

LampLighter

15 Tevet
Vayechi
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Vayechi, Jacob castigates Reuven, his firstborn son, before his passing. In addition he takes away both priesthood and kingship from him, but leaves him with the birthright of the firstborn. The priesthood is given to Levi, and the kingship is given to Judah. Judah gets this as a reward for two good deeds: Judah's suggestion that Joseph be sold, which prevented the brothers from killing him; and his public confession about his sin with Tamar, which saved her life.

This explanation, however, is insufficient, for at first glance it would appear that Reuven displayed the very same strength of character as his brother Judah, if not more.

Whereas Judah suggested that Joseph be sold for monetary gain, Reuven suggested that Joseph be thrown into a pit in order to return later and free Joseph. Furthermore, even when it came to admitting their transgressions, Reuven was on a higher level than Judah, as Judah only confessed in order to save the life of Tamar. Reuven, on the other hand, who is not even considered to have committed a true sin, was so penitent that for over a decade he was still fasting in sackcloth and ashes.

To understand, we need to recognize the difference between priesthood and kingship — which Jacob took away from Reuven, and the birthright of the firstborn — which Reuven retained.

Kingship and priesthood are primarily expressed in service to others.

A king administers the affairs of state; a priest bestows blessings and teaches Torah. Being a firstborn, however, is a matter which involves only the individual and has no bearing on one's relationship with others.

Thus, although Reuven tried to save his brother and immersed himself in a long period of penitence, the focus of his service was on achieving his own spiritual perfection rather than on helping other people.

In truth, it was because of his suggestion that Joseph was thrown into the pit full of snakes and scorpions. Even Reuven's penance was turned inward, for had he not been preoccupied with "sackcloth and ashes," perhaps he could have prevented Joseph from being sold and thereby precluded the entire Egyptian exile!

Judah, by contrast, actually saved others through his actions, even though his own spiritual service may have been on a lower level. He saved Joseph from the pit and saved Tamar from death. It was this demonstration of self-sacrifice that proved to Jacob that Judah was the one who was worthy of kingship, for the essence of kingship is service to others.

From this we learn that a Jew must never concentrate on his own spiritual state to the detriment of his fellow Jew; love of one's fellow Jew must always be of prime importance. In this way, even if his own service is somewhat lacking, the merit of his love for his fellow Jew will connect him to the entire Torah and hasten the Final Redemption.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Six Kinds of Perfection

By Yanki Tauber

"Have I got the perfect guy for you!" Perfection is what we're after when we search for a marriage partner, a physician or a babysitter. Those who have lived long enough will tell us that the only place to seek perfection is in the quest to perfect oneself. But what is "perfection"? Does it have any objective meaning beyond "what I want" (or think I want)?

This week we conclude, in the annual Torah reading cycle, the book of Genesis, also called by our sages "the book of the righteous." Genesis is the story of a series of perfect individuals: Adam (made "in the image of G-d"), Noah (whom the Torah calls "a righteous man"), Abraham (described as "G-d's beloved"), Isaac (the "perfect offering"), Jacob (the ultimate "whole person") and Joseph ("the righteous"). What kind of perfection do these personalities exemplify?

Adam was the original model, the "handiwork of G-d." You can't get more perfect than that. So perfect was he, that he couldn't stand it, and went looking for imperfection, for something to repair, something to achieve, something to do. Still, it's a good thing that we, as a race, started off perfect, if only so that we should understand where our yen for perfection comes from, and that we can, in fact, attain it.

Noah's was a by-the-book perfection. His entire generation was corrupt, but he "walked with G-d". He even tried to get them to improve their ways — not because it mattered to him what became of them, but because G-d said that that was the right thing to do. He was given precise instructions on how to build the ark, what to put in it, when to go in, and when to get out; which he did. His was a selfish perfection, the sole aim of which is to be perfect.

