever-growing family.

As time passed, the father remained jobless. Matters became increasingly difficult as the family struggled to subsist. One day the father received a phone call. It was a head-hunter asking if the father would like to receive an interview with a certain corporation. Of course, the answer was yes.



The interview went very well. It was only towards the last few minutes that the interviewer turned to the father and very bluntly said, "Let me ask you something. Nineteen other people are vying for this position. Why should you be given the job?" The father, unsure exactly what to answer, kept quiet. No answer was given as the interview came to a close.

11pm later that night the phone rings. The father picks up. It is the interviewer who clears his throat and optimistically says, "The job is yours." Elated, the father relays the news to his wife, asking if she would be able to head to the local supermarket tomorrow and buy some of the family's favourite foods so they can celebrate and enjoy a nice meal. For the past while, the family had just barely gotten through the week with enough. "And please," added the father, "make sure to also buy a seven-layer cake."

The following day was a busy one. Trips were made to various supermarkets as a sumptuous meal was prepared and thoroughly

enjoyed by the family. Now it was time for dessert: the seven-layer cake. "Everyone should know," exclaimed the father, "that the cake is for Shlomi." The children unsure what their father meant by this remark, he went on to relate the real story.

"Last night I received a phone call at 11pm. It was my job interviewer informing me that I had received the job. Why did he choose me out of all the other applicants? The interviewer proceeded to tell me the following:



After I finished a long day of interviewing applicant after applicant, I closed the office's doors and went to daven Maariv. As I neared the shul, I noticed that the parking lot as well as the entire side street was parked with cars bumper to bumper. There simply was no place available. It was only after much circling around and around that I found one. I was by then exhausted and without any energy.

As I opened the shul's doors, I was greeting by a packed room. Scanning the area, there was literally no seat available. With no other option, I leaned against the back wall. But just then a little boy came up to me. "Here," he said, "you look like you could use a break. You must be tired; take my seat." I was pleasingly taken aback. Here was a little boy who acted with such consideration and kindness. I then asked for his name, which he told me.

Thinking that this boy must be the rabbi's son as I had just donated a fair sum of money to the shul, I took a seat. I began to think to myself, "This boy's last name sounds very familiar…" And then it hit me. This boy must be the son of one of my interviewees. Touched by

the boy's thoughtfulness, I went to my office after davening. Looking though the list of everyone I had interviewed that day, I discovered that the boy who had offered me his seat was the son of one of the applicants.

"And so," concluded the father, "the interviewer called me right then and told me I have the job. He said, 'If your son acts that way, it must be because he got it from you. And if you act like that, I want you to work for me.'"

Sometimes we think that a small little act only goes so far. But in truth, it goes farther than we ever could have imagined. Putting a smile on another's face, acting with thoughtfulness, and yes, offering them our seat even when we are already comfortable goes a long way. When we do so, we not only infuse our own lives with happiness, but the lives of so many others as well. And you never know, maybe that little gesture will land you a wonderful job.



Royalty

Yaakov's blessing to Asher was, מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֶנָה לַחְמּוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי־מֶלֶךְ -"***Of Asher, his bread is fat and he will provide royal delicacies.***"

Our sages say that the girls of that tribe were exceedingly beautiful and married kings and Kohanim Gedolim (High Priests, a sort of royalty of their own.) But how did he merit this? How did his children become worthy of royalty?

The Alshich says we can read the verse in a unique way. To Asher, bread is "hearty" - and he is satisfied with simplicity. But when he gives to others? Maadanei Melech - only royal delicacies will suffice!

הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם– כתב סופר 49:2.



Yaakov told his children to gather together – meaning that they should be at peace with each other. While the brothers were from different mothers, they were all from the same father. None of them should feel arrogant that they are greater than the others. The Brochos which Yaakov was to give his sons needed to have a vessel with which to retain them. That vessel was that there needed to be peace amongst them.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים - זרע קודש 49:1



Yaakov Avinu wanted to reveal to his children when Moshiach would come and redeem Klal Yisroel. Yaakov was able to do this for he had Ruach Hakodesh.

As Yaakov was looking into the future, he saw all of the terrible pain and suffering that his children would have to endure. This made Yaakov Avinu sad, and therefore the Shechina left him for the Shechina does not reside with one who is sad. Once the Shechina left, Yaakov was no longer able to see what the future held.

Handsome

Reb Yochanan was from the most beautiful people in the world. There were times when he would purposely want people to look at his beauty, as a segulah to bear beautiful children like him (see Brachos 20.). The chachamim asked him, "Aren't you afraid of an ayin hara?" He replied, "I am from the descendants of Yosef, and an ayin hara doesn't affect me." How do we know that Yosef and his descendants aren't affected by an ayin hara? The gemara gives three answers:

1] It is written, "ben poras Yosef ben poras alay ayin — Yosef is a child with chein (charm). He has chein in the eyes of those who see him" (Vayechi, 49:22). The Gemara says, don't read it, "alay ayin – on the eye" read it, "olei ayin – the eye goes up" (referring to the ayin hara that leaves).



2] "vayidgu lerov - [Yosef's children] will multiply like fish…" (Vayichi, 48:16). Fish are covered by the water and one can't see them, so too, one cannot affect with sight, the children of Yosef.

3] Yosef guarded his eyes and didn't want to look at Photiphar's wife, therefore, he was rewarded that an ayin hara can't harm him. As the Gemara says, "an ayin ra can't affect the eye that didn't want to have pleasure from what wasn't his."

Similarly, the Or Hachayim (49:22) writes: "The midrash Tanchumah tells us that Photiphar's wife gathered all the wives of the great officers of Egypt and she stood them in a circle, so they could all look at Yosef, but Yosef didn't look back at them. Since he didn't look at them, an ayin hara cannot harm him." According to the third

explanation, when one isn't jealous, and doesn't want to look at what isn't his, he is then protected from an ayin hara.

This lesson is also learned from the story of Bilaam. Rashi (Bamidbar 24:2) tells us that Bilaam wanted to give an ayin hara to the Jewish people, but he was unable to, because "mah tovu ohelecha Yaakov — how beautiful are your tents, Yaakov." He saw how the doors of the Jewish people weren't opened one towards the other, because they were careful to keep their eyes to themselves, and therefore an evil eye can't harm them. Reb Yochanan said that he is protected from an ayin hara because he was from Yosef's children (descendants).





When we follow Yosef's ways, not to desire the lot of others, we are also Yosef's children (because we will be his students and a student is like a child) and we will likewise be protected from an ayin hara.

The Zera Kodesh (from **Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz zy"a**, on parashas Vayeitzei) writes, "In my youth I heard a segulah: When one doesn't want to give an ayin hara to a child, he should look upwards.

I think that it is possible that a wise tzaddik gave this segulah. Because when one sees beauty, wealth, children, power, or any other quality, and is astounded by it – even in a positive way, because of his love to his fellow man – this causes bad, because he is separating the item from its source." With these words, the Zera

Kodesh explains one aspect of ayin hara, and why it has a negative effect. Everything comes from Hashem. When one sees beauty, wealth, children, etc. and he thinks that it is natural, and he forgets that it comes from Hashem, then in his mind he is separating the blessing from its source (from Hashem) and this can cause damage, chas veshalom.

The Zera Kodesh concludes, "Instead, one should raise his eyes heavenward and connect the matter to its source." One should look up to the heaven and remember that everything comes from Hashem. "This is a good eye."

Living Jewish

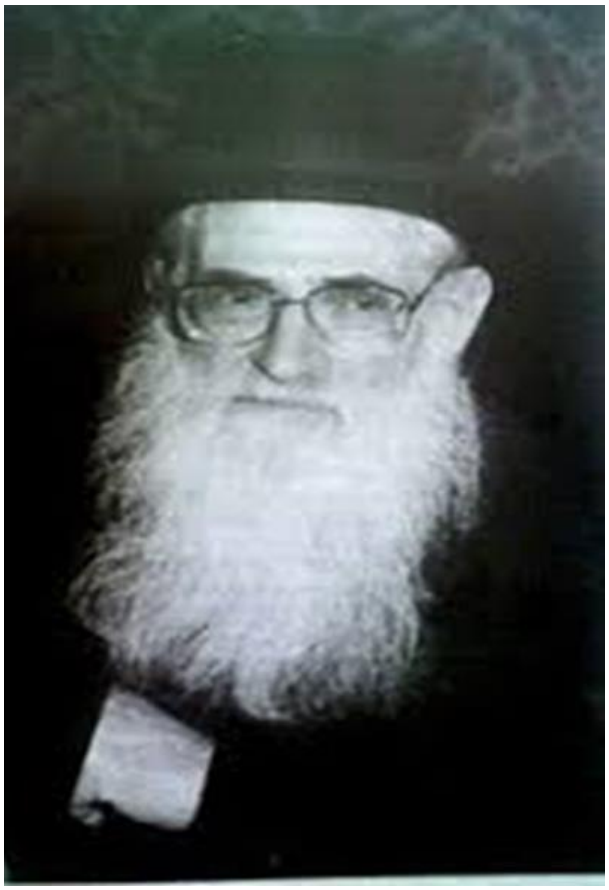


וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת וַיִּקְרָא | לִבְנוֹ לְיוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׂים־נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת אַל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרָיִם׃ ***The days of Israel's death drew near, and he called his son Joseph and said...deal with me kindly and truly*** *(47:29)*

The mitzva of accompanying the dead is called an "act of true kindness" ("chesed shel emet"), as its motivation can never be the expectation of reward. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for "truth," **אֱמֶת** is an acronym for **אָרון** (casket), **מִטה** (bier), and **תַחריכין** (shrouds). (*Baal HaTurim*)

Y I Matter

ויאמר השבעה לי וישבע לו וישתחו ישראל על-ראש המטה ***"Then Yisrael prostrated himself towards the head of the bed."*** (47:31) **Rashi z"l** writes: "*He turned towards the Divine Presence. Our Sages infer from this that the Shechinah is above the head of an ill person.*" Why is the Shechinah found above the head of an ill person?



R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; died 1986) explains: The term "Shechinah" refers to Hashem's "presence" in our lower world, which is dependent on whether we make room for Him to be revealed here. Specifically, the degree to which the Shechinah rests upon a person is dependent on the degree to which he humbles himself, as we read (Yeshayah 57:15), "For so says the exalted and uplifted One, Who abides forever and Whose Name is holy, 'I abide in exaltedness and holiness--but I am with the contrite and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite'." Since a person who is ill is more likely to feel humble and subdued than is a healthy person, the Shechinah is more likely to be found at a sickbed than elsewhere.

מי שאינו רואה את המקום (ה') בכל מקום אינו רואה אותו בשום מקום

"One who does not see Hashem everywhere, does not see him anywhere." ~ רבי מנחם מנדל מקוצק -The Kotzker Rebbe.

הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם - מהר"ם שיק –49:2.



One way to ensure that one always follows in the ways of Hashem is if one keeps his heart and mind focused on his "family" - his forefathers.

How embarrassed would his forefathers be if he were to turn away from Hashem. **ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם** - "Yaakov Avinu told his children that they should always remember their ancestors, in this way one will always follow in the ways of Hashem.



כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד Brochos 60b. ***"Everything that Hakodosh Boruch Hu does, He does it for good."***

Perhaps now we can understand what happened when Yaakov Avinu wanted to reveal the **קץ** to his children. Immediately after these Pesukim the Torah goes on to tell us of the Brochos that Yaakov gave to each of his children. Yaakov Avinu revealed to his children what they would need to know in order to survive the long and bitter exiles they would go through. Each Brocha that Yaakov gave was appropriate for that child, and not another. Yaakov told his children that they must not quarrel, for whatever happens to each individual is best for him, and one should not be jealous of another.

The Golus as well is for our benefit. It is to purify and cleanse us so that we should be worthy of the **קץ**. Our Emunah must be unwavering

through all the pain and suffering for Hakodosh Boruch Hu is our Father, and all is for our good. The Shechina departed from Yaakov momentarily for Yaakov was saddened by what he saw would occur but returned for the great message that Yaakov knew and lived by was that all Hakodosh Boruch Hu does is for good. May we do a proper Teshuva and be Zoche to see the final Geulah **במהרה בימינו אמן**!

Who Are We Anyway?



Yaakov looked at his grandchildren and exclaimed: Mee Eileh? Who are these boys? Yaakov wasn't blind. Yitzchak was. Yitzchak couldn't tell Yaakov from Esav, he was blind. But now, Yosef brings his two sons Efraim and Menashe to his ailing father Yaakov. Yaakov looked at his grandchildren and exclaimed: Mee Eileh? Who are these boys? I don't recognize them! For the last seventeen years of Yaakov's life, Efraim and Menashe spent a lot of time with their grandfather. They studied with him every day and were privy to the secrets of tradition that Yaakov carried. Why didn't Yaakov recognize them?

The Medrash explains that Efraim and Menasheh worked in the Egyptian palace. They were members of Yosef's cabinet. They were seriously involved in political and economic issues, helping to run a world super-power. When in Egypt, they dressed like Egyptians. They couldn't dress like their cousins in Goshen, the Monsey or Lakewood of Egypt; they worked in the White House. But every day after work, out of respect for their grandfather, they would change out of their Egyptian garb and put on their Jewish clothing.

One day, they received an emergency call. Yaakov's health had begun to fail. He was in fast decline. He called for Yosef and his sons to come immediately so he can see them and bless them before he passed away. There was no time to change clothing, no time for that extra kovod - time was too short. So in their work clothes they went to visit their grandfather Yaakov. Yaakov didn't recognize them. He may have known who they were, but he didn't understand what they were about. Are these the same two boys that come here every day to study Torah? Have I been deceived? Which one of these outfits is the costume? Which one is the real them? Are they Egyptian or are they Jewish? Mee Eileh?

Quite a few years ago, I attended the funeral of **Rav Mordechei Gifter** of blessed memory, the Telzer Rosh Yeshiva. I listened carefully to the stories of his life. One story stood out and made a very deep impression on my soul.



Rav Gifter started his career as a Rav in Waterbury, CT. He was out of town, separated from the great scholars of Lithuania he had loved. He was isolated from his friends with whom he studied and grown. He was surrounded with people that never saw the world that he related to and didn't understand it. There was no one around to discuss a Tosfos or difficult Ketzos. Whenever a meshulach, a shochet or a visiting Rav would pass through his town, Rav Gifter would grab him and talk with him through the night. Rav

Gifter had an interesting practice. He would ask his guests to look around his house.

He would ask them to walk through the living areas, the bedrooms, and look through the kitchen cupboards to check for nuances of change. Rav Gifter realized that he wasn't in Telz, he wasn't even on the East Side of New York - he was in Waterbury. He was afraid that without even realizing it he might be declining spiritually. He knew that he was too close to the situation to realize it. He gave his guests the job of inspecting his life. He was guarding his most sacred possession his Yiddishkeit.

Yosef saw his father's confusion. Yaakov wanted to know if his grandchildren changed. Who are they? Who did they become while in the palace of the Pharaoh?

Yosef answered with a bold sense of confidence, Banai heim! These are my sons that Hashem has graced me with! They are the same Efraim and Menashe that you are used to seeing, the difference is only external. Life in the world in which we live can get very complicated.

We have to balance so many demands. We have to portray ourselves in different ways at different times. Sometimes when we look in the mirror we even confuse ourselves! Ask Yaakov's question: Who are you? Make sure the answer is always resoundingly clear - Bonim Anachnu.

He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven.

There's nothing I value more than the closeness of friends and family, and a smile as I pass someone on the street.

Just Two Words - By Rabbi David Ashear

A man named Steve was serving a jail sentence for illegal, insider trading. He sat in his prison cell sulking, remembering the great life that he once had- a loving wife, beautiful children, and a high-powered job on Wall Street. Since he became too greedy, however, he got into trouble. Now, time was passing him by, and he had nothing to look forward to.

One day, he was told that he had a visitor. He was soon introduced to Rabbi Richard Bieler, the prison chaplain who had moved up from New York City to take the position. Steve was far removed from his Jewish roots at the time but was open to talking to a Rabbi. They spoke for a little while. The Rabbi said that he would be back another day to talk more.

During the next few visits that they had, the Rabbi gave Steve words of hope and Emunah. Eventually, they started learning Torah together. Then came the day when the Rabbi told Steve that he was leaving and moving back to New York City. Steve thanked the Rabbi for all that he had done for him, and they wished each other well.

A number of years later, Rabbi Bieler was walking down a Manhattan Street, when he came upon a man who looked very familiar. He then realized that it was Steve! They shook hands warmly. The Rabbi asked what had happened since the last time that they had seen each other. Steve replied that the Torah sessions that they had gave him a thirst for more. When the new Rabbi came in, they continued learning on a regular basis. His connection to Torah became the anchor that had been so missing in his life.

When he finally got out of jail a few years later, rather than being diminished by his prison experience, he had a new positive direction in his life. He told the Rabbi how his relationship with his family became strengthened, how he had gotten a new job and how much he is enjoying the religion.

The Rabbi was so happy, and he mentioned that he was actually leaving on a trip to Israel the next morning. He told Steve that there is a custom that people put notes in the Kotel, making requests from Hashem, or giving certain messages. He asked Steve if he wanted to write something to put in.

"Definitely," Steve said. So, the Rabbi took out a pen and paper, handed it to Steve. "Write whatever you want to say, he said."

Steve took no longer than a few seconds to write. He then handed the note back to the Rabbi. Surprised by how quick he was, the Rabbi asked, "What did you write so fast?"

Steve responded, "I wrote something that I think that Hashem does not hear often enough. You can look at it if you want."



The Rabbi opened the note, and saw two words, "Thank You." What a beautiful message. Here the Rabbi was telling this man, "You can ask Hashem for whatever you want." His first thought was just to say "Thank You. Thank you for giving me a second chance. Thank you for bringing me closer to your Torah."

The words "Thank You, Hashem" are very easy to say, and they are so beloved to Him. The Reshit Chochma quotes from the holy Zohar that when a Jew praises and thanks Hashem, it causes him to cling to Hashem.

The Pasuk says in Tehilim: **טוב להודות להשם** - "It is great to thank Hashem." We have so much to be thankful for. The more a person realizes that he does not deserve anything, the easier it becomes to say thank you.

Somebody once recommended that each time that we say the Amidah, we should think of one new blessing to thank Hashem for when we recite Modim- the Beracha of gratitude. It does not even have to be something new. Whatever it is, just get accustomed to saying the words "Thank You, Hashem." That itself accomplishes so much. This is the essence of a Jew. This will build our connection with Hashem.

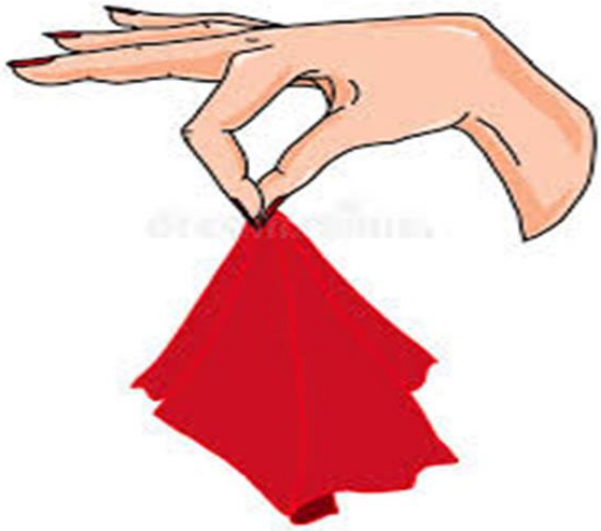
The Rambam and the 'Blind' Man



The Rambam was an accomplished physician, personally attending the sultan of Egypt and his family. He was not the only doctor in the palace, but the Rambam was the sultan's favourite, and this provoked much jealousy. His rivals lost no opportunity to devise schemes and plots to discredit the Rambam in the eyes of his royal employer, but the sultan was not fooled by the wicked plots.

With each failed scheme, the Rambam rose even higher in the sultan's estimation. The Rambam's detractors never rested in their machinations. Finally, the sultan exploded in anger. "You charlatans never give up! How many times will you come to me with your foolish stories and ridiculous claims against ben Maimon? This time I challenge you to prove that you are superior to the Jewish doctor!" The physicians left elated, confident that they would surely find a way to finally ruin the hated Jew.

The following day, they appeared at the appointed hour at the royal palace, an unknown man in tow. "This man, Your Excellency, has been blind from birth, and we, Sire, will cure him before your eyes! Ben Maimon surely cannot perform this feat, but we can do it!" The



sultan smirked at these words. "Liars! It is patently impossible to cure someone who has been blind from birth!" At that, one of the physicians stepped forward and, with a flourish, applied a layer of salve to the man's eyes.

Everyone stood staring at the man, waiting to see some sign of a cure. Could it really happen that a blind man would see? The silence was broken by the man's joyous cries, "I can see! I can see!" But before a word was spoken, the Rambam flashed a scarf before the man's eyes. "What colour is this handkerchief?" he asked. The man responded in a victorious tone, "It is red!" "Aha!" said the Rambam with a smile. "The fraud is obvious! A blind man cannot possible identify colours that he has never before seen!" The sultan rose from his seat and exultantly clasped the Rambam's hand, exclaiming, "How could I have believed them for a moment!" The group of deceitful physicians quickly left the room, praying the sultan would not punish them in his anger.

Rabbi J. Gewirtz Migdal Ohr - Now You Know

In this week's Parsha, Yaakov blessed Yosef's sons, Efrayim and Menashe. It established the way we bless our children, and for boys we say, "HaShem should make you like Efrayim and Menashe."

Menashe was the elder son, but he was not upset that his younger brother was placed ahead of him. On the contrary, he respected and admired his younger brother who spent time learning Torah with Yaakov while he, Menashe, was involved in his work at the palace. Though he could not spend his days in Torah study, he appreciated

its value. Supporting Torah is so important because it shows one's appreciation for it.



When we finish a Sefer of Chumash as we do this week, we recite, "Chazak, chazak, v'nischazek," "Be strong, be strong, we will become stronger." It's something that we do as a group, united, working together. WE become stronger when we encourage each other. On his deathbed, Yaakov underscored this. The Torah tells us, "Each according to his blessing did he bless them." When they are united, they all get the benefits of the strengths of the individual. Chazak, chazak, let us unite and become strengthened!

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



The Igra DeKalah asks:

1) Why didn't Yaakov Avinu give both brachos [Hamalach Hago'el… yesimcha Elokim…] together? Why are these brachos interrupted with the issue whether Yaakov should place his right hand on Efraim or Menasheh?

2) Why should parents bless their children to be specifically like Efraim and Menasheh? All the shevatim were outstanding tzaddikim, and before them came the

Avos. What is special about Efraim and Menasheh, that parents should want their children to be just like them?

The Igra deKalah answers that Yaakov Avinu honoured the younger son, Efraim, over the older son, Menasheh. Yaakov noticed that this didn't cause Efraim to become haughty, and it didn't move Menasheh to be jealous. They weren't affected by ***kinah*** and by ***kavod***, the two traits which vex the entire world. Reaching this level is the highest peak of the Torah. It means that they have clarity that everything is from Hashem, and there isn't any reason to be jealous of others. When Yaakov Avinu saw this, he said: *"May all parents bless their children to be like Efraim and Menasheh, without pride, without jealousy, and with perfect emunah."*

Rebbe Moshe of Lelov zy"a



13th of Teves, is the yahrtzeit of Rebbe Moshe of Lelov zy"a. Towards the end of his life, Rebbe Moshe traveled to Eretz Yisrael with mesirus nefesh because he understood that if he would daven by the Kosel HaMaravi, he could bring Moshiach.

Rebbe Moshe planned to travel with a group of ten people. He put away money for this cause, but somehow whenever he had enough money, he ended up giving it to some worthy tzedakah, and then he would start saving up money for the trip again. Once, a childless woman came to Rebbe Moshe and asked for a brachah for children. Rebbe Moshe told her that if she gives him a certain amount of money (the amount he needed for his trip) she would have a child. She was ready to give the money, but Rebbe Moshe Lelover told her that she must first

ask permission from her husband. It was a large amount of money, and she couldn't give it without her husband's consent.

Her husband was a chassid of "The Gitte Yid" of Neistadt, and he asked his Rebbe whether he should give the money. "The Gitte Yid" replied, "You should give the money. However, for your wife to bear a child will require a great miracle, and this often results that the child doesn't live long. Therefore, don't give the money until Rebbe Moshe Lelover gives you his guarantee that the child will live long."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover agreed to the condition. He said, "The years of your child's life will be as many as the days I live in Eretz Yisrael." Rebbe Moshe Lelover lived seventy-four days in Eretz Yisrael, and the child lived for seventy-four years.



On his voyage to Eretz Yisrael, he endured several hardships. One was that the ship had a hole in it, and water began to seep in! Rebbe Moshe placed a cloth over the hole, and this (miraculously) stopped the influx of water. (This cloth still exists, and it is used as a deck tichel [veil] for the kallahs of his descendants.)

He said great things about his yahrtzeit. He said that the day of his demise is mesugal for rain, and therefore, it is unnecessary to proclaim a fast day for rains before his yahrtzeit passes.

Reb Shmuel Salant, the Rav of Yerushalayim zt"l kept to this counsel, and he wouldn't decree a fast day for rains, until the thirteenth of Teves passed. He also said that those who will dedicate a meal on his yahrtzeit in his honour (it may be just cake and bronfen, liquor) will have a salvation for whatever he needs.



Rav Avigdor Miller's Perspectives

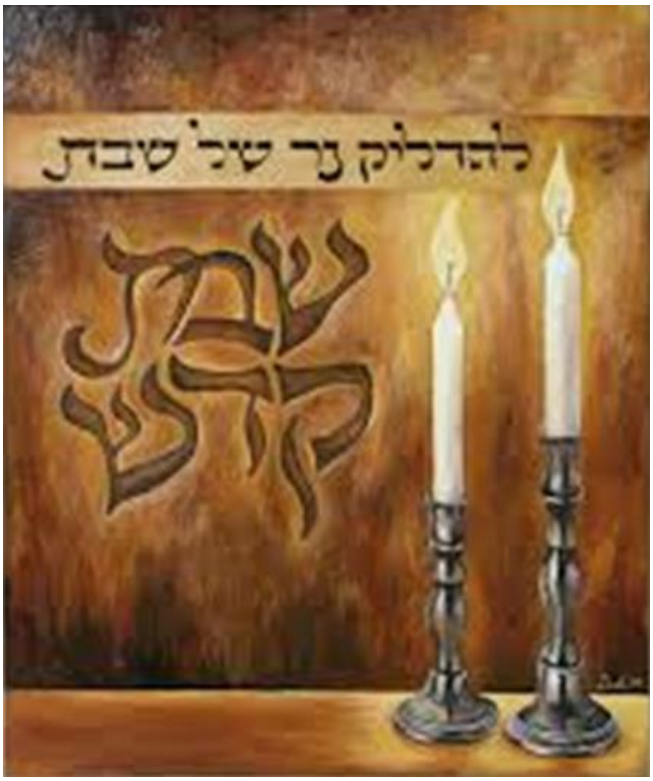
With the start of the rainy season, Rav Miller once noted that usually a child hears his parents being upset and grouchy if it's a rainy day; this attitude seeps into the psyche of the child and he continues the pattern with his children. But without a steady rainy season, many bad things would befall us, such as no clean drinking water, cleansing of the air and earth, food growth. Additionally, since it usually rains for a large portion of our lives, that means we're in a foul mood for a nice chunk of our time on earth, for something we request three times a day in Shemone Esrei~ V'sein Tal U'Motor Livrocha!!

Furthermore, Rav Miller once remarked that if a person goes through life without major hurdles that require him to seek and beg for Hashem's assistance and comfort - even though he is a Shomer Torah U'Mitzvos, nevertheless when he passes away and comes to shomayim, he will have squandered a large part of his mission, since he never needed to recognize that Hashem was indispensable and didn't call out to Him for help. It's all a matter of perspective. In these trying times, we need to call out to Him even if our lives are on a relatively even plateau.

Being that this week is the Rambam's yahrzeit – let us incorporate the Ani Ma'amins in our daily routine after davening and ingrain it into our souls. May Hashem have nachas from us, hear our prayers and 'show us' the goodness that he bestows upon Klal Yisrael, Amen.

Shabbos Treasures

In the mid-nineties, a Jewish advertising executive in New York had the idea to list the weekly Shabbos candle lighting times in the New



York Times newspaper each week. He knew it would cost a lot to pay for the space on the front page, but he thought, "Imagine the Jewish awareness and pride that might result from such a prominent mention of the Jewish Shabbos candle lighting times each week." He started speaking to people, and soon he found someone that was willing to sponsor the cost— almost two thousand dollars a week, and for the next five years, each Friday, Jews around the world would know when candle lighting time was for that Shabbos.

Eventually, the philanthropist had to cut back on a number of his projects, and in June 1999, the little Shabbos notice stopped appearing in the Times on Fridays.

On January 1, 2000, the New York Times decided to run a Millennium edition. It was a special issue that featured three front pages. One had the news from January 1, 1900. The second was the actual news of the day, January 1, 2000, and the third front page projected future events of January 1, 2100. This fictional page included all types of fascinating articles about what might be going on in the world at that time. In addition, there was one more item: on the bottom of the page was the Shabbos candle lighting time in New York for January 1, 2100. Nobody had paid for it, it was just put in by the Times. The production manager of the New York Times— an

Irish Catholic— was asked about it. His answer was remarkable. He said, "We don't know what will happen in the year 2100 as it is impossible to predict the future. However, of one thing you can be certain— that in the year 2100, Jewish women will be lighting the Shabbos candles!"

Rav Yaakov ben Rav Ze'ev (Wolf) Krantz - The Maggid of Dubno 17th of Teves



The Dubno Maggid teaches us that whenever something breaks or gets ruined, even if we do our utmost to fix it, it is sometimes nearly impossible to ever get it to return to its initial state. So, for example, in the case of a white cloth stained red ink. The ink stain runs deep and has dyed the threads so that even after washing it away a stain remains. The only way to whiten the cloth back to its original pure and pristine state requires not just a simple wash with some water; rather much water, detergent and scrubbing is needed to get the stain out and leave the cloth as white as it was.

Similarly, when Yosef comforted his brothers after revealing his identity to them, they were shocked and disheartened, for by selling him they had committed a grievous sin. Yosef was unable to simply comfort them by saying that the good that came out of the episode was in equal measure to the evil act they had perpetrated. Instead, his words of comfort and solace needed to demonstrate that the good that came out of it superseded in measure and magnitude their evil. He therefore said to them, "You thought to do me evil" – your thoughts were focused on me alone, one single individual; however, "G-d thought to make it good to give life to a great number of

people." The measure of good was thus exponentially greater, since it was ultimately good for two entire nations of people to survive the famine. *(Mishlei Yaakov Vayechi)*

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rebbetzin Margulya was the mother of the Gaon, **Rav Meir Shapiro, zt"l**, the Rav of Lublin and the Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. She devoted her life to ensuring that her son would eventually grow into a Gadol B'Yisroel, and every day she reminded him that a day without learning Torah is a day wasted. When Rav Meir Shapiro began to learn Chumash, Rebbetzin Margulya prepared a beautiful Seudah for the local Rabbanim, as an indication of her great love for Torah.



Reb Meir Shapiro once told a childhood story about his mother. "When I was a boy, my family was forced to move several times from house to house, and from city to city. The constant moving did not bother my mother, but only one thing would disturb her— my Bitul Torah, when I was not able to learn Torah! On one occasion, as we were again preparing to move, my mother contacted the Rebbe of the town to which we were moving, and arranged that he would meet me by the gate of the city so that he could be able to learn with me immediately when we arrived at the town.

When we finally reached our destination, we searched and searched, but the Rebbe was not there. My mother sat down in despair next to the wagon and cried for a long time. I tried to calm her down by saying, 'Mommy, why are you crying? I'll learn tomorrow!' My mother answered me, 'Meir! You don't yet know how to appreciate the

meaning of one day of Torah learning, and what wasting a single day of Torah learning really means!"

whY I Matter

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר לְיוֹסֵף הִנֵּה אָבִיךָ חֹלֶה ***And someone said to Yosef, "Behold!" - your father is ill.*** *(48:1).* If someone had not informed Yosef that his father was ill, he would not have known. During the entire seventeen years that Yaakov Avinu resided in Egypt he was never alone with his long lost son, Yosef. They had been separated for twenty-two years, their hearts yearning for one another; yet, they were never alone together, never saw one another, until the end, when Yaakov lay on his deathbed.



Pesikta Rabbasi explains that Yosef was afraid to be alone with his father, lest he ask him the big question: "What happened?" Yosef was acutely aware of his father's supernatural powers. A single word with a negative connotation that left his mouth would have disastrous ramifications.

When Lavan was searching for his idols, and Yaakov claimed that they were not in his possession, Yaakov said, "Whoever has them will not live," and Rachel, Yosef's mother, had died. If Yosef were to relate the story of the sale which led to his captivity to his father, it might catalyse a negative reaction; an impugning word might cause his brothers to be cursed. The world was created for the Shevatim who would produce Klal Yisrael. Without them - there would be no world. Yosef was not prepared to assume such an onerous responsibility. So he stayed away, his heart yearning for his father.

Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon, 20th of Teves

Judging your fellow Jew



The Rambam used to be considered controversial; many people didn't agree with his way of relating halocha to the modern day, so much so that many great Rabbonim told their followers to burn any books by the Rambam.

Some towns decided to send a delegation of great Rabbonim to the Rambam to see if the information they had received was based on falsified rumours and loshon hora. The delegation arrived at the Rambam's house and the Rambam decided to play a ruse on these Rabbonim in order to see how smart they were.

In those days they did not have yayin mevushal; the Rambam called to his servant, Peter, to bring the wine from the cellar. The Rabbonim were wondering how the Rambam could tell his non-Jewish servant, Peter, to bring wine –surely such an action would render the wine yayin nesech! They therefore refused the wine.



The Rambam then took a calf and, instead of *schechting* it, struck it over the head with a hammer and had it cooked and served to the Rabbonim. Then he placed a cooked human hand on the table before them. At this point, the Rabbonim were convinced that the Rambam's behaviour was bizarre and outrageously flaunted halocha. They left, satisfied with their verdict.

The Rambam told his servant to catch up with them and bring them back. He told them that his servant was Jewish; in the Gemora there was a Rav named Petros-Peter – so they needn't be worried about the wine being handled by him. He then told them of the halocha that if you schecht a cow and inside is an unborn calf, you do not need to schecht it. Lastly, he informed them that the human hand was really a root vegetable that looked like a hand. Some poskim have thought it to be ginger, but no one really knows.

וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה Israel strengthened himself and sat up in bed (48:2)



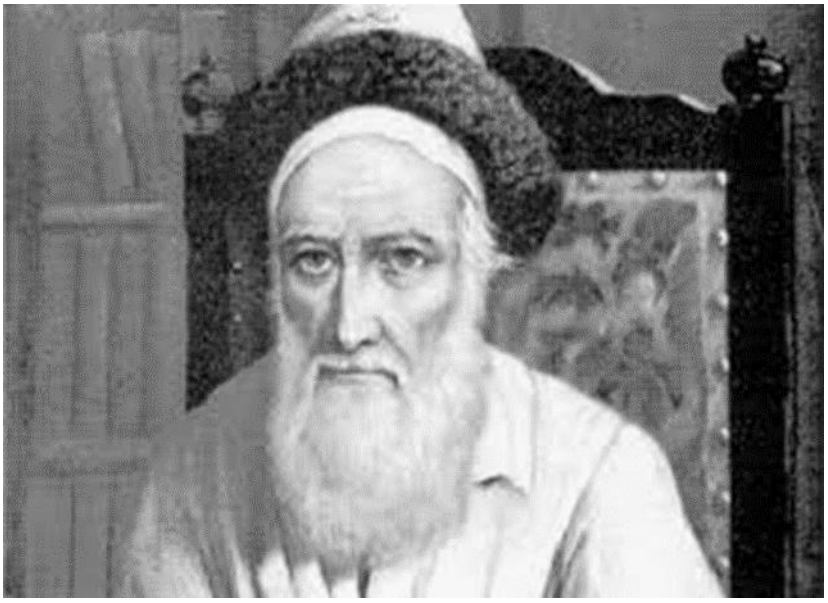
From where did Jacob derive this extra strength? The Talmud explains that when someone visits a sick person, 1/60th of the illness is taken away if the visitor is his "astrological twin." According to our Sages, Joseph resembled his father in many ways. Thus, when he visited him, a sixtieth of his father's illness was removed and he was able to sit up in bed. This is alluded to in the Hebrew word for "bed, " הַמִּטָּה the numerical value of which is 59.

In every situation, I ask what can be done. If something can be done, I do it. If not, I stop worrying about it. ~ Rabbi Simcha Wasserman.

Rebbetzin Menucha Rachel



Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, the daughter of the **Mitteler Rebbe** (the second Rebbe of Chabad), was born on Yud Tes Kislev in the year when the Alter Rebbe was freed from prison. She married Reb Yaakov Kuli Slonim and later moved to Chevron in Eretz Yisroel. She was a very saintly woman, to whom many mofsim (wonders) are attributed, and would often have people come to her home, seeking her blessing and advice. She is buried in Chevron.



While preparing to travel to Eretz Yisroel, Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel went to the **Tzemach Tzedek** (the third Rebbe of Chabad) and expressed her fear of travel, being that it was then winter, and she would perhaps fall sick from the rain. The Rebbe replied, "No worries! You will travel between the rain drops" For the rest of her life, not a drop of rain ever fell on her!

For those that dislike gematrias, the gematria of גמטריות is equal to ביטול תורה (668)

Pardes Yehuda – By Yehuda Z Klitnick

וַיַּשְׁבַּע יוֹסֵף אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹקִים אֶתְכֶם וְהַעֲלִתֶם אֶת־עַצְמֹתַי מִזֶּה Yosef adjured his brothers saying, *"Hashem will surely remember you and you should bring my bones up from here."* (50:25).



The Ba'al Haturim on our posuk asks, why did Yosef make his brothers swear to take his bones out of Egypt and bury him in Eretz Yisroel - and not his own children?

He answers: Yosef wanted his brothers to know that by doing so they would attain forgiveness for their sin against him. Since they sold him and removed him from Shechem, he made them promise that they will once again return him to Shechem. The act of returning him to Shechem would rectify their sin.

Another answer can be adduced: The Gemara (Sanhedrin 92b) says that during the three days of the Plague of Darkness, many of the children of Tribe Ephraim (Yosef's grandchildren) were killed while trying to escape from Egypt., Yosef felt that if he entrusted his bones to his offspring, he could not be sure they would reach burial in Eretz Yisroel. Yosef saw through Ruach Hakodesh that in this case he must accord preferential trust to his brothers over his children.

"The gates of prayer are never closed. " ~~ (Devarim) R.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

הִנֵּה בִנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה



Yaakov was told, "Hinei / Behold! Your son Yosef has come to you." So Yaakov exerted himself and sat up on the bed הַמִּטָּה. (48:2)

The Vilna Gaon z"l observes: Chazal say that (in certain cases) one who visits the sick causes 1/60 of the illness to depart. In the above verse, the gematria of the word הִנֵּה is 60, alluding to Yaakov's illness before Yosef visited him. The gematria of הַמִּטָּה is 59, alluding to the effect that Yosef's visit had on Yaakov's health (i.e., it removed 1/60). (Kol Eliyahu)

וַיַּגֶּד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בִנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה



Yaakov was told, "Behold - your son Yosef has come to you" (48:2) This verse implies that it was unusual for Yosef to visit Yaakov. Why was this the case? **R' Shlomo Kluger z"l** (19th century) explains that Yosef's stature as deputy king of Egypt might have required Yaakov to stand when Yosef entered the room. Yosef did not want Yaakov to stand for him, so he did not visit Yaakov. (Yaakov could, of course, visit Yosef.) Only now, when Yaakov lay on his deathbed, could Yosef be sure that Yaakov would not stand for him, and therefore he visited Yaakov. (Imrei Shefer)

ארור אפם כי עז ועברתם כי קשתה - מדרש הבאור 49:7.



