

Good Shabbos, everyone.

I want to thank the *drasha* sponsors:

- Nosson, Sara Rachel and Eli Schechter, in honor of Eli's successful surgery and successful recovery from surgery. May he have a continued *refuah shleima*.
- Hillel and Dena Soclof, in memory of Hillel's brother, Alan B. Soclof, Eliyahu ben R. Avraham Abba, 7 Kislev. May his *neshama* have an *aliya*.
- The Tanen Family, *bezchus a refuah shelaima* for Aharon HaKohen ben Zissel Rachel and Nacha bat Chava. May they have a *refuah shleima bekarov*. And for the protection of our soldiers, police, and security forces and speedy return of our brothers and sisters kidnapped by Hamas. Amen!

May all the sponsors be rewarded for their support of the shul with *bracha, hatzlacha*, and good health!

We continue to daven and strengthen our commitment to Torah and *mitzvos* as a *zechus* for the safety of our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael, with a focus on the brave *chayalim* and *chayalot*, the hostages, the wounded, and the grieving families. And those *tefillos* must be accompanied by real empathy. Try to put yourself in the place of a parent of a hostage, or a fallen soldier, or a wounded Jew, or a spouse or child or parent of an IDF soldier. Imagine the pain, the anxiety, and the confusion. We should all try to daven from a place of connection with a fellow Jew. It was so special to have a Yom Kippur Kattan tefilla in our shul on Monday, Erev Rosh Chodesh, joining many hundreds of kehillos across the country and the world in this special Yom Tefilla. May Hakadosh Baruch Hu listen to our heartfelt tefillos.

But besides tefilla, there are other concrete things we can do, and therefore must do. The famous **Ramban** in the introduction to Parshas Vayishlach tells us how Yakov Avinu prepared for battle...

רמב"ן בראשית פרק לב פסוק דנכתבה הפרשה הזאת להודיע כי הציל הקדוש ברוך הוא את עבדו וגאלו מיד חזק ממנו, וישלח מלאך ויצילהו. וללמדנו עוד שהוא לא בטח בצדקתו והשתדל בהצלה בכל יכלתו. ויש בה עוד רמז לדורות כי כל אשר יארע לאבינו עם עשו אחיו יארע לנו תמיד עם בני עשו, וראוי לנו לאחז בדרכו של צדיק שנזמין עצמנו לשלשת הדברים שהזמין הוא את עצמו, לתפלה ולדורון ולהצלה בדרך מלחמה, לברוח ולהנצל, וכבר ראו רבותינו הרמז הזה מן הפרשה הזאת...

When Yaakov Avinu was facing an existential threat from his brother Esav, in addition to prayer, he engaged in diplomacy and a military strategy. So while the IDF will take care of the military part of this battle...there are things regarding diplomacy and supporting the soldiers that we can all do--call your elected officials, donate to worthy causes in Israel, have your children make cards for soldiers (which they really do appreciate), check in on family and friends in Israel. These are things we can do from afar, together with *tefilla* and Tehillim, *mitzvos*, and *maasim tovim*. And have extra *kavana* when we say the *tefilla* for *chayalim* and the Tehillim we say daily.

On that note, the rally on Tuesday in Washington, D.C., was a very important and powerful experience. I don't think I'll ever forget standing with hundreds of thousands of Jews, from different geographic locations, different backgrounds, and different political and spiritual worldviews, united by our pride in being Jewish, and the responsibility as Jews to come together and proudly display our commitment to our people, our history, and our Land. It brought back memories of the December 7, 1987, rally for Soviet Jewry, which I attended as a child. And having Natan Sharansky, who was freed from the Iron Curtain thanks to that rally, at this rally on Tuesday brought home that point.

I hope Tuesday's rally, the largest gathering of Jews in this country, sent a strong message to our elected officials, and to other people watching in this country and the world, about how we feel and how united we are as a Jewish community on this issue. And it certainly sent an internal message as well. It was a reminder of what it means to be part of a special nation, to stand with other Jews who may live differently, knowing we are one family, and a family with true strength of character that displays passion and love for our people without the violence, hatred, and anger that was displayed at the counter rallies.

May Hakadosh Baruch Hu see this unity, this sincere act of *hishtadlus*, and hear our *tefillos*, and soon bring an end to this suffering, and bring ישראל לעם ורפואות, amen.

Our Parsha opens אברהם הוליד את יצחק, ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם, אברהם הוליד את יצחק. *This is the story of Yitzchak, son of Avraham. Avraham begat Yitzchak.*

רש"י בראשית פרק כה פסוק יט: אברהם הוליד את יצחק - על ידי שכתב הכתוב יצחק בן אברהם הוזקק לומר אברהם הוליד את יצחק, לפי שהיו ליצני הדור אומרים מאבימלך נתעברה שרה, שהרי כמה שנים שהתה עם אברהם ולא נתעברה הימנו, מה עשה הקדוש ברוך הוא, צר קלסתר פניו של יצחק דומה לאברהם, והעידו הכל אברהם הוליד את יצחק, וזהו שכתב כאן יצחק בן אברהם היה, שהרי עדות יש שאברהם הוליד את יצחק:

Avraham begat Yitzchak — When the Torah wrote, “Yitzchak, son of Avraham” it felt compelled to say “Avraham begat Yitzchak” because the cynics of that time said, “Sarah became pregnant with child of Avimelech. See how many years she lived with Avraham without becoming with child.” What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He shaped Yitzchak’s facial features exactly like those of Avraham’s, so that everyone had to admit that Avraham begat Yitzchak. This is what is stated here: that Yitzchak was the son of Avraham, for this is “evidence” that Avraham begat Yitzchak.

