

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIGASH · 7 TEVET 5776 - DEC. 19, 2015 · VOL. 23 NO. 11

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE SOUND OF MUSIC

*“And they arose from Egypt and they came to the Land of Canaan to Yaakov their father.” (45:25)*

In the 1960s a new form of advertising was discovered and made illegal almost immediately. Madison Avenue realized that flashing one single frame of an advertisement into a movie playing at 24 frames per second left a subliminal message imprinted in the mind of the viewer; a message of which he was totally unaware. Because of its extreme subtlety, the message managed to sneak under the defenses of the consumer and plant itself into his subconscious. Without knowing it, the next time he was shopping he had this overpowering impulse to buy Fidofeed over his usual brand of dog food.

In fact, Madison Avenue had invented nothing new, for they were merely applying a principle that was over three thousand years old.

In this week's Torah portion, Yosef's brothers return to their father Yaakov and have to tell him that Yosef is still alive. Naturally, they are concerned how to break the news. They feared that the shock of hearing that not only was Yosef alive but that he was now the ruler of Egypt might be too much for Yaakov. As they approached Yaakov's tent, they saw Serach, the daughter of Asher, coming out of the house to greet them. Serach was an extraordinary person, on a higher spiritual level than her contemporaries. She also played the

harp beautifully.

They decided that the best way to break the news to Yaakov was for Serach to compose and play a beautiful song whose lyrics would say that Yosef was alive and well and living in Egypt. Then, with her harp, she would slip into her grandfather's tent and begin to play and sing.

Yaakov had never recovered from the imagined loss of Yosef, and was still in mourning, till that moment when Serach began to sing. Softly she began, “My uncle Yosef is still alive; he is the ruler over Egypt”. Serach's soothing music cocooned those highly-charged words. Yaakov imbibed the words, and the message, and blessed Serach, “Serach! You have revived my soul. May you live forever!” And, measure for measure, Serach's reward was that she lived until the reign of King David (another master of the harp) and was one of the few people to be taken to *Gan Eden* alive.

Music has charms to soothe a savage breast. It has the power to work on our emotions, to sneak below the level of the intellect and lodge its message in our subconscious. Before Yaakov could be shocked by the news that Yosef was alive, the message had already entered his consciousness subliminally, through the sound of music.

• Source: *Sefer Hayashar*

## PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

*“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”*

## GITTIN 9 - 15

“When the words (of Rabbi Shimon) were said in front of Rabbi Yossi, Rabbi Yossi praised them with this verse: ‘Lips should kiss he who speaks wisely.’” (Mishlei 24:26)

This *beraita* on our *daf* refers to the praise and support that Rabbi Yossi showed to Rabbi Shimon’s opinion in a halachic dispute with Rabbi Meir. What is meant by the use of this specific expression of “lips should kiss” to extol Rabbi Shimon’s wisdom? And isn’t every kiss done with lips?

One explanation seems to be the “simple meaning” and means that one who speaks Torah wisdom is “suitable to be kissed”. (Rashi) However, this does not seem to explain why the verse says “lips should kiss” instead of simply saying “kiss”, which is understood to be done with lips. Tosefot offers a different interpretation of the verse, one which answers this question. According to Tosefot the verse is not speaking about “kissing”. Rather, Rabbi Yossi is citing this verse as praise for Rabbi Shimon’s words as follows: When a person speaks stunning words of Torah wisdom in front of others, the listeners surrounding the speaker should “press their lips together” and be silent with agreement. (The Hebrew word in the verse “*yishak*”, which is often translated as “kiss” — “*nishika*” — is in fact from the root of “things touching one another”, and here it refers to the top lip touching the bottom lip, and closing one’s mouth in silence and agreement with the speaker’s statement.)

• Gittin 9a

Rabbi Yochanan says, “If a person (from the ‘market’, i.e., not appointed by the recipient to collect) confiscates money from a debtor to benefit a creditor at the expense of other creditors, his collection is not valid.”

There is a principle of “effecting ownership for a person without his knowledge” that is taught in a *mishna* on this *daf*.

