



L'Chaim

The Yeshiva Centre – Chabad NSW Headquarters
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Living with the Rebbe



In this week's Torah portion, Vayechi, Jacob, on his deathbed, makes a last request of his son Joseph. "Bury me not, I pray you, in Egypt!" he implores. "I will do as you have said," Joseph promises his father. But Joseph's promise is not enough. "Swear to me!" Jacob insists, and Joseph does.

Why was Joseph's promise insufficient? Was Jacob worried that his son would not fulfill his promise? What is the difference between a promise and an oath?

An oath differs from a promise in the sense of obligation and urgency it imposes. When a person makes a promise, he most certainly intends to carry out his word when the opportunity presents itself, but he does not spend all of his waking hours thinking about the promise and wondering how to implement it. But when a person utters an oath, it becomes the single most important motivating factor in his life. An oath is so serious, in fact, that the person dare not divert his mind from the matter for even a moment.

Jacob realized that what he asked of Joseph was so difficult and fraught with obstacles that the force of an oath was necessary.

This exchange between father and son also underscores an important difference between Jacob and Joseph: Jacob refused to be interred in Egypt, insisting that his body be brought back to the land of Israel for burial. Joseph, however, before his death, made the Jews swear they would take his bones back with them to Israel when the time for redemption came. His casket remained in Egypt for the duration of the exile.

It is erroneous to conclude that Jacob's request was made for selfish reasons; that he preferred to be buried in the holy soil of Israel while his children languished in Egyptian exile. Rather, Jacob's concern was for the welfare of the entire Jewish people.

"The prisoner cannot free himself from prison," our Sages have declared. The Jewish people, subjugated and enslaved, needed an outside force to free them from exile in Egypt. This outside force was the merit of Jacob, whose rightful place was the holy land of Israel, from where the Jewish people drew strength and spiritual sustenance.

Joseph, however, was exiled in Egypt with the rest of his brethren. His positive influence came from within and was therefore closer and more immediate. When he passed away, his remains stayed in Egypt, affording the Jews an additional merit. Jacob wanted to forestall the possibility that Joseph would want his body to remain in Egypt for this reason, and insisted that he swear to his request.

We learn from this that although the Divine Presence has indeed accompanied us throughout our exile, a Jew must nevertheless cry out for the galut to end and for all of us to be "carried out of Egypt." With faith and trust in G-d we will merit the coming of Moshiach and the Final Redemption, speedily in our day. *Adapted from Likutei Sichot vol. 25 of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

Breaking the Rules

Does anyone have anything positive or upbeat to say about the world economic crisis that we are currently experiencing? (You were hoping, maybe, that at least on these pages the hottest topic of the decade wouldn't be mentioned!?)

Well, the first bit of good news is that we should be optimistic about the future. Former American Secretary of State George Shultz was interviewed by Wall Street Journal columnist Peggy Noonan. She asked him if he thought we should be optimistic about our country's fortunes and future. "Absolutely," he said, there is "every reason to have confidence."

The second bit of good news is that despite the fact that you might have to be making cuts in your spending, you don't have to lessen your charitable donations. Though charity organizations around the country have a difficult time satisfying the needs of their recipients all the time, it is especially true in times like these. Charity is in demand every hour of every day, recession, depression, financial crisis notwithstanding.

When the going gets tough, not only do the tough get going, but, unfortunately, the giving also goes - out the window. Yet, when it comes to charity, all the rules of the economy, laws of growth, supply and demand that you can find in most economic textbooks are completely irrelevant.

Why? Because, as the Jewish saying goes, "G-d does not remain in debt." For every good thing a person does, he is recompensed grandly by G-d, with children, health and livelihood in abundance.

In Proverbs, King Solomon, the wisest of all men, states: "G-d's blessings bring wealth." This is especially true when a person gives of his time for the community's needs in matters of charity.

