

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYECHI

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

THE SECRET BEHIND TECHIYAT HAMETIM

As we complete the first book of the Torah we are left with a subconscious message hinted throughout the Parasha.

It all begins with the name of this week's Parasha – Vayechi.

In essence the Parasha relates Yaakov's last years and final blessing to his children. After passing away and a national mourning, Yaakov is taken up to Eretz Yisrael to be buried. Thereafter the children of Israel return to Egypt, where they continue to flourish. At the end of the Parasha we are told about Yosef gathering his brothers and asking them to ensure his remains will be taken up to Israel at the time of the exodus. They concur and we end the book of Bereishit with the passing of Yosef.

There are two Parshiot in the Torah that are called with reference to life. The first is Chayei Sarah – the life of Sarah, and the second is this week's Parasha – Vayechi (and he lived).

It seems strange that that the two Parshiot which seem to talk about death are the ones that are named with life? Is there a connection?

Our Sages teach that we should bless G-d one hundred times a day. (See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 46:4, 284:4, 290:1).

Unfortunately sometimes due to habit, we miss out on the beauty found within so many of our blessings.

The aim is to constantly recognise Hashem in everything we do.

As part of our blessings in the silent Amida

there is a special blessing where we praise G-d for being Mechayeh Hametim – resurrecting the dead.

Have you ever noticed how many times within that blessing the words relating to life and death are mentioned?

Although we say this blessing three times a day, many people have not noticed the seemingly repetitive theme of Techiyat Hametim within the blessing. In total this is mentioned five times! (Mechayeh Metim Ata, Mechayeh Metim Berachamim, Melech Memit Umechaye, Neeaman Ata Lehachayot Metim, Baruch.. Mechayeh Hametim)

Why the repetition?

The Gemara Avoda Zara 5a mentions that there are four types of people that although they are alive, nevertheless are considered dead.

The first is a poor man.

The Torah relates that Hashem told Moshe that all the people that wanted him harmed had died (Metu Kol ha'Anashim). Our Rabbis explain that this refers to Datan and Aviram, who although were still alive, because they had lost their wealth, were considered dead.

The second is a blind person. This is learnt from a Pasuk which compares a blind man to dead "b'Machashakim Hoshivani k'Metei Olam";

The third is a Metzora, one who has (spiritual) leprosy. After Miriam received Tsarat for speaking against her brother Moshe, Aharon defended her and asked "Al Na Tehi (Miryam) ka'Met"; Please don't let Miriam be like a dead person.

The fourth category is a childless person. This is learnt from Rachel's request from Yaakov to have children "Havah Li Vanim v'Im Ayin Metah Anochi – grant me

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children otherwise I am (like) dead". We all yearn for the Messianic era daily where eventually we will witness ultimate physical and spiritual bliss. All will be healed. The blind, the deaf and the dumb, the lame, whosoever has any blemish or disability, shall be healed from all their disabilities: "The eyes of the blind shall be clear-sighted, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened... the lame shall leap as a hart and the tongue of the dumb shall sing..." (Isaiah 35:5-6). Death itself shall cease, as it is said, "Death shall be swallowed up forever and G-d shall wipe the tears from every face..." (Isaiah 25:8)

There will be a life of ease. Our physical needs will be taken care of by others, as it is said, "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks and aliens shall be your ploughmen and your vinedressers." (Isaiah 61:5)

The time will come when G-d resurrects the dead.

But which 'dead' will be resurrected. Our daily blessing of Mechayeh Hametim is teaching us that all these four categories of 'dead' people will be resurrected. Those that are childless will bear children, there will be no poverty, no lepers and all will be able to see. The fifth and final reference to resurrecting the dead refers to the real

dead that have passed away being resurrected.

Thus what we think is the end is only a transition period. We are born, we live and pass on, but one day we have faith we will be resurrected.

For the righteous we have a stress on life particularly in the place that death is mentioned.

Sarah lived a fulfilled life, she passed away and the Torah relates, "Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and li'vkotah/to cry for her." (23:2)

In the Torah, the word "li'vkotah" is written with a small letter "kaf". In this way, the Torah tells us that Avraham did not cry or mourn excessively for his wife Sarah.

R' Ovadiah Yosef Z'l explained that our patriarch Avraham was a prophet. When Sarah died, Avraham knew that she was in Gan Eden with other righteous people who had died. Since the sages teach, "One hour in Olam Haba is more worthwhile than all life in This World/Olam Ha'zeh," Avraham had no reason to cry. Thus his mourning was not excessive.

