

Kindert Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Vayechi

Yom Zeh LiYisrael

"Abba, the atmosphere at our Shabbos table has changed completely since you have begun explaining the *zemiros* before we sing them."

"I know. I feel it too, *kinderlach*. Let us finish the evening *zemiros* with an emotional song written by the holy Arizal. The first letter of each stanza spells out his name. The full *zemer* contains many verses, so I will explain each one only briefly. *Yom Zeh LiYisrael* ... 'This day is one of light and joy for Yisrael – Shabbos of contentment.'"

"We see the light; feel the joy, and contentment Abba."

"The laws of Shabbos and the Holy Days were commanded at Har Sinai; among them preparing courses and banquets. Shabbos is such a comfort for us. 'We receive the "*neschama yesayra*" that wipes away the sighs and suffering that the *golus* has brought to our broken nation."

"You sanctified it and blessed it more than all other days. In six days, You completed the labor of the universe. On this day, grieving people find tranquility and security."

"The Awesome One banned *melacha*. I shall merit royal splendor if I observe Shabbos. I shall bring a blended meal offering to the Awesome One."

"I will arrange a pleasant melodious song for You, before the splendor of Your Glory. My soul will be yearning for You, beloved and perfect, when Your promise will be fulfilled."

"Enjoy *nachas* from my prayer like the offering of Nachshon, (the first prince of Israel who brought an offering in the Mishkan). My rest this day, with rejoicing and happiness should be as dear to You as the smoke of the incense offerings."

"We hope for Your deliverance, o most Majestic One. Send the son of Dovid our king to the Ivrim. He will proclaim freedom, relief, and rest."

"Answer us, o Awesome, Elevated One! Look upon our suffering, redeem us speedily, have abundant mercy upon us. Make our souls happy with light and joy. 'Renew our Mikdash, remember that it was destroyed. Our Savior, grant Your Goodness to the one in pain, who sits on Shabbos with song and praise."

"Remember what is holy to us, in the merit of the dearness of the day (of Shabbos). Please guard us, today and every day, our Beloved, Pure, and Mighty, bring relief."

"Let Yisrael hear the voice of prayer and salvation, when the vision of the redemption will come. O Rock let the deliverance sprout forth, let the sun-like light be seen, and shine eternally!"

Kinderlach . . .

Yom Zeh LiYisrael describes the menuchas hanefesh (tranquility of the soul) that Shabbos brings. We do our part by preparing the home, the food, the clothing, and refraining from melacha. Hashem then sends us the neshama yesayra that brings serenity and comfort from the sadness and suffering of the golus. We ask that our prayers be accepted and beloved like the sacrifices in the Mishkan. We then speak about the redemption, when Hashem will fulfill His promise, send the moshiach, and rebuild the Beis HaMikdash. Then we will rejoice, sing songs of praise, and see the spiritual light shine forth. Speedily and in our days!



Nothing to Sneeze At

"Achool!"

"La'briut (to your health) Chaim."

"Thank you, Avi. You are very considerate."

"Thank you, Chaim. In what way am I considerate?"

"After I sneezed, you gave me a blessing for good health."

"You deserve it, Chaim. Everyone should have good health, especially after they sneeze."

"Why?"

"Because there is a lot more to a sneeze than just hot air."

"Are you speaking about allergies?"

"No, I am speaking about mankind from the beginning of creation until Yaakov Avinu."

"That is a big subject, Avi - nothing to sneeze at."

"It is actually related to this week's parasha."

"Now you really have my curiosity going."

"The Torah states, that someone told Yosef that his father (Yaakov) was sick

(Bereshis 48:1). This was an earth-shattering event, unprecedented in the entire history of mankind."

"What was so earth-shattering about being sick?"

"The Chizkuni informs us that Yaakov Avinu changed the way people die. From the beginning of creation, a man's sneeze would be his last breath. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, when he sneezed, his *neschama* (soul) would leave his body – without warning."

"How abrupt?"

"Exactly. Yaakov Avinu wanted to bless and admonish his children. The Torah Temima explains that one should admonish ones children shortly before one dies."

Therefore, Yaakov asked for Hashem's mercy, to know his time of departure from this world. Hashem responded by making him sick, informing him that his death was imminent."

"I see. Yaakov Avinu was the first person in history to get sick."

"Precisely. The Torah Temima relates several *minhagim* (customs) regarding sneezing. Some people say *li'chaim u'li'shalom* (to life and peace) because the sneeze was considered a dangerous event. Rashi (Berachos 53a) explains that people would say 'To your health' to the one who sneezed. The Yalkut states that a person is obligated to thank Hashem after he sneezes. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (61:5) advises saying a verse from this week's parasha, 'For Your salvation do I long, O Hashem!' (Bereshis 49:18)."

"Avi, this is all amazing. Who would have thought that a simple sneeze is so full of meaning?"

"Chaim, a sneeze is nothing to sneeze at."

Kinderlach . . .

Health is a wonderful gift from Hashem. Many people do not appreciate it until they become sick or injured lo aleinu (may it not happen to us). Thank Hashem for everything. When we are healthy we can see, eat, sleep, breathe, walk, and hear properly. Good health is a pillar of avodas (service to) Hashem. As we say in the blessing "Asher Yatzar" . . . "(without a healthy body). . . it would be impossible to survive and stand before You". Hashem gives us a wonderful reminder to appreciate our health . . . the simple sneeze. People would die when they sneezed. However, we sneeze and live! Therefore, every time we sneeze, we can thank Hashem for our life and our health. "La'briut!"

Parasha Questions:

- Why did Yaakov bury Rachel on the road to Beis Lechem, and not in Ma'aras HaMachpela? (Rashi 48:7)
- How does a Jewish father bless his sons? (48:20)
- What are Yaakov's "weapons of war"? (48:22 and Rashi)

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