Abraham's perfection was the perfection of love. For Abraham, to eat a meal was to share it with every hungry wayfarer; to discover a truth was to teach it to the world. Outward reaching and all-embracing, Abraham's perfection had the self as its centre, with the entire world as its sphere.

Isaac found perfection in selflessness. Since every human activity or experience is imperfect; perfection lies in the endeavour to reunite with the divine "nothingness" that is one's source. When one is nothing, one is one with the ultimate All.

Jacob achieved perfection through harmony; through the balance of love and awe, through the melding of assertiveness and self-effacement. He knew the secret of synthesis: that to love indiscriminately is to embrace also evil, but to recoil from engagement is to abandon much that is good; that to assert the self is to turn one's back on G-d, but to eradicate the self is to counteract the Divine purpose. Jacob's life was a tightrope stretched taut from Hebron to Charan to Egypt, belonging to neither, and integrating the best of each into the wholeness of his life.

Joseph's perfection was the perfection of challenge. Indeed, can a thing be perfect unless it has been tested, unless it has been stretched to its limits and beyond? Joseph's righteousness was not the righteousness of a meditating shepherd in a tranquil meadow, or a scholar secluded in the "tents of study." It was a righteousness that was taken to prisons and palaces of Egypt, to clash with commerce and politics, to lock horns with wealth and depravity — and persevere.

Six people, six prototypes, six ways to be perfect.



The Incredible Returns of a Time Investment

Anonymous

The other day my eight year old son came home and declared: “My teacher said I need to buy a new *Chumash* (a volume of one of the Five Books of Moses) ‘cuz mine’s all ripped up.” After a trip to my son’s classroom, I found that indeed the two pages he was learning that week were badly torn, but not beyond repair. Armed with heavy duty packing tape, I spent twenty minutes that day fixing the tattered and worn pages and the broken binding. The book was as good as new.

Sometimes we are quick to throw things out because they are broken or simply too much trouble to fix. Sometimes people are treated this way as well.

We are quick to throw things out. Ever since my son was in pre-school, he was red-flagged for various issues, including problems with fine-motor skills and frustration tolerance. A professional evaluation revealed he had dyspraxia, a neurological disorder of motor coordination that manifests as difficulty in many ways. It was a tough diagnosis that we had to untangle one issue at a time. Our son spent a couple of years in physical therapy, eye therapy and play therapy. As the therapies continued, thank G-d, he improved academically, socially and emotionally. But like his battered book, he was still a bit broken—but not beyond repair. Like his well-worn *Chumash*, my son needed someone who would care and take the time to carefully fix the broken parts.

By the time he reached second grade, the principal and teachers were pleased that he had progressed, but dismayed he

still wasn’t up to par with his peers. I heard comments such as: “He is just not like the other boys,” or “His behaviour is just not normal” and “Perhaps he should go to another school.” Mind you, my son was evaluated by the State and found capable of learning. He required no special educational services. He just needed someone who could tune into his specific learning style.

Our Torah tells the story of Moses and his huge flock of sheep. One source relates that Moses shepherded a massive flock of sheep; yet one day, the Midrash relates, one little sheep escaped his watchful eye and ran off in search of water. Moshe sought him out and, after making sure he’d satisfied his thirst, carried him back to the flock. Moses’ attention and care for even the smallest and neediest of his flock revealed a true leadership quality which endeared him to G-d, who later chose him to lead the Jewish people.

Few teachers go out of their way to emulate Moses; and when they do, they make an impression. For my son, there was one teacher who stood out. He was a new teacher, fresh out of rabbinical school and trying his hand at education. The young man became my son’s resource room teacher for a year. Before the school year even began, this young tutor spent the summer interviewing every resource room /special education teacher of note in our town, gleaning tricks and tips of the trade.

While he had my son only twenty minutes a day, he worked tirelessly trying to reach him. He often called me to find out which motivational tools worked. Reading was a chore for my son though he has no problem memorizing entire sections from the prayer book and *Chumash* and reciting them, rapid-fire, on demand. His teachers would let him get away with this year after year. But this new teacher, under the guidance of a discerning principal, realized that my son would not succeed unless he could read with fluency and accuracy. He kept trying new methods to motivate his young charge.

