

Vayechi | Teves 16 - 22 | December 28 - Jan 3



Rabbi Fried *Youth Minyan*

See page 6



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Inside:

A Closed-Off Parsha

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

Getting Credit

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Story: The Amshinover and the Cossack

and more...



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Shabbos Zmanim

2023 Early Friday Mincha, 18 Main
at מנחה גדולה and every 15 minutes from 12:30pm-3:00pm

4:17pm Candle lighting	4:27pm Mincha in tent א	4:27pm Chabad Mincha	4:35pm Shkiya
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SHABBOS SHACHRIS MINYANIM:

6:42am <small>Vasikin, followed by a Daf Yomi Shiur 20↑</small>	8:00am <small>Shachris 2 18 main</small>	9:15am <small>Shachris 3 Tent א</small>	10:00am <small>Shachris 4 Bais Chabad 20↑</small>	10:00am <small>Shachris 5 18 main</small>
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2:00pm Pirchei	4:15pm <small>Mincha followed by Shalosh Seudos</small>	4:36pm Shkiya	5:16pm Maariv 1	5:21pm Maariv 2
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Late Maariv Motzei Shabbos Every 15 Minutes!
6:45 pm – 8:30 pm | 18 Main

Weekday Zmanim

Zmanim for the week of Dec 31 - Jan 6

Shacharis — 20 min. before Neitz
Mincha & Maariv — 12 min. before Plag and more (see posted times)

	Neitz	Shma Magen Avraham	Shma Gra	Tefila Gra	Chatzos	Plag	Shkiya
Sunday	7:22am	8:56am	9:40am	10:26am	11:59am	3:39pm	4:37pm
Monday	7:22am	8:56am	9:40am	10:27am	11:59am	3:40pm	4:38pm
Tuesday	7:22am	8:56am	9:40am	10:27am	12:00pm	3:40pm	4:38pm
Wednesday	7:22am	8:57am	9:41am	10:27am	12:00pm	3:41pm	4:39pm
Thursday	7:22am	8:57am	9:41am	10:28am	12:01pm	3:42pm	4:40pm
Friday	7:22am	8:57am	9:41am	10:28am	12:01pm	3:43pm	4:41pm
Shabbos	7:22am	8:57am	9:41am	10:28am	12:02pm	3:44pm	4:42pm

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Be a Mench

The Talmud in *Bava Matzia* 87a tells us that Yaakov Avinu was the first person to "get weak" prior to dying. In fact, he asked Hashem for this "gift" so that he would have the time to put his affairs in order. You see from the day that heaven and earth were created, no one was ever sick; if one was on the road or in the marketplace, he would sneeze, and his soul would leave by way of his nostrils. Until our forefather Jacob prayed to Hashem about this, saying: "Master of all worlds! Don't take my soul from me before I have the opportunity to give instructions to my children and my household." Hashem agreed with him, as the verse says: "After these events, Joseph was told, 'Behold, your father is ill.'" All of the peoples of the world heard of this and were amazed, since nothing like this had happened since heaven and earth had been created. Accordingly, the Midrash concludes, we wish life to someone who sneezes, since it used to represent the opposite.

On the other hand, a sneeze can be a positive thing. "If a person sneezes while praying," the Talmud says, "it is a good sign for him. Because sneezing makes a person feel better, and so it is an indication that his prayer has been accepted: "Just as he is given satisfaction below, so is he given satisfaction Above."

This week's *haftorah* is from Kings I Chap. 2 which relates that Dovid Hamelech becomes ill and gives final instructions to Shlomo prior to his death. Similar to Yaakov who arranged his final affairs with his children, Dovid too finalized his personal affairs with his son. We can imagine that just as Yaakov Avinu gave the most important blessing to his children, David Hamelech would also do the same. Dovid Hamelech, who wrote the beautiful words of *Tehillim* that were inspired by *Ruach Hakodesh*, surely had a meaningful message and blessing to give to his children on his deathbed. Yet, his last words are simple and concise. "And the days of Dovid came near and he commanded his son Shlomo saying. 'I am going in the way of the land, and you should strengthen yourself and you should become a *mench*.'"

