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ON VAYECHI - 5777

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Rabbi Yisroel Reisman – Parshas Vayechi 5776

1. It is Shabbos Chazak, a week of strengthening ourselves. I would like to share with you some ideas on the Parsha and perhaps they can Takeh serve as Chazak, to strengthen and give us Koach. I would like to start with a question. One of the themes of the Parsha, certainly at the beginning of the Parsha is Yaakov's decision to elevate Ephraim and Menashe as is found in 48:5 (כְּרֵאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן, יְהִי-לִי). To elevate them to the status of Shevatim. It is an incredible thing to take two grandchildren and elevate them to the status of Shevatim and as you know, this was at least in part because Reuvain lost the Bechorah and Yosef received the Bechorah. Yosef would get Pi Shnayim which included getting two Shevatim. Still it is a major event in the Parsha. If Yaakov Avinu wanted to elevate Ephraim and Menashe to have the status of two Shevatim, why is it that immediately thereafter he gives Berachos to the twelve Shevatim and he gives a Beracha to Yosef. He doesn't split the Berachos between Ephraim and Menashe? He gives Berachos to Ephraim and Menashe earlier. Why? If he is elevating Ephraim and Menashe to be Shivtai Kah, the Berachos should be all together with all Shivtai Kah right before his Petirah, and it would seem to be inconsistent. The beginning of the Parsha says that Ephraim and Menashe are like Reuvain and Shimon and then immediately thereafter we find the twelve Shevatim were given Berachos without Ephraim and Menashe being counted separately. It certainly begs an explanation.

I would like to share with you an idea that I saw B'sheim Rav Zalman Volotziner (1756 – 1788) and this is quoted in the Mamarei Pachad Yitzchok of Sukkos, Maimar Pei Aleph. We find at the end of Sefer Yechezkel that Shaar Yosef Echad. When Yechezkel talks about the twelve Shevatim he talks about a Shaar Yosef. He doesn't talk about a Shaar for Ephraim and Menashe. He talks about Yosef specifically. Rav Yisrael Salanter (1810 – 1883) asks in the name of Rav Zalman Volotziner why it is that way that in Yechezkel's Nevuah which is a Nevuah

on L'asid Lavo where Yechezkel has a Nevua of the division of Eretz Yisrael after Moshiach comes, why there are Ephraim and Menashe not together? Rav Yisrael Salanter answers that in the Parsha Yaakov said (וַעֲתָה שְׁנֵי-בְנֵיךָ הַגִּדְּתִים לְךָ בְּאָרְצָךְ מִצְרַיִם, עַד-בְּאֵי אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם--לִי-הֵם: אֶפְרַיִם, וּמְנַשֶּׁה--כְּרֵאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן, יְהִי-לִי). And now, your two children Ephraim and Menashe are like Reuvain and Shimon. It is only (וְעַתָּה), it is only B'olam Hazeih, however, when Moshiach will come it will revert back to being Shaar Yosef Echad, one for the entire Shaar of Yosef. Ad Kan Divrei Rav Yisrael Salanter as quoted in the Pachad Yitzchok. He says that this Beracha (יְהִי-לִי) is only an Olam Hazeih Beracha.

Naturally, that would answer our original Kasha. The Kasha was why is the Beracha of the twelve Shevatim not giving Ephraim and Menashe Berachos separately, why is it that their Berachos were independent. The Teretz is that the Berachos of the Shevatim are inherent in the Sheivet forever and ever. Even when Moshiach comes, the Shevatim will stand as an independent group within Klal Yisrael. The Beracha of Nitzchiyos was given to Yosef. The Berachos for Olam Hazeih, for the duration of time until Moshiach comes that was given to Ephraim and Menashe. So it answers our question. Still, it does not answer or explain why it should be so. If Yaakov is elevating them, what is the importance of limiting that elevation only to the time Moshiach comes?

Perhaps we can find in this a Remez for an idea that is well-known but doesn't have a good original source. There is an idea that L'asid Lavo the Avodah will return to the Bechorim. The idea is attributed to the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh in words that he says in Parshas Acharei Mos. It doesn't really seem to have an earlier Mekor or any Mekor that carries it through. Why should we say that the Avodah will return to the Bechorah L'asid Lavo?

According to Rav Yisrael Salanter we find a Remez to that here. The Bechorah was taken away from Reuvain. It is a punishment and the punishments end by Yemos Hamashiach. Punishments are for the duration. When the punishments end the Bechorah of Reuvain will return to Reuvain and therefore, that which was given here to Yosef as a double Cheilek is only temporary, it is for Olam Hazeih. L'asid Lavo it returns. This idea that even the Onshim that happen L'olam Hazeih are only Olam Hazeih Onshim and not L'asid Lavo perhaps can serve to give us a deeper understanding into many of the Pesukim that we say when we talk to the Ribbono Shel Olam, (like in Tehillim 13 or 74) Al Tishkacheini Lanetzach. We talk about punishments not being Nitzchiyos. Even when there are punishments they are Olam Hazeih punishments not the Nitzchiyos, they don't touch on the permanence of Klal Yisrael. That is this idea (עַד-בְּאֵי אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, עַד-בְּאֵי אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם--לִי-הֵם: אֶפְרַיִם, וּמְנַשֶּׁה--כְּרֵאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן, יְהִי-לִי). So Rav Yisrael Salanter is the source and whatever else I have added in my conjecture. Ulai, perhaps it is so. From this idea regarding Ephraim and Menashe we turn to a second aspect of the beginning of the Parsha.

2. In the beginning of the Parsha we find as Rashi brings in 47:31 (מֵאֵן אִמְרוּ) (מֵאֵן אִמְרוּ) (שהשכינה למעלה מראשותיו של הוילה). That we learn from Yaakov Avinu that the Shechinah stands over the head of the Choleh. There is a Gemara in Maseches Nedarim 40a (5 lines from the bottom) that says when one comes into the home of a Choleh, it is not clear how sick the Choleh has to be in order for this to apply, however, it is certainly the case if one goes to the hospital for a severely ill person Lo Aleinu that he has to realize that the Shechinah is there. The Gemara brings a Minhag not to sit in the presence of the Choleh because the Shechinah is there (תַּנְיָא נְמוּ הֵכִי הִנְכַּס לְבַקֵּר אֶת הַחֹלֶה לֹא) (ישב לא על גבי מטה ולא ע"ג ספסל ולא על גבי כסא אלא מתעטף ויושב ע"ג קרקע מפני שהשכינה שרויה למעלה ממטתו של חולה). That seems to be a Minhag that has fallen by the wayside.

The question is that in the beginning of Parshas Vayeira we learn as is found in 18:1 (לְבַקֵּר אֶת הַחֹלֶה). Rashi says (וַיָּרָא אֱלֹהֵי יְרֵד, בְּאֵלֵי מְקָרָא). Hashem came to Avraham to be Mevakeir Choleh. It sounds like a special idea because of the special greatness of Avraham Avinu. Guess what? It is not only Avraham Avinu and not only Yaakov Avinu. (מֵאֵן אִמְרוּ שֶׁהַשְּׂכִינָה לְמַעְלָה מֵרֵאשִׁיתוֹ שֶׁל)

(חולה). It seems to be true about everyone. What is special about Avraham Avinu that we are told there that Hashem came to be Mevakeir the Choleh? I think here we see a Klal Gadol, an important idea.

There are sometimes in a person's life where a person feels the Shechinah more. There are sometimes during the year like for example as is found in Yeshaya 55:6 (דְּרֹשׁוּ יְרוּרָה, בְּהִמְצָאוֹ; קְרָאֵהוּ, בְּהִיטּוֹ קְרוֹב). During the ten days of Teshuva a person can feel the presence of the Shechina more. Certainly by Yom Kippur Neilah a person feels the presence of the Shechina more. The Shechina is always there, yet there are sometimes that are more of an opportunity to feel the Shechina. Similarly, there are some places that you feel the Shechina more. Someone who goes to the Kosel and takes seriously his visit to the Kosel has a Hergish of (Beraishis 28:17) (אֵין זֶה, כִּי אֶם-בַּיִת) שְׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם (אֶלְרִים, וְזֶה, שְׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם). Wherever Yaakov Avinu went he felt the presence of the Shechina. There are some places that are special. The Har Habayis is special and there, Yaakov Avinu felt the presence of the Shechinah more. (Yeshaya 6:3) (מְלֵא כָל-הָאָרֶץ, כְּבוֹדוֹ). Hashem's presence can be felt anywhere. Different times, places, opportunities that are special. The idea that (הַשְׂכִּינָה) (למעלה מראשותיו של חולה). It is true because it is a time in a person's life where if he chooses he can feel the presence of the Shechinah.

I once saw a Maiseh about one Rebbe (I don't remember which one). Someone came to him with Sefaikim in Emunah, he had questions about believing in G-d. The Rebbe told him to come back a week later. He Davened that this person should have an open heart to recognize Hashem. At the end of the week the person came back. He said Ani Mamin. So the Rebbe asked what happened to you. He replied that during this week I had a terrible stomach virus and there were many moments when I felt, what is going to be with me, Hashem you are the only one that can help me. I felt that it is to the Ribbono Shel Olam that I have to turn. To that the Rebbe replied you see Lo Emunah Chosarta Ela K'avim Chosarta. You weren't missing faith you were missing the belly ache, you were missing the pain.

There are times in a person's life where he has the opportunity to feel the Shechina because he feels the weakness of a human being. The fact that a human being is so frail and imperfect, that a human being can't be the purpose of the entire creation. When a person is strong and feels (Devarim 8:17) (כְּחִי וְנֶעְצָם יָדַי) he feels differently. When a person realizes his frailty, he turns to the Ribbono Shel Olam.

(יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְשָׂרָאֵל, עַל-רֹאשׁ) (שַׁחֲשִׁיבָה לְמַעַל מֵרֵאשִׁיתוֹ שֶׁל חוֹלֵה). Says Rashi on 47:31 (הַפֶּךְ עֲצַמוֹ לְצַד הַשְׂכִּינָה) that (הַמְּטִיחַ הַשְׂכִּינָה). It is hard to know what it means as if the Shechina is over your head how do you turn towards the Shechinah. But figuratively (הַפֶּךְ עֲצַמוֹ לְצַד הַשְׂכִּינָה). When people are sick the Shechina is there, they don't see it, they don't recognize it. A person has to be (הַפֶּךְ עֲצַמוֹ לְצַד הַשְׂכִּינָה) turn to the Shechinah. A person has to recognize that the Shechina is there.

I asked before how sick does a person have to be to have (הַשְׂכִּינָה לְמַעַל) (מֵרֵאשִׁיתוֹ). The answer is it depends on you. It depends on when you will recognize the Shechina. (מְלֵא כָל-הָאָרֶץ, כְּבוֹדוֹ). The Shechinah is always there to be recognized. There are opportunities in life. Just like there are times, there are places, there are moments in a human beings life where you have the opportunity. Avraham Avinu had the Shechina visiting him just like every Choleh. For Avraham Avinu it was real. He sat with the Shechina. He excused himself when he stepped away from the Shechina, it was real. We are not Avraham Avinu and we are not Yaakov Avinu but it is an opportunity. It is an opportunity of recognizing the presence of the Shechina when a person has his moments of Choili Lo Aleinu. And so, a message from the Choli of Yaakov and a message from the Beracha to Ephraim and Menashe.

3. Finally, this week's Parsha reveals to us a Chiddush that before a person's death he has a special opportunity to give a blessing to his children. Yitzchok gave a Beracha to Yaakov and Eisav it wasn't immediately before his death but Rashi tells us that because his mother had passed away at the age of 127, as he approached that milestone, he gave a Beracha thinking that his life may be cut short as well. The point being from both places that when

a person is close to death, there is a special time to give a Beracha. Why is that?

The Chasam Sofer comments in numerous places that when a Tzaddik leaves the world his Talmidim have a special opportunity for growth. When a father leaves the world those who he influenced have a special opportunity to grab the influence that he had. When Rabbeinu Hakadosh died, the people who were with him were Mizuyaim to Chayei Olam Habo. They took the opportunity to grab from that moment. Eliyahu tells Elisha when I am taken from the world if you will be there then you will have Pi Shnayim Ruchacha Alai. How can someone give twice what he has?

The answer is that when a Tzaddik is taken from this world he does have more. His life is finished and special. It is unique. The Kedusha is complete. When someone leaves the world it is a very special moment. The Chasam Sofer writes that he wishes that he would have had the Zechus to be there at the Petira of his Rebbe Rav Nassan Adler, who knows to what he would have been Zoche. He writes that Yitzchok didn't have Nevua until after Avraham's Petira. Yaakov didn't have Nevua until he left his father's house when he was sent away by Yitzchok. When one leaves the source of the Kedusha, and the source of Kedusha takes leave of him, it is a special moment to grab, to Chap, and take from the influence that he had and then it is gone.

It is a Limud. The same thing is true on Yom Kippur when Yom Kippur leaves is Neilah, a special moment, a time to grab an opportunity. When Shabbos leaves, Seudos Shlishi time between Mincha and Maariv is a very special moment. People are in Shul for Mincha and Maariv is perhaps 45 minutes later, people go home and come back. It takes 20 minutes or more to walk back and forth and to walk around in circles. It is a special time, Shabbos is leaving. When Kedusha leaves it has a Pi Shnayim, it is an opportunity that a person has. Between Mincha and Maariv, a person will come L'asid Lavo and the Ribbono Shel Olam will say, you work all week why don't you learn on Shabbos? Perhaps he will say that he is tired and it was a short Shabbos. The Ribbono Shel Olam will say what about between Mincha and Maariv what did you do then? There is nothing else to do but learn. You are in Shul for Mincha and for Maariv what else is there to do? It is a special moment when Shabbos is leaving.

A special moment when a person finds a time in his life where spiritually a change is taking place. It is a time to grab, a time to Chap, a time to grab Pi Shnayim. Yaakov Avinu's lesson is that when a father passes away it is a very special moment for the children. They can make something of it. Perhaps we understand why children observe twelve months of Aveilus. To be reminded that it is a time of opportunity, make something of it. And so, Beraishis comes to an end, the Tekufah of the Avos comes to an end, the Tekufah of Maiseh Avos Siman L'banim come to an end. Try to grab and take our last lessons. Just as when Shabbos ends, Yom Kippur ends, when a person's life ends, it is an opportunity. When Chumash Beraishis ends or any Chumash ends we say Chazak Chazak, it is an opportunity. Why Chazak Chazak at the end? When something ends it is an opportunity to grab, to take something from there that is meaningful. With that I wish one and all an absolutely wonderful Shabbos. Chazak Chazak! Be stronger. Keep to your Sedorim and Limud Hatorah which is what the Satan wants to fight the most. Make it happen, grow. IY"H It should be a Shabbos of Chizuk for all of us.

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Peninim on the Torah

by **Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** -

Parshas Vayechi

But as for me - when I came from Paddan, Rachel died on me in the Land of Canaan on the road...and I buried her there on the road to Efras. (48:7)

Yaakov Avinu seems to be apologizing to Yosef for not having buried Rachel Imeinu in Eretz Yisrael: "Although I trouble you to bury me in the land of Canaan, though I did not do so for your mother, for, see now, she died near Beis Lechem"; "And I did not even take her to Beis Lechem, to bring her into the Land, and I know that there are hard feelings in your heart against me. But you should know that by the Word of G-d I buried her there so that she should be of aid to her children when Nevuzaradden would exile them, and when they would pass through by way of Rachel's tomb, Rachel would go out and seek mercy for them." (Rashi)

Despite the fact that he did not bury Yosef's mother in Eretz Yisrael, Yaakov asked his son to do for him what he did not do for his mother. Furthermore, this validation of Rachel's burial is placed right in the middle of Yaakov's blessing of Yosef's two sons. He says: "Ephraim and Menashe will be to me like Reuven and Shimon ... But as for me..." He then continues with the designated blessings for Ephraim and Menashe. What is Yaakov intimating by what appears to be a disjointed conversation?

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, explains that when Yaakov asked Yosef to bury him in Eretz Yisrael, he was actually presenting his son with a powerful challenge. He was requesting that Yosef do something which he himself had not done for Yosef's mother! Would Yosef refuse? Would he rebel? Not Yosef HaTzaddik. He stood there respectfully. He neither complained nor rebelled. Instead, he immediately promised his father that his request would be executed to the fullest extent.

Now, let us address the blessings and why Yaakov's validation is placed in the middle of the conversation concerning the blessings. What happened to Reuven? Why did he lose the bechorah, right of the firstborn? Impetuosity. He criticized his father for not moving his bed into Leah Imeinu's tent following the passing of Rachel. Reuven made the move, placing Yaakov's bed in Bilhah's tent. Reuven had taanos, complaints. One who cannot accept a challenge-- confront a situation with which he neither agrees, nor understands -- loses the birthright. He lacks the quality of amidah b'nisayon, staying the course, even when confronted with a difficult challenge. Yosef, however, was silent. He, too, had reason to perhaps express his taanos; yet, he remained silent. He stood strong in the face of challenge. Thus, he became the b'chor, firstborn.

Yaakov is now transferring the bechorah, saying that Ephraim and Menashe will be like Reuven and Shimon. Yaakov intimates to Yosef: Do you want to know why I am giving you the bechorah? It is because when I came from Paddan, your mother, Rachel, died and I was compelled to bury her on the side of the road - not in Eretz Yisrael! Yet, you did not complain! This is why you have become the firstborn - instead of Reuven.

How many times in life do we lose our cool - justifiably? How often do we lose something important as a result of our impetuosity? How often do we say to ourselves: "If I would have only controlled myself..."? Last, how often do we judge people negatively without giving them the benefit of the doubt, without asking ourselves: "Perhaps there is something about him that I am overlooking"? It all boils down to what the Maggid explains: Leadership goes to he who is able to rise above challenge. Some of the greatest and most powerful people have fallen because they could not overcome petty challenges. Challenge may be defined as a refusal to accept something as true or correct when our hearts do not coincide with this line of thought. In other words, if my "gut feeling" tells me that something is not right, the fact that my mind tells me there might be a reason, a validation for what our gut feeling is telling us is incorrect, we follow our heart and ignore our mind. Such a person has failed the challenge.

The following is one story where, indeed, an entire city fell victim to this gut feeling. The city of Krakow/Cracow, Poland, in the seventeenth century had a large Jewish population, many of whom were devout Torah scholars. A city is home to all types of people. Cracow was home to a wealthy Jew by the name of Yisrael who achieved infamy for his uncompromising stinginess. The local beggars had long since stopped coming by his house to solicit funds, knowing full well that it was a waste of time. The city's trustees had

followed suit, since every attempt at fundraising was met with polite, but adamant, refusal. Seventeenth century European Jews were, for the most part, devoid of economic opportunity. Many lived lives of abject poverty, augmenting their meager "income" by begging from door to door. Thus, Yisrael's utter heartlessness enraged the community. Here was a Jew who had so much and was capable of supporting the community; yet, he did not. As a result of their annoyance with him, they nicknamed him Goy, a nom deguere that stuck, despite its crude and vulgar connotation.

