

NCYI Youth Groups Parashas Vayechi

Parsha Outline

VaYechi

- Yosef's promise to Yaakov
- Yaakov's blessing of Efrayim and Menashshe
- Yaakov's blessing of the Twelve Tribes
- Yaakov's death
- Yosef's death and promise

(http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/HebEngTaNaKh_TorahSummary.htm)

Sefer Bereishit is divided into twelve parashiyot (weekly readings). The first two parashiyot cover 1,948 years of history and twenty generations. The third and fourth parashiyot focus only on one hundred years of Avraham's life. The message is - what Avraham stood for is what Creation is all about - what Avraham represented is what concerns the Torah. The Torah therefore dwells on the lives of the forefathers.

The balance of Sefer Bereishit (eight week parashiyot) is devoted to following the course of Avraham's descendants - Yitzchak, Yaakov, and the Twelve Tribes - as they further develop the philosophy and approach to live of their ancestor, Avraham. The ideology developed by Avraham becomes the basis for a unique nation, the further evolution and progress of the nation is presented in the following sefer - Shemot.

Sefer Bereishit not only describes the origin of the Jewish people, but traces the origins of all peoples of mankind.

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Parsha Summaries

Family Parshah

Vayechi Roundup Vayechi-And He Lived

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/341340/jewish/Vayechi-Roundup.htm

By Chani Benjaminson

After Jacob has lived in Egypt for seventeen years, he feels his days on earth are ending. He calls Joseph to his side and asks him to promise that he will bury him in the land of Canaan where Abraham and Isaac are buried. Jacob then blesses Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Menasseh, that they will each become the father of a tribe, just like Jacob's sons.

Jacob then calls all of his sons to his side and blesses each one. He tells each son what his role will be as one of the Tribes of Israel. For example, he says that the tribe of Judah will produce kings, and Dan will produce judges. Naphtali will be swift as a deer and Benjamin fierce as a wolf.

When Jacob is finished blessing his children, he passes away. He is 147 years old. Joseph cries and mourns his father as do his brothers and all of the people of the land of Egypt. They mourn Jacob because he was a righteous person who brought a lot of blessing to the land. Joseph keeps his promise to his father and brings him to the land of Canaan and buries him in the Cave of Machpeila in the city of Hebron.

The sons of Jacob are worried that now that Jacob is no longer alive Joseph will take revenge on them for selling him into slavery. But Joseph comforts them and tells them he is not planning to do anything against his brothers. Joseph dies at the age of 110. Before passing away, he gives a message to the people of Israel, telling them that "G-d will surely remember you, and bring you up out of this land to the land of which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." He asks that his body be brought out of Egypt with them.

Joseph's body is not buried in the land of Canaan yet. (The Egyptians do not let the Jewish people take him out of Egypt.) With this Parshah we conclude the first book of the Torah, the book of Bereishit.

Vayechi Aliya Summary

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/608754/jewish/Aliya-Summary.htm

General Overview: This week's Torah reading, *Vayechi*, discusses Jacob's final years. Shortly before his passing, Jacob blesses Joseph's children as well as his own. A massive funeral procession escorts Jacob's body to Canaan. The reading, and the Book of Genesis, concludes with Joseph's death.

First Aliyah: Jacob lived his last seventeen years in Egypt. When Jacob sensed that his days were numbered he summoned Joseph and asked him to promise that he would bury him in Israel. Joseph acceded to the request. When Jacob then fell ill, Joseph visited him, accompanied by his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob conferred upon Ephraim and Manasseh the status of tribal progenitors, a status hitherto enjoyed only by Jacob's sons. Joseph asked his father to bless Ephraim and Manasseh.

Second Aliyah: Joseph presents his two sons, placing Manasseh, the firstborn, to Jacob's right, and Ephraim to Jacob's left. Jacob, who was nearly blind at this point, crossed his hands, placing his right – more prestigious – hand on Ephraim's head. He blessed them: "May the angel who redeemed me from all harm bless the youths, and may they be called by my name and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and may they multiply abundantly like fish, in the midst of the land."

