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Machshava - E Pluribus Unu

Machshava
By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein
Parshas Vayechi
E Pluribus Unum

All of these are the tribes of Israel – twelve – and this is what their father spoke to them and he blessed them. He blessed each according to his appropriate blessing.[2]

Jealousy and hatred are powerful forces. Curiously, they behave like some physical laws: they are strongest at close distance, and weaker as the gap between the two parties opens up.

We don't mean the distance as the crow flies, so much as the psychological sense of commonality and sameness. A person sharing the same vocation as his friend is more likely to be jealous of him than if he worked in an unrelated field. When people share some context, but one somehow does markedly better than the other, the less fortunate often thinks of himself as having been cheated or disadvantaged by the success of the other. He sees the other as having taken what rightfully should have gone to him. It is possible – but much less likely – to feel the same way about someone with whom he shares much less. A musician might be jealous of another musician who achieves fame faster than he does. At times, the jealousy might even morph into hatred. The same musician is less likely to be jealous of the fame achieved by a hedge-fund manager.

This was part of the reason for the affinity of Yissachar and Zevulun. As the latter initially were coastal sea-farers involved in commerce, there was no friction or jealousy with the more land-rooted Yissachar. The same did not hold true in the relationship between Yissachar and Naftali. At one point in time, they had a close relationship; both figured in Barak's war against Sisera.[3] But as Yissachar moved inland[4] – and they both were involved in agriculture – there was friction between them.

Yaakov's desire was that the shevatim live harmoniously with each other, in love and brotherhood. This was his intent when instructing them, "Gather together,"[5] as a prelude to his berachos to them. He told them that

banishing jealousy and hatred was his chief wish. In those berachos, he gave something different and unique to each, so that no one would see his portion as similar to, but inferior to, that of another brother. At the conclusion of the berachos, he referred back to his opening instruction: "This is what their father spoke to them," i.e. this message of solidarity is what Yaakov had previously mentioned to his sons. He built upon that instruction when he blessed them, by shaping those berachos so differently, by giving each something very different from the others, and that could not be compared to the others: "Each according to his appropriate blessing."

Yosef's brothers saw that their father was dead. They said, "Perhaps Yosef will nurse hatred against us, and then he will surely repay us all the evil that we did him..." His brothers...flung themselves before him and said, "We are ready to be your slaves." But Yosef said to them, "Fear not, for am I instead of G-d?"[6]

What did the shevatim suddenly "see?" What new insight could they have gained about the death of their father? By this time, they were not caught in the shock of his demise! We can best understand this by applying the same principle as above.

The brothers had previously not worried excessively about Yosef seeking vengeance from them. Again, jealousy and hatred most often apply to people living on the same plane. When a lowly commoner is insulted by the king, he does not feel the sting as much as when his neighbor does so. The reverse is also true. A proper king will not be insulted by the action of a commoner. It does not behoove him to take notice of the action of someone so beneath his station. (When the Duke of Orleans became King of France, his advisors urged him to take retribution against a duke who had harmed him. He wisely responded, "The King of France does not take retribution against an enemy of the Duke of Orleans.")

Yosef's brothers did not worry about Yosef avenging himself upon them when their father was alive. After he died, they "saw" – or realized – that they no longer enjoyed the protective influence of Yaakov. Moreover, they actually saw the behavior of their brother – and became fearful. At first, they did not believe that the viceroy to Paroh would react to a wrong committed by commoners like them. But Yaakov died, and they saw from Yosef nothing but cordiality and brotherly love. They realized that Yosef was not relating to them as king to subjects, but as equals. Ironically, that was a more sobering reality. For if Yosef treated them as on an equal footing with himself, then in time he might very well be tempted to turn the tables on them, and punish them for the way they had treated him decades before! They would be far safer if there were an immense social chasm that separated them!

Therefore, they threw themselves at Yosef, and declared themselves his servants. Their intention was to reinstitute the class distinction between them. In doing so, they believed that they would decrease the likelihood of his taking action against them. It would once again be beneath his rank and station to do so.

Yosef replied that they were mistaken. His treating them as equals did not change the fact that he was indeed a ruler, a king over them – and they therefore had no reason to worry. "For am I tachas Elokim?" should not be translated as "for am I in place of G-d?" Elokim here means judges, and tachas means beneath. Yosef said, "Am I indeed beneath any judges? Are my actions subject to the approval of anyone else? Do I not indeed have near-absolute power? My treating you warmly does not detract from the reality that I am royalty relative to your commonness – and therefore it would be inappropriate for me to deal with some past grievance against you, even if I would feel that one had been committed. I tried earlier convincing you that I bore no malice against you for selling me into servitude. Even if you do not believe me, however, you have nothing to fear, because the difference between our positions on the social ladder precludes my taking any action against you. We can continue treating each other with brotherly warmth."

1. Based on Meleches Machsheves by R.Moshe Cheifetz, 1663-1711 ? 2. Bereishis 49:28 ? 3. Shoftim 4:6 ? 4. See Otzar Midrashim (Eisenstein), Eldad HaDani, pg 20 ? 5. Bereishis 49:1 ? 6. Bereishis 50:15, 18-19 ?

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Vayechi (Genesis 47:28-50:26)

What It Takes To Forgive by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

How Joseph was a trailblazer in the art of forgiveness.

Joseph forgives. That, as I have argued before, was a turning point in history. For this was the first recorded act of forgiveness in literature.

It is important here to make a key distinction between forgiveness, which is characteristic of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and the appeasement of anger, which is a human universal. People are constantly harming others, who then become angry, indignant and "disrespected." If the offender does nothing to turn away their wrath, they will take revenge.

Revenge is one way of restoring the social order, but it is a very costly and dangerous one because it can lead to a circle of retaliation that has no natural stopping point.[1] One of my family offends one of your family (think of Montagues and Capulets, or Corleones and Tattaglias), so one of your family takes revenge, which one of my family must retaliate for the sake of family honour, and so it goes, sometimes for generations. The cost is often so great that it is in everyone's interest to find a way of stopping the cycle. That is universal. It exists in every human group, and some non-human ones as well.[2]

The general way of bringing this kind of conflict to an end is what the ancient Greeks called *sunphone*, often translated as "forgiveness," but which actually - as David Konstan shows in his masterly study, *Before Forgiveness*[3] - means something like pardon, appeasement, a willingness to make allowances, or accept an excuse, or grant an indulgence. The end result is that the victim forgoes revenge. The offender does not atone. Instead he or she makes some kind of plea in mitigation: I couldn't help it; it wasn't that bad; it's human nature; I was carried away. In addition the offender must show, in words or body language, some form of humility or submission.

One classic example in the Torah is Jacob's conduct toward Esau when they meet again after more than twenty years, during which time Jacob had been away in the home of Laban. He knew that Esau felt wronged by him and had declared his intention to take revenge after their father Isaac had died. That is why Jacob fled in the first place. When they meet again, Jacob does not mention the earlier incident. But he does attempt to appease[4] Esau by sending him an enormous gift of livestock, and by abasing himself, bowing down to him seven times, and calling him "my lord," and himself "your servant." For his part, Esau does not mention the earlier episode, whether because he had forgotten it, or it no longer rankled with him, or because he was mollified by Jacob's self-abasement. This was not remorse and forgiveness, but submission and appeasement.

What Joseph does toward his brothers is different. When he first reveals himself to them, he says, "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (Gen. 45: 5). This sounds like forgiveness, but, as this week's parsha makes clear, it is not necessarily so. The word "forgiveness" is not used. And the brothers may well have assumed that, as in the case of Esau, Joseph intended to take revenge but not during the lifetime of their father. That is what provokes the drama at the end of this week's parsha:

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: Please

forgive [sa] your brothers' wrong and the sin they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." (Gen. 50: 15-17)

This was Joseph's response:

Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Gen. 50: 19-21)

This is forgiveness. Joseph does not use the word, but he makes it clear that he foregoes all thought of revenge. What is happening here and why did it not happen in other cultures? This is one of the most fascinating features of Judaism, and why it eventually made such a difference to the world.

Note what has to happen for forgiveness to be born. First, Joseph engages in an elaborate plan, hiding his identity, to make sure the brothers were capable of remorse and atonement. This happens on their first encounter in Egypt, when he accuses them of being spies, and they say in his presence - not knowing that he could understand them - "Surely we are guilty because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us" (Gen. 42:21). They know they have done wrong. They acknowledge their guilt.

