

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Vayigash 5770

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, December 25, 2009
GENERATIONS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

I had my little great granddaughter as a guest in our home this past Shabat. As I was with her I thought about the importance and connection of generations within Jewish society. This bond has unfortunately been weakened in our time by all sorts of issues and problems that have arisen with the breakdown of the traditional Jewish family. Even though I am realistic about my age I still nurture the hope of seeing her bat mitzvah and even her wedding. But I am grateful that I have been of help and influence to her parents, my beloved grandchildren.

Everyone needs grandparents who are removed from the nitty gritty of having to daily raise them from infancy to adulthood and instead are just there for them for advice, help and can serve as a role model. The Torah tells us that Menashe and Ephrayim were raised to greatness because they benefited from having been in close contact with their grandfather Yaakov. It records that Yosef was privileged to see great grandchildren.

Everything that is mentioned in the Torah has great importance. The fact that this detail of the life of Yosef and his generations finds its way into the Torah narrative indicates how important this detail really is. Yosef's fame, wealth, power and influence will all shortly disappear. There will soon arise a new Pharaoh who knows not Yosef. His name will be erased from the pantheon of Egyptian rulers. But he will live on eternally through his descendants, the little great grandchildren who frolicked at his knees. It is our generations that remember us and through them we attain a degree of immortality even on this earth.

Ashkenazic Jewry and Sephardic Jewry as well, though by employing different customs to do so, memorialized themselves and their previous generations by continuing to name their offspring with the names that were common in their family background. In current Jewish society, except for perhaps the Charedi world and parts of the religious society, this method of naming children has waned. Modern names are employed.

When the child grows up and reaches understanding and maturity there is no connection with one's ancestors. He or she does not bear a generational name. In the course of my rabbinic career I have had many people come to me to ask how they can trace their generational roots. Many times their name was the clue that allowed a successful search to be made. We all wish to know from whence we came. The sense of generations is comforting because then one does not feel alone. One has a past and if one is blessed with grandchildren, let alone great grandchildren, then one has a future as well.

We are able thereby to live beyond the grave. The Torah counts the Jewish people a number of times, sometimes by name. Names in classical biblical Hebrew described one's genealogy, who one's parents were and sometimes even who one's grandparents were. Bezalel who was the architect and the builder of the Tabernacle in the desert is identified by his generations. Someone who has a sense of generations is apparently entitled and able to build a holy place for himself and others even in an arid desert. My little great granddaughter is too young to understand any of this yet. Only at the end of the Shabat did she recognize me sufficiently to smile at me. I hope that she will live in health and security to see her own great grandchildren smile at her. But I also pray that she and all of our family will have within their souls and psyches that treasure of appreciating the generations of our family.

She is the sixth generation from my beloved grandfather who taught me Torah when I was a young child and whose Pesach seder remains embedded in my heart and memory till today, many decades after the fact. So I see myself, as I think all of us should see ourselves, as the bridge between the known past and the unknown future.

Armed with generational knowledge and family loyalties the Jewish people have weathered unbelievably difficult storms and times. This has been our solid anchor and the source of our tenacity and survival. Communicating

this idea to our offspring is the real challenge of Jewish parenthood. We must not allow our future generations to be buffeted by the questions of "Who am I?" and "Where did I come from?" Thinking in generational terms provides strength, serenity and continuity to our lives.
Shabat shalom

Weekly Parsha :: VAYIGASH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The long hoped for reunion of Yaakov and Yosef actually occurs in this week's parsha. The Torah records for us this poignant and emotional moment. Yet, it tells us that Yaakov remained apparently emotionless while Yosef wept. The rabbis of the Talmud compound the mysterious behavior of Yaakov by stating that Yaakov at that moment recited Shema. What does this mean?

Many commentators interpret this to mean that since in all of the years of Yaakov's separation from Yosef he was in a depressed mood, the Divine Spirit could not have rested upon him and he was therefore unable to communicate with Heaven – the understanding of Shema being that ability to communicate with Heaven. Now that he saw Yosef in front of his eyes, alive and well, his joy of the moment allowed that Holy Spirit to descend upon him once again and that is what meant by his reciting the Shema.

But this does not really explain why Yaakov was apparently emotionless at that moment. One can recite Shema with great fervor and intensity and still weep. In fact we find it strange that in the entire parsha Yaakov does not ask the brothers how Yosef ended up as the ruler of all Egypt and why did he so torture the brothers on their previous trips to Egypt. One would have thought that all of these questions would be uppermost in Yaakov's mind and therefore should have been posed on his lips as well. The Torah makes no mention of this. Why?

Well, I am not presumptuous enough to say that I have the answer to these questions regarding the behavior of our holy father Yaakov. However, there is an insight here that I do wish to share with you. Yaakov is well aware of the tensions that existed between Yosef and his brothers. He is also cognizant that his sons misled him when they showed him Yosef's bloody shirt. He is also aware of the dreams of Yosef for he himself harbored them as well over all of the long painful decades of separation from his beloved son.

And Yaakov, who was able to survive Lavan's schemes and machinations, is certainly not naïve. As he will say on his deathbed to Yosef, "I know, my son, I know." He meant that I know everything that has transpired in our family regarding you and your brothers. But Yaakov chooses not to mention it directly. He does not want to display undue emotion to Yosef or to his brothers. He contains his tears for his weeping will only rip open a scab on a wound that has to heal slowly and carefully.

The less said the better is his motto in this instance. Not every family secret need be publicly revealed nor every family dispute constantly rehashed. Yaakov says effectively, "I am aware of all that has transpired between you and your brothers. I prefer to let the matter rest and not pursue it further." Reuniting the family is his prime goal.

Tears, emotional outbursts and reproaching them for their past errors, which the brothers themselves now recognize as being errors, will not realize his goal of building a united and strong family that will become the Jewish people. Many times, restraint and even silence are the best tools for family unity and tranquility.

Shabat shalom.

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Vayigash
For the week ending 26 December 2009 / 8 Tevet 5770
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

INSIGHTS

The Power Of Love

And he (Yosef) fell on his brother Binyamins neck and wept. And Binyamin wept on Yosefs neck. (45:14)

If your memory serves you well, free love was a much touted slogan in the nineteen sixties.

Actually, it wasn't so much about love as lust. And free meant it didn't cost me anything. Whatever the cost to other people didn't enter the agenda. Which usually meant that someone else wound up picking up the tab emotionally. That kind of free is pretty expensive.

However, free love does exist.

When someone loves his fellow man not for any reason, but merely and purely because he is a creation of the Master of the World and a reflection of His Majesty, then this Free Love is a love which hastens the final redemption.

The Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple) was destroyed because of free hate baseless hatred. What will hasten its return is the reverse free Love. Love which doesn't depend on any conditions.

And he wept Yosef wept about the two Batei Mikdash to be built in Binyamins portion of the land that would eventually be destroyed. And Binyamin wept about the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting) that would be erected in Yosefs portion of the land and also would eventually be destroyed.

Why were Yosef and Binyamin crying now, at this time of consummate joy at their reuniting, over events that were thousands of years in the future? Furthermore, why were they crying over the others loss and not their own?

When the brothers encountered each other after 22 years of separation, they realized that what had kept them apart was free hate, the hatred of the brothers for Yosef. Immediately, they saw the future destruction of the Temple that would be caused by free hate. They cried, for just as free hate had separated them all these years, so too it would destroy the Temple in the future.

The cure for free hate is free love. To feel such empathy that the pain of ones fellow is as ones own.

Thats why each cried over the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash of the other. Yosef and Binyamin were showing a path for generations unborn, teaching us the way to cure free hate.

For even though Binyamins Beit Hamikdash would not be built until Yosefs Mishkan would be destroyed its existence was predicated on the others demise nevertheless Binyamin cried over the destruction of the Mishkan.

Binyamin would have preferred the Beit Hamikdash never to have been built, and then Yosefs Mishkan would have stood forever. Such is the power of free love

Source: Based on Rabbi Y. MKuzmir in Iturei Torah

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

© 2009 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas Vayigash

I am Yosef. Does my father still live? (45:3)

The very first words that Yosef uttered after revealing his true identity formed the gut-wrenching question: "Does my father still live?" The question indicates Yosef's primary concern, a worry which had probably been gnawing at him during these many years: "Does my father still live?" The bond that existed between Yaakov Avinu and Yosef was unbreakable and reciprocal. Yosef felt for his father as his father felt for him. Yosef knew, when his father sent him to Shechem to inquire about his brothers, that it was clearly a journey and a meeting fraught with danger. Yet, he gladly went, because his father had asked him to go. When his father asked - Yosef immediately responded. Yaakov's influence permeated Yosef's very essence. Thus, it is not at all surprising that the very first words that Yosef uttered after his revelation were, "Does my father still live?"

The relationship between Yaakov and Yosef was one of Jewish destiny. Yosef transmitted the legacy imparted to him by Yaakov, who had received it from his father and grandfather. The future of Klal Yisrael was embodied in this relationship. Thus, explains Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, Yaakov Avinu did not cease to mourn for his son, nor could he be comforted over his loss. It was not a personal loss; it was a loss for the future of Klal Yisrael.

Yosef without his father was an incomplete Yosef. He recognized that he was an extension of his father. Therefore, when he uttered, "I am Yosef - does my father still live?" it was a statement: I am Yosef as long as my father still lives. His awareness that he must, throughout his life, remain the embodiment of his father's life was the spiritual identification card that he carried with him throughout the twenty-two years of separation. He never lost hold of his legacy. During his trials and tribulations, he maintained a steadfast sense of loyalty to the ideals of his family. Consequently, when Yosef identified himself to his brothers, it makes sense that the first question for them would be whether their lives also reflected such a positive fidelity to the teachings of their father.

