

LAMPLIGHTER

10 Teves
Parshas Vayechi
117
13 December
5774/2013

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

With this week's Torah portion, Vayechi, we conclude the Book of Genesis. "Joseph died, being 110 years old...and he was put into a coffin in Egypt" is its final verse.

This conclusion to the entire Book is somewhat surprising, in light of the principle that "one should always end on a positive note." Why couldn't Genesis have concluded a few verses back, when we learn that Joseph lived a long life and merited to see grandchildren and great-grandchildren? Why couldn't the description of Joseph's death have waited until the Book of Exodus?

We must conclude that Joseph's passing is somehow related to the theme of Genesis itself.

The primary difference between Genesis and the other Books of the Torah is that Genesis relates the early history of our ancestors and the 12 tribes - the preparation for our existence as a distinct nation - whereas the other four books contain a narrative of our history as a people.

Genesis begins with an account of the creation of the world. The Sage, Rabbi Yitzchak, explained that although the Torah should have begun with a practical mitzvah (commandment), G-d chose to commence with the Creation to refute the arguments of the Gentiles, who would one day claim that the Jews had stolen the land of Israel from the nations who lived there prior to its conquest.

To counter their assertion, the Jews will say, "The entire world belongs to G-d; He created it and divided it as He saw fit. It was His will to give it to them, and it was His will to take it from them and give it to us."

Surely G-d did not change the entire order of His Torah just to supply an answer to the arguments of the Gentiles. The comments of Rabbi Yitzchak must therefore contain a more fundamental teaching for the Jewish people as a whole.

The nations of the world are cognizant of the Jew's special mission. Their claim is that precisely because Jews are different, they should limit themselves to spiritual service and not tie themselves down to a physical land. They opine that because Jews are a nation like no other, they have no right to claim ownership of a homeland. To the non-Jew, the spiritual and physical realms are incongruous and incompatible.

"The entire world belongs to G-d," the Jew explains - the mundane as well as the spiritual. Both require sanctification through the light of holiness - the sacred mission of the Jew.

With this concept the Book of Genesis begins, and on this note it concludes. Joseph's coffin remained in Egypt to strengthen and inspire the Children of Israel during their exile there. Joseph (who remained true to Hashem even as viceroy in Egypt) is symbolic of the ability of the Jewish people to overcome even the most difficult of obstacles, imbuing even the most mundane matter with holiness and bringing the long-awaited Redemption.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 30

Above the Fray

By Dovi Scheiner

Jacob wants out.

The moment Jacob arrives in Egypt, he quickly departs to his gated community in Goshen, where he leads his life at a distance from the corrupt Egyptian society.

Now, as Jacob prepares to die, he summons his son Joseph and pleads: "Please do not bury me in Egypt . . . Take me out of Egypt!"

To ensure that not even his remains will remain in Egypt, Jacob feels he needs more than Joseph's word. "Swear to me," he asks of Joseph. And Joseph does.

Where results are essential, a vow is a powerful tool, as it binds the committed party to fulfil its duties under all circumstances. Still, why was a vow necessary in this story? Was Joseph's word to his dying father insufficient?

The very fray Jacob struggled to remain above, Joseph was very much a part of. Every soul is entrusted with its own mission. Joseph found his calling at the heart of Egyptian society, inside the belly of the beast, where he worked to identify and elevate G-dly sparks wherever they would be found.

Jacob is quick to recognize how Joseph would consider keeping his righteous father close by, even posthumously, as a critical asset in his effort to elevate Egypt. The only way Jacob could rest assured of compliance was through adjuring Joseph to take a vow.

If so, why was Jacob so eager to be removed from Egypt? Why not be buried amongst his children, where his presence might help reduce their sense of isolation in exile?

Jacob knew that his children would require help in order to escape the shackles of Egyptian bondage, and felt he would be in the best position to assist them from a distance. To successfully escape from prison, you need someone on the outside pulling for you.

So Jacob was transported to the Promised Land, while Joseph returned to the trenches in Egypt. The vow between them served as a bond-which Jacob would tug on when the time came for his children to come home.

One further lesson may be gleaned from our narrative. While living in Goshen, Jacob had prime pastureland for his flocks and a yeshivah on the premises-"the best of the land of Egypt" both materially and spiritually. Still he pleaded with Joseph, "Take me out of Egypt." Even under the best of circumstances, exile is no place for a Jew.

Take it from Jacob, who wouldn't be found dead in Egypt.

