



**BEGINNING TUESDAY NIGHT AT MAARIV ON DEC. 4, "ותן טל ומטר" MUST BE ADDED TO SHEMONEI ESREI. SEE LAWS BELOW.**

שבת פרשת וישב  
**SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYEISHEV**  
 23 KISLEV/DECEMBER 1  
 Haftorah is Amos 2:6-3:8. We bless the month of Tevet. We do not say אב הרחמים.

**FRIDAY NIGHT**  
**CANDLE LIGHTING - 4:11 PM**  
**MINCHA - 4:15 PM**  
**TZAIT - 5:14 PM**

**SATURDAY**  
**HASHKAMA - 8:15 AM**  
**SHACHARIT MAIN - 9:00 AM**  
**LAST KRIAT SHEMA - 9:23 AM**  
**MINCHA - 3:55 PM**  
**SHKIA - 4:29 PM**  
**SHABBAT ENDS - 5:14 PM**

**CONGREGATION AHAVAT ACHIM**  
**18-25 SADDLE RIVER ROAD**  
**FAIR LAWN, NJ 07410-5909**  
**201-797-0502**  
**WWW.AHAVATACHIM.ORG**

**BULLETIN INFORMATION**  
**TO REQUEST A BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT (BY 7:00 PM WEDNESDAY) OR DEDICATE A BULLETIN FOR \$36 (\$54 W/PHOTO), EMAIL SEPLOTNICK@GMAIL.COM**

**הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם**

Molad for Tevet is Friday, Dec. 7, 10:29 PM & 13 Chalokim.  
 ראש חדש טבת יהיה ביום שבת קודש ויום ראשון הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה.


**Rabbi Ely Shestack**

**WEEKDAY DAVENING INFORMATION**


	Sunday (12/2)	Monday (12/3)	Tuesday (12/4)	Wednesday (12/5)	Thursday (12/6)	Friday (12/7)
<b>Earliest Talit</b>	<b>6:01 AM</b>	<b>6:02 AM</b>	<b>6:03 AM</b>	<b>6:04 AM</b>	<b>6:05 AM</b>	<b>6:06 AM</b>
<b>Shacharit</b>	<b>8:15 AM</b>	<b>6:10 AM</b>	<b>6:10 AM</b>	<b>6:10 AM</b>	<b>6:10 AM</b>	<b>6:10 AM</b>
<b>Gedolah</b>	<b>12:09 PM</b>	<b>12:10 PM</b>	<b>12:10 PM</b>	<b>12:10 PM</b>	<b>12:11 PM</b>	<b>12:11 PM</b>
<b>Mincha - Maariv</b>	<b>4:15 PM</b>					<b>4:15 PM</b>
<b>Shkia</b>	<b>4:29 PM</b>	<b>4:28 PM</b>	<b>4:28 PM</b>	<b>4:28 PM</b>	<b>4:28 PM</b>	
<b>Tzait</b>	<b>5:14 PM</b>	<b>5:13 PM</b>	<b>5:13 PM</b>	<b>5:13 PM</b>	<b>5:13 PM</b>	
<b>Maariv Only</b>		<b>8:20 PM</b>	<b>8:20 PM</b>	<b>8:20 PM</b>	<b>8:20 PM</b>	

Thank you Randi Spier for arranging this Friday night's dinner.



 Kiddish is sponsored by Dina & Elliot Greene to commemorate the Yahrzeit of Dina's Mother, Zelda Rubinowitz ז"ל (Zelda bat Hertzl), may her neshama have an aliyah, and in honor of the birth of a grandson to Jennifer & Gary Wexler.  
 יגדלוהו לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים וכניסוהו לבריתו בזמנו ובעתו  
 May they raise him to Torah, chupah and good deeds, and may he be entered into the covenant of Abraham.


