

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas Vayechi
Shabbos Chazak
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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 mitzva (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 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.

Dealing with Adversity

By Tali Loewenthal

How do we deal with an unfamiliar, and even hostile, environment? You try to survive, yes. But in addition to that, a person also tries to preserve his or her sense of self, one's own identity. "Don't let the conditions make you forget who you are and what you are trying to achieve," you tell yourself.

The next step is something more. You try to find a way to develop and grow, precisely in that unfamiliar environment. In fact, you discover ways to transform negativity into something wholesome. Finding the balance between preserving one's identity and positive interaction with the environment is a subtle issue, which closely relates to the long experience of the Jewish people.

In order to keep one's Jewish identity strong and healthy, a fair measure of restraint is needed. One may have to refuse that important dinner invitation, for any of a variety of reasons (the food will not be kosher, the event will be on Yom Kippur, and so on). On the other hand, in order to be a creative and positive force in society—in the way that we, the Jewish people, often are, transforming attitudes and opening up new frontiers—this restraint has to be combined with boldness, assertiveness and daring.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, points out that an intriguing scene in our Parshah can be understood in terms of these two pathways: struggling to preserve one's own identity, and positively interacting with society.

The incident concerns an apparent disagreement between Joseph and his father Jacob. Joseph has brought his two sons to the elderly and blind Jacob, so that Jacob could give them his blessing. Joseph thought it would be appropriate that his father should place his right hand on the head of Manasseh, the older son, and his left hand on that of the younger brother, Ephraim. Surprisingly, Jacob crossed his arms so that his right hand was on the head of the younger son. When Joseph protested at this, his father insisted this was correct (Genesis 48:13–14, 18–20).

What was the disagreement between Joseph and his father Jacob? The usual explanation is that Jacob was aware that the great leader Joshua would be a descendant of Ephraim. However, the Rebbe provides another level of explanation, based on the meaning of the names of the two youths.

Joseph had named his older son Manasseh, saying, "G-d has dislodged me from my father's house." The name "Manasseh" signifies Joseph's attempt to preserve his identity as the son of his father Jacob. He was now in the immoral Egyptian environment, but was determined to retain his religious and moral identity—as we see in the incident involving Potiphar's wife. The firstborn Manasseh signifies restraint. By contrast, he gave his second son the name Ephraim, saying, "G-d has made me flourish in the land of my affliction." Ephraim represents the second path, that of creative interaction.

Which approach is the most important? Joseph, whose own life was indeed one of struggle to preserve his identity, thought that Manasseh should be dominant. Jacob, looking ahead to the future, thought that Ephraim was more important. Certainly, the restraint of Manasseh is essential, and even must come first. But the ultimate goal is the positive transformation of the world—which is achieved through Ephraim.

Thus, the traditional Jewish blessing that fathers give their children is, "May G-d make you like Ephraim and Manasseh." Manasseh is essential. But after that level has been reached, Ephraim is the goal.

Slice of LIFE

A Walk in the Park

by Lieba Rosen

One cold and rainy winter Shabbat morning found our son Yisroel fearlessly striding along the leafy roads toward Hampstead (in Northwest London), where he read the Torah each week in the local synagogue. He hardly noticed the perfectly manicured privet hedges nor the beautiful trees and flowers in the front gardens as he walked steadfastly towards his destination. His thoughts were focused on the matter at hand: arriving in shul on time to fulfill his responsibility as the baal koreh - Torah reader. As he hurried on his way, Yisroel was overtaken by a red London bus.

Back in the '80s, when this incident took place, London buses still had both a driver and a conductor aboard. While the driver drove the bus, the conductor, wearing a heavy metal ticket machine strapped to his body, supervised the passengers boarding and dismounting the bus. Once they were seated, the conductor would come to their seats collecting their fares in cash and issuing paper tickets from his ticket machine.

On that particular Shabbat, a bus drove past my son as, dressed in his Sabbath best, he purposefully made his way along the winding roads. The driver turned towards the conductor and venomously remarked, "Look at that Jewish kid, walking in his old-fashioned black clothing with that silly hat on his head. I hate the Jews; why do they have to be different? They think they own the world."

Jack, the conductor, a 19-year-old Cockney lad, covered with tattoos and into the world of '80s punk, angrily retorted, "What has that kid or any Jew ever done to you? Why do you

hate him?"

The unexpected irritation in Jack's voice surprised the driver. What's got into him, he wondered, Jack is usually so even-tempered. He shrugged his shoulder and carried driving.

But the unprovoked anti-Semitic outburst had unsettled the conductor. Jack had never told his workmates that he was Jewish. Jack's father, Avrohom, a friend of ours, was a Holocaust survivor. Before the war he had lived in Europe. With the onset of World War II, the Nazis had invaded his hometown and his life was changed forever. By a series of miracles, Avrohom survived and escaped to England, the only member of his family still alive after the war.

