

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel,
including the recently fallen soldiers of the IDF

בס"ד

30 DECEMBER 2023 | 18 TEVET 5784

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DAF HASHAVUA

ויחי | VAYECHI

SHABBAT ENDS:

London 4.54pm
Southend 4.50pm
Leeds 4.51pm
Edinburgh 4.49pm
Hull 4.52pm
Glasgow 4.56pm
Birmingham 4.58pm
Sheffield 4.57pm
Manchester 4.57pm
Liverpool 5.00pm
Southport 5.03pm
Cardiff 5.10pm
Dublin 5.12pm
Jerusalem 5.25pm



Tomb of the
Patriarchs, Hebron

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEREISHIT 47:28-48:9

Yaakov has been in Egypt for 17 years and is 147 years old. Knowing that he will soon die, he asks Yosef to take an oath to bury him in Cana'an (later Israel) in *Me'arat Hamachpela* (the Cave of the Patriarchs) where his forefathers are buried. Yosef promises. Yaakov becomes ill and Yosef visits him, together with sons Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov tells Yosef that these two grandsons will be like the other tribes and will receive their own portion of the Land.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 48:10-16

Yaakov's sight is failing. Yosef places his younger son Ephraim to Yaakov's left and his older son Menashe to Yaakov's right. However, Yaakov crosses his arms, putting his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left hand on Menashe's head. He blesses them with his hands in this position.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 48:17-22

Yosef tries to switch Yaakov's hands back but Yaakov resists. He tells Yosef that Menashe will be great, but Ephraim will be greater still. Yaakov tells Yosef that God will eventually bring the people back to Cana'an.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 49:1-18

Yaakov gathers together his sons to deliver a final message to them. Following Rashi's commentary: Reuven is criticised for behaving impulsively; Shimon and Levi are criticised for aggression; Yehuda is given a leadership role; Zevulun will be successful as a sea merchant; Yissachar will bear the 'yoke' of Torah learning and Dan will be as great as Yehuda.

Point to Consider: *Why did Yaakov pray for God's help whilst blessing Dan? (see Rashi to 49:18)*

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 49:19-27

The tribe of Gad's battalions will fight war successfully. Asher will receive a fertile portion of land and prosper, as will Naftali. Yaakov praises Yosef for overcoming his many challenges.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 49:28-50:20

Yaakov hints that King Shaul (Saul), Mordechai and Esther will descend from Binyamin. Yaakov reiterates his burial instructions to his children and then dies. Yosef falls on his dead father in tears. Yosef instructs doctors to embalm Yaakov. This process takes 40 days, followed by 30 days of the Egyptians mourning Yaakov's death (Rashi). Yosef asks for permission from Pharaoh to bury his father in Cana'an. Pharaoh grants permission and sends a large entourage to accompany Yosef and his relatives. The brothers observe seven days of mourning (shiva). Yaakov's sons bury him in *Me'arat Hamachpela*. Yosef reassures his anxious brothers that he is still at peace with them.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 50:21-26

Yosef commits to providing food for his brothers and their families. He makes them take an oath to take his bones out of Egypt when the nation eventually leaves. Yosef dies, aged 110. He is embalmed and placed in a coffin. This concludes the Book of Bereishit.

HAFTARAH

King David, about to die, entreats his son and successor Shlomo (Solomon) to stay faithful to the ways of the Torah. His final request is for Shlomo to make sure to punish Yoav and Shimi Ben Gera for their rebellious behaviour.



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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Shema Yisrael: A Prayer for Jewish Unity



RABBI BEN BARUCH

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Perhaps the central event of our parasha, and a fitting way to end the book of Bereishit, is the description of Yaakov's (Jacob's) blessings to his twelve sons. Yaakov called his sons and said, "Come together (*he'asfu*) that I may tell you what is to befall you in days to come; assemble (*hikavtzu*) and listen O sons of Yaakov; listen to Israel your father" (Bereishit 49:1-2).

Based on seeming repetitions in these verses, the Talmud describes the conversation that led up to the blessings as a source for the way we say Shema until today (Pesachim 56a).