In this *mishna*, the Rabbanan (the majority opinion) state that a master who gives a person a document of freedom for his slave may not retract the giving, since the person is acquiring the freedom document *immediately* for the benefit of the slave, despite this being to the detriment of the master. Therefore, one might think to apply this rule to a case of taking for the benefit of a specific creditor, and say that his taking is valid. Nevertheless, Rabbi Yochanan teaches that this principle of “acquiring for another’s benefit” does not apply in this case of collecting for a creditor, since others are negatively affected. The *gemara* explains the difference between the case in the *mishna* which “works” and the case where Rabbi Yochanan says that this confiscation does not “work”, despite their apparent equality.

Tosefot says that Rabbi Yochanan’s teaching here seems to contradict what Rabbi Yochanan said in the first chapter of Bava Metzia. There he says, “one who picks up a lost object (one that is “finders keepers”) for his friend, it is immediately acquired by his friend”, despite this being to the detriment of other potential finders. Tosefot answers that by a lost object the acquisition “works” for his friend due to a logical reason: Since the person who picks it up could acquire it for himself, he also has the ability to acquire it for his friend.

Rabbi Yochanan’s teaching is codified in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De’ah 105:1.

• Gittin 11b

## LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

## OIL FROM THE “MOUNT OF OLIVES”

Chanukah is the time when so many Jews are performing the mitzvah of lights with olive oil as a way of recalling the fuel used to light the menorah in the Beit Hamikdash.

The Mount of Olives in Jerusalem may not necessarily



have been the only source for the menorah oil but tradition has it that oil from the mountain’s olive trees was used for anointing kings, *kohanim gedolim* and Beit Hamikdash implements, hence its other name – “Mount of Anointment”.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers, "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said, "Don't dispute on the way"?
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt"?
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanit?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham. Alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *lashon hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave Eretz Canaan.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in Eretz Canaan.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - Dina *bat* Yaakov.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the family.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn't see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

*Love of the Land*, written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt"l • *Parsha Insights* written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair  
General Editor and *Talmud Tips*: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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# Abarbanel

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## ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

### Vayigash

After revealing himself to his brothers and reuniting with his father Yaakov, Yosef develops an elaborate plan to ensure that his family will be settled in Goshen. He tells them that he will speak to Pharaoh first, hoping that Pharaoh will offer them the land of Goshen without their requesting it. He wanted to keep his family as far away from the center of government as possible in order to prevent them from being tapped for administrative positions. This was necessary to protect them from possible assimilation into Egyptian society. However, since Pharaoh might still want to meet with the brothers personally, Yosef instructs them carefully as to what to say. They should emphasize that they are not simply shepherds and herdsmen of the animals of others. Rather, they are, and always have been, proprietors in the business of animal husbandry. This is a much more prestigious occupation. However, the result will be that, “you may be able to settle in the region of Goshen, since all shepherds are abhorrent to Egyptians.” (Ber. 46:34) The simple reading of this verse is that since Egypt was an agricultural society that worshipped certain animals as gods, and therefore would not engage in business with them, Pharaoh would want to keep this family with its abhorrent practices as far away as possible. However, Abarbanel shows that the Hebrew word which is normally translated as “abhorrent” can also be interpreted as a reference to the gods themselves. In effect, the verse would be saying that “all shepherds are like gods to the Egyptians.” Therefore, Pharaoh would actually honor them by granting them the land of Goshen, which was known for its exceptional fertility.

Yosef then goes ahead and speaks to Pharaoh. He is careful not to mention that “my brothers and my father’s household...have come to me.” (Ber. 46:31) Rather, he just says that they have arrived from the land of Canaan and have come to Goshen. He does not want Pharaoh to think that they are coming to be supported by Yosef through the royal treasury. Rather, Yosef emphasizes that they are independently wealthy.