Yaakov cursed the anger of Shimon and Levi, and not Shimon and Levi themselves, for it was their anger which was the cause for their actions.

חזקוני - This is not a curse that Yaakov was giving Shimon and Levi, rather it was a Brocha. He was blessing them that their anger should not win over them, so that they not become people who are **רגזנים** -bad-tempered.

חתם סופר says: "Yaakov Avinu was saying that he would spread out the anger that they had amongst all of the Shevatim. Anger and rage are not necessarily a bad thing, and at times it is needed. Shimon and Levi exhibited excessive rage, and that was not good. Yaakov wanted this Midah to be spread out amongst all the Shevatim, so that there would be a good amount of anger amongst Klal Yisroel.

Perhaps now we can understand what Brocha Yaakov Avinu gave to these two holy brothers, Shimon and Levi. They may have gone a bit too far in their actions in Shechem, though they were preserving the honour of their sister. Yaakov cursed their anger, for they were not in complete control of their anger. Yaakov gave them a Brocha that they should be in total control of it. One must never become angry for his own honour, yet there are times that anger is an important part in one's Avodas Hashem. One must be angry with himself and strive to greater heights in Avodas Hashem, and one is obligated to become angry and stand up for the honour of Hashem at all times.

Anger is a very volatile Midah, and can have devastating effects, yet is something which can and must be utilized at times. May we be Zoche to be in full control of the Midah of anger and use it as a tool to further our Avodas Hashem, and to defend the honour of Hashem.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

וימת יוסף בן מאה ועשר שנים נ:כו *Yosef died at the age of one hundred and ten years (50:26)*



The Torah has already stated (posuk 22): "And Yosef lived one hundred and ten years". Why does it repeat the years of Yosef's life?

Rebbe Chaim Kaniyevsky in his sefer 'Ta'ama D'Kra' explains that the number of years in Yosef's life are a hint that Yosef lived one hundred and ten years to the day, as we find in the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 11a): HaKadosh Baruch Hu completes the years of the righteous from day to day. Yosef HaTzaddik was born on 21 Tishrei, as explained in the Midrash Tadshei. 21 Tishrei corresponds to Hoshanah Rabbah, and from here we learn that Yosef died on Hoshanah Rabbah. This hints to the years of Yosef's life – **מאה ועשר** –the last letters are the first letters of **הושענא רבה** .Umatuk HaOhr)

Parsha Points to Ponder - Rabbi Oizer Alport



The Torah states (47:29)**יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי לָמוּת** *that the days of Yaakov's dying drew near*, in contrast to Yitzchok who referred to (27:2) **יוֹם מוֹתִי** *the day of his death*. Why does the Torah discuss the days of Yaakov's death when there was only one day on which he actually died? (Tosefes Beracha)

The Tosefes Beracha suggests that this peculiar wording hints to the statement of the Gemora in Bava

Metzia (87a) that up until Yaakov, people died suddenly without any illness or other prior warning. Yaakov prayed to get sick before his death so that he would have time to prepare for it and repent. Regarding Yitzchok, the Torah discusses only the day of his death, as the days prior gave no indication of what lay ahead. Since Yaakov became sick some time before passing away to hint to him that his time was coming and he should put his spiritual affairs in order, the Torah refers to the "days" of his dying.

חזק חזק ונתחזק



When a major project is to be undertaken, it is at the outset that one must gather his resources and strengthen himself in order to hopefully complete the entire job at hand. What is the need for the strong words of encouragement which we shout out now that we have completed the Sefer of Bereshis?

Sefer Imrei Yisrael notes that usually, when a person has exerted himself and successfully finished something, he feels a certain sense of accomplishment. It is only natural for the person to then relax and enjoy a well-deserved rest. In the study of Torah, however, we must always be on guard and be prepared to work even harder to achieve higher levels of understanding. We cannot tolerate any element of laziness at any point. It is for this reason that we strengthen one another particularly at this point that we should merit to continue our studies into Shemos and beyond without any hesitation or weakness. Chazak Chazak V'nischazeik!

Chazzak Weekly

Rabbi Moshe Aharon Stern zt'l once accompanied **Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Aurebach zt'l** to his home after davening shacharis. It was a particularly blustery day in Jerusalem and as they walked, Rabbi Aurebach's beard and payos blew freely in the wind. As they stood on the steps about to enter Rabbi Aurebach's home, the Rav stopped and straightened his beard and payos. He turned to Rabbi Stern and explained that a woman does not deserve to see her husband unkempt and disheveled. When a man enters his house, he should look neat and put together and he should have a pleasant countenance. When recounting that incident Rabbi Stern would admiringly comment that even though Rabbi Aurebach had been married over fifty years, he was so meticulous and careful to greet his Rebbitzin with a happy demeanour, looking neat and respectable."



Prior to his death, Yaakov Avinu summoned each of his holy sons to individually bless them. In his blessing to Yehuda, Yaakov said, **חכלילי עינים מיין ולבן שיניים מחלב**- *"His eyes are red from wine and his teeth are whiter than milk."* The Gemara notes that when a person displays the white of his teeth to his friend by smiling warmly, it is more beneficial than giving him a cup of milk to drink. **Avos D'Rabbi Nosson** adds, *"Even if a person is unable to give his friend anything, if he greets him pleasantly it is as if he has given him all the gifts in the world."*

Rabbi Avrohom Pam zt'l emphasized the importance of smiling and maintaining a genial disposition toward others. The ability to perform acts of chessed is not limited to those with time and money. A person can do chessed with a smile or a friendly word. With minimal time or effort, one can brighten a person's day. The opposite

is also true. Walking around with an unhappy expression on one's face can cause other people pain .

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter zt'l would say that one's face has the status of a reshus harabim- public domain. If one walks around with a dour look on his face, his face is a bor b'reshus harabim- a pit in a public area, and he is responsible for any damage caused to someone who falls or hurts himself on account of his 'pit'.

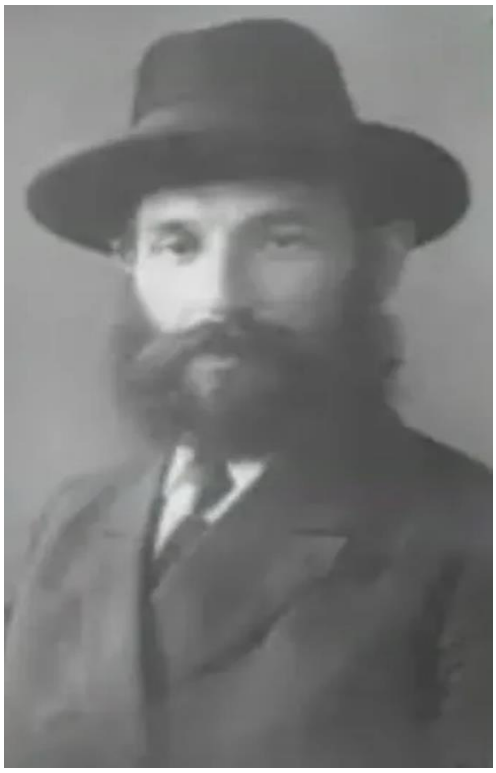


Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe zt"l writes that even a tiny infant recognizes and reacts to different facial expressions. If his mother smiles at him his face lights up and he returns the smile. But if she stares at him angrily, he immediately begins to cry. Milk helps a child grow physically, but the constant smiles and love a child sees helps him grow emotionally and spiritually. Just like a plant can't grow with water alone, but requires the sun's rays for nutrients, so does a child need constant smiles to nurture his spirit and infuse him with vitality.

The same applies as we mature and throughout life. We enjoy and seek to be around people who are positive and pleasant, and we draw strength and encouragement from being in the vicinity of positive and pleasant people.

The Mishna states,"V'hevei mikabeil es kol ho'odom b'seiver panim yafos -Greet every person with a pleasant countenance." **Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt'l** explained that the Mishna's vernacular represents a three-step process in greeting people properly: The word **סבר** is an expression of 'sevara', which in Talmudic vernacular refers to a thought process. When one focuses his gaze on another person it should be noticeable that he is thinking about him and acknowledging him. The word **פנים** means face. One should turn to

the person and make eye contact with him as he greets him. **יפות** means beautiful. It is not enough merely to show one's face when he greets another, he should have a radiant and pleasant smile upon is face. When a person greets another in this manner it is tremendously powerful and encouraging.



Rabbi Yechiel Michel Gordon zt'l, the Lomza Rosh Yeshiva, was on a fundraising trip in the United States when World War II broke out. His wife and children had remained behind in Lomza and he anxiously awaited news about their precarious predicament in Nazi-occupied Poland. A Jew from Lomza who had miraculously escaped the Nazi inferno came to see Rabbi Gordon. He related that he had witnessed the massacre of most of Rabbi Gordon's family. One can hardly imagine the anguish and pain that Rabbi Gordon felt upon hearing that his worst fears confirmed. A few moments after hearing the news, a guest, who was unaware of what had just occurred prior to his arrival, came to see Rabbi Gordon. When Rabbi Gordon noticed his guest his countenance immediately changed and he greeted his visitor with a hearty welcome and a warm smile. The conversation lasted a few minutes and then the guest departed.

The man who had related the tragic news to Rabbi Gordon could not believe that Rabbi Gordon was able to completely mask his personal pain and greet someone with a warm smile and then carry on a conversation. Rabbi Gordon explained by quoting the aforementioned teaching of Rabbi Yisroel Salanter. "If a person's face is part of the public domain, one has no right to open a pit!"

Rabbi Pam concluded that although we may not be on the level of Rabbi Gordon, we must strive to be positive people. When a husband

comes home from a very difficult day at the office, it is not easy for him to put a big smile on his face as he enters his home. A human being is not a machine where, with the press of a button, the whole picture can change. Nevertheless, many things can be accomplished through repetitive actions. With practice, one can get used to having a cheerful smile on his face and thereby greet every person in a pleasant manner. If one realizes that replacing a 'sour' face with a smile is an act of chessed, it becomes easier to do.

"A smile costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive, without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment, but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. None is so rich or mighty that he can get along without it, and none is so poor but that he can be made rich by it. A smile creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in business, and is the countersign of friendship. It brings rest to the weary, cheer to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and is nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen, for it is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away. Some people are too tired to give you a smile. Give them one of yours, as none needs a smile so much as he who has no more to give."

"His teeth are whiter than milk" "Sever panim yafos"



Reb Moshe of Lelov *zt'l* (*niftar* 13th of Teves, 5611)

Rebbe Moshe Lelover said that whoever does something in honour of his *yahrtzeit* (primarily, to give food to Yidden, such as cake and *lechayim* in beis medresh) will have a salvation with whatever he needs.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

בחרבי ובקשתי מח:כב *With my sword and with my bow (48:22)*



With my sword and with my bow – this means my wisdom and my prayer. (Rashi) **Ha'gaon Ha'kadosh Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, zt"l**, wrote: The reason Tefilah- prayer, is compared to a bow is because, just as a bow, the more a person draws back the string, the further the arrow will fly, the same applies to Tefilah. The more a person concentrates and Davens from his heart, the further the Tefilah will travel to pierce the Heavens.

Parshah Thoughts By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



After Yaakov passed away, Yosef's brothers were scared that he would retaliate for their involvement in his sale. Yosef poignantly told them, "You tried to do evil [to me] and Hashem utilized it for good" (50:20). Even though he had experienced such a tumultuous life, Yosef was still capable of expressing that all that transpired in his life was for the good. We should also be inspired to see the silver lining of our hardships, which don't compare to the hardships of Yosef's life.

Parsha Encounters - Fish Is Good For You!

הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל־רָע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ׃ *May the angel who delivered me from all evil bless the lads… and may they multiply like fish in the midst of the earth.* *(Bereishis, 48:16)*

Towards the end of his life, Yaakov blessed Yosef's sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Commentaries discuss the fact that he does not simply say that they should multiply, but uses the metaphor of fish. In what way did he want his descendants to be like fish?

Rav Hirsch suggests the following. "Fish live their quiet lives in their own separate element, in depths beyond human eyes… People standing on shore are unaware, have no idea, of the carefree, vibrant life going on below …" Fish are a metaphor for living deeply! (This can give us an added appreciation of the custom, mentioned in Halacha (See M.B. 242:2), of eating fish on Shabbos. It reminds us that Shabbos is a gift from Hashem that enables us to "live deeply" in a way unknown to the rest of the world.

However, Yaakov didn't just say "multiply like fish". He continued, "Like fish in the midst of the earth". And as Rav Hirsch notes, Targum goes further by translating, "like fish in the midst of mankind"!



When **Rav Henoch Leibowitz ZTL**, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim, married his Rebbetzin Pesha Trop, she made it very clear that she did not want him helping around the house. He should be totally free to be in Yeshiva and teach Torah and mussar to his students. He would often try to help and she would have no part of it. One evening, the Rebbetzin was leaving the house for a

meeting and she knew that while she was gone, the Rosh Yeshiva would wash the dishes!

What did she do? She put up a sign over the kitchen sink, "Please do not turn on the water, the plumber has to come!"



When she returned late at night she was surprised to hear water running… Rav Henoch was washing the dishes in the bathroom sink!

But the Rebbetzin got what she wanted. The Rosh Yeshiva was not just "helping around the house". He was teaching his talmidim to live deeply!

The Holy Miser of Krakow

In 1550 in Krakow, during times of poverty, there was a rich Jew named Yossele who was known as The Miser of the community. He hoarded his wealth and never gave charity. Children would walk by his house and throw stones; people would ignore him as he walked past them. One day, he became ill and he passed away, and the Chevra Kaddisha refused to bury him due to his selfishness.

Days passed, and his body was not buried. A neighbour felt very sorry for Yossele's wife and children and decided he would privately bury him himself. He hauled Yossele onto his wagon, dug a grave for him near a tree outside of the cemetery, threw him in and put dirt on him, leaving The Miser to be forgotten.

The next night, on Thursday, the Chief Rabbi of the community, Reb Kalman, answered a knock on his door. It was a poor person, asking

for some money for Shabbat. The rabbi said, "Sure, but I've never seen you before. How did you make last Shabbat?"

The poor man said, "I have never been able to make a decent living, and for 20 years, every Thursday morning, there were five rubles in an envelope on my broken doorstep, but not this morning."

Five minutes later, there was another knock at the door. Another pauper asked, "Reb Kalman, please help me, I need some money for Shabbat." Reb Kalman replied, "I'd be glad to, but where were you last week?" And the man said, "I've been living here ten years and unable to make enough money for Shabbat. Every Thursday morning, there was an envelope with 2 rubles underneath my broken door, but not this morning."

Within hours, all the poor people in Krakow came to the rabbi and told the same story.

After Reb Kalman caught on that it was Yossele supporting the entire community, he asked, "How come one gets five rubles, one gets two, one gets 10? How did he know their addresses?"

So he asked the paupers at his door, and one-by-one they told similar stories. "I knocked on his door, and he answered warmly. Yossele asked me where I'm from, how many children I had, and what I did for a living. He was attentive and kind when he asked me what I would need to tide me over for the week. He wrote everything down and thanked me for visiting.

"Then out of nowhere, he screamed and threw me out of his house! He told me he would never give up his precious money! I went home to my wife to tell her Yossele was a crazy and selfish miser. And that Thursday, I received five rubles on my doorstep. I had forgotten all about him."

Reb Kalman was heartbroken. Not only did Yossele give, he gave like Hashem gives, without credit, the holiest way. And they didn't even

bury him. The rabbi called for a fast day for all of Krakow. The people of the community cried and begged Yossele for forgiveness.

When Reb Kalman was crying and inconsolable at the ark, he fainted, and Yossele came to him in a dream. "Reb Kalman, please tell all my brothers and sisters there is no reason to fast. This is the way I wanted it. I wanted to have the privilege to give like G-d gives—without anyone knowing. Please tell them I am in *Gan Eden* in the highest place. I have everything I need."

Reb Kalman said to him, "But, tell me, Yossele, weren't you lonely being buried there all alone?"

Yossele smiled and said, "But I was not alone.



The tombstone of Yossele the Holy Miser, found in the back of the Remuh Cemetery in Krakow, Poland.

Our Avos - Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were there. Our Imahos were there too. Moshe Rabbenu, Aharon Hakohen, Yosef Hatzaddik and David Hamelech walked with me, and Eliyahu Hanavi led the way with a candle to show me to my place in Gan Eden."

This is true giving. Yossele did the ultimate *hesed* like Rachel *Imenu*, sacrificing without anyone having any idea. On his elaborate tombstone in Krakow, Reb Kalman had it engraved, saying: *Here lies Yossele Hatzaddik, the Holy Miser.*

HaRav Shmuel Kamenetsky shlita - The Shabbos Soul

Chazal (Beitzah 16a) tell us that Hashem grants each person a neshama yeseira at the commencement of Shabbos and takes it away at the end of Shabbos.

The simple understanding of a neshama yeseira is that the neshama (soul) of each Jew feels different. Yet, interestingly, Rashi (ibid.) captures the meaning of this Chazal with a very unique and perplexing description:

"The neshama yeseira is a widening of one's heart… which allows one to eat and drink and yet his soul does not despise himself."



Rashi is essentially telling us that the neshama yeseira enables a person to not despise eating on Shabbos. Yet what does this mean? While it is true that one should strive to eat and drink l'shem shamayim, in order to have the strength to serve Hashem, at its most basic level, what does it mean that on Shabbos one is able to withstand eating?

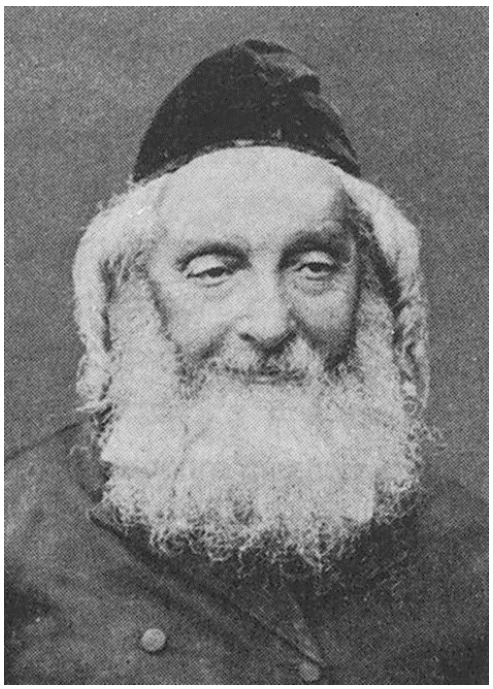
In truth, a person would not need to eat if not for the fact that he is human. And if a person would not need to eat, doing so would be superfluous. When Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai, he did not eat anything. He was being sustained and nourished by ruchniyus, spirituality.

On Shabbos, when we receive the neshama yeseira, we are elevated to a level of tremendous spirituality. Our physical life takes on additional holiness. The question therefore becomes how our bodies which are now on a higher spiritual plane can intake something which is so physical? How can something spiritual, our bodies, handle consuming food?

This is what Rashi means. Shabbos is so great that a person is able to withstand eating. While generally the consumption of food is a physical act, on Shabbos, that changes. Eating on Shabbos has a different quality. Even the gashmiyus, the physicality, takes on spiritual dimensions. Shabbos gives physical food a taste of spirituality. Our otherwise physical bodies are spiritually enhanced by the neshama yeseira, and with the infuse of Shabbos and the elevation of food to a greater spiritual degree, we can withstand it. We do not despite food in the least, but rather fully enjoy it. With our spiritually elevated body consuming spiritually elevated food, there is perfect harmony.

This is what Shabbos offers us. A day when we ourselves are uplifted and our food is uplifted. And together, true enjoyment of Shabbos is achieved.

The word 'Tefillah' - Written by D Fine



What does the word tefillah mean? In our sedra (48:11) we are given a major clue. **וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יוֹסֵף רְאֹה פָנֶיךָ לֹא פִלָּלְתִּי** Yaakov tells Yosef that in all these years '*I have not seen your face*' – and he uses the word **פִלָּלְתִּי** which has its roots in the word Tefillah. So what does **פִלָּלְתִּי** mean?

The Netziv writes that it means when one makes a special effort to achieve something (a real hishtadlus). Thus, Yaakov was saying to Yosef that 'in all these years that I thought you were dead, I did not even make a real attempt to see you (for I thought you were dead).'

This reveals to us a bit about what Tefllah means. One aspect of Tefillah is that a real attempt (hishtadlus) to ask things from

HaShem. Indeed, if one praises HaShem but does not then ask something of Him then one can be considered to have sinned. Tefillah is a form of histadlus, as the **Chazon Ish** said. Apart from its innate ability to create a relationship of closeness to HaShem, Tefillah is a way of making a real effort to achieve something and 'get what you want from HaShem.' And nothing is too small for Him to provide – you just need to ask.

MeOros Ha Tzaddikim - What a Great Gehinnom!

Once, after the **Rebbe Reb Melech [Noam Elimelech]** had left this world, the **Kozhnitzer Maggid** was seen smiling. When asked why he was smiling, the Maggid told the following:



When the holy Rebbe Reb Melech reached the next world and they questioned him, he answered them truthfully. "Did you daven? Did you study Torah?" "No, not enough, not really lishma." He honestly believed that it was true. And in response to his testimony, the Bais Din ruled that if he had not studied Torah or davened he deserved Gehinnom. And so they prepared to take him there after pronouncing the verdict. Of course, in the world of truth it was known that he was humble and that he had davened and studied Torah and so they actually took him to Gan Eden. When he arrived the Tzaddik exclaimed, "See how great and loving is Hashem! If Gehinnom is this good just imagine how great Gan Eden must be!!!"

In his humility he did not immediately grasp where he was and where they had taken him; he thought they had actually brought him to Gehinnom.

A good ending can make the entire past, no matter how difficult, disappear! Written by Benjamin A Rose



The Posuk tells us Yaakov lived in Mitzrayim for 17 years. The Meforshim all point out that the word "VaYechi" is telling us that these were the years he "lived". In VaYigash when Paroh asked Yaakov his age, Yaakov first uses the term "Yimei Migurai" the days of my dwelling because his life was so difficult it was hard to use the word "living". He merely "existed". Once he came to Mitzrayim and he rejoined his closest son Yosef, then he "lived".

The Kli Yakar points out that this is the meaning of the Medrash that says there the gap between VaYigash and VaYechi is "stuffed up", as it is a "Parshah Stuma", there is no gap in the Torah. The reason is to teach us that once Yaakov arrived in Mitzrayim the trials and tribulations of his life were finally closed as well. That is why, says the Kli Yakar, immediately after this it says "VaYehi Yimei Yaakov Shnei Chayav Sheva Shanim…" The years of Yaakov's life were 147. - These final years were so good that although beforehand he didn't consider the first 130 years living, now after the last 17 wonderful years the troubles of the past were forgotten and his whole life seemed enjoyable and memorable.

A good ending can make the entire past, no matter how difficult, disappear!

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Relating Good News



The Pele Yoatz *[In the introduction to his book "Pele Yoetz", he wrote:* ***"Everyone who will come to my grave in purity after immersion in the mikveh, and prays with a broken heart, I guarantee him that his prayer will be accepted"****.]* tells us that if a person has good news for someone, he should quickly inform him. This gives life to the recipient of the news. Quickly informing the other person is considered a mitzva! He writes further that this is included in Gemilus Chasadim.



The Meor Einayim tells us that one who relates good news has a spark of Eliyahu Hanavi because Eliyahu relates all good news in the world. For this reason, when the opportunity arises to say over good news, everyone wants to run and tell it over since his Neshama feels Eliyahu. One can use such a time to ascend spiritual heights. Additionally, a spark of Eliyahu enters the one whom the news is being said to, and he is more easily able to connect to Hashem!

L'Maaseh



In Mesivta Torah Vodaath one blustery, snowy morning, the Rosh Yeshivah, **Rav Shlomo Heiman, zt"l**, came to give his Shiur. However, there was a blizzard the night before and very few students were able to show up.

Rav Heiman walked into the classroom and there were only four students there. Yet, it did not seem to faze him. He began to give his Shiur, and he raised his voice with passion, as he usually did when he delivered Shiur.

The students were confused why their Rebbe was giving such an animated, loud Shiur, when there were only four people in the room. One of the boys asked, "Rebbe, there are only a few of us here. Is it necessary to get so excited delivering the Shiur? Rebbe is speaking as if the room is full."

The Rosh Yeshivah responded, "Do you think that I am talking only to you? I am speaking to you and your students, and to your students' students. I am speaking to generations of Jews to come, and that is why I must be loud and excited!"

Change the changeable, accept the unchangeable, and remove yourself from the unacceptable.

Mistakes are painful when they happen, but years later a collection of mistakes is what is called experience.

Peninim

ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים *Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt. (47:28) Rashi* asks (based on a *Midrash*), "Why is this *parsha setumah*, closed?" Despite the fact that *Vayechi* begins a new *parshah*, it is "closed." This means it is not set off by the usual number of spaces that would normally mark it as distinct from the previous *parsha*. (In other words, when there are no spaces it is difficult to discern the beginning of a new *parsha*.) *Rashi* offers his responses. I would like to focus on a meaningful explanation which ***Horav Nissan Alpert, zl***, renders.

Life (can be – and is) unpredictable and mysterious. Life is like a "closed book," its final chapters elusive and hidden until one reaches the end. Some individuals cannot tolerate the suspense of reading a mystery novel. Thus, they turn to the pages at the end of the book to find out what happens at the end before they actually read the book. This cannot be done with life. Man is formed from clay (*Adam, yesodo mei afar*), and he goes through life wondering when his end will come. When he is in a period of distress, he wonders from whence will come his salvation. We all know that good might emanate from situations that appear (to our mortal vision) to be absolutely bad and vice versa. We never know when – or from where – our salvation will be delivered. (The only thing that we know for certain is that whatever will come, it will come from Hashem.)

Yaakov *Avinu* lived in the land of Egypt. Did the Patriarch ever imagine that the "Egyptian years" would be the best ones of his life? Did he believe that one day he would be reunited with Yosef? Certainly, he hoped that the education and inspiration that he imparted to Yosef would infuse him with positive spiritual character and moral traits, but did he ever dream that Yosef would achieve and maintain *tzaddik*, righteous, status?

Life is filled with surprises – some good and some that are not so (to the mortal eye) good. At the end of the day, the term *olam* (the

Hebrew word for world), which shares its *shoresh*, root, with *he'elam/ne'elam*, concealment, is very appropriate. Life is a *parsha setumah*, closed book. We live in an *olam*, world, in which much of life is *ne'elam*, concealed. How do we do it? How do we successfully, confidently, navigate the sea of life? *Bitachon*, trust in Hashem. Without it, we are *ne'evad*, lost at sea. We have no dearth of stories which demonstrate the significance of *bitachon* and to the lengths to which our people have gone in their commitment to Hashem. The following is a classic story which I remembered this morning, as a good friend rushed out early from *davening* to be at an important business meeting.



The story was related by the venerable ***Bobover Rebbe, zl, Horav Shlomo Halberstam***. A follower of ***Horav Mordechai Chernobyler, zl***, had a particular habit which he revealed when he visited the *Rebbe* to petition his blessing. The *Rebbe* asked the *chassid* to recount his daily schedule. "First, I go to the market to purchase goods and wares for my business. Then, I go to *shul* to *daven*. Following *davening*, I go to the market to sell my wares at a profit." The *Rebbe* wondered, "Why do you start your day by purchasing wares and only afterwards *daven*?" The man replied, "The good merchandise is available early in the morning. If I wait until after I *daven* to purchase my wares, I would be selling inferior quality, because that is all I would find."

It seemed like a common-sense response, one that any of us might agree is acceptable. The *Rebbe* countered with a story about a *melamed*, itinerant Torah teacher, who earned his livelihood by journeying from town to town teaching children Torah. He would eke

out a meagre livelihood from a profession that kept him on the road and away from home most of the year. In the meantime, his wife and children lived on the debt they incurred, which he paid when he returned home. Understandably, his year's salary meant a lot to him, since it had already been spent. The teacher was paid for his services with various coins: the wealthy paid with gold; the middle class "preferred" silver; those of more modest means paid with nickel or copper. The teacher made a money belt for himself in which he divided his coins into four pouches. After a year of teaching, he packed his bag and prepared for his journey home.



As the first *Shabbos* of his return trip approached, he knew that he had to remove his money belt and find a place to leave it for safekeeping.

At first, he decided to bury it, but, when he saw people in the distance, he became paranoid and alarmed. Pressed for time, he decided the only alternative was to make a dash to the local Jewish inn and pray that the innkeeper with whom he would hopefully deposit the belt was honest and upright. This was a year's earnings, which he could not afford to lose.

His doubts coursed through his mind the entire *Shabbos*. The innkeeper was accustomed to this, since many a Jewish traveller left his money with him for *Shabbos*. As soon as *Maariv*, the evening service of *Motzoei Shabbos* began, the innkeeper brought the money belt to the teacher to allay his fears. "Do not worry," he said. "It is all there – every coin." To the amazement of the innkeeper, right in middle of his supplications, the teacher began counting his coins.

First came the gold coins, which were all there. The he opened the pouch containing the silver coins and ascertained that everything

was there. He then proceeded to do the same with the nickel and copper coins. At this point, the innkeeper, who had observed the entire process, was shocked and a bit perplexed. "I do not understand you," the innkeeper began. "When you saw that all of your gold and silver coins were intact, why did you not trust me then? Yet, you continued to count the ridiculously less valuable nickel and copper coins."

At this point, the *Chernobyler Rebbe* turned to his *chassid* and asked, "I want to present you with the same question that the innkeeper asked the teacher. Every single morning, you wake up and observe that Hashem has returned your *neshamah*, soul, your body, your very life – which is the equivalent of (the teacher's) gold and silver coins.

If Hashem can be "trusted" to return the valuables, what makes you think that He will not provide for your livelihood (your nickel and copper coins)?

I think you should work on increasing your *trust* in Hashem and *believe* that He will give you the physical sustenance that you require. You have no need to rush off to purchase your goods before you *daven Shacharis*. Hashem takes precedence." P. S. Things have not changed. When we rush out of *davening,* we show where our priorities lie and how much trust we have that all will be provided for us.

Courage is not the absence of despair; it is, rather, the capacity to move ahead despite despair.

"There will be times in your life when you must choose between being loved and being respected. - Always pick being respected.

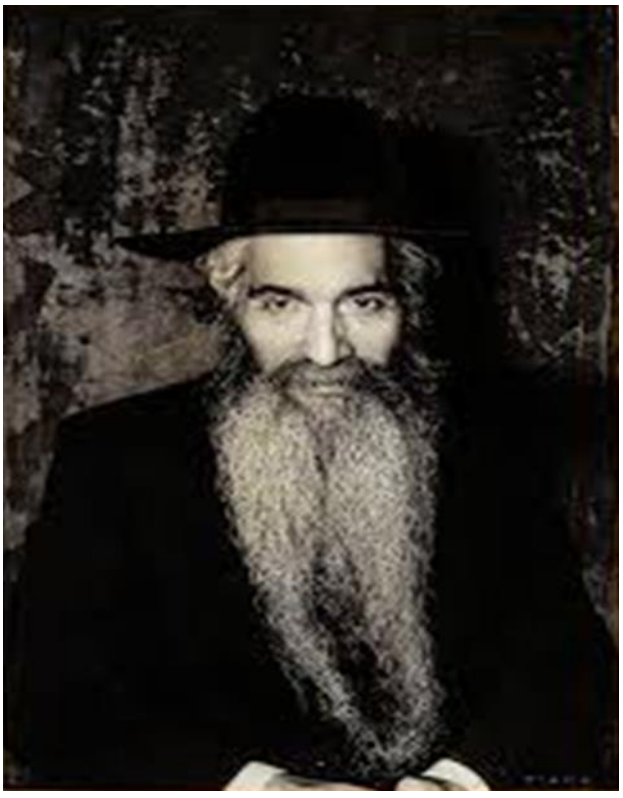
Revach - Chasam Sofer - Like Fish on Dry Land

וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ ***and may they multiply like fish in the midst of the earth.*** *(Bereishis, 48:16)*

The Iturei Torah brings from the **Chasam Sofer** that Yaakov was giving a bracha that our survival will be a miraculous one. Just like fish cannot survive on dry land MiDerech HaTeva, so too Am Yisroel cannot not survive naturally among the goyim. Our continued existence and survival is a miracle every second!

He also brings down from **"Seforim Atikim"** that we are compared to fish because every kosher animal, although it has the proper simanim, can ultimately become Treif if it is not slaughtered the right way. Fish remain kosher no matter what you do to them.

Rav Yaakov Abuchatzeira, 20th of Teves - The Abir Yaakov



Rav Dovid Chai Abuchatzeira of Nahariya told the following story about his illustrious forebear, the Abir Yaakov: There was once a group of gabbo'im who were the tzedoka collectors in Tefilalat, Morocco. They passed by the house of a certain ba'al habayis and heard him counting his money.

The sound of the coins as they jingled when counted was well known; it was even well known how to differentiate between gold coins and silver ones. The gold coins were heavier and made almost no sound when counted whereas the silver ones were much louder when they clanged. This gave birth to the well-known saying: speech is

silver and silence golden! This group decided to wait patiently outside and count in tandem with the householder, hoping to find out exactly how much money he had. Then he would be unable to deny his wealth; even if he was stingy and tight-fisted, they would be able to demand a just donation for charity. The tzedoka collectors "heard the coins" and determined by their sound that they were golden. They counted out five thousand gold coins jingle one after the other – altogether a princely sum. And so they entered smiling smugly and demanded a donation of no less than five thousand gold coins! The poor householder was baffled and embarrassed, and earnestly denied that he had so much money. The gabbo'im did not accept his words and refused to back down.

The matter came before the Rav, the Abir Yaakov, for judgment. The poor householder cried and pleaded with Rav Abuchatzeira that he did not own so much money and there was some kind of error. The Rav listened and said, "Your words ring true, that you do not have five thousand gold coins – and if so, I give my berocha that you will!!!" That day the poor blacksmith, for that was our baal habayis's job, took the five thousand horseshoes that he had been counting (that was the clanging sound the gabbo'im had mistaken for gold coins!) to sell to the authorities of the French military, who had commissioned them. Except that a miracle occurred: the official inspector stamped the work order and told the astonished blacksmith to go to the cashier to use the document to collect his pay – one gold coin per horseshoe. On the work order, instead of five thousand horseshoes for five thousand gold coins, was written fifty thousand! Immediately, the blacksmith collected his moneybags, hung them on his horse and made his way to the Tzaddik, the Abir Yaakov, to give the tzedoka!!!



Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld- Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid

Towards the end of the parsha, Yaakov avinu feels that he is about to leave the world. He gathers his children together and he gives each one a bracha that they need. One of the brachos that Yaakov Avinu gave to his children was חַכְלִילִ֥י עֵינַ֖יִם מִיָּ֑יִן וּלְבֶ֥ן שִׁנַּ֖יִם מֵחָלָֽב 49:12 ***[He is] red eyed from wine and white toothed from milk.***

Derived from here there is a Gemara in כתובות קיא: that says **טוב המלבין שינים לחבירו יותר ממשקהו חלב** : ***that showing another person the white of one's teeth with a warm smile is an even greater act of kindness than giving him milk.***



Imagine the scene, it's a boiling hot day, everyone is *shvitzing* and there is a Yid giving out freezing cups of ice-cold water. What a chesed, what a tremendous person. Can you imagine that instead of water, he was giving out milk? Not only was he giving people something refreshing, but he was giving something nutritious, something one can gain from. What an ***amazing*** thing.



Says Chazal, that to smile at somebody else is better than giving him a cup of milk. The ability to do Chesed is not limited to time or with money. A person can do Chesed with a smile.

The Sefer Yeraim writes in Mitzvah נא that just like it is forbidden to inflict pain on somebody in a physical way, or even in a verbal manner, it is similarly forbidden to hurt somebody with a sour face.

Rabbi Yechiel Morderchai Gordon the Lomza Rosh Hayeshiva, was once fundraising in America at the time when World War 2 broke out. He left his wife and children in Nazi occupied Poland. His concern for their safety was constantly on his mind and he was terribly fearful when letters he received stopped arriving.

A Yid from Lomza, who miraculously managed to escape Europe, visited him, and told him the tragic news of which he himself was an eyewitness of the massacre of most of Yechiel Michel's family. Words cannot describe the sad and upsetting scene, as the suspected news was confirmed.

All of a sudden, the door opened as guest came in to see the Rosh Hayeshiva. With the most amazing inner strength, his countenance immediately changed. He greeted the visitor with a hearty Sholom Aleichem, with a big smile on his face. The conversation eventually ended, and the visitor left. The man that brought the tragic news sat through this and saw with disbelief the transformation that occurred right before him. He said, "How did you do that?"

He answered that **Rabbi Yisroel Salanter** said that a person's face is a Reshus Harabim. It is something that everyone can see and it is a lesson that Yaakov Avinu gave to his children before he died. It is something so simple and easy that any of us can do. Whether it is to our friends or family members or people on the street. – ***Give them a smile! Make their day.***

Have a great שבת!

Instead of worrying, stressing, panicking, overthinking, assuming, controlling, and wondering - Trust Hashem and daven!

Blessing on the kids Written by D Fine



48:20 contains the famous blessing Yaakov gave to Yosef's sons – a blessing that many people have the custom to give to their children on Friday night; יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה Why do we give these blessings to our children – why do we not bless our children that they should be like the Avos or like any of the other tribes? One idea is that Efraim and Menashe were unique in that they had shalom between them. Every one of the Avos had to live through some form of sibling rivalry and 'family issues' – Avraham with his idolatrous father Terach and then with Lot his nephew. Similarly, Yitzchak had to deal with Yishma'el, and Yaakov had to worry about Eisav and then Lavan. Moreover, Yaakov's sons sold Yosef into slavery.

Therefore, Efraim and Menashe were the first generation to have serenity and peace at home. This is what we bless our children with – that they should live with constant shalom and without any family feuds or bickering. Another idea here is that Efrayim and Menashe grew from being 'mere sons of Yosef' to being tribes in their own right.

Thus, we bless our children that they should grow into being more than is expected of them – that they should (spiritually) grow out of proportion!

Life after death- Written by D Fine



The sedra is called Vayechi; and he lived. Yet this is the sedra in which Yaakov dies. What's going on? (and The Torah is not sarcastic) Chazal tell us that 'yaakov avinu lo meis' ie Yaakov Avinu didn't die. How is this; the psukim clearly say that Yaakov was niftar and was covered for burial, etc?

Because Yaakov Avinu's body was not his main thing; his shining feature and main part of his life was his neshama and spiritual goals. Thus, though the body died, his aims and spiritualty live forever via his children etc. Thus, Yaakov Avinu did not die; he lives on in his children and ultimately in us.

We are not only measured spiritually after what we accomplish, but also after how we affect others – causing one mitzvah can have massive knock-on effects – and you are attributed with a certain reward for those effects.



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

Dovid Hamelech writes (Tehillim 81:10) – לֹא־יִהְיֶה בְךָ אֵל זָר "You should have no foreign gods within you."

This could mean that the G-d Who dwells within you should be no stranger! – Harav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.

Torah Anytimes - Rabbi Chaim Dahan zt"l - Life is Hidden

When looking into a Torah scroll, one will notice that between the end of one Parsha and start of a new Parsha there are empty spaces. The purpose of this open space (Parsha Petucha), was to allow Moshe Rabbeinu, who was dictated and taught the Torah by G-d, to take pause between one Parsha and another and enable him to ponder and internalize the laws and lessons he had just learned. Practically speaking, these breaks in the Torah allow the Torah reader to more easily and readily locate the particular spot of the new Parsha, from which he will begin to read.

Yet there is one exception, that of Parshas Vayechi, the last Torah Portion in the Book of Bereishis. The beginning of Parashas Vayechi is Stumah, closed off, wherein no space is left empty between the end of the previous Parsha and it. While our Sages (Bereishis Rabbah 96:1) explain this anomaly to be related to G-d "closing off" the revealed date of Moshiach's arrival, which Yaakov Avinu wished to reveal to his children, it furthermore creates the logistical challenge for the Torah reader to locate the beginning of the Parsha, from which he will begin to read.

