

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYHI

Haftarah: Melachim I 2:1-12

JANUARY 13-14, 2017 16 TEBET 5777

DEDICATION: In memory of Rosa bat Victoria

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Editors Notes - Shema Yisrael

As I write this, it's Sunday morning the 10th of Tevet and I am sitting in Aventura. We learned of and saw the graphic video of a sadistic terrorist attack in Jerusalem where a heartless murderer drove a truck into a group of young soldiers boarding a bus at Armon HaNetziv in the East Talpiot neighborhood. One pass wasn't enough for this cruel butcher who turned to run over his victims again and was only stopped when he was shot dead. Our hearts go out to the injured, praying that Hashem will grant them a refuah shelemah and to the families of the innocent dead, may Hashem bring them nechama and avenge our loss.

This tragedy sits atop the heartbreaking and senseless murder which took place down the road at the Fort Lauderdale airport on Friday when an ex-soldier arriving on a flight took his checked luggage into the bathroom and in a senseless act, came out firing his gun killing five and injuring more. I was unaware of the situation when my mother in law called me a few moments after one to find out if I was OK. She knew I was arriving into Fort Lauderdale Friday morning. Getting ready for Synagogue we watched the situation at the airport in horror wondering who we knew and praying for all those involved.

As we completed Friday night prayers, our friend Danny Massry spoke to the nearly full congregation

reminding them that 70,000 people fly through Fort Lauderdale airport each day and odds are each of us in the synagogue have walked the same steps as those who were so tragically shot earlier that day. He asked me to say a prayer.

After asking that the Al-mighty to send refuah to the injured, to comfort the mourners and to give strength to the first responders, the police and those in the airport, I noted that there were thousands of people stranded on the tarmac. There were nine Jet Blue flights with passengers aboard sitting near the runways and countless other flights from other airlines. Thousands were sheltering in place throughout the airport and I was sure that every one of us would know someone stranded that day. I remarked that only hours earlier I walked through terminal three and met my Uber driver between terminals two and three. Each one of us had to think, "There but for the grace of G-d, go I".

That thought often triggers a reaction of thankfulness. When we imagine what we might lose, we suddenly appreciate what we have and acknowledge Hashem for his benevolence.

This week we read of the passing of Jacob. He gathers his sons around him wishing to reveal to them what will occur at the end of days when suddenly his prophetic vision is withdrawn. The midrash and the Talmud elaborate suggesting that Jacob wonders if perhaps any of his children have a quarrel with Hashem. If the 12 are not complete, he is not complete. They answer in unison, Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeynu, Hashem Echad. Just as you father have no quarrel, we have no quarrel. Hashem is our one and only G-d to all of us. To which Yaakov responds Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto LeOlam Va'ed.

Although the text of the Shema will not appear in the Torah until Moses gives his speech in the book of Devarim, the midrash and Talmud attribute it being said here in this week's portion of Vayechi by the sons of Yaakov and previously in last week's portion of Vayigash by Jacob himself.

The Torah tells us, "Yosef harnessed his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and he appeared before him, he fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck continually". The assumption from the way the verse reads is that we begin with Yosef and each time we see the word he, we assume he refers to Joseph.

Ramban doesn't agree. He states that "he fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck", both refer to Jacob. He states, "And I will bring you a proof that it was Yaakov who cried and not Yosef. It is a well-known phenomenon. Who is more likely to cry? The aged father who finds his son alive after despairing and mourning for him, or the young son who rules?"

Rashi though prefers a simple reading of the text. The he, always refers to Joseph. As such it was Joseph who after so many years is crying. (I believe that in all of Genesis, it may be that only three people are said to cry, Rachel and her two sons Joseph and Benjamin). Rashi though quoting the midrash in Bereshit Rabbah continues his thought explaining that Yosef cried upon his father's shoulder, but Yaakov did not cry upon Yosef's. Rashi explains that instead Yaakov recited Shema.

I don't know anyone who after reading this for the first time, and many of us for the 100th time have not stopped and asked, what and why? Couldn't Jacob have a chosen a moment earlier to recite Shema or a moment later? If this was the time to say it, why didn't Joseph also stop to say it? The Rabbis give a number of reasons, the strongest being that Jacob was channeling his emotion at finally seeing his son alive, into his love for G-d so at that moment he took the opportunity to say Shema.

I would like you to consider another possibility. I would like you to consider that in this case the recitation of Shema was in many ways a prayer of thanksgiving at seeing his son Joseph, who Jacob considered dead these past 22 years, still alive.