However, Pharaoh does not explicitly grant them the land of Goshen, and therefore Yosef is forced to have them make

the request of Pharaoh on their own. They emphasize again their profession, hoping that Pharaoh will get the hint and volunteer the land of Goshen. Pharaoh, however, remains silent, and now the brothers are forced to not only mention Goshen explicitly but also make it clear that they do not intend to remain permanently, but rather just to remain a year or two due to the severity of the famine in the land of Canaan.

Pharaoh does not respond to the brothers’ request. He addresses Yosef instead, saying, “Your father and your brothers have come to you...let them settle in the region of Goshen...appoint them as chamberlains over the livestock that belongs to me.” (Abarbanel emphasizes that this is another indication that shepherds were actually holy to the Egyptians, not abhorrent, because why else would Pharaoh own animals that required chamberlains?) (Ber. 47:5-6) Pharaoh’s strange response indicates that he has seen right through Yosef’s scheme. He knows that the real reason that they came was to be supported and protected by Yosef. As a result, Pharaoh declines to explicitly grant them permission. However, since Pharaoh had previously made Yosef viceroy over the entire land, Yosef could be the one to officially grant them residence in Goshen. This is what Pharaoh means when he says, ‘let them settle in Goshen.’ Pharaoh officially mentions Goshen, which is what Yosef wanted all along, but it will be Yosef who will let them settle there.

Finally, Abarbanel adds another fascinating reason why Yosef wanted to keep his brothers far away from involvement in the Egyptian government. He was afraid that once they tasted honor and power they would once again be jealous of the fact that he was still their superior. They might think that he didn’t deserve the power and prestige that he held in Egypt. If they had plotted to kill him over a simple coat that he received from Yaakov, all the more so would they be jealous of his supremely exalted position in Egypt. Insightfully, Yosef realized that the best way to maintain peace in the family was to keep his brothers involved with shepherding and herding in distant Goshen.

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BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## COMFORTING THE MOURNER

**From: Phillip**

*Dear Rabbi,  
The wife of one of my neighbors recently passed away and he is currently sitting shiva. I know it is a mitzvah to console a mourner, aside from being a kind thing to do. But I am very uncomfortable in those types of situations and would rather not do it. Since there are certainly other people who are closer to him than me, do you think I really have to do it? He probably won't notice if I'm there or not anyway. What are your thoughts?*

Dear Phillip,

I am sorry to hear of the unfortunate news, and certainly empathize with how you feel, but by the same token, I'm sure we both empathize with your neighbor, and therefore you should certainly go to console him.

G-d forbid you should be in his position of mourning, but if you were in his position, you would certainly want, and very much appreciate, people coming to comfort you in your loss and loneliness.

Another thing to consider is that many people are more than happy to join other people's joyous occasions – after all, there's music, dancing, merriment and, of course, a

several-course meal. But when it comes time to share in others' sorrow, G-d forbid, suddenly people don't feel close enough to participate.

This is wrong, and if you'd participate in his joyous occasions, you should certainly overcome your natural awkwardness and involve yourself in his grief. And even if you wouldn't necessarily attend his joyous occasions, or might not even be invited, you should still visit him, according to the teaching of the Talmud that is preferable to participate in the house of mourning than the house of mirth.

Often people justify their discomfort to comfort the mourner with the thought that the person won't notice their absence. Although this might be true, it's usually not. And even if the person would not be missed by not attending, he certainly would be noticed if he did. In fact, the less likely his absence would be missed, the more likely his actual attendance would be noted and appreciated.

Similarly, people often rationalize that their presence is not so important since there are others who will certainly console, and many are actually closer to the mourner than him. But this thinking is also faulty. First, if everybody thought this way, most would never come. Second, every person, no matter how distant, just by the visit alone relieves to some degree the intensity of the mourner's suffering. In addition, virtually every single person has some

*continued on page ten*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**W**ith the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt

and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

## A PRIVATE AUDIENCE

**W**ith regards to a mortal king who is difficult to approach, it is impossible for everyone to merit having their cases heard personally. Instead, all are expected to be judged according to the system of judgment that has been established. However, all who turn to G-d, the King of kings, in heartfelt prayer, will always be heard.