Second, Joseph arranges a trial that will test whether Judah, the brother who proposed selling him into slavery in the first place, is indeed a changed person. He has Benjamin brought before him on a false charge, and is about to take him as his slave when Judah intervenes and offers to become a slave in his place so that Benjamin can go free. This is what the sages and Maimonides defined as complete repentance, that is, you have so changed that you are now a different person. These two elements tell us what has changed in the brothers so that they, the wrongdoers, can be forgiven.

There is a change in Joseph too, as we noted in last week's Covenant and Conversation. He has reframed his life, so that the entire story of his relationship with his brothers has now become utterly secondary to the drama of Divine providence that is still unfolding. As he explains: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good." This is what allows the victim, Joseph, to forgive.

These, though, are details. What is absolutely fundamental is that Judaism represents, for the first time in history, a morality of guilt rather than shame. In the past we've explored some of the elements that made it possible. Earlier this year we spoke of the difference between tradition-directed cultures and - what the call to Abraham initiates - inner-directed ones. Tradition-directed individuals, when they break the rules, feel shame. Inner-directed personalities feel guilt.

We also spoke about the difference between cultures of the eye and of the ear. Visual cultures are almost always shame cultures. Shame is what you feel when you imagine other people seeing what you are doing. The first instinct when you feel shame is to try to hide or to wish you were invisible.[5] In cultures of hearing, however, morality is represented by an inner voice, the voice of guilt that you cannot hide from even if you are invisible to the world.

The key difference between the two is that in shame cultures, wrongdoing is like a stain on the person. Hence the only way to be rehabilitated is to have the stain covered up somehow (the meaning, as we noted, of the verb *k-p-r*). You do this by placating the victim of your wrong so that in effect he "turns a blind eye" to what you did. His resentment, indignation and desire for revenge have been appeased.

In guilt cultures, however, there is a fundamental distinction between the person and his or her acts. It was the act that was wrong, not the person. That is what makes forgiveness possible. I forgive you because, when you admit you did wrong, express remorse and do all you can to make amends, especially when I see that, given the opportunity (as was Judah) to repeat the crime you do not do so because you have changed, then I see that you have

distanced yourself from your deed. Forgiveness means I fundamentally reaffirm your worth as a person, despite the fact that we both know your act was wrong.[6]

Forgiveness exists in righteousness-and-guilt cultures. It does not exist in honour-and-shame cultures like those of ancient Greece and pre-Christian Rome.

Contemporary culture in the West, often thought by secularists to be morally superior to the ethics of the Hebrew Bible, is in fact - for good or bad - a regression to pre-Christian Greece and Rome. That is why, nowadays, people who are found to have done wrong are publicly shamed. Examples are not necessary: they abound in every day's news. In a shame culture, the main thing to do is not to be found out, because once you are, there is no way back. There is no place in such a culture for forgiveness. At best you seek to appease. As in ancient Greece, the culprit argues, "I couldn't help it; it wasn't that bad; it's human nature; I was carried away." They undergo some ritual of self-abasement. Eventually they hope, not that people will forgive but that they will forget. This is an ugly kind of culture.

Which is why Judaism remains the eternal alternative. What matters is not outward appearances but the inner voice. And when we do wrong, as we all do, there is a way forward: to confess, express remorse, atone, make amends, and, like Judah, change. To know that however wrong our deeds, "the soul You gave me is pure," and that if we work hard enough on ourselves, we can be forgiven, is to inhabit a culture of grace and hope. And that is a life-changing idea.

NOTES:

1. Rene Girard, in *Violence and the Sacred*, argues that religion was born in the attempt to find a way to stop cycles of retaliation and revenge. 2. See Frans de Waal, *Peacemaking among primates*, Harvard University Press, 1989. 3. David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: the origins of a moral idea*, Cambridge University Press, 2010. 4. Note that the word Jacob uses to himself (Gen. 32: 21) comes from the verb k-p-r which will later be used in Leviticus to mean atonement, and is the source of the phrase Yom Kippur. It means literally to "cover over." It is what Noah does when he covers the ark with pitch (Gen. 6: 14). It also means a ransom (Num. 35: 32) such as might be paid to compensate a family for the murder of one of its members, something forbidden in Jewish law. 5. That is what I suggested was at stake in the Garden of Eden, which is all about shame and hiding. Adam and Eve followed their eyes rather than their ears. 6. Note that in certain cultures, forgiveness is not held to require remorse, atonement and the like. Maimonides himself says (Hilkhot Deot 6: 9) that if you regard the person who wronged you as incapable of handling criticism, then you may forgive him unilaterally. Note however that this kind of forgiveness does not signal that you reaffirm the moral worth of the person you forgive. To the contrary, you regard him as beneath contempt. Judaism seems always to have known this. The Christian theologian who understood it best was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who called it, "cheap grace."

from: Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kooklist+owners@googlegroups.com to: Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Wed, Dec 27, 2017 at 5:36 AM subject: [Rav Kook Torah] Rabbi Akiva's Prayer

?Rabbi Akiva's Prayer

Rabbi Praying The Talmud in Berachot 31a relates how Rabbi Akiva, the great first-century sage, would conduct himself in prayer:

"When he was with the congregation, he would pray quickly so as not to be a burden on those praying with him [who would respectfully wait for him to finish]. But when he prayed alone, one could leave him in one corner and afterwards find him in another corner, due to his many bows and prostrations." Two Levels of Kavanah

From this account we see that there are two levels of kavanah - intent and mental focus in prayer. The minimal level of kavanah is to concentrate on the

meaning of the words. This is a basic requirement of prayer (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 98:1).

There is, however, a higher level of kavanah, when one's thoughts are raised upwards, scaling the heights of profound insight and expanded consciousness. The Shulchan Aruch describes the lofty kavanah of great tzaddikim:

"Devout and pious individuals would seclude themselves. They would direct their thoughts in prayer until they succeeded in divesting themselves from their physicality and expanding their state of consciousness. Then they would attain a level close to that of prophecy." (ibid.) Every prayer makes an impact on the person praying, but the extent of this impact depends on the kavanah. A prayer recited with the basic level of kavanah - just concentrating on the words - promotes spiritual advance. This is, however, a gradual progress, like the imperceptible growth of the body.

A prayer focused on higher kavanah, on the other hand, will be the trigger of more radical transformation. When Rabbi Akiva prayed by himself, his prayer was not the reserved, dignified prayer of the community. It was an intense and ecstatic service of God. His fervent spiritual ascent was expressed physically; when he finished praying, he would find himself in the opposite corner of the room.

Such great movement during prayer is unusual. The Amidah prayer is supposed to be recited standing in one place, feet placed together. Yet Rabbi Akiva would move across the room "due to his many bows and prostrations." The more one is aware of God's infinite greatness, the stronger will be one's feelings of submission. The sense of one's separate selfhood dissipates, and one yearns to unite with the greater existence of the Infinite.

As Rabbi Akiva deepened his awareness of God's greatness, his profound feelings of subservience and selflessness was expressed with profuse bowing and prostrations.

Communal Prayer

Despite the obvious benefits of such an intense prayer, this is only suitable when one is secluded in private prayer. But when praying with the congregation, one should align oneself with their level of prayer. The entire congregation could never attain the intensity of prayer of a holy scholar like Rabbi Akiva, so he would pray quickly, content with the ordinary kavanah of concentrating on the meaning of the words.

This is the implication of Rabbi Akiva's conduct when praying with the congregation. The importance of joining in communal prayer outweighs the benefits of private prayer, even a profoundly intense prayer suitable to one's own spiritual level.

(Adapted from *Olat Re'iyah* vol. I, p. 28; *Ein Eyah* vol. I, p. 132)

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Dec 28, 2017 at 6:37 PM subject: Rav Frand - Yosef's Three Treasures / Shechinah Above the Choleh

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1058- Bentching Your Children on Friday Nights. Good Shabbos! For complete listings of all the new offerings, log onto our secure site at <http://www.yadyechiel.org>

The Three Treasures Yosef Hid Away in Egypt

The Talmud [Sanhedrin 110a] expounds the expression "riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune" [Koheles 5:12] as referring to Korach. The Gemara there teaches that Korach was a very wealthy individual. However, this was a dubious situation, where his wealth actually led to his downfall, as alluded to by Shlomo in Koheles. There is a Yiddish expression used to indicate that a person is rich: Ehr is reich vi Korach [he is as rich as Korach]. Where did this expression originate? It comes from this Gemara, which tells us that Korach was very wealthy.

