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from: Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein  
<[ravadlerstein@torah.org](mailto:ravadlerstein@torah.org)>  
to: [targumim@torah.org](mailto:targumim@torah.org)  
date: Dec 16, 2021, 12:11 PM  
subject: Reb Yeruchem - Torah Boot Camp  
**Reb Yeruchem**

**By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**

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Parshas Vayechi

Torah Boot Camp

Parshas Vayechi Torah Boot Camp

He saw that tranquility was good, and bent his shoulder  
to carry loads, and became a forced laborer.[2]

Did we hear correctly? He really appreciated tranquility,  
so he took upon himself strenuous labor? Now, we  
understand that the pasuk is meant as a metaphor for  
toiling in Torah, but it still reads like a contradiction in  
terms. If he was looking for quiet comfort, does it make  
sense that he should seek out the apparent opposite?

Or maybe it does.

The calm and tranquility that grow out of a satisfaction  
of physical needs can be a recipe for confusion and chaos.  
When serenity comes from our getting used to a particular  
set of circumstances and situations, any change in any of  
those conditions can disturb or completely destroy it.  
Remove one of the important contributors to that serenity,  
and we become worried, agitated, flustered. If enough are  
removed, we can be fully broken.

How is genuine tranquility achieved? Only by  
maintaining focus on a single goal, one that applies to  
every and all situations. That constant goal, in the famous  
words of the Ramchal, is "to clarify and verify what is  
Man's obligation in this life." One who makes that his  
only essential preoccupation will not waver from the  
course he has chosen, no matter what unexpected  
circumstances come his way. The person, however,  
whose serenity is dependent upon specific conditions,  
will rarely hold on to his serenity. The different  
conditions that he meets up with will pull him in every  
which direction. Moving from one to another, he can  
break. Peace is beyond reach.

Soldiers are not readied for battle by pampering them  
and making them feel comfortable. Quite the opposite.  
They learn to live under trying conditions, and to make do  
with less comfort. They learn to maintain stability without  
the things they are used to.

Before giving us the Torah, Hashem subjected us to  
similar treatment. There was no five-star hotel for us at  
Har Sinai, and no van transportation from Goshen. Our  
ancestors made their way slowly through the wilderness.  
"He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the  
mohn that you did not know." [3] Hashem broke them  
bodily, to create a serenity not affected by the material,  
but born of a strong purpose and commitment. They  
needed that kind of serenity to receive the Torah.

Yissachar understood the value of the most complete  
menuchah – that which comes with achieving a single  
goal and purpose. He recognized in particular the value of  
devoting long days to the study of Torah as the best path

for him to take to get to the goal. Because of that, he “bent his shoulder to carry loads,” knowing that by breaking himself of his physical dependencies, he would experience more tranquility, not less.

The Alter of Kelm used a similar approach to explain the way that the Bnei Yisrael made their hurried exit from Egypt. They could not have been surprised that redemption was coming – they had been waiting for it for centuries. Recent events, including the avodah of the korban Pesach, certainly indicated that it was imminent. Granted that they could not stay an extra minute without becoming irreparably enmeshed with the Egyptians, but they still could have been better prepared by Moshe. He could have told them that they had a half day to bake bread and take provisions, because they were leaving the next morning. Why not spare them the anxiety of leaving with no food in hand for the journey?

The Alter explained: calming their anxiety was precisely not what Hashem wanted! This was their first test. Would they be able to maintain their poise even in the face of the unexpected? If the anxiety would break them, they could not candidates for receiving the Torah. Torah requires a steadfast menuchah that can endure challenges. Without that inner tranquility, they could not receive the Torah, let alone hold on to it for a long, complex future ahead of them and their descendants.

Based on Daas Torah, by R. Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l, Bereishis pg. 280-282 ↑ Bereishis 49:15 ↑ Devarim 8:3 ↑

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From: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)> to: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) date: Dec 16, 2021, Subject: Rav Frand Parshas Vayechi Chessed, Emes & Anava

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1275 – I Don’t Want Hespeditim at my Levaya – Must We Obey? Good Shabbos!

The True Chessed Shel Emes

At the beginning of the parsha, Yaakov asks Yosef to swear that he will bring him back to the Land of Canaan and not allow him to be buried in the Land of Egypt. Rashi famously comments that a kindness done with the deceased is a “true kindness” (Chessed shel Emes) because the person extending the favor expects no repayment from the person receiving the favor. The quintessential Chessed shel Emes is the chessed someone does with a dead person. There are no ulterior motives involved in such kindness. Many Chevra Kadisha organizations are known as Chessed Shel Emes societies. The source is this Rashi at the beginning of Parshas Vayechi.

However, a number of commentaries ask on this Rashi, because the pasuk explicitly says that Yaakov was giving Yosef an ulterior motive for rendering this kindness. Yaakov promised Yosef the city of Shechem because he was troubling himself not to bury Yaakov in Egypt! How can Rashi call this the classic paradigm of Chessed shel Emes where no gain or benefit is expected in return?

Moreover, the Gemara says in Kesuvos and other places that the way this world works is that if someone eulogizes others, others will eulogize him, and one who goes to funerals and participates in the burial of the departed will have others do the same for him as well. In other words, there is repayment for people who occupy themselves with burying the dead! Basically, this is a death insurance policy. The premiums are to eulogize and bury others; the payment is that others will eulogize and bury you. So, again we have a question on Rashi’s characterization of the matter.

The sefer Avir Yaakov offers the following interpretation: Certainly, when there is a funeral and someone buries a departed friend or neighbor, there can

be and there will be a payback. However, the reason why kindness done with the dead is considered a *Chessed shel Emes* is because the dead person will not feel indebted to his benefactor. Every time someone does someone else a favor—for the purest of reasons—it creates an obligation on the recipient. He feels indebted to the one who did him the favor. It is just human nature. When you give something to someone, he feels indebted.

The favor may have been performed totally altruistically, but inevitably, later on, when you see the person who did you a favor in the street, you are thinking “I owe him something”. And this other fellow may very well also be thinking that you owe him something. The only person who will certainly NOT feel indebted after receiving a favor is a dead person. That is why Rashi calls this a true *Chessed shel Emes*.

Rav Yeruchem Levovitz, the *Mir Mashgiach*, always portrayed a situation where Reuven does a favor for Shimon and Shimon is very appreciative and tells Reuven, “Thank you so much, how can I repay you?” Reuven answers “Oh, it was nothing. Forget about it!” Shimon persists “No, no. I really want to repay you somehow. What can I do for you?” Again, Reuven says “Please, just forget about it!”

People think, Rav Yeruchem said, that Reuven is being very nice and magnanimous. He is not asking for anything in return from Shimon for the kindness he did for him. Rav Yeruchem said that the contrary is true. Reuven is not being nice by not giving Shimon the opportunity to do something for him as repayment. When a person says “What can I do for you in return,” it gives him the opportunity to remove the feeling of indebtedness that he must now carry around. When the benefactor disallows the possibility of payment, he is really holding onto the debt for possible collection at a later date.

Therefore, the real true *Chessed* is only the kindness someone does with the dead, who have no feelings of indebtedness.

**Yosef Had to Be Told His Father Was Sick?**

There is a *Daas Zekeinim m’Baalei haTosfos* in our parsha that comments on the pasuk “And it was after these matters, it was told to Yosef ‘Behold your father is sick.’ He took his two sons with him, Menashe and Ephraim.” [Bereshis 48:1] Yosef hears that his elderly father is on his death bed and goes to see him, taking along his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim.

Let us ask a question: If someone is on his death bed, isn’t it likely that the son will know about it without needing to be told? What kind of son would not know what kind of condition his father is in and need to be told by others “Behold, your father is sick”?

The *Daas Zekeinim* infers from this narration that Yosef did not visit his father frequently. Yosef was not there on a regular basis and therefore he did not know Yaakov’s condition and consequently, he needed to be informed by others that the end was near. The *Daas Zekeinim* suggests a reason why this may have been the case: Yosef did not want to spend time with his father alone because he was afraid his father would ask him how it was that he wound up in Egypt.

This is an incredible idea. Yaakov was in *Mitzrayim* for seventeen years. He had not seen Yosef for twenty-two years prior to that. There was a dramatic meeting between the two of them in last week’s parsha. They had been so close during Yosef’s youth in Canaan. Can it be thought that now, after their initial dramatic reunion, that Yosef, the “heir apparent” to the patriarchal legacy, does not go back to visit with his father on a frequent basis?

According to the *Daas Zekeinim*, as hard as it is to imagine, and as difficult personally as it must have been for Yosef, he kept his distance. Yosef feared that moment of privacy with Yaakov when his elderly father would say to him “Yossele my dear son – tell me: what really happened? How did you ever wind up here in Egypt?” The truth would have caused Yaakov great aggravation and anger at his other sons. Yosef did not want to be the cause of that aggravation and family strife.

The *sefer Avir Yaakov* asks the following question: Yosef did not see his father all these seventeen years when they were both in *Mitzrayim*. It was painful to Yaakov and it was painful to Yosef. Why? Yosef wanted to avoid the question “What happened to you?” However, there is a simple resolution to this problem. It is called “Lie through your teeth.” There are plenty of stories Yosef could have told Yaakov to explain his disappearance without incriminating his brothers. “I was kidnapped by these *Yishmaelim*” is a very plausible story. It is not true, but perhaps Yaakov would have believed it. If there ever was an example of “one is allowed to extend the truth to preserve peace” (*M’shaneh b’ad ha’Shalom*) [Yevamos 65b] – this was it!

The Avir Yaakov offers an answer to this question. (If you have a better answer, perhaps discuss it around the family Shabbos table.) He suggests that even though Yosef may have been allowed to lie, he just could not bring himself to deceive his father. Maybe that is because Yaakov personified the attribute of truth more than anything else. If you know your father values truth over every other human characteristic – you just cannot lie to him. Despite both Yosef and Yaakov suffering for all of these years, Yosef could not lie to his father and violate the paramount value in his life.

The Fundamental Qualification for Malchus in Klal Yisrael: Lack of Arrogance

This final thought is from the sefer Chidekel, by Rav Chaim Dov Keller, the late Rosh Yeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva in Chicago. It is based on a Targum Onkelos, a Targum Yonosan ben Uziel and a Medrash.

Yehudah is actually the first of Yaakov's sons to receive an unadulterated blessing. Reuven, Shimon, and Levi received a "Bracha" that was actually more mussar than bracha. Yehudah's "Bracha" was pure blessing.

