



# INSPIRE

## VAYIGASH

### 11TH TEVES - 26TH DECEMBER

# WE'RE NOT ALONE

How many Jews came down to Egypt?

By the time of the Exodus, there were 600,000 men of military age (and, according to all estimates, a total of a few million people) in the young nation. But the number who originally went down to Egypt in the days of Joseph were only, by the Torah's attestation, "seventy souls." However, if one examines the text, Jacob's sons and their children – even including Joseph and his sons who were already in Egypt – only amount to a total of sixty-nine. The commentaries offer a number of explanations. Some say that the Torah simply rounds off the number to the nearest ten. Another explanation is that the seventieth person is Jocheved, born as Jacob's family was entering Egypt. Or, Jacob himself is counted as number seventy.

But, for me, the most touching one of all comes from the Midrash:

What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do? He Himself entered into the count and thus it totaled seventy, to fulfill his promise made earlier to Jacob (Genesis 46, 3-4), "Have no fear of going down to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt and I shall also surely bring you up..."

How inspiring! How magnificently encouraging. G-d is with us in Egypt. Amidst the bondage, the pain and persecution, He is with us. And in all our wanderings and dispersions, He is there. As He assures us in Psalm 91, "I am with him in his affliction." In all our anguish, in all our tzorris, He is right there with us!

It was this conviction of the invisible but tangible Divine Presence being with us in the Galut and in the ghettos that sustained our people throughout a torturous history. This was the promise that inspired us with an inexhaustible fountain of faith, courage and strength to survive our enemies and to flourish again long after they were gone.

Many continue to ask, "Where was G-d during the Holocaust?" I could never even attempt to debate this question with an embittered survivor who has lost his faith. And who are we to criticize those holy tormented souls? But my father, and many like him, survived with their faith intact. How did they maintain their beliefs in spite of their suffering? One answer they might offer is this: "How did I survive? Do you understand how many miracles it took to get me out of Poland? Or out of the camps? And how about escaping Lithuania, Russia, Japan or Shanghai? How can I deny the hand of G-d that plucked me from danger again and again?"

Surely the greatest miracle of our generation is that after Auschwitz Jews still wanted to be Jewish. That our people rebounded and rebuilt their families, their communities and their homeland. For many, the certainty that a higher power was guiding them to survival is what sustained them in their darkest moments and what gave them the confidence to regroup and regenerate.

Friday we will observe the fast of Tevet 10, commemorating the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. So who is having the last laugh? Do you know any grandchildren of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon? ) All that is left of his mighty empire are a few statues. All our enemies, down to the Third Reich, have come and gone. The Jews are here, alive and well, still doing their thing 2,500 years later.

G-d's promise to Jacob that "I will go down with you" has kept us going. And the conclusion of the verse assures us all of a happy conclusion. "And I shall surely also bring you up" – from Egypt and from our own exile. May it be speedily in our day.

## By Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Shabbos ends 4:54pm

Maimonides called his ideal type of human being – the sage – a rofe nefashot, a “healer of souls.” Today we call such a person a psychotherapist, a word coined relatively recently from the Greek word psyche, meaning “soul,” and therapeia, “healing.” It is astonishing how many of the pioneering soul-healers in modern times have been Jewish.

Almost all the early psychoanalysts were, among them Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank and Melanie Klein. So overwhelming was this that psychoanalysis was known in Nazi Germany as the “Jewish science.” More recent Jewish contributions include Solomon Asch on conformity, Lawrence Kohlberg on developmental psychology and Bruno Bettelheim on child psychology. From Leon Festinger came the concept of cognitive dissonance, from Howard Gardner the idea of multiple intelligences and from Peter Salovey and Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence. Abraham Maslow gave us new insight into motivation, as did Walter Mischel into self-control via the famous “marshmallow test.” Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky gave us prospect theory and behavioural economics. Most recently, Jonathan Haidt and Joshua Green have pioneered empirical study of the moral emotions. The list goes on and on.