Third Aliyah: Joseph was disturbed that Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim, and he attempted to adjust his father's hands. "I know, my son, I know," Jacob responded, explaining that the "younger brother will be greater, and his children[']s fame] will fill the nations." Jacob blessed the two boys further, saying that all of Israel will bless each other by saying: "May G-d make you like Ephraim and Manasseh."

Fourth Aliyah: Jacob summoned all his sons, and delivered to each a poetic, and sometimes cryptic, parting personal message. Reuben was chastised for his impetuosity and for "ascending upon his father's bed." Shimon and Levi were rebuked for their anger, which expressed itself in the killing of the Shechemites and the attempted

execution of Joseph. Judah was blessed with monarchy, success in waging battle, and an abundance of wine and milk in his portion. Zebulun was blessed with success in his sea-trade endeavors. Jacob likened Issachar to a thick-boned donkey who finds both rest and ample work. Dan was blessed with the tenacity of a serpent and the ability to judge.

Fifth Aliyah: Gad was blessed with bravery in battle. Asher's blessing: an abundance of olive oil. Naphtali was blessed with the speed of a deer. Joseph was recognized for his charm, suffering, and righteousness, and was showered with a variety of blessings.

Sixth Aliyah: Benjamin was likened to a devouring wolf. Jacob then repeated his request to be buried in Israel, in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, and he passed away at the age of 147. After an extended national mourning period, Joseph received Pharaoh's permission to carry Jacob's body up to Israel. A huge funeral procession consisting of all the elders of Egypt as well as Jacob's family went and buried Jacob. After returning to Egypt, Joseph's brothers feared that now, after Jacob had passed away, Joseph would exact revenge from them for selling him into slavery. Joseph reassured them that he harbored no ill feelings towards them.

Seventh Aliyah: Joseph lived until the age of 110. Before passing away he told his brothers that G-d would eventually take them out of Egypt and return them to the Promised Land. Joseph asked his brothers to promise that when that time arrived they would carry his remains with them, and inter him in Israel.

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Overview

http://ohr.edu/this_week/torah_weekly/4132

By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather.

Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of *Eretz Yisrael* and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d. Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Ephraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishet, the first of the five Books of the Torah. *Chazak!*

Parsha Songs

[The lyrics are supplied here. For the tunes, please click on the link]

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/573574/jewish/Parshah-Song.htm

This Tefilah from Yaakov, at night is said
By all yiddisheh kinderlach, before going to bed
To Ephraim and Menasheh, this bracha, Yaakov gave
"May the malach watch over you, for me he did save
In the name of my fathers, Avrohom and Yitzchok too
May Hashem's bracha, forever be with you

Hamalach hagoel osi mikol ra
Y'vorech es han'orim, vikorei bahem sh'mee
V'sheim avosai, Avrohom v'Yitzchok
V'yidgu larov b'kerev haaretz

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Parsha Questions & Answers

Selected from the following website:

<http://chinuch.org>

Questions By Rabbi Normie Lowenthal

_____ םש

The “Pitgam Hashavuah” is...

לְפֹם - צַעֲרָא אֲגָרָא

“According to the effort, so is the reward”

How long was Yaakov in Egypt? And how long did he live?

He was in Egypt for 17 years and he lived for 147 years.

What did Yaakov ask Yosef to swear to do after he died?

To bury him in the land of Canaan

How did Yaakov give Yosef’s sons (Efraim and Minashe) his blessing?

*He put his right hand on Efraim and the left on Minashe (crossed), and gave them the Brocho of **הַמְלֵאךְ דְּהַגּוֹאֵל**, that Hashem should bless them, and they should be many.*

What did Yaakov want to tell his sons about before he died?

*When **מְשִׁיחַ** would come.*

What are the “Birchos Yaakov”?

*The blessings that Yaakov gave each of his sons, which were full of prophecy about the future of each **שבט** (tribe) and the description of each tribe’s special attributes and characteristics.*

Where was Yaakov buried?

*In **הַמְכַפְלֵה**, with the rest of the **אֲבוֹת** (forefathers).*

What were Yosef’s brothers afraid of after Yaakov’s death?

That Yosef would now try to “get back” at them for hurting and selling him... So the brothers told him that Yaakov had asked that Yosef forgive them.

How old was Yosef when he died?

