

# Lionel Stein's Shabbat Newsletter

## Shabbat Vayeishev

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**Shabbat Shalom – Lionel Stein**

**"Am Yisrael Chai"**

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### Editorial

Yesterday it was reported that "‘Shockingly high' number of Gaza children still acutely malnourished after truce, UN says."

Israel must immediately contest such false statements, because they are made to have Israel face condemnations and sanctions for supposedly breaking international treaties.

Unfortunately, the fall out from this could be nuclear.

### Kodesh

RABBI AVRAHAM CHAIM TANZER TALKS  
VAYEISHEV

By Rabbi Dov Tanzer

VOL 6/5786

*These Divrei Torah are dedicated Lezecher Nishmas and Leiluy Nishmas*

*Rabbi Moshe Reuven Charrick zt'l*

*(father of Rebbetzin Marcia Tanzer tlch"t) on his yortzeit*

וַיָּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגְוָרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן

A LIFE OF EASE...

*Yaakov settled in the land where he father had sojourned in the Land of Canaan (37, 1)*

Rashi famously comments: Yaakov thought he could ‘settle’ and rest comfortably without concern, taking it a bit easy; but immediately the ‘fury of Yosef’ jumped up at him.

Yaakov had struggled valiantly against the forces of evil his entire life. He struggled with his brother Esav, with Lavan and indeed even against the Angel of Esav. Now, in his older age, he wished to serve his Creator in ease; what was so wrong with his desire for rest?

Rabbi Tanzer zt”l explained that we are here for a reason, and we never know when that reason has been accomplished. Yet, once accomplished, there’s no more reason for Hashem to keep a person here, in this world.

The ‘fury of Yosef’ came to teach Yaakov that though he had truly done wonders in his personal service of Hashem and his own self-development; that is not the only reason we are here. Chiefly we are here for the betterment of others. The world would benefit greatly by Yaakov struggling with the evil of Yosef’s kidnapping and ‘murder’. As Yaakov struggled with these terrifying notions and feelings, he brought forth for all the generations of Klal Yisrael the *kochos*, the capacity to deal with the vagaries of life, and maintain focus on Truth and Service.

He taught the world that even through his heartrending events, he remained Yaakov, faithful to the vision of Avraham and Yitzchak, and especially to Yaakov’s own vision. He never veered. He never fully even believed the evil reports.

Through his struggle with catastrophe and evil, even at his advanced age, Yaakov achieved previously unfathomed levels of greatness and paved the way for the Jewish Nation.

*As Yaakov struggled personally with the fears and feelings of Yosef’s fate, he brought forth for all the generations of Klal Yisrael the capacity to deal with the vagaries of life without becoming embittered, and remain firm and keep their faith and their focus on Truth and Service.*

The Torah records that Moshe Rabbenu died ‘on the mountain’ – inferring that he was still climbing; he had not resigned himself to any peak – no matter how high and remarkable – his sights were set on an infinitely high target. The way to leave this world, after a long and full life, is in the middle of an important project; always beginning anew.

#### **AS LONG AS THERE’S LIGHT WE MEND**

A perennial favourite anecdote of the famous violinist who was asked why he continued to practice many hours a day into well into his 90’s, though he was no longer professionally active. ‘Because I feel I’m still making progress’, he explained. Maybe he wouldn’t pack a concert hall again, but there was some improvement, and that’s the important point in life.

We’re not here to rest on our achievements and simply reap the rewards; we’re in the world to invest and to reinvest again and make some improvement for ourselves and for others. We owe that to the world. That’s an act of generous leadership and responsibility.

Rav Yisrael Salanter retold the inspiration he gleaned from the word of a simple cobbler working well into the night: ‘As long as there’s a little light left in the candle, we must mend’. Rav Yisrael took this as meaning more than the economy of using the candle till it went out; he applied it to life: It’s never too late to mend, and you’re never too old to make something of yourself – as long as there’s life, we must mend...

Rabbi Tanzer, in his final days, was waiting for a family member to bring him a luach of the daily study of Rambam; it was a limud he was keen to include in his *sedarim*.

**BEGIN AGAIN NOW**

be

**אלה תלדות יעקב יוסף**

*These are the generations of Yaakov, Yosef (at seventeen years old was tending the sheep with his brothers...37, 2)*

The Tzadik of Riminov, (with whose Torah and *Avodah*, Rabbi Tanzer zt”l had a great affinity), read the Pasuk in a novel way: These are the generations of Yaakov – ‘Yosef’. ‘Yosef’ means ‘to add’, thus the Pasuk could read: ‘*These are the toldos (generation/products) generated by Yaakov in his lifetime – he was always adding and building and moving forward. He never truly stopped to rest.*’

Perhaps that is precisely why the ‘fury of Yosef’ was aroused at Yaakov specifically; because this was at the essence of Yaakov – always a beginner. Always just starting. The very name ‘Yaakov’ means ‘heel’ – he had the magnificent capacity to see with a beginner’s eyes, and to invest energy with the freshness of one just starting out on his way.

During his entire life, Yaakov sought to improve his character and his devotion, each and every day, in some way. He was essentially and fundamentally a ‘Yosef’ – one who adds and grows incrementally, always positing goals for himself to move towards.

*"Each and every day you must refine your goals, and move closer to them with small steps.*

Therefore, for him to decide that it's time to put his feet up, so to speak, was the antipathy of the service of Yaakov. That's why the reaction was swiftly coming, the 'fury of Yosef'.

This, to remind Yaakov, that Yosef was his not just his son, but that 'Yosef' was his most essential *Middah*.

### KEEP TALKING

ולא יכלו דברו לשלם

*The brothers could not speak with Yosef in peace (37, 4)*

This Pasuk almost sounds as if the real problem was not the dreams that were visiting Yosef. Nor, indeed, was the main issue that he was relaying each dream and vision to them, without realizing the harm he was causing. Here, the verse almost implicated the brothers themselves for this simple fact 'they could not converse with him peaceably' – about anything. They were so incensed by his visions of grandeur that they stopped speaking.

Yet, surely, there were much greater moments of tragic consequence, from Yosef's sharing the dreams in all their detail, to his repeating the alleged offences to the father, and the brother's tragic sale of him etc.

Why is this emotion highlighted?

It certainly brings to mind an attitude that the Rav believed, lived and taught: 'Keep talking to each other'. Never let the line of communication be silenced. Talk about anything at all, but don't allow alienation to creep in between a relationship. Because, in that space of alienated silence, anything can happen.

*'Keep talking to each other'. Never let the line of communication be silenced. Talk about anything at all, but don't allow alienation to creep in between a relationship. Because, in that space of alienated silence, anything can happen*

If you just 'keep talking', keep greeting – 'never use your greeting as weapon' he would say: 'every single person deserves to be greeted – just because he is human', you will find another way to deliver your message of hurt of disappointment. But let it not be the silent treatment.

*"Never use your greeting as weapon," he would say; 'every single person deserves to be greeted – just because he is human'; you will find another way to deliver your message of hurt of disappointment. But let it not be the silent treatment.*

Thus, despite the fact that the Sages also had a positive insight into the brother's character based on this silence; viz, they were not capable of hypocrisy – of feeling about Yosef in a negative light, and still maintaining positive casual conversation as though all was normal.

Yes, it does speak of their sincerity and honesty. Yet, relationships require not always being totally brutally frank or hurtfully honest. A certain amount of well-guided and well-intended guile is sometimes a useful aid to maintaining social connections, and producing the desired outcomes.

### SUCCESS IS THE BEST PROTECTION FROM FAILURE

והבור רק אין בו מים

*The pit was empty, it had no water (37, 24)*

If the pit was empty, why do we need to be informed that it had no water? Obviously, otherwise it wouldn't be 'empty'?!

He cited the Gemara, (cited in the Sugyos of Chanuka), that the pit was empty – only of water, but something else did lurk in it's recesses – it seethed with dangerous snakes and scorpions; that is the pit into which the brothers cast Yosef, wishing for the logical outcome...

The Vilna Gaon, explained, that the Sages were issuing an educational attitude here: Wherever there is no Water of Torah ideas, to revive the soul; there will be poisonous ideas, of serpents and scorpions to flourish in the absence of the water. This, Rabbi Tanzer explained, because, Nature abhors a vacuum.

*'Nature abhors a vacuum'. Wherever there are no Torah values and thoughts, there will be poisonous ideas - serpents and scorpions flourish in the absence of the water.*

*Fill the mind with Torah thoughts, and Mussar ideas, because, it's the best and truly the only way to ensure that the poisons are kept out. Pursuit of excellence is the best hedge against failure.*

The take-away is clear. Fill the mind with Torah thoughts, and Mussar ideas, because, it's the best and truly the only way to 'own the territory', to ensure that the poisons are kept out.

This idea was Rabbi Tanzer's clarion call to Torah Education, believing and teaching, that Jewish Education means Torah Education, that the two are inseparable. He taught that the challenge of chinuch is to fill the mind with positives ideas of Halacha and Emuna, of Chesed and responsibility. These ideas will ensure that the mind is not an environment for the 'snakes and scorpions' that will always fill the empty mind – because nature abhors

a vacuum. A mind that isn't filled with ideas of Torah and Yirat Shamayim, becomes fertile breeding ground for the many serpents that abound.