Initially, Yaakov had planned to reveal to his sons the future of the Jewish people, including when the redemption will come at the end of days. However, God did not want this to happen, so the *Shechina* (Divine spirit) departed from Yaakov, leaving him unable to prophesy. Yaakov, trying to understand why he had seemingly been punished

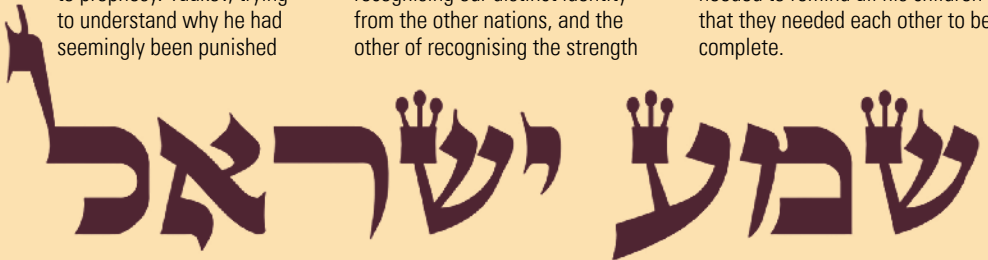
this way, starts to wonder if, like his father and grandfather before him, his children were the problem, "perhaps one of my descendants is unfit". Seeking to reassure him, his children responded with the first line of the Shema, "Hear O Israel, God is our Lord, God is one. Just as there is only one God in your heart, so too there is only one in ours". Yaakov, immediately reassured, responded with the line we utter immediately after saying Shema, "Blessed be the Name of His glorious Kingdom forever".

Whilst a comprehensive discussion of this rich midrashic account is beyond the scope of this article, some questions demand our attention. What exactly was Yaakov trying to reveal? Why did he assume that the reason he lost his ability to prophesy was related to his children? And how does it relate to our mitzvah of *Kriat Shema*, the saying of the Shema?

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) builds off the wording of Yaakov's initial requests '*he'asfu*' and '*hikavtzu*'. Rabbi Hirsch explains these two words as referring to different aspects of Jewish unity, one of recognising our distinct identity from the other nations, and the other of recognising the strength

in our togetherness. Yaakov was not just trying to predict the future, he was trying to give guidance to his children on how they could survive future challenges he knew they would have, and he opened by exhorting them to be united.

The Talmudic passage we quoted is adding another level of meaning. Yaakov was not just concerned that his children were unfit; he was concerned that they were not united in their service of God. And this is why they reassure him by reciting the opening line of the Shema; not only do they confirm that individually their hearts are pure, but that they are also together in their allegiance and dedication to God and His mission for them. Every time we say *Kriat Shema*, re-enacting this beautiful moment between Yaakov and his sons, we are not just reaffirming our own personal faith in God, we are remembering that the only way we can succeed in our national mission is through being united. Yaakov goes on to give a unique and individualised blessing to each of his children, recognising that each had their own strengths and purpose, but before he could, he needed to remind all his children that they needed each other to be complete.





**RABBI DR HARVEY
BELOVSKI**

Emeritus Rabbi of Golders Green Synagogue,
Organisational Consultant
for the US and Chief
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On 30th December 1993, diplomatic relations were established between the State of Israel and the Holy See (Vatican). Subsequently, Israel opened an embassy in Rome and the Vatican a nunciature (embassy) in Tel Aviv. While for Israel this relationship is purely diplomatic, for the Vatican it carries both diplomatic and theological significance. The nuncio (ambassador) has the rank of an archbishop; he is a diplomat as well as being responsible for the well-being of Catholics in Israel.

But this happened over 45 years after the founding of the State of Israel. To understand why it took so long, we will examine early Christian attitudes to Jews. As Christianity moved away from its Jewish roots, it developed a 'replacement theology' (supersessionism), the conviction that the Christian Church had superseded the people of Israel and arrogated our role as God's 'chosen

people'. All biblical promises to the people of Israel – including the Land itself – were abrogated and would instead be fulfilled through the Church. A later development was the notion of the 'wandering Jew', originally a legend about a Jew condemned to walk the earth until the return of Jesus, for taunting him *en route* to the crucifixion. This became a symbol for the abject suspicion with which European Jews were treated and the absolute, perpetual power which Christianity exercised over Jews and especially our permanent landlessness.

That the Jews should return to our ancient, ancestral homeland and establish a Jewish polity there after almost 2000 years of an exile that began at the dawn of the Christian era, posed a major theological challenge. It is unsurprising that many Christian theologians resisted recognising the State of Israel (perhaps hoping it would fail and allow the theological status quo to be reinstated) and later called for Jerusalem (the locus of the ancient Judaism they believed Christianity had replaced) to be an 'international city' rather than the capital of Israel. Effectively, the establishment of the State of Israel

created theological chaos for some Christians.

Between 1962 and 1965, Popes John XXIII and Paul VI convened 'Vatican II', a groundbreaking ecumenical council. Its declaration ('*Nostra Aetate*' – In Our Time) radically reconsidered many of the historical attitudes of Catholicism to Jews and Judaism. John XXIII himself wrote, "forgive us for the curse we falsely attached to their name as Jews; forgive us for crucifying thee a second time in their flesh, for we knew not what we did". The affirmation that "God holds the Jews most dear" would have been unthinkable just a decade earlier.

