

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE VAYHI

January 2-3 2015 12 Tebet 5775

DEDICATIONS: In memory of our dad, Joe R. Bibi – Yosef Ben Esther
We commemorate 12 months since his passing on Monday evening
January 5th with a men's class in Manhattan at 6PM - 979 Third Avenue 17th Floor with Mendys
If you would like to join, please let us know

And for all family and friends, we are planning an Areyat at
Ahi Ezer on Ocean Parkway and Avenue S, in Brooklyn on Tuesday February 3rd – 14th of Shevat

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH
Fast 10th of Tebet - Thursday January 1 - Fast Begins 6:20 am
We will pray Shaharit at 8AM
We will return for mincha with Sefer Torah and Arbit at 4:15PM - Fast Ends 4:58 pm

Candle lighting Friday evening January 2nd at 4:21 p.m. Mincha at 4:21

SHABBAT: Perasha class with Rabbi David at 8:30AM this week
LeShem Yichud – Connecting the Yud and the Heh with the Vav and the Heh
Shaharit - Hashem Melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:55AM

Kiddush this week by The Lemberger Family
in memory of Uri's dad - Aryeh Leib ben HaRav Moshe Chaim Yitzchak
Uri will be saying the Haftara
And the Mashlim will be given to Rabbi David

Kiddush before 11:59 Hasot
Next week's Kiddush will be given by
Kathy Amiel in memory of Hilda Amiel

Please sponsor a Kiddush or Seudah Shelishi or breakfast in memory or in honor of a loved one
Early Mincha after Kiddush - Amidah after 12:22

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30
Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom/ Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's afternoon program with the Bach at the Bach 3:30 PM
January and February joint program will be at Sephardic
Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 4:00

Return for Arbit at 5:30 and then following ARBIT
Beginning again next Saturday night
Bring your friends for pizza, fun, raffles and prizes for the winners of our weekly 613 mitzvot contests!
DATES: 01/03/15, 01/10/15, 01/31/15, 02/07/15, 02/21/15, 03/07/15

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE
Shaharit Sunday 8:00AM, Mon and Thurs at 6:55, Tues, Weds and Fri at 7:00

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Thursday Nights 8:30-9:30 Virtual* Class facilitated by Rabbi Yosef Colish. Practical Laws of Shabbat for Sephardim

SAVE THE DATE!
Movie night will be on January 10th at Lido Synagogue.
We will be seeing BRURIAH, an Israeli movie about a modern Orthodox woman whose life
and fate are intimately connected with the legendary Bruria

Krav Maga returns in February

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
 Newsletter archives now at BenaiAsher.Org

Follow us on twitter @BenaiAsher for a daily dose of Torah,
 Israel or something of interest

**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,
 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us!
 212-289-2100 – Mincha and Arbit – Give us 22
 minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!**

Editors Notes

Celebrating New Year's Day or Not

This year, January 1st coincides with the Tenth of Tevet, a day of fasting, mourning and introspection. On the 10th day of the Jewish month of Tevet, in the year 3336 from Creation, the armies of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. Thirty months later—on 9 Tammuz 3338—the city walls were breached, and on 9 Av of that year the Holy Temple was destroyed. This morning in Synagogue, I mentioned that the Shulchan Aruch and the Tur suggest that if possible, a person should really fast three days, the 8th, 9th and 10th of Tevet. This fast is so strict that when it falls on Friday, while every other fast is pushed off, we must fast on Friday. Some even suggest that if the Tenth of Tevet fell on Shabbat (it's not possible using our current calendar) we would be required to fast on Shabbat.

Given that this day falls on the day when our neighbors are out celebrating we decided to replace our class this morning with a discussion of New Year's day and how a Jew should treat that day.

The class was based on a class given by my wife Chantelle's rabbi, Lawrence Kelemen. He is, aside from my wife's rabbi, a professor of education at Neve Yerushalayim College of Jewish Studies for Women in Jerusalem, where he also lectures in modern and medieval philosophy. R' Kelemen was awarded his undergraduate degree at U.C.L.A. and did graduate studies at Harvard. My daughter Aryana had the pleasure of having him as a teacher while she studied in Israel. He has many classes available on line to listen to at SimpleToRemember.com, including The Real Story of Christmas, We Are Never Alone: The Unbelievable Story of a Child's Birth and A Rational Approach To The Divine Origin of Judaism. I published a version of this article more than a decade ago, but after the class, everyone wanted me to put the class into writing so they could share it with others so here we go. And on the one hand, I'm sorry if you cancel your New Year's plans

but on the other hand, when you finish reading this, how can you not?

