

ry. Adam and Eve were created on Friday afternoon, the time when all last minute things get done, like making humanity.

On that first day, they were told not to eat from the fruit of one tree, the Tree of Knowledge. The mystics teach that this fruit was a grape vine, a fruit that contains the potential for great good and great evil. Over a glass of wine friendships are made and lost, lives are enhanced and destroyed, hopes are created and dashed. It is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The prohibition was only to last until nightfall that day. Once Shabbos came in, they were allowed to eat from the fruit. Because Shabbos is holy. When holy people on a holy day have holy intentions, indulging in the fruit of the vine can do no harm.

Had they done what they were told, Adam would have made Kiddush on the juice of the Tree of Knowledge on that first Friday night. But they didn't wait until Shabbos. Eve squeezed the grapes, drank and gave Adam to drink too. And that was the cause of all the problems in the world ever since.

We correct this mistake by making Kiddush on Friday night over wine or grape juice. It reminds us that we can only enjoy the pleasures of this world if we can also defer our enjoyment. If you can wait, then you are the master of your desires. If you can't, then you are slave to them. The key to being a good person is the ability to control yourself. It starts with the way we eat, and extends to every choice we make.

Adam and Eve didn't wait. So the Torah tells us to learn how to wait. We wait between meat and milk. We wait to go to the mikvah. We wait for Kiddush so we can eat. And we wait for Moshiach, the ultimate Shabbos. May the waiting be over, so we can make Kiddush on the holy wine from the Garden of Eden.

Live & Laugh

On a Northwest Airways flight from Atlanta, GA, a well attired middle-aged woman found herself sitting next to a man wearing a kippa ("yarmulka" in Yiddish). She called the attendant over to complain about her seating. "What seems to be the problem, Madam?" asked the attendant. "You've sat me next to a Jew!! I can't

possibly sit next to this strange man. Please find me another seat!"

"Madam, I will see what I can do to accommodate," the attendant replied, "but the flight is virtually full today and I don't know if there is another seat available." The woman shoots a snooty look at the snubbed Jewish man beside her (not to mention the surrounding passengers).

A few minutes later the attendant returned and said, "Madam, the economy and club sections are full, however, we do have one seat in First class." Before the lady had a chance to respond, the attendant continued, "It is only on great exceptions that we make this kind of upgrade, and I had to ask permission from the captain. But, given the circumstances, the captain felt that no one should be forced to sit next to an unpleasant person..."

The flight attendant turned to the Jewish man sitting next to her, and said: "So if you'd like to get your things, Sir, I have a comfortable seat for you in First class..." At this point, the surrounding passengers stood up and gave a standing ovation while the Jewish man walked up to the front of the plane.

The lady then said indignantly, "The Captain must have made a mistake.." To which the attendant replied, "No Ma'am. Captain Cohen never makes a mistake."

Calendar

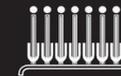
- ◆ Shacharis: 8:45 am (one minyan)
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall.
- ◆ Mincha: 6:30 pm
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 7:38 pm

- ◆ 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.**
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Parshas Vayechi

12 Teves 5778

Immortality

by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Why does this week's Torah reading — a Parshah which describes the end of Jacob's life, his death and his funeral — carry the title *Vayechi*, "And He Lived"?

Let me be faithful to Jewish tradition and try to answer one question with another question. Interestingly, the Torah never actually states that Jacob died. It simply says that "*he expired and was gathered unto his people.*" This prompted one of the Talmudic sages to expound that "*our father Jacob never died.*" Whereupon his colleagues challenged him and asked, "*Did they then bury Jacob for no reason? Did they eulogize him in vain?*" To which the Talmud answers: "*As his descendants live, so does he live.*"

Life does not end with the grave. The soul never dies and the good work men and women do on earth continues to live on long after their physical passing. More particularly, if there is regeneration, if children emulate the example of their forbears, then their parents and teachers live on through them.