Slice of LIFE

The Orthodox-Jewish International Grandmaster

Samuel Herman (Sammy) Reshevsky (1911-1992) was a famous chess prodigy and later a leading American chess Grandmaster. He was born in Ozorkov, Poland in 1911, to parents who belonged to the Gerrer Chassidic dynasty. When he was nine years old his family moved to the United States, where he later became a contender for the World Chess Championship from about the mid-1930s to the mid-1960s; coming equal third in the World Chess Championship 1948 tournament, and equal second in the 1953 Candidates Tournament. He was also an eight time winner of the U.S. Chess Championship.

Reshevsky was famous for his slow and thoughtful moves, contemplating every move and strategizing every step, sometimes for hours. At the age of six, he already could play against as many as 30 players at a time, moving quickly from board to board and could remember and repeat all 30 games afterwards, move by move. At the age of eight, he competed against older contestants and won. He was featured in newspapers and branded as a chess prodigy. He was known as "Shmulik der vunder kind"-Samuel the wonder child. He was a descendant of the rabbinic genius, Rabbi Yonasan Eibshitz, who descended from the great Kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Arizal of Tzefat.

Sammy Reshevsky grew up in an observant home, and throughout his life and fame, remained faithful to his Judaism and Torah, refusing to ever play chess on the Sabbath or Holidays. In the years before his marriage, Reshevsky developed a relationship with the sixth Lubavitch Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn. Reshevsky once asked Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak for his blessing for success in a particular chess match. The Rebbe responded that he would grant his wish if he would resolve to study Torah every day. Reshevsky readily agreed, and indeed, the blessing the Rebbe granted was fulfilled.

Living in Crown Heights in the 1940's, Sammy prayed in the central Lubavitch

synagogue at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, NY. Once, at a Sabbath gathering (*farbrengen* in Yiddish), in 1948, the Rebbe, in recognition of his presence, explained the spiritual meaning behind the chess game.

There is one king. All of the other pieces revolve around him and their entire mission is to protect and serve him. G-d is the King, all else was created by Him, given the opportunity to connect to His truth and to serve Him.

The queen represents the feminine manifestation of the divine, known as the "*shechinah*," intimately involved with every aspect of creation, granting vitality and substance to every existence. The queen is the most practically affective piece, often sent into the lines of fire, even placed in danger. Likewise, G-d risks His own dignity, as it were, by investing Himself in every creature and existence, subjecting Himself to the vicissitudes of the human condition.

Then there are bishops, rooks, and knights. They are swift, free, not limited by the squares immediately surrounding them; they can "fly" around freely, without constraints. These are symbolic of the angels-in their three mystical categories we discuss in the daily morning services, "*seraphim*," "*chayot*" and "*ofanim*," represented by the bishops, rooks, and knights.

In order for there to be free choice in the world, there are two teams, the white and the black. One team representing G-dliness and holiness; the other team representing everything antithetical to G-dliness and holiness. The teams are engaged in fierce battle. And for the confrontation to be meaningful each team contains, at least on the surface, all the properties contained in the opposite team. Both teams pretend to have a king, queen, bishops, rooks and knights.

Finally, there are the pawns. They are very limited in their travel, moving only one step at a time, only in a singular direction, and they constantly get "knocked off." But... when they fight through the "board," arriving at their destination, they can be promoted even to the rank of the queen, something that the bishop, rook or knight can never achieve.

The pawn represents the human being living down here on earth. We humans take very small steps, and we are so limited in every aspect of our journey and our growth. We also constantly make mistakes and get "knocked down." But when man perseveres,

and overcomes the angst and despair of his or her own failings and mortality, when we fight the fight to subdue darkness and to reveal the presence of the "king" within our own bodies, our own psyches and the world around us-the human being surpasses even angels; the pawn is transformed into a queen! The human life reunites with its source above, the queen, the Shechinah, experiencing the deepest intimacy with the King Himself.

The bishops, rooks, and knights, though spiritually powerful and angelic, are predictable, and limited by their role. There is no room for real promotion, no substantive growth, no radical progression. Yes, they fly around, but only within their own orbit. The angels on high, as well as the soul alone on high, before entering the body, are powerful yet confined by their own spiritual standing. It is the limitations of the human person that stimulate his or her deepest growth. The limits of our existence create friction, causing us to strain against the trials and disappointments of life.

Upon turning 70 and no longer on top of his game, Sammy Reshevsky asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, if he should retire. The Rebbe advised him to continue playing because it was a "Kiddush Hashem"-a sanctification of G-d in the world, a proud demonstration of a Jew succeeding without compromising his spiritual ideals and values. Reshevsky complied and shortly afterwards, he travelled to Russia and upset the world champion at that time, Vassily Smyslov. He received a standing ovation from the thousand-member audience who were enchanted by his brilliance.