While my son is not dyslexic, the young teacher found that a method used

for dyslexia helped. Separating the words of the prayer book into six readable words in six separate boxes on a page was the turning point towards reading success. It sounds like an easy solution, but it meant a lot of work. Firstly, the prayer book used in our school is not available online. The teacher had to download a prayer book of a different style and change the order and vocalization of each word. Then he had to reformat the words onto a page with six clear, bold boxes. He did this for all of the morning blessings and many of the main parts of prayer.

The day before Passover, the young teacher took time out of his busy day and knocked at our door bearing a simple binder in hand. The binder contained my son’s completed prayer book and an abridged Haggadah with the Four-Questions, all painstakingly formatted in a fashion for easy reading. That Passover my son prayed perfectly, one word at a time.

Tikkun olam, the popular Jewish concept often associated with large scale projects such as saving the world, literally means “to repair the world.” In reality *tikkun olam* has little to do with the big stuff and much to do with “sweating the small stuff.” For me, fixing the world is all about saving the world on a small scale: one sheep at a time, one page at a time, one person at a time.

Nothing is beyond repair; an old book need not be relegated to the garbage heap because it is worn and torn; a needy child need not be sent to another school because he requires a little extra attention. Even a thirsty sheep deserves our attention. In fact, the little sheep that Moses ran to help ended up leading Moses to the burning bush and, ultimately, to G-d’s revelation. [By the way, this teaching experience led my son’s resource room teacher to pursue a career in education and he is now enrolled in a program to earn a Master’s in Special Education.] Every broken thing is worthy of our care and attention. Everything is worth fixing—one page at a time, one soul at a time.

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ISSUE 911

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Happy is he who does not tire of awaiting redemption and who makes certain that he and his children increase their Torah learning and their observance of the precepts so they will not be ashamed when Moshiach comes. (*The Chofetz Chaim on Awaiting Moshiach*)

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



THE JEWISH SERVICEMAN

11th of Shevat, 5727 [1967]

Chaplain - Office of the Chaplain Ft. Bragg, N.C.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter. I was very gratified to note your desire to promote among the Jewish servicemen under your care the idea and practices of Judaism according to the Torah-true interpretation. Actually no other true interpretation is possible.

Needless to say that in your case, as the spiritual monitor and guide of the Jewish young men in the camp, every degree of fortified conviction and personal advancement in this area is multiplied many times as it is reflected in those who look up to you for guidance and influence.

I had occasion to emphasize also the fact that, however responsive Jews are to a good influence and to the truth, especially when it is given to them sincerely and truthfully, Jewish servicemen are even more responsive because of the stability of the atmosphere in which they live, where they are by circumstances, sheltered from contacts and temptations so prevalent in civilian life.

Moreover, the very military training they receive impresses upon them the importance of compliance and a response to the call of duty. This should provide immediate food for thought and logical inferences, namely, that if an order of a human commanding officer must be obeyed and carried out without question, how much more readily and willingly should a commandment of G-d be fulfilled.

Indeed the Jews are called the "hosts of G-d," having been enlisted in the service of G-d ever since we were freed from human bondage and received the Torah and mitzvot at Mt. Sinai, as we read in this week's Torah portion.

It is noteworthy that the expression, the "hosts of G-d," is mentioned for the first and only time in connection with the departure from Egypt, on the way to receive the Torah.

A person in military service can readily understand that when he receives an order from a superior officer, he cannot delay its execution until such time as he will be able to weigh it in his mind and see if he too approves of it, especially if such an order comes directly from the Commander-in-Chief, for such a delay can endanger the whole army.

Certainly, the attitude towards a command of G-d could not be in any lesser degree, and no Jew can be so reckless as to wait until he has sufficient time and inclination to study the Divine commandments. It is for this reason that the Torah was received with the unanimous declaration by all our people: Na'aseh v'Nishma [we will do and then we will understand].

