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Shabbat Vayechi

Sat. 10 - 11 Jan. 2020 - 14th of Tevet, 5780

י"ד בטבת תש"פ

שבת פ' ויחי
Issue Number 934

Baal Koreh <i>Yom Shabbat Kodesh</i>	Mr Jacob Oved	(Page-268).
Mufteer & Haftarah	Rabbi Asher Sebbag	(Page -1145).

Mincha, Shir Hashirim, Kabalat Shabbat & Arbit.	15:40
Shabbat Candles.	15:57
Shabbat Shahrit - Followed by Kiddush. (Shema 010:02).	08:30
Daf Hayomi with Rabbi Asher Sebbag Shlit"a.	*
Mincha Shabbat - Followed by Seuda Shelishit. (*) (Sunset - 16:13).	15:40
Arbit Motzei Shabbat.	17:11
Shahrit Weekday - (Sunday - 7:30).	06:40
Mincha & Arbit.	15:45
Daf Hayomi with Rabbi Asher Sebbag Shlit"a.	16:15
Next Friday: Mincha, Shir Hashirim, Kabalat Shabbat & Arbit.	15:50
Next Friday: Candles. Shabbat. Shemot	16:05

Vayechi 5780 (Genesis 47:28-50:26)

Jan 5, 2020 | by Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig

GOOD MORNING! Anyone living in a God-driven world knows that things don't happen by accident – there are no "coincidences."

A **significant** portion of this week's Torah reading is dedicated to the end of life issues of our patriarch Jacob, his eventual death, and funeral procession. Remarkably, just last week I was called to a meeting with Rabbi Yaakov Lyons who works for South Florida Jewish Cemetery (SFJC.org), a charitable organization dedicated to seeing that all Jews have a traditional Jewish burial.

Aside from helping indigent Jews afford the otherwise very expensive costs associated with funerals and burials, this organization is dedicated to steering people

away from cremations and toward a traditional Jewish burial.

This particular issue was VERY near and dear to our beloved friend and teacher Rabbi Kalman Packouz, of blessed memory. He would spare no expense or effort to try to convince bereaved families not to cremate their loved ones. This week's discussion is dedicated to this very important issue and includes some of his remarks on this topic.

I would like to start by relaying some information about what a "traditional Jewish burial" entails. For thousands of years, Jewish communities around the world have had local organizations dedicated to the important task of properly burying members of the Jewish community. This group is called the *Chevra Kadisha* – Holy Society.

Their holy work is known in Hebrew as *chessed shel emes* – the ultimate kindness; after all, the dead cannot repay their kindness. This term is derived from this week's Torah portion in which our forefather Jacob asked his son Joseph to fulfill his wishes for his death and burial plans (Genesis 47:29).

The Jewish men and women who oversee this sacred obligation ensure that the bodies of deceased Jews are prepared for burial according to Jewish tradition and are protected from desecration, willful or not, until burial. Two of the main requirements are the showing of proper respect for a corpse and the ritual cleansing of the body and subsequent dressing for burial.

At the heart of the society's function is the ritual of *tahara* – purification. The body is first thoroughly cleansed and then ritually purified by water. It is then dressed in shrouds of white muslin or linen and the casket is closed – except in Israel, where a casket is generally not used.

Burial in the ground is extremely important because one of the fundamental principles of the Jewish faith is the staunch belief in the eventual resurrection of dead. Burying a person begins the process of rebirth; in fact, the Hebrew word for grave – *kever* – is also the word for womb. Thus, burying someone is akin to planting a seed.

Cremation is antithetical to everything Jews believe. To wit; traditional Jewish cemeteries will not bury the ashes of those who are cremated. Below are some of Rabbi Packouz's comments on this topic.

The time to decide how to bury is before a loved one passes away. It is a great kindness to your relatives to think this through and make your arrangements in advance. The more information a person has, the better decision he will make. Here

are 5 perspectives regarding cremation vs. burial: Spiritual, Philosophical, Practical, Jewish Consciousness, Lessons for the Living:

1. SPIRITUAL: The Torah teaches that life is a gift from the Almighty. We are created with a soul and a body. However, our essence is the soul. The body is a vessel on loan from the Almighty to house the soul. Like all objects that are on loan, we are obligated to care for the body to the best of our ability and eventually to return it to its Owner according to His instructions. The Almighty told Adam, "From dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). In the Book of Deuteronomy 21:23, the Almighty says, "You shall surely bury him."

2. PHILOSOPHICAL: How we treat our dead tells us a lot about ourselves and our society. After everything is said and done, do we burn things we love? We burn trash and bury treasure! Cremation destroys the body, symbolizing and promoting the marginalization of the worth of physical life and of the individual.

3. PRACTICAL: Some people think that cremation is ecological. No. It consumes a tremendous amount of fossil fuels and generates toxic wastes, particularly heavy metals (in 2005, the EPA estimated that 6,600 pounds of mercury was vaporized into the air via cremation, which eventually finds its way back into the waterways, the fish, and the ecosystem).

Oftentimes, parents will opt for cremation thinking that they are doing their children a favor by saving them money, but cremation robs the children of having a grave to visit. Even though an urn is portable and may seem easier for

geographically dispersed children – how many urns can a child take with him through multiple moves in a lifetime? What happens to those urns with the next generation?

