
Torah Portion: Vayigash, Genesis 44:18–47:27
Haftarah: Ezekiel 37:15-28

Text Study

Joshua ben Perahiah used to say: appoint for yourself a teacher, and acquire for yourself a companion and judge all men with the scale weighted in his favor (Pirkei Avot 1:6).

Rabbah b. Hanah said: Why are the words of the Torah likened to fire, as it is said, "Is not my word like fire?" saith the Lord? (Jeremiah 23:29). This is to teach you that just as fire does not ignite of itself, so too the words of the Torah do not endure with him who studies alone (Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit, 7a).

Resh Lakish died, and R. Yochanan was plunged into deep grief. Said the Rabbis, 'Who shall go to ease his mind? Let R. Eleazar b. Pedath go, whose analysis of the law is very subtle.' So he went and sat before him; and on every dictum uttered by R. Yochanan he observed: 'There is a Baraita (Ancient oral source) which supports you.'

'Why aren't you like the son of Lakisha?' R. Yochanan complained: 'when I stated a law, the son of Lakisha used to raise twenty-four objections, to which I gave twenty-four answers, which consequently led to a fuller comprehension of the law; whilst you say, "A Baraita has been taught which supports you:" do I not know myself that my dicta are right?' Thus he went on rending his garments and weeping, 'Where are you, O son of Lakisha, where are you, O son of Lakisha!?' and he cried thus until his mind was deranged. Thereupon the Rabbis prayed for him, and he died (BT Bava Metzia, 84a).

Let the reading of Torah be like prayer—
a meditation to remind us what we strive for,
a chant that binds us to the chain of generations.

Let the reading of Torah be like prayer—
a moment of purest solidarity
with our people's hopes and history;
an invitation to affirm or dissent,
to challenge or believe,
to ask why or say amen.

Let the reading of Torah be like prayer—
every word a blessing,
every verse a conversation with God.

Prayer for Redemption of Hostages

By CCAR members Rabbis Ofer and
Rachel Sabath Beit Halachmi

*Our God, the One who raised Joseph up from the pit, be
"a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."
(Psalm 9:10)*

Send complete rescue and full redemption to all those
held captive by the enemy.

Strengthen their spirit and bring them our prayers that
they be protected from all harm.

Implant understanding in the heart of the enemy that they
may return the captives in wholeness of body and spirit.

Grant wisdom to the Israel Defense Forces that they may
secure freedom for the captives without loss of life. Grant
strength of spirit and courage of heart to all the sons and
daughters of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to release
bonds of captivity and allow us all to live in freedom.

*"They shall call upon Me, and I will answer them; I will
be with them in distress; I will rescue them, and honor
them." (after Psalm 91:15).*