Time does not halt for anyone; the wealthy miser was no exception. He now lay on his deathbed surrounded by members of the Chevra Kaddisha, Jewish Sacred Burial Society, negotiating for his burial and tombstone: "I have already had tachrichim, shrouds, sewn for me. I need a simple plot anywhere in the cemetery. Likewise, a simple stone to serve as a marker will suffice."

"You understand that the money incurred from the sale of plots is used for charity," the head of the Chevra began. "Each Jew pays according to his means. In your case, you are quite capable. In addition, you have hardly assisted the poor in the past."

"As far as my non-relationship with the poor, Heaven will judge me. You, on the other hand, have no right to extract more from me than I am willing to give. I will give you one hundred gulden, and that is it. One more thing. I insist that the inscription on my head stone to read: Here lies Yisrael Goy." The members of the Chevra could not argue with the man. He was adamant. They completed the paperwork and left his home in desperation. The latest act of miserliness evinced by Yisrael Goy duly annoyed the populace. "How low could a person get?" they wondered. Apparently, this man would leave the world a very lonely person - which is what he did. It took great effort to secure a minyan, quorum, for his funeral. There were no eulogies; people simply were not interested. [We are not allowed to judge, but, when someone is destitute and he has no food to give his hungry family-- with no hope for a solution other than the wealthy man who refuses to help him-- people will do strange things and often act out of character. We may not judge those who are in dire need.] That Thursday evening there was a knock at the door of Cracow's Rav, the distinguished Horav Yom Tov Lipa Heller, zl, author of the Tosfos Yom Tov commentary on Mishnayos. It was one of the community's poor who asked for money to purchase the necessary foods for Shabbos. The Rav gave him a few coins from his discretionary fund. No sooner had the man left than someone else appeared at the door with a similar request. During the next hour, twenty men came to the Rav's door asking for Shabbos funds. The Rav had never experienced such a sudden rise in the community's poor. What had happened? He called an emergency meeting of the community's tzedakah gabbaim, trustees. They, too, did not understand this phenomenon.

A few minutes into the meeting, another poor petitioner knocked on the door requesting funds. This time the Rav asked him, "Tell me, how did you survive until now?" "We bought on credit at the grocers. We had no money. He simply wrote it down in his ledger, and that was the last we heard of it. He never asked us for the money." (Apparently, they were not going to look a gift horse in the mouth. They knew it was unreal to receive unlimited credit, but, regardless, they accepted it.) The Rav investigated and discovered that literally hundreds of families lived this way - receiving credit at the town's grocers.

Now it was time to meet with the grocers. The Rav called them all together and said, "You will not leave this room until you share with me how you were able to give credit for hundreds of families each and every week."

They hemmed and hawed until the truth finally came out. For years, Yisrael G. had sustained hundreds of poor families. Every week, when a merchant presented him with a bill, he immediately paid it in full. There was one condition, however: No one - absolutely no one- not even his closest family, was to be made aware of his practice of anonymous charity.

When the Rav heard this tale he was shattered that such a righteous person had lived in their midst, and the community, in their haste to judge him, had excoriated a Jew who stood on a much higher spiritual plane than any of

them.

Rav Yom Tov Lipa immediately declared a public fast day on Yisrael G's sheloshim, thirty days after his passing, to atone for misjudging and reviling a fellow Jew. They were to gather at the cemetery where they would all beg forgiveness from the deceased. The Rav followed their supplication with a fiery eulogy extolling the quality of he who gives charity anonymously, despite the fact that it caused him extreme personal humiliation. Last, the Rav declared that, when his time to leave this world would come, he asked to be buried next to Reb Yisrael.

The Rav instructed that the community comply with Reb Yisrael's last wish to have Yisrael Goy engraved on his stone. He had them, however, add a word - kadosh. The stone now read Yisrael Goy Kadosh - a different meaning for a different person. Apparently, they had a never known the original person.

<http://5tjt.com/a-fruitful-discussion/>

Jan 13, 2017

A Fruitful Discussion

Newborn baby boy under a blue blanket - Halachic Musings

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

There is a mitzvah in the Torah called P'ru u'R'vu—be fruitful and multiply. It is given twice in the Torah. Rashi explains that one appearance is to give mankind a blessing in this regard and the second is to command us in the mitzvah. It is an extremely important mitzvah; without it, there would soon be no people.

There is a second mitzvah, discussed in Yevamos 62b, “LaErev al tanach yadecha—in the evening do not let your hand rest.” This mitzvah involves the obligation to continue having children later in life—in other words, beyond the two obligatory children of the mitzvah of P'ru u'R'vu. This halachah is quantified in Shulchan Aruch (EH 1:8). The Beis Shmuel (1:18), citing the Rif, Rambam, and Rosh, rules that this mitzvah is rabbinic in nature.

There is possibly even a third mitzvah. In Sefer Yeshayahu, the pasuk (45:18) states, “Lo sohu barah, lasheves yatzrah—He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited.” Tosfos in Gittin (41b “Lo”) are of the opinion that “He formed it to be inhabited” is a separate mitzvah in and of itself. The Sefer HaChinuch, however, is of the opinion that it is merely an explanation of the first mitzvah and does not form its own independent mitzvah. Many poskim are in agreement with Tosfos, such as the TaZ, the Avnei Miluim, the Pischei Teshuvah, and the Chasam Sofer.

Chelkas Mechokek's Question

The poskim that surround the Shulchan Aruch consider whether one has fulfilled the mitzvah of P'ru u'R'vu if the siring of the child came through waters of a bathhouse, without direct contact between the two parents—even though they were clearly the parents. The Chelkas Mechokek (EH 1:8) poses this question and remains unclear. The Beis Shmuel (EH 1:11) cites a proof to this position from a Bach in Yoreh Deah. However, the TaZ (EH 1:8) rejects this proof.

Dayan Weiss (Minchas Yitzchak Vol. I #50) rules that even those poskim who hold that the child is not attributed to the father in the above case would rule that the child is attributed to the father in the case of IUI, intra-uterine insemination. He rules thus because a maaseh is performed in the latter case, whereas that may not be the case in the former.

The Tzitz Eliezer (Vol. III #27) is unsure, however, if this is, in fact, considered a maaseh, since there is no direct contact. The majority of halachic authorities, however, are of the view that it is considered a maaseh. (See Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l, IM EH 1 #18; Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt'l, Shulchan Shlomo Vol. III p. 99; and Rav Shmuel Vosner, zt'l, Shevet HaLevi Vol. VIII 251:11.) The same would be true about IVF, in-vitro fertilization.

Is It An Obligation?

A friend of mine posed the question to Rav Elyashiv, zt'l, as to whether one

is obligated to undergo these procedures in order to fulfill the mitzvos mentioned above. He responded that although one does fulfill the mitzvah under those circumstances, there is no obligation to perform a mitzvah in such a different manner than the regular manner. This seems to be the consensus of rabbinic thought, although each person should ask his or her own rav or posek.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's Opinion

There is a fascinating incident that is cited in Shulchan Shlomo (Vol. III p. 99 note 7). A certain individual did not have children in the 18 years since he got married. He approached Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and asked whether he was, in fact, obligated to undergo a procedure called ICSI, which is an in-vitro-fertilization procedure in which a single unit is injected directly into an egg. It is more specialized than conventional IVF.

Rav Shlomo Zalman, zt'l, answered that in terms of the halachos and requirements of P'ru u'R'vu, he is exempt. He did all he could, and he is certainly not obligated to go that extra yard. However, there is another obligation at play here. Rav Shlomo Zalman said, “In terms of the verse (Devarim 24:5), ‘And he shall make his wife happy,’ he is obligated to undergo this procedure so that his wife will have children.”

The man responded that prior to his coming to Rav Shlomo Zalman, he and wife had taken it upon themselves to accept that whatever Hashem wills will be good for them and that they have no desire to undergo extreme procedures unless they are obligated to do so.

Rav Shlomo Zalman answered, “Everything that she is saying, she is only telling you in order to placate you. But deep within her heart of hearts she certainly is pining to have children.”

Within a short time after this man had accepted Rav Shlomo Zalman's opinion, the home was filled with the voices of children.

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Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

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subject: Weekly Parsha from **Rabbi Berel Wein**

VAYECHI

The traditional rabbinic approach as to why this portion of the Torah is titled “vayechi Yaakov” even though the subject matter of this Torah portion concerns itself with the death of Yaakov is that as long as his descendants – the Jewish people – are alive and functioning, then Yaakov is still considered to be alive. The message here is one of immortality and continuity, family and generations. Like life itself and its counterpart, death, these words mentioned immediately above are difficult to define. Other nations and empires that are long ago extinct in terms of presence and participation in current world events, also have biological descendants alive and present in today's world population. Nevertheless, we think of Rome and Babylon, Greece and Persia, the Holy Roman Empire and even the Soviet Union as being swept into the dustbin of history, never to rise to power again. So, the rabbis must be telling us a deeper message than mere biological and genetic survival from the past until today. I have often thought that a great part of the secret of Jewish survival lies in the fact that different – completely different – generations are able to bond together, recognize each other and have the same common goals, values and lifestyle. My father was born before the Wright brothers flew an airplane and he lived to see human beings walk on the moon. In spite of the difference in age, background and even language, he had close contact with and a great influence on his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They somehow recognized who he was in his essence and beliefs and easily responded to his presence and later treasured his memory. So, to a certain extent we may say that he lived on through his descendants. Yaakov recognized the different personalities, qualities and talents of each of his children and grandchildren. His blessings

to his children and grandchildren, as recorded for us in this week's Torah reading, clearly indicate this fact. He had no one-size-fits-all blessing to bestow. And it is perhaps that fact that guarantees that as long as his descendants are alive, Yaakov also lives. For every one of his descendants could say in response to the blessing that each one received – all of them different and personal – that their old father and grandfather understood them and recognize them for what they were. And because of that, they treasured his memory and championed his cause throughout the ages. Relationships that bridge time and space, generations and world upheavals can only be forged upon the recognition and acceptance of the uniqueness of the parties involved. There is no blessing ultimately in national and personal life that is brought about by conformity. The pithy remark of the great Rebbe of Kotzk was: "If I am I and you are you, then I am I and you are you; but if I am you and you are me, then I am not I and you are not you." The blessings of Yaakov to his future generations reflect the wisdom of this truism.

Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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Is a Position Inherited? By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: The inherited shofar "Our shul's longstanding shofar blower passed on. Are we required to appoint his son, when we would prefer to appoint a different master blaster?"

Question #2: I'd like a change! "Is there a halachic reason why, in some communities, people hold their appointments on shul and school boards forever, whereas, in other communities, these positions are constantly rotated?"

Question #3: Long live the Rabbi! "When a rav passes on, does his son have a claim to the position?"

Answer: In parshas Vayechi, Yaakov Avinu provides a glimpse of the different qualities that will be inherited among the tribes of Bnei Yisroel.

Does the scion of someone who achieved a leadership, communal or rabbinic position among the Jewish people have a halachic claim to his father's position?

In several places, Chazal derive that a son qualified for a communal appointment held by his father inherits the position (Horiyos 11b; Kesubos 103b; Sifrei, Devorim 17:20). To quote the Rambam's halachic ruling on the topic: When the king, the kohen gadol, or a different appointee dies, we appoint, in his stead, his son or someone else who would inherit from him. Whoever would be first to inherit from him comes first for the position of the deceased, provided he is a valid substitute... the same is true for any appointment in the Jewish people -- one who receives it does so for himself and his descendants (Hilchos Klei Hamikdash 4:20).

The Rambam mentions this law a second time, in which he explains in more detail what is meant by saying that the son is a "valid substitute": whoever has a prior right germane to receive inheritance has a prior right for inheriting the monarchy... not only the kingship, but any other position of authority and any other appointment in Israel is an inheritance for his son and his son's son, forever, provided that the son fills the place of his father in wisdom and fear of G-d. If he meets the standard in fear of G-d, but not in wisdom, we appoint him and then teach him. However, anyone lacking in fear of G-d, even if he is very wise, is not appointed to any position in Israel (Hilchos Melachim 1:7).

Retiring Chazzan One of the earliest surviving responsa related to this question was penned hundreds of years ago, when the Rashba was asked concerning the following case (Shu"t HaRashba 1:300). A chazzan/baal keriyah had been serving a community faithfully for 38 years, a position that he inherited from his father, who had inherited the position from his father. The current chazzan's vision is now somewhat impaired, making it difficult for him to be the baal keriyah, and he has been having his son function as baal keriyah and also as community secretary and scribe, which apparently were other responsibilities included in the position. Some members of the

community are dissatisfied with the new arrangements -- they feel that the son does not have as nice a voice as his father. They are requesting that either the chazzan fulfill all the requirements of his position, or that he retire and allow the community to hire a new chazzan, who can perform to their specifications. When the community hired this chazzan over a generation before, he was able to perform all his tasks admirably. They are still satisfied with his skills as a chazzan, and they would not request that he step down, as long as he can fulfill his job. However, they feel that they did not hire his replacement, and they are dissatisfied with the son's voice, which is not as melodious as that of his father.

For his part, the chazzan notes that he has a life contract with the community, which states that no one can take his place at any of his tasks without his permission. Furthermore, he claims that most of the 150 members of the community are willing to have his son help him in the areas that are now difficult for him, whereas only about ten members voice disapproval of the new arrangement. Each of the two sides in the dispute presented its position to the Rashba to rule on the case via correspondence. We are highly grateful that they chose this specific method of dealing with their litigation, because it provided a written record of the case and the Rashba's detailed decision. Based on what we have seen so far, how would you rule?

The ruling The Rashba sided with the chazzan for three different reasons: First, when you hire someone for a position as chazzan, it is self-understood that he will occasionally need someone to substitute for him, either because he is occasionally ill or needs to be out of town. The Rashba rules that it is within the authority of the chazzan to choose who should serve as his substitute, assuming that he chooses someone who can do an adequate job. (A later authority, the Keneses Hagedolah, notes that there is another requirement – the substitute is G-d-fearing enough to fill the position [quoted by the Mishnah Berurah 53:84].)

Second reason of Rashba A second reason why the Rashba rules in favor of the chazzan is that since the contract states that the community cannot have someone else take his place without his agreement, this implies that the chazzan has the authority, at his option, to choose someone to assist him in carrying out his responsibilities.

The Rashba does not make any distinction between having someone substitute for the chazzan on an occasional basis and having someone assume some of his responsibilities permanently. In both instances, he considers it the right of the chazzan to assign part of this job to someone else, provided the assignee can perform the job adequately. It is not necessary that the substitute or replacement perform the job at the same level as the chazzan himself.

The son's right The third reason the Rashba cites is that, should the chazzan no longer be able to fulfill his responsibilities, his son has the right to the position as long as he can perform the job adequately. It is not necessary that the son have a voice as melodious as that of his father, as long as he is G-d-fearing enough to fulfill the position. It is, therefore, certainly true that the son has the right to assist the current chazzan ahead of anyone else. Some later authorities rule that the son does not have a right to the position if his voice sounds strange (Magen Avraham 53:32).

To simplify: The Rashba's first two reasons explain why the chazzan has a right to choose his own replacement, and the third reason explains why the son has the right, ahead of any other candidate.

Choosing someone else What would the Rashba hold if the different reasons are in conflict – meaning that the son would like to be his father's replacement, but the father does not want him? The Rashba implies that, should the chazzan want to appoint someone other than his son to help him with his responsibilities, he may do so.

How do we rule? The Rema (Orach Chayim 53:25) quotes this Rashba, but implies that he limits the right of the chazzan to appointing his son and does not accept that he has the right to appoint someone else. The Mishnah Berurah explains as follows: There are indeed two different concepts that

explain why the Rashba ruled according to the chazzan. One is that the chazzan has a right to appoint a substitute to assist him on an occasional basis, or to take over for him while he is away or ill. However, it may indeed be that this right is his only when the substitute is temporarily fulfilling one of the chazzan's responsibilities. It may not follow that the chazzan can appoint someone to replace him permanently in one of his roles. In this instance, that job would pass to the chazzan's son. Since a permanent appointment is being made, the son has the right to the position, in the opinion of the Rema, whereas the Rashba, himself, held that the chazzan has the right to appoint even someone other than his son on a permanent basis to assist him in his responsibilities. We will soon see a possible source for the Rema's opinion.

Inherited his voice? Why does the son of a chazzan have the right to inherit his father's position? After all, when the chazzan died, he made his son into an orphan, not into a chazzan! As we saw above, this halachah is true for any position in klal Yisroel: The son has the right to the position as long as he meets the basic requirements for the position.

Can the son sell the position? To what extent does the son have the right to the position? Can he offer the position to someone else, and if so, can he do so even for payment?

An early authority, the Mordechai (Bava Kama 8:108), quoting a responsum from his rebbe, the Maharam Rottenberg, discusses this exact question. He rules that a position of authority among the Jewish people is bequeathed to a son, but that the son does not have any right to give the position to someone else. He compares this to the rights of a kohen or a levi, which also are bequeathed to sons, but cannot be sold or transferred.

This is explained nicely by the Chasam Sofer (Shu"t Orach Chayim #12), who notes that a position, even of king of the Jewish people, is not inherited in the same way that one inherits property. According to the Torah, when a man dies, his sons automatically become the owners of his property. They do not require an authorization of a beis din, a court order, or a formal transfer of title – the property automatically becomes theirs. This is not the case regarding the inheriting of a position. The son does not automatically become king or kohen gadol – he must be appointed to the position. (Those interested in knowing how the kohen gadol is appointed should check the following sources: Tosafos, Zevachim 18a s.v. Hagah; Tosafos, Yoma 12b s.v. Kohein; Tosafos, Megillah 9b s.v. Velo; Aruch Hashulchan Ha'asid, Chapter 23.)

Source for the Rema This Mordechai might be the source for the above-quoted Rema who ruled that the chazzan may transfer some of his responsibilities to his son, but not to anyone else. The Rema accepted that it is understood that a position of chazzan will require that he occasionally needs someone to substitute, and that the choice of substitute may be left to the chazzan. But the chazzan does not own the position to the extent that he can transfer it to someone else permanently, either completely or partially. Other reasons Let us return to the original responsum of the Rashba, in which he ruled that the chazzan has the right to appoint his own substitute. The Rashba is assuming that, even without a contract, the community cannot replace the chazzan. In a different responsum (Shu"t Harashba 5:283), he provides several reasons why a chazzan or anyone else in a community position has a right to keep his post. One reason is that halachah recognizes that once someone has been fulfilling a communal role, he acquires a chazakah, the right of status quo, to keep the position, as long as there is no reason to disqualify him.

The Rashba presents a second reason why an appointee has the right to keep his position: because of darchei shalom. It reduces machlokes when people have an assumption that replacements are not made arbitrarily. Anyone who has lived in a community where this is not common practice can certainly attest to the strife created when a public servant's contract is not renewed. (However, see Shu"t Mahralnach, quoted by Magen Avraham 53:32.)

A third reason why the person has the right to keep his position is because, otherwise, people may think that he was replaced because of malfeasance.

Maintaining him in the position protects his personal reputation.

Exceptions Even the Rashba felt that there can be exceptions to his ruling – in other words, there are some instances in which one may be able to terminate a person's tenure from a community position without that person having committed a malfeasance. The Rashba notes that there are places in which the recognized custom is that all positions are regularly rotated. In these communities, all appointments, whether salaried or voluntary, are temporary. He explains that since this is an accepted practice in these congregations, the reasons mentioned above why one may not remove someone from a position do not apply. Since everyone knows that his appointment is only temporary, no machlokes should result when a replacement is made. Similarly, no one will assume that an appointee was replaced because of malfeasance.

