

DVAR TORAH PARSHAT VAYECHI

By: Lloyd Epstein TMZ Kollel Fellow Bezalel Racz

In this week's Parsha we have one of the most famous quotes from Jacob. When he blesses the sons of Joseph, he says:

"The Messenger who has redeemed me from all harm — Bless the lads. In them may my name be recalled, And the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, And may they be teeming multitudes upon the earth."

הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגָּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל-רָע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת-הַנְּעָרִים וְיִקְרָא בְהֵם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם
אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק וְיִדְגְּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ:
(Bereisheet 28:16)

This blessing of Jacob's has become what Jews have repeated for generations, not just with many melodies, but also in Halachic terms. According to Halacha, it is the blessing we say when we pray just before we go to sleep every night.

Another kind of importance that we attach to this blessing is that it is the blessing of the children. For many generations Jews have been blessing their children with this blessing on Simchat Torah and numerous other occasions.

However, if we examine this passage in the Torah more closely, we will find something strange. In the beginning of Jacob's blessing he says: "The Messenger who has redeemed me from all harm — Bless the lads" Jacob blesses the sons of Joseph, Menashe and Ephraim, to have the same Messenger or angel, who saved him "from all harm," to save Menashe and Ephraim, too.

But wait a minute! Jacob's life was full of harm and tragedy, from his fear of Esau to the treachery of Laban, the kidnapping of Dinah, and the sale of Joseph. So, why does Jacob bless Menashe and Ephraim that the Messenger who saved him from all harm will save them? Another question is: why for generations has this blessing been so important for Jews that we pray with it every night and bless our children with it?

To answer these questions, we must look at story of Honi Ha Ham'agel (חוני המעגל) in the Mishnah (*Taanit* 3:8). Honi was praying for rain after a year of famine. Honi prayed for a miracle to happen. G-d answered Honi's prayers, and it started to rain. But a less well-known part of this story is that the head of Sanhedrin at that time, Shimon ben Shetach (שמועון בן שטח), didn't like Honi's solution, to pray for a miracle. Shimon sent a letter to Honi, saying that Honi would have been excommunicated if G-d hadn't answered him. Why did Shimon Ben Shetach write that to Honi? Shimon Ben Shetach wrote that to make the point that it is forbidden for us to rely on miracles. In other words, sometimes we cannot avoid evil or harm.

Now we have a problem. If we accept the idea that some harm or

evil in our lives is inevitable, and we accept Shimon Ben Shetach's criticism of Honi Ham'agel. Does that mean that we should not pray? Does that mean that we should not pray for a better time and a better future? Does it mean that we should accept evil?

To answer, we must go back to our Parsha and look at Jacob's blessing of Menashe and Ephraim and consider the essence of Jacob's life and character. We know that Jacob had a hard life, full of problems and difficulties. In his greatest tragedy, the apparent loss of his most beloved son, Joseph, he is not even willing to be comforted:

"All his sons and daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted."

וַיִּקְרָאוּ כָל-בָּנָיו וְכָל-בָּנוֹתָיו לִנְחָמוֹ וַיִּמָּאֵן לְהִתְנַחֵם

Jacob understood that his son died, and he will never see him again. Nevertheless, he is not accepting the idea of evil has won. He revolted against the idea of evil prevailing in the end.

This is the idea that Yaakov wanted to give to the Next Generation. He wanted them to have the faith in the good, a better life, and a greater future. At the same time, he wanted them to understand that sometimes we can't be saved from all evil or harm, and we will have to deal with it.

This leads us to the explanation of Jacob's blessing. Even if they meet evil or harm and get hurt, they will never give up on the good. In other words, the "Messenger who has redeemed me from all harm" is the belief in a good and better life, even in a time of darkness. This is why this blessing has been so important to the Jewish People ever since the days of Jacob, because the Jewish People will never give up on a better future and on good.

