



December 30, 2023

VaYechi

18 Tevet, 5784

A Fork Is ...

There was a time in the early years of the foundation of the state of Israel when the Israeli government was involved in gathering Jewish children from primitive countries and resettling them in Eretz Yisrael (the Holy Land). First, however, the children were brought to refugee camps in Europe where they were supposed to make a transition to Western culture.

When the children were served their meals, in front of them was a full place setting - a plate, a cup, and flatware. The only problem was that these children had never seen silverware before and they didn't know what to do with them. Then, one boy picked up his fork and put a piece of paper in the prongs and started blowing on it. With this, he made a little harmonica. The other children saw and they all figured out what this fork must really be for - making a harmonica - and they all did the same thing.

Everything in this world was created and designed for a purpose. Yet a person can always invent his own way of using whatever he wants. But this is not the real purpose. The real purpose is revealed to us through G-d's Torah.

Torah in general, and Chasidic philosophy especially, describes the true objective behind everything in this world, for the world itself and for ourselves. The Sages say that the only reason gold was created was to be used in the Holy Temple. The fact is, gold has also been used for many other purposes: good functions, holy purposes, mundane things and even idolatry. Nevertheless, the Sages tell us that none of that is the real purpose of gold. Gold was created only for the Temple.

Many years ago, people in the religious community asked the Rebbe how he could instruct his Chasidim to broadcast Torah on the radio when radio is a vessel for so many negative messages. They felt that perhaps radio was a contaminated medium. (The same question was asked about satellite broadcasts for the Rebbe's public talks and about the internet.) The Rebbe explained that if something was created and exists in this world, then G-d wants us to have it for a purpose. That purpose is the making of this world into a dwelling place for Him. The radio was really only created for disseminating Torah and making the world a more holy place.

This is the true purpose for everything - that we make the world a fitting place for G-dliness to be seen by the physical eye. This should be immediately through the revelation of our righteous Moshiach.

(by Rabbi Yaakov Goldberg from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

Stand and Deliver

This week the Book of Braishis ends. Yaakov (Jacob) summoned his son Yoseph (Joseph) and discussed final arrangements with him. He asked to be transported to Chevron and to be interred in the same cave as his father, mother, and grandparents. Yoseph returned home and an unprecedented event occurred. Yaakov took ill. He is the first human that the Torah records as getting sick. Yoseph was informed and quickly hurried to his father's bedside. The Torah tells us that when Yoseph was announced, "Israel (Jacob) exerted himself and sat up on the bed" (Genesis 48:2). Yoseph enters the room and Yaakov proceeded to recount major events of his life to him. Yaakov talked about his divine revelations and the blessings that the Almighty bestowed upon him. He discussed the death of Rachel and explained why he buried her in Bethlehem and not Hebron. Then Yaakov proceeded to bless his beloved son Yoseph's children in a unique manner. He designates Yoseph's children as shevatim (tribes) with equal rights and inheritance as his other sons.

One portion of the episode needs clarification. The Torah is usually short on detail. Why then does the Torah tell us that when Yoseph walked in Yaakov exerted himself and sat up in bed? Why is that significant? Who cares if he sat up or lay down? If he was able to sit, why should he not? And if it was very difficult for him to sit up, why did he? And isn't what Yaakov said more relevant than how he said it?

Rashi explains that the seemingly supplementary detail teaches us a lesson. A father whose son has risen to power must show respect. It may have been quite difficult for Yaakov to sit, however it was important. One must show respect for royalty, even if it is his own child who has risen to power. I'd like to analyze the incident from another angle.

(continued on the other side)

American historian Paul F. Boller Jr. relates the following story: At noon on January 1st 1863, the final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation was placed in front of Abraham Lincoln. He stared intensely at it as it lay before him on his desk. He picked up his pen to sign it, and was about to dip the quill into the ink when he hesitated and put his arm down. He paused, closed his eyes, and began the process again. Determinedly he picked up the quill, dipped it in the ink, and put it down. With a grim face he turned to Secretary of State William N. Seward and said, "My hands have been shaking since nine o'clock this morning. My right hand is almost paralyzed. If I am ever to go down into history, it will be for this act. My whole self is in it. However, if my hand trembles when I sign this proclamation, whoever examines it will say hereafter, 'he hesitated'".

With that, the President mustered his strength, dipped the quill into the ink, and slowly but resolutely signed in perfect form — Abraham Lincoln.

As he lay on his deathbed, Yaakov Avinu was about to perform an unprecedented act. He was about to bestow the title of shevatim, tribes, to his grandchildren Ephraim and Menashe. This was an honor only relegated to his own children. Then he blessed them with words that were destined to become the hallmark of paternal blessings for generations to come. "By you shall (the children of) Israel bless their children – May G-d shall make you like Ephraim and Menashe. Thus shall be your children."

Those were not blessings that could be endowed in a prone position. As weak as Yaakov was, he knew that the future of two young tribes lay in the strength of his blessing. He wouldn't give it lying down. Yaakov Avinu knew that any sign of weakness that he would convey in transferring that most important message would be recognized for eternity. He mustered his strength and sat up to give that blessing that would wax eternal. Execution of great actions needs great strength and fortitude. Our forefather Yaakov knew that just as there are things you can't take lying down, there are also many things, namely greatness and blessing, that you cannot give lying down.

(by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Community Information of Interest

December 30: Dashed Hopes and New Horizons: The State of Israel and The Jewish People 1996 - 2000. Lecture by Rabbi Dovid Katz. *"The State of Israel and the Jewish Religion 1996-2000"*. This lecture will begin at 8:00 p.m. and be held at the Congregation Shomrei Emunah.



We are resuming the very popular
'The Rav's Friday Night Hashkafa Q&A Shiur for Men'

This season's first Shiur will take place Friday night, January 12, 2024 (Parshat Vaera)
at 8:00 p.m. and will be held at
the home of **Mr. & Mrs. Moshe Berry**, 2307 Baythorne Court.

Questions can be submitted in advance to rabbikaplan@chabadmd.com
and/or to Larry Ziffer at lziffer@cranefdn.org or Howard Kaplon at hkaplon@towson.edu.

DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 12/29 — 17 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 4:33 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:35 p.m.

Shabbat, 12/30 — 18 Tevet

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:45 a.m.
Minchah — 4:20 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Ma'ariv — 5:35 p.m.

Sunday, 12/31 — 19 Tevet

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Monday, 1/1 — 20 Tevet

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Tuesday, 1/2 — 21 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Wednesday, 1/3 — 22 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Thursday, 1/4 — 23 Tevet

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Friday, 1/5 — 24 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 4:39 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.