In 46 B.C.E. the Roman emperor Julius Caesar first established January 1 as New Year's Day. Janus was the Roman god of doors and gates, and had two faces, one looking forward and one back. Caesar felt that the month named after this god ("January") would be the appropriate "door" to the year. Caesar celebrated the first January 1 New Year by ordering the violent routing of revolutionary Jewish forces in the Galilee. Eyewitnesses say blood flowed in the streets. In later years, Roman pagans observed the New Year by engaging in drunken orgies -- a ritual they believed constituted a personal re-enacting of the chaotic world that existed before the cosmos was ordered by the gods. Do we really want to celebrate a pagan holiday?

Early Catholics did not accept this pagan date as the New Year at first. When the calendar system of Anno Domini was first introduced by Dionysius Exiguus in 525 of the common era, he assigned the beginning of the new year to March 25. This date is called Annunciation day in the church because it is they claim, the day of the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary that she would conceive and become the mother of Yeshu.

So while the pagans celebrated January 1 as the beginning of the year, Christians celebrated March 25 as their beginning of the year. After William the Conqueror was crowned at Westminster Abbey on December 25th in 1066, he announced that the New Year would take place on January 1st after the Roman custom and to forever commemorate his monarchy. The Christians weren't very pleased and about a century later, the year 1154 ended on the 31st of December, but the start of 1155 was delayed to 25-March. And things continued this way for the next 500 years.

The Julian calendar as set up by Julius Caesar counted 365 ¼ days per year and the rule was to add one extra day every four years to allow for that extra quarter. But the year is actually 365 days, 5 hours 48 minutes and 46 seconds as the Rabbis knew more than a thousand years prior. And those missing 12 minutes year after year add up. In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII (one of the greatest anti-Semites of all time) abandoned the traditional Julian calendar and established the Gregorian calendar which differs from the Julian in three ways: (1) No century year is a leap year unless it is exactly divisible by 400 (e.g., 1600, 2000, etc.); (2) Years divisible by 4000 are common (not leap) years; and (3) once again the New Year would begin with the date set by the early

pagans, the first day of the month of Janus - January 1. The Pagan New Year would become the Christian New Year.

And how should one celebrate a Christian New Year? On New Year's Day, Pope Gregory XIII decreed that all Roman Jews, under pain of death, must listen attentively to the compulsory Catholic conversion sermon given in Roman synagogues after Friday night services. On Year Years Day 1578 Gregory signed into law a tax forcing Jews to pay for the support of a "House of Conversion" to convert Jews to Christianity. On New Year's 1581 Gregory ordered his troops to confiscate all sacred literature from the Roman Jewish community. This included copies of the Talmud, Jewish law books and Torah scrolls. Thousands of Jews were murdered in the campaign. New Year's sounds more like a day of mourning as it is this year than a day of celebration.

Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, January 1 - supposedly the day on which Jesus' circumcision initiated the reign of Christianity and the death of Judaism - was reserved for anti-Jewish activities: synagogue and book burnings, public tortures, and simple murder.

As such Israelis felt they shouldn't celebrate New Year's day, but still needed an excuse to party on New Year's eve. So in Israel, these celebrations are called "Sylvester." Tis was the name of the "Saint" and Roman Pope who reigned during the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.). The year before the Council of Nicaea convened, Sylvester convinced Constantine to prohibit Jews from living in Jerusalem. At the Council of Nicaea, Sylvester arranged for the passage of a host of viciously anti-Semitic legislation. All Catholic "Saints" are awarded a day on which Christians celebrate and pay tribute to that Saint's memory. December 31 is Saint Sylvester Day - hence celebrations on the night of December 31 are dedicated to Sylvester's memory. Amazing, Israeli's celebrating the day of an Anti-Semite and the one who prohibited Jews from Jerusalem.

For Jews, The day is more an anniversary of mourning than one where we could possibly engage in reckless and drunken merriment.

Paraphrasing Rabbi Kelemen, many who are excitedly preparing for their New Year celebrations would prefer not knowing about the holiday's real significance (and most never even heard of the Tenth of Tevet.) If they do know the history, they often object that their celebration has nothing to do with the holiday's monstrous history and meaning. "We are just having fun."

He tells us to imagine that between 1933-45, the Nazi regime celebrated Adolf Hitler's birthday – April 20 – as a holiday. Imagine that they named the day, "Hitlerday," and observed the day with feasting, drunkenness, gift-giving, and various pagan practices. Imagine that on that day, Jews were historically subject to perverse tortures and abuse, and that this continued for centuries.

