

Potomac Torah Study Center
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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Mazel-Tov to Rabbi Binyamin and Nina (Le Blanc) Ehrenkranz on their wedding in London on December 23. Mazel-Tov to their families. May their love grow throughout their marriage, as did that of Yitzhak and Rivka (Bereishis 24:67).

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

Vayigash opens after Yosef accuses Benyamin of having stolen his special cup. He tells the other ten brothers that they are free to return home, but only Benyamin will remain as his slave. Yehuda responds by pleading for the Viceroy of Egypt to take him instead as a slave and let his youngest brother (age 30) to return, lest the loss of his special son kill their aged father. This emotional reunion mirrors themes that recur throughout Tanach.

An obvious parallel is when Kayin kills his brother (Hevel) in Gan Eden. God asks him where his brother is, and Kayin replies asking whether he is his brother's keeper. Animosity between brothers returns with Yishmael & Yitzhak and Esav & Yaakov. Although Yosef's brothers do not kill him, by leaving him in a pit and going away, they might have caused his death.

Although Yehuda suggests selling Yosef into slavery rather than killing him, he does not fulfill the obligations of a brother until Vayigash. Yehuda has three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er dies, and Yehuda gives his widow, Tamar, to Onan for levirate marriage. (Tamar's son from Onan would inherit Er's property.) Onan would not fulfill levirate marriage, so God makes him die (ch. 38). Yehuda's sons therefore do not fulfill the holy obligations of one brother to another. As with many other instances, this incident of a man not supporting his brother becomes a Torah law (levirate marriage, Devarim 25:5-9).

The Torah and Navi have numerous instances where the concept of obligations to ones brothers generalize to obligations toward all Jews, and even to non-Jews. As we read in the Haftorah on Shabbat Devarim, right before Tisha B'Av, God rejects rote performance of rituals from those who do not treat others properly: ". . .desist from doing evil. Learn to do good, seek justice, strengthen the victim, do justice for the orphan, take up the cause of the widow" (Isaiah 1:16-17). As Isaiah notes, our obligations to others extend beyond the 613 mitzvot – proper midot (moral conduct) is an essential part of our religion. Proper attitude to our brothers (generalized) includes proper midot.

Yehuda's pleading to Yosef hits Yosef at another level. When Yehuda tells him that Yaakov would not survive losing his special son, Yosef suddenly realizes that in waiting so long to identify himself to his family, he has caused twenty-three years of suffering to his beloved father. When Yehuda makes this argument, Yosef bursts into tears and can no longer restrain himself (44:34-45:1). Yosef has been focusing on the brothers' treatment of him twenty-three years earlier and trying to see whether they would act the same way to Benyamin. Yosef, however, has not been considering the impact of his silence on either his father or any of his brothers. Yosef has also sinned in keeping quiet and deceiving his family. All of the brothers therefore have reason to ask for forgiveness.

Favoritism in family relationships is very common – perhaps even universal. In reading the story of Yosef and his family, hopefully we can recognize the dangers of favoritism and try to avoid it as much as possible in our families. Also, when we are on the back side of favoritism, hopefully we can look past it and avoid letting rejection interfere with our

relationships with others in the family. As Yosef worked on repairing family relationships (not completely successfully), may we also do what we can when we feel disadvantaged.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, like virtually everyone else, dealt with complex relationships among family members, both in his personal family and in his synagogue family. Conflicts among siblings, and with parents and children, always arise. The key is trying to deal with these conflicts successfully. The stories involving Yosef are very absorbing, perhaps the most interesting part of the Torah. In reading these stories every year, may we find new depths and lessons from the stories. Yosef and his brothers represent far more than one generation in the history of our people. The interactions of the brothers with each other, their parents, and their children involve themes from all over the Torah and Navi. The issues lead to various Torah laws and messages from our prophets. While enjoying the stories, let us also learn from parallels throughout Tanach and later Jewish history.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Nossan ben Pessel, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Ramesh bat Heshmat, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Vayigash: Destiny Today

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1997

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

The plot thickens. At the end of last week's portion, Yoseph accused the brothers of stealing his magic goblet. Yehuda, in charge of the troupe, denies even the remotest possibility that any one of the brothers could be a thief. So confident was Yehuda that he pre-ordained the would-be thief to a death penalty and offered the remaining group of nine brothers as slaves were if the egregious accusations proved correct. Unfortunately, Yehuda was unaware of Yoseph's precontrived ruse of planting the goblet in Benjamin's sack. This week's portion begins as Yoseph wants to keep Binyamin, and only Binyamin, as a slave, something that Yehuda will battle to the very end to prevent. Yoseph and his brothers confront each other. In a mixed array of rage, fury, and emotional pleas, Yehuda bargains with Yoseph. Almost threatening war over the matter, Yehuda explains that "Benjamin cannot be taken as a slave as he has left an old father who awaits his return. If he will not return to his father, the old man will die of grief and aggravation. After all, he already lost one son to a terrible accident."

After seeing the concern that Yehuda has for his younger brother, Yoseph makes the startling revelation. "I am Joseph Is my father still alive?" (Genesis 45:3) Yoseph then forgives the brothers and tells them that his episode was divinely preordained. It set the path as a lifeline from the ensuing famine. He then sends his brothers back to Canaan to bring his father, but before doing so he presents each of them with a set of clothes. However, Yoseph gives his youngest brother Benjamin five sets of clothing and three hundred pieces of silver (Genesis 45:22). The Talmud (Megillah 16b) asks a very poignant question. How is it that Yoseph, a victim of jealousy, provoked his brothers by favoring Benyamin? Didn't jealousy spur the hatred that led to the original calamity? Why didn't he learn from past experience, not to show favoritism? The Talmud explains that Yoseph was very calculated in his actions. He was alluding to a similar event that would occur in the future. After being saved from the gallows, Mordechai, a descendent of Benyamin, miraculously rose to power and prestige. He was gifted with five changes of clothing as he left the palace of Achashveirosh. Benjamin's five changes of clothing were symbolic of a future sartorial gift that Benyamin's descendent would one day receive. Some commentaries ask a powerful question. Obviously, Yoseph did not explain the deep meaning of his actions to his brothers. What then was gained by favoring Benjamin in front of them? Would the symbolic reference negate any ill feeling? Would some mysterious token resolve a problem that may have been simmering? Why does Yoseph, in the midst of the turmoil of his startling revelation, decide to make a ceremonial gift that favors one brother over the rest, in order to foreshadow an event destined to occur in more than 1,000 years in the future? Could he have not saved symbolism for a more complacent setting?

Rabbi Paysach Krohn tells this beautiful tale in his latest work, *Along the Magid's Journey*:

In 1939, the Nazi Gestapo shut down Rabbi Moshe Schneider's yeshiva in Frankfurt, Germany. With tremendous effort and support from the English community, he was able to relocate the school to England. Survival during that horrific period was both a tremendous spiritual and physical challenge but two boys in the Yeshiva helped meet that challenge. They both were named Moshe. One Moshe would rise in the early hours of the morning and pick up leftover bread from a generous bakery. Carrying the bags of bread and leftover rolls while walking through the bitter cold was not easy, but Moshe never missed his duties. In fact, he often took the place of other boys who were supposed to do the chore.

The other Moshe also woke up early. He led a special learning session before dawn. He encouraged his friends to make the extra effort – which they religiously did.

After years of uninterrupted efforts, one day the boys got public recognition. Rabbi Schneider blessed them in front of the entire school. "Moshe who shleps the bread is not only schlepping today's bread. One day, he will help distribute bread for thousands of people. And the Moshe who is concerned with spirituality of others will continue to do so in years to come," announced the Rosh Yeshiva. "Their actions today are only seeds of the future."

His words proved true. Moshe, the bread-shlepper, became Moshe (Paul) Reichman, one of our generation's most benevolent philanthropists. Moshe, the young teacher, became Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch, Rav in Johannesburg, South Africa and Har Nof, Israel, an author of prestigious books on Jewish Law, and a teacher of thousands.

Perhaps Yoseph is telling us the secret of our people. Moments earlier Benyamin stood in shackles. He was accused of stealing a magic goblet and was humiliatingly sentenced with life-long enslavement to Pharaoh. Moments later he was not only liberated, but identified with honor and integrity as the blood brother, from both mother and father, of the most powerful man in the world. Yoseph gives the former slave-to-be a special a five-fold gift as an announcement to the world. With Benyamin, he declares the destiny of his people. Yoseph declares through Binyamin that today's events are our manifest destiny. Due to the courageous actions of Yehuda, Binyamin, the slave-to-be, walked away triumphantly, not with one change of clothing but with five. This was not a symbolism for thousands of years to come, but rather a symbolism of the ever-present character of the Jewish people.

The events of Benyamin in Egypt manifested themselves in almost direct comparison and beautiful symmetry with events that occurred centuries later in Persia. Mordechai the Yehudi, a descendant of Benjamin and by many accounts Yehuda, stood his ground under the greatest threats of death and humiliation. He defied the prophets of doom and walked away with glory and splendor.

Yoseph's message was no riddle, it was no illusion, and it was no mystical prophecy. It was our destiny. Courage in the trying times yields greatness. It was not a message only for the future. It was a message of the future – for today. That was a message all the brothers could appreciate — at that moment. It is a message we too, can appreciate –right now.

Good Shabbos!

Vayigash: The Sound of Silence

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2020

A major theme in this week's parsha is silence. Without a doubt, there is much talking – endless talking in fact. Yehuda begs Yosef to free Binyamin; Yosef breaks down and reveals all to his brothers. Yosef commands his brothers return with a message to their father; the brothers tell Yaakov that Yosef is still alive; G-d speaks to Yaakov; Yosef tells Pharaoh his brothers have arrived and prepares his brothers for that meeting, and on and on.

Yet, with all this talking, we may ask – is anyone saying what needs to be said? In the words of Simon and Garfunkel in The Sound of Silence, this parsha is full of "People talking without speaking."

Talk, talk, talk. So much busyness and running around. There is always some distraction, something that urgently needs to get done, so that there is no time to really talk.

When, after over two decades of agonizing separation, Yaakov finally sees Yosef, he declares with poignant relief that speaks of years of pain and longing "אָמַתָּה הַפָּעָם, אַתְּ רָאוּתִי אֶת-פְּנֵיךְ, כִּי עָזַךְ תִּהְיֶה – Now I can finally die after I have seen you, that you are still alive!" (Genesis 46:30-31). What is Yosef's response? Does he say "It's so great to see you Dad! I've missed you so much." No. He says "אָעָלָה וְאָגִידָה לְפָרָעָה – Sorry, Dad. I have to go talk to Pharaoh. So many things to do. I know it's been 22 years, but – let's talk later, ok? I promise we will find the time." After so long, Yosef is busy, busy, busy. No time to talk, to confront the huge painful issue that looms between them. A lot of chattering is filling up that space, but nobody is truly speaking.

To confront that looming, agonizing topic would mean exposing oneself to possible additional pain. It would mean making oneself vulnerable, admitting failures, and possibly hearing things that are so very hard to hear.

Where is Yosef saying "Dad, I missed you so much. Where were you? Why did you send me to my brothers, you know they hated me! Did you come searching for me? Did you want to know where I was? Were you perhaps complicit in everything that happened?"

And where is Yaakov saying to Yosef "Tell me, what really happened all those years ago? Did your brothers really do this to you? I thought you were dead! I was in terrible grief and mourning. What did you not send a message to me once you had risen to a position of power? Were you trying to forget us? Did you forget who you were and where you came from?"

There is only talking without speaking, and a huge silence that becomes a hole in their relationship: "Fools' said I, 'you do not know / Silence like a cancer grows.'"

The silence between Yaakov and Yosef grew like a cancer. In that first fateful moment of their encounter, they avoided what most needed to be talked about. And from that time on, the silence only grew and festered. Always beneath the surface, always being bracketed and glossed over in every conversation that followed. And it became easier to maintain distance than to have to constantly skirt around such a silence.

