

The Shul

at the Lubavitch Center

6701 Old Pimlico Road
Baltimore, MD 21209

www.chabadshul.org



January 3, 2026

VaYechi

14 Tevet, 5786

Jacob and Rachel

Intrinsic to our nature is a perpetual striving for self-improvement. The human being is never content to just be: the very thought of a missed opportunity or an unrealized potential gives him no rest, spurring him to the ceaseless toil and unremitting ambition he calls life.

He, we said. For though the drive for self-betterment is present in every individual of our species, it belongs to our "male" or active-assertive aspect. But no less integral to our being is our "female" element — our capacity for receptiveness and sacrifice, our conviction that there is no greater greatness than the abnegation of self to a higher end.

So ingrained is this duality in us that we unquestionably accept its paradox in every area of life. We exalt selflessness, even as we glorify the self. We equate good with altruistic, even as we recognize the ego as the prime motivator of all positive achievement. We strive for success, fulfillment and realization, even as we avow that we are doing it all for the children.

For so were we formed at the hand of our Creator: "G d formed man as dust of the earth"— as yielding as the soil under his feet; "and He blew into his nostrils the breath of life"— the drive to aspire, grow and achieve (Genesis 2:7). G d then took the man He had made and placed him in His world to work it and develop it, but also to keep it and nurture it (ibid. 2:15).

Man is thus a creature with not one, but two centers to its being: an entity with not one, but two nuclei at its heart. Man is spirit revolving upon an axis of fulfillment-seeking selfhood, as well as a soul centered upon a core of selflessness. In the words of the verse: "Male and female He created them ... and He called their name — man" (ibid. 5:2).

As Jews, we inherit this duality from Jacob, the choicest of the Patriarchs, and Rachel, the quintessential mother of Israel. From Jacob, whose life of accomplishment is crowned by a royal procession to the heart of the Holy Land where the founders of Israel are enshrined, we derive our potential for self-perfection. And from Rachel, the young mother who died in childbirth and who dwells in a lonely wayside grave in order to better bear witness to the suffering of her children, we receive our capacity for commitment and self-transcendence.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; adapted by Yanki Tauber from www.chabad.org)

Capital Decision

"And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt..." (47:28)

The manner in which Parshas Vayechi is recorded in the Torah scroll differs from the normal fashion, which allows for a minimum of a nine-letter space between two parshios. This deviation prompts Rashi to comment that Parshas Vayechi is a "stumah" — "closed" or "sealed" parsha, for once our Patriarch Yaakov died, the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were sealed due to the hardship of the servitude to which they were subsequently subjected. The implication from Rashi's words is that the servitude began with Yaakov's passing. This appears to contradict Rashi's comments on Parshas Va'eira, where he teaches that the servitude began with the death of Levi who was the last of the brothers to die; as long as the sons of Yaakov were still alive, the servitude did not begin. How do we reconcile both of Rashi's comments?

In the third paragraph of Krias Shema we are enjoined not to stray after our hearts and our eyes. Rashi comments that the heart and the eyes are the spies which provide the opportunity for the body to sin.⁴ We cannot consider the heart and eyes to have only a negative purpose. Rather, a person chooses whether he will use the energies of his heart and eyes for sin or to facilitate his service of Hashem; the person's focus determines the path he will choose. If a person is focused on and motivated by the desires of his body, his limbs will function to fuel those desires. However, if his focus is on his soul and the fulfillment of the edicts of his Creator, his entire body will be harnessed to fulfill his desire for spirituality.



(continued on the other side)

A person who is driven to satisfy the basic pleasures of his body has his eyes blinded and his heart sealed by his incessant hedonistic pursuit. Since he focuses only upon that which he desires, he is completely selfish and unable to perceive the needs of others. In contradistinction, a person whose actions are driven by his desire to enhance his relationship with his Creator has his eyes and heart open to sensitivities which were previously dormant. Therefore, he is able to focus upon the needs of others.

It is common that when a person perceives that he might be in danger, his natural desire for the preservation of his body is activated. Self-preservation leads a person to focus upon the needs of his body, very often causing the needs of his soul to be neglected. Although the actual servitude did not begin until after the death of Levi, Bnei Yisroel began to sense the imminent danger of oppression at the hands of the Egyptians immediately following Yaakov's demise. Sensing this activated Bnei Yisroel's need for self-preservation, and since they were so strongly focused on their physical well-being, they became desensitized to their spiritual needs; their eyes and hearts became sealed. The physical servitude had not yet begun, but the fear of its impending doom sparked the beginning of the spiritual servitude.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)



Brit Milah The Covenant of Circumcision

We wish a hearty Mazel Tov to **Mr. Zvi and Mrs. Avital Friedman**
on the Birth and Bris of their son **Yosef Yehoshua**.
Mazel Tov the Grandparents and the entire family!



'The Rav's Friday Night Hashkafa Q&A Shiur for Men'

will take place **Friday night – January 16th**
at 8:00 p.m. and will be held at
the home of **Mr. Josh and Mrs. Yedida Orlofsky**,
at 2323 Farringdon Road (corner of Amleigh & Farringdon).
Questions can be submitted in advance to rabbikaplan@chabadmd.com.

Kol Hanaarim – every Friday evening during the winter at **7:30 p.m. in The Shul**. Cholent and pastries are served. Each session is 'topped off' at the end with a fascinating story by Rabbi Eli Itzkowitz. For any questions, please see Rabbi Itzkowitz.

DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 1/2 — 13 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 4:37 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Shabbat, 1/3 — 14 Tevet

Shacharit 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:46 a.m.
Minchah — 4:25 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Shkiah — 4:56 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 5:40 p.m.

Sunday, 1/4 — 15 Tevet

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Monday, 1/5 — 16 Tevet

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Tuesday, 1/6— 17 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Wednesday, 1/7 — 18 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.
Tanya Shiur: 2nd part of Tanya Shaar HaYichud
V'Emunah which deals w/the nature of creation
and the unity of Hashem — cancelled this week

Thursday, 1/8 — 19 Tevet

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Friday, 1/9 — 20 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 4:43 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.