Among the five pesukim of Yehuda's bracha, Yaakov said: "The scepter shall not depart from his descendants nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh arrives..." [Bereshis 49:10]. This is a seminal pasuk in all of the Torah. It grants monarchy to the Tribe of Yehudah. All kings must be from his descendants. In fact, at the time of the Chashmonaim, when the Tribe of Levi usurped the monarchy (the Maccabees were Kohanim), they were punished severely despite their righteousness.

What did Yaakov see in Yehudah that made him fit for royalty? The pasuk "Yehudah ata yodoocha achecha..." is commonly translated "Yehuda—you, your brothers will acknowledge" [Bereshis 49:8].

Targum Onkelos translates the pasuk to mean: "Yehudah you confessed (Yoducha from the word Modeh) [when it came to the story of Tamar] and were not embarrassed". When Tamar was taken out to be burnt at the stake and she said, "Whoever is the person who gave me these items is the person who impregnated me," Yehudah said "She is more righteous than I." Imagine the Yehudah's humiliation in making this embarrassing admission.

Targum Yonoson ben Uziel adds a further element in his translation of this pasuk: "Yehudah, you admitted in the story of Tamar. Therefore, all Jews will be called

YEHUDim after your name." We are called Jews because of the name Judah in all different languages. The name of our nationality is derived from the name of Yaakov's fourth son! We received our national identity because of the strength of this incident. Being able to admit you are wrong is so fundamental to being a Yid that it is why we are all called Yehudim.

In fact, the Medrash Rabbah says that it was the Ribono shel Olam who made Yehudah the Melech of Klal Yisrael for this one act of humility and his ability to say "I am wrong."

This is an amazing quality that is extremely rare among contemporary politicians—the willingness and ability to announce "I made a mistake" or "I am wrong!" In Klal Yisrael, the fundamental qualification for Malchus is lack of arrogance—the ability to be Modeh al haEmes.

In general, this is a Jewish trait. Rashi illustrates this point several times in Chumash. In Toldos, Rashi says regarding a certain pasuk [Bereshis 28:5] "I don't know what this is coming to teach us." Now obviously, Rashi does not comment on every pasuk in Chumash. Rashi could have easily glossed over this pasuk and not said anything. He could have just skipped it. However, Rashi felt compelled to admit that he was bothered by this pasuk and did not know why it was there.

Likewise, the same phenomenon [e.g. – Bava Metziah 108b] occurs in his monumental Talmud commentary. In the middle of a sugya, Rashi writes "I did not closely follow the words of my teachers (lo dikdakti b'Divrei Rabbosai)." He gives the impression – "Do you know why I don't know complete pshat in this piece of Gemara? It is because I was sleeping during shiur!" Why does Rashi need to say that? It is because he is a Yid! Also see Brachos 25b. There is a Gilyon HaShas there which quotes every single place in Shas that Rashi explicitly writes that he does not understand the Gemara's interpretation. The print is too small and the list is too long for me to count all the places mentioned.

In each of those places, Rashi had the option of not saying anything but he chose not to take that easier option. That would be the less-than-fully-truthful approach. That is not the characteristic of Jews.

Rabbi Keller cites an incident he saw in a sefer that Rabbi Shlomo Loricz wrote (B'Mechitzasam), describing the various Gedolim he had connections with in Eretz Yisrael.

The Chazon Ish wrote on the entire Torah. He wrote a chapter (Siman 12) in one of his Sefarim about Masechta Kelim. He later regretted having published that Siman. He didn't think what he wrote was correct. He expunged it from his Sefer. In the Chazon Ish's volume on Taharos regarding Masechta Kelim, the chapters skip from eleven to thirteen. Siman 12 was removed in all later editions.

Someone asked the Chazon Ish why he did not renumber the subsequent chapters and make Siman 13 into Siman 12 and so on? "Let there be one less Siman at the end of the Sefer. Why do you need to announce that there is something missing here?" The Chazon Ish said "I want people to know that I had something to say over here. It was originally included but I decided it was wrong so I removed it. That's the way it is."

This is another example of Yehudah – Ata yodoocha achecha. He admitted and was not embarrassed to do so. The ability to confess and say "I'm human, I was wrong, I made a mistake" is highly admirable. In Klal Yisrael, it is a qualification for true leadership. There has never been a dogma in the history of Klal Yisrael that anyone is infallible, as is the case in other religions. This is because people are not infallible. People are people and people are humans, and even the greatest can from time to time err.

The attribute that qualifies the Melech Yisrael for Malchus is the ability to say "I was wrong. She is more righteous than I." That is why Yehudah merited monarchy. It is because a king cannot be arrogant. He has much too much power. Arrogance, on top of having all that power, can be disastrous. The higher up you are, the humbler you must be. Unfortunately, we see the opposite in the world around us.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem  
DavidATwersky@gmail.com

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore,  
MD dhoffman@torah.org

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**When Can We Lie?**

**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l**

After the death of Jacob, Joseph's brothers were afraid. Years earlier, when he had revealed his true identity to them, he appeared to have forgiven them for selling him as a slave.[1] Yet the brothers were not wholly reassured. Maybe Joseph did not mean what he said. Perhaps he still harboured resentment. Might the only reason he had not yet taken revenge was respect for Jacob. There was a convention in those days that there was to be no settling of scores between siblings in the lifetime of the father. We know this from an earlier episode. After Jacob had taken his brother's blessing, Esau says, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob" (Gen. 27:41). So the brothers came before Joseph and said:

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

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

The Sages derived a principle from this text. Mutar le-shanot mipnei ha-shalom: "It is permitted to tell an untruth (literally, "to change" the facts) for the sake of peace." [2] A white lie is permitted in Jewish law.

This is not the only place where the Sages invoked this principle. They even attributed it to God Himself. [3] When the angels came to visit Abraham to tell him and Sarah that they were about to have a child, "Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, 'After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?'" God then asked Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'" (Gen. 18:12-13).

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

It is clear that the Sages needed both episodes to establish the principle. Had we only known about the Sarah case, we could not infer that it is permitted to tell a white lie. God did not tell a white lie about Sarah. He merely did not tell Abraham the whole truth. Had we only known about the case of Joseph's brothers, we could not have inferred that what they did was permitted. Perhaps it was forbidden, and that is why Joseph wept. The fact that God Himself had done something similar is what led the Sages to say that the brothers were justified.

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

be inequality. You can have economic equality, communism, but the result will be a loss of freedom. In the world as currently configured, moral conflict is unavoidable. [4]

This was an important fact, though one about which Judaism seems never to have been in doubt. There is, for example, a powerful moment in Tanach when King David's son Absalom mounted a coup d'etat against his father. David was forced to flee. Eventually there was a battle between Absalom's troops and David's. Absalom, who was handsome and had fine hair, was caught by it when it became entangled in the branches of a tree. Left hanging there, Joab, captain of David's army, killed him.

When David heard the news he was overcome with grief:

The King was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!"

2 Samuel 18:33

Joab was brutal in his response to the King:

"Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life ... You love those who hate you and hate those who love you ... Now go out and encourage your men."

2 Sam. 19:6-8

David's grief at the loss of his son conflicts with his responsibilities as head of state and his loyalty to the troops who have saved his life. Which comes first: his duties as a father or as a king?

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

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

There is, for example, a famous argument between the schools of Hillel and Shammai as to what to say about the bride at a wedding. (See Ketubot 16b) The custom was to

say that “The bride is beautiful and graceful.” Members of the School of Shammai, however, were not prepared to say so if, in their eyes, the bride was not beautiful and graceful. For them the supreme value was the Torah’s insistence on truth: “Keep far from falsehood” (Ex. 23:7). The School of Hillel did not accept this. Who was to judge whether the bride was beautiful and graceful? Surely the bridegroom himself. So to praise the bride was not making an objective statement that could be tested empirically. It was simply endorsing the bridegroom’s choice. It was a way of celebrating the couple’s happiness.

Courtesies are often like this. Telling someone how much you like the gift they have brought, even if you don’t, or saying to someone, “How lovely to see you” when you were hoping to avoid them, is more like good manners than an attempt to deceive. We all know this, and thus no harm is done, as it would be if we were to tell a lie when substantive interests are at stake.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is a challenging text. What exactly were the angels saying? What does it mean to say that “God took truth

and threw it to the ground?” And what happened to the claim made by the angel of Peace that humans “will never cease quarrelling”?

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

This deep insight is, I believe, the reason why the Torah is multi-perspectival, why Tanach contains so many different kinds of voices, why Mishnah and Gemara are structured around argument, and why Midrash is built on the premise that there are “seventy faces” to Torah. No other civilisation I know has had so subtle and complex an understanding of the nature of truth.

Nor has any other so valued peace. Judaism is not and never was pacifist. National self-defence sometimes requires war. But Isaiah and Micah were the first visionaries of a world in which “nation shall not lift up sword against nation.” (Is. 2:4; Mic. 4:3) Isaiah is the poet laureate of peace.

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

[1] This is the theme of the Covenant & Conversation essay entitled “The Birth of Forgiveness”. [2] Yevamot 65b. [3] Midrash Sechel Tov, Toldot, 27:19. [4] Isaiah Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty,’ in Isaiah Berlin, Henry Hardy and Ian Harris, *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. See also the important work by Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983. [5] Bereishit Rabbah 8:5. [6] Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986. The only person to have achieved a non-

anthropocentric, God's-eye-view of creation, was Job in chs. 38-41 of the book that bears his name.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l was a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and the moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks, please visit [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org).

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from: torahweb@torahweb.org date: Dec 15, 2021, 7:33 PM

**Rabbi Mordechai Willig -  
Yehuda and Jewish Survival  
Yehuda - What's in a Name?**

Our people are called Bnei Yisrael in the Torah. In Megillas Esther and since, we are called Yehudim. This change can be explained historically. After the ten tribes were exiled, the tribe of Yehuda comprised the majority of Am Yisrael. As such, all of us are called Yehudim. However, the Targum Yonasan in Parashat Vayechi (Breishis 49:8) offers a different explanation. He explains that Yaakov Avinu blessed Yehuda, "Your brothers will acknowledge you (yoducha)" as their ruler, and that this blessing is a reward for Yehuda's response to Tamar. "Yehuda," the Targum has Yaakov telling his son, "you admitted to the story of Tamar. Therefore, your brothers will acknowledge you ('yodun achayich') and will be called Yehudim after your name." The Targum thus links Yehuda's admission of his sin to his being acknowledged by his brothers, and to the fact that we are called Yehudim.

