

LAMPLIGHTER

15 Tevet
Vayechi
Shabbos Chazak
1067
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Vayechi, Yaakov castigates his sons before his passing and takes away both priesthood and kingship from his firstborn, Reuven. The kingship is then given to Yehudah, as reward for two good deeds: his suggestion that Yosef be sold, thus preventing the brothers from killing him; his public confession about his sin with Tamar, thus saving her.

This explanation, however, is insufficient, for at first glance it would appear that Reuven displayed the very same strength of character as his brother Yehudah, if not more.

Whereas Yehudah suggested that Yosef be sold for monetary gain, Reuven suggested that Yosef be thrown into a pit in order to return later and free Yosef. Furthermore, even when it came to admitting their transgressions, Reuven was on a higher level than Yehudah, as Yehudah only confessed in order to save the life of Tamar. Reuven, on the other hand, who is not even considered to have committed a true sin, was so penitent that for over a decade he was still fasting in sackcloth and ashes.

To understand, we need to recognize the difference between priesthood and kingship - which Yaakov took away from Reuven, and the birthright of the firstborn - which Reuven retained.

Kingship and priesthood are primarily expressed in service to others. A king administers the affairs of state; a priest bestows blessings and teaches Torah. Being a firstborn, however, involves only the individual and has no bearing on one's relationship with others.

Thus, although Reuven tried to save his brother and immersed himself in a long period of penitence, the focus of his service was on achieving his own spiritual perfection rather than on helping other people.

In truth, it was because of his suggestion that Yosef was thrown into the pit full of snakes and scorpions. Even Reuven's penance was turned inward, for had he not been preoccupied with "sackcloth and ashes," perhaps he could have prevented Yosef from being sold and thereby precluded the entire Egyptian exile!

Yehudah, by contrast, actually saved others through his actions, even though his own spiritual service may have been on a lower level. He saved Yosef from the pit and saved Tamar from death. It was this demonstration of self-sacrifice that proved to Yaakov that Yehudah was the one who was worthy of kingship, for the essence of kingship is service to others.

From this we learn that a Jew must never concentrate on his own spiritual state to the detriment of his fellow Jew; love of one's fellow Jew must always be of prime importance. In this way, even if his own service is somewhat lacking, the merit of his love for his fellow Jew will connect him to the entire Torah and hasten the Final Redemption.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 15

Six Kinds of Perfection

By Yanki Tauber

"Have I got the perfect guy for you!" Perfection is what we're after when we search for a marriage partner, a physician or a babysitter. Those who have lived long enough will tell us that the only place to seek perfection is in the quest to perfect oneself. But what is "perfection"? Does it have any objective meaning beyond "what I want" (or think I want)?

This week we conclude -- in the annual Torah reading cycle -- the book of Genesis, also called by our sages "the book of the righteous." Genesis is the story of a series of perfect individuals: Adam (made "in the image of G-d"), Noach (whom the Torah calls "a righteous man"), Avraham (described as "G-d's beloved"), Yitzchak (the "perfect offering"), Yaakov (the ultimate "whole person") and Yosef ("the righteous"). What kind of perfection do these personalities exemplify?

Adam was the original model, the "handiwork of G-d." You can't get more perfect than that. So perfect was he, that he couldn't stand it, and went looking for imperfection -- for something to repair, something to achieve, something to do. Still, it's a good thing that we, as a race, started off perfect, if only so that we should understand where our yen for perfection comes from, and that we can, in fact, attain it.

Noach's was a by-the-book perfection. His entire generation was corrupt, but he "walked with G-d". He even tried to get them to improve their ways -- not because it mattered to him what became of them, but because G-d said that that was the right thing to do. He was given precise instructions on how to build the ark, what to put in it, when to go in, and when to get out, which he did. His was a selfish perfection, the sole aim of which is to be perfect.

Avraham's perfection was the perfection of love. For Avraham, to eat a meal was to share it with every hungry wayfarer; to discover a truth was to teach it to the world. Outward reaching and all-embracing, Avraham's perfection had the self as its centre, the entire world as its sphere.