A few lines later, the Gemara mentions that Yosef HaTzadik hid three treasures while he was ruling Egypt. One of the treasures was found by

Korach; one treasure was found by Antoninus (the Roman general and politician, contemporary of Rav Yehudah HaNassi); and one is hidden away for the righteous, in the world to come. On a literal level, this Gemara is saying that of the three fabulous treasures that Yosef hid away (which he presumably acquired as Viceroy of Egypt) Korach found one, Antoninus found one, and the Tzadikim will find one in the Messianic era.

A fascinating Pardes Yosef at the end of Parshas Vayechi has an entirely different take on this Gemara. According to his approach, the Gemara is not speaking about wealth at all. The Pardes Yosef says that the treasures that Yosef buried in Egypt had nothing to do with money, but rather, Yosef's life embodied three fundamentals of living that he figuratively hid away for future generations to rediscover.

The first "treasure" was the fundamental principle that if the Almighty wants you to be elevated to a position of leadership, you will achieve that position regardless of anyone else's attempt to halt your rise to power. You can have all the enemies in the world, and the plotters who are against you can rise to the top, but you will still prevail. They will not be able to stop you!

We see this for the first time, in the life of Yosef. He told his brothers that he prophetically saw in his dreams that they would come and bow down to him, and despite all the brothers' efforts to quash Yosef's rise to leadership, the Will of the Almighty came to pass!

Korach discovered this treasure (the hard way)! Korach had argued that "the entire congregation is holy." He challenged the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu. "I want to be the leader." He tried his hardest to wrest power from his cousin Moshe. However, in his time once again it was revealed from Heaven that if the Almighty wants someone (i.e., Moshe) to be the leader, his leadership is inevitable and inviolable.

The second "treasure" of Yosef's life, writes the Pardes Yosef (who lived into the twentieth century), has to do with anti-Semitism. Some think that what causes anti-Semitism is the fact that we act differently, and if we would act more like the Gentiles, they would accept us and not be anti-Semitic. We know that this is not true.

The righteous Yosef was a religious and observant Jew in Egypt. The Egyptians and their religious practices were diametrically opposed to the lifestyle practiced by Yosef. One would think, "How could he achieve a position of authority? He is a Jew." Anti-Semites say, "We hate Jews. Jews are disloyal. Jews are pushy. Jews are aggressive. Jews are this. Jews are that." The popular maxim of this philosophy is, "If you want to be successful in life, you need to give up your Yiddishkeit." Yosef disproved this philosophy. He showed that it was not true by remaining Yosef the Righteous in Egypt, and nevertheless rising to the very pinnacle of Egyptian authority. Pharaoh accepted him as he was.

This lesson, that one can remain "Jewish" and achieve respect from Gentile society regardless of one's religion, was the second treasure that Yosef "hid away for future generations to rediscover." When was this "treasure" revealed? It was revealed with the comradeship between Antoninus and Rabbi. Rabbi was Rabbeinu HaKadosh, who compiled the Mishna and led the Jewish community. And yet, Antoninus, the head of Rome, respected and honored him! Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi acted like a "Jew" why did Antoninus not hate Rabbi? It is because — as Yosef revealed centuries earlier in Egypt — anti-Semitism does NOT stem from the fact that Jews act differently than Gentiles.

Yosef proved this in the time of Pharaoh, and it was "rediscovered" in the era of Antoninus and Rabbi. One can achieve success in society at large, if one sticks to his principles. We see that today too. There are observant Jews in every area of government and industry, in positions of great prominence. They do not need to compromise their religious principles to achieve success and respect.

The third "treasure" that Yosef showed us is that we think there is absolutely no solution to the problem of "hatred between brothers" (sin'as achim). We have almost become resolved to the idea that inner-communal jealousies, rivalries, and hatred was with us, is with us, and will always be

with us. The story of Yosef proved that despite the tensions and the bitter events that transpired between them, it was possible to put those differences behind themselves, and reach a level of brotherly love (aha'vas achim).

We look at the controversies and tensions that exist within the Jewish people today, and we ask ourselves "How is Moshiach ever going to come?" This "treasure" of Yosef, the Gemara admits, is still hidden away; it has not yet been "rediscovered." However, the Gemara assures us that the Tzaddikim in the world of the future will one day find it, and then true brotherly love — Yosef's "third treasure" — will once again reign within our nation.

The Shechinah is Present Above the Head of One Who is Ill

Yaakov asks Yosef to swear to him that following his passing, Yosef would take him from Egypt and bury him with his fathers (in the Me'aras HaMachpela in Chevron). At the conclusion of the narration of this episode, the pasuk says, "He said, 'Swear to me,' and he swore to him; and Israel prostrated himself toward the head of the bed." [Bereshis 47:31] Rashi comments on the words "toward the head of the bed": "He turned himself in the direction of the Shechinah [the Divine Presence]. This is the source for that which the Sages say [Shabbos 12b], "The Shechinah is present above the head of one who is ill."

Why does the Divine Presence hover, so to speak, on the top of the bed of a sick person? I saw an interesting observation in a sefer. When a person is sick in bed, he can think that the Almighty has abandoned him (My G-d, my G-d, why have you left me? [Tehillim 22:2]). A person thinks, "The Ribono shel Olam must be angry with me; He must have it "in" for me!"

The reason the Shechinah is above the head of a sick person is because the Ribono shel Olam wants us to know that even under these circumstances, He still loves us, and He is still with us. The reason we are ill is for whatever reason it may be, but it is NOT because He is throwing us away.

There was a fellow named Rav Herschel Kowalski, ob"m. He came to America several times. I developed a connection with him, and I still have a connection with his widow. He was an extremely righteous individual — a holy man. When he was sick, and people would come to him to receive blessings from him, he would take the "kvittel" (piece of paper with the prayer or request of the individual coming to him for a blessing) and he would put it on top of his bed. He told the petitioners, "This is just as good as putting the "kvittel" into the Kosel." Just as the Talmud says that the Shechinah never departed from the Western Wall, so too the Shechinah is right there above the bed of a sick person.

This is a very important thing to bear in mind, especially when people are very ill — the Divine Presence is still with them.

A couple of weeks ago, I was in New York visiting my children, and I davened Shabbos morning in a shteible in Brooklyn. This was a nice Hashkama minyan in the basement of a building. They finished pesukei d'zimra, reaching shochan ad, but nobody went up to the amud to lead the Shachris service. Finally, an old Jew — who had trouble getting out of his seat — said to his neighbor, "Help me get up, and I will go to the amud to lead the davening." He made it to the amud and davened beautifully, but he was not able to stand at all. He had to lean on the amud throughout the davening.

I assumed that since he was an old man it was hard for him to stand, and that is why he had to lean on the amud throughout davening. When he finished davening, everyone gave him a hearty "yasher koach!" After Mussaf, he approached me and asked me if I had a minute to talk. We sat down, and he told me, "I have stage-four gastric cancer. The doctors have given me four months to live." He told me, "Cancer is not only a battle between the medicine and the disease. It is a battle between the Yetzer HaTov and the Yetzer HaRah. The Yetzer HaRah tells you, 'Give up. Stop davening. It is not worth it. You are a goner. You are going to lose it anyway. Just give up.' The Yetzer HaTov tells you, 'No. Keep on

davening. It will help you. If it won't help you, at least your davening will help someone else. Just don't give up."

I told him that I noticed — and it had made an impression on me — that the whole time that he was davening, he was hunched over the amud, but when he said Kedusha (with a nice niggun), when he reached the words "and our eyes will see your Kingdom..." he stood up erect and banged on the amud with vigor. It was as if he was able to strengthen himself, and had the full conviction that he would yet merit to see His Kingdom revealed to all, as promised by the words of 'Dovid Your Servant.' The Shechinah was still with this person, even with a diagnosis of stage-four gastric cancer. The Shechinah still loves this person.