Perhaps these two explanations, the historical explanation, as well as the pshat of the Targum, can be reconciled. We are called Yehudim ever since the time that the ten tribes were scattered, because most Jews that were left from that time forward descended from the tribe of Yehuda. The reason the tribe of Yehuda is the one that survived is because they admitted to their mistakes. Admitting to mistakes enabled Yehuda himself to be acknowledged as the ruler of the family, and it also enabled his descendants, who followed his example, to survive.

One example of the historical phenomenon of the Jewish ability to admit to our mistakes is found in the very story of Esther. Why did the Jews of that time deserve extinction? According to the Talmud, it was because they partook of the party of the wicked Achashverosh (Megillah 12a). However, they were spared when they repented after Haman's decree (Yalkut Shimoni, Esther, 4:16; see Michtav Me-Eliyahu, Vol. 1, p. 77). Admitting their mistake and repenting enabled the Yehudim to survive and return to Eretz Yisrael by the decree of Esther's son Darius (Rashi, Chaggai 1:1). The ten tribes, by contrast, have not yet returned.

A third association with Yehuda's name, besides that of admission and acknowledgement, is that of thanks. When Yehuda was born to Leah as her fourth child, Leah said "This time I will thank Hashem. Therefore, she called his name 'Yehuda'" (Bereishis 29:35). As Rashi explains, Leah was saying, "This time I took more than my share. Hence I must thank [Hashem]."

Combining these themes of admission, acknowledgement, and thanks, we learn a valuable lesson. Only by admitting one's mistakes and shortcomings can one be in position to give proper thanks. Otherwise, our feelings of gratitude are hindered by a feeling of entitlement. Only by realizing our imperfections and our sins can we express the proper thanks and gratitude and thereby be worthy of acknowledgement by others (see R. Yitzchak Hutner, Pachad Yitzchak, Chanukah 2:5).

**Realizing Our Limitations**

On the verse in Yaakov's berachah to Yehuda discussed above, "attah yoducha achecha" Targum Onkelus has a very interesting explanation. He explains the pasuk as meaning "Yehuda, you admitted and were not ashamed. [Therefore] your brothers will acknowledge you" (Targum Onkelus, Breishis 49:8). How could Yehuda not have been ashamed to admit to his heretofore unknown paternity? Furthermore, isn't shame, especially in intimate matters, a praiseworthy hallmark of our people (Yevamos 79a)? How was it that Yehuda did not feel shamed?

The key to answering these questions is the realization that we only feel shame when we fall short of our expected standard of behavior. No one is ashamed of their inability to fly. Yehuda, aware of the fact that "there is no person who does not sin" (Koheles 7:20), was thus able to admit his sin without shame. Also, although intimate



matters are usually supposed to be kept private, that value is outweighed when one has the opportunity to save someone else from harm. Thus, Yehuda admitted his paternity in an effort to save Tamar's life (Rashi, Breishis 38:25). Asked to recognize his personal effects and admit his paternity of Tamar's unborn children, Yehuda, as Rashi puts it, was called upon to "recognize [his Creator:] When one recognizes and realizes that it is the will of Hashem to admit when one falls short and sins, the shame of a public confession like the one Yehuda experienced can be eliminated. For these realizations, Yehuda deserved to be a ruler and to have our entire nation called Yehudim.

#### A Dynasty of Kings

Just as Yehuda's leadership and our people's survival resulted from admitting mistakes, so too was the Davidic dynasty preserved in this manner. Like his ancestor, David Ha-Melech admitted his mistakes immediately (Yoma 22b, see Maharsha and HaRav Y.D. Soloveitchik, Kol Dodi Dofek ("Hachmatzas Ha-Sha'ah"). Shaul, in contrast, did not do so when faced with his mistake in not wiping out Amalek, and his dynasty was discontinued.

The ability to admit mistakes requires humility. Like Yehuda, David possessed humility, which enabled him to confess. "I am like a worm, not a man" (Tehillim 22:7). Humility not only enables one to admit one's shortcomings, but it also allows one to accept rebuke, and even to maintain silence when faced with provocations.

In the haftarah of Parashas Vayechi, David tells Shlomo, "Shim'i ben Gera cursed me a powerful curse" (Melachim I 2:8). In fact, Shim'i had called David a murderer (Shmuel II 16:7) and pelted him with stones (ibid., 6). However, David protected Shim'i from Avishay, who wanted to kill him (ibid., 9-10), explaining: "Hashem told him to curse. Perhaps Hashem will repay me with goodness instead of the curse" (ibid., 11-12). David Ha-Melech, in demonstrating such humility, was in fact following in the footsteps of the greatest prophet and the humblest of men, Moshe Rabbeinu. When Yehoshua told Moshe to imprison the prophets who were prophesying Moshe's demise (Rashi, Bamidbar 11:27-28), Moshe rebuffed him (ibid., 29). David, learning from Moshe's example, was able to demonstrate humility and maintain his silence in the face of provocation. As a reward, Hashem repaid David for his decision to protect Shim'i and elevated David to the heavenly level of the patriarchs,

by which David became the fourth wheel in the Divine Chariot (Chafetz Chaim, Shemiras Ha-Lashon, Sha'ar Ha-Tevunah 8).

We know that the Davidic dynasty will culminate in the arrival of Mashiach. Bar Kochba, a descendant of David who was proclaimed Mashiach by Rabbi Akiva in Beitar, in the end fell short of expectations by showing a lack in the qualities of David. Bar Kochba mistakenly thought that Rabbi Elazar Ha-Modai, whose prayers protected Beitar, was a conspirator. In his rage, he kicked and killed him. As a result, Beitar fell and Bar Kochba was killed (Midrash Eichah 2:4). An angry leader, who lacks the humility and forbearance of David, cannot be the Mashiach.

#### A Dynasty of Torah Leadership

Torah leadership also requires humility. Hillel, a descendant of David, established a centuries-long dynasty of Torah. He famously retained his patience even in the face of outrageous provocation (Shabbos 31a) and Beis Hillel admitted when they made Torah mistakes, and upon realizing them, ruled in accordance with Beis Shammai (Eduyos 1:12, 13, 14). Hillel himself was the personification of humility (Shabbos 30b). Famously, in our practice, the Halachah always follows Beis Hillel because they not only quote Beis Shammai's opinion, but even cite it before their own (Eruvin 13b). Obviously the law is not decided in Beis Hillel's favor simply because of their ethical behavior, but rather, we hold like them because one who humbly listens to, respects, and quotes another's opinion, will likely reach a more proper conclusion in deciding the Halachah (R. Chaim Shmulevitz, Sichos Mussar, Sha'arei Chayyim, Ch. 46).

#### Keys to Survival Begin at Home

Yehuda was privileged to have our entire nation named after him because he promptly admitted his mistakes. His illustrious descendants David Ha-Melech and Hillel established dynasties of kingship and Torah, respectively, by following the lead of his humility. Thus, the Jews have survived history because of our adherence to the principles of our namesake, Yehuda. Confessing, acknowledging and thanking, the three related verbal expressions connected with Yehuda himself, are the critical survival skills of our people.

These same concepts are equally critical within a Jewish home and family. The model of Yehuda's own rulership occurred within the context of his own family, and must

serve as inspiration for Jewish families forever. The Rambam writes that a husband should be viewed as a king (Rambam, Mishnah Torah, Hilchos Ishus, 15:20). To deserve this treatment, however, he must fulfill the first promise of the ketubah: "I will cherish you in the manner of Jewish men (Yehudain) who cherish their wives in truth (be-kushta)." He must acknowledge his debt to his wife, thank her constantly, and admit his mistakes in recognition of the truth (see Onkelos, Breishis 42:21).

Acknowledgement of one's personal debt to a spouse and appropriate and sincere gratitude, as well as sincere apologies when one makes mistakes, are crucial elements of a proper Jewish home. The phrases "I'm sorry" and "thank you" are integral for the success, and even the survival, of a Jewish marriage. As a community and as individuals, it is not enough to be called Jews. We must live up to the name Yehudim to survive, thrive, and merit the ultimate Jewish leader, Mashiach ben David, a descendant of Yehuda.

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From: **Rabbi Eliezer Parkoff**

<rabbiparkoff@gmail.com> date: Dec 16, 2021, 8:31 AM  
subject: Rabbi Parkoff's Chizuk Letter - Vayechi - Lokshen, Farfel and Dan

Parshas Vayechi

Lokshen, Farfel and Dan

(Adapted from an article in the **Jewish Observer**, Nissan 5766 by **Rabbi Yisrael Greenwald**, of the Kollel Bais Hatalmud, Melbourne, Australia.)

And the sons of Dan: Chushim. (Bereishis 46:23)

In his youth, Rabbi Raphael Halpern would occasionally accompany the Chazon Ish on his evening walks alongside the Heligman orchard in Zichron Meir. On one of these walks, the Chazon Ish turned to him and said:

"Soup can have either lokshen (noodles), or farfel. If you pick up lokshen with your spoon, half remains in the spoon, and the other half hangs over its edge. You have no idea whether the lokshen will remain in your spoon or slip back into the soup bowl. If however, you take farfel

in your spoon, whatever you take remains there. Nothing will fall, nor will anything be added.

"The same is true with man's powers. There is a man whose powers are like farfel – namely, he has certain limitations. What he has is what there is, and one cannot expect more from him. There are no surprises or great changes with him. And then there are people who are like lokshen – namely, who have great powers, but one does not know how these will be used – for good or for bad, whether they will remain or fall – just like lokshen, which may remain in the spoon or fall out.

"You, Raphael'ke, have immense powers and unusual qualities. If you use them properly, you can achieve great things, and if you do not use them properly, Heaven will hold you accountable for not having utilized your great powers." (Twenty Years Beside the Chazon Ish, p. 195)

Among these "lokshen" children, there some who fall into a difficult category. Just as we have some people who are anshei eshkolos – loaded with clusters of strengths and qualities – there are others who appear the exact opposite, a package of problems and inadequacies. These are children who, for example, are impulsive, easily distracted, and may also have a strong tendency toward bad behavior and a natural aversion to authority figures. Naturally, fitting into a traditional school setting may not be among their strongest points. To further complicate matters, these kids may also have poor social skills, and be shunned by their peers as being "out of sync," "in your face," or "weird." If that weren't enough, these kids also tend to have a higher rate of learning disabilities, speech impediments, organizational and audio-processing difficulties, or poor motor coordination, which further isolates them academically as well as socially.