In a critical analysis of Yosef's dialogue with his brothers, R' Feldman questions the significance of the pronoun used by Yosef, "my father," as opposed to the plural, "our father." Is he offering a subtle rebuke to his brothers for their apparent lack of sensitivity to their father's feelings? Did they have no problem convincing their father that his beloved Yosef was torn apart by a wild animal? They certainly did not act then as if he were their father - also. Yosef's filial relationship with them was far from amicable. Thus, he says, "I am Yosef" - not your (long lost) brother - just plain Yosef, not an allusion to his status as their brother.

Accordingly, Yosef's question, "Does my father still live?" is a spiritual question. My father's teachings are still alive for me. How about for you? Are we still a family with a destiny? Do we have a common mission to build Klal Yisrael, or has your attitude changed? Are you ready to repent of your cruel treatment of me and our father, and acknowledge him as your father once again? The brothers did not respond. Perhaps they understood the powerful implications of Yosef's question/statement. Yosef wants to know if the term, "my father," with all of its implications and nuances, both the obvious, positive ones, and the remorse that it evokes, "still lives." What took so long for Yosef to utter these words, to ask the compelling question which would blanket the past twenty-two years? He did so only after Yehudah made his moving speech, reiterating the word avi, "my

father," referring to his love for Binyamin, his loss of Yosef, his suffering and misery at his advanced age. When Yehudah emphasized that he would not allow any more evil to befall his father, Yosef revealed himself. Yosef saw that the trait that was odious in his brothers, their lack of sensitivity towards their father, had been rectified. Yehudah was so concerned about his father's negative reaction to Binyamin's being taken captive that he was willing to take his place and become Yosef's servant. He would not allow Yaakov to suffer anymore. The critical phrase is *avi*, "my father." The same father who had long ago inadvertently become the dividing point in the family with his selection of Yosef as heir to the Patriarchal legacy was now the unifying force between them. He had become the bridge of reconciliation between Yosef and his brothers.

With this in mind, we suggest that Yosef was not actually asking a question but rather, was making a declaration. He finally perceived that the strife and divisiveness that had reigned in the family during these last twenty-two years had been ameliorated. The brothers were no longer envious of Rachel's two sons. They cared for Binyamin and regretted what had happened to Yosef. Their concern for their father was now as it should have been - but was not - all along. Yosef was not asking, "Does my father live?" He was exclaiming, "My father lives!"

The question, "Does my father still live?" is one which we should ask ourselves. This statement is directed to the observant who have been raised and educated by fathers who cared, who sacrificed themselves so that their sons and daughters would be availed Judaism in its pristine, quantum essence, without embellishment and without adulteration. It is equally directed to those who have not been fortunate enough to have this opportunity, who came to observance later in life, either through the assistance of others or through their own intellectual searching and discourse. To them, father means Hashem, our Father in Heaven. Do our traditions still have the same meaning? Does our heritage still infuse us with pride? Do the lessons we learned in our youth still play a vital role in our lives? Are we transmitting this legacy to the next generation?

The answer to this question makes an enormous difference. If it is in the affirmative, if we can proudly respond with a resounding, "Yes!" to these questions, then our lives are filled with joy. Yes! Our Father still lives within us. If, however, we cannot give a resonant "yes" to these questions, if we meekly look for a hole to climb into, if we vacillate with our response or attempt to justify its negative overtones with lame excuses, blaming everyone but ourselves, then this question should catalyze introspection, remorse and contrition. The change it will hopefully generate will ultimately alter the tenor of the question.

But his brothers could not answer him because they were left disconcerted before him. (45:3)

Chazal have used the brothers' reaction to Yosef's revelation - their overriding fear and trepidation - to describe in some manner what we are all destined to face on the day of ultimate judgment before the ultimate Judge. Indeed, the *Kli Yakar* writes that this is why the Torah relates their reaction, so that the intelligent individual will derive a *kal v'chomer*, a priori argument, concerning what he should personally expect. When you think about it, what does the average person fear? There is no doubt that we all have areas in which we are deficient; some, in which we could improve; and others, in which we have serious - perhaps uncorrectable - deficits. We are only human. Certainly, we will not be taken to task for not developing our potential and becoming this generation's Gaon *m'Vilna* or *Chafetz Chaim*. Our *Baalei Mussar*, Ethicists, teach us otherwise. This is what prompted the unprecedented fear that gripped Yosef's brothers. It was discovered that they had erred this entire time, that all of their postulates had been false.

The brothers had paskened, adjudicated the law, and decided that Yosef's actions warranted the ultimate penalty: death. He was a *rodef*, pursuer, and deserved to be punished accordingly. They had grappled with the incident concerning Yosef numerous times throughout the years, arriving at the same decision each time. Now, after twenty-two years, there is aroused within them some doubt concerning their lack of compassion. Perhaps they should have shown a bit more sensitivity. After all, he was their brother. But, that was all. After twenty-two years, their only concern was their lack

of compassion. Their opinion concerning the penalty which they had adjudicated was set in stone. They had not erred.

A few days later, Yosef made his revelation: Ani Yosef, "I am Yosef!" Suddenly, they realized that they had not been correct, an error in judgment had crept in. They were shocked beyond shock. According to Chazal, *parchah nishmasam*, their souls flew out from them. They died as a reaction to their overwhelming fear. Obviously, their *neshamos* returned, but, for a short moment, they were the "living dead" or the "dead living."

Horav Leib Chasman, *zl*, would present this scenario based on Chazal's description of what had occurred that day: He would *klop* on his *shtender*, bang on the podium, and challenge his students: "Is there anyone among you who has long ago determined the lifestyle he should lead, and, of course, he cannot be wrong? He has decided that he simply does not have the acumen to become a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, the diligence and character to become a *yarei Shomayim*, G-d-fearing Jew. He now begins to address whatever shortcomings he might have, but scholarship and G-d-fearing are no longer 'on the table.' It is beyond him. Hashem can only make demands on those areas that affect Him. Certain areas are beyond his ability - or so he has decided."

The *Mashgiach* continued, "Bachurim! My dear students! What are you going to do when you stand before the *Kisei HaKavod*, Holy Throne, and discover that Hashem does not agree with your assessment? He feels that you did have the acumen and the ability. Now you have an idea what Yosef's brothers experienced. They discovered that it had all been an egregious error. Yosef had not been guilty. If so, what should we say?"

In relating his revered rebbe's reaction to self-imposed smugness concerning sin, Horav Sholom Schwadron, *zl*, would suggest another reason for the brothers' fainting spell and sudden shock upon learning the true identity of the Egyptian Viceroy. He cites an incident concerning the Gaon, *zl*, *m'Vilna*, who, while eating his Friday night meal, inadvertently touched a fruit peel. He immediately fainted. He had touched *muktzeh* (literally, "set aside," a class of objects which is not set to be used on *Shabbos*). After a few moments, he was revived, only to faint once again. His *rebbe* *tzin*, understanding what had caused him to faint, quickly walked over and stood directly in front of him and began eating the peels. When the Gaon saw that the peels could be eaten and, thus, could be considered food, he was able to remain revived. He realized that the peels were not *muktzeh*.

Clearly, this demonstrates who the Gaon was and illustrates his extreme level of piety. Now, if the Gaon fainted repeatedly as a result of touching peels, is it any wonder that Yosef's brothers, who were on a much more exalted spiritual level, passed out when they heard the words: Ani Yosef?

Oy lanu m'Yom Ha'Din, *v'oy lanu m'Yom HaTochacha*. "Woe is to us from the Day of Judgment, and woe is to us from the Day of Rebuke." Rav Sholom explains the difference between these two terms. *Yom HaDin*, Day of Judgment, is a reference to the type of questions the Tribunal will ask. What did you do on this and this day? What did you not do when you were sequestered alone on a certain day? Where were you on a specific day at a certain time? The list goes on, the type of question is standard: Where and what? Nothing is hidden, no cover-up. One must give an accounting for every minute, every day, week, month and year of his life. *Sof davar ha'kol nishma*, "The sum of the matter, when all has been considered" (*Koheles* 11:13). Everything is brought out in the open. There is no avoiding it. This is *Yom HaDin*.

Yom HaTochachah, Day of Rebuke, refers to the period of time after everything is on the table, every action, every minute is revealed; now it will be decided if the individual has acted properly and in accordance with what he could have done. For example: The chart will show that he did not learn Torah when he could have. He will then be questioned: "Why did you not learn?" He will reply, "I had no head for learning. My acumen just could not cut the grade." He will then be shown that, for so many other things, he "surprisingly" had a head. Hashem demonstrates for us that our excuses have no validity. If Yosef's brothers could not handle Yosef invalidating their "alibi," what will we say when it will be Hashem Who will be doing the demonstration?

But his brothers could not answer him, because they were left disconcerted before him. (45:3)

In the Midrash, Chazal emphasize the fear that will grip every Jew on his ultimate judgment day, when he stands before the Heavenly Tribunal. They cite two instances of rebuke in which even powerful people could not withstand the most simple reproach. First, Bilaam was chastised by his donkey, and he cowered in fear. Second, Yosef, was the "smallest" of the brothers. All he had said was, "I am Yosef," indicating that his brothers had erred, and they became disconcerted before him. Certainly, when we will stand before the Almighty and He will rebuke us, l'fi mah shehu, each one according to what he is, we will cringe with embarrassment and fear. The phrase, l'fi mah shehu, "according to what he is," seems to imply something significant, something unusual, something novel. What do Chazal mean by using this phrase?

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, explains that we really do not know ourselves, or, let me rephrase that: We refuse to recognize who we really are and what we are capable of achieving. The brothers thought they had taken the right action concerning Yosef. They might have been a bit more compassionate, but nothing more. When Yosef revealed himself to them, they saw the truth about themselves through a clear, unbiased perspective. Likewise, Hashem will "point out" the real truth about each one of us. No more cover-ups, no more self-sustained positive packaging - just the real truth concerning who we are, what we have achieved and how far we are from the goal of success.