And as in the illustration, here too, a Jew cannot say this is my own personal affair, and mind your own business, because all Jews form one body and are mutually responsible for one another, so that the actions of one Jew have a very important bearing upon the well-being of another...

A WORD from the Director

The 20th of Tevet, January 6 this year, marks the yartzeit (anniversary) of the passing of the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon), Rabbi Moses Maimonides, 800 years ago. The Rambam was an outstanding codifier, commentator, philosopher, physician to the Sultan and leader of Egyptian Jewry.

Approximately 25 years ago, the Lubavitcher Rebbe urged all Jews to study a section of the Rambam's Mishne Torah every day, or at least the briefer Sefer HaMitzvot. Hundreds of thousands of Jews undertook this great endeavor and are studying one of the above-mentioned works.

Although the Rambam passed away so long ago, he and his great wisdom are still with us. When a person sits down to study a chapter, or a law from one of the Rambam's works, his spirit and teachings remain alive.

About the Rambam, our Sages have said, "From Moses to Moses, there was none like Moses!" This means that from the time of the Moses who took us out of Egypt, there has never lived a person who exhibited all of the Rambam's unique qualities.

Throughout the 50 generations from Moses our Teacher until Moses Maimonides, there was not even one person similar to Moses, our Teacher, in terms of transmission of the Torah until the arrival of the Rambam. This saying is engraved on Maimonides' gravestone, which implies that it was even accepted by all of our Sages who came to pray at the Rambam's resting place.

J.I. Gutnick

Shabbos Chazak

This Shabbos is called Shabbos Chazak, because of the custom of declaring, Chazak, Chazak, Vinischazak ("Be strong, be strong, and may you be strengthened") at the conclusion of the Torah reading, in acknowledgment of the completion of the Book of Genesis.

In other words, "Chazak Chazak V'Nitchazek" is meant as a public "chizuk" [strengthening] for those that have just finished reading the Torah – akin to having a Siyum [celebration on finishing] at the end of the learning of a Masechet (tractate of Talmud). It is a way to tell those present that they need to strengthen themselves through what they have learned, not to forget what they have learned, and encourage them to continue learning.

When a Jew understands that through a connection to the Torah he has been granted a heritage of essential life, he will possess the inner strength to confront the different challenges presented to him by his environment.

This minhag is treated as a very special minhag – as attested to by the fact that the Gabbai gets up and announces that the entire congregation should stand up for the last aliyah and chant in unison – chazak chazak v'nitchazek.

It Happened Once...



The 18th of Tevet is the *yahrtzeit* (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Shapiro of Dynov (1783?-1841), author of the Chassidic work *B'nei Yissaschar*.

When Chassidic master, Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Spira, (known as the "Bnei Yissaschar" after the book he authored by that name) was ten years old, his father took a position as a teacher in a distant town. Zvi Elimelech's father spent the duration of the winter in a Jewish-owned inn. In those days it was normal for a teacher not to see his family from October to April.

That winter was particularly bitter. Snowstorms lasted for a week. During one such storm, a knock was heard at the door. The innkeeper opened the door and found three half frozen Polish peasants requesting a place to stay. He inquired of their ability to pay and found that their combined funds were not enough for even one night's stay. The innkeeper closed the door on them. The teacher was shocked. When he complained to the innkeeper, the innkeeper merely shrugged and responded, "Do you want to undertake their expenses?" Much to the innkeeper's surprise, the teacher agreed.

The peasants thanked their benefactor and proceeded to enjoy themselves at his expense. That storm was particularly brutal and the peasants remained in the inn for two weeks. After the snow cleared enough for passage, they thanked the teacher profusely and left.

Passover approached and the Bnei Yissaschar's father went to settle his account. The innkeeper figured he owed the teacher 40 rubles for teaching his children, but the teacher owed him 43 rubles for taking in the peasants. The innkeeper wished him a Happy Passover and said he could bring the three rubles upon his return after the festival.