Now, imagine that your great-great-great-grandchildren were about to celebrate Hitlerday. April 20th arrived. They had long forgotten about Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen. They had never heard of gas chambers or death marches. They had purchased champagne and caviar, and were about to begin the party, when someone reminded them of the day's real history and their ancestors' agony. Imagine that they initially objected, "We aren't celebrating the Holocaust; we're just having a little Hitlerday party." If you could travel forward in time and meet them; if you could say a few words to them, what would you advise them to do on Hitlerday?

When I wrote this way back when I concluded So now that I have completely ruined your New Year's eve plans let me end with a thought from my club going days. (I guess all of life's experiences have lessons). Those of us who would party in Studio and Xenon every night would know that on New Year's Eve, one takes the night off. New Year's Eve was known as the night 'the regular people' came out and we considered ourselves anything but regular.

As Jews, we should remember that we are special, so this year before you run out to party, consider the origins of the day especially for us. The first Jewish New Year's day was the day that G-d created man. The first January 1st was the day Caesar ordered the murdering of Jews. And this year it coincides with a real Jewish day of mourning. As Jews we celebrate Rosh Hashana with family and in prayer. We have our New Years day! Maybe we can leave January 1st to everyone else. Why not leave it to the regular people? And remind yourself that you really are more than just regular. You are very special!

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Inflated Palestinian Population Figures Lie Behind Talk of 'Demographic Time Bomb,' Israeli Expert Says
Ben Cohen, Senior Editor, The Algemeiner,

The latest demographic survey of the Palestinian population by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics overestimates the number of Palestinians resident between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan by around 1.2 million, a leading Israeli expert on demography has told The Algemeiner.

Ambassador Yoram Ettinger, a former Israeli diplomat who now works as lecturer and consultant and is well-known in policy circles for his research on Palestinian and Israeli demography, said that the Palestinian statistics, released yesterday, "are inflated by more than 1 million in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and by almost 400,000 in Gaza." According to the Palestinian statistics bureau, there are over 6 million Palestinians living west of the Jordan; Ettinger calculates the number at 4.8 million.

The inflated numbers are a key factor behind the current claim that Palestinians will outnumber Jews living in Israel and the Palestinian territories by 2016. Similarly false claims have been made in previous years, triggering the politically-loaded conclusion that Israel, in supposedly becoming a country where a Jewish minority rules over an Arab majority, has effectively emerged as an apartheid state.

Ettinger identified several methodological flaws in the official Palestinian count. "According to their own records, they include over 400,000, mostly in Judea and Samaria, who are abroad for more than a year," he said. This contradicts, Ettinger said, the "international standards" which dictate that a person who lives outside his or her country for more than a year should not be included in a count of the resident population. "The only entity that doesn't follow this practice is the Palestinian statistics bureau," Ettinger said.

The 300,000 Arab residents of eastern Jerusalem who carry Israeli identity cards comprise a similar problem in terms of population count, Ettinger observed, as they are "counted twice, in the Israeli count of the number of Israeli Arabs, and the Palestinian count of the number of residents of the West Bank." The 105,000 Palestinians who received Israeli citizenship between 1997 and 2003 by virtue of marrying Israeli Arab citizens – a pathway canceled by an Israeli Supreme Court decision in 2003, which denied automatic citizenship through marriage to residents of several Arab and Muslim

countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel – are also "doubly counted," Ettinger said.

All these numbers, Ettinger emphasized, grow every year, "because many of these people produce children who are added to the numbers." In October 2014, he noted, the Palestinian deputy interior minister even said that "100,000 children born to overseas Palestinians had been added to the overall count."

When it comes to migration patterns, Palestinian statistics are equally problematic, Ettinger said. Since there is no net immigration into Palestinian areas, population surveys assume no net emigration – yet, Ettinger pointed out, data collected by the Israeli border police, who control all 13 land, sea and air exit points into Israel and the Palestinian territories, demonstrates that in 2013, net emigration stood at 20,000, with similar numbers recorded over the four previous years. Significantly, this does not include Gaza, where no count has been conducted since the Israeli withdrawal in 2005, but Ettinger asserted that "those who deal with Gaza say the number of emigrants is much higher, as a result of war, instability and the disintegrating economy."

Once adjustments for the Palestinian errors are made, Ettinger said, a different picture of Arab settlement emerges: 1.7 million in the West Bank (as opposed to the 2.83 million claimed in the Palestinian survey, which includes eastern Jerusalem) and 1.4 million in Gaza (instead of the 1.79 million in the Gaza Strip claimed in the survey.) Interestingly, the Palestinian survey gives a lower account of the number of Palestinians resident in Israel – 1.46 million, as opposed to the 1.7 million claimed in the Israeli count – though this is likely connected to the manner in which residents of eastern Jerusalem are counted by Palestinian and Israeli sources respectively.