Do we really know who we are? Do we want to know what we are actually capable of achieving? Perhaps not. Most of us have developed a preconceived notion of who we are. We have built an imaginary facade around ourselves, blocking anyone on the outside from entering and discovering the truth. This does not work with Hashem. He knows the truth. He knows who we really are.

Rav Pincus asserts that we do not know who we really are. We imagine ourselves to be fine, good, upright people, who are incapable of doing anything wrong. Regrettably, this is not usually the case. There are activities in which we might engage if society were to deem it appropriate. In other words, there are things that we might do if we could get away with it. These activities, imaginations and desires define the real nature of the person. This is the l'fi mah shehu, "according to what he is."

Horav Michael Dov Weissmandel, zl, relates one of the many episodes which occurred during his involvement in the Holocaust. He was availed the opportunity to "redeem" a number of Jews who were destined for the death chamber. It was simply a question of money. He has been credited with saving the lives of thousands of Jews during the tragic years of the Holocaust, through bribes and redemption. He turned to a number of secular Jewish groups, who at that time were the only ones who had serious money, and came up against a brick wall. They apologized, offered their regrets, validated their lame excuses, but gave no money. Sadly, the Jews in Europe were not their highest priority.

Shortly after the multiple refusals, Rav Weissmandel had occasion to meet with one of the emissaries who represented this world Jewish organization. He was a professor of chemistry, and made the following reprehensible statement: "You know, Rabbi, that I have a PhD in chemistry, and I have researched the zyklon gas used by the Nazis against the Jews. I can assure you that there is opium mixed in with it. Therefore, the Jews feel no pain when they are put to death." Can one imagine the coarseness of this statement - by a Jew, no less! To ignore the deaths of millions of his co-religionists with the comment, "At least they feel no pain," is as reprehensible as it gets. This evil man had no sensitivity whatsoever to the plight of so many. Yet, he was on a committee that was involved in "rescue" on a world basis. Needless to say, the meeting abruptly ended at that point, as Rav Weissmandel picked himself up and left the room. One does not deal with such a fiend!

Let us take this comment in perspective. If the conversation were to take place today, the individual would be labeled in the most negative terms. Sixty-five years ago, however, it was in vogue to hate Jews. It was acceptable to the American people that Jews were dying in Europe. Only a handful of Orthodox Jews fought relentlessly to expose the wholesale

murder that was going on, and, in some way, served as America's conscience. When we take this incident into perspective, we note that there are two aspects to each individual: the l'fi mah shehu, the real person; and the one that presents himself to the public. That professor was self-loathing, evil and heartless, but, in the society in which he lived, he was considered a decent, fine individual, a member of a world rescue organization.

Rav Pincus relates that he once had to take his young child to the emergency room for a bad cut to the knee. Regrettably, it was during a physicians' strike. The doctors had to be in the hospital in case a major trauma would occur. When Rav Pincus came in, the nurse - who was not on strike - saw that the child needed stitches. She immediately turned to the attending doctor for help. He simply smiled and said, "Sorry, I am on strike." Now, if someone would have been brought to the emergency room in cardiac arrest, he certainly would have responded. Why? Because the strike does not supersede matters of life and death - just children who need stitches. What kind of person is this doctor? Is he compassionate? Is he a decent human being? It all depends on the strike, and what is considered acceptable.

Some people live dual lives, presenting themselves to the community as kind, respectable, even virtuous. In truth, beneath the veneer of respectability, there lurks a darker side, one that - under different conditions - would expose the ugly truth, which, quite possibly, the person does not even realize applies to him. This is what Hashem will show each one of us on our personal day of judgment. Is it any wonder that Yosef's brothers were traumatized with fear? What should we say?

Behold! Your eyes see as do the eyes of my brother, Binyamin, that it is my mouth that is speaking to you. (45:12)

Apprehensive that his brothers still doubted his true identity, Yosef sought to reassure them by referring to his "mouth that is speaking to you." Rashi explains that the reference to his mouth denotes Yosef's ability to speak Hebrew. This exposition has been questioned by the commentators, since Yosef's position as viceroy required him to come in contact with other world leaders, thus necessitating him to learn the Hebrew language. What indication was there that he had been proficient in this language from birth?

Horav Bentzion Halberstam, zl, the Bobover Rebbe, in his Kedushas Tzion, cites Horav Yaakov Emden, zl, who asserts that a Jewish child, by nature, speaks Hebrew. He goes so far as to say that if a child were not to have come in contact with human beings, if he had been born on an island and raised in seclusion, without conversing with anyone, he would naturally speak lashon kodesh, the holy tongue/language, Hebrew. The reason that we do not speak Hebrew is that we listen to other languages, so that these "foreign" languages supersede Hebrew in our brains.

Yosef was born and raised in Yaakov Avinu's home. He heard no language other than Hebrew. Therefore, his means of expression was not tainted by any other language. Hebrew was his mother-tongue. It was his mouth that was speaking - not him. When the organ in question performs its natural, G-d-given function, we say organ/foot/arm/ear/eye - walks, throws, hears, sees. When the organ is not performing its natural function, we say the person acted. A person flies, since this is not natural for him. Thus, when Yosef said, my mouth speaks, rather than saying I speak, he was intimating that his ability to speak Hebrew came naturally, without embellishment. It was intrinsic to his natural being, his unique heritage.

Hallelu es Hashem min ha'Shomayim. Praise Hashem from the heavens.

In the Talmud Shabbos 118b, Chazal assert that one should not recite Hallel on a daily basis. Apparently, reciting this song of praise constantly reduces it to nothing more than a musical song and a farce. The Talmud notes that Rabbi Yosi considered its daily recital a worthy practice. They reply that this is a worthy practice only in regard to the Hallel which is in Pesukei d'Zimra, "Verses of praise." Rashi comments that this refers to Psalms 148 and 150, since these Psalms do not dote on the subject of miraculous intervention but, rather, on matters that warrant praise every day. While these are certainly impressive verses of praise, why do they take precedence over Psalm 146, which is the first of the Hallelukahs

(Halleli nafshi es Hashem, "My soul praises Hashem")? These verses express our overwhelming gratitude to the Almighty for His countless chassadim, kindnesses. They also allude to Hashem's justice concerning the wicked. Why should that Psalm not have greater significance than one which records man's ability to activate all of the forces of creation in praise of the Almighty?

Horav Avraham Grodzenski, zl, explains that the above Psalm is unique in that it records gadlus ha'adam, the greatness of man, while the preceding Psalms address the greatness of the Almighty. The Psalm teaches us that all of creation - the ministering angels, the sun and the moon, the growing herbiage and creatures of the earth - wait for man to raise his "baton" and lead the "orchestra" in praise of Hashem. Man meditates, contemplates, and acknowledges the greatness of Hashem's work, and that starts the "ball rolling." This Psalm is a tribute to man, who controls the praise of Hashem. What place, however, does a tribute to man have taking precedence over a tribute to Hashem?

The Mashgiach explains that, veritably, praise belongs to Hashem and that precedes everything. Man, his eminence notwithstanding, lacks the ability to praise Hashem sufficiently. He must, therefore, harness all of the forces of creation, so that they all praise the Almighty in concert. Even then, we are sorely lacking in our ability to praise Hashem properly. Despite all that we collectively do, it all only represents a microscopic effort, and an infinitesimal recognition of the real praise that Hashem deserves from us.

Sponsored in memory of our dear father and grandfather Harry Weiss Tzvi ben Yoel a"h

By Morry & Judy Weiss, Erwin & Myra Weiss and Grandchildren Gary & Hildee Weiss, Jeff & Karen Weiss, Zev & Rachel Weiss, Elie & Sara Weiss, & Brian
"Love and memories are gifts from G-d that death cannot destroy"

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Vayigash

They Weren't Just Learning Eglah Arufah By Coincidence

A pasuk in this week's parsha (right before Chamishi) says: "And they related to him all the words of Yosef that he had spoke to them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived." [Bereshis 45:27]

Rashi quotes the Medrash that the wagons were a sign that Yosef was sending to his father of what topic of study they was involved in when they last parted company. They were studying the laws of Eglah Arufah [the decapitated calf, which is an atonement that is brought when a murdered body is found near a city]. This is why it says that Yaakov took note of the Agalos [wagons] that Yosef sent, rather than that Pharaoh sent.

There are literally dozens of interpretations as to the symbolism and the message of the Eglah Arufa in terms of this Medrash cited by Rashi. We have discussed many of them in previous years. This time I would like to share a different perspective on the matter. This idea put forth by both the Sifsei Chachomim and the Kli Yakar. However, I would like to take their ideas and go a step further.

The Sifsei Chachomim is bothered that Rashi's comment that the Agalos were symbolic of the Eglah Arufa is very uncharacteristic of Rashi. Agala and Eglah are two different words with differing vowels and different meanings. They happen to share the same letters but the words are otherwise unrelated. Why would it be obvious to Yaakov by Yosef's sending a wagon that they had been learning about a calf? What if this was too subtle of a connection and Yaakov did not "get it"? Why not send a calf itself, if he was so interested in making that connection?

The Sifsei Chachomim suggests that when Yosef separated from Yaakov, Yaakov accompanied him until Emek Chevron [the valley of Hebron]. When Yaakov told Yosef to go look after his brothers, the pasuk states that Yaakov sent Yosef from Emek Chevron [Bereshis 37:14]. Yaakov escorted him all the way to this departure point. Yosef told him, "Return, please." Yaakov responded, "I cannot go back, for a person is required to accompany a departing traveler, as is taught in the chapter of Eglah Arufah."

This is how they came to study the section of Eglah Arufah. It was not just some chance study of the Biblical topic. Yaakov taught Yosef a practical lesson in the laws of levayah [accompanying a traveler on the road] from the Eglah Arufah parsha that was rooted in the scenario of their last encounter.