May G-d bless us with the strength to face any evil or harm that may come our way in life, and may He bless us with the ability always to hope and work for a better future.

Shabbat Shalom

Dvar Torah writing is open to all LSS members, their children, and LSS clergy. Guidelines will be provided on request. For more info, see Bill Greenbaum in shul, email him at dvar@lss.org, or call the shul office.

The next Shabbatot available: Tetzaveh, 2/23-24; Ki Tissa, 3/1-2.

Enjoy reading the weekly Dvar Torah

-in print, in the Shelly Danishefsky Foyer, or

-on lss.org under the Echod tab, or

-in the Electronic Echod (available to print at home).

In case of a bereavement, please call our Clergy at 646-543-7485

If you would like to receive the Shabbat Echod by e-mail, sign up at www.lss.org email

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Lincoln Square Synagogue • 180 Amsterdam Ave. at W. 68th Street New York, NY 10023 • 212-874-6100 • www.lss.org

Please note that the deadline to submit content for the Echod, excluding sponsorships, is Wednesday at 3:00pm.

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Friday night:

4:19pm Candle Lighting

4:25pm Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat

Location: Nathaniel Richman Cohen Sanctuary.

Mashiv HaRuach Kiddush and Shiur

Following Maariv, join us for a shiur given by Rabbi Gottesman in the Nathaniel Richman Cohen Sanctuary, followed by a hot kugel kiddush in the Shele Danishefsky Covlin Foyer.

4:36pm: Sunset

5:07pm: Repeat Shema

Shabbat:

7:45am Hashkama Minyan; Location: Belfer Beit Midrash.

Hashkama Kiddush to follow; Shiur by Dr. Moshe Sokolow on the third floor.

9:00am Chazzan Sherwood Goffin Memorial Minyan;

Drasha before Musaf by Rabbi Gottesman.

Location: Nathaniel Richman Cohen Sanctuary.

Main Kiddush to follow in the Ballroom.

9:30am Beginners Service led by Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald;

Location: 3rd Floor. Beginners Kiddush to follow.

9:38am Latest Shema

9:45am Rabbi Herschel Cohen Memorial Minyan;

Drasha before Musaf by Rabbi Tepler;

Location: Belfer Beit Midrash.

10:00am Youth Groups; Supervised play. Location: Second floor classrooms for ages 3+ and Room LL2 for ages 0-2.

2:30pm Beginners Mishna Chavura with Moshe Sheinwexler;

Location: Belfer Beit Midrash.

3:20pm Louis and Rhoda Lazar Memorial Shiur by Rabbi Tepler in the Nathaniel Richman Cohen Sanctuary.

4:05pm Mincha; Location: Nathaniel Richman Cohen Sanctuary.

Followed by Seudah Shlishit featuring a shiur by Lloyd Epstein TMZ Kollel Fellow Bezalel Racz.

4:37pm: Sunset: Latest time to daven Mincha.

5:20pm Ma'ariv/Shabbat Ends.

*Please note that the Hebrew Only Shiur with Bezalel Racz is canceled this week.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Hashkama:

Sponsored by generous contributions to the fund.

Main Kiddush:

Halana & Alan Greenberg sponsor this week's Main Kiddush in commemoration of the yahrtzeits of Alan's father, Harold Greenberg z"l and Halana's father, Eli Jack Mizrahi z"l.

Beginners:

Natalie Lardner in celebration of the wedding of her daughter, Emma (Emet Shalom), to Robert Winn.

Seudah Shlishit:

The Nussbaum and Verschleisser Families in commemoration of the yahrtzeit of Jamie's Father, Asher ben Eliezer, Mr. Allen Nussbaum, z"l. Please join us for a siyum in his memory.

