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Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayechi

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E Pluribus Unum (From many, one)

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Yaakov, the aging leader who had fought wars and pursued peace, who had endured great pain and navigated great crises, who had shepherded his family from riches to rags to riches, who had lost children and re-gained them, now gathered his descendants for a final message that would prepare them for their future national identity. This solemn moment, decades in the making, was the transition from the centuries-old clan of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov to the decentralized tribes who would constitute the Jewish nation for centuries to come.

The words Yaakov used toward this end are perplexing:

- Reuven. Shimon. Levi. Rebuke after rebuke, with all of their brethren present to bear public witness to their dressing-down.
- Yehudah is likened to a regal lion clothed in eternal ermine robes of majesty – and then Yissachar is compared to a humble donkey squatting in the road.
- Yosef, long-favored Yosef, is singled out not for expertly administering the region's leading economy and supporting his family through a famine, but for a pretty face that causes girls to climb walls for a better look.

The scene is reminiscent of a family feast at which Uncle Ernie reminds everyone present of their most embarrassing childhood habits, or Aunt Eileen singles out almost every dish for praise, ridiculing only the one that you contributed. It seems that Yaakov is using his fade-to-black moment to stir the pot, turning brother against brother!

A midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 98:2) explains that Yaakov's goal was to create unity among his children. Yaakov introduces the blessings by demanding of his children, "Gather and listen," and the sages elaborate, "He instructed them regarding strife. He told them: Gather together, be a single unit." At this moment, when the Jewish people were about to cease obeying a single leader and instead identify themselves by thirteen different sub-family loyalties, Yaakov sought to train them to recognize the value in their division. You won't have a central leader to direct you, so you had better learn to work together.

To accomplish this goal, Yaakov demonstrated that he thought of each child as an individual, to be honoured for his abilities and to be marked by his mistakes and challenges, and he challenged all of his children to do the same. As Rav Chaim ibn Attar wrote (Or haChaim to Bereishit 49:28), "Each soul has a special attribute: priesthood, royalty, Torah knowledge, strength, wealth, success," and so on. Yaakov saw each child as an individual blessed with traits great and small, and he encapsulated a lifetime of these observations for the entire group's benefit, highlighting that which identified each child as unique. The result of valuing each individual, with his foibles as well as his successes, would be a greater whole.

Yaakov told his children: You will be separate tribes, but your unique talents and struggles will benefit the whole, building the team. Were all of you identical – all lions or all donkeys – then the result would be a weaker unit. The valuable union manifests a variety of skills, a variety of strengths, a variety of

challenges, a variety of personal aspirations, a variety of individual blessings united in service of the whole.

The Torah underscores this point by concluding Yaakov's blessings with the observation, "**Each one** according to **his** blessing, Yaakov blessed **them**." (Bereishit 49:28)" Grammatically, this passage should have ended, "Yaakov blessed **him**." Why switch to the plural? Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar explained that the Torah worded it this way because, "the blessing of each individuals benefits the collective 'them'."

We naturally look at our personal families as Yaakov looked at his; our daughters and sons and nieces and nephews teach us early on that they possess unique interests and strengths. A scientifically minded child will think in certain ways, that an athletic child will enjoy certain activities, that an artistic child will excel in certain areas. Certainly, we coach our children toward the greatest overall success, but we nurture their unique strengths, each in an appropriate way.

However, as an international Jewish community resembling the orphaned children of Yaakov, without any umbrella authority to direct our diverse energies, we might benefit by creating a culture that encourages and pursues this variegated development. Yaakov's message summons us to create and cultivate institutions – schools and synagogues, youth groups, adult programs, forums and contests – to recognize and stimulate the abilities all of us possess, bringing them into service of the community. Thus, the blessing of each individual will also be a blessing for the whole.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

The book of Melachim ("Kings") records the history of Jewish life in Israel from the end of King David's reign until the Babylonian destruction of the first Beit haMikdash. The Talmud (Bava Batra 15a) says that it was recorded by Yirmiyah, who lived through the last decades recorded in the book. In our editions of Tanach, Melachim is split into two parts; the first part begins with the end of King David's reign and continues until shortly after the death of King Achav of Yisrael, and the second part continues from there.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah marks the death of King David, and the passing of the throne to his son Shlomo; this parallels the death of Yaakov and then Yosef, and the end of their era, in our parshah.

