

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYECHI · 16 TEVET 5773 - DEC. 29, 2012 · VOL. 20 NO. 12

PARSHA INSIGHTS

On the 27th of Kislev, our beloved Rosh HaYeshiva,
Rav **MENDEL WEINBACH**, zatzal,
passed from this world.

*I heard the following story from him several times. As I read it again
I can still hear his voice recounting it with his customary passion...*

L'CHAIM! TO LIVES!

"And Yaakov lived..." (47:28)

If ever there was a Jew who was the epitome of empathy, it was Reb Baruch of Mezebitsch, the grandson of the saintly Baal Shem Tov. Reb Baruch took up the burden of his fellow man as though it were his own. When news of trouble or sorrow reached his ears, his face would turn pale, his shoulders would droop and his eyes would fill with tears.

To any unknowing observer Reb Baruch seemed as though the tragedy had actually struck him. It was just as well then that Reb Baruch had a personal assistant whose spirit was as light as a balloon. Reb Herschele Ostropoler was a man who radiated optimism like a summer's day. His light touch and sense of humor raised the Rebbe's spirits and stopped him from becoming overly grieved by this world.

Once it happened that a terrible plague hit the city of Mezebitsch. The plague was swift and incurable. With monotonous regularity, the unmistakable sounds of a horse-drawn hearse would pass the window of the Rebbe. He would look up and see the cortege pass his window and collapse into uncontrollable tears. "Reb Herschele! Yidden are dying! Yidden are dying!" After a week of the plague scything through the population of Mezebitsch, the Rebbe was in a state of clinical depression on the verge of breakdown.

Reb Herschele realized that drastic measures were called for. He knocked on the door of the Rebbe's study. A barely audible voice emerged from behind the door, "Come in." Reb Herschele opened the door, entered the room and announced with great joy:

"Rebbe! The plague is over! The plague is over!"

The Rebbe was hunched over his desk, his arms covering his head. Slowly he brought himself up to a sitting position. His eyes met Reb Herschele's. "The plague is over? The plague is over? It's really over?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Reb Herschele. His eyes wide and bright! "The plague is over."

Like the easing of the rain at the height of a storm, the Rebbe's countenance brightened the tiniest fraction.

"It's over," the Rebbe said more to himself than to Reb Herschele.

Silence filled the room like an hour glass. Then out of the silence, there came a sound. At first it was possible to dismiss its import, but with every second it became more inevitable. It was the sound of another funeral.

The Rebbe looked at Reb Herschele. Their eyes were locked together.

"Herschele..." said the Rebbe. "Herschele. You said the plague was over. I can hear another hearse on its way to the graveyard!"

"No, Rebbe. They're not taking to the graveyard anymore. They're bringing them *back*!"

The name of this week's Torah portion is *Vayechi* which means "And Yaakov lived..." You might think the title a bit ironic because it is in this week's portion that Yaakov dies. Similarly, Sarah, the mother of the Jewish People passes from this world in the weekly portion entitled "*The Life of Sarah*."

However limited your knowledge of Hebrew is, I'll bet there's one word you know if you ever raised a glass or two in a toast. "*L'Chaim!*" *L'chaim* is usually translated as "*To life*." More accurately it means "*To lives*."

The word for life in Hebrew is a plural noun. It's not by coincidence. There are two lives. The life we live in this world and the life that we live in the next world. This life is like a factory. A factory has no other purpose than to produce. This life has only one purpose. To produce. To produce the next life. The biggest mistake you can make in this life is to mistake the factory for the product.

The fact that the deaths of Yaakov and Sarah are found in Torah portions whose titles mention life teaches us a lesson. It teaches us that a righteous person is alive and well even in death.

Even when the hearse seems to be going to the graveyard it's really coming back from there.

Source: Based on a story heard from Rabbi Mendel Weinbach zt"l in the name of Rabbi Yosef Zehnwirth zt"l

PARSHA OVERVIEW

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov

summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d. Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Ephraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishet, the first of the five Books of the Torah. *Chazak!*

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

"I HAVE NO OTHER FATHER"

Among the many legends of how Jews braved all odds in order to reach Eretz Yisrael is one with a most important lesson.

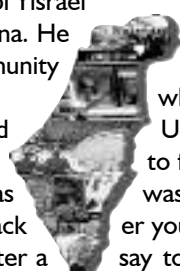
Rabbi Yeshaya Bardaky was the son-in-law of Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov, an outstanding disciple of the Gaon of Vilna. He eventually became the leader of the Parushim community in Yerushalayim made up of the Gaon's followers.

The ship on which he traveled to the Holy Land from Europe together with his two young children was wrecked by a storm and sank. No lifeboat was available so he told his children to climb on his back and he would make a desperate swim to safety. After a couple of hours of such strenuous swimming, he felt that he could no longer continue carrying the weight of both chil-

dren and asked one of them to let go.

When he tried to explain to this child why she had to let go, they both wept at what this implied. But, then the little girl cried out "But Abba, I have no other father!" Upon hearing these words Rabbi Yeshaya told her to hold on again and made a superhuman effort to reach shore where he collapsed in a faint.