There is a great message to be gleaned from this configuration. Many times in life, we are not privy to seeing the final end or understanding the full meaning of a particular matter, and we are therefore left with a mind full of questions and a heart obscured with doubt. Yet one of the greatest lessons we can ever carry with ourselves is that life, in its truest and ultimate sense, is hidden from our comprehension as human beings.

As an illustration, we would likely assume that the very last Pasuk in Sefer Bereishis would end with a reverberating and powerful climax, given the ever-important events and experiences which were detailed throughout the Book, inclusive of the Creation of the World and the lives of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. We would have presumed that it would be a moving and resonating Pasuk.

Yet what does the Torah state?



"Yosef died at the age of one hundred and ten years; they embalmed him, and he was placed in a coffin in Egypt" (Bereishis 50:26).

It is unusually strange. How can this be the end to such a beautiful Book of Bereishis, filled with the majestic and extraordinary description of the Creation of the world and mankind and the exalted lives of our ancestors? 'Yosef died, he was mummified and placed in a coffin...' That is how the Torah chooses to conclude Sefer Bereishis?

Truth be told, this verse is by no means a sad one. Quite to the contrary, it is a verse laden with special Divine promise and providence. The Pasuk is foreboding an exceptionally important future occurrence, which would prove to serve the Jewish people well. At first glance, we would look at this verse and make the foregone conclusion that it is conveying nothing but the sad event of Yosef passing away. But, in truth, life is Stumah, hidden, and at the times when events transpire, we do not always understand their true rhyme and rhythm.

Only with patience do we learn that many years later as the Jewish nation was readying to leave Egypt, Moshe Rabbeinu made his way to the Nile River, where Yosef's metal casket had been lowered and laid to rest (in order to provide blessing to the Nile which would overflow and fertilize the land of Egypt), and prompted it to rise, from where it was taken out with the Jews from Egypt (Sotah 13a). And what then happened?

As the Jewish people found themselves standing before the Red Sea with the Egyptians behind them in fierce pursuit, they had nowhere to turn. Yet as we know, Hashem miraculously had it that the Sea parted. But on what account did it split? In Yosef's merit. As the Midrash (Shochar Tov 114:3; Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeshev 9) explains, the Pasuk in Tehillim (114:3) states, "The Sea saw and fled." What did it see that it fled? It saw the coffin of Yosef, of whom the Torah attests that he fled and ran outside to resist the temptations of the wife of Potiphar. In recognition and remembrance of that meritorious act, measure for measure, the Sea so-called fled by splitting itself.

And now we can understand and appreciate how and why the concluding verse of Parshas Bereishis is in fact one with immense positive implication. Yosef's passing, embalming and laying to rest in Egypt was all the antecedent to the event many years later when his merit would be called upon to split the Sea for the entire Jewish nation.

We may not understand many things in life. Events may occur which appear to be nothing but sadness and tragedy. Yet the ever-lasting Stumah of Parshas Vayechi and its concluding Pasuk to the Book of Bereishis remind us that such matters only appear dreary and dismal because life is hidden and we cannot see the big picture. If only we can wait and have patience, one day, G-d will reveal to us why everything occurred as it did, and we will see that it was all with a particular Divine plan and providence in mind and meant to yield wondrous results.

A Sensitive Soul

The stronger the emuna, the more refined the neshama, attuned even to the faintest aveira. ~ The Chazon Ish zt"l.

Man and Animal



R' Mordechai Yosef Izbitzer (1801-1854) comments on **נעשה אדם**, let us make man, that Hashem was consulting the creatures in regard to them becoming part of man. The creatures, that granted permission are now within man. As a result, man can use these qualities that were endowed to the creatures, as we shall explain.



Included in this, is that man contains the different characteristics of animals. For example, one animal may be sly while another is brazen. Some are lazy while others are quick. We too have these qualities and are able to use them in positive—or negative—ways. Procrastination and laziness can be used negatively to avoid doing a task, or positively to avoid sin.



The trait of cunningness can be used to cheat or to defeat the evil inclination, as in **באין תחבלות יפל עם**, without strategies, people fail. In this light we can comprehend **כצבי...לעשות רצון עז כנמר, רץ אבינו שבשמים**, to be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer…to do the will of Hashem. How does the Shulchan Aruch begin? **יתגבר כארי** , one should be strong as a lion in awakening in the morning to serve Hashem.

This explains why some people have names of animals. These include **צבי** - deer; **דוב** - bear; **זאב** - wolf; **אריה** - lion; **יונה** - dove; **צפורה** - bird.

It comes as no surprise that when Yaakov and Moshe blessed the shevatim, different animals are mentioned—**גור אריה יהודה**, a lion cub is Yehuda; **יששכר חמר גרם** , Yissaschar is a strong-boned donkey; **יהי דן נחש...שפיפן עלי ארח** , Don will be a snake…a viper by the path; **נפתלי אילה שלחה**, Naftali is a hind; **ולגד...כלביא שכן** , Gad dwells like a lion.

Since we have these qualities, we have free choice as well as being subjected to reward and punishment. Animals, on the other hand, have their own unique attributes and consequently don't have free choice. As a result, animals don't have **שכר ועונש**. Hashem therefore first consulted with the creatures before creating man, because they may lose out if man uses their qualities for evil. The word **בחירה** is sourced in **בחר**, to choose. This is composed of the same letters as **חרב** since one can destroy by using his free will negatively. Rearranging these letters, we also get the word **חבר**, to connect, since by using his free choice properly, one can connect to Hashem.

It is no coincidence that the Beis Hamikdash is called **בית הבחירה**, since through utilizing our free choice, we can either build it or destroy it. Through our daily actions we build or destroy the Beis Hamikdash, although we may not actually see this with our physical eyes. In fact, this is why the phrase **בונה ירושלים** is in the present tense, since through our current actions we build the Beis Hamikdash. Each mitzva is another brick in the wall.

It is because man has free choice that Reuven said to throw Yosef into the pit, since man can choose to kill someone who is not sentenced to death. Animals, however, would not touch a person if he were not liable to death according to Heaven.

This is what is meant in **ויצלהו מידם** he rescued them from their hand, which means from the hand of the one who has free choice that could alter the situation. With this, we can grasp a deeper meaning in **מה יהיו חלומותיו...** , we will see what will become of his dreams…as free choice can cancel it.

The Holy Shopkeeper - By Elchonon Isaacs



Reb Berel Bieber, my grandmother's father, was a widely respected Chabad Chassid, a diligent student of Torah, and a kindhearted man who took an active role in community affairs. He lived in Novozybkov, Belarus, where he provided for his family from his small business.

In 1890, Reb Berel chose to immigrate with his family to the Holy Land. To facilitate this, he first went alone to lay the groundwork for a smooth transition. He joined a new religious settlement in the Hadera region, where the main source of work was draining swamps.

The pioneers greatly respected him, as draining swamps was dangerous and difficult work, and at the end of the long day of manual labor he would immerse himself in Torah study. Reb Berel never complained; on the contrary, he was wont to say, "Thank G-d for allowing me to work the earth of the Holy Land."

After a few weeks, Berel came down with a high fever and was hospitalized. With the tireless efforts of the doctors and nurses, he was saved. When he recovered, the doctor ordered him to either

return to Russia or move to Jerusalem, where the air quality was better than the marshy swampland. Reb Berel was pained that he'd have to leave working the earth, which he saw as a holy mission, but the doctor's order took precedence.

Returning to Russia was out of the question. He moved to Jerusalem and, in time, settled in the Old City. He acquired a small shop in the Muslim quarter, where he sold staples such as flour and sugar. The grains were imported from Odessa to the port in Jaffa, and from there to Jerusalem.

Once the business got off the ground, his wife and children joined him in Jerusalem. Reb Berel's grandson, the late Dr. Aryeh Shoshan, related:

During my childhood, I loved to hang around my grandfather's shop. I see him clearly, sitting at the counter, his face shining, immersed in a volume of Talmud.

When customers entered, they'd do so quietly, always with an excuse for "bothering" him. As soon as he noticed them, my grandfather would mark his place, close the Talmud, and serve them patiently and graciously.

One day, an inspector from the Ottoman regime, which ruled the Holy Land from 1517 to 1917, entered the store and handed my grandfather an official document stating that he owed an enormous sum of taxes. The inspector warned my grandfather that if he did not pay up by noon the following day, they would confiscate the store and its contents.

As soon as the inspector left, my grandfather sat back down and returned to his Talmud as if nothing had happened. Astonished by his composure, I asked, "Did you hear what the person said?! They will confiscate your store tomorrow! He looked serious!" My grandfather looked at me with an ever-comforting smile, "Worry not, the help of G-d comes in the blink of an eye."

That night I could not sleep. Early in the morning, I returned to the store to witness with my own eyes how G-d would help.

It was eight o'clock, and I asked my grandfather, "What will be?" The answer was the same, "G-d's help can come in the blink of an eye." And he returned to his study.

Ten o'clock came and went, then eleven, and I asked yet again, "What will be?" Still, I received the same answer. As the minutes ticked by, I felt my heart beating faster and stronger.

At 11:15 am, a city councilman burst into the store, and asked my grandfather in a desperate, panicked voice, "A platoon of Turkish soldiers just arrived without any advance notice and we have nothing to feed them. Perhaps you have a large amount of flour so we can bake some bread?" Grandfather deliberately closed his book and rose to serve his customer. The city official pressed, "Please! Quick, help save us all!"

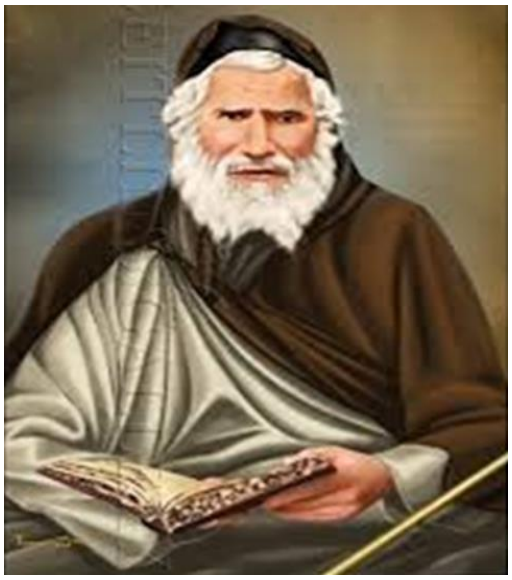


Grandfather got up and calmly went to the storage house behind the store. He piled up a few sacks of flour and brought them to the city councilman. The grateful bureaucrat hastily took out a wad of bills, paid for the flour, and left just as quickly as he had arrived.

My grandfather then walked to the government office a few blocks down and paid up his debt in full. When he came back, he sat down in his chair and resumed his learning, in the familiar tune, now with a slight smile on his face.

Indeed, I was privileged to witness how G-d's help comes in the blink of an eye.

Vechol Maaminim-Protection and Salvation in the Merit of Amen המלאך הגאל אתי מכל רע יברך את הנערים ויקרא בהם שמי ושם אבתי אברהם ויצחק וידגו לרב בקרב הארץ (מח טז)



The passuk (Tehillim 34:8) says "Choneh malach Hashem saviv l'yereiav vayechaltzem," the angel of Hashem is stationed around those who fear Him, and he saved them. **Harav Yaakov Abuchatzeira** explained: **מלאך** is numerically equivalent to "amen" and the acronym **א-דני סביב ליראיו** is also 91, which is amen. This is an allusion that in the merit of answering amen, the holy Shechinah guards over yirei Hashem and protects them in this world and the Next World. *Alef Binah, Tehillim 34*

Rabbi J. Gewirtz - Now You Know- No Job Too Small



The Steipler Gaon, R' Yisrael Yaakov Kanievsky z"l, offered advice on how to bring HaShem into your life. He said that one should speak to HaShem and ask Him for all one's needs. For example, if a man needs a pair of shoes, he should say, "Ribono Shel Olam, I need a pair of shoes. Please help me find one at a good price, that will last a long time, be comfortable and good quality, etc."

This may wasteful, to ask for such mundane things, but what it does is something amazing. We tend to imagine that the world just works by itself and G-d intervenes for the "big things." That simply isn't true. When you start to involve HaShem in all the events of your life, you start to see Him all around you.

These aren't just prayers, but constant reminders that HaShem is the One doing everything in your life. This leads to trust in Him, serenity for you, and the ability to cope with adversity because you realize it's part of the plan. It is a simple step towards happiness, and one that more people should take.

How many Years do you owe your parents?? Written by Benjamin A Rose



"Yaakov lived in Mitzrayim for 17 years; and the days of Yaakov, the years of his life were 147 years".

We know from Parshas VaYigash (47:9) that Yaakov was 130 years old when he came to Mitzrayim. Once the pasuk informs us that he lived the remainder of his life in Mitzrayim, why is it necessary to state that he remained in Mitzrayim for 17 years? Obviously, if he lived until the age of 147, he had to be in Mitzrayim for 17 years?

Daas Zekainim answer, the pasuk is stressing that Yosef repaid the kindness which Yaakov had bestowed upon him in his youth. Yosef lived by his father for 17 years until he was sold. During those years Yaakov took care of Yosef and fed him. Midah KiNeged Midah, Yosef supported his father for the last 17 years of his life. It is for this reason that the Torah stresses that Yaakov lived in Mitzrayim for 17 years – the years that Yosef was Mikayem the Midah KiNeged Midah.

The Segulah to Recite Certain Perakim of Tehillim



Rabbi Ephraim Eliyahu Shapiro told an amazing story about a woman in her 40's who hadn't yet found her *zivug—match*. A friend of hers suggested she go to Rav Yissachar Meyer to get some advice. The woman was from France and didn't speak Hebrew, so she asked her friend to help translate the rabbi's message to her.

The rabbi suggested to the woman to read *tehillim*— to "recite *perek* 32, *perek*, 38, *perek* 82, and *perek* 121 every day for 30 days." The friend translated this for the single woman, and she vowed to do just that.

On day 30 she got engaged, and she asked her friend to find the rabbi to share the amazing news! While they were getting in touch with the rabbi, the friend realized something.



She said to the new bride, "I know you don't speak Hebrew, because I need to translate for you, but do you read Hebrew?"

The woman said, "No, of course not."

The friend, dumbstruck, said, "Well, how did you say the four *perakim* for 30 days?"

The woman answered, "I did exactly what the rabbi said to do! I held the *tehillim* close to me, and I said with all my heart, '*perek* 32, *perek* 38, *perek* 82, *perek* 121, please Hashem send me a *zivug*,' every day for 30 days.

The woman's intention was to pray to Hashem with sincerity and *emunah*, and although her prayers weren't exactly traditional, they were heartfelt prayers, nonetheless, and Hashem sent her a *shidduch*.

Rav Meir Shapiro - Did Yaakov Really Command The Shvatim To Beg Yosef For Mechila?

After Yaakov's burial the Shevatim told Yosef, אָבִיךָ צִוָּה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר; Your father Yaakov told us to ask you for Mechila." 50:16

Rav Meir Shapiro asks where do we find that Yaakov ever told them such a thing?

He answers that the Shulchan Aurch paskens (OC 606:1-2) that if you do something bad to someone you must ask them for Mechila. However, in this case the Shevatim were not sure if they were obligated to ask for mechila, since it turned out good at the end. After all the end result was that Yosef became King and even saved the entire family.

Then when they saw Yaakov ask Mechila from Yosef for burying Rochel on the road and not even taking her to a proper burial site in Bais Lechem, they saw that they need to ask Yosef for Mechila. In Rochel's case as well, the end result was that when Bnei Yisrael were on the way to Bavel they davened at Rochel's kever.

When the Shevatim said Yaakov commanded them to ask Mechila, they meant that Yaakov taught them the Halacha that they must beg forgiveness for their act no matter how good it turned out.

Our role is to act; whether we succeed is no longer in our hands. ~ R' Elazar Menachem Man Shach zt"l.

ShortVort.com: Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֶנָה לַחְמוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי מֶלֶךְ - From Asher: his bread will be rich, and he will give kingly delicacies (49:20)

On face value this verse, describing the blessing that Yaakov gave, is difficult to understand. We see that regarding Asher "his bread will be rich" — he will have good quality food — but we also see that he "will give kingly delicacies", which indicates that he will have food of a much higher quality but give it away. Is it such a blessing to have better quality goods only to give them to others?

Rav Moshe Sternbuch answers, yes. Rav Moshe explains that the blessing to Asher was that he would appreciate the value of giving to others, so much, that he would limit his own intake in order to be able to make a greater investment for other people. This was not only Asher's blessing, but a lesson which we can all learn from.

One person who truly understood this point was the **Rebbe of Kopishnitz** who was approached to help a Rabbi who had escaped the terrors of the Holocaust and had arrived in his city with nothing to his name. First point of call was to collect fitting Rabbinic attire for this Rabbi.



Collectors came and asked the Rebbe if he had any old boots to donate. The Rebbe opened his closet and handed them his unworn, new boots. The embarrassed men were quick to explain that they would never have requested the Rebbe's new boots, they merely wanted some old boots. The Rebbe answered them, "The clothing that a person wears in the World to Come are the mitzvos and good deeds that he did in This World. And you want me to go there with old boots?"

Yaakov Finally Finds Serenity

The Pasuk tells us Yaakov lived in Mitzrayim for 17 years. The Mefarshim all point out that the word "VaYechi" is telling us that these were the years he "lived". In VaYigash when Paroh asked Yaakov his age, Yaakov first uses the term "Yimei Migurai" the days of my dwelling because his life was so difficult it was hard to use the word "living". He merely "existed". Once he came to Mitzrayim and he rejoined his closest son Yosef, then he "lived".

The Kli Yakar points out that this is the meaning of the Medrash that says the gap between VaYigash and VaYechi is "stuffed up", as it is a "Parshah Stuma", there is no gap in the Torah. The reason is to teach us that once Yaakov arrived in Mitzrayim the trials and tribulations of his life were finally closed as well. That is why, says the Kli Yakar, immediately after this it says "VaYehi Yimei Yaakov Shnei Chayav Sheva Shanim..." The years of Yaakov's life were 147.

These final years were so good that although beforehand he didn't consider the first 130 years living, now after the last 17 wonderful years the troubles of the past were forgotten and his whole life seemed enjoyable and memorable.

Beneath the Surface by *R' Shmuel Winzelberg*

ידעתי בני ידעתי ***"I know, my son, I know"*** (48:19)

When Yaakov gave Yosef's sons a *brachah* he switched his hands, placing his right hand on the head of Ephraim, the younger son. Yosef tried to intercede and correct this so that Yaakov's right hand would be on the head of the older son Menashe. Yaakov tells Yosef, "I know, my son, I know", meaning that I am well versed in these matters. I too, took my *brachah* first though I was the younger one by my father, and you need not understand my actions.

Vedibarta Bam By Moshe Bogomilsky

ויקרבו ימי דוד למות "And the days of David drew near that he should die." (Haftorah, Vayechi)

QUESTION: What is the connection between the passing of David and *Parshat Vayechi?*

ANSWER: Originally, King David was destined to die at the time of his birth. The 70 years he lived were a gift from Yaakov and Yosef.



Yaakov lived 147 years, while his father Yitzchak lived 180 years, and Yosef lived only 110 years.

Thus, Yaakov lived 33 years less than his father, and Yosef lived 37 years less than his father. These 70 years were given as a gift to King David so that he might live and be King of Israel.

Therefore, it is most appropriate to read about the passing of David in the week we learn of the passing of Yaakov and Yosef.

According to another opinion, Adam gave 70 years to King David reducing his own life from 1000 years to 930 years.

Thus, Chumash *Bereishis*, which starts with the life of Adam, is concluded with the Haftorah of the passing of King David, because in reality this was the culmination of Adam's lifespan. (**עי' זהר בראשית, קס"ח ע"א**)

"Love your wife as yourself – and honour her more." (Yebamoth 62b)

"הנה אביך חלה" "Behold, your father is sick." (48:1)

QUESTION: 1) The word *"hineih"* — "behold" — seems extra. The text should simply read "**אביך חלה**" — "your father is sick." 2) Why is the word "**חלה**" written without a "**ו**"?

ANSWER: According to the *Gemara (Bava Metzia* 87a), up to this time no one was ever sick before dying. When the time would come to leave this world, a person would sneeze and die without any prior illness. Yaakov prayed to Hashem that this order be changed because it is proper that a person first become ill so that he will know he is about to die and he will be able to give his children and family a message before leaving the world.

Therefore, the messenger told Yosef *"Hinei"* — "Behold, it is a surprising thing" — "**אביך חלה**" — "your father is sick."

The word "**חלה**" — "sick" — is written without a "**ו**" because it is the acronym for **חוץ לדרך הטבע** (beyond the laws of nature). The messenger told Yosef, "What is happening to your father is not in accordance with the usual laws of nature." (**זכרון ישראל**)

"Tzu Gezunt"



When someone sneezes, it is customary to say to him, "*Tzu Gezunt,*" indicating that the sneeze should be for healthy purposes and not, G-d forbid, the reverse.

[This goes back to times when a sneeze was believed to separate the soul from the body and a person would die. "Bless you" (i.e. G-d bless you) was uttered to release the soul from Satan's clutches and return it to its rightful owner.

It comes from the time of the Great Plague. As sneezing was one of the first symptoms, and it was obvious that person would die, "bless you" (or "G-d bless you") was a suitable thing to say.]

Why do some people have a custom to pull their ear when they sneeze?

Death came to the world because Adam failed to listen to Hashem and sinned. Prior to Yaakov's sickness, when the time would come for a person to leave the world, he would sneeze and his soul would depart.

Therefore, when a person sneezes, he pulls his ear as a reminder that he must "listen" to Hashem so that he will not be punished, G-d forbid, with the opposite of life. (**אוצר כל מנהגי ישרון סי' ל"ט**)

V'halachtah B'drachav - Working on our Middos



Rav Simcha Zissel, the *Alter* of Kelm, was once travelling together with another Rav when they stopped at a certain inn. The proprietor of the inn came running out and excitedly announced to everyone that great *Rabbanim* were visitors at her inn! She led them into the dining room and prepared a hearty meal for them.

During the meal, she sat at their table and recounted to them in great detail about how her fruit trees were blossoming, the young animals on her farm were growing, and informed them as well of the welfare of her ducks and chickens. She then proceeded to describe about her flourishing onion and potato harvest.

The companion traveller of the *Alter* did not pay much attention to her idle chatter and learned from a *sefer* as she spoke. The *Alter*

of Kelm, however, paid careful attention to her and interjected from time to time with questions and comments.

When they were about to leave and offered to pay, the hostess refused their payment saying that it was a great honour for her to serve them. After they left and resumed their travels, the *Alter* asked the accompanying *Rav*, "Are you not worried about stealing since you ate and did not pay?"

Surprised, he reminded the *Alter* that the innkeeper had refused to let them pay, and that the honour of their company was her payment. "True," replied the *Alter*, "But if you noticed, she was flattered by all the attention she received while telling her stories. *This* was her payment.

By not even listening to her, you did not pay anything!" The *Alter* of Kelm, who surely would have paid the price of the meal in order to learn, taught not to miss the opportunity of making another Jew feel important.



Rav Eliyahu Dessler - Yosef And Ayin Hara - Avoiding The Evil Eye

"בֵּן פֹּרָת יוֹסֵף בֵּן פֹּרָת עֲלֵי־עָיִן" (Vayechi 49:22) Rashi says that this means that Yosef will multiply and be beyond the reach of Ayin Hara. As a reward for not taking his master's wife, no one will be able, through jealously, to inflict any harm on what belongs to him.

The Shulchan Gavo'a brings from Rav Eliyahu Dessler, that no matter how rich a person is, no one is ever jealous of a totally selfless person whose whole life is about giving. An element of

jealousy stems from the intended or even unintended flaunting of oneself before others.

Yaakov gave Ephraim and Menashe a bracha, "V'Yidgu LaRov; They should multiply like fish." There are two attributes of fish that Yaakov had in mind. Fish are not seen from the dry land. And fish live a life totally separated from the inhabitants of the land. They don't compete with them in any way. That is why the Ayin Hara does not affect them.

If a person lives a life of Yosef, where he doesn't want what doesn't belong to him, and he lives and enjoys his material assets out of the public eye, he, too, will not suffer from any unwanted evil eyes.

Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin Curses the Hospital



The famous magid of Yerushalayim Rav Bentzion Yadler retold the story of a group of Askanim who came to Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin to tell him that they purchased a plot of land to build a hospital outside of the old city of Yerushalyim near Shaar Shchem.

Rav Yehoshua Leib said to them, "Yehi Ratzon Shelo Tishreh Shechina Aleha", it should be Hashem's will that the Shechina will not reside there. The group was baffled. Why would Rav Yehoshua Leib curse their holy venture?

Then they realized the slyly disguised bracha in Rav Yehoshua Leib's words. The pasuk says (47:31) that after Yosef swore to bury Yaakov in Eretz Yisroel, Yaakov turned to the head of the bed and bowed. Rashi explains that from here the gemara (Shabbos 12b)

learns that the Shechina rests above the head of a sick person's bed.

Rav Yehoshua Leib gave them a bracha that their hospital should not have many sick people in it and all of Am Yisroel should be blessed with good health! (Gilyon Pninim Al HaParsha)

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְמִינוֹ וַיָּשֶׁת עַל־רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא הַצָּעִיר וְאֶת־שְׂמֹאלוֹ עַל־רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה שִׂכֵּל אֶת־יָדָיו כִּי מְנַשֶּׁה הַבְּכוֹר



Yaakov blesses Yosef's sons, and crisscrossed his hands, resulting with his right hand going on Ephraim's head, the younger son, while his left hand went on Menashe, the older son (48:14).

The *Chizkuni* explains that Yaakov realized that although Ephraim deserved a greater blessing, this would not validate hurting Menashe's feelings. Therefore, he had them standing in their proper positions, with the older grandson on Yaakov's right side. He just changed his hands to give the blessings to them in the way they deserved, while still upholding the proper respect for their ages.

We can understand from this how detrimental a slight preference can be taken, and how careful we must be in this regard.

It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

On Shabbos night, there is a *minhag* to *bentch* one's sons to become like Ephraim and Menashe.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*, writes (*Darash Moshe, volume I, Parashas Vayechi* 48:5) that Ephraim and Menashe were unique because they were raised by Yosef in the same way that Yaakov *Avinu* would have raised them, however, they were born in *galus*, in Mitzrayim.

If Ephraim and Menashe could be raised in such a lowly place and still become *Tzaddikim*, then it makes sense for everyone to *bentch* their children to be just like them!

Pearls of Wisdom… *A Word for the Ages*

Rav Ovadia Yosef, *zt"l*, once related the following when he paid a *Shivah* call to the family of a great *Tzadik* and *Talmid Chacham* who had passed away in Yerushalayim: "We say **הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׁאָר אֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלָיִם**, ***" which means, 'May Hashem comfort you among those who mourn for Zion and Yerushalayim.***

The word we use to refer to *Hashem* is *'HaMakom'*, which really means, *'The Place'*, and it is most commonly understood to be referring to *Hashem*, Who is 'The Place' of the universe.

However, if we understand these words in their plain meaning, without being a reference to *Hashem*, the word *'HaMakom'* can also refer to 'the place' of the person who has passed away in *Olam Haba*, the Next World. Knowing what that person accomplished here in this world and what tremendous *S'char* they have earned in *Olam Haba*, that 'place', meaning the eternal place in *Shamayim*, should be a comfort to you!"

L'Maaseh



Rav Binyamin Pruzansky writes the following remarkable story, which took place in Israel with two *Bachurim* learning in *Yeshivah*. Duvi had a friend, Shlomo, who received a phone call from his wealthy uncle in America. The uncle told him that there was an orphanage in Chaderah which was in need of financial assistance. The orphanage had invited the uncle to take a tour of its facility, so he could consider offering his help. The uncle told the orphanage that he would send his nephew who was in Israel at the time, and the nephew would tell him his impressions.

Shlomo invited Duvi to join him, and they arranged that they would meet at the central bus station for the 2:00 bus to Chaderah. Duvi wanted to take care of a couple of errands first, so he headed out early, and went first to the barber to take a haircut.

He walked into the barber shop, took off his jacket and gloves, and sat down for a haircut. Fifteen minutes later, when the barber had finished, Duvi rushed out and went to the *Machaneh Yehudah* market to buy some candy for the children of the orphanage. He bought some chocolates and put them into his jacket pocket, when he realized that he did not have his gloves with him anymore, he had left them at the barber shop.

It was a cold day, but he didn't have the time to return to the barber shop and get his gloves. Instead, he went to catch his bus, and two hours later he and Shlomo reached Chaderah.

When they got off the bus, they saw a Yemenite man selling his wares out of a cardboard box, and Duvi noticed he was selling a very interesting pair of elbow-length gloves. They were peculiar, but Duvi was desperate for gloves, and he did not want to wait until he returned to Yerushalayim, so he purchased the gloves.

When they arrived at the orphanage, they were met with a very warm greeting and began touring the facility. At one point in the tour, their guide escorted them to the director's office, and as they waited outside, a 10-year-old boy excitedly ran from the room with a huge smile on his face, announcing that he had received a 100 on his *Chumash* test. Duvi went over to the boy to congratulate him and asked if he could see his test.

The boy happily agreed, and Duvi looked over the test paper and was very impressed and further complimented the child. He then glanced at the name at the top of the paper, and noticed that the boy's name was Yitzchak Alfasi, which was the same name as the *Rif*, one of the most famous and influential *Sephardic* Sages, whose commentary is found at the back of every *Gemara*.

Duvi asked the boy, "Did you know you have the same name as the great *Rif*?" The boy replied, "Sure, he's my great-great-great-great grandfather. That's why my father named me Yitzchak."

Duvi couldn't believe it. If this child was a descendant of the *Rif*, he figured that he must have great potential. Duvi then turned to meet with the director, who had come to join them, and he asked the director how much *Torah* was taught at the orphanage. The director told him that they did not have sufficient funding for serious *Torah* instruction, and all they were able to afford was to bring a Rabbi in once a week to learn *Chumash* with the boys. Duvi then turned to the boy and asked him, "What would it take for you to agree to learn *Torah* every day, if I could find a *Rebbi* to come learn with you?" The boy said, "Well, I really like the gloves you are wearing. If you give them to me, I'll learn *Torah* every day." Duvi happily took off his elbow-length gloves and gave them to the boy. The boy was thrilled. He put them on, and they were so long they reached his shoulders.

Duvi and Shlomo left the orphanage with a very good feeling about their visit, and especially their encounter with this promising young boy. When they returned to Yerushalayim, Duvi went directly to the

barber shop to see if his gloves were still there. He arrived just as the barber was closing his shop. He asked the barber if he had seen his gloves, and the barber went over to a drawer, pulled them out, and gave them to Duvi. The barber proudly announced, "Everyone will know that Moshe Alfasi is an honest man!" Duvi looked at him with surprise and said, "Your name is Alfasi? Do you happen to have a son?" The barber got quiet and said, "I prefer not to talk about it." Duvi persisted, "Please tell me."

The barber sadly told of how he had once been married, but his wife had an illness and mistreated their son. The courts stepped in and took their son away from them and placed him in an orphanage. Even after the couple had divorced, the courts refused to tell Moshe where his son was. He told Duvi, "I haven't seen him in five years." Duvi softly asked, "Is his name Yitzchak?" Surprised, the barber said, "Yes. How did you know that?" Duvi said, "I just saw him today! He's in an orphanage in Chaderah. He looks terrific, and he's doing great! He showed me that he just got a 100 on a *Chumash* test, and he agreed that he would learn *Torah* every day!"

The barber was overjoyed at this news. He ended up moving to Chaderah to be with his son and became very involved in his son's life.

Hashem brought the boy and his father together through an extraordinary sequence of seemingly insignificant, and unrelated events. Nothing in life is random. Everything that happens has a purpose and has been carefully orchestrated by *Hashem*!

Equality is overrated. Each of us must live up to our potential, regardless of anyone else.

L'Maaseh



When the ***Steipler Gaon*** was a young man, he once went to meet with a young lady who was a prospective match for a *Shidduch*.

While they were sitting at the table and talking, the *Steipler Gaon* nodded off and fell asleep. The young lady let him rest and just sat there waiting patiently. Soon, he awoke and realized where he was and what had happened.

"You must excuse me," he said. "Oh, it is nothing," said the young lady. "Don't worry about it." The *Steipler* replied, "No, it is something. I must explain.

You see, I was very tired." The young lady smiled. "Well, that was obvious." He cleared his throat. "You know I had to travel twelve hours by train today to get here."

She responded, "Yes, I know. Twelve hours on a train can make anyone tired."

He said, "No, it is not so simple. I knew that I could not learn that much traveling on a train, so I stayed up and learned all night last night. I expected I would be able to catch a few hours of sleep on the train and come here reasonably rested. But when I saw the upholstered seats on the train, it seemed to me that the material might have *Shaatnez* in it. I couldn't take the chance of sitting on it, so I remained standing for the whole train ride. And of course, I

didn't get any sleep at all. Please forgive me for falling asleep in your company, and please don't take any offence." The young lady forgave him, and in fact, she agreed to marry him.

Rav Yissocher Frand, *Shlit"a*, commented about this story, "To remain standing for twelve hours on a train, after having stayed up the entire night, all because of a suspicion that there might be *Shaatnez* in the train's seats— this is clearly a high level of *Yiras Shamayim*!"

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYECHI

How Could the Business Have Possibly Failed? By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

In the city of Leon, France there is a flourishing Chabad House run by Rabbi Shmuel Gurevitz. Several years ago at one of their annual dinners, one of their richest and strongest supporters took the podium and told an emotional story.

"I want to tell everyone how the Lubavitcher Rebbe made me a rich man.

"I was always proud to be Jewish and that is what connected me with Rabbi Gurevitch here in the Chabad House, but back then I was totally non-observant.

"Then, years ago, I had this novel idea to build a large, state-of-the-art hotel that would also be a college for hotel management. After months of hard work, I succeeded in finding investors and architects and was about to begin building when my friend Rabbi Gurevitch of the local Chabad house suggested that I first receive the blessing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"I had heard a lot of good things about the Rebbe so I agreed. We flew to New York and that next Sunday I was standing in a line of

several thousand people in front of the Rebbe's headquarters. But when I was finally face to face with him, I was speechless.

The Rebbe just took two dollars from a stack next to him and said



"One is for you and the other is for success in your new school." Then he added, "Just be sure that you put a Mezuzah on every door in the new building."

"I was astounded! I don't know how he knew me and my idea but he gave his blessing! I returned to France certain of success! But I was in for a surprise.

"Everything started off like a dream. Within a year the building was finished. We made a grand opening with much publicity in the newspapers and on T.V. the biggest celebrities in France were there. But for some reason it didn't work. After five years I was millions of francs in debt. I had no way to repay it, the debt was growing and had no choice but to declare bankruptcy.

"And that is when the big troubles began. The government suspected foul play and after a few days they sent a mean-looking inspector. He seemed to be a bit of an anti-Semite as well because when he entered my office and saw the picture of the Rebbe on my wall he wrinkled his nose and angrily mumbled something. Then he told me to put all my accounts on the table, leave the room and close the door behind me.

"My worst fears proved true; several days later I received a subpoena to court in one month's time. I was charged with fraud and embezzlement.

"Things looked bad but I only realized the real hopelessness of my situation when I began looking for lawyers and not one was willing to take the case. Now, all this time I consulted Rabbi Gurevitz and we wrote several letters to the Rebbe asking for help but we never received an answer. I was getting really afraid and desperate.

"Anyway, the day of the trial arrived. The media had been sure to sensationalize the whole thing and the court was packed while I just sat there alone, reading psalms and praying for a light sentence.

"There was only one witness for the prosecution; the investigator himself. He took the podium, was sworn in, turned to the Judge, pointed his finger at me and as he began to speak I sank into my seat and cringed.

"He said, 'Your honour, after my first examination of the defendant's books it was obvious that he was a criminal that should be prosecuted and punished to the full extent of the law.'

"The courtroom was silent, and he continued. 'But after reconsideration I admit that I began to have doubts! In fact, I reexamined the material several times and it is now clear to me beyond the shadow of a doubt that the failure of this business was not due to fraud or even the mismanagement of the accused, but rather to an extraordinary series of events beyond the defendant's control. It is my opinion that for the sake of justice, of the economy and the glory of France the court should do all it can to reestablish his project, and make sure it succeeds.'

"The courtroom was abuzz, the Judge called him to his desk for consultation and after he returned to his seat the Judge pounded on his desk and announced, that I was innocent of all charges

"Of course, after such a dramatic turnabout decision from the prosecution the government had little choice other than to take his advice, pay my debts and support my project. But this time, thank

G-d, fortune began shining and the project became a tremendous success

"But two things bothered me. First, why did the business fail so miserably at first. And second, what caused that anti-Semitic inspector to change his mind?

"A month or so later I got my answer. I received a phone call one afternoon and recognized the voice of the inspector on the other end of the line. He asked me to meet him at a certain place that evening and not tell anyone about it as it would be suspicious if we were caught talking.

"We met. He had purposely picked a deserted spot where we could speak freely, and he got right to the point.

"'You probably are wondering why I suddenly changed my mind about you in the trial aren't you.' I shook my head yes and he continued.

"Well, a few days before the trial I decided to go back to your hotel and search for more evidence so I could have an airtight case against you. But as I was walking about, suddenly I noticed something strange; on every door was a Mezuzah! But I always thought it was for just the front door and you put them on a hundred doors! I even opened a few of them to see if maybe something else was inside but, no! They were all Mezuzas! I thought to myself' 'If this man is a thief, why would he spend a small fortune on these commandments? I was really puzzled.'

"'Maybe you wonder how I know what a mezuzah is? Well, you see, my friend, I'm Jewish. I was born and raised a Jew and even married a Jewish woman. We were living in Germany till the war began but then we escaped to France changed our names and erased what little sign of our Jewishness we had.

"'So, I went back to your office took out your accounts again and the picture of your Rabbi on the wall caught my attention again. I looked into his eyes, and something happened to me. Suddenly I

remembered my parents. I suddenly got to thinking that maybe I made two big mistakes; one about you and a bigger one about myself. I decided that if this is your teacher then you can't be a thief and I decided that I should return to Judaism."

"Then he took out a bag, opened it and showed me a pair of Tefillin he just bought. He finished with the words 'What baffles me is why your business failed. In fact, you did everything correctly. I've never seen anything quite like it. Who knows, maybe it was to bring me back to Judaism. I can't think of any other reason'"

The Importance of Not Embarrassing Another Yid By Rabbi Label Lam

When **Reb Moshe Feinstein ztl** was already an elderly man he was asked as many sages of the Talmud, "Why have you merited such a long life?"

He answered, "I tried my whole life never to hurt another human being." The following story illustrates to what extent this principal was installed into the very psyche of his being: A group of Yeshiva students were respectfully escorting the Reb Moshe to a car that was waiting curbside. As soon as he was in and the door was slammed shut, the driver started on his way.



A few blocks away, Reb Moshe urged the driver to pull over to the side of the road and stop for a moment. Once the car halted Reb Moshe opened the car door and removed his fragile and aged hand from where it was crushed when the door was shut by one of the students.

The driver was aghast and so he asked Reb Moshe, "Why didn't the Rabbi say something back there?"

Reb Moshe replied, "If I would have reacted just then, the poor fellow that closed the door would never have forgiven himself."

Wow! How can one ever be prepared enough for such a test!? It's certainly a principled decision and the work of a lifetime!

Vechol Maaminim – Maasei Emunim

"Several weeks ago, I travelled to Europe on business. I was in Prague for Shabbos, at the King David Hotel, which is kosher mehadrin. The hotel is located near the ancient Jewish Quarter, home to the renowned Altneushul, the oldest shul in Europe that still has regular tefillos.

According to tradition, the Maharal of Prague davened in the shul. Every time I am in Prague, I try to daven at least one tefillah in this shul. It is enveloped in an aura of history, and the age-old inscriptions that adorn its high walls always touch my emotions and make me feel a sense of awe. The tefillos uttered within the shul's confines are commensurate with its elevated status.