In Parshat Vayeseh, Jacob took "from the rocks of the place". Rav Yehuda teaches in the Midrash that Yaakov took 12 stones, symbolic of the Al-mighty's decree that the Jewish people would be founded based on a family consisting of 12 Tribes. Jacob said to himself, "My grandfather Abraham was not able to fulfill this decree; my father Isaac was not able to fulfill this decree. If these 12 stones that I am placing under my head will merge into a single stone, I will take it as a Divine Sign that I will be able to fulfill this decree." In the morning, when Jacob saw that the 12 stones had indeed merged into one, he knew that he would be the progenitor of a single nation emerging from a family of 12 sons.

With the disappearance and possible death of Joseph, Jacob went into a depression, because with the loss of his son, the prophecy would not be complete and he, Jacob would have failed.

Twenty two years after entering a state of mourning Jacob is told that Joseph is alive. Joseph sends a

message to his father reminding him that he still recalled their last lesson and they were connected. Still Jacob needed to see for himself.

Jacobs descends to Egypt. A man dressed in royal garb comes to meet him. The man is veiled in the custom of Egyptian nobility with only his eyes exposed. He approaches Jacob and removes his veil. Jacob sees that it is true, his son Joseph is alive and knows immediately that Joseph has held strong to his faith and truly deserves the title Yosef HaSadik, Joseph the righteous one. A prophetic spirit rests on Jacob at that moment and he turns to Hashem to thank Him. Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeynu, Hashem Echad. One of the mediations one can have on this final word Echad is imagining the aleph, the one as Jacob. He can then see the Chet as eight and the Daled as four totaling twelve. These are the 12 Shevatim, his 12 sons, the 12 tribes. At this moment that word Echad finally is real as his 12 sons are back together and with that the prophecy returns. Echad; one plus twelve, Jacob and his sons in unity. Given the tragedy all around us, in Israel and here in the States, we must reflect and pray for those in need and appreciate what we have been given. We must learn to take nothing for granted because life is so fleeting. We need to hug our parents, our spouses, our kids and our grandkids.

And when we say Echad, picture the one father with his twelve sons and the unity of the Jewish people with Hashem and pray for the unity of your own family and friends and for a world where tragedy will be forgotten and the sadness and the mourning of our fast days will be replaced with the voice of joy and happiness. Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha

Va'yechi- Yaacov blesses his children before his death

- 1- Yaacov, feeling his days are near an end, asks Yosef to bury him in Eretz Israel
- 2- Yaacov blesses Efrayim and Menashe - hamalach ha'goel oti...
- 3- Yaacov blesses Efrayim and Menashe - yesimcha Elokim ke'efraim oomenashe...
- 4- Yaacov blesses / rebukes Reuben, Shimon and Levi. Yaacov blesses Yehuda w/ kingship, Zebulun w/ business success, Yisachar w/ Torah, and Dan w/ strength in battle.
- 5- Yaacov blesses Gad w/ victory in war, Asher with good land, Naftali w/ quickness and Yosef w/ grace
- 6- Yaacov blesses Binyamin w/ strength in battle and the beit ha'mikdash in his land. Yaacov dies. Benei Israel goes to bury Yaacov in Kenaan
- 7- Yosef tells his brothers that Hashem will redeem them. Yosef dies

Parashat Va'yechi largely discusses the blessings Yaacov gives to his children before his death. The blessings are difficult to understand from a simple reading of the pesookim and thus we sought to explain the blessings based on the commentary of Rashi. Below is a short summary of each blessing followed below by a more in-depth word for word explanation.

Reuben – Rebuke for moving the bed, not getting the kehuna or malchoot
 Shimon & Levi – Rebuke for Yosef and for destroying Shechem, You will be separated
 Yehuda – Kingship (David Ha'melech)
 Zevulun – Wealth (success in import /export business) and good land
 Yissachar – Yoke (Ol) Torah (you will teach Torah to others)
 Dan – Strength in Battle (Shimshon)
 Gad – Victory in war without casualties
 Asher – Good Land/Wealth (Olives)
 Naftali – Quickness (3 explanations)
 Yosef - Chen or a double inheritance
 Binyamin – Strength in Battle (Shaul) or Beit Ha'mikdash

Reuben – Rebuke for moving the bed, Not getting the kehuna or malchoot

Reuben bechori ata, you are my bechor, kochi ve'reshit oni, you came from my first drop of seed, yete se'et ve'yete oz, you were supposed to have the kehuna (which is called se'et) and you were supposed to have oz, the kingship (but since you sinned, the kehuna was given to Levi and the malchoot was given to Yehuda).

Pachaz ka'mayim al totar, you are like the rushing of water, kiy alita mishkebey abicha, in that you rushed to move my bed, az hilalta yesooiy alah, then you desecrated the shechina that was on my bed.

