

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYHI

JANUARY 7, 2012

12 TEBET 5772

**DEDICATIONS : In memory of Esther Bat Leah – Esther Bibi whose Yahrzeit is today 11 Tebet**

## SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHEDULE

### FRIDAY NIGHT

- Mincha at 4:25 – Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and Arbit (Candle Lighting: 4:25)

### SHABBAT SCHEDULE

- Shahrith: 9:00 Kiddush this week is sponsored by Uri and Tina Lemberger to commemorate the 36th yehrtzeit of Uri's father Bela Lemberger and the 14th yehrtzeit of Tina's mother Eva Levine
- Benai Asher Youth Program 10:45 – 11:45 with Rikki Waldman
- Mincha following Kiddush
- Arbit at 5:45pm followed by Havdalah – Shabbat ends at 5:26pm
- Class at 6:15PM Probably Based on Rabbi Yaakov Hillel, Rosh Yeshivat Ahavat Shalom, Beyond Nature - Mazal
- Movie Night is Back 6:15pm with Dave's Pizza

### WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

- Shahrith Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

### WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

- **THIS SUNDAY MORNING – INTRODUCTION TO A KOSHER KITCHEN with Rav Don Channen and Rav Fishel Todd.** Please join us for learning and breakfast and invite your friends.
- "Wisdom from the Wisest of Men" Mon-Fri 6:30 AM – based upon King Solomon's Proverbs
- **Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav – This week TABLE MANNERS!**
- Ladies Tuesday night class 8PM – for this weeks location and subject speak with Leah Colish or Chantelle 917-620-1607

### SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Turn your winter Sunday into a Funday!** 10- 10:45am (girls ages 5-11). Alternating weeks of Hula with Sammy Hoop and Arts & Crafts with Rikki. Hula-hoop \$10. Arts & Crafts \$5. Pre-registration required. Mark Your Calendars: January 8 & 15 / February 5, 19 & 26. Under the supervision of Leah Colish.
- January 13th 2012 at the Young Israel of Long Beach – a joint event – Shabbat Dinner Catered by Meal Mart, Donation p/p \$18.00 with children \$10.00, Please contact Tara Spiess (516) 432-1515 or Rivka Bohan (516) 749-9099 for reservations
- **January 14 - Join us Saturday night January 14 at 8 pm for a melava malka with guest speaker Rabbi Yaakov Reisman, Rav of Agudath Israel of Long Island.** Bring your friends. A joint Melava Malka with The Young Israel
- January 28 - Rabbi's Yehrtzeit. The entire Abittan family will be with us for Shabbat
- February 3 - Friday night dinner at the shul to commemorate the Rabbi's yehrtzeit. Program details to follow.
- Join us for the first of many movie nights sponsored by the Sephardic and Lido Synagogues on Moztei Shabbat, February 4th at 7:30. We will be watching the 2007 Israeli thriller Ha Hov (The Debt) at the Lido Synagogue: The year is 1965. Rachel Brener is one of 3 young Mossad agents team who caught "The Surgeon of Treblinca" - a Nazi monster who was never brought to trial in Israel. The official reason was that he has committed suicide as a prisoner while being held by his Israeli captive (kidnappers) in a safe house somewhere in Europe. Today, 35 years after the well communicated suicide story of the monster, a small article appears in a local unimportant paper in a small town in Central Europe. Surprisingly the Surgeon is alive . . . While our children will be watching a movie at our synagogue, we will be at Lido Synagogue enjoying Ha Hov. Refreshments will be served. Cost: \$5 per person. Checks can be made out to our synagogue.
- February 12<sup>th</sup> – Sunday ISLAND ROCK - **Indoor Mountain Climbing.** Bring the whole family! Ages 4 and up. \$22/person. 11am -1pm. Speak to Rabbi Colish to sign up.

please reply to  
[ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com)

### Editors Notes

This week, my 18 year old daughter Mikhayla writing from Israel takes my column. We take great pride in her. My wife Chantelle had prepared notes on the concept of Hodaah of admitting and being thankful, but that will need to wait til next week.

For those on the South Shore of Long Island this Sunday, we are hosting a breakfast for Rav Don Channen and Rav Fishel Todd of Pirchei Shoshanim and the Shulchan Aruch Project. For the past dozen years these two gentlemen have been a tremendous influence on me and on countless Jews throughout the world in their efforts to get Jews back on the road to the study of Halacha through the school's courses in every aspect of Jewish law.

