



Shabbat Announcements

Parshat Vayeshev

December 13, 2014 21 Kislev,

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks on Parshat Vayeshev

TORAH
ARTSCROLL, 198
HERTZ, 141

HAFTORAH
ARTSCROLL, 1142
HERTZ, 152

This is a true story that took place in the 1970s. Rabbi Dr Nahum Rabinovitch, then Principal of Jews College, the rabbinic training seminary in London where I was a student and teacher, was approached by an organization that had been given an unusual opportunity to engage in interfaith dialogue. A group of African bishops wanted to understand more about Judaism. Would the Principal be willing to send his senior students to engage in such a dialogue, in a chateau in Switzerland? To my surprise, he agreed. He told me that he was skeptical about Jewish-Christian dialogue in general because he believed that over the centuries the Church had been infected by an anti-Semitism that was very difficult to overcome. At that time, though, he felt that African Christians were different. They loved Tanakh and its stories. They were at least in principle open to understanding Judaism on its own terms. He did not add, though I knew it was in his mind since he was one of the world's greatest experts on Maimonides, that the great twelfth century sage held an unusual attitude to dialogue.

So we went. It was an unusual group: the semikhah class of Jews College, together with the top class of the yeshiva in Montreux where the late Rabbi Yechiel Weinberg, author of Seridei Esh and one of the world's foremost halakhists, had taught. For three days the Jewish group davened and bentsched with special intensity. We learned Gemara each day. For the rest of the time we had an unusual, even transformative, encounter with the African bishops, ending with a Hassidic-style tisch during which we shared with the Africans our songs and stories and they taught us theirs. At three in the morning we finished by dancing together. We knew we were different, we knew that there were deep divides between our respective faiths, but we had become friends. Perhaps that is all we should seek. Friends don't have to agree in order to stay friends. And friendships can sometimes help heal the world.

person should be willing to throw himself into a furnace of fire rather than shame another person in public. With that he ordered them back to their seats, and the prayers continued. The moral of that moment never left me. The Rav, for the past 32 years head of the yeshiva in Maaleh Adumim, was and is one of the great halakhists of our time. He knew immediately how serious were the issues at stake: men and women praying together without a mechitzah between them, and the complex question about whether women may or may not wear a tallit and tefillin. The issue was anything but simple.

On the morning after our arrival, however, an event occurred that left a deep impression on me. The sponsoring body, a global Jewish organization, was a secular one, and to keep within their frame of reference the group had to include at least one non-orthodox Jew, a woman studying for the rabbinat. We, the semikhah and yeshiva students, were davening the morning service in one of the lounges in the chateau when the Reform woman entered, wearing tallit and tefillin, and sat herself down in the middle of the group.

But he knew also that halakhah is a systematic way of turning the great ethical and spiritual truths into a tapestry of deeds, and that one must never lose the larger vision in an exclusive focus on the details. Had the students insisted that the woman pray elsewhere they would have put her to shame, the way Eli did when he saw Hannah praying and thought she was drunk. Never, ever shame someone in public. That was the transcending imperative of the hour. That is the mark of a great-souled man. To have been his student for more than a decade I count as one of the great privileges of my life.

This is something the students had not encountered before. What were they to do? There was no mechitzah. There was no way of separating themselves. How should they react to a woman wearing tallit and tefillin and praying in the midst of a group of men? They ran up to the Rav in a state of great agitation and asked what they should do. Without a moment's hesitation he quoted to them the saying of the sages: A

The reason I tell this story here is that it is one of the powerful and unexpected lessons of our parsha. Judah, the brother who proposed selling Joseph into slavery (Gen. 37: 26), had "gone down" to Canaan where he married a local Canaanite woman. The phrase "gone down" was rightly taken by the sages as full of meaning. Just as Joseph had been brought down to Egypt (Gen. 39: 1) so Judah had been morally and spiritually

Times

Candle Lighting	4:09 pm
Friday Mincha	4:10 pm
Hashkama	8:00 am
Parsha Shiur	8:30 am
Main Shul	9:00 am
Beit Midrash	9:15 am
Youth Minyan	8:30 am
Shiur	3:30 pm
Mincha	4:05 pm
Shabbat Ends	5:18 pm
Sunday Dec., 14	7:30/8:30 am
Mon., Thur.	6:35/7:45 am
Tues., Wed., Fri.	6:45/7:45 am
Mincha	4:10 pm
Latest Times for Shema/Shemoneh Esrei	
December 13	9:30/10:17am
December 20	9:34/10:21am
Next Shabbat Miketz	
Candle Lighting	4:11 pm
Mincha	4:10 pm