Shimon and Levi – Rebuke for Yosef and destroying Shechem, You will be separated

Shimon ve'levi achim, Shimon and Levi, you are brothers (brothers in the aspect that you acted together to fight Shechem and that you acted together to sell Yosef, as one told the other "Here comes the dreamer, let us go and kill him") keley hamas mechoretehem, a stolen craft are your weapons (stolen in the aspect that weapons and killing are a craft of Esav and they used it to fight Shechem). Or alternatively, mecherotehem is referring to the place where they lived and the pasook is saying they conducted themselves with stolen weapons in the place where they lived (Oonkeloos).

Be'sodam al tabo nafshiy be'kahalam al tached kevodi, in your conspiracy, don't include my name (by

the sins of Zimri from the tribe of Shimon and Korach from the tribe of Levi, Yaacov is saying not to include his name. As we see there, the pesookim do not refer to Zimri and Korach as descendants of Yaacov and rather the Torah only traces their lineage back to their respective tribes. And the reason Yaacov doesn't want to be associated with them is, ki be'apam hargoo ish, because in their rage they killed the people of Shechem, oobirsonam ikroo shor, and their desire was to uproot the shor which is Yosef. Aroor apam kiy oz ve'evratam kiy kashata, cursed is your anger because it is strong. Achalakam be'yaacov ve'afisam be'Yisrael, I will separate and disperse Shimon and Levi from each other (i.e., Shimon will be counted among the tribes, but the Leviim will be counted separately). Or alternatively, achalakam be'yaacov is referring to Shimon, saying that the people of Shimon will be divided throughout the tribes of Yaacov (they will be dispersed among klal Israel), and ve'afisam be'Yisrael, is referring to Levi who will also be spread out among klal Israel. The tribe of Shimon will be scribes and teachers, and the Leviim will get teruma and maaser so, as a result of the business each is in, both will be forced to spread their tribes throughout klal Israel to get their parnasa. So either Shimon and Levi will be separated from each other or they will be separated in general, spread among the rest of Benei Israel.

Yehuda – Kingship (David ha'melech)

Yehuda ata, Yehuda, you are different from your brothers that I just rebuked, yodoocha achecha, your brothers will praise you, yadcha be'oref oybecha, your hand will be on the neck of your enemy (i.e., in the time of David Ha'melech, who is from the tribe of Yehuda, David will chase away his enemies, and all that will be seen is the back of their necks as they will be running away). Yishtachavu lecha benei imecha, the children of your father will bow down to you. Gur Aryeh Yehuda, Yehuda will be like a gur (a young lion) and like an aryeh (an old lion). This is referring to David Hamelech, from the tribe of Yehuda, who will be like a young lion when he takes Benei Israel out to war (while Shaul is still king) and then, when he is crowned as king, will be like an old lion. Miteref, from this that I, Yaacov, accused you tarof toraf Yosef, beni alita, my son you have come up and withdrew yourself from this accusation (because you suggested instead to sell Yosef). Or alternatively, miteref is referring to, Tamar who was to be ripped apart for being accused of zenoot, beni alita, my son you have come up and saved her as you said "sadka mimeni." Kara rabatz ke'aryeh ve'ke'labi, therefore you will be zocheh to crouch and lie like an aryeh, a male lion, and a labi, a female lion (since you saved Yosef a male and Tamar a female therefore he was zocheh to lie like an aryeh and labi),

miy yekimenu, no one will be able come up against you.

Lo yasoor shebet me'yehuda, the rulership will never leave from the tribe of Yehuda (even after David Ha'melech the rulership with never leave), oomehokek miben raglav, and lawgivers will not be removed from between his legs (i.e., the Nesiim of Eretz Israel will be from the tribe of Yehuda), and yavo shilo, until the time of mashiach (which is referred to as "shilo"). Ve'lo yikhat amim, and to him nations will gather.

Osriy la'gefen iyro, you will tie to a grapevine your donkey (i.e., you will have so many grapes you will be able to fill up your donkey from one grapevine), ve'la'soreka benei atono, so many grapes that from one branch you will be able to fill up your female donkey, kibes ba'yayin leboosho, and so many grapes that you will be able to wash your clothing in wine, oobedam anavim sooto, and your garments in the blood of grapes. (Rashi also brings down 2 other explanations of this pasook from Oonkeloos, where he learns the pasook is referring to the Jews or sadikim in Yerushalayim in the times of the mashiach).

Hachlili enayim me'yayin, your eyes will be red from the abundance of wine, oolaben shinayim me'chalab, and your teeth will be white from the abundance of milk (Rashi also brings other explanations).