No one ever becomes poor by giving charity. The Talmud likens a person who gives charity to a nursing mother. The more the baby nurses, the greater is the mother's capacity to nurse. Similarly, the more charity one gives, the more resources he will have from which to give charity.

In addition, our Sages tell us that charity, or tzedaka (a more accurate translation of the Hebrew word "tzedaka" is "righteousness" or "justice") is one of the three pillars upon which the world is based. Our Sages also relate that "Charity is great because it brings the Redemption closer."

It would be simple to fill volumes with what has already been written in Jewish works about charity. But actions speak louder than words. A number of decades ago, the Lubavitcher Rebbe established giving charity daily (even just a coin or two in a charity box) as part of his ten point "Mitzva Campaign." The Rebbe urged people to perform the mitzva (commandment) of giving charity as a part of Jewish life. Giving charity each weekday (except Shabbat and Jewish holidays), putting money in a charity box before lighting Shabbat candles, actually affixing a charity box to a wall of one's home to assure that it is a "charitable home," are twists to this important commandment.

You won't even miss the money, because, "G-d doesn't remain in debt for long."

Aliyot Summary

General Overview: This week's Torah reading, Vayechi, discusses Jacob's final years. Shortly before his passing, Jacob blesses Joseph's children as well as his own. A massive funeral procession escorts Jacob's body to Canaan. The reading, and the Book of Genesis, concludes with Joseph's death.

First Aliyah: Jacob lived his last seventeen years in Egypt. When Jacob sensed that his days were numbered he summoned Joseph and asked him to promise that he would bury him in Israel. Joseph acceded to the request. When Jacob then fell ill, Joseph visited him, accompanied by his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob conferred upon Ephraim and Manasseh the status of tribal progenitors, a status hitherto enjoyed only by Jacob's sons. Joseph asked his father to bless Ephraim and Manasseh.

Second Aliyah: Joseph presents his two sons, placing Manasseh, the firstborn, to Jacob's right, and Ephraim to Jacob's left. Jacob, who was nearly blind at this point, crossed his hands, placing his right – more prestigious – hand on Ephraim's head. He blessed them: "May the angel who redeemed me from all harm bless the youths, and may they be called by my name and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and may they multiply abundantly like fish, in the midst of the land."

Third Aliyah: Joseph was disturbed that Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim, and he attempted to adjust his father's hands. "I know, my son, I know," Jacob responded, explaining that the "younger brother will be greater, and his children[']s fame] will fill the nations." Jacob blessed the two boys further, saying that all of Israel will bless each other by saying: "May G-d make you like Ephraim and Manasseh."

Fourth Aliyah: Jacob summoned all his sons, and delivered to each a poetic, and sometimes cryptic, parting personal message. Reuben was

chastised for his impetuosity and for "ascending upon his father's bed." Shimon and Levi were rebuked for their anger, which expressed itself in the killing of the Shechemites and the attempted execution of Joseph. Judah was blessed with monarchy, success in waging battle, and an abundance of wine and milk in his portion. Zebulun was blessed with success in his sea-trade endeavors. Jacob likened Issachar to a thick-boned donkey who finds both rest and ample work. Dan was blessed with the tenacity of a serpent and the ability to judge.

Fifth Aliyah: Gad was blessed with bravery in battle. Asher's blessing: an abundance of olive oil. Naphtali was blessed with the speed of a deer. Joseph was recognized for his charm, suffering, and righteousness, and was showered with a variety of blessings.

Sixth Aliyah: Benjamin was likened to a devouring wolf. Jacob then repeated his request to be buried in Israel, in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, and he passed away at the age of 147. After an extended national mourning period, Joseph received Pharaoh's permission to carry Jacob's body up to Israel. A huge funeral procession consisting of all the elders of Egypt as well as Jacob's family went and buried Jacob. After returning to Egypt, Joseph's brothers feared that now, after Jacob had passed away, Joseph would exact revenge from them for selling him into slavery. Joseph reassured them that he harbored no ill feelings towards them.

