

**In My Opinion SHABBAT SHOES**  
**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

When I was growing up in Chicago, a long time ago, most Jewish families were still living under the shadow of the Depression. As such, when I was young, I always had only one pair of shoes, which I wore on weekdays, Shabbat, holidays, and even special family occasions, until they wore out. Then, I got another pair of shoes.

By the time that my children were born and required shoes, the general financial situation in the United States and especially in the Jewish Orthodox community had changed for the better. So, one of the first things that my wife and I decided to do, to make the Shabbat special in the eyes and minds of our little children, was to institute the concept of Shabbat shoes.

They would each have a separate pair of shoes to wear on Shabbat. These shoes were shinier and prettier, though not necessarily more expensive, than the shoes that they wore to school and played in during the week. It was meant to create an idea that is central to Jewish life, that Shabbat is special and must be treated that way in every facet of our otherwise mundane existence.

Having a different, ostensibly nicer, and better pair of shoes to wear on Shabbat reinforces the idea that Shabbat is special, beautiful, and something to look forward to all week long. However, as a child of the depression, I continued to wear one pair of shoes on each day of the week, every day of the year, until that pair of shoes finally wore out. Then, I bought another pair that I continued to wear daily until those, too, finally collapsed from wear and tear.

I have always worn a special suit of clothes for Shabbat. However, I never bought for myself a pair of Shabbat shoes. I always had my weekday shoes polished for Shabbat, but habit is a very strong impediment to changing one's way of life and even spending habits. However, last month the shoes that I was wearing literally fell apart, and, therefore, coronavirus and all, I went the shoe store to buy a replacement pair of shoes.

While there, I decided that I would buy a lighter weight shoe to wear during the weekdays. At my stage of life, anything that helps me walk more easily becomes a necessity. Naturally, the shoes that I bought had to be black, as befitting the Rabbi of the important congregation that I serve. However, suddenly on impulse, I also purchased a much more expensive and stronger shoe that I decided I would now dedicate as my Shabbat shoes. It took almost 3 weeks for the shoes to finally arrive at the shoe store, but when they did and I began to wear them, I am happy to report, they fit perfectly and are most comfortable. But then I experienced a sudden surge of nostalgia and even excitement because I felt I was re-enacting the experience of my little children when they put on their Shabbat shoes on Friday afternoon. They were always so proud of how they looked in those shoes. I have no doubt that it enhanced their Shabbat, and now I felt that it enhanced my current Shabbat experience markedly. I have the delicious experience at my age, of being like a child, with all the wonder, excitement and optimism that is reserved for the very young.

Now I know you will say that I am reading too much into the mundane and ordinary experience such as buying a pair of shoes. But all my life I have believed that there really are no small matters in life, and that everything, ordinary as they may appear on the surface, have an importance far beyond the act itself.

Shoes are important item in our minds. It is not for naught that there are holy days in the year when we are meant to mourn and afflict ourselves, when wearing comfortable leather shoes is forbidden. Part of this concept is that the rest of the year shoes are important. In fact, one of the blessings that we make in the morning, according to Jewish tradition, is that the Lord has fulfilled everything that is needed, and this includes having a good pair of shoes to wear. Having special shoes for Shabbat really does make a lot of sense for us, both spiritually and psychologically.

Shabbat shalom

Berel Wein

**Weekly Parsha VAYIGASH 5781**

**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

The brothers and Joseph finally meet each other head-on, without pretense and subterfuge. When Joseph reveals himself to the brothers, the veil of secrecy, role-playing, distrust, and enmity is ripped away. The dreams that apparently were the cause of this gripping family drama now reappear in their stark and simple meaning.

The sheaves of grain are the brothers and the constellation of stars in heaven are to be taken literally as the brothers bowing down to Joseph. It is noteworthy that the brothers never asked why Joseph is entitled to such respect and discipline from them. They apparently never search out the merit or qualities that have made Joseph their ruler.

There are many commentators who believe that Joseph never recounted to them the story of his life with Potiphar and how he had risen to such glory and power. For the brothers, as perhaps for Joseph himself, it was sufficient that the dreams had meaning and had come true. All the rest of the story became almost incidental and unimportant. It was the dreams that were the central issue, and when proven to be accurate and effective, that was all that really mattered.

No longer would the brothers, or their descendants, mock dreams, or dreamers. In effect, they now realize that somehow the dreamers were more practical than the pragmatic people of the world. Certainly, as part of Jewish life was to be concerned, it would only survive and prosper based on dreams and not based on data.

When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, they are naturally shocked by the turn of events. Until now, they had always believed that they were within their rights, and that the actions that they had taken against Joseph were not only justified, but necessary. They saw him as a mortal threat to their very survival and to the necessary nation-building process that would create the Jewish people.

Then, in a moment, this entire understanding and assessment of the situation with Joseph was turned on its head. This occurred because they had refused to give credit or to display confidence in the dreams that Joseph had related to them. It is, thus, superfluous to state that the Jewish people have survived only based on dreams.

The return of our people to the land of Israel in our time is perhaps the greatest of dreams. We are taught in the book of Psalms that the return to Zion must be viewed as a dream, for based on pragmatism alone it could never have happened. The same thing is true regarding the revival of Torah in Jewish society in our time. Only dreamers could imagine, that at some level, the long-standing tides of ignorance and hostility towards Judaism and Jewish values could be checked. The great Ponovizher Rav summed up the situation succinctly when he told me: "I sleep little, but I dream all the time."

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

**The Unexpected Leader (Vayigash 5781)**

**Rabbi Sacks zt"l** had prepared a full year of *Covenant & Conversation* for 5781, based on his book *Lessons in Leadership*. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

I was once present when the great historian of Islam, Bernard Lewis, was asked to predict the course of events in the Middle East. He replied, "I'm a historian, so I only make predictions about the past. What is more, I am a retired historian, so even my past is passé." Predictions are impossible in the affairs of living, breathing human beings because we are free and there is no way of knowing in advance how an individual will react to the great challenges of their life.

If one thing has seemed clear throughout the last third of Genesis, it is that Joseph will emerge as the archetypal leader. He is the central character of the story, and his dreams and the shifting circumstances of his fate all point in that direction. Least likely as a candidate for

leadership is Judah, the man who proposed selling Joseph as a slave (Gen. 37:26-27), whom we next see separated from his brothers, living among the Canaanites, intermarried with them, losing two of his sons because of sin, and having sexual relations with a woman he takes to be a prostitute. The chapter in which this is described begins with the phrase, "At that time Judah went down from among his brothers" (Gen. 38:1). The commentators take this to indicate Judah's moral decline. At this point in the story, we may have no doubt who will lead and who will follow.

Yet history turned out otherwise. Joseph's descendants, the tribes of Ephraim and Menashe, disappeared from the pages of history after the Assyrian conquest in 722 BCE, while Judah's descendants, starting with David, became kings. The tribe of Judah survived the Babylonian conquest, and it is Judah whose name we bear as a people. We are Yehudim, "Jews." This week's parsha of Vayigash explains why.

Already in last week's parsha we began to see Judah's leadership qualities. The family had reached deadlock. They desperately needed food, but they knew that the Egyptian viceroy had insisted that they bring their brother Benjamin with them, and Jacob refused to let this happen. His beloved wife Rachel's first son (Joseph) was already lost to him, and he was not about to let the other, Benjamin, be taken on a hazardous journey. Reuben, in keeping with his unstable character, made an absurd suggestion: "Kill my two sons if I do not bring Benjamin back safely." (Gen. 42:37) In the end it was Judah, with his quiet authority – "I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him" (Gen. 43:9) – who persuaded Jacob to let Benjamin go with them.

Now, as the brothers attempt to leave Egypt, and return home, the nightmare scenario has unfolded. Benjamin has been found with the viceroy's silver cup in his possession. The official delivers his verdict. Benjamin is to be held as a slave. The other brothers can go free. This is the moment when Judah steps forward and makes a speech that changes history. He speaks eloquently about their father's grief at the loss of one of Rachel's sons. If he loses the other, he will die of grief. I, says Judah, personally guaranteed his safe return. He concludes:

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that it would bring my father." (Gen. 44:33-34)

No sooner has he said these words than Joseph, overcome with emotion, reveals his identity and the whole elaborate drama reaches closure. What is happening here and how does it have a bearing on leadership?

The Sages articulated a principle: "Where penitents stand even the perfectly righteous cannot stand." (Brachot 34b) The Talmud brings a proof-text from Isaiah: "Peace, peace, to those far and near" (Is. 57:19) placing the far (the penitent sinner) before the near (the perfectly righteous). However, almost certainly the real source is here in the story of Joseph and Judah. Joseph is known to tradition as ha-tzaddik, the righteous one.[1] Judah, as we will see, is a penitent. Joseph became "second to the king." Judah, however, became the ancestor of kings. Hence, where penitents stand even the perfectly righteous cannot stand. Judah is the first person in the Torah to achieve perfect repentance (teshuvah gemurah), defined by the Sages as when you find yourself in a situation where it is likely you will be tempted to repeat an earlier sin, but you are able to resist because you are now a changed person.[2]

Many years before Judah was responsible for Joseph being sold as a slave:

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. (Gen. 37:26-27)

Now, faced with the similar prospect of leaving Benjamin as a slave, he has a very different response. He says, "Let me stay as a slave and let my brother go free." (Gen. 44:33) That is perfect repentance, and it is what prompts Joseph to reveal his identity and forgive his brothers.

The Torah had already hinted at the change in Judah's character in an earlier chapter. Having accused his daughter-in-law Tamar of becoming

pregnant by a forbidden sexual relationship, he is confronted by her with evidence that he himself is the father of the child, and his response is to immediately declare: "She is more righteous than I" (Gen. 38:26). This is the first time in the Torah we see a character admit that he is wrong. If Judah was the first penitent, it was Tamar – mother of Perez from whom King David was descended – who was ultimately responsible.

Perhaps Judah's future was already implicit in his name, for though the verb le-hodot from which it is derived means "to thank" (Leah called her fourth son Judah saying, "This time I will thank the Lord," Gen. 29:35), it is also related to the verb le-hitvadot, which means "to admit or 'to confess'" – and confession is, according to the Rambam, the core of the command to repent.

Leaders make mistakes. That is an occupational hazard of the role. Managers follow the rules, but leaders find themselves in situations for which there are no rules. Do you declare a war in which people will die, or do you refrain from doing so at the risk of letting your enemy grow stronger with the result that more will die later? That was the dilemma faced by Chamberlain in 1939, and it was only some time later that it became clear that he was wrong and Churchill right.

But leaders are also human, and their mistakes often have nothing to do with leadership and everything to do with human weakness and temptation. The sexual misconduct of John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton and many other leaders has undoubtedly been less than perfect. Does this affect our judgment of them as leaders or not? Judaism suggests it should. The prophet Nathan was unsparing of King David for consorting with another man's wife. But Judaism also takes note of what happens next.

What matters, suggests the Torah, is that you repent – you recognize and admit your wrongdoings, and you change as a result. As Rav Soloveitchik pointed out, both Saul and David, Israel's first two kings, sinned. Both were reprimanded by a Prophet. Both said chattati, "I have sinned".[3] But their fates were radically different. Saul lost the throne, David did not. The reason, said the Rav, was that David confessed immediately. Saul prevaricated and made excuses before admitting his sin.[4]

The stories of Judah, and of his descendant David, tell us that what marks a leader is not necessarily perfect righteousness. It is the ability to admit mistakes, to learn from them and grow from them. The Judah we see at the beginning of the story is not the man we see at the end, just as the Moses we see at the Burning Bush – stammering, hesitant – is not the mighty hero we see at the end, "his sight undimmed, his natural energy unabated."

A leader is one who, though they may stumble and fall, arises more honest, humble and courageous than they were before.

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### **Shabbat Shalom: Vayigash (Genesis 44:18-47:27)**

#### **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – "And Joseph could not hold himself back in front of all who were standing around him... And Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph; Is my father still alive?'" (Genesis 45:1-3)

Why does Joseph suddenly wake up to his familial ties and reveal himself as the long-lost son and brother? Apparently, he was inspired by Judah's stirring speech which opens our Torah reading of Vayigash. How did Judah strike such a responsive chord in a Joseph whose heart had previously been so impervious to filial and sibling sensitivity? I believe that the crucial phase is, "because your servant guaranteed my father that I would serve as a surety for the youth" (Genesis 44:32); Judah informs Joseph that he is an arev, a co-signer, a stand-in for Benjamin.

This concept is quite radical for these warring siblings and resonates in subsequent Jewish legal and ethical literature in the axiom that "all Israel are co-signers (or sureties) for each other."

Joseph was born into a family of jealousy and hatred.

The six sons of Leah, the "hated" wife who had been forced upon Jacob under false pretenses, refused to recognize the beloved wife Rachel's son as a legitimate brother; hence the 17-year-old Joseph had no recourse but to find his companionship with the younger brothers, and

compensated by “shepherding” his siblings, the sons of Leah, acting the big shot, and reporting all their foibles to his adoring father (Gen. 37:2). Joseph always refers to his siblings as his brothers, but they never refer to him as “brother”: “And he [Joseph] said, I am seeking my brothers... and Joseph went after his brothers... And they saw him from afar. The men said, each one to his brother, behold, that master of dreams is coming, let us kill him and throw him in one of the pits and say that an evil animal devoured him” (Gen. 37:16-20).

The young Joseph was desperately seeking a brotherly relationship with his siblings – but he was constantly rebuffed. When he tried to overcome their rejection of him by recounting his (perhaps compensatory) dreams of grandeur, it only caused them to hate him even more.

Even Reuben, who attempts to rescue Joseph, never calls him “brother,” only referring to “him” as a pronoun (Gen. 37: 21, 22). It is only Judah who refers to him as a brother, but since he is desirous of making a profit by selling him as a slave, the use of the term may be ironic: “What profit have we in killing our brother? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, for he is our brother, our flesh” (Gen. 37:26-27).

As the story progresses, the lack of brotherliness towards the sons of Rachel is emphasized even more: “And the ten brothers of Joseph [they felt towards each other as brothers] went down to Egypt to purchase grain, but Jacob did not send Benjamin, brother of Joseph” (but not the brother of the other 10).

And when the sons of Jacob stand before the Grand Vizier, the Bible stresses the inequality in their relationship with a ringing declaration, pregnant with a double meaning, “Joseph recognized his brothers [their identity as well as a sibling relationship to them], but they did not recognize him” (Gen. 42:8).