Zevulun – Wealth (success in import / export business) and good land

Zevulun lechof Yamim Ishkon, Zevulun will live by the sea shores, ve'hu lechof aniot, and be found by the ship's harbor (doing business with the boats that will bring in merchandise), ve'yarkato al Sidon, and his border will reach until Sidon (i.e., he will receive a good portion of land).

Yissachar – Ol Torah (you will teach torah to others)
Yissachar hamor garem, Yissachar will be like a strong-boned donkey, robetz ben ha'mishpatayim, who does not sleep by day nor by night and is always traveling from city to city, only resting between the borders. Just like the strong-boned donkey that carries a heavy load, Yissachar will carry the heavy load of Torah, and just like the donkey that does not sleep by day or by night so too the talmidey hachamim of Yissachar will not be sleeping (only sleeping by the borders of the land teaching Torah to the masses).

Va'yar menucha ki tov, and he saw that his resting place was good, ve'et ha'aretz kiy na'ema, and that his land was pleasant (i.e., he had good land to bring forth fruit), va'yet shichmo lisbol, and he lowered his shoulder to bear the load (of Torah). Or alternatively, to bear the wars and fight against other nations.

Va'yehi le'mas oved, according to the explanation

that he will lower his shoulder to carry the yoke of Torah then Va'yehi le'mas oved will mean that he will be in servitude to Klal Yisroel to give rulings on questions and set up calendars. According to the explanation that he will lower his shoulder to wage wars then Va'yehi le'mas oved will mean that the ones that they capture will be servants.

Dan – Strength in Battle (Shimshon)

Dan Yadin amo, Dan will take revenge for his nation (i.e., from Dan will come Shimshon who will take revenge on the Pelishtim), ke'achad shivtey Israel, he will take revenge for all of klal Israel together. Or, alternatively, he will take revenge like the me'yuchad of shivtey Israel, which is referring to David Ha'melech (just like David Ha'melech took revenge against the nations, so too will Shimshon take revenge on the Pelishtim).

Yehi Dan nachash aley derech shefifon aley orach, Dan will be like a snake on the path, ha'noshech ikvey soos va'yipol rochbo achor, who bites the heel of a horse and the rider falls backwards (i.e., just like the snake knocks the rider off the horse without touching the rider, so will Shimshon destroy the Pelishtim without touching them. Shimshon grabbed a hold of the pillars of the house pushing them apart; the building collapsed and all the people of the roof fell and died).

Liyshoo'atech kiviti Hashem

Gad – Victory in war w/o casualties

Gad gadood yegudenu, troops will troop forth from the tribe of Gad over the Jordan River to fight with the rest of Benei Israel and capture the land of Israel (Gad's land was outside of Israel but they still will go to fight). Ve'hu yagood akev, and the troops will troop back on the same path they came (meaning everyone who left to war will return and no one will die).

Asher – Good land / Wealth (Olives)

Me'asher shemena lachmo, Asher's food will be rich and fatty (because his land will have a lot of olives and as a result they will have a lot of oil from the olives), ve'hu iten ma'adaney melech, and he will provide delicacies for the king.

Naftali – Quickness (3 explanations)

Naftali ayala sheloocha ha'noten imrey shafer, Naftali will be quick like a deer. Rashi brings three explanations.

1- Wealth- Your land will be quick to ripen its fruit as quickly as a deer that is sent to run (i.e., the fruits of Genotar).

2- Zerizoot in battle- When you will fight against Sisra you will be like a deer sent to run. You will run quickly to fight against them.

3- Quick to get the contract- You will be quick to run down to Misrayim to get the contract that proves that Esav sold his share in Ma'arat Hamachpela to Yaacov (when Yaacov died, Esav was preventing the brothers from burying Yaacov in Maarat Ha'machpela claiming this plot was rightfully his).

Yosef – “Chen,” or a double inheritance

Ben porat Yosef ben porat aleh ayin banot saada aley shor. Rashi brings 3 explanations.

1- Grace- “Porat” means grace. And “shor” is a wall. Yosef is a son who has grace. And thus the daughters of Misrayim climb on the walls to see his beauty.

2- Fruitfulness- “Porat” means fruitful. A fruitful son is Yosef (since his tribe was divided into two so his inheritance was fruitful and multiplied).

3- Big- “Porat” means big. A son who made himself big over the eyes of Esav is Yosef (Yosef stood in front to block Rachel when Yaacov met up with Esav).

