



SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYECHI · 11 TEVET 5774 - DEC. 14, 2013 · VOL. 21 NO. 12

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE SCRAPBOOK OF ETERNITY

Reminiscing through an ancient family album, I came across some photos I had completely forgotten about. Moments long-presumed lost smiled up at me from the yellowing pages. Others had not fared so well; abducted from their rightful place in history their memory was preserved by a faded oblong and four browning “photo corners.”

History is so selective. This moment survived; this one didn’t.

How many photographs do I possess of my parents as young children? Very few. And even fewer of their parents and siblings. A few smiling faces have survived, and so many other smiles captured for eternity will smile no more. And how many of the myriad dedicated pixels our own life will endure the ruthless editing of time?

And more: when I look back at the photographs of my youth, of my parents’ lives in black and white excursions to the Kursaal in Westcliff or Canvey Island, I think the same. How many moments there are that I never saw, of which I will never know, that have vanished!

There are two worlds. The world in which we live each and every moment of our daily lives – and then there are those few moments which will be eternalized as scrapbook memories.

The name of this week’s Torah portion is “Vayechi” which means, “And Yaakov lived.” You might think the

title a bit ironic because it is in this week’s portion that Yaakov’s dies. Another thing. Sarah, the mother of the Jewish People passes from this world in the weekly portion entitled “The Life of Sarah.”

The word for life in Hebrew is a plural noun. It’s not by coincidence. There are two lives. The life we live in this world — and the life that we live in the next world.

This world is called in Hebrew *Olam Hazeh*, and the next world is *Olam Habah*. Grammatically, the corollary of *Olam Hazeh* — “This World” — should be *Olam HaHoo* — “That World.” Why then is the next world called *Olam Habah*? *Habah* literally means “that comes.” The World-to-Come is just that – a world that comes as a direct result of what we do in this world. Nothing can exist in the World-to-Come that was not done in this world.

This life is like a factory. A factory has no other purpose than to produce. This life has only one purpose. To produce. To produce the next life. The biggest mistake you can make in this life is to mistake the factory for the product.

The fact that deaths of Yaakov and Sarah are found in Torah portions whose titles mention life teaches us a lesson. It teaches us that the essential life of a righteous person is not in this world but in the World-to-Come, for the righteous take every moment in this world and paste it into the scrapbook of eternity.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuben. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of *Eretz Yisrael* and the

teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d. Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Ephraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishet, the first of the five Books of the Torah. *Chazak!*

TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

YOMA 37 - 43

"Regarding the Kohanic family of Bar Kamtzar it is said 'the name of the wicked shall rot' (Mishlei 10:7)."

The *mishna* teaches that this family which served in the second Beit Hamikdash refused to teach other people their unique manner of writing four letters with four fingers simultaneously. The *gemara* explains that this was wrong on their part to the point where the curse in the above verse is intended for them. The *gemara* explains that the practical outcome of this curse — "the name of the wicked shall rot" — is that one should not name his child with the name of a wicked person. The *Maharsha* explains that we learn this from the fact that the verse states "the name of the wicked shall rot" instead of just stating that "the wicked shall rot". *Tosefot* also points out that although a famous *dayan* (judge) cited in a different *masechta* was named "Avshalom", this is not the same name as the name as the wicked son of King David (Avshalom) who rebelled against his father the king and was killed.

Concerning the point in the *mishna* and in the *gemara* that this family had a special wisdom for writing simultaneously with writing utensils attached to four fingers, it is advised to see the commentary of the *Maharitz Chiut*. He elaborates on the greater *kedusha* of writing the four-letter Name of G-d all at once instead of one letter at a time, and suggests that this *gemara* is the source of using a type of "printing press" in place of writing — and the possible advantages in doing so.

• *Yoma 38 a&b*

"From G-d's blessing of the righteous one can learn the curse to the evildoers, and from the curse of the evildoers one can learn the blessing for the righteous."

This is a statement is made by Rabbi Eliezer on our *daf* and is based on verses of blessing and curse that we find in the Torah regarding the righteous Avraham and the wicked people of S'dom.

But what is the connection between the blessing of one to the curse of the other, and vice versa? *Rashi* explains the meaning of our *gemara* that in a place where one finds a blessing of the righteous, one finds a curse to the wicked — and vice versa. The *Maharsha* points out that this does not seem to explain why there is a connection between the blessing and the curse.