With 6.5 million Jews resident in Israel, Ettinger said, there is a clear Jewish majority of 66 percent in Israel and the West Bank – that figure dips to 58 percent if Gaza is factored in. Moreover, he said, birth patterns are now weighted towards the Jewish population: the Palestinian fertility rate has dropped from 5 babies per mother in 2000 to 2.9 now, while the Jewish birth rate "is slightly over three and increasing." Among the reasons for the drop in the Palestinian birth rate is the growing popularity of contraception, increasing access to higher education, and a trend towards urbanization, which means that Palestinian women are marrying later in life.

The Jewish population has additionally been boosted by favorable migration patterns – according to Ettinger, Israel "is now benefiting from the highest number per capita ever of returning expatriates" – and increasing fertility among the secular Jewish population. This includes the descendants of the 1 million Jews who came to Israel from the former Soviet Union during the 1990s, whose fertility rate exceeds two children per family, as well as the burgeoning Israeli middle class, who twenty years ago would have had one or two children per family, and who presently have three or four.

While Ettinger's revisions are unlikely to stall the continual talk of a "demographic time bomb" toppling Israel's Jewish majority, his calculations are, he said, regarded as far more reliable by experts on demography. The prevalence in the media of the Palestinian figures is, he argued, partly down to the international protocol of regarding statistics assembled by national authorities as beyond reproach. "It is assumed that central statistics bureaus are above politics," he said.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: In the year 2255, Yakov was 147 years old and Yoseph was 56. Yakov had been living in Mitzrayim for 17 years. (Note that Yoseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery and that the numerical value of the word "Vayichi" is 34.) Yakov summoned Yoseph to his bed-side. Yoseph came with his 2 sons. Yakov greeted them and appointed Menashe and Ephrayim to the status of "Tribe". Yakov then insisted that Yoseph "swear" that he would bury him in Canaan, and not in the land of Mitzrayim.

2nd Aliya: The parsha relates the famous scene of Yakov crossing his arms in order to place his right hand on the head of Ephrayim (who was standing to Yakov's left) and his left hand on the head of Menashe. Yakov blessed his grandchildren with the renown blessing of Hamalach Hagoel. (48:16)

3rd Aliya: Yoseph attempted to straighten Yakov's hands. Yakov resisted and told Yoseph that, although Menashe was destined for greatness, Ephrayim would be even greater. The classic blessing of a father to his son is stated. (48:20)

4th & 5th Aliyot: Yakov summoned his twelve sons and blessed each one.

6th Aliya: Yakov instructed all of his sons to bury him in Canaan, next to his wife Leah, and then passed away. Mitzrayim mourned Yakov for 70 days. Yoseph

arranged with Pharaoh to bury Yakov in Canaan. After sitting Shiva (50:10) and the burial, the 12 sons returned to Egypt. Following Yakov's death, the brothers expressed their concern to Yoseph that he would now take revenge against them for having sold him into slavery. Yoseph cried as he heard their concerns and assured them that he bore no grudges against them.

7th Aliya: Yoseph ruled over Egypt for another 54 years. He made his brothers promise that at the time of their exodus from Egypt his bones would be transported for re-burial in Canaan. Yoseph died in the year 2309 at the age of 110.

The Talmud in Bava Matzia 87a tells us that Yakov Avinu [our father] was the first person to "get weak" prior to dying. In fact, he asked Hashem for this "gift" so that he would have the time to put his affairs in order. This week's Haftarah is from Kings I Chap. 2 which relates Dovid Hamelech's final instructions to Shlomo prior to his death. Just as Yakov arranged his final affairs with his children, so too Dovid finalized his personal affairs with his son.

Dovid's unfinished business dealt with situations of personal loyalty and treachery. In order for the succession of the throne to be secure and peaceful, Dovid identifies two key individuals who had betrayed him during his 40 years as King - King David's General, Yoav ben Tzeruah, and Shlomo's own Rebi, the great scholar Shimi ben Gera. In addition, he set apart the family of Barzillai the Gileadite for special royal consideration and reward.

Dovid Hamelech was not interested in revenge. Dovid, the father of Mashiach, was not consumed with anger. Dovid, the sensitive poet and magnificent singer, was interested in justice and the future well being of his nation. It was essential that he teach the young Shlomo the meaning of strong leadership and how to care for a problem, before it becomes a crisis.

