

repulsed by unethical behavior and by false facades.

What are its aspirations? The soul harbors a single yearning: to melt away in the all-pervading truth of G-d.

### The Abused Soul

Yet, how many of us are even aware of the existence of such a dimension in our personality? How many of us pay heed to the needs of our soul? In response to the soul's never ending dreams and yearnings that confuse our ego-based schedules and disturb our cravings for instant gratification, we so often take the "Joseph" within us and plunge it into a pit. We attempt to relegate its dreams and passions to the subconscious cellars of our psyche.

When that does not work, because we can still hear its silent pleas, we sell our "Joseph" as a slave to foreigners, allowing our souls to become subjugated to forces and drives that are alien to its very identity.

Can you imagine how horrified you would be if you were to observe somebody taking the little adorable hand of an infant and placing it on a burning stove? The Chassidic masters describe each time we utter a lie, each time we humiliate another human being, each time we sin, as precisely that: taking the precious innocent spirituality of our soul and putting it through abuse and torture.

### Moment of Truth

Yet, in each of our lives the moment arrives when our inner "Joseph," which was forced to conceal its truth for so many years, breaks down and reveals to us its identity. At that moment, we come to discover the sheer beauty and depth of our soul, and our hearts are filled with shame. The humiliation the brothers experienced when Joseph revealed himself to them did not stem from the fact that he rebuked them for their selling him into slavery. Joseph's mere appearance to them constituted the most powerful rebuke: For the first time they realized who it was that they subjected to such horrific abuse and their hearts melted away in shame.

Similarly, Rabbi Elazar was saying, when the day will come and we will realize the G-dly and spiritual sacredness of our own personalities, we will be utterly astounded. We will ask ourselves again

and again, how did we allow ourselves to cast such a beautiful and innocent soul into a dark and gloomy pit?

## Live & Laugh

The cardiologist, a bit surprised, walked over to where the mechanic was working. The mechanic straightened up, wiped his hands on a rag and said; "So doc, look at this engine. I opened its heart, took the valves out, repaired and replaced anything damaged and then put everything back in, and when I finished, it worked just like new. So, how is it that I make \$48,000 a year and you make \$1.7 million when you and I are doing basically the same work?"

The cardiologist paused, leaned over and whispered to the mechanic: "Try doing it with the engine running!"

"Excuse me," Nissbaum said to the cashier at David's Deli, as he examined the check. "What's the eighteen bucks for?" "For the chopped liver sandwich, sir."

"Really?" said the startled customer, "Whose liver was it, Rockefeller's?"

## Calendar

*Welcome to Rabbi Zev Wineberg.*

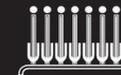
- ◆ Shacharis: 8:45 am (one minyan)
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall.
- ◆ Mincha: 6:25 pm
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 7:35 pm
- ◆ **Remember Tal U'matar**
- ◆ **Fast of 10 Teves:** Thurs 28 Dec.  
Fast Begins 3:56 am; Fast Ends 7:20 pm

- ◆ The **Scottish Leader Signature** whiskey at Shul is sponsored by **Distell** & available for purchase at **Norman Goodfellows**.
- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of I.deal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
- ◆ **Vehicles wanted. Any make, any condition. Best prices. Phone ARNOLD ORKIN 082 823 7826**
- ◆ Acknowledgements: Chabad.org
- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.



Published by the  
Sydenham Highlands North  
Hebrew Congregation  
Johannesburg, South Africa

# Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!



23 Dec 2017

Parshas Vayigash

5 Teves 5778

## No Time To Weep

by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

The wisest of men said there is a time to weep, which implies that there will be occasions when weeping is inappropriate. Though King Solomon's exact words were *there is a time to weep and a time to laugh*, obviously there are times when other responses are called for. Clearly, life is not simply about crying or laughing.

This week's Parsha relates the story of Joseph's dramatic reunion with his brothers. Though he embraces them all, he reserves his deepest emotions for his only full brother, Benjamin. Joseph left him when Benjamin was a mere child and he was the only one who was not involved in the plot against him. Theirs is, therefore, an exceptional embrace.

*And he (Joseph) fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and cried, and Benjamin cried on his neck* (Genesis 45, 14).