As someone who carries the subject of amen close to his heart, I will note one of the inscriptions on the western wall of the shul: **גה"א-ימ"ה**.This seems to be some type of secret code, but it is actually the acronym of the well-known words of Chazal (Brachos 53b).: **גדול העונה אמן יותר מן המברך.**

The plan was to return to Israel on Sunday night. Due to the circumstances, I had to leave the hotel early on Motzaei Shabbos, to go take a corona test before the flight. In addition, I planned to make a purchase at a large store located near the testing area; the store was a branch of a large European chain. I deliberated whether to first do the test or first make the purchase, and ultimately decided to first do the test. After making my selections in the store, I took out the envelope in which I kept my money, paid, and then walked back to the hotel.

When I returned to the hotel, I suddenly gasped. I realized that the valuable envelope was not with me. Aside for the monetary loss, as there was a large sum of money in the envelope, I was very worried about being in a foreign land without a penny to my name. How would I pay my hotel bill tomorrow, and any other expenses I would have until the flight? At the late-night hour, the store was already closed, and the streets were dark. Because I had no idea where the envelope had fallen – whether on the way to the hotel or in the store, or perhaps it had been purposefully removed by a pickpocket – I saw no point in retracing my steps at that moment. To the best of my knowledge there were no identifying details on the envelope that could have pointed to me as the owner, and that's why I virtually gave up hope of ever seeing it again.

As a believing Jew, I accepted the decree of Heaven, and after reciting Krias Shema, I went to sleep, hoping for the best. The next morning, as I went down to Shacharis in the hotel, I deliberated about the appropriateness of asking in my tefillah for the money to be returned. Such a large sum of cash, without identifying details, so many hours after it was lost – could it even be returned?

It seemed certain to be a tefillas shav – a tefillah that would be for naught…In the end I decided to daven simply that from Shamayim, I should be sent reprieve and salvation. I recited Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa, as I regularly do, and when saying the brachah of

Hameichin Mitzadei Gaver, I had in mind an additional kavanah that Hashem should direct my steps today for good and for brachah. I especially had this in mind when answering amen to the brachah of my partner, because I was still under the impression of the letters I had seen inscribed on the walls of the ancient shul nearby, which stand for: "The one who answers amen is greater than the mevarech."

After breakfast in the hotel, my wife urged me to go to the store where we'd made a purchase the night before and ask if they had found my envelope. I didn't think there was any chance that they would give it to me, and I was sure that it had fallen on the way or been stolen, but I said I'd go to the store and fulfil my obligation of hishtadlus.

When I reached the store, it was full of shoppers, and I had a hard time finding an employee who would hear me out. Even after I found someone, I struggled to explain that I'd lost an envelope, and when the employee finally understood, he told me to wait until he asked the person in charge of security. A few minutes later, he came back with the security officer. I was surprised when the security officer asked my name. I knew that it wasn't on the envelope, but I told him my name. I was even more surprised when he asked me to show him my passport. I complied, and he looked at it closely, and then without a word, handed me my envelope.

I took it with trembling hands and thanked him sincerely. I hurried back to the hotel, my heart soaring with gratitude. Only when I arrived at my room, and looked into the envelope, did I realize how the security officer knew it was mine. Inside the envelope was the official paper with my name and the code of the corona test I'd done the night before. I had unintentionally placed it into the envelope with the money. Hashem had planted the remedy before the illness…

Only now did I realize that in the brachah of Hameichin Mitzadei Gaver that I had made that morning, I should have also thanked

Hashem for preparing my steps, that I went to the corona test before the store, so that when my envelope got lost, it already had an identifying sign inside that would be instrumental in getting it back to me.

Of course, the next morning, when I returned to Eretz Yisrael, I thanked Hashem emotionally for my personal salvation. But the lesson that I learned from it will remain with me forever: Who knows how many times Hashem prepares our steps for the good without us even knowing to thank Him for it? How many times is it the case that "gavar aleinu chasdo" and we don't even realize…

L'Maaseh

Rav Yehudah Yosefi once related that a young man who came from a background that was not so *Frum*, recently approached **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l** for a *Brachah*.

Rav Chaim asked the young man for his name, and the young man replied, "Nimrod". In response, Rav Chaim said to him, "Nimrod? No, not Nimrod. Rather, your name is Shaltiel."

Those who were around and heard this, knew that Rav Chaim had a sensitivity to the name Nimrod, but wondered why Rav Chaim chose to call the young man with such a rare name from *Tanach*, 'Shaltiel'?

The young man returned home and informed his parents that from then on, his name would be Shaltiel. His mother said to him, "That is not your name only from today, it is the name you have had since your *Bris*. However, later on, we thought it was too old-fashioned, so we changed it to Nimrod, and that is what we have always called you. But your real name is already Shaltiel!"

Torah Sweets - All Marriage Matches Are Made In Heaven by Rabbi Moshe Klein



In one small village there was a shortage of marriageable men, so Shmuel, who was not only miserly but had big boils, told the local matchmaker, he'd marry if the dowry was big and the girl was special.

"I have just the one," said the matchmaker. "Her father's rich and she's gorgeous."

"So why isn't she married?" asked Shmuel.

"She has an affliction. She goes a little meshugge (crazy), but only one day a year. Otherwise, perfect! And her father will pay twice the usual dowry!" After thinking it over the cheap, ugly prospective groom said, "we have a match - introduce us."

"Ok, it's a match, but we have to wait," says the matchmaker, "Until she goes meshugge again."

Sometimes, people think that they were crazy for marrying who they married. They blame their own immaturity, pressure, or that fuzzy infatuation feeling for obscuring the complete picture. Alternatively – or additionally – they blame their match for pulling the wool over their eyes (matchmaker, too) by not revealing their true nature while they were dating. However, one who carefully analyses not only the timing, the mutual feelings of desire, and all the many pieces that fell in place to turn the prospective match into a spouse, one can't help to realize that Someone (note the capital letter) made it happen.

At the end of this week's Parsha, Vayechi, Yosef sends an important message to his brothers right before he passes away. He relates (to

his brothers) the mindset of how to survive and thrive in Galus (exile). As we know, Mitzrayim was the microcosm of all the other exiles, including the one that we will live in today (sometimes we forget that we are in exile). It follows, then, that when Yosef was sending the brothers a message, he was sending us a message, as well. Yosef tells his brothers (Bereishis 50:24), *"I am going to die, but Hashem will surely remember you and bring you into Eretz Yisrael."* The first idea that we need to remind ourselves is that Hashem doesn't forget about us and no matter how comfortable we are in the Diaspora we are not home: He will bring us into the Promised Land.

In the next Pasuk (ibid. 50:25), Yosef again tells the Jewish people that Hashem will remember them and to please bring up his bones (out of Egypt). Rashi (Shemos 3:18) points out the reason why the repetition is brought. The first time Yosef spoke, he had transmitted his father's prophecy, whereas the second time, he was transmitting his own prophecy. These prophecies would prove crucial during the infancy of the Redemption process from Egypt. We find that Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu that they will heed Moshe's word when he comes to announce the redemption (Shemos 3:16-18). What did Hashem say that assured Moshe that the Jews would listen?

Rashi says that Hashem told Moshe that, "*as soon as you will mention to them Yaakov and Yosef's words, they will listen to your voice; for they have long had this sign that by the mention of this phrase and their deliverance will be brought about. Yaakov said to them 'And Hashem will surely visit you,' and Yosef said to them, 'Hashem will surely visit you.'*"

Rav Moshe Feinstein, ZT"L, (*Dorash Moshe*) asks: What did Yosef have to do with these prophecies? After all, he just heard them from Yaakov and not from Hashem. Why are the expressions accredited to him? Rav Moshe answers that Yosef, who heard it from Yaakov, had such a strong belief in the words of the prophecy

that for him it was as though he heard it himself! So much so, that Hashem considered it as if Yosef got the prophecy himself. Rav Moshe teaches us that the requirement of listening to the words of our Sages has to be akin to hearing those very words emanating from Hashem himself.

Let's apply this to a practical area in our lives. The Gemara (Sotah 2a) teaches: "*Forty days before an embryo is formed a Bas Kol (Heavenly Voice) issues forth and says: 'the daughter of so-and-so is destined to marry so-and-so.'*" This teaching is not a metaphorical idea that applies only to the greatest of the generation. When Hashem says it's a *Bas Kol*, it's actually speaking to each and every one of us. We may not hear the Heavenly Voice, but Hashem is sending a very important message to all of us. Every marriage that happens only comes to fruition because Hashem has decreed it to happen, and not because a man and a woman "fell in love".

Rav Moshe writes that this is the key to *Shalom Bayis*. One who truly and fully believes that Hashem arranged his or her marriage, and it is the best thing for the person will taste continuous success and bliss. However, Hashem's perfect plan will only work if we are partners with Him in our marriages - if we buy in to the program. On the other hand, if one doubts that his/her marriage was the "direct doing" of Hashem, and instead attributes the match to a matter of chance, he will be treated in kind (see Vayikra 26:27-28). Hashem will not help such a person because he/she does not recognize Hashem's involvement.

It is important to reflect that Hashem is with us in our lives and talks to us directly, whether with the words of our Sages or the Heavenly Voice. Just like with marriage, Hashem has a unique message for every couple, Hashem communicates to every individual on their own level. All we need to do is believe that in earnest and be on the lookout for Hashem's personal messages.

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Yaakov switched his hands when blessing Yosef's children, and he placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, the younger child, and his left hand on Menashe, the older one (48:14).

Rav Chaim Volozhiner, *zt"l*, is quoted as explaining this action as a lesson for our interpersonal relationships. When two people

face each other, their mirror image has their right, dominant side facing the other person's left, weaker side. We tend to use our 'right side' and focus on and criticize the weaknesses of others, which would be their 'left side', and use our 'left side' by ignoring or showing how little we care for the successes and accomplishments of others.

Yaakov was teaching us the need to switch these feelings and emphasize and encourage the successes of others, while giving only minimal care to their faults and weaknesses.

Fascinating Insights – Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Life Support, Wife Support

The Chassam Sofer writes that if a wife supports her husband and children in learning Torah, although the husband and children have their reward diminished if they mess up and don't follow in the Torah path she supported, her reward is not reduced.

A passionate chassid of the **Bobover Rebbe, R' Ben Tzion Halberstam**, known as the Kedushas Tzion15 (1874-1941), would leave his family many times for the sake of Avodas Hashem including learning Torah and visiting his rebbe who lived in a distant city.

One day his wife decided that to be sure she will receive half the reward of her husband's Avodas Hashem, which she supported, she will go with her husband to the Rebbe to make a contract which will state that she receives half of the reward.

After mentioning the purpose of their visit, the Rebbe told the husband that he should make a contract to receive half of her reward! "Her reward is much greater than yours. You learn Torah, practice your Avodas Hashem, and enjoy! But she remains home alone! What kind of pleasure does she have?"



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Tefillah Betzibur

The Beis Ahron *zy'a* said, "I'm convinced that *tefillah betzibur* helps for all matters, just like the prayer of a *tzaddik hador*."

When someone calls you on your phone, you look at the caller ID to see who is calling. If you aren't interested in speaking to that person at the moment, you might decide to ignore the call.

So, what does a determined caller do? He calls from an anonymous number. In this way, his call will most probably get answered. When a person davens by himself, it's possible that his *tefillah* won't be accepted in *shomayim*. It's coming from a 'number' that heaven may choose to ignore. But when one davens with a minyan, it's similar to an "anonymous number" and his *tefillah* will be answered together with the *tefillos* of the rest of the congregation.

Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.

Torah Tavlin

R' Shimshon Pinkus zt"l would say: אֶפְרַ֥יִם וּמְנַשֶּׁ֖ה כִּרְאוּבֵ֣ן וְשִׁמְעֹ֑ון יֵֽהְיוּ־לִ֖י -48:5

Leah's final child was switched from a boy to Dinah. In essence, she sacrificed a shevet. However, she was zoche that this girl, Dinah gave birth to a daughter, Osnas, who later married Yosef HaTzaddik and had 2 boys, Ephraim and Menashe.

Before he died, Yaakov elevated them to be considered Shevatim. Now, if a thief is punished with paying double (**כפל**), then certainly 'Midda Tovah Merubah' would dictate that one be rewarded at least double for being mevater. Hence, by giving up one shevet, Leah was zoche to two grandchildren who became Shevatim.

Chazu Bonai - Emunoh In The Parsha

האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים מט:א

In this **פסוק** we find that **יעקב** intended to reveal to his sons what would transpire at the end of days. It is interesting to note that **יעקב** says **אתכם**, that which would happen to the sons themselves at the end of days even though he will have known they would not be around then?

The **באר משה זיע"א** quotes a fascinating **מדרש** [**בראשית רבה פה**] which describes the scene after the **שבטים** had thrown **יוסף** into the pit: **יוסף** was languishing among snakes and scorpions, **ראובן** was engrossed in mourning, **יהודה** began looking for a wife… and all the while **הקב"ה** was busy creating and preparing the light of …**משיח**

The message is clear: events don't exist in a vacuum. Every single moment and every single incident are part of a large tapestry which Hashem is weaving behind the scenes. We can't see the bigger picture and it can sometimes appear as though things just "happen" at random. But nothing is random, it is all part of the Masterplan.

While the brothers were busy with seemingly disconnected matters, in truth they were all coming together towards the ultimate **גאולה**. This was **יעקב**'s message to the **שבטים**: Gather round and I will tell you that what you have been experiencing now is all related to the final outcome.

This message remains relevant throughout time. We may not be able to see it immediately, but each and every event, occurrence, happening and incident, big or small, will one day be revealed as an essential piece in the final design **בב"א.**

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Yehoshua Trenk, zt"l, of Kutna was a child prodigy, and at the young age of twenty he was appointed Rav of his city. One day, Rav Yehoshua called a meeting with the leaders of the Jewish community of Kutna. The community leaders were sure they knew what the Rav wanted from them— a raise in salary.

The people of Kutna were far from wealthy, and the community leaders were not sure how they would be able to gather together enough money to meet the Rav's request. However, they loved the Rav so much that they agreed that they would somehow come up with the money.

At the meeting, the community leaders learned that a raise in salary was not what their Rav had in mind at all. To their astonishment, the young Rav had gathered them to say that he felt the salary he was receiving was far too high. He wanted to request a reduction in his salary!

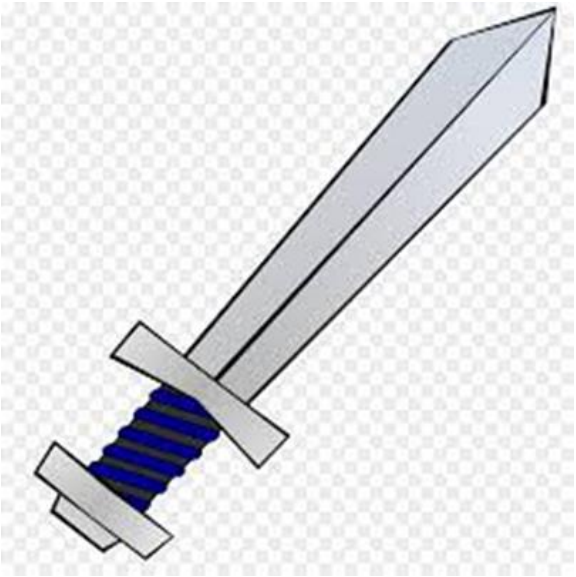
After Rav Yehoshua had served loyally as Rav for thirteen years, to show their appreciation, the community planned a banquet in the Rav's honour. Rav Yehoshua, however, refused to cooperate with the plans, insisting that he was completely unworthy of such honour. By way of explanation, he said, "Some babies begin walking as early as

nine months old. Others take their first steps at the age of one year. Some children wait until they are two before they finally begin to walk. But if you look at a group of healthy five-year-old children, you could never tell which children began walking early and which began late. All the children can run and jump with equal skill.

It is the same with me. I may have been a child prodigy, far ahead of my peers in my learning. At this point, however, others have caught up with me, and there is no reason that I should be singled out for such honour!"

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

בחרבי ובקשתי מח:כב ***With my sword and with my bow*** *(48:22)*



What is the 'sword' and the 'bow' that saved them from the enemies? Onkelos translates: With my sword and with my bow – with my prayer and with my request. Midrash Rabbah brings down: With my sword and with my bow – with Mitzvos and good deeds. Some explain, 'with my sword' is a hint to learning Torah, since the Torah saves the person and protects him, as it states, **תורה אגוני מגנא ואצולי מצלא** 'Torah protects and saves' (Sotah 21a).

Rebbe Dovid Pardo, a"h, a Rav in Yerushalayim, and the son-in-law of the Chida, explains the difference between a sword and a bow. The sword always stays in the hand of the person. He can kill hundreds or even thousands of enemies that confront him, and he still holds onto his sword. In contrast, when a person shoots an arrow from his bow, the arrow leaves him.

The Torah is like a sword, as it always remains with the person. When a person learns a Dvar Torah, he acquires it and it protects him, and it never leaves him.

Tefilah is like a bow and arrow. When a person prays, it is as if the prayer leaves his domain and can never be used again.

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk

Something unusual happened right at the beginning of Parshas Vayechi. Some years after his father's arrival, Yosef was told, "Your father is sick!" He quickly took his children and went to visit Yaakov. What was so unusual?

Until that time, no one ever got sick before they died. A person would be walking along, checking out the fruit in the market, when suddenly, "Ahhchoo!" and it was curtains for him. That's right, people died instantly. Just as the soul was blown by G-d into Adam's nostrils, it left the body the same way. Yaakov realized the problem with this. People would not have a warning so they might arrange their affairs before their deaths. They might not have time to guide their children or leaving an ethical will for them to follow.

He therefore prayed that people become ill before they died. It would be a wake-up call and give them time to do what they needed. Though the illness might seem like a curse, it was truly a blessing.

If we look at the challenges and pains in our lives and realize that Hashem is the ultimate do-gooder, we may very well find that what we thought were burdens were actually lifting us up.

Hashem's plan for your life extends far beyond the limits of your imagination. – Trust Him!

Chazak Chazak V'nitchazek by Rabbi Ari Enkin



Upon completion of each of the five books of the Torah in the course of the Shabbat morning Torah reading, it is customary for everyone present to shout out loud: "חֲזַק חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזֵּק" which means "Let us be strong, let us be strong and let us strengthen others as well."

It is interesting to note that the original custom was to recite this phrase at the conclusion of *each and every aliya* and not merely at the conclusion of a book of the Torah, as is done today.

The custom in most Ashkenazi communities today is to salute the one who received an aliya with the blessing "yasher ko'ach" which can be described as an expression of "spiritual congratulations".

Yasher Ko'ach, or the shortened form of "shko'ach" literally mean, "May your strength be firm" first quoted in Rashi to Shabbat 87a. It is suggested that in ancient times, the Torah scroll was held upright during its reading so that those surrounding it could follow as it was being read.

Sephardic communities made Sifrei Torah in cylindrical cases, which were self-standing. In Ashkenazi Synagogues, however, the Ba'al Koreh required a lot of strength to keep the Torah scroll upright and often he was helped by those standing alongside him. Hence, a "Yasher Ko'ach" was certainly in order.

In most synagogues, the congregation rises for the last few verses of each book of the Torah in preparation for reciting the "chazak" together out loud. There are a number of authorities who are of the opinion that "chazak, chazak, chazak" is what truly should be said upon completion of a book of the Torah.This is because the gematria of these three words combined is the same as the name "Moshe".

There is also a view that the proper wording is actually "chazak v'nitchazak". Nevertheless, common custom is not like these views. There is also an intriguing theory that the custom to shout חֲזַק חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזֵּק upon completion of a book of the Torah is actually the result of a printer's error. It may just be that an acronym (in the form of the letters chet-zayin-kuf) for the words "chazzan v'kahal" which used to be printed in Chumashim to remind the reader and congregation to say "chazak v'nitchazek" was misunderstood and came to be printed as חֲזַק חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזֵּק

"chazak" is recited by everyone present, to the exclusion of the one who was honoured with the concluding aliya. This is because the "chazak" is in fact a blessing to him. Additionally, some authorities rule that the one who received the aliya should remain silent as shouting "chazak" might be considered a forbidden interruption between the Torah reading and his concluding blessing. If, however, the one who received the aliya also recited the "chazak", one need not protest and nothing need be done. The one who reads the Torah only says "chazak…" after the congregation has done so.

It may just be that the wording of "chazak" is meant to parallel the blessing G-d gave to Yehoshua or the blessing which the angel Michael gave to Daniel. Although the "chazak" recited at the conclusion of a book of the Torah is viewed as a blessing to the one who received the last aliya of the book it is also deemed a congregational blessing for having reached the milestone of completing another book of the Torah together.

Finally, the "chazak" is also a congratulatory blessing to those individuals who completed that book of the Torah within the context of self-study as well. Indeed, a person is required to study the weekly parsha twice along with the targum each week before it is read on Shabbat in shul.

Rabbi Yosef Brandeiss -Rosh HaYeshiva Yeshivah L'zeirim Manchester



After the death of Yaakov, Yosef took his brothers on a detour to re-visit the pit that his brothers put him in. They thought that this was to remind them of the evil that they did to him, and to re-new the bitter feelings and hatred that he still harboured on them.

Yosef said, "Don't worry, I don't harbour any ill feelings anymore, I just want to come to say the bracha - **ברוך אתה ה' א-לקינו מלך העולם שעשה לי נס במקום הזה**



Rabbi Yehuda Zev Segal zt"l, The Manchester Rosh Yeshiva asks, why were the brothers so worried, especially as Yosef explained the reason why he came there?

He answers that Yosef said the bracha with such intensity and kavana, that he actually re-lived the whole dastardly episode. They were therefore worried and concerned that Yosef would take revenge on them and kill them!

This shows us, that it is very important to have **כוונה** and proper intentions when we make a brachas.

The Rosh Yeshiva's tefillos were meticulous.

Every time the Rosh Yeshivah sat down to eat, he stated his intention of doing the mitzvah of guarding one's health. Then out

came a small card with the brachos printed on it. It was his custom never to daven anything by heart, so one brachos card was kept at home and one in yeshivah.

When the Rosh Yeshivah davened, it seemed as if the fire of the tefillos encompassed him as he spoke each word meticulously from the siddur. Occasionally he would add words of supplication in Yiddish. In those days, the variety of translated siddurim that abound today didn't exist. The Rosh Yeshivah, who followed every word with his finger, used a "ladies' siddur," the Korban Minchah, because he liked the Yiddish translation it provided. His kavanah was so famously intense that it was widely known that he never looked out of the lines, not even noticing if a student wrote a name in the margin.

Before beginning his morning prayers, Rav Yehuda Zev would pray that Hashem help him daven with kavana. To achieve this goal, he recited every single tefilla from a text, even prayers such as Asher Yatzar, which one says a number of times a day. He would recite this prayer with the same intent and emotion that one recites Ne'ila on Yom Kippur.

Quite soon, he became renowned for his manner of tefillos, and people from all over the world would seek his blessings. Great Torah sages such as **Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky** would advise people in distress to seek the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva's brachos. When Rav Yaakov himself was ill, he asked someone who was going to Manchester to ask that Rav Yehuda Zev pray for him.

Similarly, the late **Satmar Rav** told someone who had approached him for a bracha, "Why seek a bracha from me when you can go to the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva?"

"When he davened, the Rosh Yeshivah wasn't just saying the words, he was living them!"

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel – The Power of Simcha



Whilst on a trip to America, I heard a shiur on נ"ך from **Rabbi Yisroel Reisman** one of the Roshei Yeshiva at Yeshiva Torah Vodaas, **(talmid of Rav Avrohom Yaakov Pam Zt'l)**

He asks a question that had been bothering him for many years which he did not have an answer to. There are not many people nowadays who are experts in negotiating their way around נ"ך. He said that he would have asked his Rebbe, Rav Pam, who would have surely known the answer.

It says in Yirmiyahu Perek 45, which consists of just five pesukim.- which is the shortest perek in all of נ"ך, that the talmid of Yirmiyahu,- בָּרוּךְ בֶּן־נֵרִיָּה requested of Yirmiyahu that he desired to also become a Navi. יָגַעְתִּי בְּאַנְחָתִי וּמְנוּחָה לֹא מָצָאתִי אוֹי־נָא לִי כִּי־יָסַף יְהוָה יָגוֹן עַל־מַכְאֹבִי Rashi says, ***The Shechinah has not rested upon me to prophesy. "Why am I different from the disciples of the prophets? Joshua served Moses and the Holy Spirit rested upon him. Elisha served Elijah and the Holy Spirit rested upon him. Why am I different?"***

His request was denied on the premise that the Yidden were going through tumultuous times as the Beis Hamikdash had just been destroyed, and there was a spiritual nadir in the world. This is not the opportune time to become a Navi. וְאַתָּה תְּבַקֶּשׁ־לְךָ גְדֹלוֹת אַל־תְּבַקֵּשׁ כִּי הִנְנִי מֵבִיא רָעָה עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר - ***And you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek, for behold I am bringing evil upon all flesh, says Hashem.***

However, if you look at the timeline, Yechezkel **was** appointed a Navi at this very same time period. Why was Yechezkel permitted to become a Navi but Baruch ben Neriah was denied?

He found an answer by **Reb Tzaddok HaKohen** in his sefer Pri Tzaddik on Succos.

Reb Tzaddok says that Yechezkel came to the conclusion that the Yidden were at a nadir spiritually, and there was only one direction to move in, - and that was up! So he went about his avoda with a happy disposition and was b'simcha.

Doing the avoda in this manner was very powerful, and allowed him to become a Navi.

We can learn from this, the power of Simcha!

Fulfilling the Will of Those Who Fear Him



In the last winter of his life, **R' Shimon Schwab** called in a wealthy benefactor of his kehillah. "I don't have much time left in this world," said R' Schwab to the benefactor, "and I will be going to Gehinnom.

"The Yeshivah's [Yeshiva Rav Samson Rafael Hirsh] deficit is close to a million dollars and most of it is in the unpaid salaries of its melamdim. I am Rav of the kehillah that teaches Torah im Derech Eretz. "Where is the derech eretz if we haven't paid our teachers for months? It will not be long before I will be called to give a din ve'cheshbon for my actions and I will be going to Gehinnom for this.

"I'm begging you. Please take me out of Gehinnom!"

The man was shaken. After giving the matter some thought, he agreed to cover the entire deficit in teachers' salaries, in weekly instalments, to be completed before the Yeshivah's annual dinner.

The last payment was made on the Friday before the dinner. The Yeshivah's dinner was on Sunday night. The following evening, R' Schwab passed away. (Torah Lives)

Shemiras Shabbos

Rabbi Yechiel Meir Tzudker told a story about a man named Mr. Donat who received a share in the first public transport company in Israel, called Shachar as part of his immigration privileges. For Donat, this was a marvellous stroke of good fortune.



In time, Shachar merged with HaMikasher, another transportation company, forming the iconic Egged Bus Service and shares skyrocketed. Just the dividends earned from his share in Egged were sufficient to support Mr. Donat's family comfortably. Yet, this merger resulted in an unforeseen problem for Torah observant shareholders.

When the newly founded Egged began operating, a large number of bus lines ran on Shabbat. Now anyone who owned shares in the company would be profiting from chilul Shabbat. Mr. Donat asked the Rav of Haifa, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Klein about what to do. Simply, this was forbidden, but Rabbi Klein wouldn't rule on the matter because there was so much poverty in Israel at the time, and if Mr. Donat would give up his shares, he would most probably have to start collecting to feed his family, which was not a simple matter. It borderlined a question of pikuach nefesh. And so he sent Mr. Donat to the **Chazon Ish** with the question, saying only the Gadol HaDor could answer such a critical question.

At that time, the Chazon Ish was ill and bedridden, but because Mr. Donat travelled for a half a day to get there, they allowed him in to quickly present his question. After hearing it, the Chazon Ish responded with just two words. "**אין אפשרות**" which meant it would be impossible to allow. Mr. Donat heard the Gadol's reply and his heart plummeted. Yet, despite his heartache and fear, he completely accepted the ruling and immediately set out for Egged's main offices.

When he arrived, he requested the deed of his share and ripped it into pieces, forfeiting his share in the company and its considerable returns. In that second, Donat was reduced from a man of means to a pauper. Instead of living in comfort, he became a low wage vendor and spent his days lugging around a heavy suitcase, selling soap door to door. But despite all the difficulties, he walked with his head held up high, knowing he sacrificed wealth and comfort to follow Hashem.

Even when he turned 80 years old, he was still working hard. While his friends were reaping the benefits of their pensions and living off their savings, old Mr. Donat was still working hard to make ends meet.

In his later years, he ended up changing jobs and became a helper in a yeshiva building. One day, he came into the building with a beaming smile on his face. One of the boys there asked him why he was so happy.

Mr. Donat replied, "This morning I was walking in one of the upscale neighbourhoods on Mount Carmel when I bumped into an old acquaintance of mine, a former colleague from my days in Egged. He recognized me and said, 'You see all these splendid houses around you? They all belong to veteran Egged shareholders. Look at what you lost when you foolishly forfeited your share. That one share would have been worth millions today. We are all living in beautiful homes with pools and cars while you are still toiling away like a workhorse.'"

Mr. Donat continued, "I didn't answer him because he would never understand what I have. Besides for my eternal rewards for what I gave up, tonight I am going to attend my son's Siyum HaShas.



This is not any siyum HaShas, my son was tested and knows the entire Shas by heart. Tonight, I'll be sitting with great Rabbis and the room will be filled with my children, children-in-law, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all of whom are filled with Torah and yirat Shamayim. You see, Shabbat paid me back ten-fold with the most nachat a person could have in this world." - It is not always about money. There is so much more to life than just dollars and cents.

Chizuk In The Siddur - יהי כבוד

רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום ***Many are the thoughts in a man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem, only that will prevail.***

As *frum Yieden*, we pepper our sentences with terms such as **ברוך ה', בעזרת ה', אם ירצה ה'** and similar phrases, but it's all too easy to say them without thinking about what they really mean.

The **של"ה הקדוש** explains that such words are crucial to our **אמונה** because while we have the ability to choose any action we wish, the outcome of that action is always in **הקב"ה** 's hands.

Saying these phrases and meaning them is **מחזק אמונה** in a very powerful way. He says that the word **היא** in our **פסוק** is an abbreviation of the phrase **אם ירצה ה'** . Human beings may have many thoughts, plans and desires, but **הקב"ה** has a far bigger plan and the result of our actions will always be part of that plan.

So the next time you try to do something and it doesn't work out the way you wanted it to, just remember that **עצת ה' היא תקום** - the outcome is always part of **הקב"ה** 's masterplan!

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez **לעילוי נשמת יהושע ע"ה בן ברוך הלוי נ"י**

וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם֙ שְׁמִ֔י וְשֵׁ֖ם אֲבֹתַ֣י אַבְרָהָ֑ם וְיִצְחָ֔ק 48:16



In his famous brocha of **הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל** Yaakov bentches Menashe and Efraim that they be deserving of having their names associated with those of Avraham and Yitzchok…

Yaakov saw with ruach hakodesh that Reshaim would descend from both of them. (see Rashi 48:8) How then would his bracha be effective?

So the Gemarah tells us in Nedarim 40a that there is a great reward for the mitzva of Bikur Cholim – even on **this** world.

Based on the Pasuk in Tehillim 41:3 **–ה' יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ וְיִחַיֵּהוּ וְאֻשַּׁר בָּאָרֶץ וְאַל תִּתְּנֵהוּ בְּנֶפֶשׁ אֹיְבָיו** ***Hashem will the protect him. give him life, he will be happy on earth, and will not be given over to his enemies!***

Yaakov hinted to this - **וְשֵׁ֖ם אֲבֹתַ֣י**

יַ-ה-וּ-ה יִשמרהו וְיחיהו וְאשר בָּארץ וְאל תִּתנהו בְּנפש אֹיביו

The first letter of each word is contained in the word **אֲבֹתַ֣י**!

"*May the merits of the mitzva of Bikur Cholim – by you coming to visit me now when I'm sick, stand and protect you and your children!!*" – Sefas Emes

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez

מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֶנָה לַחְמּוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי־מֶלֶךְ 'From Asher will come rich food, and he will yield regal delicacies..' 49:20

On Shabbos Kodesh, it is a great mitzva to eat delicacies and special foods in its honour. Each one according to his means- **שְׁמֶנָה לַחְמּוֹ:** Rich bread and **מַעֲדַנֵּי־מֶלֶךְ:** delicacies fit for kings.

In fact, the whole Pasuk hints to 'Oneg Shabbos.'- The word **מֵאָשֵׁר** is the same gematria as **ישראל** and the letters following **אשר** spell out the word **שבת!**

Also, the word **שְׁמֶנָה** unscrambled spells – **נשמה**

So far, the Pasuk hints as follows: Every **ישראל** (**מֵאָשֵׁר**) is obligated to enhance his **שבת**(**מֵאָשֵׁר**) with delicacies(**מַעֲדַנֵּי־מֶלֶךְ**), as well as with Torah learning to pleasure his **נשמה**(**שְׁמֶנָה**)

The gemarah says Shabbos 118b that one who keeps Shabbos properly – which is like keeping the entire Torah – has his sins forgiven!

This is based on a Pasuk in Yeshayahu 56:2 **שֹׁמֵר שַׁבָּת מֵחַלְּלוֹ.** The word **מֵחַלְּלוֹ** can be read **מחל לו** – 'He is forgiven.'

The word **לַחְמּוֹ** in our Pasuk can be unscrambled to read **מוחל** And the **נרות** that we light before Shabbos are for**שלום** – peace.

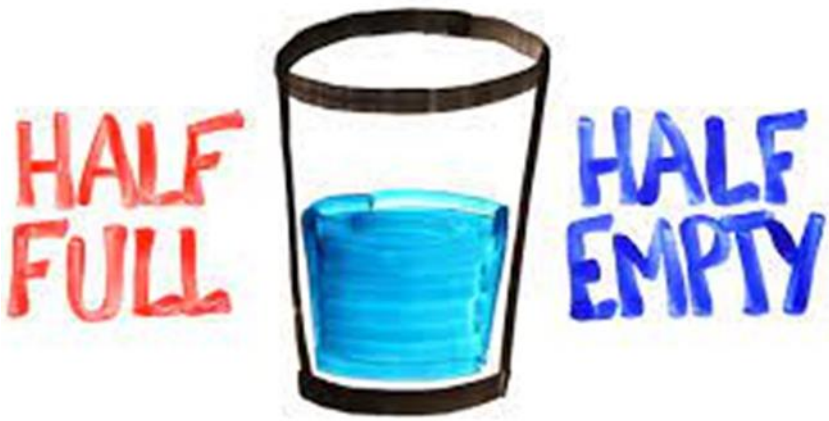
The Roshei Teivos of **מאשר שמנה לחמו והוא** spell out **שלום.** And the Sof Teivos are - **מאשר שמנה לחמו והוא** spell out **אורה.**

[ספר שמנה לחמו]

If Hashem has called you to the task – He has already qualified you for the job!

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - A Life That Matters

When a person says that he is making a living, he means that he is making an existence. Earning money is merely surviving. No matter how much money a person earns, it does not make his life meaningful. Making a living means making meaningful contributions to the world. How is the world now a better place because of you? How will the world look differently by the time you exit it?



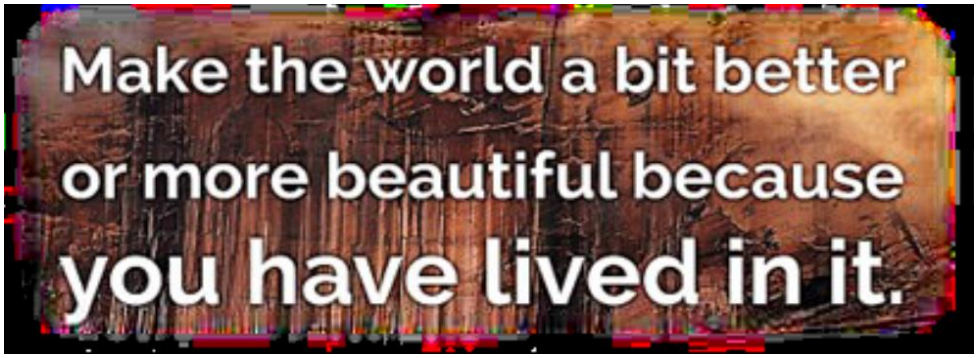
A grandchild asked **Rabbi Avigdor Miller Zt'l** his thoughts on the age-old quandary as to whether the cup was half-empty or half-full. His grandfather said that the answer is obvious — the cup is completely full- It is half full of water and half full of air! People can live without water for a while, but it is not possible for a person to live without air for more than a few minutes.

People look at their lives and see that it is half empty but that's insignificant compared to how full it is with what matters. The air of life is your contributions to the world, the meaning you add to the world. Will anyone miss you when you leave this world? Why will they miss you? What have you achieved? What significant contributions will you leave behind in this world?

At the funeral of a millionaire named David, the eulogizer, Jay, mentioned the wealthy man's accomplishments. He praised David's many great business dealings, the real estate he acquired throughout his life, the immense amount of luxury cars he owned and his brand-name watch collection. Jay suddenly realized that David's family felt embarrassed. They request that Jay make the focus on his accomplishments in meaningful arenas such as the charity he gave and the Torah he learned.

Why did those present feel awkward when David's material achievements were mentioned? The answer is because everyone wants to leave this world being remembered for their meaningful, deeper, spiritual accomplishments.

Most people spend the majority of their time chasing physical matters even though they know internally that this is not the legacy they want to leave behind. Who wants to be remembered for their muscles, nice appearance or wealth?



We must ask ourselves: **"What do you want people to remember about you after you leave this world?"**



Chirping of Birds

R' Avraham, the son of the **Vilna Gaon**, tells us that Hashem created the phenomenon of birds' chirping to provide us with a built-in natural reservoir of music so that it will be readily available to draw its listeners to joyousness. He writes, "The birds sing before us on the face of the heavens *l'dashein es nafsheinu l'orair es levavainu l'simcha*, to saturate our souls, to arouse our hearts to joy."

Now, listen to these words on this subject. **R' Chaim Vital** writes that the **Arizal** was able to understand the chirping of birds. He explains that on the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed the secrets of Torah were captured by the *klipos*.

All creatures, even unclean animals, birds and creeping things have a guardian angel above. Ever since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, the guardian angels of unclean animals know the mysteries of the Torah and they infuse profound secrets of the Torah into the chirpings of the birds.

A person who understands bird chirpings can gather many secrets of the Torah by listening to their songs. He concludes, "In fact, I personally saw my master the Arizal do that."



The Zaloshitzer Rebbe*Hyd

R' Shem Klinberg of Zaloshitz was the Zaloshitzer Rebbe (1870-1943), who was a scion of the Zidichov-Karmarna lineage and one of the greatest mekubalim before the Holocaust. After his father's death in 1918, he became the Zaloshitzer Rebbe in Krakow.

When the Germans captured Krakow, he was on the list of rabbis they sought to arrest, in accordance with their policy of arresting the Jewish spiritual elite in order to destroy the leadership. The Zaloshitzer Rebbe succeeded in escaping arrest and hid for two years in one of the nearby towns.

In hiding he continued to study and teach as much as possible and to give encouragement to all those who were with him. When the Krakow ghetto was established in March 1941, he was forced to leave his hiding place and was smuggled into the ghetto. From the Krakow ghetto he was transferred to the Plaszow concentration camp.

On April 3, 1943 (28th of Nissan) the Germans combed the barracks of the Plaszow concentration camp in search of ten prominent Rabbanim whom they would execute publicly.

When the Zaloshitzer Rebbe was led to the execution site, thousands of Jews, observant and non-observant broke into bitter tears but the Rebbe begged them to accept the divine decree with love and joy. The Rebbe was ordered to remove his clothes but his request to be allowed to keep his shirt and tallis katan while reciting *vidui* was granted. He absorbed himself in lofty thoughts as his face radiated an otherworldly glow. After briefly glancing at the Jews who were forced to witness the execution, he lifted his eyes upward crying out **הרני כפרתם של ישראל** – '***let me be an atonement for the Jewish people***.' He recited *vidui*, covered his face with his tallis katan and cried Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad and was then shot to death (see Ohalei Shem, p. 18).

