

Bulletin is  
sponsored  
by Steve  
Plotnick  
because . . .



AHAVAT ACHIM  
קהילת אהבת אחיכים  
THE FAMILY SHUL

CANDLE LIGHTING 4:22 PM | 14 TEVET | JANUARY 3, 2026 | HAVDALA 5:26 PM



שבת פרשת ויחי  
SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYECHI

Kings I 2:1-12. Kiddush Levanah of Tevet may be said this Friday night if necessary.

#### FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 4:25 PM

SHKIA 4:40 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 5:20 PM

#### SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 7:45 AM

SHACHARIT - MAIN 9:00 AM

POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR ≈ 9:30 AM

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:41 AM

FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR ≈ 11:30 AM

GEDOLAH 12:24 PM

PRE-MINCHA SHIUR 3:35 PM

MINCHA 4:15 PM

SHKIA 4:41 PM

MAARIV 5:26 PM

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



#### PARENT-CHILD LEARNING

Starts at 6:15 PM this Motzei Shabbat, 1st grade and up. Rabbi Shestack will speak on Sibling Rivalries. Hosted by Farnaz & David Gorelik. Pizza will be served!

#### JANUARY BIRTHDAY/ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH NEXT SHABBAT



Next Shabbat is the birthday/anniversary kiddush! Just \$36 per family for all January family birthday/anniversary listings. To sponsor and provide names, click here: [SIMCHA](#).



#### WOMEN'S MONDAY NIGHT HALACHA SHIUR

Starting this Monday night, the Women's Halacha Shiur will start a new series of analysis and insight on the topic of Borer, and it will be at the home of Denise Miller at 8:15 PM.

#### 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.



SUNDAY  
1/4

MONDAY  
1/5

TUESDAY  
1/6

WEDNESDAY  
1/7

THURSDAY  
1/8

FRIDAY  
1/9

#### WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:25 AM				
MINCHA/MAARIV	4:30 PM	4:31 PM	4:32 PM	4:33 PM	4:34 PM	4:30 PM
<b>ZMANIM</b>						
Earliest Talit	6:21 AM					
Gedolah	12:25 PM	12:25 PM	12:26 PM	12:26 PM	12:27 PM	12:27 PM
Shkia	4:42 PM	4:43 PM	4:44 PM	4:45 PM	4:46 PM	
Tzait	5:22 PM	5:23 PM	5:24 PM	5:25 PM	5:26 PM	

Rabbi Ely Shestack

President Jay Herman

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Jan. 24** - Game Night (Adults). RSVP: [Board Games](#)

**Jan. 30** - Shabbat Shira Dinner.

**Jan. 31** - Tu B'Shvat Sustainable Kiddush w/ Cholent cookoff.

**Feb. 1** - Adi Karni, IDF Combat Engineer.

**Feb. 7** - Super Bowl Kiddush.

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

**Feb. 14** - Birthday/Anniversary Kiddush.

**Feb. 21** - 4th Annual Comedy Night with Mike Fine, Sat. night, Doors Open at 7:30 PM, show starts at 8:00 PM! Buy Tickets: [LAUGH A LOT!](#)

**Feb. 22** - Journal Dinner.

**Feb. 28** - Esther Chapter-by-Chapter Round-Robin Shiur. To sign up, click: [Esther](#).

**Mar. 28** - Shir HaShirim Chapter-by-Chapter Round-Robin Shiur. To sign up, click here: [Song of Songs](#)

## IN OUR FUTURE

**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 to commemorate the Yahrtzeit of Rabbi Hyman Agress<sup>הצ"ר</sup>, 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](mailto:dmgarfunkel@gmail.com).
- Want to know the menu for Kiddush? Email [dmgarfunkel@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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 - **STUDYING BORER**.
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit - **Korbonot Part VI (R. Donin - p. 199-200, R. Munk - pp. 61-73)**.

## BOARD MEETINGS 8:15 PM

**Jan. 27** - At shul w/Zoom option.

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

## GITA COOPERWASSER ה"ע

### YOUTH EVENTS

**Feb. 7** - Parent-Child Learning.

## GITA COOPERWASSER ה"ע

### SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



#### ● SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS:

**3RD - 5TH: LETIZIA & ZOE**

**K - 2ND: ABBY & ARNELLA**

**3 YRS - PRE-K: SOPHIA & MAYA**

- 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.