In next week's parsha, when Yaakov speaks with Yosef at the end of his life, it is poignantly clear how much they have been avoiding one another. Yaakov knows that Yosef has children, and even gives them a blessing. But then he sees them and says, "Who are these boys?" He has been so apart from Yosef that he doesn't even recognize his own grandchildren!

It is only at the end of next week's parsha, after Yaakov dies, that the subject is finally broached, but at that time it is too late. When Yaakov dies, the brothers are afraid that Yosef will use this opportunity to take revenge for what they had done to him so many years ago. They send word to Yosef: "Your father instructed before he died saying, say to Yosef 'Please

forgive your brothers for what they have done to you... And Yosef wept when they spoke to him." (50:16-17). Why did Yosef cry? Perhaps because he was so saddened by the fact that his brothers were still afraid of him and still believed he could do such a thing. But I think it was more than that. It was because Yosef knew his father could never have said such a thing. He knew because he and his father never really talked; they never spoke about what had happened so long ago and there was no way that Yaakov could have given such instruction before he died. And so, Yosef cried. He cried for himself and he cried for his father. He cried for the conversation that never happened, for that painful issue that never surfaced, and was never worked through and resolved. He cried for the relationship that could have been.

We must ask ourselves – what is that silence in our lives that we are avoiding, that festers and “like a cancer grows”? What is that huge issue that fills the room in our relationships with a parent, child or friend, that we expertly skirt around, that we are always too busy to talk about? Such a silence is corrosive and distancing. We have to find ways to stop avoiding it, to surface it so resolution and healing can take place.

If silence can be destructive, it can also be healing. An active silence, an active listening that makes space for the other, that is an invitation to share what needs to be shared and talk about that which needs to be spoken about. Let's find a way to talk about the silence that fills the room and then stop talking, and create a silence that puts aside any defensiveness, a silence that pulls back and lets the other in.

We are now living in a time in which our lives are not so filled with busyness as they used to be. We are in our homes and have more opportunity for reflection, more opportunity to connect with those who matter in our lives. Let's not let this opportunity go to waste. Let's reach out to that person with whom we've been avoiding having that difficult and painful conversation. Let's speak and then let's listen. Let's create a new silence —a silence that can heal.

Shabbat Shalom!

Vayishlach: Vision in the Night

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine* © 2020 Teach 613

After 22 years, Yakov was finally apprised of Yosef's whereabouts. How Yosef got to Mitzrayim was still a mystery to him. Yet, with great trepidation, Yakov readied himself to enter the darkness of exile, to join Yosef in Mitzrayim. It was at this time that Hashem appeared to Yakov in a prophecy of the night.

The commentaries observe that the occurrence of this prophecy at night is significant. Unlike Avraham who was given a prophecy to travel towards the promised land, Yakov was being instructed to leave the promised land and enter an exile. It was to be a painful exile, one that would be punctuated with the enslavement of his descendants for many decades. The darkness of night is an appropriate time and setting for such a prophecy, setting the tone for the start of exile. Like darkness, it would be hard to see the purpose of events and to understand them.

It is in this prophecy of the night that Yakov is told, “Don’t be afraid,” from entering this exile. It is in Mitzrayim, in the midst of oppression, that “I will make you into a great nation.” “I will be with you,” Hashem said to him, as you enter Mitzrayim, and “I will bring you back” from there. Thus Yakov was promised that even in the vicissitudes of life Hashem would be with him; even if Yakov wouldn’t be able to understand. This is the vision of the night. Yakov sees less and understands less of the normal things that people see. Much is hidden from him; but he is provided with a vision of eternity, a higher calling, the promise of becoming a special people.

Even the information that was presumably in the forefront of Yakov’s mind at this time; How did Yosef end up in Mitzrayim? was to be hidden from him. The verse states, “Yosef will place his hand on your eyes.” The Meshech Chochma commentary takes this to mean, poetically speaking, that even Yosef will place his hand on Yakov’s eyes and withhold from Yakov the information about how he disappeared for so many years. No, Yakov would be deprived of seeing in the conventional sense; but in a metaphysical sense, the vision and clarity that he was provided with were better than ever.

I once had the opportunity to be introduced to a great sage who was legally blind. It was said that he could not even read the large-print tomes before him. He basically studied from memory throughout the day, sometimes on his own, and sometimes with a study partner. Due to his proficiency, he was able to assist his study partners with pronunciation

whenever they got stuck on a Hebrew or Aramaic word. The person who introduced me said, "Go ahead, ask him for a Bracha (blessing) and you can even ask him advice if you'd like. His eyes don't see, but he has greater vision than most people."

This is the gift of Yakov to the Jewish people. He is unlike Avraham who is associated with Shacharis, the morning prayer, symbolizing dawn and daylight. He is unlike Yitzchak who is associated with Mincha, the afternoon prayer, symbolizing fortitude, as the story of the day progresses, and we encounter challenge. Yakov is associated with Maariv, the prayer of night. When it is dark we can't see; but we still must have vision.

As we continue to weather the effects of COVID, it is so tempting to lose sight. In the darkness of personal and national loss, in the challenge of lockdowns, masks, and financial upheaval, it is hard to see. But as children of Yakov we are infused with the quality called vision. Although vision might not enable us to make sense of events, just as even after being reunited, Yakov still couldn't make sense of Yosef's disappearance, clarity of long term vision must remain. We have the clarity to know that we will persevere, as families, as communities, and as a nation. And we take note of the people who have been helping us get there. We take note of the people who arranged spacing, with indoor and outdoor minyanim. We take note of those who built the unique partitions between the Baal Korey and the Oleh, so that we were able to begin Torah reading again. We take note of Rabbanim, educators, community leaders, therapists, and volunteers, who have been giving their all to support and help get us through this.

With the introduction of the vaccine, we hope that the worst is behind us. But there will still be the challenge to emerge, to reunite, and to deal with post-trauma. For one who chooses to be a student of Yakov it is okay not to understand. It is okay to daven Maariv and enter the exile, without being able to see. As long as we maintain our vision, we can continue to do our best, and rely on the promise (Tehillim 23) not to fear, "Because You are with me."

With heartfelt blessings for a wonderful Shabbos,

* Rav of Southeast Hebrew Congregation, White Oak (Silver Spring), MD and Director of Teach 613.

Resolving an Identity Crisis: Thoughts for Parashat Vayiggash

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel*

"And Joseph said to his brothers: I am Joseph. Does my father still live?"

In re-uniting with his brothers, Joseph asked if his father was still alive. Yet, the brothers had already told him that Jacob was alive. Indeed, the rest of Joseph's words make clear that he knew Jacob was alive. So what is the significance of his question "does my father still live?" We need to understand Joseph's dilemma.

We gain insight into Joseph's inner life by the names he gave to his sons. He named his first-born Menasheh "for God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." Joseph was proclaiming himself an Egyptian. He was a ruler in Egypt, he had an Egyptian name, an Egyptian wife; he wanted to forget his father's house. Yet, he named his second son Ephraim, "for God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." He described Egypt as a land of his affliction--he still wasn't at peace in Egypt in spite of his efforts to be a full Egyptian. Who was Joseph? Was he a fully assimilated Egyptian, or was he still tied to his ancestral home? Joseph had a serious identity crisis.

Joseph concealed this inner struggle until he actually was faced with his brothers, who had come to Egypt to buy food. Now Joseph was forced to decide who he was. Should he be an Egyptian and reject his brothers, or should he be an Israelite and identify with them. This uncertainty might explain his cruel treatment of his brothers. He strove to remain an Egyptian, to avoid re-connecting with his brothers. Yet, he could not succeed. At last, he broke down crying: I am Joseph. Does my father still live?

The question about his father was rhetorical, since he already knew Jacob was alive. The question can be understood as Joseph speaking to himself: I thought I could assimilate and become a full, true Egyptian. I tried very hard to forget my father's home, my connection with my people. But I cannot keep up the charade any longer. Does my father still live within me, do my ties to my people continue to bind me to them, is this connection so powerful as to be able to draw me back to my roots?

When Joseph finally realizes that his father is still alive within himself and that he cannot break away from his family and traditions, he is able to reconcile with his brothers. Joseph, the archetypal "assimilated Jew", returns to the fold. He regains his true identity. I am Joseph your brother. I reclaim the ideas and ideals of my father's home.

The Joseph story foreshadows so many other stories of assimilated Jews who have found their ways back home. They had left their families and traditions, trying to adopt an entirely new identity. Yet, something happens in their lives, triggering a return to Judaism and the Jewish people. They are often perplexed by this return. They ask in amazement: "does my father still live?" And they answer: yes, the Jewish teachings and traditions and peoplehood still live within me. I will not run away any longer. I finally know who I am, and have made peace with myself, my family and my God.

* Jewishideas.org. <https://www.jewishideas.org/two-pharaohs-two-modes-leadership-thoughts-parashat-mikkets> **The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website jewishideas.org or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.**

The End of Prophecy: Malachi's Position in the Spiritual Development of Israel

By Rabbi Hayyim Angel *

Introduction

God communicated to people through prophecy for nearly the entire biblical period, from Adam until Malachi. According to a prevalent Jewish tradition, prophecy ceased with Malachi, not to be renewed until the messianic age. In this article, we will consider a few traditional explanations of why prophecy ceased and some spiritual implications for Judaism over the ensuing 2,500 years and counting.

Overview of Malachi

Unlike Haggai and Zechariah, whose prophecies pulsated with messianic potential, Malachi lived a generation or two later—a generation in which that messianic potential appears to have been lost. At that time, the people's political and economic suffering contributed to:

- their feelings of rejection by God (1:2–5),
- corruption of the priesthood (1:6–2:9),
- rampant intermarriage (2:10–16), and
- laxity in tithing (3:8–12).

God-fearing people were losing heart as well. Why remain righteous? Their sinful compatriots were successful, while God-fearing people suffered (2:17; 3:13–21)! All Malachi could answer was that for now, the mere fact of Israel's continued existence proved that God still loved them (1:2–5). Only in some unspecified future would God bring complete justice (3:13–24).

According to a prevalent Jewish tradition, Malachi was the last prophet (see, for example, *Tosefta Sotah* 3:3; *Yoma* 9b; *Sanhedrin* 11a). That his book is positioned last in the Twelve Prophets does not prove he was the last prophet, since the book is not arranged in chronological order. However, it seems from textual evidence that he likely was the last of the Twelve. Radak and Abarbanel observe that unlike Haggai and Zechariah, Malachi does not mention the Temple construction; it was in use already. Malachi also condemns intermarriage (Mal. 2:10–16), a shared concern of Ezra and Nehemiah (458–432 B.C.E., see *Ezra* 9–10; *Neh.* 13:23–28). The widespread laxity in tithing (Mal. 3:8–12) also likely dates to Nehemiah's time (*Neh.* 10:35–40; 12:44; 13:5, 10–12).

Even if Malachi were the last of the biblical prophets, there is no statement at the end of his book or anywhere else in the Bible stating categorically that prophecy had ceased. For example, Nehemiah battled false prophets (*Neh.* 6:5–7, 11–13) but did not negate the existence of prophecy in principle.

Nevertheless, the tradition that Malachi was the last prophet opened the interpretive possibility that Malachi was conscious of the impending end of prophecy.

A pronouncement (massa): The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi (Mal. 1:1).

Most commentators understand the book's opening word *massa* as another generic term for "prophecy." However, Abarbanel notes that the term could also mean "burden." One Midrash similarly understands *massa* in this vein:

?[Prophecy] is expressed by ten designations...And which is the severest form? ... The Rabbis said: Burden (*massa*), as it says, As a heavy burden (Ps. 138:5) (Gen. Rabbah 44:6).