*Ahavat Achim Presents*



*The Essence of Chanuka: Heroic Judaism*

**A PRE-CHANUKA SHIUR**  
**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2ND**  
**(EREV CHANUKA) @ 9AM**  
 WITH R' ELY SHESTACK

*Breakfast will be served*



**ותן טל ומטר:** At Maariv on Tuesday night, Dec. 4, we begin to include "ותן טל ומטר" in Shemonei Esrei. If you become aware after completing the Bracha **מברך השנים**, that you omitted "ותן טל ומטר" you should insert it right before "כי אתה שומע" of שמע קולנו. If you completed the Bracha **תפלה שומע**, you may insert it before saying "רצה". If you already begun "רצה", return to the Bracha **ותן**, which is the proper place for "ותן טל ומטר". If you completed Shemonei Esrei, then repeat the entire Shemonei Esrei. In any situation in which a person must repeat the entire Shemonei Esrei, he may fulfill his obligation by listening to every word of the Chazzan's Repetition from beginning to end, with the intention of thus fulfilling his obligation. It is advisable to repeat 101 times, at the very least 90 times, "את כל מיני", so as to make the inclusion of "ותן טל ומטר" habitual and fluent (thus eliminating any future doubt as to whether one included "ותן טל ומטר" in the Shemonei Esrei or not).

**President Aryeh Brenenson**

**Kiddush Information**



- ☆ To sponsor a Kiddush (\$1000/\$613/\$318, plus scotch) email Gail at [gplotnick@aol.com](mailto:gplotnick@aol.com).
- ☆ If you are around when the Rabbi says “על המחיה”, your assistance in clean up would be appreciated.

**Adult Education**



- ☆ GEMARA SHIUR - On Winter Hiatus.
- ☆ DAYTIME TORAH VOYAGES - Thursdays at 1:00 PM.
- ☆ FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT - After Kiddush.
- ☆ PEREK ON THE LAWN, Pirkei Avot Periodic Shiur.

**Community Events**

- ☆ Dec. 1 – **Cocoa & Conversation**, a small open discussion regarding social pressures in the modern Orthodox community. Motzei Shabbat, 8:00 PM, a Darchei Noam event taking place at 3-07 Berdan Ave. To sponsor, email [yoetzet@darcheinoam.com](mailto:yoetzet@darcheinoam.com).
- ☆ Dec. 5 – **Chanukah Party**, featuring STEVE MAX, the nation's leading SIMON SEZ caller! Shomrei Torah, Wedn. night, 6:00 PM. Register at [www.shomrei-torah.org/event/chanukah2018](http://www.shomrei-torah.org/event/chanukah2018).
- ☆ Dec. 6 – **Chanukah Party**, at Bounce U for a hoppin' good time! \$17/child; \$40/family max, which includes admission, pizza and doughnuts. Thur., 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM, a Darchei Noam event at 70 Eisenhower Dr., Paramus, NJ. Sign up at [dno.am/chanukah-party](http://dno.am/chanukah-party).
- ☆ Dec. 9 – **Chanukah Party**, for kids 3 & up, featuring everybody's game show “The Dreidel of Fortune.” YIFL, Sunday, 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM. \$10 per child (not more than \$25 per family), RSVP to [youth@YIFL.org](mailto:youth@YIFL.org).

Gita Cooperwasser

**Youth Program**

- ☆ Youth groups start at 10:00 AM!
- ☆ Contact our Youth Director Aliza Kaplan to discuss our children's youth programming at [youthdirectoraliza@ahavatachim.org](mailto:youthdirectoraliza@ahavatachim.org).
- ☆ Dec. 9 - Children's Chanukah Chagiga, with yummy treats, a mystery Maccabee game and more. RSVP to Aliza.



**Tot Shabbat**

- ☆ 10:40 AM, with the Shabbat reading often featuring a surprise story teller.



**Stay & Play**

- ☆ Next get together will be in the spring, on April 6. See you then.



**Teen Hashkama**

- ☆ Dec. 22



**Welcome to our guests joining us this Shabbat**

- ☆ Liz & Alan Jacob and their children Ariella, Daniel & Samuel.
- ☆ Aliza & Rich Mayer and their daughters Perri & Sophie.
- ☆ Thank you to those who hosting them!

**Ahavat Achim Future Events**

- ☆ Dec. 15 - Reuvain Brenenson Bar Mitzvah
- ☆ Dec. 15 - Seudah Shlishit sponsored by Wigod and Sokoloff families in memory of Ron's and Cheryl's parents Leonore (Leah bat Zev) and Benjamin (Boruch Chaim ben Zevulun Aryeh) Sokoloff.
- ☆ Dec. 21 - Friday night Oneg/NCSY Friday Night Lights
- ☆ Dec. 22 - Siyum Mesechet Menachot at Suedah Shlishit
- ☆ Feb. 1 - Friday night Oneg/NCSY Friday Night Lights
- ☆ Mar. 1 - Friday night Oneg
- ☆ Mar. 9 - Yachad/Yavneh Shabbaton
- ☆ May 11 - Suedah Shlishit sponsored by Kira & Andrew Wigod in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month
- ☆ June 8 - Suedah Shlishit sponsored by Eli Zezion in memory of Shlomo Ben Eliyahu (שלמה בן אליהו - זון נלב"ע זיון תשס"ד)
- ☆ June 22 - Suedah Shlishit sponsored by Eli Zezion in memory of Baroch Mafzir Ben Samuel (ברוך מפציר בן שמואל) - נלב"ע כ"ד סיון תשנ"ט