On a side note, here is an interesting tidbit: in 1984, the Lubavitcher Rebbe requested Reshevsky to try and help his colleague Bobby Fischer get out of his world-famous depression and isolation, and also to help him in relation to his Judaism. Bobby had already been out of public life for a few years, and was known to be living reclusively in Los Angeles. Soon after Reshevsky received the Rebbe's letter, he travelled to Los Angeles to play at a tournament. As soon as he arrived, he phoned Bobby and related the Rebbe's request to him. Bobby immediately agreed to see him. This was very unusual, since he did not often receive visitors. Their meeting lasted three hours, during which Bobby asked many serious questions about Judaism.

Published by The Chabad House of Caulfield in conjunction with the Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.

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ISSUE 1117

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In this week's Parsha (Vayechi 47:29-31), Yaakov says to Yosef: "...do not bury me in Egypt... swear to me!"

Jacob did not rely on Joseph's promise, but asked him to swear. He had no peace of mind until he obtained that oath.

A promise differs from an oath. With a promise one will no doubt do his best to keep it at the appropriate time. Until then, however, one is not disturbed by the pledge. With an oath, however, the mind is constantly preoccupied with thoughts how to keep the oath, worrying that failure to do so would lead to the severe consequences of having violated an oath.

When a Jew is in exile, he must constantly realize that the promise of an eventual redemption is not enough. Galut (exile) is not our home, and just as an oath, the Jew's demand of the Almighty - "carry me out of Egypt" - is his constant preoccupation.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

I have just received your letter.

To begin with a blessing, may G-d grant that henceforth you and all your family should have only goodness and benevolence - in the kind of good that is revealed and evident.

At the same time, you must make every effort to regain the proper state of mind, despite the pain.

You should remember the teachings and instruction of the Torah which is called *Toras Chayim* [= Torah of Life], and *Toras Emes* [= Torah of Truth], meaning that what it teaches is not just to ease the mind, but the actual truth. Thus, the Torah, taking into account human nature/feelings in a case of bereavement, and the need to provide an outlet for the natural feelings of sorrow and grief, prescribes a set of regulations and periods of mourning. At the same time the Torah sets limits in terms of the duration of the periods of mourning and the appropriate expression, such as Shiva (the first seven days), *Shloshim* (thirty days), etc. If one extends the intensity of mourning which is appropriate for Shiva into *Shloshim*, it is not proper, for although *Shloshim* is part of the overall mourning period, it is so in a lesser degree. And since the Torah says that it is not proper to overdo it, it does no good for the *Neshama* - soul of the dear departed. On the contrary, it is painful for the *Neshama* to see that it is the cause for the conduct that is not in keeping with the instructions of the Torah.

A second point to bear in mind is that a human being cannot possibly understand the ways of G-d. By the way a simple illustration: An infant cannot possibly understand the thinking and ways of a great scholar or scientist even though both are human beings, and the difference between them is only relative, in terms of age, education and maturity. Moreover, it is quite possible that the infant may some day surpass the scientist, who also started life as an infant. But the difference between a created human being and his creator is absolute. Therefore, our sages declare that a human being must accept everything that happens, both those that are obviously good and those that are incomprehensible, with the same positive attitude that "All that G-d does is for the good," even though it is beyond human understanding.

Nevertheless, G-d has made it possible for human beings to grasp some aspects and insights about life and after life. One of these revealed truths is that the *Neshama* is a part of G-dliness and is immortal. When the time comes for it to return to heaven, it leaves the body and continues its eternal life in the spiritual World of Truth.

It is also a matter of common sense that whatever the direct cause of the separation of the soul from the body (whether a fatal accident, or a fatal illness, etc.), it could affect only any of the vital organs of the physical body, but could in no way affect the spiritual soul.

A further point, which is also understandable, is that during the soul's lifetime on earth in partnership with the body, the soul is necessarily "handicapped" - in certain respects - by the requirements of the body (such as eating and drinking, etc.). Even a *Tzaddik* - a righteous person whose entire life is consecrated to G-d cannot escape the restraints of life in a material and physical environment. Consequently, when the time comes for the soul to return "home," it is essentially a release for it as it makes its ascent to a higher world, no longer restrained by a physical body and physical environment. Henceforth the soul is free to enjoy the spiritual bliss of being near to G-d in the fullest measure. That is surely a comforting thought!