Certainly, the free will of these morally challenged kids is highly circumvented as a result of their deficient personality makeup, which should be viewed more as a medical condition than moral weakness. Still, the constant attention needed to properly guide such children requires enormous emotional resources, which at times can drain even the most well-meaning parents and teachers. And even after all that superhuman effort, they may still fall short of attaining the level of the majority of kids who thrive and grow with relatively little special attention.

Appreciating the "Dan" Child

Perhaps we can find a paradigm of children with a strong negative streak by the careful study of Yaakov Avinu's children. The personality traits of the twelve tribes encompassed a wide gamut of human emotion and endeavor, from the king to the farmer, from the scholar to the seafaring merchant. While all twelve occupied a supernal level of spirituality, one child, relatively speaking, could be termed in some sense "of lesser stature" – Dan. Yaakov compared him to a snake, the arch symbol of the evil inclination. The Tribe of Dan not only traveled in the desert behind everyone else, but were even expelled from the protective clouds of glory due to their spiritual failings. Furthermore, the Midrash Shocher Tov comments that the verse, "Lest there be a family or tribe whose heart turns astray from Hashem," refers specifically to the Tribe of Dan. No wonder the Tribe of Dan was called "ירוד שבשטים – the lowliest of the tribes."

Dan's only offspring, Chushim, seemed to bear out the difficult struggles that lay in store of their future progeny. Not only was he deaf, but he also possessed other striking physical deformities. According to some commentators, physical blemishes in primal figures are the manifestation of spiritual deficiencies. With so much going against him, the future of the lesser tribe appeared to show little hope and promise.

The Chofetz Chaim would often quote the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 94:9) that relates how broken and dejected Dan felt when he came before his father for a blessing, bringing his single, handicapped son. By contrast, all his brothers brought their large families of healthy, robust children. The Midrash demonstrates how limited and faulty human vision can be. We have no idea what Hashem has in store for the future: "Binyamin, who came before Yaakov with his ten lads, was blessed with 40,000 [descendants in the desert]. Dan, who had only one child, ended up with 70,000."

Dan's miraculous growth and recovery was not only in numbers, but was paralleled in the spiritual dimension, as well. The Torah records that Yaakov's family entered Egypt with seventy members. Commentators point out that if you tally all the names, you will have a total of only sixty-nine. The Kabbalists present a fascinating answer.

The verse records U'venei Dan Chushim – "The sons of Dan [is] Chushim." The grammar seems incorrect. "U'venei" is a plural expression; Dan had but one child.

The Kabbalists answer: "Chushim was so distinguished that he counted as two children" and thus brought the total to seventy souls. (Rama Mi'panu, Mei'a Kesita 76). Dan's spiritual weakness was in fact his greatest strength. His affinity for evil put him in the most suitable position for conquering it. It was specifically Chushim who succeeded in decapitating Eisav when he attempted to prevent Yaakov's sons from burying their father in Me'aras Hamachpeila. Another Midrash relates that when Yehudah "roared" when he pleaded his case before the viceroy of Egypt, Dan's son Chushim joined him in his cry. Together, their combined outcry toppled two Egyptian cities.

Of all Yaakov's sons, Dan received a most unique blessing: "For your salvation do I hope, Hashem." It appears that the entire destiny of the Jewish people hinged particularly on the success of Dan's mission. (The Rama Mi'panu points out that Chushim is spelled in the Torah without the letter Vav - הוּשִׁים - thus comprising the letters of Moshiach.) Why, among all of Yaakov's children, was the lowly Dan the one upon whom Yaakov especially placed all his hope?

Before Yitzchak blessed Yaakov, he first wanted to know how his children would look. The Midrash says that Yitzchak had a vision of two horribly wicked men, both of whom betrayed their people during the time of the Second Beis Hamikdash. But in their final moments, both men gave up their lives in dramatic acts of repentance. Yitzchak then felt assured of the future of the Jewish people, and gave his blessing to Yaakov.

Rav Mendel Kaplan, zt"l, asked: The Jewish people surely did not lack for pious individuals in every generation. Couldn't Yitzchak have found more noble tzaddikim in whose merit Yaakov would be worthy of blessing?

Reb Mendel answered, "If I want to buy a new car, I wouldn't care so much how it looks in the showroom. I would want to see what happens to it after a crash. If it still looks like a car, then it is for me. Before Yitzchak blessed Yaakov, he wanted to know how his children would look – not when they were being righteous, but how they would hold out after a crash. When Yitzchak saw how even the traitors among the Jews demonstrated spiritual greatness, he knew he could give Yaakov his blessings."

Dan represents the lowest spiritual stratum of our people. People of such standing, however, with their capacity to rise above their apparent limitations, are the only true gauge of our success as a nation and the assurance of our future.

#### Unconditional Love

As Hashem has given us a perfect soul, we naturally gravitate toward all forms of perfection. We appreciate the beauty of music and nature, and even more, our souls feel a kinship when encountering spiritual perfection. It is therefore not hard for us to love the good kids, who excel in school and have wonderful middos. Our "other" child's pure soul is not as readily apparent, as it is often masked by negative behavior. Even if we were to intellectually accept that his mode of conduct is no fault of his own, but due to a chemical imbalance or neurological mis-wiring, there still is a natural tendency to repel, disdain, and even dislike the young person himself. It is therefore no surprise that many gedolim, as well as professionals involved in the field of children at risk, feel that the single most important contribution in helping these young people is to give them our constant, full measure of unconditional love.

In the poignant words of Rabbi S. R. Hirsch\*:

The [lesser loved] child may really be less intellectually gifted, so that he is slow to grasp things, does not readily understand, cannot keep pace at school, and even at home the parents cannot do very much with him. Or – and this would be even more painful – it may be a child endowed with a character and disposition that bode ill for his future behavior. At an early age he shows a tendency to depart from the path of truth, honesty, uprightness, modesty, temperance, obedience, and all the virtues which go to make up a man of worth and high character. "Stupid," "wicked" is what the father and mother are disposed to call him. What love do they bear toward him, what love ought they to bear to him?

What love, we say? That is not the question we wish to ask. Their love should from the beginning flow equally and unremittingly to all their children. If parents really understood their relation to their children and the value and meaning their children have for them, to whom should their love be given in the greatest measure? To the gifted child or to he who is less gifted? To the one with a good or a bad disposition?

Which child is more in need of love; for which is parental love almost the only anchor, the only lever that might raise him from stupidity to intelligence, from moral perversity to moral purity and perfection? With which child has Divine providence set parents a greater task, or given them a greater token of trust? Is it not precisely with the one who is less gifted intellectually and whose moral character is not so good?

A bright and intelligent child will, even without your help, ultimately distinguish himself by his understanding and knowledge; if he is naturally good, he will, even without you, grow up honest and sincere. But the child who is intellectually less gifted, and above all, the child whose moral character is shaky – can you not see how such a one is peculiarly entrusted to your love, how he requires your most devoted and tireless love, so that you may fulfill the highest task of a parent, that your parental love may through the child achieve its greatest triumph..., to have saved a soul that was in danger of going astray for a life of moral purity.

We know the self-sacrificing devotion with which the parent's love unfolds to tend a child who suffers physically, who is weak and infirm of body. We know the passionate care and tenderness with which a father and mother will nurse and tend a weak and ailing child, and with what pride a mother will think to herself, "Without care, without uninterrupted vigilance and devotion, this weakling would long ago have withered away and been buried, while now, instead, he is healthy and flourishing and looks forward smilingly to a happy life."

And is the child who is sick and suffering in mind or nature less unhappy, less deserving of sympathy and compassion? Above all, is he less completely ruined if the father or mother's love is withheld from him? For the physically sick child, love is only the nurse. But for the child who is ill mentally and, still more, morally, love is the healing medicine itself. The absence of love is poison, and the father and mother who deny their love to the delinquent child deny him the medicine that could cure him; they themselves plunge him into a hate-ridden atmosphere in which his vicious disposition inevitably blossoms into moral corruption.

\*Judaism Eternal, p. 250-251; Collected Writings, Vol. 7, pp. 330-331. It is interesting to note that Rav Hirsch had to deal with this problem already in his days close to 200 years ago. While Rabbi Hirsch speaks of a parent's

relationship towards his morally challenged child, it would extend equally to our responsibility towards these young people on the communal level as well.

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from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein**

<ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com> date: Dec 16, 2021, 7:00 AM

Dimensions in Vayechi Inbox  
Rav Immanuel Bernstein

<ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>

Vayechi here DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH Parshas Vayechi “Yaakov our father never died” Concept: The Worlds of Pshat and Drash

Introduction: A Mystifying Exchange The Gemara in Maseches Taanis[1] records the following exchange between two sages of the Talmud, R’ Yitzchak and Rav Nachman: אמר ליה הכי אמר ר' יוחנן, יעקב אבינו לא מת אמר ליה? ליה וכי בחנם ספדו ספדנייא וחנטו חנטייא וקברו קברנייא מקרא אני דורש, שנאמר: "ועתה אל תירא עבדי יעקב נאום ה' ואל תחת ישראל כי הנני מושיעך מרחוק ואת זרעך מארץ שבים," מקיש He [R’ Yitzchak] said to him [Rav Nachman]: Thus said R’ Yochanan: “Yaakov our father never died.” [Rav Nachman] said to [R’ Yitzchak]: “Was it for nothing that the eulogizers eulogized [Yaakov] and the embalmers embalmed him and the buriers buried him?” [R’ Yitzchak] replied: “I am expounding a verse, as it says: ‘And you fear not, My servant Yaakov, says Hashem, and do not become broken, Yisrael, for behold I will deliver you from afar, and your descendants from the land of their captivity.’”[2] [We see that] the verse equates him [Yaakov] and his descendants: Just as his descendants are living, so too is he living.” The above exchange is most perplexing. With all due respect to R’ Yitzchak’s exposition, he appears to have entirely sidestepped Rav Nachman’s objection that the simple meaning of the verses indicates that Yaakov died! Pshat and Drash Teachings Rav Tzaddok Hakohen of Lublin[3] explains the matter by taking us in to the methods of interpretation we call pshat and drash. These are not simply two ways of deriving messages from the verse. Rather, they often represent two different types of messages, reflecting two entirely different realms: In the same way as pshat represents that which is openly stated and clearly visible to the reader, it likewise reflects the situation as would be

