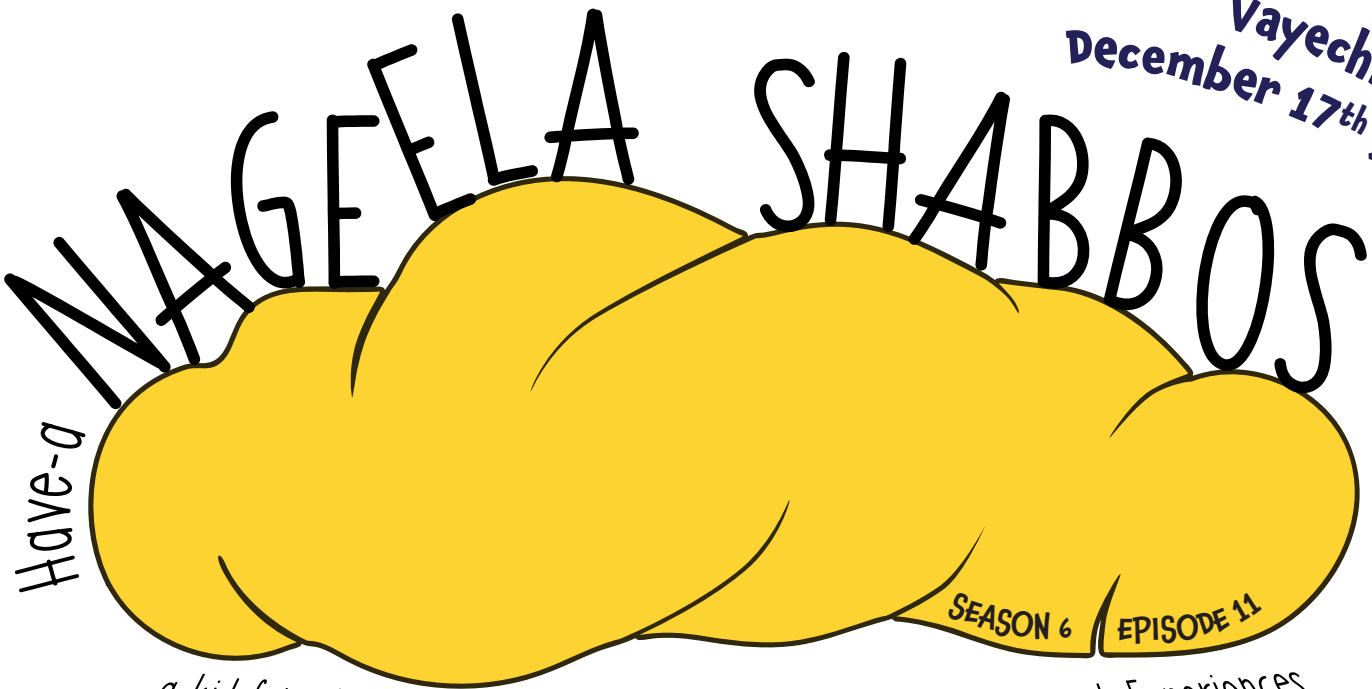


Vayechi 5782
December 17th 2021



a kid friendly publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences



Fave- O- Right

by Rabbi Dani Locker

It's bad to play favorites, right? Ask Harry Potter what he thinks about the treatment he got in comparison to Dudley.

If you look at the story of Joseph, what do you learn about showing favoritism to children? Clearly we learn that it's bad. Right? I mean, Jacob gave Joseph a designer coat, while his brothers were wearing stuff from Goodwill. This did not cause good will. The jealousy brought about by Jacob's favoritism led to some minor family disagreements, attempted murder, human trafficking and spicy camel riding. If I were a professional and Jacob was asking me for advice (which I'm not, and he wasn't), I'd probably say something like, "Ya know, maybe we should just keep things equal from now on."