Undoubtedly, it would have been easy for Dovid Hamelech to forgive those who had betrayed him, especially at the very end of his life; but that isn't the quality of leadership, which brings eventual redemption, and the building of the Bais Hamikdash. As the King, Dovid and Shlomo had to be devoted to Hashem's Torah, social justice, and the eternity of the nation.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Yissachar is a strong-boned donkey." (Beresheet 49:14)

In Ya'akov's blessing to Yissachar, he compares him to a strong-boned donkey. The commentaries offer different explanations for what this alludes to. Rabbi David Kaplan tells a story that sheds light in the analogy to a donkey (although not the plain meaning of the pasuk) and provides guidance in an area with which many Torah learners struggle.

Rabbi Eliezer Platchinsky zt"l was a tremendous Talmid Hacham, besides being the brother-in-law of Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l. Some 50 years ago, when he was once walking in Jerusalem, he passed a stone quarry and stopped to watch the Arab workers for a few minutes.

One of the Arabs loaded up a donkey with a heavy load, and the donkey started on its way up the steep hill out of the quarry. After a few steps the donkey stopped moving. The Arab hit it with a stick, but the donkey didn't budge. He hit it again, still nothing. The Arab then took a towel and draped it over the donkey's head. The animal put its head down, started moving, and walked up the hill and out of the quarry.

Rabbi Platchinsky said this incident gave him an insight into the meaning of the pasuk. The donkey, he said, took a look at how far it had to climb and decided it would never make it that far, so it stopped in its tracks. When the Arab covered its head, it looked down and saw that all it had to do was take one step. Donkeys don't have great memories, so it obviously forgot it had to get to the top of the hill. The beast saw it had to take one more step and it just kept doing that until it was out of the quarry.

This is the very attitude Torah learners should have. A Torah learner is often discouraged because he looks to the end of the masechet or the end of Shas and feels he'll never get there, so he stops. He must realize that the only thing that should concern him is the page in front of him. Once he finishes that page he can go on to the next one. If he continues that way, he will eventually find himself at the end of the masechet, or even Shas. This, Rabbi Platchinsky said, explains the comparison to a donkey. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

The parashah begins by telling us about the dialogue which Yosef, the ruler of Egypt, was having with his brother, Yehudah, about whether to release Binyamin or not. The Midrash tells us that the debate was very heated and Yehudah threatened to destroy Egypt and all of its inhabitants. When Yosef saw that Yehudah had reached the limit of his patience, he

revealed his identity thereby diffusing the entire drama. The Midrash calls Yosef a wise man who can appease people. It seems that it would be obvious to anyone that this is what Yosef should have done in this situation. What great wisdom is seen from Yosef's actions?

The lesson that can be learned from here is that there is usually a point during an argument when it is wise to back down and retreat. When one is involved in a dispute, it often escalates to levels far beyond the original issues. One needs to look at it with a clear head, and know when to cut it short. Otherwise it reaches another level which can bring pain and destruction. Although it takes wisdom and foresight to be able to concede to someone else, especially during the heat of "battle," one who can muster inner strength like Yosef will diffuse the tension bringing peace and harmony among all parties involved. Shabbat Shalom! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com
Time Flies When You're Doing G-d's Will

The opening verse of Parashat Vayehi informs us of the number of years that Yaakov Abinu lived: "Yaakov's days, the years of his life, were one hundred and forty-seven years."

One Rabbi noted the peculiarity of the syntax of this verse. Rather than simply stating, "Yaakov's years were one hundred and forty-seven," it begins by saying, "Yaakov's days..." Curiously, the Torah speaks of Yaakov life not only in terms of years, but also in terms of days.

The reason, perhaps, is that for a Sadik, years seem like days. For most of us, the days pass by quickly, but the years move far more slowly. This is not the case for the spiritual giants, those whose sole ambition is serving God to the best of their ability and reaching greater and greater heights in Torah and Misvot. For them, there is never enough time. The Sadikim are never satisfied with what they've accomplished, they always have more room for improvement, more Torah to study, more people to help, more ways to fulfill God's will. When a person lives his life with this kind of intense ambition and sense of purpose, the years move by as quickly as the days. The Torah therefore speaks of Yaakov's years as "days."

The story is told of the Beneh Yissaschar (Rav Zvi Elimelech Shapiro of Dinov, 1783-1841), who was

once walking through a market and came across two Jewish men sitting comfortably and chatting.

"What are you doing here?" the Rabbi asked.

The men answered, in Yiddish, "We're just chasing the time away." Evidently, this is the Yiddish equivalent of the English expression, "killing time."

