

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך,
יום השביעי שבת לה'

SHABBAT LASHEM

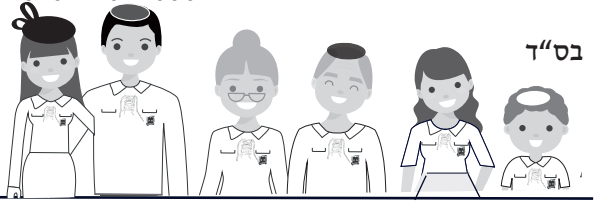
THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

PARASHAT VAYECHI

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THE CHINUCH MESORAH

DANIA MANN-WINEBERG AND JOSH DANIEL
SHEVET AVICHAI | CHINUCH WORKERS 5782

A prominent theme that emerges during this week's parasha is mesorah, the idea of passing down values and concepts to the next generation. As Yaakov is approaching his end, he gives each of his sons and two of his grandsons individual brachot, each representing their unique tafkid in this world. In Masechet Ta'anit (5b), Rabbi Yochanan makes a curious statement, 'Our patriarch Yaakov did not die,' even though it heavily implies in this week's parasha that he did (Bereishit 49:33)! Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Krakow explains that this means that Yaakov 'lived on' through his descendants. Through passing on his knowledge and values, Yaakov ensured that his impact rippled through generations. We are hugely grateful to the many Chinuch Workers who have come before us and made their everlasting mark on the Bnei Akiva Mesorah. This issue of Shabbat Lashem features Divrei Torah from a few of these individuals, spanning multiple decades of Chinuch! We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we did!



A LEGACY TO THE EXILES

MARINA KISSIN
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Our sedrah records the death of the patriarch, Yaakov. There are three accounts of Yaakov giving practical instructions from his deathbed.

In the first (Bereishit 47:29-31), Yaakov addresses Yosef alone, and makes him

swear an oath not to bury him in Egypt. Yaakov asks for Yosef's vow with the same language that Avraham used when entreating his servant to swear not to take a Canaanite wife for Yitzchak, but one from his family (24:3). In both of these cases, the Avot sought to maintain the family's cultural integrity; by avoiding intermarriage or establishing ancestral shrines in foreign lands.

In the second (48:21-22), Yaakov makes no request for his burial. Rather he assures Yosef that the family

will return to Canaan, and assigns him a double portion of land - Shechem. This seems strange, as it would be many years before Israelites would conquer and allocate the land, under Yehoshua! Perhaps, in Yaakov's long-term view, the intervening years of slavery and wandering were barely perceptible; he remained focused on the ultimate goal of being a fully fledged nation in the Holy Land.

In the third (49:29-33), Yaakov asks all his sons to bury him in the cave of Machpela, not only Yosef. He takes pains to specify the precise location and purchase details. Sforno posits that, since the family had already spent a number of years in Egypt, Yaakov felt the need to remind everybody of their legal ownership of this plot.

With Yaakov's final words, he seeks to maintain his descendants' distinct identity in exile, cement their pragmatic relationship to their land, and instill an enduring yearning to return home.

MARINA CURRENTLY LIVES IN LONDON AND WORKS AS A PHYSIOTHERAPIST FOR THOSE WITH NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS.

SHABBAT TIMES

London In 15:36 Out 16:51
Manchester In 15:34 Out 16:53
Cambridge In 15:29 Out 16:48
Alton In 15:33 Out 16:54

Oxford In 15:37 Out 16:55
Bristol In 15:44 Out 17:01
Birmingham In 15:36 Out 16:55
Cardiff In 15:46 Out 17:04

Leeds In 15:27 Out 16:49
Liverpool In 15:35 Out 16:56
Glasgow In 15:25 Out 16:52
Jerusalem In 16:02 Out 17:18

THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK TAKES TIME

SPENCER LEWIS

SHEVET ELYASHIV | CHINUCH WORKER 5751



The story of the life of Yaakov Avinu is the story of the development of Am Yisrael. In our parasha at the end of his life, he reflects and blesses his sons and grandsons.

Back in perek 28 the pasuk tells us when Yaakov fleas

his father's house that Yaakov left Be'er Sheva, and he went to Haran.

The seemingly superfluous mention of Be'er Sheva as his place of origin seems to be reiterating that in order to know where we are going and fulfill our mission, we must know where we have come from, or as the late Terry Prachett put it, 'if you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, then you don't know where you're going. And if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong.'

We work hard at ensuring that we provide our students or Chanichim with the knowledge and skills to know where they are going, to be lifelong Jewish learners, in the hope that as they grow they are in a position to be the next link in the chain of Jewish continuity. So that when asked by their children about Jewish life or about their own moral and intellectual perspectives, they are able to reflect on what they have absorbed and are confident in reply.