The later authorities note that this is true only when it is already an established custom in these places that appointments are always temporary and replacements are made at a specified time. However, when it is usual practice that people remain in their positions, one may not remove someone from his position, unless there was malfeasance (Shu"t Chemdas Shelomoh #7 and Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Orach Chayim #206, both quoted by Mishnah Berurah 53:86). The Chasam Sofer allows another exception -- when it was stipulated at the time of the original appointment that a new negotiation and appointment is necessary to renew the person's appointment after the term is complete.

I'd like a change! At this point, we can discuss one of our original questions. "Is there a halachic reason why, in some communities, people hold their appointments on shul and school boards forever, whereas in other communities, these positions are constantly rotated?"

We now see that there is halachic basis both for the practice in some communities that people remain in the position of shul or school president for long periods of time, whereas in other communities these positions are rotated on a regular basis.

A major exception? Although we have noted that a son has a right to inherit his father's position, several authorities contend that there is a major exception to this rule: a Torah position is not automatically inherited. One of the major advocates of this approach, the Chasam Sofer (Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Orach Chayim #12 and glosses to Orach Chayim end of 53), asked the following question: The Gemara (Yoma 72b) states that the position of kohen meshuach milchamah, the kohen anointed to provide encouragement and announce the halachos to the soldiers of the Jewish army, is not a hereditary position. Why is this position different from all the other appointments that we say are hereditary? The Chasam Sofer answers that there is a difference between positions of authority and religious positions. Positions of authority, such as king, do belong to the son, if he is qualified. However, there is no inheritance of religious positions, unless that is the accepted custom. (A similar view is stated by the Shu"t Maharashdam, Yoreh Deah #85.) The one exception to this rule is the position of kohen gadol, which the Torah says does go to the son, notwithstanding the fact that it is a religious position. Thus, the Rashba's case in which the son inherits his father's position as chazzan is only because that was the accepted custom.

The Chasam Sofer rallies support for his approach based on the fact that the positions of nasi and head of the Sanhedrin did not usually pass from father to son, but instead passed to the most qualified scholar. Only the nesi'im from Hillel and onward passed the position from father to son. The Chasam Sofer explains that from the time of Hillel until the Sanhedrin disbanded, the nasi of the Sanhedrin was also viewed as the "king" of the Jewish people, thus making it a position of authority and not merely religious. During this era, the position was bequeathed to the oldest son of the previous nasi, if he was G-d-fearing and enough of a scholar to fulfill his duties. However, prior to this era, the position was viewed only as a religious role and, therefore, it was assigned to the greatest scholar in the Jewish people.

Based on his analysis, the Chasam Sofer concludes that the son of a deceased

rav does not automatically have the right to the position. If most of the tzibur does not want him, they have a right to pick someone else. However, if most of the tzibur wants the son, or for that matter, any other qualified G-d-fearing Torah scholar who is qualified enough to rule on the community's needs, they may choose him. They are not required to pick the most qualified talmid chacham for the position. For example, they may choose a person who is a stronger leader over a bigger talmid chacham who does not have the same leadership abilities.

The Chasam Sofer closes his responsum with the following proof to his position: The Midrash, quoted by Rashi, states that when Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem to appoint a leader to head the Bnei Yisroel, he wanted his sons to be his replacement. Obviously, his sons had all the qualities that Moshe felt were necessary for the position – otherwise, why would he have thought that they should qualify? Yet, Hashem chose Yehoshua for other reasons. Thus, we see that the position of Torah leader over the Jewish people is not an inherited one.

Conclusion When the Mishnah Berurah (53:83) discusses this matter, he cites the opinions we have mentioned without taking an obvious position on the matter. Thus, I leave the individual congregation to have its rav or posek decide whether a son has the right to replace his father, where there is no established minhag and the community would like to appoint someone else.

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayechi Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com For the week ending 14 January 2017 / 16 Tevet 5777 Insights Listening to the Little Voice "Reuven, you are my firstborn, my strength...Accursed is their rage for it is intense..." (49:1-7)

Nobody likes being told they did something wrong.

And no one has yet walked the earth who was not a candidate for correction. How do we overcome our inherent talent for self-justification and admit that we messed up, and realize that by accepting that reproof we can grow immeasurably?

Rabbi Yehuda b'Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmani said: Because Reuven and Shimon and Levi accepted the rebuke of their father they merited that their names would be associated with those of Moshe and Aharon (in Parshat Shemot), to fulfill the verse "an ear that hears life's reproof will dwell among the wise. (Mishlei 15:31)" (Yalkut Shimoni)

It must have been very difficult for Reuven and Shimon to accept such criticism, or our Sages would not have heaped upon them such praise. And that, even though they were great tzadikim eager to find ways to improve themselves, and the reproof came from their father Yaakov whose purity of intention was undoubted, and also these words of reproof were among the last to leave his lips — nevertheless it was very hard for them.

If it was hard for such great people as Reuven and Shimon, what hope do we have to be able to hearken to honest and constructive criticism?

When Avigail took King David to task and told him that it was wrong to spill blood and to kill Naval, she finished her reproof with the words, "And don't say, because I am King, there is no one to take me to task — You take yourself to task!" It's apparent from Avigail's adding those last words, that without that final admonition David might not have accepted her criticism. If King David needed that extra admonishment, how are we to be able to hear honest criticism?

There's a little voice inside each of us that says at a time like that, "He (or she) is right, you know..." Usually we manage to silence that little voice with pride and self-defense. But if we take to heart Avigail's words, "You take yourself to task!", and imagine that it's not someone else criticizing us but "we ourselves", we will find that that we have become bigger and better in the process. *Source: Chidushei HaLev*

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

OU Torah Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb Parasha Column, Vayechi "The Yoke's On Us"

We all have received blessings at one time or another. We have certainly received compliments. Over the course of time, we learn that sometimes the compliments are clearly flattering. But occasionally, ambiguous statements are made to us, leaving us confused and unable to determine with certainty whether we are being complimented or insulted. There are statements which leave us with no such doubts. Suppose someone called you a "donkey?" Would you think he was flattering you? What if, as if to remove any shadow of doubt, he went further and asserted that you are a "thick-boned donkey?" I wager that you would come out fighting. In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Vayechi (Genesis 47:28-50:26), our forefather Jacob calls one of his sons, Issachar, just that—a "thick-boned donkey." Surprisingly, not only does Issachar not take umbrage at his father's description, but he remains quite convinced that his father is not just complimenting him but is blessing him. Our Sages take things even further. For them, Jacob's calling his son a donkey is his way of expressing a prophetic prediction: Issachar's descendants will have a prestigious role in Jewish history. They will become our people's supreme Torah authorities. Why would a loving father, foretelling a glorious future for his son Issachar, choose such a bizarre metaphor to describe him? Admittedly, Jacob compares some of his other sons to a variety of animals. But those sons were no doubt quite pleased to be designated "majestic lions" (Judah), or "lovely fawns" (Naphtali). Even Dan and Benjamin could, albeit perhaps grudgingly, come to terms with being likened to "a serpent by the road" or "a ravenous wolf." But "a large boned donkey?" Issachar could not be blamed for finding that overly offensive. Our commentators insist that Issachar found Jacob's choice of the term "donkey" inoffensive. Indeed, they consider it an apt metaphor for Issachar's special qualities. To understand this, we must study the full text of words of the blessing that Jacob granted to Issachar: "Issachar is a thick-boned donkey, Crouching down between the sheepfolds. For he saw a resting place that was good, And the land that it was pleasant; He bent his shoulder to the burden, And became a toiling serf." (Genesis 49:14-15) Jacob knew all of his sons quite well. He discerned their unique strengths and did not suppress his criticisms of their weaknesses. He insightfully recognized Issachar's special qualities: While Issachar intuitively realized he didn't have the leadership talents of Judah or the reckless courage of Simon and Levi, he was an idealist who set strong goals for himself, even in his early youth and he understood that in order to achieve those goals, he would have to persevere tenaciously over the course of long years; he was willing, even eager, to do so. He accepted the yoke of hard work and the burden of sustained effort. Knowing Issachar well, Jacob chose to compare his characteristics to those of the donkey. With this comparison, he was both blessing Issachar with success, and he was complimenting him for his willingness to bear any burden and to even toil as a lowly serf in order to attain his lofty goals: a "resting place" and a "pleasant land." Just as Jacob chose the metaphor "donkey" to best capture Issachar's diligence, so did he select the term "menucha (resting place)" to symbolize Torah and the world of menucha which it engenders. And so did he use the phrase "pleasant land" to refer to the land that Jacob so cherished, the Land of Israel. Intellectual mastery of Torah and remaining loyal to its ideals is a formidable challenge. Such mastery and such loyalty demand kabbalat ol malchut shamayim vekabbalat ol mitzvot, an acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven and an "acceptance of the yoke of the mitzvot. For Jacob, Issachar's stubborn willingness to submit to those yokes was best captured by the image of the "thick-boned donkey." Steadfast commitment is not only a prerequisite for a life of religious menucha, of Torah. It is also required in order to possess the Holy Land, cultivate it, and protect it. Both Torah and