Seventh Aliyah: Joseph lived until the age of 110. Before passing away he told his brothers that G-d would eventually take them out of Egypt and return them to the Promised Land. Joseph asked his brothers to promise that when that time arrived they would carry his remains with them, and inter him in Israel.

Thoughts that Count

For in order to preserve life has G-d sent me before you...to prepare for you a posterity on the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance (Gen. 45:5,7)

The darkness of the exile makes it hard to perceive G-dliness, or to arouse the natural, innate love for G-d that is the birthright of every Jew. But G-d has mercy on His people Israel, and in every generation sends us one tzadik (righteous person) like Joseph, whose function is to diffuse light to each individual soul and enable it to contemplate G-d's greatness. (*Torat Chaim*)

Do not be sad, nor be angry with yourselves that you sold me (Gen. 45:5)

Sadness and anger are connected and feed off each other. Joseph told his brothers not to be sad; once they were in a better frame of mind, their anger would naturally dissipate.

(*Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar*)

And he sent his brothers away and they departed, and he said to them, "Do not quarrel by the way" (Gen. 45:24)

There are many true and valid ways of serving G-d within the context of Judaism, all of which are positive and holy (provided that they do not contradict the fundamental principles of the Torah). Joseph was counselling his brothers to avoid quarreling over "the way," meaning individual "styles," of G-dly service, for they are all "the words of the living G-d."

(*Divrei Yisrael*)

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



It is the sacred mission of every Jew - man, woman and child, old and young alike - to make the Redemption a reality. This holy task is incumbent on all of Israel, cutting across party lines and irrespective of external differences.

Every Jew has the innate power to bring the Redemption, for every good deed he does serves to diminish the sum total of evil in the world, as it states, "Little by little I will drive it out." Every positive action draws the Messianic era closer, when G-d will remove the "spirit of uncleanness" from the earth.

This hidden power of every mitzva to hasten the Redemption can be learned from the very first commandment in the Torah, the mitzva to "be fruitful and multiply." In a discussion of this commandment, the Talmud states that "The son of David [Moshiach] will not come until there are no more souls in guf." "Guf," the Hebrew word for "body," refers to the supernal storehouse of souls from which they make their descent into the physical world to be invested in a corporeal body. Therefore, whenever a Jewish child is born, the world takes one step closer to Moshiach.

Our Sages described the month of Tevet as "the month when the body derives pleasure from the body." According to Chasidut, this means that during Tevet, G-d's Essence derives pleasure from the service of the Jewish people within the realm of physical reality.

Because the Torah's 613 mitzvot are really one united entity, every single mitzva, being a part of that entity, has the same power to bring us closer to the revelation of Moshiach. Just as the mitzva of "be fruitful and multiply" entails the soul's descent from a higher sphere and its revelation down below in the physical world, so too do all mitzvot uncover and reveal the Divine sparks that are hidden within physical reality and that exist within every Jew.

Pinchus Feldman

Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

Smile its Friday

Two five year-olds, one Jewish, the other Catholic, are playing in a sandpit. Sean says to David, "Our priest knows more about things than your rabbi!" To which David replies, "Of course he does, you tell him everything."

Creme de la Krim by Leah-Mindle Lipszyc

The Story of a Brit

One year ago, I spoke to a new boy in our school about undergoing a brit mila (circumcision). During Communism, performing a circumcision was illegal. Afterwards most people either didn't know that Jewish baby boys should have a brit when they're eight days old, or didn't know to whom to turn. The result is that almost no Jewish males in Crimea had been circumcised for 90 years. Since our arrival, we have made nearly 100 britot to date, from babies, to school children, to adults and old men.

The boy readily agreed, and I met with his guardian, who signed the permission slip. I contacted the mohel who would do the circumcision. As is usual, he asked me to put together a group of people so that he would not have to travel such a long distance just for one brit. We did that, but one thing and another kept happening to prevent his coming to Simferopol to perform the britot. During this time, unfortunately, one of the men moved to Germany, and another "chickened out." However the original boy kept asking me "When am I going to have my brit already, Leah?"