Yitzchak found perfection in selflessness. Since every human activity or experience is imperfect; perfection lies in the endeavour to reunite with the divine "nothingness" that is one's source. When one is nothing, one is one with the ultimate All.

Yaakov achieved perfection through harmony, through the balance of love and awe, through the melding of assertiveness and self-effacement. He knew the secret of synthesis: that to love indiscriminately is to embrace also evil, but to recoil from engagement is to abandon much that is good; that to assert the self is to turn one's back on G-d, but to eradicate the self is to counteract the Divine purpose. Yaakov's life was a tightrope stretched taut from Hebron to Charan to Egypt, belonging to neither yet a stranger to neither, integrating the best of each into the wholeness of his life.

Yosef's perfection was the perfection of challenge. Indeed, can a thing be perfect unless it has been tested, unless it has been stretched to its limits and beyond? Yosef's righteousness was not the righteousness of a meditating shepherd in a tranquil meadow, or a scholar secluded in the "tents of study." It was a righteousness that was taken to prisons and palaces of Egypt, to clash with commerce and politics, to lock horns with wealth and depravity -- and persevere.

Six people, six prototypes. Six ways to be perfect.

Slice of LIFE

In the Chabad community in Crown Heights, there is a woman who is very active (I wasn't told her name but for the sake of the story we'll call her Sarah) who told of how she became religious.

Although she and her brother were brought up in a "reform" home where Torah was of little or no importance, he attended a few classes at a Chabad House in New Jersey and became interested, but she remained unimpressed.

She even spent several Shabbats there but, although it was a pleasant experience, she decided to seek spirituality elsewhere.

She enrolled in a seminar of Scientology or some similar idolatry and prepared for new adventurous vistas. But because the seminar was to begin only in two weeks time she decided to spend a last Shabbat at Chabad.

That Shabbat, like all the others at Chabad, was peaceful and uneventful (in fact she never was quite sure why she went in the first place) and shortly after Shabbat ended she was already heading for the front door with her bag packed.

On the way out she passed the Chabad house director and said good bye but he was so busy calling people on the phone and simultaneously arranging the room for some program that was about to happen, he didn't even notice.

She moved closer, waiving and smiling trying to catch his attention and said, "Rabbi, I just wanted to say thank you for the Shabbos" and turned to leave.

But he signalled for her to wait, finished his call, hung up and said, "Hey! Why don't you stay for the lecture? It's a great speaker, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hecht from Chicago, you'll really enjoy it. C'mon, he'll only speak for an hour or so, unless you have somewhere really important to go and he tells fantastic stories."

It sounded harmless enough so she put her suitcase in a corner and began helping everyone set up the room. Just as she was

beginning to have second thoughts about staying the Rabbi arrived.

He was an older man, perhaps in his late sixties, but he had a contagious smile and warm eyes that made her forget her qualms. Everyone took their seats and the lecture began.

He was really an excellent and friendly speaker. But after just a few minutes he suddenly interrupted what he was saying and said,

"My dear friends please excuse my changing the subject but I just remembered a strange thing that happened to me and I want to share it with you.

"A long time ago, shortly after the war, I flew to New York from my home in Chicago to have a private audience with the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of blessed memory.

"I entered into his room, gave him a paper upon which I wrote all my questions but instead of reading it he looked at me and said: 'Rabbi Hecht, do you know who was just in here to see me?' Rabbi Boyer the well-known philanthropist"

The Rebbe's holy eyes were red as though he had been crying.

"I remember thinking to myself that this was very strange because the Rebbe would never reveal to others what was told him in private. But he continued; 'Rabbi Boyer told me that he had just returned from a tour of refugee camps in Europe. He said there are thousands of Jews in these camps; broken souls, all that remains of European Jewry.' The Rebbe began weeping aloud. He dried his eyes and continued:

"He explained, that even though he is a Misnagid (one who opposes of the Chassidic way) he came to visit me because of a young boy he met there wandering through one of the camps.