The Kli Yakar echoes the idea that while Yaakov was walking with Yosef, he most likely related to him the law of levayah, whose source comes from the chapter of Eglah Arufah. The Elders of the city testify regarding the dead body "Our hands have not spilled this blood," meaning we did not send him away without proper accompaniment. The Kli Yakar then asks where Yaakov learned this concept and answers that Yaakov learned it from his grandfather Avraham, who accompanied his guests when they departed on their travels.

The Torah states that Avraham planted an Eishel in Beer Sheva [Bereshis 21:33]. Chazal say that Eishel is an acronym for the words Achila [food], Shtiya [drink], and levaya [accompaniment] - the three pillars of the hospitality provided by the paradigm of Chessed, the Patriarch Avraham, to all his guests.

The Rambam in Chapter 14 of the Laws of Mourning enumerates a variety of rabbinic obligations towards one's fellow man that fulfill the underlying Biblical command of loving one's neighbor as one's self. He lists in the first paragraph (Halacha aleph) visiting the sick, comforting mourners, burying the dead, helping brides get married, gladdening grooms and brides, and accompanying guests, among other rabbinic obligations towards one's fellow man. Then in the next paragraph (Halacha bais) the Rambam states that the reward for accompaniment is greater than for anything else.

This is noteworthy. We would not, on our own, out of the entire list of rabbinic commandments enumerated in Halacha aleph, assume that accompanying guests tops the list in terms of reward! But that is exactly what the Rambam writes. The Rambam then cites the source of this custom being the practice of Avraham toward his guests.

Why is this in fact so? It is because when one accompanies a person, he provides him with something that is basic to the human condition - dignity (Kavod). You can give a person a piece of bread,; you can give him clothes on his back. And at times, a person can go hungry and not dressed in the best way. But there is something every human being needs. It is literally water to the soul. Every person needs dignity. Every person must feel that he is appreciated, that people take him seriously.

A person may have a guest in his house and give him the finest room with his own bathroom and a whirlpool bathtub and a fruit basket on the dresser. But if the guest is otherwise treated coolly and the host spends no time with him, all the material comforts provided are not worth anything.

On the other hand, one may give his guest a simple bed and a simple blanket and yet show him great honor and respect. Such a host has provided his guest with a sense of self-worth. That is the greatest hospitality that can be shown. As the Rambam says, it is "greater than all the rest".

Now we understand the message that Yosef sent to Yaakov. Yosef has been away for 22 years. There was not another Jew within hundreds of miles. He was in a society that was decadent and depraved. He became the viceroy and everyone jumped at his command. What happened to Yosef? Did he leave the ways of Judaism? Did he become perverted? No. He remained Yosef the Righteous.

He sends a message to his father Yaakov asking "How did I do that? How was I able to remain committed to Jewish values despite my surroundings and environment?" He answered his own question. "I did it because you believed in me. You showed me respect and dignity by accompanying me on the road that day. I felt self worth as a result of your levaya. Any time that I was tempted to sin, I asked myself 'How could I - Yosef - do such a thing after my father had so much respect for me and faith in me?'"

This is the great Chessed that Avraham Avinu taught us. Sure, food and drink are important, but levaya - giving a person a feeling of self worth - that is more important than anything!

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

Minor Fast, Major Decision
Rabbi Benjamin Yudin
The TorahWeb Foundation

The Navi Zechariah (8:19) promises that four fast days will in the future be transformed to holidays. The fast of the tenth month, namely Asarah B' Teves, the day which commemorates the siege that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia lay to Jerusalem (586 BCE), which marked the beginning of the end of the first Bais HaMikdash, will in the future become a day of celebration.

The Avudraham in his commentary on the siddur writes a fascinating halacha. He says that the Navi Yechezkel (24:2), who instructed the Jewish community in Bavel where he was exiled from Eretz Yisrael, to write "b'etzem hayom hazeh"- to note with precision and surety that on this day- the Tenth of Teves- the siege was placed around Jerusalem. Because the Navi uses this expression several times we are to learn the importance of fasting precisely on that day. It is for this reason that Asarah B' Teves is the only fast that can fall on a Friday and indeed we fast on Erev Shabbos. The remarkable teaching of the Avudraham is that were this fast to occur on a Shabbos, we would fast on Shabbos as well.

At first glance this seems rather startling. True, the Rabbis orchestrated the calendar that the tenth of Teves cannot occur on a Shabbos. But what is it about this day, wherein lies its significance that it would join Yom Kippur which is the only fast that the Jewish people fast on Shabbos?

The Chasam Sofer zt"l in his commentary on the slichos for Asarah B' Teves provides an insightful explanation of the Avudraham. He reminds us that what transpires here on earth is a reflection of what is transpiring in heaven. The siege of Bavel was indeed to serve as a wake-up call to the Jewish nation to reflect upon the possibility that they might lose the Bais HaMikdash. On high, the Heavenly Court was called into session to determine if the Bais HaMikdash would indeed be destroyed. Moreover, annually, writes the Chasam Sofer zt"l, on every Asarah B' Teves the Bais Din Shel Maalah is convened to decide if the third Bais HaMikdash will be built this year or Heaven Forbid postponed.

There are two models of mourning. The first is called aveilus yeshana- a mourning for a historical phenomenon that affected us adversely in the past. Tisha B' Av is just such an occurrence. For an aveilus yeshana we do not fast on Shabbos. Thus when Tisha B' Av falls on Shabbos we fast on Sunday. Those who have the practice of fasting on a yahrzeit do not fast on a Shabbos, as that too is commemorating an aveilus yeshana.

However, there is also a model of aveilus chadasha, meaning a present or contemporary mourning. If one has a chalom rah (a disturbing dream) on Friday night, the halacha (Orach Chaim 220:5) allows the individual to fast on Shabbos since for them there is an immediate crisis and fasting would often be a greater personal oneg (pleasure) than partaking of the Shabbos meals. Similarly, with the insight of the Chasam Sofer, the Heavenly Deliberations on Asarah B' Teves designates this fast as not only historical and commemorative, but creating a national crisis, inspiring us to storm the Heavenly Court with our fasting and prayers.

The urgency and immediacy of Asarah B' Teves may further be gleaned from the teaching of the Yerushalmi (Yuma 1:1) that "any generation that did not build the Bais HaMikdash in its day- it is as if it were destroyed in its generation". The Sfes Emes explains that there have been many generations of righteous individuals such as Tanaaim and Amoraim, the chachamim of the Talmud and still the Temple has not been built. He explains, based upon Tehillim (147:2) "boneh Yerushalayim Hashem - Hashem builds Jerusalem", meaning it is a process and every generation must contribute its share of building the third Bais HaMikdash by proving its worthiness of the Divine dwelling literally in its midst. Asarah B' Teves is our appearance before the Heavenly Court, hence we would fast on a Shabbos.

Finally, the Seder Hadoros sees Nebuchadnezzar as the gilgul and direct descendant of Nimrod. Nimrod led the construction of migdal Bavel,

which is understood by Chazal (Tanchuma Noah 24) as a direct attack on G-d. The goal was (Beraishis 11:4) "let us make a name for ourselves", i.e. place man at the center of the universe, not any Divine Being. He attempts to dominate the public mindset by casting Avraham, his vocal opponent, into the fire. Avraham, as we know, is miraculously saved.

Nimrod's direct descendant, Nebuchadnezzar, likewise wishes to destroy the Bais HaMikdash. The daily functioning of the Temple accompanied by the ten miracles (as found in Avos 5:7) proclaimed to the world the existence and directorship of Hashem over all. G-d was recognized as the center of the world. Like Nimrod, this was challenged by Nebuchadnezzar. He too cast Chananya, Mishael and Azariah into the furnace and they too, loyal descendants of Avraham, were miraculously saved. He too wanted to place man at the center of the universe.

Asarah B' Teves thus invites all proud descendants of Avraham, and the many myriads throughout Jewish history who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Hashem, to bolster their living a life of Kiddush Hashem- sanctifying G-d's name , thereby contributing their share to the building of the Third Temple. Perhaps in contrast to the length of the fast, a day fast as opposed to 25 hours, Asarah B' Teves is called a minor fast, but in reality we know better.

Copyright © 2009 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

Matzav.com
Parshas Vayigash: Age Old Questions
By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

It was the ultimate encounter. Yaakov, the consummate theologian, meets Pharaoh, the king of the powerful land of Egypt. What could they have discussed? The meaning of life? The geopolitics of famine? They don't. Instead, the Torah records that meeting as having to do with something quite mundane. Age. Yet that trite discussion had severe ramifications for our forefather Yaakov.

The Torah relates how Yoseph presents his father to Pharaoh. Genesis 47: 9-10: "Pharaoh asked Yaakov, 'How old are you?' Jacob answered, 'the years of my sojourns are one hundred thirty; few and bad ones; they have not reached the days of my forefathers in their sojourns.' "

There is a Midrash that notes the bitterness of Yaakov's response and makes an amazing calculation. Yaakov lived to the age of 147. His father lived 'till 180. There is a difference of 33 years. Yaakov, explains the Midrash, lost 33 years of his life due to the 33 words that were used as he cursed his life's struggles.

The Midrash needs explanation. In the Torah's version of the story (and even in my loose translation), Yaakov did not use 33 words to curse his fate. That number is only arrived at if the original question "How old are you," including the words "and Pharaoh asked Yaakov," are also counted. I can understand that Yaakov was punished for the words that he spoke: after all, he was saved from his brother Esau, his daughter Deenah was returned to him, and he did leave Lavan's home a wealthy man. But why should Yaakov be punished for a question posed to him, even if the response was improper? Why count the words that Pharaoh used, and even more difficult, why count the words, " Pharaoh asked Yaakov," which are obviously the Torah's addition? At most, Yaakov should only be punished for the 25 words that he actually used.