BRINGING THE REDEMPTION

EVE MINSKY-COHEN

SHEVET ACHIA | CHINUCH WORKER 5773

In this week's parasha, Yaakov lives out the final years of his life, and calls to his children to reveal what will happen at the end of days.

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאִסְפֹּר וְאֶגְדָּה לְכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרָא אֲתֶכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים

And Jacob called his sons and said, "Come together that I may tell you what is to befall you in days to come.

He proceeds to give each of his sons an individualised blessing, acknowledging their strengths and encouraging their unique potential. Some readers may feel short-changed as Yaakov doesn't explicitly explain what will happen at the end of days, as he had promised. However, according to one reading in the Midrash, Yaakov did in fact hint to the end of days with his choice of words. He asks his sons to

I am so often asked about the frustrations of running Jewish schools - how do we measure the success of Jewish education?

After the crossing the Sea of Reeds Moshe sang a song of praise to Hashem. As the Israelites stood ready to cross into the Promised Land, he again sang a song of praise. Moshe states:

יְעָרֵף כְּמִטְרַת שָׁמַיִם לִקְחוּי תִּגְלוּ כַּטֵּל אֶמְרָתִי

May my teaching drop like the rain, may my utterance flow like the dew...(Devarim. 32:2)

The Zohar teaches that the rain refers to the Written Torah and the dew to the Oral Torah.

Rabbi Moshe Zevi Neriah, offers a unique explanation of the connection between rain, dew and the Torah. After a farmer plants their seeds and it rains, an onlooker sees the water seep into the ground and thinks that this water will serve no purpose. It sank into the earth and is gone. Later when the vegetation springs through the ground, one realizes the benefit of the rain.

The same is true in education. Often a young person studies Torah and it seems that it has had no effect whatsoever. However, after some time, maybe even years, it's clear that the teaching was not in vain, that the student has grown up to have a family of their own, sending their own children to Jewish schools, ensuring they have the right set of values, creating the next link in the chain. The rain and the dew have done their job.

MR LEWIS IS CURRENTLY THE EXECUTIVE HEAD-TEACHER OF THE YAVNEH SCHOOLS IN LONDON.

"come together," and only then he will tell them what to expect, alluding to the fact that unity is the key to bringing the redemption.



Moreover, Yaakov does not ask his sons to change their individual behaviour or to become more alike. He celebrates their differences and recognises that each has their own role to play, but ultimately requests that they unify in order to bring Mashiach. This too is a lesson for us; despite our differences, there is a place for each and every one of us and together, we will bring the redemption.

EVE LIVES IN JERUSALEM AND WORKS FOR THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR ISRAEL

WHY WAS RACHEL BURIED IN BEIT-LECHEM?

RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER

SHEVET HAMEVASER | CHINUCH WORKER 5758



'And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died on me in the land of Canaan on the road...and I her there on the road to Efrat, which is Beit-Lechem (Bethlehem).' (Bereishit 48,7)

This verse is part of Yaakov's final testament to Yosef as the end of Sefer Bereishit draws to a close. It appears out of sync with the context of Yaakov's testament, in which he gives various blessings to Yosef. Other than Rachel, all the patriarchs and matriarchs, including Yaakov, were buried in Mearat Hamachpela, which Abraham purchased as a burial ground for Sarah. Why was Rachel not buried there?

Rashi explains that Yaakov received a prophecy instructing him to bury Rachel in Bet-lechem, which we might think refers to the contemporary town of that name. This was so that her tomb would provide comfort and the eternal link of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel when, after the destruction of the first Temple, Jewish captives were being led north to Babylon. The captives were comforted by the prophecy that they would return, with a symbol of the matriarch Rachel waiting for them.

Ramban expands on Rashi's explanation. He sug-

YOSEF'S MESSAGE

ELI MAMAN

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Sefer Bereishit ends in a state of limbo. Yosef is not even buried, he lies dormant in a box through the entire ensuing exile. He asks his children to remember him and eventually bury his bones with them upon their exodus. Why does he not seek immediate burial in Canaan like Yaakov?

Also, after we read that "Yosef was put in a box in Egypt," we all shout as if in a cheer, "be strong and be strengthened." Are those sombre words a proper lead-in to the shouts of "Chazak?"

Would it not have been more fitting to end Sefer Bereishit with the reconciliation of Yosef and his brothers? That would have been a more uplifting ending and would leave the reader with a sense of closure.

What is the purpose in ending Sefer Bereishit with Yosef's state of limbo?

Yosef's mission was to leave this world with more than memories. He wanted to declare to everyone that he, too, would not find his final rest during their

time of suffering. Yosef understood that with his passing, the long exile would slowly emerge. But Yosef also knew that one day the exile would end and that his people would once again be free. By remaining in a box, Yosef declared his message of hope to the multitudes that awaited their redemption. Silently, in an unburied box, he waited with them as his pact rang in their memories. It is a message for all generations. It is a message for all times. When we see the bones of Yosef, unburied and in a box, we see the faith that he declared. "Do not bury me now, as you surely will be remembered one day. My hope is your hope." And as we finish Sefer Bereishit on that unfinished note, we stand up and shout in unison, "Chazak! Chazak! V'nitchazek! - Be strong! Be strong! May we all be strengthened!" For one day we will all be free.