"The boy was about twelve years old, wearing a 'kippa (Yarmulke) and his clothes, even his shoes, were so old and torn that he looked like a truly lost sheep. So he went up to him, took out a ten dollar bill from his wallet and offered it to him.

"But the boy shook his head 'no' and said in Yiddish that he didn't take gifts

and that he didn't need anything.

"When Rabbi Boyer insisted, the boy looked up at him and said, 'If you want to give me something, then I want to see the Rebbe! Buy me a ticket to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe in New York!'

"Rabbi Boyer was astounded. Here is a young boy who probably had been through hell, lacking everything, and what is going on in his mind? What is he thinking about? He wants to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe! Just imagine what an education he must have had to teach him that.

"Of course Rav Boyer couldn't afford to give him such a gift but did promise him that when he arrived back in New York he would go see me and mention his name to me.

"Then I asked him to tell me about the various refugee camps and when he finished (here the Rebbe began weeping almost uncontrollably) I asked him if there is anything he wanted. He answered that he wanted me to bless him. So I blessed him that he should have 'nachas' (satisfaction) from his offspring.' Then the Rebbe turned to my letter."

Rabbi Hecht apologized again to the crowd for telling a story out of context, and he continued his lecture.

When he finished and everyone applauded said thank you and left he noticed that one girl was sitting in her seat, her face in her hands weeping; it was Sarah.

He and the Chabad House Rabbi approached her and asked if anything was wrong. She dried her eyes. Smiled a smile of thanks and said,

"I'm sorry for crying, excuse me but I couldn't help myself. You see.... that Rabbi you spoke of in your story, Rabbi Boyer He was my grandfather.

"That blessing the Rebbe gave him must have been for me! G-d wanted you to tell that story tonight so I would hear it."

She changed her mind about the cult and decided to dedicate her life to being the type of Jew that would give her grandfather (and hundreds of generations of grandfathers before him) 'nachas'.

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ISSUE 1067

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Until Shiloh comes (49:10)

The disciples of Rav Shilah would say: The Messiah's name is Shiloh, as it is stated, "Until Shiloh comes." The disciples of Rabbi Chaninah would say: His name is Chaninah, as it is stated (Jeremiah 16:13), "I will not give you Chaninah." The disciples of Rabbi Yannai would say: His name is Yinnon, for it is written (Psalms 72:17), "E'er the sun was, his name is Yinnon."



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

B"H, 19 Shvat, 5704

Greetings and blessings,

Your donation of \$18 was brought by our distinguished colleague, R. Yehudah Leib Horowitz. I gave the money to the fund established within Machne Israel for the purpose of purchasing Tefillin for soldiers. A receipt is enclosed.

The efforts to spread [the observance of the mitzvah of] Tefillin among the dispersed members of our people and in particular, among soldiers, is given a prominent position in the work of Machne Israel. With G-d's help, these efforts have been successful and numerous individuals who had not put on Tefillin for many years - or perhaps never put on Tefillin at all - have begun to observe this mitzvah at present.

In order to reduce the challenge of accepting [the mitzvah of] putting on Tefillin for these individuals, Machne Israel gives them Tefillin free or for a minimal price, according to what each person desires [to pay]. This is particularly true with regard to soldiers to whom Tefillin are sent as presents.

Parenthetically, it will certainly interest you to know that we endeavour to strengthen the spirits and the faith of the soldiers by sending from time to time, without charge, books and pamphlets to all those soldiers whose addresses we know.

As an example, we are enclosing a message to soldiers from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe shlita, of which thousands of copies have already been distributed, and a letter concerning Tefillin. If you would like us [to add] soldiers whom you know to our list, we will also send them these different pamphlets.

While speaking about Tefillin, I would like to suggest that since you have merited becoming one of the financial supporters of the purchase of Tefillin, you should proceed from strength to strength in this [endeavour]. Even though you are busy, you should speak with your acquaintances who have sincere feelings for G-d's word to begin an organized campaign in your city regarding the observance of [the mitzvah of] tefillin. Certainly, your words which will come from the heart will enter the hearts of the listeners.