Within this interpretation, it is possible that Malachi viewed his mission with additional weight, conscious of his being the last of the prophets.

Similarly, several interpreters understand the book's closing verses as a self-conscious expression that prophecy was about to end:

Be mindful of the Teaching of My servant Moses, whom I charged at Horeb with laws and rules for all Israel. Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the Lord. 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 (Mal. 3:22–24).

Kara (on 3:22), Ibn Ezra (on 1:1), Abarbanel (on 1:1), and Malbim (on 3:22) explain that Malachi was aware that prophecy would stop with him. The word of God would henceforth be available only through the written word of the Bible. Malbim links the exhortation to observe the Torah to the prediction of Elijah's coming. With the end of prophecy, the Torah would sustain the people of Israel until the messianic era, at which point prophecy will resume.

Why Prophecy Stopped

We now turn to three leading trends in traditional Jewish thought as to why prophecy ceased: sin, the destruction of the Temple, or a metaphysical spiritual transition.

Sin

Some sources suggest that the loss of prophecy was punishment for sin. Over 200 years before Malachi, the prophet Amos predicted the cessation of prophecy:

A time is coming—declares my Lord God—when I will send a famine upon the land: not a hunger for bread or a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the Lord. Men shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it (Amos 8:11–12).

Avot D'Rabbi Nathan B:47 explains that prophecy ceased as a consequence of people mocking the prophets.

Radak (on Hag. 2:5) suggests more generally that lack of fidelity to the Torah resulted in the loss of prophecy. A Midrash (Pesikta Rabbati 35) states that many Jews failed to return to Israel after Cyrus gave them permission, and therefore prophecy ceased. Commenting on Yoma 9b, which blames the lack of redemption in the Second Temple period on the fact that many Jews did not return, Maharsha similarly states that prophecy ceased as punishment for the non-return from exile.

Destruction of the Temple

Ezekiel chapters 8–10 describe a vision wherein God shows the prophet the rampant idolatry in Jerusalem. God's Presence abandons the Temple and goes into exile. Radak (on Ezek. 9:3) explains that the absence of God's Presence ultimately contributed to the disappearance of prophecy.

Although Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesied after the destruction of the First Temple, a number of sources consider the destruction to have dealt a fatal blow to prophecy.

?In five things the first Sanctuary differed from the second: in the ark, the ark-cover, the Cherubim, the fire, the Shekhinah, the Holy Spirit [of Prophecy], and the Urim ve-Thummim [the Oracle Plate] (Yoma 21b).

As Benjamin is the last tribe, so Jeremiah is the last prophet. But did not Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesy after him? R. Lazar says: they had limited prophecy. R. Samuel b. Nahman says: [Jeremiah's] prophecy already was given to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (Pesikta D'Rav Kahana 13).

The last prophets were diminished or, alternatively, were mere transmitters of Jeremiah's message. Malbim (on Zech. 1:5–6) presents a more benign form of this approach:

I will not send new prophets, since there is no longer any need for prophets as you have seen all the prophecies of doom fulfilled against you...there is no longer any need for prophecy since you already understand God's hand in history.

According to Malbim, there no longer was any need for prophecy since the message had already been given through earlier prophets.

Metaphysical Transition

Seder Olam Rabbah³⁰ states that prophecy ceased in the time of Alexander the Great. Based on the rabbinic chronology, the Greek Empire began immediately following the end of the biblical period, so this time frame would synchronize with Malachi. Following this chronological assumption, R. Zadok HaKohen of Lublin observed that a metaphysical transition to an age of reason occurred in Israel and in Greece at the same time:

The proliferation of idolatry and sorcery in the gentile world paralleled divine revelation and prophecy in Israel. When prophecy ceased and the era of the Oral Law commenced, there appeared Greek Philosophy, which is to say, mortal wisdom (Resisei Laylah, 81b, Bezalel Naor translation).

This idea meshes with a talmudic statement that at the beginning of the Second Temple period, the temptation for idolatry ceased being the force it had been during the First Temple period (Yoma 69b). R. Yehudah HeHasid argued that once the urge for idolatry vanished there no longer existed the need for prophecy to counterbalance magic (Sefer Hasidim, Wostenetzky ed., p. 544; cf. R. Elijah of Vilna, commentary on Seder Olam Rabbah 30; R. Zadok, Divrei Soferim, 21b).

Similarly, a certain spiritual intensity was lost. Once the urge to idolatry had declined, prophetic revelation would have too much power if left unchecked. To preserve free will, prophecy had to cease as well (R. Eliyahu Dessler, Mikhtav me-Eliyahu III, pp. 277–278).

Religious Implications

According to the sin approach, the deprivation of the supreme gift of prophecy was a devastating punishment that has diminished the connection between God and humanity for the past 2,500 years since Malachi. Within the destruction of the Temple approach, the disappearance of prophecy was a necessary corollary of that cataclysmic event.

Although the loss of prophecy was a spiritual catastrophe, there still are some spiritual benefits to its suspension particularly within the approach that there was a divinely ordained metaphysical shift from prophecy-idolatry to human reason. In 1985, Professor Yaakov Elman published two articles analyzing the position of R. Zadok HaKohen of Lublin in reference to the transition from the age of prophecy to the age of Oral Law. According to R. Zadok, the end of prophecy facilitated a flourishing of the development of the Oral Law, a step impossible as long as people could turn to the prophets for absolute religious guidance and knowledge of God's Will. Sages needed to interpret texts and traditions to arrive at rulings, enabling them to develop axioms that could keep the eternal Torah relevant as society changed.

Although the decline of revelation distanced people from ascertaining God's Will, it simultaneously enabled mature human participation in the mutual covenant between God and humanity. This religious struggle is captured poignantly by the talmudic passage:

And they stood under the mount: R. Abdimi b. Hama b. Hasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an [inverted] cask, and said to them, 'If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, there shall be your burial.' R. Aha b. Jacob observed: This furnishes a strong protest against the Torah. Said Rava, Yet even so, they re-accepted it in the days of Ahasuerus, for it is written, [the Jews] confirmed, and took upon them [etc.]: [i.e.,] they confirmed what they had accepted long before (Shabbat 88a).

Rather than explaining R. Aha's question away, Rava understood that revelation in fact crippled an aspect of free will. He proposed Purim as the antidote, since that represents the age when revelation ceased.

Although prophecy was the ideal state—and we pray for its return—its absence enables the flourishing of human reason, as we no longer have access to absolute divine knowledge. We must take initiative in our relationship with God or else the relationship suffers. R. Zadok applied this human endeavor to the realm of Torah study. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik understood prayer as replacing prophecy, precisely with the imperative of our responsibility to keep the lines of communication between God and humanity open:

In short, prayer and prophecy are two synonymous designations of the covenantal God-man colloquy. Indeed, the prayer community was born the very instant the prophetic community expired and, when it did come into the spiritual world of the Jew of old, it did not supersede the prophetic community but rather perpetuated it...If God had stopped calling man, they urged, let man call God (The Lonely Man of Faith [New York: Doubleday, 1992], pp. 57–58).

Institutionalizing prayer rescued intimacy with God by creating a new framework for this sacred dialogue.

Although prophecy disappeared some 2,500 years ago, the underlying spiritual struggle continues to be manifest in contemporary society. Many people long for absolute knowledge of God's Will. Consequently, there exists a compelling pull toward holy men (rebbe, kabbalists) or the over-extension of a da'at Torah concept that accords near-infallibility to Torah scholars. Though that appeal may be understandable, it must be remembered that (a) these individuals are not prophets and therefore do not have the certain divine knowledge that many accord to them; and (b) in an age lacking prophecy we have a far greater responsibility to learn Torah and pray, and to take that spiritual energy to infuse every aspect of our lives with sanctity. This requires a healthy dose of human reason and effort, coupled with an ongoing consultation with spiritual guides who can help us grow.

For further study, see:

Hayyim Angel, "The First Modern-Day Rabbi: A Midrashic Reading of Ezra," in Revealed Texts, Hidden Meanings: Finding the Religious Significance in Tanakh (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV-Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2009), pp. 217–226.

Hayyim Angel, "The Theological Significance of the Urim VeThummim," in Through an Opaque Lens (New York: Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2006), pp. 195–214.

Gerald Blidstein, "In the Shadow of the Mountain: Consent and Coercion at Sinai," Jewish Political Studies Review 4:1 (1992), pp. 41–53.

Yaakov Elman, "R. Zadok HaKohen on the History of Halakha," Tradition 21:4 (Fall 1985), pp. 1–26.

Yaakov Elman, "Reb Zadok HaKohen of Lublin on Prophecy in the Halakhic Process," in Jewish Law Association Studies I: Touro Conference Volume, ed. B. S. Jackson (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 1–16.

Lawrence Kaplan, "Daas Torah: A Modern Conception of Rabbinic Authority," in Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy, ed. Moshe Sokol (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1992), pp. 1–60.

Bezalel Naor, Lights of Prophecy (New York: Union of Orthodox Congregations, 1990).

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Parshas Vayigash – To Truly Love

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

Observing the Tenth of Teives this past week, remembering the siege on Jerusalem which led to the destruction of the Temple, it is appropriate to focus on our interpersonal conduct. As baseless hatred was the cause for destruction of the Temple, to rebuild the Temple we need to focus on baseless love.

One of the greatest difficulties in attaining baseless love is that if love is truly baseless then we are fully justified in not feeling that love for another. As love is a character trait that causes one to bend justice, perhaps baseless love applies even where one is justified in feeling frustration towards another, perhaps having even been wronged by another. It is in these situations where we truly display baseless love and attain true greatness. Yet it is in these situations where we feel the greatest difficulty in looking beyond ourselves.

When we ask ourselves if we are ready to reach beyond ourselves, if we even have that capacity – or should, we tend to think over our lives and experiences searching for examples. We wonder if this is done, or at least has been done. Sometimes, if we can find an example, that alone can help to inspire us to reach beyond ourselves and achieve true greatness. I believe we can find such inspiration from Yosef in this week's parsha.

After Yosef has his brothers brought before him for Binyamin supposedly stealing his goblet, Yehuda makes an impassioned plea for Yosef to take him as a servant instead of Binyamin. At this point, Yosef is ready to reveal himself to his brothers. Before he does so the Torah tells us that "Yosef did not have the strength to bear all those standing upon him" and cries out for everyone but his brothers to leave. (Bereishis 45:1).

There are many explanations of what it was that Yosef could not bear. Rash"i (ibid.) explains that Yosef could not bear to have the Egyptians standing there hearing his brothers' shame when he revealed himself. He, therefore, insisted on being alone with his brothers', despite placing himself in danger should they choose to attack him to save Binyanim. He simply did not have the strength to bear their shame. When we think of Yosef's life, this is an astounding statement. Yosef had been taken from the life of nobility, a cherished son in a respected, wealthy household, and found himself a slave. Yet he continued to find the strength to move forward. He then finds himself being seduced by his master's wife. She would change her clothing for him, so he would not see her wearing the same dress at night which he had seen her wearing in the morning. Yet, he held himself strong and despite being a young man in the prime of his passions, found the strength to withstand her attempts. One time she finally catches him and begins to lure him. Yet, when he realizes what is happening, he finds the inner strength to pull himself away, fleeing the moment. He is then thrown into jail, as a slave in a foreign country, and continues to find the strength to do what needs to be done. He had displayed himself many times as a man of great courage and character.

He is now faced with the men who had brought all this difficulty upon him – the brothers who had ripped him away from his father and sold him. He is aware that these very brothers are about to feel the shame and the guilt for that horrible turning point in his life, for all that they did to him. If ever there was a man who was justified in not feeling baseless love towards another, Yosef was that man.

Yet, despite all justifications, Yosef – this man of such great inner strength and will power, could not find the strength to bear his brothers' shame. Yosef is a paradigm of accepting another despite their flaws, and still seeing their goodness. Yosef, in this moment, shows us what baseless love truly is.