The Hebrew word *ah* (brother) means to be tied together, the verb *ahot* meaning to sew or to stitch, even, if you will, to patch up. It derives from a sense of unity, oneness (*ehad, ahdut*) which comes from the understanding of having emanated from one father.

Since the source of their unity is their common father; they should not want to cause pain to each other and certainly not to their father. Apparently, the hatred of the 10 brothers for Joseph even overwhelmed their filial concern for their father’s welfare – and so they seemingly had no difficulty in telling Jacob that his beloved Joseph had been torn apart by a wild animal! When Judah declares to their father Jacob that he will stand as surety for Benjamin, he is expressing his newfound recognition that this youngest son of Rachel is truly an *ah*, a brother, an inextricable part of him, Judah, even though he was born of a different mother. When he tells the Grand Vizier that he is willing to be a slave instead of Benjamin – so that this son of Rachel may be restored to his loving father in order to save Jacob further pain – he is demonstrating the bond of ultimate unity between siblings, and between them and their father. This is *ahva* (brotherliness) and *ahdut* (unity) which creates an indissoluble bond (*hibur, haverut, profound attachment*). It is at this point of Judah’s self-sacrifice for Rachel’s youngest son that Joseph recognizes his brothers’ repentance and is ready to forgive and reunite with them.

The prophet Ezekiel provides the ultimate vision of a united Israel when he is told by God to take one stick and write upon it “For Judah and the children of Israel his friends” (*haver, hibur, bond*), and to take another stick and write upon it, “for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and the entire house of Israel his friend,” and to join both sticks so that they are united in his hand (Ezekiel 37: 15-20). This is the Jewish goal, learned from Judah, when every Israelite sees themselves as a co-signer (surety) for every other Israelite for the greater glory of our common Father in heaven.

Shabbat Shalom!

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**Insights Parshas Vayigash - Teves 5781**

**Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University**

**Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig**

*This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rav Shmuel ben Rav Usher Zelig Halevi z"l. Sponsored by Kalman & Chana Finkel.*

*"May his Neshama have an Aliya!"*

**In Pieces or In Peace?**

Then Yehuda approached him and said, “If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word [...] and may your anger not flare up at your servant...” (44:18)

This week’s parsha opens with the epic showdown between Yehuda and Yosef. Rashi (ad loc) comments that Yehuda spoke to him harshly, and for this reason, Yehuda felt compelled to ask Yosef not to get angry. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 93:8) further elaborates on this theme: “Yehuda asked his brother Naphtali ‘How many markets (full of people) are there in Egypt?’ Naphtali went to check and told Yehuda, ‘There are twelve.’ Yehuda turned to his brothers and told them, ‘I will destroy three of them and you destroy the rest until no one remains.’ When Yosef saw that the brothers threatened to destroy the entire country he said, ‘It is better that I reveal myself to them.’”

Seemingly, Yehuda and the brothers were preparing for a violent confrontation with Yosef. However, Rashi in Parshas Vayeira seems to paint an entirely different picture: “And Avraham approached and said...” (18:23). Rashi (ad loc) says we find three types of “approaching” in the scriptures; we find 1) approaching for war (by Yoav captain of King David’s army), 2) approaching for appeasement (by Yehuda and Yosef), and 3) approaching for prayer (by Eliyahu). This Rashi in Vayeira indicates that Yehuda was approaching Yosef to try to appease him, yet in this parsha Rashi says that Yehuda spoke harshly to him and, according to the Midrash, even threatened him. How can Rashi in Vayeira conclude that Yehuda’s approach was to try to appease Yosef?

The classic example of appeasement is that of Neville Chamberlain’s response to Germany’s demands for territorial conquest and rapprochement of areas that they had lost in the Great War. After many meetings and detailed negotiations, Chamberlain’s response, in brief, was “okay.” Believing he had forestalled another European World War, he came back to London declaring that he had achieved “peace in our time.” Winston Churchill, Chamberlain’s main foe in the British parliament, later termed Neville’s efforts as “the great surrender.”

This distinction is key. Appeasement is not the same as surrender. In fact, surrender is one of the worst responses to conflict because capitulation merely indicates that you have no interest in fighting, but it doesn’t resolve anything. Appeasement comes from the French “*apaiser*” – to bring to peace. Surrender doesn’t create peace, just a ceasing of hostilities for the time being.

The only way to create a real peace is through negotiations, and negotiations can only be successful when both parties come from a position of strength. This is true in relationships as well. When one party in a relationship feels aggrieved, the proper response isn’t merely “you’re right.” This just indicates that you surrender because you don’t want to fight. The person who feels wronged hasn’t really been validated, in fact the message received is “it’s not worth the effort to fight with you.” The better approach is validating their feelings and conveying your desire to resolve the issues through conversation and actions.

Yehuda is in effect warning Yosef: “I am perfectly capable of going to war with you – I am prepared to inflict heavy damage as well as take some losses myself. But I would prefer to work out some sort of arrangement between us.” Yehuda is not trying to beg Yosef for mercy, hoping that he will get what he wants through a surrender. He is negotiating from a position of strength, looking for a compromise that will bring an understanding between them and a lasting peace. That is what appeasement is supposed to be.

**My Son, My Father**

And they told him, “Yosef is still alive, and he is ruler over the entire land of Egypt.” But he had a turn of heart, for he did not believe them (45:26).

Upon returning to Eretz Yisroel with the incredible news that Yosef was still alive, the brothers were initially met with disbelief from their father Yaakov. He finally accepted that his son Yosef was still alive when “he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him” (45:27). This is difficult to understand. Even if Yaakov suspected that the brothers had a role in Yosef’s disappearance, what possible reason could they have for

spinning another lie, one that with some effort could be verified? Furthermore, his son Binyamin, who had no part in Yosef's disappearance, could also confirm that his brother Yosef was still alive. Why did Yaakov choose not to believe Binyamin?

Rashi (ad loc) is bothered as to why the Torah says that Yosef sent the wagons to transport Yaakov when the Torah previously stated that they were sent by Pharaoh (45:19). Rashi answers that although they were sent on the word of Pharaoh, Yosef told his brothers to use them as a sign in reference to the last Torah subject he studied with his father all those years ago. In Hebrew the word wagons has the same root as the word calf – Yosef was reminding Yaakov that they had last studied the laws of a calf whose neck is broken to atone for a city that didn't properly care for a stranger who left their city unaccompanied.

One must wonder why Yosef, who had now been gone for several decades, never sent a message earlier to his father, whom he must have known would be worried sick over his disappearance. Though we will never know for sure, a component of his reticence was that for almost all of the time he was gone he was either a slave or a convict sitting in jail; not exactly uplifting news to give his father. He may have preferred that his father think him dead than languishing as a slave or a prisoner, which would cause him ongoing grief.

Yaakov, upon hearing the news that his son was still alive, must have been incredibly conflicted. On one hand, he was relieved that his son was still alive, long after giving him up for dead. On the other hand, Yosef had been steeped in the Egyptian culture of depravity for over two decades. What remained of his son Yosef, the one Yaakov taught all of the Torah he had learned in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever?

When Yaakov saw that Yosef sent him a sign indicating that his mind was on the last subject that they had studied before departing, he realized that his son, the one he had forged a real Torah bond with, was indeed still alive. This is why the Torah says, "He saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived [...] My son still lives! I shall go and see him before I die" (45:27-28).

Similarly, earlier in the parsha upon revealing himself to his brothers, Yosef asks, "Is my father still alive?" (45:3). On the surface this is a very odd question; for the last several interactions with his brothers they had been discussing Yaakov's welfare. They had explicitly told him that their father was still alive. What was Yosef really asking?

Some have tried to answer this question by saying that it was a rebuke of the brothers, in effect saying: "After all you have done to him, is my father still alive?" This is difficult to accept because that would make Yosef's rebuke sharp and sarcastic. Even if Yosef had said such a thing to his brothers, why would the Torah record it for posterity? Besides, the Torah portrays Yosef as sad and even weeping; the Torah doesn't indicate that he was speaking angrily with them.

Perhaps we can answer this question in a similar vein — Yosef is yearning to know if there is any part of his father still alive. Meaning, before Yosef was sold by his brothers, he had a special relationship with Yaakov; thus he's really asking them if his father still misses him, in the way that a father misses a son. Yosef wants to know if there is any part of his father still left in Yaakov. Yosef isn't asking about Yaakov's physical wellbeing, he is asking about his personal father-son connection.

#### **Did You Know...**

In this week's parsha Yosef instructs his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds, and since shepherds are a תועבה to Egypt, he would send them to Goshen (45:33-34). The common translation of this word (Rashi, Onkelos, and others) is an abomination; since the Egyptians worshipped their sheep as deities, once they informed Pharaoh that they were shepherds by occupation, he would become disgusted and send them away from him to Goshen.

However, the Zohar has a completely different take on this exchange. According to the Zohar, shepherds were actually revered in Egypt, even considered like deities themselves. This can easily be understood as shepherds actually take care of their deities – the sheep.

Pharaoh would therefore want to remove himself from their presence, and this is why he would send them to the best area in the land of Egypt (he calls it that in 47:6).

As we find in Rashi (Shemos 8:22), תועבה does mean abomination, but not because it was an abomination to the Egyptians. Rather, we translate it like that because the Egyptians did revere them and worshipped them, and to us as the Jewish people, worshipping other deities is an abomination. Although this is not the common understanding, this would explain two instances in the parsha where we see the Egyptians owning sheep. First, Pharaoh himself asked them to watch his own sheep immediately after learning they are shepherds (47:6), and later the people of Egypt sold Yosef their sheep for food (47:17).

But why shepherds and sheep? The Egyptians were, unsurprisingly, a very superstitious lot. They had literally over 2,000 gods that they worshipped regarding every single conceivable aspect of life, often with multiple gods per subject. However, several of the gods were similar as they were depicted through sheep imagery, most notably Khnum (the "First One" who created everything) who had a sheep's head, and the more well-known Amun-Ra (the greatest of all the gods), who's symbol was a ram headed Sphinx.

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#### ***Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights***

*For the week ending 26 December 2020 / 11 Tevet 5781*

**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)**

#### ***Parshat Vayigash***

#### ***Nuclear Fusion***

*"And you, son of man, take to yourself one piece of wood and write upon it 'For Yehuda and the Children of Israel, his associates,' and take another piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yosef, the stem of Ephraim and the whole House of Israel, his associates.'" (Haftarah, Yechezkel 33:16)*

One of the fascinating facets of the A-bomb story is that the vast majority of the players were Jews. Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity paved the way for investigation into nuclear fission. In 1939 he urged President Roosevelt to build an atomic bomb before Nazi Germany did so. Leo Szilard (1898-1964), born in Budapest, helped Italian Enrico Fermi (married to a Jew) conduct the first controlled nuclear chain reaction. Niels Bohr (1885-1962) was the first to apply quantum theory to explain nuclear structure. Born in Denmark to a Christian father and Jewish mother, Bohr won a Nobel Prize in 1922, and narrowly escaped Denmark in 1943, pursued by the Nazis. He worked on the Manhattan Project with his son Aage. Lise Meitner (1878-1968) was born in Vienna and became a pioneer of research into nuclear fission. She analyzed her results with her nephew, Otto Frisch. Walter Zinn and Fermi directed the first controlled nuclear chain reaction in 1942 at the University of Chicago. Hungarian-born Edward Teller led the US team that developed the first hydrogen bomb. And the list goes on.

But maybe the most fascinating of the all those who built the atom bomb was J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967), the US-born theoretical physicist who was chosen to direct the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos in 1942. It was his team that, on July 16, 1945 exploded the world's first atomic bomb. Three months later he resigned as project director and opposed development of the H-bomb. Oppenheimer was accused of being a Communist, he was vilified in public, and, although exonerated, the experience broke him. Oppenheimer came from a wealthy, assimilated New York Jewish family. He was an aesthete, an intellectual and a philosopher. His colleague I. I. Rabi once wrote about him:

"He reminded me very much of a boyhood friend about whom someone said that he couldn't make up his mind whether to be president of the B'nai B'rith or the Knights of Columbus. Perhaps he really wanted to be both, simultaneously. Oppenheimer wanted every experience. In that sense, he never focused. My own feeling is that if he had studied the Talmud and Hebrew, rather than Sanskrit, he would have been a much greater physicist." (From "Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb" by Richard Rhodes)

Commenting on this week's Haftara, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch bewails the continuing strife between the "Ephraim" Jew and the "Yehuda" Jew. The "Ephraim" Jew, "by his systematic disavowal of the Divine Torah, seeks salvation in political greatness and tries to find a substitute for the lack of protection from G-d by vain efforts to obtain alliance with the nations, among whom it hopes to 'blossom out in brotherhood' (Hoshea 23:15) by complete assimilation. But, for giving up all Jewishness, he only experiences contempt and repulsion."

On the other hand, "Yehuda, who in principle certainly acknowledges Hashem as its G-d... is still far off from unreserved trust in G-d." Rabbi Hirsch criticizes the "Yehuda" Jew for failing to apply the same standards in his relation with his fellow man as he does with regard to his kashrut.

"And you, son of man, take to yourself one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yehuda and the Children of Israel his associates,' and take another piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yosef, the stem of Ephraim and the whole House of Israel, his associates.' And bring them near... and they will become united to one union in your hand."

The two chips of wood representing the two tribes will eventually be united, not in a watered-down compromise but in a genuine elevation "in an everlasting faithfulness towards G-d."

When we look at our divided nation, how we long for that "nuclear fusion" that will bathe the whole world in Hashem's light!

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*Parshas Vayigash: "Reconciliation"*

*Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb*

I have known more than my share of families that are torn by discord. I think most of us, perhaps even all of us, are familiar with families in which brothers and sisters have not spoken to each other in years, sometimes even having forgotten the original reason for the destruction of their relationship. My background and experience in the field of family therapy has given me even broader exposure than most to this unfortunate phenomenon.

Colleagues of mine in the practice of psychotherapy will concur that overcoming feelings of hatred and urges toward revenge is one of the most difficult challenges that they face in their practice. Reconciling parents and children, husbands and wives, is a frustrating process for those of us who counsel families. The successful reconciliation of ruined relationships is a rare achievement, especially after the misunderstandings have festered for years.