This will enable you to be among those who bring benefit to the many in a spiritual way - through putting on Tefillin - and in a material way - for the observance of the mitzvah [of Tefillin] brings protection. [To refer to] the well-known statements of the Rambam (Mishnah Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah 10:1): "Common people, women, and children should be trained to serve [G-d] out of fear until their knowledge increases and they serve [Him] out of love." As [the Rambam continues to explain], his intent in the expression "serv[ing G-d] out of fear" is serving Him with the intent of receiving all the blessings that come in reward for [the observance of] the mitzvah.

With the blessing, "Immediately to Teshuvah, immediately to Redemption,"

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson
Chairman of the Executive Committee

CUSTOMS CORNER

"A parent brings a child into this world; a child can bring a parent into the world to come."

As a soul leaves this world and begins its journey upward, its children can help it along its way. When a child brings more light and holiness into this world, the parent's soul climbs higher. Reciting *kaddish* is one such powerful tool of light, bequeathed to the sons of the deceased.

The *kaddish* is really just a frame around the central words, recited by the entire congregation, "May His great name be blessed forever and ever." When the mourner recites the *kaddish* and the congregation responds, bursting out in those words in unison, a flash of light breaks into all the worlds, and the soul of the deceased soars upward.

Sons say *kaddish* for their father and mother at daily prayer services for eleven months after the passing of the parent, and annually on the anniversary of their passing (according to the Jewish calendar).

If there is no son - or if there is, but he can't make it to prayer services - ideally another male relative (who himself has a deceased parent) should say *kaddish*. Or, someone else should be asked to do it in their stead.

A WORD

from the Director

This week's Torah reading, Parshas Vayechi, concludes the reading of the first Book of the Torah, the Book of Bereishis. This book is called Sefer HaYashar, "the Book of the Just," referring to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, who were just.

"The deeds of the Patriarchs are a sign to their descendants," providing them with lessons to apply in their service of G-d. Their influence begins from the Book of Shmos and continues through the entire Tanach until the Book of Divrei HaYomim. Furthermore, the name Divrei HaYomim means "chronicles," implying that this influence continues through the chronicles of the Jewish people in all subsequent generations.

Our Torah reading begins, "And Yaakov lived," implying that Yaakov's life represents the conclusion of "the Book of the Just." He thus becomes a medium to convey the influence of the Patriarchs to all their descendants, the Jewish people in the subsequent generations. This is reflected in the content of the Torah reading which describes Yaakov's blessings to his sons and to Yosef's children (for "Ephraim and Menashe will be like Reuven and Shimon for me"), who form the twelve tribes of the Jewish people.

This is reflected in our Sages' teaching, "Yaakov our Patriarch never died. Just as his descendants are alive, he (Yaakov) is alive." Yaakov's life is eternal, for he is identified with the Torah, "our life and the length of our days." And he also endows his descendants with life, the everlasting life that stems from the Torah and its Mitzvos.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED

Once...

Reb Noah was a devoted disciple of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the "Alter Rebbe" of Chabad, who lived in 18th century Russia. Reb Noah's son eventually married the Alter Rebbe's daughter and from that union came the Rebbe who was known as the Tzemach Tzedek. To this day, the memory of Reb Noah is well honoured among Lubavitchers, who tell this story about him.

After Reb Noah died and came before the Heavenly Court, they looked into his case and found that he had been a very good Jew. All his life he had observed the commandments as best he could and never missed any opportunity to perform an additional *mitzvah*.

Now, as is well known (Avot 4:11), when a Jew fulfills a *Mitzvah*, a holy angel is born from that very act. These angels, it is said, will come to testify on behalf of the soul after death. And the more properly and sincerely he does the *Mitzvah*, the stronger the angels will be. So it happened when Reb Noah stood before the Heavenly Court that thousands upon thousands of luminous *Mitzvah* angels came to his trial, saying "I was born from such-and-such a good deed performed by Reb Noah when he was alive on earth".