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Rabbi Polakoff's Shabbat Drasha, through 5775, is sponsored in memory of Pinchas ben Yosef z"l

brought down. Here was one of Jacob's sons, doing what the patriarchs insisted on not doing: marrying into the local population. It is a tale of sad decline. He marries his firstborn son, Er, to a local woman, Tamar. An obscure verse tells us that he sinned, and died. Judah then married his second son, Onan, to her, under a pre-Mosaic form of levirate marriage whereby a brother is bound to marry his sister-in-law if she has been widowed without children. Onan, reluctant to father a child that would be regarded as not his but his deceased brother's, practiced a form of coitus interruptus that to this day carries his name. For this, he too died. Having lost two of his sons Judah was reluctant to give his third, Shelah, to Tamar in marriage. The result was that she was left as a "living widow," bound to marry her brother-in-law whom Judah was withholding, but unable to marry anyone else.

After many years, seeing that her father-in-law (by this time a widower himself) was reluctant to marry her to Shelah, she decided on an audacious course of action. She removed her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil, and positioned herself at a point where Judah was likely to see her on his way to the sheep-shearing. Judah saw her, took her to be a prostitute, and engaged her services. As surety for the payment he had promised her, she insisted that he leave his seal, cord and staff. Judah duly returned the next day with the payment, but the woman was nowhere to be seen. He asked the locals the whereabouts of the temple prostitute (the text at this point uses the word kedeshah, "cult prostitute," rather than zonah, thus deepening Judah's offence), but no one had seen such a person in the locality. Puzzled, Judah returned home.

Three months later he heard that Tamar was pregnant. He leapt to the only conclusion he could draw, namely that she had had a physical relationship with another man while bound in law to his son Shelah. She had committed adultery, for which the punishment was death. Tamar was brought out to face her sentence. She came, holding the staff and seal that Judah instantly recognized as his own. She said, "I am pregnant by the person to whom these objects belong." Judah realized what had happened and said, "She is more righteous than I" (Gen. 38: 26). This moment is a turning-point in history. Judah is the first person in the Torah explicitly to admit he was wrong. We do not realize it yet, but this seems to be the moment at which he acquired the depth of character necessary for him to become the first real baal teshuvah. We see this, years later, when he – the man who proposed selling Joseph as a slave – becomes the man who is willing to spend the rest of his life in slavery so that his brother Benjamin can go free (Gen. 44: 33). I have argued elsewhere that it is from here that we learn the principle that a penitent stands higher than even a perfectly righteous individual. Judah the penitent becomes the ancestor of Israel's kings while Joseph, the

righteous, is only a viceroy, mishneh le-melekh, second to the king.

Thus far Judah. But the real hero of the story was Tamar. She had taken an immense risk by becoming pregnant. Indeed she was almost killed for it. She had done so for a noble reason: to ensure that the name of her late husband was perpetuated. But she took no less care to avoid Judah being put to shame. Only he and she knew what had happened. Judah could acknowledge his error without loss of face. It was from this episode that the sages derived the rule articulated by Rabbi Rabinovitch that morning in Switzerland: Rather risk being thrown into a fiery furnace than shame someone else in public. It is thus no coincidence that Tamar, a heroic non-Jewish woman, became the ancestor of David, Israel's greatest king. There are striking similarities between Tamar and the other heroic woman in David's ancestry, the Moabite woman we know as Ruth.

There is an ancient Jewish custom on Shabbat and festivals to cover the challot or matzah while holding the glass of wine over which Kiddush is being made. The reason is so as not to put the challah to shame while it is being, as it were, passed over in favor of the wine. There are some very religious Jews, sadly, who will go to great lengths to avoid shaming an inanimate loaf of bread but have no compunction in putting their fellow Jews to shame if they regard them as less religious than they are. That is what happens when we remember the halakhah but forget the underlying moral principle behind it. Never put anyone to shame. That is what Tamar taught Judah and what a great rabbi of our time taught those who were privileged to be his students.



GNS Yoetzet Halacha Dena Block welcomes your questions about mikvah, observance of taharat mishpacha (halacha relating to married life) and women's health, as it connects to Jewish law. Reach out to her at:
Phone: (516) 320-9818
Email: gnsyoetzet@gmail.com All conversations/ emails are strictly confidential.



Great Neck Synagogue
Shabbat Activities Program
26 Old Mill Road, Great Neck, NY 11023
516-487-6100

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Ian Lichter, Assistant Rabbi
Dr. Ephraim Wolf, z"l, Rabbi Emeritus
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For more information please call: EMUNAH conference department
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Complimentary Admission
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Refreshments on sale

SATURDAY NIGHT 6:30 PM
12-20-2014

26 Old Mill Road | Great Neck, NY 11023 | 516.487.6100

8:30 AM YOUTH MINYAN (BRAUN YOUTH CENTER)	9:00 AM PRE-GROUPS (CHALIM ROOM)	10:00 AM PRESCHOOL GROUPS & MOMMY & ME (FIRST FLOOR)
5:45 PM PICK UP PRIZES AFTER SHABBAT NEAR GYM	ANNUAL GNS YOUTH CHANUKAH BASH SCHEDULE DECEMBER 20th	11:15 AM NISSIM WITH HIGH SCHOOL FOR CHOLENT KIDDUSH
4:00 PM FAREWELL (FOLLOWED BY MIRCHA)		11:15 AM GROUPS DREIDEL COMPETITION REGULAR CLASSROOMS
3:00 PM GRAND RAFFLE (BEIT MIDRASH)		12:00 PM SHUGANOT KIDDUSH & CANDY-FILLED DREIDELS (ALL GROUPS)
2:00 PM TICKET HUNT!!		12:15 PM BINGO!! ALL YOUTH 1 st Grade & Up (BEIT MIDRASH)
		1:00 PM YOUTH LUNCHEON 1 st Grade & Up (BRAUN YOUTH CENTER)

Annual Cholent Competition

Taking place Dec. 13th
contact us by this week to enter
your cholent pot. Winner will
receive 3 free raffles to be used at
the Annual Journal Dinner
that night.



Community Wide Siyum

IN MEMORY OF THE FOUR RABBIS
& THE DRUZE POLICE OFFICER
WHO WERE MURDERED IN HAR NOF

Special Guest Speaker:
Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Tuesday, December 16th
8:00 pm
Beth Hadassah Synagogue
160 Steamboat Road



63rd Annual Dinner

Saturday Night, December 13, 2014
7:30 pm

Honoring



Father & Daughter
Leslie Kahn & Michelle Berman



Rabbi Ian & Katie Lichter



Boneh Habayit
Nadine Shatzkes

Reservations: www.gns.org or 516-487-6100

"Dinner With a New Attitude"
Top Shelf Scotch Table Exciting New Band Fabulous Dessert Buffet

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY BREAKFAST

Breakfast is sponsored by **Florence and Irvin Spira** in memory of **Avraham Eliezer ben Yeshayahu Zvi, z"l**.

HISTORY, HALACHA & HASHKAFKA SERIES:

Please join us for our bi-monthly series following Kiddush on Shabbat mornings from 12:15-12:45 pm. This month's focus will be on the upcoming Holiday of Chanukah.

Shabbat Chanukah, December 20th - Rabbi Lichter

GNS CHESED COLLECTION

The toys and games collection for Chai Life Line has been extended until **Wednesday, December 10**. Please drop off new and unwrapped toys and games at **Lichter residence, 76 Berkshire Rd.**

RABBI POLAKOFF-OPEN OFFICE HOURS

Rabbi Polakoff will have open office hours each week on **Tuesday from 10am - noon** and on **Thursday from 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm**. Barring any emergencies, he will be in his office during these times so please feel free drop by to shmooze, discuss issues about GNS, share personal concerns or learn some Torah. He can be reached at other times through the synagogue office ([516-487-6100](tel:516-487-6100)), through his cell phone [516-637-3674](tel:516-637-3674) (call or text) or through email at rabbi@gns.org.