#### *A PICTURE SPEAKS VOLUMES*

**וַיָּבֹא הַבֵּיתָהּ לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכְתּוֹ וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שָׁם בְּבֵית**

*He came to the house to perform his work (39, 11)*

Rashi comments that Yosef saw his father's holy appearance in the window father, Yaakov, appeared to Yosef, and that is what prevented him from sinning.

Even after being alone in a foreign land, sold as slave many times, and finding himself managing one of the most powerful estates in Egypt, the thing that secured Yosef's place in the line of Tzaddikim was the image of his father. What a powerful image that is!

Each person needs to strive to form that relationship with his own children, so that, no matter where they find themselves in the vicissitudes of life, they can anchor themselves by conjuring up the image of Rabbi Tanzer – a warm, loving sincere and noble presence. One which reminds you of your own nobility and sanctity.

He didn't recall a Shiur or a remonstrance of his father; it was sufficient to recall his appearance!

Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky makes the observation that the 'image in the window' only works if, as a father, you have been a figure of inspiration and duty to your children; then, when they conjure your image in the window, it will suffice to strengthen and encourage them in the struggles of life. If, however, your image reminds them of irritation and indulgence, then it won't work.

As parents, we need to be mindful that the children may well face challenges in life, both of success and the opposite; we need them to be able to conjure our image and say to themselves: "How could I ever let my father down and do this to him?"

Rabbi Tanzer used to cite a certain person who said: 'It's not something my father said, but rather who he was, that led me to choose the high road'.

Blessed is the child who received this gift – a father to look up to with love and inspiration from any corner of the world. A father and relationship that reminds you who you are, no matter where the path of life has brought you.

The most important accomplishment that you can achieve as a parent, is that your very image inspires your child to live an upright and forthright life – committed to the very highest values possible.

#### **ORabbi Label Lam on this week's Parsha "[torah.org](http://torah.org)"**

##### **To Prepare... Prepare... Prepare!**

The Chamberlain of the Baker saw that he had interpreted well, so he said to Yosef, "I too! In my dream- behold! Three wicker baskets were on my head. And in the uppermost basket were all kinds of Pharaoh's food- baker's handiwork- and the birds were eating them from above my head." Yosef responded and said, "This is its interpretation: The three baskets are three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift your head from you and hang you on a tree: birds will eat your flesh from you." (Breishis 40:16- 19)

Yosef is uniquely titled with the name HaTzadik! That being the case, there is something troubling in his dialogue with the Chamberlain of the Baker. I remember reading in a journal somewhere that doctors are most often sued by patients not because of actual malpractice but rather because of a lack of bedside manner. Usually, a person with an axe to grind based on a rude encounter with their physician will find some fault, while real victims who were treated gently have a hard time responding otherwise.

Yosef, The Tzadik, has a very direct and brutal message for the Baker after analyzing his dream. Maybe he could have let him know in a kinder fashion. That would seem more like the trait of a Tzadik, or even a decent doctor. Why does he tell him straight and strong that he has three days to live? Say, rather, "It doesn't look so good! I don't know what or how to break this to you..." There is a precedent in Torah and it seems to be a Midah of HASHEM not to land shocking news all at once but rather to build up slowly. We find that when HASHEM approached Adam after the sin, He asked, "AYEKCHA- Where are you?!" and when HASHEM wanted to let Avraham Avinu know about the Akeida he let on slowly at first, "Take your son, your only son, the one you love, Yitzchok...". Why is the Tzadik in this episode seemingly so cruel in his honesty? That cannot be so!

I entered the classroom of one of my teachers years ago and listened carefully to the beautiful lesson that he was delivering. They were learning about the fate of the Baker and the Wine Butler.

The Rebbe asked a marvelous question. Firstly, he explained what the Baker and the Butler were in jail for. The Baker presented Pharaoh bread with a stone inside and the Wine Butler delivered a cup of wine to Pharaoh with a fly in it. So, why was the Baker more culpable? Because a stone is stationary while a fly is very mobile. It's obviously more negligent and sloppier to allow a stone to slip into dough than a flying fly into an open cup of

wine. Then, he asked, “Why is the Wine Butler guilty at all? He is totally not at fault! He is an ONUS!” He explained that when a stone gets into the dough, it is immediately covered up and hidden and hard to find until one bites into it and finds a surprise. However, when a fly lands in the king’s cup, it is floating on the top. He obviously was not paying close enough attention when he was serving wine to Pharaoh.

The answer he gave opened up another subject in my mind. There is an old debate about which is more important in “serving HASHM”, the preparations (HACHANA) or the actual performance of the Mitzvah (B’SHas Maaseh)?! The Wine Butler was lacking, not paying attention at the time when he was giving the cup to the king, and the Baker was deficient during the time of his preparation. We see from here that preparation supersedes the performance at the time of “serving the king”. If a Cantor gets nervous and hits a sour note or says the wrong word it is more forgivable than if he comes to Daven woefully unprepared. The same is true of teaching and almost everything else as well.

Now we can understand Yosef’s seeming brutal honesty. The Baker was lacking in seriousness around preparation. If Yosef had been vague then the Baker would likely have wasted his time. He has only three days to ready himself to meet his Creator and go on a forever journey. The Mishne in Pirke Avos says “This world is like an entranceway to a grand banquet hall. Prepare yourself in the entranceway!” So, Yosef was doing the Baker a huge favor by telling him. “You have only three days to get ready to meet Your Maker. Do not delay! Take this time to prepare, prepare, prepare!”

### **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky on this week’s Parsha “[torah.org](http://torah.org)”**

#### **Tainted Intent**

The story of Yoseph’s discord with his brothers’ waxes as a factual, albeit eternal, analogy to feuding Jews. There are dreams and fantasies, jealousies and misconceptions. Unfortunately, the saga never seems to end, as even today it seems that there are those of our brethren who would sell out their kin – all for the sake of Heaven.

The Torah relates: Yoseph’s brothers go to Shechem to tend the flock of their father, Yaakov. Yoseph is sent by Yaakov to find out what they are up to. As he approaches them they declare, “Behold, the dreamer approaches.” At first they plot to kill him but Reuvain and Yehuda intervene, one suggesting he be cast into a pit, and the other convincing the brothers to sell him to passing merchants.

Were the plans to rid themselves of their younger sibling premeditated, or was the sale an impromptu action based on sighting Yoseph as he approached them?

Let us analyze the story and the commentaries.

Yaakov asked his children to tend his sheep. The verse tells us that, “Now, his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock in Shechem.” In the Hebrew language, a prefix “es” is often used in conjunction with a noun. Here it is used in conjunction with the word sheep. Es is a word usually placed to allude to something additional. (e.g. the famous command, “In the command, “Honor your father and your mother” the Torah adds an es before the words father and mother, “Honor es your father and es your mother.” The extra word es is there to include elder siblings, stepparents and the like, all who must be afforded honor.) In this case the word es in conjunction with the sheep is not only extra, it also has dots above it. Those dots intone, says Rashi, in the name of the Midrash, that the brothers did not set out to tend only the sheep, thus solely for the purpose of honoring their father, rather they were intent on tending to themselves. They were interested in a self-serving outing, one that involved eating and drinking, without the service of their father in mind.

The question is simple. How does the Medrash know that from the extra word es and the dots above it? Maybe the extra word and the dots imply that they had an extra mission to fulfill? Maybe it implies sheep and other cattle, thus the extra es. Where does it imply that they were not fulfilling their fathers’ will. rather they were fulfilling their own agenda? The Gemara (Bava Kama 50a) relates that once there lived a man known as Nechunia the Well Digger. Nechunia selflessly dug wells to provide water for the pilgrims, who traveled to Jerusalem for the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Sukkos and Shavuot.

It happened once that Nechunia’s daughter fell into a deep well that he had dug. People ran to the great tzadik, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who was known for his miraculous ability to intercede on behalf of those in distress, and asked him to pray for the child.

It seemed that he was not the least bit concerned. During the first hour he said to them, “Don’t worry, she will be all right.” An hour later, when there was still no sign of the girl, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa still seemed unperturbed. “She still is fine,” he said.

During the third hour, he told those who had come to him “do not worry, she has come out of the well already.” When they asked the girl, “Who brought you up?” she replied, “A ram materialized, and an old man was leading it.” After hearing this, the people asked Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa, “What made you so sure that she would be saved? Are you a prophet?” Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa replied, “I am not a prophet, nor am I the student of a prophet. But I said to myself, it is impossible that a deep well, one that the tzadik Nechunia the Well Digger took

so much pain to dig in order to quench the thirst of travelers, would be a pitfall for one of his children! I felt it would be impossible for his child to be harmed by his good deed. Therefore I knew she would be safe.”

The Midrash used simple logic. If the brothers’ intent was solely to honor and service their father by tending his sheep, then that mission could never have produced the consequences that brought Yaakov misery for 22 years. How is it possible that an exercise in parental honor would turn into an activity that would cause such parental grief and anguish? Therefore, those two dots that hover over the extra word contain a powerful message. Tainted acts cause tainted results. If the mission is pure, so are the results, and when we see sullied circumstances then we must assume tainted intent. However, when brothers act out of purity of purpose and with a non-tainted mission, then their intent will only bring honor to Heaven.