Nostra Aetate paved the way for improved relationships between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people. The Church has continued to develop its theology of Jews and Judaism, especially under Pope Francis. And beyond theology, arguably the most important consequence of these changes was the Vatican's ability first to recognise the State of Israel (and, by obvious implication, the right of Jews to establish a sovereign state in our ancestral homeland) and eventually to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

The *Chevra Kadisha*, a Mitzvah of *Chesed Shel Emet* (Kindness of Truth)



RABBI YOEL MURKOFF

Superintendent,
United Synagogue
Burial Society



LINDA BOXER

Operations Manager,
United Synagogue
Burial Society

As a united Jewish people, our dedication to acts of kindness and charity reverberates globally, touching the lives of millions. In current events, we have witnessed many such profound examples of this.

The United Synagogue Burial Society stands as a cornerstone of *Gemilut Chasadim* (acts of kindness). We accompany individuals on their final journey, whilst providing solace to grieving families. Our team, comprising dedicated staff and selfless volunteers, works tirelessly, managing all challenges to enable a funeral to take place as soon as possible.

Our sages teach that acts of kindness and charity hold equal weight with all other mitzvot. They also assert that acts of kindness surpass charity in three ways: they

involve physical action, benefit both rich and poor, and extend to the deceased as well as the living. Tending to the deceased encompasses all three aspects, making it an even greater act of kindness than others.

In this week's Torah reading, the passing of our patriarch Yaakov (Jacob) is discussed. In making his request that he be buried back in Canaan, Yaakov made his son Yosef (Joseph) swear to "deal with me with lovingkindness and truth (*chesed ve'emet*)". Regarding this, Rashi (1040-1105) comments that acts of lovingkindness performed for the deceased are genuine, true kindness, as they are done without any expectation of payment or reward.

In Psalm 25, King David characterises God's attribute of kindness as "*Chesed Ve'Emet*", encompassing all God's actions. This leads us to ask: Why do our Rabbis specifically highlight caring for the deceased as "*Chesed Shel Emet*" (kindness of truth) more than other acts of kindness? This is because every act of kindness by God is executed with absolute purity and sincere intent, qualifying it as "*Chesed Shel Emet*". However, when we engage in acts of kindness, there may be some impurity, with underlying motives like expecting reciprocation or seeking recognition.

Yet, when one tends to the departed, any impure intentions that may have existed beforehand dissipate. What remains is a state of purity akin to when God performs acts of kindness.

The United Synagogue Burial Society deeply values its dedicated *Chevra Kadisha*, comprising both professionals and volunteers. They collaborate seamlessly, ensuring prompt retrieval of the departed, regardless of early mornings, late nights or adverse weather. *Tahara* preparations are consistently organised, regardless of notice. Funerals are prioritised for same-day service, with staff extending their hours to fulfil this commitment. Their devotion transcends familiarity with the deceased, membership status or observance level. These selfless individuals perform this Mitzvah, a genuine *Chesed Shel Emet*, without expecting gratitude from the departed or their unknowing families, safeguarding their cherished ones with utmost care and dignity.

We are continuously seeking individuals, both women and men, who may wish to join our *Chevra Kadisha*. We provide training, both halachic and practical. If you are interested, please call the United Synagogue Burial Society office at 020 8950 7767 option 1, and we will connect you with the appropriate person.

In loving memory of Mordechai Avraham ben Nechemia z"l

Tzipori - The City on the Mountain

Tannaim and their Cities: Part 29

Rabbi Yosei ben Chalafta of Tzipori

This series of articles takes a closer look at the Tannaim (Sages of the Mishnaic era) mentioned in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 32b) and the locations which served as their Torah centres.



**DAVID
FREI**

US Director of External
and Legal Services and
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Beth Din

At an elevation of just 286 metres above sea level, it is surprising to learn that Tzipori, the city whose yeshiva is mentioned in connection with Rabbi Yosei, earned its name because “it sits on top of a mountain like a bird” (Talmud Megillah 6a). *Tzipor* is the Hebrew word for bird.

Nevertheless, its elevated position in the Lower Galilee above the Bet Netofa valley, with its cooling breezes, was regarded as a pleasant place to live and indeed, when Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi (c.135-217 CE) became ill, he transferred his home from Bet Shearim to Tzipori because of “its altitude and scented air” (Ketubot 103).

According to the Talmud, a town had stood on this site from antiquity. The Mishna (Arachin 9:4) mentions Old Katzra of Tzipori (translated either as a fortress or a town close to Tzipori) as an example of a city which was walled from the time of Joshua’s conquest of Israel. Additionally, the Book of Shofetim (Judges, 1:30) mentions a place called Kitron in the tribal area of Zevulun, which the Talmud (Megillah 6a) identifies as Tzipori.