Then why did he cry at all? Only because of "what people would say." In reality, though, we all should recognize that the deceased is in a better place. This is why we comfort mourners with the words: "Hamakom ye'nachem

etchem . . ."/"May Hashem (who we refer to as "Makom" because He is everywhere) comfort you . . ." The word "makom" literally means "The Place" – thus we are saying, "May your knowledge that the deceased is in a good place comfort you."

Sarah was the first mother of our nation and taught us this important message. Hence Chayei Sarah – the life of Sarah teaches us that although she passed away, she lives on.

Perhaps it was taught yet again with Yaakov as he lived a life full of trials and tribulations and represented the Jew in exile. He saw beyond the pain, perceived beyond the troubles, because his life source was Hashem. Yaakov's inextricable bond to the Almighty was an enduring quality, which he infused in his descendants throughout the generations. Vayechi Yaakov B'ereitz Mitzrayim is the catchphrase for Jewish transcendence in the diaspora, for the almost daily confrontation with adversity and pain. This emotion comprises our generative force that keeps us strong and committed despite the overwhelming challenges which confront us at every turn.

Remember everything will be ok in the end, if it's not, it's not the end!

Shabbat Shalom



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

FAITH AND INTEGRITY

In Parashas Vayechi, Yaakov Avinu asks Yosef to make a solemn promise to bury him in the Me'aras HaMachpelah and not in Egypt. Despite Yosef's assurance, "Anochi e'eseh k'dvarecha" (Bereishis 47:30), Yaakov insists on a Shvua (oath). This back-and-forth prompts deeper reflection on trust and the role of spiritual integrity in navigating life's challenges.

The Sforno explains that the Shvua was not due to doubt in Yosef. Yaakov fully trusted his son but foresaw potential obstacles with Pharaoh. The oath would give Yosef leverage, allowing him to say, "Avi hishbi'ani"—"My father bound me by an oath." Pharaoh, fearful of violating his own oaths to hide his ignorance of lashon ha'kodosh (Hebrew), would respect this

demand. This practical reasoning reflects Yaakov's foresight in securing his wishes. This contrasts sharply with Abraham's requirement of a Shvua from Eliezer in arranging Yitzchak's marriage. While Eliezer was an Eved Ne'eman (loyal servant), Abraham understood that Eliezer's spiritual perspective differed from his own. Eliezer acted out of obedience rather than conviction. Abraham feared that in moments of difficulty, Eliezer might compromise, necessitating the binding oath (Rashi, Bereishis 24:2).

Yosef's case is unique. Having grown up in Beit Yaakov, Yosef absorbed his father's sensitivities. Despite decades in the morally corrupt Egypt, Yosef remained spiritually untainted, retaining the values of his youth. Yaakov recognized Yosef's alignment with his vision, especially in his shared disdain for Egypt's impurity and his reverence for the sanctity of the Me'aras HaMachpelah.

When Yaakov saw Yosef's steadfast commitment, the Torah says, "Va'yishtachu Yisrael al rosh ha'mitah" (Bereishis 47:31). Rashi notes this bow expressed Yaakov's gratitude that his legacy of Torah and Kedusha endured in Yosef.

Yaakov and Yosef's story teaches the power of maintaining spiritual integrity in challenging environments. Yosef's ability to thrive in Egypt while remaining rooted in Beit Yaakov's values serves as a timeless model. Whether in exile or surrounded by contrary influences, we are called to embody the steadfastness of Yosef, ensuring that Torah and kedusha guide our decisions. Like Yosef, we must safeguard our legacy by embedding values so deeply that they endure, even amidst external pressures. By trusting in Hashem and staying true to our principles, we can navigate life's challenges with unwavering faith and integrity.



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

למנצח בנגינות על-השמינית מזמור לדוד: - Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 6

THE POWER OF PRAYER - PART II

King David pleads;

ד' אל-באפך תוכיחני ואל-בחמתך תיסרני: (6:2)

G-d, do not rebuke me in anger, do not punish me in fury.

It is interesting to look at the language King David uses here because it offers a fascinating insight into how he perceives the workings of divine justice.

King David mentions four concepts which on the face of it are closely associated with one another; anger, fury, rebuke and punishment. What is the difference between all these concepts? The Malbim explains that anger is an external expression of anger. A person who appears angry may not feel anything inside at all. On the other hand alludes to an internal swelling of emotion as the individual in question feels their anger burning inside. The Malbim also differentiates between the concept of rebuke and punishment. When one offers rebuke to another person they do not necessarily look to inflict any sort of

"damage". Indeed, rebuke is often given in respect of future behavior, in an effort to set somebody on the correct path. Punishment on the other hand relates to a situation where actual damage is inflicted on the subject as a response to their past deeds.

