

# THE SHADOW

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Vayechi

### The Shadow

The Midrash Tanchuma on our parashah opens by connecting the verse (47:29), "The days approached for Yisrael [Yaakov] to die," with the verse (Divrei Ha'yamim I 29:15), "For we are like sojourners before You and like temporary residents, as were all our forefathers-- our days on earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope [to escape death]." Says the midrash: "Our days on earth are like a shadow"--if only our lives were like the shadow of a wall or a tree [which has some permanency]; but, they are not--rather, they are like the shadow of a flying bird. "There is no hope"--everyone knows and even acknowledges that he is destined to die. Avraham said (Bereishit 15:2), "I will die childless." Yitzchak said (27:4), "So that my soul may bless you before I die." Yaakov also said (47:30), "I will lie down with my fathers." Therefore, concludes the midrash, the verse says, "The days approached for Yisrael to die."

R' Yisrael Moshe Bromberg z"l (Lodz, Poland; early 20th century) explains: The Zohar (Bereishit 121b) asks: What is the meaning of, "The days approached for Yisrael to die"? Does one die over a period of days? Death occurs at one moment! This means that, shortly before one dies, all of the days that he lived come together and give an accounting. Fortunate is a person whose days appear together before G-d and the person has no days of which he is ashamed! Also, the Zohar teaches (Bereishit 124b), a person's days become the garment he wears in the World-to-Come. If one is worthy, the good deeds of his fathers become part of his garment as well.

With this background, writes R' Bromberg, we can understand the midrash. The midrash wanted to know: Since one's days are fleeting, why did Yaakov wait until his last days to instruct Yosef about his burial in Me'arat Ha'machpelah? The answer is that Yaakov didn't know until his final days, when he sensed that his days had gathered together and had been joined by his father's and grandfather's good deeds, that he deserved to "lie down" (i.e., to be buried) with his ancestors. (Netiv Ha'yam Al Midrash Tanchuma)

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"Do kindness and truth with me -- please do not bury me in Egypt. When I will lie down with my fathers and you shall transport me out of Egypt and bury me in their tomb." (47:29-30)

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) asks: Shouldn't the phrase "please do not bury me in Egypt" have come after the phrase "I will lie down with my fathers"? He explains:

Our Sages give three reasons why Yaakov did not want to be buried in Egypt: (1) He was afraid that the Egyptians would deify him; (2) he knew that the soil of Egypt would turn to lice during the Ten Plagues and he didn't want to be buried in that soil; and (3) those buried in Eretz Yisrael will arise first at the time of Techiyat Ha'meitim.

R' Kluger writes: The first two reasons alone did not require Yaakov to be buried in Eretz Yisrael, only that he be buried outside of Egypt. Only the third reason required burial in Eretz Yisrael.

R' Kluger continues: Burial in Eretz Yisrael requires special merit (see Bereishit Rabbah 96:5). Therefore, said Yaakov: Whatever you do, please do not bury me in Egypt. And, if I merit to lie down with my fathers, i.e., if I am deserving of being buried in the Land of my fathers, then bury me in their tomb. (Imrei Shefer)

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"Yisrael bowed towards the head of the bed." (47:31)

Rashi z"l explains: "He turned himself toward the head of the bed. Based on this, our Sages taught (Shabbat 12b), 'The Shechinah resides above the head of an ill person'."

In connection with this verse, we present here several laws relating to praying for the sick, many of which are not widely known.

Ramban z'l (1194-1270) writes: If one visits an ill person and does not pray for him, he has not fulfilled the mitzvah. Regarding the form of the prayer, we are taught (Shabbat 12a-b): One who goes to visit the ill on Shabbat should say, "Today is Shabbat, when crying out is not permitted. Healing is close-at-hand." The sage Rabbi Meir says: One should say, "The merit of Shabbat can heal." The sage Rabbi Yehuda says: One should say, "May Hashem have mercy on you and on all the ill of Yisrael." The sage Rabbi Yose says: One should say, "May Hashem have mercy on you \*among\* all the ill of Yisrael." . . . In accordance with which opinion did the sage Rabbi Chanina say that one who has an ill person in his house must include him amongst other ill people? In accordance with Rabbi Yose's opinion. . . . In the presence of the sick person, one may pray in any language, because the Shechinah is present there. (Torat Ha'adam)

Regarding the "Mi she'beirach" prayer that is recited in shuls in our era, we find the following laws in the widely-used handbook on Torah reading by R' Ephraim Zalman Margaliot (Galicia; died 1828):

On a weekday, if there is a need to bless an ill person, the shaliach tzibbur / prayer leader blesses him while standing in front of the aron kodesh before putting away the Torah scroll. (Commentaries note that the "Mi she'beirach" is now commonly recited at the place where the Torah was read.)

