



RABBI GROSSMAN ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA



A Wondrous Minyan Parshas Vayechy

Passover eve, Seder night, 2002, Abed al Basset Uda, a Palestinian terrorist sent by Hamas, blew himself up inside the Park Hotel in Netanya, killing 30 Israeli victims. The attack was one of several that hit Israel at the time. The results were horrific.

During those days, my good friend Murray Appelbaum of New York called me. He told me it was his mother's first Yartzit was to occur on the coming Friday, but that he feared to come to Israel to visit her grave in Netanya because of the attack.

I calmed him and told him I would do my best to get a *Minyan* - a quorum of 10 men together, so that he could recite the special prayers. On Friday morning, I drove to Netanya to make the arrangements myself.

We arrived at the cemetery and began to ask people there to join a Minyan. We counted nine members and were one man short. The minutes passed, and then I saw a man in the distance. He looked like a beggar.

The man understood only French. With hand gestures, I explained that we needed a Minyan for *Kaddish*. The man understood and agreed to join us. I felt G-d's providence.

When we concluded the prayers, the tenth man asked us to join him at his father's grave. It turned out that it was his father's Yartzit as well. He did not think he would find a Minyan. I was glad for the opportunity to fulfill another Mitzvah. We then joined him at the other side of the cemetery.

When I read the wording on the tombstone I was struck with awe. The man's father served as a communal leader and organizer in Tunisia for some 60 years. The man told us that his father worked for the *Chevrah Kadisha* which is entrusted with Jewish burial. One of his chief responsibilities was to care for a Minyan when relatives came to the gravesites of their dearly departed.

I addressed the small group and quoted a verse from our weekly parsha.

"When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called his son Yosef and said to him, 'If I have now found favor in your eyes, now place your hand beneath my thigh, and **you shall deal with me with loving kindness and truth**; do not bury me now in Egypt.'"¹

Rashi explains: "Loving kindness that is done with the dead is true loving kindness, for one does not expect any payment or reward."

The Chevrah Kaddisha are in fact known as "the true form of loving kindness."

However, we are surprised to learn that Yosef was in fact repaid for his kindness.

Yaacov blesses Yosef: "And I have given you one portion over your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

Rashi explains: "Since you are taking the trouble to occupy yourself with my burial, I have given you an inheritance where you will be buried. And which is this? This is Shechem, as it is said: 'And Yosaef's bones, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried in Shechem.'"²

"As I stand here with you, near the grave of a member of Tunisia' *Chevrah Kaddisha*, I may have found answers to some questions," I told them. "If we take a close look at Rashi's words we see that loving kindness and truth is done by 'one **who does not expect** any payment or reward.' One is rewarded for his acts of kindness, but should not expect it."

When is Yosef paid for his good deed? Only after his death. One is repaid for such an act of kindness only after he leaves this world, and is definitely not expecting it.

This was now clearly evident to us— a communal worker who spent his life ensuring that people could honor their dead properly was now being paid for his deeds, after his death. A measure for a measure.

¹ Beresheit 47:29.

² Beresheit 48:22.