When we are faced with the challenge of seeing the good in another, we must remember Yosef's example. Surely, whatever wrong we see, is less than what Yosef faced in his brothers. If he could see the good in them, and truly care for them, perhaps we can, as well.

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Dvar Torah for Miketz and Channukah: Happy Chanukkah

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

[Rabbi Rube's Dvar Torah was not ready in time for my deadline this week. Watch for his Dvar Torah next week.]

Shabbat Shalom!

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Rav Kook Torah

Vayigash: The First Exile

The very first exile of the Jewish people, the exile to Egypt, began as Jacob and his family left the Land of Israel. They intended to spend a short stay in Egypt until the famine passed.

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Hosea 528) makes a startling observation:

"Jacob should have gone down to Egypt in chains. Yet God said, 'Jacob, My first-born, how could I banish him in disgrace? Rather, I will send his son to go down before him.'"

What did Jacob do to deserve being exiled in iron chains?

Two Purposes to Exile

We need to analyze the purpose of exile. The Jewish people have spent more years in exile than in their own land. Why was it necessary to undergo these difficult trials? Could they not be punished by other means?

In fact, the Midrash states that the Jewish people are particularly suited for exile. They are called "the daughter of exiles," since the Avot (forefathers) were sojourners and refugees, subjected to the whims and jealousies of local tyrants (Midrash Eicha Petichta 1 on Isaiah 10:30).

Exile accomplishes two goals:

The people of Israel were created to serve God. The nation needs a pure love of God, undiluted by materialistic goals. Clearly, people are more prone to become absorbed in worldly matters when affluence and prosperity are readily attainable. In order that the Jewish people should realize their true spiritual potential, God made sure that the nation would lack material success for long periods of time.

Exile serves to spread the belief in one God throughout the world. As the Sages wrote in Pesachim 87b, "The Holy One exiled Israel so that converts will join them." Similarly, we find that God explained the purpose of exile and redemption in Egypt, "so that Egypt will know that I am God" (Ex. 7:5).

The major difference between these two objectives lies in the conditions of the exile. If the purpose of exile is to avoid significant material success over a long period of time — to prepare the Jewish people for complete dedication to God and His Torah — then such an expulsion by definition must be devoid of prestige and prosperity.

If, on the other hand, the goal is to influence and uplift the nations of the world, then being honored and respected in their land of exile will not contradict the intended purpose. On the contrary, such a state of honor would promote this aim.

Jacob's Exile

Jacob had spiritually perfected himself to the extent that nothing in this world could dampen his burning love for God. His dedication was so great that he could interrupt the emotional reunion with his beloved son Joseph, after an absence of 22 years, and proclaim God's unity with the Shema prayer (Rashi on Gen. 46:29). Certainly, for Jacob himself, only the second goal of exile was applicable.

Jacob's descendants, however, would require the degrading aspects of exile in order to purify them and wean them from the negative influences of a materialistic lifestyle. As their father, it was fitting that Jacob be led to Egypt in iron chains. But since Jacob personally would not be adversely affected by worldly homage and wealth, he was permitted to be exiled in honor, led by his son, viceroy of Egypt.

(Gold from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 233-241.)

The First Psychotherapist (Vayigash 5778)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

The phrase "Jewish thinker" may mean two very different things. It may mean a thinker who just happens to be Jewish by birth or descent – a Jewish physicist, for example – or it may refer to someone who has contributed specifically to Jewish thought: like Judah Halevi or Maimonides.

The interesting question is: is there a third kind of Jewish thinker, one who contributes to the universe of knowledge, but does so in a recognisably Jewish way? The answer to this is never straightforward, yet we instinctively feel that there is such a thing. To give an analogy: there is often something recognisably Jewish about a certain kind of humour. Ruth Wisse has interesting things to say about it in her book, *No Joke*.^[1] So does Peter Berger in his *Redeeming Laughter*.^[2] Humour is universal, but it speaks in different accents in different cultures.

I believe that something similar applies to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. So many of the early practitioners of psychoanalysis, with the marked exception of Jung, were Jewish that it became known in Nazi Germany as the "Jewish science." I have argued – though my views on this have been challenged – to the contrary, that by taking the Greek myth of Oedipus as one of his key models, Freud developed a tragic view of the human condition that is more Hellenistic than Jewish.^[3]

By contrast, three of the most significant post-war psychotherapists were not merely Jewish by birth but profoundly Jewish in their approach to the human soul. Viktor Frankl, a survivor of Auschwitz, developed on the basis of his experiences there an approach he called Logotherapy, based on "man's search for meaning."^[4] Though the Nazis took away almost every vestige of humanity from those they consigned to the death factories, Frankl argued that there was one thing they could never take away from their prisoners: the freedom to decide how to respond.

Aaron T. Beck was one of the founders of what is widely regarded as the most effective forms of psychotherapy: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.^[5] Among patients suffering from depression, he found that their feelings were often linked to highly negative thoughts about themselves, the world and the future. By getting them to think more realistically, he found that their mood tended to improve.

Martin Seligman is the founder of Positive Psychology, which aims not just to treat depression but actively to promote what he calls "authentic happiness" and "learned optimism."^[6] Depression, Seligman argued, is often linked to pessimism, which comes from interpreting events in a particular kind of way that he calls "learned helplessness". Pessimists tend to see misfortune as permanent ("It's always like this"), personal ("It's my fault") and pervasive ("I always get things wrong"). This leaves them feeling that the bad they suffer is inevitable and beyond their control. Optimists look at things differently. For them, negative events are temporary, the result of outside factors, and exceptions rather than the rule. So, within limits,^[7] you can unlearn pessimism, and the result is greater happiness, health and success.

What links all three thinkers is their belief that (1) there is always more than one possible interpretation of what happens to us, (2) we can choose between different interpretations and (3) the way we think shapes the way we feel. This gives all three a marked resemblance to a particular kind of Jewish thought, namely Chabad Chassidut, as developed by the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady (1745-1812). The word Chabad stands for the initial letters of the three intellectual virtues, chokhmah, binah and da'at, "wisdom, understanding and knowledge," which influence the more emotional attributes of chessed, gevurah and tiferet, "kindness, self-restraint and beauty or emotional balance." Unlike the other Chassidic movements, which emphasised the emotional life, Chabad Chassidism focused on the power of the intellect to shape emotion. It was, in its way, an anticipation of cognitive behavioural therapy.

Its origins, however, lie far earlier. Last week I argued that Joseph was the first economist. This week I want to suggest

that he was the first cognitive therapist. He was the first to understand the concept of reframing, that is, seeing the negative events of his life in a new way, thereby liberating himself from depression and learned helplessness.

The moment at which he does so comes when, moved by Judah's passionate plea to let Benjamin return home to their father Jacob, he finally reveals himself to his brothers:

"I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God."

Note what Joseph is doing here. He is reframing events so that the brothers will not have to live under an unbearable burden of guilt for having sold Joseph as a slave and deceived their father, causing him years of undiminished grief. But he is only able to do so for them because he has already done so for himself. When it happened, we cannot be sure. Was Joseph aware, all along, that the many blows of misfortune he suffered were all part of a divine plan, or did he only realise this when he was taken from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and then made Viceroy of Egypt?

The text is silent on this point, but it is suggestive. More than any other character in the Torah, Joseph attributes all his achievements to God. This allows him to do what, in secular terms, Frankl, Beck and Seligman would all have advised him to do if he had been one of their patients: think of a mission he was being called on to fulfill (Frankl), reinterpret misfortune as possibility (Beck) and see the positive elements of his situation (Seligman). Not only was Joseph freed from a physical prison; he freed himself from an emotional prison, namely resentment toward his brothers. He now saw his life not in terms of a family drama of sibling rivalry, but as part of a larger movement of history as shaped by Divine providence.

That is what makes me think that the work of Frankl, Beck and Seligman is Jewish in a way that Freudian psychoanalysis is not. At the heart of Judaism is the idea of human freedom. We are not prisoners of events but active shapers of them. To be sure, we may be influenced by unconscious drives, as Freud thought, but we can rise above them by "habits of the heart" that hone and refine our personality.

Joseph's life shows that we can defeat tragedy by our ability to see our life not just as a sequence of unfair events inflicted on us by others, but also as a series of divinely intended moves, each of which brings us closer to a situation in which we can do what God wants us to do.

We can't all be Joseph, but thanks to R. Shneur Zalman of Liady in spiritual terms, and to Frankl, Beck and Seligman in secular ones, we can learn what it is to change the way we feel by changing the way we think, and the best way of doing so is to ask, "What does this bad experience enable me to do that I could not have done otherwise?" That can be life-transforming.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Ruth Wisse, *No Joke: Making Jewish Humor*, Princeton University Press, 2013.

[2] Peter Berger, *Redeeming Laughter: the comic dimension of human experience*, Boston, de Gruyter, 2014.

[3] There were undeniably Jewish elements in Freud's work, most notably the fact that though he himself called psychoanalysis the "speaking cure," it is in fact the "listening cure," and listening is a key feature of Jewish spirituality.

[4] Frankl wrote many books, but the most famous is *Man's Search for Meaning*, one of the most influential works of the 20th century.

[5] See Aaron T. Beck, *Cognitive therapy and the emotional disorders*, Penguin, 1989. See also his important *Prisoners of Hate: the cognitive basis of anger, hostility and violence*, HarperCollins, 1999.

[6] Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, Free Press, 2002; *Learned Optimism*, Basic Books, 2008.

[7] Seligman admits that there are things about us that we can't change, but there is much about us that we can. See Martin Seligman, *What you can change and what you can't*, London, Nicolas Brealey, 2007.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar. See <https://rabbisacks.org/first-psychotherapist-vayigash-5778/>

Can I Use Vaccines Made From Fetal Tissue or Non-Kosher Animals?

By Yehuda Shurpin *

There are a number of different, albeit related, questions intertwined here, so I'll attempt to address them one by one. However, I'll preface by saying that I'll stick to these issues only, and not wander into the wider issue of Judaism and vaccination, which has already been addressed here: What Does Jewish Law Say About Vaccination? [https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2870103/jewish/What-Does-Jewish-Law-Say-About-Vaccination.htm]

It is also important to note that there are many different vaccines, and the methods and ingredients to manufacture them varies even between two vaccines created to combat a single disease.

We will start off with the question of non-kosher ingredients and work our way to the slightly more controversial issue of using a vaccine made with fetal tissue (often obtained from aborted fetuses).

Non-Kosher Ingredients in Vaccines and Medication

When it comes to non-kosher ingredients, in most instances the prohibition is limited to ingesting the substance orally. There is also no prohibition against benefiting from them. Thus, for example, although insulin contains substances derived from pigs, there is no issue for a diabetic to use it, since it is injected and not taken orally. The same is true for any vaccine or medication that is administered by suppository, enema, medicated bandage, etc. that may contain non-kosher ingredients.

Thus, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski (1863–1940), one of the leading rabbis of the last century, writes that it would technically be permitted to feed a person non-kosher food through a tube inserted directly into the stomach.¹

Notable exceptions to this principle are when the ingredients contain a mixture of milk and meat or non-kosher wine. In this instance, the prohibition includes deriving any benefit from it.²

(Even this medication or vaccination would presumably be allowed in a matter of life and death, **pikuach nefesh**. However, for the sake of this essay, let us assume that the need for vaccination has not yet risen to this level for the average person.)

Vaccine Made With Fetal Tissue

There are really two separate questions here:

- a) Is it acceptable to use fetal tissue for scientific research and production of vaccines?
- b) If the fetal tissue was already obtained (for argument's sake, in an improper way) and used to create a vaccine, can I myself benefit from it?