110 years. He lost ten years of his life because he heard his father being called “slave” (by his brothers) ten times, and he didn’t stop them.

What did Yosef make his brothers swear?

That when they return to Canaan, they would take his body along.

What do we say upon the completion of a *sefer* (book) of the *chumash*? What does it mean?

וְנִתְחַזְקׁוּ וְנִתְחַזְקׁוּ "We should continue to be strong" to be able to learn more.

דְּבַר תּוֹרָה

When blessing Yehuda, Yaakov said " יוֹדוּךָ אֶחָיֶךָ " - "Your brothers will thank/praise you."

The *זְקֵנִים נְעִיט* explains that one of the ways in which Yehuda is praised is that we, as Jews, are called " יְהוּדִים ". When Leah named Yehuda, she realized that she had gotten more than her share (she had more sons than any other wife of Yaakov's), and therefore named him using a name derived from the word " אֲזַדְדָּה " - that she would praise Hashem.

This is the essence of a Jew-- someone who always feels that he has more than his share, more than what he deserves, and is thankful.

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Parsha Stories

Family Parshah

Vayechi Parshah Lesson

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/335910/jewish/Vayechi-Parshah-Lesson.htm

By Rebbetzin Malka Touger

You have something which is very special. It's yours for life. It will go with you wherever you go. You don't have to pay for it, carry it, guard it, or make room for it. You didn't even have to work to get it.

Do you know what it is?

It's your name!

Some people are named after great men or great women. Others are named after relatives who passed away.

Sometimes people are given names which tell us about events in their lives. Adam's name comes from the word *adamah*, earth, because G-d created Adam from the earth. Moses' name comes from the word *moshui*, "pulled in," because the basket Moses was lying in was pulled in from the Nile River.

Some names tell us about wishes, thoughts or ideas connected with the person. Rachel's first child was born after many years of waiting, so he was named Joseph, which means "add." While she was waiting, Rachel had wished and prayed that G-d would bless her with an additional son.

Later, Joseph called his own children by names which tell us what he wished and hoped for.

Joseph named his firstborn son Manasseh, from the word *nasho*, "forget." Joseph did not want his family to forget where they came from or who they were. The name Manasseh was a reminder, as if someone was constantly saying: Let us not forget that we are the descendants of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel and Leah even though we are now living in Egypt. Wherever Jews may be, they must always remember who they are.

Joseph knew that G-d sent the Jews into to Egypt for a purpose. They were not supposed to struggle through the exile in Egypt merely remembering that they are Jews. They were supposed to make the exile fruitful, like a garden which flowers and blooms. By using everything to do good deeds, we can make the world into a dwelling place for G-d. Wishing to do this, Joseph named his second son Ephraim, which comes from the Hebrew word for fruitful.

This week's Torah portion tells us how Jacob blessed Manasseh and Ephraim. Even though Manasseh was older, Ephraim received the greater blessing. Ephraim represents the real purpose of exile, that a Jew should prosper and be fruitful in the Torah way. That's why Jacob gave him the greater blessing.

Still, Manasseh is the older brother and he comes first. This also teaches us an important lesson. Ephraim can only succeed and be fruitful because Manasseh constantly reminds him who he is and where he comes from.

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LESSONS FROM THE PARSHA

http://ohr.edu/this_week/kinder_torah/4139

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Parashas Vayechi

Yom Zeh LiYisrael

“**A**bbas, the atmosphere at our Shabbos table has changed completely since you have begun explaining the zemiros before we sing them.”

“I know. I feel it too, kinderlach. Let us finish the evening zemiros with an emotional song written by the holy Arizal. The first letter of each stanza spells out his name. The full zemer contains many verses, so I will explain each one only briefly. Yom Zeh LiYisrael ... ‘This day is one of light and joy for Yisrael – Shabbos of contentment.’”

“We see the light; feel the joy, and contentment Abba.”

“The laws of Shabbos and the Holy Days were commanded at Har Sinai; among them preparing courses and banquets. Shabbos is such a comfort for us.

‘We receive the “neshama yesayra” that wipes away the sighs and suffering that the golus has brought to our broken nation.

