

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

VOL 5,

Chabad of North Beverly Hills, 409 Foothill Rd. Beverly Hills, 90210

beverlyhillschabad.com

Rabbi Yosef Shusterman 310-271-9063

In this week's Torah portion, Beshalach, we find the verse "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." When the Jews left Egypt in the Exodus, they fulfilled the oath they had made to Joseph and brought his casket to the Land of Israel for reburial. "G-d will surely remember you," Joseph had made them promise, "and you shall carry up my bones from here."

At first glance, the Torah's repeated use of the word "bones" (atzmot in Hebrew) in connection to a tzadik (righteous person) seems somewhat odd and even unnecessarily strident. Why doesn't the Torah refer more respectfully to Joseph's "remains" or his "coffin"? The answer, as will be explained, is that the Hebrew expression "atzmot" has special significance.

The word "atzmot" is an allusion to "atzmiyut," meaning "essence." In the same way that a person's bones constitute the strength of his physical body, the phrase "the bones of Joseph" refers to Joseph's unique and powerful character. When the Torah tells us that Moses carried the "bones" of Joseph, it means that he took the essence of Joseph with him into the desert.

This "essence of Joseph" is alluded to in his name, as his mother Rachel declared when he was born: "And she called his name Joseph, saying, G-d will add to me another son (acher)." The function of Joseph is to "add" Jewish sons, and not just any sons, but even those who have fallen to the level of "acher," meaning "other." This essence of Joseph can restore even the most estranged Jew into a son of the Holy One, blessed be He.

When the Children of Israel left Egypt they became a nation, acquiring the status of G-d's "sons." The bond between a father and son is indestructible; no matter how far the son may roam, he will always remain his father's child. When Moses led the Jewish people out of Egypt, he utilized this special ability of Joseph to transform even an "acher" into G-d's rightful "son."

We see this illustrated at the end of this week's portion, when the Torah describes how Amalek attacked the Jews at a place called Refidim. Amalek deliberately targeted those who were "weak" in faith and deed, and were "straggling behind" the rest of the Jewish camp. Nonetheless, Moses sent Joshua to fight Amalek, and even the weakest Jews were saved.

Indeed, we are promised that when Moshiach comes, not even one Jew will be left behind in exile. All Jews will be G-d's "sons," and together we will enter the Messianic era. (Adapted from Volume 26 of Likutei Sichot, From: L'Chaim 5761 #656)

"G-d did not lead them the way through the land of the Philistines, because it was near." (13:17) The Jewish people were led on a roundabout way to the Promised Land to afford their future descendants the strength to overcome and succeed even when the path is rocky and full of obstacles. (Sefat Emet)

"G-d will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." (14:14) G-d will only fight your battle on the condition that you "hold your peace"--remain quiet and avoid controversy and disagreement amongst yourselves. (Shaar Bat-Rabim) - www.ascent.org

The Human Tree

For man is a tree of the field. Deuteronomy 20:19

"Man is a tree of the field," and the Jewish calendar reserves one day each year--the "New Year for Trees" on the 15th of Shevat--for us to contemplate our affinity with our botanical analogue and what it can teach us about our own lives.

The tree's primary components are: the roots, which anchor it to the ground and supply it with water and other nutrients; the trunk, branches and leaves which comprise its body; and the fruit, which contains the seeds by which the tree reproduces itself.

The spiritual life of man also includes roots, a body, and fruit. The roots represent faith, our source of nurture and perseverance. The trunk, branches and leaves are the "body" of our spiritual lives--our intellectual, emotional and practical achievements. The fruit is our power of spiritual procreation--the power to influence others, to plant a seed in a fellow human being and see it sprout, grow and bear fruit.

Roots and Body: The roots are the least "glamorous" of the tree's parts, and the most crucial. Buried underground, virtually invisible, they possess neither the majesty of the tree's body, the colorfulness of its leaves nor the tastiness of its fruit. But without roots, a tree cannot survive. Furthermore, the roots must keep pace with the body: if the trunk and leaves of a tree grow and spread without a proportional increase in its roots, the tree will collapse under its own weight. On the other hand, a profusion of roots makes for a healthier, stronger tree, even if it has a meager trunk and few branches, leaves and fruit. And if the roots are sound, the tree will rejuvenate itself if its body is damaged or its branches cut off.

Faith is the least glamorous of our spiritual faculties. Characterized by a "simple" conviction and commitment to one's Source, it lacks the sophistication of the intellect, the vivid color of the emotions, or the sense of satisfaction that comes from deed. And faith is buried underground, its true extent concealed from others and even from ourselves. Yet our faith, our supra-rational commitment to G-d, is the foundation of our entire "tree." From it stems the trunk of our understanding, from which branch out our feelings, motivations and deeds. And while the body of the tree also provides some of its spiritual nurture, the bulk of our spiritual sustenance derives from its roots, from our faith in and commitment to our Creator.