The *Sh'l Hakadosh*, however, explains the connection in the following manner. He writes that this teaching refers to righteous and wicked who live together in one place, but the righteous remain righteous while the wicked stick to their errant ways. When G-d sees the righteous person and the wicked living in proximity, and the wicked remain wicked, He becomes even more disconcerted with them, as it were, since they did not learn from the nearby righteous person and improve their ways. In this sense, the righteousness of the *tzaddik* can be viewed as a reason for the curse and punishment of the *rasha*. Likewise, the bad deeds of the evildoers heighten the righteousness of the *tzaddik* with them, since he was so careful not to learn from their evil deeds. The outcome is that G-d rewards the righteous in connection with punishing the wicked, whose ways he did not follow.

• *Yoma 38b*

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is kindness towards the dead called “chesed shel emet” — kindness of truth?
2. Give three reasons Yaakov didn’t want to be buried in Egypt.
3. How do you treat a “fox in his time” (i.e., a commoner who rules)?
4. “When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat...” Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?
5. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Efraim and Menashe?
6. What does *pillalti* mean?
7. What does “Shechem” mean as used in this week’s parsha? (two answers)
8. Which individual is called “the Emori”? Why? Give two reasons.
9. What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?
10. What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?
11. What congregation from Yaakov’s offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?
12. What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?
13. What does milk do to teeth?
14. Why is Yissachar like a “strong-boned donkey”?
15. With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?
16. In Yosef’s blessing Yaakov said, “They embittered him...” Who are “they”?
17. Which descendants of Binyamin “will divide the spoils in the evening”?
18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?
19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?
20. Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 47:29 - Because the giver expects no reward from the recipient.
2. 47:29 - a) Egypt’s ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside Israel will suffer; c) So the Egyptians wouldn’t make him into an idol.
3. 47:31 - Bow to him.
4. 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef’s mother, Rachel, in the *Ma’arat HaMachpela*.
5. 48:8 - The *Shechina* departed from him.
6. 48:11 - “I thought.”
7. 48:22 - a) The actual city of Shechem; b) A portion.
8. 48:22 - Esav. a) He acted like an Emorite; b) He trapped his father with words (*imrei pi*).
9. 49:1 - When *mashiach* will come.

10. 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.
11. 49:6 - Korach and his congregation.
12. 49:8 - He drew back. He was afraid that Yaakov would rebuke him for the incident with Tamar.
13. 49:12 - It makes them white.
14. 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.
15. 49:20 - Oil-rich land.
16. 49:23 - Yosef’s brothers, Potifar and his wife.
17. 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.
18. 50:5 - From Esav.
19. 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh’s ignorance of Hebrew.
20. 50:13 - Levi, because he would carry the *aron* (holy ark). Yosef, because he was a king.

A Memorial Tribute on the First Yahrzeit

IN MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED ROSH HAYESHIVA

HARAV MENDEL WEINBACH ZT'L

Rabbis, students, alumni, friends and members of the family have come together to share their memories, stories and thoughts in the

MEMORIAL TRIBUTE BOOKLET FOR RAV WEINBACH

The booklet will be available in print shortly as well as in PDF format on www.ohr.edu

Abarbanel ON PARSHAT VAYECHI

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

With death of their father Yaakov, Yosef's brothers fear that despite all of Yosef's assurances to the contrary, he would now exact revenge from them for having sold him into slavery. They even go so far as to fabricate a report about Yaakov's wishes that he expressed before his death. They instruct a messenger to tell Yosef that Yaakov had given an explicit order that Yosef forgive his brothers. Abarbanel points out that this completely fabricated order had two dimensions. First, Yosef should forgive them because of the brotherly connection between them. Secondly, he should forgive them because they are the "servants of your father's G-d." The brothers were taking no chances. If he would not forgive them due to the family connection, perhaps he would forgive them since they were 'brothers in faith', sharing the same unique religious values and beliefs, the beliefs handed down to them from Yaakov. With their father's death they express a deep concern about their fate: "Perhaps Yosef will nurse hatred against us and then he will surely repay us all the evil that we did him."