Courses include

**Issur V'Heter**  
**Shabbos**  
**Eiruv**  
**Choshen Mishpat**  
**Nida**  
**Aveilus**  
**Hilchos Pesach**  
**Shatnez**  
**Orach Chaim**  
**Kiddushin**  
**Ribbis**  
**How to Daven (Pray)**  
**How to Make Your Kitchen**  
**Kosher**  
**Shabbos Kitchen**  
**6 month Business Ethics Course**

Pirchei Shoshanim and the Shema Yisrael Torah Network provides free educational information to everyone interested in learning Halacha and learning more about Judaism, in general. We are committed to helping

people to learn Shulchan Aruch by offering a program featuring extensive courses and information. We can even offer smicha at the course completion.

Regardless of your experience and teachings, we can teach anyone about Torah and Halacha and can also help enlighten anyone on how to properly pray, keep a kosher kitchen, learn Hebrew, and much more. You can complete the Shulchan Aruch program at your own pace and according to your own schedule.

Rav Channen will be giving an introductory class on "The Kosher Kitchen", a class we plan on offering in Long Beach. Please join us. Shahrit is 8AM followed by the class and breakfast at 9. This is not a fund raising event. This is simply to spread Torah.

For years we learned with Rabbi Abittan z'sl using the "course" notes from Pirchei Shoshanim. A few moments with Rav Channen and Rav Fishel can change your outlook on learning. Please bring your friends. Men and Women are invited. The Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach located at 161 Lafayette at the Corner of West Penn.

For those who cannot attend and want more information go to:  
<http://www.shemayisrael.com/>

### From Mikhayla

As Shabbat approaches, we count down the days waiting finally for that day of rest. But being in Israel and although there's that feeling that everyone is family, when one is separated from their real family, Shabbat can either be a time of excitement in going to new places or the most nerve racking experience of having absolutely nowhere to go.

In school, we have to register by Tuesday afternoon where we'll be spending Shabbat and given our busy schedule there's not always time to really think that one out. This past Thursday arrived and I along with two of my friends, Samara and Nirelle, had nowhere to go.

Nirelle called a family friend who had been inviting her to spend a Shabbat and they gladly accepted having the three of us that weekend. Nirelle warned us before that they weren't exactly as religious as we are, but not to worry, because they are "extremely accommodating, understanding and they know all of the laws".

We arrived Friday afternoon. It was about an hour before Shabbat. There we discovered that we would be joining a completely secular family with little knowledge of religious practice. We requested to leave the bathroom light on for the next twenty four hours. The mother of the house set up candles for us. She was also so kind as to leave us fresh fruit and raw vegetables to eat. Their graciousness was amazing and we were so thankful. We lit the candles and after saying the beracha- turned to the screams of fire as smoke was pouring out from the oven. Our hostess was making us a potato dish to eat with our cold veggies. It was as if G-d interceded on our

behalf saving us from the embarrassment of telling our host that we couldn't eat them. The potatoes were gone, totally burnt.

We left the house in search of a Bet Knesset – A Synagogue. As we walked through the quiet neighborhood watching the people; some jogging, others walking their dogs we realized that it appeared that there was not a single observant Jew in sight. We came to the conclusion that we weren't going to find somewhere to pray. But what could beat nature on a beautiful evening? We stopped and sat by a park bench and the three of us began to sing kabbalat shabbat.

On our walk back we spotted a religious looking man walking with a couple of kids all dressed up. We bolted towards them. "Where's the shul??" He stopped and gladly pointed out the directions and told us shacharit would be at 8:30 the next morning.

We came back to the family we were staying by and sat down for Friday night dinner. The eldest brother made Kiddush which he had been practicing for us. And when we brought out the challah to make hamotzi they were totally surprised- they had "never seen that one before." Imagine that they never saw Challah!

The State of Israel is the Jewish homeland. We're in a country which is meant to be a Jewish nation in a Jewish land. How was it possible that they had "never seen that one before."

As we sat together, we spoke about the hot topic in Israel now of the separate seats on the buses, and of the fighting between the religious Zionists and the charedim in Beit Shemesh. It was apparent that this secular family really didn't

have any understanding of why anyone would ever ask genders to separate on a bus. They saw it simply as a lack of respect from one person to the next. They could only relate it to their understanding of the Rosa Parks story, but instead of degrading a race by sending them to the back, here it was degrading to women. They commented on the rumor that they had heard of small girls being required to cover their hair by the time they turned three. Sitting and listening to this family and their perception of religion, showed me the lack of understanding that exists even between co-religionists in the same country. Not only does one side fail to understand the other side, they fail to even desire or attempt to understand.