To my mind, though, one of the most important Jewish contributions came from three outstanding figures: Viktor Frankl, Aaron T. Beck and Martin Seligman. Frankl created the method known as Logotherapy, based on the search for meaning. Beck was the joint creator of the most successful form of treatment, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Seligman gave us Positive Psychology, that is, psychology not just as a cure for depression but as a means of achieving happiness or flourishing through acquired optimism.

These are very different approaches but they have one thing in common. They are based on the belief – set out much earlier in Habad Hassidim in R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi’s Tanya – that if we change the way we think, we will change the way we feel. This was, at the outset, a revolutionary proposition in sharp contrast to other theories of the human psyche. There were those who believed that our characters are determined by genetic factors. Others thought our emotional life was governed by early childhood experiences and unconscious drives. Others again, most famously Ivan Pavlov, believed that human behaviour is determined by conditioning. On all of these theories, our inner freedom is severely circumscribed. Who we are, and how we feel, are largely dictated by factors other than the conscious mind.

It was Viktor Frankl who showed there is another way – and he did so under some of the worst conditions ever endured by human beings: in Auschwitz. As a prisoner there Frankl discovered that the Nazis took away almost everything that made people human: their possessions, their clothes, their hair, their very names. Before being sent to Auschwitz, Frankl had been a therapist specializing in curing people who had suicidal tendencies. In the camp, he devoted himself as far as he could to giving his fellow prisoners the will to live, knowing that if they lost it, they would soon die.

There he made the fundamental discovery for which he later became famous:

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.

What made the difference, what gave people the will to live, was the belief that there was a task for them to perform, a mission for them to accomplish, that they had not yet completed and that was waiting for them to do in the future. Frankl discovered that “it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us.” There were people in the camp who had so lost hope that they had nothing more to expect from life. Frankl was able to get them to see that “life was still expecting something from them.” One, for example, had a child still alive, in a foreign country, who was waiting for him. Another came to see that he had books to produce that no one else could write. Through this sense of a future calling to them, Frankl was able to help them to discover their purpose in life, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

The mental shift this involved came to be known, especially in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, as reframing. Just as a painting can look different when placed in a different frame, so can life. The facts don’t change, but the way we perceive them does. Frankl writes that he was able to survive Auschwitz by daily seeing himself as if he were in a university, giving a lecture on the psychology of the concentration camp. Everything that was happening to him was transformed, by this one act of the mind, into a series of illustrations of the points he was making in the lecture. “By this method, I succeeded somehow in rising above the situation, above the sufferings of the moment, and I observed them as if they were already of the past.” Reframing tells us that though we cannot always change the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we can change the way we see them, and this itself changes the way we feel.

Yet this modern discovery is really a re-discovery, because the first great re-framer in history was Joseph, as described in this week’s and next’s parshiyot. Recall the facts. He had been sold into slavery by his brothers. He had lost his freedom for thirteen years, and been separated from his family for twenty-two years. It would be understandable if he felt toward his brothers resentment and a desire for revenge. Yet he rose above such feelings and did so precisely by shifting his experiences into a different frame. Here is what he says to his brothers when he first discloses his identity to them:

“I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for G d sent me before you to preserve life ... G d sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but G d.”

And this is what he says years later, after their father Jacob has died and the brothers fear that he may now take revenge:

“Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of G d? Though you intended to do harm to me, G d intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.”

Joseph had reframed his entire past. He no longer saw himself as a man wronged by his brothers. He had come to see himself as a man charged with a life-saving mission by G d. Everything that had happened to him was necessary so that he could achieve his purpose in life: to save an entire region from starvation during a famine, and to provide a safe haven for his family.

This single act of reframing allowed Joseph to live without a burning sense of anger and injustice. It enabled him to forgive his brothers and be reconciled with them. It transformed the negative energies of feelings about the past into focused attention to the future. Joseph, without knowing it, had become the precursor of one of the great movements in psychotherapy in the modern world. He showed the power of reframing. We cannot change the past. But by changing the way we think about the past, we can change the future.