‘You sanctified it and blessed it more than all other days. In six days, You completed the labor of the universe. On this day, grieving people find tranquility and security.

‘The Awesome One banned melacha. I shall merit royal splendor if I observe Shabbos. I shall bring a blended meal offering to the Awesome One.

‘I will arrange a pleasant melodious song for You, before the splendor of Your Glory. My soul will be yearning for You, beloved and perfect, when Your promise will be fulfilled.

Enjoy nachas from my prayer like the offering of Nachshon, (the first prince of Israel who brought an offering in the Mishkan). My rest this day, with rejoicing and happiness should be as dear to You as the smoke of the incense offerings.

‘We hope for Your deliverance, o most Majestic One. Send the son of Dovid our king to the Ivrim. He will proclaim freedom, relief, and rest.

‘Answer us, o Awesome, Elevated One! Look upon our suffering, redeem us speedily, have abundant mercy upon us. Make our souls happy with light and joy.

‘Renew our Mikdash, remember that it was destroyed. Our Savior, grant Your Goodness to the one in pain, who sits on Shabbos with song and praise.

'Remember what is holy to us, in the merit of the dearness of the day (of Shabbos). Please guard us, today and every day, our Beloved, Pure, and Mighty, bring relief. 'Let Yisrael hear the voice of prayer and salvation, when the vision of the redemption will come. O Rock let the deliverance sprout forth, let the sun-like light be seen, and shine eternally!'"

Kinderlach . . .

Yom Zeh LiYisrael describes the menuchas hanefesh (tranquility of the soul) that Shabbos brings. We do our part by preparing the home, the food, the clothing, and refraining from melacha. Hashem then sends us the neshama yesayra that brings serenity and comfort from the sadness and suffering of the golus. We ask that our prayers be accepted and beloved like the sacrifices in the Mishkan. We then speak about the redemption, when Hashem will fulfill His promise, send the moshiach, and rebuild the Beis HaMikdash. Then we will rejoice, sing songs of praise, and see the spiritual light shine forth. Speedily and in our days!

Nothing to Sneeze At

“**A**choo!”

“La'briut (to your health) Chaim.”

“Thank you, Avi. You are very considerate.”

“Thank you, Chaim. In what way am I considerate?”

“After I sneezed, you gave me a blessing for good health.”

“You deserve it, Chaim. Everyone should have good health, especially after they sneeze.”

“Why?”

“Because there is a lot more to a sneeze than just hot air.”

“Are you speaking about allergies?”

“No, I am speaking about mankind from the beginning of creation until Yaakov Avinu.”

“That is a big subject, Avi - nothing to sneeze at.”

“It is actually related to this week's parasha.”

“Now you really have my curiosity going.”

“The Torah states, that someone told Yosef that his father (Yaakov) was sick (Bereshis 48:1). This was an earthshattering event, unprecedented in the entire history of mankind.”

“What was so earth-shattering about being sick?”

“The Chizkuni informs us that Yaakov Avinu changed the way people die. From the beginning of creation, a man's sneeze would be his last breath. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, when he sneezed, his neshama (soul) would leave his body – without warning.”

“**H**ow abrupt.”

“Exactly. Yaakov Avinu wanted to bless and admonish his children. The Torah Temima explains that one should admonish ones children shortly before one dies. Therefore,

Yaakov asked for Hashem's mercy, to know his time of departure from this world. Hashem responded by making him sick, informing him that his death was imminent."

"I see. Yaakov Avinu was the first person in history to get sick."

"Precisely. The Torah Temima relates several minhagim (customs) regarding sneezing. Some people say li'chaim u'li'shalom (to life and peace) because the sneeze was considered a dangerous event. Rashi (Berachos 53a) explains that people would say 'To your health' to the one who sneezed. The Yalkut states that a person is obligated to thank Hashem after he sneezes. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (61:5) advises saying a verse from this week's parasha, 'For Your salvation do I long, O Hashem!' (Bereshis 49:18)."

"Avi, this is all amazing. Who would have thought that a simple sneeze is so full of meaning?"

"Chaim, a sneeze is nothing to sneeze at."

Kinderlach . . .