Though Rebbitzin Chana Levin the wife of Reb Aryeh, the Tzadik of Jerusalem, endured a difficult life she never let her own misfortunes dampen the cheer of friends or neighbors. During the terrible years of famine in Palestine during World War I, tragedy struck. After an epidemic induced illness, on a Shabbos morning, her beautiful 18 month-old son, succumbed. She and Reb Aryeh were devastated.

However, until Shabbos was over, there were no noticeable cries coming from the Levin home. The Shabbos meal was accompanied by the regular z'miros (songs) recited with the weekly enthusiasm. The children discussed the Torah portion at the table, and the Rav and his Rebitzen greeted their neighbors as if nothing had occurred. Reb Aryeh's own sister had visited on Shabbos and left with no inkling of the catastrophe. When

news of the tragedy was revealed after sunset, her neighbors were shocked. "How is it," they asked, "that you didn't diminish your normal Shabbos cheer in the face of striking tragedy?"

The Rebitzin tearfully explained. "On Shabbos one is not allowed to mourn. Had we not continued our Shabbos in the usual manner, everyone would have realized the end had come. We would have destroyed the Shabbos of everyone in the courtyard, as you all would have shared our terrible pain."

In order to understand the Midrash one must understand diplomacy. Ramban (Nachmanides) notes: World leaders do not normally greet each other with mundane questions such as, "how old are you?" Yet those are the only recorded words of the conversation that ensued between Yaakov and Pharaoh. "Obviously," explains the Ramban, "Yaakov looked so terrible and so aged that Pharaoh could not comprehend. He therefore dispensed with diplomatic etiquette and asked the discourteous query. Yaakov's response explained why his appearance overbore his numeric age.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, (1902-1978) the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, explains why the Midrash is upset with Yaakov. Had Yaakov worn his suffering with more cheer, on the inside, he would not have looked as old as he did. Pharaoh would not have been astonished and would never have asked the undiplomatic question, "how old are you?" Yaakov was punished for prompting a query that resulted in open discontent of the fate he endured. And for that unfortunate repartee, an entire portion of the Torah was added and Yaakov lost 33 years of his life.

The Torah teaches us a great lesson. No matter what life serves you, do not let the experience wrinkle your spirit. One must never let his pain get to him in a way that it gets to someone else. Especially when you represent Hashem's word.

Haaretz.com

Portion of the Week /Wanted: More brainpower

By Benjamin Lau

Two individuals want Jacob and his family to move from Canaan to Egypt - Joseph and Pharaoh - each for his own reasons. After stunning his brothers by revealing his true identity, Joseph describes to them the intense belief in God that has accompanied him since he arrived in Egypt: "God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

"Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: And there will I nourish thee ... And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither" (Genesis 45:5-13).

Joseph sees God's hand in everything, including the fact that he can now save his family from starvation: "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

Opposing any idea of members of his family becoming permanently rooted in Egypt, Joseph persuades them to live in the Land of Goshen. Unlike the rest of Egypt, where intensive agriculture creates continuous dependence on the Nile River, Goshen is unsuited for crop cultivation, but is ideal for sheep- and cattle-raising, which is how Joseph's family has earned its livelihood. Furthermore, Joseph does not want them to live in an area that is the heart of the Egyptian empire; Goshen is thus ideal because it is relatively remote.

In contrast to Joseph, who has a profound understanding of his family and its desires, Pharaoh is excited by the prospect of a "gold mine": the brainpower Joseph's brothers undoubtedly must share with him. The ruler's invitation to them exudes optimism: "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours" (Gen. 45:17-20). Pharaoh invites Jacob and his sons to the royal palace - "Come unto me" - and wants Joseph's highly intelligent siblings to enjoy the "good of all the land of Egypt."

To isolate his family from becoming part of mainstream Egyptian society and finding a place in the empire's corridors of power, Joseph must thwart Pharaoh's plan. He plans to stress the family's occupation when he introduces its members to the ruler: "I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians" (Gen. 46:31-34).

His brothers follow Joseph's instructions: When they meet Pharaoh, they present themselves as shepherds: "They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen" (Gen. 47:4).

Pharaoh's reaction is bitter disappointment: "And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle" (Gen. 47:5-6).

Joseph knows his family must survive the famine without assimilating into Egyptian culture. Indeed, theirs is an ideal occupation for keeping at a distance from Egypt's centers of power. Unlike Egypt's farmers, shepherds are not dependent for their livelihood on the Nile or on Pharaoh's patronage and protection; thus, they are an "abomination unto the Egyptians."

The ruler is sadly disappointed: He had wanted Joseph's siblings to help him "herd" his flock, the Egyptian people, into a situation where he could exercise total control. He must accept the fact that the family will live in remote Goshen, where they will become a burden in terms of the state's revenues, rather than an asset.

Joseph cannot risk exposing his family to Egyptian culture and society. Only he can live in two worlds simultaneously: as an Egyptian and, courageously and proudly, as a Jew who fiercely maintains his identity.

Haftorah :: Parshas Vayigash :: Yechezkel 37:15

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

This week's haftorah is devoted to the Jewish nation's future unification. It opens with Hashem instructing the Prophet Yechezkel to take two pieces of wood and inscribe them with names of the Jewish kingdoms, Yehuda and Yosef. Hashem then said, "Bring them near one another to appear as one and they shall unite in your hands." Radak interprets this to mean that Yechezkel should hold the pieces alongside each other and they will miraculously unite into one solid piece of wood. He explains that this refers to the future miraculous unification of the Jewish kingdom. The individual pieces of wood represent the individual kingdoms of Israel. Although Hashem unconditionally granted Dovid Hamelech's dynasty the kingdom of Israel this did not preclude fragmentation. In fact, soon after

Shlomo Hamelech's passing the kingdom suffered a severe split. Yeravam ben Nvat, a descendent of the tribe of Yosef led a powerful rebellion against the Judean dynasty and gained control over most of the Jewish nation. The split was so intense that the seceding camp of Yosef totally severed ties with its brothers never to return to them. Yechezkel prophesied that these kingdoms will eventually reunite and form one inseparable unit. The unification will be so perfect that it will leave no trace of any previous dissension. The entire nation's sense of kinship will be so pronounced that it will be likened to one solid piece of wood, void of all factions and fragmentation.

Yechezkel continues and states in Hashem's name, "And I will purify them and they shall be a nation to Me and I will be G-d to them...My Divine Presence will rest upon them ... forever." (37:23,28) These verses predict the final phase of unity- Hashem's unification with His people. In the Messianic era all aspects of unity will be achieved. The entire Jewish nation will become one inseparable entity and Hashem will reunite with His people. This unification will resemble that of the Jewish people, an everlasting and inseparable one.

It is important to note the order of this unity. The first phase will be our nation's unification and after this is achieved Hashem will return to His people. Sefer Charedim sensitizes us to the order of this development. He reflects upon Hashem's distinct quality of oneness and explains that it can only be appreciated and revealed through His people's harmonious interaction. Hashem's favor and kindness emanates from His perfect oneness and reveals this quality in full. When the Jewish people function as a harmonious body they deserve Hashem's favor and kindness. They project and reflect Hashem's goodness and express His oneness and bring true glory to His name . However, if the Jewish people are fragmented and divided they display- Heaven forbid- division in Hashem's interactive system. Their divisive behavior gives the impression that Hashem's influence is disjointed and fragmented and not achieving its ultimate purpose. At that point Hashem removes His presence from His people and disassociates Himself from their inappropriate ways. The Jewish people's lack of success and accomplishment is then attributed to Hashem's unwillingness to remain involved in their lives.

We now understand that the Jewish people's unity is a prerequisite to Hashem's return to His people. Sefer Charedim explains with this the introductory words of the Shabbos afternoon Amida service. We state therein, "You are one, Your identity is one and who can be likened to Your people Israel one nation in the land." He interprets these words to refer to the glorious Messianic era. During that period Hashem's oneness will be recognized through His harmonious interactive system reflected in the oneness of His people. Their perfect unity will provide the perfect setting for Hashem's revelation to the world. During that time Hashem's master plan will be expressed through the perfect interaction of His people. Every detail of Hashem's kindness will serve its intended purpose and reveal His absolute oneness and control over every aspect of this world. Undoubtedly, this will require the Jewish people's total cooperation and perfect harmonious interaction with one another. Indeed, it can be said that when Hashem's people unite as an inseparable entity His identity and perfect quality of oneness will be recognized throughout the world. (adapted from Sefer Charedim chap. 7)

In truth, the foundation for this unity was laid in this week's sedra. Yosef developed an ingenious scheme to silence all his brothers' suspicions and convince them of their grave misjudgement of his actions. He successfully removed their deep seeded jealousy and hatred and brought about a sincere unification to the household of Yaakov. Yosef and Yehuda, the two powers to be, embraced one another and displayed a true sense of kinship. Unfortunately, irrevocable damage already occurred that would ultimately yield a severe split in the Jewish kingdom. Yosef's descendant, Yeravam would eventually sever relations with Yehuda's descendant Rechavam and establish his own leadership. (see Gur Aryeh to Breishis 48:7) However, groundwork was already established to reunite these kingdoms and return the Jewish nation to its original perfect unity.

This week's sedra records the immediate result of the unity of the household of Yaakov. After Yaakov Avinu discovered Yosef's existence

and salvation the Torah states, "And their father, Yaakov's spirit was restored to life." (Breishis 45:27) Rashi quotes the Sages who explain these words to refer to the return of Hashem's Divine Spirit to Yaakov. (ad loc) Yosef's absence from Yaakov's household indirectly prevented Hashem's Divine Spirit from resting upon Yaakov. Now, after twenty-two dark years Yaakov Avinu's household was reunited and Hashem returned His Divine Presence to Yaakov. This development is indicative of the Jewish people's future experience. The ten lost tribes representing the kingdom of Yosef will be divided from the Judean kingdom for over two thousand years. This will result in Hashem's removing His Divine Presence from amidst His people and throughout their long dark exile they will have no direct contact with Him. However, the time will eventually arrive for the Jewish people to reunite and become one inseparable entity. This miraculous unity will immediately lead to a second unity, that of Hashem and His people. In response to their total unification Hashem will return His Divine Presence and rest amongst His people us and "The spirit of Israel will be restored to life".