How profound it is that David Hamelech condensed everything into one formula; being a *mench* is the highest form of success. Even more so, Dovid directs Shlomo Hamelech saying that it requires strength to become a *mench*. Many times we see people that seem to be a *mench* naturally, but that is not the case. It is a life's effort to behave constantly in a proper fashion, and to maintain the status of being a *mench*. We should all have strength to reach this goal and have the *nachat* to see our children being *menchen* as well.



The Power of a Smile

by Rabbi Daniel Coren

One of my favorite *pesukim* in this week's *parsha* is חכלילי עינים מיין ולבן שינים מחלב. Chazal expound on the words ולבן שינים מחלב as follows: טובה המלבין חלב שינים לחבירו מהמשקהו חלב. The simple translation sounds almost like its speaking to a dentist "better is the one who whitens his friend's teeth than one who gives him milk." However, as Rashi explains, Chazal are talking about someone who gives another person a smile when you show your white teeth (this is a good plug for dentist to push using whiteners for people with yellow teeth) means showing a smile can have a greater positive effect than giving someone a glass of milk.

There is a famous saying: a smile is a small curve that sets a lot of things straight. It's amazing how many times (and I remind myself of this many times throughout the day) when one is walking into shul or work, or whatever the place is, they should remind themselves to push their cheeks up and make that smile. How much effect that smile can have on other people! I once said that to smile in *Loshon Hakodesh* is לחייך; the word has the same letters as חיים – your life. When you go out of your way to smile at someone, you can be giving a person life.

There is an amazing midrash quoted by Rabeinu Tam in *Sefer Hayashar* that when the brothers were returning from Yosef in Mitzrayim and they were trying to figure out how to present the astounding good news to their father Yaakov Avinu in a safe way, their conclusion was to have Serach the daughter of Asher do it gently, using music and song, and this is what she did. Yaakov Avinu in return told her that since she gave him life, she will merit to live for a very long time. There are stories up until 450 years ago in Persia of Serach bat Asher acting on behalf of the Jews to save them from evil kings and leaders who tried to make harsh decrees against the Jews.

We too have this opportunity of giving life countless times a day by simply smiling and giving a positive greeting. Chazal say that Rabbi Yochanan never had a non-Jew greet him before he had already greeted him. This world is a world of opportunity; let's take advantage of the seemingly small but actually large opportunities presented to us, and smile.

Wednesday Night 8pm – Smichas chaver Rabbi Coren Office
Shabbos Morning - Vasikin Minyan & 8:00am Minyan

The Presence of Joseph



Rabbi YY Jacobson

"Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; they embalmed him and he was placed in a coffin in Egypt." In these very uninspiring words, one may sense profound inspiration.

The Jewish people are about to become enslaved and subjugated to a tyrannical government that will attempt to destroy them one by one, physically and mentally (as recorded at the beginning of Exodus). This new Egyptian genocide program will drown children, subject all Jewish men to slave labor and crush a new nation.

What will give the people of Israel the resolve they will desperately need? What will preserve a broken and devastated people from falling into the abyss? The knowledge that one day they would be liberated? Certainly. The knowledge that evil will not reign forever? Absolutely. Indeed, this is what Joseph told the Jewish people before his passing, recorded in the **second-to-the-last** verse of Genesis: "Joseph told his brothers: 'I am about to die, but G-d will indeed remember you and bring you up out of this land to the land that He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob... You will bring my bones up out of here.'"

But, then, when Genesis seeks to choose its **final** words, it provides us with a message that perhaps served as the greatest source of strength for an orphaned and broken Jewish family. "Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; they embalmed him and he was **placed in a coffin in Egypt.**" Joseph's sacred body is not taken back to the Holy Land to be interred among the spiritual giants of human history: Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebecca; his father Jacob, or his mother Rachel. Joseph's spiritual and physical presence does not "escape" to the heavenly paradise of a land saturated with holiness.

Rather, Joseph remains in the grit and gravel of depraved Egypt, he remains etched deeply in the earthiness of Egypt, together with his beloved people.

This is based on the ancient Jewish idea that has its roots

in the Bible itself: The burial place of a virtuous and saintly human being contains profound holiness and spiritual energy and constitutes a place conducive for prayer to G-d. Since the soul and the body retain a relationship even after they depart from each other, the space where the physical body of a holy man is interred is a space conducive for spiritual growth, meditation, reflection, and inspiration.