visibly apparent to the onlooker. Conversely, just as drash involves looking beneath the surface of the Torah’s words, so too, the message it communicates reflects aspects of that situation which are “hidden” and not readily apparent. Here, too, when Rav Nachman challenged the teaching that “Yaakov our father never died” from the fact that he was embalmed, eulogized and buried, R’ Yitzchak responded by saying “מקרא אני דורש – I am expounding a verse.” With this, he was indicating that the realm to which his teaching refers was not the one apparent to the onlookers and reflected by the pshat reading of the verse, but to a more hidden realm, whereby Yaakov, although physically dead, lives on in his descendants. Dead Maidens Walking This fundamental idea is already discussed in earlier sources. In the course of the Torah’s description of Pharaoh’s daughter going to wash in the Nile, where she would meet the baby Moshe who had been set afloat there by his mother, the verse relates: “וַנַּעֲרֹתֶיהָ הִלְכָת עַל יַד הַיָּאָר – and her maidens were walking on the side of the Nile.”[4] Commenting on these words, Rashi cites the following Midrash: רבותינו דרשו "הולכות" לשון מיתה... הולכות למות לפי שמיהו בה Our Sages expounded the word “going” [here] as an expression of death... they were “going” to die because they protested her [taking the child].[5] The Maharal[6] explains that, here too, the midrash does not mean to say that these maidens dropped dead at the side of the Nile when they protested. Rather, it means that they found themselves somehow unable to prevent Pharaoh’s daughter from taking the child. This lack of ability was the result of their strength being withheld from them from On High, and it is to this the Midrash refers when it says that they “died”, since their connection with life in the higher realms was diminished. The Maharal’s words confirm Rav Tzaddok’s principle that a message derived through the medium of drash reflects an inner or higher reality beyond that which is readily visible to the onlooker. In Conversation The above idea regarding pshat and drash also relates to the midrash’s expositions on people’s words in the Torah. In the beginning of Parshas Vayigash, when Yehuda approaches Yosef to plead for Binyamin’s freedom, he prefaces by saying, “כִּי כְמוֹד כְּפָרְעָה” – for you are like Pharaoh.”[7] Rashi, commenting on these words, cites no less than four interpretations, starting with the pshat and from there proceeding to drash: זהו פשוט, השוב אתה בעיני כמלך, זהו פשוט.

ומדרשו: סופך ללקות עליו בצרעת כמו שלקה פרעה על ידי זקנתי דבר אחר: מה פרעה גוזר ואינו מקיים, מבטיח ואינו עושה, אף. שרה. דבר אחר: אם תקניטני אהרוג אותך ואת אדוניך. אתה כן You are as important in my eyes as a king, this is the pshat meaning. The midrashic meaning is: your end will be to be afflicted with leprosy just as [the earlier] Pharaoh was afflicted on account of my ancestress, Sarah. An alternative explanation: just as Pharaoh decrees and does not fulfill, promises and does not act, so too, do you. An alternative explanation: if you antagonize me, I will kill you and your master. In this instance, the midrashic explanations seem to not only differ from the pshat meaning, but also contradict it! If the pshat says that Yehuda's words meant to convey his respect for Yosef, how can the drash then say that in fact, they meant to indicate criticism and even threats of a most extreme nature? R' Yaakov Kamenetzky[8] explains that here too, the pshat and drash interpretations reflect the overt meaning and implicit messages within Yehuda's words. The outermost layer was undoubtedly one than expressed respect, and that is the pshat. However, people often accompany a straightforward message with additional undertones, insinuations and implications. Together, these form a composite or blended message. It is these added messages that the drash draws out from a deeper analysis of Yehuda's words. After all, for a person in his position, standing accused both of spying and of theft, to state that the second-in-command is like the king himself is at best redundant and at worst potentially dangerous. Additionally, the words “כְּמֹדֶךָ כְּפָרְעֹה” literally translate as: “for like you like Pharaoh,” indicating further layers of comparison between the two personalities. R' Yaakov concludes that this is a major idea when learning Midrashim such as these, whereby the interpretations of pshat and drash in the verse reflect the “pshat” and “drash” within the person. A Level Deeper: Hidden Elements within Revealed Events Taking this discussion one stage further, there are times when the hidden or inner element identified by the drash refers not to the event itself, but to its role within the episode being described in the Torah. An example of this is in the episode of the golden calf, where the verse states, “וַיֵּרָא אֶהָרֶן וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ לַפָּנָיו” – Aharon saw, and built an altar before him.”[9] The verse does not explicate exactly what Aharon saw that led him to build the altar for the people. Rashi cites the explanation of the midrash that Aharon

saw that Chur, who protested the making of the calf, was killed by the people. Aharon reasoned that if he, too were to protest, the people would kill him too, rendering their sin so grievous so as to be beyond any hope of rectification, and therefore, he made the altar. In this instance, this discussion takes place in the realm of drash, not because Chur was murdered in a hidden or inner way, but because that murder constituted the inner reason why Aharon acquiesced to the people's demand to make the altar.[10] This example demonstrates the latitude we sometimes need to take with this idea, when we come to consider which aspect of the element identified by the drash was hidden from open view at that time. In Halachah In light of the above, let us conclude by considering the relative roles of pshat and drash in halachah, where seemingly, their relationship with visible reality appears to be reversed, i.e. it is reflected specifically in the interpretation of drash and not of pshat.

A classic example if this is the famous verse in Parshas Mishpatim, “עֵין תַּחַת עֵין – an eye for an eye.”[11] The simple meaning for this verse is that a person who takes someone's eye out is punished by having his eye taken out. As we know, based on the midrashic exposition of the verse, the halachah does not require this, but rather he pays monetary compensation equal in value to the victim's eye.[12] In this case, we see that the visible reality is as indicated by the drash and not by the pshat! How is this to be understood in light of their relative roles, as discussed above? Here, too, the “apparentness” expressed by the pshat is that the literal penalty of and eye for an eye is what we would expect to be the verdict. The actual punishment of financial restitution is the product of deeper considerations, as expressed by the Talmud in its discussions of this matter, and hence is reflected in the drash. All of this is certainly food for thought and should give us much to contemplate as we seek to further develop our understanding of the worlds of pshat and drash. [1] 5b. [2] Yirmiyahu 30:10. [3] Takanas Hashavin, maamar 6. [4] Shemos 2:5. [5] The simple understanding of the basis of this exposition is the fact that the word “הִלַּכְתָּ” is written “deficiently” i.e. without either letter vavs, indicating a deficiency in the state of the maidens themselves, see Pachad Yitzchak, Pesach maamar 52. [6] Gevuros Hashem chap. 17. [7] Bereishis 44:18. [8] Emes le'Yaakov Bereishis ibid. [9] Shemos

32:5. [10] From a conversation with R' Beryl Gershenfeld shlit"a. [11] Shemos 21:14. [12] See Bava Kama 83b-84a. Copyright © 2021 Journeys in Torah, All rights reserved. You're receiving this email either because you signed up on the website or you requested to be added.

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The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT Vayechi 5782

### **To be like Menashe and Ephraim \**

**Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh** (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur originally given at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on Dec 20, 2018)

In this week's Parsha, we have a few very famous lines. One of them is what all Jewish fathers use to bless their sons every Shabbos—Va-yivarcheim ba-yom ha-hu ley-mor, becha yivarech Yisroel ley-mor, yesimcha Elokim ke- Ephraim ve-che-Menashe. To this very day, a thousand years later, when a Jew wants to bless his son, he says yesimcha Elokim ke-Ephraim ve-che-Menashe—may Hashem make you like Ephraim and like Menashe. Netziv points out that without a doubt, Ephraim and Menashe were good Jews. But so were Yissachar and Zevulun, Zerach and Peretz, Chetzron and Chamul, and lots of other brothers. Why do we bless our kids to be davka like Ephraim and Menashe? We have mentioned other answers in previous years, but Netziv says that the other brothers in the Torah basically did similar things. However, Ephraim and Menashe represented different models of success. Rashi says here that Ephraim haya ragil lifnei Yaakov be-Talmud. Who was Ephraim? He left Yosef's Palace and sat in front of Yaakov as an avreich and learned all day. But Menashe doesn't seem to have taken the same path. First of all, when Rashi says that Ephraim haya ragil lifnei Yaakov be-Talmud, that implies that Menashe was with Yosef in the palace. And in Parshas Mikeitz, when the pasuk says: Ki hameilitz beinosam, Rashi says: this is Menashe. He worked as an interpreter in his father's court. Also, Chazal say that the "Ish asher al beis Yosef" was Menashe. He was the Interior Minister in Yosef's government. And Netziv says that they both represent excellence. Ephraim

shteiged away as he sat and learned Torah all day, and Menashe made a Kiddush Hashem by being out there in the world, by being involved in the government and politics, etc., as a Ben Torah. Says Netziv, we say yesimcha Elokim ke-Ephraim ve-che- Menashe—davka like Ephraim and Menashe—because one role is not necessarily good for everyone. He talks about a kid who was just born. How do you know how he will grow up? You can't say that you should grow up and be an avreich and learn Torah your whole life—because that's not right for everyone. That's not everyone's tafkid. Some people are cut out for this, but not others. Neither should we say to him: You should be successful. You should go out there and mekadesh Shem Shomayim. You should be a communal leader and involved in politics, business, etc., and help the Jewish people. Not everyone is cut out for that either. So we say: You should, be'ezras Hashem, become like Ephraim and like Menashe. They are different models of how you can grow up. Everyone should choose what's right for them. There are different drachim, and not just different philosophical drachim. Even within the same philosophy, there are various personal tafkidim that Hashem has for everyone, depending on what talents and personality and what kochos He gave them. That's why, he says, early on in children's life we tell them that they don't have to fit any particular role. You don't have to be exactly like this for me to be proud of you or to give you a brocha. Yosef had two sons, both founders of Klal Yisroel, and Yaakov used them both as examples in his brocha—even though they fulfilled different roles in Klal Yisroel. You should find a role in Klal Yisroel that is good for you. One interesting detail, though, which Netziv himself points out, creates added layers of depth to the whole drama of sikel es yadav. Va-yishlach Yisroel es yamino, va-yoshes al rosh Ephraim ve-hu ha-tzair ve-es smolo al rosh Menashe; sikel es yadav ki Menashe ha-bechor. Yaakov switched his hands and placed his right hand on the head of younger Ephraim instead of Menashe, who was the bechor. Netziv points out that he could have switched Ephraim and Menashe le-gamrei, but no, Yaakov firmly wanted Menashe to be on his right side, while Ephraim would get his right hand. Because in some ways, Menashe was greater, and in other ways, Ephraim was greater. But ultimately, what does he say to Yosef? Ve-ulam achiv ha-katon yigdal mimenu—however, the

younger one will be greater. Ultimately, in the history of Klal Yisroel, what's the core, what ensures survival, to be our first priority through the generations? Yes, we must have all the Jews, each one doing avodas Hashem in the way they are cut out for. But ultimately, the core is: Es Yehuda shalach le-fanav le-takein sham beis talmud. Ultimately, the core needs to be a masorah of learning Torah. We must have Torah learning! Without gashmius, the Torah learning will survive. But it will be very, very difficult, and Klal Yisroel will not be able to succeed kemo she-tzarich. However, without Torah learning, Klal Yisroel would be lost le-gamrei, chas ve-shalom. And therefore, even though there are different roles in Klal Yisroel, we should be proud of every kid, no matter what they do. However, ultimately, we need to know and ensure that Torah learning is the kiyum of Ki heim chayenu ve-orech yameinu. That is the yesod of what keeps Klal Yisroel going through the generations. And once we have that core of Torah learning, once we have the yeshivas, the people can be influenced and inspired by Torah, go out into the world, and do what they need to do. But first and foremost, you need that basis of Torah. Shabbat Shalom.