When Jacob was about to breathe his last, he called his children to gather round his bedside. Our Parshah recounts what he told each of them. But the Oral Tradition gives us a behind-the-scenes account. Apparently, Jacob was anxious to know whether all his offspring were keeping the faith and he put this concern to them at that time. They replied, *Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*--"Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One." They were saying that the G-d of Israel their father would al-

ways be their G-d, too. Jacob was comforted and responded, *Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto L'olam V'ed*--"Blessed be the Name of the glory of His Kingdom forever and ever" (or in plain English, *Baruch Hashem!* Thank G-d!)

When all of Jacob's children remained faithful to his tradition, that was not only a tribute to Jacob's memory but the ultimate gift of eternal life bestowed upon him. His spirit lives on, his life's work continues to flourish and he is still present in this world as his soul lives on in the next.

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of attending the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries in New York. At the closing banquet of the epic Kinus, there were some 5600 rabbis and lay leaders in attendance. For me, personally, one of the most special moments in an altogether powerful event, is when the chairman, Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky does the famous global roll call. While I was proud to rise and represent South Africa when our turn came, an even prouder and profoundly moving moment was when the rabbis were asked to indicate in which decade they went out to their respective communities as *shluchim* (emissaries) of the Rebbe. A handful of old men stood for the 1940's, a somewhat larger group of senior rabbis rose for the 1950's, and so it grew by the decade. But when the call was made for those who had gone out to serve communities around the world after 1994 - i.e. after the passing of the Rebbe - the majority of the huge hall rose to their feet. At that moment, it was clear to everyone present that Jacob never really died. Just as his students are alive, carry on his teachings and still answer his call to go out and change the world, so

too, does the Rebbe live on. Whether it means moving to Belarus or Bangkok, Sydney or Siberia, Alaska or the bottom of Africa, the Rebbe's mission is still moving people, literally and spiritually.

In following his path, Jacob's children immortalized him. Such a Parshah is aptly entitled *Vayechi*, "And he lived." Ultimately, our children make us immortal. And so do our students, our spiritual children. May we each be privileged to raise families and disciples who will be true children of Israel, faithful to our father Jacob and the G-d of Israel. Amen.

Parsha Pointers

Vayechi: Artscroll Chumash pg 268;
Living Torah pg 241

Jacob lives the final 17 years of his life in Egypt. Before his passing, he asks Joseph to take an oath that he will bury him in the Holy Land. He blesses Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, elevating them to the status of his own sons as progenitors of tribes within the nation of Israel.

The patriarch desires to reveal the end of days to his children, but is prevented from doing so. Jacob blesses his sons, assigning to each his role as a tribe: Judah will produce leaders, legislators and kings; priests will come from Levi, scholars from Issachar, seafarers from Zebulun, schoolteachers from Shimon, soldiers from Gad, judges from Dan, olive growers from Asher, and so on. Reuben is rebuked for "confusing his father's marriage"; Shimon and Levi for the massacre of Shechem and the plot against Joseph. Naphtali is granted the swiftness of a deer, Benjamin the ferociousness of a wolf, and Joseph is blessed with beauty and fertility.

Joseph, too, dies in Egypt, at the age of 110. He, too, instructs that his bones be taken out of Egypt and buried in the Holy Land, but this would come to pass only with the Israelites'

Exodus from Egypt many years later. Before his passing, Joseph conveys to the Children of Israel the testament from which they will draw their hope and faith in the difficult years to come.

Righteous Individual vs Righteous Leader

By Rabbi Yanki Tauber

In his blessings to his children before his passing, Jacob assigned to each of them their role in the formation of the Jewish nation. The twelve sons of Jacob became the twelve tribes of Israel, whose twelve individual callings collectively realize the mission of Israel.

Judah, Jacob's fourth son, was granted the role of sovereign and ruler. In Jacob's words, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the legislator's pen from his descendants; to him nations shall submit, until the coming of Shiloh." Beginning with King David, all legitimate rulers of Israel — kings, *nessiim*, exilarchs — up to and including Moshiach, were and will be from the tribe of Judah.

By rights, the sovereignty belonged to Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. But Reuben had sinned against his father, forfeiting this right, which was then transferred to Judah. Why Judah? Our sages identify two virtues for which Judah merited the leadership of Israel:

(a) When the other sons of Jacob plotted to kill Joseph, Judah saved his life. "What shall we profit by killing our brother and covering his blood?" argued Judah. "Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not harm him with our own hands, for he is our brother, our own flesh." The others accepted Judah's reasoning, and Joseph was taken out of the snake-infested pit into which he had been thrown and sold into slavery.