Contemporary Josephs

This idea transcribed above I had the privilege to hear from the Lubavitcher Rebbe 35 years ago, on the Sabbath of the portion of Vayechi 5747, January 1987.

I will never forget the emotion the Rebbe displayed while giving this talk. At its conclusion, he noted that the name of his father-in-law, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe (1880-1950), was Yosef (Joseph) and that his father-in-law was interred not in the Holy Land but in New York, and continues to provide energy, inspiration, and blessings to our generation.

Indeed, the Rebbe would visit his father-in-law's resting place frequently to pray on behalf of Jews and non-Jews the world over. The Rebbe would spend hours standing at his father-in-law's resting place, immersed in prayer, reading letters that he has received from people all over the world requesting him to pray for them.

I personally observed many times the Rebbe returning from his father-in-law's graveside sometimes close to midnight, his eyes swollen from tears and his back bent over from the extraordinary effort.

Womens Shiur **Tuesday** 9:30am (18 Main)
Chassidus Shiur **Monday & Thursday** 7:45am (18 Main)
Shabbos: Friday Night – before Barchu (20 Upstairs)
Morning 9:00 (20 Upstairs)
After Davening 12:00pm (20 Upstairs)



Vayechi: Stop Worrying, Start Living

UFARATZTA

the *yetzer hatov* or from the *yetzer hora*, it is a valid question.]

Bitachon – Trust that Hashem will bring out the good, or change bad things to good, for everyone to see, even in a serious predicament in health or in business/*parnasa*. This trust is based on the fact that Hashem is totally benevolent and does *chesed* both for those who deserve it and for those that do not. (*Chovas Halevavos, Shaar Habitachon, Perek Beis*: Seven conditions for you to put your complete trust in someone... "Seventh: The person in whom one puts his trust in, is exceedingly generous and shows kindness to both to the deserving and to the undeserving...")

The above *bitachon* we are talking about is not that since Hashem does *chesed* with deserving and undeserving people, therefore you should expect that things will turn out good with no input and responsibility on your side. Rather, true *bitachon*, when you really need it, comes with hard work and toil from your part, depending totally on Hakadosh Baruch Hu from the depth of your soul, training yourself to trust Hashem that he will get you out of this mess, having such confidence that you are calm without worrying about this specific real-looking problem. That way of thinking alone brings good and even miracles, if needed, from Above, even if without this *bitachon* you would not merit to be saved.

[What about *schar* and *onesh*? Whether this question got into your mind from

==== Sefer Shaarei Emuna P111-112.

Smichas Geula L'tfillah Part II

by Rabbi Nachum Scheiner, *Night Kollel & Morning Kollel*



We previously discussed that the brocha of *Hashkiveinu* is an extension of the *geula* and is not a *hefsek*. Similarly, "*Hashem sfasi*" is considered an extension of the *tefillah* and is not a *hefsek*.

Reciting Baruch Hashem L'olam

In many places there is a *minhag* to recite the brocha of *Baruch Hashem L'olam*. Why is it not an interruption between *geula* and *tefillah*? This question is discussed by Tosfos (*Brochos* 4b). Tosfos explains that this is also considered an extension of the redemption, and does not constitute an interruption.

The Meiri offers a different rationale. He explains that since it was instituted with 18 *pesukim* – which includes the name of Hashem 18 times – it is meant to be like *shmoneh esrei*, and is considered an extension of the *tefillah*. This is similar to "*Hashem sfasi tiftach*," which is considered an extension of the *tefillah* and is not considered an interruption.

Other Rishonim argue and maintain that *Baruch Hashem L'olam* is an interruption and should not be recited. The Tur and the Shulchan Aruch quote both opinions. The Gra and the Baal Hatanya follow the latter opinion, and rule that it should not be recited.

Reciting V'shamru on Shabbos

There is also a custom in many places to recite the *pesukim* "*V'shamru*" on Friday night before *shmoneh esrei*. Why is this not a *hefsek*? The Tur and the Levush explain that since this *pasuk* discusses the *mitzvah* of keeping Shabbos – which will bring the ultimate redemption – it is considered an extension of the redemption, and does not constitute an interruption.