### **The Parsha Quiz by Rabbi Jonathan Fox**

#### **Shabbat Vayeishev**

**Questions and answers are based on the simple translation of the Chumash.**

- Q. Why did Jacob love Joseph more than all his other sons?
- A. Because Joseph was a child of his old age [37:3]
- Q. What did Jacob make for Joseph?
- A. A fine woollen tunic [37:3]
- Q. Who said to whom: “your sheaves gathered around and bowed to my sheaf.”
- A. Joseph to his brothers [37:7]
- Q. In Joseph’s second dream, how many celestial bodies bowed down to Joseph?
- A. Thirteen [37:9]
- Q. Complete: “His brothers were jealous of him but his father \_\_\_\_\_.”
- A. guarded the matter [37:11]
- Q. When Jacob sent Joseph to look into the welfare of Joseph’s brothers, from where did he send him?
- A. From (the depths of) Chevron [37:4]
- Q. Where did Joseph find his brothers?
- A. In Dothan [37:17]
- Q. Who said about Joseph: “We will not strike him mortally!”?
- A. Reuben [37:21]
- Q. True or false: There was no water in the pit into which Joseph was cast.
- A. True [37:24]
- Q. Which of Joseph’s brothers advised that they sell him to the Ishmaelites?
- A. Judah [37:26-27]
- Q. For what price was Joseph sold to the Ishmaelites?
- A. For twenty silver pieces [37:28]
- Q. Who said: “The boy is gone! And I – where can I go?”?
- A. Reuben [37:29-30]
- Q. Who said: “For I will go down to the grave mourning for my son.”?
- A. Jacob [37:35]
- Q. Who was Judah’s father-in-law?
- A. Shua [38:18]
- Q. (a) List Judah’s sons in order of their ages? (b) Which of these sons died while married to Tamar?
- A. (a) Er, Onan and Shelah [38:3-5] (b) Er and Onan [38:6-10]
- Q. What was the name of Judah’s Adullamite friend?
- A. Hirah [38:12]
- Q. What payment did Judah offer to Tamar?
- A. A kid of the goats from the flock [38:17]
- Q. What three items did Judah leave as a pledge with Tamar?
- A. His signet, his wrap and his staff [38:18]
- Q. About whom does it state that she removed her veil from her and put on a widow’s garb?
- A. Tamar [38:19]
- Q. About whom did Judah say: “Take her out and let her be burned!”
- A. Tamar [38:24]
- Q. Tamar gave birth to twins. (a) What were their names? (b) Whose hand emerged first from the womb? (c) Who was born first?
- A. (a) Perez and Zerach [38:29-30] (b) Zerach [38:30] (c) Perez [38:29]
- Q. I perceived that Hashem was with Joseph and Joseph found favour in my eyes. Who am I?
- A. Potiphar [39:3-4]
- Q. Who said to whom: “he has denied me nothing but you, as you are his wife”?



- A. Joseph to Potiphar's wife [39:8-9]  
 Q. Who said: "He came to lie with me but I called out with a loud scream"?  
 A. Potiphar's wife [39:14]  
 Q. What did Potiphar do to Joseph after he heard his wife's accusation against Joseph?  
 A. He put him in prison [39:20]  
 Q. True or false: Joseph found favour in the eyes of the prison warden.  
 A. True [39:21]  
 Q. Which two of Pharaoh's ministers were with Joseph in prison?  
 A. The Minister of the Cupbearers and the Minister of the Bakers [40:2-3]  
 Q. Who said: "Why are your faces downcast today?"  
 A. Joseph [40:6-7]  
 Q. Fill in the missing word: "Do not interpretations belong to \_\_\_\_\_?"  
 A. God [40:8]  
 Q. In the dream of the Minister of the Cupbearers: (a) How many tendrils were on the grapevine? (b) What was in the hand of the Minister of the Cupbearers?  
 A. (a) Three [40:10] (b) Pharaoh's cup [40:11]  
 Q. In Joseph's interpretation of the dream of the Minister of the Cupbearers, what did the three tendrils represent?  
 A. Three days [40:12]  
 Q. In Joseph's interpretation of the dream of the Minister of the Cupbearers, what would happen in three days?  
 A. The Minister of the Cupbearers would be restored to his post [40:13]  
 Q. In Joseph's interpretation of the dream of the Minister of the Bakers, what would Pharaoh do to him in three days?  
 A. He would lift his head and hang him on a tree [40:19]

### **Shabbat Shalom fax by Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig**

One of my friends recently told me how shocked he is at the outfits his teenage daughter wears to school, "Rabbi, by comparison a tennis skirt would be considered modest and overly long." He has given up trying to get her to dress differently, "It just leads to an all-out confrontation, one that I am unwilling to have every day at 6:30 in the morning."

**I want** to add that his daughter attends a school that is run, at least ostensibly, as a coed Orthodox Jewish day school. I say ostensibly because immodest dress is antithetical to authentic Jewish Torah values.

**The continually** disintegrating standards of what is acceptable to wear in public is following the pattern of declining social mores several decades in the making. Unfortunately, over the last two decades the insidious influence of social media has super charged this descent.

**Entertainment** and fashion industries that once highlighted glamorous, elegant dressing have devolved into garish and risqué displays, reminiscent of Hans Christian Andersen's The Emperor's New Clothes. The only difference is that now no one even pretends to see the clothes, in fact, they seem to prefer it that way. Unfortunately, this attitude has permeated society.

**In response**, the more right-leaning Orthodox day schools, particularly the single gender ones, are militant in their adherence to draconian dress codes. Aside from requiring their students to wear uniforms, these schools' dress codes describe in exhaustive detail; neck lines, sleeve and skirt lengths, sock height, and even shoe specifications. Additionally, hair must be worn a certain way and makeup is all but prohibited.

**Superficially**, it is understandable why the schools feel the need to address concerns over dressing properly so severely. But couching it as "*tzniut* – modesty" policies simply betrays a failure of understanding what this Torah value is really about.

**These schools** are merely addressing symptoms instead of focusing on the core cause. This is similar to a dehydrated person popping Advil like Tic Tacs to deal with their headaches instead of increasing their water intake.

**In actuality**, the Torah value of personal modesty or *tzniut* has little to do with what you wear. Focusing mostly on clothing and appearance teaches students the wrong lesson.

**In last week's** Torah portion, Jacob's father-in-law Lavan wanted to trick Jacob into marrying his elder daughter Leah instead of Rachel – who's hand in marriage he had previously agreed to give to Jacob.

**Jacob**, fully aware of the devious nature of his father-in-law to be, prepared for this with Rachel by creating a series of code words to be delivered under the marriage canopy. In this way, even though she would be heavily veiled, Rachel would be able to quietly convey that it was, in fact, her under the veil. However, Rachel had second thoughts.

**Upon** seeing her father doing exactly what Jacob had feared – switching Rachel out and with Leah – she realized that her sister would be terribly shamed and embarrassed if Lavan’s deception would come to light during the wedding ceremony. To prevent a public commotion, Rachel told her sister the code words and Jacob inadvertently married Leah. Lavan later pacified him by allowing him to marry Rachel the following week.

**The Talmud** (*Megillah* 13b) states that because of Rachel’s extraordinary display of *tzniut* her children too would carry that trait and they would become royalty; both King Saul and (hundreds of years later) Queen Esther were her descendants. But this is a little puzzling. One might understandably say that Rachel was a *ba’alas chessed* (a kindhearted and charitable person) and therefore wanted to prevent her sister from embarrassment, but what does this have to do with the attribute of modesty? Perhaps even more perplexing, what does *tzniut* have to do with kingship?

**The attribute** of *tzniut* actually means not calling attention to oneself (the Hebrew word *tzanua* means hidden or discreet). In other words, Rachel realized that if Leah didn’t know Jacob’s code words it would become a huge hullabaloo: Jacob would reject Leah as a wife, creating a scene at the wedding that would bring unpleasant attention on Leah (who would be mortified), and bring Rachel’s own absence under intense scrutiny.

**Rachel**, personifying the attribute of *tzniut*, never wanted to be the center of attention. People who are totally self-absorbed and make everything about themselves have an impossible time sharing their space or limelight. By contrast, people who are secure in themselves are comfortable sharing with others. It’s this personal attribute of *tzniut* that prevented Rachel from desiring attention and enabled her to allow Jacob to marry Leah.

**Have you** ever noticed that the people who call the most attention to themselves are generally the most superficial and the least interesting? These are usually people who have failed to properly develop themselves, leading to low self-esteem. Their way of coping with that failure is to become inveterate publicity hounds, and the more attention – whatever kind of attention – the better. They tend to make terrible bosses, spouses, business partners, and leaders because there is very little space for anyone else in their reality.

**By contrast**, people who are modest and secure don’t need constant validation and therefore don’t seek the spotlight. They actually prefer to listen rather than speak. They can take a stand not because they have to be right, but because they aren’t afraid to be wrong. Consequently, they will also own their mistakes.

**Most importantly**, modest and secure people focus on the needs of others and look for ways to build up those around them. These are key elements of leadership and that’s why *tzniut* is a prerequisite to Jewish kingship. Both King Saul and Queen Esther modeled the attribute of modesty.

