



Shearith Israel
SPANISH &
PORTUGUESE
Synagogue of Montreal
Est. 1768

SHABBAT BULLETIN

December 31, 2022 | 7 Tevet, 5783



Parashat Vayigash

Halakhic Guidance for New Realities:
Thoughts on Parashat Vayigash

By: Rabbi Marc D. Angel

When Jacob and family set out for the land of Egypt to re-unite with Joseph, the Torah informs us that Jacob sent Judah ahead "to show the way before him unto Goshen" (Bereishith 46:28). The Midrash offers an interpretation: Judah was sent ahead in order to establish a center for Torah study and "hora-ah"--a place for giving definitive halakhic rulings to guide the family in their new setting. This anachronistic interpretation (the Torah wasn't given to the Israelites until hundreds of years later!) reflects an interesting rabbinic insight.

I believe that this Midrash is indicating the vital importance of proper spiritual leadership--especially in new circumstances. Jacob had been able to provide religious leadership while the family lived in Canaan. But now that the family was moving away to settle in Egypt, Jacob was concerned about the spiritual health of his family in the new environment. He was already an old man; he may not have been confident of his ability to adapt to the new

circumstances and meet the needs of the younger generations. So he sent Judah to establish a base for Torah study and "hora-ah"--instruction in practical religious living. Jacob understood that a new situation demanded new insights, new interpretations, new applications of old principles. He sent Judah ahead to set the spiritual framework for the Israelites.

"Hora-ah"--halakhic decision-making by our teachers--is an essential ingredient in religious life. The public needs to have clear answers and definitive guidance on matters affecting their religious observance. But the public also needs to have halakhic decision-makers who are not only versed in sacred texts, but who are fully aware of new realities and new circumstances.

Rabbi Haim David Halevy, late Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, indicated that various rabbinic texts needed to be re-evaluated in light of the newly established State of Israel. He argued that it was halakhically unsound to point to texts written during the many centuries of Jewish exile, and to apply those texts uncritically to problems facing a sovereign Jewish State. For rabbis to offer proper guidance to the Jewish State, they first need to recognize that they are living in a new situation, a new era; that the Jewish State has new responsibilities and challeng-

es not explicitly discussed in the rabbinic literature that developed while Jews lacked their own State. Rabbis cannot make proper halakhic decisions relating to the State of Israel, unless they first understand the nature of governmental responsibility for society--economics, military matters, diplomacy, international relations, democratic principles etc.

A "ruling" was recently issued by over 40 rabbis in Israel that it is halakhically forbidden for Jews in Israel to sell homes or land to non-Jews. These rabbis cited texts from Maimonides and the Shulhan Arukh. This "ruling" is an example of narrow halakhic interpretation that ignores the new realities of maintaining Israel as a democratic State. The rabbis--in their concern for strengthening the Jewish population in Israel (especially in the North)--ignore the democratic principles upon which Israel was founded; foster discriminatory policies against non-Jewish Israeli citizens; shame Israel in the eyes of the democratic world; justify anti-Jewish policies in territories and countries under non-Jewish control. These rabbis demonstrate a pre-modern mindset that does not factor in the real needs and responsibilities of a sovereign democratic Jewish State.

Fortunately, many--including the Prime Minister of Israel--have raised

their voices in strong criticism of the statement by this group of rabbis. Rabbi Yuval Cherlow, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshivat Hesder in Petah Tikvah, has argued that it is halakhically permitted to sell homes and land in Israel to non-Jews, and that this indeed is demanded by the democratic principles of Israel. If the rabbis are concerned about increasing the Jewish population in various areas of Israel, they should encourage Jews to move in--not forbid non-Jews from buying homes.

Our forefather Jacob understood that new times and new circumstances created new challenges for "showing the way" of Torah and halakha. We can't operate as though nothing has changed in the past hundred years. We can't provide meaningful and valid guidance if we are not fully aware of the broader implications and ramifications of our decisions. Narrow learning and narrow perspective lead to a stunted view of Torah and halakha--and ultimately undermine the credibility of those who claim to be halakhic decision-makers.

Let us remind ourselves of the fundamental Jewish teaching about Torah: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her pathways are peace."

Shabbat shalom!
Reverend Hazan Danny Benlolo

OPINION

Chevra Shaas

Words From
Rabbi Menahem White
VA-YIGGASH 5783

Dear mitpallelim: A thought on *tefillah*:

Many years ago, when I was in high school, we studied the Book of Mishlei (Proverbs.) Among the many verses that we had to learn by heart was *lekh 'el nemalah 'atsel, re'eh drekheha va-hakham*, "go to the ant, you lazy guy, see its ways, and become wise." (6:6)

I never fully understood that verse, until one day, many years later, as I was waiting with my son for the #4a bus in Jerusalem, and was watching with fascination how hundreds of ants were working in unison, carrying loads: bigger than

their bodies, apparently on their way to build their home.