The great eighteenth-century moralist, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, contends that these difficulties are intrinsic to our human nature. Thus he writes:

"Hatred and revenge. These, the human heart, in its perversity, finds it hard to escape. A man is very sensitive to disgrace, and suffers keenly when subjected to it. Revenge is sweeter to him than honey; he can not rest until he has taken his revenge. If, therefore, he has the power to relinquish that to which his nature impels him; if he can forgive; if he will forbear hating anyone who provokes him to hatred; if he will neither exact vengeance when he has the opportunity to do so, nor bear a grudge against anyone; if he can forget and obliterate from his mind a wrong done to him as though it had never been committed; then he is, indeed, strong and mighty. So to act may be a small matter to angels, who have no evil traits, but not to 'those that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust.'" (Job 4:19) (Mesilat Yesharim [The Path of the Upright], Chapter 11)

Granted that one must approximate the angels in heaven in order to overcome the natural human inclinations to hate and take revenge. How, then, do we explain the astounding reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, which occurs in this week's Torah portion? (Genesis 44:18-47:27)

Joseph's brothers came to hate him because of what they saw as his malicious arrogance. Joseph certainly had reason to hate his brothers, who cast him into a pit full of snakes and scorpions. We can easily understand that he would attribute his years of imprisonment to their betrayal of him. And yet, in last week's Torah portion, we learned that they came to regret their actions and to feel guilty for what they did to him. "Alas, we are at fault...because we looked on at his anguish, yet paid no heed as he pleaded with us." (Genesis 42:21)

It is in this week's parsha that we learn of the forgiveness that Joseph demonstrated toward his brothers. We read of a dramatic, reconciliation—a total triumph over hatred and revenge. What inner strengths enabled Joseph and his brothers to attain this rare achievement?

I maintain that quite a few such strengths help Joseph's brothers to rejoin him harmoniously. One was their ability to accept responsibility for their actions. Over time, they reflected introspectively and concluded that they were indeed wrong for what they did. Self-confrontation, and a commitment to accepting the

truth when it surfaces allowed them to forget whatever originally prompted them to hate Joseph.

I further maintain that the underlying dynamics of Joseph's ability to forgive were very different. He came to forgive his brothers because of two fundamental aspects of his personality: his emotional sensitivity and his religious ideology.

Joseph's sensitivity becomes apparent to the careful reader of this and last week's Torah portions. The most reliable indication of a person's sensitivity is his ability to shed tears of emotion, his capacity to weep. Joseph demonstrates this capacity no less than four times in the course of the biblical narrative:

Subsequent to his initial encounter with his brothers, we read that "he turned away from them and wept..." (Genesis 42:24); when he first sees his younger brother Benjamin, "he was overcome with feeling...He went into a room and wept there..." (ibid. 43:30); unable to contain himself after Judah's confrontational address, "his sobs were so loud that...the news reached Pharaoh's palace..." And finally, as we will read in next week's Torah portion, this is Joseph's response to his brothers' plea for explicit forgiveness: "and Joseph was in tears as they spoke to him." (ibid. 50:17).

No doubt about it. The biblical text gives us conclusive evidence of Joseph's emotional sensitivity. But there is another secret to Joseph's noble treatment of his brothers. It relates to his philosophy, not to his emotional reactivity.

If there is one lesson that Joseph learned from his father Jacob during his disrupted adolescence, it was the belief in a divine being who ultimately controls man's circumstances and man's destiny. When a person wholly has that belief, he is able to dismiss even the most painful insults against him. He is able to attribute them to God's plan and not to blame the perpetrators of that insult. Thus was Joseph able to say, "So, it was not you who sent me here, but God..." (ibid. 45:8)

The power of genuine faith to instill the awareness that even hurtful circumstances are part of the divine plan is, in my opinion, best described in this passage from the anonymous 13th century author of *Sefer HaChinuch*, in his comments on the commandment to desist from revenge:

"At the root of this commandment is the lesson that one must be aware and take to heart the fact that everything that happens in one's life, whether it seems beneficial or harmful, comes about because of God's intervention...Therefore, when a person is pained or hurt by another, he must know in his soul...that God has decreed this for him. He should not be prompted to take revenge against the perpetrator, who is only indirectly the cause of his pain or hurt. We learn this from King David who would not respond to the traitorous curses of his former ally, Shimi ben Gera."

The author of *Sefer HaChinuch* sees King David as the exemplar of this profound religious faith. In these final Torah portions of the Book of Genesis, we learn that Joseph was King David's mentor in regard to the capacity to rise above the misdeeds of others and to see them as but part of God's design.

It is not easy for us lesser believers to emulate Joseph and David, but we would be spared much interpersonal strife if we would at least strive to do so.

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*Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis*

*Dvar Torah Asarah b'Tevet and Parshat Vayigash*

*A Fast on a Friday? Asarah B'Tevet: Treating the root cause, not the symptoms.*

This week shabbat will commence in a most unusual way. We'll be fasting, and we'll only be able to eat or drink after kiddush on Friday night. That's because Friday will be Asarah b'Tevet – the Fast of Tevet.

You might wonder, why is this fast different from all other fasts? Our calendar does not usually allow fasts on Fridays, in order that we should be able to have the health and the energy to prepare for Shabbat. However, Asara b'Tevet is the one exception. That's because, in the book of Ezekiel, Chapter 24, the day is described as 'etzem hayom hazeh' – 'this very day,' the identical terminology used by the Torah to describe Yom Kippur. So in the same way as Yom Kippur must take place on that very day, so too with Asara b'Tevet. If it falls on Friday, we must fast on Friday.

The Root of our Problems

This highlights for us the significance of this particular fast day. You see, Asarah b'Tevet was the very beginning of the troubles that followed. It was on this day that Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army laid siege to the city of Jerusalem. You might say, "What was so important about that? It pales into insignificance compared with the 17th of Tammuz when the walls of the city were breached and the 9th of Av when the temple was destroyed!"

Actually Asara B'tevet is significant because that's when it all began. That was the root of our problems.

If a river is badly polluted, in order to clean up the waters, you could go downstream, but whatever you clean will last just a few hours. Instead, you should go upstream in order to block off the original source of the pollution. Instead of treating the symptoms, we need to treat the cause.

There is a story of the mythical town of Chelm in Poland in which there was just one little bridge over the valley. People noticed that there was a crack in the bridge, causing some people to trip and fall. The crack widened until some people were breaking their legs. It widened further and there was a danger that people might fall through it, and then when the gap became exceptionally wide, people, wagons and horses were falling down it to the valley below.

The council of the sages of Chelm decided to deliberate on the issue. At the end of an entire day's discussions they announced their decision: They would build a hospital in the valley below.

#### Causeless Love

That's what happens when you treat the symptoms instead of the cause. Ever since the destruction of our Second Temple within the diaspora we have experienced some wonderful highs and some very tragic lows. Let's look back to the origin of it all – it was the sin of *sinat chinam*, of causeless hatred.

Now close to two millennia after that time, we have not yet repaired the original cause. Sadly today there is still so much damaging and unnecessary *sinat chinam*, causeless hatred, within our ranks.

Let us therefore heed the call of *Asara b'Tevet* – let us treat the original cause, and in the spirit of the teaching of Rav Kook, let us now engage in *'ahavat chinam*, causeless love, for one another.

*Shabbat shalom.*

*Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.*

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#### ***Drasha Parshas Vayigash - Age Old Questions***

##### ***Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky***

*Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya*

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 Yosef 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 Rebitzen 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 *Mirror 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.

*Dedicated In memory of Irving M. Bunim Reb Yitzchok Meir ben HaRav Moshe — 4 Teves. By his children, Rabbi & Mrs. Amos Bunim*

*Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.*

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#### ***Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayigash***

##### ***Yehudah's Sudden Switch: Analysis of the Opening Pesukim of Vayigash***

At the end of last week's parsha (Miketz), Binyomin is "caught red handed with stolen goods." Of course, it was a ruse, but the brothers did not realize this at the time. The pasuk says, "And Yehudah said, 'What can we say to my master? How can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? G-d has found the sin of your servants. Here we are: We are ready to be slaves to my master – both we and the one in whose hand the goblet was found.'" [Bereshis 44:16]. Yosef responds: "It would be unseemly for me to do this; the man in whose possession the goblet was found, he shall be my slave, and as for you – go up in peace to your father" [Bereshis 44:17].

This statement of Yehudah, "What can we say? How can we speak? How can we justify ourselves?" is an act of great contrition on his part. "We are your slaves. You caught us red-handed!" He could not have been more contrite. That is the end of Parshas Miketz. Then, at the beginning of Parshas Vayigash, Yehudah suddenly seems to be a different person. "...May your anger not flare up at your servant..." [Bereshis 44:18]. Rashi says: "From here we see that Yehudah spoke harshly to Yosef." Two pesukim ago, this same Yehudah expressed such contrition. Now he changes his tune and is letting Yosef have it! What happened to cause this metamorphosis?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains what happened. Until now, the brothers felt that all of this was happening to them as a result of Divine punishment. The Almighty was paying them back for the way they treated Yosef. "Aval asheimim anachnu" ("indeed we are guilty!") [Bereshis 42:21]. They sensed that this was all a case of "From the L-rd this has happened" (*may'ais Hashem hayesa zos*) [Tehillim 118:23]. Now suddenly Yosef says "No. You can go free. It is the youngest brother, Binyomin, who will be my prisoner." As a result, their previous explanation of the events they were experiencing had to be rethought.

Yehudah said, "Wait a minute! This is not from the Ribono shel Olam. This could not be a punishment for what we did, because Binyomin was not involved in that incident at all. So why is this happening? It must be happening strictly because of the perverseness of this Egyptian ruler. I am going to give him a piece of my mind!" This is the great change that happened.

The Vilna Gaon shares a very interesting insight on the pasuk "Vayigash eilav Yehudah..." [Bereshis 44:18] Rashi explains regarding the words "Ki avdecha arav es hana'ar" [Bereshis 44:32] that Yehuda promised his father "If I do not bring Binyamin back to you, I am going to be excommunicated both in this world and in the world to come."

Yehudah stood to lose the most over here. The Gaon comments: The trop (cantillation notes) for the expression “Vayigash elav Yehudah va’yomer bi Adonee...” is as follows: Vayigash elav has the cantillation notes Kadma v’azla. Yehudah has the note reviyee. Va’Yomer bi Adonee has the notes zarka munach segol.

The Gaon interprets the trop as providing a hidden message: Vayigash elav – Kadma v’azla, meaning “Yehudah came forth.” Yehudah says – You might ask why I am acting as the spokesperson for the family – after all I am only the fourth son (reviyee). The reason the fourth son (reviyee) is coming forth (kadma v’azla) is that zarka munach segol – meaning I will be thrown away (zarka) from resting (being munach) in the World-to-Come among the Am Segulah (the Chosen People). Therefore, it is my life that is on the line – both here and in Olam HaBah. That is why I put protocol aside and came forward to speak, even though I am only the fourth son.

### **Do Not Waste the Precious Years of Youth**

As part of Yehudah’s plea to the Egyptian ruler (who he did not yet know was his brother Yosef) Yehudah said, “For how will I be able to go back to my father if the youth is not with me.” [Bereshis 44:34]. To appreciate the thought that I am about to express, it may be necessary to have a bit of an inclination for Chassidishhe Torah. Also, please remember that Chazal say “one does not ask questions on Drush.” This may not be the true interpretation of this pasuk, but the message it delivers is certainly true.

One day, each of us will go up to the Yeshiva on High after we leave this world. The above cited pasuk can be read; “How am I going to go to my Father (in Heaven) when the na’ar is not with me.” — Meaning, if I wasted my youth, the easiest years of my life, on matters of nonsense – how will I be able to answer for myself before the Master of the Universe in that Final Judgement?

If there is one message my students at Ner Yisroel have heard from me over and over again throughout my entire teaching career it is: Do not waste these precious years. They are not repeatable. This is not to say, of course, that life ends at age 22 or 23. However, the care-free life that a typical yeshiva bochur lives today—from the age of say 18 until he gets married—is blissful. Baruch Hashem, most bochrin have parents. Their tuition is paid. Their cell phone bills are paid. Their car insurance is paid. Their health insurance is paid. They typically do not have to worry about earning a living or about chronic illness. These are the carefree years.

“How will I be able to ascend to my Father and the (years of my) youth will not be with me?”

I know that the demographic of the crowd I am speaking to tonight is well past the years of na’arus. But as I always say: The job of raising your children never stops, and the job of raising your grandchildren never stops. If there is one message that we should impart to our children and grandchildren and, IY”H, our great-grandchildren, it is: Do not waste these years. They are not going to repeat themselves!

The Kotzker Rebbe cited a pasuk from Tehillim: “Like the arrow in the hand of the mighty archer, such is youth” [Tehillim 127:4]. The Rebbe taught: When an archer pulls back his bow and is about to shoot his arrow, he still is in control of what is going to happen with that arrow. He can shoot it up, he can shoot it down, he can shoot it right, or he can shoot it left. Once the arrow leaves the bow, it is on its own. He cannot take it back. He cannot guide it. It is not like a ‘smart bomb’ that can be redirected mid-course. The Rebbe said, “So too it is with youth.” When a person is young, he is in control. He does not have illness, he does not have all the worries that come with older age, and that frustrate his ability to accomplish what he wants to accomplish with the talents and strengths the Almighty has granted him.

There is a famous quip – Youth is wasted on the young. When a person reaches a certain stage in life, that youth-like freedom is there no more. I knew an older Jew who was in a retirement home. He used to get up in the morning and his fellow residents would ask him “What hurts today?” A person loses all kinds of powers and capabilities that he once had when he reaches old age. Ah, for the days of youth – bnei ha’neurim!

This is a message that we need to impart to our children, and even if our children are grown, we need to impart it to their children. “You must not waste the precious years of youth.”

### **Sensitive News Must Be Delivered with Sensitivity**

“They told him that Yosef was still alive and that he ruled the entire land of Egypt...” [Bereshis 45:26] The Sefer HaYashar says that the brothers were afraid that if they would suddenly break the news to Yaakov that his beloved and presumed-dead son Yosef was still alive, he would die on the spot. The news would be too shocking. An older person can die from sudden shock.

So, what did they do? Serach, daughter of Asher, knew how to play violin. She played her violin and kept on singing “Od Yosef Chai; Od Yosef Chai.” Yaakov Avinu thus already had put into his consciousness these words stating that Yosef was still alive.