Avrohom eventually met and married a Jewish girl and had two children, Jack and Donna. Avrohom, now called Arthur, was kind and gentle, but he no longer celebrated the religion of his youth. After his parents divorced, Jack left home, abandoning the few Jewish practices his father had maintained.

Now living alone, Avrohom was befriended by a work-colleague, a Lubavitcher chasid, who often invited him to his home. Slowly Avrohom began to again observe the commandments he had taken pride in as a youth. Eventually Avrohom remarried and become fully observant. He was content and fulfilled with his new life, but was troubled that he had not raised or educated his children to observe Jewish traditions.

After that Shabbat, Jack called his father and told him what had happened. He was extremely upset at the anti-Semitism displayed by the bus driver, and was surprised at his own strong reaction. Avrohom was amazed by Jack's story, and was naturally curious to know the identity of the boy who had so incensed the driver, and consequently had had such an effect on Jack. Assuming that

it was likely to be a Lubavitcher boy, he went to the Lubavitcher synagogue and after making some inquiries, identified our Yisroel as the protagonist.

Avrohom animatedly told my son, who had been totally oblivious, the drama that had played out on the bus.

Fast forward a year or so. Jack planned a vacation to the United States, and would be spending some time in New York. Avrohom begged his son to visit the Rebbe in 770. Jack had no desire to do any such thing, but when Avrohom persisted, he reluctantly agreed. When he went past the Rebbe, the Rebbe suggested to Jack that he should study in a yeshiva. The very notion seemed preposterous to Jack; he had no affiliation with anything Jewish and the idea of learning in a yeshiva, whatever that was, was completely alien to him.

However, the Jewish spark which had been aroused on the bus that Shabbat began to stir within him. Very slowly, he became more involved in Judaism. Some 10 years after that fateful Shabbat morning, about nine years after his first visit to the Rebbe, he enrolled in a yeshiva.

More than a quarter century had passed since those events. The synagogues my son attended in the East End have an aging, dwindling membership, and most have long since closed. The Hampstead shul, being in fashionable Northwest London, is fortunately flourishing.

Each Shabbat, sees Yisroel yet again striding along leafy lanes to read the holy words of the Torah. Nowadays he has his own son or two in tow, as he makes the long weekly walk in a far-flung corner of the United States to his own Chabad House, where he continues to be a devoted emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and lamplighter of Jewish souls.

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SOUL COFFEE

There are times when a stern word is necessary, when a child needs a firm reminder, when social justice demands harsh measures.

Of their own, these acts are unwholesome—only their context redeems them.

Think of them as toxic medicines, to be administered with great care. Once they are no longer necessary or can be replaced with more wholesome means, they are no longer medicine, but poison.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

A Heretic's portion in the World to Come

You ask, how can one accept the Mishnah "All Israel have an portion in the world to come" and how, by the widest stretch of the imagination, can one believe that the worst "apikores" will have a share in the world to come.

The answer to your question may be found in various sources and is especially illuminated in the sources of Chasidus at length.

The belief of our Jewish people in true Monotheism is, of course, the very basis of our faith and way of life. This means not only that there is only One G-d and none other beside Him, but "nothing else beside Him" (ein od Milvado). The whole Creation and all the worlds have no reality of their own, for there is only one Reality—G-d, inasmuch as a spark of G-dliness animates and keeps everything in existence, as it is written, "By the word of G-d the heavens were created," etc. This "word" of G-d is the essence and reality of everything.

Thus, the individual you call "apikores" is also animated by the "word" of G-d, which is surely eternal, for that individual is also a part of Creation and is animated and sustained in the same way. Except that it was the will of the Creator that this individual, created by the word of G-d, should have complete freedom to choose good or bad, life or death, as it is written, "Behold, I place before you this day life and good, and death and evil." The individual who misuses this gift of freedom and chooses evil, loses and forfeits that part of his G-d-given energy which went into the commission of the sin or omission of the Mitzvah, which, had he chosen otherwise, would have been imbued with an eternal quality. However, the very essence of his reality, that is, that which has been created and came into being by the word of G-d, cannot be destroyed, so long as it retains its essential character. It can only be soiled and stained by sin, G-d forbid.

But inasmuch as every individual Jew is a "whole world," as our Sages said, and, moreover, the whole universe was created for his sake, and as the Sages commented on the word "Breishis"—for the sake of Yisroel called "Reishis," the Jew who sinned must undergo various transformations and stages of purgatory to be cleansed of the impurities which had attached themselves to his soul, which is his essence, and which has a portion in the world to come because of its eternal quality.