There is also a custom to recite a *pasuk*: "*Vayedaber Moshe...*" on the night of *yom tov* before *shmoneh esrei*. The Levush explains that since the *yamim tovim* are "*zecher l'yitziyas Mitzrayim*," to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt, it is also considered an extension of the redemption, and is not an interruption.

The Drisha explains that it is like an introduction to the *shmoneh esrei*. Since the *pasuk* discusses the topic of the *yom tov*, it is considered like an extension of the *tefillah* – just as we recite *Hashem sfasi tiftach* – and is not a *hefsek*.

Similarly, the custom is on the night of Rosh Hashana to recite the *pasuk*: "*Tiku bachodesh shofar*." Once again, the Levush explains that since the *shofar* will be blown to signal the arrival of the *geula*, it is also considered an extension of the redemption, and does not constitute an interruption. He explains that this is also the reason for the *pasuk* recited on Yom Kippur, "*Ki vayom hazeh yechaper*" which talks about clearing our slate from our *aveiros* – which is redemption of

the soul – and is also considered a part of the *geula*.

Others argue, and hold that all of these *pesukim* do constitute a *hefsek* and should not be recited. This is the opinion of the Gra, and the Baal Hatanya. (Interestingly, although they are printed in the Chabad siddur, they are not recited.)

In Summary

Some have the custom to recite "*Baruch Hashem L'olam*" during the weekday Maariv, or "*V'shumru*," on Shabbos, as well as the *pasuk*: "*Vayedaber Moshe*" on the night of *yom tov* before *shmoneh esrei*. It is considered an extension of the *geula*, and it is not a *hefsek*. Others rule that it is a *hefsek* and should not be said.

To be continued...

Rabbi Scheiner

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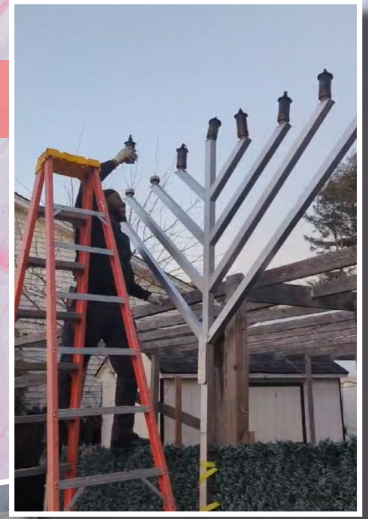
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“And you intended to harm me, Hashem intended it for good; in order to accomplish, it is as this day, that a vast people be kept alive.” Yosef tells his brothers that you thought to do evil to me, however Hashem wanted good for me – for I would be the one who would sustain many. Why does Yosef mention to the brothers that they thought to do evil to him, instead of just focusing on the positive that Hashem wanted good for him, and thus it was all good?

“And Yosef’s brothers saw that their father was dead, and they said: Perhaps Yosef will nurse hatred against us and then he will surely repay us all the evil that we did to him.” The *posuk* uses a double Lashon of, “והשב ישיב”. It says in the *Yalkut Shimoni* 150 that even after Yosef revealed himself to the brothers, they still wanted to kill him. They were sticking to their error, that the judgment they gave was correct, and that Yosef was a *Rasha*. They thought that Yosef should try to appease them, as he had said *Lashon Hara* about them. At the same time, Yosef thought the exact opposite. He believed that the brothers owed him an apology, and they should be appeasing him for their evil acts against him. The brothers thought, “והשב” – although Yosef should be seeking to do *Teshuva* for what he

did to them, “ישיב לנו” – nonetheless, he will seek to repay us with all the evil he perceives we did to him. (מהר"י שטייף)

His brothers clearly had evil intentions against him, although they felt that they had a right to those feelings and were justified. Yosef was telling the brothers that in fact they were wrong, and they needed to do *Teshuva* for it. Yosef was humble and was not saying that he was great, while they were not. Yosef tells them that Hashem did good for him on behalf of the many. He was being humble and saying that it was not in his *Zechus* that Hashem did good for him, rather it was just that he is a messenger for the many. However, Yosef was pointing out to the brothers that by the fact that Hashem did not allow evil to befall him despite their intentions, that is the proof that they were wrong. Thus, Yosef was telling the brothers that while he did not have anything personal against them, they needed to do *Teshuva*.