It may be asked, If it is a "release" for the soul, why has the Torah prescribed periods of mourning, etc.? But there is really no contradiction. The Torah recognizes the natural feeling of grief that is felt by the loss of a near and dear one, whose passing leaves a void in the family, and the physical presence and contact of the beloved one will be sorely missed... However, to allow oneself to be carried away by these feelings beyond the limits set by the Torah - in addition to it being a disservice to one's self and all around, as well as to the *Neshama*, as mentioned above would mean that one is more concerned with one's own feelings than with the feelings of the dear *Neshama* that has risen to new spiritual heights of eternal happiness. Thus, paradoxically, the overextended feeling of grief... actually causes pain to the loved one, since the *Neshama* continues to take an interest in the dear one left behind, sees what is on (even better than before), rejoices with them in their joys, etc.

One thing the departed soul can no longer do, and that is, the actual fulfillment of the commandments, which can be carried out only jointly by the soul and body together in this material world. But this, too, can at least partly be overcome when those left behind do a little more commandments and good deeds - in honor and for the benefit of the dear *Neshama*.

More could be said on the subject, but I trust the above will suffice to help you discover within you the strength that G-d has given you, not only to overcome the crisis, but also to go from strength to strength in your everyday life and activities in full accord with the Torah.

In your case there is an added G-d-given capacity, having been blessed with lovely children, long may they live, with a strong feeling of motherly responsibility to raise each and all of them to a life of Torah, wedding and Good Deeds, with even greater attention and care than before, and in this, as in all good things, there is always room for improvement.

With blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Once a month, as the soft, mellow light of the moon waxes in the sky, we recite a special blessing called *Kiddush Levanah*; praising the Creator for His wondrous work we call astronomy. The moon has the most obvious monthly cycle of all the stars and planets, so we take the occasion of its renewal to make a blessing for the entire masterpiece.

Besides, our nation is likened to the moon-as it waxes and wanes, so have we throughout history. So, too, has the Divine Presence (the *Shechina*)-which explains why the moon represents that, as well. The blessing of the moon on its reappearance is a way of renewing our trust that the light of G-d's presence will soon fill all the earth and our people will be redeemed from exile, very soon in our time; which is why the blessing is concluded with songs and dancing in celebration and joy.

- *Kiddush Levanah* can be recited three days after the moon's rebirth-known as the *molad*. The kabbalah tells us it is best to wait a full week. Once 15 days have passed, the moon begins to wane once more and the season for saying the blessing has passed. The very best time for this blessing is immediately after Shabbat, as we leave the synagogue together dressed in our Shabbat clothes.

- " After nightfall, when the moon is fully visible and unobstructed by cloud cover, stand under the open sky and look once at the moon. Then face Jerusalem and recite the blessing along with a few accompanying prayers. If there is a quorum of ten men present, *kaddish* is recited.

A WORD

from the Director

At the end of the book of Bereishis which tells about the end of Yosef's life, Yosef makes the Jewish people swear that "G-d will surely remember you and He will take you up from this land... and you should take up my bones from here." As a man of flesh and blood, Yosef recognized his life was ending, but in a manner reserved for the divine, Yosef announced that the time of exile in Egypt would come to an end. The Jews would go to the land that Hashem promised their forefathers, no matter what time would elapse and what bodies would expire. The nation of Israel would continue and inevitably be redeemed.

This role that Yosef played as the herald of the redemption was a role that was played conceptually and practically throughout his life. Unlike his brothers, who had a great and deep grasp of heavenly matters and Torah wisdom, Yosef was additionally blessed with a unique strength of mind to practice these ideas even in hostile environments without being affected, and to the contrary, to engage the place of his dwelling in the service of Hashem.

At the time of the exodus from Egypt the Jewish People had to physically escape the land quickly, and spiritually escape the impurities of the land with even greater speed and desperation. When Moshiach comes however, the world will have been elevated though our service of Hashem during the long exile, and we will enter the times of the redemption with the grace of Yosef who was able to live in Egypt and regally retain his pride as a Jew, and inspire those around him.

This is why he was the one to announce the redemption. Live with G-d in your life and announce the redemption to your environs.

J. I. Guttentag

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

THE TAILOR'S INVESTMENT

Rabbi Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam of Shinova was standing in the train station when suddenly he heard the sound of someone crying. "Who is crying?" he asked Berel, the tailor, who was also waiting for the train.

"It's a little girl," answered Berel. "Why is she crying?" the *tzadik* wondered. "I don't know," said Berel. "I'll go ask her."

After a few minutes he came back and said, "The little girl's purse is lost. She has no money to buy a ticket to get home."

The *tzadik* looked at him strangely. "Perhaps you can help her out, Berel," he suggested. "One day it might stand you in good stead."

Berel paid for a train ticket for the girl with his money and gave it to her. She thanked him profusely as she wiped away her tears. Soon after that the train arrived and they both had to board. When they reached the station of his tailor shop, Berel got off.