**We find** a similar lesson in this week’s Torah portion. It opens with our forefather Jacob feverishly preparing for an epic showdown with his brother Eisav who was marching towards him with four hundred men in full battle mode. One of the ways that Jacob dealt with this imminent threat was to try and pacify his brother by paying him a huge tribute in the form of cattle:

*“[...] he took from that which had come into his hand a tribute to Eisav his brother: She goats two hundred and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty nursing camels and their young, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys” (Genesis 32:14-16).*

**The Torah** details the actual number of animals that Jacob had readied as a gift for his brother. Oddly, four of the five species that Jacob gave to Eisav are listed as males and females while the camels were gifted as pairs of mother and child.

**Because** of this, the Midrash suggests that instead of reading the phrase “thirty nursing camels with their young (בניהם), the verse should be read “thirty nursing camels with those that build them” (בנאיהם i.e. their mates). Rashi goes on to quote the end of the Midrash that explains why the mates of the camels are written in such a cryptic manner: Because camels are modest in their mating habits the Torah chose not to publicize this (that the camels were mated pairs).

**Modern** field studies have observed that breeding pairs of camels separate from the herd and go somewhere secluded before mating. In addition, most mating events occur at night or at dawn, naturally reducing visibility. Camel mating also usually involves the male kneeling low to the ground behind the female, making the act physically less visible compared to most ungulates that stand (I am fairly certain that’s more than you ever wanted to know on the subject).

**Still**, why does the Torah describe male camels as “those that build them,” and what does this have to do with the fact that they are modest in their mating habits?

**Because** the camels are innately modest, the relationship between male and female is one of a bond and they are as a single unit – thus they are the only species that Jacob sent with a 1:1 ratio of male to female. Camels aren’t focused on merely gratifying their desires; their focus is on having children. The Torah previously describes having children as being “built” (see *Genesis* 16:2 and Rashi ad loc). Because the camels have a sense of modesty



the basis of their mating is not self-centered. The male camels are focused on producing the next generation, which in turn “builds up” the females.

**It is**, of course, no coincidence that the Hebrew word for “camel – *gama*” is the same root word for “giving – *gomel*.” When your life is not self-centered it’s much easier to be a giving person.

**If** we truly want our children to be modest and model the attribute of *tzniut*, we have to do what we can to build them up and make sure they are happy with themselves. Consequently, they won’t be constantly seeking superficial (and very unhealthy) outside validation. We must make sure they are secure with who they are and help them express themselves. When they are comfortable with themselves, they will focus outwardly and give to others. By doing this we actually build up the next generation who, in turn, will build the future.

### **Vayishlach, Genesis 32:4 - 36:43**

**On a trip** back to Canaan, Jacob meets his brother Eisav; Jacob wrestles with the angel. Then they arrive in Shechem. Shechem, the son of Chamor the Hivite, (heir to the town of Shechem) rapes Jacob’s daughter, Dinah. Dinah’s brothers, Simon and Levy, massacre the men of Shechem. Rebecca (Rivka) dies; God gives Jacob an additional name, “Israel,” and reaffirms the blessing to Abraham that the land of Canaan (Israel) will be given to his descendants. Rachel dies after giving birth to Benjamin (Binyomin). Jacob’s 12 sons are listed. Isaac dies. Eisav’s lineage is recorded as is that of Seir the Horite. Finally, the succession of the Kings of Edom is chronicled.

### **Summary of the weekly Torah Reading by Rabbi Aron Tendler “[torah.org](http://torah.org)”**

**1st 2nd & 3rd Aliyot:** It's the year 2205 and Yakov is 97 years old. He sends messengers to greet Eisav and is informed that Eisav is approaching, prepared to do battle. He applies a three pronged strategy in preparation for the confrontation: a) Tefilah - prayer b) diplomacy c) war. Prior to the actual confrontation, Yakov bests Eisav in a spiritual battle with Eisav's Angel, and earns the name "Yisroel." Due to the wound he sustained in the battle, G-d prohibits Yakov and his family from eating the Gid Hanashe - the sciatic nerve. Yakov and Eisav meet after 34 years.

**4th Aliya:** Yakov and Eisav agree to separate peacefully. Eisav returns to his kingdom of Seir, and Yakov settles outside of the city of Shechem.

**5th Aliya:** Dina is abducted and raped by Shechem the son of Chamor, and Shimon and Levi devise a strategy for successfully killing the entire male population of Shechem. According to Chazal, Shimon and Levi were 13 years old. Hashem (G-d) instructs Yakov to move to Beth El. Rivka's nurse Devora dies, and Hashem confirms the name Yisroel upon Yakov.

**6th & 7th Aliyot:** Rachel dies while giving birth to Binyamin and Yakov buries her in Beis Lechem. Following Rachel's death, Reuven switches the bed of Yakov from Bilha's tent to Leah's tent. Although Yitzchak will live another 21 years, the Torah relates his death at the age of 180 (2228). The remainder of Vayishlach lists Eisav's descendants as well as the specific Kings of Seir who ruled prior to King Saul - the first king of Israel. (2882)

### **Haphtora summary Amos 2:6 – 3:8**

In this weeks Haftorah, Amos the Navi chastised the Bnai Yisroel [Children of Israel] for the perversion of justice manifest in their behavior toward the widowed, orphaned and the poor. Yoseph’s sale for a few pieces of silver is referenced as a prime example of such injustice. Regardless of whatever rationalization the brother’s may have used to justify their actions, the money they accepted for the sale reduced their actions to nothing more than selfish and self-serving.

This same theme is repeated in the story of the 10 Martyrs. The Roman Governor accused the brothers of selling Yoseph for money. If their motives were in fact righteous, they should not have accepted any personal gain from their actions.

The Navi contrasted the injustices against the poor to the three most severe sins of: idolatry, adultery, and murder. Hashem [G-d] is willing to give a second chance when humankind fails due to personal failing; however, when humankind fails in the arena of social justice, there can not be a second chance. Judges are intended to do G-d’s work of ministering justice, and the administration of justice should be a primary display of Hashem’s manifest presence within society. When a judge perverts the power of his office he compromises much more than justice. He compromises G-d Himself.

### **1 Minute on the Parsha with Rav Adin z”l**

#### **Parashat Vayeshev**

#### **No Rest for the Righteous**

Rashi introduces this week’s parasha with the words of the Midrash:

*Jacob wished to live in tranquility, but then the trouble of Joseph sprang upon him. When the tzaddikim wish to live in peace, The Holy One, Blessed Be He, says, “Is it not enough for the tzaddikim that so much is prepared for*

*them in the next world, that they seek to live in peace in this world?" (Genesis Rabba 84:3) The righteous do not—cannot—live at ease. Not as punishment, but because tranquility would be "bad for them and bad for the world." A tzaddik without complication, anguish, and pain is deficient in his essential character.*

Jacob consistently tries to settle down quietly, to live at ease, and each time, some new trouble springs upon him. In all the stories about Jacob, and in stories of many other tzaddikim as well, we are often struck with the question of to what extent tzaddikim can attain peace of mind. Jacob's trials are in the sphere of sorrow and grief. The story of Jacob is a struggle for peace of mind.

When Rabbi Yannai says that "in our hands we have neither the tranquility of the wicked nor the suffering of the righteous" (Avot 4:16), he notes the seemingly counterintuitive reality that the wicked experience tranquility while the righteous experience suffering. The suffering of the righteous is part of their world, part of the pattern of their existence.

Judaism in general does not promise to solve one's problems. Going deeper into Jewish life does not mean attaining peace; it means encountering ever-more-profound questions. Empty tranquility only brings a person closer to death, rendering his existence superfluous.

The reward for drawing closer to God is not rest but questions—more questions, deeper questions. If a person is particularly successful in his spiritual journey, each day three small questions die and three large questions are born in their place. This is not stagnation but elevation: harder questions relating to loftier worlds.

Even in the World to Come, there is no retirement for the righteous. "They go from strength to strength" (Psalms 84:8)—graduating from one world means promotion to another, more demanding one. The goal is not tranquility but perpetual ascent through questions, each lifting a person higher in his spiritual journey.

### **Hanukkah: 8 Short Insights for 8 Nights 'Aish.com'**

*An easy way to share the Hanukkah story and its relevant lessons with your family and friends during the eight nights of the Festival of Lights.*

#### **First Night: The Background of Hanukkah**

Over 2,000 years ago, around 200 BCE, the Land of Israel was part of the Syrian-Greek Empire (known as the Seleucid Empire). In the middle of his reign, the Seleucid king, King Antiochus III, began imposing heavy taxes on the Jewish People. His successor intensified the oppression, determined to unify his empire by enforcing Greek customs. He began imposing severe restrictions on Jewish practices, and while some Jews tried to resist the pressure, others willingly joined the Hellenistic movement.

**Lesson:** Tonight, as you light one, lone candle, notice how even the darkest room is transformed by one small flame. Don't underestimate the power of a seemingly small act of good to influence on the world.