King David presents two messages to his son: A warning that he must continue to follow the instructions of HaShem in order for his monarchy to endure (Melachim I 2:1-4) and a list of King David's foes and advice for how to deal with them. (2:5-10)

King David's insistence that Shlomo follow the Torah is consistent with the messages that came with other pivotal changes of the guard in Tanach. Yehoshua was given the same message when he took up the mantle of Moshe in the first succession of Jewish leadership. (Yehoshua 1:5-9) Yeravam

ben Nevat was passed the same instruction by Achiyah haShiloni when he splintered the Jewish people to form the northern kingdom of Yisrael. (Melachim I 11:38) Zecharyah gave a similar message to Yehoshua, the high priest of his day, at the beginning of the second Beit haMikdash. (Zecharyah 3:7)

The second part of the message, with its list of figures who should not be permitted to die of old age, may seem odd as the closing words of King David's life. However, these instructions may be seen as more than a last set of tasks left to Shlomo. The fact that King David was not able to carry out these tasks in his own lifetime, and needed to leave them to his son, was due to a set of religious and practical considerations which restricted his freedom. Perhaps this was King David's parting message: I am leaving you a kingdom and a Torah, and with that comes the full force of the Divine Hand. However, even when you operate with Divine blessing, remember your limitations, debts and commitments, and never overstep your bounds.

Where was King David buried?

Melachim I 2:10 records King David's burial in "Ir David", the City of David. Where is this?

There is a great deal of disagreement regarding the correct site, due to

archaeological finds as well as the evidence found in Tanach. A set of burial caves excavated north of the Old City in 1863 has been identified as the "tombs of the House of David". A ten-acre area in the southeastern portion of the Old City is known as the City of David. There is no definitive answer.

For more on this question, see:

- Doron Bar, "Kever David b'Har Tzion B'Shnotehah Harishonot shel Hamedinah," Al Atar 11 (5763): 85-95
- Yoel Elitzur, "Achen! Kivrei Beit David," Al Atar 11 (5763): 15-27
- Gabriel Barkay, "L'ba'ayat Makom Kivrehem shel Malchei Beit David Ha'achronim," Bein Chermon L'Sinai: Yad l'Amnon (1977): 75-92
- Bargil Pixner, Biblical Archaeological Review (May/June 1990)
- Hershel Shanks, "The Tombs of David and Other Kings of Judah," Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography (New York: 1995), 35-43
- Ora Limor, "King David's Tomb on Mount Zion: The Origins of a Tradition," in D. Jacoby & Y. Tsafir (eds.), Jews, Samaritans and Christians in Byzantine Palestine (Jerusalem, 1988), 11-23 [Hebrew].

torczyner@torontotorah.com

613 Mitzvot: #330-335, 339-340**Yovel [The Jubilee Cycle]**

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

One of the core principles of Judaism is that we must never become arrogant; a Jew must remember that Hashem created us, and we are tenants on this earth. The mitzvah of *yovel* helps remind us of this point. We are instructed to count seven cycles of seven years each (mitzvah #330); the fiftieth year is *Yovel*, the Jubilee Year. The year is celebrated with a Rosh HaShanah-style public shofar blowing on Yom Kippur (#331). In that sanctified year, like in the sabbatical *shemita* year, we do not work the land (#332-333), and we do not harvest and store produce as we normally would (#334-335). All fields sold in the past fifty years return to the families and *shevatim* who originally held them (#339-340). Thus we are reminded of our tenant status.