The Zaloshitzer Rebbe wrote a commentary on the Zohar called Ohalei shem. His library contained 800 volumes on kabbala and chassidus and 1,500 volumes of shailos teshuvos and chidushim on gemara, all inscribed with his marginal notes (Ohalei Shem).

The many sefarim written by the Zaloshitzer Rebbe were all destroyed by the Nazis except for a few scattered manuscripts that survived the Holocaust. His son, R' Moshe Klinberg, collected these writings and published them under the title Ohalei Shem.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, *zt"l*, was the *Rav* of Vilna, and the author of the *Sefer Achiezer*.

When he got older, he used to say, "For years, I thought my entry to *Olam Haba* would be my *Sefer Achiezer*. However, now I believe it is the money I raised for widows and orphans throughout Europe that will get me into *Olam Haba*!"

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez



The Meforshim on the Medrash tell us that when we recite Shema and Boruch Shem multiple times daily during the tefilos of Shacharis and Maariv, we should concentrate on living up to the Emunah of Yaakov Avinu who lived his entire life with perfect belief in Hashem. – All 147 years!

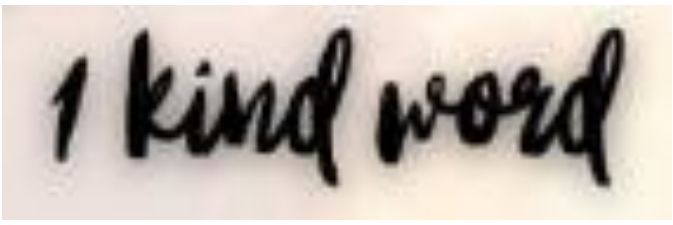
Says the **Ben Ish Chai**: Shema and Boruch Shem are recited by Korbonos in the morning before Shacharis, and the two pesukim are also recited during the tefilos of Shacharis itself. They are repeated once again in Maariv.. A total of 3 times.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְ-ה-וָ-ה אֱלֹקינוּ יְ-ה-וָ-ה אֶחָד contains 25 letters

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד contains 24 letters.

25+24= 49. Three times a day… 49+49+49 = **147**!

The years of Yaakov's LIFE (147) are represented in our recital of Shema and Baruch Shem each day!



IKEA conducts bullying experiment on plants — the results are shocking

We've already seen too many examples of the negative effects of bullying on humans, but IKEA took it one step further when the retailer conducted an experiment to show what can happen to a plant that's been relentlessly bullied.

The niche experiment showed students how destructive negative comments can be. The DIY furniture giant set up two identical IKEA

plants in the school, and for 30 days invited students to compliment one plant and bully the other.

Although it's not the most scientific of experiments — the company has admitted as much — the plants were kept under identical controlled environments. They each received the same amount of light, nutrition and water.

The students' comments were fed through speakers rigged into each enclosure. They were encouraged to record their words of praise, and to record their insults. A recording device then transmitted the messages to each plant.



After 30 days, the plant that received compliments was healthy and thriving, while its insult-riddled counterpart was wilted and noticeably droopy.

"This is an incredibly effective initiative that has encouraged people to make room for change," said Vinod Jayan, managing director of IKEA UAE, Qatar, Egypt and Oman, in a statement. "It has helped children and their families understand the impact that words can have."

Although this was obviously a marketing and awareness initiative on the part of the Swedish retailer, many have rushed to show there's little real evidence to prove that plants will die if they receive an onslaught of negative chatter.

There is a garden section at IKEA complete with complimented plants for anyone to take a little bit of happiness home! Because plants have the same senses as human beings!"

If a kind word can have such an impact on a plant… Just imagine what it can do to a person! - Kind words save lives.



Connecting by Rabbi Sender Haber



I have a brother who spends an extraordinary amount of time at the Kosel Hamaaravi. Before he was married, he even brought each of his dates to the Kotel. Despite the presence of a Mechitza, my brother managed to make these dates meaningful by greeting each one of the beggars by name and introducing them to his date.

One particular girl was particularly struck by this habit. She did not end up marrying my brother, but she recommended that my brother meet the only other person she knew who could greet the Kotel staff by name. They were engaged a few weeks later.

I arrived in Israel on the day before my brother's wedding with a strong desire to go to the Kosel and spend time with my brother. We arrived at the Kotel just before midnight and the soldiers on duty greeted my brother like an old friend. As they ushered us through the metal detector an alarm went off. The soldier searched my brother and gave him a questioning look when he found and removed a case of cigars from my brother's jacket pocket. "Those are for you guys", Eliyahu explained, "I'm getting married tomorrow".

As the smiling soldiers lit up and the aroma of cigars filled the Kosel plaza, I couldn't help but notice the number of beggars approaching my brother and I. They didn't want money. They just wanted to talk to Eliyahu. Eliyahu looked straight into the first man's eyes and said "I'm getting married tomorrow, please come to the wedding". The joy on the man's face was unmistakable, but I couldn't tell if he was smiling for Eliyahu's good fortune in getting married, or for his own good fortune in getting invited.

Eliyahu extended his sincere invitation to each and every one of those downtrodden men and women at the Kosel. He asked about their spouses by name, gave some money for a taxi, and expressed genuine regret when one fellow said that he would be too busy to make it to the wedding.

We made our way to the Kosel, davened, and finally made our way home after midnight amidst calls of good wishes and through a cloud of cigar smoke.

Needless to say, the wedding was beautiful, and the couple began their married lives together with some of the most overlooked residents of Jerusalem.

In Parshas Vayechi, Yaakov lay on his deathbed. He summoned each one of his children and blessed them individually. Only Shimon and Levi were called in as a pair. "Shimon and Levi are brothers", Yaacov told them. "You have the power to unite with each other and cause major events to happen. You acted together to sell Yosef, and he was sold. You acted together to attack the residents of Shechem, and you were successful".

In his bracha, Yaacov hinted that in the future the children of Shimon would stage a demonstration against Moshe in the episode of Zimri and Kosbi and the children of Levi would gather together against Moshe in the rebellion of Korach. Yaakov was very clear in his criticism.

He cursed their anger and declared that he would have no part in their actions. He prayed that the protagonists would not be identified as his grandchildren and that the children of Shimon and Levi not be allowed to unite. Instead, he expressed his hope that the decendants of Shimon and Levi would be scattered and dispersed throughout the Jewish kingdom.

Despite the implications of Yaacov's dying words, the tribes of Shimon and Levi were not evil. From all of the tribes, it was Levi who was to represent us in the Beis Hamikdosh.

To this day, we are commanded to this day to give special honour to Kohanim and Leviim. Likewise, the tribe of Shimon made up the teaching corp of the Jewish people. The scholars and educators of all of the tribes came primarily from Shimon.

The Kli Yakar writes that the ability of Shimon and Levi to represent and educate the Jewish people as Kohanim and teachers was a result of their ability to connect with people. Yaacov saw that when Shimon and Levi connected to each other the results were not good, so he prayed that they separate from each other and use their abilities to form powerful connections with the entire Jewish nation. Shimon and Levi were to spread out, to teach and to inspire because of their ability to connect, not in spite of it.

When I was in yeshiva, one of my Chavrusas was also my best friend. We didn't learn much because there was so much to talk about. We could shmooze for hours and fall drastically behind in our learning. In an act of self-righteousness, we asked asked our rebbe to split us up and assign us new Chavrusos. The rebbe refused. "If you shmooze well together", he said, "you can learn well together too".

Yaacov looked at the powerful abilities of Shimon and Levi and saw enormous potential. He chastised them for their anger but not for their unity. He told them to channel their energy to benefit all of Klal Yisrael. In their particular case it was not advantageous to direct their connectivity toward each other. Instead, he insisted

that they scatter throughout the land of Israel and connect to every single Jew. He made them our representatives in the Beis Hamikdash and the teachers in our Yeshivos. He unleashed their power in a constructive way and gave them, perhaps, the best blessing of all.

I recently asked my brother what became of all of those guests at his wedding. He told me that not one of them has forgotten his gesture. Five years later, they approach him in the streets and thank him for making them a part of his simcha and of his life.

We have a power to connect with people in a way that is too valuable to ignore. Like Shimon and Levi, we need to spread the love and recognize that we can change lives every time we smile, every time we make a phone call, and every time we say good shabbos.

We may be tempted to restrict our unity to those around us, but we need to follow the lead of Yaacov, Shimon, and Levi to touch and acknowledge every single person in our lives.

The power of "Good morning" - Yisroel Ciner

Seeing his strength ebb, Yaakov summons his twelve sons to bless them before his death. Yehuda was ordained with the blessing of 'malchus' – the royal lineage until the coming of the Moshiach. Yaakov also prophesied of the abundance that the portion of Yehuda would contain. "Chachlili einayim miyayin" – the eyes will be reddened from an abundance of wine – "u'l'ven shinayim maichalav (49:12)" – and the teeth whitened from an abundance of milk.

The Talmud (Kesuvos 112B) offers an alternative understanding. It is greater to 'whiten your teeth' to a friend ("u'l'ven shinayim") than to give him milk to drink ("maichalav"). The power of a smile! Often it is both the easiest and the greatest gift that we can offer.

The Mishna (Avos 4:15) states **הֱוֵי מַקְדִּים בִּשְׁלוֹם כָּל אָדָם** -that one should always endeavour to initiate a greeting. **The Aley Shor**

explains that to return a greeting is 'derech eretz' -proper respect – but to initiate a greeting is "hazrachas shemesh" – sunshine!



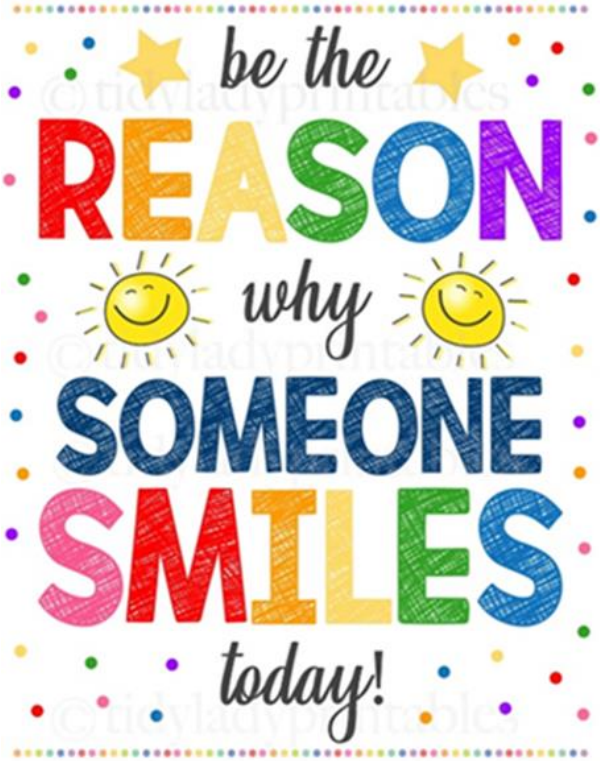
The Torah wants us to know, he writes, that everyone is waiting and hoping for this little bit of 'sunshine'. It is each and every person's responsibility to, as much as possible, illuminate the lives of others.

A small infant already differentiates between a smile and a frown. A smile prompts the glow of his delight. An angry face brings almost immediate tears. I believe that studies have shown that a healthy, cheerful, nurturing environment contributes at least as much to a child's well-being and development as does proper eating and nutrition.

Everyone needs this sunshine of a friendly and encouraging smile. Spouses need it to maintain and build on their relationship. Children (of all ages!) bask in the glow of a parents proud smile. The mood of parents often depends on a smile, or lack of one, from their children. Friends, acquaintances, teachers, students, bosses, workers all need this to coexist happily and productively.

A person's face has been called a 'rshus harabim' – public property. We all have issues that we are dealing with and often a dour expression is a true representation of our feelings. At the same time, how often is our own mood spoiled by seeing such an expression on the face of another… The strength that it takes to assure that our problems don't become someone else's…

On a Friday in Yerushalayim one has many opportunities to give charity to others less fortunate than us. Normally, in our rush to accomplish the many pre-Shabbos errands, a few coins are blindly dropped into a cup, accompanied by a mumbled wish for a good Shabbos.



One time, having noticed a despondent look on the face of an elderly man collecting charity, I paused as I handed him the coins. Looking into his eyes I smiled, asked him how he was feeling, and then, shaking his hand, I warmly wished him a good Shabbos.

The transformation that took place in this man was incredible. He didn't want to let go of my hand! He literally followed me out of the bakery, holding my hand, thanking and blessing me. I was very moved by this encounter as I realized that the relatively small mitzva of giving a few cents to charity could be increased exponentially by a simple smile and a few kind, caring words.

So often, what really matters isn't necessarily what we do or how much we do but rather the way we do it. Often, many aspects of our acts are beyond our control. However, our attitude and the way we do things is clearly within our control.

That is the power of a smile. The power of a "Good morning"!

Torah.org - A Father's Blessing by Rabbi Naftali Reich

It is an intensely Jewish and awe-inspiring spectacle. The father lifts his hands, and the child bows his head. The father places his hands on the child's head, closes his eyes and begins to whisper his blessing. It matters not if the father is a great sage or a simple man, the blessing draws its power from the sincerity of the father.

Come, let us move a little closer and listen to the words he is saying. "May the L-rd establish you like Ephraim and Menashe! May Hashem

bless you and protect you . . .” These are the words our Sages, based on Jacob’s instructions, have instituted as the formula for the paternal blessing. But why Ephraim and Menashe? What was so special about Joseph’s sons that they have become the paragons to which all Jewish children aspire?



In this week’s parshah, we witness the emotional scene of Jacob blessing his grandsons Ephraim and Menashe from his deathbed. As Jacob reaches out to place his hands on their heads, he sees that Joseph has positioned the older Menashe to receive his grandfather’s right hand, which is considered predominant, and the younger Ephraim to receive the left. But Jacob sees greater things in Ephraim’s future, and he “maneuvers his hands,” crossing over with the right hand to place it on Ephraim’s head and the left on Menashe’s.

We would not have been surprised had the elder Menashe resented the pre-eminence accorded to his younger brother, but there is not the slightest hint of such a reaction in the Torah. Nor do we find any hint of Ephraim feeling suddenly superior.

On the contrary, Menashe and Ephraim were both perfectly content with the roles they had been assigned to play in the destiny of the Jewish people. There was absolutely no discord between these two brothers, only a desire to fulfill their own individual destinies to the best of their abilities and a selfless dedication to their common goal of doing what was best for the Jewish people as a whole.

This, the commentators explain, is the perfect blessing a father can give his son. The most blessed state a person can achieve is to reach his own full potential while maintaining a sense of equilibrium – or in our contemporary parlance, to be a “contented overachiever.” This

is quite an accomplishment, but we can attain it if we rise above the pettiness of coveting what Heaven has chosen to grant someone else.

If we look inward at what we ourselves can be, we can focus on our growth and, at the same time, relate to other people in a positive, giving and compassionate way. If, however, we look outward at what others have been given, we will never find contentment and the growth that it fosters.

Ephraim and Menashe found that rare harmony of achievement and contentment, and we bless our children that they should find it as well.

A weary traveller was returning home after a long journey. As he trudged along the road, he tried not to think of the blisters on his feet. Instead, he thought only about his younger brother's wedding, which was to take place the following day. One day's march more, and he would be home.



Suddenly, he heard the clatter of hooves, and he turned and saw a beautiful coach. "My good man," he called out to the coachman. "Can I catch a ride with you for a ways? I'll sit beside you on the bench, and I'll tell you where I have to get off."

"Today's your lucky day," said the coachman. "No one's using the coach. You can ride inside."

The traveller couldn't believe his good fortune as he sank into the plush upholstery. Within moments, he was fast asleep.

He slept for hours while the coach followed a bewildering course of highways and roads. Finally, the coach pulled to a halt, and the traveller awoke. The sun was sinking in the sky as he rubbed his eyes and looked about him.

"Where are we?" he asked.

The coachman mentioned the name of a town.

"What!" the traveller cried out in anguish. "I'll never get to my destination in time. We've been riding in the opposite direction!"

"Well, look at the bright side," said the coachman. "At least your ride was comfortable."

A comfortable ride is not much consolation when one is going in the wrong direction. And if we devote too much of our energy to comfort and status, we may very well lose sight of the true destination in our journey through life,. Especially in our own times, when there is such peer pressure to focus on the accumulation of comforts, we would do better to focus on the activities that help us reach our destination. And when we sit down to define the goals of our lives, we will surely find that we care more about who and what we are than about what we have accumulated. Of one thing we can be sure – we have all been given the tools we need to fulfil our personal destinies.



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

To find the truth, one must search with candles…

Harav Moshe Morddechai of Otwock.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series [לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה]



וַיְבָרְכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּךָ יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה 48:20

The Ksav Sofer brings **The targum Yoinoson Ben Uziel** who says וּבָרִיכִינוּן בְּיוֹמָא הַהוּא לְמֵימַר בָּךְ יוֹסֵף בְּרִי יְבָרְכוּן בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יַת יְנוּקָא בְּיוֹמָא דְמְהוֹלְתָּא לְמֵימָר יְשַׂוִינָךְ ה׳ כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה ***'And he blessed them in that day, saying, In you, Yoseph my son, shall the house of Yisrael bless their infants in the day of their circumcision, saying, Hashem reckons you as Ephraim and as Menasheh.***

This is the beautiful bracha that we give nowadays at the Bris to a child.

[Incidentally, **Rav Tzadok HaKohen** says that this is a proof from the Torah, that when you say over a gematria with the kolel (+/- 1) it is ok. His proof is Yaakov Avinu said **כִּרְאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן יִהְיוּ לִי** (48:5) - **אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה** are considered as equal to **רְאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן**.

The gematria of **אֶפְרַיִם** (331) and **מְנַשֶּׁה** (395) =**726**.The gematria of **רְאוּבֵן** (259) and **שִׁמְעוֹן** (466) =**725**, which is 1 out!]

Why did Yaakov say **אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה כִּרְאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן יִהְיוּ לִי** in this manner? Why didn't he just say, "You should be like **רְאוּבֵן** and **שִׁמְעוֹן**? And also, why did he give precedence of **אֶפְרַיִם** (who was younger) over **מְנַשֶּׁה**?

Says the Ksav Sofer, that the meforshim say that אֶפְרַיִם spent his time learning Torah together with his father – Yaakov Avinu. Whereas מְנַשֶּׁה was the right hand man of his father – looking after the affairs of the country and leading over the people in a upright and just way.

When we come to give a child a bracha on the day of his Bris, this is hopefully a trajectory for what his life is going to be like. We therefore say that you should go on either of these two paths - Either leading a life like אֶפְרַיִם being **עוסק בספרי התורה** which has priority (which is why he is mentioned first), but if not, then be like מְנַשֶּׁה being **עוסקים בצורכי ציבור באמונה**.

A Yid must always be doing either of these two things.

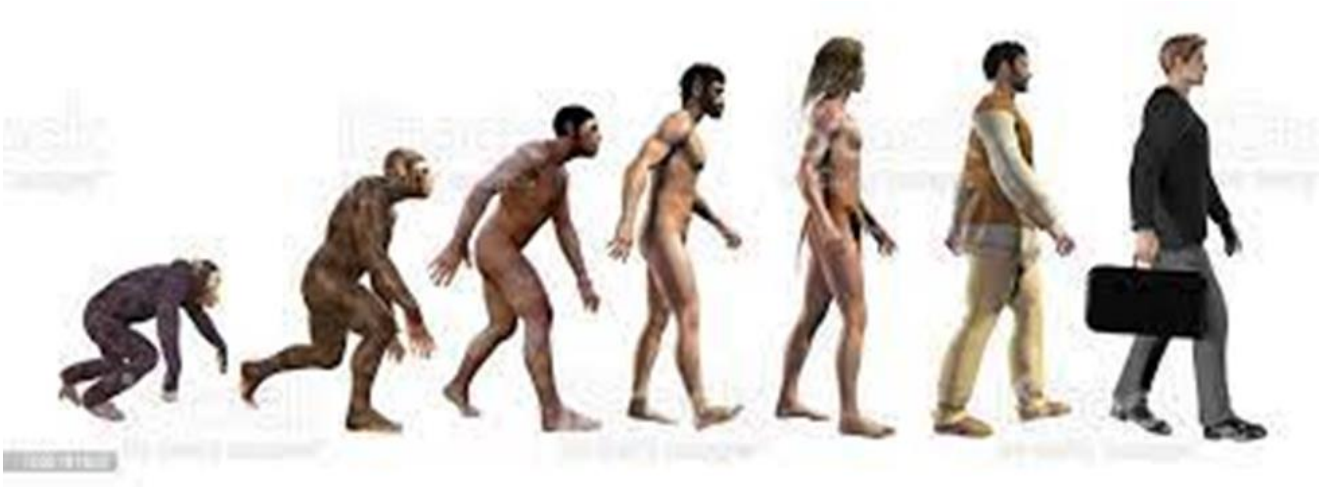
Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky was once travelling with his son and granddaughter on an airplane. Seated next to him was the non-religious head of the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labor in Israel. During the course of the flight, he was astonished to notice Rav Yaakov's son and granddaughter constantly coming to check on him to see if there was anything they could do to make his flight more comfortable.

The man couldn't help but sadly contrast the behaviour of Rav Yaakov's family with that of his own, who barely made time to visit or talk to him, and he asked Rav Yaakov to explain the secret of how he created such close and reverential family bonds. Rav Yaakov responded that the warm relationships he enjoyed with his children and grandchildren had nothing to do with any superior methodology, but with the underlying philosophical differences between him and his seatmate.

Rav Yaakov explained that Orthodox Jews believe in a concept of yeridas ha'doros – declining spiritual generations – as each

successive generation is further removed from the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. As such, we emphasize the paramount important of mesorah, and young children inherently respect and care for their parents and elders. Our children and grandchildren view us as a critical link in their connection to the Torah, and as such, they naturally want to interact with us and help care for us.



Turning to his neighbour, Rav Yaakov concluded, "You, on the other hand, believe in and promulgate the theory of evolution, which teaches that each successive generation is more sophisticated and evolved than the previous one. Instead of looking at you as being closer to Moshe Rabbeinu, your family views you as being closer to a monkey. Is it any wonder that they don't make much time for you!?"

There is a famous Rav Tzadok HaKohen (amongst others) says that there was only one time ever in the history of the world that there wasn't **ירידת הדורות**. And that was with **אֶפְרַיִם** and **מְנַשֶּׁה**. Yaakov Avinu said **אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה כִּרְאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן יִהְיוּ לִי** (48:5) They jump up a level to be considered just the same as the other **שבטי קה**. We always aspire for our descendants to do the same. This is why at a Bris we say that the child should be **וּבָרֵיכִינוּן בְּיוֹמָא - כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה הַהוּא לְמֵימַר בָּךְ יוֹסֵף בְּרִי יְבָרְכוּן בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יַת יְנוּקָא בְּיוֹמָא דְּמְהוֹלְתָּא לְמֵימָר יְשַׂוִינָךְ ה' כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה**

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series [לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה]

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים. When Yaakov Avinu gathered his family together, he wanted to tell them about **אחרית הימים**, the end times. (49:1)



Rashi says **בקש לגלות את הקץ ונסתלקה שכינה ממנו והתחיל אומר דברים אחרים** - ***Yaakov wanted to reveal to them the end times, but The Shechina left him, and he began to say other things.***

The Gemarah Pesachim (56a) and the Targum Yerushalmi complement the story with additional information.

The Gemarah says that Yaakov was lying on a bed made out of solid gold. He called in his entire family, and they all stood around him. **בִּיקֵּשׁ יַעֲקֹב לְגַלּוֹת לְבָנָיו קֵץ הַיָּמִין** - He wanted to reveal to them the end times, **וְנִסְתַּלְּקָה מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁכִינָה** - but The Shechina left him. He said to them, **שֶׁמָּא חַס וְשָׁלוֹם יֵשׁ בְּמִטָּתִי פְּסוּל** maybe Heaven forbid, one of my descendants is unfit (that you don't believe in **ה׳ אֶחָד** as was the case with my grandfather Avraham, from whom Yishmael emerged, and like my father Yitzchok, from whom Esav emerged).

Together, his sons said to him: **שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה׳ אֱלֹקינוּ ה׳ אֶחָד** - ***Just as there is only one G-d in your heart, so too, there is only one in our hearts***.

Yaakov said that if that is the case, then I don't understand this feeling, however he bentched them - **בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד** -

Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever, as all his children were righteous.

The Targum Yerushalmi says over here, that Yaakov responded **יהא שמיה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמין**



The Marhasha points out that not only was Yaakov worried that one of his sons was '*unfit*', but that generally, there was a lack of achdus amongst them, which could lead to avoda zarah.

The Medrash points out that this is why a double lashon is used here - הֵקָּבְצוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ - '***Gather and listen***' (Pasuk **ב**) ie Yaakov recognized this lack of unity, and was requesting of his son's, that they should gather back together and be unified.

I saw in a sefer an insight into what Yaakov Avinu wanted to reveal to his sons.

He wanted to reveal the **קֵץ** of the galus Mitzrayim, and also the **קֵץ** of the current galus that we are in now. However if there would be a p'gam amongst them, he would be unable to tell the revelations. But since they allayed his fears that they were all holy and had full Emunah in Hashem, there must be another reason holding me back from revealing the **קֵץ**.

With regards to Galus Mitzrayim, the sefarim write that Hashem told Moshe Rabeinu **שמות ג יד** to tell Klal Yisrael **אהי-ה אשר אהי-ה** - I will be with and guide them through galus.

We were sent into galus because there were 9 of the Shevotim who sold Yosef Hatzadik to Mitzrayim. So 9x **אהי-ה = 189**. **לְגַלּוֹת לְבָנָיו בִּיקֵּשׁ יַעֲקֹב קֵץ הַיָּמִין** - This is entering into the final year of **קֵץ** - **190 וְנִסְתַּלְּקָה מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁכִינָה** because Yaakov didn't take into account

that the 9 that sent him down to Mitzrayim made a *cheirem* that no one could divulge what occurred – including the Shechinah! **וְנִסְתַּלְּקָה מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁכִינָה** can therefore mean that he didn't reckon in the additional 21 of the Shechina! Therefore, you must include an additional 21. Therefore 189+21 = 210 which is the actual number of years of galus Mitzrayim!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

How to Give Tzedakah



In the bracha of Osher - **מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֶנָה לַחְמּוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי מֶלֶךְ** (49:20) '***From Asher will come rich food, and he will yield regal delicacies***.' This is only one of three pesukim in the whole of T'nach that the **Alshich** says are similar to one another in the fact that they are the only three pesukim that have 7 words with the middle word being **וְהוּא**.

The next one is in Yeshayahu (32:8) - **וְנָדִיב נְדִיבוֹת יָעָץ וְהוּא עַל־נְדִיבוֹת יָקוּם** ***But the generous person plans generous deeds, and he, because of generous deeds, shall stand.***

The third one is in Iyov (28:23) - **אֱלֹקִים הֵבִין דַּרְכָּהּ וְהוּא יָדַע אֶת־מְקוֹמָהּ** ***Hashem understood its way, and He knew its place.***

The Alshich says that there are three types of ways people can give tzedakah:

The first type of way is someone that takes regular sustenance for himself but gives the poor man delicacies in a regal manner.

The second type of way is a person who not only gives to the poor, but he advises and encourages others to give as well.

The third type of way is a person who doesn't know who the recipient of his charity is and the recipient doesn't know who the giver is. Only Hashem knows.

These three ways of giving tzedakah correspond to the three pesukim above.

The Imrei Emes had a very special pair of precious Tefillin that he only used once a year on Erev Yom Kippur. One time, his Chasidim came into shul and saw that stranger in town was wearing the Rebbe's special Tefillin. They asked the Rebbe, "What's going on?"

The Rebbe replied, "This Yid came from out of town, and he lost his Tefillin. He asked for a pair to put on. So, I lent him these as my regular ones are at home."

When you do chesed with someone, you should do it in the best way possible.



Bitachon

In all circumstances we must have Bitachon, as it says in the Midrash, "Everything can be attained through bitachon. If you suffer yesurim (afflictions), have bitachon. To merit Hashem's compassion, have bitachon. If you want forgiveness, have bitachon. For the redemption (from galus), have bitachon, as it states (49:18) **לישעותך קויתי ה'** 'For Your salvation, I trust, Hashem.'"

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l saw a Yid who was very worried and asked what was bothering him. The man told the Rebbe his problems.

The rebbe replied, "When a Yid has a tzarah, he must say (49:18) **לישעותך קויתי ה'** , 'For Your salvation, I hope for, Hashem.' If the tzarah is greater, he should say, **קויתי ה' לישועתך**. And if the problem is even greater, he should say **ה' לישועתך קויתי**.

Reb Pinchas Koritzer zt'l says, "Someone who lives with emunah and trusts in Hashem will have yeshuos and be saved in ways he never imagined." Perhaps we say **לישעותך קויתי ה'** in three forms to hint that the salvation might come from the right, and maybe from the left, and it can come from a third place, too - from a place you never imagined.

Notice that each time one says **לישעותך קויתי ה'**, Hashem's name comes closer to him. The first time, he says **לישעותך קויתי ה'**, where Hashem's name appears as the third word. The second time, **ה' קויתי לישועתך**, "Hashem" is the second word. Finally, the third time, we say **ה' לישועתך קויתי** , and Hashem's name is said first. This hints that the more we think about Hashem and trust in Him, Hashem comes closer and closer to us.

Reb Shlomo Kalish zt'l was with **Reb Chaim Brisker** for a shalosh seudos, and he related that for twenty minutes, Reb Chaim repeated the words **לישעותך קויתי ה'**. This is because emunah and bitachon require constant reinforcement.

A malach once told the Bais Yosef that if Hashem would give one's eyes reshus to see what happens when one learns mishnayos they would see how on every side of the person armies and armies of malachim that are created from the 'hevel picha' [the breath of your mouth] of being oisek in the heiligeh mishnayos! **{ מגיד מישרים בא }**

Be Strong – Chazak



It is a good omen to finish a sefer on a positive note, but Chumash Bereishis doesn't seem to end positively. The final words of the sefer are (50:26) **וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בֶּן־מֵאָה וָעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים וַיַּחַנְטוּ אֹתוֹ וַיִּישֶׂם בָּאָרוֹן בְּמִצְרָיִם** "***Yosef was niftar at the age of one hundred ten years, and they embalmed him, and he was placed into the coffin in Mitzrayim***."

Why do we end on this sad note? Even if we translate the pasuk according to *remez*, the question remains. Yosef represents the spirituality of a Yid. **וימת יוסף** , means that the Yid fell to very low levels. **וישם בארון במצרים** , "*he was placed into the coffin in Mitzrayim*" further expressing just how low he fell. He fell so far from kedushah, and we wonder why the Chumash ends like this.

However, immediately following these words, everyone listening to Kriyas Hatorah stands up and announces **חזק חזק ונתחזק** . If a person can fall to such low levels and still stand up and shout, "I will strengthen myself strong and become good again," it marks and symbolizes a happy ending.

This week, we say **חזק** at three places. First, it states **וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַמִּטָּה** "*Yisrael summoned his strength, and sat up on his bed.*" (48:2)

The second time we say **חזק** is when we finish the parashah. Everyone stands up and says **חזק חזק ונתחזק**.

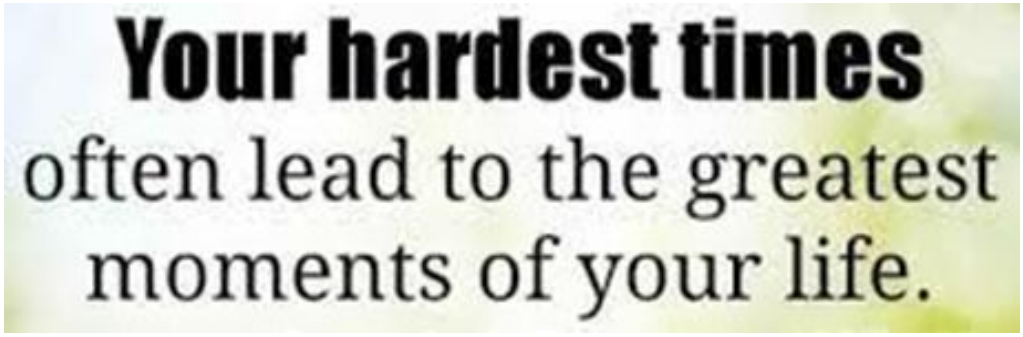
The third **חזק** is in the haftarah. It states **וְחָזַקְתָּ... לָלֶכֶת בִּדְרָכָיו** "*You shall be strong…to walk in His ways.*" (Malachim 1,2:2-3)

Reb Moshe Mordechai of Boyan zt'l points out that the first **חזק** is written when Yaakov Avinu was lying in bed and then sat up. The second is when we sit and then stand up. The third time while standing and then beginning to go.

Reb Moshe Mordechai explains that this is telling us to take one step in the right direction. If you are lying down, sit up. If you are sitting, stand up; if you are standing, begin walking. Take one step towards improvement.

Growth happens slowly, by taking small steps. Similarly, when we tell someone **חזק** - to be strong, we mean that he should take even just one step in the right direction. That one good deed will lead to others. Begin with something small and grow from there.

Turning Tribulations into Triumphs



Yosef HaTzaddik reached his high levels because of the hardships he endured in his life. He was hated by his brothers, sold as a slave, withstood difficult tests with Photiphar's wife, and was in jail for twelve years. He became the leader of Mitzrayim, which certainly came along with a new array of spiritual challenges.

It is precisely because he was tested repeatedly and so intensely that he reached his high spiritual levels.

Reb Tzaddok HaKohen says that this shouldn't surprise us because the Jewish nation excels and reaches its full potential, specifically during hard times.

Salvation that Come from Toiling in Torah



The *Zohar* (vol.3, 216:) writes, **כָּל הַמִּשְׁתַּדֵּל בְּאוֹרַיְיתָא, בָּטִיל מִנֵּיהּ חִיּוּבָא דִּכְתָבַיָּא וּמַזָּלֵ**" ***Whoever toils in Torah, his mazal changes***."

If he had a mazal to be poor, childless, or any other *yesurim*, the mazal turns around and becomes better in the merit of the Torah.

A bachur once asked the **Chazon Ish *zt'l*** whether he should follow the doctor's recommendation to undergo surgery. After hearing the details of the situation, the Chazon Ish advised the *bachur* to go ahead with the surgery.

The *bachur* then said, "Can I speak in learning with the Chazon Ish? I have a question I want to discuss."

The Chazon Ish enjoyed speaking in learning with *bachurim*, and they discussed a deep topic in *Kodshim* for about an hour. The Chazon Ish was impressed by this young man's erudition.

As the *bachur* was getting ready to leave, the Chazon Ish told him, "Regarding the operation, I changed my mind. You don't need the surgery."

The surprised *bachur* asked the Chazon Ish why he had changed his mind.

The Chazon Ish replied, "When you asked me whether you should have the operation, I didn't know that you are a *talmid chacham*. But now that I see you are among the **עמלי התורה** those who toil in Torah, so you don't need the operation because Hashem deals with **עמלי התורה** in an entirely different manner (*Maaseh Ish* vol.1, p.77).

Some years ago, **Reb Malkiel Kotler *shlita***, *rosh yeshiva* of Lakewood, repeated this story, and an elderly person stood up and said, "I am the **בעל המעשה**." The story happened to him!

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

וַיְמָאֵן אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר יָדַעְתִּי בְנִי יָדַעְתִּי But his father refused, saying, "I Know, my son, I know." (48:19)

Yosef made a move to show his father that Menashe was his older son; thus, he warranted the blessing on the right/stronger side. One would have expected Yaakov *Avinu* to simply inform him that Ephraim will ultimately be the greater of the two.

Why does he preface his response with **יָדַעְתִּי בְנִי יָדַעְתִּי**?

Horav Yisrael Aharon Kupshitz, Shlita, comments that the Torah is teaching us an important principle with regard to our seeking advice from a *gadol*, Torah giant.

We must never forget that the reason he is where he is, and we are where we are, is that he devoted his life to Torah. As such, he is blessed with an acute cognitive appreciation of the profundity of every issue that is presented to him. Thus, when we ask a question of him, we should allow him to give his response/advice without our prompting him to view the situation from our perspective. He knows and understands far more about the situation than we think. His mind is honed by the wisdom garnered from studying Torah, in addition to the inspiration he receives from up on High.

This is the meaning of **יָדַעְתִּי בְנִי יָדַעְתִּי**, "Yes, my son, *I know* what you know." *I also know* what you are not privy to know. - The *gadol* is always one step ahead of us.

Rav Turk cites a story related by a *Rav* in Petach Tikvah, which he includes in his preface to the *sefer* he published in 1929. The preface is addressed to ***Horav Yechezkhel Sarne, zl***.

Apparently, this *Rav* was serving as the spiritual leader of a European community. He was visited by the venerable *Rav* of Lodz, Poland, ***Horav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel, zl***, who was well known throughout Europe as a brilliant Torah scholar and a *pikeach atzum*, exceptionally smart, perceptive and alert.

"Coincidently," his visit coincided with that of the Czar's minister." (Nothing happens by coincidence. It is a pejorative term, and thus in quotation marks.)

The *Rav* gave the minister a tour of the community which ended with a visit to the *shul*. The minister was greatly impressed until he arrived at the *shul* and noticed that a picture/painting of the Czar could not be found anywhere in the edifice. He immediately ordered the *Rav* that prior to his return visit, a picture of the Czar (who was a rabid anti-Semite) should be hung prominently in the *shul*.

The community was in a quandary. On the one hand, how could they deface the sanctity of the *shul* with an image of the Czar? On the other hand, if they refused to adhere to the Minister's command, it could spell an end to the Jewish community.

Rav Eliyahu Chaim came to the rescue. First, he commissioned a large painting of the Czar and had it framed in a glass frame. He had them hang the frame in the *shul*. The community was aghast. How could the esteemed *Rav* allow such a travesty in the *shul*?



The next thing he did was to tell the members of the community to have their young children use the *shul* as a playground. Once again, they thought the *Rav* had become distanced from reality!

He intimated to them that they should be patient.

The next day, the children played ball in the *shul* and, lo and behold, the ball hit the glass frame and bounced

off – not before smashing it to smithereens. *Rav* Eliyahu Chaim instructed them to take the frame to a craftsman to have it repaired, but to instruct him to hold on to it. This was not to be a rush job.

The community now understood the brilliance of the *Rav* from Lodz. Had they left the picture hanging, quite possibly the minister would have been so impressed that he would insist that every *shul* under the *Czar's* dominion follow suit. Had they refused to hang the picture, a pogrom might have ensued. This way, if – and when – the minister returned, they would inform him that the picture was being repaired.

יָדַעְתִּי בְנִי יָדַעְתִּי – always one step ahead of us!

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

וְהָיוּ עֵינֶיךָ רֹאוֹת אֶת־מוֹרֶיךָ – "***And your eyes will behold your teacher***" (*Yeshayah* 30:20). We derive from here the importance of seeing and remembering the image of our Torah giants. The impression they leave on us cannot be overstated.



A chasid once came to the ***Chidushei HaRim*** and stared at him for what seemed an inordinately long time. The *Rebbe* asked the man what he was staring at. The *chasid* replied, "**The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*** writes, **רְאֵה אָנֹכִי**, 'See, I' (opening words of *Parashas Re'eh*, *Devarim* 11:26), in which Moshe *Rabbeinu* exhorts them: '*A* blessing and a curse. *A* Jew should make an effort to gaze upon the countenance of a *tzaddik*. It will inspire him.'

The *Rebbe* replied, 'We say, **וְעַמֵּךְ כֻּלָּם צַדִּיקִים,** Your nation is all righteous' (*Yeshayah* 60:21). As such, you are also a *tzaddik*. You should look into yourself."

A powerful lesson. One needs to introspect, to be aware of who he really is, and to examine himself without the subjectivity of ego, so that he can determine exactly what he has achieved in his life; his habits, feelings, reactions and behaviours.