Regarding the first question, without getting too much into the question of abortion and Jewish law, it is safe to say that there may indeed be some halachic issues with taking advantage of the tissue and other body parts of aborted fetuses.

Regarding the second question, it should be noted that for the most part, vaccines don't actually contain any fetal tissue. Rather, in some instances a weakened virus is grown in cells strains from a fetus. The virus itself is then extracted from the cells and used in the vaccine.

Indeed, to this day, scientists are still using a cell strain that was obtained more than 50 years ago from a fetus.³ Thus, even if one were to get this vaccine, that would in no way be encouraging anyone to perform abortions to harvest their cells.

It should be noted that most vaccines are researched and produced in ways that present no halachic questions at all. However, we must still address the few that may have been developed in ways that are contrary to halachah. May we benefit from them?

The very short and simple answer is, yes, it is permitted.

To quote Rabbi Dr. J. D Bleich in Contemporary Halachic Issues, vol. 4:

Although performance of an abortion is a grievous offense, Jewish law does not posit a "Miranda principle" or an exclusionary rule that would, post factum, preclude use of illicitly procured tissue for an otherwise sanctioned purpose...

By the same token, the absence of an exclusionary principle means that there is no moral barrier preventing the research scientist or the manufacturer of pharmaceutical products from utilizing fetal tissue procured by means of induced abortion for purposes that are otherwise moral, provided that such utilization of fetal tissue does not involve collusion in, or encouragement of, the abortion itself.

If an act (in this case, abortion) is forbidden, how can benefiting from it be permitted?

There are various instances in halachah⁴ that demonstrate that this is not an issue. Perhaps a simple analogy (although not quite the same) would be the prohibition of kilayim, crossbreeding various animals and fruits. Although producing and crossbreeding is biblically forbidden, if it was already done, one is permitted to benefit from it or even eat it (for example, there is no problem with eating a plumcot or riding a mule).⁵

In light of the above, even ingredients that we only have due to an abortion that was performed in the past don't pose a halachic impediment to being vaccinated.

As in all cases of medical importance, everyone should seek and follow the advice of a trusted and qualified medical practitioner.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Achiezer, vol. 3:61.

2. See Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 87:1, 131:1.

3. For example, to this day, the varicella (chickenpox), shingles, hepatitis A and rubella vaccines all use cells that originally came from tissue obtained from two fetuses in the early 1960s. The Covid vaccine developed by AstraZeneca in collaboration with Oxford University, and which in all likelihood is the one you are asking about (many of the other Covid vaccines don't use any fetal cells), uses cells that originate from a fetus that was aborted in the Netherlands in 1973. The fetus was aborted for other reasons, and not for the purposes of vaccine research.

4. See Contemporary Halachic Issues, vol. 4, ch. 8 and 10 for a lengthy discussion regarding the use of fetal tissue, as well as the implications regarding information gleaned from the heinous and barbaric Nazi experiments and the parameters of which research can be used.

5. See, for example, Maimonides, Laws of Kilayim 1:7.

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NOTE: Israel is vaccinating its population faster than any other country in the world, after the first week since approval of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccination – see <https://unitedwithisrael.org/israel-fastest-country-in-the-world-vaccinating-its-population-against-covid-19/>

What Is Asarah B'Tevet (Tevet 10)?

By Chabad.org *

The 10th of Tevet (known as Asarah B'Tevet) is observed as a day of fasting, mourning and repentance. We refrain from food and drink from daybreak to nightfall, and add Selichot (penitential prayers) and other special supplements to our prayers. The fast ends at nightfall, or as soon as you see three medium-sized stars in the sky.

What does it commemorate?

Jerusalem Surrounded

For years, G d had sent His prophets to warn Israel about the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple if they didn't mend their ways. But they derided the holy men as bearers of "false prophecies of doom," bent on demoralizing the nation. They even went so far as to kill one of the prophets.

Then it finally happened. On the 10th day of the Jewish month of Tevet, in the year 3336 from Creation (425 BCE), the armies of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem.¹

Ever patient, G d delayed the destruction to give the Jews yet another chance to repent. He repeatedly sent the prophet Jeremiah to admonish His nation, but they foolishly had him imprisoned. Thus, 30 months later, on Tamuz 92 (or 17,3 the very date the walls would be breached when the Second Temple was destroyed), 3338, the city walls were breached, and on 9 Av of that year the Holy Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people were exiled.

Unique among Jewish fasts, 10 Tevet is observed even when it falls on a Friday, though it interferes somewhat with Shabbat preparations.

It is viewed as the beginning of the chain of events that culminated with the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent exiles, something that we have never fully recovered from, because even when the Second Temple was finally built, it never returned to its full glory.

The 10th of Tevet also commemorates two tragic events that occurred close to that date, which were incorporated into the Selichot of 10 Tevet.

8 Tevet: Translating the Torah Into Greek

In an effort to translate the Torah into Greek (following an unsuccessful attempt 61 years earlier), the ruling Egyptian-Greek emperor Ptolemy gathered 72 Torah sages, had them sequestered in 72 separate rooms, and ordered them to each produce a translation. On the 8th of Tevet of the year 3515 (246 BCE), they produced 72 identical translations. This was miraculous, especially since there were 13 places where the translators intentionally diverged from the literal translation.⁴

Despite the miracles, the rabbis viewed this event as one of the darkest days in Jewish history, comparing it to the day the Jews made the golden calf.

Now, translating the Torah is not a bad thing. After all, Moses himself had translated the Torah into 70 languages.

But, unlike that divine endeavor, this was a human project, initiated by a mortal ruler. As such, it could become a "golden calf"—a humanly defined vessel for the divine truth. Instead of faithfully conforming to their sacred content, the foreign garments could allow for distortion of the Torah's original meaning.

Indeed, the Greek translation advanced the agenda of the Hellenist Jews to bring Greek culture into Jewish life,

transforming the holy Torah into just another book of wisdom in Ptolemy's great library.

9 Tevet: Passing of Ezra the Scribe

Ezra the Scribe passed away on the 9th of Tevet of the year 3448 (313 BCE), exactly 1000 years after the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

It was he who led the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel after the Babylonian exile, oversaw the building of the Second Temple, and helped put a stop to the wave of intermarriage that afflicted the Jews at that time. As head of the Great Assembly, he canonized the 24 books of the Holy Scriptures (Tanach) and legislated a series of laws and practices, including formalized prayer, guaranteeing the continuation of authentic Judaism among the Jewish people to this very day.

A Composite of Sadness

Although the 8th and 9th of Tevet were established as separate fast days, the rabbis consolidated them into the fast of 10 Tevet, a day mentioned in the Bible by the prophet Ezekiel as a day of mourning, so that the month would not be full of sadness and mourning.

Accordingly, in recent times, 10 Tevet became the day to say kaddish for the victims of the Holocaust, many of whose day of martyrdom is unknown.

An ancient Jewish custom, which was revived by the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, is to deliver words of inspiration that arouse the soul to repent on fast days such as this one.

How to Pray Today

There are a number of changes in the liturgy to be aware of. All page numbers below correspond to the Annotated Chabad Siddur.

In the morning services, during the chazzan's repetition of the Amidah, he should add in Aneinu, on page 48. The most significant addition is the Selichot, a collection of biblical verses and rabbinic dirges, which are added in the morning during the post-Amidah Tachanun. This means that when you get to the end of page 55, you take a leap to page 427, for "Selichot for 10 Tevet."

Afterwards you say the "long" Avinu Malkeinu, on page 454, and then resume at the top of page 60.

During both morning and afternoon services, we read the Torah, from Exodus 32:11–14 and 34:1–10, which you can find on page 468.

In the afternoon, the reading (which is held before the Amidah) is followed by a haftarah from Isaiah 55:6–56:8, which you can find on page 469.

During the afternoon Amidah, every individual who is still fasting says Aneinu, on page 108.

During the chazzan's repetition of the afternoon Amidah, he should add in Aneinu, on page 105.

The chazzan also recites the Priestly Blessing, on page 110.

As in the morning, say the "long" Avinu Malkeinu (page 454) in place of the regular truncated version on page 114.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Ezekiel 24:2.

2. Jeremiah 39:2.

3. According to the Jerusalem Talmud.

4. Talmud, Megillah 9a–b.

* No author listed. © Chabad 2020

When Not to Cry

An Insight from the Rebbe *

Joseph fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his [Joseph's] neck.
(Genesis 45:14)

Rashi comments: "Joseph foresaw prophetically that the first two Temples, destined to be built in Benjamin's territory would be destroyed. Benjamin wept on his neck, for he in turn foresaw prophetically that the Tabernacle of Shiloh, destined to be in Joseph's territory, would also be destroyed."

Why did Joseph and Benjamin cry over the destruction that would occur in each other's territories, but not over the destruction that would occur in their own territory?

The function of crying, generally, is to alleviate pain caused by a distressing situation, it does not actually ameliorate the situation. Thus, as long as we can remedy a distressing situation, we should try to do so instead of comforting ourselves with tears.

Consequently, in regard to the Tabernacle that would be destroyed in his own territory, Joseph had to focus on doing everything he could to forestall its destruction. Crying about it would have been counterproductive. He was ultimately powerless to stop the destruction that would occur in Benjamin's domain, however, since the destiny of Benjamin's territory was in Benjamin's hands. Thus, after Joseph did everything he could on behalf of Benjamin and still saw that the Temples would be destroyed, he felt so bad about it that he burst into tears. Likewise, Benjamin cried over the destruction that would occur in Joseph's territory, not for the destruction that would occur in his own.

In our lives, when we see that our fellow's "temples" are being destroyed, i.e., that they are failing to sanctify their personal lives and spheres of influence, we must help them by advising them gently and praying on their behalf. But ultimately, they control their own destiny by their freely made choices. At some point, our concern for them can express itself in tears.

But when we see that our own "temple" lies in ruins, we do not have the luxury of comforting ourselves with crying. In fact, crying may impede our work, since we may be tempted to feel that we have fulfilled our moral obligation by the mere fact that we care, even if we do not act on our concern.

-- * From the Kehot Chumash

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Unexpected Leader

I was once present when the great historian of Islam, Bernard Lewis, was asked to predict the course of events in the Middle East. He replied, "I'm a historian, so I only make predictions about the past. What is more, I am a retired historian, so even my past is passé." Predictions are impossible in the affairs of living, breathing human beings because we are free and there is no way of knowing in advance how an individual will react to the great challenges of their life.

If one thing has seemed clear throughout the last third of Genesis, it is that Joseph will emerge as the archetypal leader. He is the central character of the story, and his dreams and the shifting circumstances of his fate all point in that direction. Least likely as a candidate for leadership is Judah, the man who proposed selling Joseph as a slave (Gen. 37:26-27), whom we next see separated from his brothers, living among the Canaanites, intermarried with them, losing two of his sons because of sin, and having sexual relations with a woman he takes to be a prostitute. The chapter in which this is described begins with the phrase, "At that time Judah went down from among his brothers" (Gen. 38:1). The commentators take this to indicate Judah's moral decline. At this point in the story, we may have no doubt who will lead and who will follow.

Yet history turned out otherwise. Joseph's descendants, the tribes of Ephraim and Menashe, disappeared from the pages of history after the Assyrian conquest in 722 BCE, while Judah's descendants, starting with David, became kings. The tribe of Judah survived the Babylonian conquest, and it is Judah whose name we bear as a people. We are Yehudim, "Jews." This week's parsha of Vayigash explains why.