This lesson is apropos for our times where so much potential diversity exists. We pray to Hashem that we merit total unification thereby yielding Hashem's return to us resting His Divine Presence amongst us.

Rabbi Dovid Siegel is Rosh Kollel of Kollel Toras Chaim of Kiryat Sefer, Israel.

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Prayer - Preparing the Heart to Pray

Before praying, the rabbis taught, it is not enough to direct one's thoughts. We should prepare not only the mind but also the heart. Which emotions are conducive to sincere prayer?

Avoiding Sorrow and Idleness

There are two emotions that the Sages specifically mentioned to avoid before prayer. "One should not stand up to pray while immersed in sorrow or idleness" [Berachot 31a]. Why are these two emotions particularly detrimental to prayer?

We function in three realms - in our thoughts, emotions, and actions - and we aspire to serve God in all three. We serve God in the realm of thought through Torah study, and in the realm of deed through practical mitzvot. Between these inner and external services of God lies the intermediate realm of prayer, the service of the heart. Prayer engages our emotions, and through them bolsters the other two realms. It inspires the mind to contemplate pure and holy thoughts, and it encourages the body to perform good deeds.

However, the mind and the body must be ready to accept the positive influence of prayer. For this reason the Sages counseled that one should avoid sorrow and idleness. One who is sad or depressed will be discouraged from intellectual exerting himself to seek pure and enlightened thoughts. And idleness is a lethargic state when one is disinclined from engaging in good deeds. If we can steer away from these two emotions, we will be more receptive to the spiritual benefits of prayer.

Four Preparations

The Sages also listed four activities that are inappropriate before prayer because of the emotional state that they induce. They are: laughter, conversation, frivolity, and idle chatter.

To merit heartfelt prayer, we must prepare ourselves in four aspects.

First, we need to acquire an overall attitude of seriousness and reverence. This is the opposite of joking and laughter. Those who constantly jest belittle their sense of reverence and respect. For such people, nothing is serious and nothing really matters. Nothing needs to be respected - including their own inner self and their higher aspirations.

The second preparation for prayer is to internalize the truth that the soul's true perfection is only to be found in its inner happiness. We must recognize the unique honor and joy when the soul is enlightened with the light of knowledge and awe of God. Since the soul attains true happiness

when it meditates inwards, during prayer we should avoid any activity that indicates that our happiness may be found outside of ourselves. This is the essence of conversation: that we seek what we lack, not within ourselves, but in others.

The third preparation is to avoid frivolity - literally, kalut-rosh (light headedness). It is important that we conduct ourselves according to our highest visualization of awe of heaven. There should not be a disconnect between our ideals and our behavior. Thus we must avoid kalut-rosh, which indicates an attitude of disregarding one's cognitive inner truths, a willingness to act in contradiction to one's beliefs. This negates the very purpose of prayer, which works to create harmony between the three realms of mind, heart, and body.

The final preparation for prayer is to internalize the importance of speech. Only if we are able to fully value our faculty of speech - a unique gift to humanity - can we grasp a proper image of the value of prayer. Therefore we should avoid idle chatter, especially before prayer, as such talk belittles the value of speech. Rather, we should respect and safeguard this gift.

To summarize the four principles of true prayer:

Taking ourselves and our higher aspirations seriously;

What we truly seek is within, not without;

Harmony between belief and deed;

Appreciating the power of speech.

Mitzvah Joy

Avoiding sorrow and idleness, refraining from laughter, conversation, frivolity, and idle chatter - these are all negative guidelines. Is there also a positive preparation for prayer?

The Sages mentioned one emotion as a positive preparation for prayer: "the joy of performing a mitzvah." While a mitzvah is an external deed performed for others, the joy in its performance is an internal emotion. It is a feeling of accomplishment as the soul rejoices in the goodness of its path. This feeling of completeness, the harmonious balance between our external and internal worlds, is uniquely suitable for prayer.

[Adapted from introduction to Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 29]

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: RavKookList@gmail.com

Weekly Halachah - Parshat Vayigash 5750

Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)

Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Conflict: Individual vs. Congregational Customs

Part 2

Rav M. Feinstein was asked numerous times for his opinion on this matter. For reasons which are not completely clear, he did not always give the same response. Basically, though, he was unsure if the Biblical prohibition of Lo sisgodedu applied to the question of a different nusach - but the Rabbinical edict against deviating from local custom was definitely relevant. Usually, he advised that the local custom be strictly upheld, unless the individual could keep his practice undetected by others in the shul. The following is a digest of the guidelines that Rav Feinstein offered on this subject and its specific applications [see footnotes for the opinions of some other poskim]:

* Any part of davening, e.g., Shemoneh Esrei, which is normally recited in an undertone may be recited in one's own nusach.1

* Preferably, Pesukei d'Zimrah and Birchos Kerias Shema should be recited according to the nusach of the minyan, since they are sometimes recited out loud. If, however, it is difficult for one to change from his own nusach, they may be recited in one's own nusach provided that they are said in an undertone.2

* Kedushah or any other part of davening which requires a minyan should be recited according to the nusach of the minyan, even if it is recited in an undertone.3

* Vidui and the Thirteen Attributes should be recited with the congregation before Tachanun, even if one's own custom is not to do so.4

* One may recite Vidui in an undertone in a shul that does not recite it, but one may not strike his chest as he usually does. The Thirteen Attributes cannot be recited, since a minyan is required to recite them.5

* A sheliach tzibur must always daven according to the nusach of the congregation, even while reciting his own silent Shemoneh Esrei.6

* On Pesach night, one should recite Hallel with the congregation even if his custom is not to do so; he may not leave shul to avoid reciting it. If he can avoid reciting the blessing without it being noticeable he should do so; otherwise he should recite the blessing as well.7

* One who follows the view of the poskim that yire'u eineinu is not recited at the nightly Ma'ariv, need not recite it with the congregation if the people around him will not notice his omission.8

* If the officers and members of a shul do not mind, there is no halachic objection to having men who lay tefillin on Chol ha-Mo'ed and men who do not, daven in the same shul.9

1 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:23. This is also the opinion of most poskim with the exception of the Pe'as ha-Shulchan who rules that one should always daven according to the nusach of the tzibur. Rav S.Z. Auerbach writes that it is not our practice to do so (Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 180).

2 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:23. [In other responsa, however, Rav Feinstein required that Pesukei d'Zimrah and Birchos Kerias Shema be said according to the nusach of the tzibur; see O.C. 2:104.] Rav Y.S. Elyashiv is quoted (Tefillah K'hilchasa, pg. 92) as permitting these tefillos to be recited according to one's own nusach.

3 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:23. This is also the opinion of other poskim, see Meishiv Davar 17 and Minchas Yitzchak 7:1. [In a later ruling (O.C. 5:37-5), however, Rav Feinstein writes that this is not required.]

4 Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:89.

5 Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:34.

6 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:29. Other poskim disagree; see Shoel u'Meishiv 3 1-247 and She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 26:3. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 5, note 31) and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 131; Avnei Yashfei 1:14) are also quoted as ruling according to this opposing view.

7 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:94. It is reported, however, that the Brisker Rav left the shul when the congregation said Hallel (Hagadas Moadim u'Zemanim).

8 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:96-8. If, however, he generally omits yire'u eineinu only on motzaei Shabbos, then he must recite it along with the congregation; ibid.

9 Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:24-6.

It's About Time - The Bracha of Shehechyanu

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff (ymkaganoff@013.net)

When Yaakov Avinu saw his son Yosef after many years, he presumably recited the *bracha Mechayeh Hameisim*, rather than the *Bracha Sheheyichanu* (see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* 225:1). Nevertheless, today we usually do not recite *Mechayeh HaMeisim* on these occasions, but we often recite the *Bracha Sheheyichanu*. This provides us with the opportunity to discuss the laws of the *Bracha Sheheyichanu*.

Question #1: We are making renovations to our house. Do we recite a *bracha* of *shehechyanu*? And if so, when do we recite the *bracha*?

Question #2: I am visiting *Eretz Yisroel*, and someone served me a melon that looks very similar to a cantaloupe, but it is a different color and it is somewhat smaller. Do I recite a *shehechyanu* on this melon although I have certainly eaten from this year's cantaloupe crop in America? Assuming that I recite *shehechyanu* on the melon, do I recite it before or after the *bracha* of *borei pri ha'adamah*?

Question #3: While visiting *Eretz Yisroel*, I was able to attend a family *bris*, and noticed that the baby's father recited *shehechyanu*. I have never

seen this in *chutz la'aretz*. Does this *bracha* have anything to do with *kedushas Eretz Yisroel*?

Question #4: I am a *kallah*, *b"h*, and I am very excited about the coming exciting events in my life. Do I recite *shehechyanu* when my *choson* gives me the engagement ring and when my future mother-in-law presents me with my candlesticks? Also, do I recite a *shehechyanu* the first time I light Shabbos candles?

We will explore the answers to these and other questions as we study the *halachos* of this *bracha*, *shehechyanu vikiyimanu vihigayanu lazman hazeh*, who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this time. *Chazal* usually refer to this *bracha* simply as *zman*, time. (Later I will also explain why the *bracha* contains three different expressions of blessing: (1) *shehechyanu* (2) *vikiyimanu* (3) *vihigayanu*.)