In fact, each person receives a private audience with G-d during his prayers. Accordingly, the words of the Shemoneh Esrei prayer are spoken in a whisper, indicating the close, personal connection that one experiences during his prayers, presenting his requests directly to G-d. We also find that on Rosh Hashana, all of Creation, namely Mankind, passes before G-d to be individually judged in a single moment. So too, G-d receives each of our prayers as if we were the only one praying.

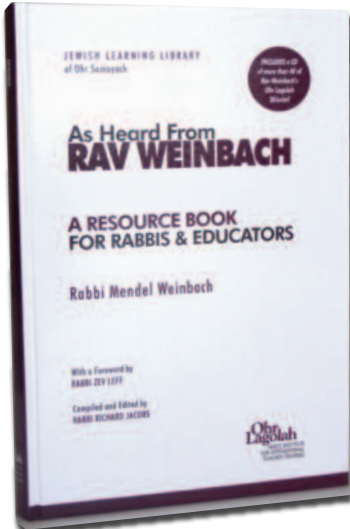
*A Related Story:*

Jacob, a fifth grade *rebbe*, wanted to instill in the heart of his eight year old son David the great importance of praying together with the congregation, the *tzibur*, as well as the immeasurable value of his own personal prayers to G-d. He decided to take him to shul (synagogue) for the first time for

the Friday night prayers. He taught his son how to sing the famous Lecha Dodi hymn that is part of “Kabbalat Shabbat”. The custom in their shul was for everyone to read each of the stanzas together as a group. He told his son that G-d would be listening only to him as he sang this special song out loud.

When it came time for David to sing Lecha Dodi he nervously took hold of his Siddur. As he began to sing out loud he was surprised to see everyone else singing with him. Jacob quickly whispered to him not to stop, reminding him that G-d was listening only to him. David continued as his father instructed.

Later, during the Shabbat meal, David explained to his younger brother Moshe Chaim that he wanted to teach him that G-d listens to each person who comes to pray in shul as if he is the only one. He continued to say, “Whenever you go to shul to pray for the rest of your life, whether as the prayer leader or as one of the congregants, you must feel as though you are alone with G-d. If you do this, your prayers will always be precious to G-d.”




# As Heard From **RAV WEINBACH**

## A RESOURCE BOOK FOR RABBIS & EDUCATORS


Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

With a Foreword by  
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Compiled and Edited by  
RABBI EDWARD JACOB



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## THE TEFILLIN PROJECT

As Rabbi Ivan Ziskind was exiting the Yeshiva one summer morning a few years ago with one of his JLE students, the student was expressing his reluctance to return home that day and his hope to hang onto the spiritual level of growth that he had achieved in the weeks he spent here. “I think if I had a pair of *tefillin* it would mean a lot to me,” the student said. At that very moment, a taxi pulled up to the curb in front of the Yeshiva and a young man got out. “Excuse me, Rabbi, but I’m leaving for the airport now to return home. I was a JLE student here a few months ago. When I left the program I wasn’t sure if I was going to continue laying *tefillin*, so I borrowed a pair. As a matter of fact, I’ve been putting on the *tefillin* every day since I left, and just bought my own new pair of *tefillin*. I’m returning the loaner. Could you please take them? I’m sure there are other boys like me who could use them.” Amazed that G-d answered his prayers immediately and in such a miraculous way, the student gratefully took the *tefillin* and left the Yeshiva more convinced than ever that G-d listens to the prayers of those who beseech Him.

Mr. Yossi Ehrman of Lakewood, New Jersey, following the dictum of the Sages to imitate the Creator, has recently launched a new campaign to provide *tefillin* for the young men who come Ohr Somayach and express a desire to come closer to G-d, and wrap themselves in the ornaments that are unique to the Jewish People.