There are times that we get so caught up in something, that we cannot see clearly. We think that we acted properly, while in fact we did not. Hashem sends us signs, sometimes faint ones and other times strong ones, that we in fact did wrong and must atone for it. We must be humble and be ready to see the truth, so that we can do *Teshuva* when we do wrong. When one is not convinced he actually sinned, he won't be able to do a proper *Teshuva*, for in his mind, perhaps he did nothing wrong. May we be *Zoche* to have our eyes open and recognize what we need to do *Teshuva* for, and then achieve it.

The Light Inside

Yaakov blessed his children; a heart overflowing with *ruach hakodesh*. And so, this parsha is full of blessings, enough to last till Moshiach comes.

Perhaps that's why in the Torah, there's no traditional space between last week's reading and *Parshas Vayechi* – to preserve these blessings.

It was many years ago, when the cost of a ride between Bnei Brak and Yerushalayim was very little. The driver of the *sherut*, the shared cab, before setting out, purchased a bag of candies. With the *choshuve* passengers aboard he started to eat, but no *bracha* passed his lips.

Rabbi Zehnwirth noticed that the driver had made it halfway through the snack.

"Could you do me a favor?" he asked the driver. "Sure," he answered.

Venturing into uncharted territory, Rabbi Zehnwirth, a *mechanech*, opened his heart – a heart that sparkled with love for every Jew.

"Could you make a *bracha*?"

The cab driver was not pleased at this request.

"You *chareidim* don't know how to leave us

alone. Everybody is different. We all have our ways. Respect my way of life and leave me alone!"

But the Rabbi was not to be deterred. A little while later he asked again. The driver got annoyed and raised his voice: "Enough already. Don't stick yourself where you're not welcome" he snarled.

Then Rabbi Zehnwirth committed a cardinal sin in *kiruv*.

"What if I give you half a *shekel*? Would you make a tiny little *bracha*?"

He handed the coin over to the driver with all the innocence of a newborn baby. The driver of course at that point had had enough cajoling and threw the money back at the Rabbi.

"Leave me alone!"

A little later, Rabbi Zehnwirth, noticing that the bag was nearly empty, spoke quietly.

"I am truly sorry, I didn't mean to bother you. I apologize, I only wanted to hear your *bracha* and say *Amein*."

Suddenly the driver blurted out "Ok if you give me the price of your collective fares, 3½ shekels – a lot of money in those days – I will say the *bracha*."

RABBI BEN ZION SNEH



A collection was started. A Vizhnitzer *chosid* gave a shekel, and a Gerrer *chosid*, one. The money made its way to the driver – who on the last piece of candy said the *bracha* "*Shehakol neehye bi'dvaro*."

After the much-awaited blessing, the driver addressed his passengers and said "I don't want your money, I made the *bracha* because I wanted to. I was just kidding when I asked you to pay for it. Here, take back your payment. But one request: please don't talk to me anymore on this trip, not about *brachot*, not about anything."

Years later Rabbi Zehnwirth was speaking at a local yeshiva and told this story.

A *bochur* approached the Rav after the shiur and told him "That story is about my father. To this day he asks us to say our *brachos* in front of him out loud, so he can say *Amein*. And each time, his eyes well up as he tells us. "I still remember the day I decided to become religious. When I saw that those *chareidim* wanted to pay money to hear my *bracha*. My *bracha*!"

Every Jew's heart is brimming with *Mitzvos* and overflowing with blessing, we only need to know how and when to open it. Have a wonderful Shabbos!

Written by R' Avrohom Hillel Reich based on a lesson and story by Harav Ben Tziyon Sneh Shlita

Getting Credit

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l



With *Vayechi*, the book of Genesis, full of conflicts within the family, comes to a peaceful end. Jacob, reunited with his beloved Yosef, sees his grandsons, the only such scene in the Torah. He blesses them. Then, on his death-bed, he blesses his twelve sons. He dies and is buried in the cave of Machpelah with his parents and grandparents. Yosef forgives his brothers a second time, and he himself dies, having assured his brothers that God will eventually bring the family back to the Promised Land. The long patriarchal narrative is at an end and a new period – the birth of Israel as a nation – is about to begin.