Health is a wonderful gift from Hashem. Many people do not appreciate it until they become sick or injured lo aleinu (may it not happen to us). Thank Hashem for everything. When we are healthy we can see, eat, sleep, breathe, walk, and hear properly. Good health is a pillar of avodas (service to) Hashem. As we say in the blessing "Asher Yatzar". . . "(without a healthy body). . . it would be impossible to survive and stand before You". Hashem gives us a wonderful reminder to appreciate our health . . . the simple sneeze. People would die when they sneezed. However, we sneeze and live! Therefore, every time we sneeze, we can thank Hashem for our life and our health. "La'briut!"

Parasha Questions:

- Why did Yaakov bury Rachel on the road to Beis Lechem, and not in Ma'aras HaMachpela? (Rashi 48:7)
- How does a Jewish father bless his sons? (48:20)
- What are Yaakov's "weapons of war"? (48:22 and Rashi)

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Family Parsha Vayechi

by [Nesanel Yoel Safran](#)

This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/tp/pak/fp/48931257.html>

Vayechi(Genesis 47:28-50:26)

Keeping Promises

From this week's Torah Portion

One sign of a good, honest person is that he keeps his promises. In this week's Torah portion, Joseph promises his elderly father, Jacob, that after he passes away Joseph will make sure Jacob is buried next to his ancestors in Hebron, and not in idolatrous Egypt (where they were currently living). Even though it was risky and difficult to approach the Egyptian king and get him to agree, Joseph did just that - in order to keep his promise and to teach us the value of keeping ours.

Story

In our story, a kid who wants to keep her promise faces a tough choice.

PROMISING START

'ONE MORE DAY!' Liz smiled as she read the scribbly note her younger sister Gail had taped to her door. For the past week, the kid had excitedly been 'counting down' the days left until her birthday - and the days until Liz would take her out to the cool new pizza parlor, like she'd promised.

Well, why not? thought Liz. She liked her little sister (most of the time, anyway) and they *both* really liked good pizza.

The next day came around and Gail was bouncing around the house like a super-ball waiting for Liz to get changed so they could go on their big 'pizza-date.'

Then the phone rang. "Liz, it's for you!" Gail yelled "But talk fast okay - 'cuz we've gotta go!"

"Hi Liz, it's Tiff. You're never going to believe it. Jan's cousin works at the auditorium and he just called and told her there's five unclaimed VIP seats for this afternoon's Circus Amaze-Us show and he promised to give them to us free if we zip over there right now. I saved one last place in the car for you!"

Liz really *couldn't* believe it. The Circus Amaze-Us show was the hit of the season and even if you could afford the tickets - they were next to impossible to get.

She was about to say *I'll be right over*, when she felt a tug on her sweater. "Hurry up, Liz. It's time to go," Gail was pleading. Suddenly Liz felt torn in two and her tongue tied in a thousand knots.

"Hey, you didn't faint or anything, did you, Liz?" came the voice on the other end of the phone."

"Um, no - Tiff, I'm here. Just give me a second, okay?" Liz mumbled and turned to face her little sister's bright, expectant face.

"Um, Gail, you really want to go out now, right?"

"You bet! Let's go!"

"Yeah ... but I got this call now and I'm not so sure if... Maybe, do you think we could like go tomorrow instead?" Liz

could hardly watch as her sister's face went from sunny to cloudy to stormy dark.

"Not go today? But Liz - today's my *birthday*, and I've been waiting so long."

"I know, Gail, but you see, my friends..."

"But you PROMISED!!!" The young girl started to cry.

"Liz? Where did you go? Are you coming or not?" Tiff asked. Liz wanted so much to go with her friends - yet she knew how much Gail was counting on her and she also knew from experience how bad it felt when someone promises something then backs out. She lifted the phone receiver that suddenly felt as heavy as a lead weight.

"Thanks a million, Tiff. You guys go have a great time - but I've got to pass." She thought she heard something like the words 'out of your mind' coming out of the phone as she hung up.

"Okay! Let's go!" Liz said, with as big a smile as she could manage.

The sisters got to the pizza parlor and as they ate Liz tried her best not to think about the amazing time her friends were having.

"Hey, there are all your friends," Gail said, pointing to the door. Liz turned and sure enough, Tiff and the crew were marching in, looking really down.