Upon waking up he turned to his daughter and asked her to forever remember what she had said to him when she was on the brink of drowning. "Remember that whenever you are in trouble," he advised her, "just turn to G-d and say to Him what you said to me, that you have no other father except for me, and you will discover that you do have another Father Who can and will come to your rescue."



לע"נ
הרב חנא מנחם מנדל בן ר' יחזקאל שרגא זצ"ל
ת.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is kindness towards the dead called “chesed shel emet” — kindness of truth?
2. Give three reasons Yaakov didn’t want to be buried in Egypt.
3. How do you treat a “fox in his time” (i.e., a commoner who rules)?
4. “When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat...” Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?
5. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Efraim and Menashe?
6. What does *pillalti* mean?
7. What does “Shechem” mean as used in this week’s parsha? (two answers)
8. Which individual is called “the Emori”? Why? Give two reasons.
9. What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?
10. What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?
11. What congregation from Yaakov’s offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?
12. What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?
13. What does milk do to teeth?
14. Why is Yissachar like a “strong-boned donkey”?
15. With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?
16. In Yosef’s blessing Yaakov said, “They embittered him...” Who are “they”?
17. Which descendants of Binyamin “will divide the spoils in the evening”?
18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?
19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?
20. Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 47:29 - Because the giver expects no reward from the recipient.
2. 47:29 - a) Egypt’s ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside Israel will suffer; c) So the Egyptians wouldn’t make him into an idol.
3. 47:31 - Bow to him.
4. 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef’s mother, Rachel, in the *Ma’arat HaMachpela*.
5. 48:8 - The *Shechina* departed from him.
6. 48:11 - “I thought.”
7. 48:22 - a) The actual city of Shechem; b) A portion.
8. 48:22 - Esav. a) He acted like an Emorite; b) He trapped his father with words (*imrei pi*).
9. 49:1 - When *mashiach* will come.
10. 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.
11. 49:6 - Korach and his congregation.
12. 49:8 - He drew back. He was afraid that Yaakov would rebuke him for the incident with Tamar.
13. 49:12 - It makes them white.
14. 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.
15. 49:20 - Oil-rich land.
16. 49:23 - Yosef’s brothers, Potifar and his wife.
17. 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.
18. 50:5 - From Esav.
19. 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh’s ignorance of Hebrew.
20. 50:13 - Levi, because he would carry the *aron* (holy ark). Yosef, because he was a king.

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SHABBAT 86 - 92

“We Jews relate to G-d with perfect faith and King Shlomo says about us (Mishlei 11:3), ‘The faith of the righteous is their comfort’.”

This is how the Sage Rava responded to the gentile heckler who claimed that when Jews accepted the Torah without knowing its demands they were guilty of “putting their mouths before their ears.” He taunted Rava that he was guilty of the same lack of caution as evidenced by the Sage’s intense concentration in studying Torah which made him oblivious to the fact that he was sitting on his hands and forcing blood to his fingertips.

Rava’s reply was that neither he nor his ancestors were impulsive but that they had such faith in G-d that they were certain that He would never require of them anything they were not capable of fulfilling.

• Shabbat 88b

“They who suffer shame and do not shame others, who bear insult and do not respond, who perform mitzvot with love and rejoice in their suffering – about them it is written ‘Those who love G-d are like the sun going forth with all its power’ (Shoftim 5:31).”

The *beraita* cites these closing words of the Prophetess Devorah following the victory over the Canaanites. The message that the Sages wish to convey is that one should not take insults to heart and that one should accept any suffering as a gift from G-d to atone for his sins.

• Shabbat 88b

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

COMFORTING A WIDOWER

The great Rosh Hayeshiva of the Ponovez Yeshiva, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, *zatzal*, was once informed that a particular Jew who had lost his wife was plunged into a deep depression. In his grief he ceased to eat, speak or function.

Rabbi Shach immediately went to visit him but there was no response when he knocked on the door. Seeing that the door was not locked he went inside and took a seat next to the couch upon which lay the poor fellow. Placing his hand on the fellow’s shoulder he said to him:

“I understand you so well. I too am a widower and I also felt as if my world had come to an end. We share the same grief, for whoever is without a wife, say our Sages, is without simcha. You need simcha and I need simcha.”

A spark of life was suddenly visible in the eyes of the lis-

tener and Rabbi Shach continued:

“I have an idea of how we can help each other. I know how to prepare a good *cholent* for the Shabbat meal. I will prepare such a *cholent* on Erev Shabbat and send it to you here. On Shabbat I will come to your home. We will eat together, sing *zemirot* together and give strength to each other.”

For the first time a smile came to the lips of his listener who gently protested that there was no way for him to thus impose on the Rosh Hayeshiva.

“If so,” concluded Rabbi Shach as he departed, “please think of some other plan. In any case I will visit you again tomorrow because I gain strength from being together with you.”