Whatever situation we are in, by reframing it we can change our entire response, giving us the strength to survive, the courage to persist, and the resilience to emerge, on the far side of darkness, into the light of a new and better day.

## PARSHA SUMMARY

Judah approaches Joseph to plead for the release of Benjamin, offering himself as a slave to the Egyptian ruler in Benjamin's stead. Upon witnessing his brothers' loyalty to one another, Joseph reveals his identity to them. "I am Joseph," he declares. "Is my father still alive?" The brothers are overcome by shame and remorse, but Joseph comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but G-d. It has all been ordained from Above to save us, and the entire region, from famine." The brothers rush back to Canaan with the news. Jacob comes to Egypt with his sons and their families—seventy souls in all—and is reunited with his beloved son after 22 years. On his way to Egypt he receives the divine promise: "Fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again." Joseph gathers the wealth of Egypt by selling food and seed during the famine. Pharaoh gives Jacob's family the fertile county of Goshen to settle, and the children of Israel prosper in their Egyptian exile.

## HAFTORAH SUMMARY

Ezekiel 37:15-28. This week's haftorah mentions the fusion of the kingdoms of Judah and Joseph during the Messianic Era, echoing the beginning of this week's Torah reading: "And Judah approached him [Joseph]." The prophet Ezekiel shares a prophecy he received, in which G-d instructs him to take two sticks and to write one on, "For Judah and for the children of Israel his companions" and on the other, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions." After doing so he was told to put the two near each other, and G-d fused them into one stick. G-d explains to Ezekiel that these sticks are symbolic of the House of Israel, that was divided into two (often warring) kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom that was established by Jeroboam, a member of the Tribe of Ephraim, and the Southern Kingdom, that remained under the reign of the Davidic (Judean) Dynasty. The fusing of the two sticks represented the merging of the kingdoms that will transpire during the Messianic Era – with the Messiah, a descendant of David, at the helm of this unified empire. "So says the L-rd G-d: 'Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side, and I will bring them to their land. And I will make them into one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be to them all as a king...'" The haftorah ends with G-d's assurance that "they shall dwell on the land that I have given to My servant, to Jacob, wherein your forefathers lived; and they shall dwell upon it, they and their children and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever."

## WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK CHAIM ARUCHIM

**Irwin Bernard Mother Bashki bas Baruch 14 Tevet**  
**Zucker Sylvie Father Sabatino Rousso 14 Tevet**

## JEWISH HUMOUR

A Yiddish speaking newcomer to America took his pregnant wife to the hospital, but during the delivery, when he found out they were twins, he fainted. He didn't come to for a few days so his brother was brought in to help name the children. "My brother named my kids?!" he exclaimed when he woke up. "But my brother is illiterate. And he can't even speak any English. Oiy, so what did he name the girl?" "He named her Denise." "Denise? Well, that's not such a bad name. I kind of like it. And what did he call the little boy?" "De Nephew."

## RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

A man pushes his car to a hotel. When he gets there, he suddenly realises that he has just gone bankrupt! How is this possible?