"If you're chasing the time away," the Rabbi replied, "then please chase it toward me. I never have enough time to complete what I need to do. If you have extra time, please send it my way so I'll have some more!" This is how the Sadikim view time – there's never enough of it.

The reason why we waste time is because we don't make religious pursuits our primary ambition and goal. We are satisfied and complacent, so we feel no pressure to achieve more. But if we prioritize Torah and Mitzvot, and view our lives as opportunities to achieve spiritual greatness, we will always have more to do, more to accomplish. And if we live with this perspective, then we will use our time far more constructively, and realize that there really isn't any time for us to "kill."

Rabbi Wein UPS AND DOWNS

Though every election in Israel is full of surprises, because we are a restless and constantly dissatisfied people there is a pattern that has emerged from all of the previous nineteen elections that have bedeviled us over the past sixty-six years. The pattern includes constant fragmentation of existing parties as personal ambition and rigid ideology overtake practical and achievable goals.

Another facet that is apparently constant in all Israeli elections is the emergence of new parties with grandiose promises and attractive personalities. They all seem to paint a rosy future of peace and prosperity, social equality and stern justice and an absence of corruption and venality. These new parties always seem to do quite well in the election process.

The history of the state of Israel is loaded with the debris of such parties which rose, obtain substantial mandates to the Knesset and yet somehow disappeared or were terribly diminished by the next round of elections. There has been an unbroken pattern of this over the past many decades and it seems that it is about to occur in this coming election as well.

There are a number of new parties and personalities, or better put, recycled personalities that seem to be riding the crest of the wave of current popularity. Upon closer examination it is hard to see how any of their proclaimed programs and policies can actually be realized, given the nature of the Middle East, the Palestinians, the Israeli way of doing business and the heritage of the socialist infrastructure on which the state was founded. But I am confident that these new parties will somehow do well in the coming election and I am also confident that they will also end up, as almost all new parties that arose in Israel over the past years, in the dustbin of history.

Israel is always searching for a savior, a messianic figure that can and will solve all of our problems and make us beloved amongst the nations of the world, united at home and at peace with ourselves and our neighbors. So, anyone or any party that advertises itself as being that savior will naturally attract votes and support from a populace that is trained to ignore the realities of Jewish life and of the historical attitude of the world towards us.

So, I am also convinced, that since the inception of the state of Israel the guiding hand of Heaven thwarts our follies and somehow does not allow the repetition of catastrophic mistakes made by us in the past. The Bible records for us a verse that states: "He Who dwells in heaven laughs at us; God mocks us."

I do not pretend to know the opinion of Heaven as to our forthcoming election. In fact I think that invoking God's name in this purely secular exercise is itself wrong if not even blasphemous. But I do have the feeling that Heaven is at least chuckling over the election campaign currently being waged by our erstwhile saviors, both new and old.

I have often recounted the anecdote attributed to Abraham Lincoln about the horse thief who was apprehended in his act of burglary. He was subjected to instant frontier justice and was tied to a rail, dipped in tar, covered with feathers and was being carried out to be deposited in a nearby swamp. Lincoln said that the man was heard to mutter that if were not for the honor he would forgo the pleasure.

I think that that is a good description of what we are experiencing in the current election campaign. It is the honor that allows wise and good people to be subjected to the indignities that this type of election campaign produces. Some parties will increase their representation in the Knesset, some parties that were previously powerful and influential will wane and almost disappear. There will be many ups and downs as there always are in elections. Nevertheless

probably very little will change in our daily personal lives and perhaps even in the overall national life of our wonderful little country.

The savior will not yet have arrived and our problems are not likely to disappear in the immediate future no matter what the results of the election may be. This does not mean that we should despair of positive change or of good leadership. But it does mean that we should be realistic, rational and we should try to retain our emotional equilibrium and good sense in judging the parties and personalities involved.

I make no recommendations or predictions regarding the election. I only think that it will always follow the pattern of previous elections and that the ups and downs of Israeli political life will continue in the future as well

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks When is it permitted to tell a lie?

After the death of Jacob, Joseph's brothers were afraid. Years earlier, when he had revealed his true identity to them, he appeared to have forgiven them for selling him as a slave. That was the theme of last week's essay.

