

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayigash

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Dr. Allan Kaplan & Cheryl Reicin and family in honour of the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Phillip Kaplan, Rav Pesach ben Chana z"l

Don't Count the Days, Make the Days Count

Rabbi Yehuda Mann

In this week's parshah, Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers, and sees his father Yaakov once again. When Yaakov arrives in Egypt, he meets Pharaoh, and Pharaoh asks him a peculiar question: "How many are the years of your life?" Yaakov's answer is even more peculiar. Instead of just answering, "I am one hundred and thirty years old," Yaakov elaborates at great length, "My years on earth are one hundred and thirty. Few and hard have been the years of my life, nor do they come up to the years of my fathers, during their years on earth." (Bereishit 47:8-9)

Why is Pharaoh so interested in knowing the age of Yaakov, and why does Yaakov give such a long and redundant answer?

Rabbi Ephraim Luntschitz (*Kli Yakar*) explains that Pharaoh was informed that once Yaakov came to Egypt, the hunger had stopped, and the Nile's waters had miraculously come up to the feet of Yaakov. Pharaoh was happy about this, expecting the Nile to water the fields of Egypt. However, when he met Yaakov, he saw that he was extremely old and weak; Pharaoh was concerned that the famine might return with Yaakov's death. He asked Yaakov's age in order to estimate how long he had to live, and therefore how long the famine would be avoided.

Yaakov replied that he only **seemed** old, that he was "only" one hundred and thirty years old, and his fathers had lived longer than that, and so

would he. The reason he looked so old was because he had faced many challenges and difficulties, which had influenced his appearance. Pharaoh shouldn't worry; he would live more than just a few years.

Rabbi Asher Weiss gives another answer. (*Sichot al HaTorah* pg. 95) According to some commentators, Pharaoh was shocked to see such an old person, and was interested to know how old he was. In response, Yaakov replied with a most profound answer.

The Talmud (Berachot 18b) says that the righteous are considered alive even after they pass away, and the wicked are considered to be dead even when they are alive. The Rambam adds that "Life without study is like death for scholars who seek wisdom." (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Murderers 7:1). True life, according to the Talmud and the Rambam, is not merely living our lives for a certain number of years on earth, but using our days for doing good. A similar idea was expressed by a Chasidic master, explaining the words of King David (Psalms 118:17), "I shall not die but live." One should ask: if you won't die, of course you will live! But King David wanted to say that during his life he would not act as if he were dead, but rather he would live every day and fill every day with purpose and meaning.

With this profound message, Yaakov humbly answered Pharaoh's question of "How many are the years of your **life**," telling him that he had been on **earth** for one hundred and thirty years, but

the years of his **life** had been few and hard. Yaakov was saying that he had not filled his life properly, that he had experienced many days that didn't count because he had not made the best of those days by doing good, as opposed to his ancestors who had lived their life fully. "Nor do they come up to the **years** (of life) of my fathers during their years on **earth**"- my forefathers lived their lives fully, and their years on Earth correspond with the days they lived.

However, says Rabbi Weiss, the Torah goes on to teach us that Yaakov indeed had a full life. Parshat Vayechi will begin by telling us, "Yaakov lived seventeen years in the land of Egypt, so that the span of Yaakov's **life** came to one hundred and forty-seven years." (Bereishit 47:28) Every day of Yaakov's live counted, and he lived fully for a hundred and forty-seven years.

May all of us live a full life, as well.

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Summary

In Melachim II 4, Elisha revived the son of a woman from Shunem. He had also warned her about an incoming famine, recommending that she move somewhere else. She had moved to the Land of the Philistines. Seven years later, when she returned, she found that her land had been stolen. The king offered to help her. At the king's request, she told him about Elisha's miracles. (8:1-6)

Elisha came to Damascus. Ben Haddad, King of Aram, was sick, and he sent an officer, Chazael, to ask Elisha if he would survive. Elisha told him that Chazael would live, but Ben Haddad would die, and Chazael would succeed him. Elisha burst into tears, because he prophesied that Chazael as king would severely harm Israel. Chazael returned to Ben Haddad, strangled him, and became king of Aram after him. (8:7-15)

Yehoram son of Yehoshaphat was the king of Judea; he strengthened ties with the northern kingdom of Israel, but at the same time his relationship with G-d deteriorated. (8:16-24)

Achaziah son of Yehoram became the next king of Judea. His mother was

Ataliah, the daughter of Achav and Izevel, and the text states that he was also evil. At the end of the chapter, Achaziah travels to visit Yoram son of Achav, king of Israel, who had been wounded in battle with the Aramaeans. (8:25-29)

Insight

We can learn a great lesson from the tears of Elisha. He gives voice to the personal and the national, his private pain for the suffering of the individual with the duty to declare the great prophecy given to him.