This week's portion of Vayechi is that last in the book of Bereshit. It appears that after everything was said and done, Yosef and his brothers never fully reconcile. The distrust at some level remains active. We don't see the brothers ever offering a sincere apology and we don't see Yosef's efforts convince them that they are pardoned. Instead of apologizing, admitting their mistake and begging his forgiveness, they fall before him, ready to be his slaves; ready to be slaves of the Egyptian viceroy. And how does G-d respond? We see next week that He gives them what they asked for. Bnai Yisrael become slaves to Egypt.

Why is it so difficult to admit ones mistake, to say I am sorry, to announce that if I had known then what I know now, I would have acted differently?

It's been thousands of years since Joseph turned to his brothers and said I am Joseph and G-d brought me here. That should have ended the battle. They could have admitted they messed up.

But it didn't and the battle between brothers is still on the front page. We still haven't learned to talk it out between one another. We're still fighting.

The next morning we woke up extra early in order to get to shul on time so that we would be able to get a bit of Shabbat in. After tefilah, the man from the night before came to us and asked if we had a place to eat lunch. Before we could answer, he said he had already told his wife he found us the previous night and that we would be joining him and his family.

During the meal, he and his wife explained to us that they, along with a few other families had moved to the neighborhood, not to run around and preach, but to simply be the nice, religious neighbor. They felt it so important that secular people should be comfortable with the observant; that secular people should see that religious people were "normal". And what was even more amazing was learning that his wife had attended our school, Midreshet Harova, a couple of years before...

We left the table with the total awe of the way things work out. It was a moment as my sister Aryana likes to say, "Is it odd or is it G-d?"

We as Jews constantly speak of the importance of brotherhood. The prophet in last week's Haftara speaks poetically of the joining of Yehudah and Joseph. We strive for unity in our prayers. And as our lips utter words, what do our actions reveal? They suggest something totally different. Stones are being thrown at soldiers, little girls are being spat at, and people are being moved from their seats. How have we come to the point that Beit Shemesh is being compared

to the Warsaw Ghetto? How can one dare compare an Israeli soldier to the German SS Yimach Shemam? Why would Jewish writers exaggerate and incite rather than seek to reconcile. All around us there are public protests and rallies from all sides – and this isn't just happening, it's happening in the so called name of Judaism. It's an embarrassment.

How befitting is this parsha to the times. We're meant to learn from Yosef. His bones were carried out of Egypt by the people on their way to Eretz Yisrael. And through the desert his coffin traveled alongside the Ark of the Covenant, the aron of the luchot. Yosef excelled in every aspect. He was the one to achieve the name "Yosef HaTzadik". The Zohar calls him "Yosef HaTzadik Amudah DeAlmah", "Yosef the righteous, the pillar of the world."

We see that from the moment he revealed himself, he strived for brotherhood. He was the de facto ruler of Egypt under Pharaoh. He could have destroyed his brothers at any time. He could have killed them off the second Yaakov died, but he didn't.

At the end of our parsha it is written, "Then Yosef said to his brothers, 'I am about to die, but G-d will surely remember you and bring you up out of this land to the land that He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' Then Joseph adjured the children of Israel, saying 'G-d will indeed remember you, and you will bring my bones out of here.'"

Yosef spent his entire adult life in exile, but he never forgot the land he came from and the land that he would return to. But the land requires our unity. We are finally in the stages of the redemption, of the geulah. We are finally coming together in the land that

we were promised. Yosef didn't let the differences between him and his brothers ruin that. How dare we?

Shabbat Shalom

Mikhayla Bibi

### 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 bedside. 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.

Melachim Aleph 2:1 - 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 Haftorah 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

**“Now Israel’s eyes were heavy with age, he could not see.” (Beresheet 48:10)**

Ya’akob Abinu in his old age lost his ability to see. Our eyesight is the most precious gift Hashem gives us. Hashem created a world filled with so many things to see. Our Sages teach us that the wonder of eyesight together with the phenomenon of light enables us to see Hashem in this world. There is nothing more important in our lives than proving the existence of Hashem by studying the things we see.

Every day we say the Shema a number of times. In the last paragraph we say “Ur’eetem oto - and you shall see it.” The Shulhan Aruch (24:4) says that there is a custom that when one says “Ur’eetem oto” one should look at the sitit, and place them on the eyes and kiss the sitit; this shows that we love the sitit. The

Kaf Hahayim adds (#14) that if one does this he is guaranteed not to become blind! Good advice to retain the unbelievable gift.