18-25 Saddle River Road

Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

201.797.0502

<http://www.ahavatachim.org>

הַלְאָדָחָמָה מִקְרָאָה וְתַבִּזְבָּה חֲטֹאת כְּבָרָא שֶׁעָרִים אֶלְיָהָה בֵּית נְמִיקָּות נָאָה: לִיְדָעָתָה מְבוֹא בְּתַחַת מְרָגָה: אֶלְיָהָם אַיִלְים אַקְרָא וּקְוֹלָי אַלְבָנִי אַךְ: הַבִּנְיוֹן פְּתָאִים עַרְמָה וּכְסִילָם הַבִּנְיוֹן לְבָב: יְשָׁמְעוּ כִּיְנָגִיקִים אַדְבָּרָם וּמְפַתָּח שְׁפָטָם מִישָׁרִים: כִּיְדָאָתָה יְהָגָה חָכִי וְתוֹעַת שְׁפָטִים רְשָׁעָה: בְּאַדְקָה כָּלְאַמְרִיךְיָא אַיְזָנָה גְּפָתָל וּעְקָשׁ: יְכָלָם גְּנָחִים לְמַבִּין יוֹשָׁרִים לְמַאֲדִי דְּעָתָה: קְחָרוּ מִסְפָּר וְאַלְכָסָר נְדֹעַת מִתְרוֹז נְבָחר: כִּיְתּוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מְפִנִּינִים וּכְלִיחְצָצִים לְאַיְשָׁוְרָה: יְאַנְיִינְכָּמָה שְׁגָנָתִי עַרְמָה נְגַעַת מְזֻמָּות מִסְפָּר וְאַלְכָסָר נְדֹעַת מִתְרוֹז נְבָחר: כִּיְתּוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מְפִנִּינִים וּכְלִיחְצָצִים לְאַיְשָׁוְרָה: יְאַנְיִינְכָּמָה שְׁגָנָתִי עַרְמָה נְגַעַת מְזֻמָּות אַמְּזָא: יִגְּרָאַת יְהָה שְׁנָאת בַּעַגְּאָה וְגַאְוָן וְגַרְדָּה רָע וְפִלְיָה מְהֻפְּלוֹת שְׁנָאתָה: לִיְדָעָתָה וְתוֹשָׁהָה אַגְּבָה בֵּינָה לְגַבְּרָה: יְבִי מְלָכִים יְמָלְכוּ יוֹרָגִים יְתַקְּקוּ אַדְקָה: שָׂוִי שָׁנָרִים נְשָׂרוּ וְנְדִיבָּרִים כְּלִישְׁפָטִי אַדְקָה: יְאַנְיִ אַהֲבָה (אַהֲבִי) אַהֲבָה וּמְשַׁחְתִּי יְמָצָאָנוּ: עַשְׁרָדְוּכְבָּזָד אַתְּ הַזָּוּ עַמְּקָמָךְ וְזַדְקָה: טָוֹב פְּרִיּוֹן מִתְרוֹז וּמְפַזּוֹן וְחַבּוֹאָתִי מְכָסָףִ נְבָחר: בְּאַרְחֵדְצָדָקָה אַסְגָּל בְּתוֹךְ נְחִיקָות מְשָׁפָט: יְלַמְּדָעָל אַקְבִּי יְשָׁוֹא אַצְרָמִיתָם אַמְלָא: –

1Surely wisdom will call out [and] understanding will raise her voice. 2Atop the heights along the way, at the crossroads, she stands. 3Beside the city gateways, at the approaches to the entrances, she cries out. 4“To you, gentlemen, I call out, [and I will] raise my voice to all humanity. 5Let the simpletons understand shrewdness, and let fools gain an understanding heart. 6Listen, as I speak noble thoughts; from my lips shall come [words of] righteousness. 7My palate shall utter truth; wickedness is abhorrent to my lips. 8All my words are just; containing nothing twisted or perverse. 9[My words] will be clear to someone with understanding, and straightforward to the knowledgeable. 10Accept my instruction over silver; choose knowledge above gold. 11For wisdom is better than pearls; all desirable things cannot compare to her. 12I, wisdom, dwell beside shrewdness, and have attained knowledge of the [purpose of the] design. 13Fear of the Lord is the hatred of evil, [so] I hate pride and arrogance, the way of evil, and a perverse mouth. 14With me [you will find] counsel and substance; I am [the essence of] understanding; courage is my possession. 15Through me [wisdom], kings reign and rulers decree just laws. 16Through me princes govern, as well as nobles and all who judge righteously. 17I love those who love me, and those who search for me shall find me. 18Wealth and honor are with me, abundant riches rightfully obtained. 19My fruit is better than the finest gold and my produce [is better] than choice silver. 20On a path of righteousness I will go, in the midst of paths of justice. 21I have much to bestow upon those who love me, and I will fill their treasuries.<sup>1 . . .</sup>”

A. Throughout the father-son discourses so far, wisdom was largely set up as a contrast, especially against “lady folly” and the “strange woman”. Here, after the father/narrator gives a brief introduction, lady wisdom steps forward and speaks in her own voice using sustained first-person language making an appeal on her own behalf. In verses 4 to 21 lady wisdom sets forth that: (1) she calls to all people, especially the naive and the foolish, so no social or intellectual class has an exclusive claim to her (vv. 4–5); (2) her speech is truthful and morally straight, not crooked or perverse (vv. 6–9); (3) her instruction is more valuable than silver, gold, or precious stones (vv. 10–11); (4) she is inseparable from reverence for Hashem, and as such she hates evil, pride, and perverse speech (vv. 12–13); (5) she is the foundation for just rule and governance (vv. 14–16); (6) she loves those who love her, and can always be found by those that seek her (v. 17); and (7) she brings to a relationship durable riches and honor together with righteousness and justice (vv. 18–21).

B. The Vilna Gaon's commentary assumes that wisdom and Torah are one and the same, synonyms with no distinction. With that background, he proffers the following:

- Verses 1- 6 uses 4 different terms to describe speech: “call out” and “raise her voice” (v.1), “cries out” (v. 3), and “I speak” (v. 6), and each relates to a different way to interpret the Torah

## <sup>1</sup> Mishlei Chapter 8.

(*i.e.*, **Peshat** (plain meaning), **Remez** (hint, allusion, implied meaning), **Derash** (midrashic interpretation), and **Sod** (mystical meaning)).

- Verses 6-11 refer to 6 different parts of Torah: **Chumash** (“from my lips shall come [words of] righteousness”, v. 6), **Mishnah** (“My palate shall utter truth”, *i.e.*, the law in its most simple and standard form being the “plain” truth, v. 7), **Gemara** (while analysis is necessary, and sometimes interpretations seem to be a stretch, there is “nothing twisted or perverse” therein, v. 8), **Midrash** (describes the exegesis of a pasuk when it says “[My words] will be clear to someone with understanding, and straightforward to the knowledgeable”, v.9), **Aggadah** (the tangential teachings that deliver Mussar, “instruction”, and that are more valuable than precious metals, v. 10), and **Sod** (the mystical and the mysteries of the Torah are harder to find than the rare “pearl”, v. 11).

C. Malbim sees verses 2 and 3 as expressing the four successive levels of Torah study: (1) **literal** meaning (available to everyone, “atop the heights along the way”), (2) **deeper** meaning (reserved to scholars, where concepts come together, “at the crossroads”), (3) **enlightened** meaning only available to our greatest teachers of Torah (with references to the Jerusalem and by extension the Sanhedrin, “beside the city gateways”), and (4) **mystical** meaning, only available to a select few that have been singled out (at the “approaches to the entrances”, with entrances referring to the beginning/creation, and its mysteries).

D. Hatred is typically viewed as a negative trait, and at Vayikra 19:17 we are told that “You shall not hate your brother in your heart”. Nevertheless, at Pesachim 113b, after teaching that one is forbidden to tell others of another Jew’s licentious behavior if he is the sole witness to the act, states that as relates to the person who engaged in this licentious behavior it would be “**a mitzva to hate him, as it is stated: ‘The fear of God is to hate evil’** (Mishlei 8:13). **Rav Aḥa, son of Rava, said to Rav Ashi: What is the halakha with regard to** whether one who saw someone sin may **tell his teacher** so that **he too will hate him?** Rav Ashi **said to him: If the student knows that he is trusted by his teacher as two witnesses**, and therefore his statement will be accepted, **he should tell him, and if he is not trusted by his teacher as two witnesses, he should not tell him.**” Accordingly, even if not common, there is a place for hatred in Judaism. In Yerushalmi Shabbat 16:1, giving over a teaching of Dovid, *i.e.*, Shlomo’s father, we are also told: “**If a pursuer was pursuing to kill me, I would escape** by entering into non-Jewish **Houses of Idolatry, but I would not escape** by entering into the houses of Jewish sectarians. And why are Jewish sectarians worse than idolaters? **Because idolaters are unaware of God and therefore deny him. Whereas the sectarians are aware of [God] yet they deny him** all the same. **And concerning them King David said: “... For indeed those who hate you, Hashem, I hate ...** and with those who rise up against You I quarrel. With the utmost hatred I **hate** them; I regard them as my own enemies. [Tehillim 139:21-22]”

E. The Chofetz Chaim ponders the rewards being discussed for embracing wisdom. He suggests that as a matter of humility, one might be hard to imagine receiving any reward for Torah study, especially after all the greats of previous generations received their share. So wisdom here has to stress that her capacity to reward is unlimited. Of course, this raises the question of whether one should be studying Torah (wisdom) for the sake of reward in the first place. In that regard, while I have used the term “bestow” in translating verse 21, I note that a common translation is “bequeath”, which has more of a concept of a familial share of family wealth than a reward, and perhaps that is the correct way to understand these pasukim, *i.e.*, you are entitled to these items as a birthright in the first instance, but a relationship with wisdom will make sure you in fact receive your share of the family inheritance.

# PARENT CHILD LEARNING

SPONSORSHIP  
WELCOME!

JANUARY 3RD AT 6:15 PM  
FOR KIDS IN 1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE AND UP

RABBI SHESTACK ON THE TOPIC OF  
SIBLING RIVALRY

PIZZA DINNER TO BE SERVED!

HOSTED BY FARNAZ & DAVID GORELIK

RSVP [HERE](#) BY 12/31 FOR THE  
ADDRESS!



AHAVAT ACHIM

קָהָלָת אֶחָדָים

THE FAMILY SYNAGOGUE



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THE FAMILY SHUL

Ahavat Achim invites  
you to join us for a fun

# Monthly

## Simcha Kiddush

Have a birthday, anniversary, or  
another reason to say Mazel Tov?  
For \$36, you can co-sponsor that  
month's simcha kiddush!

Click [HERE](#) to get  
your sponsorship in!



**Deadline: 1 week before each kiddush!**



AHAVAT ACHIM  
קהילת אהבת אחים  
THE FAMILY SHUL



# Board Game Night

FOR  
ADULTS!



WITH PIZZA & BEER

**SATURDAY  
JANUARY 24**

**8:00 PM**

\$10 per person

RSVP by 1/20

RSVP at:

**<https://tinyurl.com/GameNightAA>**

[events@ahavatachim.org](mailto:events@ahavatachim.org)

*Bring your competitive spirit  
(and your favorite board games!)  
for a night of gaming and fun*



Ahavat Achim Presents...

★ Annual ★



# COMEDY



Night!



**WITH WINE AND DESSERT**

Saturday, February, 21

8:00 PM/Doors Open at 7:30

Address to be  
given after  
**RSVP**



FEATURING

the comedy of

MIKE FINE



Purchase Advance Tickets online before Feb. 18

[www.AhavatAchim.org/events/comedy](http://www.AhavatAchim.org/events/comedy)



Members: \$25

Non-Members: \$30

At the door: \$36



Sponsorships available! \$150 for 4 up-front seats!



# Covenant & Conversation

VAYECHI • י"ד

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.

## Generations Forget and Remember

The drama of younger and older brothers which haunts the book of Bereishit from Cain and Abel onwards reaches a strange climax in the story of Joseph's children. Jacob/Israel is nearing the end of his life. Joseph visits him, bringing with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. It is the only scene of grandfather and grandchildren in the book. Jacob asks Joseph to bring them near so that he can bless them. What follows next is described in painstaking detail:

Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right hand to Israel's left, and Manasseh on his left hand to Israel's right, and brought them close. Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, even though he was the younger. And, crossing his hands, he put his

left hand on Manasseh's head, even though he was the firstborn...

*Gen. 48:13-14*

When Joseph saw that his father had placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, he was displeased. He took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. Joseph said to his father, "Not so, father. This is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head." But his father refused: "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great, but his younger brother will become even greater, and his descendants will become an abundance of nations." On that day, he blessed them: "By you shall Israel bless, saying: 'May God make you like Ephraim and

Manasseh.’’ He put Ephraim before Manasseh.