RABBI LAITNER IS THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION FOR THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE AND AN ASSISTANT RABBI AT FINCHLEY SYNAGOGUE IN NORTH-WEST LONDON

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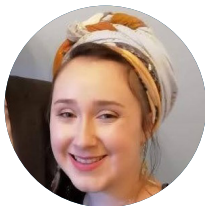


ELI LIVES IN LONDON AND WORKS AS AN AUDITOR

STAYIN' ALIVE

CHANA BE'ERI

SHEVET NA'ALEH | CHINUCH WORKER 5780



The life of Yaakov was scarred by trauma and uncertainty. The independence he found in adulthood began with deceit, then exile in fear for his life. A life marked by deception and loss followed him through his time with

Lavan, his reconciliation with Esav, Dina's capture, Rachel's death, and Yosef's disappearance. Finally, in Egypt, Yaakov enjoyed seventeen years of peace and contentment. For the first time, "Yaakov lived" (Bereshit 47:28).

Living is more than merely existing. The trials and uncertainties in Yaakov's life until this point forced him to focus on mourning or survival, and only now could he relax and enjoy the good that life had to offer. Anguish had prevented him from living. Now, surrounded by family, "he sat among them like good wine settling" (Zohar, Vayechi, 217b).

The Pri Tzadik takes this further: because Yaakov's days of anguish cannot truly be described as living, "only in Egypt did he merit self-actualisation in his holiness!" It seems shockingly inappropriate that Yaakov was only able to achieve complete holiness

DON'T BURY ME IN EGYPT!!

DANIEL ROSS

SHEVET MORASHA | CHINUCH WORKER 5781

Our Parasha begins with Yosef, at his father's behest, swearing that he would bury Ya'akov in Eretz Yisrael:

"And when the time approached for Yisrael to die, he summoned his son Yosef and said to him, "Do me this favour, place your hand under my thigh as a pledge of your steadfast loyalty: please do not bury me in Egypt. ... Swear to me." And he swore to him." (Bereishit 47:29-31)

Whilst this interaction may seem strange, it is not the only time biblical pinky-swearing is used as an emphatic gesture to accompany an oath. It's also invoked by Avraham before sending Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak (Bereishit 24). In both cases - in Canaan and Mitzrayim - the local culture was harmful to a proper Jewish existence and identity, and strong oaths served to contain their influence.

after leaving Eretz Yisrael for the impurity of Mitzrayim. The Pri Tzadik compares Yaakov's experience to the flourishing of the Oral Torah that occurred in Bavel. He quotes Shir HaShirim Rabba (4:4), "more righteous people were established for me in her destruction than in her building."

I find this troubling: rather than an explanation for Yaakov's failure to succeed spiritually in Eretz Yisrael, he gives further examples of the success of the Jewish people in exile. This reality sits uncomfortably alongside our millennia-old longing to return to our home and witness the rebuilding of the Bet HaMikdash. I don't have an answer for this tension, but perhaps there is something to be said for the creativity brought out in absence. We are forced, in exile, to appreciate what was lost and to fill that void. Yaakov reached completeness in Egypt. However, something was still missing, something that drove him to his dying request to be buried in the land of his ancestors.

Perhaps this is a lesson on overcoming trauma. Not everything was perfect; he couldn't reverse the suffering of the past. Nor could he cheat the death that awaited him. And yet ... he could find acceptance, and even joy in his world. He did not allow his anguish to destroy him. And Yaakov lived.

CHANA LIVES IN CHEADLE AND SPLITS HER TIME BETWEEN YOUTH DIRECTING AT YESHURUN SHUL, WORKING FOR AN ORGANIC SUSTAINABLE VEG BOX COOPERATIVE, AND PLANNING HER UPCOMING ALIYAH



Rav Hirsch explains that in Mitzrayim, Yaakov could see the influence Egypt was having on his descendants, that as a result of their economic prosperity it stopped being seen as Galut. Therefore, in effect, Yaakov is admonishing them, saying, "You hope and wish to stay in Egypt, I do not wish even to be buried there." That he is called "Yisrael" is indicative of this, acting as "a warning of the national future of his children," Rav Hirsch adds.

Just as it was then, so too now. We also struggle to see our existence in Chutz la'Aretz as Galut, entangled within its culture and economy, and we should also take Yaakov's warning to heart, 3,000 years later.

DANIEL IS A NIVCHAR HANHALLAH AND IS CURRENTLY IN HIS SECOND YEAR OF STUDYING EUROPEAN POLITICS AT KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

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