Rashi, quoting the Talmud (Megilla 16b), explains that for both brothers, beyond the powerful feelings of the moment their cries were nothing short of prophetic. Joseph cried over the two Temples of Jerusalem, destined for destruction, which were in the land apportioned to the tribe of Benjamin. And Benjamin cried over the Sanctuary at Shilo, located in the land apportioned to the tribe of Joseph, which too would be destroyed.

The question is why are they each crying over the other's *churban*? Why do they not cry over their own destructions?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that when it comes to someone else's problem, we may be

able to help but we cannot solve other people's problems. Even good friends can only do so much. We can offer generous assistance, support and the best advice in the world, but the rest is up to him. No matter how strenuous our efforts, there can be no guarantee that they will be successful. As hard as we may try to help, the individual alone holds the key to sort out his own situation.

So, if we are convinced that we have done our absolute best for the other person and have still failed to bring about a satisfactory resolution, the only thing we can do is shed a tear. We can pray for them, we can be sympathetic. Beyond that, there is really nothing else we can do. When we have tried and failed, all we can do is cry.

But when it comes to our own problems and challenges, our own *churban*, there we dare not settle for a good cry. We cannot afford the luxury of giving up and weeping. If it is our problem, then it is our duty to confront it again and again until we make it right. For others we can cry; but for ourselves we must act.

Sixty years ago, the great spiritual leaders of Europe were counting their losses - in the millions! The great Chassidic courts of Poland, the prestigious Yeshivas of Lithuania, were all destroyed by the Nazi hordes. What did these righteous men do? Did they sit down and cry? Of course there were tears and mourning and indescribable grief, but the emphasis quickly shifted to rebuilding. And today, thank G-d, those same institutions are alive and well, thriving and pulsating with spirit and energy in Israel and the United States. The leadership focused on the future. And painstakingly, over time, they were able to resuscitate and rejuvenate their

decimated communities.

Those leaders cried bitter tears for their fallen comrades but for themselves they did not sit and weep. They set about the task of rebuilding - and succeeded in the most inspiring, miraculous way.

When we have problems (and who doesn't?), so many of us simply moan and groan and heave a good old-fashioned *yiddishe krechtz*. How many times have we sighed, *Vos ken men ton? - What can I do?* And what are we left with? - With the moaning and groaning and nothing else. In the words of the Rebbe Rashab, *One good deed is worth more than a thousand sighs*.

Leave the *krechtzing* for others. If it's your problem, confront it, deal with it, work at it. You'll be surprised by the results.

## Parsha Pointers

*Vayigash: Artscroll Chumash pg 250;  
Living Torah pg 223*

Judah approaches Joseph to plead for the release of Benjamin, offering himself as a slave to the Egyptian ruler in Benjamin's stead. Upon witnessing his brothers' loyalty to one another, Joseph reveals his identity to them. "I am Joseph," he declares. "Is my father still alive?"

The brothers are overcome by shame and remorse, but Joseph comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but G-d. It has all been ordained from Above to save us, and the entire region, from famine."

The brothers rush back to Canaan with the news. Jacob comes to Egypt with his sons and their families -- seventy souls in all -- and is reunited with his beloved son after 22 years. On his way to Egypt he receives the Divine promise: "Fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again."

Joseph gathers the wealth of Egypt by selling food and seed during the famine. Pharaoh gives Jacob's family the fertile county of Goshen to settle, and the children of Israel prosper in their Egyptian exile.

## When the Lights Went Out

*By Rabbi Mendel Greisman*

Last Friday night, at about 9:30 p.m., something went wrong with a power transmission substation, and over 10,000 residents of our hometown of Rogers, Arkansas, were left without power. I am not sure what the other 9,999 households did, but in our home there was not much we could have done. It was Shabbat, and no flashlights could be turned on or phone calls made. Fortunately, we were able to continue our Shabbat dinner without interruption.

It is a custom in many communities that with the birth of each child we add one more Shabbat candle to the required two. So, with eight children, thank G-d, my wife lights ten candles every week. Those, in addition to the candles lit by our daughter and our guest, provided enough illumination to continue our Shabbat meal.

I don't know if I ever appreciated the Shabbat candles as much as I did last Shabbat. With the electric lights usually on, I hadn't noticed just how much light and warmth they provide. Enjoying a candlelit dinner in a pitch-black home and neighborhood was amazingly beautiful and peaceful.