WEEKDAY MINYAN

Shacharit:

Sunday, December 31st @ 7:10am & 8:30am

Monday, January 1st @ 7:00am & 8:30am

Tuesday & Wednesday, January 2nd & 3rd @ 7:10am & 7:50am

Thursday, January 4th @ 7:00am & 7:50am

Friday, January 5th @ 7:10am & 7:50am

Mincha/Maariv:

Sunday, December 31st @ 4:25pm

Monday - Thursday, January 1st - 4th @ 4:30pm

MAZAL TOV

Janet Horwitz, who is being honored at the Yeshiva Ketana of Manhattan's annual dinner on January 7th. For more information visit www.ykomdinner.net/.



HAKARAT HATOV

Lloyd Epstein TMZ Kollel Fellow **Bezalel Racz** for writing this week's Dvar Torah.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Meryl and Joseph Mark

END OF YEAR GIVING

Tax-Wise Strategies to Easily Maximize Your End-Year Gifts:

Donations coming from IRA accounts designated as RMDs (Required Minimum Distributions) Donating stocks, bonds, or mutual funds is easy and financially savvy. When you contribute appreciated securities, you not only support LSS but may also enjoy potential tax benefits. Visit www.lss.org/securities for guidance on how to advise your broker. Your smart giving makes a significant difference! Closing out past membership dues and charges, Gifts of Cash, Gifts of Appreciated Securities, IRA Charitable Rollover, A tax free gift from your IRA, Gifts in Your Will or Revocable Trust, Gifts of Retirement Assets, Gifts of Real Estate, Gifts of Life Insurance, Long term appreciated securities. If you have any questions please email finance@lss.org or call 212-874-6100 ext 106. To pay your balance online please visit www.lss.org/payment *Reminder: you must be logged in.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Shabbat, January 6th: Beginners Luncheon: The cost is now \$35 per person. Registration will close Wednesday, January 3rd at 12:00pm. Register online at www.lss.org/beginners

Sunday, January 7th: LSS Films & Culture Committee Presents Prayer for the French Republic at the Manhattan Theater Club: 2:00pm SOLD OUT. Stay tuned for more film and culture events.

WEEKLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, December 31st

- **9:15am Kosher Made Clear - Hilchot Kashrut Tzurba Style:** Led by Rabbi Gottesman this week. Location: Belfer Beit Midrash


Monday, January 1st

- **9:30am: Morning Off? Morning On! Legal Holidays with the Assistant Rabbis: "Average Joe and the Power of Torah – All About the Great Rav Yosef"** with Rabbi Gottesman
- ***CANCELED* 7:00pm: Chug Ivrit Chadashot (News from Israel) with Gali Rabin.**

Tuesday, January 2nd

- ***CANCELED* 11:00am-12:00pm: The Marilyn & Sam Isler, "Studies in the Weekly Parsha"**
- **6:30pm: United Hearts for Israel:** If you have been affected by the crisis in Israel, The Jewish Board invites you to their community of healing. Register at www.tinyurl.com/UnitedHeartsIL
- **8:15pm: The M'lachim (Kings) Study Group led by Ron Platzer:** If you are interested in joining, please contact Ronald Platzer at RPlatzer@citytech.cuny.edu.

Wednesday, January 3rd

- **6:30pm: United Hearts for Israel:** If you have been affected by the crisis in Israel, The Jewish Board invites you to their community of healing. Register at www.tinyurl.com/UnitedHeartsIL2
- **7:00pm: Kabbalah and Its Influence on the Birth of Chassidut** with Lloyd Epstein TMZ Kollel Fellow Bezalel Racz.  Location: Belfer Beit Midrash.