Rabbi C. Nissenbaum tells a story about Rabbi Elazar Shach zt”l. The Rabbi was suffering from an eye problem and visited an ophthalmologist when he was eighty years old. The doctor told him that he could do nothing and in fifteen years he would probably be blind. Rav Shach started to weep.

“But Rabbi,” the doctor started to explain, “You won’t have to worry about that until you’re ninety-five!” The Rosh Yeshivah could not be consoled. “How will I be able to study Torah then?” he cried. “I’m afraid I will remain an ignoramus!”

His love for Torah and life wouldn’t allow Rav Shach to consider the thought that he might not reach ninety-five years – or to take comfort in the fact that he had lived close to eighty years engrossed in Torah study, and that his knowledge of Torah was one of the greatest of his time. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**Ya’akob told his sons to come around him so that he could bless them before he left this world.** He began by rebuking Reuben for getting involved in his father’s conjugal bed. Then he addressed Shimon and Levi, and cursed their anger which was displayed when they destroyed the city of Shechem. The Midrash tells us that Yehudah, who was next on line, shrank back because he was afraid of what his father would say to him, but Ya’akob blessed him instead.

We see from here that a blessing doesn’t only mean being praised and having good wishes heaped upon oneself. If someone points out our fault and emphasizes our shortcomings so

that we can better ourselves, that is called a blessing. Ya’akob knew that for some of his children, pointing out areas for improvement is the best berachah.

When someone gives us criticism, let’s try to see how this can lead us to self improvement. Although it may hurt our feelings somewhat, if we look to better ourselves and are sincerely aiming to improve, we will try to take it constructively, and this will help us change. In the long run, this may be the best berachah!

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

### FAIR GAME

“Life,” some will say, “is a real rat race.” Others declare, “It’s a dog-eat-dog world.” And perhaps the most often heard complaint? “Life is not fair!”

Are these statements true?

True or not, the life situations that prompt people to espouse the philosophy that underlies these clichés are what we all must learn to deal with. When we consider the uneven distribution of wealth in the world, we could say that life is not fair. Even the looks, intelligence, and special talents that Hashem gives graciously to some and denies to others give credence to the notion of unfairness. And anyone who has been involved in a highly competitive business transaction with a tough adversary has very likely felt, at some time, that it’s a dog-eat-dog world – not to mention that life is a rat race.

But Hashem is fair. He does not expect from poor folks what He requires of wealthy individuals. He does not compare the success of people gifted with intelligence to the accomplishment of those who are not blessed with superior mental capacity. All people are measured against the standard of

their own potential, according to the material and spiritual talents they were given for their journey through life – not against the accomplishments or failures of another.

When you get the feeling that the “rat race” of this “dog-eat-dog world” is “not fair,” look at yourself and measure your performance against the bag of tools Hashem gave you for building a life. This perspective will free you from the depression of keeping up with the “race” and allow you to achieve to the best of your own ability. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**  
 Visit [DailyHalacha.com](http://DailyHalacha.com),  
[DailyGemara.com](http://DailyGemara.com),  
[MishnaBerura.com](http://MishnaBerura.com),  
[LearnTorah.com](http://LearnTorah.com)

Yaakob's Final Seventeen Years Parashat Vayehi begins by giving us the “statistics” of the end of Yaakob Abinu's life: “Yaakob lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years; Yaakob's days...were 147 years.”

The question arises as to the purpose of the Torah's emphasis that Yaakob's spent seventeen years in Egypt. After all, we were already told earlier (47:9) that Yaakob was 130 years old when he settled in Egypt. And thus, once the Torah informs us that he died in Egypt at the age of 147, we can easily determine that he spent seventeen years in that country. There seems to be no need for the Torah to do the math for us and specifically state that Yaakob was in Egypt for seventeen years. And besides, why is it significant to know the number of years that Yaakob lived in Egypt?

The answer lies in a fundamental concept regarding our lives and

the purpose for which our souls descended into this world.

The human soul originates from the Heavenly Throne, where it was able to bask in the glory and delight of closeness to God. There it enjoyed absolute purity and perfection, until God sent it down to this difficult, complicated, flawed world, where it would have to struggle – sometimes unsuccessfully – to remain pure and pristine. The soul may be compared to a princess living in the lap of luxury in the royal palace, until her father sent her to live in the slums. For the soul, the spiritual conditions of this world are like the physical conditions of a rundown slum for a princess. The soul is forced away from the pleasure and luxury of the heavens to the harsh, unholy conditions of our world.

