

DAF TSAFON

3 December 2022
9 Kislev 5783

Parashat Vayetzei
ArtScroll 144 Hertz 106



Our parasha opens with Jacob fleeing his home and arriving at the Temple Mount. The Torah states that when Jacob arrived, he took 'from the rocks of the place'. The Midrash quotes Rabbi Yehuda who taught, 'This teaches, that Yaakov took twelve stones, symbolic of the Almighty's decree that the Jewish people would be founded based on a family consisting of twelve tribes.' Jacob said to himself, "My grandfather, Abraham, was not able to fulfill this decree; my father Isaac, was not able to fulfill this decree. If these twelve stones that I am placing under my head will merge into a single stone, I will take it as a Divine Sign that I will be able to fulfill this decree." In the morning, when Jacob saw that the twelve stones had indeed merged into one, he knew that he would be the progenitor of a single nation emerging from a family of twelve sons.

Rabbi Simcha Schepps, (the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vedaat in New York) asks a question regarding this incident. It would have been more logical to request a symbolic sign that he would be the father of a twelve tribe nation by taking a single stone and having it turn into twelve stones by the next morning. Jacob's symbolism sees counter-intuitive. Twelve stones joining to form one stone appear to symbolize the opposite of the sign he was looking for.

Rabbi Schepps answers his question by citing a second Midrash - (Midrash Raba 39:11). When God told Abraham "I will make you into a great nation – "goy gadol" [Genesis 12:2] Abraham asked Him "but you already have seventy nations who are descended from Noah, what will be so special about another nation?" The Almighty answered Abraham - "The nation that will descend from you is the nation about whom it will be said, "For which is such a great nation?" (ki mi goy gadol) [Deut 4:7] - that is the nation that will emerge from you."

What is the meaning of "goy gadol" (literally, big nation)? The biggest "goy gadol" in the world today are the Chinese. There are more Chinese in the world than any other people. The second largest nationality are the Indians. There are approximately twelve million Jews in the world – we have never been the "goy gadol". So what is the Midrash trying to teach us that we, the Jewish People will be a "Goy Gadol"?

The answer to the question lies in the Torah. The first time the term 'gadol' is used is in reference to the sun in creation. We know from science that the sun is not the largest star in the universe, however it does provide light and heat to our planet and solar system. So, the term "gadol" means the ability to give to others.

We see this idea clearly in the book of Exodus. Moses grows up and as a prince goes out to see the suffering of his people. "Moshe became a "Gadol" and went out to see his brethren's suffering" [Exodus 2:11]. Since Moshe was a "Gadol", he wanted to become aware, first hand, of how his brethren were suffering and how he might be able to help them.

Now we can understand the dialogue between Avraham and God. There are plenty of nations in the world. There are 1.3 billion Chinese and a billion Indians. However, God promised Avraham that he would make him into a nation that is 'gadol', meaning a nation of people that care about others and have the capacity to give. As we are well aware the Jewish contribution to civilization is indeed gadol - large and great.

Jacob thus says, "If I take twelve stones and they become one, this symbolizes a nation that has unity amongst them." If there is unity, it means that the members of this nation are not just concerned about themselves, but are concerned about others as well.

Jacob knew that the appropriate sign that he would be the progenitor of the "Goy Gadol" promised to Avraham is for him to take twelve stones that would turn into one, demonstrating this property of unity and the capacity for caring for one another.

Shabbat Shalom

* I first saw this idea in a lecture by Rabbi Yissachar Frand of Baltimore.

Haftarah

ArtScroll 1139 Hertz 118

APPEAL FOR REPENTANCE

Hosea XII, 13-XIV, 10

Assyria threatens to invade the Northern Kingdom and Hosea pleads with the people to return to God. In his opening words – 'and Jacob fled into the field of Aram and Israel served for a wife' – he reminds them how, from the very beginning, God has been their Redeemer, guiding Jacob in his hour of distress and delivering their ancestors from Egyptian slavery. The power of Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) had once been great but Baal-worship had proved its downfall and the invaders would destroy its people. Yet even at this late hour, true repentance and renunciation of idolatry and alliances with idol-worshipping nations would secure God's love and mercy.

מזל טוב

Mazal Tov

This Shabbat we celebrate the Aufruf
for

Mark Schwartz and Sasha Aronson.

Mazal Tov to the young couple, their parents,
Paul and Sandra Schwartz and Larry and Arlene Aronson,
Sasha's grandmother, Anthea Friedman,
as well as their extended family and friends.

מזל טוב

Wedding anniversaries

Dan and Daryl-Anne Elias
Benjamin and Ellen Goodman
Brent and Desiree Isaacson
Ian and Terry Katz
Jeremy and Natalie Levy
Wendy and Brandon Penn
Alan and Esther Reich
Gary and Jenni Ulman

מזל טוב

Bar and Bat Mitzvah anniversaries

Jake Bortz
Zac Katz
David Laufer
Ian Marx
Harold Zev

Shyli Lewin

COMING EVENT

Family Friendly Friday

Chanukah, Day 6

23 December 2022

Join us at 6.00 for a musical session followed by
Ma'ariv and a delicious Kiddush of Sufganiyot.

Our congregation acknowledges the following
yahrzeit anniversaries and wishes long life to those
who are commemorating a yahrzeit
during the coming week.

חיים ארוכים

Rina Bensaul	mother of Sheila Goodman
Leon Berman	father of Errol Berman
Vera Feher	mother of Marianne Feher
Ella Bertha Festinger	mother of Marilyn Rosenbaum
Martin Freiberg	brother of Sylvia Kossard
Jeno Glucksman	grandfather of George Parker
Jacov Hepner	father of Mark Hepner
Doris Josephson	great aunt of Netty Rosenthal
David Krost	brother of Rachelle Lever, uncle of Anton Lever
Alice Levy	grandmother of Jacob Levy
Sabina Taylor	mother of Sandra Zev
Avraham Wertheim	great uncle of ETTY Green