Taking another approach, Rav Kook (Introduction to *Shabbat ha'Aretz*) writes that the Jewish people are elevated with each *shemita* year of sabbatical, separating temporarily from the daily grind of mundane life to return to their Divine root. Each *shemita* year offers an opportunity for a national act of *teshuvah*. The *yovel* year, the culmination of seven cycles of these *shemita* years, is the peak of this redemptive process, and an opportunity for the Jewish nation to achieve its greatest heights.

The mitzvah of *yovel* applies only when "all of the land's residents live there", and many other mitzvot, such as *shemita*, and the laws of the *ger toshav*, are biblically binding only when *yovel* applies. However, the definition of "all of the land's residents live there" is itself subject to debate. Definitions include:

- All Jews live in Israel (Rashi Yoma 9b *sanina*)
- Each *shevet* lives in its ancestral portion (Erchin 32b; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shemita v'Yovel 10:8)
- Representatives of each *shevet* live in the *shevet's* ancestral portion (Tosafot Gittin 36a *b'zman*, Ramban to Gittin 36a)
- 600,000 Jews live in Israel (Vilna Gaon in Kol haTor 1:15 and 2:118, and see Tzitz Eliezer 10:1:9-12)

There is some debate as to whether biblical *yovel* applied during the second Beit haMikdash; multiple commentaries by Tosafot (Gittin 36a and Erchin 31b) contend that it did, but the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shemita v'Yovel 10:8) rules that it did not, as an insufficient number of Jews returned from Babylon to Israel.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Biography

Reb Nathan of Breslov Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Nathan Sternhartz, also known as Reb Nathan of Breslev or Reb Noson, was born on the 15th of Shevat 5540 (January 22, 1780), in Nemirov, Ukraine. He was married at the age of 13, as was the custom in that community at that time. Although his father and father-in-law were fiercely opposed to the new and fast-growing Jewish spiritual movement of chasidism, Nathan felt that his upbringing lacked happiness and vitality, and he was drawn to the chasidim. Fatefully, it was in 5562 (1802), when young Reb Nathan was supposed to join his family business in Berdichev, that the renowned chasidic master, Rabbi Nachman, moved to nearby Breslov.

Reb Nathan went to hear Rabbi Nachman and was immediately won over by the charismatic teacher, becoming his lifelong disciple. He abandoned the family business and began to accompany Rabbi Nachman, recording all he said. Later on, when Reb Nathan's family saw that his devotion to Torah and mitzvot only grew with his chasidic attachment, they withdrew their objections.

Reb Nathan's time with Rabbi Nachman was not long; the latter passed away in 5570 (1810). Nonetheless, in those eight years Reb Nathan wrote and collected numerous *Torot* (the Chassidic nickname for the Masters teachings) from his teacher, many of them approved by Rabbi Nachman himself.

After Rabbi Nachman's death, Reb Nathan concentrated on strengthening and organizing the Breslover chasidim, leading them according to the lessons he had learned from Rabbi Nachman, and spreading his writings across Eastern Europe. Reb Nathan also established the custom, kept to this day among the Breslov Chassidim, of spending Rosh Hashanah at Rabbi Nachman's grave in Uman. Reb Nathan also authored a few independent works. Despite his leadership role, though, Reb Nathan was never appointed to become Rabbi Nachman's successor.

While he felt that all of his activities were only a continuation of his master's work, many believe that Reb Nathan was essential in the founding of Breslov Chassidut. As Rabbi Nachman himself said, "Without Reb Noson, not even a *sheimos* page would remain from me".