The brothers fear for their lives as Yosef reveals himself to them. What would stop him from taking his revenge? Yosef reassures them with these words: “Don’t be afraid,” said Yosef. “Am I in place of God? You intended to harm me but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (Bereishis 50:19-20) The conclusion to this story is the original source for understanding the concept of *teshuva* (repentance).

Another important source for understanding *teshuva* is one of the most colorful characters of the Talmud – the third-century Sage known as Reish Lakish. Reish Lakish was originally a highway robber and gladiator who later in life repented and became a great scholar. Perhaps speaking from his own experience, he is quoted as the author of several sayings about *teshuva*, two of which are reported in the tractate of Yoma (86b): Reish Lakish said: Great is repentance, because through it deliberate sins are accounted as unintentional. Reish Lakish also said: Great is repentance, because through it deliberate sins are accounted as though they were merits.

Confused by the contradiction between the two statements (does *teshuva* make sins “unintentional” or “merits”?) the Talmud solves the contradiction: the first applies to repentance from fear (of punishment), the second to repentance from love (of God and the good).

Reish Lakish’s statement about sins and merits is almost certainly inspired by the words Yosef speaks to his brothers in the closing chapter of Genesis: “You intended to harm me but God intended it for good.” This is the paradigm that stands at the basis of Reish Lakish’s argument. The brothers had committed a deliberate sin by selling Yosef into slavery; they (or at least Yehuda, the instigator of the decision to sell Yosef) had done *teshuva*. The result is that – through divine providence (“God intended it”) – their action is now reckoned “for good.” Any act we perform has multiple consequences, some good, some bad. When we intend evil, the bad consequences are attributed to us because they are what we sought to achieve. The good consequences are not: they are mere by-products or unintended outcomes.

So in the case of Yosef, many positive things happened once he had been brought to Egypt. None of these consequences could be credited to his brothers, even though they would not have happened had the brothers not done as they did. However, once the brothers had undergone complete repentance, their original intent was canceled out. It was now possible to see the good, as well as the bad, consequences of their act – and to credit the good to them.



Ephraim and Menashe: *Role Models for the Jews of Sioux City*

Rabbi Yissacher Frand

In this week’s parsha, Yosef brings his two children to his father Yaakov for a bracha [blessing]. Yaakov gave Yosef’s children a tremendous bracha: “By you shall Israel bless saying, ‘May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh’” [Bereishis 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 in the works of 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.



280 DAYS UNTIL UMAN



The Amshinover and the Cossack

Yiddishkeit, than the Torah. Hopefully, you and I know the truth: When you really want to do something, the whole world respects you. So this is the story:

At the end of the First World War, when Russia lost the war and needed a scapegoat, they said, "Why did we lose the war with Germany? It's very simple. It's because the Jews speak Yiddish. Yiddish is like German, so all the Jews are German spies, and they gave over all the secrets of Russia to Germany. So because of the Jews, we lost the war."

So in all those little *shtetlach* where the *goyish* peasants were angry that Russia lost the war, they had a little custom; every Friday afternoon they would hang ten Jews and say, "These are the ten spies." The Holy Amshinover Rebbe, the *heilige* Amshinover, sent messengers all over the area to redeem those Jews, because for a hundred rubles, the police would let a Jew go. So one of the closest disciples of the Holy Amshinover went Friday morning to a village to redeem the ten Jews who were supposed to be hanged, and he succeeded in getting them released. He was on his way back to Amshinov through a forest, and suddenly the wheel broke off his wagon. It was late, almost Shabbos. He was desperate. Suddenly he heard Cossacks coming. I don't have to tell you, friends, the way Cossacks drive their horses – at a crazy pace. But the *chassid* wasn't afraid; he placed himself in the middle of the road, blocking the way so that the Cossack had to stop.