From the Tzedakah Committee: United Hatzalah of Israel Event, featuring Eli Beer, Founder & President, sharing amazing and powerful stories of life saving rescue and chessed. Childcare to be provided. Sunday morning, 9:00 AM, at Shomrei Torah. To attend or support the organization, contact [Jason@israelrescue.org](mailto:Jason@israelrescue.org).

**Points To Ponder**

- ☆ 2nd - When do the brothers decide they're going to kill Yoseph? What's their reasoning?
- ☆ 3rd - The midrash says that the pit Yoseph was thrown into had snakes and scorpions in it, what textual inference is the midrash picking up on?
- ☆ 4th - Discussion: When does Yehuda leave his brothers and join Chirah? Why did he leave at that time? How does the Torah describe their relationship?
- ☆ 7th - What is the very first thing the Torah tells us that Yoseph does that begins his ascension to royalty in Egypt?

**Answers to Points To Ponder**

- ☆ 2nd - When they seem him coming "from far away"; they justify it by calling him the dreamer (v. 19) who wanted to rule over them
- ☆ 3rd - The pit was empty; there was no water in it (v. 24) no water - but not empty of other things that would do him harm
- ☆ 4th - At that time (v. 1) of the sale of Yoseph, Yehuda leaves his brothers. The Torah describes Chirah as his friend (v. 12)
- ☆ 7th - He notices the emotional state of others, specifically the baker and cup-bearer.



**Shirley Vann has dedicated this week's Covenant & Conversation (used with permission of the Office of Rabbi Sacks) in memory of her beloved mother Necha bat Yitzchok.**



## IN TEVET WE REMEMBER . . .



<u>NAME</u>	<u>HEBREW DATE</u>	<u>CANDLE EVENING OF</u>	<u>DEDICATOR</u>	<u>RELATIONSHIP</u>
Sylvia Eis	4	December 11	Jacob Eis	Mother
Blima Jablon	8	December 15	The Schwitzer Family	Grandmother
Samuel Eis	12	December 19	Jacob Eis	Father
Benjamin H. Sokoloff	12	December 19	Ron Sokoloff	Father
Andrew Leeb	13	December 20	Alice Banner & Janie Kirschenbaum	Father
Lester Plotnick	13	December 20	Steven Plotnick	Father
Ida Freilich	15	December 22	Eita Latkin	Mother
Udel Chedva Schaeffer	16	December 23	Mimi Weinraub	Mother
Sarah Brody	19	December 26	Ron Sokoloff	Grandmother
Leonore Sokoloff	22	December 29	Ron Sokoloff	Mother
Abraham Rotberg	25	January 1	Ellen Chass	Father



## SUPPORT YOUR SHUL

### Donate a Sefer, etc.

The shul has Siddurim & Machzorim (\$36) and Chumashim (\$54) available to be donated. Please contact Jeff Safier at [robysafier@gmail.com](mailto:robysafier@gmail.com) for details.

### Yahrzeit Plaques

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque for \$300 for members and \$450 for non-members. We will also endeavor to send you written notice of an upcoming yahrzeit, mention your loved one's name during the public Yizkor and list the yahrzeit in the Bulletin once a year. For more information, email Larry at [lardavbern@gmail.com](mailto:lardavbern@gmail.com).

### Scrip

Scrip is available from Men's Club. Email David at [dmgarfunkel@gmail.com](mailto:dmgarfunkel@gmail.com). Pay using Paypal ([treasurer@ahavatachim.org](mailto:treasurer@ahavatachim.org)) or use Discover, MasterCard or Visa - email [treasurer@ahavatachim.org](mailto:treasurer@ahavatachim.org) for details.

### Mishebayrach

If you've made a Mishebayrach you've pledged to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing. Contributions to the shul are appropriate and can be made via Paypal to [treasurer@ahavatachim.org](mailto:treasurer@ahavatachim.org), or via MasterCard, Visa or Discover by sending info to Steve Winchester (contact him at [treasurer@ahavatachim.org](mailto:treasurer@ahavatachim.org)). If by check indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

### David Schwitzer <sup>דוד שוויצער</sup> Social Hall

Please contact Ben Lang at [bmmnpl@aol.com](mailto:bmmnpl@aol.com) to book the David Schwitzer <sup>דוד שוויצער</sup> Social Hall for an event or special occasion. \$250 per simcha (members)/\$325 for Associates/\$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of any additional clean up (plus a \$150 security/cleaning deposit refunded when the social hall is returned in the condition it started in). Private caterers must be approved in advance by the Rabbi.

### Men's Club

Please contact Elliot Greene at [MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org](mailto:MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org) to join the Men's Club.

### Honoraria

Contributions to acquire honoraria in memory or honor of a loved one are welcome. The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at [seplotnick@gmail.com](mailto:seplotnick@gmail.com).

### Mitzvah Cards

Want mitzvah cards, contact Eita Latkin at 791-8940 or [parentsof3@aol.com](mailto:parentsof3@aol.com). Cost is \$3 per card. Also can be ordered in bulk - ten cards for \$25, which you send out yourself privately.

## SUPPORT YOUR SHUL

## Chanukah - הנוכה

One should light Chanukah candles as close to 10 minutes after sunset as possible (excepting Sat. night). However, it is preferable for the family to light together rather than have a portion of the family light earlier. Everyone in the household is encouraged to light chanuka candles. (The matriarch of the household should follow the family custom.) There must be enough oil/wax to last one half hour past the time when the stars appear. If one is lighting after the appearance of the stars there must still be enough oil to burn for half an hour.

Under extenuating circumstances, one may light even after midnight if any members of the family are awake to see the lights. If the Chanukah lights are accidentally extinguished prior to their having burned the requisite time, one is not obligated by Halacha to rekindle them; it is, however, permissible to rekindle them, but without a Bracha.

There is a custom to give children Chanukah Gelt as part of publicizing the miracle.

In Shemonah Esrei and Bircat HaMazon add ועל הנסים (do not repeat if omitted). At Shacharit we recite complete Hallel.

## Fifth Night of Chanukah - ה' דהנוכה

### Friday Afternoon - December 7 (29 Kislev)

We light the Chanukah Menorah at home before lighting the Shabbat candles. One must be careful to use enough oil (or light a large enough candle) to remain lit until thirty minutes after the appearance of three stars. There is a minhag to daven Mincha before lighting the Menorah, but one should not delay the welcoming of Shabbat because of this. One may not light Chanukah or Shabbat candles earlier than Plag HaMincha (3:30 PM).

**The Sisterhood is looking for vibrant dedicated women to take over its leadership reins, shape it in accordance with their vision, and prepare it to serve the next generation of women in the shul. Please step up, speak to Aryeh, and let's keep the momentum going!**



You can help Ahavat Achim's finances and it won't cost you a cent! Just make your regular Amazon purchases via this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/>. After a one-time set up designating Congregation Ahavat Achim of Fair Lawn as your preferred charity, nothing more for you to do except make your regular Amazon purchases.

- Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Ahavat Achim.
- AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Ahavat Achim Membership/Hospitality

Contact Arnie at [aspier@verizon.net](mailto:aspier@verizon.net) for membership details. For Shabbat hospitality contact Melanie at [mkwestel@gmail.com](mailto:mkwestel@gmail.com).

### Bikkur Cholim/Chesed Committee

If someone needs a visit/assistance, contact Sara at [saralevine06@gmail.com](mailto:saralevine06@gmail.com) or Mary Lisa at [kenkatter541@gmail.com](mailto:kenkatter541@gmail.com).

### Personal Announcements

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births, bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings and deaths, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). We also welcome new members. Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (a \$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

### Numbers & Info

☆ ERUV – To subscribe for updates, email [fairlawneruv@groups.io](mailto:fairlawneruv@groups.io). Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

☆ MIKVAH – 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah, 9 PM–10:30 PM, Motzei Shabbat from 1¼ hours after Shabbat ends for 1½ hours. Kaylim Mikvah: Sun. 10 AM–3 PM

☆ TWITTER: [AhavatAchimFL](https://twitter.com/AhavatAchimFL)

☆ FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/groups/ahavat.achim/](https://facebook.com/groups/ahavat.achim/)

☆ INSTAGRAM: [instagram.com/ahavatachimfl/?hl=en](https://instagram.com/ahavatachimfl/?hl=en)

☆ FLICKR: [flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums](https://flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums)

### Shul Calendar

☆ To add events to the shul calendar email Larry at [lardavbern@gmail.com](mailto:lardavbern@gmail.com)



# Children's CHANUKAH Chagiga

Candle Making, Ultimate Dreidal, Mystery Maccabee

12.9.18

@ 5:30 P.M.

Congregation Ahavat Achim

18-25 Saddle River Road Fair Lawn, NJ

Come join us for a Chanukah Celebration!

Please RSVP to [youthdirectorliza@ahavatachim.org](mailto:youthdirectorliza@ahavatachim.org)

to participate in Mystery Maccabee!

(\$5 min. and \$10 max)

קהילת  
אהבת אחים  
Congregation  
Ahavat Achim



# COVENANT & CONVERSATION

THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA  
FROM RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

בס"ד



I am deeply touched that Covenant & Conversation has been generously sponsored by THE MAURICE WOHL CHARITABLE FOUNDATION in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl ז"ל. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist on a vast scale, driven throughout his life by a sense of Jewish responsibility. Vivienne was a woman of the deepest humanity and compassion, who had a kind word for everyone. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving. Through their Charitable Foundation, they continue to bring blessings to Jewish communities around the world. — RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

וישב תשע"ט  
Vayeshev 5779

## COVENANT & CONVERSATION: FAMILY EDITION

*Covenant & Conversation: Family Edition* is a new and exciting initiative. Written as an accompaniment to Rabbi Sacks' weekly *Covenant & Conversation* essay, the *Family Edition* is aimed at connecting older children and teenagers with his ideas and thoughts on the *parsha*. To download the accompanying Family Edition to this *Covenant & Conversation* essay, please visit [www.RabbiSacks.org/CCFamilyEdition](http://www.RabbiSacks.org/CCFamilyEdition) or make sure you are subscribed to Rabbi Sacks' free mailing list via [www.RabbiSacks.org/Subscribe](http://www.RabbiSacks.org/Subscribe) and you will receive the link each week in your inbox.

## Refusing Comfort, Keeping Hope

The deception has taken place. Joseph has been sold into slavery. His brothers dipped his coat in blood. They bring it back to their father, saying: "Look what we have found. Do you recognise it? Is this your son's robe or not?" Jacob recognises it and replies, "It is my son's robe. A wild beast has devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces." We then read:

*Jacob rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned his son for a long time. His sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, "I will go down to the grave mourning for my son." (Gen. 37:34–35)*

There are laws in Judaism about the limits of grief – *shiva*, *sheloshim*, a year. There is no such thing as a bereavement for which grief is endless. The Talmud says that God admonishes one who weeps beyond the appointed time, "You are not more compassionate than I."<sup>1</sup> And yet Jacob refuses to be comforted.

A Midrash gives a remarkable explanation. "One can be comforted for one who is dead, but not for one who is still living," it says. In other words, Jacob refused to be comforted because he had not yet given up hope that Joseph was still alive. That, tragically, is the fate of those who have lost members of their family (the parents of soldiers missing in action, for example), but have as yet no proof that they are dead. They cannot go through the normal stages of mourning because they cannot abandon the possibility that the missing person is still capable of being rescued. Their continuing anguish is a form of loyalty; to give up, to mourn, to be reconciled to loss is a kind of betrayal. In such cases, grief lacks closure. To refuse to be comforted is to refuse to give up hope.

<sup>1</sup> Mo'ed Katan 27b.

Yet on what basis did Jacob continue to hope? Surely he had recognised Joseph’s blood-stained coat – he said explicitly, “A wild beast has devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces.” Do these words not mean that he had accepted that Joseph was dead?

