

From: The Rabbis at Chicago Torah Network

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Home For The  
Wondering Jew™

# THE CHICAGO TORAH NETWORK SHABBAT FAX<sup>©</sup>

A WEEKLY PRESENTATION OF JEWISH THOUGHT PUBLISHED IN MEMORY OF RAE DANIEL

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 11 FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2010 / 10 TEVES 5771 CANDLE LIGHTING: 4:00 P.M. SHABBAT ENDS: 5:11 (CHICAGO)

*Hang in there - Shabbos is coming!*

## TORAH PORTION: VAYECHI (GENESIS 47:28 - 50:26)

*This week's CTN Shabbat Fax is sponsored anonymously with a prayer for blessings and peace in the Land of Israel.*

### **1. "Jacob called to his sons and said to them ... Listen to Jacob your father ... Judah, You will be the leader of your brothers ... Your eyes more sparkling than wine, teeth whiter than milk ... " (49; 12)**

Our forefather Jacob is on his deathbed, surrounded by his sons.

And before he dies, he blesses each one. Gives them instructions for living.

And he has some very important things to tell each one.

... But then he says something that seems really strange.

*Eyes more sparkling than wine? Teeth whiter than milk?*

He's supposed to be talking about important, serious things.

... What's that all about?

The Rabbis of the Talmud tells us something powerful about these words.

That they have a very important message. For all of us.

... The sparkle in his eyes? The white teeth?

*It simply means to smile.*

Which we may not think is such a big deal.

*But the Torah says it's a very big deal.*

... Because we know how it is. How a smile can lift someone's spirits. Make him feel important.

*Give someone a smile and you can make his day.*

And in Judaism that's more than a *chessed*. An act of kindness.

*... It's being spiritual.*

Because in Judaism, spirituality isn't found by staying away from people.

Spending your day in prayer and mystical thoughts.

Spirituality is there in everyday life. You find it by caring about and helping others.

And it doesn't necessarily cost a lot or take a lot of time.

*... It can be as easy as seeing someone without a smile.*

*And giving him one of yours.*

▪ Rabbi Yechiel Gordon was a great European Torah scholar, known not only for his great scholarship, but also for his deep commitment to Torah ethics and incredible sensitivity to others.

He was in America when World War II broke out. But his wife and children were still in Poland. They were constantly on his mind.

*And one day he received the devastating news that some of them had been killed.*

*Words could not describe his pain. He broke down crying.*

*A little while later, a guest – unaware of the Rabbi's situation – came to see him.*

*When he came in, Rabbi Gordon's face changed.*

*And he greeted the visitor with a warm smile.*

*When the visitor left, the Rabbi broke down again in tears.*

*And later on, he turned to his student who had been there and explained:*

*"... What's in my heart has to do with me.*

*But what's on my face affects others."*

... Now, that's a tremendous sensitivity and self control that the Torah wouldn't demand of us.

*But it's something we can learn from on our level – and in our lives – as well.*

... Because our lives are hectic. Sometimes even painful.

And a smile doesn't always come naturally.

*... But Jewish tradition says we have to make the effort.*

Because the Rabbi was right. Our face is public.

And a sour face brings other people down. Dampens their spirits.

... But a smile is contagious.

### THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

*What is life really about?*

*The Torah's answer is that life is about growth. About never being complacent.*

*And about always looking to become better.*

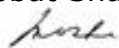
*More giving to our fellow man. And more connected to G-d.*

*... Which is why it's been said that we're not just human beings.*

*But human 'becomings'.*



*Shabbat Shalom and best wishes for a wonderful week.*

  
Rabbi Moshe Katz

  
Rabbi Doni Deutsch

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