Yossi was one of the first Mentors when the “Mentor’s Mission” began almost a decade ago, and has been coming to Ohr Somayach nearly every year on the Mission since. His dedication to the JLE students whom he tutors is renowned. He has maintained a connection with them throughout the years, and has guided and observed their spiritual growth. He was active in procuring *tefillin* for JLE students who expressed the desire to own them in the past. As an outgrowth of his activism he started the “Tefillin Project”, setting goals for students to achieve before receiving their personal set. While in the Yeshiva they can use “loaner” pairs, but, now, thanks to Yossi, they can earn their own.

To qualify, the student must commit to learning with his “*tefillin* mentor” for 15 weekly one hour sessions. They study the book “Tefillin” by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, published by NCSY, a division of the Orthodox Union. At the end of the sessions, the mentee is awarded a pair of *tefillin*.

The program is administered by Yossi Kantor of the

Ohr Somayach staff. It began this September with two students, Justin Ross of the Mechina Program in Ohr Somayach, and Michael Rogachevsky, who had been a student on the JLE program this past summer and is now back at home in Minneapolis, working in IT.

Zvi Pitterman is an accountant in Manhattan and lives in Flatbush. He met Michael in Israel on this past summer’s Mentor’s Mission and was paired with him for the Tefillin Project. They met again in person at the Ohr Somayach Mentor’s Mission Shabbaton in Flatbush in October of 2015.

“I was apprehensive about joining the Mentors Mission as I was skeptical of the opportunity it claimed to afford — meeting high-achieving, college-age individuals seeking to explore authentic Judaism. I was quickly proven very wrong. The mentee I was assigned to (Michael), as well as the general group of mentees, were high-achieving, career-focused individuals with a tremendous thirst to explore in-depth Torah learning. The enthusiasm of the mentees towards Torah learning was both invigorating as well as thought provoking.

“There is something extremely unique to learn in-depth with an individual who is highly intelligent, but due to his lack of Torah knowledge approaches a Gemara through the prism of Western culture. As we progressed through the learning sessions it was very gratifying to witness Michael’s appreciation of the thought process and truth of Chazal. I knew I had made a difference in my mentee’s life when he turned to me on the bus heading towards an excursion and stated, “I would rather have another learning session with you than go on the hike”. The mentee’s respect and admiration towards the mentor’s Torah lifestyle refocused my understanding of the corporate definition of “work-life balance” to “Torah work-life balance”. I have kept up with my mentee, first via e-mail correspondence and now with a weekly phone learning session. Through the Ohr Somayach *tefillin* program I will be presenting my mentee with his first pair of kosher *tefillin*.”

Rabbi Eli Harrar, a real estate executive, is Justin’s mentor.

Eli was born in New York and brought up in a religious home in Flatbush, learned in the Yeshiva of Chaim Berlin, and after his marriage, in its Kollel. He has deep experience in teaching Torah, and while in Kollel he also ran a Jewish day school on Long Island.

He also participated in a number of Shabbatonim with

*continued on page nine*

## ASARAH B'TEVET

The fast of Asarah b'Tevet ("the 10th of Tevet") is unique when compared to the other fast days that are mentioned in the prophets. Even though everyone agrees that when the other fasts fall on Shabbat they are pushed off, when it comes to Asarah b'Tevet there is the unique opinion brought down by the Avudraham that even if Asarah b'Tevet would fall on Shabbat we would observe the fast on that day just as we would for Yom Kippur (see Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 550). The reason for this is because the *pasuk* in Yechezkel (24:2) that describes Asara b'Tevet says "b'etzem hayom hazeh," on this very day, indicating that an integral component of the fast is that it occurs on *this very day*. This view, however, needs to be understood in light of the fact that even Tisha b'Av, which commemorates the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, doesn't override the Shabbat. What is it about the fast of the tenth of Tevet that sets it apart from the other fast days? Even though this halacha has no practical application, since the tenth of Tevet will never actually fall out on Shabbat, by exploring the answer we will nevertheless arrive at a deeper understanding of the nature of this remarkable day.