Reb Nathan died on Tevet 10th 5605 (December 20, 1844); his yahrtzeit was on Friday.

bweintraub@torontotorah.com

Torah and Translation

The Tenth of Tevet and the Sale of Yosef Rabbi Nathan of Breslov

Likutei Halachot 8, Hilchot Taanit 4

Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

וזה בחינת השלש צרות שארעו בטבת שאז התחלת חרבן בית המקדש, כמו שכתוב "כתב לך את עצם היום הזה" (יחזקאל כד,ב) והם נזכרים בסליחות של י" בטבת שנכתבה התורה יונית ומת עזרא הסופר ואז סמך מלך בבל וכו', שהוא התחלת החרבן. כי כל אלו הצרות תלויים זה בזה, כי נכתבה התורה יונית זה עקר בחינת פגם כתב ידינו, ונותנים תקף לכתב שלהם, מאחר שהתורה הקדושה עצמה נכתבה בכתב שלהם. וזה בחינת שמת עזרא הסופר, שהוא הסופר הראשון שעסק ביותר לתקן כתיבת התורה כראוי. ועל כן צרת מיתנו הוא שיכה לצרת כתיבת התורה בכתביהם, ושהוא ההפך מהתיקון שעשה עזרא הסופר, על ידי שהיה עוסק להיות סופר הכותב בכתבינו כדינו והמשיך שלמות כתיבת ספרי תורה בעולם.

ועל כן אז התחיל החרבן, כי עקר החרבן על ידי זה, על ידי פגם אמונת חכמים, שעל ידי זה נפגם כתב ידינו ומגשין מארץ ישראל ונחלקה העצה. ואז אין שלמות להתורה, על ידי שפוגמין הספרים אמיתיים של תורתנו הקדושה, שעל ידי זה אין יכולין להמשיך המתקה מקדש קדשים...

וזה בחינת מחלקת השבטים עם יוסף, שגרם הגלות והחרבן, כי יוסף הוא בחינת הצדיק האמת. והשבטים, אף על פי שהם כלם קדושים, אף על פי כן קפץ השטן ביניהם והטעה אותם בעצות רעות כאלה למכר את יוסף הצדיק, כי גם צדיקים גדולים צריכים לשמר עצמם מאד ולבקש מהשם יתברך מאד להנצל מעצות נבערות בפרט בענין מחלוקת, ששם עיקר התגברות השטן, שמכניס סברות בלב הצדיקים, עד שנדמה להם שהם צריכים לרדף את הצדיק האמת עד לחייו...

...These are the three tribulations that happened in Tevet, the beginning of the Temple's destruction, as Yechezkel 24:2 says, "Write for yourself this very day" (Yechezkel 24:2). These tribulations are mentioned in the *selichot* of the Tenth of Tevet – that the Torah was written in Greek, that Ezra the Scribe died, and that the Babylonian king drew near [to Jerusalem]. This was the beginning of the destruction, for all of these tribulations were dependent on each other. The writing of the Torah in Greek represented a defect in our own script, and gave validity to their script, as the holy Torah itself was recorded in their script. This is also represented in the death of Ezra the Scribe, the first scribe to specialize in establishing the proper text of the Torah. And that is why the tribulation associated with his death relates to the tribulation of the Torah being recorded in their script, an act which is the opposite of Ezra's establishment of the correct text, in which he was engaged to write precisely, in our script, according to its law, and he enabled the perfection of the writing of Torah scrolls in the world.

This is when destruction began, because of the main vehicle of destruction – a lack of faith in our sages, leading to a defect in our script, exile from the Land of Israel and wise counsel becoming divided. Then there was no perfection in the Torah, due to the harm inflicted upon the true books of our holy Torah, and therefore we cannot draw sweetness from the Holy of Holies...

And this is similar to the dispute between the brothers and Joseph, which caused exile and destruction. Joseph represents the truly righteous person. Although all of the tribes are holy, nonetheless, the Satan jumped between them and led them astray with bad counsel to sell Joseph the Righteous. Even the great righteous leaders must guard themselves rigorously and ask G-d to cause them to be saved from foolish ideas, especially in regard to disputes. There the Satan is most powerful, injecting arguments into the heart of the righteous, until it seems to them they must persecute the truly righteous person for his very life...