Early in his career, Elisha was quick to become angry and hurt by the mockery of the children in the forest. (Melachim II 2) We also saw Elisha hasten to punish his aide Gechazi for enriching himself at the expense of the honour of Elisha's mission. Elisha distanced him, cursing him harshly. (ibid. 5)

At the same time, we saw Elisha sensitively intercede with G-d for the Shunamite woman to birth a child, and then intercede with G-d again to save the child's life. (ibid. 4-5) And here,

Elisha cannot restrain himself from weeping for the prophecy that Chazael will harm the people of Israel. (ibid. 8:11-12)

Elisha's career is complex, and his interactions are turbulent, but throughout he is authentic. He does not hide his emotions, even as he expresses his horrific prophecy. In this regard he displays that he has learned well the lessons of his mentor, Eliyahu. Eliyahu was quick to express his emotions fully and dramatically, as seen before the nation on Mount Carmel (Melachim I 18), before G-d on Mount Horeb (ibid. 19), and before King Achav. (ibid. 21) The student learned well from the master.

(See also [this \(Hebrew\) article](#) by Chen Artzi Srur, 929 website)

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It Happened in Israel: Is the Chilazon Hidden?**Rabbi Adam Friedmann**

In Parshat *V'zot HaBerachah*, Moshe Rabbeinu gives blessings to each of the tribes. Zevulun is told that they will live on the seashore and recover things hidden in the sands. (Devarim 33:19) Rashi notes that one of the things hidden in the sand is the *chilazon*, a sea creature used to create the biblical dye, *techelet*.

Historically speaking, we know that this coastal region, part of Zevulun's tribal territory, was in fact used for dye production. We also know from other sources (such as Menachot 44a) that at a certain point in history access to the *chilazon* declined, and eventually its identity was lost.

A midrash (Sifrei Devarim 354) which deals with Zevulun's blessing records the following incident:

Rabbi Yosi said: Once I was walking from Keziv to Tzor, near the coast of Israel. Finding an old man and greeting him, I asked him, "From what do you earn a living?" He answered, "From the *chilazon*." I asked him, "Can it still be found today?" He answered, "By Heaven! There is a place between the mountains [where it is found], and spiders bite it and it dies and is crushed in its place." I replied, "By Heaven! It is clear that it has been hidden away for the righteous for the World to Come!" (Translation by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein, with emendations)

This story seems to have occurred sometime during the decline of access to the *chilazon*. Rabbi Yosi declares that the *chilazon* has been lost, while his interlocutor, who is from the previous generation, still makes a living producing dye from the *chilazon*.

Insight

The lesson of this story is unclear and controversial. Some look at the old man's statement as evidence that the *chilazon* was available then and still is today. Others look at Rabbi Yosi's response as indicating that the *chilazon* will only be available in the World to Come, and so it is no longer accessible to us today. Moreover, contemporary halachic authorities debate the halachic influence of this midrash and whether it can even be used for deciding practice today. This is reflected in the following anecdote that happened to this author:

Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, an influential posek, opposes the practice of producing and wearing *techelet* on *tzitzit*. Once, when studying the topic of *techelet*, I sent Rabbi Kanievsky a letter with this question: Many early authorities hold that *chilazon* would be readily available today, if only we could correctly identify it. Therefore, Rabbi Yosi's statement indicating that the *chilazon* is no longer available must be reinterpreted. Rabbi Kanievsky's answer was unequivocal: The *chilazon* is hidden away until the World to Come.

It happened to be that on the very day I received this reply I met Rabbi Hershel Schachter of Yeshiva University, a proponent of wearing *techelet*. I showed him Rabbi Kanievsky's answer and he responded that such midrashic statements should not be used as the basis for halachic conclusions.

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Biography

Rabbi Yosef Kapah

Rabbi Chaim Metzger

Rabbi Yosef Kapah (Qafih) was born in Sana'a, Yemen in 1917, and was orphaned by age five. He was raised by his grandfather Rabbi Yihya Kapah, while also working as a copyist and helping his grandfather in his rabbinic work. Rabbi Yihya advocated strongly for following the Halachic positions of Rabbi Saadia Gaon and the Rambam over those of the Zohar and Kabbalists. Rabbi Yihya passed away when the young Yosef was just 14, but Yosef took over giving his grandfather's lectures in the Beit Midrash, teaching alongside and learning from Rabbi Ratza Tzarum.