Mark Twain tells a funny story about Brigham Young who was one of the early leaders

of the Mormons. Young had a whole lot of children, and one man bought one of his kids a whistle. "The result was just what any man of reflection could have foreseen... I think we had a hundred and ten children in the house... I had to order a hundred and ten of those shrieking things... And if ever another man gives a whistle to a child of mine and I get my hands on him, I will hang him higher than Haman!" Even Brigham Young knew how important it was for each of his children to be treated equally.

Did Jacob follow my (theoretical, not- really- existent) advice? No he did not! After all the heartache he and his family had endured, it seems he still played favorites. In this week's Torah reading, Jacob has aged and wants to give all his children blessings before he dies.

He gives a special blessing to Joseph's kids (not the other grandchildren), which is challenge #1. Then, in an unexpected move, he uses his



Candle lighting

- Henderson 4:10
- Las Vegas 4:10
- Reno/ Tahoe 4:19
- San Diego 4:27
- Irvine 4:27
- Los Angeles 4:28
- Oakland 4:33
- Park City 4:42
- Scottsdale 5:04
- Honolulu 5:35



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continued on next page

right hand (his dominant hand for eating, giving blessings and playing whack-a-mole) for the younger grandson, Ephraim, and even comments that he was giving the greater blessing to the younger son because he would be greater. What? Really? After what the family went through, shouldn't Jacob be more careful not to cause jealousy?

Yeah, maybe. Perhaps

Every child has different needs and giving each child what they need is appropriate

Menashe might feel jealous. But Jacob understood a deep truth about parenting, psychology and education. Every child has different needs and giving each child what they need is appropriate. This concept has to be applied very carefully, to minimize possible jealousy, and to make sure that it's really coming from the proper source and not from inappropriate favoritism. Yet it's clear that one child might require more help with her homework. A second might have a hard time falling asleep and the parent could help by telling a long bedtime story. Yet a third child in the same family has serious food allergies or stomach issues and though you spend 2.5 minutes making microwave pizza for the rest of the family, you might spend 2.5 hours making food they can eat. It's wrong to deprive a child of what they need just because it might make someone else jealous (all attempts should be made not to rub it in the other kids' faces).

According to Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky, Jacob saw his grandchildren who had grown up around Egyptian royalty, and thought they needed a stronger, more personal blessing to ensure their continued connection to the Jewish people. Ephraim especially, who was younger- and therefore further removed from Jo-

seph's Israelite upbringing- required the most special blessing.

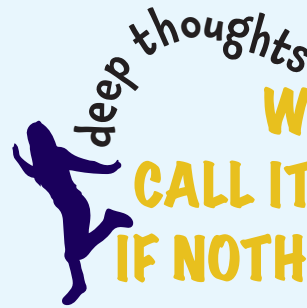
This is a beautiful concept for us to fight our own natu-

ral jealousy. You might think, "Why does THAT GUY get everything, and I don't?" Well, his FATHER, actually, the FATHER of both of you, gave each of you what you each need. He just has a spiritual peanut allergy.

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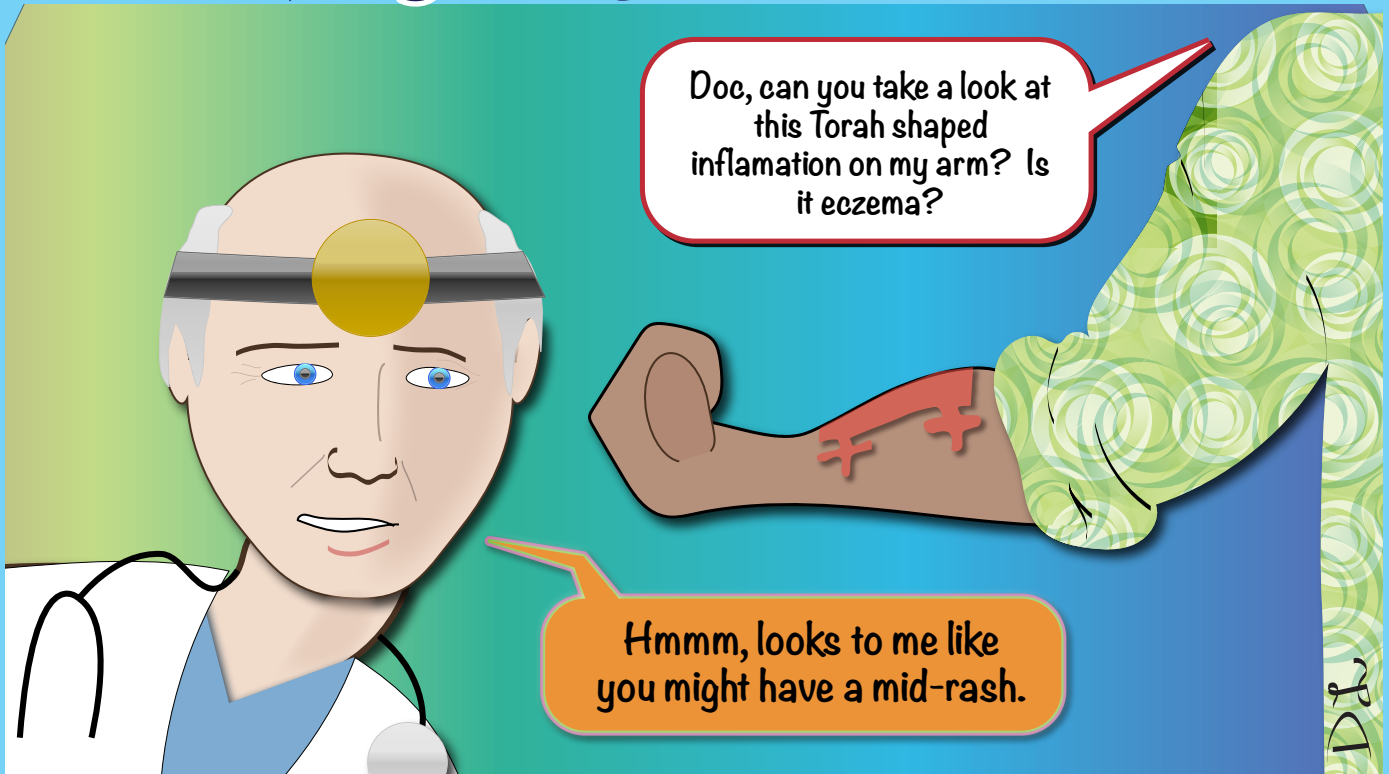
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WHY DO THEY CALL IT RUSH HOUR IF NOTHING MOVES?

PICKLE JEWS

GALACTICALLY SYNDICATED COMIC STRIP



Doc, can you take a look at this Torah shaped inflammation on my arm? Is it eczema?

Hmmm, looks to me like you might have a mid-rash.

DL

Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed.

Note: We call this 'Stump The Rabbi' for fun, but that's not really the point. The goal is to learn something important in an interesting way.



#189 It's All Greek to Me

Hi Rabbi,

I read a lot of Jewish books in English, and I love my Hebrew- English Chumash. Is that cool, or should I be learning it in Hebrew instead?

Thanks,

Tiran Slater



Dear Translator,

Let me teach you a Greek word. Ready? Septuagint. No, I didn't sneeze. That's an actual word. It means seventy, and it's based on this story, found in the Talmud, or in this case, the Ptalmod, because I'm going to ptell a ptale of Ptolemy, who for some odd reason spelled his name with a P (it's a good pthing he didn't play for the Ptennessee Ptians). Ptolemy was pthe Emperor of Egypt after Alexander pthe Great's conquest, and he decided to ptranslate pthe Ptorah into greek. He gathered 72 of pthe greatest Ptorah scholars and forced pthem pto do his work- for him. But pthat wasn't enough. Ptolemy suspected pthat pthese Rabbis might misptranslate some or the ptext, so he put pthem in separate rooms so pthey could not consult each other. Incredibly, all 72 of pthem ptranslated every word exactly pthe same. Pthis Ptranslation is called pthe Septuagint, and still exists. Many writings simply refer pto it as LXX (pthe Roman numeral for 70).