Indeed, our sources tell us of qualities we can learn from animals, such as modesty from cats, *'arayot* from doves, etc.

The mishnah, at the beginning of Tractate Bava Qamma, uses a strange Hebrew noun, *"mav'eh."* The Talmud explains that it refers to a human being, for it comes from a word that means to request, or even to pray. The famous Israeli "spiritual mashgiach," Rav Shlomo Wolpe, in his classic *mussar* work *'alei shur*, points out that prayer is the one activity that distinguishes a human from an animal. Animals can fight among themselves, animals can play, animals can build houses, animals can live organized social lives, etc., etc. But only a human being can, so to speak, talk to HaShem face to face, using the

word *'attah*, "you."

Let us all take advantage of our unique place in creation, and try to increase our concentration in *tefillah*.

And may we all have a healthy and happy secular New year.

Yahrtzeits this week:

Shabbat 7 Tevet, Helen Scharf for husband Israel;
also on shabbat: Anna Kaufer for father Leslie;
Friday 13 Tevet: Michael Rubin for grandmother Lillian;
also next Friday: Leonard Mintz for grandfather Rev. Solomon Gershuni.
May the neshamot have aliya.

Shabbat shalom



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.
-Anne Frank | Aish HaTorah



S.&P. Shabbat Kiddush is Sponsored by:
Carolyn Elbaz & Shabbat Hatan, Shimon Bevilacqua, in honour of their upcoming wedding.
Barbara & Sasson Shahmoon, in memory of his mother, **Lydia Aziza Haim Shahmoon z'l.**

S.&P. Seudah Shlishit is Sponsored by:
Arlene & Henri Abitan, in memory of his mother, **Flora Benarroch Abitan z'l** and her mother, **Simone Madar z'l.**

C.S. Shabbos Kiddush is Sponsored by:
The Congregation

Mazal Tov To



Jennifer & Alan Serour, on the Bar Mitzvah of their son, **Benjamin**, brother of **Sophie & Gabriel.**



Carolyn Elbaz & Shabbat Hatan, Shimon Bevilacqua, in honour of their wedding.

Our Condolences To



Angele Shahrabani & Family, on the loss of her two sisters, **Tova Eshayek bat Moshe ve Haviva Wakil z'l** and **Tifaha Ruth Shmueli bat Moshe ve Haviva Wakil z'l.**

INSIGHTS

Jewish Wisdom HALAKHA

DO JEWS CELEBRATE NEW YEAR'S EVE? IT'S COMPLICATED, NEW SURVEY FINDS.
Edited from: Haaretz | Israel News

Only 2% of Israeli Jews say they conduct any form of soul-searching or resolution-making on December 31, but about a third of young adults will be out celebrating.

While some Jewish Israelis still party it up on December 31, they mentally compartmentalize their “meaningful” New Year (the Jewish one) from the “fun” one in winter, according to a new survey compiled by the Jewish People Policy Institute.

The JPPI poll found that a large majority of Israeli Jews view Rosh Hashanah as their “real” New Year, with only 2 percent saying they conduct any form of soul-searching or resolution-making on December 31. Only 6 percent polled believe that the latter date should be viewed as the actual end of their year and January 1 the beginning of the New Year.

Still, even without any deep meaning attached to the New Year in the Gregorian calendar, many Israelis are happy for any excuse to party. JPPI found that 20 percent of Israeli Jews celebrate the New Year, with that number climbing to 34 percent among those without children.

In Tel Aviv, most restaurants are packed on the last night of the calendar year, with many featuring special menus despite the fact that January 1 doesn't mean a day off from work. And champagne toast functions in private homes aren't uncommon, either.

Unsurprisingly, the biggest factor

determining whether one pops a champagne cork at midnight is the level of religious observance. Over a quarter of Israeli Jews who consider themselves secular or traditional, but not religious, say they celebrate New Year's Eve, according to the survey. Among the traditional Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox crowd, that number drops below 5 percent.

The most extravagant celebrations at this time of year in the Holy Land are held by the thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union celebrating Novy God. This secular Russian New Year's Eve celebration comes complete with decorated fir tree – which looks like a Christmas tree to the untrained eye – and the Santa Claus-like figure of Grandfather Frost.

Though decorated fir trees have become far more common in the Jewish state as a result, the survey reported that 38 percent of Israeli Jews have no idea what *Novy God* is (and that number shoots up to 75 percent among the ultra-Orthodox community).

However, 8 percent of Israeli Jews say they mark Novy God, either because they are immigrants themselves or are celebrating with Russian-speaking friends.