The Cossack stopped and said to him, "Jew! What do you want?" The *chassid* said, "I'm stuck here in the forest. I have to get to Amshinov before Shabbos. I'll be happy to pay you 100 rubles to take me back to Amshinov." The Cossack said, "No! I'm not taking a Jew in my carriage." The Cossack attempted to make his horses go and continue on his journey, but this *chassidische* *Yid* of Amshinov was a farmer and he knew how to handle horses. He put his hand on the horses, and they stood quietly, not moving. Now the Cossack was stuck. The Cossack said, "Let me tell you something, I know the Jews, there is nothing they are more afraid of than Cossacks. But let me ask you; how much are you afraid of Shabbos? How much does Shabbos mean to you? Enough so that because of Shabbos you're not afraid of Cossacks? I'm impressed" And so then the Cossack said, "If Shabbos means that much to you, let me have the privilege of driving you back for free."

So the *chassid* arrived in Amshinov in time for Shabbos. That night, as he was sitting next to the Rebbe, he told the Rebbe the story about the Cossack. I heard the story from the *Chassidim* and they said, "It wasn't really clear anymore: Was it really a Cossack that drove the *chassid* back to Amshinov, or was it Elijah HaNavi?"



A CLOSED-OFF PARSHA *Rabbi Yochanan Zweig*

"And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt..." (47:28)

The manner in which *Parshas Vayechi* is recorded in the Torah scroll differs from the normal fashion, which allows for a minimum of a nine-letter space between two *parshios*. This deviation prompts Rashi to comment that *Parshas Vayechi* is a "closed" or "sealed" *parsha*, for once our Patriarch Yaakov died, the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were sealed due to the hardship of the servitude to which they were subsequently subjected. The implication from Rashi's words is that the servitude began with Yaakov's passing. This appears to contradict Rashi's comments on *Parshas Va'eira*, where he teaches that the servitude began with the death of Levi who was the last of the brothers to die; as long as the sons of Yaakov were still alive, the servitude did not begin. How do we reconcile both of Rashi's comments?

In the third paragraph of *Krias Shema* we are enjoined not to stray after our hearts and our eyes. Rashi comments that the heart and the eyes are the spies which provide the opportunity for the body to sin. We cannot consider the heart and eyes to have only a negative purpose. Rather, a person chooses whether he will use the energies of his heart and eyes for sin or to facilitate his service of Hashem; the person's focus determines the path he will choose. If a person is focused on and motivated by the desires of his body, his limbs will function to fuel those desires. However, if his focus is on his soul and the fulfillment of

the edicts of his Creator, his entire body will be harnessed to fulfill his desire for spirituality.

A person who is driven to satisfy the basic pleasures of his body has his eyes blinded and his heart sealed by his incessant hedonistic pursuit. Since he focuses only upon that which he desires, he is completely selfish and unable to perceive the needs of others. In contradistinction, a person whose actions are driven by his desire to enhance his relationship with his Creator has his eyes and heart open to sensitivities which were previously dormant. Therefore, he is able to focus upon the needs of others.

It is common that when a person perceives that he might be in danger, his natural desire for the preservation of his body is activated. Self-preservation leads a person to focus upon the needs of his body, very often causing the needs of his soul to be neglected. Although the actual servitude did not begin until after the death of Levi, Bnei Yisroel began to sense the imminent danger of oppression at the hands of the Egyptians immediately following Yaakov's demise. Sensing this activated Bnei Yisroel's need for self-preservation, and since they were so strongly focused on their physical well-being, they became desensitized to their spiritual needs; their eyes and hearts became sealed. The physical servitude had not yet begun, but the fear of its impending doom sparked the beginning of the spiritual servitude.



“And Jacob Lived...”

Rabbi Berel Wein



The traditional rabbinic approach as to why this portion of the Torah is titled “vayechi Yaakov” even though the subject matter of this Torah portion concerns itself with the death of Yaakov is that as long as his descendants – the Jewish people – are alive and functioning, then Yaakov is still considered to be alive.

The message here is one of immortality and continuity, family and generations. Like life itself and its counterpart, death, these words mentioned immediately above are difficult to define. Other nations and empires that are long ago extinct in terms of presence and participation in current world events, also have biological descendants alive and present in today's world population.

Nevertheless, we think of Rome and Babylon, Greece and Persia, the Holy Roman Empire and even the Soviet Union as being swept into the dustbin of history, never to rise to power again. So, the rabbis must be telling us a deeper message than mere biological and genetic survival from the past until today.