#### **Second Night: The Rise of Hellenistic Influence and Persecution**

As Hellenistic (or Greek) influences grew, the Jewish people faced increasing pressure to adopt Greek customs and abandon their own faith. Antiochus forbade key Jewish practices such as Sabbath observance, kosher laws, and circumcision. Jewish books of law were burned, and those who disobeyed were murdered. The Jews were left in a crisis of faith and survival, with Antiochus's enforcers relentlessly attempting to uproot their traditions.

**Lesson:** Each night of Hanukkah, you light one more additional candle, echoing a fundamental Jewish insight that you should always strive to move upwards, taking small, consistent steps towards bettering yourself.

#### **Third Night: Defiance and the Birth of the Revolt**

In the village of Modiin (located in modern-day central Israel), Mattathias, a devout Jewish priest, was ordered by Seleucid officers to perform sacrifices to Greek gods. He refused and instead killed a Hellenistic Jew who stepped forward to offer the sacrifice in his place. Mattathias's actions sparked a Jewish revolt. Mattathias, his sons, and a small band of loyal Jews fled to the hills of Judea, conducting guerrilla attacks on Syrian outposts. This resistance rallied more Jews to their side, determined to protect their faith and heritage.

**Lesson:** Mattathias' resistance is a reminder to not to be swayed by the opinions of others. While most Jews had resigned themselves to the Hellenization of Israel, Mattathias stood nearly alone in his defiance - and his seemingly futile rebellion ultimately saved the Jewish people. His actions are a powerful reminder to hold fast to your values and don't let external pressures alter who you are.

#### **Fourth Night: The Maccabees' Victories**

Before his death, Mattathias appointed his son Judah to lead the revolt (the rebels were called the "Maccabees," which is a Hebrew acronym for "Who is like You, Oh God"). Judah's brilliant strategies and unshakable faith led the Maccabees to remarkable victories over larger and better-equipped Syrian forces. Despite repeated Syrian attempts to crush the resistance, the Maccabees prevailed, boosting the morale and faith of the Jewish people in their fight for freedom.

**Lesson:** The Maccabees' resistance seemed hopeless to onlookers—they were a handful of rebels trying to defeat a vast, powerful army. Yet against all odds, they triumphed. Their courage and victory remind us that we can't begin to fathom the power of our actions until we dare to try.

#### **Fifth Night: The Rededication of the Temple**

After their victories, the Maccabees returned to Jerusalem and found the Temple, the focal point for prayer and Jewish life, desecrated and filled with pagan idols. They purified and rededicated the Temple, but discovered a shortage of oil available to light the menorah - a unique candelabra which lived in the Temple and burned continuously. They lit the menorah with enough oil to last for one day yet the flames continued to burn for an additional seven days. This blatant, open miracle gave the Maccabees enough time to finish preparing more oil to keep the candles burning.

**Lesson:** Lighting your own menorah commemorates the miracle of the oil that kept the Temple's flames burning for eight days. The eternal flames in the Temple symbolized the enduring spirit of the Jewish People; the flames you light today serve as a reminder that, just as the Maccabees' light shone brightly then, the fire of the Jewish People burns just as brightly today. Hanukkah is a time to reaffirm your pride in your Jewish identity and to renew your commitment to keeping the fire of the Jewish People alive.

#### **Sixth Night: The Ongoing Struggle for Freedom**

Although Jerusalem and the Temple were reclaimed, Judah Maccabee knew the fight wasn't over. He fortified Jerusalem, understanding that surrounding hostile nations and even Hellenistic Jews (Jews aligned with the Greeks) remained threats. Antiochus's forces had allies among neighboring peoples who envied the Jews' newfound strength. Judah and his brothers continued to defend and secure Jewish territories across Israel, determined to preserve their hard-won freedom.

**Lesson:** Although Hanukkah is the only holiday rooted in a military campaign, the way you commemorate it is almost entirely spiritual - to observe the holiday, you light a flame and give thanks to God. The lack of a physical side is unusual but fitting. The Maccabees' battle was, at its core, a fight against the Greeks' worldview that prioritized the physical above all else. The Jews fought to instead preserve a view of the world with God, not man, at its center. The power of the Maccabees lies in centering your life around something greater than yourself.

#### **Seventh Night: Victory Across Israel**

Judah led campaigns throughout Israel, protecting Jewish communities from hostile neighbors. With each victory, more Jewish settlers returned to rebuild their towns and farms, resuming their lives in peace. Judah's brothers also aided in securing areas across the region, defeating adversaries and restoring safety to Jewish lands. By the summer, the Jewish people had successfully reclaimed their homeland from those who had sought to erase their identity.

**Lesson:** Those who sought to destroy the Jews have brought oceans of suffering, yet none has outlasted the Jewish people. The Seleucids, once powerful, are now virtually forgotten. Time and again, the Jewish spirit has proven indomitable, with each generation rising to reclaim its heritage and faith. This serves as a reminder that no matter how great the threat, now, then, or in the future, the resilience of the Jewish People will always overcome.

#### **Eighth Night: Celebration and Renewal**

With their land finally free, the Jewish people celebrated their victory with joy and gratitude, gathering in Jerusalem to give thanks to God. They sang psalms, offered sacrifices, and embraced the return of Jewish life and traditions. Hanukkah became a lasting commemoration of their victory, a symbol of hope, resilience, and the enduring power of faith to overcome even the darkest of times.

By placing the menorah in your window, you declare your pride in your Jewish heritage, as well as the resilience of the Jewish people. [Hanukkah](#) is a reminder to stand tall as a Jew, to shine your light outward for all to see, and to embody the spirit of a people who have persevered through every challenge with unyielding faith, commitment, and resolve.

#### **Rabbi Shlomo Katz on this week's Parsha "torah.org"**

##### **No Rest**

Our Parashah opens: "Vayeishev / Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan." Rashi z"l comments: Yaakov wished to live in tranquility, but this trouble in connection with Yosef suddenly came upon him. When the righteous wish to live in tranquility, Hashem says of them, 'Are not the righteous satisfied with what is stored up for them in the World-to-Come that they wish to live in tranquility in this world too?!' [Until here from Rashi]

But why would Hashem object if Yaakov had lived in tranquility in this world also? R' Avraham Zuckerman z"l (1915-2013; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bnei Akiva Kfar Ha'ro'eh and chairman of the network of Bnei Akiva Yeshivot) explains:

On the one hand, a person who lives in tranquility may have an easier time serving Hashem consistently. As we know, it is difficult for a person to keep up a regular schedule of studying Torah, praying with a Minyan, and performing Mitzvot when he is constantly on the move. On the other hand, a person who sits in one place will find it more difficult to impact others—which was the Patriarchs’ mission. Moreover, if Yaakov remained in one place, he would not be asserting his right to Eretz Yisrael (compare Bereishit 13:17).

Also, perhaps, Yaakov was not allowed to rest because Hashem chose him from among the Patriarchs to be the one who would begin the exile in Egypt. Why? Because Yaakov had demonstrated while living with Lavan that, even in exile, he could raise a family that would be loyal to Hashem. “This trouble in connection with Yosef” (in Rashi’s words) was the first step toward that exile. (*Luchot Aven*)

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***“Yaakov settled in the land of his father’s sojournings, in the land of Canaan.” (37:1)***

R’ Eliyahu Ha’Tzarfati z”l (1715-1805; rabbi of Fes, Morocco) writes: The Torah is highlighting that Yaakov wished to live near his father Yitzchak so that he could learn from his good deeds and his Divine service. Yaakov also wished to remain in Eretz Yisrael because it is the Holy Land, whose very air bestows wisdom on a person and assists him in serving Hashem properly.

In pointing this out, the Torah is contrasting Yaakov with his brother Esav, about whom we read in last week’s Parashah (36:6, 8), “Esav took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household—his livestock and all his animals, and all the wealth he had acquired in the land of Canaan—and went to [another] land because of his brother Yaakov . . . So Esav settled on Mount Seir; Esav, he is Edom.” Esav distanced himself from his father and chose a land where he believed he would prosper financially. This, the Torah points out, had a negative impact on his descendants—as if the verse says. “He, Esav, was the father of the evil nation of Edom.” (*Eliyahu Zuta*)

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***“Then the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers recounted his dream to Yosef and said to him, ‘In my dream—behold! there was a grapevine in front of me’.” (40:9)***

Midrash Rabbah comments: “A grapevine”—this refers to Yisrael. [Until here from the Midrash]

What does the cupbearer’s dream have to do with the Jewish People? asks R’ Yosef Konvitz z”l (1878-1944; rabbi in Newark, NJ; President of the Agudath HaRabonim of the United States and Canada). He answers:

Yosef sat in jail with two of Pharaoh’s chamberlains—one, the cupbearer, a good-natured person, and the other, the baker, a nasty person. Yosef interpreted their dreams, and his interpretations came true; the “good” cupbearer was restored to his position as Yosef had foretold. The cupbearer promised to remember Yosef, but, once he was out of prison, he forgot him.

Our Sages say, “Whatever happened to Yosef happened to Zion.” In our exile, explains R’ Konvitz, we are like a prisoner. Sometimes, we encounter noblemen and world leaders who likewise are in a bind, and they make all kinds of promises in order to gain our support. Once they no longer need us, however, they forget those promises. For example, R’ Konvitz writes, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917 to win Jewish support during World War I. Once that war was over, however, the government “forgot” its support for establishing a Jewish homeland and instead actively opposed and prevented Jewish immigration to Eretz Yisrael. Even the “good” officials, like the cupbearer, behave this way.