Consequently, when the brothers came in and they said “Od Yosef Chai!” it was not the same shock as it would have otherwise been. Yaakov had been inoculated, so to speak, to the concept that Yosef was still alive.

This is all well and good. But what is the lesson we learn from this Medrash? Rav Pam writes in his sefer that the lesson we learn is how sensitive we need to be about how we say certain things. We need to anticipate how our words will be taken by the intended recipient. Sometimes news needs to be broken softly. In all cases, we must speak sensitive words with sensitivity!

Rav Pam writes that Rav Yaakov Bender (Rosh Yeshiva of Darkei Torah in the Five Towns) has two rules whenever he calls a parent on the phone. The first thing he says is, “Hello. This is Rabbi Yaakov Bender. Your child is fine.” Why? Because whenever a parent gets a call from the principal the parent braces himself: “Okay. What did my kid do now? What did he break? What happened to him?” Therefore, the first thing out of the principal’s mouth is “Your child is fine” thus relieving the parent.

The second policy Rabbi Bender has is that whatever a child has done, he never suspends a child on Erev Shabbos. That is all that is needed to ruin a Shabbos. The kid gets thrown out of school; the kid is suspended; the kid flunked.... The kid will sit there at the Shabbos table with this just having happened to him. It will put a pall over the entire Shabbos for the whole family.

Maybe the child will be suspended... but that can always wait until Sunday morning. On Friday afternoon, he does not suspend students. That is a lesson learned from the Medrash about Serach bas Asher. “Od Yosef Chai.” We must always break news gently, softly, — even good news. This is the sensitivity we must have when dealing with people.

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***Vayigash: Fake Righteousness***

***Ben-Tzion Spitz***

*Keep thy smooth words and juggling homilies for those who know thee not. - Lord Byron*

Joseph has finally sprung his trap, while his brothers still haven’t discovered that he, the Viceroy of Egypt, is their long-lost brother. Joseph got them to bring brother Benjamin to Egypt, and he had incriminating evidence placed among Benjamin’s belongings. The brothers, not realizing they were being set up, had brazenly declared that if Joseph’s men would find the thief in their midst, the thief would be put to death and the rest of them would become Joseph’s slaves.

When the stolen goblet is found in Benjamin’s possessions, the brothers realize they are in big trouble. Joseph, however, presents himself as a magnanimous judge. He states that only the thief himself will become his slave, while the rest of the brothers are free to return home.

This is the situation in which Judah steps forward and asks for a private audience with the Viceroy. Judah recounts the recent history, of how the Viceroy had insisted on Benjamin coming to Egypt, despite pleas that their father Jacob’s life was highly dependent on Benjamin’s wellbeing.

If anything untoward were to happen to Benjamin, it would almost certainly kill their father Jacob.

The Bechor Shor on Genesis 44:32 reads an accusatory statement in Judah's plea to the Viceroy. He explains that Judah is saying that the Viceroy's magnanimity is ultimately false. The Viceroy is only pretending to be generous by saying the other brothers are free to go, while only Benjamin will remain enslaved. While the Viceroy seems to be saying that the other brothers are likely innocent and there's no need for them to be punished, in effect, by enslaving Benjamin and separating him from their father, the Viceroy will be killing Jacob, who is completely innocent. How can the Viceroy justify the exoneration of people who may have been accomplices to the crime, while he inflicts a fatal punishment on Jacob, someone completely innocent?

At that point, Judah offers himself to be a slave to the Viceroy instead of Benjamin, in order to save Jacob's life. Moved by Judah's valiant gesture, the Viceroy finally reveals himself to be Joseph. The brothers are shocked into silence, and the process of family reconciliation can begin.

May our family reunions be less duplicitous than that of our ancestors.

*Dedication - To Israeli politics. Never, ever boring.*

*Shabbat Shalom*

*Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.*

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**Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz**

**Parashat Vayigash**

**Exile as a Moral Foundation**

In this week's Torah portion, Vayigash, we read about the Jewish nation that is not actually a nation yet, but rather is an extended family of seventy. They leave Canaan (later to be called the Land of Israel) to their first exile in Egypt. In this strange land, the family becomes a nation with its own unique identity. Why there? Wouldn't it have been more natural to leave the nation to form its identity in the land intended for it?

It is very difficult to exist within a foreign society and culture, and yet this is the reality chosen as the environment for the nation to establish itself. There are several reasons for this, but we will focus on two of them. Firstly, being in a foreign environment causes a person to adopt a world view in which reality is incomplete and necessitates repair. It was therefore appropriate for a nation about to be given the mission and goal of "tikkun olam", repairing the world morally and spiritually, to grow into a reality that did not suit its existence. A person who grows up in a seemingly-perfect social reality does not feel the inner motivation to change and repair the world. The Jewish nation that came into being in an alien environment is a nation that carries within it a vision of a repaired world. As such, it is called upon to work toward advancing the world – morally, socially, culturally, and spiritually.

Also, the nation began in a demeaned social status suffering from great discrimination. One of the biggest issues any society deals with is how it treats foreigners. This question is especially important in an agricultural society like those in ancient times. Any foreigner entering the land is checked to see what advantages or disadvantages he has: Does he create more than he uses or vice versa?

The Jewish nation's time in Egypt created the basis for the repeated warnings in the Torah regarding the proper treatment of foreigners – that person who has been disconnected from his homeland and often also from his family when exiled to a foreign land. The memory of the exile in Egypt is a foundational memory meant to inform Jewish society as one that does not reject the foreigner or stranger, but respects him and makes it possible for him to live respectably. Again and again, the Bible repeated the connection between the exile in Egypt and the obligation to respect foreigners. "And you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, since you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23, 9); "The stranger who sojourns with you shall be as a native from among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your G-d" (Leviticus 19, 34); "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10, 19).

A nation that rose in exile can see a stranger and respect him, give him space and allow him to exist and integrate. The book of Genesis contains almost no laws or commandments because it is a book that describes the foundation upon which the Jewish nation was built: the period of the forefathers. During this time, the nation's spiritual foundations were formed and this is when its first exile – the exile to Egypt – began. That was where the important foundation of appropriate treatment of foreigners was laid, a foundation that was to impact the independent Jewish state from ancient times until today.

*The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.*

**Rav Kook Torah**

**The Holiness of the Synagogue**

"On account of two sins, ignoramuses die young: because they call the Torah ark 'the cabinet,' and because they call the synagogue 'Beit Am' - the house of the people." (Shabbat 32a)

What is so terrible about this behavior? Are there no worse sins committed regularly by ignorant people?

Superficial Perception

We are good at seeing the functional purpose of things. You do not need not be a genius to realize that a Torah ark is meant to store Torah scrolls. Even a cursory observation indicates that a synagogue is a place where people assemble together. Yet these functional definitions are so superficial that they fail to recognize the true essence of these objects. To perceive a Torah ark as simply a cabinet, and a synagogue as a community center, is to lose sight of the unique qualities that make them a source of spiritual influence in our lives.

This is a grave mistake. Failing to see the sanctity of a Torah ark and the holiness of a synagogue is a fundamental error in how we look at life and our relationship with God.

Holiness in the External Aspects of Life

When we reflect on God's infinite grandeur and transcendental nature, our initial response is to view all human concerns as petty and inconsequential. All of our actions appear to be of no lasting significance, disconnected from that which is infinite and eternal.

Therefore, the most important study is precisely in this area: to understand how life's external aspects, when they are expressions of serving God, connect to the highest levels of inner Divine knowledge. By binding the entire gamut of human activity to the loftiest contemplations, we can elevate and sanctify all aspects of life.

Life is not just the "still, small voice" - moments of calm introspection, uplifting revelations, inspiring words of prayer and supplication. Life is full of conflicts and challenges. It is noisy and rushed, flowing with joy and grief, anger and satisfaction. Deep contemplation, however, will help us recognize that God's holiness can find us everywhere, even in our lowly physical state.

This awareness cannot come from intellectual inquiry alone; it requires profound and constant study. For this reason, the Torah is compared to water: just as water flows from mountains to lower regions, so, too, the Torah is not confined to the rarified spheres of metaphysical inquiry, but "flows down" to elevate the emotional and practical aspects of life.

Now we may better understand the true significance of the Torah ark and the error of the ignorant. The ark is not just another cabinet. By virtue of its serving as a receptacle for a sefer Torah, the Torah ark is also a holy vessel. When we recognize the holiness of the Torah ark, we acknowledge the sanctity of life's external aspects - our actions and deeds - when they are a receptacle for Torah and mitzvot.

The Holiness in Communal Life

While the Torah ark reflects the holiness in the life of the individual, the synagogue reflects the holiness in the life of the community.

One who sees the synagogue as simply a place for people to meet fails to grasp the intrinsic sanctity of the Jewish people. Israel is not just a collection of individuals who pool together their resources for utilitarian purposes, for mutual support and protection. The true value of Israel is in the communal Divine soul that resides within them, a force of collective holiness that transcends the holiness of its individual members.

This quality of the community is especially revealed in the synagogue, a place of communal prayer and study. It is our communal holiness that transforms the synagogue into a House of God and a mikdash me'at, a miniature Temple.

As the ignorant grow in wisdom and Torah knowledge, they will come to recognize the holiness of the Torah ark. They will see that life's external aspects, our actions and deeds, can be a source of holiness. And they will recognize the special collective holiness of Israel, realizing that the synagogue is not a "house of the people," but rather a house of God's Presence.

*(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, pp. 169-170)*

*See also: VaYigash: The Hazards of Leadership*

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**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

**Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Vayigash**

**פרשת ויגש תשפ"א**

**אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אתי מצרימה**

**"I am Yosef, your brother, it is me, whom you sold into Egypt."**  
**(45:4)**

*Abba Kohen Bardela* says, "Woe is to us from the *Yom HaDin*, Day of Judgment; woe is to us from the *Yom HaTochacha*, Day of

Rebuke. Yosef, who was the smallest (youngest) of the tribes, and (when he rebuked his brothers) they were unable to withstand his rebuke. Similarly, what will we say/do when Hashem rebukes each and every one of us in accordance with what he is (or could have been)?” Many commentators have commented on this well-known *Midrash* throughout the millennia as the paradigm of *tochachah*, rebuke. After all, what did Yosef actually say to them? Two words: *Ani Yosef!* “I am Yosef!” This was sufficient rebuke for the brothers, enough for them to realize that they had committed a grave error. Yosef was not the man they had made him out to be. Standing before them was the *baal ha'chalomos*, the ne'er-do-well dreamer, whom they had ruled deserved to die for his evil machinations against them. Now they saw and, with two words, it all became crystal clear: they had made a terrible mistake. They just realized that they had been living a lie, believing that they had been justified in their actions against their younger brother, only to be rudely awakened from their false reverie to the stark reality that they had been wrong.

One day, the unavoidable meeting with Hashem will occur. He will utter two words: *Ani Hashem*, “I am G-d.” How did you live an entire life of falsehood? How did you frivolously waste away your time and strengths, the numerous gifts that I gave you? We will stand there dumbstruck, mute, with nothing to say. We will have no excuses, because the time for prevarication will be over. We are before Hashem, Who is the essence of truth. All our excuses, rationales and lies – gone.

Yosef added, “that you sold me.” I am the Yosef whom you sold. He could have simply said, “I am Yosef.” Why did he add whom you sold? Even if they had not sold him, nonetheless, what happened to him was an unpardonable injustice, a tragedy of epic proportion. What difference does it make whether they sold him or gave him away? *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*, explains that this was part of Yosef’s rebuke. “For what did you sell me? For a pair of shoes? Is that all a human being is worth? How could you sell me for such a paltry reimbursement?” Likewise, when the day of reckoning arrives, Hashem will ask us: “For what did you exchange the life of the spirit? What was so valuable that you felt it prudent to renege the Torah for it? What did you do with the time allotted for *davening*; with the time that should have been spent learning Torah? How did you spend it? For what did you exchange the spiritual opportunities that I gave you?” Imagine, if Yosef’s holy brothers were left speechless, what will we “say” when Hashem asks us these questions?

We make the mistake of exchanging spirituality for the material and physical, thinking that it is an equal trade, ignoring the simple fact that nothing physical endures. Only the spiritual prevails over time. A father who had a good life lay on his deathbed. Shortly before he took his last breath, he handed his eldest son an envelope: “This is my will, my last testament to you, which I would like you to open prior to my funeral.” He passed away a few hours later. Word spread throughout the community. The deceased was known as a benevolent, generous man who viewed his fortune as nothing more than a Heavenly deposit to be used to help others. Material assets are not here for one to be wed to them. They are here to serve a Divine purpose.

The family convened in the side room off the main chapel to open and read the contents of the envelope, their father’s last epistle to his family. They anxiously wanted to hear his message. The son opened up the large envelope only to discover within it two smaller envelopes. One envelope was marked: “to be opened after the *shivah*,” seven-day period of bereavement. The other envelope had a note in it: “I ask that you bury me in my socks. Totty.” A strange request which actually was not consistent with *halachah*. Thus, the son decided that he must first confer with the *rabbanim*. A Jew is buried in *tachrichim*, shrouds. He does not pick out his burial clothes.

The *rabbanim* apologized, but they could not permit the family to follow the wishes of the deceased. The *halachah* was straightforward concerning the garments in which a deceased is to be buried. Socks are definitely not among the permitted items. Indeed, at the funeral, each *rav*, after singing the praises of the deceased, apologized for not fulfilling his last wish. Following the funeral and burial, the family

observed the seven bereavement days. On the last day, following the Morning Prayer service, they ended the *shivah* and then proceeded to their late father’s study for the reading of the second envelope. After what was contained in the first letter, they truly wondered what the second letter would say. In the back of their minds was their father’s division of assets. Who was receiving what held a captivating position in everyone’s mind. While they were all equal as siblings, people often have novel interpretations concerning the term equal – especially when it applies to one’s inheritance. In addition, everyone knew that the deceased was a charitable man. As such, everyone who had even an “imagined” organization had his call in for a contribution. Sad, but this is reality.

The eldest son opened the envelope and removed a note: “My dear children. By now, you have confronted the grim reality that nothing material in this world endures. When they say, ‘You cannot take it with you,’ they are correct. When a person leaves this world, he cannot even take his socks along with him! With this in mind, I hope that you will continue to focus your life on matters of the spirit, and, thus, use the material assets that I bequeath to you for the performance of *mitzvos* and good deeds. Nothing in this world leaves with you, only *mitzvos* and good deeds. This is how I encourage you to spend your newly acquired wealth.”