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The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT Vayechei 5782

### **Watch Where You're Going!**

#### **Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l**

On a recent trip to Israel, I visited an old friend of mine whom I hadn't seen in almost thirty years, although we had been in some contact, of late, through Netvort. At dinner, his wife asked me a question that she had raised in a Chumash shiur on parshas Vayechei and had not received an answer to. The question was, when Ya'akov's sons carried his remains from Egypt to Chevron to be buried in the cave of Machpeilah, why did they take a circuitous route and go to 'Eiver HaYarden,' (see Bereishis 50:10) which we generally understand to mean the eastern side of the Jordan River, before they went to Chevron? Wasn't this completely out of the way? I had to admit that I did not know the answer to this question, but we did find that the Netziv, in his

commentary Ha'amek Davar discusses the issue, and offers an explanation, which we will discuss further on. Subsequently, I discovered that medieval commentators already discussed this question, and not all of them agree that 'Eiver HaYarden' here refers to the eastern side of the Jordan. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, in his short but excellent notes to his Torah translation, The Living Torah, mentions the opinion of the Chizkuni, who says that the term refers to the western side of the Yardein, and the opinion of Rabbeinu Meyuchas, who says that it refers to the west side of the Yardein. Interestingly, more recent writers have taken either side of the issue as a given, without mentioning these earlier opinions. Rabbi Jacob Hertz, in his commentary to the Pentateuch, cites a nineteenth century American Hebraist, W.H. Green, as saying, "This cannot mean east of the Jordan, as it is unthinkable that in going to the cave of Machpeilah at Hebron the company would take the circuitous route round the Dead Sea. All difficulties disappear when we remember that to Moses and the Israelites in the land of Moab, he words 'beyond Jordan' meant west of Jordan. This phrase therefore is another incidental confirmation of the Mosaic authorship of the Torah." This explanation is similar to that of Chizkuni, except that Chizkuni explains the term Eiver HaYardein to be from the perspective of the people of Sichon and Og, who observed the funeral procession. Rabbi Nosson Dovid Rabinowich, on the other hand, writes, in a recent article entitled "Are We Teaching Chumash Correctly to our Children?" which is published in the journal Hakira, that the Torah is referring to the eastern side of the Yardein, and notes that this was the identical route taken by the Jewish people when they left Egypt and traveled to Eretz Yisroel. This approach accords with that of Rabbeinu Meyuchas, who also says that this route prefigured the route later taken after the exodus from Egypt. Rabbi Menachem Kasher, in his Torah Shleimah to this verse, has a lengthy footnote in which he mentions a discussion among nineteenth century experts on the geography of Eretz Yisroel regarding this entire issue, and expresses his amazement that they did not mention the opinions of the medieval commentators. More recently, Yehudah Kil, in his commentary to Bereishis, which is part of the Da'as Mikra series published by Mossad HoRav Kook, has a lengthy discussion of this issue, to which the interested reader is referred. I would like to focus on the



opinion of Rabbeinu Meyuchas that the Torah is referring to the eastern side of the Yardein, and try to understand why this circuitous route was taken. Rabbeinu Meyuchas, as we have seen, explains that the circuitous route taken in burying Ya'akov was the same route that would later be taken when the nation left Egypt and traveled to the Holy Land. The Torah tells us, in the beginning of parshas Beshalach, that God did not lead the people by way of the land of the Pelishtim, "because it was near, for God said, 'Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt. And God took the people around toward the way of the Wilderness of the Sea of Reeds (Shemos 13:17-18). One way, then, of explaining the reason for taking a circuitous route in burying Ya'akov could be to say that the burial party simply wished to avoid war, just as God wished to shield the nation from war when they left Egypt. However, a reading of Rabbeinu Meyuchas does not seem to yield this explanation of his words. More likely, he is saying that the route taken by the burial party was a prefiguration of the later path taken by the nation as a whole. Interestingly, Rashi, in his commentary to a later verse (Bereishis 50:13) cites a midrash which says that Ya'akov's sons carried his coffin in the same arrangement for traveling that would later be used by the tribes when they left Egypt and traveled in the wilderness. Thus, according to the midrash, the manner in which the tribes carried Ya'akov from Egypt to his burial place paralleled the manner in which they were to travel during the redemption process. According to Rabbeinu Meyuchas, the path they took, as well, would follow the pattern that would later be followed by the nation as a whole. What was the purpose of carrying Ya'akov to Eretz Yisroel in the same way and on the same path that would be taken by the nation in the future? Perhaps it was a way of paving the way for the nation to be able to make the trip, in the sense of the Ramban's principle of 'ma'ase avos siman lebonim.' Rav Aharon Soloveichik zt"l explained this to mean that the deeds of the forefathers paved the way for those of the children, giving them the ability to accomplish what they needed to in order to achieve their goals as a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' Another intriguing possibility emerges from a look at a Mechilta at the beginning of Beshalach that Rabbi Rabinowich refers to in a footnote to his article. The midrash there says that the reason God took the people on a circuitous

route is that the Cana'anim had destroyed the crops in Eretz Yisroel when they heard they were coming, and, therefore, God wanted to give them forty years to replant them. This midrash suggests that the nation was destined to travel in the wilderness for forty years even before the sin of the spies. The Ibn Ezra also suggests this, in a different way, in his commentary to parshas Beshalach (Shemos 14:13). He writes there that the reason the nation was afraid of war was that they had been slaves for so many years that they did not have the courage to do battle. Therefore, a new generation had to arise, born in freedom and able to meet the challenges that would face them. According to the Ibn Ezra's approach, in conjunction with Rabbeinu Meyuchas' opinion that the funeral procession took the path it did in order to pave the way for the path of the nation from Egypt to Eretz Yisroel, it follows that it was the divine will for the nation to have a slave mentality when they left Egypt, and to develop a more courageous mind-set over a forty year period. Perhaps the reason behind this was to avoid the development of an arrogant attitude once the nation entered their land. Since the new generation, ready to battle, if necessary, with the Cana'nim, emerged only as a result of God's leading them in the wilderness for forty years, it would have a sense of humility and be less likely to attribute its success to its own efforts. The Netziv offers a different explanation for the circuitous route taken by Ya'akov's funeral procession. He says that the reason Yosef took this route was in order to include among the mourners many people from Moav and Cana'an, who dwelled near the Jordan. He then cites a Mishnah in Kelim (1:7), which says that it is the custom for a funeral procession to take a circuitous route. The Netziv explains that the purpose of this practice is to increase the honor of the departed. If we combine this explanation of the Netziv with the explanation of Rabbeinu Meyuchas, that the circuitous path taken was a prefiguration of the path that would be taken by the nation when they left Egypt and traveled to Eretz Yisroel, we emerge with the opposite conclusion than we reached in our previous expansion of Rabbeinu Meyuchas' explanation. Instead of preparing the nation for future wars and giving them the ability to wage them without developing a sense of arrogance, it would seem that, following the Netziv in conjunction with Rabbeinu Meyuchas, the reason the nation stopped on the eastern side of the Yardein was for

the other nations to give honor to Ya'akov, and pave the way for these nations to honor the Jewish nation, as God's chosen people, when it would leave Egypt after their redemption. Following this approach, Ya'akov's funeral procession was directed in a way that would avoid war with other nations not simply because the Jewish nation avoided approaching sensitive areas, but because the other nations of the world recognized the greatness of the Jews and their God, just as they recognized the greatness of Ya'akov and his God when they honored him after his death. Although the two ways of viewing the explanation of Rabbeinu Meyuchas that we have suggested, the first in conjunction with the commentary of Ibn Ezra, and the second in conjunction with the Netziv, appear to be conflicting, perhaps they are not. When the Jews first left Egypt, the nations did respect them, and were not planning to attack. In parshas Beshalach, Rashi writes that before Amalek attacked, the nations were too much in awe of the Jewish nation to attack, but once Amalek waged war against them, due to their complaints against God, the door was open for the other nations to attack, as well. However, apparently, after the events at Mt. Sinai, the respect of the other nations was restored. The Torah, in parshas Beha'aloscha, describes the pattern in which the different tribes were to be arranged - following the pattern that Ya'akov prescribed for his funeral procession - as they began their journey to Eretz Yisroel. Moshe then spoke to his father-in-law, Yisro, and said "We are traveling" (Bamidbar 10:29). Rashi there explains that, at that point, the nation was scheduled to enter the land in three days, but the sin of the murmurers against God prevented that from happening. Apparently, the respect that nations had for the Jewish people diminished as a result of their spiritual failings, and the possibility of attack was now a reality. The nation therefore needed to resort to arms, and the scenario described by Ibn Ezra took hold. By taking a circuitous route and stopping on the eastern side of the Yardein in their funeral procession for Ya'akov, his children were paving the way for both contingencies in the nation's future.

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From: Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky <rmk@torah.org>  
reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: drasha@torah.org

date: Dec 16, 2021, 6:19 PM subject: Drasha - Mixed Blessings Drasha

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky  
Parshas Vayechi Mixed Blessings**

People usually learn from their mistakes. It seems, albeit on the surface, that our father Yaakov does not.

The Talmud in Shabbos 10b explains: "As a rule, one should never differentiate between children. For it was due to Yaakov's favoring Yoseph that led to our exile in Egypt." The Talmud, of course, is referring to the tragic chain of events that were spurred by the special display of love shown to Yoseph. Jealousy ensued amongst his brothers. Eventually they sold him to Egypt, and the spiral of events led to a 210-year exile in that land. We would think that Yaakov would have resolved never to favor one child over another. He doesn't. This week the Torah relates to us that Yaakov blesses Yoseph's children, Menashe and Ephraim. In addition to singling out those grandchildren for a blessing, he does another provocative act. He switches the order of their blessings, as he blesses Ephraim, Yoseph's younger child, before Menashe, the older one.