the Land require that same stubborn commitment. The donkey willing to submit to its burden is also the perfect symbol for a people committed to building and defending Eretz Yisrael. The Targum (or Aramaic) translation of the Bible, written by the ancient sage Onkelos, treats the last phrases of the verses quoted above in a dramatic and almost shocking manner. The words “he bent his shoulders to the burden and became a toiling serf” are rendered by Onkelos as follows: “He will vanquish the lands of the nations, defeat their inhabitants, and those that survive will serve him and pay him tribute.” Thus, the “thick-boned donkey” conjures up diverse images for our Sages. The best known view sees Issachar bent under the burden of Torah study until he finally becomes the model Talmudic sage. The Midrash sees the donkey as akin to the early Zionist chalutz (pioneer), who persists in his mission of settling the arid desert, causing it to flower, and protecting it from marauders. For Onkelos, the donkey is the symbol of the Jewish soldier, stubbornly holding on to every inch of the hotly contested battlefield. Among my favorite twentieth century rabbinic writers was a man named Elimelech Bar-Shaul, a former rabbi of Rehovot, who passed away exactly fifty years ago. In a collection of his sermons entitled *Min HaBe'er*, he agrees that the stubbornness of the “thick-boned donkey” is needed for achieving both Torah prowess and sovereignty over the Land of Israel. But he goes further and writes: “Just as Torah study must be refreshed and renewed constantly, so does our appreciation of the Land of Israel require renewal. Torah cannot be taken for granted; neither can the Holy Land. We must continuously deepen our love for the Land of Israel, just as our Torah study must always strive for greater depth. Each morning, we must be newly impressed by Torah, and with every dawn, we must appreciate our land anew.” Rabbi Bar-Shaul coined a phrase that has remained with me ever since I first encountered it soon after his premature demise: He wrote, “The Rabbis speak of the ol Torah, the yoke of Torah. There is also an ol Eretz Yisrael, the yoke of the Land of Israel.” Issachar is the archetype of the one who bears both the burden of Torah and the burden of the Land of Israel. He submits to both yokes. It might be difficult for the rest of us to feel comfortable with the title “thick-boned donkey.” But we must at least understand that this title is a symbol of our stubborn submission to the twin yokes of Torah and Israel. © 2017 Orthodox Union

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ou.org Jewish Time Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

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

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

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

Yet that is what the Bible repeatedly does. Consider the Chumash, the five

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

Nevi'im, the second part of Tanakh, ends with Malachi foreseeing the distant future, understood by tradition to mean the Messianic Age:

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.

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

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

Remember that the story of the people of the covenant begins with God’s call to Abraham to leave his land, birthplace and father’s house and travel “to a land which I will show you”. Yet no sooner does he arrive than he is forced by famine to go to Egypt. That is the fate repeated by Jacob and his children. Genesis ends not with life in Israel but with a death in Egypt: Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place”. So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. (Gen. 50:26)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was this revolutionary concept of time – based on human freedom – that Judaism contributed to the world. Many ancient cultures believed in cyclical

time, in which all things return to their beginning. The Greeks developed a sense of tragic time, in which the ship of dreams is destined to founder on the hard rocks of reality. Europe of the Enlightenment introduced the idea of linear time, with its close cousin, progress. Judaism believes in covenantal time, well described by Harold Fisch: “The covenant is a condition of our existence in time . . . We cooperate with its purposes never quite knowing where it will take us, for ‘the readiness is all’.” In a lovely phrase, he speaks of the Jewish imagination as shaped by “the unappeased memory of a future still to be fulfilled”.

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

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subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

ou.org Heasfu – Assemble Yourselves!

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

Schechina rests only upon one in a state of simcha. . .

2017 dawns on an age in which anger, negativity and personal animus is spiking across the nation and the world. Disturbingly, this same trend seems to be etching its way ever deeper into our own Orthodox community. For more and more Orthodox the sine qua non is “us versus them” with the “us” being a narrow “just like me” Jew and the “them” being other Jews who do not meet a pre-ordained criteria of how to look, how to act, where to pray, etc.

The extent of the vituperation visited by one Jew upon another is beyond disheartening, it saps the holiness and divine inspiration that should animate our Jewish community and world, leaving us vulnerable to the greatest dangers imaginable – from both within and without!

With so much hate and turmoil roiling our observant community, is it any wonder that so many flee? Is it any wonder that so many stay away? Who wouldn't prefer an accepting, caring environment with people who express love and concern rather than a judgmental, angry gathering that is a “community” in name only?

The question is not, what has become of us? but more importantly, What will become of us?

When Yaakov was getting ready to leave this world, he brought his children together to charge them not only with personal goals and aspirations, but also with a national mission. “Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the End of Days.” (Breishit 49:1)

Heasfu – assemble yourselves, come and receive blessings.

In calling his children together, Yaakov was teaching them that to be together is in and of itself a blessing of Jewish existence, that to gather, to assemble – to avoid dissension – is a foundational necessity of Jewish existence. Assembled together, we can merit and achieve geula. Apart, we are at the mercy of what's most evil in the world and ourselves.

Am Yisrael's greatest blessing is unity; our greatest curse, machlokes. As Rabbi Soloveitchik taught, “If one tribe is eliminated, Knesses Yisrael would be stillborn.” The varied and individual gifts of each son contribute together to the fullness of our community. No two brothers are alike in temperament or ability. Our community is not sameness but unity and joy in our combined individual gifts.

Following the Midrash, Rashi comments that Yaakov wanted to tell his children when the long, bitter galus would end and when Mashiach would come but the Divine spirit “left him.” The Kotzker Rebbe suggests this was so they should always live with the hope, always continue to anticipate, and always need to beseech and pray that they be worthy of the geula and so learn that God does not want us to find comfort in deadlines but in deeds that

merit the End. Redemption must be earned, not gifted. Mashiach sits at Jerusalem's gates, ready and waiting for us to genuinely want him. In this context, understanding that God did not want to reveal the date of Redemption to Yaakov, the Radomsker Rebbe asks a difficult question, Why have the Divine Spirit leave him? Certainly God could have simply hidden this one data point without depriving him of the Divine Spirit. In wrestling with the question, the Radomsker reasoned that God did not actually remove the Divine Spirit directly. Rather, Yaakov foresaw Am Yisrael's future of ordeals, trials and tribulations and he grew so distressed and dejected that he himself lost his capacity for Divine inspiration!

How could such a thing be? How does one simply “lose” his capacity for inspiration? Easier than we might imagine. As the Talmud teaches, “...shechina rests only upon one who is in a state of simcha.” From this, we learn that a basic qualification needed to attain Divine powers – ruach hakodesh – is simcha, joy. In seeing the harsh future of the Jewish people, Yaakov lost his joy, hope and optimism, causing the shechina to separate from him, leaving him only a sense of desperation.

As a people, we have managed to not only survive but to thrive through our many travails and our seemingly endless galus because we never lost hope; we never succumbed to a national depression. We remained one, unified, and in our unity we found joy. Even in galus we have seen the glimmers of light and hope guiding our way.

We have always been one.

But now? Now, at a time when the Orthodox community is showing strengths that were once unimaginable, we risk the greatest gift of all! Rather than invite unity; rather than embrace unity; rather than cling desperately to the one thing upon which our connection to the Divine Spirit rests, we consciously create dissension!

There are many, all too many, in our community today who are on the outs. Their parents have turned their backs on them. Their rebbeim, yeshiva rosters bursting with more compliant students, cast them aside. Neighbors, former friends and classmates. . . no one wants them. They have been stripped of their “membership” in the community.

Dumped by the very people who should want them most of all, who should love them most fiercely, who should celebrate them warts and all these OTD children have no place to find acceptance they desperately want than the streets. They want community but when their own community will not have them they find community in a gathering of other hurt and broken souls.

How they suffer! And not because God has removed His Divine Spirit from them, not because God does not want to inspire them and reveal to them when their Mashiach will herald for them a better day, no, no, no not because God has abandoned them but because we, their parents, their rebbeim, their teachers and friends have removed from them their joy and optimism. Our OTD children can see no light, no hope. Like Yaakov, they see the darkness of the days ahead and cannot imagine a personal geula! They are weighted down by unrealistic demands, unreasonable expectations from home and school, no personal attention or sympathy and they lose hope, they lose Simcha. They see clearly the hypocrisy in those who have turned their backs.

How could they not be adrift?

We would be wise to understand that in his insightful lessons, the Radomsker spoke not only of Yaakov Avinu, but of our own Yankele! Yes, he speaks not only of our patriarch but of our children, once so delightful and curious, now surly and cynical, angry and bitter.

Yes, we live in a harsh time, an angry time. That is sad and unfortunate.

That the same harshness and anger has seeped into our own community is a shande. That we live in a time of OTD is a judgment not on our children but on us!

We learn from the Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh that when Yaakov met Esau, his hid Dina, his daughter. Why? So Esau would not abduct her. To our modern eyes, we can see no fault in Yaakov's actions but the Midrash teaches that Yaakov was punished for his actions, that had he given his

daughter to his OTD brother perhaps she would have caused him to do teshuvah and return! So too Yitzhak intended all his blessings for his “evil” son so that perhaps if he gave him the most he could give, that would make him a tzadik!

Our tradition is filled with examples of small gestures of kindness turning the most recalcitrant sinner into a pious believer!

Yet we do not behave as though those lessons are real, or have power in our world.

We are wrong.

In Vayigash, when Yaakov is informed that Yosef is alive and sees the wagons sent by Yosef for him, the Torah tells us vatechi ruach Yaakov – the “spirit of Yaakov was revived”.

Rashi and Ramban comment on this that, in the years of Yosef’s absence, Yaakov was in mourning. He was sad and dejected. The Divine spirit had left him as it can only rest upon one in joy. But once Yaakov was once again happy and joyful, the Divine spirit returned and he was revived spiritually! Our OTD children can also be revived again, if we only gave them uplifting experiences. If we overwhelmed them with optimism and opportunities for growth and self-esteem, they too can have the Divine revisit them and our community can be whole, our community can be one in more than just name.