ESAU COMPLEX

From: Gabe

*Dear Rabbi,
I don't understand why Jacob was allowed to deceive Isaac to get the blessing that belonged to Esau, and why he was allowed to take that blessing. Furthermore, what was he doing dressing up as Esau, which certainly seems to indicate that he knew he was doing something wrong? If receiving the blessing was justified, why didn't he just explain that to Isaac and get the blessing with his consent?*

Dear Gabe,

Jacob's seeming "Esau complex" is one of the more complex topics in the Torah, so I empathize fully with your question. But allow me to present only some of many possible explanations:

First of all, while Esau had the potential to be a very righteous person, he wantonly chose a path of wickedness, and cunningly deceived Isaac into thinking he was the person that his father wanted him to be, and that he could have become if he wanted. But instead, according to traditional sources, he was a glutton, a murderer and an adulterer who "trapped his father with his mouth" by presenting himself as if he meticulously observed Isaac's ways.

This is why Isaac thought to bestow the blessing upon Esau. But Rebecca, exemplifying what the Sages describe as a woman's keen judgment of character, saw the truth about her wicked son Esau. She therefore understood how dangerous it would be to have such blessing in the "hands of Esau", and sought to secure the blessing for Jacob, who deserved it and would use it properly.

According to one explanation, this blessing was earmarked for the first-born, so that when Esau gluttonously

despised the birthright and sold it to Jacob, the right to the blessing was transferred to Jacob. Jacob didn't tell Isaac of the sale because he did not want to make Esau look bad, nor did he want to hurt his father over Esau's despising of the birthright. But Esau knew that he forfeited the blessing and that it really belonged to Jacob, and yet he continued to deceive his father and went along with his plan to bless him. So it was not Jacob that was deceiving his father to get Esau's blessing, but rather Esau's deceiving him to get Jacob's.

So why didn't Rebecca or Jacob intervene by revealing this directly to Isaac; why did they contrive a deception of their own? Because at that point, time was of the essence, and if they had revealed the truth of Esau's ongoing deception of Isaac, he, convinced of Esau's sincerity, clearly would have consulted with him about their accusations. At that point, Esau would very likely have murdered Jacob, which he ultimately intended to do, and which was the reason Jacob fled to Rebecca's family. So Jacob was justified in protecting himself through cunning that which Esau intended to steal from him through cunning.

According to another explanation, the blessing was not necessarily earmarked for the first-born, but rather it was intended by Isaac to be for Esau. But this was because, even in Isaac's understanding of the two brothers, Esau was more interested in this-worldly matters while Jacob was focused more on spirituality. Accordingly, Isaac intended to give Esau the blessing for material bounty in order that he would help support Jacob's Torah study, which would in turn benefit Esau as well. He thought that the brothers would maintain this mutually-beneficial relationship, as did later the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun. Rebecca knew that that was the farthest thing from Esau's mind, but rather he would take the blessing for himself and not share any of it with Jacob, effectively strangling the life-line of Torah. She therefore had Jacob "dress-up" as Esau, meaning she equipped him to be involved in this-worldly pursuits, in order to receive material blessing for the purpose of supporting and studying Torah.

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“We have to be like the Jewish people,” was Nachman’s Christian grandfather’s motto. When Nachman was 10, his Grandpa made his own congregation of non-Jews who wished to “be like the Jews.” Using available books and the Internet, the community was able to keep halacha, holidays, and even acquired *tefillin* and *tzitzit*.



Nachman’s family had discovered their name on a list of known Spanish Maranos, so the rituals were deeply felt. When the family began working in an Orthodox Jewish bakery the transition to conversion was inevitable. Nachman began praying at 6:00 am with the community and was already far ahead in knowledge and practice. The Rabbi noticed the family’s honesty and dedication, and today they are more than *like* the Jews. His two brothers hope to follow him to Yeshiva at Ohr Somayach and the family has plans to make *aliyah* to Israel. Their Grandpa passed away before he completed his conversion, but there is no doubt that he lives on through his Yiddisha-family.

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

BUG IN THE BOTTLE

Question:

A fellow shopping in a supermarket noticed a bug crawling in a bottle of drink on one of the shelves. He took down the bottle, paid for it at the counter, and wrote a letter to the company which produced the drink expecting that he would be compensated with two cartons of the beverage. Before sending the letter he had second thoughts about profiting in this manner. What is the right thing to do?

Answer:

On the one hand he would be doing a public service by reporting this to the company and thus causing it to be more careful in its production. But this should be his only motiva-

tion, not the desire to win some free drinks for himself.

The advice given by a rabbi to the fellow who found the bug was to indeed send that letter to the company in order to benefit the public, but to donate the bottles he receives to some charitable organization. This will prove that his motive is truly altruistic and not exploitation for personal gain.

It should be noted that this advice was given in regard to someone who purchased the bottle only for the purpose of reporting the company’s oversight. In the case of someone’s unsuspectingly purchasing a product only to find it defective, it may very well be that whatever gesture is made by the company is coming to him as compensation for his anxiety.

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