In light of these definitions we can gain a deeper understanding of what King David was requesting from Hashem. He asks that the rebuke that Hashem offers should not be given with external anger but gently, as a father would do to his son. King David was not worried that Hashem would rebuke him with fury because rebuke is only ever offered out of love.

With regard to his punishments, King David did not ask that he be saved from Hashem's superficial anger because a punishment - whether physical or not - is, by definition, an outward display of anger. He could only ask that his punishment should not be meted out with internal "fury".

Whilst this chapter clearly stands out for its quite desperate tone, it is important to note that King David concludes with a message of hope. He declares that "Hashem has heard the voice of my cries; Hashem has heard my pleading; Hashem has taken up my prayers" (6:9-10).

King David believes that since his prayers

were uttered with real sincerity he is guaranteed salvation from his troubles.

The Tachanun prayer is a cry of an oppressed individual but it has been adopted as the cry of an oppressed nation. Eyeing the turbulent history of our people it is not surprising that the custom to recite Tachanun has emerged but it is important to point out that the prayer is not just reserved for national crises (heaven forbid). Small groups of our brethren may be suffering around world at any time and we need to bring this suffering to our awareness. At the same time we are certainly at liberty to bring our own personal struggles to mind as King David intended.

We are understandably busy throughout the day as we engage in essential activities such as earning a living and performing mitzvot but the Tachanun prayer calls out to us, requesting that we pause for a few minutes to focus on the suffering which we are experiencing as a people and also in our own lives. Most importantly, it offers us the opportunity to desperately plead for redemption from our troubles.

Be'ezrat Hashem we will all soon be able to declare

"Hashem has heard the voice of my cries; Hashem has taken up my prayers" (6,10)



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Are Tefillin Considered Muktze and Thus Prohibited To Move On Shabbat

(Ben Ish Chai, Hilchot Purim Halacha 9)

One does not wear Tefillin on Shabbat or Yom Tov. See Shulchan Aruch 31:2, and Rama. This includes both the first day of Yom Tov and the additional day observed in the Diaspora. The custom among Sepharadim is not to wear Tefillin during Chol Ha'mo'ed Pesach or Chol Ha'mo'ed Sukkot, either. Among Ashkenazim, different customs exist in this regard of Chol HaMoed. Some wear Tefillin with a Beracha, some wear them without a Beracha, and some do not wear them at all. Tefillin are worn on Chanukah and Purim. On Purim, there is a custom to kiss the Tefillin during the reading of the Megila, when the reader reaches the word "Ve'ykar" in the verse, "La'Yehudim Hayeta Ora Ve'simcha Ve'sason Ve'ykar" ("The Jews had light, joy, jubilation and glory"), because the word "Ve'ykar" alludes to the Mitzva of Tefillin.

Given that Tefillin may not be worn on Shabbat or Yom Tov, the question arises as to whether they are considered Muktze - an object that serves no functional purpose on Shabbat and may therefore not be handled on Shabbat. For example, if one wants to sit on a chair on Shabbat but his Tefillin were left on the chair before Shabbat, may he move the Tefillin so he can sit? Furthermore, if a Rabbi teaches a class on Shabbat about Tefillin, may he show the students Tefillin as part of his instruction?

Halacha classifies Tefillin under the category known as "Keli She'melachto Le'issur" - utensils whose primary use involves activity forbidden on Shabbat. The law regarding such a "utensil" is that one may move it either to use the space it currently occupies, or to use the item itself for a permissible

purpose. Therefore, in the aforementioned case of the Tefillin left on a chair, one may, indeed, move the Tefillin so that he can use the chair. Likewise, one may use Tefillin for a permissible purpose on Shabbat, such as if a Rabbi wishes to show the Tefillin to his students as part of his instruction of the laws of Tefillin.

Summary:

- 1) One may not wear Tefillin on Shabbat or Yom Tov; different customs exist regarding wearing Tefillin on Chol Ha'mo'ed.
- 2) Tefillin are worn on Chanukah and Purim.
- 3) On Shabbat and Yom Tov, one may move Tefillin only for the purpose of using the space it occupies, or to use the Tefillin themselves in a manner permissible on Shabbat.

See Halichot Olam, Helek 3, page 196. See Menuhat Ahava, Helek 1, page 263.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Vayechi

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 Reuven. 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 Efraim'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

Rabbi Sinclair, Seasonsofthemoon.com



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 Ephraim and Menashe?



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.



Yissachar is a bony donkey ... he can carry the yoke of Torah like a strong donkey that can be loaded up with a heavy package (Bereishis 49:14 and Rashi)



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