ANNUAL CHANUKAH BOUTIQUE

Be sure to come to the Shul lobby on **Tues., Dec 9th from 3-9 PM** - We've got Optical Insight, Pampered Chef, Arbonne, Makeup Artists, clothes, Judaica and more!!! We need volunteers for that day, so if you can help just a little bit, we'll really appreciate it! Please tell all your friends to come! Contact farlafrumkin@gmail.com

ANNUAL CHOLENT KIDDUSH COOKOFF

We are bringing back our Cholent Competition on Shabbat, **Dec., 13**. If you wish to enter your Cholent, please contact Rabbi Lichter.

BUY RAFFLES

GNS Annual Dinner scheduled for Saturday evening, December 13th. We strongly urge you to buy your tickets early. Please go to the gns website and buy discounted tickets now. For more information please contact :

rafflechairs@gmail.com or **Michael & Pia Shlomo— (917)371-8013 Mark & Amy Kalter - (516)857-1719.**

YOUTH BASH & GRAND RAFFLE

This years Youth Bash and Grand Raffle will take place on Shabbat, **Dec., 20**. More details to follow.

NISSIM IN CONCERT

Converting to Orthodox Judaism, **Nissim** dropped his former moniker, and adopted a new name, he began a new journey, and in his own words "to make music that inspires and elevates this world, to the world of spirituality and divine purpose." Not your average MC, Nissim's work is multidimensional, combining energy and passion, with a deep focus on personal growth through times of struggle.

Nissim will be here on Dec.19 and 20th and will spend time with us and our kids concluding with a live concert Saturday evening in the GNS gymnasium at 6:30 open to all.

WITHIN OUR FAMILY

Mazal Tov to our Dinner Honorees: **Rabbi Ian & Katie Lichter, Leslie Kahn & Michelle Berman** and **Nadine Shatzkes.**

Mazal Tov to **Debbie Wang** on the marriage of her daughter **Danitte** to **Justin Beegel**. **Mazal Tov** also to grandparents **Gloria & Leon Miller.**

Mazal Tov to **Randi & Arthur Luxenberg** on the engagement of their daughter **Elizabeth** to **Steven Lipner.**

COMMUNITY NEWS

YACHAD HALF-MARATHON

Yachad provides services to individuals with special needs. My name is Limor Khalili and I will be running the half-marathon for Yachad in Miami on **January 25** and I am asking for your help to make it possible! All donations are tax deductible. Donations can be made online at <https://miami.teamyachad.com/runner/dkhalili/> and checks can be made to Team Yachad 11 Broadway, 13th Floor, New York, NY. Please make sure to include my name as the runner.

NSHA PTA CHANUKAH BOUTIQUE

Please join us at the NSHA PTA Chanukah Boutique Sale **Sunday Dec 14 at 11-5 at 16** Cherry Lane featuring many vendors including jewelry, children's clothing, exercise wear, Bella's hats, faux flower creations, customized perfumes and soaps, monogrammed gifts and clothes, housewares, Silver Spoons, Pampered Chef and more!!!

THANK YOU

On behalf of the girls who lost their personal and household belongings on a fire, we would like to thank the GNS community for its generosity and outpouring of support. Our community stepped up again, allowing the girls, who moved into a new apt. this past week, to enjoy their first Shabbat in their new home. Tzku L'Mitzvot. The Lunzers

Y A H R Z E I T

Saturday, 21 Kislev

Martin Brownstein for Samuel Brownstein
Pearl Ginsburg for Isaiah Ginsburg
David Greenwald for Samuel Greenwald
Norman Seif for Mayer Seif

Sunday, 22 Kislev

Mahin Aryeh for Morad Aryeh
Lloyd Bayme for Rachel Bayme
Hillel Milun for Reuben Milun
Fred Pomerantz for David Pomerantz
Irvin Spira for Abraham Spira

Monday, 23 Kislev

Al Leiderman for Leo Leiderman
Karen Wydra for Evelyn Stein
Peter Weiss for Joseph Weiss

Tuesday, 24 Kislev

Michal Malen for Emanuel Hoschander
Susan Goldman for Malia Ring
Vahid Sedaghatpour for Habibolah Sedaghatpour

Wednesday, 25 Kislev

Ebrahim Gabbazadeh for Yehudit Chaya bat Rav Shlomo
Mark Abraham for Sara Malka bat Sara

Thursday, 26 Kislev

Mahin Aryeh for Marilyn Schwadron
Eliezer Noy for Yosef Zargaryan