There are two points we must analyze. Why did Yaakov, still reeling from the terrible ordeal he endured due to favoring Yoseph, overtly display his preferences towards the next generation? Was he not fearful of evoking jealousy among all his grandchildren who were first cousins of Menashe and Ephraim? Also, why did he switch the first and second child in the same family? Was he not fearful of, once again, evoking jealousy among brothers?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l had one steadfast rule subsequent to delivering his daily lecture at Yeshiva Kol Torah in Jerusalem. After he finished discussing a particular sugya (Talmudic topic), and proceeded to the next sugya, no one was allowed to ask a question about the previous one. This approach would prevent confusion among the many students in attendance. It was therefore to the amazement of all the pupils when Rabbi Auerbach entertained a question from an otherwise very quiet student on a topic he had finished discussing twenty minutes prior. He proceeded to backtrack to the earlier topic and reexamined the entire thought process in intricate detail. All the students were astounded. They had distinctly remembered their Rebbe explaining everything clearly the first time. After the lecture a few of the older

students approached the sage to question his favoring the younger student with his departure from an otherwise sacred rule.

Suddenly they realized that the student in question had been at the Yeshiva for almost a year without ever asking a question in the middle of a discourse. Today was the first time he mustered the courage to ask. Had the Rosh Yeshiva dispensed with the question as normal procedure would have dictated, he may never have asked again. Rav Auerbach departed from protocol and fear of invoking jealousy to give the young student a new confidence that would help him emerge as a true scholar.”

My grandfather zt”l, once explained to me that there are certain actions that must be taken without fear of invoking jealousy. Certain children need more attention, more care, and more encouragement. You must do what is correct in certain circumstances and hope that the other siblings will understand. Yaakov’s grandchildren all lived under his tutelage in the relative security of a traditional society. There were scores of cousins, uncles and aunts whose presence lent an atmosphere of ancestral observance. Yoseph’s children were unfortunately raised in a society wrought with idolatry. Their only link to tradition was the steadfast memories that Yoseph brought with him in his sojourn. Thus, Yoseph’s children needed special blessing.

Reb Yaakov continued, “Yaakov Avinu also understood that even in Yoseph’s family there was a difference in the children. Menashe, the first-born was thus named as a grace to Hashem who allowed Yoseph to forget the terrible hardship he endured both in Egypt and in his father’s household. Ephraim, on the other hand, is so named as a recognition of Yoseph’s prosperity in a difficult land.

“Menashe represents the memories of the ‘Old World.’ As long as there is an attachment to that world, perhaps there is less need for the blessing of the sage. But if the child represents the prosperity of the ‘New Country,’ it is very likely that he may cast off his heritage and seek a totally new culture and inheritance. That child needs special warmth and blessings — before any other child”

There are times when conventional protocol is out-of-place. When dealing with special needs, special conduct must overrule the norm. One must weigh the needs of the individual and the reactions of others. The proper decision will benefit both.

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from: **Joshua Kruger** <genesis@torah.org> to:  
**parsha-halacha@torah.org** date: Dec 16, 2021, 5:58 PM  
subject: Parsha Halacha for the Shabbos Table - The  
Bedtime Prayer - Hamapil Parsha Halacha for the  
Shabbos Table

By Joshua Kruger

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Parshas Vayechi

The Bedtime Prayer - Hamapil

The silly boy in the following story makes at least six mistakes. Can you find them? Can you think of how the story is connected with the parsha?

The Story:

In the city of Balagan, on a street named Gevalt, lived the Mevulbal family. This family was nice and funny and very very very mixed up.

“Reuven, it’s time for you to go to bed!” said Mr. Mevulbal to his son.

“Can’t I stay up for just 10 more years, Daddy?”

“Sorry son, we tried that last week and you were very tired the next morning.” his father replied.

Reuven proceeded up the stairs to his bedroom. He took off his pajamas, dressed in his tuxedo, and brushed his teeth.

He thought to himself “I’d better sleep well tonight. Tomorrow I’m having a bubble gum blowing contest with my friends and I need all my strength”.

He lay down in his bed on his back and began to recite the words of the keriyas shema al hamita. When he reached his favorite part, he began to sing “Hamelech ha-goel oti mikol rah...”.

After finishing the tefilah he opened up his night table drawer and pulled out a chocolate donut, which he quickly devoured.

“Reuven” his mother entered his room. “I’m making your lunch for tomorrow. Would you prefer fish or chicken?”

Reuven pointed to his closed lips and then his siddur. "I see" said his mother "You've already said keriyas shema al hamita and can't talk. I'll just go with chicken".

As Reuven lay in his bed, he thought about his day and remembered how he had accidentally dovened the amidah of minchah l'shabbat instead of shacharit l'chol. "Oh well" he told himself "Nobody's perfect. Now's not the time to think about the mistakes I've made. It's time to think of all the presents that I want for my birthday."

Answers

1) Reuven's reasons for going to sleep (to win the bubble-blowing contest) are wrong. A Jew should have in mind that the purpose of sleeping is to gain the energy needed to serve Hashem the next day (Piskei Teshuvot 239:3). The Aruch Hashulchan recommends that this statement be said aloud (Aruch HaShulchan 236:1).

2) It is not proper for Reuven to recite the keriyas shema al hamita lying down, particularly on his back. One should recite the tefila sitting or standing (Mishna Brurah 239:6).

3) The words are "Hamalach Ha-go'el oti" (The angel that redeemed me).

4) In general, after we recite a beracha we must immediately perform the action associated with the beracha. There should be no hefsek. The beracha of hamapil is about sleeping. This means that immediately after saying the beracha we should go to sleep. So it isn't proper for a person to eat, drink, or talk unless it's absolutely necessary (Mishna Brurah 239:4, Rema 239:1). A donut is certainly not necessary.

Note that if someone realizes that they need to use the bathroom after saying keriyas shema al hamita, they certainly may do so and many poskim instruct that the berachah of asher yatzar should be said, though it does create a hefsek for the beracha of ha-mapil (Shut Pri Ha-Sadeh Vol. 1, no. 93; Shut Hitorerus Teshuvah Vol. 1, no. 125; Halichos shlomo Chap. 13, note 14; Shut Tzitz Eliezer Vol. 3, no. 27; Shut Be'er Moshe Vol. 1, no. 62).

5) As stated above, there is a concern that someone who speaks after saying keriyas shema al hamita and before sleeping is performing a hefsek. However, the mitzvah of Kibbud Av VeEm is more important (Yalkut Yosef vol 3, 665). Reuven should have answered his mother, when she spoke to him.

6) Before a person goes to sleep they should think about the mistakes that they made during the day, and make a

goal to not make those mistakes again (Mishna Berura 239:9).

Connections with the Parsha:

The famous words of tefilas hamapil "hamalach hago'el oti..." come from Yaacov Aveinu's blessing for Menashe and Ephraim in parshas Vayechi.

(Written by Josh and Tammy Kruger, in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer of the Instituted for Dayanim, and based in part on his article entitled "Interrupting After Hamapil"

<http://www.dinonline.org/2012/12/05/interrupting-after-hamapil/> and the following article from halachipedia.com:

[http://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Bedtime\\_Shema](http://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Bedtime_Shema))

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From: Project Genesis <genesis@torah.org> Date: Tue, Dec 14, 2021 at 11:38 AM Subject: Weekly Halacha - Medications On Shabbos To: <weekly-halacha@torah.org>

### **Weekly Halacha**

**By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

To Dedicate an Article [click here](#) Parshas Vayechi

### **Medications On Shabbos**

The following is a discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Behold your father is ill (48:1) Until Yaakov fell ill, no one was sick...(Bava Metzia 87a)

One of several Rabbinical decrees that our Sages enacted in order to guard the sanctity of Shabbos concerns the use of medications. In the opinion and experience of the Rabbis, easy access to medicine may lead to the transgression of Shabbos Labors such as "grinding" (when preparing certain medications) or "smoothing" (when applying certain medications). While issuing the decree, however, the Rabbis were bound by the halachic principle of being as lenient as possible with those suffering pain or distress. Thus, they established guidelines for determining when it is permitted to take medication on Shabbos and when it is not. In the following discussion, we will list several common conditions which normally require medication and how they are dealt with on Shabbos.

**HOW TO USE THIS LIST:**

Our discussion is limited to non-life threatening situations. When in doubt whether or not a situation is life-threatening, consult a rav and/or a doctor.

Whenever we mention that an act may be done “with a shinui”, it means that the act may be done in a manner different from the normal and usual. For example, dialing a telephone with the knuckles instead of the fingers is considered a shinui.

Our discussion applies to healthy adults and children over three(1). Children under three, and certainly infants and babies, are treated (for the most part) as “patients not dangerously ill”, and will be discussed elsewhere.

A separate area of discussion concerns a healthy person who takes medication for preventive purposes or in order to strengthen himself. Those laws are not discussed here.

#### LIST OF AILMENTS AND CONDITIONS:

**ABSCESS** – may be opened to relieve pressure from pus, even if some blood is secreted in the process(2).

**ALLERGIES (mild)** – medication may not be taken.

**ANGINA** – all medications are permitted.

**ASTHMA** – all oral and/or breathing medications may be taken(3).

**ATHLETE’S FOOT** – all medications are prohibited.

**BACK OR NECK BRACE** – may be put on or removed(4).

**BEDRIDDEN(5) DUE TO PAIN – ALL ORAL MEDICATIONS MAY BE TAKEN.**

**BEE STING** – the stinger may be removed and the area may be washed with ice water, lemon juice or vinegar, etc. The area may not be soaked, however, in those liquids(6).

**BLEEDING (SLOW)** – pressure may be applied to a cut to stop bleeding. Sucking or squeezing out blood is prohibited(7).

**BROKEN BONE** – a non-Jew may be asked to do anything necessary, e.g., make a phone call, drive a car, take x-rays or put on a cast. [If a non-Jew is not available, some poskim permit a Jew to do these actions with a shinui(8).]

**COLD (RUNNING NOSE)** – medication may not be taken.

**COUGH** – medication may not be taken. If the cough may be an indication of pneumonia or asthma, medication is permitted.