Yet the brothers were not wholly reassured. Maybe Joseph did not mean what he said. Perhaps he still harboured resentment. Might the only reason he had not yet taken revenge was respect for Jacob. There was a convention in those days that there was to be no settling of scores between siblings in the lifetime of the father. We know this from an earlier episode. After Jacob had taken his brother's blessing, Esau says, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob" (Gen. 27: 41). So the brothers come before Joseph and say:

"Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. (Gen. 50: 16-17)

The text makes it as plain as possible that the story they told Joseph was a lie. If Jacob had really said those words he would have said them to Joseph himself, not to the brothers. The time to have done so was on his deathbed in the previous chapter. The brothers' tale was a "white lie." Its primary aim was not to deceive but to ease a potentially explosive situation. Perhaps that is why Joseph wept, understanding that his brothers still thought him

capable of revenge.

The sages derived a principle from this text. Mutar le-shanot mipnei ha-shalom: "It is permitted to tell an untruth (literally, "to change" the facts) for the sake of peace." [1] A white lie is permitted in Jewish law.

This is not the only place where the sages invoked this principle. They even attributed it to God himself. [2] When the angels came to visit Abraham to tell him and Sarah that they were about to have a child, "Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, 'After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?'" God then asked Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'" (Gen. 18: 12-13).

God did not mention that Sarah believed that not only was she too old to have a child. So was Abraham (this turned out to be quite untrue: Abraham had six more children after Sarah's death). The sages inferred that God did not mention it because he did not want there to be bad feeling between husband and wife. Here too the sages said: it is permitted to change for the sake of peace.

It is clear that the sages needed both episodes to establish the principle. Had we only known about the Sarah case, we could not infer that it is permitted to tell a white lie. God did not tell a white lie about Sarah. He merely did not tell Abraham the whole truth.

Had we only known about the case of Joseph's brothers, we could not have inferred that what they did was permitted. Perhaps it was forbidden, and that is why Joseph wept. The fact that God himself had done something similar is what led the sages to say that the brothers were justified.

What is at stake here is an important feature of the moral life, despite the fact that we seem to be speaking of no more than social niceties: tact. The late Sir Isaiah Berlin pointed out that not all values coexist in a kind of platonic harmony. His favourite example was freedom and equality. You can have a free economy but the result will be inequality. You can have economic equality, communism, but the result will be a loss of freedom. In the world as currently configured, moral conflict is unavoidable. [3]

This was an important fact, though one about which Judaism seems never to have been in doubt. There is, for example, a powerful moment in Tanakh when King David's son Absalom mounts a coup d'etat against his father. David was forced to flee. Eventually there was a battle between Absalom's

troops and David's. Absalom, who was handsome and had fine hair, was caught by it when it became entangled in the branches of a tree. Left handed there, Joab, captain of David's army, killed him.

When David heard the news he was overcome with grief: "The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: 'O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!'" (2 Samuel 18: 33). Joab is brutal in his words to the king: "Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life ... You love those who hate you and hate those who love you ... Now go out and encourage your men" (2 Sam. 19: 6-8). David's grief at the loss of his son conflicts with his responsibilities as head of state and his loyalty to the troops who have saved his life. Which comes first: his duties as a father or as a king?

The existence of conflicting values means that the kind of morality we adopt and society we create depend not only on the values we embrace but also on the way we prioritise them. Prioritising equality over freedom creates one kind of society – Soviet communism for example. Prioritising freedom over equality leads to market economics. People in both societies may value the same things but they rank them differently in the scale of values, and thus how they choose when the two conflict.

That is what is at stake in the stories of Sarah and Joseph's brothers. Truth and peace are both values, but which do we choose when they conflict? Not everyone among the rabbinic sages agreed.

There is, for example, a famous argument between the schools of Hillel and Shammai as to what to say about the bride at a wedding.[4] The custom was to say that "The bride is beautiful and graceful." Members of the school of Shammai, however, were not prepared to say so if, in their eyes, the bride was not beautiful and graceful. For them the supreme value was the Torah's insistence on truth: "Keep far from falsehood" (Ex. 23: 7).

The school of Hillel did not accept this. Who was to judge whether the bride was beautiful and graceful? Surely the bridegroom himself. So to praise the bride was not making an objective statement that could be tested empirically. It was simply endorsing the bridegroom's choice. It was a way of celebrating the couple's happiness.

Courtesies are often like this. Telling someone how much you like the gift they have brought, even if you don't, or saying to someone, "How lovely to see you"

when you were hoping to avoid them, is more like good manners than an attempt to deceive. We all know this, and thus no harm is done, as it would be if we were to tell a lie when substantive interests are at stake.

More fundamental and philosophical is an important Midrash about a conversation between God and the angels as to whether human beings should be created at all:

Rabbi Shimon said: When God was about to create Adam, the ministering angels split into contending groups. Some said, 'Let him be created.' Others said, 'Let him not be created.' That is why it is written: 'Mercy and truth collided, righteousness and peace clashed' (Psalms 85:11).