As the evening progressed, and the candles were reaching their end, one by one, I was surprised to see the difference in the room with each missing flame. I never before had a chance to witness just how much light one little candle emits.

And I thanked G-d for each and every little candle. The following morning in synagogue, enjoying Shabbat prayers with our wonderful community, I couldn't help but make the connection between the previous night's events and that morning at services.

Yes, ours is a small community. We don't have hundreds of people in synagogue like they have in Jerusalem or Brooklyn. But because of that, each person makes a tangible difference to the atmosphere and warmth of the community. It isn't easy to notice the value of each individual when "the lights are on," when you're in synagogue with 500 people. Thank G-d for our small community where we can appreciate the difference each and every one makes.

And I thanked G-d for each and every member of our Jewish community.

So, we had a well-lit Shabbat, after all. Tonight, as my wife, Dobi, lights her candles and tomorrow, as we sit and pray with whoever is in synagogue, I will once again thank G-d for the light and warmth each candle and each Jew brings.

P.S. In case you're wondering, after about an hour and a half of darkness, as the last of the candles was about to go out, the power came back on.

## Do You Know Your Soul?

*By Rabbi Yosef Y Jacobson*

The story of Joseph revealing himself to his brothers after decades of bitter separation is one of the most dramatic in the Torah. Twenty-two years earlier, when Joseph was seventeen years old, his brothers kidnapped him, threw him into a pit, then sold him as a slave to Egyptian merchants. In Egypt, Joseph spent twelve years in prison, from where he rose to become viceroy of the country. Now, the moment was finally ripe for reconciliation.

"Joseph could not hold in his emotions," the Torah relates in this week's *parshah*. He dismissed from his chamber all of his Egyptian assistants, "and he began to weep with such loud sobs that the Egyptians outside could hear him. And Joseph said to his brothers: 'I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?' His brothers were so astounded, they could not respond."

### A Sage Weeps

The Talmud relates that whenever the great sage Rabbi Elazar came to this verse — "his brothers were so astounded they could not respond" — he would weep. Rabbi Elazar would say, "If the rebuke of a man of flesh and blood (Joseph) is so powerful that it causes so much consternation, the rebuke of G-d (when it comes) will all the more so cause much shame."

Yet, two points in Rabbi Elazar's statement seem to be amiss. Firstly, the verse does not say that the brothers were astounded because Joseph rebuked them. Perhaps the brothers were astounded by the realization that the man standing before them was none other than their long lost brother Joseph?

Secondly, the comparison between Joseph's rebuke of his brothers and G-d's rebuke of mankind seems to be exaggerated. The brothers personally sold Joseph into slavery, subjecting him to the

worst type of abuse. It stands to reason, therefore, that they would be utterly in shock when they finally faced him. Could any of us have ever caused a similar affront to G-d, as to experience such dread in the face of G-d's rebuke?

### Our Inner Dreamer

To understand this, we must recall the idea stated a number of times that all of the figures depicted in the Torah are not just physical people who lived at a certain period of time. They also embody particular psychological and spiritual forces, existing continuously within the human heart.

Joseph is described in the Torah as a beautiful and graceful lad, "handsome of form and handsome of appearance," and as a "master of dreams." According to the Kabbalah, Joseph symbolizes the pure and sacred soul of man.

Thus, to understand the story of Joseph, we must understand the nature of our own soul.

### A Portrait of the Soul

What does a soul look like? What elements of our personality can we attribute to our soul?

In the Tanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi defines the soul as a flame that seeks to depart from its wick and kiss the heavens. "The soul," he writes, "constitutes the quest in man to transcend the parameters of his (or her) ego and become absorbed in the source of all existence."

The sixteenth-century Kabbalist, Rabbi Elazar Azkari, wrote a prayer which describes the soul in these words: "My soul is sick with love for you; O G-d, I beg you, please heal it by showing it the sweetness of your splendor; then it will be invigorated and healed, experiencing everlasting joy."

The soul, in other words, is that dimension of our psyche that needs not self-aggrandizement, dominance or excessive materialism. It despises politics, manipulation and dishonesty. It is

**Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.**

**Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810**

**E-mail: [sydshul@sydshul.co.za](mailto:sydshul@sydshul.co.za)**

**Website: [www.sydshul.co.za](http://www.sydshul.co.za)**

**[www.facebook.com/sydenhamshul](http://www.facebook.com/sydenhamshul)**