"What are you guys doing *here*?" asked Liz. "Aren't you supposed to be at the show?"

"We got there and not only were there no tickets, but the guy who was supposed to give them to us had gone home!"

Promises, promises, promises - you can't count on anybody nowadays, can you?" sputtered Tiff.

Liz nodded sympathetically while inside she felt so glad she'd shown her kid sister that she could count on her.

Discussion Questions

Ages 3-5

Q. How did Liz feel when her friend first invited her to the show?

A. She felt like she wanted to break her promise, and go with her.

Q. How did she feel in the end?

A. She was really glad she'd kept her promise to her sister.

Ages 6-9

Q. What life lesson do you think someone could learn from this story?

A. The way a person keeps his promises says a lot about what kind of person he is. Liz faced a tough choice, but she kept her word and not only made her sister feel good, but she felt good about herself, too.

Q. Is there ever a time it's okay not to keep our promises?

A. Though generally we should keep our word even when it's difficult, there could be times that we promise something seriously destructive, either under pressure or by mistake. In such a case, it's okay to back out. If we can, it could be worthwhile to first talk it out with someone whose opinion we respect.

Ages 10 and Up

Q. What do you think a person could do to avoid breaking promises?

A. One easy thing is not to make them in the first place. Some people who take their word seriously have a practice almost never to promise, but to say 'they will try, but they can't promise.' Of course this is no excuse to take what we say lightly and we should indeed sincerely try to do what we say we will.

Q. Is there a way a person could use promises as a tool to better achieve his goals?

A. Once we learn to take our promises seriously, if there is something we know clearly is the right thing to do but we know it will be hard to do - we can promise ourselves (or others) and use the motivating power of the promise to drive us to our goal.

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Family Parsha Vayechi

by [Nesanel Yoel Safran](#)

This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/tp/pak/fp/48906282.html>

Vayechi(Genesis 47:28-50:26)

Encouraging Words

From this week's Torah Portion

Just as healthy food and exercise gives physical strength to one's body, hearing words of encouragement gives a boost of

emotional and spiritual strength to one's soul. This week's Torah portion is the last one of the book of Genesis. There is an ancient custom to exclaim at the completion of one of the five books of Moses the following encouraging words, "Be strong, and may we be strengthened!" We can light up people's lives and do a great act of kindness when we use our words to give them a boost of strength.

Story

In our story a kid discovers the power of positive speaking.

"RAISING MORE THAN MONEY"

"Sorry kid, I can't help you." The door slammed closed before Matt even had a chance to say, "Thanks anyway." It had been one hard afternoon. He and his friend, Gary, had been so full of energy and enthusiasm when they began their rounds trying to sell raffle tickets to raise money for their school's annual charity drive for the local children's hospital.

The pair who sold the most - besides doing a good deed - would also win a big prize. But it had been a lot harder than they thought, and two hours later the guys had given up on the prize and were feeling pretty down about the whole thing.

"What do you say, Gary? Should we just call it quits?" Matt asked.

Gary shrugged. "I don't know. We have one more street we're supposed to do. I don't imagine we'll do any better here than the other streets, but we might at least try and do a few more houses, don't you think?"

"Yeah, I guess so," Matt reluctantly agreed and the two of them decided to save time by splitting up, each taking one side of the street.

Matt took a deep breath as he shuffled up the driveway of the first house on the street. He still had so many unsold tickets. A few people had bought them, but a lot of people seemed really annoyed when asked.

Matt hesitated as he nervously got ready to ring the doorbell. He pushed the small red button and braced for the worst.

The door slowly opened. "Why, hello there!" came a surprisingly cheerful voice.

Matt looked up to see an elderly woman with smiling eyes. She didn't look familiar, but from her greeting, Matt wondered if she knew him.

"And how can I help you today?" she asked.

"Um, I, I'm selling raffle tickets for our school charity drive," he quickly stammered. This was the point where a lot of people had closed the door on him.

"Really?" she smiled, "That's fantastic. A young fellow like you would take off from a whole day of playing to do such a good deed!"

Matt was taken aback by the lady's comment and felt himself straightening up as she continued to speak. "Now you stay right there, young man. I'll be right back."