Binyamin – Strength in Battle (Shaul) or Beit ha'mikdash

Binyamin ze'ev yitraf, Binyamin will be like a wolf that will rip apart his prey (Pilegish by Giva and also by Shaul ha'melech who will destroy his enemies like a wolf); Baboker, in the morning (in the early stages of klal Israel when Shaul, who is a descendant of Binyamin, will become melech), Yochal ahd, he will consume and eat the spoils of his enemies. Ve'la'erev, and in the evening (i.e., in the dark stages of klal Israel, by galoot babel) yehalek shalal, Mordechi and Esther, who are descendants of Binyamin, will divide the spoils of Haman. (Oonkeloos learns differently that the pasook is referring to the Beit Hamikdash that will be built in the portion of Binyamin.)

The above was put together by Nathan Dweck based on the explanation provided in the CD “Chumash with Rashi” by Rabbi Rosenberg

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

“A son of grace is Joseph, a son of grace to the eye, girls stepped up to gaze.” (Beresheet 49:22)

The Torah describes Yosef as an extremely handsome, young man. Rashi explains: “The girls of Egypt would step along the wall to gaze at Yosef's beauty.” However, the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni adds an important point: “He didn't lift his eyes to one of them, and he didn't have any impure thoughts with any of them, and therefore he merited to inherit two worlds.” Yosef was pure – no looks, no thoughts.

When Rabbi Obadiah Yosef's wife, Margalit, passed away, the Rabbi received many visitors. Amongst them was Rabbi Elazar Abuhatzera zt"l. He asked the Rabbi what his merit was that all of his sons were Torah scholars and sadikim. He added that it's well known that gifts don't come down from heaven for no reason. A person must have done something to get this reward, so please reveal what it was.

The Rabbi answered with his usual humility, “I don't know. Hashem just gave me a gift. Hashem just gave me!”

But Rabbi Elazar continued, “If it's because of non-stop learning of Torah, there are others also. If it's because of helping many to return to religion, there are others also. If so, what's the secret?” But Harav Obadiah just gave the same answer.

Finally, Rabbi Elazar said, “I'm not budging from here until you tell me the secret!”

When Rav Obadiah saw that he wasn't able to shake him off, he explained, “As you know, a few decades ago I served on the Bet Din. We had many cases of applications for divorces. Sometimes the women would come dressed improperly. As judges, we were required to try to bring about reconciliation, and we would have to talk to them and investigate the case. However, I was careful with this problem and, Baruch Hashem, I had the merit and I was able never to lift my eyes to look at them. I never studied them to know to whom I was talking to. Rather, I would always investigate their words with my eyes downward, to the floor.” Rabbi Reuven Semah

“And Ya'akob saw the wagons that Yosef sent him.” (Beresheet 45:27)

Rashi tells us that Yosef sent his father, Ya'akob, a sign that he still remembers the Torah that he was taught, and he reminded Ya'akob of the last subject they had learned together. When Ya'akob saw that, he knew that his son was truly alive in a spiritual sense, and he rejoiced! Similarly, when Ya'akob sent his son, Yehudah, to Egypt before the whole family, he instructed him to establish a Torah academy so that they could study Torah in Egypt. We see from here how important the Torah was to our forefathers. Although we only read of their deeds and their character in the perashah, the Midrash is teaching us how pivotal the study of Torah was to them. They were engaged in it constantly, and this is what kept them alive. Ya'akob mourned very deeply for his son for twenty-two years, yet the only thing that kept him strong was Torah study. Yosef was in a very difficult position for many years in Egypt, spending twelve years in jail, yet his faith and trust never wavered because he was constantly reviewing the Torah he learned.

This should be an inspiration for us to strengthen our Torah learning, especially when the going gets tough. The more we are connected to Hashem through Torah study, the more we can endure all of life's challenges. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Open Lines

Did you ever consider that most creatures leave the nest soon after birth, yet human beings don't mature enough to leave home until almost twenty years of age? How come Hashem made it work that way?

The answer is that Hashem wants parents to have ample time to transmit the proper values for good living and spiritual success to their children before the children leave to start life on their own. We, who want to give our offspring a solid foundation to withstand the challenges of the non-religious world in which we live, should take advantage of the system Hashem has devised to mankind in regard to child rearing.

Most books on the subject give two basic methods of teaching values: "tell them" and "show them." Some parents are good at teaching by example, and others have stronger explaining abilities, but most would admit they could use help in improving their communication skills. Let's face it: our generations suffer from a wide "generation gap."

What really works is a two-way conversation. Many adults assume that their experience and wisdom gives them the right to lecture their "pupils." Most experts, however, will tell you that the secret to a good lesson is: listen, listen, and then listen some more! Discover your child!