**CUTS AND ABRASION (minor wounds)** – may be washed or soaked in water. Hydrogen peroxide may be

poured over a cut. It is not permitted, however, to soak absorbent cotton or paper in such a solution and then wash the wound with it. The wound may be covered with a non-medicated band-aid(9).

**DIABETES**– all oral medications may be taken.

**DRIED (OR CRACKED) LIPS**– It is prohibited to apply chapstick or any other medication, liquid or otherwise.

**DRIED (OR CHAPPED) HANDS** – It is prohibited to rub them with either oil, ointment (vaseline) or lotion. One who regularly uses a pourable, liquid lotion or oil on his hands (whether they are chapped or not) may do so on Shabbos, too, even if his hands are chapped(10).

**EAR INFECTION** – all medications are permitted. Cotton balls may be inserted(11). Even if the infection is no longer present, the prescription begun during the week must be continued until finished in order to avoid a relapse

**EYE INFLAMMATION** – eye drops (or ointment) may be instilled in the eye. If the eye is not inflamed but merely irritated, no medication is permitted(12).

**FEVER** – all oral medications may be taken. A conventional thermometer may be used(13). If a person is suffering from high-grade fever, a non-Jew may be asked to do whatever the patient needs in order to feel better(14). If the cause of the fever is unknown, a doctor should be consulted.

**HEADACHE** – medication may not be taken. If the headache is severe enough so that one feels weak all over or is forced to go to bed, medication may be taken. One who is unsure if he has reached that stage of illness may be lenient and take pain relieving medication(15).

**HEARTBURN** – Foods which will have a soothing effect may be eaten. Some poskim permit taking anti-acid medication while others are more hesitant. In a severe case, one may be lenient(16).

**INSECT REPELLENT** – liquid or spray repellents may be used(17).

**MIGRAINE HEADACHE** – all oral medications may be taken.

**NOSEBLEED** – the bleeding may be stopped with a tissue or a napkin. If none is available, a cloth napkin may be used(18).

**RETAINER** – may be inserted and removed(19).

**RHEUMATISM** – It is prohibited to bathe in therapeutic hot springs(20).

**SCAB** – it is permitted to remove a scab as long as blood is not drawn from the wound(21).

**SORE THROAT** – medication may not be taken. Gargling is prohibited(22). Drinking tea or any other hot drink, or sucking a candy, is permitted even if the intention is for medicinal purposes(23). See also ‘strep throat’.

**SLEEP DISORDER** – There are conflicting views among contemporary poskim whether it is permitted to take sleeping pills or no-doze pills(24). One who is weak all over or is bedridden may take these pills. Cotton balls may be used as ear plugs. It is questionable if it is permitted to use pliable ear plugs, which are made from a wax-like material that must be spread to fill the cavity of the ear(25).

**SPRAINS** – If the patient is not experiencing severe pain, nothing may be done. If the patient is experiencing severe pain, medication may be taken and a massage may be given. A makeshift splint may be applied, provided that no Shabbos Labors are transgressed.

**SPLINTER UNDER THE SKIN**(26) – May be extracted with the fingers, or with tweezers or a needle. If, unavoidably, a little blood is secreted in the process it is of no consequence(27).

**STITCHES** a non-Jew is allowed to stitch any wound(28), even if the stitching is done only for cosmetic reasons(29).

**STOMACH CRAMPS** – Unless one is in severe pain, it is prohibited to take a laxative or castor oil. Prune juice or any other food or drink is permitted. A hot water bottle is permitted when one experiences strong pains(30).

**STREP THROAT**-all oral medications may be taken. Even if the infection is no longer present, the prescription begun during the week must be continued until finished in order to avoid a relapse.

**SUNBURN (ORDINARY)** – medications are not permitted.

**SWEATING** – it is permitted to sprinkle baby powder on those parts of the body which are perspiring(31).

**SWELLING** – It is permitted to press a knife, etc. against the skin to prevent or minimize swelling(32). It is permitted to wash or soak the swollen area in water(33). It is permitted to place a compress(34), ice (placed in plastic bag) or any frozen item over a swollen area(35).

**TOOTHACHE** – a slight toothache may not be treated with painkillers, but one is permitted to drink whiskey,

etc., provided that it is swallowed immediately(36). A severe toothache (to the point where one feels weak all over) or gum infection may be treated with oral medication. If the tooth needs to be extracted, a non-Jew may be asked to do so(37).

**WEAK ALL OVER** -all oral medications are permitted to be taken.

#### GENERAL NOTES:

It is commonly accepted among the majority of poskim that the Rabbinical restriction against taking medications on Shabbos applies to Yom Tov as well(38). The poskim agree, however, that on the second day of Yom Tov(39) and on Chol ha-Moed(40) it is permitted to swallow any medication, even for the most minor of ailments. No shinui is required.

On Shabbos, a pill may be split in half(41) (even on a dotted line(42)) ground into small pieces(43) or dissolved in a cup of liquid(44).

One who suffers from two conditions – one for which he may take medication on Shabbos and another for which he may not – may take medication only for the former(45).

Sometimes (as described above) a medication may not be taken on Shabbos, but not taking it could lead to aggravating a condition to the point where the medication would become necessary and permitted. In such a case, one is allowed to take the medication in order to avoid this eventuality. For example, one who has a headache which, if untreated, tends to escalate to a migraine, may take medication before the migraine sets in(46).

When ointment needs to be applied on Shabbos, it should, preferably, be prepared before Shabbos on a gauze square and then placed on the skin on Shabbos. If this was not done, the ointment may be squeezed directly from the tube on to the wound and a bandage placed over it. Whatever shinui can be made should be employed, so as to serve as a reminder not to inadvertently spread ointment on the skin (“smoothing”), which is prohibited. If this is impractical, there are sometimes other methods that may be followed. Consult a rav.

**FOOTNOTES** 1. There are different opinions as to when a child is no longer treated as a “patient not dangerously ill”. Some (Chazon Ish O.C. 59:4; Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Nishmas Avrohom 328:54; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv in Eis la-Ledes, pg. 57) quote the age of 2-3; others (Tzitz Eliezer 8:15-12) say six, while yet others (Minchas Yitzchak 1:78) are lenient till the age of nine. The poskim agree, however, that in the last analysis, it all depends on the strength and maturity of the child. 2. O.C. 328:28. 3. See The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society # 6, pg. 47 for a full discussion of how to treat asthma on Shabbos. 4. Based on ruling of Harav

S.Z. Auerbach in Tikunim u'Miluim 34, note 111. 5. Even if he is capable of getting out of bed and walking around, but presently he is in bed due to his pain, he is considered as bedridden – Aruch ha-Shulchan 328:19. 6. See Mishnah Berurah 328:141,142. Obviously, one is allergic to a bee sting must do everything necessary to avert danger. 7. Mishnah Berurah 328:147. 8. This is the view of Shulchan Aruch Harav 328:19 and Eglei Tal (Tochen 18). Some poskim (Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 33, note \*17) rule that one may rely on this view, especially when there is “danger to a limb”. Note, however, that Mishnah Berurah and Aruch ha-Shulchan and the majority of the poskim do not agree with this leniency. 9. Some poskim (oral ruling by Harav M. Feinstein, Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Tikunim u'Miluim, pg. 58; Harav C.P. Scheinberg, quoted in Children in Halachah, pg. 88; Az Nidberu 7:34,35) permit removing the protective tabs from a band-aid, while other poskim (Minchas Yitzchak 5:39-2; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, quoted in Machazeh Eliyahu 70) are stringent. It is proper to prepare band-aids for Shabbos use by peeling off their protective tabs and re-sealing them before Shabbos. Once they have prepared in this fashion, they may be used on Shabbos (Tzitz Eliezer 16:6-5). 10. Based on O.C. 327:1. 11. It is prohibited to tear cotton balling on Shabbos – Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 35:19 and Tikunim u'Miluim; Minchas Yitzchak 4:45. 12. O.C. 328:20. See also Eglei Tal (Tochen 17). 13. O.C. 306:7. Before using it, the mercury may be shaken down. 14. Mishnah Berurah 328:46, 47. 15. See Ketzos ha-Shulchan 138, pg. 100; Minchas Yitzchak 3:35; Be'er Moshe 1:33; 2:32. 16. See Ketzos ha-Shulchan 138, pg. 98; Tzitz Eliezer 8:15 (15-21); Az Nidberu 1:31; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34:4. 17. Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 14:31; Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 179. 18. Mishnah Berurah 328:146. 19. Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34:29. See Tikunim u'Miluim for the reason that it is not considered mesaken. 20. Mishnah Berurah 328:137. 21. O.C. 328:22 and Mishnah Berurah 90. 22. O.C. 328:32. 23. O.C. 328:37. 24. See Minchas Yitzchak 3:21, Tzitz Eliezer 9:17, Be'er Moshe 1:33 and Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 176 for the various views. 25. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Tikunim u'Miluim 14:39) permits their usage while Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 179) and Az Nidberu 3:21 do not. 26. If the thorn or splinter is under a fingernail, it may be considered dangerous. 27. Mishnah Berurah 328:88 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 63. 28. See Nishmas Avrohom, vol. 4, O.C. 340 who quotes Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S. Y. Elyashiv as ruling that stitching a wound may be a Biblically prohibited activity. Accordingly, only a non-Jew may do it, unless it is a life threatening situation. 29. Ibid. See also Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 33, note 23 and 35, note 62. 30. Mishnah Berurah 326:19. 31. Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34:12. 32. Mishnah Berurah 328:124. 33. Tzitz Eliezer 8:15 (15-12). 34. In order to avoid several possible prohibitions, only paper towels or napkins should be used and care should be taken not to squeeze them. 35. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Tikunim u'Miluim 34, note 87); Be'er Moshe 1:33-18. 36. O.C. 328:32. It may not be retained in the mouth longer than usual, nor may one rinse his mouth with it and then spit it out. 37. Rama O.C. 328:3. See Tzitz Eliezer 9:17 (2-11). 38. Mishnah Berurah 532:5. There is a minority opinion that permits taking medications on Yom Tov, see Tzitz Eliezer 8:15 (16) who quotes their opinion and rules that when in distress one may rely on this view. 39. Mishnah Berurah 496:5. 40. O.C. 532:2. 41. Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 33:4. 42. Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Nishmas Avraham, vol. 5, pg. 225. 43. Rama O.C. 321:12. 44. See Mishnah Berurah 320:34,35. 45. Igros Moshe O.C. 3:53. 46. Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34:16. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 1997 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Project Genesis, Inc. Rabbi Neustadt is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Hayeled Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available—please send email to the moderator, Dr. Jeffrey Gross

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