Maybe I'm actually going to sell a ticket, Matt thought to himself.

A moment later the woman returned. "I'm sure you must be pretty hungry and thirsty after working so hard for such a good

cause. This nice cold drink should hit the spot! And you came at the right time - these cookies are straight from the oven."

Matt's mouth watered as the lady invited him to sit down.

"You should be so proud of yourself to be working hard to help make sick children's lives more pleasant. Would you like another cookie?" she asked.

Matt looked at his watch. "No thanks. They were great but actually I've got to get going," he said, standing up and turning to leave.

"Not until I buy a ticket first." The lady smiled and pulled a bill out of her handbag. Matt blushed, he had felt so good just being there and hearing all her encouragement that he had forgotten even to ask. She wished him the best of luck and waved to him as he walked down the driveway. The snack and drink - and especially the lady's kind and encouraging words - made him feel so much better than he had just a few minutes ago.

He got to the sidewalk to find his friend, Gary, sitting on a bench, his head hanging down. "How'd it go?" asked Matt with a new sense of energy and excitement.

"Not good," Gary replied. "They wouldn't even open the door. Let's just call it a day. Hey? what are you so happy about? You just sell all your tickets or something?"

"No, only one. But the lady was so nice and encouraging..." Then, looking at his down-looking friend, Matt got an inspiration. If positive, encouraging words helped him so much, why not pass them on?

"Hey Gary, do you realize what a fantastic thing it is that you're trying to do, even if it's hard? What do you say we finish it out to the end of the street? Let's give it our best shot!"

Gary sat up a bit straighter and smiled for the first time in hours. "Okay," he said.

Matt didn't know how much money they would raise, but he already felt rich from learning from that special lady the secret of how to raise another person's spirits.

Discussion Questions

Ages 3-5

Q. How did Matt feel about what he was doing before he got to the lady's house?

A. He felt down and disappointed that things weren't going well.

Q. How did he feel after going to the lady's house?

A. The lady said encouraging things to him that made him feel more positive and full of energy.

Ages 6-9

Q. What do you think Matt learned from his experience that day?

A. He discovered a big secret - the power of kind and encouraging words to strengthen a person and help them get up when they're feeling down.

Q. Why do you think encouraging words are so powerful to lift a person up?

A. A big part of how we feel depends upon how we view ourselves and our accomplishments. A person often feels down because he's focusing on the negative. Encouraging words help a person to re-focus on the positive side of himself, and this makes him feel much better.

Spiritual exercise: Give someone a smile and an encouraging word today.

Ages 10 and Up

Q. Our sages teach that giving someone a smile is even more valuable than giving them a material gift. How do you understand this?

A. A smile is magic. God created us in a way that it's almost impossible not to feel better after receiving a sincere smile (or giving one, for that matter). Getting a material gift may make a person feel good, but a smile is like a ray of sun that reaches deep down into a person's soul and can fill the darkest mood with light.

Q. What are some ways to encourage people?

A. As we said, smile! Also by expressing appreciation for anything that they do for us—even the little things. We can look for other people's good traits and abilities and point them out to them. Sometimes even just a listening ear to let them talk things out is a big boost.

Spiritual exercise: Give someone a smile and an encouraging word today.

Parsha Games

Vayechi

Shevatim Family Tree

Props:

- *Choice of a family album made of construction paper OR a picture frame. Both should be decorated and have Hebrew names on them under their corresponding slits. (see the activity for explanation.)
- *12 popsicle sticks, with a paper head pasted on each one. On the front write the names of the Avot, Imahot, and/or Shevatim in Hebrew, and on the back in English. (this is good for both reading practice and simply learning the names of the shevatim.)

Activity: Place the empty album on the floor, and tell a generalized summary story of all of sefer Breishit (starting from Lech-Lecha.) As you mention each character, reveal that character's popsicle stick. Whoever can read the name on the stick must decide where on the family tree it belongs and places it in its proper slit. (Obviously this can be made harder if the names are not also written on the tree itself.) You can also challenge them to leave the older ones less pushed in to represent height differences.

Courtesy of Ellen H.

Courtesy of parshaactivities.com