Already in last week's parsha we began to see Judah's leadership qualities. The family had reached deadlock. They desperately needed food, but they knew that the Egyptian viceroy had insisted that they bring their brother Benjamin with them, and Jacob refused to let

By Rene and Rami Isser
 in loving memory of

Yehudah Ben Gedaliah David, a"h
 (12th of Tevet)

and Chaim Ben Yehudah, a"h (17th of Tevet)
 Rene's grandfather and Rene's father

this happen. His beloved wife Rachel's first son (Joseph) was already lost to him, and he was not about to let the other, Benjamin, be taken on a hazardous journey. Reuben, in keeping with his unstable character, made an absurd suggestion: "Kill my two sons if I do not bring Benjamin back safely." (Gen. 42:37) In the end it was Judah, with his quiet authority – "I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him" (Gen. 43:9) – who persuaded Jacob to let Benjamin go with them.

Now, as the brothers attempt to leave Egypt, and return home, the nightmare scenario has unfolded. Benjamin has been found with the viceroy's silver cup in his possession. The official delivers his verdict. Benjamin is to be held as a slave. The other brothers can go free. This is the moment when Judah steps forward and makes a speech that changes history. He speaks eloquently about their father's grief at the loss of one of Rachel's sons. If he loses the other, he will die of grief. I, says Judah, personally guaranteed his safe return. He concludes:

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that it would bring my father." (Gen. 44:33-34)

No sooner has he said these words than Joseph, overcome with emotion, reveals his identity and the whole elaborate drama reaches closure. What is happening here and how does it have a bearing on leadership?

The Sages articulated a principle: "Where penitents stand even the perfectly righteous cannot stand." (Brachot 34b) The Talmud brings a prooftext from Isaiah: "Peace, peace, to those far and near" (Is. 57:19) placing the far (the penitent sinner) before the near (the perfectly righteous). However, almost certainly the real source is here in the story of Joseph and Judah. Joseph is known to tradition as ha-tzaddik, the righteous one.^[1] Judah, as we will see, is a penitent. Joseph became "second to the king." Judah, however, became the ancestor of kings. Hence, where penitents stand even the perfectly righteous cannot stand.

Judah is the first person in the Torah to achieve perfect repentance (teshuva gemurah), defined by the Sages as when you find yourself in a situation where it is likely you will be tempted to repeat an earlier sin, but you are

able to resist because you are now a changed person.^[2]

Many years before Judah was responsible for Joseph being sold as a slave:

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. (Gen. 37:26-27)

Now, faced with the similar prospect of leaving Benjamin as a slave, he has a very different response. He says, "Let me stay as a slave and let my brother go free." (Gen. 44:33) That is perfect repentance, and it is what prompts Joseph to reveal his identity and forgive his brothers.

The Torah had already hinted at the change in Judah's character in an earlier chapter. Having accused his daughter-in-law Tamar of becoming pregnant by a forbidden sexual relationship, he is confronted by her with evidence that he himself is the father of the child, and his response is to immediately declare: "She is more righteous than I" (Gen. 38:26). This is the first time in the Torah we see a character admit that he is wrong. If Judah was the first penitent, it was Tamar – mother of Perez from whom King David was descended – who was ultimately responsible.

Perhaps Judah's future was already implicit in his name, for though the verb le-hodot from which it is derived means "to thank" (Leah called her fourth son Judah saying, "This time I will thank the Lord," Gen. 29:35), it is also related to the verb le-hitvadot, which means "to admit or "to confess" – and confession is, according to the Rambam, the core of the command to repent.

Leaders make mistakes. That is an occupational hazard of the role. Managers follow the rules, but leaders find themselves in situations for which there are no rules. Do you declare a war in which people will die, or do you refrain from doing so at the risk of letting your enemy grow stronger with the result that more will die later? That was the dilemma faced by Chamberlain in 1939, and it was only some time later that it became clear that he was wrong and Churchill right.

But leaders are also human, and their mistakes often have nothing to do with leadership and everything to do with human weakness and temptation. The sexual misconduct of John F.

Kennedy, Bill Clinton and many other leaders has undoubtedly been less than perfect. Does this affect our judgment of them as leaders or not? Judaism suggests it should. The prophet Nathan was unsparing of King David for consorting with another man's wife. But Judaism also takes note of what happens next.

What matters, suggests the Torah, is that you repent – you recognise and admit your wrongdoings, and you change as a result. As Rav Soloveitchik pointed out, both Saul and David, Israel's first two kings, sinned. Both were reprimanded by a Prophet. Both said chattati, "I have sinned" [3] But their fates were radically different. Saul lost the throne, David did not. The reason, said the Rav, was that David confessed immediately. Saul prevaricated and made excuses before admitting his sin.[4]

The stories of Judah, and of his descendant David, tell us that what marks a leader is not necessarily perfect righteousness. It is the ability to admit mistakes, to learn from them and grow from them. The Judah we see at the beginning of the story is not the man we see at the end, just as the Moses we see at the Burning Bush – stammering, hesitant – is not the mighty hero we see at the end, "his sight undimmed, his natural energy unabated."

A leader is one who, though they may stumble and fall, arises more honest, humble and courageous than they were before.

[1] See Tanchuma (Buber), Noach, 4, s.v. eleh, on the basis of Amos 2:6, "They sold the righteous for silver."

[2] Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:1.

[3] I Sam. 15:24 and II Sam. 12:13.

[4] Joseph Soloveitchik, Kol Dodi Dofek: Listen – My Beloved Knocks (Jersey City, N.J.: Ktav, 2006), 26.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"And Joseph could not hold himself back in front of all who were standing around him... And Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph; Is my father still alive?'" (Genesis 45:1-3)

Why does Joseph suddenly wake up to his familial ties and reveal himself as the long-lost son and brother? Apparently, he was inspired by Judah's stirring speech which opens our Torah reading of Vayigash. How did Judah strike such a responsive chord in a Joseph whose heart had previously been so impervious to filial and sibling sensitivity? I believe that the crucial phase is, "because your servant guaranteed my father that I would serve as a surety for the youth" (Genesis 44:32); Judah informs Joseph that he is an arev, a co-signer, a stand-in for Benjamin.

This concept is quite radical for these warring siblings and resonates in subsequent Jewish legal and ethical literature in the axiom that "all Israel are co-signers (or sureties) for each other."

Joseph was born into a family of jealousy and hatred.

The six sons of Leah, the "hated" wife who had been forced upon Jacob under false pretenses, refused to recognize the beloved wife Rachel's son as a legitimate brother; hence the 17-year-old Joseph had no recourse but to find his companionship with the younger brothers, and compensated by "shepherding" his siblings, the sons of Leah, acting the big shot, and reporting all their foibles to his adoring father (Gen. 37:2).

Joseph always refers to his siblings as his brothers, but they never refer to him as "brother": "And he [Joseph] said, I am seeking my brothers... and Joseph went after his brothers... And they saw him from afar. The men said, each one to his brother, behold, that master of dreams is coming, let us kill him and throw him in one of the pits and say that an evil animal devoured him" (Gen. 37:16-20).

The young Joseph was desperately seeking a brotherly relationship with his siblings – but he was constantly rebuffed. When he tried to overcome their rejection of him by recounting his (perhaps compensatory) dreams of grandeur, it only caused them to hate him even more.

Even Reuben, who attempts to rescue Joseph, never calls him "brother," only referring to "him" as a pronoun (Gen. 37: 21, 22). It is only Judah who refers to him as a brother, but since he is desirous of making a profit by selling him as a slave, the use of the term may be ironic: "What profit have we in killing our brother? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, for he is our brother, our flesh" (Gen. 37:26-27).

As the story progresses, the lack of brotherliness towards the sons of Rachel is emphasized even more: "And the ten brothers of Joseph [they felt towards each other as brothers] went down to Egypt to purchase grain, but Jacob did not send Benjamin, brother of Joseph" (but not the brother of the other 10).

And when the sons of Jacob stand before the Grand Vizier, the Bible stresses the inequality in their relationship with a ringing declaration, pregnant with a double meaning, "Joseph recognized his brothers [their identity as well as a sibling relationship to them], but they did not recognize him" (Gen. 42:8).

The Hebrew word ah (brother) means to be tied together, the verb ahot meaning to sew or to stitch, even, if you will, to patch up. It derives from a sense of unity, oneness (ehad, ahud) which comes from the understanding of having emanated from one father.

Since the source of their unity is their common father, they should not want to cause pain to each other and certainly not to their father. Apparently, the hatred of the 10 brothers for

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Joseph even overwhelmed their filial concern for their father's welfare – and so they seemingly had no difficulty in telling Jacob that his beloved Joseph had been torn apart by a wild animal! When Judah declares to their father Jacob that he will stand as surety for Benjamin, he is expressing his newfound recognition that this youngest son of Rachel is truly an ah, a brother, an inextricable part of him, Judah, even though he was born of a different mother. When he tells the Grand Vizier that he is willing to be a slave instead of Benjamin – so that this son of Rachel may be restored to his loving father in order to save Jacob further pain – he is demonstrating the bond of ultimate unity between siblings, and between them and their father. This is ahva (brotherliness) and ahud (unity) which creates an indissoluble bond (hibur, haverut, profound attachment). It is at this point of Judah's self-sacrifice for Rachel's youngest son that Joseph recognizes his brothers' repentance and is ready to forgive and reunite with them.

The prophet Ezekiel provides the ultimate vision of a united Israel when he is told by God to take one stick and write upon it "For Judah and the children of Israel his friends" (haver, hibur, bond), and to take another stick and write upon it, "for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and the entire house of Israel his friend," and to join both sticks so that they are united in his hand (Ezekiel 37: 15-20). This is the Jewish goal, learned from Judah, when every Israelite sees themselves as a co-signer (surety) for every other Israelite for the greater glory of our common Father in heaven.

The Person in the Parsha

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Wagons, Calves, and Responsibility

I have been blessed with many fine teachers. She was one of the best. Her name was Mrs. Lachmann. I no longer recall her first name. She taught an advanced course in world literature at the college I attended, and she insisted that we call her Mrs. Lachmann, although, as I later discovered, she had earned a doctorate with honors at a very prestigious European university

The course was an elective, and I was motivated to take it because of my fondness for literature, which I developed quite early in my childhood. I was already familiar with some of the authors of our assigned readings, all of whom were 19th century Russian or German writers, and assumed that the course would be an easy one for me.

I was a philosophy major then and was particularly impressed by her assertion, in the very first class session, that great literature is an important source of philosophical ideas. In fact, she insisted that a work of literature bereft of philosophical lessons could not qualify as great literature.

As the course progressed, two things became apparent. First of all, it was not going to be

nearly as easy a course as I had anticipated. Furthermore, it was not philosophy in general that was her sine qua non for great literature. It was one specific concept that mattered so much to her. That was the concept of ethical responsibility.

I can still hear her, with her central European accent, making the case that great writers of fiction portray their characters in light of whether or not they meet their responsibilities.

“Several central questions are posed in all works of literature,” she would say. She would then proceed to list those questions:

“How do the heroes or villains of the novel define their responsibilities? Do they consider the long-term consequences of their actions? Do they feel accountable to others? To what degree is their sense of responsibility central to their personalities?”

She would quote the words of Fyodor Dostoevsky, who wrote *The Brothers Karamazov*, which was, in her opinion, the greatest novel of all time: “We are all responsible for all... for all men before all, and I more than all the others.”

I remember her remark at the end of her final lecture: “The theme of all great literature is the theme of responsibility.”

Over the years, I have come to realize that Mrs. Lachmann’s insight was not limited to the Russian and German writers of the 19th century. It applies even more to biblical literature. Indeed, I am convinced that the theme of personal responsibility is the core theme of *Sefer Bereshit*, the Book of Genesis.

One example of the theme of responsibility can be found in a verse in this week’s Torah portion, *Vayigash* (Genesis 44:18-47:27), as explicated by Rashi.

In the story, Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers. They journeyed back to Canaan and informed Jacob that Joseph is still alive. Initially, Jacob did not believe them. The verse then reads:

“But when they recounted all that Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons [Hebrew: *agalot*] that Joseph had sent to transport him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ‘Enough!’ said Israel. ‘My son Joseph is still alive! I must go and see him before I die.’”

