

for all later Jewish exiles and for Diaspora Jewry in all times and places. Apparently only tragedy moves the Jewish people and throughout our history tragedies abound. Let us hope that somehow history does not repeat itself in our time as well. *Rabbi Berel Wein and torah.org.*

Haftarah Summary Rabbi Aron Tendler

The Talmud in Bava Matzia 87a tells us that Yakov Avinu [our father] was the first person to “get weak” prior to dying. In fact, he asked Hashem for this “gift” so that he would have the time to put his affairs in order. This week’s Haftarah is from Kings I Chap. 2 which relates Dovid Hamelech’s final instructions to Shlomo prior to his death. Just as Yakov arranged his final affairs with his children, so too Dovid finalized his personal affairs with his son.

Dovid’s unfinished business dealt with situations of personal loyalty and treachery. In order for the succession of the throne to be secure and peaceful, Dovid identifies two key individuals who had betrayed him during his 40 years as King - King David’s General, Yoav ben Tzeruah, and Shlomo’s own Rebi, the great scholar Shimi ben Gera. In addition, he set apart the family of Barzillai the Gileadite for special royal consideration and reward.

Dovid Hamelech was not interested in revenge. Dovid, the father of Mashiach, was not consumed with anger. Dovid, the sensitive poet and magnificent

Minyan Schedule

Erev Shabbat Parashat Vayechi
Kabbalat Shabbat 6.30 pm
Candle lighting 25/12/15 7.49 pm

Shabbat Parashat Vayechi
Shacharit 26/12/15 9.15 am
Children’s Service 10.00 am
Mincha (Mizrachi) 7.41 pm
Shabbat ends 8.51 pm

Erev Shabbat Parashat Shemot
Kabbalat Shabbat 6.30 pm
Candle lighting 1/01/16 7.51 pm

Announcements

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singer, was interested in justice and the future well being of his nation. It was essential that he teach the young Shlomo the meaning of strong leadership and how to care for a problem, before it becomes a crisis.

Undoubtedly, it would have been easy for Dovid Hamelech to forgive those who had betrayed him, especially at the very end of his life; but that isn’t the quality of leadership, which brings eventual redemption, and the building of the Bais Hamikdash. As the King, Dovid and Shlomo had to be devoted to Hashem’s Torah, social justice, and the eternity of the nation. *R. Aron Tendler and torah.org.*

Or Chadash

קהילת אור חדש

WEEKLY BULLETIN

Shabbat Parashat Vayechi
14 Tevet 5776; 26 December, 2015
Shabbat Torah reading: Stone Chumash
page 268 and Haftarah page 1146.

President Jonathan Erlich
Rabbi-in-residence Rabbi Franklin
Dvrei Torah

Lions, Not Laggards

Rabbi Marc D. Angel

This week’s Torah portion includes Jacob’s last words to his sons. He described his fourth son, Judah, as a lion, and stated that the scepter of kingship would never depart from Judah (and his descendants). All the brothers (and their tribes) would turn to Judah for leadership. What did Judah do to deserve this singular role?

The answer may be suggested in the story of Joseph’s threat to keep Benjamin in Egypt as his servant. The brothers, believing that Joseph was a ruler of Egypt, were in a terrible quandary. They knew that their father Jacob would be devastated by the loss of Benjamin. They knew that they

had to find a way to confront Joseph and make him change his mind.

Reuben was first born. He had a strong, impetuous personality. Why didn’t he come forward? Apparently his bravura abandoned him at this moment of crisis. Simeon and Levi were prone to violent action. They wiped out the men of Shechem. Why didn’t they challenge Joseph? Apparently, their courage melted when facing a regal opponent. Issachar, according to rabbinic tradition, was the family’s great Torah scholar. He devoted his days to study and spiritual contemplation. Why didn’t this man of G-d stand up to Joseph? Apparently, his holiness and scholarship did not lead to making him fit for courageous action. Zebulun, according to rabbinic tradition, was an



expert businessman. With all his financial acumen, why didn't he try to make a deal of some sort with Joseph? Apparently, his business skills failed him at this desperate moment.