The teacher did not know what to say. He bid his employer farewell and left. He travelled to his village, but could not bring himself to go home. He stopped into one of the local synagogues, opened a tome of the Talmud and immersed himself in study. In the meantime, his son heard that his father was in town and went looking for him. He found his father in the shul.

Young Zvi Elimelech ran to his father and with great emotion begged his father to come home. He wanted to show his father his new Passover shoes, clothes and all the other things mommy had bought (on credit). This made the father only feel worse. As they walked home a carriage raced towards them at a great speed. The streets of that hamlet were very narrow and pedestrians were forced into alleyways to avoid being trampled. As the coach passed by them, it hit a bump and a parcel fell off the back.

The Bnei Yissaschar's father picked it up and began running after the coach, but was unable to get the coachman's attention. The coach turned a corner and disappeared. The Bnei Yissaschar's father, seeing no distinguishing marks on the bag (according to Torah law, in such a situation it may be presumed that the owner would relinquish all hope of

its recovery, and the lost object may be kept by the finder), and realizing that there was no possible way for him to locate the owner, opened the parcel. Inside were exactly 43 rubles.

The night of the seder, the Bnei Yissaschar was given the job to open the door for Elijah the Prophet. When he opened the door, he called to his father, "Ta, the coachman is here!" There was no one there. The Bnei Yissaschar's father pulled the boy aside and told him that he must promise never to tell anyone this story until the very last day of his life.

This story was told to me by a rabbi who heard it from a disciple of the Bnei Yissaschar, who heard it directly from the Bnei Yissaschar on his deathbed.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

He blessed Joseph saying... "The angel who redeemed me from all evil should bless the lads..." (Gen. 48:15-16)

These two verses begin by stating that Jacob was going to bless Joseph, and yet, the actual blessing was given to "the lads" — Joseph's sons Menashe and Efraim. Jacob's blessing to Joseph was that his children should be righteous. When children conduct themselves in a proper way, the pleasure and "nachas" the parents derive from this is the greatest blessing possible. (*Zohar*)

Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth (Gen 48:16)

Jacob blessed his children to multiply like the fish in the sea. By comparing his descendants to fish, he was instructing his children to remember that just as a fish cannot live out of water, so too the Jewish people cannot live without Torah. He blessed them to "swim like fish" in the ocean of Torah study. (*B'Hiyot HaBoker*)

The life of a fish depends in a large measure on its vitality and ability to swim upstream. If it permits itself to be swept along by the currents of the rapids or the tide it will be washed away. It is only because the Creator has endowed the fish with the precious instinct of self-preservation, whereby it is able to swim upstream against the forces of the current that it can thrive and survive. Jacob blessed his children to be willing and able to swim upstream and resist flowing with the tide. (*Rabbi B. Berzan*)

Assemble yourselves, and I will tell you what will befall you in the end of days (Gen 49:1)

Jacob gathered his children and wanted to reveal the time of Moshiach's coming when suddenly the Divine Presence left him. He began to worry, "Maybe there is some fault in my children." They immediately responded, "Shema Yisrael - you believe in the One and Only G-d and so do we." Happily, Jacob answered, "Baruch Shem... Blessed be His name forever and ever." (*Talmud Pesachim 56a*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS VAYECHI

16 TEVET • 2 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:27 PM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS :	9:10 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:33 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS: SUN- FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	MAARIV:	9:25 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 1 JANUARY 2010



Begins	Ends
8:27	MELBOURNE 9:33
8:15	ADELAIDE 9:17
6:28	BRISBANE 7:26
6:57	DARWIN 7:50
6:28	GOLD COAST 7:25
7:08	PERTH 8:08
7:51	SYDNEY 8:53
8:04	CANBERRA 9:06
8:31	LAUNCESTON 9:41
8:26	AUCKLAND 9:30
8:39	WELLINGTON 9:48

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

יצוקללה"ה נב"מ ז"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.