The Chatam Sofer (Torat Moshe, *drasha l'zayin Adar*) says that historically, on Asarah b'Tevet, the *bet din shel ma'alah*, the Heavenly court, was adjudicating the matter regarding the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. It was on this day that the final verdict of its destruction was agreed upon, and it was then that the siege surrounding Yerushalayim began. However, this wasn't a one-time event. Every year on the tenth of Tevet the Heavenly court reassembles and reassesses whether the Beit Hamikdash will be destroyed, as we are told that every generation in which the Beit Hamikdash is not rebuilt is as if it was in that generation that it was destroyed (Yerushalmi, Yoma 1:1).

The halacha dictates that one may not fast on Shabbat because it takes away from the mitzvah of *oneg Shabbat*, enjoying Shabbat. However, if one is disturbed because of a

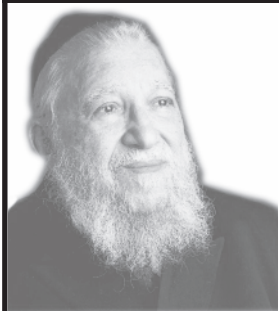
dream and wishes to fast, he may do so even on Shabbat (Orach Chaim 288:1, 4). The reason for this is that the upsetting dream is a way of conveying that there is a potentially worrying judgment being made against the individual, and, by fasting, this person has an opportunity to reverse this judgment (see Shabbat 11a, Ta'anit 12b). Since the fast has the power to relieve the individual's distress, fasting is considered more of an *oneg Shabbat* for him than eating (Rashba, Berachot 31b in the name of Rav Chai Gaon). Therefore, he is allowed to fast.

With this understanding we may now explain the unique nature of the fast of Asarah b'Tevet in contrast to the other fasts. The Chatam Sofer explains that this fast day is similar to the fast following an ominous dream, for it too is coming to annul the unfortunate judgment that dictates that the Beit Hamikdash should remain in ruins. It follows from the above that fasting for Asarah b'Tevet on Shabbat does not take away from the mitzvah of *oneg Shabbat*, since through the fast, one is able to reverse the decree of the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash.

The Rambam says: There are days on which all Jews fast because of the calamities that befell them. This is in order to awaken the hearts and open the ways of repentance, and to serve as a reminder of our evil deeds and the evil deeds of our fathers that were similar to our deeds that caused them and us those calamities. Through this reminder we will repent and fix our ways... (Hilchot Ta'anit 5:1).

As is clear from the words of the Rambam, the purpose of fasting is to trigger *teshuvah*, repentance. Just like the fast for a bad dream annuls the decree only if it is followed by repentance (Sefer Chasidim 226), so too the fast on Asarah b'Tevet is only as powerful in relation to the degree to which we better our ways. May we all contribute to bring a favorable judgment on Asarah b'Tevet and thereby merit seeing the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash speedily in our days.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*  
on the  
Torah Portion of the Week



The Tefillin Project continued from page seven

students at Yale University whom he hosted at his home in Brooklyn.

He was introduced to the Mentor's Mission by his brother-in-law, Yossi Breacher, who participated in a Mission a number of years ago. "When he returned and described the program to me I said to myself that one day I would like to share that experience. *Im yirtze Hashem*, I hope to be on my fifth program this December."

"I met Justin on a Friday night of President's weekend 2015 at an Ohr Somayach Shabbaton in Flatbush. His warm smile caught my eye and we had some interesting chats over the Shabbos. I was worthy enough to be partnered with him in the 2015 summer Mentor program. I had already learned with close to 20 students and I found that Justin had a very strong thirst for the knowledge of Torah. While my past students also had a degree of thirst, Justin's was stronger. We enjoy learning together and spending quality time with one another. Our conversations over the course of that Shabbos centered on his desire to return to the path of his forefathers.

"In September 2015, I got a phone call from Rabbi Binyamin Schonblum, asking if I would like to learn the laws of *tefillin* with Justin. We have delved into the understanding of why we wear *tefillin* and the connection it has between bringing us closer to Hashem and a deeper understanding of the *parshios* in *tefillin*."