The Zohar writes that God sends the soul in this world in order for it to earn its place in the heavens. As our Sages teach, “A man prefers one measure of his own toil than nine of somebody else's.” It is humiliating to receive handouts, to live off the largesse and generosity of other people. We much prefer earning our keep, putting in a hard day's work and then asking for a paycheck. God therefore sends the soul into this world where it must work hard and struggle to retain its purity, through the observance of Torah and Mitzvot. As we know, living pure, Torah-true lives is not easy. Our natural inclination is to stay in bed in the morning, rather than get up for prayers. Our innate tendency is not to live the kind of disciplined, structured and ethical lives that the Torah demands. But we came into this world specifically to struggle, to work hard, to earn our keep, so that when our souls return to their Maker, they can delight in God's presence as their “salary,” rather than as a free gift.

And so if it feels at times that Torah life is difficult and challenging, this is precisely how it is supposed to be. A person does not get a workout in the weight room lifting 5 lb weights. He lifts 20 lbs, and then gradually works his way up to heavier and heavier weights. The same is true of the soul. It gets its “workout” by overcoming spiritual challenges. And once it overcomes one hurdle, the next one is just a bit higher. And this is how it is throughout our lives, as we work to earn our share under the Heavenly Throne.

This concept is expressed in the opening verse of the Torah, which tells that God created “Et Ha'shamayim Ve'et Ha'aretz” – the heaven and the earth. Hashem first created the heaven, the place of the souls, and then later created the earth as the place where the souls would descend to work to earn their place in the heavens.

Yaakob Abinu endured many challenges throughout his life. He was chased by Esav, spent twenty years with his corrupt uncle, Laban, and lost his beloved son Yosef for over twenty years. Yaakob passed all these tests, remaining fully committed and devoted to God throughout these ordeals. But the hardest test of all came in the final seventeen years, when he had to live in Egypt, a place of spiritual contamination and idolatry. Remaining pure in such a spiritually hostile environment was a more difficult challenge than anything Yaakob had endured until that point. Yaakob was not allowed to “retire,” to rest and take it easy, at the end of his life. Even after all the tests he endured, his work was not finished. This is what the Torah is telling us when it says, “Yaakob lived in the land of Egypt for

seventeen years." It teaches us that he had to continue to struggle, even at the end of his life, working to maintain his pristine state of purity in the corrupt environment of Egypt.

It is no coincidence that this period lasted for seventeen years. Earlier, we noted the significance of the phrase "Et Ha'shamayim Ve'et Ha'aretz," which refers to the creation of the earth as the place for the soul to receive its "workout." The first letters of these words – "Alef," "Heh," "Vav," "Heh" – forms one of the Names of God, and they have a combined numerical value of seventeen. Through his seventeen years in Egypt, the final of his many tests, Yaakov achieved the purpose of "Et Ha'shamayim Ve'et Ha'aretz." He spent his life working and struggling to maintain his purity, thus realizing the purpose of his soul's descent to this world, and earning an exalted place in the heavens.

I was privileged to see a number of great Sadikim who continued this struggle even in their older years, refusing to "retire" or surrender to age or illness. I recall visiting Hacham Baruch Ben Haim zs"l in the hospital, and watching him continue to learn even as he lay in the hospital bed with tubes attached to his body and having difficulty breathing. And I had the privilege to see Rav Eliezer Shach zs"l delivering a Shiur in his yeshiva with vigor and intensity when he was in his 90's. The Sadikim understand that as long as their souls are here on earth, they must work and struggle. There is no such thing as retiring or throwing in the towel. As long as we're here, we have what to accomplish.

The lesson for us is not to be intimidated or discouraged by life's tests and challenges. It's not

supposed to be easy. We are here to struggle, to work hard, to exert effort. God knows exactly what tests to give us, precisely how much we can handle. If He sends us a test, it is because He knows we can pass. We must continue struggling and never despair, so that we can earn our place in the eternal world, and our souls will feel eternally gratified for having rightfully earned their place in the highest sphere, beneath the Almighty's Heavenly Throne.

### Rabbi Wein

The conclusion of the book of Bereshith not only completes for us the picture of the founders of the Jewish people – our fathers and mothers – but to a great extent also concludes the purely narrative portion of the Torah. There are precious few commandments or laws and ritual that emanate from this first book of the Torah.