A soul might grow a majestic trunk, numerous and wide-spreading branches, beautiful leaves and lush fruit. But these must be equaled, indeed surpassed, by its "roots." Above the surface, there might be much wisdom, profundity of feeling, abundant experience, copious achievement and many disciples; but if these are not grounded and vitalized by an even greater faith and commitment, it is a tree without foundation, a tree doomed to collapse under its own weight.

On the other hand, a life might be blessed with only sparse knowledge, meager feeling and experience, scant achievement and little "fruit." But if its "roots" are extensive and deep, it is a healthy tree: a tree fully in possession of what it does have; a tree with the capacity to recover from the setbacks of life; a tree with the potential to eventually grow and develop into a loftier, more beautiful and fruitful tree.

Fruit and Seed: The tree desires to reproduce, to spread its seeds far and wide so that they take root in diverse and distant places. But the tree's reach is limited to the extent of its own branches. It must therefore seek out other, more mobile "couriers" to transport its seeds. So the tree produces fruit, in which its seeds are enveloped by tasty, colorful, sweet-smelling fibers and juices. The seeds themselves would not rouse the interest of animals and men; but with their attractive packaging, they have no shortage of "customers" who, after consuming the external fruit, deposit the seeds in those diverse and distant places where the tree wants to plant its seeds.

When we communicate with others, we employ many devices to make our message attractive.

We buttress it with intellectual sophistication, steep it in emotional sauce, dress it in colorful words and images. But we should bear in mind that this is only the packaging--the "fruit" that contains the seed. The seed itself is essentially tasteless--the only way that we can truly impact others is by conveying our own simple faith in what we are telling them, our own simple commitment to what we are espousing. If the seed is there, our message will take root in their minds and hearts, and our own vision will be grafted into theirs. But if there is no seed, there will be no progeny to our effort, however tasty our fruit might be. Based on teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Taube - chabadonline.com

Rabbi Yosef Shusterman

Chabad of Northern Beverly Hills

Yahrzeit is observed on the anniversary of the day of death even the first year, and even if the day of burial was much later than the day of death. When my grandfather (R. Shmuel) was seven, his father (the Tzemach Tzedek) once answered him: The kindness and special quality on G-D's making man upright, to walk erectly, is that though he walks on earth he sees the heavens; not so with beasts that go on all fours; they see only the earth. (From Rebbe's Hayom Yom, Shevat 13)

The world is not a reasonable place. Meet it on its own terms: When you do something good, do it beyond reason.

-From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Tzvi Freeman

PARTICIPATE IN WEEKLY CLASSES

Sunday 8:00 AM Gemara-Tractate Rosh Hashana (men)

Monday 8:00 PM Chumash (men and women)

Tuesday 8:00 PM Gemara-Tractate Sukka (men)

Wednesday 8:30 PM Halacha and Tanya (women)

Thursday 10:00 AM Chassidus (women)

8:00 PM Class for Beverly Hills Highschool Students

Daily 6:45 to 7:15 AM Chasidus

Between Mincha and Maariv Halacha

DAILY MINYONIM

Shacharis: Mon -Fri: 6:00 AM & 7:30 AM
Sunday: 9:00 AM

Mincha/Maariv: 5:15 PM

There will be no classes on Mon., Jan 28 and Wed. - Thurs., Jan. 30 - 31.

SHABBAT PARSHAT BESHALACH
January 25, 2002

Candlelighting: 4:58 PM
Friday Mincha: 5:15 PM

LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA: 9:31 AM

SHABBAT MORNING

- Tanya 8:45 AM
- Shacharit 9:30 AM followed by Kiddush, Cholent & Farbrengen
- Chumash 4:15 PM
- Mincha 4:50 PM followed by Seuda Shlshit
- Shabbat ends 5:58 PM

Kiddush this week is being sponsored by Mr. Marty Biegel in honor of his 80th birthday.

Yartzheits: Dovid Greenwald (Dr. Zev Rav Noy's brother) - Shevat 14

Happy Birthday to Dovid Sochaczewski, Marty Biegel, Moshe Chodorow and Chaya Riva Mayberg.

Mazel tov to the Levy Family on the engagement of Naomi Levy to Levy Selwin.

A Sefer Torah is being written in memory of the fathers of Rabbi & Mrs. Shusterman.
Anyone who is interested in participating should contact Mendel Shusterman at (310) 497-2643