Rabbi Eli Harrar's "Justin" is Justin Ross, 32, from Princeton New Jersey. He had a secular upbringing, attended the University of Houston, and got a BA in Supply Chain and Logistics. With his degree he joined the US Air Force and worked in logistics and contract negotiations in Abu Dhabi and the US. After four years in the service he received an honorable discharge and moved to Baltimore, where he had a senior position with a major medical distribution company. When his childhood best friend died in 2013, he started thinking seriously

about the meaning of life. A friend of his, Rachel Peretz, her memory for a blessing, who had become religious and gotten married, suggested that Justin get involved with Partners in Torah, a program that matches non-religious people with religious ones for weekly learning, either on the phone or in person. Justin followed her suggestion and became a Partner to Rabbi Eli Scheller, of Flatbush. The two learned for a number of months and then Rabbi Scheller suggested that Justin come to the Ohr Somayach Flatbush Shabbaton in the winter of 2015. It was the first Shabbat he kept. And he loved it. Rabbis Reuven Katz and Yitzchok Greenblatt were at the Shabbaton and suggested to Justin that he come to the Yeshiva for a few months. Mentioning this to his friend Rachel, she convinced him that it was the smart thing to do. He arrived on May 27th and is now in the Mechina Program. When his friend Rachel and her husband died in a tragic accident in Jerusalem, Justin was devastated. "Because I felt so crushed, in a way it would have been easy for me to walk away from the religion. But, instead, the next morning, I went to the Beit Medrash and wrapped *tefillin* and *davened* in front of the holy ark. I really felt a connection to G-d. And that's when I felt the power of the *tefillin*."

It is reported that when the Chafetz Chaim first heard about Marconi's invention of radio in early 1900's he inquired into the theoretical nature of the invention, its engineering and circuitry. As befits the *Gadol Hador*, he said, "Now I understand *tefillin*. If one letter in one of the parchments has the slightest cut, the *tefillin* are *pasul* (invalid). They cannot receive the signal from the Divine — just like a radio, if one of its many wires is disconnected, there is no reception."

Thanks to Yossi Ehrman, Justin and Michael are now connected.



Highlights from the 43rd Anniversary Gala Dinner

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*Comforting the Mourner continued from page five*

special thought, recollection or experience to share about the deceased that makes that person's visit uniquely comforting.

Therefore, I think you definitely must overcome your personal feelings of discomfort and awkwardness and place your mourning neighbor's feelings and needs before your own. Perhaps the following practical considerations will make it easier for you.

Constantly remind yourself why you're going and why you're there:

1. To show the mourner that everyone he knows, or who knew the departed, cares enough about the loss to make a special effort to share in the sorrow of the living and honor the memory of their beloved deceased.

2. To give the mourner the opportunity to relieve his suffering and sorrow by either expressing to others, or hearing others share, heartwarming and elevating thoughts, recollections or experiences about the deceased.

3. To distract the mourner from the intensity of his suffering by being available for him to converse with if that is what he needs.

Regarding the logistics of the actual visit, there are several practical customs which help to facilitate the intentions above.

Since the initial days are the most traumatic days of mourning, consolation visits during the first three days of the seven are generally designated for the closest of family and friends. It is usually much "easier" for both the mourner and comforter who are not especially close to interact after those first three days.

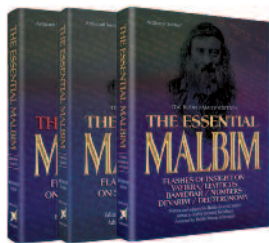
Also, when one does actually visit, the custom is not to speak until the mourner initiates conversation. This affords a few moments of mutual silent reflection in honor of the departed, expresses through silence the essentially inexpressible nature of the pain of bereavement and helps initiate the process of recovery by encouraging the mourner to proactively reach out of his solitary grief to accept the outstretched helping-hand of society.

Upon departing, the custom is to express condolences in the context of our collective mourning and feelings of loss over the destroyed Temple while offering a prayer that the mourner will have both a personal and collective consolation at the time of Redemption when G-d will remove the tear from all eyes and sorrow will be no more. In this way we remind the mourner that he is not alone in his grief, while constructively directing it toward collective consolation in a better future.

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