From now forward the Torah, while continuing to be a narrative of early Jewish existence and life, develops into a law book detailing the commandments of the Creator to the Jewish people. If so, then what is the purpose of this lengthy beginning narrative? This is really the essence of the question that Rashi quotes at the beginning of his commentary to the Torah: "Should not the Torah have begun from the commandment regarding the new moon?"

It is there that Rashi answers why it began with the story of creation but the question remains: Why does the Torah continue the narrative regarding the personal lives of our ancestors? To this question the rabbis responded by stating that the events that occurred to our ancestors are sign posts for the later events that would occur to their descendants.

Since this idea can only be validated in hindsight – only after the event occurs to later generations can it be glimpsed as having been foretold by events that occurred to our ancestors – it still begs the original question somewhat. It is important to know that otherwise inexplicable events somehow fit into a preexisting pattern. But what particular lessons can be learned from the detailed narrative of the lives of our great ancestors?

There are general lessons about Jewish life that can certainly be gleaned from the Torah narrative of Bereshith. And perhaps this idea of general lessons is one of the reasons why the Torah invests so many words and descriptions in this eternal book.

One lesson is that Jewish life is not an easy one. Being a small minority and yet preserving a unique identity is no easy task. The struggle of our ancestors to do so is therefore clearly delineated for us. Another life lesson is that there are no guarantees in life especially as regarding children. Yishmael and Esau are prime examples of this disturbing truth.

Another lesson is that in the absence of tolerance for the differences in personalities and outlooks that will always be part of Jewish life and society, terrible things can happen to the Jewish people as a whole. Witness the narrative regarding Yosef and his brothers. A further lesson is that others will always threaten Jewish survival, often by violence and murderous intent. Nimrod, Abimelech, Pharaoh, Lavan, Shechem, Esau are but a few that illustrate this point.

All of our ancestors were forced to face up to enmity, jealousy and the duplicity of others. Another teaching to us is the power of the

individual and the power of an idea. Abraham and Sarah, practically alone, changed the world with their idea and teachings of monotheism. The Torah further informs us that "good" exiles such as Goshen Egypt can eventually turn out to be less good. All of these lessons are essential to Jewish life and its survival. The wise will ponder upon them and apply them well in one's own life and current society

### **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables Squeeze Play**

Yaakov had passed from this world. His twelve sons were left alone in a foreign world and it was time for reconciliation between the ten brothers and the younger sibling whom they sold. But how do a group of brothers who sold a younger sibling into slavery muster the courage to stand in front of him and ask forgiveness?

It was not easy. The Torah tells us that they sent a messenger to Yoseph. "And when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said: 'It may be that Yoseph will hate us, and will fully pay us back for all the evil which we did unto him.' And they sent a message to Yoseph, saying: 'Thy father did command before he died, saying: So shall you say unto Yoseph: "Please, forgive now your brothers' transgression and their sin, for they did evil to you."

Indeed Yoseph responds that they should not worry, rhetorically asking them, "Am I in place of Hashem?" (See Genesis Ch. 50: v.16-18)

Rashi quotes the Midrash and Talmud: They altered the facts for the sake of peace. [Yevamos 65b, Tanchuma Toldos]

I think that Rashi is bothered. After all we find no mention in the Torah that Yaakov ever told the brothers such a directive. It must be that they made it up. He thus quotes the Talmud, that "they altered the facts for the sake of peace."

But I am bothered as well. How could they compound their crime by stating that their father had so requested. How could they use Yaakov's name as an approbation of, if not the basis for, their white lie?

#### **The Story**

The 1929 Boston Braves were owned by owned by a Judge Emil E. Fuchs. Judge Fuchs, basically cared for the financial management and legal affairs of the team, but the depressed economy left the team without a manager.

"I read the rule book!" cried the judge who surrounded himself with a few cronies and literally brought his swivel chair into the dugout. It was late in the summer of that dismal season and the team had just been on a losing streak. Miraculously, however it seemed that the down streak was about to end. The game was tied at the bottom of the ninth and the bases were loaded. Fuchs gave the orders to swing away.

After one strike the batter, Joe Dugan called time and approached his well-respected manager. "Judge," the player meekly suggested, "the rookie at third is playing well behind the bag. I'll drop a bunt and we'll squeeze the winning run in!"

The judge looked sternly at the ball player. He was stunned at the mere suggestion. "Mr. Dugan," he exclaimed, "You will do no such thing. Either we will score our runs honorably or not at all!"

#### **The Message**

The brothers understood how to play the game of life and how

their father Yaakov would have wanted it.