Forget about the stories you tell others about yourself and your accomplishments. Be truthful with yourself, and you will find that you will be a happier, more satisfied person.

וַיְבָרְכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּךָ יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם לִפְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה ***So he blessed them… saying, "By you shall Yisrael bless saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Menashe.'"*** *(48:20)*



Yaakov *Avinu* blessed his grandsons with what has become the standard of blessing. ***Horav Yechezkel, zl, m'Kuzmir***, notes that the word *becha*, by you, is singular, as if the speaker is addressing one person, which is not the case. Both Menashe and Ephraim were present during this blessing; thus, *bach* refers to both of them. The *Kuzmirer* explains that *bach* alludes to complete unity in which two individuals – in this instance, Menashe and Ephraim – who are unified in complete harmony as

one person. Only when perfect amity prevails can *brachah*, blessing, radiate to *Klal Yisrael*.

When Yosef presented Ephraim and Menashe to Yaakov, he did so in such a manner that Menashe, his older son, would be on Yaakov's

right and Ephraim would be on his left. Instead, Yaakov crisscrossed his hands, placing his right hand on the head of Ephraim and his left on the head of Menashe.

At first glance, one might question the Patriarch's judgment. Indeed, Chazal (Megillah 16b) do just that, "On account of two selas, the weight of a fine wool garment, that Yaakov gave to Yosef in excess of what he gave to Yosef's brothers, the matter evolved and our forefathers descended down to Egypt."

In other words, the entire Yosef debacle had its origins in the preferential treatment Yaakov showed to Yosef. Why would the Patriarch stir up (what could have resulted in) jealousy between the two brothers, Menashe and Ephraim?

The Rebbe explains with a simple analogy. A father has two sons. He gives one a gold coin and the other son a silver coin. Clearly, such action can provoke jealousy between the brothers. If one has only one son, however, and he places the gold coin in the son's right hand and the silver coin in his left hand, understandably no jealousy occurs, since it is one person.

This is the meaning of Becha yevorach Yisrael, "By you shall Yisrael bless." You – in the singular – is how the two of you shall act: one unit, complete peace and harmony, as if you were one person. Only then can the blessing, "May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe," when no jealousy existed, be effective.

The following is not a new story. I used it years ago. It is so powerful and inspiring that I feel I can use it again.

A popular American entertainer was asked to put on a show for a group of World War II veterans. He was a noted comic, and these men, having suffered the trauma and pain associated with war, could use a pick-me-up. He said that he had very little time and too many commitments. He would give them ten minutes.

Surprisingly, for some reason, the comic stayed for thirty minutes. After every monologue, the audience applauded. While this entertainer was quite used to applause, something special, encouraged him to keep up his monologue, so that he could experience more applause.

Finally, he bid the audience good night and went backstage, where someone stopped him and asked, "What happened? I thought you were only willing to be up there for a few minutes."

He replied, "I really was pressed for time, but I can show you the reason that I stayed. Just look at the front row and see for yourself."



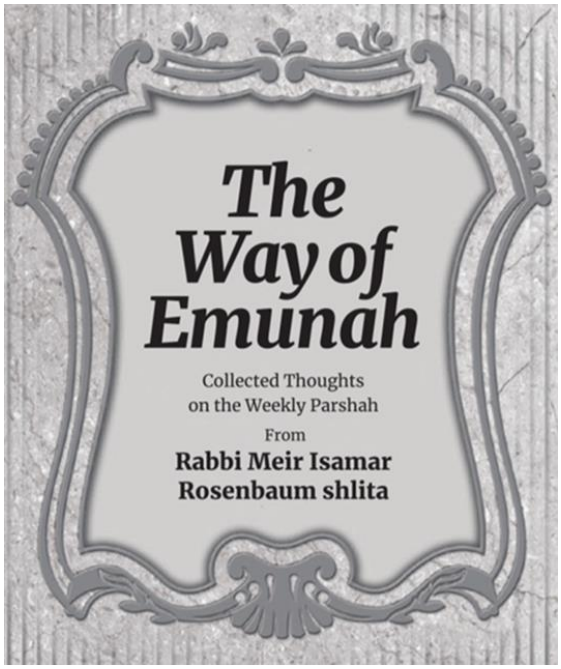
Two men were sitting next to one another in the front row. Each of these men had lost an arm in the war. One had lost his right arm; the other had lost his left arm. Together, they were able to applaud. This is exactly what they were doing – right to left – two men, working as one!

True Love by R' Dr. Abraham J. Twerski Zt'l

People make a serious mistake in thinking that '***you give to those whom you love***.' And the real answer is that '***you love those to whom you give***.'

And the point is, If I give something to you, I've invested myself in you. And since self-love is a given – everybody loves themselves, now that a part of me has become you, there's part of me in you that I love' - So true love is a love of giving – not a love of receiving!

He Stressed The Importance of Peace and Brotherliness



הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם... הִקָּבְצוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב וְשִׁמְעוּ אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיכֶם *And Yaakov called for his sons and said, "Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you…Gather…and listen to Yisroel, your father*. (49:1-2)

Before Yaakov began giving brachos to his sons, he told them to "gather".

The Sefarim Hakedoshim explain that he was stressing the importance of gathering together in peace and brotherhood. Yaakov spoke about this fundamental concept before giving the blessings because "Hashem does not find a vessel that can hold brachos besides for shalom."

In order to receive any blessing, peace must come first. Each of the Sefarim explains this concept in their own way, with each reaching this same important understanding of the pesukim.

The Shlah Hakadosh (Derech Chaim Tochachos Mussar) states simply that Yaakov wanted to reveal the date of the redemption to his sons (as is stated in Rashi). Therefore, he told them to gather together, because it is not possible to bring about the geulah when Klal Yisroel in not united. The destruction of the Bais Hamikdosh was caused by baseless hatred, and as long as hatred still exists amongst us, we cannot merit the final redemption.

Hashem wants to give us so much, but we must open His treasury – We open it with Tefillah – R' Elimelech Biderman

He Hinted to All Future Events

Rashi quotes Chazal who say that when Yaakov wanted to reveal the time of the redemption, the Shechinah left him, so he started speaking about other things.

The Ropshitzer Rebbe zy"a (Sefer Zera Kodesh) explains that although Yaakov switched to other topics and began giving brachos to his sons, these blessings hinted to all events that would occur to each Shevet until the time of Moshiach's arrival.

In the beginning, Yaakov wanted to speak about these things openly. However, he was not given permission to do so. Therefore, he had to say them in a hidden way.

The Ropshitzer Rebbe says that this actually was a kindness from Hashem. Had Yaakov spoken openly and explicitly told his sons about how long and hard the golus will be, it would have caused them a lot of pain.



Furthermore, if all subsequent generations would have known that Moshiach was not coming for many hundreds of years, it would have been very hard for them. Instead, since we don't know when Moshiach is coming we wait for him every day and we hope that he will arrive soon.

"There is no hour or instant in the day in which Hashem is not performing an action on behalf of a person, seeing to their most basic needs." – The Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh.

If One Has Emunah That Everything is Good, Everything Will be Good



The Modzhitzer Rebbe zy"a (Sefer Divrei Yisroel) explains Yaakov's desire to reveal the time of the redemption as follows: Everything Hashem does is for the good (Brachos 60B). In the end, it will be clear to all how everything is good. However, when we are in the middle of a difficult time, it is not always possible for us to understand how it is good. Since we can't see how things will turn out in the end, they may appear bad to us.

When Chazal say that Yaakov wanted to reveal "the keitz", the end, this means that he wanted to show his sons how everything would be good in the end. However, he was not granted permission to do this because this would take away their free will. If they knew that everything was good, they would not have the ability to decide on their own whether to have bitachon or not.

Instead, one is supposed to trust in Hashem and believe that it will be good. If one has emunah on this level, he will only experience goodness in his life.

Thought of The Week:

Atheists are not lacking in belief. They are full of belief – in things other than G-d. - **R' Leizer Gordon z"l – Telzer Rav.**

Torah Compilations with Yossi



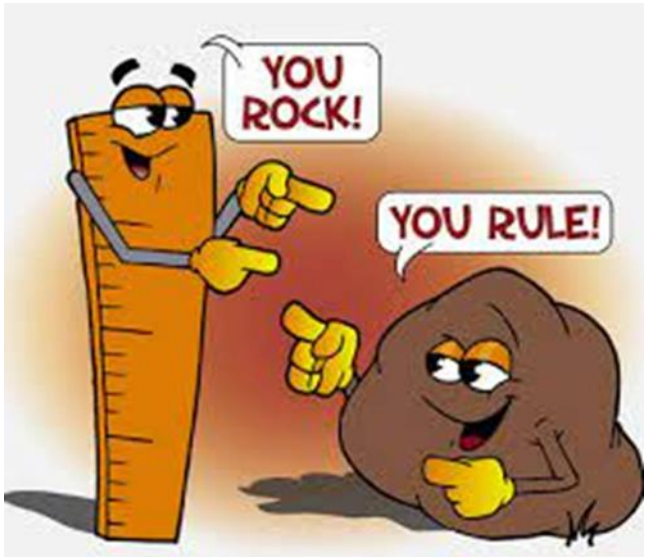
Every parsha starts at the beginning of a fresh paragraph. There's either a short gap or a longer gap before it. Parshat Vayechi, however, has no beginning. It flows directly on from the end of the previous week's parsha. So why is this the case?

Rav Meir Yechiel of Ostroff gives a beautiful commentary. He tells us that when the 70 souls of the family of Yaakov Avinu came down to Egypt, they didn't know at what point in their journey they were. There was so much doubt, so much confusion. They knew they were going into exile. But how long would it last? Would it be happy? Would it be trying? When would their redemption come? When would they be going back to their land?

Because the beginning, the middle and the end of their journey was not known to them, that's why the beginning of the parsha is not clearly defined. What was the response of Yaakov Avinu during those challenging times of uncertainty? His response was in one word: **ברכות** - Blessings. Yaakov Avinu counted his blessings, and he wanted those around him to do likewise. In particular at that moment, he appreciated his family.

Coming right at the end of the book of Bereishit – Yaakov Avinu wanted to bring his divided family together, and he showed them how his grandchildren, Ephraim and Menashe, got on so well together – a model for future peaceful domestic coexistence.

The **ברכות** - blessings, are what Yaakov Avinu gave to his family. Vayechi is full of them: a blessing for each and every child, a blessing for his grandchildren, charging us to bless our children likewise for all time.



Indeed, the blessings of Yaakov Avinu as presented in Vayechi continue to provide inspiration for us to this very day. Just like Yaakov Avinu, we need to count our blessings. We need to step back and prioritize what is really important in life and like Yaakov Avinu, highlight how crucial our families must be for us all.

In addition, we need to bless others, to let them know how much we appreciate them, to give them words of praise and also to invest in the future. These are trying times – people are dying, people are ill, people have lost their jobs, people are lonely and there is an increase of mental illness. But together with that, like Yaakov Avinu, let's invest now in our future. And through our actions, our deeds and our blessings, may we provide an inspiration now for all time to come.

So let's join together and give our blessings by praying with all our hearts for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, relaxed, spiritual and sweet Shabbat.

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

A person is not evaluated by his money, his wisdom, or his strength. How then is a person assessed? It is by Tefilah. As Dovid Ha'melech wisely understood, there is nothing better to stand for a person than his prayers. (Shocher Tov, Tehilim 140)

He Cheated the Angel of Death - R' Aharon Loschak

Satan, the angel of death, and the evil inclination are all one (Bava Batra 16a).

Reb Shmaya was a *chassid* of **the Rebbe of Kotzk, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern.** Shmaya's friends knew him as sincere, pious, and humble, more so than anyone else they knew.

And then, disaster struck. Shmaya fell deathly ill. His situation deteriorated, and before long, the end was approaching. He lay on his deathbed, frighteningly pale, holding onto the very last threads of life.

Those at his bedside noticed that he was murmuring to himself. Eager to hear the last words of this renowned and esteemed chassid, they quickly moved closer to bask in what was sure to be a deeply meaningful and awe-inspiring lesson.

Imagine their disappointment when they heard nothing of the sort. With the last vestiges of energy left in his frail body, Reb Shmaya turned to them and said, "You see, the evil inclination is always right there, ready to pounce and capitalize on my every move. Even now, as I lie here ready to meet my Maker, that wily and noxious creature is at my side, whispering:



"'Reb Shmaya, now's your chance! You're about to die, and everyone is eager to hear what you're going to say. Take the opportunity and go out like a star. Say *Shema* with all your might and make sure to really draw out the last word as is your habit. People will be so impressed, and they'll remember you forever

as a *chassid* of unparalleled piety and devotion. For centuries, people will say, "With such concentration, Reb Shmaya died with the last words of Shema on his lips!" Go for it; make your mark!' "

"I can't give the evil inclination such a victory," said Reb Shmaya, "so everyone leave me alone and let me die in peace."

To everyone's surprise, Reb Shmaya made a miraculous recovery. Word in Kotzk was that because he had denied the Angel of Death his big victory, he had given up and left him alone!

Parsha pages

Yissachor-Zevulun Partnership Can One Who Supports Torah Share The Reward?





Moshe Rabeinu & Yaacov Avinu blessed the tribes of Yissachor and Zevulun (Devarim 33,18 & Bereshis 49,13-14). Rashi explains: "Zevulun and Yissachor made a partnership between them. Zevulun would dwell at the harbour, and deal in business with ships; thereby sustaining Yissachor who would deal in Torah. Thus, the verse precedes Zevulun to Yissachor, since the Torah of Yissachor came through Zevulun."

Zevulun's great merit was that he would support the Torah study of Yissachor and be credited with the knowledge of the Torah as well as the reward for the mitzvah of Torah study.

The Medrash asks why the blessing of for Zevulun, who was the younger son, preceded that of Yissachor, the older son?

The Medrash answers that the merit of Zevulun supporting Yissachor is so great, as per the verse, "Eitz chaim hee lamachzikim boh" those that support the Torah are considered as if they learned Torah.



This concept of the supporters of Torah being meritorious is alluded to in the letters of the name זְבוּלֻן, spelled Zayin-Beis-Vov-Lamed-Nun. The letters Zayin-Nun spell ZaN, to give sustenance. The remaining letters, Beis-Vov-Lamed are the first letter (Bereishis 1:1 בְּרֵאשִׁית *B*ereishis), middle letter (VaYikra 11:42 גָּחוֹן goch*O*ne), and last letter (Devorim 34:12 יִשְׂרָאֵל Yisroe*L*) of the Torah, to indicate that Zevulun is credited with learning the complete Torah from beginning to end! (Gan Yosef)

"It is well known that all the happenings in the world are intended to inspire a person to contemplate their obligations to Hashem. It is also well known that people are not inspired, because no one thinks about what they see". - Rav Michel Birnbaum zt"l.

Parsha Pages - Sefas Emes



The Sefas Emes, Rebbe Yehudah Leib Alter (1847-1905) was the 2nd Rebbe of the Gerer Chassidim and the grandson of the **Chiddushei HaRim**. He was orphaned at the age of one and raised by his grandfather. He was a child prodigy and studied without interruption for eighteen hours at a time.

When he was nineteen, his grandfather, the Chiddushei HaRim passed away and pressure was exerted on Reb Yehudah Leib to assume the mantle of leadership of the Gerer Chassidim. He felt unworthy however and instead went to Alexander to study under Rebbe Chanoch Henoch.

After only four years, Rebbe Chanoch Henoch passed away, and then Reb Yehudah Leib was left with no choice but to comply with the wishes of the Chassidim to become the leader of the Ger.

Under his guidance and leadership Ger became the largest Chassidic group in Poland. The Sfas Emes, named after his magnum opus, was a proponent of expanding the Chassidic community in Israel, and greatly supported activities to that end. His son, the **Emrei Emes**,

escaped the Nazis, came to Israel and rebuilt Ger, restoring it to its former glory.

Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib (known by the title Sefas Emes) is strongly connected to the Parsha of VaYechi. He was nifter on this Shabbos in the year 5665. His last Maamar (Torah talk) was said in connection to this Parsha.

בראשית מט,א: וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים The Medrash tells us that we have the merit of Krias Shema from the following incident: All the children of Yaacov were gathered at his bedside to hear his last words. Yaacov wished to share information about the "end of days" but was unable to do so. Perhaps there was a weakness in the heart of one of his children (was not totally devoted to LeShem haShamayim)?

The children answered, **שמע ישראל אבינו** – 'Listen our father Yisrael **ה' א'לקינו ה' אחד** – There is no weakness in our hearts we are all dedicated to HaShem."

Why is this short tefilah treasured and elevated above all else?



The Sefas Emes emphasizes that this gathering of all the Jews of that generation was a preparation for all future generations. (The acts of our forefathers are a siman for us, their children; and this was the one of the last acts of Yaacov). When the children of Yaacov accepted the Torah, it provided the ability for future generations to accept the Torah. Every future gathering of the Jews which was LeShem ah Shamayim is "moresha Kehilas Yaacov."

Therefore each Shabbos is a proper time for a gathering of the Jews. Therefore it says in Kabalah "not to fear My honour" that it

is known that all gathering that are LeShem haShamayim bring honour to HaShem and called EMES as it says **א-לקים אמת ה' הוא והוא מתקיים**

Furthermore, Krias Shema which is said in a holy gathering of the Jews is testimony that HaShem is only with the nation of Yisrael. With this HaShem is Elokim and it will be everlasting like it is written: **שְׂפַת־אֱמֶת תִּכּוֹן לָעַד : משלי יב,יט** "***Words of truth are established forever***"

This was the holy Rebbe's last public words. Therefore, after his petirah when publishing his talks on the Torah, his children decided to title the Sefer **שְׂפַת־אֱמֶת** in honour of his last part of his last Maamar and as an indication of his holy life.

The Sefer became an international success, so much so, that Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh became known by the title of the Sefer, Sefas Emes.

Crouching Lion, Hidden Blessing by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

You may have noticed an interesting parallel between Yaakov's blessing to Yehuda and Bilaam's blessing to the Jewish People. When Yaakov blesses his son Yehuda, he says, "Yehuda is [like] a lion cub (*gur aryeh*)… he bends and crouches like a lion (*aryeh*), and like a lion (*lavi*). Who can lift him up?" (Gen. 49:9). In a similar way, Bilaam blesses the Jewish People saying, "…he bends and reclines like a lion (*ari*), and like a lion (*lavi*). Who can lift him up?" (Num. 24:9). In just these two passages, we have encountered four Hebrew words that refer to a lion: *ari, aryeh, gur,* and *lavi*. As we shall soon see, there are several more Hebrew words which mean "lion".

The Talmud (*Sanhedrin 95a*) relates that Rabbi Yochanan said that there are six words for "lions" in the Bible: *ari, kfir, lavi, layish, shachal,* and *shachatz*. Rabbi Levi (in *Yalkut Shimoni* to Prov. 20) adds a seventh term, *gur aryeh,* and explains how each of these

names is related to "lions" (a similar tradition is found in *Avot d'Rabbi Natan*, version 2, ch. 43):



1. *Ari* because everyone fears lions, and the root of the word fear (*yirah*) is comprised of the same letters as the word *ari*. *Tikkunei Zohar* (122a) explains that lions correspond to the sense of sight (the letters of the word *aryeh* rearranged spell out the word *reiyah*, "sight").

2. *Kfir* because anybody sees a lion will deny (*kofer*) his life. Others argue that *kfir* is related to the root *KAF-PEH-REISH*, which means to "cover" (like the *kapporet* which covered the Holy Ark), and refers to the lion's mane which covers him in hair.

3. *Lavi* because lions "grab" the hearts (*levavot*) of men by scaring them (when they roar). Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano (1548-1620) writes that a lion is called a *lavi* because when feasting on its prey it begins by eating the heart (*lev*).

4. *Layish* because the lion's teeth "knead" (*lash*) the skin of man like dough.

5. *Shachal* because people become "sick" (*choleh*) from fear when confronted by a lion.

6. *Shachatz* because the lion's teeth are very sharp like "arrows" (*cheitz*).

7. Rabbi Chaim Palagi (1788-1868) adds that *gur* is also an expression of "fear" (see, for example, Deut. 1:17 and Job 19:29).

The sources we have cited seem to understand that the seven words in question refer to the exact same "lion" but recall seven different

attributes of the animal or human reactions to it. However, other sources assume that the different words for "lions" refer to different stages in a lion's life.

Rashi (to Ezek. 19:5 and Job 4:10) explains that a *kfir* is a young, but strong lion; a *shachal* is a medium-sized lion; and an *ari* is a big lion. The Vilna Gaon disagrees with this approach. He explains that there are three stages in the life of a lion, and at each stage it is scary for a different reason. When young, a lion's teeth are scary — at that point a lion is called a *kfir*. When it is older, its roar is scary — then it is called an *aryeh*. When it is even older, even its regular voice (i.e. when it is not roaring) is scary — then it is called a *shachal*. According to the Vilna Gaon, a *kfir* is a lion cub, a *shachal* is an old lion, and an*ari* is a middle-aged lion.

Rabbi Yaakov Baal HaTurim (to Num. 24:9) writes that a *lavi* is a younger lion than an *ari*, but does not explain where it fits in vis-à-vis *shachal* and *kfir*.

Similarly, Radak (to Judges 14:5) tracks the progression of a lion's life by saying that first it is a *gur* (a young cub who still nurses from its mother, see Lam. 4:3), then it becomes a *kfir*, then an *aryeh*, then a *lavi*, and finally a *layish*. Radak stresses that as long as a lion keeps growing older, it keeps getting stronger and stronger. He, too, does not explain where *shachal* fits in.



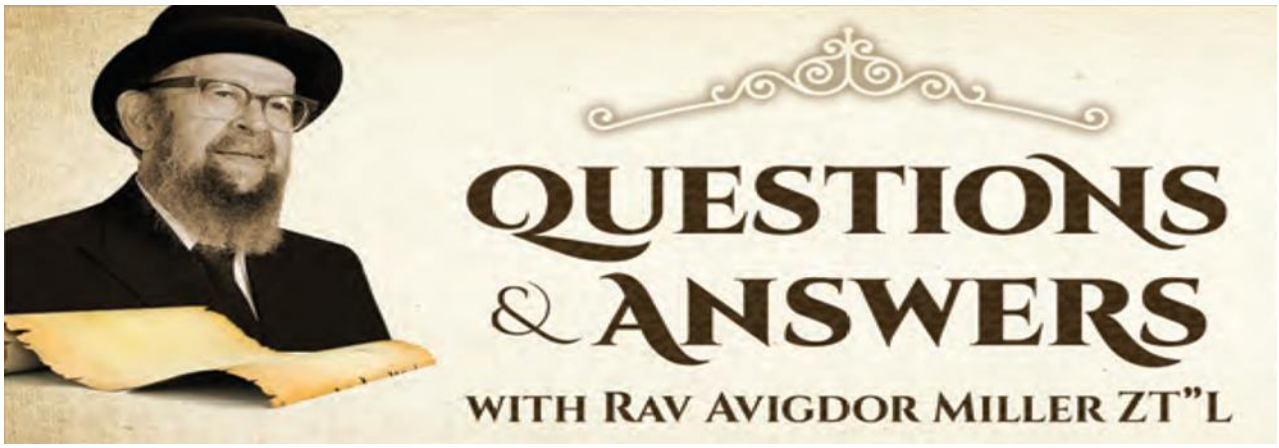
Abarbanel (to Judges 14:5) disagrees with Radak's position, and rejects the supposition that a lion's life goes through so many different stages. Instead, he explains that *gur* and *kfir* are synonyms for a young lion, and *aryeh*, *layish*, and *lavi* are all synonyms which mean an older lion.

Abarbanel in *Mashmia Yeshua* cites Rabbi Yosef Ibn Kaspi as explaining that the word *gur* for "lion cub" is related to the word *ger* ("sojourner" or "stranger") because the lion cub's agility allows it to always be on the move. In a similar vein, the Rashbam (to Gen. 49:9) notes that Yaakov compared Yehuda to a *gur aryeh* because it is faster and stronger than an older lion.

That a *kfir* is a relatively young lion is discernible from several sources. *Avot d'Rabbi Natan* explains that a *kfir* is an adolescent lion who is called so because he "denies" (*kofer*) his parents. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Stern (Rav of the Ezras Torah neighbourhood of Jerusalem) explains that a *kfir* is not as fierce as an *aryeh*, which is why Micah (5:3) says that a *kfir* will attack sheep, which are domesticated and vulnerable, while an *aryeh* will attack the wild animals of the forest. Moreover, Psalms 104:21 says that a *kfir* roars to *ask* for its food, implying that it is too young to go out hunting for food on its own. See also *Zohar* (*Terumah* 143a) which says that a *kfir* is a weak, small lion.

While Radak explains that an older lion is first called a *lavi,* and afterwards a *layish*, the Vilna Gaon explains the difference between these two words differently. He explains that a *layish* is a female lioness that has not yet borne children, while a *lavi* is female lioness that already has children.

Interestingly, the Italian scholar Rabbi Yishaya of Trani (to Hoshea 13:8) writes that *lavi/laviyah* is a separate species than lions. Rabbi Pinchas Eliyahu Horowitz of Vilna (1765-1802) similarly writes in his scientific almanac *Sefer HaBrit* that a *shachal* is a panther and a *layish* is a leopard. He understood that they are not alternate words for "lion". Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) similarly writes that *namer, lavi,* and*shachal* are all words for a spotted leopard (or perhaps "tiger"). Nonetheless, Rabbi Yishaya himself admits that*shachal* and *shachatz* are different words for lion.





How does one gain self-esteem?

Oy! Who said you have to gain self-esteem? It's a foolishness. The psychologists and the therapists are dreying ah kop. How do you gain self-esteem? Who needs self-esteem?! On the contrary, get rid of self-esteem. Say, "I'm nothing, I'm a nobody. I have to work hard to become a somebody!"

Let's say you learned half of shas already; say, "I'm a nobody. I don't want any self-esteem, I have to know the whole shas; half a shas is nothing yet." Give up your self-esteem. All these things you have to know are phrases which come from the outside world, and we are slaves to our environment. We listen to the talk of the world and we believe that psychologists have a Torah that we didn't know before.

The Torah of the character is found in the seforim, in our mussar seforim and the Gemara. If you look carefully, you'll find all the psychology that's true, it's there already. What's not there, you know is not true. It's the imagination of two apikorsim; one of them was named Freud; Sigmund Freud was an oisvurf. The other was Carl Jung. Two people. And what they said is worthless. You might say how do I know it? I know all about it. What I tell you, I know what I'm talking about.

True psychology is found in our seforim. The gedolei Yisroel have practiced it in all generations. My rebbes in Slabodka were tremendous chachmei hanefesh! They studied character; they knew people from the way they smiled, the way they talked. They were

experienced; they dealt with hundreds and hundreds of bochurim for many years, and they learned all the seforim and thought into the things.

They had the true chochmas hanefesh. And therefore, if you want to know about the truth of the knowledge of character, don't go to the umos ha'olam. It's found in our own Torah more than any place else.

Etz Hachaim - Mipnei Meshaneh HaShalom



Rebbe Ela'ah Related in the name of Rebbe Elazar ben Reb Shimon that one is allowed to be ***meshaneh*** for the sake of shalom. Reb Elazar brings the source for this idea from the story of Yosef and his brothers. What's the story?

After Yakov Avinu was niftar, the brothers were afraid Yosef may take revenge and therefore they told Yosef, **אביך צווה לפני מותו לאמר...** "***Your father commanded us before he was niftar that we should tell you***..." When in truth their father Yakov had never told them specifically to say what they were about to tell Yosef, however, they said it this way **מפני דרכי שלום**. So the brothers were meshaneh mipnei hashalom!

A Rosh Yeshiva once received a call about a bochur regarding a shidduch. This bochur, although he was not a bad bochur, when he was in Yeshiva he never really showed up to seder. The Rosh Yeshiva knew that the bochur had shaped up and he wanted to help the boy

find a shidduch, however, he did not know what to say about the bochur since he was never really in the Yeshiva.

Finally, the Rosh Yeshiva, who did not want to give the negative information told the person "This bochur was the most "***out-standing***" bochur I ever had in my Yeshiva all the years!!"

The Chazon Ish was once asked for information about a bochur who the Chazon Ish did not feel was such a good bochur. The Chazon Ish did not want to say something outright negative about the potential bochur. Instead, the Chazon Ish answered each one of the questions "***Ken Zien Besser***" "it could be better".

After hearing this information, the fellow went ahead with the shidduch. The Chazon Ish could not believe it. The Chazon Ish said that this person totally misunderstood him and obviously heard what they wanted to hear. The fellow had said to himself "***It could be better, I also could be better***!!"

Reb Yoel Rotenstien On The Parsha

רבי זיידל אפשטיין "*The malach who redeemed me from all evil, should bless these lads…*" המלאך הגאל אתי מכל רע יברך את הנערים
מח:טז



This *pasuk* is referring to Menashe and Ephraim (Rashi).

In *pasuk* 14, the Torah tells us that Yaakov put his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left hand on Menashe's, and he blessed them. Later in *pasuk* 16, the Torah tells

us that Yaakov blessed Menashe before Ephraim. From here, we see that although Yaakov placed his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Menashe, he actually blessed Menashe first.

When Yosef attempted to switch Yaakov's hands, Yaakov refused, and reassured his son that he knew what he was doing. Yaakov saw that the younger brother, Ephraim, would be greater than his older brother. We continue to bless our sons until this day that they be like Ephraim and Menashe.

Question: Why was there so much confusion regarding the *berachos* of Ephraim and Menashe?

Answer: The commentators tell us that Ephraim learned with Yaakov constantly, while Menashe was involved with the needs of the people. It was Ephraim who told Yosef that his father was sick, and it was Ephraim who was a bigger *ben Torah* than his older brother. Both were accomplishing great things and both had tremendous *yiras Shamayim*. Yet, there is no comparison between someone who is learning Torah and someone who is involved with communal activities.

Yosef depended on Menashe and preferred that he get the first *berachah*. Due to Yosef's honour, Yaakov started to give Menashe the first *berachah*, even though he had switched his hands. In addition, Yaakov was trying to avoid embarrassing Menashe, so he only switched his hands. However, once Yosef pointed out the switch, Yaakov then made it clear that Ephraim was receiving the more honourable *berachah*.

It was necessary for Yaakov to make a statement, by switching the order, to clarify life priorities for future generations. One who is involved in helping the community is filling an important role and will receive reward, but one who is learning Torah is even more praiseworthy. We must learn the lesson of *Yaakov Avinu* and realize that there is nothing greater than one who sits and learns Torah.

The Posuk says **וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת וַיִּקְרָא לִבְנוֹ לְיוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׂים־נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת אַל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרָיִם** '***When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have now found favour in your eyes, now place your hand beneath my thigh, and you shall deal with me with lovingkindness and truth; do not bury me now in Egypt***.' 47:29



The Days of Yaakov Avinu were coming to an end so he asked Yosef to make a promise that he will not bury him in Mitzrayim.

Two Psukim later, Yaakov Avinu asked Yosef again to make a promise that he will bury him in Eretz Yisroel. What is the necessity to ask Yosef twice to make a promise?

The Zera Shimshon answers that originally, Yaakov did not ask Yosef to make a promise because maybe he would not be able to fulfil it. Perhaps Pharaoh would oblige Yosef to bury Yaakov in Mitzrayim. Yosef replied to Yaakov, **אנכי אעשה כדבריך** – '*I will do as you say*', meaning, I will try my best but it is not in my hands as you understand. Therefore, Yaakov then asked Yosef again to make a promise that he will not bury him in Mitzrayim.

Once Yosef made a promise, Pharaoh would have to let him bury Yaakov in Eretz Yisroel. For if he would ask Yosef to renege on his promise, Yosef will then have the ability to renege on the promise not to let anyone know that Pharaoh does not know all the languages.

Torah Tavlin

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים 49:1



A young chasid of **R' Dovid of Skver zt"l**, received a notice that he was to be conscripted into the army. He immediately went to the Rebbe for a beracha so that he can be exempted from army service.

R' Dovid blessed him warmly and spoke to him for a few minutes. Just as the chasid was about to leave, the Rebbe handed him a small coin, instructing him to take it with him wherever he went. The loyal chasid gratefully accepted the coin and left.

Days later, he went to army headquarters for his medical examination. As the exam got underway, the chasid started feeling nervous. The doctor looked quite confident, and he worried that he was going to be conscripted. Suddenly, he remembered that he had left the coin he'd received from the Rebbe in the pocket of his outer garment which was in the waiting room.

Frantic, he jumped up, shouting, "My money! My money! I must retrieve my money!" He ran back to the waiting room and returned to the exam room a moment later clutching his precious coin tightly in his hand, obviously much relieved.

The doctor assumed the man must have left a sizable sum of money in the outer room. He couldn't believe his eyes when he saw a single coin of almost worthless value his patient was clutching tightly.

Almost immediately, the doctor concluded that the man must surely have some kind of mental challenge or imbalance and exempted him from army duty!

The idea of a beracha is a discussion beyond the scope of this context. One point however, is that we mustn't forget it is not the blessing that brings salvation, rather the blessing helps a person reach a goal. Ultimately, it is the Torah, tefillah and good deeds that brings about salvation.

When Yaakov blessed his holy sons, it was that they be able to reach their utmost potential – as described in the posukim.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיַּ֤רְא מְנֻחָה֙ כִּֽי טֹ֔וב וְאֶת־הָאָ֖רֶץ כִּ֣י נָעֲמָ֑ה וַיֵּ֥ט שִׁכְמֹ֖ו לִסְבֹּ֑ל 49:15

'He saw a resting place, that it was good, and the land, that it was pleasant, and he bent his shoulder to bear burdens.'

Yaakov Avinu blessed his son Yissachar with the words, **וַיַּ֤רְא מְנֻחָה֙ כִּֽי טֹ֔וב... וַיֵּ֥ט שִׁכְמֹ֖ו לִסְבֹּ֑ל**." This means that Yissachar sees that menucha, calmness and peace of mind, is a good thing, so he bends his shoulder to suffer. How odd? If someone wants to find calmness and peace, why is he taking on the pain or burden and causing himself to suffer? This is the opposite of menucha.



R' Simcha Bunim M'Pshischa zt"l provides a truly fascinating explanation. He says that the word "Lisbol" which means to suffer, can have an alternate explanation. It can also mean to tolerate - savlanus.

Yissachar, the Talmid Chacham, understood that in order to find peace and tranquillity in life, you need to learn how to tolerate others. We all know the famous saying, "Pain in life is inevitable, but suffering is a choice." There are always going to be people and

situations in life that cause us pain, but how much we suffer from them is really our choice. Do we choose to be the victor or the vanquished? This is all up to us.

I'm not saying this is easy, but it is well worth the investment. It will determine whether our lives will be filled with suffering and painful hardship or filled with tolerance and calmness - real Menuchas Hanefesh. The great reward for such behaviour, for a person who can truly tolerate, is beyond our understanding.

It says in the Seforim Hakedoshim, that the whole world is sustained in the merit of tolerance, of such a person who can tolerate others. ***This person is compared to the sun that comes out in its full strength and lights up the world!***

But besides for the great reward that comes later is the great reward that comes now. You save yourself the suffering and can really feel peace and tranquillity in life. When we come to the realization that although we cannot control the way other people act, we can control the way we respond to their behaviour, we become empowered to make the correct choices. Either we tolerate or we suffer, but the choice is ours.

TORAH Sweets

Saying Of The Week With Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"Be there for your brother to help him and stand up for him."

Yaakov Avinu (49:5) called Shimon and Levi brothers. Rashi (ibid.) says this is a negative statement about them in that they plotted together against Yosef and Shechem. **The Ramban** learns the opposite: they fought against Shechem but it was because of their commitment to their siblings. They would stick up for Dinah because of this feeling of brotherhood, even to the extent of waging war against a city.

It was wrong to wage a war, but Yaakov gave them the pass because it was this great character trait that caused them to do it. We should always try to feel for our brothers and sisters around the world and wish only the best for them (just let's not start a war!)

Short And Sweet Story Of The Week With Rabbi Mordechai Levin

As World War II ramped up in Europe, some Gedolim were able to procure precious visas that enabled them to travel to Eretz Yisroel or America. **Rav Aharon Kotler, ZT"L**, decided to go to America, and established the Lakewood Yeshiva. His powerful influence on Torah education in America is felt to this very day. **The Brisker Rav, ZT"L**, decided to attempt to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel.

Those who chose America did so because it was far from the war front, while Eretz Yisroel did not seem safe as the Germans were about to invade Egypt. Nevertheless, the Brisker Rav felt that of the two options, Eretz Yisroel was the spiritually-safer choice. He felt that in Eretz Yisroel it would be easier to keep Shabbos and raise one's children properly. Although there also were secular Jews in Eretz Yisroel, "in the holy city of Jerusalem there are G-d-fearing people who show mesirus nefesh in their battle for Hashem and His Torah".

The Brisker Rav was uneasy about his decision. He decided to conduct a "Gorel HaGra" (the method used by the **Vilna Gaon** when seeking Divine guidance; done by opening a Tanach to a random Pasuk and following what it says).

The Tanach opened to a Pasuk (Tehillim 104:8): **יַעֲלוּ הָרִים יֵרְדוּ בְקָעוֹת אֶל־מְקוֹם זֶה יָסַדְתָּ לָהֶם** -"***They will go up to the hills; they will go down to the valleys to this place You founded for them***". He then knew definitively that he should bring his family to Eretz Yisroel, "***the place Hashem founded for them***".

On their travels, as they made their way through the mountains of Turkey and Lebanon, he commented that he now understood the hint from the first half of the Pasuk, "*They will go up to the hills; they will go down to the valleys*".

Comment: Yaakov Avinu was hesitant to travel down to Mitzrayim, as he feared that his family would be entrapped by its decadent society and spiritual wasteland. Hashem spoke to him and assured him (Bereishis 46:4) אָנֹכִי אֵרֵד עִמְּךָ מִצְרַיְמָה וְאָנֹכִי אַעַלְךָ גַם־עָלֹה -"***I will descend with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up (out of Egypt)***". Only then did Yaakov agree to join Yosef in Egypt. (Story taken from "**Reb Dovid Soloveitchik**", 2022)

Maaseh Avos Siman L'Bonim

אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׂים־נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת אַל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרָיִם 47:29



The well-known speaker, **R' Shabsi Yigal**, tells of a chance encounter with **R' Yehoshua Hartman shlit'a** in which the latter saw **R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l** literally comb through all the works of Chazal in ninety seconds. He tells the story as follows:

I saw a familiar face one Friday morning. It was my old rebbe, R' Yehoshua Hartman, who had just recently edited a new edition of the **Maharal's** writings. He had been my rebbe in Maarava. I hadn't seen him for years. I had heard he had moved away to a different country. That's why I was so surprised to meet him, especially in Raanana, my hometown, on a short Friday, in the middle of the winter.

After a few friendly words, I asked my rebbe what he was doing in town. He said that his in-laws had made aliyah from Brazil and settled in Raanana, and he and his Rebbetzin were there to visit them.

When I found out that R' Hartman was going to spend Shabbos in our city, I didn't waste a moment - I immediately asked him if he could come speak in the shul where I daven, both during davening and at a kiddush afterwards. I remembered the fascinating lectures he'd delivered during my yeshivah days, and was anxious to experience them again, to hear him expound on wonderful principles of the Maharal, and to share this treasure with my friends.

R' Hartman gave me his phone number so I could get his answer later in the day, and we said goodbye. When I phoned him later that day, shortly before Shabbos began, he told me he would be able to come and speak. Of course, I was more than thrilled.

During the kiddush, R' Hartman said an exquisite dvar Torah and then told over one of the most amazing stories I'd ever heard about a talmid chacham of our generation and his incredible breadth of Torah knowledge.

While editing **Gur Aryeh**, R' Hartman came across a Maharal on Parshas Vayechi that states as follows: "***During techiyas hameisim, all the dead will stand in Mearas Hamachpeilah, as is written in Chazal***." However, the Maharal never cited his source.