Another good technique is to reserve your comments for last. Let your son or daughter reveal doubts, concerns, and emotional reactions to the subject under discussion. Treat every comment – even childish or foolish ones – with respect. That will keep the lines of communication open for the next time you get together.

When you feel you have something important to teach your children, consider what the best method of communicating your experience may be. Then start a two-way conversation. Your open-minded approach will change the way your talks are listened to from here on in. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Life After Death

Parashat Vayehi begins with Yaakob Abinu summoning Yosef and asking, "Please do not bury me in Egypt." Yaakob had Yosef promise on oath that

he would bring his remains back to the Land of Israel, rather than bury him in Egypt.

Yaakob introduces his request by asking Yosef, "Do for me kindness and truth" (47:29). Rashi explains that when we perform an act of kindness for a deceased person, by fulfilling his wishes expressed before his passing or by showing him honor, it is considered "true kindness," wholehearted and sincere, because it is done without any anticipation of reward. When we do a favor for a living person, even if we act sincerely, in the back of our minds we think that the favor will one day be reciprocated. Even the noblest act of kindness is accompanied by a tinge of self-interest, as we expect the beneficiary to someday repay his debt of gratitude. But when we act kindly to a deceased person, who cannot repay the kindness, we perform "Hesed Ve'emet" – true and genuine kindness, which is purely altruistic without ulterior motives.

Several questions have been asked regarding Rashi's comment. First, the phrase "Hesed Ve'emet" appears earlier in the Torah (24:49), in reference to kindness performed for a living person. Eliezer, Abraham's servant, tells Ribka's family that they would be performing "Hesed Ve'emet" to Abraham by allowing their daughter to marry his son. How can Rashi claim that the term "Hesed Ve'emet" refers exclusively to kindness performed for a deceased person, if Eliezer used it in reference to kindness performed for Abraham while he was alive?

Secondly, is it really true that all kindness performed for a living person is partially insincere? When a wealthy person gives money to a destitute pauper, does he really expect any sort of payback?

To answer this question, we might explain Rashi's comment differently. When Rashi writes that kindness for the dead is "true kindness" because "he does not anticipate reward," he means not that the one doing the favor does not anticipate reward, but rather that the deceased does not anticipate reward.

Before a person leaves his world, he recognizes that his time for performing Misvot and earning eternal reward is coming to an end. It is told that the Vilna Gaon wept bitterly as he lay on his deathbed, and he explained that he wept because soon he would be no longer capable of earning reward in the next world. Misvot can be performed and merits can be earned only in this world, during a person's lifetime. However, there is one way a person's soul can experience elevation and have his share of the next world increased even after death – through the Misvot performed by his progeny. When a deceased

person's children or grandchildren perform Misvot as a result of the education and inspiration they received from the deceased, his soul is elevated. Although he can no longer earn merits by performing Misvot, he can earn merits through the Misvot performed by his offspring.

This concept is expressed by the Sages of the Talmud when they taught, "Bera Kar'a De'abu" – "A son is the father's leg." After a person passes on, he has no "legs," he is no longer capable of advancing, of achieving, of moving forward and elevating himself spiritually. A son, however, has the ability to advance his deceased father by performing Misvot. And thus the child is the deceased father's "leg." He is the one who moves the father forward and elevates him in the next world, when the father is no longer capable of advancing himself.

This is Rashi's intent in explaining the phrase "Hesed Ve'emet." When a person prepares to leave this world, he expects that his time for earning reward is now ending. And therefore the greatest kindness we can do for a person is to enable him to earn reward even after his death by performing Misvot as he taught us to do. Yaakov requested of his son, "Do not bury me in Egypt" – as if to say, "Do not allow my progress and advancement to end when I die in Egypt." He wanted Yosef to continue living the way Yaakov taught him, and this would ensure Yaakov's continued elevation long after his death. Yaakov did not want to be "buried" in Egypt. He wanted to continue living even after his physical death through the power of the Misvot performed by his offspring. This is "Hesed Ve'emet" – the greatest kindness one can perform, facilitating a deceased person's elevation in the next world.

Indeed, the Talmud teaches that "Yaakov Abinu Lo Met" – Yaakov never died. Since he left behind twelve children committed to Misvot, he continues to "live" even after death, through the good deeds performed by his descendants, all Am Yisrael.

This insight conveys a very important lesson to parents regarding the decisions they make for their children's education and upbringing. Investing in our children's Torah education is an investment that will continue paying dividends for eternity, even long after we have departed from this world. By inspiring, teaching and directing our children to live a life of Torah and Misvot, we ensure our everlasting growth and elevation, in both this world and the next. The key to immortality is properly educating and training our children to live in a way that will continue bringing us reward for all eternity.