A short time later a general came into the shop and ordered new uniforms for all the soldiers under his command. Berel was very happy because the large job would ensure him a good income.

As soon as the general left, Berel set to work. He brought the material, measured it, and cut it. Then he sewed the pieces together to make uniforms. He made them shorter than the usual uniforms to save money and increase his profit. He hoped the general would not notice.

But the general did notice. When he received the uniforms and saw that they were short, he became very angry and sent a squad of soldiers to arrest the Jewish tailor.

Berel saw the soldiers coming. Frightened, he sneaked out through the back door, running as fast as his legs could carry him. "The Shinover *rav* will surely help me," he thought desperately. "I'll go to him."

He ran and ran. Finally, he reached the home of the *rebbe*. "I am in terrible trouble," Berel cried out. "*Rebbe*, please help me!"

"What is it, my son?" the Shinover asked, concerned.

Berel told the *rebbe* his whole story. The *tzadik* promptly advised him to go to Vienna and speak to the officer who was in charge of his case.

Berel took the train to Vienna. It turned out to be difficult to find out who was the officer he needed to see and how and where to locate him. Finally he met someone who said he knew which official it was and where he lived, and would write down the information for him. But then, when the friendly man handed Berel the slip of paper with the name and address, he warned him, "This officer is mean. And he does not like Jewish people."

Berel was scared, but he knew he must follow the *rebbe's* instructions. He went to the officer's house and knocked on the door. The door opened. A little girl stood there - the same little girl who had cried at the train station. She ran inside excitedly calling, "Father! Father! Come quickly! It is the man who was nice to me when I lost my purse!"

Berel was amazed. "This is a miracle from G-d," he thought.

The girl's father appeared. "So you are the man who saved my precious daughter," the officer exclaimed, taking Berel's hand in his. "I have wanted

to thank you all this time, but I did not know your name or where you lived. How can I ever thank you and show you my gratitude?"

"I am in danger of being arrested and you are the officer in charge of my case," Berel said. "You can help me by pardoning me for making the uniforms short."

"Of course I will pardon you," the officer promised. "I always thought the old uniforms were too long, anyway. The soldiers used to trip on them when they ran. And I will make sure you are paid in full for the work, as well."

Berel left Vienna with a light heart and pockets full of money. Sitting on the train on the way home, Berel thought about how he had been saved because he had been kind to a little girl in need.

Suddenly he remembered the odd look that the Shinover *rav* had given him at the train station when he told him to help the little girl. "The *rebbe* must have known from the beginning what was going to happen," thought Berel in wonder. "And then later, when I was running away, he knew just where I should go. Praised be G-d. What a great *rebbe* I have!"

Source: Adapted from "*Why the Baal Shem Tov Laughed*" by Sterna Citron (Jason Aronson Inc.)

Rabbi Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam of Shinova, (1813- 5 Tevet 1899), was the eldest son of the Divrei Chaim, Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz. As an emissary of his father, he founded the Sanzer synagogue in Tzefat. He served as the rabbi of Shinova from 1855 till 1868, and then again from 1881 till his passing. Many of his Torah insights into Scripture, Law and Kabbalah are collected in *Divrei Yechezkel*.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

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

Jacob had not desired his sons to perpetrate that deed; yet when they did perpetrate it, he exclaimed: "Shall I leave my sons to fall into the hands of the heathens!" What did he do? He took his sword and bow and stood at the gate of Shechem, saying: "If the heathens come to attack my sons, I will fight against them." (*Midrash Rabbah*)

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*)

Cursed be their anger (49:7)

Even when he rebuked them, he cursed only their anger; thus Baalam says (Numbers 23:8): "How can I curse whom G-d has not cursed?" (*Midrash Rabbah; Rashi*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 13 DECEMBER 2013



BEGINS	ENDS
8:19MELBOURNE	9:25
8:05ADELAIDE	9:09
6:19BRISBANE	7:17
6:48DARWIN	7:41
6:19GOLD COAST	7:17
6:59PERTH	8:00
7:42SYDNEY	8:44
7:54CANBERRA	8:58
8:21LAUNCESTON	9:31
8:16AUCKLAND	9:21
8:30WELLINGTON	9:40
8:25HOBART	9:37
7:19BYRON BAY	8:18
6:42SINGAPORE	7:34

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYECHI

10 TEVES • 13 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:19 PM
	MINCHA:	8:15 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:00 PM
	FAST ENDS:	9:10 AM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9:33 AM
	MINCHA:	8:15 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:25 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
	MON-FRI:	8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	8:25 PM
	MAARIV:	SUN-FRI: 9:20 PM