This is also what our Sages meant when they succinctly said—as they often compress a far-reaching idea into a few concise words—by way of explanation immediately following the statement in the said Mishnah of Kol Yisroel: "For it is written, 'And Thy people are all righteous . . . a branch of My planting, the work of My hand to be glorified (by them).'" Because every Jew contains in him something which is like a branch of the Divine Tree and the work of G-d's own hands, it is eternal, and that is why "Every Jew has a portion in the world to come."

I trust that in harmony with your search for knowledge which you display in your letter, you have regular daily periods of study of the Torah and the Torah view, and that is the kind of study which leads to action and practice in daily life, as our Sages emphasized that the essential thing is the deed.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Bar Mitzvah

Question: What is the origin of the festive Bar Mitzvah celebration?

Answer: According to some, the first documented Bar Mitzvah celebration is referred to in the Torah: "And the child [Isaac] grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned" (Genesis 21:8). According to one opinion expressed in the Midrash, this was the day that Isaac turned thirteen; the day when he was "weaned" from his childish nature, and assumed the responsibilities of a Jewish adult. In Jewish literature, this verse is often used as a source for the celebration made in honor of a boy's acceptance of the mitzvot at age thirteen.

The Zohar relates how on the day of his son's Bar Mitzvah, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai made a feast which was akin to a wedding celebration.

My research suggests that the celebratory Bar Mitzvah feast became a unanimously accepted Jewish custom some four hundred years ago.

As for the cause of the celebration, this is the day when a Jewish person is given the obligation and resulting privilege of observing G-d's commandments. One would be hard-pressed to think of a more joyous occasion to celebrate together with friends and family!

Rabbi Shlomo Luria, noted 16th century Polish scholar, rules that the Bar Mitzvah feast is a seudat mitzvah, a "mitzvah repast," which means that participating in this meal is actually a mitzvah

A WORD

from the Director

The 20th of Tevet, this year Wednesday, January 18, marks the yartzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon), Rabbi Moses Maimonides, more than 800 years ago. The Rambam was an outstanding codifier, commentator, philosopher, physician to the Sultan and leader of Egyptian Jewry.

A little over 30 years ago, the Lubavitcher Rebbe urged all Jews to study every day a section of the Rambam's Mishne Torah, or at least the briefer Sefer HaMitzvot. Hundreds of thousands of Jews undertook this great endeavor and are studying one of the above-mentioned works. (You can find them online at chabad.org)

Although the Rambam passed away so long ago, he and his great wisdom are still with us. When a person sits down to study a chapter, or a law from one of the Rambam's works, his spirit and teachings remain alive.

About the Rambam, our Sages have said, "From Moses to Moses, there was none like Moses!" This means that from the time of the Moses who took us out of Egypt, there has never lived a person who exhibited all of the Rambam's unique qualities.

Throughout the 50 generations from Moses our Teacher until Moses Maimonides, there was not even one person similar to Moses our Teacher in terms of transmission of the Torah until the arrival of the Rambam. This saying is engraved on Maimonides' gravestone, which implies that it was accepted by all of our Sages from all circles who came to visit the Rambam's resting place.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



The Rav (rabbi) of Yanov was a great scholar. As a young man he had been the friend of Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg, and their friendship had endured in spite of the young man's terrible obstinacy and inability to concede the correctness of anyone else's viewpoint.

Once, the Rav of Yanov was traveling to his son's wedding together with a party of illustrious well-wishers. The Rav and his party stopped at a lovely site on the outskirts of a forest to say the afternoon prayers. The Rav chose a secluded spot under the trees some distance away from the others, and he lingered over his devotions. The members of his traveling party waited patiently for him in the carriage, but when darkness descended, they began searching for him in the surrounding groves of trees. Their search proved unsuccessful and though they were a bit concerned, they assumed that he had accepted a ride from one of the many other carriages in the wedding party.

Their anxiety was borne out when they arrived at the site of the wedding and the Rav was nowhere to be seen. There were all kinds of speculation, but there was nothing to do other than to proceed with the wedding without him. The sad group returned to Yanov without the Rav and in fact, without a clue of what might have happened to him.

Meanwhile, the Rav was wandering around in the depths of the forest unable to find a way out. He had unwittingly lost his way in the forest. As hours became days the Rav became more despondent and disoriented. He lost track of time and set about preparing for Shabbat a day early.