*Gen. 48:17-20*

It is not difficult to understand the care Joseph took to ensure that Jacob would bless the firstborn first. Three times his father had set the younger before the elder, and each time it had resulted in tragedy. He – Jacob, the younger – had sought to supplant his elder brother Esau. He had favoured the younger sister Rachel over Leah. And he favoured the youngest of his children, Joseph and Benjamin, over the elder Reuben, Shimon, and Levi. The consequences were consistently catastrophic: estrangement from Esau, tension between the two sisters, and hostility among his sons. Joseph himself bore the scars: thrown into a pit by his brothers, who initially planned to kill him and eventually sold him into Egypt as a slave.

Had his father not learned? Or did he think that Ephraim – whom Joseph held in his right hand – was the elder? Did Jacob know what he was doing? Did he realise that he was risking extending the family feuds into the next generation? Besides which, what possible reason could he have for favouring the younger of his grandchildren over the elder? He had not seen them before. He knew nothing about them. None of the factors that led to the

earlier episodes were operative here. Why did Jacob favour Ephraim over Manasseh?

Jacob knew two things, and it is here that the explanation lies. He knew that the stay of his family in Egypt would not be a short one. Before leaving Canaan to see Joseph, God had appeared to him in a vision:

Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes.

*Gen. 46:3-4*

This was, in other words, the start of the long exile which God had told Abraham would be the fate of his children (a vision the Torah describes as accompanied by “a deep and dreadful darkness” – Gen. 15:12). The other thing Jacob knew was his grandsons’ names, Manasseh and Ephraim. The combination of these two facts was enough.

When Joseph finally emerged from prison to become Prime Minister of Egypt, he married and had two sons. This is how the Torah describes their birth:

Before the years of the famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh, saying, “It is

because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." The second son he named Ephraim, saying, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

*Gen. 41:50-52*

With the utmost brevity the Torah intimates an experience of exile that was to be repeated many times across the centuries. At first, Joseph felt relief. The years as a slave, then a prisoner, were over. He had risen to greatness. In Canaan, he had been the youngest of eleven brothers in a nomadic family of shepherds. Now, in Egypt, he was at the centre of the greatest civilisation of the ancient world, second only to Pharaoh in rank and power. No one reminded him of his background. With his royal robes and ring and chariot, he was an Egyptian prince (as Moses was later to be). The past was a bitter memory he sought to remove from his mind. Manasseh means "forgetting."

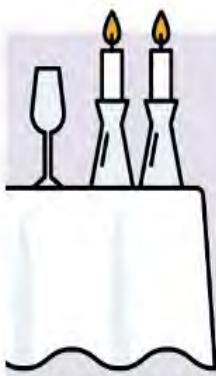
But as time passed, Joseph began to feel quite different emotions. Yes, he had arrived. But this people was not his; nor was its culture. To be sure, his family was, in any worldly terms, undistinguished, unsophisticated. Yet they remained his family. They were the matrix of who he was. Though they were no more than shepherds (a class the Egyptians

despised), they had been spoken to by God – not the gods of the sun, the river, and death, the Egyptian pantheon – but God, the creator of heaven and earth, who did not make His home in temples and pyramids and panoplies of power, but who spoke in the human heart as a voice, lifting a simple family to moral greatness. By the time his second son was born, Joseph had undergone a profound change of heart. To be sure, he had all the trappings of earthly success – "God has made me fruitful" – but Egypt had become "the land of my affliction." Why? Because it was exile.

There is a sociological observation about immigrant groups, known as Hansen's Law: "The second generation seeks to remember what the first generation sought to forget." Joseph went through this transformation very quickly. It was already complete by the time his second son was born. By calling him Ephraim, he was remembering what, when Manasseh was born, he was trying to forget: who he was, where he came from, where he belonged.

Jacob's blessing of Ephraim over Manasseh had nothing to do with their ages and everything to do with their names. Knowing that these were the first two children of his family to be born in exile, knowing too that the exile would be prolonged and at times difficult and dark,

Jacob sought to signal to all future generations that there would be a constant tension between the desire to forget (to assimilate, acculturate, anaesthetise the hope of a return) and the promptings of memory (the knowledge that this is “exile,” that we are part of another story, that ultimate home is somewhere else). The child of forgetting (Manasseh) may have blessings. But greater are the blessings of a child (Ephraim) who remembers the past and future of which he is a part.



## Around the Shabbat Table

1. What are ways people today might “forget” where they come from without meaning to?
2. What traditions or stories help you remember what matters most in your family?
3. How do you think the stories in Bereishit prepare the Jewish people for future generations?

● 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/vayechi/generations-forget-and-remember/](http://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/vayechi/generations-forget-and-remember/)