**ויפל על צווארי בנימין אהיו ויבך ובנימין בכה על צוואריו**

**Then he fell on Binyamin’s neck and wept; and Binyamin wept upon his neck. (45:14)**

When Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers, the Torah writes that he and Binyamin fell on one another’s shoulders and wept profusely. *Chazal* explain why they wept: Yosef cried over the *Batei Mikdash* which would be destroyed in Binyamin’s portion of *Eretz Yisrael*. Binyamin cried over the *Mishkan Shiloh* that was once situated in Yosef’s portion, which would be destroyed. The obvious question is not why they wept, but rather, why should they not weep? Who would not cry after years of separation with one brother longing for the other, not knowing if he were dead or alive, spiritually connected or not, then discovering how everything was for the good and all was well? Of course they should cry when they met! What is the question? These were tears of joy, for finally seeing that their hopes had been realized.

*Horav Eliyahu Svei, zl*, cites the *Yalkut (V’Zos HaBrachah)* which quotes *Chazal*’s reasons concerning the *Shechinah*’s reposing in Binyamin’s portion of *Eretz Yisrael* in the (*Batei Mikdash*). One reason is that Binyamin was the only brother who had not been involved in the selling of Yosef. Hashem said, “I am instructing the builders of the *Bais Hamikdash* to erect it as a place for Jews who pray for Heavenly compassion to come to pray. How can it be built in a portion of *Eretz Yisrael* belonging to one of the brothers who had been involved in selling Yosef? When he pleaded with them to have mercy on him, did they listen? No! I will not have the *Bais Hamikdash*, the place where one seeks Heavenly mercy, to be erected in a place that does not represent compassion.”

The *Yalkut* implies that the primary purpose of the *Bais Hamikdash* was to serve as a center where a Jew could turn to pray to Hashem for mercy. As such, the *Bais Hamikdash* could not stand in a portion of *Eretz Yisrael* apportioned to a tribe which earlier had not responded with compassion to their brother’s pleas. Even Yosef could not have the *Bais Hamikdash* in his portion of *Eretz Yisrael*, because, he, too, played a role in the *mechirah*, sale. The only brother who had had no involvement whatsoever in Yosef’s sale was Binyamin. Therefore, he was worthy to have the *Bais Hamikdash* in his portion.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* derives from here that in order to be worthy of having the *Bais Hamikdash*, one must represent the *middah*, attribute, of *achavah*, brotherhood/brotherly love, *b’shleimus*, in complete perfection. Binyamin was worthy. How sad it was that the Second *Bais Hamikdash* was taken from us as a result of *sinaas chinam*, unwarranted hatred, between brothers.

Let us now return to the encounter between the two sons of Rachel *Imeinu* – Yosef and Binyamin. When they fell on each other, they exhibited brotherly love at its apex. Nonetheless, they wept. Why?

They saw that the *Batei Mikdash* and *Mishkan Shiloh* would ultimately be destroyed. This in and of itself was an indicator that the *achvah* which should have reigned was deficient. Had the *achvah* been faultless, had it achieved perfection, the Sanctuaries would not have been destroyed. They wept because they saw that the perfect love that currently existed would eventually deteriorate and no longer retain its perfection. Indeed, when *Klal Yisrael* was divided, the tribe of Binyamin was no longer “perfect.” This would happen in the End of Days.

*Mah tov u'mah na'im sheves achim gam yachad*, “How good and how pleasing for brothers to sit together in unity” (*Pele Yoetz*). Two famous brothers whose relationship with one another was flawless were *Horav Zalman* and *Horav Chaim Volozhiner*. They personified holiness and purity from their very entrance into this world. The love and esteem they manifested for one another was exceptional. Their father, *Rav Yitzchak*, was a *parnes*, leader and supporter, of the Volozhin community. He had a massive library in his house. In those days, any person who owned a complete *Shas*, all the folios of the *Talmud*, was considered wealthy and distinguished. As a result, his home was filled with Torah scholars from all areas, who came to delve in his priceless treasures. *Rav Yitzchak* and his *Rebbetzin*, who was a deeply righteous woman, opened their home and enabled these scholars to spend days and nights engrossed in Torah study, with the greatest comfort and ease of mind.

One Torah giant who spent time in *Rav Yitzchak's* home was *Horav Aryeh Leib Heller*, *zl*, author of the *Ketzos Hachoshen*. One day, as *Rav Aryeh Leib* was engrossed in learning, *Rav Yitzchak's Rebbetzin's* labor began in earnest. She called for the midwife who came forthright to assist her in the birthing process. It was a difficult birth which went on for hours, accompanied by serious pain. Never once did the prospective mother utter a sound, for fear that she might disturb *Rav Aryeh Leib's* learning. Finally, she gave birth to her first son, *Rav Zalman* (*Zalmele*). When *Rav Aryeh Leib* heard of her sacrifice, he blessed her to have sons who would illuminate the Torah world with their knowledge and leadership. The relationship between these two Torah giants was one of pure, unmitigated love and respect, with each one considering the other the true *gadol*. They were two different personalities with distinct outlooks on life, but, with regard to the esteem in which they held one another their feelings coincided fully.

When the *Chortkover Rebbe*, *Horav Yisrael*, *zl*, left this world, his *chassidim* took it for granted that his two sons, *Horav Nuchem Mordechai* and *Horav Dov*, would ascend to his position. *Rav Nuchem Mordechai*, the older brother, had spent his life in total devotion to Hashem, spiritually perfecting himself to the point that he was an undisputed *tzaddik*. The younger brother, *Rav Dov*, was greatly respected for his erudition in all areas of Torah. His brilliance shone, not only in his scholarship, but also in his wisdom and ability to give sage advice. Yet, despite their obvious suitability to become *Rebbe*, neither one felt worthy of “sitting in his holy father's place.”

After much convincing by the closest *chassidim*, the brothers finally relented and agreed to sit at the head of the table. Nonetheless, they each adamantly refused to become *Rebbe*. The issue came to its resolution when their mother decreed that they must accept the position. They relented, and the two brothers together led their *chassidim*. Their followers were awestruck by the brotherly love and esteem they gave to one another. Neither one acted without prior consent of the other. Even when a *chassid* entered with a *kvittel*, written petition, both brothers sat together and, after each one read it, they would take turns giving their individual *brachah*. A *chassid* who sought advice had to speak to both brothers, who would then issue a joint response. Any letter sent to them had to be addressed to both, or they would not read its contents. They redefined brotherhood. *Chazal* establish the barometer for *achdus*, unity, as *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, “Like one man with one heart.” The *Chortkover Rebbes* were not “like” one man. They were one man; each one totally abrogating himself to the other.

ואת יהודה שלח לפניו ... להורות לפניו גשנה

## He sent Yehudah ahead of him... to prepare ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

*Rashi* quotes the well-known *Chazal*: *Yaakov Avinu* sent Yehudah to prepare the way for the family. He sent Yehudah to establish a *bais Talmud*, house of Torah study, a *yeshivah*, from where Torah would be disseminated. No one questions that Yehudah was a capable leader, a spokesman for the family, but was he appropriate to be a *Rosh Yeshivah*? *Levi* and *Yissachar* were the two brothers who devoted their days and nights to spiritual pursuits. One would have expected that *Yaakov* would have selected either or both of them to be his emissaries to build a *makom Torah*. The answer lies in how we define a *Rosh Yeshivah*, whose function is to be *mechanech*, educate, a generation of *bonei Torah*.

The *Tiferes Shlomo* (*Horav Shlomo Ganzfried*, *zl*, author of *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*) explains that Yehudah demonstrated his ability to be *mekabel achrayos*, accept responsibility, when he told *Yaakov*, *Anochi e'ervenu miyadi tevakshenu*; “I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him” (*Ibid*. 43:19). The Patriarch hesitated to send Binyamin to Egypt, for fear that he would lose him, as he “lost” *Yosef*. Yehudah countered that he would assume responsibility for his safe passage to Egypt and back. To build a *makom Torah*, an institution in which Torah study would thrive and be disseminated to others, it is critical that its leader never shirk responsibility.

A responsive leader is prepared to “own” the problem, present a solution and never make the same mistake twice. This way, he builds trust among his colleagues and subordinates, achieving the respect of those around him. Thus, he gets better results. While we often confuse responsibility with accountability, they represent diverse mindsets. An accountable leader is answerable, and he is willing to accept the results of a project or activity, regardless of its negative or positive outcome. A responsible person goes further. He views himself as the one who must make the project “happen,” even if it is not something in which he personally believes. If it is his job or a position he has assumed, he is relentless in seeing it through to the finish line, because he has taken responsibility for its completion.

How does *achrayos* play itself out in the area of Torah *chinuch*? A Torah leader (*rebbe*, *Rav*, *Rosh Yeshivah*, *menahel*, *Rosh Kollel*) is concerned for each and every *talmid*, student, regardless of background, acumen, pedigree or financial portfolio. He cares and worries about everything that involves his *talmid*, both spiritually and materially, because an unhappy student who has external, troubling concerns does not learn well. He shares both in his student's joy and his pain and makes every effort to address his needs. Indeed, each and every one of the *gedolei Yisrael* who achieved the pinnacle of greatness in the area of *chinuch* manifested the highest degree of *achrayos* for his *talmidim* and their institutions. *Horav Shlomo Wolbe*, *zl*, cared for each and every *talmid* as a father cares for his son. His care extended far beyond the student's spiritual growth. Every aspect of his student's life was important to him. During the winter, if he would notice a student walking around without a sweater (buildings were not heated), he would tap the student on the shoulder and ask, “Where is your sweater? Are you cold?” Undoubtedly, his caring nature “warmed” the student. When a student knows that his *rebbe* cares about him, he feels a sense of obligation and gratitude to the *rebbe*. To absorb oneself in the sea of Torah requires a calm, relaxed and happy mind. When one is troubled, learning successfully is a challenge. When the *talmid* perceives that a *rebbe* is devoted to him, it makes all of the difference in the world.

*Horav Shimon Shkop*, *zl*, was a brilliant Torah scholar whose volumes on *Talmud* are staples in every *yeshivah*. He was also a *Rebbe* par excellence who cared for every *talmid* as if he were his own child, as well as for those who were not yet his *talmidim*. Every Jewish child has enormous potential, and one never knows how and when it will be realized. The following story is a classic which demonstrates this Torah giant's love for a Jewish child and how it played itself out years later.

The Bolshevik Revolution took its toll on Russia and, as always, its Jewish population, which suffered whenever an upheaval occurred. The *bachurim* studying under *Rav Shimon* in his *yeshivah* in

Grodno were suddenly shocked out of their idyllic Torah study when they heard loud shots. Apparently, the war was being brought to their doorstep. As the sounds of battle came closer, their thoughts slowly drifted from the *Gemora* to their lives. Would they survive this incursion? Would they ever see their families again? Would their spiritual status be impugned as a result of the impending troubles?

Suddenly, the door burst open, and a group of gun-wielding soldiers burst into the room. They had the *bachurim* line up against the wall. They looked at their *Rebbe*, who instructed them to follow the orders. *Rav Shimon* arose from his seat and stood with his students. The *bachurim*, many of whom were still boys, were overcome with fear. Whatever composure they maintained was due to their revered *Rebbe*, who stood there staring into the faces of the soldiers, without fear. As the head of the soldiers stepped forward, *Rav Shimon* told him, "We are prepared to follow your orders and do what you ask of us. We are simply studying our Torah." The soldier did not reply. He just kept staring at *Rav Shimon* with penetrating eyes, as if he were trying to place *Rav Shimon*, to recall an incident in his life that included the *Rosh Yeshivah*.

"*Rebbe*, is that you?" The *Rosh Yeshivah* looked at the man, but was unable to recognize him. The man removed his military cap and ordered his men to lower the rifles.

"*Rebbe*, I know that you do not remember me, but I will never forget you. When I was a young man, I came to *Telshe Yeshivah* (where *Rav Shimon* had been *Rosh Yeshivah*) for an entrance *bechinah*, test. As I was walking from one building to the next, you looked at me and the first thing that you noticed was that a button was missing from my coat. I told you that it did not really matter. You would not take no for an answer, and you insisted that I come to your house, where your wife would sew on a button. You said that it was bitter cold outside and, thus, important that my coat be properly buttoned to protect me from the elements. Your concern and compassion for a total stranger left a strong, enduring impression on me. In the end, I decided that *yeshivah* was not really for me, and soon thereafter I was drafted into the army. While my life took a different turn than many had hoped for, I never forgot the warmth you showed me that cold, frigid day." He turned to the boys and told them how fortunate they were to have such a *Rebbe*. He then ordered his men to leave. They marched away, leaving the entire village unscathed, all because of the caring and concern of a *Rebbe*.

*Horav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, zl*, was the consummate *Rebbe* whose love for his *talmidim* was palpable. In a biography of his life, *Rabbi Yechiel Spero* relates a number of stories that demonstrate his love and concern for each of his *talmidim*. One vignette particularly moved me. One of his *talmidim*, who was now a *Rosh Yeshivah*, asked his *Rebbe* for a *brachah* for one of his *talmidim*. Apparently, he was struggling and in need of Divine assistance. As *Rav Scheinberg* listened to his student relate the issues confronting his student, *Rav Scheinberg's* face manifested pain. It was obvious from his expression how much he cared for the struggle of a student whom he did not personally know. He asked his student for the boy's name and the name of his mother, so that he could *daven* for him. His student, the *Rosh Yeshivah*, admitted that he did not know his student's mother's name.

*Rav Scheinberg* looked at his student with disappointment: "How could a *rebbe* not know the name of his student's mother? Do you not *daven* for him?" *Rav Scheinberg* immediately rattled off this *talmid's* name along with his mother's name. "Seventeen years ago, you were undergoing an issue that was troubling you and occupying your mind. I began *davening* for you then, and I have not stopped *davening* for you for the last seventeen years."