I have often thought that a great part of the secret of Jewish survival lies in the fact that different – completely different – generations are able to bond together, recognize each other and have the same common goals, values and lifestyle. My father was born before the Wright brothers flew an airplane and he lived to see human beings walk on the moon.

In spite of the difference in age, background and even language, he had close contact with and a great influence on his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They somehow recognized who he was in his essence and beliefs and easily responded to his presence and later treasured his memory. So, to a certain extent we may say that he lived on through his descendants.

Yaakov recognized the different personalities, qualities and talents of each of his children and grandchildren. His blessings to his children and grandchildren, as recorded for us in this week's Torah reading, clearly indicate this fact. He had no one-size-fits-all blessing to bestow. And it is perhaps that fact that guarantees that as long as his descendants are alive, Yaakov also lives.

For every one of his descendants could say in response to the blessing that each one received – all of them different and personal – that their old father and grandfather understood them and recognized them for what they were. And because of that, they treasured his memory and championed his cause throughout the ages.

Relationships that bridge time and space, generations and world upheavals can only be forged upon the recognition and acceptance of the uniqueness of the parties involved. There is no blessing ultimately in national and personal life that is brought about by conformity. The pithy remark of the great Rebbe of Kotzk was: “If I am I and you are you, then I am I and you are you; but if I am you and you are me, then I am not I and you are not you.” The blessings of Yaakov to his future generations reflect the wisdom of this truism.



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JOKES

Short ones

I relabeled all of the jars in my wife's spice rack. I'm not in trouble yet, but the thyme is cumin.

I just read a book about marriage that says treat your wife like you treated her on your first date. So tonight after dinner I'm dropping her off at her parents' house.

The best way to get back on your feet is to miss two car payments.

Driver: "What am I supposed to do with this speeding ticket?"

Officer, "Keep it. When you collect four of them, you get a bicycle.

I asked a supermarket employee where they kept the canned peaches. He said, "I'll see," and walked away. I asked another and he also said, "I'll see," and walked away. In the end, I gave up and found them myself, in aisle C.

I just burned 1,200 calories. I forgot the pizza in the oven.

Who knew that the hardest thing of being an adult is figuring out what to fix for dinner and doing it every single night for the rest of your life until you die?

I hate it when people act all intellectual and talk about Mozart when they've never even seen one of his paintings.

Never trust an electrician with no eyebrows.

Cloned Blemish-free Lambs

A bio-research institute in Israel is developing plans for cloning sheep. "When the Holy Temple is rebuilt, there will suddenly be a tremendous demand for blemish-free lambs to use for the Korban Pesach (pesach sacrifice)", explained its director.

"We will be able to meet that demand by cloning."

"Each lamb thus produced will be known as a Korban copy".

Sides

Josh, looking for a free meal, entered a wedding hall and joined the Schwartz wedding. He went over to the buffet and piled his plate high with petit fours from one table, kebobs, stir fry and veal chops from another table. While thoroughly enjoying himself a man approaches him and says, "Hi my name is Chaim, are you on the bride's side or groom's side?"

Josh looks up from his plate of deliciousness and responds, "What!? They're only married five minutes and they're already fighting?"

Concrete

There was a rabbi known for his constant preaching about the need to nurture children with warmth and love.

One time he noticed some children who were playing in the freshly laid concrete outside his newly renovated home, their little feet leaving lasting impressions. He became irritated and started chastising the children.

A congregant asked, "How can you, a person who devoted his entire life to teaching warmth to children, speak this way?"

To which the rabbi replied: "You must understand. I love children in the abstract, not the concrete."

Food

I read recipes the same way I read science fiction. I get to the end and I think, "Well, that's not going to happen." - Anonymous

Inside me there's a thin person struggling to get out, but I can usually sedate him with four or five cupcakes. - Bob Thaves

In Mexico, we have a word for sushi: bait. - Jose Simmons

When the waitress asked if I wanted my pizza cut into four or eight slices, I said, "Four. I don't think I can eat eight." - Yogi Berra

You are what you eat eats. - Michael Pollan

The most remarkable thing about my mother is that for 30 years she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found. - Calvin Trillin



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