Rashi wonders what it was about the wagons, the *agalot*, that convinced Jacob and revived his spirit. Rashi tells us that these wagons were a sign sent by Joseph to Jacob, recalling the subject of their learned conversation when they first parted ways so long ago.

That subject is the ritual of the “calf [Hebrew *egla*] with a broken neck,” the details of which

are described in the first several verses of Deuteronomy 21. Joseph was apparently confident that Jacob would see the connection between the word for wagons, *agalot*, and the word for calf, *egla*.

The reader of Rashi’s words cannot help but ask with astonishment: Is this some game, some bizarre wordplay? *Agala* calls to mind *egla*? What connection can there be between the ritual of the calf and Jacob’s parting words of instruction to Joseph before sending him off on his mission to his brothers, never to see him again until this moment?

To answer this question, we must reflect upon the meaning of the ritual of the “calf with a broken neck.” It is a ritual that is performed by the elders of the city nearest to a discovered murdered corpse, whose murderer is unknown. The elders must wash their hands over the calf whose neck was broken and declare that they did not shed this blood.

The Mishnah asks, “Can we possibly suspect the elders of the city of murder?” The Mishnah answers that they must declare that they did not allow the victim to pass through their city unfed, nor did they allow him to be part of their city without escorting him along his way.

The early 17th century commentator Kli Yakar understands this to mean that the elders must declare that they treated the victim decently and humanely. Had they not done so, they would be, however indirectly, responsible for the murder. Their failure to treat their fellow properly would render them responsible for his tragic end. The theme of responsibility for the long-term consequences of one’s interactions is the dominant theme of this ritual.

As the Kli Yakar explains, if the elders of the city are not hospitable to the wayfarers who frequent the city, the criminals who populate the environs of the city will assume that this wayfarer is of no import, and they will therefore take liberties with him, even to the point of shedding his blood. Were these villains to observe that the wayfarer was significant enough to the elders of the city to be treated graciously, they would have refrained from harming him.

This is the nature of responsibility. The elders are not suspected of actual murder. But if they treat their guests improperly, they set in motion a process by which those guests are dehumanized, becoming easy prey to malicious persons. That is how far the demands of responsibility extend.

When Jacob sent Joseph on his dangerous mission, continues Kli Yakar, he escorted Joseph part of the way. By doing so, he was teaching Joseph the lesson of the “calf with a broken neck,” the lesson of the importance of escorting the traveler, thus demonstrating the human value of that traveler. Joseph signaled to his father that he learned that lesson well

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and knew the responsibility entailed in dealing with one’s fellow.

Jacob realized that it was Joseph who personally had a hand in sending the wagons of Pharaoh, thereby escorting his brothers part of the way back to Canaan. Jacob took note of those wagons and therefore knew that Joseph had learned that a minor gesture of considerate behavior to others may have long-term consequences. He signaled that he had learned the crucial importance of taking responsibility for all one’s actions, however insignificant they may appear. And so, “The spirit of their father Jacob revived.”

Agalot and *egla* are not just words in a linguistic game. Rather, they allude to the profound lesson about personal responsibility, which is the basis of the requirement of the elders to proclaim their innocence of murder.

Let’s return to Mrs. Lachmann, may God bless her soul. The reunion of Jacob and Joseph contains the implicit theme of which she spoke with such lasting impact so many years ago.

Recall the questions that Mrs. Lachmann listed. “How do the heroes or villains of the novel define their responsibilities?” Joseph defines his responsibilities in terms of the need to be sensitive to other human beings.

“Do they consider the long-term consequences of their actions?” Joseph certainly does. “Do they feel accountable to others?” Again, Joseph can answer with a resounding “Yes.” “To what degree is their sense of responsibility central to their personalities?” Joseph demonstrated that his sense of responsibility was part of his very essence.

If, as Mrs. Lachmann contended, a profound sense of responsibility is the test of the true hero, Joseph certainly passed that test.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Yosef Rules in the Entire Land of Egypt—The Rest of the Story

Yosef finally reveals his true identity to his brothers and tells them, “It was not you who sent me here, but G-d; He has set me as a father to Pharaoh, and as a master of his entire household, and as a ruler in the entire land of Egypt.” [Bereshis 45:8] He tells his brothers not to be upset at what they caused; everything that transpired was all personal Divine Providence (Hashgacha Pratis).

However, technically speaking, Yosef’s statement is not correct. Although he states that G-d made him “the ruler in the entire land of Egypt,” in fact he was not the ruler in the entire land of Egypt. He is clearly only second in command. L’Havdil, when Ronald Reagan was shot and temporarily incapacitated during an assassination attempt (March 1981), his Chief of Staff at the time—Alexander Haig—made the inaccurate and much ridiculed statement to the press that, “I am in charge

here now." Observers suggest that with that faux pas he ruined his chances of ever becoming president. Someone who is not president does not make such a statement! So how could Yosef tell his brothers "Ani moshel b'chol Eretz Mitzrayim" (I rule over all Egypt)?

It is also interesting to note that when the brothers returned to Yaakov and reported to him, "Yosef is still alive, and he is ruler over the entire land of Egypt" [Bereshis 45:26] they do not give all the titles and functions that Yosef had previously mentioned to them. They ONLY say that he ruled the entire land of Egypt. What happened to "father to Pharaoh"? What happened to "master of his entire household"?

The Chasam Sofer says a single thought that answers both these questions.

When the brothers came back and told Yaakov that Yosef had been living in Egypt all these years (20+ years), Yaakov was not interested in what his title was, he was not interested in how much money he was making, he was not interested in what his position was. He was only interested in one thing: Has he remained a Jew or not? Here you have a young boy separated from his father, separated from his family, separated from the entire spiritually enriching environment in which he grew up. He is thrust into a corrupt and spiritually hostile environment. What has happened with him?

Yaakov Avinu was interested in one thing, and that is the message the brothers delivered to him. They told him that Yosef was moshel b'chol Eretz Mitzraim (he ruled over the entire land of Egypt). This meant that rather than Egypt controlling him, he controlled Egypt. This answers our first question as well. How could Yosef make the claim that he ruled over all Egypt? The answer is that he was not stating his political position in the country. He was speaking spiritually. Who got the best of whom? Did Egyptian culture influence me or did I remain above it? U'moshel b'chol Eretz Mitzraim means I remained above the culture, I did not allow it to influence me.

This was what Yaakov wanted to hear from the brothers, and this is what they told him. Yosef ruled over Egypt rather than vice versa.

The next pasuk (verse) following the previously quoted portion of the report from the brothers to Yaakov reads as follows: "And they related to him all the words of Yosef that he had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, and then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived." [Bereshis 45:27]. There is a famous Rashi on the words "and he saw the wagons that Yosef sent". Rashi quotes Chazal that the wagons are a hint to the passage of the Eglah Arufa (the calf whose neck is broken), which was the Torah portion Yosef was studying with his

father immediately prior to their separation. There almost appears to be an unwritten rule that a person may not publish a book of Torah thoughts on Sefer Bereshis without giving at least one homiletic explanation of what this teaching of Chazal symbolizes.

I heard a beautiful insight on the deeper meaning of this Rashi in the name of a Dayan from Manchester, England who is no longer alive. He Anglicized the lesson he learns from here; I will transform the analogy somewhat to give it an American flavor:

To what can the matter be compared? Imagine an elderly pious Jewish couple. They had a son to whom they had given a good Jewish education. They sent him to Day School, and then they sent him off to Yeshiva. But then the son went off to University, to College, and he became very prominent in his field—whether it is law, medicine or business—and he moved away. Where is he living? He is living in Alabama.

The parents are thinking to themselves, "What must be with our son's religiosity?" They sent a single boy to Alabama. He is a good son. He calls every Erev Shabbos to wish them a Good Shabbos. Now he is already 30-35 years old. Imagine that for some reason, the parents do not really know about this boy's life. What must be with a successful single fellow living in Alabama? Is he married or not? Does he have a Jewish wife? Does he have children or not? In our imaginary story, the parents are clueless to all these private aspects of his life.

One Erev Shabbos he calls up and his parents say to him, "You know what, we haven't seen you in all these years. We want to come visit you." The son says, "You know what, I have a better idea. I will come visit you, instead!" Why doesn't he want them to come to Alabama? If they come to Alabama they will see what's doing there with him. It is not going to be a pretty scene. Therefore, he tells his parents, "No. Don't come to me. I'll come to you."

Yaakov saw the wagons Yosef sent for him to come meet him in Egypt! If Yosef was embarrassed about what happened to him in Egypt, he would come to visit Yaakov, he would not let Yaakov come down to Egypt to see him in his own environment! That is what rejuvenated the spirit of Yaakov. The wagons proved that Yosef was not afraid to have Yaakov come visit him. This proves that indeed "Yosef rules in the entire land of Egypt." He has not lost his Yiddishkeit!

The Cedars of Beer-Sheva Accompany Klal Yisrael to Egypt and Back

The next thought I would like to share is a beautiful observation by Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky on the next pasuk: "So Israel set out with all that he had and he came to Beer-Sheva where he slaughtered sacrifices to the G-d of his father Yitzchak." [Bereshis 46:1]

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Rav Kamenetsky in his Emes L'Yaakov says something he mentioned previously in Chumash as well. Beer-Sheva occupies a special place in the hearts of the patriarchs. What happened in Beer-Sheva? Chazal say that when Avraham Avinu came to Beer-Sheva, he planted cedars. These cedar trees were going to be the wood from which the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was going to be built.

Avraham Avinu already knew prophetically that his children were going to be oppressed strangers in a land that was not theirs for 400 years [Bereshis 15:13]. Therefore, he already planted the trees to build a Mishkan when they emerge from this exile and return to Eretz Yisrael. This, Rav Yaakov says, is why when Yitzchak came to Beer-Sheva it was spiritually invigorating for him. He knew that his father planted those trees there, and he came there to receive spiritual nourishment. Now when Yaakov, on his way to Egypt, comes down to Beer-Sheva, what does he do? Chazal say he cuts down the trees and transports them to Egypt.

Why? Yaakov Avinu understood full well what was about to happen. He was very afraid. The Almighty had to reassure him. Yaakov understood that his offspring were about to remain in Egypt for a very long time. He feared that they would assimilate. That is, in fact, what happened. They reached the 49th of fifty levels of spiritual impurity there. Yaakov was legitimately afraid.

However, Yaakov Avinu, in his wisdom, cut down those trees when he journeyed to Egypt, and he told his children, "Kinderlach (my children), one day we are going to come out of here and these are the trees you are going to use to build a place of worship for the Almighty when you return to Eretz Yisrael." Therefore, while they were in the land of Egypt, they still had this connection to the Land of Israel. From generation to generation, they would give over the wood from the trees. Every generation would be told the family tradition: These are the trees Avraham planted in Beer-Sheva and one day we are going to leave. One day we are going to get out of this bondage. One day we are going to build a Sanctuary to the G-d who created Heaven and Earth!

That gave them this connection and link to the Holy Land so that they would not totally become impure and assimilated amongst the nations.

Rav Yaakov then says an interesting interpretation to a Gemara in Tractate Megilla [31b]. The Gemara says that Avraham Avinu asked the Ribono shel Olam – what is going to be with Klal Yisrael in galus? The Ribono shel Olam responded, they will bring sacrifices and have atonement. Avraham persists: "That is fine when the Beis HaMikdash is in existence. What will be when the Beis HaMikdash is not in existence?" The Ribono shel Olam

responded, "I have already established the order of the sacrificial service, as long as they read it before me, I will consider it as if they have offered sacrifices and I will forgive them."