*Sponsored in memory of our dear father and grandfather*

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*"Love and memories are gifts from G-d that death cannot destroy"*

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*prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

## *Ohr Somayach :: Insights into Halacha* *For the week ending 26 December 2020 / 11 Tevet 5781* *Fasting on Friday?*

### *Rabbi Yehuda Spitz*

#### *Asarah B'Teves: Not Your Ordinary Fast Day*

One of the fascinating characteristics of 5781 is that the Taanis Tzibbur of Asarah B'Teves (the 10th of Teves) will fall out on Friday. Or to be precise, this Friday. This remarkable status of a 'Friday Fast' is actually exclusive to Asarah B'Teves – as it is the only one that we do actually observe as a communal fast on a Friday.[1]

Although to many the only notable aspect of Asarah B'Teves is that it is by far the shortest fast day in the Jewish calendar for anyone in the Northern Hemisphere (my heartfelt sympathies to the South Americans, So'Africans, Aussies, and Kiwis), nonetheless, it turns out that the Fast of Asarah B'Teves is actually quite unique. Indubitably, to maintain this distinction of being the only Taanis Tzibbur that we actually do observe on Friday, there is much more to the Fast of Asarah B'Teves than meets the eye. Indeed, upon closer examination, Asarah B'Teves has several exceptional characteristics that are not found in any other fast day.

#### *Why This Fast?*

The reason given for fasting on Asarah B'Teves is that it is the day that the wicked Babylonian king Nevuchadnetzar started his siege of Yerushalayim,[2] foreshadowing the beginning of the end of the first Beis Hamikdash, which culminated with its destruction on Tisha B'Av several years later. Therefore, Chazal declared it a public fast, one of four public fast days that memorialize different aspects of the catastrophes and national tragedies associated with the destruction of both Batei HaMikdash.[3]

#### *A Friday Fast*

However, of these four public fast days, as mentioned previously, only Asarah B'Teves is actually observed on a Friday. Proof to Asarah B'Teves' exceptionality can perhaps be gleaned from the words of Yechezkel HaNavi referring to Asarah B'Teves, that the siege of Yerushalayim leading up to the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash transpired "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh – in the middle of this day,"[4] implying that the fast must always be observed on that exact day, no matter the conflicting occurrence. This would help explain why it is fully observed on Friday, with no dispensation given.[5]

Yet, this uniqueness is fairly interesting, as there is a whole debate in the Gemara about how to conduct fasts on a Friday, when we must also take kavod Shabbos into account,[6] implying that it is a common occurrence. However, according to our calendar, a communal Friday fast is only applicable with Asarah B'Teves, and it actually does occur quasi-frequently. The last few times Asarah B'Teves fell out on a Friday were in 1996, 2001, 2010, and 2013; the latter of which, quite appropriately, coincided with a "Yerushalmi Blizzard." [7]

Asarah B'Teves is next expected to occur on a Friday in 2023 (5784), 2025 (5785), 2034 (5795), and 2037 (5798). In another interesting calendrical twist, but not the Jewish calendar, due to the differences between the Jewish lunar-based year and the Gregorian solar-based year, this fast, curiously (and perhaps appropriately) falling out on December 25th,[8] is actually the second Asarah B'Teves fast to occur in 2020. The first was back on January 7th (anyone remember that B.C. – Before Covid-19?).[9]

#### *Halachos of a Friday Fast*

The halachos of a Friday fast generally parallel those of a regular fast day;[10] including Aneinu and the Krias HaTorah of "Vayechal"[11] twice (along with the haftarah of "Dirshu" at Mincha), albeit with no Tachanun or Avinu Malkeinu at Mincha, as it is Erev Shabbos.[12] In fact, even though there is some debate in the Rishonim as to the Gemara's intent that "Halacha – Mesaneh U'Mashlim, a Friday fast should be completed" whether or not one may be mekabel Shabbos early and thereby end the fast before nightfall,[13] nonetheless, the halacha follows the Shulchan Aruch and Rema that since Asarah B'Teves is a public fast (Taanis Tzibbur) and not a Taanis Yachid, one must fast the whole day and complete it at nightfall (Tzeis HaKochavim) before making Kiddush.[14]

There are many Poskim who maintain that it is preferable to daven Maariv somewhat earlier than usual on this Friday night, to enable making Kiddush, and breaking the fast exactly at Tzeis HaKochavim.[15] On the other hand, there are those who maintain that if one generally waits until Zman Rabbeinu Tam (Shiur 4 Mil, commonly observed as 72 minutes after Shkiya) to break his fast, he should do so as well this Erev Shabbos Asarah B'Teves, but nonetheless should make Kiddush immediately at the Zman.[16] Some maintain that it is preferable to begin the Leil Shabbos Seudah directly with Kiddush and only recite Shalom Aleichem and Eishes Chayil after being somewhat satiated and relaxed.[17]

#### Three Day Fast?

Another fascinating and unique aspect of this fast, is that according to the special Selichos prayers recited on Asarah B'Teves,[18] we are actually fasting for two other days of tragedy as well; the 8th and 9th of Teves. In fact, and although in his Beis Yosef commentary the great Rav Yosef Karo, notes that he has never seen nor heard of anyone fasting on these days, nevertheless, both the Tur and in his own later Shulchan Aruch, Rav Karo asserts that it is proper to try to fast on all three days.[19] However, it is important to note that of the three, only Asarah B'Teves was actually mandated as a public fast day.[20]

#### The 8th of Teves

On the 8th of Teves, King Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.E.) forced 72 sages separately to translate the Torah into Greek (the Septuagint). Although miracles guided their work and all of the sages made the same slight but necessary amendments, nevertheless this work is described as "darkness descending on the world for three days," as it was now possible for the uneducated to possess a superficial, and frequently flawed understanding of the Torah, as well as providing the masses with a mistaken interpretation of true morality.[21]

#### The 9th of Teves

Although several decisors, following the Megillas Taanis, write that the reason for fasting on the 9th of Teves is unknown,[22] nonetheless many sources, including the Kol Bo and the Selichos recited on Asarah B'Teves, as well as many later authorities, explain that this is the day on which Ezra HaSofer, as well as possibly his partner in rebuilding the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael after the 70 year Galus Bavel, Nechemiah, died. Ezra, the Gadol HaDor at the beginning of the time of the Second Beis HaMikdash, had a tremendous impact upon the nascent returning Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael. He drastically improved the spiritual state of the Jewish people and established many halachic takanos, many of which still apply today.[23] With his passing, the community started sliding from the great spiritual heights Ezra had led them. Additionally, since Ezra was the last of the prophets,[24] his passing signified the end of prophecy.

Other sources attribute fasting on this day to the passings of other specific Tzaddikim on this day, including the enigmatic Shimon HaKalphus and Rav Yosef HaNaggid, or to the birth of 'Oso HaIsh', the founder of Christianity, in whose name myriads of Jews over the millennia were R"l murdered.[25] [26] The Sefer HaToda'ah posits that it's possible that Chazal's expression of "darkness descending on the world for three days" alludes to the triple woes of these three days: the 8th, 9th, and 10th of Teves.[27]

#### A Shabbos Fast?!

The third and possibly most important attribute of Asarah B'Teves is that according to the Abudraham, if Asarah B'Teves would potentially fall out on Shabbos, we would all actually be required to fast on Shabbos![28] (Notwithstanding that with our calendar this is an impossibility.[29]) He cites proof to this from the words of Yechezkel referring to Asarah B'Teves that the siege transpired "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh," implying that the fast must always be observed on that exact day, no matter the conflicting occurrence – not only Friday, but even on Shabbos.

Yet, the Abudraham's statement is astounding, as the only fast that halachically takes precedence over Shabbos is Yom Kippur, the only Biblically mandated fast. How can one of the Rabbinic minor fasts push off the Biblical Shabbos? Additionally, Asarah B'Teves commemorates

merely the start of the siege, and not any actual destruction. How can it be considered a more important fast than Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the actual destruction and loss of both of our Batei HaMikdash, which get pushed off when it falls on Shabbos?[30]

In fact, the Beis Yosef questions this declaration of the Abudraham, stating that he "does not know how the Abudraham could know" such a ruling. As an aside, this does not seem to be the actual halacha, as other Rishonim, including Rashi and the Rambam, as well as the Tur and Shulchan Aruch and later poskim explicitly rule, that if Asarah B'Teves falls out on Shabbos it gets pushed off.[31] [32]

#### Commencement Is Catastrophic

Several authorities, including Rav Yonason Eibenschutz and the Bnei Yissaschar,[33] understand the Abudraham's enigmatic statement as similar to the famous Gemara in Taanis (29a) regarding Tisha B'Av. It seems that historically the Beis HaMikdash only started to burn toward the end of the 9th of Av (Tisha B'Av) and actually burned down on the 10th. Yet, Chazal established the fast on the 9th, since "Aschalta D'Paranusah Adifa," meaning that the beginning of a tragedy is considered the worst part. Likewise, they maintain that since the siege on Asarah B'Teves was the harbinger to and commencement of the long chain of tragedies that ended with the Beis HaMikdash in ruins and the Jewish people in exile, its true status belies the common perception of it as a minor fast, and potentially has the ability to push off Shabbos.

Indeed, the Midrash Tanchuma[34] teaches that it was already fitting for the Bais HaMikdash to actually be destroyed on Asarah B'Teves, but Hashem, in His incredible mercy, pushed off the destruction to the summertime, so that Klal Yisrael would not have to be exiled in the cold. Hence, Asarah B'Teves's role as the 'beginning of the end' underlies the severity of this fast day.

The famed Chasam Sofer[35] takes this a step further. He wrote that the reason Chazal established a fast for the siege on Asarah B'Teves, as opposed to every other time Yerushalayim was under siege over the millennia, is that on that day in the Heavenly Courtroom it was decided that the Bais HaMikdash was to be destroyed a few years hence. There is a well known Talmudic dictum that any generation in which the Beis HaMikdash has not been rebuilt is as if it has been destroyed again.[36] Therefore, he explains, every Asarah B'Teves the Heavenly Court convenes and decrees a new Churban. He adds though that, conversely, a proper fast on Asarah B'Teves has the potential to avert future Churbanos.

Accordingly, we are not fasting exclusively due to past calamities, but rather, similar to a Taanis Chalom, a fast for a dream, we are fasting to help prevent a tragedy from occurring. The Chasam Sofer even refers to such a fast as an oneg, a delight, as our fasting will help stave off potential future catastrophes. That is why the fast of Asarah B'Teves, even though it is considered a minor fast, nonetheless has the potential to possibly override Shabbos. These explanations would also certainly elucidate why we would fast on a Friday for Asarah B'Teves.

The Rambam famously exhorts us to remember the real meaning underlying a fast day. It's not just a day when we miss our morning coffee! The purpose of fasting is to focus on the spiritual side of the day and use it as a catalyst for inspiration towards Teshuva.[37] In this merit may the words of the Navi Zechariah, "The Fast of the Fourth (month, 17th of Tamuz), the Fast of the Fifth (month, Tisha B'Av), the Fast of the Seventh (month, Tzom Gedalyah), and the Fast of the Tenth (month, Asarah B'Teves) shall be (changed over) for celebration and joy for the household of Yehuda"[38] be fulfilled speedily and in our days.

*For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.*

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*Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.*

*This article was written L'Iyuv Nishmas the Ohr Somayach Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga and R' Chaim Baruch Yehuda ben Dovid Tzvi and l'zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikif u'miyad*

[1] See Meiri (Megillah 2a), Abudraham (Hilchos Taanis), Magen Avraham (O.C. 550:4), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 4), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. end 2), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 10). Although the Erev Pesach Taanis Bechorim can also technically fall out on a Friday, nevertheless, it is not a true communal fast, as it is not incumbent upon all of Klal Yisrael, rather exclusive to firstborns, of whom the vast majority exempt themselves with a siyum – see Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 470:5) and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 10). Moreover, the common minhag is that when Erev Pesach occurs on Erev Shabbos, like it does this year, 5781 – the Taanis Bechorim is actually observed on Thursday. See Terumas Hadeshen (126), Shulchan Aruch and Rema (O.C. 470:2), Ben Ish Chai Ben Ish Chai (Year 1 Parashas Tzav, Halachos Im Chaf Erev Pesach B'Shabbos Kodesh 1), and Rav Yosef Elyahu Henkin's authoritative Ezras Torah Luach (reprinted in Shu"t Gevuros Elyahu O.C. vol. 1:126, 7). However, as noted by the Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 249:3; citing Gemara Erwin 40b and Yerushalmi Taanis Ch. 2, Halacha 12), Anshei Maaseh would have the custom of fasting every Erev Shabbos.

[2] Melachim II (Ch. 25:1), Yirmiyahu (Ch. 52:4), Yechezkel (Ch. 24:1-2). Interestingly, it seems that Yechezkel HaNavi's wife also died on Asarah B'Teves, as the same prophecy on that day continues with his wife's passing (Ch. 24:15-19). See Gemara Moed Kattan (28a) and Ya'aros Dvash (vol. 2, Drush 12 s.v. ulefi zeh).

[3] See Zecharia (Ch. 8:19), Gemara Rosh Hashana (18b), Rambam (Hilchos Taanios Ch. 5 1-5) and Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 549 and 550).

[4] Yechezkel (Ch. 24:2).

[5] See Rambam (Hilchos Taanios Ch. 5:5), Abudraham (ibid.), Beis Yosef (O.C. 550 s.v. u'mashekasav v'im), Rema (ad loc. 3), Magen Avraham (ad loc. 6), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 4). Although technically speaking, if other fasts (with the possible exception of Taanis Esther) would fall out on Friday, an impossibility in our calendar, we would also have to fast.

[6] Gemara Eiruvin (14a).

[7] Yes, this author is familiar with the 'Coincidences' involved with that memorable Yerushalayim snowstorm. According to the Targum (Rav Yosef) to Divrei Hayamim, 'Yom Hasheleg', 'The Day of Snow' that Benayahu ben Yehoyada "smote the lion in the pit" (Shmuel II, Ch. 23:20 and Divrei Hayamim I, Ch. 11:22; see also Gemara Brachos 18a), is none other than Asarah B'Teves! Additionally, since it was a fast, the haftarah read by Mincha included the apropos verse (Yeshaya Ch. 55:10) referring to "Ka'asher Yet'reid Hageshem Vehasheleg min Hashamayim, when the rain and snow fall from the heavens." Furthermore, that day's Daf Yomi was Yoma 35, which includes the famous account of Hillel almost freezing to death on the roof of Shmaya and Avtalyon's Beis Midrash, while trying to listen to their teaching "Divrei Elokim Chaim," when he could not afford the admission fee. That day was described by the Gemara as an Erev Shabbos in Teves, that a tremendous amount of snow (three amos) fell upon him from the heavens. Moreover, this incident ostensibly occurred in Yerushalayim, as it is well known that Shmaya and Avtalyon, the Gedolei HaDor, lived in Yerushalayim. [See Mishnayos Ediyus (Ch. 1:3 and Ch. 5:6), Gemara Brachos (19a), Shabbos (15a), and Yoma (71b).] Thanks are due to Rabbi Dovid Alexander for his paper on these 'Coincidences.'