The 16th of Tevet is Thursday

In the 1960's the Israeli government desperately needed to upgrade their navy. Many of the Israeli naval boats were severely outdated, and Israel felt threatened by the Egyptian navy, which was receiving new ships from the Russian government. Israel reached an agreement with France to obtain twelve new vessels; construction began in Cherbourg, France, and by 1968 Israel had received seven of the twelve missile boats.

In December 1968, the Israeli air force carried out a raid on the Beirut airport, destroying millions of dollars worth of planes. In response, the French president, Charles de Gaulle ordered an arms embargo on Israel. The embargo included arms for which the Israeli government had already paid, like the missile boats in Cherbourg.

The Israeli navy devised a plan to bring the missile boats to Israel. A few weeks before the mission, Israeli officials and

sailors arrived in Cherbourg to prepare for the operation. Fuel was smuggled into Cherbourg, and food was stocked up to prepare for the voyage to Israel.

The plan, dubbed Operation Noa, began on 16 Tevet, 5730 (the eve of December 24, 1969). Despite harsh weather conditions, they set sail in the middle of the night, undetected by French authorities. The French government only realized the boats were missing the next day, when the vessels had already reached the middle of the sea. The French government was furious at Israel for their actions, and the French defense minister ordered an airstrike on the boats. However, the chief of staff and president of France refused to carry out the strike, to avoid any further escalation. The boats arrived in Israel on December 31, 1969 and were instrumental in the navy's efforts a few years later, during the Yom Kippur War.

jgutenberg@torontotorah.com

Highlights for December 14 - December 20 / 11 Tevet - 17 Tevet

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
SHABBAT DEC. 14 Shabbaton at TCS!				
Derashah	Ensemble Cast	Shiur Theatre: Frumming Out, Fitting In	Thornhill Community Shul	
After musaf	Mrs. Sara Frieberg Eli Gelernter Josh Gutenberg Rabbi Baruch Weintraub	Bereishit to Shemot to Today Topic TBA Torah in Translation Yissachar-Zevulun	Thornhill Community Shul	Mrs. Frieberg's shiur is for women only
Before minchah	Josh Gutenberg	Mishnayos for Boys	BAYT	
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	To Repeal a Rabbinic Decree	BAYT	
6:30 PM	Adam Frieberg	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	
SUNDAY DEC. 15				
8:45 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Medical Halachah: Dealing with Dementia	BAYT	CME credit available Laypeople welcome!
9:15 AM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Parshah Revisited	Zichron Yisroel	Hebrew
After maariv	R' Baruch Weintraub	Shlichut Reflections	Clanton Park	Hebrew, men
8:00 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Shlichut Reflections	4 Tillingham Keep	Hebrew, mixed
MONDAY DEC. 16				
8:00 PM	Rav Shlomo Gemara	The Prophets of Israel	Bnai Torah	
8:00 PM 8:00 PM 9:30 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub R' Mordechai Torczyner R' Baruch Weintraub	Parshah not this week Principles of Faith	Shaarei Shomayim	Community Beit Midrash Night
TUESDAY DEC. 17				
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Living Midrash	Shaarei Shomayim	with Mekorot
8:45 PM	Adam Frieberg	Exploring Laws of Shabbat	Shaarei Tefillah	
WED. DEC. 18				
8:00 PM 8:00 PM 9:00 PM 9:00 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub R' Mordechai Torczyner R' Yehoshua Weber R' Baruch Weintraub	Prophecy for Our Time Business Ethics: Lending Responsa: Surrogacy Chabura: Sanhedrin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Community Beit Midrash Night Maariv at 9:50 PM
THU. DEC. 19				
8:40 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Learning and Latte	Ulpanat Orot	
8:30 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Chabura: Sotah	Clanton Park	