Finally, we thought everything was going to work out, when I got a text message from the mohel that he had accidentally overslept, and would be late. Okay - there was still enough time left for him to get to us before sundown. Then he sent another SMS - his wife was out of town, and his babysitter had not shown up! He had to feed and dress his children, find another babysitter, etc.... He wouldn't be able to arrive till the evening, and had to return early the next day, so he'd have to do the britot at 7 a.m. in the morning.

I knew that if the boys were going to be there on time, they'd need to sleep over at my house, and they were overjoyed to hear that! The boys came straight from school to my house. When they arrived, I offered them some Lemon Fanta, one of the few kosher drinks available here. "Wow!" they said, in awe, "We fell into heaven! Leah, will you adopt us?" they kept repeating.

After dinner, I took the boys downtown to pick up some small electronic games

for them to play with during the brit. It's been awhile since I've had little boys in the house, and I had to keep my eyes wide open as the three of them ran around, while we searched high and low to find something. We went home in a taxi - another new and "luxurious" experience for them!

The next morning, 357 days after the first permission slip had been signed, the boys had their brit. Artur became Aharon Sholom. Nikita chose three names - one that he liked, one that his mother liked, and one that his older sister liked - becoming Aharon Eitan Daniel! And Maxim became Menachem Mendel, or Mendy.

Before the brit, as per the advice of Rabbi Eliyahu Shain, a leading American mohel, I told the boys they should refrain from caffeine - coffee, tea, cola, and chocolate - for three days, but that I would compensate them by giving each one a two-liter bottle of Coke, a bar of chocolate, 100 points at the school "store," a new yarmulka with his Hebrew name, and a present. One of the boys excitedly said, "That's great - can I have a brit every day?" Now that it's over, he's fine with having had it once, which of course is as it should be!

A Small Menora Miracle

A week before Chanuka we got permission to put up our giant public menora on a plaza in the center of town, where it usually stands during Chanuka. I immediately called the man whose firm has always put the menora up for us, and he arranged for a crane to pick up the menora from our Beis Menachem School, and set it up.

The menora is constructed of a triangular base, a long stem, and the actual menora, on top. Even though they've put the menora together many times before, this year they accidentally attached the middle section upside-down, resulting in the menora standing only six meters tall,

instead of its usual nine meters. By the time we saw this, the crane was gone, and there wasn't a possibility of changing it. Obviously we were disappointed, but there wasn't much we could do.

The first evening of Chanuka arrived. We had signed a contract with a company that had a "cherry-picker" to come help us light the menorah every evening of Chanuka. The appointed time, 3:30 p.m., came and went. No cherry-picker. We called the company and were informed that they were really sorry, but a vital part of the machine had just broken, and they wouldn't be able to get the part and repair it for over a week.

Everyone, including the news reporters, was there, but no cherry-picker! We dashed into the nearby bank and asked if they might have a very tall ladder that we could use. They had a ladder and yes, we could use it, but they weren't sure it would be tall enough. It was (are you ready?) just under six meters tall! If the menorah had been put together correctly and had been the nine meters tall it had always been, we would not have been able to light it!

The next day, the non-Jewish guard in the bank said to me "Why did the rabbi have to climb up the ladder himself to light the menorah? I looked out and saw him way up on the ladder and felt terrible - I would have done it for him!" (Frankly, I was nervous as my husband mounted the shaky ladder to light the menorah.) Everyone was very impressed that we don't just give up. It had seemed certain that there was no way to light the menorah. But just as in other areas of our work here, we hang in there, until G-d sends us another miracle, may the next one be the big one that we all really need!

Read more at chabadcrimea.org

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Moshiaich

The ultimate perfection of the days of Moshiaich is a kind of birth - a revelation of the light of G-d within the deepest recesses of a man's heart. As it is written, "The glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh together will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken"; and likewise too it is written, "For they shall see eye to eye [when G-d returns to Zion]."