NEW ACQUISITIONS

The *Mishnah* teaches: "Upon hearing good tidings, one recites *Baruch hatov vihameitiv*. One who builds a new house or purchases new items recites *Baruch shehechyanu vikiyimanu lazman hazeh*" (*Berachos* 54a). One recites this *bracha* only when acquiring items that are important to the individual acquiring them and make him feel good (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 223:6; *Mishnah Berurah* 223:13). If the person acquiring the new item feels good about the acquisition, he recites *shehechyanu* even if the item was previously owned by someone else, providing that he has never owned this item (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 223:3). Thus, someone who purchases a used car recites *shehechyanu* on it. However one does not recite *shehechyanu* on items that are unimportant, such as undergarments, socks, and shoes (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 223:6). A person should only recite *shehechyanu* on an item that he feels good about acquiring – thus, one person might recite *shehechyanu* on the purchase of a new coat because they feel good about it, whereas another does not because to him it is not such a momentous event.

When one hears good tidings that are beneficial only for him, he recites *shehechyanu*; if others also benefit he recites *hatov vihameitiv* (*Gemara Berachos* 59b; *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 222:1). Similarly, when acquiring new appliances one recites *hatov vihameitiv* if other people benefit; if only one person benefits, as is usually the case when purchasing new clothes, then he or she recites *shehechyanu* (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* 223:3, 5).

WHEN DOES ONE RECITE THE BRACHA?

Many *poskim* contend that if the person feels the joy at the time of purchase, he should recite the *bracha* then even though the item cannot yet be used (*Taz, Orach Chayim* 223:3; *Chayei Odom* 62:2). However, the prevalent practice is to follow the *poskim* that rule that one does not recite *shehechyanu* until the item is usable, but if it requires repair or alteration one should not recite *shehechyanu* until the item is ready for use (*Mishnah Berurah* 223:17, 19).

NEW HOUSE

Someone who purchases a new house recites *shehechyanu* even if he is paying for it with a huge mortgage (*Shu't Tzitz Eliezer* 12:19; cf. *Shu't Lev Chayim* 3:52). If he purchases the house exclusively for investment purposes, but he does not intend to reside in it, he should not recite *shehechyanu* (*Mor UKetziah, Orach Chayim* 223). One does not recite *shehechyanu* upon *renting* a house or apartment or any other item. However, if he later purchases it, he recites a *bracha* on it at that time (*Halichos Shelomoh* 23:14).

Some people have the practice that one recites *shehechyanu* only upon clothes but not other items (see *Magen Avraham* 223:5; *Ben Ish Chai*, Year 1, Parshas Re'eih #6; *Kaf Hachayim* 223:17, 20). Thus, some have a custom not to recite a *shehechyanu* upon acquiring a new house, but instead purchasing a new garment and recite *shehechyanu* upon the garment with the intention of including the house in the *bracha*. However, the reason this custom developed is obscure and the prevalent practice is to recite *shehechyanu* on any new acquisition (see *Mishnah Berachos* 54a;

Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 223:5). (The above-mentioned custom appears to be based upon the opinion of Rav Sherira Gaon, quoted by *Tosafos* to *Sukkah* 46a s.v. ha'oseh, that one does not recite *shehechyanu* on anything that is not seasonal. *Kaf Hachayim* (223:20) records that on this basis the custom was not to recite *shehechyanu* on jewelry or household appurtenances, but only on new clothing. However, none of the major *poskim* cite Rav Sherira's opinion. Even more problematic is that, according to Rav Sherira, one does recite *shehechyanu* on new clothing either.)

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ruled that someone who purchases a house with the intention of renovating it, should recite the *shehechyanu* after renovating (*Halichos Shlomo* 23:14). This would be similar to reciting *shehechyanu* on a new garment where one does not recite the *bracha* until it is ready to wear.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach also ruled that one does not recite a *shehechyanu* when remodeling a house that one lives in already. However, if he expanded the living area, he does recite *shehechyanu* (*Halichos Shlomo* 23:14, based on *Mishnah Berurah* 223:12). Some *poskim* contend that one who enclosed his porch should not recite a *bracha* unless he feels tremendously happy as a result (*Halichos Shlomo* ad loc.).

The *Chayei Odom* (62:2) rules that one recites *shehechyanu*, but not *hatov vihameitiv*, when acquiring a new house. Even though the entire family benefits from the new house, he rules that since the husband/father has the responsibility to support his wife and children, it is considered his benefit more than theirs.

WHEN SHOULD ONE RECITE A BRACHA ON A NEW HOUSE?

Rabbi Akiva Eiger (to *Orach Chayim* 223:3) suggests that one should not recite *shehechyanu* on a house until there is a *mezuzah* on the door; similarly one should not recite it on new dishes until he has immersed them in a *mikveh*. In both instances, one should not recite *shehechyanu* until the house or the dishes are ready for use.

Based on this ruling, some *poskim* contend that he should recite *shehechyanu* on the purchase of a new house when he puts up the *mezuzos* (*Halichos Shelomoh* 23:13). If *mezuzos* are already up, then one should recite *shehechyanu* when the purchase goes through, unless the house is not ready to be lived in. In the latter case, one should recite *shehechyanu* when the renovations are completed.

MUST ONE RECITE A SHEHECHIYANU?

This may seem like a strange question. Of course, one must recite a *shehechyanu*! In actuality, though the answer to this question is not obvious. In general, someone who fails to recite a *bracha* that he is required to, whether it is a *bracha* before performing a mitzvah, a *bracha* of praise, or a *bracha* of benefit, violates a mitzvah *d'rabbanan* for failing to recite that particular *bracha*. The *poskim* dispute whether *shehechyanu* is similar to all other *brachos* and that therefore one who fails to recite it when required violates a mitzvah or whether it has an unusual *halachic* status. Many prominent *poskim* contend that reciting *shehechyanu* is technically not required. In their opinion, someone who refrained from reciting *shehechyanu* when he was required to do so has not violated any mitzvah (*Rama* 223:1 and *Mishnah Berurah* 223:7, based on *Gemara Eruvin* 40b). However, others disagree and contend that this *bracha* is required (*Keneses Hagedolah, Smaq* and others quoted by *Eliyah Rabbah* 225:6).

SHEHECHIYANU ON NEW PRODUCE

One who sees a new seasonal fruit – even if one sees someone else with or it is still on the tree, can already recite *shehechyanu*. However, the custom is to wait to recite the *bracha* until one eats it (*Shulchan Aruch* 225:3).

One does not recite *shehechyanu* on the fruit until it is ripe because only then do people enjoy the new fruit (*Shulchan Aruch* 225:7; *Mishnah Berurah* 225:19). For a similar reason, one should not recite *shehechyanu* on a fruit or vegetable that is not eaten raw, until it is cooked (*Halichos Shlomo* 23:14).

DOES ONE RECITE A SHEHECHIYANU ON A VEGETABLE?

I have often heard people say that one does not recite *shehechyanu* on an item whose *bracha* is *ha'adamah*. This statement is not accurate -- one recites the *bracha* on a new fruit whether it grows on a tree or on the ground, such as a melon or gourd (*Biyur Halacha* 225:1). As a matter of fact, the *Gemara's* case of reciting *shehechyanu* on a new fruit is for a new gourd (*Eruvin* 40b). However, there are some *poskim* who mention a practice not to recite *shehechyanu* on the vegetable part of a plant, such as the stem, root, or leaf, because people do not consider this part of the plant so important (see *Chayei Odom* 62:9). Similarly, one should not recite *shehechyanu* on a fruit that people do not usually eat or if he does not like it and therefore is not particularly happy over seeing or eating it (*Eliyah Rabbah* 225:7).

One does not recite a *bracha* on a fruit that does not have seasons or does not have a clear growing season (*Shulchan Aruch* 225:6). Therefore, one does not recite a *bracha* on fruit produced in a hothouse, since they grow all year round. Similarly, one should not recite this *bracha* on a fruit that is available all year round because it is imported or because it is frozen or canned (see *Rama* 225:6; *Magen Avraham* 225:14; *Mishnah Berurah* 225:18).

A fruit that grows biennially, that is, it produces two crops a year, warrants *shehechyanu* on each crop (*Rama* 225:6).

The *poskim* dispute whether one recites a *shehechyanu* upon smelling a new seasonal fragrance. Although many contend that there is no *halachic* difference between smelling a new fragrance and a new fruit, the accepted practice is not to recite *shehechyanu* on a new fragrance since there is not as much benefit from fragrance as there is from food (see *Magen Avraham* 225:12; *Shaarei Teshuvah* 216:1).

WHICH BRACHA IS RECITED FIRST?

When reciting *shehechyanu* on a new fruit, do you recite the *shehechyanu* first, or the *ha'eitz* or *ha'adamah* first? Is the *shehechyanu* an interruption between the *bracha* on the fruit and eating the fruit?

There are three options:

1. Preferred option: Recite *shehechyanu*, then the *bracha* on the fruit, and then eat the fruit (*Pri Megadim* 225:7 in AA; *Chayei Odom* 62:8; *Mishnah Berurah* 225:11).
2. Second best option: Recite the *bracha* on the fruit, take a bite from the fruit, and then recite *shehechyanu*.
3. Third choice: Recite the *bracha* on the fruit, recite the *shehechyanu* on the fruit and then eat the fruit. Although the *shehechyanu* is not considered an interruption between the *bracha* and eating the fruit, it is still better not to interrupt between the *bracha* on the fruit and eating it (*Pri Megadim* 225:7 in AA; *Shaar HaTziyun* 225:12).

VARIETIES THAT ARE NOT SPECIES

Our second question was: Someone served me a melon that looks very similar to a cantaloupe, but it is a different color and it is somewhat smaller. Do I recite a *shehechyanu* on this melon although I have certainly eaten from this year's cantaloupe crop?