Tzipori was, during the late



Mosaic floor design of the ancient
Synagogue at Tzipori

Second Temple and post Temple-destruction periods, the most prominent city of the Galilee, a bustling metropolis and scholarly town, which during Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi’s sojourn, hosted the *Sanhedrin* (Rabbinic Supreme Court).

In the rebellion against the Romans (66-73 CE), which included the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Flavius Josephus, the great Roman-Jewish historian, commanded the Jewish Resistance in the Galilee. He sought the support of the inhabitants of Tzipori (known by the Romans as

Sepphoris), but the local populace refused to join his rebellion. Perhaps the reluctance of the residents to join the revolt was based on the experience of their predecessors three decades earlier. As reported by Josephus himself, after the death of King Herod in 4 BCE, a Jewish nationalist rebel attacked the city and armed his followers in a revolt against Herodian rule. The Roman Governor in Syria burnt the city down in an act of revenge.

The failure of Tzipori to side with Josephus in his battles with the Romans was a significant setback to the rebel cause. It did, however, result in Tzipori surviving the devastation experienced by other Galilean towns that had supported Josephus.

The town thrived in the second and third centuries, particularly when Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi was in residence, and it was here that he completed the Mishna in around 200 CE.

Today, the site of Tzipori (just off Route 77, a few miles northwest of Nazareth) is a magnificent National Park which is well worth a visit. There you will see the remains of a Roman Theatre and of a Jewish quarter with a number of *mikvaot* (ritual baths). The finest mosaics in Israel are in a luxurious Roman villa. There are also the remains of colonnaded Roman roads and of a Crusader citadel.

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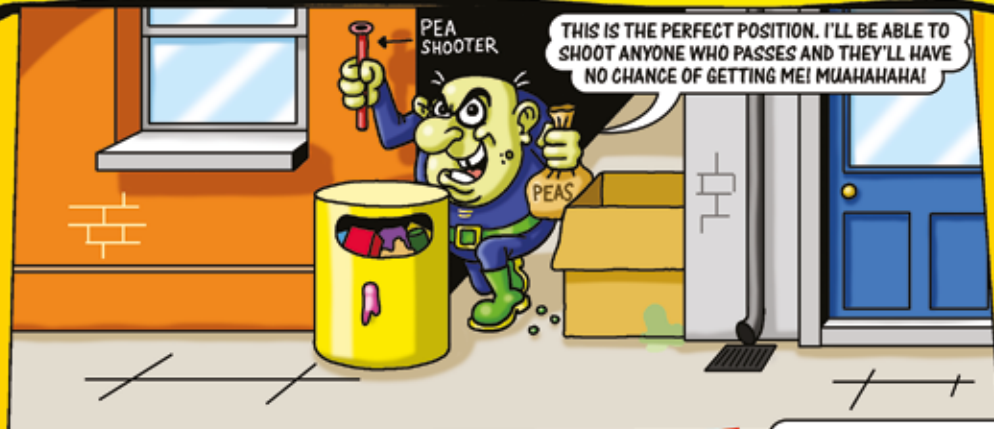
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THE TRIBE SCRIBE

VAYECHI: PEACE, NOT PEAS PLEASE!



PEA SHOOTER

THIS IS THE PERFECT POSITION. I'LL BE ABLE TO SHOOT ANYONE WHO PASSES AND THEY'LL HAVE NO CHANCE OF GETTING ME! MUAHAHAHA!



LATER...

DAN, LET'S GO THE OTHER WAY TO SHUL. DR TSORIS MIGHT STILL BE LYING IN AMBUSH. OH! HI DR TSORIS!



I GUESS I DESERVE WHATEVER YOU'RE GOING TO CHUCK AT ME. JUST DO IT QUICK...

NOPE, WE'RE NOT THROWING ANYTHING... WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO THE CHALLAH MAKE - DO YOU WANT TO COME TOO?

PEOPLE OFTEN ASSUME THAT THE WAY TO TREAT OTHERS DEPENDS ON THE WAY THEY TREAT US. IN THIS WEEK'S PARASHA, YOSEF (JOSEPH) SHOWS US THAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY! EVEN THOUGH HIS BROTHERS HAD TREATED HIM BADLY IN THE PAST, YOSEF STILL BEHAVED TOWARDS THEM WITH KINDNESS AND RESPECT. DR TSORIS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO RUN FOR COVER - WE WON'T GIVE YOU TSORIS (TROUBLE)!



tribe
www.tribeuk.com

Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.