(b) Judah publicly admitted his culpability in the incident of Tamar, thereby saving her and her two unborn sons from death.

It would seem, however, that Reuben was no less virtuous than Judah. Indeed, in both these areas, Reuben's deeds were greater and his intentions purer.

Regarding the plot to kill Joseph, it was Reuben who first saved Joseph's life by suggesting to his brothers that, instead of killing him, they should

throw him into the pit. As the Torah attests, he did this "in order to save him from their hands and return him to his father" (Reuben did not know that there were snakes and scorpions in the pit). The Torah also attests that Reuben was not present when Joseph was sold, and records his shock at not finding Joseph in the pit when he returned to take him out and his berating of his brothers for what they had done. Judah, on the other hand, only suggested a more profitable way of disposing of Joseph (the Torah says nothing about any hidden intentions), and was the cause of Joseph's sale into slavery. Indeed, we later find the others accusing Judah: "It was you who told us to sell him. If you would have told us to return him [home], we would have listened to you" (Rashi, Genesis 38:1).

As for Judah's public penance, here, too, Reuben excelled him. Reuben, too, admitted and repented his sin. And while Judah was faced with a choice to either admit his responsibility or cause the destruction of three innocent lives, there were no such compelling factors in Reuben's case. Furthermore, Reuben's penance did not end with a one-time admission of guilt, but continued to consume his entire being for many years. Indeed, the reason why Reuben was not present at the time of Joseph's sale — nine years after his original wrongdoing against his father — was that "he was occupied with his sackcloth and fasting."

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains: As far as personal virtue is concerned, Reuben indeed surpassed Judah, both in the purity of his intentions regarding Joseph and the intensity of his repentance over his failings. But Judah was the one who *actually saved* Joseph, while Reuben unwittingly placed him in mortal danger. In the same vein, Judah's repentance saved three lives, while Reuben's remorse helped no one; in fact, had he not been preoccupied with his sackcloth and his fasting, he might have prevented Joseph's being sold into slavery.

Indeed, Reuben retained his rights as Jacob's firstborn in all that pertained to him as an individual. But he forfeited his role as a leader, by neglecting the most basic prerequisite for leadership. Believing Joseph safe for the time being, Reuben rushed back to attend to his prayers and penance, forgetting that concern for one's fellow must always take precedence over one's own pursuits, no matter how pious and lofty these pursuits might be.

While Reuben prayed and fasted, Judah acted. Judah earned the leadership of Israel by recognizing that when another human being needs us, we must set aside all other considerations and get involved. Even if our own motives are still short of perfection. Sometimes, we cannot afford to wait.

Oasis in the Desert

By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

The very first time the Torah testifies that our patriarch Jacob fully enjoyed and appreciated life is during the period of time that he lived in Egypt.

We must assume that it is the spiritual quality of life that Jacob, the saintliest of our forefathers, came to appreciate. How then was Jacob able to appreciate spiritual life in a place of absolute moral depravity? The answer lies in the Yeshiva (Torah academy) that he established while he was in Egypt.

Even in an unseemly place of spiritual impurity Jacob developed a center of light, a source of spiritual energy that produced an aura of holiness.

The Personal Egypt

Every Jew has inherited from Jacob the ability to transcend the limitations of our personal environment, the ability to transform our personal Egypt into a personal Jerusalem, by creating an oasis of happiness and G-dliness.

We can uncover spiritual life even when friends, neighbors and acquaintances who are spiritually corrupt, surround us. Furthermore, it is possible to positively influence those very friends to fashion for themselves a life of Torah, Judaism and holiness.

Had Enough of Waiting?

By Rabbi Aron Moss

Question:

I make Kiddush over wine every Friday night, but I would like to know a deeper meaning behind it. Is there some mystical ideas you can share that I can meditate on when I say the Kiddush?

Answer:

It all goes back to the very first Friday of histo-

Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.

Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810

E-mail: sydsdul@sydsdul.co.za

Website: www.sydsdul.co.za

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