[8] Well, perhaps not so curious, but possibly rather apropos. You see, according to the Selicha for Asarah B'Teves that starts with the word Ezerah, generally attributed to Rav Yosef Tov-Alem (Bonfils), a unique aspect of Asarah B'Teves is that we are actually fasting for two other days of tragedy as well; the 8th and 9th of Teves. According to the Megillas Taanis, regarding the 9th of Teves, "lo noda bo eizo hi hatzara she'eera bo," the reason for the fast is unclear. One theory posited over the centuries is that the real reason for fasting is that the 9th of Teves is the true birthday of 'Oso Halsh', in whose name myriads of Jews over the millennia were R'l murdered. The origin of this claim seems to be the 12th century Sefer Halbur by Rav Avraham bar Chiyah (pg. 109). In fact, the Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Chanuka, Inyanei Nittel, pg. 416) cites that some say that Nittel, the name used for the Christian December holiday, actually stands for Noland Y eishu T es L'Teves. This is discussed further in the article.

[9] Interestingly, in 2022 there is no Asarah B'Teves. It is set to next occur on December 14, 2021 and the following one on January 3, 2023. This is because the corresponding Jewish year, 5782, is a leap year with an added Chodesh Adar; hence there are 384 days between the two fasts of Asarah B'Teves – 19 days longer than the solar/Gregorian calendar year. Thanks are due to R' Avraham Schivjeschurder for pointing out this calendar quirk.

[10] However, even those who advise not to bathe on a regular fast day, nevertheless allow one to do so on a Friday fast L'Kavod Shabbos, with hot water as usual. See Bach (O.C. 550:3; although cited by both the Ba'er Heitiv and Mishnah Berurah as the source for this rule, nevertheless, this author has been unable to locate where exactly the Bach states an explicit Erev Shabbos exception for bathing), Elyah Rabba (ad loc. 2), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 3), Shu"t Ksav Sofer (O.C. 100), Shulchan HaTahor (249:4), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. end 6), and Shu"t Siach Yitzchak (247).

[11] Parashas Ki Sisa (Shemos Ch. 22:11). Haftarah is Yeshaya (Ch. 55:6).

[12] See Abudraham (ibid.), Maharil (Hilchos Taanios 17), Rema (O.C. 550:3 and 566:1), Magen Avraham (O.C. 550:6), Yad Efraim (ad loc.), and Mishnah Berurah (550:11 and 566:5). The halacha is not like the Shibolei Haleket (263, Hagahos; as cited by the Agur, 880, and later the Beis Yosef, ibid.) who maintains that we also do not lean the special Fast Day Kriyas HaTorah at Mincha Erev Shabbos.

[13] Although the Gemara (Erwin 41a; also in Midrash Tanchuma, Bereishis 2) concludes "Halacha - Mesaneh U'Mashlim," even so, there are many Rishonim [most notably Tosafos (ad loc. 41b s.v. hilchasa), the Rashba, and Rivva (ad loc.)] who understand this dictum to mean that one may conclude his Erev Shabbos fast at Tzeis HaKochavim, even though it means he will enter Shabbos famished (a situation that is normally disfavored), and not that one must conclude his fast on Friday night at Tzeis HaKochavim. An additional shivah is that of the Raavad (Sefer HaEshkol, vol. 2, pg. 18; cited by the Beis Yosef, O.C. 550:3), who maintains that "mashlim" in this instance is referring to completing the fast by Shkiya, as otherwise it will infringe upon Tosefes Shabbos. A further complication is that this also may depend on whether one is fasting for personal reasons (Taanis Yachid) or an obligatory public fast (Taanis Tzibbur). The Rema (O.C. 249:4) concludes that for a Taanis Yachid one may rely upon the lenient opinions and end his fast after he accepted Shabbos, prior to Tzeis HaKochavim (especially if he made such a stipulation before commencing his fast), yet for a Taanis Tzibbur, he rules that we follow the Rishonim who mandate strict interpretation of the Gemara, and we must fast until actual nightfall on Friday night. It is debatable whether the Shulchan Aruch is actually fully agreeing with this approach or not. See explanation of the Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 21 and Biur Halacha s.v. v'im) at length. This has since become normative halacha. See next footnote.

[14] See Shulchan Aruch and Rema (O.C. 249:4), based on the Rosh (Taanis Ch. 2:4) and Maharil (Shu"t 33); Magen Avraham (ad loc. 8), Bach (ad loc. end 6), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 7), Elyah Rabba (ad loc. 10), Korban Nesanel (Taanis, end Ch. 2:60), Shulchan Aruch HaRav (ad loc. 12), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (121:6), Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parashas Lech Lecha 23), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 10), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 21 and Biur Halacha s.v. v'im), Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 29 and 31), Shu"t Yabea Omer (vol. 6, O.C. 31), Shu"t Yechaveh Daas (vol. 1:80), Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Chanuka, Shu"t 14), Yalkut Yosef (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 249:7 and 559:25), and Rav Mordechai Elyahu's Darchei Halacha glosses to the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (121:5). The Netei Gavriel adds that B'shaas Hadchak and l'tzorech gadol one may be mekabel Shabbos early and rely on the lenient opinions, as long it is after nightfall according to several opinions (meaning, an earlier Zman of Tzeis HaKochavim than the faster would usually observe).

[15] See Shulchan HaTahor (249:13) who writes that usually it is assur to complete a Friday fast until Tzeis HaKochavim, even an obligatory fast, as it is an affront to Kedushas Shabbos; rather, he maintains that one should be mekabel Shabbos early and have his seudah before nightfall. Yet, in his explanations (Zer Zahav ad loc. 4) he maintains that regarding Asarah B'Teves on Friday, since we are beholden to follow the ruling of the Rema, one should still be mekabel Shabbos early, and daven Maariv earlier than usual, to enable us to end the fast with making Kiddush at the exact zman of Tzeis HaKochavim. This is also cited by the Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Chanuka, Ch. 63:6). The Steipler Gaon (cited in Orchos Rabbeinu, new version, vol. 1, pg. 203:7 and vol. 2, pg. 200:8) was nohag this way, that in his shul on Asarah B'Teves on a Friday, they davened Maariv earlier than usual and announced that everyone should repeat Kriyas Shema. It is also mentioned (Orchos Rabbeinu ibid. and vol. 3, pg. 160:5) that this was the Chazon Ish's shittah as well, regarding any taanis, that Maariv should be davened somewhat earlier than usual, with Kriyas Shema repeated later on (the Chazon Ish held to start from 30 minutes after Shkiya, instead of his usual shittah of

40 minutes). This idea is also found in the Matheh Efraim (602:29), albeit regarding Tzom Gedalia, not to carry extraneously regarding Maariv on a Motzai Taanis. He explains that there is no inyan of tosefes (adding extra time) on a fast day aside from the Biblically mandated Yom Kippur, and therefore it is worthwhile to synchronize the ending of Maariv with the fast ending, and not wait for the full Tzeis Hakochavim to start Maariv as is usually preferred. Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner (Shu"t Shevet Halevi vol. 6:72 and vol. 10:81 and Halichos Shevet Halevi Ch. 21:4, pg. 172) ruled this way as well, that it is proper to daven Maariv earlier on a standard fast day, shortly after Bein Hashmashos of the Gaonim's shittah, in Eretz Yisrael approximately 20 minutes after Shkiya. It is known that Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (Hanaghos Rabbeinu pg. 308:133, and in his Talmid, Rav Nochum Eisenstein's Dvar Halacha, #160, Parashas Vayigash 5781) as well, would daven Maariv on Motzai Taanis, even Motzai Tisha B'Av, twenty minutes after Shkiya (instead of his usual thirty minutes). Rav Shmuel Salant, long time Rav of Yerushalayim in the late 1800s, ruled similarly (Toras Rabbeinu Shmuel Salant ז"ל vol. 1, pg. 102:5) that on a Motzai Taanis, Maariv should be recited earlier than usual, in Yerushalayim from 10 minutes after Shkiya, and making sure Kriyas Shema is repeated afterwards. See also Halichos Even Yisrael (Moadim vol. 1, pg. 370:39 and vol. 2, pg. 145:1) that even on Motzai Yom Kippur and Motzai Tisha B'Av (which have a din of tosefes), Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer held to daven Maariv 20 minutes after Shkiya.

[16] See the Sanzer Dayan, Rav Yitzchak Herskovitz's Shu"t Divrei Ohr (vol. 2:47), as well as the Klausenberger Rebbe's Shu"t Divrei Yatziv (O.C. vol. 2:230; maintaining that those who are makpid on Zman Rabbeinu Tam for Tzeis Hakochavim should keep the same for fasting, and certainly not break fasts before 60 minutes after Shkiya).

[17] See Rav Yitzchak Yaakov Fuchs' (author of Halichos Bas Yisrael and other sefarim) recent Taanis Asarah B'Teves 5781 B'Erev Shabbos Kodesh, based on the Mishnah Berurah's comments (271:1 and Shaar Hatziyun 639:67).

[18] See the Selicha for Asarah B'Teves that starts with the word Ezerah, generally attributed to Rav Yosef Tov-Alem (Bonfils). As pointed out by Rabbi Moshe Boruch Kaufman, at the end of said Selicha, it seems to include a fourth tragedy worth fasting for – the tzara of Bavel first hearing the news of the Churban Beis Hamikdash on the 5th of Teves. This 'Yom Hashamua' is mentioned in Gemara Rosh Hashana (18b) and Yerushalmi Taanis (Ch. 4, Halacha 5). See Rabbi Yitzchak Weinberg's recent excellent Lechem Yomayam (on Chodshes Kislev and Teves, Chodesh Teves 2) at length as to why this shittah of Rabbi Shimon's, to fast on the 5th of Teves, is not the practical halacha.

[19] Tur, Beis Yosef, and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 580).

[20] Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 549 and 550).

[21] As told at length in Gemara Megillah 9a. For a slightly different version see Maseches Sofrim (Ch. 1:7-8). This quote is found in Megillas Taanis (Ch. 13), and cited by the Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 580). See Sefer HaToda'ah (vol. 1, Ch. 8, Chodesh Teves, par. Yom Kasheh) at length.

[22] See Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 580; quoting the BeHa"G, Hilchos Tisha B'Av V'Taanis 18), "lo noda bo eizo hi hatzara she'eera bo." This quote is essentially originally found in Megillas Taanis (ibid.). However, many poskim, including the Ba'er HaGolah (ad loc. 4), Magen Avraham (ad loc. 6), Taz (ad loc. 1; who concludes "tzarich iyun rav" on the Tur and Shulchan Aruch for not knowing that Ezra HaSofer died on that day), Elyah Rabba (ad loc. 5), Rav Yaakov Emden (Siddur Amudei Shamayim vol. 2 pg. 149b), Pri Megadim (ad loc. Mishbetzos Zahav 1), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 6), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 13), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 20), all cite the Kol Bo (63), BeHa"G (ibid.), or the Selichos of Asarah B'Teves (ibid.) that the tzara on that day is that Ezra HaSofer died. The Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 3) diplomatically states that originally they did not know which tragedy occurred on that day to mandate fasting, and afterwards it was revealed that it was due to Ezra HaSofer's passing on that day. [Interestingly, the Kaf Hachaim (ibid.) cites the Shulchan Gavoh (ad loc. 3) and others who maintain that Ezra really passed away on Asarah B'Teves. But, since it was already a scheduled fast day due to Nevuchadmetzar's siege, its observance of fasting due to Ezra's passing was pushed to the ninth of Teves.] Rav Yonason Eibenschutz (Ya'aros Dvash vol. 2:192-193) gives an interesting variation on this theme. He maintains that since Ezra's role in Klal Yisrael in his time was akin to Moshe Rabbeinu's, Chazal wanted to withhold publication of the day of his passing, similar to the Torah stating that "no one knows of Moshe's burial place" (Devarim, V'Zos HaBracha Ch. 34:6). However, the Chida (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chaim 580) points out that the statement in Megillas Taanis (and later cited by the BeHa"G) that "lo kasvu Rabbeinu al mah lum" seem to be referring to a separate occurrence than its next listing, that Ezra HaSofer died on that day, and that they are not exclusively one and the same. The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Parshas Vayigash, Drush for 8 Teves s.v. kasav BeHa"G) answers that Ezra was similar to Moshe Rabbeinu, and drastically improved the spiritual state of the Jewish people, and yet, even after he died, Klal Yisrael felt satisfied and blessed simply to have been led by him when he was alive, and did not see any reason to fast on the day he died. Yet, when the Torah was later translated into Greek, enabling the "Tzaraas of the Minim", only then did they realize the import of Ezra's passing and established it as a fast day (similar to Moshe Rabbeinu's passing on the 7th of Adar also being on the list of proper days to fast in Tur and Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 580: end 2). Yet, previously, they did not know why to fast on the 9th of Teves.

[23] As found throughout Shas - see for example Bava Kama (82a) and Kestivos (3a).

[24] This follows the consensus that the last of the Nevim, Malachi, was none other than Ezra HaSofer. See Gemara Megillah (15a), Targum Yonason on Malachi (Ch. 1:1), and Tosafos (Yevamos 86b end s.v. mipnei). It is also implied in Gemara Zevachim (62a) and Sanhedrin (21b), regarding who established the Torah's script as 'Ashuris.' Thanks are due to Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein for pointing out several of these sources.