People think that cremation is antiseptic and wholesome. One moment a body, the next moment a sealed urn of fine ashes. The reality: Even after incineration, cremation does not reduce everything to ashes. Actually, the ashes are discarded. The bones are ground and put in the urn. Is this the final honor we wish to give our loved ones?

4. JEWISH CONSCIOUSNESS: After the Holocaust it is hard to believe that a Jew could request to be cremated or agree to cremate another Jew. I can only imagine Adolph Hitler, may his name and memory be blotted out, laughing with glee and saying, "What I failed to do to all of the Jews, they are now doing to themselves!"

5. LESSONS FOR THE LIVING: Graves are not wasted land. We, the living, need them. Graves teach about life's finality – not to be over-focused on acquisitions or ego. They connect us to each other through commemorating loved ones. They remind us of love, devotion, and bonds that we don't always feel in the present – the importance of the affection given from parent to child, grandparent to grandchild.

Graves motivate us to consider what will be written on our epitaphs – what will be my contribution? How will I be remembered? Graves obligate us to assure their maintenance and perhaps to visit. We need obligations to be fully human. We need to be reminded that our lives are important and that we will be remembered. That the world will take

note, in some way, that we lived. That we died. That our lives had meaning.

There is a national organization of Jewish Burial Societies, it's called NASCK (National Association of Chevra Kadisha). Because of the lessons gained from this week's Torah portion, this is the week that NASCK organizes synagogues all over the country to host a TEAM (Traditional End-of-life Awareness Movement) Shabbat. Please go to their websites (NASCK.org and TeamShabbos.org respectively) to learn more.

I will leave you with a last and rather macabre thought on the subject – "Cremation is one way to ensure that you end up with a hot smoking body."



TORAH PORTION OF THE WEEK

Vayechi, Genesis 47:28 - 50:26

The parsha, Torah portion, opens with Jacob on his deathbed 17 years after arriving in Egypt. Jacob blesses Joseph's two sons, Manasseh (Menashe) and Ephraim (to this day it is a tradition to bless our sons every Shabbat evening with the blessing, "May the Almighty make you like Ephraim and Manasseh" — they grew up in the Diaspora amongst foreign influences and still remained devoted to the Torah. The Shabbat evening blessing for girls is "to be like Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah"). He then individually blesses each of his sons. The blessings are prophetic and give reproof, where necessary.

A large retinue from Pharaoh's court accompanies the family to Hebron to bury Jacob in the *Ma'arat Hamachpela*, the burial cave purchased

by Abraham. The Torah portion ends with the death of Joseph and his binding the Israelites to bring his remains with them for burial when they are redeemed from slavery and go to the land of Israel. Thus ends the book of Genesis!



In loving memory of
Rabbi Kalman Packouz
Kalman Moshe ben
Reuven Avigdor
1950-2019

*Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig*

Mazal Tov to: Orna & Ghassan Cohen and Deborah & Jonathan Kestenbaum on the forthcoming wedding of their children Dina & Avishay, lots of Mazal Tov and Happiness.

Mazal To to: Dr & Mrs Haim Kada on the engagement of their daughter Rosette.

Hot Kiddush: presented by Mr Maurice Lawee הי"ו in memory of his late wife, **Ronit** bat Yehudit ע"ה.

Security Alert: Please be very vigilant when you leave the Synagouge. Do not stand in groups and chat, go home without gathering on the main road. Be safe and alert.

Kolel every Sunday: We are still having a Kolel every Sunday at the Synagogue hall from 09.30am - 12.00pm. Everyone is welcome.

THE KEHILLA WISHES חיים ארוכים "LONG LIFE"
TO THE FOLLOWING WHO HAVE YAHRZEIT

02 Tevet	Dr. Maurice Gubbay	19 Tevet	Mr Nadhim Mouallim
03 Tevet	Mr Mayer Levy	20 Tevet	Mr Cesar Sassoon
03 Tevet	Mrs Gilda Aslan	20 Tevet	Mr Joe Sassoon
08 Tevet	Mr Yaakov Georgy	20 Tevet	Mr Robert M. E. Sassoon
08 Tevet	Mr Maurice Sheena	20 Tevet	Mr Maurice Lawee
05 Tevet	Mr Joseph Clement	24 Tevet	Mrs Naomi Sheena
09 Tevet	Mr Nissim Tricot	27 Tevet	Mrs Gracy Dallal
11 Tevet	Mr Zohair Ishak	28 Tevet	Mrs Naomi Cohen
14 Tevet	Mr Moshe Moses	29 Tevet	Mr Elie Abdulezer
16 Tevet	Mr Adrian H. Klein	29 Tevet	Mrs Doris Ezer
17 Tevet	Miss Nancy Dwek	29 Tevet	Mr Salem Abraham
18 Tevet	Mrs Naomi Cohen		

Prof Eliyahu Kelman – author of THINK STAND UP & WALK TALL will introduce you to the hidden coded secrets and rules embedded in The Torah, Kabbalah and many ancient writings including those of Adam and Abraham, the fathers of all nations...

Bring Magic into your life

Fantastical stories that show how it all works in real life

In depth – Practical – Down to earth



Join Prof Eliyahu Kelman - 19th JANUARY 2020 - 7:00 – 8:30pm

**Join us at the Ohel David Synagogue Hall,
4-15 Broadwalk (behind Tesco) Golders Green Road NW11 8HB
Light refreshments will be served**

Entrance fee donation of £5 or more to cover Synagogue expenses

“ Quote of the Week ”

Everybody wants to go to heaven but no one wants to die.