Finally, with G-d's help, the Rav found his way home and joined his jubilant family which had begun to fear the worst. When Thursday arrived the Rav busily set about preparing for Shabbat. When his family explained that it was Thursday and not Friday, he argued hotly that they were all mistaken. They tried patiently to explain that in the course of his wanderings he had somehow lost a day in his reckoning, but he just became more and more infuriated. His family invited many acquaintances to try to convince the Rav, but to no avail. What could they do, other than to allow him to celebrate the holy Shabbat on Friday. He celebrated with all the traditional foods and prayed the Shabbat prayers, and when Shabbat actually arrived he donned weekday garb and set about his usual weekday activities while his horrified family helplessly looked on.

Many weeks passed while he persisted in his mistaken behavior in spite of the steady stream of visitors all endeavoring to convince him otherwise. One day word of his strange fixation reached his childhood friend, Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg. Reb Shmelke set off at once for Yanov, making sure that he would arrive on Thursday. The Rav was thrilled to see him, and hastened to invite him for Shabbat. Reb Shmelke accepted enthusiastically, eager to implement the plan he had devised.

Reb Shmelke quietly gathered the Rav's family and outlined his plan to them. Needless to say they were anxious to do anything to bring the Rav back to reason, and so, in addition to the usual bountiful Shabbat fare, they also prepared some bottles of strong aged wine and set them on the table. The masquerade was carried out as the whole family and their many guests gathered to celebrate a festive Shabbat meal. After each delicious course Reb Shmelke poured a generous cup of old wine into the Rav's cup. Now, this was a heavy, red wine known to

induce a deep slumber in the drinker, and Reb Shmelke didn't stint on the "L'chaims." Toward the end of the meal, the Rav fell into a deep sleep. Reb Shmelke sat back and relaxed with his pipe, telling his fellow diners that they could now return to their normal activities without worry, for the situation was under control. He took a soft cushion and placed it under the head of the sleeping man and settled down to guard the Rav throughout the night and into the following day.

On the next night, which was truly the Shabbat, the same guests returned and sat down at the table to enjoy the real Shabbat repast. When it was time to say the Blessings After the Meal, Reb Shmelke gently roused the Rav, who sat up and remarked, "It seems as if I've been sleeping for a long time." He then joined in saying the prayers and everything continued in the usual manner through to the conclusion of the Shabbat. The family and townspeople were overcome with happiness at the result of Reb Shmelke's visit and thanked him profusely. For his part, Reb Shmelke made them promise that they would never reveal the true happenings of that Shabbat.

The Rav never had an inkling of what had transpired. In fact, he was very proud that everyone else had come to the enlightened conclusion that his calculations had been correct. He was however, careful to credit his old friend Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg for helping lead his mistaken congregants and family to the right conclusion, saying, "Thanks to my friend from Nikolsburg, they were able to comprehend the truth. Isn't it amazing how impossibly stubborn some people can be!"

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Jacob lives the final 17 years of his life in Egypt. Before his passing, he asks Joseph to take an oath that he will bury him in the Holy Land. He blesses Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, elevating them to the status of his own sons as progenitors of tribes within the nation of Israel.

The patriarch desires to reveal the end of days to his children, but is prevented from doing so.

Jacob blesses his sons, assigning to each his role as a tribe: Judah will produce leaders, legislators and kings; priests will come from Levi, scholars from Issachar, seafarers from Zebulun, schoolteachers from Simeon, soldiers from Gad, judges from Dan, olive-growers from Asher, and so on. Reuben is rebuked for "confusing his father's marriage bed"; Simeon and Levi, for the massacre of Shechem and the plot against Joseph. Naphtali is granted the swiftness of a deer, Benjamin the ferociousness of a wolf, and Joseph is blessed with beauty and fertility.

A large funeral procession consisting of Jacob's descendants, Pharaoh's ministers, the leading citizens of Egypt and the Egyptian cavalry accompanies Jacob on his final journey to the Holy Land, where he is buried in the Machpelah Cave in Hebron.

Joseph, too, dies in Egypt, at the age of 110. He, too, instructs that his bones be taken out of Egypt and buried in the Holy Land, but this would come to pass only with the Israelites' exodus from Egypt many years later. Before his passing, Joseph conveys to the Children of Israel the testament from which they will draw their hope and faith in the difficult years to come: "G-d will surely remember you, and bring you up out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 13-14 January	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:27	9:30
Adelaide	8:14	9:15
Brisbane	6:30	7:26
Darwin	7:01	7:53
Gold Coast	6:29	7:26
Perth	7:08	8:07
Sydney	7:51	8:52
Canberra	8:03	9:05
Launceston	8:28	9:35
Auckland	8:25	9:27
Wellington	8:37	9:44
Hobart	8:32	9:41
Byron Bay	7:30	8:27

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYECHI SHABBOS CHAZAK • 15 TEVES • 13 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8.28 PM
	MINCHA:	8.35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9.00 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.49 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9.30 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.30 PM
	MAARIV:	9.25 PM