On Shabbat, if there is a need to bless an ill person because he is in danger on that day, it should be done after "Yehalelu" while standing on the bima. However, only with great hesitation did our Sages permit praying for a sick person or a woman in labor on Shabbat or Yom Tov. (Accordingly, commentaries debate whether it is permitted to pray for even a very sick person on Shabbat if that person is in another town and, unbeknownst to us, may have passed away.) (Sha'arei Ephraim 10:43-44)

Some authorities say that praying for the sick on Shabbat is prohibited only if it will cause sadness or worry. However, reciting a "Mi she'beirach" is routine and doesn't cause those emotions; therefore, it is permitted on Shabbat. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Pardes Yosef p.424)

R' Eliyahu David Teomim-Rabinowitz z"l (the "Aderet"; 1843-1905; rabbi in Lithuania and Yerushalayim) writes: One should not recite the "Yehi ratzon" (printed in many siddurim in the blessing "Refa'ainu") regularly lest the form of prayer that was established by our Sages becomes lost among non-mandatory prayers. (Tefilat David p.58)

It is written in the name of R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (1910-1995; leading halachic authority in Israel):

One may pray in "Refa'ainu" even for a sick person who is not a family member, and this is not considered improperly praying for a public need in one's private prayers, so long as one prays for a specific person.

However, one may not pray for a sick person in the middle of shemoneh esrei unless one has a connection to the sick person and feels his pain. The reason is that one may not come before a king, and certainly not the King of Kings, without a pressing reason.

When a congregation recites Tehilim for a sick person, it should be told beforehand the name of the person for whom it is praying. (Halichot Shlomo: Tefilah 8:16-17)

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## Memories of Yerushalayim

In his memoir, B'tuv Yerushalayim, R' Ben-Zion Yadler z"l (1871-1962; the "Maggid / preacher of Yerushalayim"), describes his work supervising observance of the agricultural commandments. [This continues from prior issues.]

One time, when I came to the settlement of Ekron, they told me that the appointee in charge of

separating tithes had already done so. I went to see him to find out the procedure he had used. He told me, "This time, I went beyond the letter of the law and gave ma'aser / a tithe even on the [Ottoman] government's share." I told him that in my opinion he had ruined everything because the government's share is exempt from ma'aser. [Giving more ma'aser on produce than required is against halachah and makes all of the produce prohibited to eat.] I told him that I did not know how to fix what he had done without consulting with other rabbis.

I traveled to the rabbi of Yafo [probably a reference to R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l] and I related the questions to him, for I could find no way out of this thicket. It was not possible to annul the declaration of ma'aser [the way a rabbi annuls a vow] because some of the produce had already been eaten. And, to take other un-tithed produce and separate ma'aser from it on behalf of the first produce was not possible, for that settlement had no un-tithed produce. We toiled over this until a solution occurred to me.

I remembered a ruling of R' Shmuel Salant [z"l (1816-1909; Rabbi of Yerushalayim)] involving an incident that happened to me: I had separated terumah and ma'aser in the Old City [in a way that was halachically invalid and caused a financial loss]. I asked R' Salant what to do and he answered, "You were appointed as an agent only for constructive purposes, not to ruin things. If you did not separate tithes properly, you exceeded your authority as an agent, thus annulling retroactively your appointment as a mashgiach. Therefore, you can now start over." [By the same logic, the individual who separated tithes on behalf of the village of Ekron, but did so in an invalid way, exceeded his authority as an agent and his act was a legal nullity. R' Yadler then goes on to discuss how they accomplished the tithing of the produce that had already been eaten.]

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