Indeed, all of the brothers failed to muster the courage and quick-wittedness to stand up to Joseph and fight for their brother Benjamin, for their father Jacob, and for the honor of their family. All except Judah. Judah's life before this crisis had not been one of uniform courage or brilliance. The Torah makes careful note of his various failings. Yet, Judah's personality undergoes a gradual development. He is able to admit error. He is able to stand up against his brothers in their plan to murder Joseph. And at the critical moment, when Benjamin's life is at stake, only Judah comes forward to challenge Joseph and to risk his own life in the process.

Judah argues with eloquence. He is poised and articulate. He tells Joseph that he will stay in Egypt as a servant instead of Benjamin, but that Benjamin must be returned to his father. Judah is so persuasive and so sensitive to the feelings of his father, that Joseph can no longer hold back tears. Joseph cries. He tells his brothers who he really is. The brothers reconcile. All

because of Judah's courage. Judah is a lion. He has the presence of mind and the strength of character that all the other brothers lacked. In that one moment, Judah proved himself worthy of kingship.

All of us face crises in life. All of us confront problems. Many, like Judah's brothers, find themselves unable to take responsibility, to make necessary sacrifices, to act with courage. Many, like Judah's brothers, have various talents--and yet they allow themselves to be silenced in the face of challenge. We need to learn from Judah's example. We need to understand that leadership requires clarity of thought, unshakeable commitment to what's right, and a lion's courage to take action. If kingship was assigned to Judah, the Torah calls on all of us to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." We must be lions, not laggards. *Rabbi Marc D. Angel and the Institute of Jewish Ideas and Ideals.*

What Moves Us Rabbi Berel Wein

The conclusion of the book of Bereshith reaches its climax this week with the recording for us of the death of our father Yaakov and of Yosef. The era of the founders

of our people ended in relative tranquility and contentment, albeit on foreign soil. It will be a long and arduous journey for the descendants of Yaakov to return home to the Land of Israel.

A dark and forbidding era is about to begin but, though still in the future, it was foretold already many years earlier to our father Avraham. From the simple meaning of the words of the Torah, it is apparent that the family of Yaakov found themselves comfortable and well settled in their home in Goshen.

The promise of Yosef that the Lord would take them forth from Egypt was certainly remembered and passed on from one generation to the next. Nevertheless there was no sense of immediacy regarding this promise and its fulfillment, and the Jews would view Egypt as their home rather than the Land of Israel for a long time. They hastened to return home after burying Yaakov in the Cave of Machpela, seeing Egypt as their home and the Land of Israel as a far distant goal and dream that would somehow eventually be realized but that had no immediate bearing on their day-to-day living.

This attitude remained constant throughout the long history of the Jewish people and of its various exiles, in Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, Europe and today the entire world, outposts that have hosted and still host the Jewish people in our far-flung diaspora. The Jewish people were never in a hurry to leave any of these places and to return to the Land of Israel. This still seems to be the case in our time as well.

It is difficult to understand why

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the holy family of Yaakov seems so passive and unresponsive in relation to the Land of Israel. There are commentators who state that they were aware of the heavenly decree that they would have to be strangers in a strange land for many centuries and that they accepted their lot and decided to make the best of it under the circumstances.

However, as Maimonides points out regarding the Egyptian enslavement of the Jewish people, Egypt was not preordained to be the oppressor and enslaver of Israel. And, it was also apparently not preordained that those early generations of Jews living in Egypt were to fulfill the vision of Avraham to be strangers and slaves in a land that did not belong to them. Apparently according to Maimonides the Egyptians had a choice as to whether to enslave the Jews, and the Jews before their enslavement occurred had an equal choice of leaving Egypt and returning to their ancestral home in the Land of Israel.

However we will deal with this baffling issue, there is no question that this represents a template

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