[25] Rav Baruch Teumim-Frankel (author of the Imrei Baruch, in his glosses to Shulchan Aruch O.C. 580) cites several other sources opining different tzaddikim's passings on the 9th of Teves as the reason for fasting, including the enigmatic Shimon HaKalpus, "who saved Klal Yisrael during the days of the Pritzim," and to whom 'Nishmas' and 'Etein Tehilla,' a Piyut that is part of Yom Kippur liturgy, is attributed (see the Haggadah Marbeh Lesaper of Rav Yediyah Weil, son of the Korban Nesanel, pg. 114; and Seder Avodas Yisrael, pg. 206, in the commentary to 'Nishmas'). This reason is also cited by Rav Aharon Wurmsh, renowned talmid of the Shaagas Aryeh, in his Me'orei Ohr (vol. 4, pg. 110b, on Taanis; this volume is also called Od L'Moed), citing a 'Sefer Zichronos' that he once saw. Known as Patrus, it has been surmised that Shimon HaKalpus was a Jewish pope, placed by Chazal to infiltrate the early Christians, to ensure that Christianity became a separate religion (see Orzar Midrashim [Eisenstein] vol. 2, pg. 557-558 and the Oz VeHadar edition of Gemara Avodah Zarah 10a, Haghos U'Tziyunim 30; citing an original manuscript of Rashi's that had been censored for hundreds of years). Some opine that he was 'Ben Patora' mentioned in Gemara Bava Metziza (62b). Although we do find Shimon HaKalpus (or Kippa) mentioned derivatively as 'Shimon PETER CHAMOR' by several Rishonim, including the Machzor Vitry (Pesach 66), and Rav Yehuda HaChassid (Sefer Chassidim 193), on the other hand and quite interestingly, while referencing the laws of the Yomim Nora'im (325) the Machzor Vitry himself refers to Shimon Kippa quite approvingly, if not downright reverently. In the footnotes of the Berlin edition of the Machzor Vitry (from 1893; pg. 362, footnote 5) the editor, Rav Shimon HaLevi Ish Horowitz, posits that this is not actually an outright contradiction in the Machzor Vitry, but rather a machlokes between his mentors, Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam. He postulates that the first mention in the Machzor Vitry, that "Shimon PETER CHAMOR was certainly not the composer of 'Nishmas,' and all who claim such will have to bring a Korban Chatas Shmeinah when the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt," was from a handwritten manuscript of Rashi's. Conversely, the second mention, that "Shimon Kippa was the one who set the order of the Yom Kippur tefillos and composed 'Etein Tehilla,'" was the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam (whom the Machzor Vitry quoted as the source of the ruling of that paragraph about allowing Piyutim and personal additions during Shemoneh Esrei), who held that Shimon Kippa's kavanna in all that he did was exclusively Lesheim Shamayim. The Sefer Chassidim (ibid.) takes an alternate approach, explaining that even though Shimon Kippa was indeed a tzaddik, nevertheless since he was technically a meshumad, and people followed in his ways, he was called a derogatory nickname, 'Shimon PETER CHAMOR,' as is the proper custom to do with meshumadim, as fulfillment of the pasuk in Tehillim (Ch. 116:8) "Kimohem Yihiyu Oseihem." On the other hand, it must be noted that this description was not accepted by all. In fact, even the controversial Italian scholar R. Shmuel Dovid Luzzatto (Shada"l), in his Mevo L'Machzor K'Minhag Bnei Roma (published 1856; pg. 7) wrote that he pondered and wondered about Rabbeinu Tam's words for over twenty years, until he realized that Rabbeinu Tam must have believed in the "shamuos shav," 'false rumors,' about the founding of Christianity, that were spread, albeit with good

intention, during the years of persecution and forced conversions, “k’kavana tova l’chazek emunas habamon.”

[26]The second tzaddik’s passing on that day that Rav Teumim-Frankel cites was Rav Yosef HaLevi, son of Rav Shmuel HaNaggid, who was assassinated on the 9th of Teves in 1066, thus ending the Golden Age for Jewry in Spain. He quotes the Raavad’s Sefer HaKabbalah that “when Rabbeseinu HaKadmonim wrote Megillas Taanis and established a fast on the 9th of Teves, they themselves didn’t know the reason. Later on, after Rav Yosef HaNaggid was assassinated we knew that they foresaw this tragedy with Ruach HaKodesh.”

An additional reason for fasting on this day is cited by the Rema in his commentary to Megillas Esther (Mechir Yayin, Ch. 2:16) that we fast on the 9th of Teves as Esther was forcibly taken to Achashveirosh’s palace in the month of Teves (possibly on this day). Interestingly, some posit, as heard in the name of Rav Moshe Shapiro; also found in the Davar B’Ito calendar (9 Teves) and in Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Chanuka, Inyanei Nittel, pg. 416; quoting the Tosafos Chadashim on Megillas Taanis; also referred to as the ‘Mefareish’ of the Vilna Edition of Megillas Taanis), that the real reason for fasting is that the 9th of Teves is the true birthday of ‘Oso Halsh’, in whose name myriads of Jews over the millennia were R’l murdered. The origin of this claim seems to be the 12th century Sefer Halbur by Rav Avraham bar Chiya (pg. 109). In fact, the Netei Gavriel (ibid.) cites that some say that Nittel, the name used for the Christian December holiday, actually stands for Nolat Y eishu T es L’Teves. The author wishes to thank R’ Yitzchak Goodman, as well as Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Brodt, for pointing out several of these invaluable sources.

[27]Sefer HaToda’ah (vol. 1, Ch. 8, Chodesh Teves, end par. Yom Kasheh).

[28]Abudraham (Hilchos Taanis), cited with skepticism by the Beis Yosef (O.C. 550).

[29]According to our calendar Asarah B’Teves cannot fall out on Shabbos. The Abudraham (ibid.) himself mentions this, as does the Magen Avraham (O.C. 550:4 and 5), Ba’er Heitiv (ad loc. 3), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 2), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 8). Everyone can easily make this calculation themselves. See Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 128:2) regarding which days various Roshei Chodesh can fall out on. For the month of Teves, Kosh Chodesh cannot fall out on a Thursday. That means Asarah B’Teves, ten days later, cannot fall out on Shabbos!

[30]See Mishnah and Gemara (Megillah 5a), Rashi (ad loc. s.v. aval), Rambam (Hilchos Taanios Ch. 5:5), Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 550:3 and 552:10). This was discussed in a previous footnote. Rav Asher Weiss (in his Kuntress Shavu’i, Parshas Vayechi 5778, Year 17, vol. 12, [631]: ‘Tzom Asarah B’Teves V’Shaar Tzomos Shechalu B’Shabbos, 3’) offers a novel approach as a solution to this conundrum. He opines that perhaps the Abudraham’s intent was not that the fast of Asarah B’Teves would push off Shabbos, but rather that as only regarding this fast it is stated “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh,” perhaps he meant that it wouldn’t be merely pushed off until after Shabbos, but rather it would not be observed that year at all. Meaning, it is possible that the Abudraham was simply asserting that there would be no reason to fast for Asarah B’Teves if it would not be observed on that actual day. So, if Shabbos would push it off, it would get pushed off in its entirety until the next year. However, Rav Weiss concludes that this approach is indeed a chiddush and concedes that none of the Acharonim seem to learn this way, bein lehakel bein lehaemir.

[31] BeisYosef (O.C. end 550). Rashi (Megillah 5a s.v. aval) and the Rambam (Hilchos Taanios Ch. 5:5) both explicitly rule that if Asarah B’Teves falls out on Shabbos then it gets pushed off. Other Rishonim who write this way include the Meiri (Megillah ad loc. and Taanis 30b), Kol Bo (end Hilchos Tisha B’Av), and Maharil (Hilchos Shiva Assar B’Tamuz), that if any of the Arba HaTzomos fall out on Shabbos they get pushed off until after Shabbos. Similarly, the Ibn Ezra, in his famous Shabbos Zemer ‘Ki Eshmera Shabbos’ explicitly states that Yom Kippur is the only fast that can override Shabbos(although admittedly, he may have just been referring to the metzius – that in our set calendar, it is the only one that can actually fall out on Shabbos – and hence trump its observance). This is how the Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 550:3), as well as later poskim rule as well. See for example, Shu”t Shoel U’Meishiv (Mahadura Kama vol. 3:179), Shu”t Maharam Brisk (vol. 3:99), and Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 549: end 2).

[32] However, there are many who do defend the Abudraham’s statement based on the verse “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh.” See for example Tikkun Yissachar (pg. 28a, Teves s.v. v’ode; interestingly citing this ruling as precedent from ‘Teshuvos HaGaonim,’ and not mentioning the Abudraham by name; although this might be a form of honorific) who actually rules that way. In fact, there is even a minority opinion (see Toras Chaim on Shulchan Aruch O.C. 550:4) who is choshesh for the Abudraham’s shittah lemaaseh and extends it, holding that one should not treat Asarah B’Teves as a minor fast, but rather observe it with similar restrictions as the major fasts: meaning keeping the five inuyim, akin to Yom Kippur. The Minchas Chinuch (Parshas Emor, Mitzva 301:7), explaining why nowadays we do not observe fast days for two days (as opposed to other Yomim Tovim, due to the safek yom), writes that the Neviim established fast days in specific months, but did not set the actual day it must be observed, hence the ambiguity in the Gemara on which days to observe them. Since they were never established as being mandated on one specific day, they are unaffected by the safek yom, and nowadays only one day must be observed. [A similar assessment regarding the establishment of fast days was actually expressed by several Rishonim, including the Rivva (Rosh

Hashana 18b s.v. v’ha) and Tashbatz (Shu”t vol. 2:271).] The Minchas Chinuch adds that since both of these seemingly conflictory observances - the fasts for the destructions of the Batei Hamikdash, as well as the Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbos - are essentially Divrei Kabbalah (meaning, instituted in the times of the Neviim), why shouldn’t such a fast day be able to trump Oneg Shabbos? Especially one that was established as “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh.” Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk (Chiddushei HaGra”ch V’HaGri”z al Shas, ‘Stencils,’ pg. 27:44) takes this idea a step further to explain the Abudraham’s statement (although quite curiously, he inexplicably credits the BeHa”G with this statement, who in fact makes no mention of this; and does not mention the Abudraham; quite possibly a typo). He asserts that Asarah B’Teves is the exception to this rule of the Neviim’s ambiguity of exact day, since it is stated about it that it must be observed “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh,” and therefore would be fasted upon even if it fell on Shabbos. Similarly, the Ohr Somayach (Hilchos Taanios Ch. 5:6 s.v. v’hinei, in the brackets) defends the Abudraham’s statement, based on a diyuk in the Gemara’s (Eruvin ibid.) choice of question about whether we complete a Taanis Yachid on Friday, with no mention of a Taanis Tzibur. He posits that the reason the Gemara did not cite such a case, is that Asarah B’Teves is the only Taanis Tzibur that can fall out on Friday, and if it can override Shabbos due to “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh,” then certainly one would be required to fast the whole Friday for it! Hence, there was no reason for the Gemara to ask it. In other words, the Gemara’s question only starts if the fast would be pushed off if it fell on Shabbos, as then we are uncertain what the din would be regarding completing it if it fell out on Friday. As the Gemara only asked germane to a Taanis Yachid, this implies that regarding a Taanis Tzibur the fast would triumph. Moreover, the Ohr Somayach posits that perhaps the fact that we complete the fast, fasting into Shabbos when Asarah B’Teves occurs on Erev Shabbos, would help prove that if it fell out on Shabbos, we would do the same - as it is possible that it is only problematic to observe a full 24-hour fast on Shabbos. But, as Asarah B’Teves is only a daytime fast, perhaps it is not conflictory with proper Shabbos observance. On the other hand, the Torah Temimah, in his Tosefos Bracha (Parshas Emor, pg. 211-212; thanks are due to Rabbi Herbert Russ for pointing out this invaluable source) argues that “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh” should not prove a Shabbos fast, as when the pasuk says the same regarding Yom Kippur (Parshas Emor, Vayikra Ch. 23:29), it is a command that we must afflict ourselves on that exact day. That is why we fast on Yom Kippur that falls out on Shabbos. Yet, when referring to Asarah B’Teves, Yechezkel HaNavi was simply detailing when the siege actually started: that it was on that day, in the middle of the day; similar to the wording used to describe the animals entering Noah’s Teiva and Avrohom Avinu’s Bris Milah; with no connection to the fast that was later declared to commemorate this tragic incident. Accordingly, he avers that we would not fast if Asarah B’Teves would fall out on Shabbos. For more on this fascinating topic, as well as varying approaches, see Rav Avrohom Gurwicz’s Ohr Avrohom (Ch. 5, page 164 and on) and Rav Asher Weiss’s Minchas Asher (Moadim vol. 2, Tzomos 43).

[33]Ya’aros Dvash (Vol. 1, Drush 2 for 9 Teves, 32-33; see also vol. 2:191-193 s.v. v’hinei yadua), Bnei Yissaschar (Maamrei Chodesh Kislev/Teves 14:1), and Shu”t Shoel U’Meishiv (Mahadura Kama vol. 3:179); see also Shu”t Maharam Brisk (vol. 3:99). The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Parshas Vayigash pg. 40b s.v. vad”z) also cites this reason and explains that it is only at the end of a tragedy when salvation has a chance to sprout. We see this from the famous Gemara at the end of Makkos (24a-b) with Rabbi Akiva, who laughed when he saw foxes wandering through the ruins of the Beis HaMikdash. Only when a tragedy is complete can there be a glimmer of hope for the future redemption. See also sefer Siach Yitzchak (pg. 293) and R’ Moshe Chaim Leitner’s sefer Tzom Ha’Asiri at length. Rav Yonason Eibenschutz adds that according to his calculations, Nevuchadnetzar’s actual siege on that first Asarah B’Teves commenced on Shabbos; meaning that that Asarah B’Teves that Yechezkel wrote “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh” about was actually Shabbos. The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Parshas Vayechi, Drush for 8 Teves 5599, s.v. kshiv) agrees with this assessment and offers a variation, that the reason Nevuchadnetzar was successful in his conquest of Yerushalayim, as opposed to Sancheirev, was due to lack of Shemiras Shabbos among its inhabitants!

[34]Midrash Tanchuma (Tazria 9). However, in Parshas Bereishis, the Midrash Tanchuma (ad loc. 2 and 3), actually takes a very strong stance against fasting on Shabbos, as “Kavod Shabbos is adif than one thousand fasts”!

[35]Toras Moshe (vol. 2, Parshas Vayikra, Drush for 7 Adar, pp. 9b-10a, s.v. kasuv).

[36]Yerushalmi Yoma (Ch. 1, Halacha 1, 6a).

[37]Rambam (Hilchos Taanios Ch. 5:1); see also Mishnah Berurah (549:1).

[38]Zecharia (Ch. 8:19), as per the understanding of Rabbi Akiva (Rosh Hashana 18b). See also Knesses HaGedolah (O.C. 550, He’aros on Beis Yosef) for a fascinating hesber.

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## לע"נ

שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה  
בילול בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה