



AHAVAT ACHIM
קָהָלָת אֶחָדִים
THE FAMILY SHUL

CANDLE LIGHTING 4:16 PM | 7 TEVET | DECEMBER 27, 2025 | HAVDALA 5:20 PM

שבת פרשת ויגש

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIGASH

Haftorah is Ezekiel 37:15-28.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 4:20 PM

SHKIA 4:35 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 5:15 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 7:45 AM

SHACHARIT - MAIN 9:00 AM

POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR ≈ 9:30 AM

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:39 AM

FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR ≈ 11:30 AM

GEDOLAH 12:21 PM

PRE-MINCHA SHIUR 3:30 PM

MINCHA 4:10 PM

SHKIA 4:35 PM

MAARIV 5:20 PM

KIDDUSH

Kiddush is sponsored by the Rozenfeld family in memory of beloved mother, grandmother, and great grandmother, Mindy bat Moshe"ל.

ANNUAL DINNER



Mazal tov to this year's Dinner Honoree, Dr. Melanie Kwestel, and this year's Young Leadership Awardees Sara & Natan Santacruz. Save the date, February 22, and look out for the invitations.



**עשרה בטבת - FAST OF TENTH OF TEVET - TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30
FAST BEGINS 6:09 AM AND ENDS AT 5:18 PM**

"And it was in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth (day) of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon came, he and all his hosts, upon Yerushalayim, and he encamped upon it and built forts around it. And the city came under siege till the eleventh year of King Tzidkiyahu. On the ninth of the month famine was intense in the city, the people had no bread, and the city was breached." (Second Melachim 25).

We see then that the tenth of Tevet - on which the siege of Yerushalayim began - was the beginning of the whole chain of calamities which finally ended with the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. [From ou.org/chagim/roshchodesh/tevet/fast.htm]



SUNDAY
12/28

MONDAY
12/29

TUESDAY
12/30

WEDNESDAY
12/31

THURSDAY
1/1

FRIDAY
1/2

WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:00 AM*	6:25 AM	6:20/8:00 AM	6:20/8:00 AM
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:25 AM	7:10 AM	7:25 AM		
MINCHA/MAARIV	4:24 PM	4:25 PM	4:10 PM	4:26 PM	4:27 PM	4:25 PM
ZMANIM						
Earliest Talit	6:20 AM	6:20 AM	6:21 AM	6:21 AM	6:21 AM	6:21 AM
Gedolah	12:21 PM	12:22 PM	12:22 PM	12:23 PM	12:23 PM	12:24 PM
Shkia	4:36 PM	4:37 PM	4:38 PM	4:38 PM	4:39 PM	
Tzait	5:16 PM	5:17 PM	5:18 PM	5:18 PM	5:19 PM	

*Please note that we shall begin with Selichot.

Rabbi Ely Shestack

President Jay Herman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 30 - Shabbat Shira Dinner.

Feb. 14 - Scholar-In-Residence Rabbi Shlomo Brody, from Ematai.

Feb. 21 - 4th Annual Comedy Night featuring Mike Fine, Sat. night, Doors Open

at 7:30 PM, show starts at 8:00 PM! Buy Tickets here: [LAUGH A LOT!](http://LAUGHALOT.COM)

Feb. 22 - Journal Dinner.

IN OUR FUTURE

Jan. 3 - Kiddush is sponsored by the Riskin family as a **חכרת הטוב** for keeping Greg's long-term memory intact and allowing him to still recite his Bar Mitzvah parsha, and as a **תודה רבה** to the community for supporting Greg and his entire family as he continues his battle with Frontotemporal Dementia.

Jan. 31 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Amy & Stephen Agress to commemorate the Yahrtzeit of Amy's stepfather, **הירש בן מאיר**.

Feb. 14 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Amy & Stephen Agress commemorating the Yahrtzeit of Rabbi Hyman Agress^{הצ"ר}, Stephen's father, **הרב חיים בן הרב יהושע**.

KIDDUSH & SEUDAH SHLISHIT

- Enjoy Scotch at Kiddush, please donate a bottle to the shul from time to time.
- To sponsor a Kiddush (prices start at \$318, plus a bottle of scotch) email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.
- Want to know the menu for Kiddush? Email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com to be put on the WhatsApp group. To sponsor Seudah Shlishit for \$136 (or in the case of multiple sponsors, \$100 per sponsor), email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY

KIDDUSH

To add a birthday or anniversary to our January list (next Kiddush on Shabbat, Jan. 10), click here: [SIMCHA](#). Listings/sponsorships are \$36 per family per month. RSVP for the January birthday/anniversary Kiddush by Sunday night, Jan. 4.

SHIURIM



- PESHAT OF THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM (<https://zoom.us/j/7291311899>, PW: 112233).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via a Whatsapp group, with 3-minute daily Halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com.

- TORAH PODCAST FOR YOUR COMMUTE is available on Spotify or on other applications with an RSS code. Click here: [PODCASTS](#).
- POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR, alternates between examining the development of Halachot and analyzing Mishlei (Proverbs)
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush, discussing the Political Philosophy of our Patriarchs.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, **Sanhedrin Ch. 8**, 40 minutes prior to mincha.
- TZURBA M'RABANAN w/ Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.
- MISHNA CHABURAH, w/Jeff Safier, after 7:25 AM Shacharit minyon (~10 minutes).
- HALACHA SHIUR FOR WOMEN, Monday nights, 8:15 PM. **ON HIATUS!**
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit - **Korbonot Part V (R. Donin - p. 199-200, R. Munk - pp. 61-73)**.

BOARD MEETINGS 8:15 PM

Dec. 29 (Mon.) - At shul w/Zoom option.

Jan. 27, Feb. 24, Mar. 24, Apr. 28, May 26, & June 30

GITA COOPERWASSER ה"ע

YOUTH EVENTS

Jan. 3 - Parent-Child Learning.

Feb. 7 - Parent-Child Learning.

GITA COOPERWASSER ה"ע

SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



● SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS:

3RD - 5TH: LETIZIAA & ABBY

K - 2ND: ARIELLA & NICOLE

3 YEARS - PRE-K: SOPHIA, MAYA, & PERRI

- Youth group for in 2nd - 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

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<http://www.ahavatachim.org>

וְיַדְעָנָה בָּזָה וְנִשְׁקַה־דָּלָה הַעֲזָה לְנִיחָה וְתָמָאָה: טָמְרָבְדִים רְבָקְתִי עֲרָשִׁי טְבָבָות אַפְעָן מְאַרְבִּים: גְּנַפְתִּי מְשַׁכְבִּי מֶרֶאָהָלִים וְקַמְנוֹן: גַּלְגָּה גְּרָנָה זְדִים עַד־הַבְּקָר נְתַעַלָּה בְּאַהֲבָה: יְשִׁבִּי אַיִן הָאִישׁ בְּבִיתָנוֹ הַלְּךָ בְּגַדְדָה מְרַחְזָק: יְצָרָר־הַבְּסָר לְקָח בְּיָדוֹ לְיָום הַלְּבָס אַבְּאָבִיתָה: יְאַתְּהָטוֹ בְּרָב לְקָהָה בְּתַתְּלָק פְּלַמְּגִיהָ תְּדִיקָהָנוּ: יְהַלְלָךְ אַחֲרִיכָה פְּתָהָם קָשָׁוֹר אַל־עֲבָה בְּבוֹא וְכַעֲסָר אַל־מוֹסָר אָנוֹל: יְעַד יְפָלָח תְּזַבְּדוֹ קְמָהָר אַל־פָּחָה וְלְאַדְעָה קִידְבָּנְפָשׁוּ הוּא: יְעַנְהָה בְּנָם שָׁמְעִירָלִי וְהַקְשָׁבּוּ לְאַמְרָה פִּי: יְהַאֲלִיְשָׁטָאַלְזְרָקִיהָ לְבָבָאַלְמְתָעָבְנִתְבּוֹתִיהָ: יְקִידְקִים חַלְלִים הַפִּילָה וְעַצְמִים כָּל־הַגְּרִיגָה: יְזַרְקִי שְׁאֹל בִּתְהָרָה רְדוֹת אַל־סְרִירִמָּנוֹת:

13She seized him and kissed him; she thrust forth her face and said to him: 14 "I vowed to bring a peace-offering; today I fulfilled my vow. 15This is why I came to you; seeking your countenance and I have found you. 16I have decked my couch with spreads, with braided linen of Egypt. 17I fanned my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18Come, let us drink our fill of lovemaking until morning; let us delight in a seductive embrace. 19For the man of the house [my husband] is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. 20He has taken his money pouch; and he will not return home until the full moon." 21She swayed him with her eloquence; with the smooth talk of her lips she seduces him. 22Suddenly he follows her, like an ox going to the slaughter, like a leashed dog following the commands of an ignoramus [i.e., the skeptic].¹ 23Until an arrow splits his liver; he is like a bird that hastens to a snare, unaware that it is at the cost of its life. 24Now, sons, listen to me, pay attention to my words. 25Do not let your heart cause you to wander her way; do not stray onto her paths. 26For many are those that she has struck dead, and numerous are her victims. 27Her house is a highway to the netherworld, leading to the chambers of death.²

A. When last we left it, our protagonist the “lad” has been looking for a particular woman from the beginning of the evening until well into the night. She appears on the scene boisterous and dressed like a prostitute, seemingly unashamed by her actions. She then approached him with her “heart on a mission.”

B. Breaking down the woman’s dialogue following the understanding of Rav Peninim, we have the following:

- **Mitzvot** - “I vowed to bring a peace-offering; today I fulfilled my vow.” - A declaration of piety as she has fulfilled two mitzvot that day (fulfilling her vow and bringing a Korban Shelamim).
- **Seudah** - “This is why I came to meet you. . . .”
 - There is a time-restricted mitzvah to be done. The meat of the Shelamim would have to be consumed before sunset of the following day, so there is an urgency to the lad’s joining her in this endeavor.³
 - One alternative viewpoint is that of the Ibn Ezra who says she is lying about bringing a Shelamim, albeit it is unclear to me as to why he would think this shameless woman would proffer this lie.
 - The common view is that she is telling the truth about the Shelamim, and thereby enticing the lad with the abundance of food still to be eaten from the Shelamim (see Rashi, Malbim, Ralbag, etc.), but Rav Peninim understands this as she is in fact trying to entice him with the opportunity to do a mitzvah. [Note that as the Shelamim must be eaten in Jerusalem, and as she is seeking to establish the righteousness of this act, presumptively the adulteress lives in Jerusalem.⁴]
- **Holy Meeting** - “. . . seeking your countenance and I have found you.” - She is not promiscuous; it is only the lad that she wishes to be with, and his presence is a blessing to her in this spiritual endeavor.
- **Sin** – She provides a moral alibi, flatters the lad, entices him, and assures him that his father’s warning of an enraged husband would not come to pass, as the husband “is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. He has taken his money pouch; and he will not return home until the full moon.”

¹ Translations of the conclusion of this pasuk vary greatly, e.g., “like a fool to the stocks of punishment”, “like one who demurs to a fool’s correction”, and “like a snake following the chastisement of a fool”. Also note that as we previously defined קָפֵלִי as the fool, and אַיִלִי as the skeptic (one who doubts because he is an ignoramus), so I used the term ignoramus here albeit all seem to translate אַיִל here as fool.

² Mishlei Chapter 7.

³ Vayikra 7:15-17. In effect, you have 1½ days to consume the Korban Shelamim, see Zevachim 44a.

⁴ Zevachim 55a.

Post-Hashkama Shiur 14

C. Malbim points out that the Yetzer Hara does not begin with rebellion, but with misdirected holiness. We have this familiar concept presented at Yoma 86b that “Once a person commits a sin and repeats it, it becomes permitted in his eyes.” And the Vilna Gaon’s famous expansion of this idea by saying that after the third time he perceives it as if were a mitzvah.

D. “Suddenly he follows her, like an ox going to the slaughter, like a leashed dog following the commands of an ignoramus.”

- Translations vary widely as to pasuk 7:22 (with the exception of the metaphor of the ox going to be slaughtered). Those that translate מִתְקַרְבָּה as suddenly (Malbim, Metzudat David, Rav Peninim) usually see this word as emphasizing a sudden breakdown of resistance on the part of the lad. Alternative translations of this term are unsuspectingly or unwittingly.
- Malbim and Rashi see סְכֻנְתָּה as a reference to a snake’s rattling parts, with nothing to do with a dog. Note that most translations refer to a fool being lead to stocks or chains for punishment (e.g., Ibn Ezra sees סְכֻנְתָּה as the sound of anklets use to restrain), as opposed to a dog being led by a fool.
- The idea of a man’s restraint cracking and giving into his sexual desires brought on via the overtures of a licentious woman, doesn’t have a parallel elsewhere in the Tanach. Consider, however:
 - **Shechem & Dinah** (Bereshit 34) → Dinah “went out”, which is often understood as putting herself in a precarious position, but there is no indication of her actively tempting Shechem, and the Torah states that she was raped. After raping her, Shechem did become obsessed with Dinah, albeit after the rape he expresses his desire as love.
 - **Yehudah & Tamar** (Bereshit 38) → Yehudah gave in, but the motives of the temptress were pure.
 - **Yosef & Potiphar’s wife** (Bereshit 39) → Potiphar’s wife tempted, but Yosef conquers his desire.
 - **Dovid & Batsheva** (2 Shmuel) → Dovid’s sexual obsession is assumed to not have been a result of Bathsheva seeking to tempt him. He had a high vantage point from the roof of his house over surrounding structures, and from his roof he gazed upon her while she was bathing, triggering his obsession (2 Shmuel 11:2). Of course, there is no indication of Bathsheva resisting Dovid either.
 - **Amnon & Tamar** (2 Shmuel) → It may well be that Amnon and Tamar at first had a very loving half-sibling relationship. In fact, we are first told that Amnon loved Tamar, but we then discover this is in fact a sexual obsession of Amnon stoked on by his friend Yonadav. After Tamar rejects Amnon’s advances (“Do not defy me my brother”, 2 Shmuel 13:12), he rapes her to fulfill his sexual desires, and thereafter he hates her (perhaps he saw her lack of consent as the cause of his becoming a rapist) and refuses to marry her to lessen her shame (so it was never love, but only lust).
 - **Achav & Izevel** (1 Melachim) → Izevel is a persuasive force over a man she has the power to manipulate, albeit that power appears more ideological and not based on sexual temptation.

E. The term לִקְשָׁר, the translation for which I used “netherworld”, has an unclear meaning.

- Rashi to Bereshit 37:35 (Yaakov says he will not be comforted and instead “will go down mourning to my son in Sheol”) says the literal meaning is “the grave”, but that the Midrash says it means Gehinnom.
- References to Sheol as the “netherworld” or the “abyss” presumably distinguish this from Gehinnom.
- Kohelet 9:10 says “... for there is neither deed nor reckoning, neither knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol where you are going.” Given Kohelet’s description of the term (again oft translated as grave), might Rambam view Sheol as his third option of becoming “nothing” on death (other options on death being the receiving of a share of Olam Haba or going through the temporary waystation of Gehinnom, at least as I understand it). Note that Sheol as nothingness would fit well with Kohelet’s description.

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Covenant & Conversation

VAYIGASH • וַיַּגֵּשׁ

FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ז"ת

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel.

"I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." — Rabbi Sacks

This year's series of essays were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks zt"l in 5773 (2012–2013). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha.

Choice and Change

The sequence from Bereishit 37 to 50 is the longest unbroken narrative in the Torah, and there can be no doubt who its hero is: Joseph. The story begins and ends with him. We see him as a child, beloved – even spoiled – by his father; as an adolescent dreamer, resented by his brothers; as a slave, then a prisoner, in Egypt; then as the second most powerful figure in the greatest empire of the ancient world. At every stage, the narrative revolves around him and his impact on others. He dominates the last third of Bereishit, casting his shadow on everything else. From almost the beginning, he seems destined for greatness.

Yet history did not turn out that way. To the contrary, it is another brother who, in the fullness of time, leaves his mark on the Jewish people. Indeed, we bear his name. The covenantal family has been known by several names.

One is *Ivri*, “Hebrew” (possibly related to the ancient *apiru*), meaning outsider, stranger, nomad, one who wanders from place to place. That is how Abraham and his children were known to others. The second is *Yisrael*, derived from Jacob’s new name after he “wrestled with God and with man and prevailed.”

After the division of the kingdom and the conquest of the North by the Assyrians, however, they became known as *Yehudim* or Jews, for it was the tribe of Judah who dominated the kingdom of the South, and they who survived the Babylonian exile. So it was not Joseph but Judah who conferred his identity on the people, Judah who became the ancestor of Israel’s greatest king, David, Judah from whom the Messiah will be born.

Why Judah, not Joseph? The answer undoubtedly lies in the beginning of Vayigash, as the two brothers confront

one another, and Judah pleads for Benjamin's release. The clue lies many chapters back, at the beginning of the Joseph story. It is there we find that it was Judah who proposed selling Joseph into slavery:

Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain by killing our brother and covering his blood? Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not harm him with our own hands. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

Gen. 37:26-27

This is a speech of monstrous callousness. There is no word about the evil of murder, merely pragmatic calculation ("What will we gain?"). At the very moment he calls Joseph "our own flesh and blood" he is proposing selling him as a slave. Judah has none of the tragic nobility of Reuben who, alone of the brothers, sees that what they are doing is wrong, and makes an attempt to save him (which fails). At this point, Judah is the last person from whom we expect great things.

However, Judah – more than anyone else in the Torah – changes. The man we see all these years later is not who he was then. Then he was prepared to see his brother sold into slavery. Now he is prepared to suffer that fate himself rather than see Benjamin held as a slave. As he says to Joseph:

"So, please, let your servant stay as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I could not bear to see the misery that would overwhelm

my father!"

Gen. 44:33-34

It is a precise reversal of character. Callousness has been replaced with concern. Indifference to his brother's fate has been transformed into courage on his behalf. He is willing to suffer what he once inflicted on Joseph so that the same fate should not befall Benjamin. At this point Joseph reveals his identity. We know why. Judah has passed the test that Joseph has carefully constructed for him. Joseph wants to know if Judah has changed. He has.

This is a highly significant moment in the history of the human spirit. Judah is the first penitent – the first *baal teshuvah* – in the Torah. Where did it come from, this change in his character? For that, we have to backtrack to chapter 38 – the story of Tamar.

Tamar, we recall, had married Judah's elder son, who died, and then married his next son, who also died, leaving her a childless widow. Judah, fearing that his third son would share their fate, withheld him from her – thus leaving her unable to remarry and have children. Once she understands her situation, Tamar

disguises herself as a prostitute. Judah sleeps with her. She becomes pregnant. Judah, unaware of the disguise, concludes that she must have had a forbidden relationship and orders her to be put to death. At this point, Tamar – who, while disguised, had taken Judah's seal, cord and staff as a pledge – sends them to Judah with a message: "The father of my child is the man to whom these belong."

Judah now understands the whole story. Not only has he placed Tamar in an impossible situation of living widowhood, and not only is he the father of her child, but he also realises that she has behaved with extraordinary discretion in revealing the truth without shaming him (it is from this act of Tamar's that we derive the rule that "one should rather throw oneself into a fiery furnace than shame someone else in public").

Tamar is the heroine of the story, but it has one significant consequence. Judah admits he was wrong. "She was more righteous than I," he says. This is the first time in the Torah someone acknowledges their own guilt. It is also the turning-point in Judah's life. Here is born that ability to recognise one's own wrongdoing, to feel remorse, and to change – the complex phenomenon known as *teshuvah* – that later leads to the great scene in *Vayigash*, where Judah is capable of turning his earlier behaviour on its head and doing the opposite of what he had once done before. Judah is *Ish Teshuvah*, penitential man.

We now understand the significance of his name. The verb *lehadot* means two things. It means "to thank," which is what Leah has in mind when she gives Judah, her fourth son, his name: "this time I will thank the Lord." However, it also means to admit, to acknowledge. The biblical term *vidui*, "confession," – then and now part of the process of *teshuvah*, and according to Maimonides its key element – comes from the same root. Judah means "he who acknowledged his sin."

We now also understand one of the fundamental axioms of *teshuvah*:

Rabbi Abbahu said: In the place where penitents stand, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand.

Brachot 34b

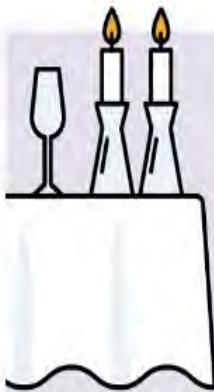
His prooftext is the verse from *Isaiah*:

"Peace, peace to him that was far and to him that is near."

Isaiah 57:19

The verse puts one who "was far" ahead of one who "is near." As the Talmud makes clear, however, Rabbi Abbahu's reading is by no means uncontroversial. Rabbi Jochanan interprets "far" as "far from sin" rather than "far from God." The real proof is Judah. Judah is a penitent, the first in the Torah. Joseph is consistently known to tradition as *Ha-Tzaddik*, "the righteous." Joseph became *mishneh le-melech*, "second to the king." Judah, however, became the father

of Israel's line of kings. Where the penitent Judah stands, even the perfectly righteous Joseph cannot stand. However great an individual may be in virtue of his or her natural character, greater still is one who is capable of growth and change. That is the power of penitence, and it began with Judah.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. What do you think caused Judah to change so dramatically?
2. Can you think of other biblical characters who underwent significant transformations? What made their change possible?
3. Do you agree with Rabbi Sacks that someone who changes is greater than someone who was always righteous?

● These questions come from this week's **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks' Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/vayigash/choice-and-change/