Rashi tells us that people questioned whether Yitzchak was really Avraham’s child, so Hashem made a miracle that Yitzchak looked exactly like Avraham.

בראשית פרק כה:כ:ויהי יצחק בן־אֶרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקִרְתּוֹ אֶת־רַבְּקָה בַת־בְּתוּרָאֵל הָאֲרָמִי מִפְּנֵי אֲרָם אֶחָיו לְבֵן הָאֲרָמִי לִוְיָאֵשָׁה:

Rav Shimon Schwab asks why this detail about Yitzchak looking like Avraham is mentioned when Yitzchak reaches the age of 40. You would think this cynical rumor had existed since the beginning...

I would like to suggest that looking like Avraham was not merely a physical description—it means in terms of how he expressed himself; his character, values, and ambitions. It is natural for children to “look” like their parents. It is natural to act properly and correctly when life is comfortable. But when there are challenges and obstacles—it becomes more difficult. When a 40-year-old still lives by his father’s values and aspirations—then it shows the strength of the bond and connection. Yitzchak at 40 showed that he truly was a continuation of Avraham—in looks, in worldview, in life goals, and in values. And we must do the same. We must never lose our core identity as Jews; as ביישנים רחמנים וגומלי חסדים, as the world’s moral compass. And that is why יצחק יקרא לך זרע, Yitzchak will carry on Avraham’s legacy, and not Yishamael. And when we act like Avraham—his *emunah*, his *chesed*-- then we are living up to our potential, and we are destined to continue his mission and carry out his destiny as בני ישראל, his descendants and heirs, and through that we are guaranteed of our continued survival.

Natan Sharansky, in his memoir *Fear No Evil*, shares a letter he wrote to his wife, Avital, from the Soviet prison where he languished. *“It’s best if you are left with only hope—the hope of remaining yourself no matter what happens. Don’t fear...believe in that meaning which was revealed to you in this life, and hope that you will succeed in guarding it.”*

As long as we Jews remain ourselves, true to ourselves, we will succeed. Our *haftara* today from the **Navi Malachi** begins with a statement from Hashem that He loves us.

אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר ה' וְאָמַרְתֶּם בְּמָה אֶהְבֵּתֵנוּ הֲלוֹא־אֵח עָשָׂו לְעֵקֵב נָאִס־ה' וְאָהַב אֶת־יַעֲקֹב:

I have shown you love, said the LORD. But you ask, “How have You shown us love?” After all—declares the LORD—Esav is Yaakov’s brother; yet I have accepted Yaakov.

Rashi writes that Hashem is saying He has shown His love by keeping His covenant through the generation, and giving us the Land of Israel.

רש"י מלאכי א:ב ואוהב את יעקב - לתת לו את ארץ חמדה צבי צבאות גוים (ירמיה ג) ארץ שצבין כל צבאות העכו"ם בה:

Rav Hirsch on *Haftaros* (p. 48) explains: It is "...an irrefutable palpable fact, which even the most skeptical obstinate skeptic could find nothing to cavil at, namely the fact of the existence, the preservation of the Jews. It is to this world historic fact that the prophet refers. Jacob stands there against the mighty Esau-Edom supported by his mighty sword, for centuries, for thousands of years, and has seen all the mighty Edom kingdoms flourish and die, rise and fall, has been subjected to all of them and has outlasted all of them, as we, looking back through history can testify as having happened what the prophetic eye of the prophet saw as the events of the future. This simple fact of the enduring existence of Israel, and indeed, under any circumstances which would without the slightest doubt entail the historical death of any other nation, is the most incontrovertible proof of the Divine love, the proof that Israel had in truth secured the Principle of Life, of national immortality in the Torah received from God."

Nicholas Berdayev was a very prominent Russian religious philosopher and dissident, who died in exile, in Russia, in 1948. He understood how Jewish survival defied any rational explanation. In his *The Meaning of History*, he wrote: "I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by applying it to the destinies of peoples, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint. And, indeed, according to the materialistic and positivist criterion, this people ought long ago to have perished. Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history. The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions, and the fateful role played by them in history; all these point to the particular and mysterious foundation of their destiny."

The **Rambam** wrote a famous letter to the Jewish community of Yemen in 1173, giving them hope in the face of terrible persecution.