The late David Daube made a suggestion that I find convincing.<sup>2</sup> The words the sons say to Jacob – *haker na*, literally “identify please” – have a quasi-legal connotation. Daube relates this passage to another, with which it has close linguistic parallels:

If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to his neighbour for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the Lord that the neighbour did not lay hands on the other person’s property...If it [the animal] was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal. (Ex. 22:10–13)

The issue at stake is the extent of responsibility borne by a guardian (*shomer*). If the animal is lost through negligence, the guardian is at fault and must make good the loss. If there is no negligence, merely *force majeure*, an unavoidable, unforeseeable accident, the guardian is exempt from blame. One such case is where the loss has been caused by a wild animal. The wording in the law – *tarof yitaref*, “torn to pieces” – exactly parallels Jacob’s judgment in the case of Joseph: *tarof toraf Yosef*, “Joseph has been torn to pieces.”

We know that some such law existed prior to the giving of the Torah. Jacob himself says to Laban, whose flocks and herds had been placed in his charge, “I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself ” (Gen. 31:39). This implies that guardians even then were exempt from responsibility for the damage caused by wild animals. We also know that an elder brother carried a similar responsibility for the fate of a younger brother placed in his charge, as, for example, when the two were alone together. That is the significance of Cain’s denial when confronted by God as to the fate of Abel: “Am I my brother’s guardian [*shomer*]?” (Gen. 4:9).

We now understand a series of nuances in the encounter between Jacob and his sons upon their return without Joseph. Normally they would be held responsible for their younger brother’s disappearance. To avoid this, as in the case of later biblical law, they “bring the remains as evidence.” If those remains show signs of an attack by a wild animal, they must – by virtue of the law then operative – be held innocent. Their request to Jacob, *haker na*, must be construed as a legal request, meaning, “Examine the evidence.” Jacob has no alternative but to do so, and by virtue of what he has seen, to acquit them. A judge, however, may be forced to acquit someone accused of a crime because the evidence is insufficient to justify a conviction, while still retaining lingering private doubts. So Jacob was forced to find his sons innocent, without necessarily trusting what they said. In fact Jacob did not believe it, and his refusal to be comforted shows that he was unconvinced. He continued to hope that Joseph was still alive. That hope was eventually justified: Joseph was still alive, and father and son were ultimately reunited.

**“Jacob continued to hope that Joseph was still alive. That hope was eventually justified...and father and son were ultimately reunited.”**

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<sup>2</sup> David Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (Cambridge: University Press, 1947).

The refusal to be comforted sounded more than once in Jewish history. The prophet Jeremiah heard it in a later age:

This is what the Lord says:

“A voice is heard in Ramah,  
Mourning and great weeping,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
Refusing to be comforted,  
Because her children are no more.”

This is what the Lord says:

“Restrain your voice from weeping,  
And your eyes from tears,  
For your work will be rewarded,” says the Lord.  
“They will return from the land of the enemy.  
So there is hope for your future,” declares the Lord,  
“Your children will return to their own land.”

(Jeremiah 31:15–17)

**“Jews refused to be  
comforted – meaning,  
they refused to give  
up hope.”**

Why was Jeremiah sure that Jews would return? Because they refused to be comforted – meaning, they refused to give up hope.

So it was during the Babylonian exile, as articulated in one of the most paradigmatic expressions of the refusal to be comforted:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept,  
As we remembered Zion...  
How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?  
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
May my right hand forget [its skill],  
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
If I do not remember you,  
If I do not consider Jerusalem above my highest joy.

(Psalms 137:1–6)



It is said that Napoleon, passing a synagogue on the fast day of Tisha B'Av, heard the sounds of lamentation. "What are the Jews crying for?" he asked one of his officers. "For Jerusalem," the soldier replied. "How long ago did they lose it?" "More than 1,700 hundred years." "A people who can mourn for Jerusalem so long, will one day have it restored to them," the Emperor is reputed to have replied.


Jews are the people who refused to be comforted because they never gave up hope. Jacob did eventually see Joseph again. Rachel's children did return to the land. Jerusalem is once again the Jewish home. All the evidence may suggest otherwise: it may seem to signify irretrievable loss, a decree of history that cannot be overturned, a fate that must be accepted. Jews never believed the evidence because they had something else to set against it – a faith, a trust, an unbreakable hope that proved stronger than historical inevitability. It is not too much to say that Jewish survival was sustained in that hope. And that hope came from a simple – or perhaps not so simple – phrase in the life of Jacob. He refused to be comforted. And so – while we live in a world still scarred by violence, poverty and injustice – must we.

Shabbat shalom

Jonathan Sacks

**“Jewish survival was sustained in a faith, a trust, an unbreakable hope that proved stronger than historical inevitability.”**



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