Abarbanel, however, in a close analysis of the literal meaning of the verse, reveals a completely different dimension of their concern. Abarbanel renders the above verse as "*It should be that* Yosef will nurse hatred against us and *it should be that* he surely will repay us all the evil that we did him." The meaning of this astounding explanation is as follows: Now that Yaakov is dead we would prefer that he express his feelings openly rather than keeping them locked up inside. We would also prefer that he repay us with evil. Since the result of the evil that we did him was his elevation to greatness, whatever evil he does to us will be to our benefit as well. It is clear to Abarbanel that the brothers were expecting Yosef to take some form of retribution. The brothers' reaction illustrates two important principles of Jewish thought. First of all they wanted their relationship with Yosef to be free of any doubt. If hatred and retribution were in his heart they

wanted to deal with it openly. Secondly, they understood the principle of "measure for measure." They expected that their fate would exactly parallel Yosef's.

However, as Abarbanel made clear in Parshat Vayigash, Yosef reiterated that just as he was G-d's agent to sustain the family in Egypt, they too were G-d's agents to bring him to Egypt in the first place. What they had done was clearly the will of G-d and they had nothing to fear. The Torah concludes the whole incident with the words, "He spoke to their hearts and they were comforted." Commenting on this verse, Rashi gives an astoundingly different interpretation. According to Rashi, Yosef told his brothers that their fears were well-founded: he had every right to punish them. However, Yosef was afraid of the likely reaction of the Egyptians. After all, it was only the arrival in Egypt of his well-known and respected father and brothers that convinced the Egyptians that he was anything more than a lowly slave all his life. If he punished them, doubts about his origins would resurface and resentment over his powerful position would be rampant. How could a man punish his own brothers for something that had turned out so well? According to Rashi, then, how could Yosef's words touch their hearts and comfort them? Rabbi Ephriam Wachsman of Monsey, New York offers the following amazing psychological insight to explain Rashi. Yosef knew that the brothers would always be psychologically burdened by their guilt, no matter how much they intellectually accepted that the whole series of events was the will of G-d. Therefore Yosef knew that he had to validate their feelings of guilt. This is what penetrated their hearts and comforted them. Validation of one's guilt followed by the assurance that all is well in the end provides true closure and consolation. Perhaps this is what Abarbanel was alluding to. The brothers never lose those feelings of guilt and Yosef never tells them directly that they were guiltless, only that all's well that ends well.

ADAM'S TONGUE

From: Monte

Dear Rabbi,
What language did Adam & Eve speak? Was it Hebrew?

Dear Monte,

We see evidence that Adam spoke Hebrew because he referred to Eve using two words that make sense only in Hebrew. He called her *isha* (woman) because "she was

taken from *ish* (man)" (Gen. 2:23); and he named her Chava (Eve) because "she was to be Mother of all *chai* (life)" (3:20).

The very name Adam is from the Hebrew word *adamah* (earth), referring to the fact that G-d created Adam from the earth. From the time of Adam and Eve until the generation of the Tower of Babel, everyone spoke Hebrew. After that time, G-d "babel-ed" people's speech, which resulted in the emergence of different languages.

Sources:

- Bereshet 2:23, 3:20
- Midrash Bereshet Rabbah 38

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

RABBI NAHOROI, THE TANA

"Travel to a place of Torah learning and do not say that this Torah learning will come to you because your chaverim (companions) will secure it for you, and do not rely on your own intelligence" — Rabbi Nahoroi (Avot 4:14)

If there are no Torah scholars in your own place travel to where they are located, and don't delude yourself in thinking that they will come to where you are. Do not rely on your *chaverim* securing Torah learning for you by returning to you, and relating to you what they heard



from the rabbi. Take yourself to the rabbi, because learning from a *talmid/student* is not the same as learning directly from the rabbi.

Another reading of the Mishna: The reason for traveling to a place of Torah learning is because there you will find *chaverim* who will secure your Torah learning for you. Even if you are very sharp and clever your Torah learning will not be secure without the interaction of *chaverim* — do not rely on your own intelligence.

• Rav Ovadia of Bartenura

NEW!

"The Talmud Navigator"

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What is Ohr Somayach's new and innovative feature for assisting everyone to learn, analyze and remember the Talmud? Especially helpful for those learning Daf HaYomi!

Talmud Navigator – "Excel" in Talmud

The Talmud, often referred to as "The Sea of the Talmud", is vast both in breadth and depth. The *gemara* (Megillah 18b) describes the difficulty of maintaining a hold on all the Torah you learn, quoting Proverbs (23:5): "When you lift (or close) your eyes from it – and it disappears".

Chazal (Eruvin 54b) prescribe a method for gaining a true understanding and making a lasting acquisition of all the material you learn. Rav Chisda is quoted as saying, "The Torah can only be acquired with signs."