This, concludes R’ Konvitz, is what the Midrash is teaching us. In their time of need, the likes of the cupbearer think about Yisrael. But just as quickly, they forget. (*Divrei Yosef*)

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***“As she was taken out, she sent word to her father-in-law . . . And she said, ‘Recognize, please, whose are this seal, this wrap, and this staff’.” (38:25)***

Rashi z”l explains: “‘Recognize, please’—an expression of entreaty, meaning, ‘I beg of you to recognize your Creator and not to destroy three lives.’ [Until here from Rashi. As for the reference to “three,” commentaries differ about whether she knew she was carrying twins, or whether the third live was Yehuda’s own.]

R’ Uri Weisblum shlita (Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshivat Nachalat Ha’levi’im in Haifa, Israel) elaborates: Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z”l (1210-1263; Spain) writes that the first essential component of Teshuvah is regret. A person should say to himself, “The Creator blew a life-giving soul into my nostrils and gave that soul wisdom and intelligence to recognize Him, to revere Him, and to rule over one’s body and its actions. Since I have done the opposite, what is my life worth?!” [Until here from R’ Yonah’s Sha’arei Teshuvah (1:10)]

R’ Weisblum continues: A person was given physical senses, such as sight, with which to recognize his friend. Similarly, a person’s soul, used properly, is the tool with which one can recognize Hashem and revere Him. The

foundation of regret for a sin is acknowledging to oneself that he has not used his soul as intended and, therefore, he has not ruled over his body and its actions as he should. In this way, recognizing the Creator leads to changing one's actions for the better, concludes R' Weisblum. (*He'arat Ha'derech: Mo'adim* p.2)

R' Yaakov Solnick z"l (17<sup>th</sup> century; rabbi of Podhajce, Poland) offers another interpretation of Tamar's message: "Recognize your Creator." She was saying: Clearly, what you did was out of character for a righteous person such as yourself. Therefore, recognize the Hand of your Creator in this event, for what occurred could only have been the result of His decree, rather than your free choice. And, therefore, do not be ashamed to admit that the pledge I am holding is yours. (*Nachalat Yaakov*)

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***"She caught hold of him by his garment . . . But he left his garment in her hand, and he fled, and went outside."***  
(39:12)

R' Nachman of Breslov z"l (1772-1810; Ukraine) observes: The Yetzer Ha'ra grabs a person by his clothes—i.e., it causes him to worry about fashion or whether his clothing is fancy enough. In this way, a person is distracted from focusing on serving Hashem. But a G-d-fearing person does not allow himself to be trapped. He leaves his clothing in the hands of the Yetzer Ha'ra and he flees—i.e., he does not give any thought to his clothes. Instead, he serves Hashem with whatever he has in the best way that he can. (Sichot Ha'Ran #100)

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### Shabbat

Halachah states that in addition to the Shabbat candles that are lit in one's dining room, a person should have lights on in the other rooms of his house as well so that people will not "trip over a stick or a stone." R' Moshe Roth shlita (rabbi in Brooklyn, N.Y. and Meron, Israel) was asked how this applies in our times, when we have finished floors. He replied:

"From your question, it appears that you are taking 'tripping over a stick or stone' literally, which today is virtually unheard of because our floors are smooth and clean. However, the real concern is 'Shalom Bayit.' This does not refer to harmony between husband and wife (the usual meaning of 'Shalom Bayit'), but rather, that a person should feel calm, tranquil, and at rest. If it is dark in the house, a person does not have those feelings. (As for 'a stick or a stone,' that is a borrowed term, since, in the days of our Sages, floors were made of dirt and there definitely could have been sticks and stones on them. However, the sticks and stones are not what cause a lack of restfulness; it is the darkness itself that causes that feeling.")

He continues: "Another reason [for having lights throughout the house] is that doing so brings Kavod / honor to Shabbat and is part of the Mitzvah of 'Oneg Shabbat' / delighting in the Sabbath. Even if a person feels at rest, it is preferable that there also be 'honor' and 'delight' . . ."

R' Roth concludes by explaining that this obligation of Kavod and Oneg explains why one can say the blessing upon lighting Shabbat candles even if there are already electric lights in the dining room—i.e., because the candles add 'honor' and 'delight' to the Shabbat [besides giving off light]. (*Mar Mi'dli* 10:1)

The Gemara (Shabbat 23b) teaches: "Rav Huna said: 'If one is meticulously careful in lighting candles, he will merit having sons who are Torah scholars'." Rashi z"l explains: "This is based on the verse (Mishlei 6:23), 'For a Mitzvah is a candle and Torah is light'—through the Mitzvot of Shabbat and Chanukah candles comes the light of Torah."

Many people light Shabbat and Chanukah candles, observed R' Kalman Winter z"l (died 2012), yet relatively few have children who are Torah scholars! Why? Because Rav Huna's promise is addressed only to those parents who want their children to be Torah scholars!

### **Rabbi Yochanan Zweig on this week's Parsha "torah.org"**

#### **Because I Care**

*"...And Yosef would bring evil reports about them to their father" (37:2)*

The Torah records that Yosef's brothers hated him because he reported to Yaakov transgressions which he had observed them commit.[1] Most commentaries agree that although Yosef's motivations were sincere, he was punished for misinterpreting his brothers' behavior.[2] It is for the assumptions he made that he was later punished, but not for reporting their actions. Where in the verse is it intimated that Yosef's intentions were pure?

The verse states that Yosef would bring evil reports concerning his brothers to their father. Why does the Torah not state his father, remaining consistent with the former part of the verse, where the Torah focuses upon the relationship between Yosef and his father?

There are two reasons why a person would inform a father as to his sons' negative behavior. If the informant is unrelated, generally, his intention is to assist the father in correcting his sons' evil ways. However, if the informant



is also a son, it is possible that he sees an opportunity to bolster his standing in his father's eyes by discrediting his brothers. The Torah specifically records that Yosef brought the information to their father in order to emphasize that his intentions were altruistic; he wanted to inform Yaakov of his sons' wrongdoing so that Yaakov would correct their ways. If the Torah would have stated that Yosef brought the information to his father, the implication would have been that he did so to benefit his own relationship with this father.

1. See Rashi 37:2 2. See Mizrahi and Gur Aryeh ibid.

### **The Customer Is Always Right**

*"There Yehuda saw the daughter of a Cananite whose name was Shua. He married her..." (38:2)*

Rashi interprets the term "Cana'ni" – Cananite as "merchant". This follows the opinion of the Talmud that it is not possible for a son of Yaakov to marry a woman of Cananite descent, since Avraham and Yitzchak instructed their children against doing so.[1] Therefore, the verse is to be understood as Yehuda marrying a merchant's daughter. We find other examples in the Torah where "Cananite" refers to merchants.[2] The Abarbanel adds that the Torah calls Yehuda's father in law "ish Cana'ani". The term "ish" denotes importance and would not be employed in the description of a Cananite, in and of itself a derogatory term, since Noach cursed Cana'an the son of Cham with eternal subservience to his brothers.[3] Why then is a merchant called a Cananite, which is generally a term of derision?

The generic term for a slave is "Cana'ani" because Cana'an's name reflects the curse which he received, subservience to his brothers. In Hebrew, "hachna'a" means "subservience". The same expression is used to refer to a merchant because the success of a merchant is dependent largely upon his ability to serve the needs of his clientele. A customer must perceive that the salesperson is catering to the customer's agenda. If he senses that the salesperson is catering to his own agenda, he will desist from doing business with him.

1. Pesachim 50a 2. Yeshayahu 23:8, Zecharya 14:21, Mishlei 26:24 3. 28:24

### **A Moral Obligation**

*"There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has denied me nothing but you, since you are his wife. How then can I perpetrate this great evil? I will have sinned against G-d!" (39:9)*

Yosef refused to acquiesce to Potiphar's wife's advances and he attempted to explain to her why it would be wrong for him to comply with her wishes. Yosef presented the following two arguments: It would be the ultimate display of ingratitude for him to take advantage of the trust his master had placed in him. Furthermore, since the prohibition against adultery is one of the Noachide laws, he would be sinning against Hashem[1]. Yosef's sense of priorities requires explanation. Why does he mention the injustice against his master before his sinning against Hashem? Furthermore, Rashi cites the Talmud's view that Yosef would have submitted to the advances of the wife of Potiphar, were it not that he saw the image of his father before him[2]. How does this coalesce with the reasons which Yosef himself gives?

In his introduction to Even Sheleima, the Vilna Gaon teaches that the ultimate goal of the observance of mitzvos is to inculcate the Jew with ethical and moral values. The mitzvos help hone a person's sensitivities to live a life of moral fortitude and integrity. Only then can a Jew reflect the attributes of his Creator.

Yosef was primarily concerned that committing adultery would be a betrayal of the trust vested in him by his master. This ultimate breach of trust would indicate a complete lack of integrity. Violating the Noachide laws is only a secondary concern, since observance of the Noachide laws does not require a person to be a G-dly being. However, being a descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov demands such behavior. Seeing the vision of his father reminded Yosef of his roots and emphasized to him his obligation to act in a manner which reflected his mission in life, to imitate his Creator. The actions of a Jew should not be governed only by what is permitted and prohibited, but, more importantly, by Hashem's requirement of him that he be a moral and ethical human being.