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subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

ravkooktorah.org Rav Kook Torah Vayechi: When Great Souls Err

Shortly before his death, Jacob blessed his sons. Some of these blessings, however, were more like reprimands: “Reuben, you are my firstborn... first in rank and first in power. [But since you were] unstable as water, you will no longer be first, for you moved your father’s beds.” (Gen. 49:3-4)

According to some opinions, Reuben did not actually interfere with his father’s sleeping arrangements. He intended to do so, indignant at what he saw as a slight to his mother’s honor and her position in the household. But at the last minute, Reuben restrained himself. How did Reuben succeed in overcoming his intense feelings of injustice and dishonor?

Reuben’s Fear of Punishment

One scholar inferred the method Reuben used to master his anger by reversing the letters of the word ‘פחדו’ (“unstable”) to ‘חפז’ and reading it as an acronym:

חַפְּזָה— You reminded yourself of the punishment for this act; חַפְּזָה— you made yourself ill over it; and חַפְּזָה— you avoided sin” (Shabbat 55b).

This explanation is surprising. Was Reuben motivated by the lowest form of yirat Shamayim (awe of Heaven) — the fear of punishment? Was this the only way the tzaddik could prevent himself from wrongdoing? Could such a great individual not take advantage of more lofty incentives, evoking his natural love and awe of God in order to avoid sin?

The Achilles’ Heel of Great Souls Some people are blessed with such nobility of soul that their traits are naturally virtuous and good. Yet even these tzaddikim need to recognize their limitations as fallible human beings. They too may be misguided. Precisely because they rely so heavily on their innate integrity, they may more easily fall into the trap of deluding themselves and making terrible mistakes, inflicting great harm on themselves and those around them.

Truly great souls will avoid this mistake. They carefully examine the source of their moral outrage. Further examination may indeed reveal that their zealous response comes from a sense of true injustice. But if they have any doubts as to the source for their powerful emotions, they can adopt a different approach. Instead of examining the matter in terms of ideals and lofty visions of the future, they will take into account more commonplace moral considerations. Such unpretentious calculations are sometimes more effective than nobler considerations. Reuben reminded himself that he would be held accountable for disrupting the delicate balance in the family and temporarily usurping his father’s position. The simple reminder of the

personal price to be paid helped Reuben clear his mind. He was then able to analyze more accurately his true motivations and arrive at the correct moral decision.

The resulting inner turmoil was tremendous. Reuben was accustomed to following the dictates of his innate integrity. The conflict between his sense of injustice and his awareness of the correct response was so great that he felt ill — emotionally, and even physically: “You made yourself ill over it.” This too indicates greatness of soul: the ability to acquiesce to moral imperatives. Truly great individuals are able, like Reuben, to rein in all of the soul’s powers when necessary. They recognize the absolute justice of the Eternal Judge, before Whom there are no excuses and no exceptions. They follow the dictum that even if the entire world — your entire inner world — tells you that you are righteous, still consider yourself fallible (see Niddah 30b).

Much good can result from recalling the punishment for wrongdoing, even if this motivation may appear beneath one’s spiritual stature. This simple reminder can overcome all the sophisticated calculations — calculations which may mislead even the noblest souls. In this fashion, Reuben succeeded in avoiding sin and retained his moral integrity. (*Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, pp. 48-49*) Copyright © 2013 by Chanan Morrison

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HaRav HaGaon Rav Moshe Shapira: The Irreplaceable Chad B'Doro
Jonathan Rosenblum Yated Ne’eman, Mishpacha Magazine

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky, Rosh Yeshivas Greater Washington, concluded his hesped for HaRav HaGaon Rav Moshe Shapira, zt”l, the night after the levaya, with a true story recorded by the famous neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks: A great artist was in a serious car accident. Happily his eye was not directly affected, but he suffered neurological damage that prevented him from seeing colors. His world became one of black and white and shades of gray. At first, he was despondent and saw no further point in living. But eventually he started drawing again this time using charcoal to convey the world as he saw it. In time, he gained renewed fame in the new medium. Some years later, a neurologist approached him and told him that he had developed a technique of brain stimulation that could return his ability to see colors. "Had you developed this technique at the time of my accident," the artist replied, "I would have paid any amount of money for your treatment. But now I'm used to the new medium and comfortable working in it. So I'd prefer not to undergo the treatment." Rabbi Lopiansky ended with a prayer that we not respond to loss of the light that was Rav Moshe by becoming accustomed to a world of black and gray. Not becoming used to that world requires first that we try to grasp even a fraction of the light that has been lost. NO ONE in our generation had so many talmidim as Rav Moshe. By talmidim I do not mean those who attended his always packed public shiurim, listened to the thousands of those shiurim available on Kol Halashon or reviewed the excellent write-ups of his Thursday parashah shiur, or even to all those who were members of smaller vaadim, where admission required his personal permission. Of those, there are literally thousands. By talmidim, I mean those for whom he opened up their eyes to a world they knew not, and for whom the excitement of that encounter led them to dedicate their lives to following his path. To be a talmid does not mean being able to say over a shiur or ra'ayon of the rebbe. It means to be willing to strive with your own intellect to add new insights based on his example. Rav Moshe credited Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler with having first done for him what he would do for his generation. As a young boy in Bnei Brak, he was playing outside the Ponevezh beis medrash when there was a power outage. Through an open window, he heard Rav Dessler reciting over and over again in the dark, a maimar Chazal, in the manner of Mussar. The exposure to Rav Dessler going deeper and deeper with every repetition of the same words left an indelible impact. Later, as a bocher in Ponevezh, he lived in Rav Dessler's

home, after the passing of the latter's wife. Rav Dessler noted his poetic nature, love of metaphor, and sensitivity to language, and directed him to the study of the Maharal. That study would prove lifelong. He drove himself to understand seforim that were considered beyond the grasp of our generation: e.g., the Gaon's commentary on Tzafra D'Tzniusa or the works of the Arizal. Once revealed, he believed, the insights of previous generations were part of morasha kehilas Yaakov, and, as such, accessible to those willing to be amal over the words of the greatest of our predecessors, while showing no mercy to themselves. He was a master of the revealed Torah, of halachah, of proper derech erez. But he also opened the eyes of a generation to the Hidden Torah, and offered a portal to the aspect of Torah as an emanation of the infinite Divine Mind. True, many of us who attended shiurim for decades only grasped a small part of what he was saying. Yet even for us, just having his image before our eyes provided our closest connection to Torah. For whatever our own individual confusions, our questions, our difficulties, when we listened to him, we knew that at least one person had everything figured out, everything understood b'etzem and in its proper place. We knew that the Torah was true because we saw that for Rav Moshe it was a perfectly seamless web. Those who attended different chaburos – perek Cheilek, Nefesh HaChaim, Hilchos Talmud Torah – would often compare notes at the end of the week and find that Rav Moshe had addressed common themes in each while remaining faithful to the different texts being studied. For decades, he spoke twice a year – once before Shavuos and once before Rosh Hashanah – on the theme of tichleh Hashanah b'klilosecha. Yet the well never ran dry, and no shiur was a repetition of an earlier one. And again, even the least among us experienced in those shiurim a taste of the infinite depth in every word of Torah – not just as a belief to be recited by rote but as a living reality. But beyond the thousands who were uplifted, even without full understanding, there were dozens, and perhaps hundreds, of close talmidim who delved into the sources which he had mastered. Wherever in the world there are those providing access to the deeper levels of Torah today – in Silver Spring and Lawrence and London and Flatbush, as well as in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak – the source of the inspiration is likely to be one of his talmidim. RAV MOSHE NEVER had his own yeshiva, and we can see the Hashgachah clearly in retrospect. Because he was not confined to one beis medrash, his personal influence was felt in dozens, and his Torah spread around the world. He gave thirty to forty shiurim a week for decades. A few were public shiurim, but most were private vaadim. It is beyond comprehension how one person could have known so much in order to teach so much at such a level. He spoke in public without notes, and made it look effortless, yet every one of those shiurim or vaadim required hours and hours of preparation, though the preparation might have taken place years earlier. Some vaadim were comprised exclusively of roshei yeshiva or others of comparable stature, who were themselves masters of sisrei Torah. Every member of his vaad in Seder Taharos, for instance, is himself a talmid chacham muflag. He traveled the world to spread Torah. In his last years, he led a Seder in Russia every year. His explanation was simple: "In Jerusalem, they don't need me. Here I'm told they need me." His message to his talmidim was the same: Spread Torah wherever it is not found, whether it be in the secular school system in Israel or to farflung communities around the world. He pushed those close to him to leave their comfort zones and to go out to teach and spread Torah. One of his sons related in his hesped how he had once come into his father's room when he was under sedation following an operation, and heard him repeating over and over again, "Everything you did, you did for Kavod Shomayim." Later, he asked his father to whom he was referring, and Rav Moshe replied, "Moshe Rabbeinu." Following that example, Rav Moshe pushed himself beyond human limits for Kavod Shomayim, and drove those close to him to do the same. "We are not here just to rearrange the furniture," I heard him say in one Tu B'Shevat shiur. Rather our task is to become partners with Hashem in bringing Creation back to tis primordial perfection before the Sin of Adam. That is what drove him, and that is the message he instilled in his followers. HE WAS ONE of the