An editor's job is to find sources. There were no search engines in those days. Bar Ilan's program hadn't been created yet, there was no Otzar Hachochma or any other comprehensive collection of Torah writings. There were plenty of talmidei chachamim steeped in the writings of Chazal, though, so R' Hartman approached quite a few of them to see if they knew the source of this Maharal. He asked many people, but none of them had any idea. In the end, R' Hartman added a footnote on this piece of Maharal. "I don't know the source of this Chazal."

Shortly after R' Hartman's Gur Aryeh was published, he found himself in Bnei Brak, and as he was walking down a random street, he chanced upon R' Chaim Kanievsky walking by himself. That was still possible in those days. R' Hartman decided to grab the opportunity. He approached the tzaddik and asked if he could ask a question.



Being given permission, he queried, "*The Maharal writes in Gur Aryeh, Parshas Vayechi, that during techiyas hameisim, all the dead will stand in Mearas Hamachpeilah.*" "Is that what he says?" R' Chaim asked, in a tone that sounded surprised. Apparently, this was news to him, too. "That's what he says," R' Hartman affirmed. "However, right afterwards, the Maharal writes that Chazal mention this fact, as well. Does the Rav perhaps know where this Chazal is?"

"Then the most amazing thing happened," said R' Hartman. "I watched as R' Chaim continued walking, but he was murmuring to himself. I walked behind him, trying to hear what he was murmuring. I heard him say, "Talmud Bavli? No. Yerushalmi? No. Midrashei Halachah? No. Midrashei Aggadah? No. Zohar? ...."

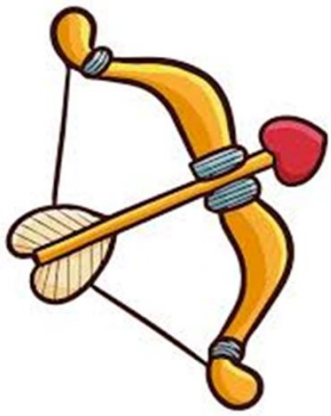
Then R' Chaim looked at me and mentioned a place in the Zohar that might be interpreted to mean that. "When I got home, I opened a Zohar to the place he'd mentioned, and bingo! It was right there!"

R' Hartman said. "It was incredible. I saw R' Chaim Kanievsky scan the entire literature of Chazal in ninety seconds!"

"Nefesh Shimshon" – Rabbeinu Shimshon Dovid Pincus Zt"L - The Sword and Bow of Tefilah

אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחַרְבִּי וּבְקַשְׁתִּי Which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow. (48:22)





Onkelos translates "sword" as "prayer," and "bow" as "supplication." Thus we see that prayer (*tefilah*) and supplication (*bakashah*) are two different things.

Let us understand this. Every *mitzvah* has power by its very nature. For instance, if we affix a valid *mezuzah* to the doorpost, it possesses the intrinsic power that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* stands there and guards the doorway, so to speak.

The difference between having a valid *mezuzah* and not having one is the difference between health and the lack of it, between finding a *shidduch* and not finding one. It is the difference between *Hashem* guarding us and the lack of Divine protection.

Also the *mitzvah* of *Tefilah* carries great power, and it has two parts. The first part of *Tefilah* is the main bulk of the *mitzvah*, which is the three daily prayers established by the *Avos*, as *Chazal* say: The prayers were instituted by the *Avos*. Avraham instituted the morning prayer, Yitzchak instituted the afternoon prayer, and Yaakov instituted the evening prayer.

The prayers of *Shacharis, Minchah* and *Maariv* carry tremendous power. When we daven *Shacharis*, we employ the power of *Avraham Avinu*, who was "The great man among giants." *Minchah* is the power of *Yitzchak Avinu*, and *Maariv* is the power of *Yaakov Avinu*.

A person gets up in the morning tired and rubs his eyes. He went to sleep at 4:00 AM and now it's already time to rise. He gets to *shul* and asks himself how will a sleepy prayer like this ascend to the *Kisei HaKavod*? It can get there. The following allegory explains how.

Let's say a person wants to get from New York to England. Swimming it is out of the question, because even if he is a really expert swimmer, and has only good weather the whole way, and manages not to drown in the middle, it will take him years. The best solution is to go to the airport and get on a plane.

We too, in order to *daven Shacharis* in the morning, need to get to a distant destination. How will we do it? By getting on *Avraham Avinu's* plane. Avraham instituted the prayer of *Shacharis,* and our prayers can ride on his *Shacharis* all the way to the Heavenly Throne of Glory. *Yitzchak* instituted the *Minchah* prayer. Every time we *daven Minchah* we are standing on the shoulders of *Yitzchak Avinu,* so to speak, and he takes us up to the *Kisei Hakavod.* And so it is with *Yaakov Avinu* and the *Maariv* prayer.

How does it work? Let's use the metaphor of blasting through a wall. Someone throws a hand grenade at a wall and blows a hole in it. What made the hole? Not the force his throw. The explosives inside the hand grenade are what blasted through the wall. - We "throw" the words of the *Tefilah,* and the *Avos Hakedoshim* fill those words with explosives, so to speak, thus turning them into powerful bombs that can work wonders.

This is the first part of *Tefilah.* It is the body of *Tefilah.*

But there is something else, called *bakashah,* "supplication." But the Rambam rules that every Jew has a Biblical obligation to pray at least a short prayer every day. The Ramban holds that there is no Biblical obligation to pray every day. However, when a person finds himself in trouble, he has a Biblical obligation to pray and beg *Hashem* to save him.

This type of prayer is not riding on the power of the set *tefilos* enacted by the *Avos*. This is *bakashah*, "supplication."

Let's say something starts to really hurt a person, and it is not the time of *Shacharis, Minchah* or *Maariv*. And he doesn't even have a *Sefer Tehillim* on him. How will his prayer ascend to heaven? This is where the power of *bakashah* comes into the picture.

If a Jew is in pain and he turns to *Hashem* and cries out: *Ribono shel Olam*, it hurts me! then at that moment he doesn't need Avraham or Yitzchak or Yaakov or *David Hamelech*. Because *Hashem* Himself is right there with him. *Hashem* is with everyone of a lowly and oppressed spirit:

For instance, someone is driving down the highway at 11:30 AM and he needs to get somewhere at 12:00 to sign a contract. Suddenly he gets a flat tire. He is in trouble now. At this moment he has a Biblical obligation to turn to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and ask Him for help. He can speak in English, Yiddish, Spanish, French, or any other language he wishes. *Hashem* understands all languages.

There are places where the *Shechinah* rests even though we don't have *Beis Hamikdash* anymore. The Jewish home is a place of the *Shechinah*. The *shul* is a place of the *Shechinah*. But the place that actually has the presence of the *Shechinah* more than any other is the hospital. The hospital is the biggest *Beis Hamikdash*, so to speak. Because "The *Shechinah* rests above the pillow of the sick person.

When a Jew is in trouble, when he is in pain, he doesn't need something to raise his prayer up to Heaven, because *Hashem* is right there, next to him. Where there is a suffering Jew, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is to be found.

Of course, this is all on condition that the suffering Jew turns to *Hashem*. If a Jew is in trouble and he turns to *Hashem*, his prayer will surely not come back emptyhanded.

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

וַיִּפֹּ֤ל יוֹסֵף֙ עַל־פְּנֵ֣י אָבִ֔יו וַיֵּ֥בְךְּ עָלָ֖יו וַיִּשַּׁק־לֽוֹ ***And Yosef fell upon his father's face; he wept over him and kissed him***. (50:1)



Yosef was not the only one present when Yaakov Avinu passed from this world. Yet, the Torah records only Yosef as being immediately aggrieved by his demise. Did the other brothers not mourn their father's passing?

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, explains that the death of a loved one is one of the most difficult events for a person to accept. Months, and even years go by before a person switches out of the mourning mode and begins to grasp fully the loss that he has sustained, in order to accept it.

Losing a parent is a tremendous shock. Until one realizes the extent of the loss, however, understanding how deeply he will miss the parent, how alone he will be, how much the parent has meant to him in terms of guidance, direction and love, he does not fully know what life will be like without the parent. The brothers had just lost their father, but they had yet to recognize the full impact of this loss, to define what life would be like without Yaakov Avinu.

Yosef, alone, had already been privy to life without Yaakov. He had been living in Egypt for the past twenty-two years. He knew first-hand the misery, the loneliness, the longing for a father. He had already experienced life without Yaakov. Only he could immediately

relate to the tremendous loss at hand. Thus, the pasuk mentions Yosef's immediate reaction – because it was instantaneous.

We might use the same idea but apply it to the contrary. The brothers had spent their entire lives with their father. Through joy and sorrow they were with him, learning and watching from his reactions to life's events, constantly imbibing his spiritual lessons. Yosef had lost out on so much.

To him, every moment with his father was precious. It had to be treasured and valued beyond anything else, but time was running out. His father was no longer the strong, "young" man that he had known as he was growing up. He savored every moment, and then suddenly Yaakov closed his eyes and was gone.

The shock and pain were overwhelming for all the brothers, but for Yosef it meant that he was cheated out of another of life's most meaningful experiences. He had missed his father for so long – and now he was about to lose him again forever; it was all too much to bear. Yosef had been separated from his father for years, but now he was confronted with the ultimate separation: death. - He had yearned for so much, so that he was not prepared for this moment. He was, therefore, devastated by his father's death.



Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

תהלים קמה יח קרוב ד' לכל קראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת

Hashem is close to all who call upon Him; to all who call upon Him sincerely.

Is Hashem close to all, or does He respond only to those who are sincere?

The Chida, zl, explains that at first consideration, the opening statement which asserts that Hashem is close to and listens to all who call upon Him is slightly far-fetched. After all, we know that

many who have turned to Him-- and for whatever reason-- seem not to have been granted a response.

The answer is that their "calling" to Him is not sincere. They only call when they are pushed against the wall, when they are in an eis tzarah, moment of travail. Soon afterward, they have already forgotten Who it was that helped them. Hashem responds only to those who are yikreuhu b'emes, call out to Him (in the future tense), who keep on calling, regardless of the original outcome and notwithstanding their circumstances. This is truly b'emes, with sincerity. The commitment to pray, to reach out to Hashem must be one that is constant, not only when it hurts, but even when it does not.

Horav Shlomo Bloch zl, ***said: Only when a person sincerely feels that Hashem is close to him, does he merit that Hashem listens to his prayers. One who feels a connection with the Almighty is privileged to have such a bond.***

Hama'ayan: Seeing the Light, by R' Shlomo Katz

אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׂים־נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת אַל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרָיִם "***Please, if I have found favour in your eyes, please place your hand under my thigh and do kindness and truth with me–please do not bury me in Egypt.***" (47:29)

Midrash Rabbah teaches that Yaakov knew that the soil of Egypt was destined to turn into lice during the Ten Plagues; therefore, he did not want to be buried there.

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes: Yaakov was not worried that his remains would turn to lice. Rather, he was worried that the holiness of his remains would prevent the soil in which he was buried from turning into lice. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)

Hama'ayan: Seeing the Light, by R' Shlomo Katz

וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְמִינוֹ וַיָּשֶׁת עַל־רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא הַצָּעִיר וְאֶת־שְׂמֹאלוֹ עַל־רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה שִׂכֵּל אֶת־יָדָיו כִּי מְנַשֶּׁה הַבְּכוֹר "***Yisrael extended his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and his left hand on Menashe's head. 'Sikail' / He maneuvered his hands, for Menashe was the firstborn.***" (48:14)

The Aramaic translation, Onkelos, relates the word "**שִׂכֵּל**" to "seichel"/ "intelligence," i.e., Yaakov's hands behaved with intelligence.



This requires explanation, notes **R' Moshe Yehoshua Hager z"l** (1916-2012; Vizhnitzer Rebbe), for how can one attribute intelligence to a body part? It would seem that intelligence is in the brain, and the hands are merely tools for implementing the brain's will!

He explains: We read (Bereishit 22:10), **וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמַּאֲכֶלֶת לִשְׁחֹט אֶת־בְּנוֹ** -"***Avraham sent out his hand, and took the knife to slaughter his son.***" Why did Avraham have to "send out" his hand, implying that a specific act of will was required?

The answer is that Avraham had purified himself to such an extent that his body automatically did G-d's Will, which, in this case, was to not slaughter Yitzchak. Thus, Avraham, who did not know that, needed a conscious act of will to override his hand's "intelligence," in order to pick up the knife.

This is alluded to in our verse as well: Yaakov, also, purified himself to the extent that his hands had their own intelligence, i.e., they

knew that G-d's Will was to give the primary blessing to the younger son, Ephraim, not to the older son, Menashe.

How can a person in our times aspire to such a level, asks the Vizhnitzer Rebbe? By studying works of mussar such as Chovot Ha'levavot and Reishit Chochmah. Unfortunately, he adds, the yetzer ha'ra also knows this and therefore encourages us not to study such works. (Yeshuot Moshe: Ma'adanei Shulchan)

Smile, by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner (Achim.org)

In this week's Parsha, in the Bracha for Yehuda, the Torah writes וּלְבֶן־שִׁנַּיִם מֵחָלָב - His teeth are whiter than milk." 49:12



Our Sages in Kesuvos 111b say this means that "***giving someone a smile is better than giving him milk***." The Shita Mekubetzes there explains that this means that milk symbolizes sweetness. This means that giving a person a smile is sweeter than the sweetness of giving him milk.

In Pirkei Avos 1:15, Shamai teaches that one is supposed to greet every person with a smiling face. Rabbi Yishmael said (3.12) we must greet everyone with joy. The Sefer Charedim 35-20 wrote that this is not simply good advice, but it is mitzva d'rabanan. So every time we give someone a smile, we are doing a mitzvah d'rabanan.

Not only is smiling at people a mitzvah, but science has shown that it has some fascinating benefits as well. According to WebMD, when we smile, it makes us happier. When people's facial muscles come together to create a smile, even if they're not thinking about smiling, something happens through the body-mind connection that results in the sensation of happiness.

Researchers aren't sure how this occurs. Some suggest that "if you activate a smile, the peripheral nervous system tells the rest of the system that happiness is happening, and it tries to catch up." 12 Other researchers explain that smiling spurs a chemical reaction in the brain, releasing certain hormones, including dopamine and serotonin. Dopamine increases our feelings of happiness. Serotonin release is associated with reduced stress. Not only does smiling make you happier, but it can also boost your immunity and prevent you from getting sick.

Experts in the field of psychoneuroimmunology (the study of how the brain is connected to the immune system) assert that it has been shown "over and over again" that depression weakens your immune system. On the other hand, happiness caused by smiling has been shown to boost our body's resistance. Just the physical act of smiling can make a difference in building your immunity.

Similar studies have found that smiling helps reduce the body's response to stress and lowers the heart rate in tense situations; another study linked smiling to lower blood pressure, and another study suggests that smiling leads to living longer.

Studies have shown that smiling releases endorphins, other natural painkillers, and serotonin. Together, these brain chemicals make us feel good from head to toe. Not only do they elevate your mood, but they also relax your body and reduce physical pain. So smiling is a natural painkiller.

It is fascinating that this works even if one smiles because they are forced to. A study performed by a group at the University of Cardiff in Wales found that people who could not frown due to botox injections were happier on average than those who could frown.

Another fascinating thing is that the benefits of smiling don't only help the smiler but those who see you smile. Much like yawning, smiling is contagious. This is because we have mirror neurons that fire when we see certain activities. Mirror neurons enable us to copy

or reflect the behaviour we observe in others and have been linked to the capacity for empathy. So when we see others smile, our mirror neurons give us the same effect as if we are smiling ourselves. Even if we smile at ourselves in the mirror, it triggers our mirror neurons and can also help us calm down and re-centre if we're feeling low or anxious.



Smiling may lead to success. Research has shown that people who smile regularly appear more confident, are more likely to be approached, and are more likely to be promoted at work. Try putting on a smile at meetings and business appointments. You might find that people react to you differently.

There are lots of different languages spoken across the world. But there is one language that can be understood across the entire globe. You can communicate all over the world with a smile!

In every society, a smile means the same thing. People can "hear" smiles. Have you ever been on the phone with someone and just knew they were smiling on the other end? That's not a fluke! When you smile, it changes your mouth's shape and impacts your voice's sound. Even if we don't realize it, we pick up on these cues, so we can often determine when people are smiling by the sound of their voices.

Let's conclude with a few fascinating simile facts. Did you know that there isn't just one type of smile? There are 19. However, only 6 of those 19 smiles are for happiness. Some of the smiles that aren't for happiness are embarrassed, miserable, and fake smiles.

Children smile more than adults! According to studies, children laugh around 300 – 500 times a day! But adults laugh around 17.5 times a day. Women smile more than men. New-borns prefer a smiling person

to a non-smiling person. Smiles are the most easily recognized facial expression; they can be recognized from over 300 feet away.

The Mysterious Minhag of "Chazak Chazak VeNischazaik" By Rabbi Yair Hoffman



The fact is that no one really knows how the minhag of reciting "***Chazak, Chazak v'Nischazaik***" upon completing the last parsha in each of Chamisha Chumshei Torah really started. Nor do people really known where and when it started (but there are some indications). Toward the end of this article, the author would like to present a theory.

There are many things that we do know about this minhag.

We know that the Aruch haShulchan (OC 139:15) and the **Chasam Sofer** both held to say instead, "Chazak, Chazak, Chazak." We know that there was a minhag to say, "Chazak, Chazak, Chazak" because Chazak in gematria is 115 and saying that three times is 345 – which is the Gematria of "Moshe."

The Chsam Sofer's minhag is mentioned in the writings of his student (5638) Rabbi Chizkiya Feivel Plaut in his Likutei Chaver ben Chaim). So we know that in 1806-ish – the minhag of reciting "Chazak, Chazak v'Nischazaik" – already existed – at least in Hungary.

This idea of chazak 3 times is actually first mentioned by Rav Chaim Vital in his Shaar hapsukim on Yehoshua 1:6 – where he notes that Hashem told Yehoshua "Chazak" three times.

We know that the custom in Worms was to recite Chazak twice at the conclusion of every Sefer – once by the Chazan and once by the congregation (5747 edition page 278). This was also the custom in Frankfurt (cited in "Noheg k'Tzon Yosef by Rav Yoseph Kashman on parshas Vayechi).

We also know that some Poskim hold that the person who got the last Aliyah should not say "Chazak, Chazak, veNischazaik" when the rest of the Tzibbur is saying it because they hold it is a hefsek. We also know that the Lubavitcher Rebbe disagreed with this psak and held that is part of the bracha – no different than saying "pass the salt" after reciting hamotzi – according to the Gemorah.

This Author's Suggestion

I would like to suggest the following idea. Somewhere, in some shul in Hungary in the late 1700's, there may have been too much talking in shul and or krias haTorah. The Rav felt that it was a lack of derech eretz and spoke about the Gemorah in Brachos (32b). There the Gemorah states that four things require Chizuk – strengthening. The last of the four is Derech Eretz. The Gemorah quotes the pasuk in Shmuel Bais (10:12), "Chazak veNischazaik ba'ad ameinu – let us be strong and we will be strengthened for our nation."

That particular shul already had the minhag of reciting Chazak three times at the completion of each sefer. But after the Rav may have quoted that Gemorah in Brachos (32b), the kehillah then combined their minhag and changed it to Chazak chazak venischazaik because of the Rav's citation of the Gemorah in Brachos to strengthen derech eretz. This minhag spread rapidly.

When it first began, the Chasam Sofer felt it was wrong. The Aruch haShulchan felt the same way. But Hashem runs the world and the minhag developed in order to strengthen Derech Eretz.

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

Chizuk – Inspiration



Yaakov had three battles in his life with three major antagonists: Lavan, Eisav, and Saro shel Eisav – the angel representing Eisav and the future nation that would emerge from him. However, not only did he prevail in these battles – the end result was that each battle or struggle actually ended in peace!

Rather than continue to quarrel with Yaakov, Lavan decided to make a treaty with Yaakov as it says (Bereishes 31:44) "Come then, let us make a pact, you and I, that there may be a witness between you and me." Regarding Eisav, it states (Bereishis 33:4) "And Eisav ran toward him and embraced him, and he fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." And in regards to the encounter with Saro Shel Eisav, though it was indeed a battle, it ended up amicably with Yaakov receiving a blessing (Bracha) from the Saro Shel Eisav.

How is this possible? Most people when they struggle with an adversary end up the lesser for it. The answer is that Yaakov lived a life of Emes – truth, and this is one of the fantastic rewards of living a life devoted to Emes. The ultimate reward for the Middah of Emes is peace.

חֲזַק חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזֵּק

פ"ה פסוקים פ"ה אל פה סימן חסלת פרשת ויחי

When we finish a Sefer of Chumash as we do this week, we recite, "Chazak, chazak, v'nischazek," "Be strong, be strong, and we will become stronger."

It's something that we do as a group, united, working together. WE become stronger when we encourage each other. On his deathbed, Yaakov Avinu underscored the importance of this.

The Torah tells us, "Each according to **his** blessing did he bless **them**." When the brothers would be united, Yaakov wished to convey, they would all share the benefits of the strengths and blessings of each brother.

When we Jews unify as a nation, we, as a group, share in the achievements and merits of each individual. Chazak, chazak, let us unite and become strengthened together, celebrating the strengths of each individual and enjoying them ourselves!

Parsha Thoughts By Mordechai Sapoznick



Efraim told Yosef - הִנֵּה אָבִיךָ חֹלֶה - Behold your father is sick." Then the פְּסוּקִים go on to say וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב הַמִּטָּה - "***Yaakov strengthened himself and sat up on the bed***."

What does Yosef hearing about his father Yaakov being sick and going to visit him have to do with Yaakov strengthening himself and sitting up on the bed?

The Alsheich Hakadosh זצ"ל explains that when someone is not well and someone comes to visit him, the visitor takes away one sixtieth of the person's illness. So, when Yosef came to visit Yaakov who wasn't well, Yosef took away one sixtieth ofthe illness and that is how Yaakov was able to strengthen himself and sit up on the bed. [Dvar Torah from **ספר טללי אורות**]

Divrei Torah Ba'er Heitev

תתן אמת ליעקב וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

'Yaakov Avienu lived in Mitzrayim etc.' We also know that the Middoh (trait) of Yaakov Avienu is Emes – Truth, as we say daily in Davening – Give truth to Yaakov etc. **The Sefas Emes ZY"A** quotes his grandfather, **The Chidushei Harim ZY"A** with the following explanation. With the Middoh of Truth a Yid can live in all circumstances, even in Mitzrayim – Maitzorim, difficulties (same letters – **מצרים** (troubles that seem to prevent one from his daily duties as a good Jew.



Divrei Torah Ba'er Heitev

וַיְבָרֲכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר וגו': ספר בראשית פרק מ"ח פ"כ

Yaakov Avienu Bentched them – Ephraim and Menashe – "that day" saying.

We must make point of and understand the significance that Yaakov Avienu Bentched them saying – "that day". Says **Rav Moshe of Kobrin ZY"A** that one must focus on the present day only and should not be worried

about the troubles of the next day. With this approach of Emunah and Bitochon one can truly serve Hashem with happiness, steadily.

Rav Avigdor Miller on Being Too Dead to be Sorry

QUESTION: How do I answer my cousin who says she went to an Ivy League college and wasn't affected? She says she's not sorry she went because it had no effect on her.

ANSWER: There was a man who ridiculed the speed laws; he was always speeding in his car and he was warned that he'll be sorry someday. And now he's in the morgue. He ended up against a lamppost and now he's dead. Now this man is not sorry for speeding. He can't be sorry because he's dead.

Now, if he wouldn't die, if he'd just be crippled, then he would be sorry; but when he's dead he can't be sorry. That girl who went to college is not sorry because she's dead. She lost her mind. She became educated which is equivalent to having an operation – your brain is removed from you.

Now, it could be your cousin never had any brain in the first place. That's also possible. Whatever she had however was replaced by an artificial set of ideas. And today it's a dangerous set of ideas what they teach in college. Marxism and humanism. They teach them to be blind to the wonders of nature.

When you learn biology, it's especially planned that you should not see the plan and purpose. And therefore, if your cousin tells you she went to college and wasn't affected, you can tell her it's because she's already in the morgue.

Procrastination is the thief of time.

Limuday Moshe by Moshe Harris - True Life

In this week's parsha we learn about the special berachos Yaakov Avinu granted to Yosef's two sons – Ephraim and Menashe – before his death. Yosef brought his sons before Yaakov, and Yaakov pronounced the famous berachah which concludes with the wish: **וידגו לרוב בקרב הארץ** – "***They shall multiply like fish in the midst of the land***" (Bereishis 48:16).

The Medrash offers a number of different explanations for why Yaakov blessed his descendants that they should multiply specifically "like fish." One explanation is that just as fish jump excitedly to greet every drop of rainwater that falls into the ocean, lake or river, so do the Jewish People eagerly and lovingly cherish every word of Torah that we learn.

Fish are not lacking water; they live in large bodies of water which contain more than enough water for them. Nevertheless, they enthusiastically welcome every single new drop that falls – representing the excitement that we should experience every time we have the opportunity to learn more Torah. As much as we have learned, as much as we know, every "drop" of Torah is precious and should cause us great excitement.



The Medrash also gives another, more famous, explanation, stating that just as fish cannot live outside water, the Jewish People similarly cannot live without Torah. The study of Torah is as crucial for our existence as water is for the existence of fish.

Rav Mordechai Gifter, esteemed Rosh Yeshiva of the Telz Yeshiva in Cleveland, developed this analogy further. He explained that when

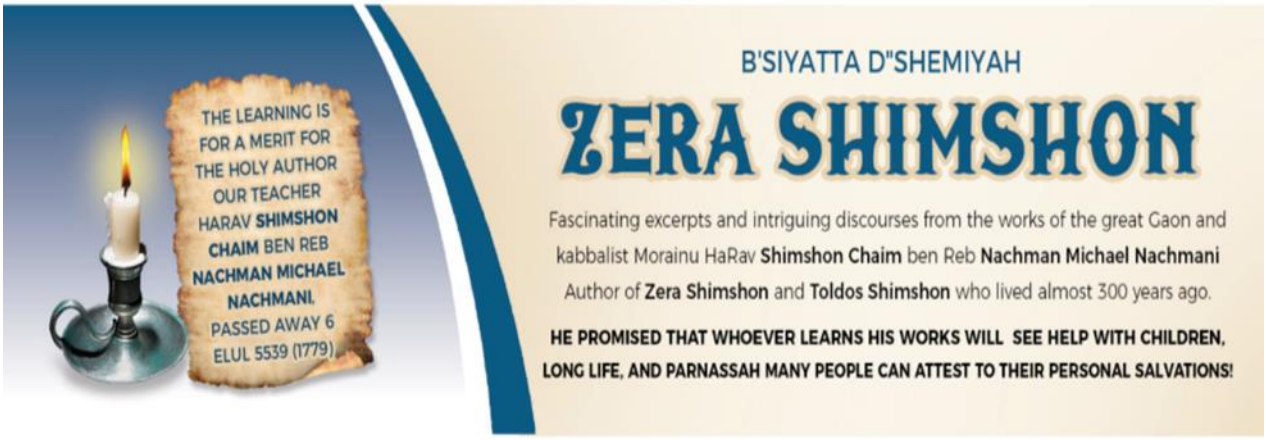
we observe fish swimming in the water, they swim slowly and calmly, without much energy, and without making any noise. But the moment the fisherman lifts his net out of the water, the fish inside the net start thrashing frantically, moving about in a frenzy.

Somebody who didn't know better might think that the fish are healthier, stronger and more energetic at that moment than they ever were inside the water, but of course, it's just the opposite. The calm, tranquil existence in the water is what the fish are supposed to experience; the thrashing outside the water is a sign that something is wrong, that the fish are about to die.

Rav Gifter taught that the same is true of Jews and Torah. People who do not study Torah might appear to be more "alive," as they involve themselves in all kinds of different activities, enjoying many different kinds of experiences, and displaying a great deal of enthusiasm and vigour. But the true life of a Jew is the calm, tranquil experience of sitting with a sefer absorbing the sacred words of the Torah.



The vigour exhibited by those who are taken out of the "water," who are not involved in Torah learning, is deceptive. It is a sign of spiritual demise. True life is experienced by living in the calm, peaceful "waters" of Torah, immersing oneself in the sacred word of Hashem and being enriched, inspired and elevated by His timeless wisdom.



רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹרִי אַתָּה כֹחִי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי ***'Reuvain etc. you are my strength my initial vigour'*** (49:3)

R' Chaim Vital writes (Sefer HaGilgulim 5), that R' Eliezer (HaGadol) possessed Reuvain's Neshama. This, he hints to in the word of the abovementioned passuk **כחי** ,my strength. The root of the word **כחי** is **כח** which has the numerical value of 28.

R' Eliezer writes about himself (Pirkei D'R Eliezer) that he started learning Torah when he was 28 years old. In Pirkei Avos (2:11), Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai asks his students to tell him what they think is the best, all-encompassing, good trait that a person should put his heart and soul into developing. He also asks them for the worst, all-encompassing, bad trait that a person should put his heart and soul into staying away from.

R' Eliezer says that the best trait is having a good eye and the worst trait is the opposite, having a bad eye.

The Zera Shimshon explains that what influenced R' Eliezer to choose this trait was because he possessed the soul of Reuvain. When Leah named Reuvain, the passuk says that she chose the name **רְאוּבֵן** since **רָאָה ה' בְּעָנְיִי** – ***'Hashem saw my suffering'*** (Bereishis 29:32). Thus, the essence of Reuvain's name is rooted in the idea of **ראה** ,to see. Therefore, R' Eliezer who possessed Reuvain's soul, chose the trait that had to do with the eyes, and seeing, to work on.

The Zera Shimshon – The Limud that Brings Yeshuos

וַיִּפְרְ֥וּ וַיִּרְבְּ֖וּ מְאֹ֑ד... וַיְחִ֣י יַעֲקֹ֗ב בְּאֶ֙רֶץ֙ מִצְרַ֔יִם שְׁבַ֥ע עֶשְׂרֵ֖ה שָׁנָֽה

And they were very fruitful. And Yaakov lived (in Egypt) seventeen years (47:27-28)

Rashi writes that the reason that there is no separation in the Torah between the end of last week's parsha and the beginning of this week's parsha, as there usually is, is because when Yaakov Avinu passed away, the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were blocked from the pain of the Egyptian labour since they started the enslave the Jewish people. This is alluded to by the 'blocked' parsha this week.

The Zera Shimshon asks - if there needs to be an allusion to Yaakov Avinu's passing away why isn't it closer to the end of the parsha, closer to when Yaakov Avinu actually passes away?

The Zera Shimshon offers as to why the parsha is blocked over here, rather than closer to when Yaakov Avinu actually passed away, is because last week's parsha ends that the Jewish people were very fruitful. This was the main thorn in the Egyptians eyes - the numerous Jews, and this is what pushed them to enslave them. Therefore, right after the passuk mentions the fact that the Jews were fruitful, which was the trigger for the slavery, the passuk is blocked to represent that this was the prompter of the slavery.

Another point the Zera Shimshon makes is that we do not find that the Jewish people cried too much over Yaakov Avinu's death which is very peculiar. The Zera Shimshon explains this in a fascinating manner. Being that crying over a Tzaddik who passes away pushes off suffering, and the Egyptian Exile was already decreed, had the Jewish people cried over Yaakov Avinu they would have pushed off the decree. Therefore, there was a blockage in their eyes that did not allow them to cry and a blockage in their hearts that did not allow them to realize how they could push off the decree.

This is the way the Zera Shimshon re-reads Rashi when he writes that - the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were blocked from the pain of the Egyptian labour. The Zera Shimshon interprets Rashi so, because even after Yaakov Avinu passed away the intense slave labour did not being until the last one of the Shevatim passed away. Therefore, the fact that their eyes and hearts were blocked from the slave labour must mean something else. Therefore, Zera Shimshon offers the above.

The Zera Shimshon – The Limud that Brings Yeshuos

בִּרְכֹת שָׁדַיִם וָרָחַם *'A blessing to the father and mother' - Targum* (49:25)

The Zera Shimshon explains this passuk to be a blessing to a father and mother to rejoice with their children by seeing them going on the right path.

He links this passuk with the passuk in Mishlei (23:25) that says, **יִשְׂמַח־אָבִיךָ וְאִמֶּךָ** - "***Let your father and mother rejoice etc***", which refers to a child that follows the way of the Torah.

The Zera Shimshon teaches that a couple merits happiness from their children when they work together - as friends - on raising their children. This, the Zera Shimshon learns from following Mishnayos in Pirkei Avos. In the second Perek (Mishna 9), the Mishna tells how Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai listed the praises of his five disciples. About R' Yehoshua he said, "Praised is the one who gave birth to him".

R' Ovadia Bartenura explains that R' Yehoshua's mother went around to Torah scholars and requested that they pray for the child she was expecting to be a Chacham. Once he was born, she placed his crib in the Beis Medrash so that he should only hear the words of Torah. This is why she merited being praised like this by Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai.

In a later Mishna (11), Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai asked his students what they think the most important thing a person should focus on in order to serve Hashem properly. R' Yehoshua's answer was to have a good friend.



The Zera Shimshon explains that the praises that Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai gave his students and his students' opinions as to what is the most important thing one should focus on - are connected. He explains this as follows:

A husband and wife are referred to by the passuk in Malachi (2:14) as friends - וְהִיא חֲבֶרְתֶּךָ . They are in fact friends because for a child to succeed, both the mother and father have to contribute to his growth. This can only happen if they work together - as friends.

This is what Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai meant by his praise of R' Yehoshua's mother. It was in addition to the effort that his father put into him. Most of the time, either parent suffices with what the other parent did. Here, R' Yehoshua's mother added to his eventual greatness by adding to what his father would do. Thus, the praise is not that only his mother contributed to his greatness, rather, that both parents did.

What Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai wanted to bring out was the (possibly overlooked) part that R' Yehoshua's mother added. If husband and wife have to work as friends for their children to succeed, then R' Yehoshua's parents were the prime example of such a couple. This influenced R' Yehoshua's opinion later on life as to what the most important thing a person should focus on to serve Hashem - a good friend.

Although his words were intended to be understood at face value, they were also in reference to his parents and how they worked together as friends, which enabled him to succeed.

The Zera Shimshon – The Limud that Brings Yeshuos

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים *'And Yaakov called to his sons and he said 'gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days'* (49:1)



The Yalkut Shimoni says (157), that before Yitzchak Avinu passed away he also wished to reveal the end to his children. In fact, it says that he wished to reveal it specifically to Esav and Hashem hid the end of time from him.

The Zera Shimshon asks, if so, why did Yaakov Avinu not learn from his father's mistake? If Hashem did not let Yitzhak Avinu reveal the end of time why would he allow Yaakov Avinu to reveal the end of time? As well, why in fact did Yitzchak Avinu wish to reveal the end of time to Esav? Lastly, the Gemara says (Pesachim 56a), that when Yaakov Avinu was unable to see when the end of time would be, he thought that one of his children must be not righteous the same way Avraham Avinu had Yishme'al and Yitzchak Avinu had Esav. The question is, why is the fact that Yaakov Avinu was unable to see the end of time an indicator that one of his children was not righteous? Perhaps it is simply an indicator that Hashem does not want this time to be revealed?

The Zera Shimshon answers with the following Gemara. The Gemara says (Sanhedrin 97a), that all the ends of time have already passed and it is now only dependent on the repentance of the Jewish people. The Gemara then brings an argument between R' Eliezer and Shmuel.

R' Eliezer says that if the Jewish people do Teshuva they will be redeemed and if they do not, they will not be redeemed. Shmuel says that Hashem will force them to repent by putting a king in power that will be as wicked as Haman who will force them to truly repent.

The Maharsha explains this argument to be about whether or not forced repentance helps. According to Shmuel it does, whereas, according to R' Eliezer it does not help and therefore, the Jewish people are going to have to do real and sincere repentance in order to be redeemed.

According to this, when Yitzhak Avinu wanted to inform Esav when the end of time would be, he was doing it for the good of the Jewish people. Yitzchak Avinu held like the opinion of Shmuel that even repentance by force is good repentance. Yitzchak Avinu therefore wanted to corner Esav not to be too cruel with the Jewish people because Esav would know that if he was too cruel with them, they would repent, and he would lose all of his power.

Hashem however did not agree with this because if this secret would be known, then none of the nations of the world would ever force the Jewish people to the point where they would have to repent. And this would push off the end of time for an untold amount of time.

Yaakov Avinu on the other hand, wanted to reveal the end of time to his children for a completely different reason. He wanted the Jewish people to know that it was dependent on their repentance even if they would be forced to repent and the quicker they would repent, even by force, the quicker they would merit the coming of Moshiach. When these times were hidden from him, he was afraid that perhaps one of his children was unworthy just like Esav was and therefore to reveal this would be counterproductive. This is because unworthy people cannot keep secrets (see Sanhedrin 31a) and this would eventually get out to the nations of the world.



Seated in the Men's Section

Rebbetzin Yehudis Neuberger, the wife of Rav Naftali Neuberger, experienced significant cognitive challenges toward the end of her life. Despite this, Rav Naftali continued to bring her with him to public events, even when doing so required great sensitivity and could lead to moments that were socially difficult and at times embarrassing.

At a chasunah in Baltimore, Rebbetzin Neuberger had seated herself on the men's side at table one beside her husband, even though the event had clearly marked separate seating, which was very common even then.

Rav Avrohom Pam was also attending the chasunah. After the chupah, as he entered the main ballroom, he noticed Rebbetzin Neuberger sitting next to Rav Naftali. He paused with the talmid walking with him and quietly said, "Please ask the Rebbetzin to join me."

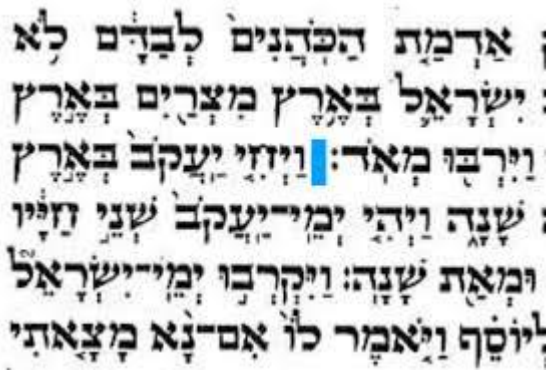
He then walked through the hall with his Rebbetzin and joined the Neubergers at their table, sitting together with them at table one in the men's section. (Heard from R' Chaim Shimon Neuberger, a grandchild of R' Naftali.)

Rav Pam's sensitivity and flexibility reflected authentic greatness, grounded in a clear understanding of the true priorities of ratzon Hashem rather than social convention. This is the natural result of a life lived with clarity of mission.

'One who truly trusts in Hashem is grateful for both the good and the difficult, knowing they come from the same loving Father.' ~ Chovos Halevavos.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

פרשה סתומה


אַרְמַת הַכֹּהֲנִים לְבַדָּם לֹא
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶרֶץ
וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד: וַיִּחַי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ
שְׁנָה וַיִּהְיוּ יְמֵי־יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חַיָּיו
וּמְאַת שָׁנָה: וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְיוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי

Parshas Vayechi is called a closed parshah or *parshah stumah*. In the Sefer Torah, there is no separation, no space between parshas *Vayigash* and parshas *Vayechi*. In the words of Rashi "it is the most closed of all the Torah portions".

Sometimes a person feels that a **פרשה סתומה** "a closed parashah" has come upon him; difficult and bitter tests, and **נסתמו עיניו ולבו**, he feels that his heart and his eyes are closed from the tzaros.

We learn from this week's parashah that this is just an illusion. In the place where we thought it was **סתומה**, closed, is where the words **ויחי יעקב** are written. - This teaches us that all the tzaros were **להחיותו**, for his goodness and well-being.

Therefore, when a person has a question **למה פרשה זו סתומה**, why is his life "closed"? Whether the question is regarding his bank account, nachas from children, shalom bayis, and so on. He should have emunah that it is all for the good. It is **להחיותו**, to give him life. (Based on **Pri Tzaddik**, of **Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen** of Lublin.)