VICTOR BIBI SOD HAPARASHA

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Rabbi Wein SCANDALS

The history of power and influence is always littered with personal scandals. This is evident in all of the words of the great prophets of Israel regarding the rulers and officers of their times. Unfortunately, over the long history of human civilization and of Jewish history as well, religious leaders who profess to represent superior morals and decency many times are tarnished as well by scandalous acts of their own.

We have been witness over the past decade of the scandals, sexual and financial, that has engulfed the Roman Catholic Church worldwide. As is the case many times, the cover-up only compounds the problems caused by the original sin and crime.

While we are accustomed sadly but realistically to all types of scandals that engulf political leaders and government officials, we are certainly less accepting and less stoic regarding scandals that touch those who purported to be religious leaders and moral examples. These types of scandals shake our very faith and force many to turn away from religions and faiths.

In Jewish life these types of scandals are said to reflect badly not only on the perpetrators but on Heaven itself. They are assigned the worst of all titles – a desecration of God's name. And even if we follow the minority opinion that even these types of crimes can be salvaged by repentance, all admit that such repentance is difficult to gain and in many cases is just completely unachievable.

We know that our political and governmental leaders are not perfect. Most of them are wise enough not to present themselves as such and to stick to the business of governing and administering our national interests. Therefore, when they are brought low by crimes and/or scandal, we ordinary citizens take his disappointment in stride. However when religious figures of note and station are found guilty of scandalous conduct, it affects us much more deeply, if not even permanently.

So, we are almost immune to the long list of political leaders and even heads of our government who have been found guilty and jailed for the crimes that they committed. We are almost not surprised that new rumors and scandalous reports constantly are the grist of our media mills. It is almost as though we do not expect differently when it comes to those in power and influence.

However, when those who advertise themselves as religious leaders – rabbis, educators, holy individuals and spiritual savants – are exposed as predators, frauds and monetarily corrupt to the core, we are truly shaken to the depths of our faith and belief. Prominent rabbis who are sent to prison for criminal behavior create an indelible stain upon the profession and upon the religion itself. That stain is almost impossible to erase.

The generation will have to pass, before the matter and its effect on others can somehow be put to rest. Published media reports have it that a former Chief Rabbi here in Israel is about to plead guilty to many offenses and will serve time in prison. It will take the Chief Rabbinate much time and effort to recover from this blow to its prestige and integrity.

It is undoubtedly true that power corrupts. Even if the individual with power and influence is pure as the driven snow there are always those who gravitate and circulate around that individual. Usually they exploit their appearance of power and influence to their own personal benefit. Many times that person who is truly honest and even holy is unaware or unable to prevent this pernicious exploitation and corruption.

Especially when the person is believed to have great and supernatural powers, those around him should be doubly suspect of their actions and motives. The Talmud teaches us that it is not the mouse that steals food from the house but rather it is the hole in the wall that allowed entry to the mouse that is the true thief. In an age of beliefs in parts of the Jewish world that border on superstition there will be many that will exploit the faith and naïveté of the masses.

The hole in the wall will always attract the mice. But it is incumbent upon us to attempt to close that hole as much as we are humanly capable of doing. As long as money is the currency of certain types of holiness, we should be wise enough to expect that scandals will eventually be revealed. That is human nature 101. Realizing this will help soften the blow when those inevitable scandals occur and dominate the public media

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Jewish Time

Different cultures tell different stories. The great novelists of the nineteenth century wrote fiction that is essentially ethical. Jane Austen and George Eliot explored the connection between character and happiness. There is a palpable continuity between their work and the book of Ruth. Dickens, more in the tradition of the prophets, wrote about society and its institutions, and the way in which they can fail to honour human dignity and justice.

By contrast, the fascination with stories like Star

Wars or Lord of the Rings is conspicuously dualistic. The cosmos is a battlefield between the forces of good and evil. This is far closer to the apocalyptic literature of the Qumran sect and the Dead Sea scrolls than anything in Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. In these ancient and modern conflict narratives the struggle is “out there” rather than “in here”: in the cosmos rather than within the human soul. This is closer to myth than monotheism.

There is, however, a form of story that is very rare indeed, of which Tanakh is the supreme example. It is the story without an ending which looks forward to an open future rather than reaching closure. It defies narrative convention. Normally we expect a story to create a tension that is resolved on the final page. That is what gives art a sense of completion. We do not expect a sculpture to be incomplete, a poem to break off halfway, a novel to end in the middle. Schubert's Unfinished Symphony is the exception that proves the rule.