1. Rashi 39:9 2. 39:11, Sotah 37b

### **Rabbi Yissocher Frand on this week's Parsha "torah.org"**

#### **The Lesson of Ki Im Zechartani – So That You Will Remember Me**

Among Rav Akiva Eiger's world-renowned Talmudic and Halachic *lomdus* questions are two questions on Chumash in this week's parsha.

Yosef is languishing away in prison. The *sar haofim* (baker) and the *sar hamashkim* (wine butler) each have dreams. They tell their dreams to Yosef, who provides them with the correct interpretations. The reason the *sar hamashkim* was thrown into prison was that he had unwittingly served Pharaoh a cup of wine into which a fly had fallen. Yosef interpreted his dream, saying "...In another three days, Pharaoh will count you and will restore you to your post and you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as was the former practice when you were his cupbearer (*k'mishpat ha'rishon asher mashkehu*).” (Bereshis 40:13).

Rav Akiva Eiger asks why Yosef needs to emphasize "as was the former practice when you were his cupbearer?"

In other words, imagine if the Secretary of the Treasury is fired. One night he has a dream. A dream interpreter says, “Guess what? You are going to be the Secretary of the Treasury again.” Does the dream interpreter need to state the job description of the Secretary of Treasury? There is no need to describe the role of Secretary of the Treasury!

Why would it not have been sufficient for Yosef to just tell the *sar hamashkim* that Pharaoh will give him back his job? Period. Why does Yosef need to go on to say “And you will place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, just like you did originally?”

Rav Akiva Eiger asks a second question about the words “*ki im zechartani...*” (at which time, if you would think of me...) Yosef’s intention is surely to say “And by the way, remember me.” How should that be expressed? Yosef should have just said “*u’zechartani*” (and remember me). The expression “*ki im zechartani*” is peculiar. It almost seems to say “**SO THAT** you can remember me.”

Rav Akiva Eiger answers beautifully: If Yosef would have just told the *sar hamashkim* that he will get his job back, the *sar hamashkim* would have been a nervous wreck. He would be petrified that the same thing might happen again. If it happened to him once that a fly fell into the wine, what is to prevent that from happening again? He would be thinking to himself, “The next time if there is a fly in the wine, I will not be merely given a jail sentence. I will lose my head!”

The *sar hamashkim* would be so jittery about carrying out his duties that the wine would be spilled all over Pharaoh’s lap! He would be a nervous wreck! So, Yosef told him that he does not need to worry at all. I want to tell you that you did nothing wrong. It was not your fault. Every time you served Pharaoh a goblet, you checked to make sure there was not a fly in there. Do you know why this happened? It happened because it was the hand of G-d. It happened because the *Ribono shel Olam* wants you to remember me – “*ki im zechartani*.”

Therefore, not only are you going to get your job back, but “you will place Pharaoh’s cup into his hand” – *ka’mishpat harishon* – JUST LIKE YOU USED TO. You used to be calm, cool, and collected when you served Pharaoh his wine, and that is how you will be once again. You will go back to your *sar hamashkim* role and perform it well because the only reason Hashem made the fly go into Pharaoh’s cup is so that you will be able to remember me and get me out of here.

I recently heard an incident involving the same type of “*ki im zechartani*.”

Last Shabbos was the “The President’s Conference of Torah U’Messorah” in Florida. The event was attended by presidents of institutions — movers and shakers of *Klal Yisrael*. There were speeches that encouraged lay leaders to get involved in supporting large *mosdos*. One of the speakers was Gary Turgow from Detroit, Michigan. He is involved in many different organizations, is a premier *askan* (communal leader) and is a very successful businessman.

He spoke at the conference and told of two amazing incidents involving *hashgacha pratis*:

He is on the Board of Directors of Blue Cross – Blue Shield of Michigan. He was attending a meeting of the organization at which he was planning to announce his resignation. (He had been there for several years; he felt that he had done whatever he could do, and he had other obligations.) He was sitting on the dais next to a woman who was the head of Blue Cross – Blue Shield of Michigan. While sitting there, he received a text message that someone in NYU needed an emergency life-or-death operation. However, Blue Cross – Blue Shield had not yet signed off on the operation, which needed to happen now or never.

They asked Gary Turgow if he had any connections with Blue Cross – Blue Shield that can help with the emergency situation. He took his cell phone and showed it to the woman sitting next to him and within five minutes, the operation was approved by Blue Cross – Blue Shield. Gary Turgow told the Torah U’Messorah convention: “Guess what? I did not resign my post on the board of Blue Cross – Blue Shield.”

This is literally an incident of *ki im zechartani*. Why did the *Ribono shel Olam* put Gary Turgow on that board for who knows how many years? Mr. Turgow said that he felt like it was *abas kol* coming down from heaven telling him, “You need to be on the board of Blue Cross – Blue Shield. You have been placed in that position in order to help with this life-saving incident.”

The second incident he mentioned was the following:

Mr. Turgow was the president of a bank, a major financial institution in Detroit. He received a call from a Jew who started chastising him: “I don’t know how you, as a Jew, can be president of this bank. They are a bunch of wicked people.” Mr. Turgow asked, “What is the problem?” The caller explained that his wife died and he fell behind on his mortgage payments. The bank sent him a letter that they were foreclosing on his property. The man only had \$5,000 left on his mortgage and the house was worth several hundred thousand dollars. He was seven months behind on his monthly payments toward this \$5000 and now the bank was foreclosing!

“How could you be president of such a bank? They are such wicked people!”

Mr. Turgow promised to look into the matter. He looked into it and found out that the facts were as the caller explained but in truth, his bank had sold the mortgage to another bank and the other bank saw that they could make a killing on this foreclosure. Mr. Turgow personally paid off the fellow’s mortgage and the man was able to stay in his house.

However, Mr. Turgow was surprised that he did not hear anything back from this fellow. The bank president thought to himself, I saved this person's house, and he did not even thank me for it! However, several months later, this fellow died and it was revealed in his will that he left the entire house to Gary Turgow with the instructions to give the proceeds from the sale of the house to any charity of his choice.

Again – *ki im zechartani*: That is why Gary Turgow merited to be the bank president.

For most of us, such “*ki im zechartani*” moments do not happen so dramatically. But “heavenly voices” reach out to all of us and force us to ask “Why did the *Ribono shel Olam* put me here? Why is this in my lap?” That is the lesson of “*ki im zechartani*”.

### **Rabbi Yossy Goldman's Sermonette**

#### **The winding ways of providence**

The story of Jacob and Joseph, plus a personal anecdote about Jews in Africa.

Why do we find ourselves in certain places and in different situations? If you think about it, often it wasn't really our conscious choice to be there. It just happened to turn out that way.

Little do we know that behind the scenes, there is always an invisible hand guiding our steps.

King David wrote in Psalm 37, “The steps of man are directed by God.” King Solomon said it in his own way in Proverbs 16. “In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.”

The bottom line? We think we know where we're going and why, but it doesn't always turn out that way. There is a higher plan (not necessarily of our own making) guiding and directing our path in life.

In this week's Torah reading, we begin the famous, dramatic tale of Joseph and his brothers. The whole story was initiated when Jacob asked Joseph to go and check out how his brothers were doing with the flocks in the fields. The brothers were already angry—jealous of Joseph—and plotted to kill him. In the end, he was thrown in the pit and then sold into slavery down in Egypt.

The story will unfold later with Joseph having risen from prisoner to prime minister of Egypt. When the brothers will come down to purchase grain during the years of famine, they will appear before him and, after an intricate charade, will finally be reunited with their long-lost brother, Joseph. He will then bring Jacob and the whole family down to Egypt, where he promises to sustain them.

But how did it all start? With these words of Jacob to Joseph: “*He (Jacob) said to him (Joseph), ‘Go now and see how your brothers are and how the flocks are faring, and bring me back word.’ So, he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.*”

The obvious question is why would Jacob send Joseph into the lions' den? Surely, he was aware of the animosity of the bothers to Joseph.

Rashi explains that there is much more to this than meets the eye. In fact, Hebron was situated on a mountainous area not a valley at all. What, then, does the “valley of Hebron” mean? Says Rashi: “He sent him in consequence of the profound counsel of that righteous man who is buried in the depths of Hebron.”

In other words, this entire narrative took place to fulfil that which was told to Abraham by God generations earlier that “your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land (Egypt).”

It was an elaborate design—an intricate scheme for God's promise to Jacob's grandfather Abraham to be set into motion. This was the very beginning of how the Jews would find themselves in Egypt, later become slaves, eventually leave Egypt in triumph as a free nation, and at Mount Sinai, become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” with a universal mission and purpose. It all began with Jacob sending Joseph to see how his brothers were doing.

The little brother who was lost in a strange and distant land would become the chief engineer of Divine Providence and the “vast eternal plan” of the Almighty. Who could have known what was really playing out in this little tale? The ways of Providence are infinite, unknowable and often unfathomable.