first to discern that the time was ripe for a ba'al teshuva movement. He succeeded Rav Dov Schwartzman as rosh kollel of the Ohr Somayach Kollel, and for close to thirty years his Thursday night Chumash shiur was in the Ohr Somayach beis hamedrash. To some extent, ba'alei teshuva, many of them coming from sophisticated academic backgrounds, created a natural audience for his multi-layered Torah. And they were the vehicle through which he reached the larger world. Few things pained him as much as the fact that many found in our batei medrash learn dutifully, but without a real ta'am in Torah learning and lacking the feeling of the light shining forth from the words under discussion. Rav Moshe understood that if he started revealing that light to some of the ba'alei teshuva whom he was teaching, word would get out to the Olam Hayeshivos and others would come to partake as well. And they did. RAV MOSHE WAS A DEEPLY SERIOUS PERSON. Everything he taught, he lived. One experienced yiras harommemus in his presence. (I still bear black and blue marks on my shins from being kicked in one vaad by fellow members who feared I might fall asleep.) Yet in private, he was able to relate to every Jew at his level, and he was unsparing with himself as to what he would do to lift some burden from the shoulders of those who approached him. His letter to a talmid whose wife had given birth to a Downs Syndrome baby has provided solace for many others in similar circumstances. He once spent over two hours on Yom Kippur speaking about shaylos in emunah with a struggling bochur. Those diagnosed with serious illnesses, with children who were not finding their place, whatever the problem, found a ready ear, as great as were the demands were on his time. THE MAGNITUDE of his loss to Klal Yisroel is beyond comprehension, and it has not yet been internalized that we are now living in a world without him. But if there is any solace, and assurance that we are not doomed to live forever more in a world of only black and gray, it lies in Rav Moshe's explication of the Gemara in Megilah (13b). The Gemara relates that Haman was delighted when he cast the pur and it came out in Adar, for he knew that Moshe Rabbeinu had passed away in Adar. But what Haman did not know was that Moshe Rabbeinu was born the same day he passed away – 7 Adar. As Rav Moshe explained, he did not see the cycle, and that the darkness that came into the world with the death of Moshe could be the source of rebirth. The longing for what was lost on the part of Klal Yisroel could bring a new infusion of light. That is why the symbol of Adar is the swift hind. Longing leads us to rush after the light that was extinguished. And in that yearning lie the roots of Geulah. May we be zocheh to live in a world filled with knowledge of Hashem, a world Rav Moshe did so much to reveal and bring into being.

The first time I asked Rav Moshe Shapira, zt"l, a question in my public position as editor of Yated Ne'eman, he told me, "There are questions that embarrass the one who is asked." I understood him to mean that my hargasha about a certain matter was correct and I should not have felt the need to ask. But that response left me acutely sensitive to the possibility that my ignorance might ever constitute a diminution of his greatness. Consequently, I would never call myself a talmid of Rav Moshe lest I embarrass him. For each one of the twenty or so times I quoted him in print, there were another four times when I was trying to express an idea heard from him but was too afraid to attach his name in case I had misunderstood. To be a true talmid one would have had to immerse oneself in the vast wellsprings from which he extracted the "or ganuz – hidden light of Torah" for our generation. And one would need to have understood enough of what he gave over to extrapolate and shine new light. Rav Moshe opened up new sources and new approaches, but he expected those who drank from his waters of Torah to go further. A Chevron bochur told one of my sons on the day of the levaya, "I only spoke to Rav Moshe twice, but they left an indelible impression. At my bar mitzvah, I was discussing the familiar yeshiva chakira whether sefiras haomer is one extended mitzvah or many. Suddenly, Rav Moshe stopped me and asked, 'So, what do you think?' Five or so years later, I asked him, "HaRav, there are so many drachim in Torah. Which one is right?" He

replied, "That is why Hashem gave you seichel, for you to decide for yourself." Both messages were one: There is no substitute for thinking yourself." There were hundreds of talmidim who met both criteria, including some of the leading roshei yeshiva of our day – e.g., Rav Dovid Cohen, Rav Shmuel Yaakov Borenstein. For decades, Rav Moshe gave an astounding thirty or more chaburos or shiurim a week – some public but most for select groups. The chaburah in Seder Taharos, for instance, was made up of only talmidei chachamim muflagim. And there were those in kabbalah where all the members of the Vaad were of rosh yeshiva stature and themselves experts in sisrei Torah. Besides those deserving of the title talmid of Rav Moshe, there were thousands more, like myself, who attended his shiurim, reviewed the written versions that circulated, and listened to tapes, for whom any access we had to the upper realms of Torah was through Rav Moshe or his disciples. Without daring to call ourselves talmidim, we would not have hesitated to point to Rav Moshe as the most important influence on our relationship to Torah. Even on the frequent occasions when I was unable to grasp one of the shiurim, I did not regret going. As long as the image of Rav Moshe was before my eyes, I knew that however many pieces of the puzzle I am missing, there was one person for whom all the mysteries of Creation were an open book, for whom every event fit into a larger picture. Those who attended different chaburos – perek Chelek, Nefesh HaChaim, Hilchos Talmud Torah – would often compare notes for the week and find that Rav Moshe had addressed common themes in each while remaining faithful to the different texts being studied. RAV MOSHE HAD A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART for ba'alei teshuva – that was an expression of his passion for spreading Torah. When I first came to Ohr Somayach nearly 38 years ago, Rav Moshe had just succeeded another Torah giant, Rav Dov Schwartzman, zt"l, as the rosh kollel for an extraordinary group of ba'alei teshuva. It is appropriate that his largest public shiur was given in Ohr Somayach for more than two decades, for ba'alei teshuva, many coming from sophisticated academic backgrounds, helped to create the audience for the multi-layered, deep Torah he was offering. Many of his leading expositors – e.g., Rabbi Akiva Tatz, Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Rabbi Jeremy Kagan, Rabbi Beryl Gershenfeld – come from the ranks of the ba'alei teshuva (and the list of prominent and prolific Hebrew-speaking ba'alei teshuva who were his talmidim would be as long or longer.) Rav Moshe was the address to which brilliant questioners of all stripes were directed. Benny Levy, one of the leaders of the 1968 French student revolt and later the leading disciple of Jean-Paul Sartre, was one whom Rav Moshe helped bring to Torah. Rav Moshe's hesped after Levy's early passing laid bare the depth of the relationship. Gidon Sar, former minister and a potential future prime minister, was another with whom Rav Moshe learned privately. A rosh kollel told me after Rav Moshe's passing that he found him most accessible in his conversations with groups of fresh ba'alei teshuva and potential ba'alei teshuva, who still addressed him with the familiar "you." He served as nasi, gave shiurim, and helped raise funds for numerous kollelim of ba'alei teshuva and for Pischei Olam, a yeshiva for Israeli ba'alei teshuva from academic backgrounds, headed by his talmid Rabbi Eliezer Faivelson. NO ONE IN OUR GENERATION reached more Jews with Torah of comparable depth. He revealed Torah not only in its halachic aspects or as a guide to every aspect of our behavior, but also as chochma, as the portal to the infinite Divine mind – a chochma that can only be received via a teacher. Every public shiur – the Thursday night shiur, leil Tisha B'Av, Hoshanah Rabba, or those in Yeshiva Sha'arei Yeshuv in Lawrence – was standing room only, no matter how large the beis medrash. There is a flourishing cottage industry of seforim based on his shiurim, and superb write-ups of his shiurim by Rabbi Moshe Antebbe and Rabbi Doniel Baron circulate in the thousands weekly. Thousands more download the shiurim from Kol Halashon. One can listen to a single shiur multiple times in succession and still experience the thrill of discovering new depths on each listening. For decades, Rav Moshe spoke on tichleh hashana b'klilosecha twice a year – once before Shavuos and once before Rosh Hashanah – without the well

going dry. He was a product of the great yeshivos – Ponevez, Chevron, Mirrer, and Brisk. As a bochur, he lived for several years in the home of Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, after the passing of the latter's wife. And he credited Rav Dessler with having twice told him something that changed his life. One was to study the Maharal. Rav Dessler understood the poetic nature of his soul, and discerned that his love of metaphor and multiple layers of understanding would find its salve in the Maharal. (Not by accident has one of his closest talmidim, Rabbi Yehoshua Hartman, published the multi-volume Gur Aryeh Chumash and numerous other annotated volumes on the works of the Maharal. Rav Moshe and he traveled at least once a year to the kever of the Maharal. But though he was a shem davar in the world of the yeshivos from his youth – many said of him that he was the greatest ba'al kishron they ever met – his Torah was available to all. Kippot serugot were liberally sprinkled throughout his public shiurim and around his table and living room on Purim. IT IS DOUBTFUL that there is another figure in our time who served as mentor and guide to so many hundreds of talmidim. They needed him not because of their timidity but because he constantly pushed them in new directions and far from their comfort zones. In the midst of a Tu B'Shevat shiur on the fruit tree as a metaphor for the creative power of Man to bring forth fruits that exist together with him but are not identical with him, he suddenly interjected: "We are not here to rearrange the furniture: We are here to become partners with Hashem in returning Creation to its primordial perfection." That is how he lived. In his last years, he led a Seder in Russia every year. Asked why, he responded, "In Jerusalem, they don't need me. Here, I'm told they need me." He constantly prodded his talmidim to go out and do and teach, often in farflung locales or unfamiliar circumstances. They listened, but only on condition that he would still be there to guide them. One young activist who has created a large organization to teach Torah in secular and dati leumi Israeli schools and another organization bringing together frum and non-frum Israelis to argue with one another based on Torah sources, told me recently, "How can I possibly function without being able to constantly ask Rav Moshe what are the proper boundaries? He guided me every step of the way. And was always there for our questions." The levaya was on Aseres b'Teves, which is described as the darkest of the fasts in the darkest time of the year. In one shiur on the day, Rav Moshe asked why is the siege of Jerusalem independently a cause of morning. He answered, "Torah goes out from Tzion. When Tzion is besieged, the light of Torah can no longer be expressed in the same way." Tzion and Yosef, he pointed out, have the same Gematria (156). Yosef is the flame that goes forth from the fire of Yaakov; the power of the Torah of Yaakov to spread and conquer Esav, until the world is filled with knowledge of Hashem. Rav Moshe Shapira was the Yosef of our generation. Oy lanu on the flame that has been extinguished and the darkness in which we are left.