Peace and harmony were the only ultimate goal. That is what all parents want for their children and that is what the objective of the twelve brothers was. It took a squeeze play, but harmony was achieved. And had Yaakov been alive to manage the situation he may have also chose the exact game plan. Yaakov after all had his father give him the blessing that were intended for Esav the first-born.

My grandfather, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt"l, once told me that the mark of attaining the highest level of any attribute or character trait knowing when to break it! And to that end Avraham the stalwart of kindness and compassion was ready to sacrifice his own son at God's command. Yaakov whose virtue is truth knew when to alter it for the sake of listening to his mother in obtaining the blessings by masquerading as Esav.

And the brothers were willing to use the sacred name of Yaakov in conjunction with their fabrication all for Jewish harmony that they felt would be a prerequisite for survival in the Egyptian Exile.

Sometimes part of the rule of law, incorporated into the great rule book of life is a way to score the run for Shalom, even if you have to steal a base. (c) 2011 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky



## Ricky Cohen

### The Real "Occupy" Movement Inspired by Our Forefathers: Joseph and Benjamin

With the onset of 2012, groups of "Occupy Wall Street" protestors, in large cities all over the country, are working to solidify their messages and plan their next series of large scale takeovers and protests. A group referred to as Occupy Student Debt is trying to secure one million participants to unilaterally default on their student loans – and thereby force the government to dramatically lighten the financial burden endured by students. At this time, it is with great pride that I announce that Ricky&Me is starting our own "occupy" movement!

After 37 years of community and civic involvement, and many middle of the night - and middle of the day – dreams about running for political office, I believe I'm ready and qualified to begin my own occupy movement. My goal would be to have an international - rather than a domestic reach. I am prepared to dedicate the rest of my life to making sure it reaches the highest levels of every government, in every country, across the globe. Other movements may come and go, but this movement will speak to elements of human existence so universal and timeless, that it will never lose relevance. This movement is not simply inspired by my own political aspirations, or by what's going on in the news, it is ancient - as well as modern - given its impetus by a pronounced and memorable action taken by our forefathers, Joseph and Benjamin.

It is described that after not having seen each other for over a decade, Joseph and Benjamin fell into each other's arms and cried on each other's shoulders. Our Sages mention that their embrace

was so heartfelt, and the emotional connection so deep and eternal, that they cried over the pain that was, and that which would be a thousand years later! The hug of Joseph and Benjamin should burn a strong imprint in our minds of something transformative, deeply telling, and forever memorable.

With the above in mind, I am naming the new movement: "UHM" – The Universal Hug Movement

The goal of UHM would be to re-educate men and women, all over the world, on how to hug. We would launch hugging classes, a hug workshop, a hug game, and most important: a mobile app that would provide daily reminders to people on the most important components of a successful hug - and then it would rate the quality level of the last hug the individual gave.

UHM would espouse the following principles under its: GHRP - Great Hug Rehabilitation Program:

1. Time: The average length of a hug to a spouse, or other immediate family member, should be no less than 45 seconds.
2. Intensity: The physical expression of the embrace should be intense. And at the midpoint of the hug, the huggee should feel "squished."
3. Focus: This is most important. The hugger and huggee should immerse their emotions completely in the hug that's taking place. Any thoughts that enter the hug-mate's minds during the hug, other than love for the other, and the specialness of their being in each other's arms, should be immediately removed. As the UHM promotes TIF, as the core elements of its GHRP, the world will begin to change! In fact, I believe that the image of Joseph and Benjamin hugging each other, and seeing and feeling all that could be felt between two

brothers, will become a popular image, hung on the walls of restaurants, coffee shops and small merchants all over the world.

So you want to occupy something? Try the arms of your parents, your spouse, your baby, or your adolescent or adult child. And when you do that type of occupying, do so as if it the hug app was rating your hug's intensity and love.

Join UHM and make the world a better place!

### Sir Jonathan Sacks Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

#### The Last Tears

At almost every stage of fraught encounter between Joseph and his family in Egypt, Joseph weeps. There are seven scenes of tears:

1. When the brothers came before him in Egypt for the first time: They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us" ... They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. [42: 21-24]
2. On the second occasion, when they brought Benjamin with them: Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there. [43: 29-30]
3. When, after Judah's impassioned speech, Joseph is about to disclose his identity:

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. [45: 1-2]

4. Immediately after he discloses his identity: Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. [45: 14-15]

5. When he meets his father again after their long separation: Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. [46: 29]

6. On the death of his father: Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. [50: 1]

7. Some time after his father's death: When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "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. [50: 15-17]

No one weeps as much as Joseph. Esau wept when he discovered that Jacob had taken

his blessing (Gen. 27: 38). Jacob wept when he saw the love of his life, Rachel, for the first time (29: 11). Both brothers, Jacob and Esau, wept when they met again after their long estrangement (33: 4). Jacob wept when told that his beloved son Joseph was dead (37: 35).