The survey did not include Israeli Arabs, roughly 9 percent of whom are Christians. The data was drawn from a survey conducted of 3000 Israeli Jews with a margin of error of 1.8 percent.

Congregation Maghen Abraham
Thoughts: Mayer Sasson

PERASHA VAYIGASH

The right order

"Then Yehuda came near unto him and said, O my Lord..." (44, 18)

He came near to pray (Breshit Rabba)

The Grand Rabbi, Rabbi Yechiel of Galina, the son-in-law of the Divrei Chaim of Sanz said:

This verse alludes to that which is said in the Gemara (Brachot): "A person should first arrange his praises to G-d and thereafter pray".

This is the explanation of the verse: "When a person comes near to pray, first he should be like the name "Yehuda" implies – thank and praise G-d - and only afterwards should he make his requests, "O my Lord".

SHABBAT SHALOM!!



PARNASS HAYOM BEIT HAMIDRASH HELWANI

SHABBAT 7 TEVET - DECEMBER 31
David & Dody Hasson, à la mémoire de Selim Halabi ben Esther ז"ל

MONDAY/LUNDI 9 TEVET - JANUARY 2
Carole & Elie Cohen, in memory of his sister, Melia Haya bat Olga ז"ל

Albert & Gabriel Benizri and Dody & David Hasson, à la mémoire de leur père, Elie Benizri ז"ל

TUESDAY/MARDI 10 TEVET - JANUARY 3
Famille Selim Sasson, à la mémoire de son oncle, Isaac Sasson ז"ל

WEDNESDAY/MERCREDI 11 TEVET - JAN. 4
Famille Abitan, à la mémoire de Flora Zari Abitan ז"ל

THURSDAY/JEUDI 12 TEVET - JANUARY 5
Sylvia Shahin, in memory of her mother, Salima Akairib ז"ל

Iris & Jacob Haimovici, in honour of their son, Leon David Nachman Lieb.

FRIDAY/VENDREDI 6 TEVET - DEC. 30
Henri & Arlene Abitan, à la mémoire de de sa mère, Simone Madar ז"ל

TORAH CLASS
Join **ANDRE ROTCHEL** every Shabbat after services
Beit Hamidrash Refreshments

Notice / Avis
The S&P office will be closed on Monday, January 2 for legal holiday.

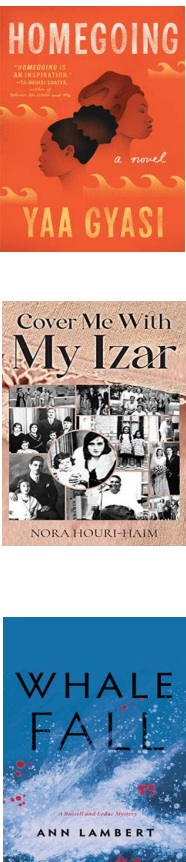
Upcoming Events



TUESDAY, JANUARY 17 | 7:30P - 9:00P
The Education Committee Presents: MUSTICISM OF ANDALUSIA (SESSION 3) KONEH OLAMO: THE PATH TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS IN RABBINIC LITERATURE - with RABBI YAMIN LEVY
We are thrilled to welcome, once again, Rabbi Levy, who will lead us into a series on Sephardic mysticism, with a combination of practice and theory.
Registration required: www.thespanish.org

SHABBAT, JANUARY 28 | 10:00A - 1:00P
SPY KIDS SHABBAT TAKEOVER
Join us for a fun song filled, children led service. Followed by a kid friendly kiddush.
Please contact Julia Peress julia@thespanish.org if your child would like to participate in the service.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12 | 10:30A - 12:00P
SISTERHOOD BOOK REVIEW: The Lincoln Highway by: Amor Towles - Reviewer: Yvonne Saleh Battat Hall
\$5 FOR SISTERHOOD MEMBER & \$8 FOR NON-MEMBERS



SUNDAY, MARCH 12 | 10:30A - 12:00P
SISTERHOOD BOOK REVIEW: Homegoing by: Yaa Gyasi - Reviewer: to be advised - Battat Hall
\$5 FOR SISTERHOOD MEMBER & \$8 FOR NON-MEMBERS

TUESDAY, APRIL 4 | 10:30A - 12:00P
SISTERHOOD BOOK REVIEW: Cover Me With My Izar by: Nora Houri-Haim - Reviewer: Joe Menashe Battat Hall
\$5 FOR SISTERHOOD MEMBER & \$8 FOR NON-MEMBERS

TUESDAY, MAY 2 | 10:30A - 12:00P
SISTERHOOD BOOK REVIEW: Whale Fall by Ann Lambert - Reviewer: Taff Chitayat Battat Hall
\$5 FOR SISTERHOOD MEMBER & \$8 FOR NON-MEMBERS