As the Talmud says in Tractate Brachos [10a], "this is my tradition from the house of my father's father — even if a sharp sword is resting against one's neck, one should not abstain himself from requesting Mercy." No matter how desperate a situation may look, a person should never give up hope, and never stop praying for a salvation.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Vayechi is provided below: # 037 Establishing Time of Death # 079 The Yissocher-Zevulun Partnership # 128 The Sandik # 175 Embalming, Autopsies, and Cremation # 221 Exhumation: When Is it Permitted? # 265 Yahrzeit # 311 Funerals in Halacha # 355 Asarah B'Teves # 399 Baruch Shem K'vod Malchuso L'Olam Voed # 443 Aveilus Issues # 487 Determining Date of Moshiach's Arrival # 531 Burial in Eretz Yisroel # 575 Honoring an Older Brother # 619 Fulfilling the Wishes of the Deceased # 663 Belief in the Coming of Moshiach # 707 Fasting on a Yahrzeit # 751 The Rabbi: Master Or Slave? # 795 Hatoras Nedorim How Specific Must You Be? # 839 Buying Cemetery Plot Investing in Real Estate for Long Term # 883 Evil Intentions Do They Matter? # 927 Yissocher Zevulun Revisited # 970 Being A Sandek Does It Really Make You Wealthy? #1014 Will We Make Pesach When Mashiach Comes? #1058 Bentsching Your Children on Friday Nights #1101 Grandfather or Great Grandfather Who Should be Sandek? #1144 Supporting Someone To Sit and Learn: Must He Be Altruistic? #1187 Can You Be Sandek More Than Once? #1231 Day of Death or of Funeral? Customs and other Yahrzeit Issues #1275 I Don't Want Hespedit at my Levaya Must We Obey? A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2017 by Torah.org.

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Avi Zelefsky <avizelefsky@gmail.com> Fri, Jan 13, 2017 at 1:55 PM
Transcribed from a Sicha given by **Rav Bezalel Rudinsky**

Yaakov picks the two children of yosef and makes them more unique than the rest of his grandchildren. Yaakov compared them to his children by calling them shevatim, yet he blessed them with something even greater than the shevatim - for all eternity they will be the source of every blessing a father gives to his son. Yet, we find that they weren't as chashuv as the shevatim because their names were not put on the choshen. Why isn't yaakov afraid of separation? Why choose two grandchildren? He saw what happened when he favored yaakov! And why cause separation between the two brothers by crossing hands?

Yaakov calls in all of his children to tell him about the keitz, about moshiach. Hashem hid it from yaakov, so instead he said the brachos. It is mashma that yaakov had nothing to talk about, so he said the brachos. But these brachos represent each and every shevet! Why would this be a b'dieved? Additionally, these brachos should seem to cause a lot of jealousy! Reuven was bashed, shimon was bashed, levi was bashed, and finally yehuda was praised unbelievably! And it's hard to understand some of the other

brachos that were given: dan should be like a snake. What is the significance of a snake? The meforshim go into the importance of all the ambiguous brachos. But why give brachos and mussar in front of everybody? Give everything in private, it's appropriate setting!

Chazal say that no person will ever be jealous of his son or his talmid. It implies that a person can be jealous of his father and his rebbi. What is the difference between the two? A father isn't jealous of his son because his son is an extension of himself. A rebbi isn't jealous of his talmid because it is an extension of himself.

When the brothers were willing to give themselves over to yosef, they showed that klal yisroel is one. That is why yaakov gave the brachos and mussar in front of everybody - we are all one. The brachos and mussar goes to all of us.

There are two ways for moshiach to come: by time, or by us bringing it. Yaakov wanted to reveal the time for moshiach, but Hashem didn't want him to give it over. Yaakov said the second way for moshiach to come: unity. He showed by bringing them all together for the mussar and blessings that klal yisroel must be together in order to bring moshiach.

Efrayim and Menashe were the first to have a yissochar/zevulun relationship. They were the first pair of brothers to have harmony. We forever bless that our children will always have that relationship.

from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <genesis@torah.org> to: rabbiwein@torah.org
date: Wed, Dec 27, 2017 at 2:15 PM subject: Rabbi Wein - Family Building
Parshas Vayechi
Family Building

The holy book of Bereshith comes to its conclusion in this week's parsha. The story of the creation of the Jewish people through the development of one family over a number of generations and by the perseverance of the great personalities of our patriarchs and matriarchs is now complete.

This raises the question originally posed in Rashi's commentary to the very beginning of the book of Bereshith – why does the Torah, which appears to be basically a book of laws and commandments, bother with all of this detailed description of creation and continued familial based narrative? Why is this seemingly anecdotal knowledge of the lives of our ancestors so necessary to be included in the eternal Torah and how does it register in the survival of the Jewish people throughout the ages?

In response to this question of relevance, the rabbis taught us that the events that occurred to our ancestors are indeed the harbingers of happenings that will occur to their descendants. But many times it is difficult for later generations to make this connection, except in the most general way of experiencing historic repetitions of circumstances.

This book of Bereshith, which comprises a substantial part of the entire written Torah, contains within it almost no commandments and is basically a book of narrative tracing the development of one family – eventually seventy in number – and of the difficulties that this family encountered over generations. So what therefore is its main message to us living in a far different world, millennia later?

I think that the message of Bereshith is the obvious one of family and its importance. The Torah purposely and in minute detail describes for us how difficult it truly is to create and maintain a cohesive family structure. Every one of the generations described in Bereshith from Kayin and Hevel till Yosef and his brothers is engaged in the difficult and often heartbreaking task of family building.

There are no smooth and trouble free familial relationships described in the book of Bereshith. Sibling rivalry, violence, different traits of personality, and marital and domestic strife are the stuff of the biblical narrative of this book. The Torah does not sanitize any of its stories nor does it avoid confronting the foibles and errors of human beings.

The greatest of our people, our patriarchs and matriarchs, encountered severe difficulties in attempting to create cohesive, moral and cooperative

families. Yet they persevered in the attempt because without this strong sense of family there can be no basis for eternal Jewish survival. There is tragic fall out in each of the families described in Bereshith and yet somehow the thread of family continuity is maintained and strengthened until the family grows into a numerous and influential nation.

This perseverance of family building, in spite of all of the disappointments inherent in that task, is the reason for the book of Bereshith. It is the template of the behavior of our ancestors that now remains as the guideposts for their descendants. The task of family building remains the only sure method of ensuring Jewish survival.

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Parshas Vayechi Tevet 5778 Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva

HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Reb Meir ben Reb Dovid HaCohen. Sponsored by Hannah Finkel in memory of her father. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

BUSINESS AS USUAL Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years... (47:28) Rashi (ad loc) points out that this week's parsha opens without the customary delineation that is commonly found between two parshios. That is, the Torah is generally broken up into paragraphs and chapters - known as "p'suchos" and "stumos." A chapter ending is indicated by leaving the rest of the line open and a paragraph break is delineated by leaving nine letter spaces blank. However, this parsha begins with no break in the writing from the previous parsha.

Rashi goes on to explain that this parsha is "sossum" or "sealed" because this parsha contains the death of Yaakov Avinu, and once he passed away the hearts and eyes of Bnei Yisroel were closed from the suffering of the enslavement, for that is when the Egyptians began to enslave them. Yet this Rashi is directly contradicted by another Rashi in Parshas Va'eira (Shmos 6:16). Rashi says there that the reason the Torah records the age of Levi when he passed away is teach us how many years the enslavement lasted. As Rashi explains, Levi lived longer than any of his brothers and "as long as Yosef and his brothers were alive the enslavement did not begin." Levi died approximately seventy-seven years after Yaakov Avinu. So, at which point did the enslavement begin? Furthermore, Rashi's use of the word "sossum" to indicate that this parsha is sealed is a little hard to understand. The halachic definition of a "stuma" would include a nine letter gap, and Rashi's whole point is that here we have no gap at all. Moreover, Rashi seems to be taking poetic license to describe the pain and suffering of Bnei Yisroel ("The eyes and hearts of Bnei Yisroel were sealed from the enslavement"). This is odd; Rashi doesn't write poetry - Rashi gives us the literal meaning of the words of the Torah. What does Rashi mean by these words? A careful reading of Rashi reveals that he is describing a remarkable phenomena. Rashi is telling us that the eyes and hearts of Bnei Yisroel were closed; that is, they were in denial. Similar to Germany in the early 1930's, the Jewish population refused to "see" or "understand" the looming calamity that was slowly beginning to take shape. The Germans started by publishing virulently anti-semitic propaganda - portraying the Jews first as greedy and immoral, and eventually characterizing them as inhuman vermin to be exterminated. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the Jewish population willfully ignored the warning signs, refusing to see or internalize what was really going on. Even many years later, the German Jewish population was shocked that "their" country and