R' Yaakov Galinsky (1920–2014), the noted maggid from Bnei Brak, points out that we must constantly be grateful to Hashem, not only for the good that He has caused to happen to us, but also for the evil that He has saved us from — and of which we are not even aware! The accident that didn't happen, the illness that didn't occur, the loss that didn't transpire — our gratitude should know no bounds!

The Weekly Vort

■ The addition of the numerical values of the first letters of the words following the names of the *shevatim* in each *brocha* equals 365 – the number of days in the solar year. And the addition of the last letters in each *brocha* yields the total 354 – the number of days in the lunar year.

The Navi Yirmiyahu said (Yirmiyahu 31:35-36) that just as the cosmic laws will never cease, so Klal Yisroel shall endure forever. (Baal Haturim)

Short Story Of The Week By Yoni Schwartz



One day after WWII, a boy named Mottel, around ten years old, arrived at the orphanage of the **Ponevezher Rav, ZT"L**, in Israel, wearing filthy, smelly clothing, clearly starving.

The orphanage matron gave him a meal. He ate a little and put the rest in his pocket. She gave him clean pyjamas and hoped to bathe him and wash his clothes, but Mottel ran straight to bed, food in his pocket, shoes still on - and refused to change.

For four nights, she tried unsuccessfully to convince him to remove his dirty clothing. Eventually, the Ponevezher Rav, together with her and Rabbi Gurewitz (the orphanage administrator) decided they needed guidance, so they brought Mottel to the **Chazon Ish**.

The Chazon Ish spoke to the boy with extraordinary gentleness, feeling every ounce of his pain. When he asked, "Why don't you want

to take off your clothes?" Motel answered, "Last time I took off my clothing was in Bergen-Belsen, and they weren't there in the morning. Before that, in Auschwitz, the same thing happened. If my parents aren't here, I'm not taking them off."

The Chazon Ish said, "If you take off your clothing, the orphanage mother will watch them."

The boy replied that he doesn't trust her.

"Then Rabbi Gurewitz will watch them."

The boy answered. "I don't trust him either."

"The Ponevezher Rav will watch them," the Chazon Ish said.

"I don't trust him either," the boy replied.

Finally, the Chazon Ish said, "You know what - if you take off your clothing, put on pyjamas, and take a shower, I will watch them. And you can trust me because I have never told a lie in my whole life." [Though saying such a thing was wholly unlike him - due to his immense humility - he said it for the child's sake.]

Mottel looked at him and asked, "You'll watch my clothing?"

The Chazon Ish gave him his word.

Motel went to bathe and left his clothing with the Chazon Ish.

Left alone, the Chazon Ish turned to the Ponevezher Rav and said, "This boy has no mother and father. Let you and me be his parents."

The great Chazon Ish, who almost never stopped learning for anything, went, found a bucket, filled it with soap and water, and together with the Ponevezher Rav, scrubbed the clothing until they were perfectly clean.

When the boy finished his bath, he asked, "Where's my clothing?" The Chazon Ish responded, "It's hanging right there on the wall, and they'll be ready for you tomorrow morning."



◣ Equal In Excellence - Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁבַע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וַיְהִי יְמֵי־יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חַיָּיו שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמְאַת שָׁנָה - "*...and the days of Yaakov - the years of his life - were one hundred and forty-seven years.*" (47:28)

Generally, the Torah recounts the life span of a person immediately prior to or following his death. It is unusual that Yaakov's days are mentioned at the beginning of this parashah, still some time before his death.

This count is placed here, however, to teach us that each day of Yaakov's life was uniform in terms of his dedication to Hashem and to Torah, from the days of his youth in his father's house, through the years he studied in the academies of Shem and Eiver, the years he spent in Lavan's house, and the years of his anguish over Yosef's absence, and throughout his years in Egypt. In his youth he had attained the same spiritual level he was to attain in his old age.

It was in the merit of these accomplishments that his image was engraved on the Throne of Glory (see Bereishis Rabbah 82:2), for he was able to take pride in all his days. Thus the length of his life span is related well before his demise to show that all of his days were equal in spiritual content.

◣ A Grandparent's Embrace - Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָבִיו בָּנַי הֵם.. וַיִּגַּשׁ אֹתָם אֵלָיו וַיִּשַּׁק לָהֶם וַיְחַבֵּק לָהֶם - "*Yosef said to his father, 'These are my sons...' He [Yaakov] brought them near to him, and he kissed them and embraced them.*" (48:9-10)



When Yosef HaTzaddik traveled to Goshen for the last time to see his father Yaakov, who lay ill on his deathbed, he brought along his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. The pasuk tells us that Yaakov "kissed them and embraced them."

Presumably, Yaakov had seen his grandchildren many times before; Ephraim would even sit by his side and learn Torah with him. Why, then, must the Torah explicitly discuss Yaakov's kisses and hugs?

R' Avraham Kelman shlit'a derives a beautiful message from Yaakov's actions. This is the first time in the Torah in which we find a zaydie - grandfather, enjoying an intimate moment with his einiklech - grandchildren. As Chazal inform us: **מַעֲשֵׂה אָבוֹת סִימָן לַבָּנִים** - the deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children" (Sotah 34).

While the Torah includes many exemplary interactions between children and parents, here, at least on a superficial level, we are able to glean something about the relationship between grandchildren and grandparents.

Grandparents are unique in the manner in which they dote unconditionally on their grandchildren. Children who feel deeply loved will automatically be more receptive to the guidance of their elders. - We can see from the Torah the beauty of the Jewish family and the manner in which the different generations live with, and for, each other.

◣ Keeping It Unknown - Reb Simchah Bunim of Pshischa

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם - "*And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt…*" (47:28)

Why is this portion closed (i.e., the text of the Torah is divided into paragraph-like passages, which are separated from each other by several blank spaces, yet in this case, there is space of only a single letter separating the word וַיְחִי from the word that precedes it)?

Because Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons the date of the end of days, but his vision was closed from him. (Rashi)

Why would Yaakov have wanted to reveal the date of the end of days to his sons?

Because exile is easier to endure if one knows in advance when it will end. But Hashem desired the Jews' exile to be difficult (thereby enabling true free will, as well as increased reward), and therefore He closed Yaakov's vision from him.

◣ Parent's Greatest Blessing - Shelah Hakadosh

"And he [Yaakov] blessed Yosef and said..." (48:15)

The blessing that follows was actually addressed not to Yosef but only to Yosef's two sons. Why, then, does the Torah say that Yaakov blessed Yosef?

In order to show that there is no more important blessing for a father than the wish that his children will take after him and become good people. Hence, Yaakov's blessing to Menashe and Ephraim, "*The angel who redeems me from all evil bless the young children, and let my name be named in them and the name of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak.*" (pasuk 16), is the best blessing Yosef, could possibly have received. (Based on the teachings of the **Rambam**.)

◣ Saving The Best For The Rest - Reb Zev Stritkover

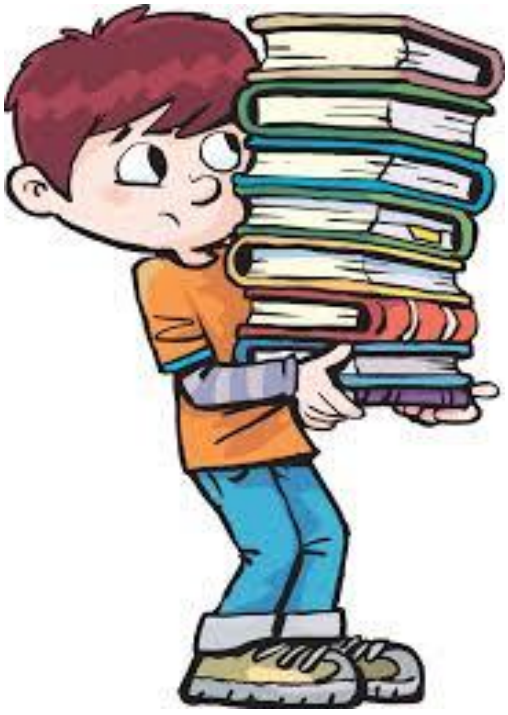
מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֶנָה לַחְמּוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי־מֶלֶךְ - "*From Asher, his bread will be rich, and he will give kingly delicacies.*" (49:20)



We have a lot to learn from Asher. "His bread is rich" - though Asher's portion was a plain piece of bread, for others he gave a kingly portion.

Such must be the life of a Jew. He should lead a very plain life so that he can give the best to others.

Short Story By Yoni Schwartz



One summer **Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky** was in a bungalow colony. He was standing next to the bookshelf after Krias HaTorah on Shabbos morning. A seven-year-old boy wanted to help by collecting all the chumashim and bringing them back to the shelf. He stacked the chumashim all the way to the top in his hands because... well... he was seven years old, and that's how seven-year-olds show that they're "big boys."

He was approaching the bookshelf with a chumash tower in his hands that was probably taller than him when he lost his balance and twenty chumashim came crashing down right at the feet of the Gadol Hador, Rav Kamenetsky.

The boy was mortified; this was probably the most embarrassing moment of his life. Everyone nearby rushed over to kiss and pick up

the chumashim. However, Rav Kamenetsky rushed over to the boy and began gently conversing with him, asking him, "Where are you from and who is your rebbe in school?"

After a couple of minutes, the young boy calmed down and went off.

Rav Kamenetsky turned to the person next to him and said, "First kiss the boy, then kiss the chumashim."

Comment: In this week's parsha, Vayechi, Yaakov blesses his grandchildren before he passes. Our sages teach us (Shabbos 119b), "The world only continues to exist in the merit of young children's Torah study."

In today's age, with everything one can imagine distracting a child, our greatest challenge is not to force children into going to shul or doing well on their chumash test and threaten punishments; rather, it is to implant in their hearts, from a young age, a genuine love of Torah so that even when they get older, they will continue in its path.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Yaakov's bracha to Asher was מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֵנָה לַחְמוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי מֶלֶךְ - "Of Asher, his bread is fat and he will provide royal delicacies." 49:20

Our sages say that the girls of that tribe were exceedingly beautiful and married kings and Kohanim Gedolim. But how did he merit this? How did his children become worthy of royalty?

The Alshich says we can read the verse in a unique way. To Asher, bread is "hearty" - and he is satisfied with simplicity. But when he gives to others? Maadanei Melech - only royal delicacies will suffice!

"Parsha Reflections for the Shabbos Table - Dayan Yehoshua Posen" - What defines us as 'Yehudim'?

In this week's **פרשה**, when **יעקב אבינו** gives **ברכות** to the **שבטים** before his **פטירה**, he says to **יהודה** the words **יְהוּדָה אַתָּה֙ יוֹד֣וּךָ אַחֶ֔יךָ** 49:8.

The **מדרש** explains that **יעקב** was telling **יהודה** that in the future, **כלל ישראל** will be referred to as **יהודים** after **יהודה**'s name. The **מפרשים** provide various explanations for this. **The Chidushei Harim** explains that just like **יהודה**'s name was given to him by **לאה**, expressing **הודאה** to the **רבונו של עולם**, so too, a fundamental tenet for any member of **כלל ישראל** is to constantly express **הכרת הטוב** to Him for all the good that He does.

Among the other explanations, some **מפרשים** say that **יהודה** was worthy of praise because he was **מודה** when he made a mistake. Whether with **יוסף** or in the episode with **תמר** - **יהודה** admitted that he had made a mistake. - This particular **מדה** was what **יעקב** was praising him for here.

If this is the case, the same is true for us, we are called **יהודים**, because it is imperative that we check and ensure that we are doing things correctly and are not shy to say that we have made a mistake.

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

In Bnei Brak, a visitor once came to see Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zt"l, after not having been in the Tzadik's house for over thirty years. After looking around, he remarked, "Rebbe, everything here still looks the same."

Rav Aharon Leib smiled and said, "It's not the house that's supposed to be updated and renovated. It's the people who live in the house who are really supposed to change!"



This shabbos is the yohrtziet of **מו״ר רב קלמן קראהן זצוק״ל** it is interesting to note that Rav Kalmen used to hire people to learn mishnayos for lost souls that had no one to say mishnayos for them.

It would be understandable to pay for people to learn for a nifter that is a relative or friend etc. However, by Rav Kalmen that was not necessarily the case at all! Rav Kalmen would take his own money and give parnassa to someone in an honorable way and at the same time give a tikkun for these lost yidisheh neshamos in the next world, even though Rav Kalmen never in his life met these Yidden, it made no difference, because Rav Kalmen's heart was big enough to love every Yid no matter his background, no matter if he met them before, no matter if Rav Kalmen agreed with their hashkafos Hachaim or not!

Rav Kalmen did not want any Jewish soul to suffer! Period.

The Weekly Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh

וַיְבָרֵךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כְּבִרְכָתוֹ – *'According to his Blessing.' 49:28*

In the beginning of this week's Parasha, the Torah relates how Yaakov Avinu blessed his children before he passed away. After he finished blessing them it says (Bereishis 49:28): "*and he blessed them, each according to his blessing*."

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks what does it mean that he blessed each one according to his blessing.

The Ohr HaChaim answers that Yaakov blessed each tribe to direct them how to achieve their potential, utilizing their specific nature

and abilities. Each person received a blessing in keeping with his individual personality and achievements.

You must not forget that different souls possess different potentials. Some souls are able to rise to the level of being priests, others to the level of being kings, etc. Still others have the potential to achieve greatness in Torah knowledge, or temporal successes such as wealth, or personal heroism.

Yaakov endeavoured to match his blessings to to what he perceived to be the nature of each of his sons special attributes.

פ״ה פסוקים. פֶּה אֶל פֶּה סימן

This Masoretic note means: There are 85 pesukim in the parsha, corresponding to the mnemonic **פֶּה אֶל פֶּה** [literally, mouth to mouth (the word **פֶּה** equals 85)].

Rav Dovid Feinstein comments that this alludes to the theme of our parsha, in which Yaakov Avinu spoke to his children, relating to them the berochos that would form the core of their mission for all time.

In the mnemonic of our parsha, Rav Feinstein, who interprets these Masoretic notes, finds support for his contention that they are meant not only as convenient memory devices but to encapsulate the message of the parsha.

If nothing were intended except a reminder that there are 85 pesukim, it would have been sufficient to use only the word **פֶּה**, mouth, or **פֹּה**, here - but this would tell us nothing about the parsha itself, therefore it was expanded to **פֶּה אֶל פֶּה** - mouth to mouth.

'When you see something beautiful in someone, tell them. - What takes a moment for you, could last a lifetime for them.' ~ Based on the teachings of Rabbi Avigdor Miller (1908-2001).

פֶּה אֶל פֶּה

The mnemonic **פֶּה אֶל פֶּה** [literally, mouth to mouth] plays a big role in the chinuch of our children.

In the Haftorah of Parshas Vayeiro we recount the story told in Melachim (chapter 4) about Elisha and the Shunammite woman. Elisha Hanavi was a regular recipient of her hospitality and as a result of this he blessed her with a son. However, when the child was very young, he was out in the field one day and complained of a headache. His father brought him to his mother, where he died in her arms. She then lay him down on the bed and went to get Elisha. At first, Elisha sent his attendant Geichazi to try and revive the child by laying his staff on the child's face. However, when this didn't work, Elisha came and lay down on top of the child and eventually revived him.

The posuk over there says (4:34): **וַיַּעַל וַיִּשְׁכַּב עַל־הַיֶּלֶד וַיָּשֶׂם פִּיו עַל־פִּיו וְעֵינָיו עַל־עֵינָיו וְכַפָּיו עַל־כַּפָּיו (כתיב כַּפָּו) וַיִּגְהַר עָלָיו וַיָּחָם בְּשַׂר הַיֶּלֶד**

'*And he went up and lay on the child, and placed his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his palms on his palms, and he prostrated himself upon him: and the child's flesh became warm.*'

We see that the child was not revived by the staff but rather by Elisha prostrating himself upon him.

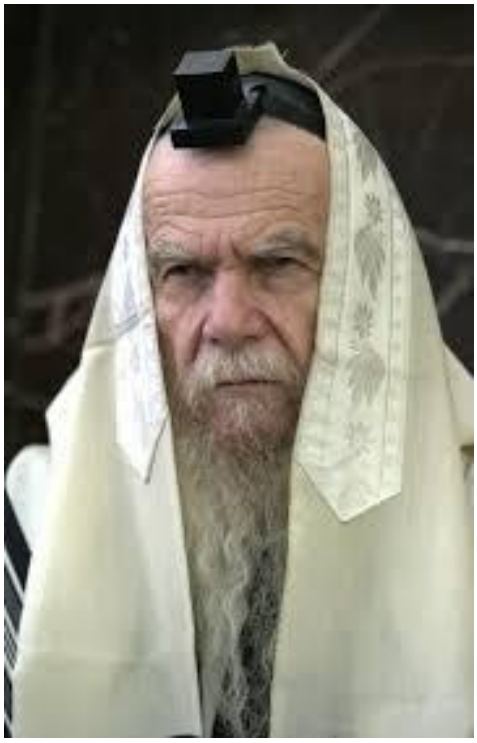


The late Gateshead Menahel, **Reb Eliezer Kahan zt"l**, in his Sefer Nachalas Eliezer brings out a tremendous lesson on Chinuch hidden in this story of Elisha: Many people take the hardline approach when it comes to Chinuch. They try to educate their children by beating and rebuking them harshly. However it is clear, particularly in this generation that this approach does not work. The children aren't able to handle such treatment anymore. Instead, young children need to be encouraged with love and affection.

The words "*mouth upon his mouth*" symbolise gentleness and deep closeness. The words "*eyes upon his eyes*" means that we have to give over our entire soul to the child and keep watch over him that he stays on the right path and does not stumble chas vesholom.

If a person goes on the wrong path, chazal call that spiritual death. The only way to save children from that path and "bring back the dead" is through drawing them close in a loving way.

This message is particularly pertinent today where so many lures and distractions draw our children away from the true path of Torah and mitzvos. However, if they feel that they have a home in which they are loved unconditionally, they will think twice before running away. - One could add that even if they do end up drifting away, they will still feel they have a warm home to come back to.



My close friend Josh Bamberg once told me that he knows someone who has recently embarked on a career in Chinuch that went to Bnei Brak to visit the home of the Ponovezer Rosh Yeshiva, **Hagaon Harav Gershon Edelstein ztvk"l**. He waited in line and when his turn came, he asked the Rosh Yeshiva what the correct approach was to discipline in the classroom.

Without hesitation Harav Edelstein replied emphatically: **רק בידידות** - "only with love". - Throughout the conversation he kept repeating those words again and again as if to emphasise the point.

Our gedolim are described as the "eyes of the generation". They understand that this particular generation needs a soft hand to eventually carry them to Eretz Yisroel to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu speedily in our days. Omen!



It simply doesn't make sense. If we take a little look at *Yaakov*'s life, we see no end to the *pain* he endured. He was chased by his very own twin brother, almost killed by *Eliphaz*, worked seven years in order to finally get married, was swindled day and night, tricked into marrying the wrong sister, was chased by his father-in-law, his son *Yosef* goes missing for years, it just goes on and on. - Only finally in this week's *parsha* do *Yaakov's tsorus* end as he descends to *Mitzrayim*, reunites with *Yosef* and finally *Yaakov* lives in peace and tranquility for seventeen years in Egypt.

So here's the question: **The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*** notices that the *Torah* describes all of the challenging years in great detail, but when it finally comes to the seventeen years of peace, the *Torah* stops and tells us nothing about them. - Why?

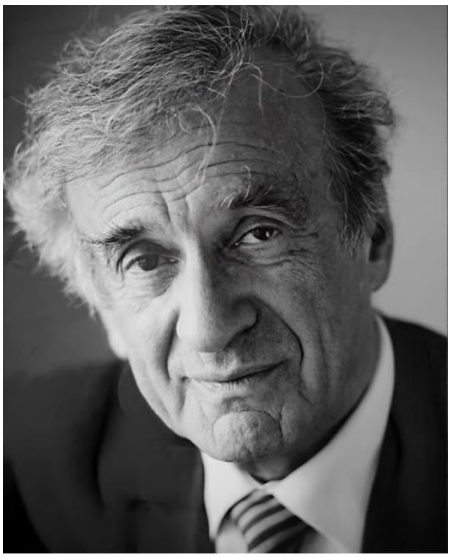
The answer reveals an important *yesod* in our own lives. We all have easier times and harder times. We tend to feel that the times when everything's going well, those are the real times, and the times that we struggle, we just wish it passes and it's over.

The *Torah* is teaching us the opposite is true. The *Torah* goes to great lengths describing the *tsorus* of *Yaakov Avinu* because that's what life is all about, and actually, one can really grow from those times.

Elie Wiesel was a teenager from Romania, raised in a deeply religious Jewish home. At fifteen years old, his world was destroyed.

He was deported to Auschwitz. He watched his mother and little sister disappear forever. He survived starvation, beatings, death

marches while clinging onto life and faith in the darkest place on earth. After liberation, Elie was broken and silent.



For years he refused to speak about what he saw, but later on, instead of running from the pain, he chose to carry it for others. He began writing a book that became one of the most important works in the twentieth century. He went on to educate the world, fight hatred, and won the Nobel Peace Prize. His pain never left him, but he refused to let it be meaningless. - He didn't escape suffering, he redeemed it.

That's the message of this week's *parsha*. Life has many ups and downs. It's the hard parts that we can emerge the strongest.

Have an amazing *Shabbos*.

Rich the Whole Time 💰



Twenty years after the war, **Rav Chaim Kreiswirth** informed a "poor" man that he had actually been left a vast fortune in a Swiss bank account. The man believed he was destitute, but in truth, he was rich the whole time.

Rav Chaim commented:

A Jew is never truly poor. His only poverty is not knowing how much Hashem has already given him, or who he truly is.

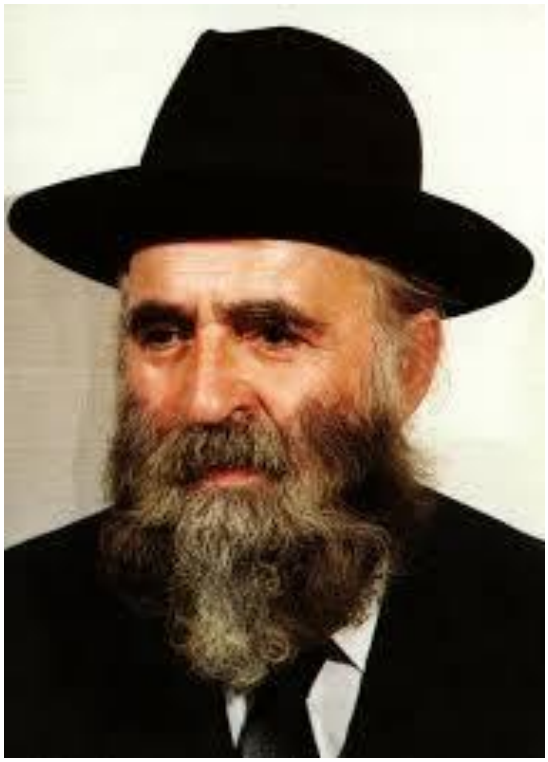
~ On the yahrtzeit of Rav Chaim Kreiswirth zt"l - **הרב חיים בן אברהם יוסף קרייזווירט זצ"ל** - Teves 16, 5762

Bending And Stretching Ourselves For Torah

Rav Chaim Kreiswirth was well known to dance on Simchas Torah with great hislahavus, aflame with excitement and joy! He was careful not to lose time from learning and often danced with an open Gemora, a sight that left its impressions on many.

He once observed a father holding the Sefer Torah and lowering it to allow his little boy to kiss the holy scroll. Rav Kreiswirth was not in favor of this practice, and lovingly admonished the father, explaining his reasons for opposing the father's well-intentioned, but in his opinion, misguided actions.

"When you bend down and lower the Torah to your son, you're teaching him that the Torah can be lowered or bent down to suit his needs, Heaven forbid. Instead, he needs to stretch himself or be lifted to kiss the holy scroll, so that he learns to accommodate and adjust himself to the Torah and not the other way around."



Reflections on Rav Chaim Kreiswirth Rav of Antwerp (1918-2001) whose yahrzeit is on 16th Teves

Reb Chaim Kreizworth zt"l would say, "We aren't able to learn Torah like Reb Akiva Eiger did, and we can't daven like Reb Akiva Eiger davened, either. But we can do chesed like Reb Akiva Eiger. Because chesed means to help your fellow man, and if you help your fellow man, you did the mitzvah, regardless of the purity of your intentions.

שָׂשׂ אָנֹכִי עַל אִמְרָתֶךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שָׁלָל רָב - *"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great spoil"*. (Tehilim 119:162

Regarding the preciousness of the **תורה**, greater than pearls and above all forms of treasure **הגאון רבי בערל דומב שליט"א** recounts that he was once on vacation in **נתניה** together with other **בני ישיבה**, when **Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro זצ"ל**, the **ראש ישיבה** of **באר יעקב** came and spoke in learning with his close friend, **Rav Chaim Kreiswirth זצ"ל**. The words of **תורה** exchanged between them were joyous like those given at **סיני**.

Within the conversation, Rav Kreiswrith said, "Come, out of honour of the **תורה**, let us share a **דבר תורה** which is worth a $100,000." The **ראש ישיבה** responded with his face glowing, "If it is worth that much, then of course, I want to hear this 'expensive *vort*."

Rav Chaim said, "However, there is a one condition, you have to pay the stated price."

The **ראש ישיבה** responded, "Let his honour give over the **דבר תורה**, and if I decide that it is indeed worth $100,000, I will pay it."

So it was, Rav Chaim Kreiswirth **זצ"ל** shared his **דבר תורה** with clarity and smooth reasoning, with his characteristic pleasantness and astonishing breadth of knowledge.

When he concluded, he asked Rav Moshe Shmuel, "Nu, was it worth $100,000?"

Rav Moshe Shmuel responded, "Definitely, with a doubt. Indeed, **דברי תורה** are precious, they are worth the full price, $100,000."

"If so," Rav Chaim answered, "Where is the one hundred thousand that you promised me? - You agreed to pay."

Rav Moshe Shmuel said that he would pay with the same currency, with an incredible **חידוש** worth no less than $200,000. - Rav Moshe Shmuel asked if He would accept this. Rav Chaim responded in the affirmative.

Rav Moshe Shmuel suggested his **חידוש** before Rav Chaim, and ended with a question, "Nu, was I not correct that a *vort* like this is worth $200,000?"

Rav Chaim replied that indeed it was, the words of **תורה** which had been shared were more valuable than gold, he agreed that the stated price was definitely not exorbitant.

Rav Moshe Shmuel asked, "If so, where is the change!?"

TORAH TAVLIN

STORIES AND SAYINGS, WIT AND WISDOM FROM OUR TORAH LEADERS

בִּנְיָמִין זְאֵב יִטְרָף בַּבֹּקֶר יֹאכַל עַד וְלָעֶרֶב יְחַלֵּק שָׁלָל (49:27)

When Shlomo Hamelech began building the **בית המקדש**, the **שבטים** discussed whose **חלק** it should be built on. **הקב'ה** told them 'You were all partners in the sale of Yosef except for Binyamin, who did not partake in this sale and therefore the **בית המקדש** is to be built on his **חלק**.

R' Dovid Firkis, a talmid of the **Baal Shem Tov** asks, the **שבטים** sinned with the sale of Yosef, but what was Yosef's crime and why couldn't the Bais Hamikdash have been built on his land?

We find in the **גמ' שבת**, 'Whoever causes the punishment of another cannot enter into the presence of the Shechina.' Because Yosef's brothers were punished on account of their sin against him, therefore it is considered as his fault somewhat, and for this reason he was not **זוכה** to have the Bais Hamikdash built on his **חלק**.

R' Moshe Sofer ZT"L (Chasam Sofer) would say:

"May they multiply abundantly like fish within the land. The entire existence of Bnei Yisroel is as extraordinary and unnatural as fish living within the land!"

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

A fire once broke out in a certain city, destroying all the homes and leaving the residents without a roof over their heads. In search of help, the local rabbi traveled from one community to another beseeching the Jews of each locale to show compassion and help their fellow Jews in need.

In one city where he visited, the rabbi approached a beautiful shop which sold extravagant, gold jewelry. The owner of the shop greeted him with a warm smile. "I see that you are not from around here," he said to the rabbi.

"How did you know?" asked the rabbi.

"Because if you were from this city you would have known already that I do not give a penny to charity!" answered the miserly storeowner.

"Let us change places," suggested the rabbi. "Instead of you fulfilling the mitzvah of helping others, I will do it, instead, by virtue of the fact that I am visiting the sick."

The wealthy man didn't understand. "Who is the ill patient which the rabbi is visiting?"

Answered the rabbi, "You are the sick one. As King Shlomo, the wisest of all men, wrote, 'There is an evil disease which I have seen under the sun: wealth kept with its master for his own detriment' (Kohelet 5:12). If the Almighty blessed you with wealth, and yet you boast about your unwillingness to share it with the underprivileged, there is no doubt, then, that your wealth is being kept with you for your own detriment. Eventually, you will have to account for the fact that you did not take proper advantage of your resources. -Thus, Shlomo Hamelech testifies to the fact that you are ill, and I am therefore fulfilling the mitzvah of visiting the sick."

The wealthy man laughed and said, "If you really want to fulfill the mitzvah in the truest sense of the word, you would be in a hospital.

You would not have come here to visit me only in the sense of involved, complex extrapolation."

The rabbi answered, "I will reveal to you the reason why I want to fulfill this mitzvah here only if you first make a pledge to contribute to the cause for which I am collecting."

The wealthy man finally consented out of curiosity. The rabbi explained, "Surely you are aware of chazal's comment that Yaakov was deathly ill, and only when Yosef arrived does the posuk say, 'Yisrael strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.' - Why did he receive additional strength once Yosef came to see him?

Because one who visits a sick patient removes one-sixtieth of the illness. And so, I prefer to visit you, whose illness is money - for I'd rather come and take with me one-sixtieth of your illness...!"



וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כִּבְרָכָתוֹ בֵּרַךְ אֹתָם – 49:28

Rashi asks a famous question: Why does the *Torah* insist that Yaakov blessed all of his sons, when we find that a good number of them did not receive blessings at all, but rather harsh criticism?

R' Michal Barenbaum Shlit'a attempts to answer by redefining the term 'Blessing.' The very act of identifying another person's strengths and weaknesses, and sharing this information with him, is the greatest blessing one can give. This idea can be illustrated through the following analogy:

A person's business begins to falter. His friends and acquaintances commiserate with him, wish him well and bless him with success. One friend, however, does more - he takes a personal interest and asks detailed questions about how the business is run. Then, one day, he begins listing all the reasons why the business is in ruins, delineating each mistake and highlighting each bad investment. His words are like arrows that puncture his friend's pride. But what a blessing!

Thanks to this friend, the man will get a realistic picture of his situation and rectify his mistakes.

Likewise, Yaakov informed his sons of their strengths and weaknesses, for he knew that now they would be able to rectify their character and perfect their service of *Hashem*. This was truly a wonderful 'blessing.'



מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ויחי אחרי הדברים האלה ויאמר ליוסף הנה אביך חולה וכו' (מז-א)

In the early 1980's **R' Yaakov Kamenetzky ZT'L** suffered an angina attack, and his doctor strongly recommended that he undergo an angiogram, a difficult and sometimes dangerous procedure for a man that age.

A grandson of R' Yaakov was learning in the Ponovezer Yeshiva at the time and decided to approach the *Rosh Yeshiva*, **R' Eliezer Menachem Shach**, with a request to pray for R' Yaakov's welfare. He knew he had to present R' Shach with his grandfather's name and the name of his great-grandmother, however, he had no clue of her name. Moreover, at the time of the angina attack, R' Yaakov was over 90 years old, and in excellent health and his grandson could not recall a time where he had mentioned his grandfather's name in a single *Mi Shebairach* for the sick. He went on a search expedition through Bnei Berak attempting to contact people who would know the name of R' Yaakov's mother, but nobody knew. After much time and effort, he finally managed to locate a relative who thought he knew the name.

Armed with the information and an update on his grandfather's condition, he approached the home of R' Shach. The elderly sage knew the *bochur* and his lineage and after inviting him into the sparsely furnished dining room and offering him a seat, he asked how

his grandfather, R' Yaakov, was feeling. The *bochur* turned white. 'That is exactly why I came,' he stammered.

Immediately R' Shach's face filled with consternation. The *bochur* continued, 'My grandfather was not feeling well and must undergo a procedure. I came to inform the...' R' Shach jumped up from his chair and exclaimed: 'We must say a special prayer for *Reb Yaakov ben Etka* (Yaakov the son of Etka)!'

The *bochur* stood opened-mouthed and could not contain himself. '*Rebbe*,' he began meekly. 'The last 12 hours I have been trying to find out my grandmother's name in order to present it to the *Rosh Yeshiva*. Now I see that the *Rosh Yeshiva* already knows the name of my great-grandmother. How is that possible?'

R' Shach explained, 'Years ago your grandfather visited *Eretz Yisrael*. After meeting him I asked him for his mother's name. I could not imagine a Jewish world without a healthy R' Yaakov, and there is not a single day that goes by that I do not say a special prayer for his welfare!'

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

A young boy was once stricken with a serious stomach ailment. A certain doctor, Dr. Weiselman, a renowned internist, was called in and he diagnosed that the boy was suffering from a dangerous condition, whereby his intestines had become twisted.

The boy's mother decided to travel to the city of Vishnitza, where **R' Shloime Halberstam ZT"L**, was the Dayan before becoming Rebbe in Bobov. The boy's mother wept incessantly, begging the Rebbe to pray for her son until she literally collapsed on the floor.

R' Shloime gave her his most heartfelt berachah, asking Hashem to cure the boy, and the distraught woman left.

R' Shloime paced the room feverishly for a few minutes. Not the type to rely on Heavenly miracles, he called to his attendant, "Quickly, call Dr. Weiselman!"

The doctor was immediately called. When he arrived, the Rebbe urgently asked him, "Please tell me, what do you think can be done for this patient?"

Replied the doctor, "Unfortunately, I don't see any hope for him. I have tried every possible medical remedy, but nothing has seemed to work."

R' Shloime thought for a moment. "Listen to me," he said finally, "I want to tell you a story from the Talmud." Taking out a Gemara Chulin, the Rebbe read aloud, translating every word into German for the benefit of the doctor. "The Talmud relates that once a man fell off a roof and suffered injuries to his stomach. In fact, his intestines were protruding out. A person skilled at slight of hand brought the son of the victim to the scene and appeared to slaughter the man's son right before his father's eyes! The injured man gasped in terror - and his intestines returned to their place, his injury totally cured!"

The Rebbe closed the sefer. "You see from here that one method of repairing intestines is to shock the patient!"

The doctor was still sceptical. Dr. Weiselman replied, "Certainly, from a medical point of view, it seems to be a rather unusual idea. But if you wish, I can attempt it by placing Bankes - leeches, on the patient."

The doctor went ahead and implemented the Rebbe's suggestion, and lo and behold, it worked! The doctor excitedly cried out, "Tell the Rebbe that the wisdom of the Talmud has saved this patient!"

After a few days, the boy felt hale and hearty once more, thanks to the intelligence, advice and perseverance of the Rebbe.

R' Naftali of Ropzhitz ZT'L would say:

"Why do chassidim drink so much schnapps? - Because they want to recite the blessing, 'שהכל נהיה בדבריו' - 'All came into being through His word'. Water is not good enough for them because anyone who truly knows that all came into being through G-d's word deserves another drink of schnapps!"

R' Chaim Ben Betzalel ZT"L (brother of the Mahar"al) would say:

"Chazal tell us that the Shechinah is "found" near the head of a sick person, because sickness is a humbling experience, and Hashem comes to those who are humble."

R' Asher of Karlin/Stolin ZT'L would say: "The posuk states, 'And (Yaakov) blessed them on that day'. He blessed them that they should do things immediately 'on that day' - rather than procrastinating."



Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

The Gaon In The Bakery - Rav Yechiel Meir of Ostrovtza zt'l - demonstrates his combination of greatness, simplicity, and humility

Welcome back to **מדרש** and **מעשה**, sharing a story for this week's **פרשה, פרשת ויחי**.

The **טאלנער רבי** said that he heard from someone, **ר׳ משה צבי ניימן זכרונו לברכה**, who in turn heard his following story from his uncle. When his uncle was young, he lived in the same town as **ר׳ מאיר יחיאל הלוי** of **אסטראווצא**. The **אסטראווצער** was known throughout Poland, really throughout Europe, as a tremendous **גאון** in **תורה**.

שאלות came to him from all over, and he eventually became a leader of many **חסידים**. So at one point, his uncle and the **אסטראווצער** went to go to **גראדזשיסק**. They were **חסידים** of **ר׳ אלימלך** of **גראדזשיסק**, and they went there for **פורים**. His uncle told them that while they were on the train, so **ר׳ מאיר יחיאל** gave him a **בבא בתרא** to hold, and as they traveled, so **ר׳ מאיר יחיאל** said the entire **בבא בתרא**, all that they were learning with the **רש״י** and the **תוספות**, all by heart as they were going.

When they got to **גראדזשיסק**, and they spent **פורים** with the **רבי**, on **מוצאי פורים** there was going to be a big **טיש**. And the **גבאים** discovered that there weren't enough **חלות** for the large **ציבור** that was there. So they asked the local baker to please open up the bakery and start baking. And meanwhile, they announced if there are any of the **חסידים** who know anything about baking, please go to the bakery and help the baker, because we want to make as many **חלות** as possible, as quickly as possible.

Now there are many stories about the **אסטראווצער** who would oftentimes quote wisdom he learned from his father, who was a fine **חסידישע** Jew and he was a baker, he baked bagels. So he knew how to bake. So he immediately jumped up and ran to the bakery and

started doing the work of kneading and braiding and baking and all the things that were there. While that was going on, the **רבי** came out of his room, and he started the **מוצאי פורים טיש**.

At one point, he was giving out cups of wine to different people to say **לחיים**, and he announced that this is for, right, **ר׳ מאיר יחיאל** of **אסטראווצא**. So he gave it to the **גבאי**, who was supposed to give it to the young man, but nobody could find him.

Eventually someone said, "I think he's in the bakery. I think he's helping the baker."

So there, **ר׳ אלימלך** of **גראדזשיסק**, when he heard that, he picked up his hands and he said, "If an **אברך** who is so full of **תורה** and **יראת שמים** doesn't care anything about his **כבוד** and runs to help bake so that people can have **חלות**," he says, "I cannot even imagine the **שכר** that he has both in this world and in the next world."

In this week's **פרשה**, we see the different **ברכות** to the **שבטים**.

ישששכר gets the **ברכה** of the **חמור**, of the donkey: **ישששכר חמור גרם רבץ בין המשפתים**. So among the many **פירושים** which we have on that is in the **ילקוט שמעוני**, it says **יעקב** said to **ישששכר**, "What caused you to be a **בן תורה**?

שאתה רובץ בעפר ואשפתות, that you like a donkey are willing to lie down in the dust, in all sorts of **פסולת**, you don't care about that, meaning that you don't care about your own **כבוד**, even though **ישששכר** was the **שבט** that had the **ברכה** of **תורה**, that produced the great, the most **יודעי בינה** that were **ראשי סנהדריות, 200 ראשי סנהדריות לעתים**. Combined with that though was the perfect combination of being a **תלמיד חכם**, but also having the **ענווה** to jump in and do what you have to do for **עם ישראל** without to worry about the **כבוד**.

This is our picture of what a true **בן תורה** is. This is the **ברכה**. So when a person is starting to imagine what image should come into mind when they think about what's called a **בן תורה אמיתי**, a true **בן**

תורה, they should think of a donkey, and then they should think of **ר׳ יחיאל מאיר** of **אסטראווצא**.

ברוך השם, לא אלמן ישראל, הקדוש ברוך הוא gives us people in each generation who bring those **מידות** to us. We have to find them, honor them, and emulate them.

Wishing everyone a wonderful **שבת**. May we have **בשורות טובות** in all things. May **השם** send **ישועות טובות** in all, to all who need **ישועות ונחמות**.

כל טוב.