Mercy said, 'Let him be created, because he will do merciful deeds.'

Truth said, 'Let him not be created, for he will be full of falsehood.'

Righteousness said, 'Let him be created, for he will do righteous deeds.'

Peace said, 'Let him not be created, for he will never cease quarrelling.'

What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He took truth and threw it to the ground.

The angels said, 'Sovereign of the universe, why do You do thus to Your own seal, truth? Let truth arise from the ground.'

Thus it is written, 'Let truth spring up from the earth' (Psalms 85:12).[5]

This is a challenging text. What exactly were the angels saying? What does it mean to say that "God took truth and threw it to the ground?" And what happened to the claim made by the angel of Peace that humans "will never cease quarrelling"?

I interpret it as meaning that humans are destined to conflict so long as contending groups each claim to have a monopoly of the truth. The only way they will learn to live at peace is by realising that they, finite as all humans are, will never in this life achieve truth as it is in Heaven. For us, truth is always partial, fragmentary, the view from somewhere and not, as philosophers sometimes say, "the view from nowhere".[6]

This deep insight is, I believe, the reason why the

Torah is multi-perspectival, why Tanakh contains so many different kinds of voices, why Mishnah and Gemarra are structured around argument, and why Midrash is built on the premise that there are "seventy faces" to Torah. No other civilization I know has had so subtle and complex an understanding of the nature of truth.

Nor has any other so valued peace. Judaism is not and never was pacifist. National self-defence sometimes requires war. But Isaiah and Micah were the first visionaries of a world in which "nation shall not lift up sword against nation." Isaiah is the poet laureate of peace.

Given the choice, when it came to interpersonal relations the sages valued peace over truth, not least because truth can flourish in peace while it is often the first casualty in war. So the brothers were not wrong to tell Joseph a white lie for the sake of peace within the family. It reminded them all of the deeper truth that not only their human father, now dead, but also their heavenly Father, eternally alive, wants the people of the covenant to be at peace, for how can Jews be at peace with the world if they are not at peace with themselves?

[1] Yevamot 65b.

[2] Midrash Sechel Tov, Toledot, 27: 19.

[3] Isaiah Berlin, 'Two concepts of liberty,' in Isaiah Berlin, Henry Hardy and Ian Harris, Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. See also the important work by Stuart Hampshire, Morality and Conflict. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983.

[4] Ketubot 16b.

[5] Bereishit Rabbah 8: 5.

[6] Thomas Nagel, The View From Nowhere, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986. The only person to have achieved a non-anthropocentric, God's-eye-view of creation, was Job in chs. 38-41 of the book that bears his name.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And Israel said unto Joseph: I had not thought to see thy face" (48:11)

The word "Pillalty" means "To Think" (Rashi 48:11).

We can now appreciate the true significance of "L'hitpallel", which is usually understood as "To Pray". "L'hitpallel is a reflexive verb which literally means: to cause oneself to Think.

Thinking is the key factor in praying. Thinking about Hashem!

The first thing that the Rabbis want us to think about is to state the fact that I could not even praise Hashem if He did not give my lips the ability to do so. So we ask Hashem for this ability in order to proceed with the Amidah.

"Baruch Atah" means "To You our knees are bent." We bend our knees to Hashem because we owe Him everything. When you owe something to someone and you can't pay him, what do you do? You bend over to him. "Atah" - our knees are bent to You, Hashem. "All the Blessings & kindnesses I receive are on my back weighing me down. I am Humbled in Gratitude to You alone and to no one else".

The next thing to Think about is that we have been given the privilege to address the King of the Universe as "You" ("Atah") throughout the Amidah, instead of "Your Majesty" (the third person which is a sign of respect). Think! You have been given the status of Children of the King ("Banim atem L'Hashem Elokechem"). And you are speaking to your Father who loves you and has unlimited power/kindness to do everything you ask Him for.

In order to get maximum benefit from our Prayers try the following strategy.

Before we reach the "Modim" (Gratitude) prayer, prepare your mind with a different Thought each day and thank Hashem with joy for what He is giving you. Such as: sight, ability to walk, parents, money, sanity ...

When we bow in this prayer, Think and Thank Hashem.

The Tefillot were composed for the purpose of elevating our minds.

Now we are Thinking and demonstrating to ourselves Emunah which is filling us with happiness and confidence and bitachon/trust. When we Think in this manner three times daily and we teach our families to practice this as well, then we will be connected to the Source of life, blessings and successful living in this world and forever.

Adapted from "Rabbi Avigdor Miller speaks Vol. 2"