At 16, Rabbi Kapah was taken into custody as an orphan, and upon release he married his cousin Berachah in order to avoid forced conversion to Islam. He made aliyah to Israel in 1943, initially to Tel Aviv before learning at Mercaz HaRav and receiving a degree in Dayanut from Machon Harry Fischel. While in Jerusalem he led a Yemenite synagogue *Avi-David*, named after his father. In 1950, Rabbi Kapah was appointed to Tel Aviv's and then Jerusalem's Regional Rabbinical Court. From 1969, he was a member of the Council of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. In 1970, Rabbi Kapah was invited to the Great Rabbinical Court by Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim and Rabbi Shlomo Zevin.

Rabbi Kapah's scholarship includes translations of various works written by Rishonim in Judeo-Arabic into modern Hebrew, such as the writings of Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim*, *Sefer HaMitzvot*, *Peirush HaMishnayot*, Commentary to *Iyov*, and personal letters and responsa), Rabbi Saadia Gaon (*Emunot veDeiot*), Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi (*Kuzari*), Rabbeinu Bahye ibn Paquda (*Chovot haLevavot*), Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi (commentary to Chullin), and a range of responsa by Ritva and Raavad.

Rabbi Kapah was instrumental in preserving and promoting the Halachah and traditions of the Yemenite Jewish community. In *Halichot Teiman* he describes the lives of Yemenite Jewry. His commentary on the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* (24 volumes) includes Yemenite Halachah and their preserved traditions of the Rambam. He also published the *Shivat Zion Tiklal* siddur based on the Rambam and Yemenite tradition.

Rabbi Kapah passed away in 2000.

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Torah and Translation

Educating Youth to Merge Communities

Rabbi Yosef Kapah, Ketavim I pg. 100

Translated by Rabbi Chaim Metzger

אחת ממישימות דורנו זה היא מיזוג הגלויות, היינו: יצירת אורח-חיים אחד, שיתפוס את מקומם של כל המנהגים הרווחים כיום בעדות השונות.

חיץ של מנהגים

בין כל עדה ועדה ניצב, כיום, חיץ גבוה של מנהגים, נוסח תפילה ואורח חיים המנכר ומבדיל בינה לבין זולתה. אנשים שהתעמקו בבעייה ודאי הבחינו, כי מציאות זמנו מעידה על מיזוג הנמצא בתהליך התהוות, מיזוג זה הינו על דרך השלילה, שכן כל עדה לומדת את הקל ביותר שבחברתה ומסגלת לעצמה קולא זו. לשמור על המחיצות הקיימות - לא ייתכן, עלינו, איפוא, להרוס את המחיצות לא על דרך השלילה כי אם על דרך החיוב: בחירת הטוב שאצל הזולת ולא הקל. כיצד נביא לידי כך? זוהי השאלה כיום.

גישה ידידותית

דרושה גישה יותר ידידותית בין העדות, בצורה שתביא לידי כך, שכל עדה ועדה תראה לזולתה את האור שבה, את החיובי והטוב, במטרה ללמוד וללמד - ולעשות. בצורה זו נתווה אנחנו את המיזוג באורח חיובי מבלי שיבוא עלינו כאפתעה לא כל כך נעימה. את הדגש יש לשים, לדעתי, על חינוך הנוער. כי, וזאת אפשר להבין, את "הזקנים" דומני שלא נוכל לחנך לכיוון המיזוג המיועד בין העדות השונות. זה בדמם. ברם את הנוער הצעיר יש לחנך, ולעשות את כל המאמצים בכיוון זה, לקראת מיזוג הגלויות המושלם הסופי...

אין לכופ

יש להדגיש: אין לכופ בענין זה [הלכות הכנת בשר כשר], שכן צמודים אליו רגשות. עדה שלימה יש בידה מסורת בנידון ואין לכופ עליה הר כגיגית. אך הדבר יבוא על פתרונו במרוצת הזמן בבתי הספר. למשל, נהוג ללמד בנוסח אחד, ונוהגים כפי הרוב, מבלי להבליט את השאלה אם לבטל או לא, ולכן בהדרגה יבוטלו המחיצות וישאר המנהג האחד...