**Answer for last week**

## STORY TIME

The era of the First Holy Temple was replete with both the greatest wonders and the greatest temptations. Although miracles were daily occurrences, the people succumbed to the temptation of idol worship which prevailed among the nations of the world at that time. Destruction came upon the Jewish nation slowly, and though the prophets begged the people to return from their sinful practices, it was to no avail. In the year 328 (533 b.c.e.), Menashe, the evil son of the righteous King Hezekiah, rose to the throne of Judea. Through his insidious influence idol worship spread through the land. The next half century saw the great struggle between the arch-rivals Babylonia and Egypt encroach into the Jewish kingdom, as Judea became a vassal king of King Nebuchadnezzar. The year 434 b.c.e. saw the first wave of exiles, the elite of Jerusalem, leave for Babylonia. These men included the greatest leaders and scholars of the time: Mordechai, Daniel and Ezekiel, men who would be instrumental in bringing about great miracles in the future. Only the poor were left in the land, and the future clearly pointed to the exiled community which was to grow and flourish in Babylonia. Eight years later, the end came as the forces of the Babylonian commander besieged Jerusalem and battered its defences. The Holy Temple, the king's palace, as well as the rest of the city was burned and laid waste. The remaining leaders were executed and the people forced into exile under torturous conditions. Although the destruction had been bloody and crushing, the Jewish exiles in Babylonia gradually rebuilt their lives and communities. The Babylonian rulers permitted the Jews considerable independence to reconstruct Jewish life in the new environment. The adjustment was made easier by the fact that the earlier exiles were now well established. The exiles thought that their stay in Babylon would be a short one. They waited and longed for the day on which they would return to the Holy Land. However, it was decreed differently: The prophet Jeremiah told them that it was decreed in Heaven that they must remain in Babylon. "Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat their fruit...Increase there...Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to G-d for her, because through her peace, you will have peace." And so, the exiled Jews settled down in Babylon. But how could they retain their Jewishness in a foreign land, bereft of the Holy Temple and its Divine service, and surrounded as they were by idol worshippers? The guidance of the Sages of the time set the pattern for Jewish life for all coming generations by establishing the foundations of Torah study, assuring the continuation of the Jewish people both in and out of exile. One of the early exiled Jews mentioned above was Daniel. Together with three companions, the 15 year-old Daniel was amongst those chosen to attend the king in the royal palace. True to their upbringing, Daniel and his friends resisted the temptations of the royal lifestyle. Refusing to partake of non-kosher food, they were given beans and water, but in spite of this meager diet, they remained robust. The wisdom of the Jewish youths attracted attention, and Daniel and his companions were appointed to high positions in the royal court. Nebuchadnezzar had reached the pinnacle of his power, but he began to worry about the future. One of the most remarkable episodes in the life of Daniel occurred when the king had a terrifying dream. When he awoke, the king was unable to remember the dream that had so frightened him. His terror and anxiety mounted, and he summoned his advisors and ordered them to reveal to him both the dream and its meaning. But even under the threat of death, they couldn't explain a dream which the king himself couldn't recall. Then, the king called upon Daniel. In response to his prayers, G-d enabled Daniel to describe and interpret the dream. His explanation was as follows: The king saw in his dream a towering statue whose head was made of gold. The golden head represented Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of the known world at the time. The chest and arms were silver, which symbolized Persia and Media, weaker kingdoms, which would, nevertheless, replace Babylon. The thighs of the statue were copper, representing Greece, the third and weaker empire in the chain. Its legs were of iron, this symbolic of the cruel rule of Rome, the fourth empire. The statue's toes were partly iron and partly earthenware. This represented the two kingdoms which would follow Rome: the Holy Roman Empire and the Moslem rule and the many smaller kingdoms which would result from their fragmentation. As the dream continued, a small stone rolled toward the figure and smashed it. Then, the small stone grew into a huge mountain. This small stone represented the King Mashiach, who would overthrow these kingdoms and rule in the end. The king accepted Daniel's interpretation and raised him to even higher rank. A succeeding king, Belshazzar was to have another, even more astonishing need for Daniel's interpretive powers when Hebrew words mysteriously appeared on the wall of his palace during a drinking orgy. He interpreted those words correctly, as well, predicting the demise of his kingdom, which occurred that same night.

## FOOD 4 THE SOUL

Lasting peace is not created by intellectuals. Even the most powerful intellect can be bribed from within and from without. Nor is it made by those who follow their faith blindly. Blindness wreaks havoc; a viable peace requires vision. Lasting peace is the achievement of those who have made peace between the rigor of their mind and the simplicity of their vision. Their vision is secured far beyond the whims of this world, yet their minds see clearly what is happening down here on earth.