ה'רמב"ם ב"אגרת תימן": "וכמו שאי-אפשר שתבטל מציאותו של הקב"ה כן אי-אפשר שנאבד ונתבטל מהעולם, שכן נאמר: "אני ה' לא שניתי ואתם בני יעקב לא כליתם" (מלאכי ג,ו).

The Rambam was telling them, and by extension is telling us, that as long as we continue to live as בני יעקב, connected to Hashem and our people, we are guaranteed survival. But we need to do more to deepen our connection with Hashem and the Jewish community. This connection offers support to those who need it. Sharansky mentioned a short telegram he received from Avital that said simply, "I am with you." And the support he derived from his pocket Tehillim book, that offered him comfort, connected to Hashem through David Hamelech and the history of our people. And it also is the assurance of our survival—because the promise is to a people, not to individuals.

Before the horrific events of October 7, there existed dangerous levels of internal conflict in Israel. Not all rifts have been patched and not all wounds have been healed, but the unity which exists today is encouraging. We are all בני יעקב...we have a shared history...a common story...and the potential of a shared destiny. When individual Jews or groups of Jews have disagreements, as inevitably happens, we have to find ways to deal with them respectfully, to ensure we continue to thrive as a people. We must maintain open channels of communication and learn how to march together in good times as well. We have seen factionalism at its worst. If we want to usher in the days of Mashiach and an end to our galus, the polarization and deep divides in our country and the Jewish world must end. .

Several years ago, **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** enunciated the following seven principles he felt were necessary to achieve this goal. It is found on <https://rabbisacks.org/seven-principles-maintaining-jewish-dialogue/>.

He wrote: *I have set out below what I regard as seven of the key principles for maintaining Jewish dialogue. I hope some, or all of them, speak to you.*

PRINCIPLE 1: *Keep talking, even when you disagree. The more you talk, the more you are likely to eventually find a way to work together.*

PRINCIPLE 2: *Listen deeply to one another. Hear what your opponent is saying. Listening is profoundly therapeutic. It is also deeply spiritual. The good news about the Jewish people is that we're among the world's best speakers. The bad news is that we're among the world's worst listeners. This has to change. Shema Yisrael, the great command, means, "Listen, Israel."*

PRINCIPLE 3: *Always be humble and modest by striving to understand the point of view with which you disagree. That was the way of Hillel. It remains the first rule of conflict management.*

PRINCIPLE 4: *Never seek victory. Never ever seek to inflict defeat on your opponent. If you seek to inflict defeat on your opponent, your opponent – such is human psychology – will seek to retaliate by inflicting defeat on you. The end result will be that even if you win today, you will lose tomorrow, and, in the end, everyone will lose. Don't think in terms of victory and defeat. Think in terms of what is best for the Jewish people.*

PRINCIPLE 5: *If you show contempt for other Jews, they will show contempt for you. If you show respect for other Jews, they will show respect for you. If you seek respect, give respect.*

PRINCIPLE 6: *Remember that the ultimate basis of Jewish peoplehood is "Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh," "All Jews are responsible for one another." We may not agree on anything, but we remain a single extended family. If you disagree with a friend, tomorrow he or she may no longer be your friend. But if you disagree with a family member, tomorrow he or she is still part of your family. Being a family is what keeps us together. We don't need to agree with each other, but we do need to care about each other.*

PRINCIPLE 7: *God chose us as a people. He didn't choose only the righteous; He chose all of us. It is as a people we stand before God, and it is as a people we stand before the world. The world doesn't make distinctions, anti-Semites don't make distinctions. We are united by a covenant of shared memory, shared identity, and shared fate, even if we have differing perspectives on our faith.*

The Sages said that the Torah was given to make peace in the world. How can we, the Jewish people or the State of Israel, be at peace with the world if we are unable to live at peace with ourselves? Bear this in mind the next time you are tempted to walk away from some group of Jews that you think has offended you. We are each called on to make some effort, some gesture, to listen to one another, to forgive one another, and to stay together as an extended, almost infinitely varied family. That is the only ultimate tikkun for the echoing grief of the [Churban] that has haunted our history, and reverberates still.

May we learn the lesson of our history and commit to keep open the lines of respectful communication within the Jewish community, both those with whom we agree and those with whom we disagree, and may we soon see the day when peace will reign supreme. And our people will see the promise fulfilled-

מלאכּי פרק ג פסוק כב - כד (כב) זכרו תורת משה עבדי אשר צויתי אותו בהרב על-פני ישראל הקים ומשפטים: (כג) הגה אנכי שלח לכם את אליה הנביא לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא: (כד) והשיב לב-אבות על-בנים ולב בנים על-אבותם פן-אבוא והפיתי את-הארץ חרם:

Be mindful of the Teaching of My servant Moshe, whom I charged at Chorev with laws and rules for all Israel. Lo, I will send the prophet Eliyahu to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of GOD. He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents, so that, when I come, I do not strike the whole land with utter destruction.

May the *יעקב קול* defeat the *ידי עשו*, the sweet sounds of Jewish prayers and dialogues among Jews help us defeat our enemies. May we merit to see this day soon, a day of unity, of reconciliation, and return to Hashem...a day of peace...amen.