

Dvar Torah for Parshat VaYechi 5764

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Areiv 4

Yaakov Avinu (our patriarch) called for his sons. He said to them, "Gather together (congregate) and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days" (Genesis 49:1).

Yaakov Avinu wanted to reveal when the Mashiach (Messiah) would come, but the Divine spirit left him. Perhaps, he asked sons, one of you does not believe in God? Immediately they declared in unison, "Shema Yisrael..." (Pesachim 56a).

Throughout Bereishis (Genesis) we see the results of discord: Cain and Abel, the Generation of the Deluge, the Sodomites, Yosef (Josef) and his brothers, to name a few. Throughout Rebbe Nachman's teachings we find that he again and again emphasizes seeking unity: in Torah (Likutey Moharan II, Lesson #67), in prayer (ibid. I, Lesson #65); with people (ibid., Lesson #17); and in Creation in general (ibid., Lesson #51).

At Mount Sinai, when we received the Torah, we undertook to be guarantors for one another, i.e., not only would each of us do his best to observe the Torah, but each of us would guarantee that every other Jew would also observe the Torah.

Ha! Who among us, asks Reb Noson, can guarantee that he himself will properly fulfill the mitzvot as well as not transgress?! On top of that we are to be responsible for others?! How is it possible?

The answer is, that there have been -- and there are -- exceptional Jews among us who actually have "gotten it right," namely done a (near-)perfect job of keeping the letter and the spirit of the Torah. Not only have they succeeded for themselves, but their influence has been so powerful that many of us and our co-religionists have done a much better job than we would have done otherwise.

Yet, even these exceptionally great Jews (tzaddikim, we call them) have not been 100% successful in getting *all* of us to *always* fulfill the Torah. Only one tzaddik can and will do that -- the Mashiach. He will complete the work of the tzaddikim who preceded him, teaching each of us how to be a complete success at Jewishness.

Yaakov Avinu knew that Mashiach matters call for Jewish unity. His sons knew it too. We know it also. Let's try harder to live it.

agutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

Copyright © 2004 Ozer Bergman

It's very good to speak out your heart to God
as you would speak to a true good friend.
Rebbe Nachman of Breslov