But the seven acts of Joseph's weeping have no parallel. They span the full spectrum of emotion, from painful memory to the joy of being reunited, first with his brother Benjamin, then with his father Jacob. There are the complex tears immediately before and after he discloses his identity to his brothers, and there are the tears of bereavement at Jacob's deathbed. But the most intriguing are the last, the tears he sheds when he hears that his brothers fear that he will take revenge on them now that their father is no longer alive.

In a fine essay, "Yosef's tears,"<sup>[1]</sup> Rav Aharon Lichtenstein suggests that this last act of weeping is an expression of the price Joseph pays for the realisation of his dreams and his elevation to a position of power. Joseph has done everything he could for his brothers. He has sustained them at a time of famine. He has given them not just refuge but a place of honour in Egyptian society. And he has made it as clear as he possibly can that he does not harbour a grudge against them for what they did to him all those many years before. As he said when he disclosed his identity to them: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you . . . God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God" (45: 5-8). What more could

he say? Yet still, all these years later, his brothers do not trust him and fear that he may still seek their harm.

This is Rav Lichtenstein's comment: "At this moment, Yosef discovers the limits of raw power. He discovers the extent to which the human connection, the personal connection, the family connection, hold far more value and importance than does power – both for the person himself and for all those around him." Joseph "weeps over the weakness inherent in power, over the terrible price that he has paid for it. His dreams have indeed been realised, on some level, but the tragedy remains just as real. The torn shreds of the family have not been made completely whole."

On the surface, Joseph holds all the power. His family are entirely dependent on him. But at a deeper level it is the other way round. He still yearns for their acceptance, their recognition, their closeness. And ultimately he has to depend on them to bring his bones up from Egypt when the time comes for redemption and return (50: 25).

Rav Lichtenstein's analysis reminds us of Rashi and Ibn Ezra's commentary to the last verse in the book of Esther. It says that "Mordechai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by most of his brethren" (Est. 10: 3) – "most" but not all. Rashi (quoting Megillah 16b) says that some members of the Sanhedrin were critical of him because his political involvement (his "closeness to the king") distracted from the time he spent studying Torah. Ibn Ezra says, simply: "It is impossible to satisfy everyone, because people are envious [of other people's success]." Joseph and Mordechai/Esther are supreme examples of Jews who reached positions of influence and power

in non-Jewish circles. In modern times they were called Hofjuden, "court Jews," and other Jews were often held deeply ambivalent feelings about them.

But at a deeper level, Rav Lichtenstein's remarks recall Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic, an idea that had huge influence on nineteenth century, especially Marxist, thought. Hegel argued that the early history of humanity was marked by a struggle for power in which some became masters, others slaves. On the face of it, masters rule while slaves obey. But in fact the master is dependent on his slaves – he has leisure only because they do the work, and he is the master only because he is recognised as such by his slaves. Meanwhile the slave, through his work, acquires his own dignity as a producer. Thus the slave has "inner freedom" while the master has "inner bondage." This tension creates a dialectic – a conflict worked out through history – reaching equilibrium only when there are neither masters nor slaves, but merely human beings who treat one another not as means to an end but as ends in themselves. Thus understood, Joseph's tears are a prelude to the master-slave drama about to be enacted in the book of Exodus between Pharaoh and the Israelites.

Rav Lichtenstein's profound insight into the text reminds us of the extent to which Torah, Tanakh and Judaism as a whole are a sustained critique of power. Prior to the Messianic age we cannot do without it – consider the tragedies Jews suffered in the centuries in which they lacked it. But power alienates. It breeds suspicion and distrust. It diminishes those it is used against, and thus diminishes those who use it. Even Joseph "the righteous" weeps when he sees the extent to which power sets him apart

from his brothers. Judaism is about an alternative social order which depends not on power but on love, loyalty and the mutual responsibility created by covenant. That is why Nietzsche, who based his philosophy on "the will to power," correctly saw Judaism as the antithesis of all he believed in.

Power may be a necessary evil, but it is an evil, and the less we have need of it, the better.

### **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.

The next thing to Think about is that we have been given the privilege to address the King of the Universe as "You" ("Ata") 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.

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.

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