(Torah Or, Va-eira)

It Happened Once

The shoemaker and his wife had prayed every day, begging the Alm-ghty to grant them a child. Alas, the answer had consistently been "No." But their faith was as strong as their desire, and they decided to go to the renowned tzadik, Reb Yisrael, the Maggid of Koznitz to ask for his blessing.

When they arrived at his court and were admitted into his room they told their story and received the Rebbe's assurance that they would be blessed with a child. True to his word, the woman gave birth to a baby boy, but soon after his birth, the baby became seriously ill.

The parents were sick with worry and the father went back to Koznitz to ask for a blessing for the baby's recovery. The Rebbe assured him that G-d would send a complete recovery. But instead of recovering, the baby went from bad to worse.

The mother sat by his cradle day and night, her lips incessantly reciting the words of the Psalms. But she was so exhausted, that she dozed off. When she awoke, she was startled to see a soldier standing over the baby's cradle holding a spoon and a bowl and gently spooning something into the baby's mouth. She screamed in fright and the soldier quickly disappeared.

From that moment on the baby began improving by the hour, until he was soon completely well. The parents were overjoyed, but at the same time, they were fearful that perhaps the soldier had been some evil spirit or magician. They again traveled to Koznitz to relate the strange occurrence to the Rebbe.

"Don't be concerned," he told them. "It was surely not an evil spirit or sorcerer. Go home and enjoy your baby."

As soon as the couple left, the Rebbe summoned his attendant. "Go to the cemetery and knock on the grave of this soldier. Tell him that I request him to come to me." The attendant did as he was told, and the soldier soon appeared before the Maggid.

The Maggid asked him, "Who appointed you to be a children's doctor?"

"I will tell you my story," the soldier replied. "When I was a young child I was forced to go into the military service as a Cantonist. I was torn from my parents and my home, and as the years passed I forgot all about being Jewish and I lived exactly

like my comrades. Only my identity papers proved my Jewishness, and I thought no more about it.

"One day as I was walking in the countryside with my comrades, we came upon an elderly Jew. A few of my fellows had the idea of robbing him, and they took his 75 rubles. Then, fearing discovery, they bound him, hanged him from a tree, and left him for dead. That was too much for me. My long-dormant Jewish feeling rose up in my heart and I quickly and stealthily returned to the spot and cut him down. I gave him 75 rubles from my own pocket and sent him on his way.

"When my commanding officer noticed my long absence from base, he sent my comrades out to find me. When they discovered what I had done, they decided to kill me to prevent me from testifying against them. So, they hanged me from the same tree and left me there to die.

"When I found myself before the Heavenly Tribunal I was sent to purgatory because I had sinned all my life. But when they learned that I had saved another Jew, and in the process had been killed myself, they realized their error. So then, they sent me to the Garden of Eden. When I got there, I was welcomed with great fanfare and shown to my place. I took my seat, but when I looked out at all the great and righteous people, I felt sad that I didn't have a very good full view of the Throne of Glory. And I regretted that I had not done better with my life.

"The angels, sensing my sadness approached me and tried to cheer me up, but I felt a terrible disappointment. Then, they suggested that if I wanted to return to the earth again, I could make up for my transgressions and earn a better position. I eagerly agreed and that is how I came to be the doctor of sick children. I have been given permission to heal them in those situations where there is very little hope. And that is how I came to heal this little baby."

When he had ended his story the Maggid said to him, "You may now return to the Garden of Eden, for you have earned your full reward." With that the soldier saluted and disappeared, and his soul rose to the highest level of Paradise.



Candle Lighting Times Friday 9th January 2009

City	In	Out
Sydney	7:52pm	8:53pm
Brisbane	6:30pm	7:27pm
Surfers Par	6:30pm	7:27pm
Melbourne	8:28pm	9:32pm

Dedicated in honour of
Joseph Isidore Jacobs

לע"נ יצחק בן צדוק ע"ה

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