Talmud Navigator is an attempt to organize the Talmud in database form, mapping and charting the Talmud by tagging the various components and building blocks of the according to type and hierarchy. It is based on the system outlined by the Ramchal in

Derech Tvnos.

This system of textual organization serves as a self-help way to outline the *sugya* in a clearer fashion. It assists in promoting a better understanding of the flow of the *Gemara* and in facilitating summary and review. It is also an excellent tool for a less advanced *Gemara* learner to identify and grasp the logical flow and interconnections of its various components.

Each Thursday we will post a PDF file which maps the *gemara* studied in that week's *Daf Yomi* cycle. G-d willing, we plan in the future to make available the Excel file which enables the user to make his own condensed selections of the *Gemara*. For example: Highlighting the main statements, arguments, questions, conclusions or personalized anchor points of the *sugya* determined by the learner to facilitate his own review.

Talmud Navigator is prepared by Rabbi Hanoch Zweig and is available at www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yitzchak Botton

PRAYER — “A TIME OF WAR”

We find in the Zohar that prayer is compared to a time of war. One may ask: “Against whom does this war take place?” The answer is: “Against oneself”. But what is the purpose of this war, and how does one fight it?

Before answering these questions, we must first explain the inner makeup of man.

Man is comprised of a body and a soul. His body, which was formed from the earth, has a *nefesh* [life force] from which it receives its vitality. This force is called the vital or animal soul. This aspect of man is almost exclusively interested in the physical pleasures of the world.

In contrast, man’s Divine soul comes from the highest heavenly realm, carved out from under G-d’s throne of glory. It is this soul that G-d breathed into man, as it is written: “And He [G-d] blew into his nostrils the soul of life, and man became a living being.”

Body and soul are represented homiletically in the story of Yaakov and Eisov, Yaakov representing the soul, and Eisov representing the body. Just as they were at odds with one another - Eisov, a creature of this world, and Yaakov, devoted to a life of Torah and spirituality - so too, the physical and spiritual facets of man are at odds with one another, each pulling in opposite directions. When one prevails, the other falls.

Winning the Battle

The inner purpose of prayer is to do battle against one’s animalistic pulls, and selfish desires. Through its meditative process a person can rise above one’s physical and material existence to which he has become accustomed, attaining a superior level of refinement, and a true level of sanctity and purity. Although one doesn’t always see quick results, through continued prayer (three times a day) a person will improve his spiritual standing.

According to the above, we can understand why prayer is called *avodah* [work], which can be understood to represent the work in the *Beit HaMikdash*, namely, the daily sacrifices, as the Sages taught: “The prayers were instituted in place of the daily sacrifices.”

According to Chassidic philosophy the offering up of animals on the altar represents the transformation of one’s animal soul. Thus, a person who offered up an animal was meant to imagine that he himself was being slaughtered and consumed by the fire. Today, this is accomplished through the service of prayer. When one concentrates deeply on the words of prayer, arousing within the heart a longing to draw close to G-d above, even the body becomes consumed by the joy and pleasure of Divine worship.

@ OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students

by Daniel Keebler

INTENSIVE CARE UNIT & INTENSIVE CENTER YEAR

Baruch Batzofin, Age: 34, Jerusalem
University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
Anesthesiologist - Center Alumnus

Although he graduated from the same medical school in South Africa as Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz, Baruch Batzofin only encountered Rabbi Tatz’s life-changing writings while stationed as a doctor in the IDF. “I was keeping Shabbat and kosher in the army, but couldn’t learn Torah. I realized I needed to learn how to learn Torah,” recounts Baruch.

Baruch “thoroughly enjoyed” his year in the Center Program, especially building those Talmud skills and starting to study *mussar* (character development lessons).



Baruch says he gained the ability to go out into the working world and yet also seriously integrate Torah learning into his regular life, “as opposed to remaining a guy who learns a bit of *Chumash* (weekly Torah portion),” explains Baruch.

Baruch specializes in anesthesiology and intensive care at a major Israeli hospital. He puts patients to sleep for surgeries and provides general care pre- and post-surgery. In addition to learning *Chumash* every week, Baruch studies the laws of Shabbat with his brother in-law, attends a *mussar* meeting with Rabbi Raskis from Center, and learns Talmud on his own. He recently made a *siyum* (completion) of tractate *Megillah* and is now starting tractate *Berachot*. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and two children.