"fellow citizens" suddenly turned on them and shipped them off to die. In truth, by 1939 it had already been a decade in the making. Part of the human condition is to ignore what we don't want to see. That is what Rashi is teaching us here. Rashi points out that the parsha containing the death of Yaakov is written like every other verse of the Torah, with a one-space gap between the verses. The Torah writes it thusly to indicate that this event was not differentiated from anything else in their lives. The transition of Yaakov's death, which should have been understood as a momentous signpost on the road to their enslavement, passed without anyone noticing - they sealed their eyes and hearts to the coming slavery. The entire generation was in denial of the looming enslavement, ignoring the slowly changing attitude of the Egyptians that began with the death of Yaakov. By the time Levi passed away, the transition of the Egyptian attitude was complete and the actual slavery began.

In tribute to the tenth Yahrzeit of Binyamin (Barry) Ross OBM, and as continuing Zechus for R' Binyomin Yitzchak Ben Meir Z'L, the Ross family is sponsoring a free class every week for the entire year.

WHAT A BLESSING

And he blessed them that day, saying, "In you shall Yisrael bless, saying, 'May Hashem make you as Ephraim and as Menashe'" (48:20) This week's parsha introduces us to the blessing that Jewish fathers all over the world bless their sons on Friday nights. The text of this bracha is that which Yaakov Avinu composed when Yosef introduced his sons Ephraim and Menashe to Yaakov, "May Hashem make you as Ephraim and as Menashe." There has been much speculation as to what Yaakov intended when he blessed them. After all, very little is known about the actual lives of Ephraim and Menashe. Why would he designate them specifically as the paradigm with which all parents should bless their children? One of the more common answers given is that Ephraim and Menashe are the first two brothers in the Torah who don't have a bitter rivalry or fight with each other. After all, the Torah is replete with stories of brothers in conflict: Kayin and Hevel, Yishmael and Yitzchak, Yaakov and Eisav, Yosef and his brothers, etc. Still, this approach is difficult to accept. First, there are many examples of brothers in the Torah who show no specific animosity to one another: Shem, Cham, and Yefet, and Avraham Avinu and his brothers, to name a few. Second, we have no specific indication that Ephraim and Menashe had a unique fraternal relationship. Third, it isn't a law of nature that brothers have to be in conflict, many famous brothers lived in harmony, such as Moshe and Aharon. Finally, it is highly improbable that none of the children of the other Shvatim had positive sibling relationships; why should Yaakov single out only Yosef's children for that reason? Ramban (ad loc) comments that this bracha was a specific blessing to Yosef. When the possuk says, "in you shall Yisroel bless" this refers to Yosef himself. This sentiment is echoed by Targum Yonason Ben Uziel, who adds that this bracha is also given on the day of a boy's bris. Ramban also says (48:15) that Yosef may have actually had more children after Yaakov and his family settled in Egypt, but this bracha was specifically regarding only Menashe and Ephraim. If this bracha is really for Yosef, why does Yaakov specifically designate only Ephraim and Menashe? Yaakov is alluding to a very powerful message, one that would be crucial to all generations of Bnei Yisroel to come. Yosef had come to Egypt as a slave, sat in jail for a few years, and then rose to the highest possible position of authority, below only Pharaoh himself. Egypt was a place well known for immorality and idol worship. Yet, through it all, Yosef was able to maintain who he was and even raise children with the same values that he had absorbed from the house of his father Yaakov. Yaakov is alluding to this remarkable accomplishment and foretelling the importance of this for future generations. We bless our children that they should be like Ephraim and Menashe; children who grew up in an environment totally bereft of holiness, yet persevered in representing the values of their father and the Jewish people. Yosef raised children under the most difficult of circumstances and they turned out exactly like him. This is also why Yaakov gives them the

ultimate recognition by replacing Yosef with them among the Shvatim, each one heading his own tribe. This further explains why we give our sons this blessing on the day of their bris. The day of one's bris a child is "brought into the covenant of Avraham Avinu." Avraham Avinu came from a family of idol worshippers and rose to make it his mission to bring Hashem into a world that had no knowledge of His presence. The very definition of being a Jew is bringing Hashem into this world by carrying on the values of your ancestors, no matter what life's circumstances may bring.

Did You Know... In this week's parsha (49:1), Yaakov tells his children he will tell them "What will happen at the end of days." Rashi (ad loc) explains Yaakov wanted to reveal details of the "end of times" (i.e. when Moshiach will come, what it will be like, etc.) but that Hashem prevented him from revealing the details. We find this same notion elsewhere; the Gemara (Sanhedrin 97b) and Rambam (Mishnah Torah Kings and Wars 12:2) both say that terrible things should befall the person who attempts to calculate Moshiach's arrival. This is a very odd statement considering that both the Gemara and Rambam immediately proceed to tell us their predictions for when Moshiach will arrive. This Gemara (Sanhedrin 97a) is probably the main source for the well known 6000 year deadline by which Moshiach will have arrived. The Gemara discusses the many opinions of what the world will be like when the end of days finally come. However, the fact that Moshiach is due to arrive by the year 6000 does not mean he will not arrive earlier. As we say in the Ani Ma'amins - we await his arrival every day. In fact, a who's who list of Chazal have attempted to predict the date of his arrival. Rambam (Iggeres Teiman, ch. 3 p. 41) relates that his family had a tradition for many generations that Mashiach would arrive in the year 1210 CE. Ramban (Bereishis 2:3) calculates that the year would actually be 1358 CE, although the Chasam Sofer (Teshuvos 6:61) responds that Ramban made a miscalculation and brought it a lot closer to his lifetime out of his great desire for Moshiach to arrive. The Chasam Sofer calculated that it would actually be in the year 1790 CE. Rashi quotes R' Saadia Gaon (Daniel 7:25) and calculates that the year that Moshiach will arrive is the year 1335 CE. Lastly, Malbim on (Daniel 12:12) calculated that the year would be 1927 CE, exactly 90 years ago. This is also important because the Malbim cites the Zohar who says that every 60 years there is an "awakening" and that year is especially meritorious to be the year that Mashiach comes. The Malbim calculated that that year would be one of those 60th years, which means that the year 2047 will be another one of those possible years. There is a different calculation that places his arrival in 2085. By now you may have noticed a common theme; all these calculated times of arrival have come and gone and it certainly doesn't seem like Moshiach has arrived. But we are still left with the question, how were they allowed to calculate the exact year that Moshiach would arrive? Ostensibly, as we see from the Malbim, they weren't predicting with absolute certainty the exact arrival of Moshiach, but rather that those years had a strong possibility and special merit that Moshiach might come. What that exactly means is beyond the scope of this Did You Know, but hopefully we will understand soon, may Moshiach arrive speedily in our days.

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from: torahweb@torahweb.org date: Thu, Dec 28, 2017 at 8:55 PM subject:

Rabbi Yakov Haber - Blessings: the Common and the Unique

Rabbi Yakov Haber

Blessings: the Common and the Unique

Several notable points surface upon reading Ya'akov Avinu's blessings to Ephraim and Menashe. Firstly, Ya'akov initially requests of Yosef, "take them to me and I shall bless them" (48:9), but later the verse states, "And he blessed Yosef and he said... The angel ... shall bless the youths" (ibid.15-16). Following that, the Torah records another blessing, "And he blessed them saying, 'With you (becha in the singular) shall Israel bless, 'May G-d make

you like Ephraim and Menashe'"..." (ibid. 20). The Torah seemingly alternates between the blessings being directed toward Yosef and their being directed toward his children. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the first blessing does not mention Yosef's children by name whereas the second one does.

The commentaries present different approaches resolving one or more of the above anomalies. Ramban explains that the first blessing was a blessing to Yosef since the greatest blessing a father could receive is a blessing for his children. He similarly explains the usage of the singular "becha" in the second blessing: Ya'akov was telling Yosef, "The Jewish people will use your descendants as paradigms for their blessings". Ohr HaChaim and Seforno explain that Ya'akov at first separately bestowed a blessing upon Yosef the content of which is not described and then proceeded to bless Yosef's sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Alternatively, Ya'akov first bestowed the power of blessing - which had been given to Ya'akov from his father Yitzchak who, in turn, received it from his father Avraham - upon his beloved son Yosef, and then Ya'akov proceeded to bless his grandchildren.

Abarbanel, in explanation of the need for two blessings, comments that the first blessing was for both children equally. He notes that there are three different types of blessings: for spiritual success, for physical success and for protection from harm. Ya'akov Avinu blessed his grandchildren together with all of these in the first blessing. (See there for the detailed explanation.) The second one highlighted their names indicating each one's uniqueness. Rashi notes that different types of leaders emerged from each tribe. Netziv (see also Rav S. R. Hirsch) stresses the fact that Ephraim excelled in spiritual matters; Menashe excelled in the worldly qualities of leadership and court conduct.>[1] A blessing is designed to augment the qualities and talents with which one was already endowed. The blessing used by the Jewish people thus wishes upon the person being blessed that he excel in the particular quality that is already present within him. Based on this concept, he explains the cryptic statement of Targum Yonasan (Yerushalmi) that this blessing would be used at a bris milah.[2] It is at that early stage in the child's life when his qualities are not yet known that the dual blessing of being like Ephraim (excelling in the spiritual) and (or) like Menashe (excelling in the physical) is appropriate.

Mikdash Mordechai (quoted in Talelei Oros) offers an alternative explanation why the sons of Yosef are uniquely chosen to be the models of blessing. They were the first brothers in Biblical history known not to be envious of or quarrelsome with each other even after their grandfather placed the younger Ephraim before the elder Menashe. His comment is especially meaningful in light of the Netziv's comment that they were quite different from each other, a fact that oftentimes, unfortunately, leads to enmity and strife. Fathers bless their sons that they should excel in their unique qualities but also admire and respect the unique qualities of others.

In closing, a comment by Be'er Yosef by Rav Yosef Tzvi Salant is most worthy of mention. Yosef, as the viceroy of Egypt, had unlimited resources to rear his two sons to excel, each with their own unique talents: Menashe as an officer in the palace and Ephraim as a devoted student of his grandfather Ya'akov. How could a "pashute Yid" with limited resources have hopes that his children will excel? For this reason, Ya'akov Avinu used the singular "becha" introducing the second blessing referring to Yosef himself. In effect, he was saying that the Jewish people will learn from Yosef's miraculous rise to success both spiritually and physically after being sold as a slave, accused of crimes by his master's wife and imprisoned for twelve years! With Hashem's blessings and providence, nothing is impossible. May we all merit blessings from above and respect each other's unique qualities thus emulating the unity of Ephraim and Menashe.

[1] See Priority and Innovation, by Mori v'Rabi Rav Mordechai Willig shlit"a, for further elaboration of the Netziv's approach.

[2] For another approach, see Invest in Futures - G-d Does, by Rav Benjamin Yudin shlita.

from: **Rabbi Ozer Alport** <oalport@optonline.net> date: Thu, Dec 28, 2017 at 10:43 PM subject: Parsha Potpourri - Vayechi
Parsha **Potpourri Parshas Vayechi** – Vol. 13, Issue 12 Compiled by Ozer Alport

But Yaakov crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys' heads. He put his right hand on the head of Ephraim, though he was the younger boy, and his left hand on the head of Menasheh, though he was the firstborn. (48:14)

When Yosef heard that Yaakov was ill, he brought his two sons Menashe and Ephraim to his father so that he could bless them before his death. Because Yaakov was no longer able to see clearly, Yosef placed the older Menashe on Yaakov's right and the younger Ephraim on his left. However, as Yaakov prepared to bless them, he famously switched his hands, placing his right hand, which signifies power, on the head of Ephraim and his left hand on the head of Menashe.

Although Yosef attempted to protest, Yaakov stood his ground and explained that he prophetically recognized that Ephraim's descendants would be greater than those of Menashe and therefore warranted the primary blessing. This is still difficult to understand. Even if Yaakov wished to bestow the main blessing upon Ephraim, why did he cross his hands instead of simply asking Ephraim and Menashe to trade places, which would save Yaakov from needing to adjust his hands?

Rav Chaim Zvi Senter points out that when two people are standing opposite one another, each person's right side is across from the other person's left side. Symbolically, this demonstrates that when we look at others, our default mode is to focus on their areas of weakness and place them opposite our strengths. We often feel threatened and challenged by other people, so we strive to reassure ourselves by seeking out their faults and areas in which we are superior to them. On the other hand, when we look at ourselves in a mirror, our right side is opposite our right, not our left. This alludes to the fact that when we look at ourselves, we naturally emphasize our positive qualities and minimize our weaknesses.

For this reason, Yaakov specifically insisted on switching his hands instead of the positions of his grandchildren because by placing his stronger right hand on the child who was on his left side, he was hinting to them – and to us – that the key to building successful relationships is focusing on other people's strengths and talents. Rav Senter adds that perhaps this explains why we are accustomed to bless our sons on Friday night that they should grow up to be like Ephraim and Menashe, for they were the first siblings in history who learned and implemented this lesson. By always focusing on each other's positive attributes, they created an atmosphere of peace and harmony, a model that we hope our children will emulate.

from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Tue, Dec 26, 2017 at 11:13 AM subject: non-kosher colorants

With the several references in the parsha to wine and grapes, I thought an article dealing with some practical grape skin problems might be in order. Observing a Colorful Lifestyle By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff
Question #1: Are there any non-kosher food colorings?

Question #2: Why would a hechsher insist on a recall of a product?

Quiz Question #1, or Question #3: How can a non-kosher ingredient be noticeable, and yet the finished product is kosher?

At one point in my life, when I worked as a kashrus supervisor, I made a surprise inspection of a company that produced juice drinks – let's call it Generic Juices, Incorporated. I was surprised to discover that the plant was not following the instructions it had received from its hechsher and was bottling beverages containing enocianina, a coloring derived from grape skins. This product was not on the list of approved ingredients, and for good reason, as I will explain shortly. The kashrus concerns involved now created a serious problem for the hechsher, the company, and most of all, the

unsuspecting consumer. Before discussing what happened, I must present the halachic issues involved.

THE FOOD COLORING INDUSTRY

Whether we like it or not, many of our foods are colored with a host of coloring agents. Some are derived from food items, such as beets, berries, sugar (caramel coloring), turmeric and annatto, whereas others are derived from inedible materials whose sources most consumers would prefer to ignore. Although processing colorants can compromise the kashrus of the finished product, few food colors are themselves obtained from non-kosher materials. However, there are two common food pigments that originate from non-kosher substances: One is carmine red, also called cochineal, which is a very common color used to color fruits, yogurts, juice drinks, maraschino cherries and more. Cochineal is extracted from an insect that is native to South America. A closely related dye color, kermes, is a shade of scarlet derived from scale insects, which may have been the source of the tolaas shani dye used in the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash. We should note that the Hebrew word tola'as, which is usually translated worm, may include insects and other small invertebrates. Thus, it may indeed be that the tola'as of the verse is a scale insect that produces a red dye.

The verse (Yeshayah 1:18), "if your sins will be like shanim, they will become as white as snow; though they be red as the tola, they will become white like wool," clearly indicates that tola'as shani is a red color. On this basis, some authorities identify tola'as shani as kermes (see Radak to Divrei HaYamim II 2:6). One can rally support for this approach from the verse in Divrei HaYamim (II 3:14), which describes the paroches curtain as woven from techeiles, argaman, karmil, and butz, which is linen; whereas the Torah describes the paroches as made of techeiles, argaman, tola'as shani, and sheish, which is linen (Shemos 26:31). The words karmil and kermes certainly seem to be cognate. Similarly, the Rambam explains tola'as shani to mean "wool dyed with an insect" (Hilchos Klei HaMikdash 8:13). Thus, karmil appears to be another word for tola'as shani. The ancients derived a red dye from the dried bodies of the species called Kermes ilices, which served as one of the most important pigments for thousands of years. As a matter of fact, the English word crimson derives from this ancient dye.

(Without going into the subject in detail, it is appropriate to mention that some responsible rabbinic authorities rule that cochineal is kosher, since it comes from an inedible part of the insect. However, I am unaware of any major kashrus organization today that treats cochineal as kosher.)

GRAPE SKIN EXTRACT

The other common non-kosher source is called enocianina, colloquially often called simply eno, a red or purple natural food color derived from grape skin extract, and commonly used in beverages, fruit fillings and confections. After the juice has been squeezed out of the grapes, the remaining pulp is processed into a commercial coloring agent. Although one could produce kosher eno from kosher-processed grape skins, grape skin color available today is produced in non-kosher facilities. After the grapes have been squeezed and the juice has been separated from the pulp, at which time they become subject to the halachos of stam yeinam, which means that they have probably become non-kosher. Thus, we assume that eno is not kosher.

GENERIC JUICE DRINKS

Unfortunately, when I discovered the problem, Generic Juices had already produced and shipped tons of product using either carmine or eno – and all of it bearing the kosher certification symbol on the label! Is the kashrus agency halachically required to insist on a recall of the product from the supermarket shelves?

RECALL

Companies hate having their products recalled, for technical reasons, because of the major expense involved, and because it is a public relations nightmare. On the other hand, if the product now in the marketplace is prohibited according to halacha, we must be concerned that a consumer may use the product, because he assumes that it is kosher! Although a recall is

never a foolproof method, it is the best we can do to avoid people unwittingly consuming a non-kosher product.

The policy of this particular hechsher was not to require a recall, unless the product could not be used even after the fact, *bedei'evid*. It was now the responsibility of the hechsher's *poskim* to decide whether the product is prohibited after the fact, and, therefore, to require a recall, or whether *bedei'evid* the product is permitted. Although we would insist that all labels bearing the hechsher on this product be destroyed, or at least the *kashrus* symbol be obliterated, the hechsher would not require the product that had already been shipped to be recalled. (There would also need to be further clarification as to whether the hechsher would allow distribution of the product that had been labeled but was still in the company's control.)

Why should the finished product be kosher, if the colorant was not?

The basis for this question follows:

Coloring agents are used in very minute amounts. Indeed, when the Spaniards discovered carmine red, they sold the concentrated powdered pigment at a higher price per ounce than gold! Thus, the amount of coloring used to color a juice drink, maraschino cherry or strawberry-flavored yogurt is significantly less than the amount that we usually say is *bateil* (nullified) in a finished product. Although one may never add *treif* product to a food and rely on its becoming *bateil*, if a non-kosher product was added inadvertently in minute quantities, the finished product is usually permitted.

The primary criterion to determine whether the *treif* ingredient is *bateil* is:

Can the non-kosher product be tasted, either because of its quantity or because it is a flavoring agent?

In our instance, this test is passed with flying colors! None of these colors can be tasted in the finished product.

However, there is, or might be, another criterion:

Is the *treif* product noticeable?

If one can see a *treif* ingredient floating inside a food, one may not consume the food without first removing the *treif* item.

COLORS ARE NOTICEABLE

The boldness of a color announces its existence. Can we say that a color is *bateil* when we see clear evidence of its existence?

Several great halachic authorities discuss this question, reaching different conclusions. Indeed, some great authorities prohibit consumption of a product that was colored with a non-kosher colorant, precisely because one can notice the existence of the non-kosher ingredient (*Pri Megadim*, *Mishbetzos Zahav* 100:1; *Minchas Kohen*, *Sefer Hataaroves* 3:3, quoted by *Darkei Teshuvah* 102:30). According to this approach, all of the juice drinks mentioned must be recalled, since the color of the drink is noticeable and comes from a non-kosher ingredient.

On the other hand, the *Vilna Gaon* argues that determining whether the food is kosher depends on whether one can taste the *treif* ingredient (*Yoreh Deah* 102:6). In our instance, although the color is noticeable, no one tastes the colorant, and, therefore, the finished product is permitted, assuming that the admixture was made in error. An earlier authority, the *Minchas Yaakov* (74:5), also espouses this position.

According to this approach, we have answered our opening Quiz Question #3, which was: How can a non-kosher ingredient be noticeable, and yet the finished product is kosher?

A COMPROMISE POSITION – IN WHOLE CLOTH

Some authorities compromise between these two positions, comparing our question to a *Gemara* that discusses whether someone who stole dye and cloth and now returns the dyed fabric fulfills his *mitzvah* of returning what he stole. The *Gemara* rules that this depends on whether the dye is considered to still exist after it has been used, because its color is still noticeable (*Bava Kamma* 101a). Is the color on the cloth treated as if the dye itself still exists, or did the dye become *bateil* and no longer exist? If the dye no longer exists, then it was not returned, whereas if the dye still exists, then it was returned. That issue remains unsettled, and, therefore, halachically is considered an unsolved doubt, a *safek* (*Shu't HaRan* #70). Based on this

discussion, several prominent authorities contend that a colorant that may involve a Torah prohibition is prohibited as a *safek d'oraysa*, whereas one that involves only a rabbinic prohibition is permitted, since the ruling is that we are lenient in the case of an irresolvable issue germane to a rabbinic prohibition (*Pri Chodosh*, *Yoreh Deah* 102:5; *Chasam Sofer*, quoted by *Darkei Teshuvah* 102:30).

CONCLUSION

By this time, I presume most readers want to know what the hechsher did. The deciding posek ruled in accordance with the last position mentioned, and contended that the carmine coloring might be prohibited *min haTorah*, and therefore the company must recall the beverages containing carmine. Since *eno*, the grape skin extract, involves only a rabbinic prohibition, he did not require the company to recall the items containing this ingredient, contending that, according to most authorities, the *eno* is considered nullified in the final mix.

We should always pray that the food we eat fulfills all the halachos that the Torah commands with no controversial *shaylos*.

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Parshas Vayechi: Eliminating Generation Gaps

By Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim

December 28, 2017

Last week, Rabbi Stechler asked me to bring a few young men from Yeshiva Heichal HaTorah (where I give a morning *shiur*) to form a *minyan* for a burial. I came with nine yeshiva boys and asked to be introduced to the relatives. The funeral director responded that this was a direct burial—he was a single man, never married and had no relatives. All they knew was his name, Alfred Piekovsky, Avraham ben Yosef Hakohen.

I couldn't believe it. I had officiated at many funerals (unfortunately), but I never had the merit of fulfilling a burial of a true *mes mitzvah*—a Jewish person with no one to bury him. I told the boys we were being given a tremendous opportunity. Hashem chose us on the second day of Chanukah to do the entire burial ourselves, from carrying the coffin to lowering it and filling in the grave. For some of the boys, this was their first burial and they were incredible.

I think of this story as we learn about the burial of Yaakov Avinu. Even Pharaoh recognized the importance and need for proper Jewish burial, granting permission for Yosef, the viceroy, and his brothers to temporarily leave Egypt to bury their noble father, Yaakov!

The loss of Yaakov was the loss of a patriarch, which was overwhelming. We see this in the way the *sefer Torah* is written, as *Parshas Vayechi* does not have a space separating it from last week's *Parshas Vayigash*, unlike all other *parshiyos*. This is referred to as *parsha stuma*—a "closed" *parsha*. *Rashi* explains that with the passing of Yaakov, the exile started and everyone's clarity of vision was dimmed.

The Jewish people suffered a major loss with the recent passing of Hagoan Rav Shteinman. He was a true leader in our generation. Here was a Jew who lived very simply and whose entire life was dedicated to learning Torah and helping out Jews.

My own family also recently suffered a great loss with the passing of my mother-in-law, Rebbetzin Ita Singer. She was born in Romania during World War II and did not have the privilege of a formal Jewish education as a child. The home of her parents was imbued with tremendous faith in Hashem and adherence to *mitzvos* and the values of Torah. This environment was so powerful that it compensated for her lack of formal Jewish education. Together with my father-in-law Rabbi Singer, she spent 50 years dedicated to raising a beautiful family and helping spread Torah in Passaic/Clifton and beyond. Her selflessness was incredible. Her hobby was her grandchildren and she was the greatest investor in the world, investing all her time and money in her children, grandchildren and in learning and teaching Torah. She is now reaping the rewards.

The loss of a patriarch or matriarch is the loss of their vision and clarity of purpose of life. We are left with a spiritual gap. Nonetheless, our parsha teaches us how to move forward.

Yaakov told Yosef that Yosef's children, Ephraim and Menashe, will be considered equal to Yosef's own brothers in clarity and spiritual levels.

Why did Yosef merit this special blessing?

I would suggest that the blessing was merited by Yosef's great dedication to his father, Yaakov, both as a teenager and then later on, tending to Yaakov's needs when he was ill and ensuring his father's proper burial. Devoted care of one's parents sends a huge message to one's children and shapes their values for the years to come. Rebbetzin Singer and her sister devoted themselves to the care of their mother for a great many years. My wife and her sisters were witnesses to this devotion and merited to have a close connection and attachment to their grandmother.

"May Hashem cause you to be like Ephraim and Menashe." Why specifically these two?

Because they were unaffected by the generation gap. There was no interruption in the transmission of vision and clarity of purpose from the prior generation. That is the special blessing we give to our children.

The Sfas Emes goes even deeper. "Vayechi Yaakov"—and Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt. The Chidushei Harim explains, "And Yaakov lived" means much more than just physically lived. It means spiritually lived. Even in the immoral climate of Egypt, Yaakov was able to remain vibrant in his connection to Hashem. This is a lesson for us in exile. Yaakov paved the way. Even in exile, when it's dark and our vision and mind are limited, we still have an ability to live, grow and connect. As the verse says, "Those who cling to Hashem are alive today."

May Hashem grant the blessing to all of us that our children be like Ephraim and Menashe.

By Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim

Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim is the associate rosh yeshiva of Passaic Torah Institute (PTI)/Yeshiva Ner Boruch. PTI has attracted people from all over northern New Jersey, including Teaneck, Bergenfield, Paramus, Rockaway and Fair Lawn. He initiated and continues to lead a full multi-level Gemara learning program in the evenings, gives Halacha and hashkafa shiurim on Shabbos and, more recently, has spread out beyond PTI to begin a weekly beis midrash program with in-depth chavrusa learning in both Livingston and Springfield.

from: **Ohr Somayach** <ohr@ohr.edu>

date: Thu, Dec 28, 2017 at 4:55 AM

subject: **Parsha Q&A** - Parshat Vayechi

Why is kindness towards the dead called "chesed shel emet" — kindness of truth?

47:29 - Because the giver expects no reward from the recipient.

Give three reasons Yaakov didn't want to be buried in Egypt.

47:29 - a) Egypt's ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside Israel will suffer; c) So the Egyptians wouldn't make him into an idol.

How do you treat a "fox in his time" (i.e., a commoner who rules)?

47:31 - Bow to him.

"When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat..." Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?

48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef's mother, Rachel, in the Ma'arat HaMachpela.

Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Ephraim and Menashe?

48:8 - The Shechina departed from him.

What does pillalti mean?

48:11 - "I thought."

What does "Shechem" mean as used in this week's parsha? (two answers)

48:22 - a) The actual city of Shechem; b) A portion.

Which individual is called "the Emori"? Why? Give two reasons.

48:22 - Esav. a) He acted like an Emorite; b) He trapped his father with words (imrei pi).

What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?

49:1 - When mashiach will come.

What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?

49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.

What congregation from Yaakov's offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?

49:6 - Korach and his congregation.

What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?

49:8 - He drew back. He was afraid that Yaakov would rebuke him for the incident with Tamar.

What does milk do to teeth?

49:12 - It makes them white.

Why is Yissachar like a "strong-boned donkey"?

49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.

With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?

49:20 - Oil-rich land.

In Yosef's blessing, Yaakov said, "They embittered him..." Who are "they"?

49:23 - Yosef's brothers, Potifar and his wife.

Which descendants of Binyamin "will divide the spoils in the evening"?

49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.

From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?

50:5 - From Esav.

What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?

50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh's ignorance of Hebrew.

Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?

50:13 - Levi, because he would carry the aron (holy ark). Yosef, because he was a king.

from: Mordechai Tzion toratravaviner@yahoo.com

to: ravaviner@yahoogroups.com

date: Mon, Dec 25, 2017 at 12:35 PM

subject: [ravaviner] Short & Sweet - Text Message Q&A #272

Rav Shlomo Aviner

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Groom Forgiven for Sins

Q: I heard that a groom is forgiven for all of his sins on his wedding day. Does this include transgressions between him and other people, or only transgressions between him and Hashem?

A: He is only forgiven for sins against another person if he appeases that person and is forgiven by him. Similarly, transgressions between him and Hashem are only forgiven if he performs Teshuvah. I heard in the name of the Gerrer Rebbe, 'Imrei Emet', that one's wedding day is no more potent than Yom Kippur, and when one is forgiven for transgressions against Hashem if he performs Teshuvah and transgression against another person if he appeases him.

Kashrut of a Non-Religious Jew

Q: I have a non-religious relative. He said that he will provide us with Kosher food. Can I rely on him?

A: On condition that 1. He knows the Halachot of Kashrut. 2. It is completely clear that he can be relied upon in this area (Shut Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 1:54).

Following One's Rav or Chief Rabbinat

Q: Does one have to follow his Rav or the Chief Rabbinat?

A: In personal matters - his Rav. In matters regarding Klal Yisrael - the Chief Rabbinat.

Working on Shabbat in Shabak (Israeli FBI)

Q: Is it permissible to accept a job for the Shabak when I will have to work on Shabbat?

A: Yes. Whatever is permissible in Tzahal and the police force is also permissible in the Shabak.

Our Land

Q: What should I respond to a co-worker who claims that the Arabs should have part of Eretz Yisrael?

A: 1. Hashem gave us this Land. 2. The Arabs have 22 countries with 600 times more territory than the State of Israel, and there are 67 Muslim countries with 3000 times more territory than the State of Israel.

Place of Mourning

Q: I have recently seen a new custom to sit Shiva not in the house of the deceased but rather in a public building, i.e. a Shul. Is this permissible?

A: It is permissible in an extenuating circumstance, such as if the house is over-crowded. Kol Bol Al Avelut p. 262. Tzeror Ha-Chaim p. 93.

Getting Rid of Mice

Q: Is there a Segulah to hang a picture of a specific Tzadik in order to rid one's home of mice?

A: It has no value.

Aiding One who Committed a Crime

Q: A person committed a crime and is now in prison. Is it a Mitzvah to help pay for his lawyer?

A: No. On the contrary, he should be punished. This is true unless he is being unjustly punished (Shut Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 3:35. An observant Jew once came to the yeshiva to speak to Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein and explained that his son was in prison for selling drugs, and he wanted Reb Moshe to write a letter to the judge asking to have mercy on his son. Reb Moshe harshly said to him: "Your son causes people to be sick and hurts them. Let him sit in prison!" The father tried over and over again to convince Reb Moshe, but he in no way agreed to sign such a letter, and added that his actions were against the laws of the country, which are not forfeited. Reshumei Aharon Volume 1, p. 22)..

Ancestors Under the Chuppah

Q: Is there a source that the souls of our departed ancestors are present at the Chupa?

A: Yes. Three Generations. Neta'ei Gavriel (Hilchot Nisu'im Chapter 4 note #4).

Prayer for the State of Israel

Q: What is the source for the Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel? Must we stand for it?

A: The Chief Rabbi of Israel, Ha-Rav Yitzchak Herzog, wrote the prayer. Regarding standing, one should follow the custom of the community. For example, it is permissible to sit for the Shema, which is a Torah Mitzvah, and one must stand for the Shemoneh Esrei, which is a Rabbinic obligation. In truth, however, the entire Shemoneh Esrei is a prayer for the State of Israel. See Megilah 17b.

Tzadik Prime Minister

Q: My young son asked me if the Prime Minister of Israel is a Tzadik. I

answered that he is, since Hashem chose him to lead Am Yisrael. Am I correct?

A: He is a Tzadik in the national sense. Orot of Maran Ha-Rav Kook, p. 84.

Lying on Accident Report

Q: My son was driving my car and caused an accident, but he is not included on my insurance. Is it permissible for me to write on the report and I was driving so the insurance company will cover the damages?

A: This is a lie and theft. Nevertheless, you should ask the insurance company directly.