The *poskim* dispute whether one recites a *shehechyanu* on one variety of pear, fig or apple when one previously has eaten from a different variety of the same species. Some *poskim* contend that one does not recite *shehechyanu* on the new variety since one has already benefited from this species this season (*Mor UKetziah* and *Gra to Orach Chayim* 225:4). However, most *poskim* contend that if the varieties have different tastes, one recites separate *brachos* since one feels a sense of happiness over seeing and eating each new variety (*Sefer Chassidim* 848; *Terumas HaDeshen* #33; *Shulchan Aruch* 225:4; *Mishnah Berurah* 225:14). Thus, whether one would recite a new *shehechyanu* on the new variety of melon would depend on whether it tastes noticeably different from the original variety. If one is uncertain, one should taste it first, and then decide whether it is noticeably different enough to warrant a new *shehechyanu*.

SHEHECHIYANU ON NEW SEFORIM

Does one recite *shehechyanu* upon acquiring new *seforim*? Indeed, someone might feel tremendous happiness for acquiring a new *sefer*, and for this reason some *poskim* contend that one recites *shehechyanu* (*Mor UKetziah*). On the other hand, many *poskim* contend that we recite *shehechyanu* for acquiring new items only if it is an item from which one gains physical benefit, but not from an item for which there is only spiritual benefit, such as a *sefer* (*Magen Avraham* 223:5). Others contend that if one was searching for a particular *sefer*, finally purchased it, and is now very happy about the acquisition, he should recite *shehechyanu* (*Chayei Odom* 62:5). *Mishnah Berurah* implies that it is preferred not to recite *shehechyanu* when purchasing *seforim* although one should not correct the practice of someone who recites it upon acquiring a *sefer* that he has been trying hard to obtain.

SHEHECHIYANU ON A NEW JOB

Some *poskim* contend that someone who is appointed to a new position that will allow him to spread Torah and *mitzvos* should recite *shehechyanu* (*Mor UKetziah*). The later *poskim* do not seem to accept this approach.

SHEHECHIYANU ON A MITZVAH

As I mentioned above, according to many *poskim*, the above applications of the *bracha* of *shehechyanu* are situations where the *bracha* is technically voluntary. However, there are instances when one is required to recite *shehechyanu*. *Chazal* instituted the *bracha* of *shehechyanu* **primarily** for *mitzvos* that occur periodically, such as the *shehechyanu* that one recites at a *pidyon haben* (*Gemara Pesachim* 121b), in *Kiddush* of *Yom Tov*, before blowing *shofar*, or before taking *lulav* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 223:7). There is much discussion among *poskim* why we recite *shehechyanu* before observing some *mitzvos*, but not before others. The primary approach is that we recite *shehechyanu* before fulfilling a *mitzvah* that we observe on special occasions, such as *Yom Tov*, *shofar*, and *lulav* that are seasonal; or *pidyon haben*, which is occasional; but not before *mitzvos* that one usually observes more frequently. However, there are many *mitzvos* that we observe that are occasional and yet we do not recite *shehechyanu* before fulfilling them.

WHY DO SOME COMMUNITIES RECITE SHEHECHIYANU AT A BRIS, AND OTHERS DO NOT?

One *mitzvah* that involves considerable discussion whether one should recite *shehechyanu* before observing it is the *mitzvah* of *bris milah*. The Separdic practice is to recite *shehechyanu* at a *bris*, and in *Eretz Yisroel*, Ashkenazim also follow this practice. In *Chutz La'Aretz*, most Ashkenazim do not recite *shehechyanu* at a *bris* (*Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* 265:7).

The dispute behind this difference in practice is hundreds of years old. Based on the rule mentioned above, that we recite a *shehechyanu* on a *mitzvah* that we observe occasionally, it would seem that one should recite *shehechyanu* at a *bris milah* (*Rambam, Hilchos Berachos* 11:9; *Shu't Rashba* #245). Nonetheless, the old *minhag* among Ashkenazim was to omit *shehechyanu* at a *bris milah* (*Tosafos Sukkah* 46a; *Rama* 265:7). What was the reason for this *minhag*?

The commentaries suggest several reasons why there is no *shehechyanu* at a *bris*. Some explain that we recite *shehechyanu* only on a *mitzvah* that is dependent on a date, such as a *Yom Tov*, or a very specific time, such as *pidyon haben*, which is always performed on the thirtieth day after birth (*Ran, Sukkah* Chapter 4). Although *bris milah* can only be performed beginning the eighth day, since there are occasions when one cannot perform the *bris* on the eighth day (such as when the baby is ill or when it is uncertain which day the baby was born), there was no establishment of *shehechyanu*.

An alternative approach is that *Chazal* did not institute reciting *shehechyanu* at a *bris* because it is not a completely joyous time, since the baby suffers pain. However, other *poskim* disagree with this reason, pointing out that one recites *shehechyanu* when hearing news that includes both good and bad tidings (see *Gemara Berachos* 46b, 59b). Thus, suffering does not preclude reciting the *bracha* of *shehechyanu* (*Hagahos*

Maimoniyos, Hilchos Milah 3:4, who also cites two other reasons for the Ashkenazic custom).

The *Gra*, himself an Ashkenazi, disagreed with the accepted Ashkenazi practice and ruled that one should recite *shehechyanu* at a *bris* (*Yoreh Deah* 265:36). Since disciples of the *Gra* established the contemporary Ashkenazic community in *Eretz Yisroel*, they followed his practice to recite *shehechyanu* at a *bris*. As a result, the custom in *Eretz Yisroel* developed that everyone recites *shehechyanu* at a *bris*. The prevalent Ashkenazic practice in *Chutz La'Aretz* follows the opinion of *Tosafos* and the *Rama* not to recite *shehechyanu*, and the difference in practice between *Eretz Yisroel* and *Chutz La'Aretz* is not connected to the special sanctity that exists in *Eretz Yisroel*.

Does one recite a *shehechyanu* the first time one performs a *mitzvah*? The *poskim* dispute what the ruling is in this question. Some contend that one should recite *shehechyanu* when one fulfills a *mitzvah* that involves an acquisition, such as when one purchases new tefillin or mezuzos (*Rambam, Hilchos Brachos* 11:9). Others contend that one recites a *shehechyanu* the first time one fulfills a *mitzvah* (*Rama, Yoreh Deah* 28:2; *Pri Toar* ad loc.=; *Taz, Orach Chayim* 22:1). The enjoyment and excitement surrounding the performance of this *mitzvah* is valid reason to recite a *shehechyanu*. Thus according to this opinion, someone fulfilling the *mitzvah* of kindling Shabbos candles should recite *shehechyanu* the first time she does so. Others contend that *Chazal* never implemented reciting *shehechyanu* on such occasions, and that therefore one should not recite *shehechyanu* (*Birkei Yosef, YD* 200=; *Shu"t Chasam Sofer, OC* #55=). The prevalent practice follows the second approach, not to say *shehechyanu*. However, *Mishnah Berurah* states that on these occasions one should preferably wear a new garment and recite a *shehechyanu* on the new garment and include the *mitzvah* in the *bracha* (*Biyur Halacha* 22).

ENGAGEMENT RINGS AND CANDLESTICKS

Above, I quoted the *shaylah* asked by a *kallah*: Do I recite *shehechyanu* when my *choson* gives me the engagement ring and when my future mother-in-law presents me with my candlesticks?

I mentioned above that some have the custom that one does not recite *shehechyanu* on new items other than clothes. Although most *poskim* disagree with this conclusion, others cite other reasons why one should not recite *shehechyanu* on gifts presented as part of the engagements and wedding plans (see *Halichos Shelomoh* 23:15). Since the matter is disputed, whether a *kallah* should recite *shehechyanu* on her diamond ring or her candlesticks is something that she should ask her Rav.

CONCLUSION

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Kiddushin* 4:12) teaches that it is a *mitzvah* to taste every new fruit that grows every year so that we can show how much

we value *Hashem's* creation (quoted by *Tashbeitz* #320; *Taz* 227:2; *Eliyah Rabbah* 225:6; *Mishnah Berurah* 225:19; *Aruch Hashulchan* 225:1). Based on this statement of the *Yerushalmi*, we can explain the wording of the *bracha*, *shehechyanu vikiymanu vihiyaganu lazman hazeh*, who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this time. This *bracha* contains three different expressions of blessing (1) *shehechyanu* (2) *vikiymanu* (3) *vihiyaganu* that appear to say the same thing. *Rokeach* (quoted by *Eliyah Rabbah* 225:6) explains that the *bracha* corresponds to the triple praise that forms the first two *pesukim* of *Tehillim* 146: "My soul praises Hashem; I will praise Hashem as long as I live; I will sing to Him as long as I exist." This chapter of *Tehillim* vocalizes how the individual Jew proclaims how Hashem cares for him throughout his life. Rav Hirsch explains that the Hebrew terms used in the second *pasuk*, *bichayay*, and *bi'odi*- allude to two distinct stages of a person's life- *bichayay* when he is in full strength and *bi'odi* when he is in weakened state. Thus, we praise Hashem for His help under all of life's circumstances. Similarly, the *bracha* of *shehechyanu* praises Hashem for allowing us to again celebrate His taking care of us by providing us with new items.

TALMUDIGEST :: Bava Batra 128 - 134
For the week ending 26 December 2009 / 8 Tevet 5770

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

FAVORING AN HEIR - Bava Batra 130a

"On the day that he causes his sons to inherit whatever will be his."
(Devarim 21:16)

This is how the Torah describes the setting for a father passing on his property to his heirs.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Brokah calls attention to the fact that the Torah uses the term "causes his sons to inherit" rather than the simpler "his sons inherit".

From this choice of language he derives that, although inheritance is normally an automatic process, a father has the power to determine (cause to inherit) one of his sons as his sole heir.

The gemara does point out, however, that this power is limited to favoring one son above the others or, when there are no sons, one daughter over the others. He cannot, however, designate a brother or other relative as his heir while disowning his own children.

This limitation is derived from the above-mentioned passage, which speaks only of a case in which sons are involved.

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"A judge must rule only according to his own understanding."

The Sage Rava - Bava Batra 131a

© 2009 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

Please address all comments and requests to HAMELAKET@hotmail.com