Thursday, January 4th

- ***CANCELED* 11:00am-12:00pm: Gemara Makot Class**
- **11:00am-12:00pm: Women's Talk Time: led by School Psychologist Ruth Moser Riemer.** Meeting ID: 972 4054 8238 Passcode: 142533
- ***CANCELED* 7:00pm: Jacob Adler Parsha Class: Explorations in the Weekly Parsha**

Daf Yomi: Sunday at 7:30am, Monday and Thursday at 6:10am, and Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday at 6:20am: Location: Belfer Beit Midrash and Virtual. Details on www.lss.org/LearningOpportunities

SHABBAT GREETERS

Donate your time as a greeter at our shul! Be part of the welcoming team on Shabbat, embodying the true spirit of LSS. Two morning shifts available (9:00-10:00am and 10:00-11:00am) with one greeter per shift. Enjoy meeting new people, putting names to faces, and making everyone feel welcome. Register at www.lss.org/form/greeter. For questions or assistance, email president@lss.org.

WE STAND WITH ISRAEL

Hafrashat Challah for the Hostages: Participate in the meaningful tradition of Hafrashat Challah as a symbol of solidarity for the hostages in Gaza. Let's unite women from every corner in a shared act of connection and support. The goal is to gather 40 women for each hostage. Commit to this cause by pledging your name at www.tinyurl.com/c4Israel

Boots for Israel: Boots for Israel began with a call from Israeli General Daniel Jacobs, seeking tactical boots for his unit. Facing a shortage of suitable footwear for reservists, our Executive Director's shul, Young Israel of Holliswood, mobilized to help. Through a stroke of luck, a local shoe wholesaler had the exact boots in stock, enabling them to send the boots to Israel at reduced rates. Now, with growing requests, they need your support to continue providing Boots for Israel. Donate today to help them sustain this critical mission. Donate at www.yiholliswood.org/payment.php

Contact Your Elected Officials: We have an essential role to play to help protect Israel. Urge members of Congress to continue speaking out and standing with Israel as it acts to defeat the terrorist threat. The message can be simple: "The Jewish community thanks you for your support. I thank you for your support. Please continue to do so publicly and proudly. It is imperative that Israel destroy any remnant of Hamas so that the people of Israel and the people of Gaza can live free of tyranny and in prosperity and harmony". Please urge your elected officials to stand with Israel! Reach out at www.takeaction.aipac.org/Wyv8pgS

YOUTH & MAGEN AVRAHAM TEEN DEPARTMENTS

Youth Groups: 10:00am: Location: Second Floor Classrooms. Supervised play.

Babies & Me (Newborn-2yrs): Shabbat, 10:00-11:30am in LL203: Enjoy parent-baby bonding (unsupervised), followed by a lively 30-minute program led by Devorah Batt at 11:00am. A dedicated nursing area is available in LL203.

Upcoming Events:

Sunday, December 31st: A Trip to the MET: 10:00am-11:30am: This tour is led by docent, Elana Kaplan. Children will tour the Egyptian section of the museum and compare the artifacts to the artifacts discussed in the Torah. Register at www.tinyurl.com/TripMET

Tamim Academy NYC Winter Tours: Wednesday, January 3rd, Tuesday, January 9th, Thursday, January 18th: 8:45am-9:45am: RSVP at admissions@tamimnyc.org. Currently accepting applications for the 2024/25 academic year for grades K-2. Visit www.tamimnyc.org for more information.


Friday Night, January 5th: 4:30pm: Teen Minyan: Join your peers for meaningful tefillah and a yummy Kiddush! Location: Belfer Beit Midrash

Motzei Shabbat, January 6th: Winter Wonderland Party: 6:00pm—7:30pm: Come in pajamas, sip on hot cocoa while you watch a movie with friends! Pizza will be served.

Sunday, January 7th: Babies & Me: 9:45am –11:15am: Details to follow.

Friday Night, January 12th: Friday Night Oneg @ Wildes: 8:00pm: Play games, talk, and enjoy snacks with Lincoln Square teen at Teen Director Alexander Wildes' apartment! Email youth@lss.org for the address.

Motzei Shabbat, January 27th: 16 Handles and Chill: 7:00pm: Meet at 16 handles (between 75th and 76th) and enjoy some Fro-Yo with friends!

Sunday, March 17th: Purim Carnival: 12:30pm - 3:15pm  For more information email youth@lss.org.