The Heavenly Court was very impressed by the testimony of all these *Mitzvah* angels and was about to decide that Reb Noah should go immediately to *Gan Eden* ("Paradise"). But suddenly another angel appeared, a dark one. It stood before the Court and said "I was born from a sin that Reb Noah committed during his life on earth." Then the angel revealed to the Court exactly what the sin had been.

The three judges who sit on the Heavenly Court deliberated thoroughly. On the one hand, Reb Noah was a pious man who had led a basically righteous life, so he deserved to go to *Gan Eden*. But on the other hand, he had committed the sin. Just as no good deed ever goes unrewarded, so does no sin ever go unpunished. Finally, the Court decided to give Reb Noah two choices: he could spend a half-hour in *Gehennom* ("Purgatory") now, to atone for the sin, and then go straight to *Gan Eden*. Or, he could avoid the pain of purgatory by reincarnating on earth once again and making up for the sin there.

Reb Noah answered: "With all due respect to this Court, I would like to consult with my Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman, before I make a decision. All my life I never did anything concerning my spiritual life without first asking the Rebbe's advice. And so I would like permission to ask the Rebbe about this now."

The Court consulted the Heavenly Records and found that it was indeed true. Reb Noah never did anything important without first asking the Alter Rebbe's advice. "Very well" the Court replied, "you may return to earth in the spirit and consult with your Rebbe about your decision".

Back on earth, Rabbi Schneur Zalman was sitting at the table as usual, learning Torah with his Chassidim. Then the soul of Reb Noah appeared to him in the spirit and posed the question: "Earth or *Gehennom*?" The Rebbe turned to his Chassidim and said "Reb Noah is here right now, and he is asking what judgment he should choose: a half hour in Purgatory or to be reborn in this world another time."

The Chassidim said nothing. What could they say? If the Rebbe wasn't prepared to decide, how could they presume to speak for him? So they sat there in silence, waiting to hear what the Rebbe's answer would be.

The Alter Rebbe put his hand on his forehead, then rested his elbow on the table and concentrated very deeply. For a long time he just sat there in silence, turning the question over in his mind, weighing all the consequences. Then came the answer: "*Gehennom* - to purgatory!"

As soon as the Rebbe had said the word "*Gehennom*", the Chassidim all heard a voice cry out in anguish, "Oy, Rebbe!" At the same moment they saw, burned into the wall by the door, the outline of a human hand!

From this the Chassidim understood what a spiritual danger it can be for a soul to be born into this world. Better to spend half an hour in the fires of Purgatory than a whole lifetime on earth once again!

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Shechem... which I took out of the hand of the Emori with my sword and with my bow (48:22)

Did Jacob then conquer Shechem with sword and bow? But "my sword" is his prayer, and "my bow" is his supplication. (*Mechilta; Rashi*)

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*)

"Fear not; for am I in the place of G-d? You thought evil against me; but G-d meant it for good..." (50:19-20)

Joseph was saying: You did me an evil which turned out for the good; if I wished to avenge myself on you, I, too, would have to do the same. But this I cannot do, for only G-d can do so... (*The Oztrotzver Rebbe*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 28 DECEMBER 2012

BEGINS		ENDS
8:27	MELBOURNE	9:32
8:14	ADELAIDE	9:17
6:27	BRISBANE	7:25
6:56	DARWIN	7:49
6:27	GOLD COAST	7:25
7:07	PERTH	8:08
7:50	SYDNEY	8:52
8:03	CANBERRA	9:06
8:30	LAUNCESTON	9:39
8:25	AUCKLAND	9:29
8:38	WELLINGTON	9:48
8:34	HOBART	9:45
7:28	BYRON BAY	8:26



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYECHI

15 TEVET • 28 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:27 PM
	MINCHA:	8:40 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:10 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:41 AM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:::	9:32 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	8:00 AM
		9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	2:03 PM
		8:35 PM
	MAARIV:	9:25 PM