מי יחליט

יש, לדעתי, להקים ועדה של נבונים שתחליט - מבלי לפגוע בשום עדה - על חינוך לקראת צורה אחידה. דבר אחד ברור לי: אנו נמצאים כבר בתהליך זה, יש לכוון למסלולים רצויים שמטרתם: מנהג אחד ואחיד לכל ישראל.

One of the missions of our generation is the merging of the exiles, meaning: the creation of a unified way of life, that grasps the importance of all of the diverse customs that exist today in the various communities.

The Barrier of Customs

Between each and every community there stands, as of today, a high barrier of customs, text of the prayers, and way of life that alienates and divides between it and its counterparts.

People who have looked at this in depth can certainly discern that the reality of today testifies to a merging which is in the process of formation, a merging by way of negatives, where each community learns the easiest from its neighbour and adapts itself to this leniency.

To preserve the existing barriers - is impossible. Therefore, it is upon us to destroy the partitions not by way of negatives but by way of positives: the choice of the good in others and not the worst. How do we do that? This is the question today.

An Approach of Friendship

A more friendly approach is needed between the communities, in a way that will lead to each community showing the other its light, the positive and the good, in order to learn and teach - and do.

In this way we will outline the merger in a positive way, without it coming as a not-so-pleasant surprise.

The emphasis should be, in my opinion, on educating youth. Because, and this can be understood, I think we cannot educate the "old men" in the direction of the intended merger of the various denominations. It's in their blood. But the younger youth should be educated, and every effort should be made in this direction, towards the final, perfect blend of the exiles...

Do not coerce

It should be emphasized: Do not force this matter [halachic practices regarding producing kosher meat], since emotions are attached to it. An entire community has a tradition in this regard and a mountain should not be forced on it like a barrel. But this will be resolved over time in schools. For example, it is customary to teach one text [of prayer], and practice as the majority, without emphasizing the question of whether to abolish or not, and therefore gradually the partitions will be abolished and the unified custom will remain...

Who Will Decide

...There should, in my opinion, be set up a committee of wise men who will decide - without harming any community - on education towards a uniform form. One thing is clear to me: we are already in this process; it should be aimed at desirable routes, with the aim of a single, unified custom for all of Israel.

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Monday-Thursday

10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/sederboker> (men)
Monday/Wednesday: Talmud Succah, Orot haTeshuvah of Rav Kook
Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

Shabbat December 10-11

After 8:00 AM shacharit R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT: Simcha Suite (men)

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Parshah: A Textual Study, Shaarei Tefillah

Sunday December 12

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver Program, Clanton Park (men)

9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, Postmodernist Jewish Thought, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

9:30 AM Legal Ethics Seminar, with CPD Professionalism Credit (laypeople welcome)
R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shepherding Jewish Families Through Family Litigation
Register at <https://torontotorah.com/cpd> / ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>

10 AM R' Aaron Greenberg, Talmud Eruvin, YOC or ZOOM: <http://bit.ly/jliczoom> 613613 (univ)

Monday December 13

New Episode: Parshat Vayechi, featuring Rabbi Yehuda Mann and Rabbi Chaim Metzger
Our Parshah Podcast! Apple Podcasts <http://tiny.cc/apodcast>, Spotify <http://tiny.cc/spodcast>

8:30 PM R' Moshe Yeres, Talmud Shabbat (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/talmud>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Food Fight in the Beis Din, Week 2 of 3, Shomrai Shabbos (3rd Floor) (Men)

Tuesday December 14 The Tenth of Tevet

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, King Solomon's Arc (Melachim I 2-3), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 9-10), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

Wednesday December 15

6:15 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Beitzah, Shaarei Shomayim and ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/beitza>

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Jewish Numerology, #2 of 3 ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Basic Introduction to Halachah #1 of 5, at Shaarei Tefillah

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah Chabura, Clanton Park

Thursday December 16

8:30 AM R' Chaim Metzger, Trei Asar, Yeshivat Or Chaim or ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/trei> (university)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 22-23), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah, email ymanntorontotorah.com for location (advanced, men)

8:00 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Gemara Bava Batra, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/torontowbm> (university women)

Friday December 17

8:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Bava Batra Perek 2 *advanced*
In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on Zoom at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

Coming Up!

9:30 AM to 4:00 PM Sunday December 26

A TANACH TOUR OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL!

In person at Yeshivat Or Chaim and ZOOM in the morning

ZOOM-only in the afternoon at <http://tiny.cc/tanachday>

For the full program and registration: <https://torontotorah.com/tour>

Registration required for in-person participation, capped at 50 per session