Pthe Ptalmod considers pthis a ptragedy. In fact, it's one of pthe reasons given for pthe fast day of Asarah B'pTeves. Pthis would make it seem pthat ptranslating pthe Ptorah is a bad pthing.

Yet, I can give you a number of examples where translating the Torah is considered a good thing. Most notably, Moses himself translated the Torah into every language that existed in his time, and carved them onto large stones that were set up near the Jordan river crossing! That sounds like we WANT people from all the nations to learn the Torah! The reality is that we have been translating the Torah for a very long time. Most printed copies of the Torah contain the Aramaic translation by Onkelos. So how do we explain the Talmud's negative reaction to Ptolemy's ptranslation?

There are a couple of ways to approach this question. One possibility is that while it's normally wonderful to translate the Torah, in this case, the translators purposely changed some things, fearing Ptolemy's disapproval of the accurate translation. While this makes it doubly miraculous thay all 72 of them

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deviated from the original in exactly the same way, it also caused there to be a very well known translation with inaccurate translations of the Torah. That is definitely NOT a good thing. (BTW, it's important to note that most English translation of the Torah, especially the Christian versions, like the King James edition are EXTREMELY inaccurate). Another approach is that while translating the Torah for individual purposes is a good thing, making it a big public thing was a problem. A similar example would be translating the prayers. All Rabbis agree that a person may pray to God in any language they understand. That's not really debatable. Yet many Rabbis are uncomfortable when Jewish movements change over their services to a different language. Because an individual praying should do it how they understand, but a communal amendment creates a culture where the original Hebrew (holy, unique and succinct as it is) is no longer important. That's uncool.

Finally, a third approach I came across in researching this: Jews are indeed meant to be a light unto the nations, and teach Jewish values to the world. Yet, a complete translation of the entire Torah by a Greguptian (that's my own invented word for Ptolemy who was the Greek ruler of Egypt) takes the control away from the Jews, the stewards of Torah knowledge. Torah knowledge should be accessible to all, but we've got to retain a connection to the scholars who

are attached to the true source. It's clear to see that in today's world, non-Jews who study what they call "The Old Testament" do not use Jewish commentaries, talmudic explanations or Midrashic accounts. Sure they may have translated 90% of the words accurately, but there is infinite depth in the Torah, and reading it like a novel without a connection to true Torah sources is irresponsible, and disingenuous. It's a dishonest representation of the word of God.

So Tiran, it's certainly fine for you to study in English, Sentinelese, Xhosa or any other languages you want. As long as you aren't a fluent Hebrew conversationalist, it's WAY better to learn in English than to study in Hebrew and only understand a bit of it. If you want my advice, it's worth learning Hebrew really, really well, because English translations will never capture the full depth of Torah study.

So kick back, reLaXX and open that Artscroll!

Have a Nageela Shabbat,

the Rabbi



What do you call it when ten Jews order steak?

Fillet Minyan!

OUCH! GROAN!
Do you have a better joke? I sure hope so! Send it to dlocker@nageelawest.org

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MAZEL TOV!
to Tova Davidowitz upon her engagement to Shmuel Meth!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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breaks the mold of old school Jewish outreach by providing out-of-the-box social and educational programs for Jewish children across the West Coast. Through afterschool activities, weekend retreats and our signature summer camp, we engage elementary and middle school children in a fun and meaningful experience. Our "questions encouraged" mindset makes Nageela a comfortable learning and growing environment for Jewish children of all backgrounds.