Yet that is what the Bible repeatedly does. Consider the Chumash, the five Mosaic books. The Jewish story begins with a repeated promise to Abraham that he will inherit the land of Canaan. Yet by the time we reach the end of Deuteronomy, the Israelites have still not crossed the Jordan. The Chumash ends with the poignant scene of Moses on Mount Nebo (in present-day Jordan) seeing the land – to which he has journeyed for forty years but is destined not to enter – from afar.

Nevi'im, the second part of Tanakh, ends with Malachi foreseeing the distant future, understood by tradition to mean the Messianic Age: See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.

Nevi'im, which includes the great historical as well as prophetic books, thus concludes neither in the present or the past, but by looking forward to a time not yet reached. Ketuvim, the third and final section, ends with King Cyrus of Persia granting permission to the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to their land and rebuild the Temple.

None of these is an ending in the conventional sense. Each leaves us with a sense of a promise not yet fulfilled, a task not yet completed, a future seen from afar but not yet reached. And the paradigm case – the model on which all others are based – is the ending of Bereishit in this week's sedra.

Remember that the story of the people of the covenant begins with God's call to Abraham to leave his land, birthplace and father's house and travel “to a land which I will show you”. Yet no sooner does he arrive than he is forced by famine to go to Egypt.

That is the fate repeated by Jacob and his children. Genesis ends not with life in Israel but with a death in Egypt: Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place". So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. (Gen. 50:26)

Again, a hope not yet realised, a journey not yet ended, a destination just beyond the horizon.

Is there some connection between this narrative form and the theme with which the Joseph story ends, namely forgiveness?

It is to Hannah Arendt in her *The Human Condition* that we owe a profound insight into the connection between forgiveness and time. Human action, she argues, is potentially tragic. We can never foresee the consequences of our acts, but once done, they cannot be undone. We know that he who acts never quite knows what he is doing, that he always becomes "guilty" of consequences he never intended or even foresaw, that no matter how disastrous the consequences of his deed, he can never undo it . . . All this is reason enough to turn away with despair from the realm of human affairs and to hold in contempt the human capacity for freedom.

What transforms the human situation from tragedy to hope, she argues, is the possibility of forgiveness:

Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover...

Forgiving, in other words, is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven.

Atonement and forgiveness are the supreme expressions of human freedom – the freedom to act differently in the future than one did in the past, and the freedom not to be trapped in a cycle of vengeance and retaliation. Only those who can forgive can be free. Only a civilisation based on forgiveness can construct a future that is not an endless repetition of the past. That, surely, is why Judaism is the only civilisation whose golden age is in the future.

It was this revolutionary concept of time – based on human freedom – that Judaism contributed to the world. Many ancient cultures believed in cyclical time, in which all things return to their beginning. The Greeks developed a sense of tragic time, in which the ship of dreams is destined to founder on the hard rocks of reality. Europe of the Enlightenment introduced the idea of linear time, with its close cousin, progress. Judaism believes in covenantal time, well described by Harold Fisch: "The covenant is a condition of our existence in time . . . We cooperate with its purposes never quite knowing where it will take us, for 'the readiness is all'." In a lovely phrase, he speaks of the Jewish imagination as shaped by "the unappeased memory of a future still to be fulfilled".

Tragedy gives rise to pessimism. Cyclical time leads to acceptance. Linear time begets optimism. Covenantal time gives birth to hope. These are not just different emotions. They are radically different ways of relating to life and the universe. They are expressed in the different kinds of story people tell. Jewish time always faces an open future. The last chapter is not yet written. The Messiah has not yet come. Until then, the story continues – and we, together with God, are the co-authors of the next chapter.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

Rebbetzin Miller would tell people who asked her husband Rabbi Avigdor Miller to Daven for them, to please call back with good news, because Rabbi Miller would keep Davening for them, unless they told him otherwise. Someone once called on Erev Yom Kippur for a Beracha for his daughter who needed a Refuah.

About six months later, on Shushan Purim the child was in Boston for surgery and the father called Rabbi Miller. The Rebbetzin answered the phone and said that he called too late, the Rav had already left. But she asked to describe the reason for the call. The man told her his child's name and the Rebbetzin said, "Oh! Don't worry. Rabbi Miller has been Davening for your daughter since Erev Yom Kippur."

A grandson once asked Rabbi Avigdor Miller how he could tolerate living on Ocean Parkway with emergency vehicles always driving by, their sirens blasting and their lights flashing. Rabbi Miller answered, "To the contrary, these disturbances are actually a great opportunity. Each time an ambulance drives by, I say a small prayer for the ill person inside it. I trained myself to do so even in the middle of my sleep."