How and why did Jews emigrate to the bottom of Africa? Or Down Under to Australia? Or, for that matter, to places like Alaska, Hawaii or Uruguay? In some instances, of course, Jews were fleeing Europe and found safe refuge elsewhere. But clearly, God wanted Torah and Jewish life to reach even the furthest continents and most remote locations.

Growing up, I never dreamed that I would be living in South Africa. But the Lubavitcher Rebbe sent us there back in 1976 and, thank God, we've never looked back.

All of us can probably share personal stories of the twists and turns in our own lives and how things turned out in ways we could never have imagined.

Here are just two of my own. It was around 1977 when we were still new in Johannesburg. Out of the blue, I developed double vision. The doctors were quite concerned, and I was admitted to the old Princess Clinic for a battery of tests. One neurologist literally put the fear of death in me with his dire diagnosis. In the end, it was only a loose nerve that healed itself with some simple eye exercises.

But why did I have to experience this? What was it all about?

Well, it turned out that my roommate in the hospital was a gentleman named Mervyn Stein. He was recovering from encephalitis and also had double vision, so we were both wearing eye patches. I remember that when Professor Harry Reef came in to see us, he asked: “Is this some kind of Jewish status symbol?” A bunch of Moshe Dayan wannabees?

In the morning, when I put on my *tallit* and *tefillin*, and prayed the morning service, Mervyn became quite nostalgic, remembering his own late grandfather who, too, would pray regularly. I helped Mervyn with the *tefillin*, and this was the beginning of a spiritual awakening that led him to become a fully observant Jew, a leader in his own community, and later, even the chairman of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues in South Africa. As far as I am concerned, that was the reason I had double vision and needed to find myself in the Princess Clinic.

Many years ago, I was asked by South Africa’s former chief rabbi, Cyril Kitchener (“C.K.”) Harris, to fly to Gaborone, Botswana, to consecrate a small patch of land as a Jewish cemetery and then officiate at the funeral of a British professor who had been living there.

Frankly, it wasn’t a simple task to find a *minyan* of Jews in Gaborone. But they came out of the woodwork. They weren’t religious or even traditional, but they heard that they were needed and arrived. We dedicated a Jewish cemetery—it was tiny, maybe 10 graves, but it became a sacred Jewish burial ground. I led the seven circuits, reciting the special prayers with the minyan following behind me.

Then, I conducted a fully Orthodox funeral service. In attendance were 10 Jews and a few hundred Tswanas, the local African people, including the dean and faculty members from the University of Botswana. I explained everything in English, and they were not only interested and intrigued but very respectful. This story of Jacob and Joseph formed part of my eulogy. It was an experience I hadn’t planned or ever envisioned, but it remains one of the most memorable ones in my rabbinic career.

The ways of providence are indeed infinite and unknowable. Wherever we may find ourselves, we should remember that we are walking in the steps ordained by God. Knowing there is a higher plan and a higher purpose always helps.

### **The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust**

#### **Refusing Comfort, Keeping Hope**

Vayeshev • [5767](#)

The deception has taken place. Joseph has been sold into slavery. His brothers dip his coat in blood. They bring it back to their father, saying: “We found this. Try to identify it. Is it your son’s robe or not?” Jacob recognises it and replies, “It is my son’s robe. A wild beast must have eaten him! Joseph has been torn limb from limb!” We then read:

Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son for many days. All his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he *refused to be comforted* and said, “I will go down to *Sheol* [to the grave] mourning for my son.” His father wept for him. [Gen. 37:34–35](#)

There are laws in Judaism about the limits of grief – *shiva*, *sheloshim*, a year. There is no such thing as a bereavement for which grief is endless. The Talmud says that God admonishes one who weeps beyond the appointed time, “You are not more compassionate than I.”<sup>[1]</sup> And yet Jacob refuses to be comforted.

A Midrash gives a remarkable explanation. “One can be comforted for one who is dead, but not for one who is still living,” it says. In other words, Jacob refused to be comforted *because he had not yet given up hope that Joseph was still alive*. That, tragically, is the fate of those who have lost members of their family (the parents of soldiers missing in action, for example) but have as yet no proof that they are dead. They cannot go through the normal stages of mourning because they cannot abandon the possibility that the missing person is still capable of being rescued. Their continuing anguish is a form of loyalty; to give up, to mourn, to be reconciled to loss is a kind of betrayal. In such cases, grief lacks closure. To refuse to be comforted is to refuse to give up hope.

Yet on what basis did Jacob continue to hope? Surely he had recognised Joseph’s blood-stained coat – he said explicitly, “It is my son’s robe. A wild beast must have eaten him! Joseph has been torn limb from limb!” Do these words not mean that he had accepted that Joseph was dead?

The late David Daube made a suggestion that I find convincing.<sup>[2]</sup> The words the sons say to Jacob – *haker na*, literally “identify it please” – have a quasi-legal connotation. Daube relates this passage to another, with which it has close linguistic parallels:

If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any other animal to his neighbour for safekeeping, and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the Lord that the neighbour did not lay hands on the other person’s property...If it [the animal] was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal. [Exodus 22:10–13](#)

The issue at stake is the extent of responsibility borne by a guardian (*shomer*). If the animal is lost through negligence, the guardian is at fault and must make good the loss. If there is no negligence, merely *force majeure*, an unavoidable, unforeseeable accident, the guardian is exempt from blame. One such case is where the loss has been caused by a wild

animal. The wording in the law – *tarof yitaref*, “torn to pieces” – exactly parallels Jacob’s judgment in the case of Joseph: *tarof taraf Yosef*, “Joseph has been torn to pieces/limb from limb.”

We know that some such law existed prior to the giving of the Torah. Jacob himself says to Laban, whose flocks and herds had been placed in his charge, “I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself” ([Gen. 31:39](#)). This implies that guardians even then were exempt from responsibility for the damage caused by wild animals. We also know that an elder brother carried a similar responsibility for the fate of a younger brother placed in his charge, as, for example, when the two were alone together. That is the significance of Cain’s denial when confronted by God as to the fate of Abel:

“Am I my brother’s keeper [*shomer*]?” [Gen. 4:9](#)

We now understand a series of nuances in the encounter between Jacob and his sons upon their return without Joseph. Normally they would be held responsible for their younger brother’s disappearance. To avoid this, as in the case of later biblical law, they “bring the remains as evidence.” If those remains show signs of an attack by a wild animal, they must – by virtue of the law then operative – be held innocent. Their request to Jacob, *haker na*, must be construed as a legal request, meaning, “Examine the evidence.” Jacob has no alternative but to do so, and by virtue of what he has seen, to acquit them. A judge, however, may be forced to acquit someone accused of a crime because the evidence is insufficient to justify a conviction, while still retaining lingering private doubts. So Jacob was forced to find his sons innocent, without necessarily trusting what they said. In fact, Jacob did not believe it, and his refusal to be comforted shows that he was unconvinced. He continued to hope that Joseph was still alive. That hope was eventually justified: Joseph was still alive, and father and son were ultimately reunited.

The refusal to be comforted sounded more than once in Jewish history. The prophet Jeremiah heard it in a later age:

This is what the Lord says:

“A voice is heard in Ramah,  
Mourning and great weeping,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
*Refusing to be comforted*,  
Because her children are no more.”

This is what the Lord says:

“Restrain your voice from weeping,  
And your eyes from tears,  
For your work will be rewarded,” says the Lord.  
“They will return from the land of the enemy.  
So there is hope for your future,” declares the Lord,  
“Your children will return to their own land.” [Jeremiah 31:15–17](#)

Why was Jeremiah sure that Jews would return? Because they refused to be comforted – meaning, they refused to give up hope.

So it was during the Babylonian exile, as articulated in one of the most paradigmatic expressions of the refusal to be comforted:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept,  
As we remembered Zion...  
How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?  
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
May my right hand forget [its skill],  
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
If I do not remember you,  
If I do not consider Jerusalem above my highest joy. [Psalms 137:1–6](#)

It is said that Napoleon, passing a synagogue on the fast day of Tisha b’Av, heard the sounds of lamentation. “What are the Jews crying for?” he asked one of his officers. “For Jerusalem,” the soldier replied. “How long ago did they lose it?” “More than 1,700 years ago.” “A people who can mourn for Jerusalem so long, will one day have it restored to them,” the emperor is reputed to have replied.

Jews are the people who refused to be comforted because they never gave up hope. Jacob did eventually see Joseph again. Rachel’s children did return to the land. Jerusalem is once again the Jewish home. All the evidence may suggest otherwise: it may seem to signify irretrievable loss, a decree of history that cannot be overturned, a fate that must be accepted.

Jews never believed the evidence because they had something else to set against it – a faith, a trust, an unbreakable hope that proved stronger than historical inevitability. It is not too much to say that Jewish survival was sustained in that hope. And that hope came from a simple – or perhaps not so simple – phrase in the life of Jacob. He refused to be comforted. And so – while we live in a world still scarred by violence, poverty and injustice – must we.

[1] [Mo’ed Katan 27b](#). [2] David Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law*, Cambridge: University Press, 1947.



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Lionel Stein

**"Who cares wins"**

**Phone: +27825529268**

**Fax: +27866699880**

**Email: [paltestein@gmail.com](mailto:paltestein@gmail.com)**

**Churchillian quote for December 2025: "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened."**