Rav Yaakov said that the simple interpretation of this Talmudic passage is that when someone reads the section of "Korbonos" it is as if he offered the sacrifices. (Whoever reads before Me the chapter of the burnt offering, it is as if he offered before Me a burnt offering...) Rav Yaakov says that there is a deeper interpretation here as well. At the time the Beis HaMikdash was standing, we had a connection to Eretz Yisrael, but we will go into Galus. We have no cedars there. What will keep us attached to the idea that one day there will be a Beis HaMikdash again? In the Egyptian exile, they had the cedar wood to tell them that one day they would get out of this exile—here are the trees! But now, in our current exile, we have no such cedar wood. Lacking that, what will preserve our connection with Eretz Yisrael and allow us to continue to hope to return? The answer is that every day we recite Korbonos (as part of the preparatory prayer service).

Why do we say Korbonos? It is because, G-d willing, there will be Korbonos again one day. Reciting Korbonos provides the same affect that the cedar trees had in Egypt—to connect Klal Yisrael with Eretz Yisrael. It provides a concrete reminder that we will not be lost here forever.

Avraham was worried: What is going to be with Klal Yisrael when there will be no Beis HaMikdash? The Almighty responded: They will read Parshas Korbonos. The Almighty was not just addressing the atonement that such reading will provide. He was telling Avraham that this reading will reinforce the idea that one day—hopefully speedily in our time—He will rebuild the Beis HaMikdash and we will go there and offer sacrifices once again. The reading of Parshas Korbonos, thus, will remind us that our existence here in galus is merely temporary.

Dvar Torah Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

You don't have to shout!

What is the best way to get your message across? In Parshat Vayigash, there is an intriguing absence of a letter. Yosef dramatically reveals his true identity to his brothers. It is just the family in one room—but the news spread like wildfire—and the Torah says 'Vehakol nishma'—'his voice was heard' the voice of Yosef saying "Ani Yosef" – "I am Yosef". It was heard in the palace of Pharaoh and throughout the land. And in fact, that very same voice is heard to this day and people are still speaking about it.

But have a look at the spelling of Vehakol – the voice. The 'vav' of Kol which is usually spelt 'kuf, vav, lamed,' is missing, to indicate

that his voice was somewhat diminished. So what is Hashem trying to tell us?

The message must be that often, to get your point across you can speak in soft, measured tones. You don't have to shout your message to others. I often notice that with great public speakers, sometimes they get their message across in the most impactful way, by lowering their voices. When a speaker speaks more softly, the audience is inclined to listen more carefully. And when the words are passionate and come from the heart, one can certainly make one's mark.

We find in this spirit, that immediately after the greatest event that has ever taken place on earth – the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai – the Torah says 'Vha'am ro'im et hakolot' – 'and the nation saw the voices'. Those voices were not ordinary voices that they heard with their ears. Rather they had a full sensory experience and were spiritually uplifted. The emotion of the day swept them in the most incredible, holy direction and as a result, they 'saw' voices. Elsewhere in the Torah, in Parshat Vayechi, when Ephraim is favoured over Menashe, to this day we remember what Menashe said: absolutely nothing. His silence made a mark. Sometimes you don't even have to open your mouth in order for your voice to be heard.

We find this in 'Hilchot Lashon Harah' as well – in our laws relating to slander. According to our tradition, sometimes, just by pulling a face, you can send a very strong message because that represents your reaction to a person or situation.

I would like to add a word of caution – because sometimes the way people look does not say it all. Perhaps a person always looks grumpy or there are some people who, beautifully, have an eternal smile on their faces. Or perhaps someone has a toothache and that is why they are reacting in what seems like a negative way. But as a rule, we can say so much without ever opening our mouths. And when we do say something, the 'Kol demama daka', the soft, still voice, is certainly among the most powerful that exists.

So therefore, from the absence of a single letter in our Parasha, we learn such an important lesson. If you want your message to get across, you don't have to shout.

OTS Dvar Torah

The Union of Joseph and Judah

By Yinon Ahiman

Judah and Joseph, once bitter enemies, now enter into a union, each a tree in their own right. These two trees mesh to produce own great nation. Full redemption is contingent on the union between the brothers.

The word of Hashem came to me, saying: And you, O mortal, take a stick and write on it, "Of Judah and the Israelites associated with him";

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and take another stick and write on it, "Of Joseph—the stick of Ephraim—and all the House of Israel associated with him."

Bring them close to each other... I will make them a single nation in the land, on the hills of Israel, and one king shall be king of them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. (Ezekiel, Chapter 37).

These are the opening verses of the haftorah reading for Parashat Vayigash. Echoing the expression famously coined by Nahmanides, maaseh avot siman labanim ("the action of the forefathers are a sign for the children"), this week's Parasha begins with an account of the struggle that took place in Egypt between Judah and Joseph. Indeed, throughout the period of the First Temple, after the kingdom disintegrates, an endless war ensues between the tribes of Judah and Joseph, between the Kingdom of Israel, with its capital city in the hereditary lands of the tribe of Ephraim, and the Kingdom of Judah.

The theme of civil war also ties into the holiday we just celebrated: Hanukah. This is a time when we commemorate the confrontation between the few – the Hasmoneans and their supporters who championed the traditions of their forefathers – and the many – the Hellenists who gravitated toward the Hellenistic culture of the Greek rulers of the land and others in the vicinity. There seems to bear a striking resemblance between the war in the story of Hanukah and the struggle between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The small Kingdom of Judah kept the traditions and laws of our forefathers, and the Holy Temple stood in its territory. The Kingdom of Israel, however, was larger, and its monarchs intermarried into the royal houses of neighboring kingdoms, gradually adopting their laws and rituals.

Yet despite the similarity, there is one marked difference between the two. The Hasmoneans waged a bloody war against the Hellenists, and ultimately, the Hasmoneans triumphed over their Hellenist enemies and the Hellenist kingdom that collaborated with them and set up an independent kingdom. Yet despite their great victory, from a historical perspective, they may have won the battle, but they lost the bigger war. The Hasmonean kings themselves began to gradually adopt the customs of surrounding kingdoms. Most had become almost entirely Hellenized, and the Hasmonean kingdom's reign was cut short following another civil war, this time between John Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, the two sons of Queen Shlomzion. In the year 63 before the common era, Vespasian exploited this civil war to launch a campaign to conquer Judah and Jerusalem.

However, the Israelite prophets had a completely different vision. The prophecy of Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel's – a

prophecy we recite as part of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy – states as follows: “Truly, Ephraim is a dear son to Me, A child that is cherished! Whenever I have turned against him, My thoughts would dwell on him still. That is why My heart yearns for him; I will receive him back in love —declares Hashem. (Jeremiah 31:19). According to Jeremiah’s prophecy, the ways of Hashem are hidden, and to our surprise, Ephraim, who represents the sinful son of the Kingdom of Israel, is Hashem’s “cherished son”, the one he pines for. So too, in this week’s haftorah from the Book of Ezekiel, not only is no decisive victory achieved in the war between the kingdoms – the opposite occurs. According to Ezekiel, no victory can ever emerge from a civil war. Judah and Joseph now enter into a union, each of them a tree in their own right. These two trees mesh to produce own great nation. Full redemption is contingent on the union between the brothers, not by the neutralization and elimination of one of them.

Redemption will only occur when the two warlike brothers unite and reconstitute a single nation. May we merit to do so speedily in our days.

**Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam**

Such a Fragile Fiction

And if it comes to pass that Pharaoh calls you and asks, ‘What is your occupation?’ You shall say, ‘Your servants have been owners of livestock from our youth until now, both we and our ancestors,’ so that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are (TOEVA) abhorrent to the Egyptians.” (Breishis 46:43-44)...are abhorrent to the Egyptians: Because they (the sheep) are their gods.- Rashi

Yosef takes the first opportunity to coach his brothers who were also impressive personalities, so that they wouldn’t get drafted into governmental duties and public life like him. Incredibly so, all the while he was playing out the drama that would bring his father Yaakov down to Egypt, he was arranging and rearranging the entirety of Egypt.

Everyone in Egypt was relocated. Everybody was in fact now a stranger, in fulfillment of the promise given to Avraham that his children will “strangers in a strange land”. Not only was the land strange to the Children of Israel but so it was for the Egyptians. This was orchestrated partially so his brothers should feel less like foreigners and more primarily so that they could live separately in Goshen, the first self-imposed ghetto, in order to preserve their unique identity and familial mission.

So Yosef told them to present themselves as shepherds and only shepherds. That is the only trade they and their ancestors know. Yosef gives another reason to tell them that they are Shepherds. This way the Egyptian culture will

repel them as well. It’s not enough that the Children of Israel learn not to be lured into Egyptian culture. If the Egyptian society rejects them, then that’s double protection.

Yosef tells his brother s that shepherds are a TOEVA- abhorrent to the Egyptians. That’s odd! Why are shepherds considered disgusting to Egyptians? What’s so bad about shepherds! Why are they worse than any other profession?

Rashi gives an answer that needs more explanation. He says that the sheep were considered a god to the Egyptians. Ok! How does that help?

Remember what made Haman hot under the collar and caused him to lose his cool! Yes! Every time he saw Mordechai the Jew not bowing down to him it provoked his anger. The verse testifies that he considered everything he had (and he had plenty) as worthless every time as long as he sees Mordechai the Jew sitting in the gate.

With that spark of rage he sought to destroy all the Jews- Yehudim. At that time Mordechai was call Ish HaYehudi and the Talmud tells us that the name Yehudi means someone who denies the validity of idolatry. He sees the hand of single G-d controlling all the forces in the world and there are no independent forces other than HASHEM.

Why does that outlook on life trouble Haman so? Imagine a child winning big in a game of monopoly against his brothers and sisters. He’s feeling like a world champion. Then the mother comes in and reminds the children to put away the game. The pieces of paper are now reduced to mere monopoly money. The sight of the parent standing there breaks the illusion that this power is real. His illusion is exposed. He is stripped of everything.

That image of the Wizard of Oz exposed by Toto the barking dog and the “all-powerful wizard” telling everyone “don’t mind the man behind the curtain!” as he in vein attempts to cover himself. That’s a painful unveiling of the lie he is projecting.

So too the Egyptians knew that anyone who worked with sheep understood the emptiness of their esteem for sheep. These creatures do what all creatures do and then they die. They are not real gods, and anyone who sees through their dark secret is a threat. Deep down, they know it themselves. Those deep feelings of hatred for the shepherd help protect such a fragile fiction.

Likutei Divrei Torah

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In My Opinion SHABBAT SHOES

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

When I was growing up in Chicago, a long time ago, most Jewish families were still living under the shadow of the Depression. As such, when I was young, I always had only one pair of shoes, which I wore on weekdays, Shabbat, holidays, and even special family occasions, until they wore out. Then, I got another pair of shoes.

By the time that my children were born and required shoes, the general financial situation in the United States and especially in the Jewish Orthodox community had changed for the better. So, one of the first things that my wife and I decided to do, to make the Shabbat special in the eyes and minds of our little children, was to institute the concept of Shabbat shoes.

They would each have a separate pair of shoes to wear on Shabbat. These shoes were shinier and prettier, though not necessarily more expensive, than the shoes that they wore to school and played in during the week. It was meant to create an idea that is central to Jewish life, that Shabbat is special and must be treated that way in every facet of our otherwise mundane existence.

Having a different, ostensibly nicer, and better pair of shoes to wear on Shabbat reinforces the idea that Shabbat is special, beautiful, and something to look forward to all week long. However, as a child of the depression, I continued to wear one pair of shoes on each day of the week, every day of the year, until that pair of shoes finally wore out. Then, I bought another pair that I continued to wear daily until those, too, finally collapsed from wear and tear.

I have always worn a special suit of clothes for Shabbat. However, I never bought for myself a pair of Shabbat shoes. I always had my weekday shoes polished for Shabbat, but habit is a very strong impediment to changing one's way of life and even spending habits. However, last month the shoes that I was wearing literally fell apart, and, therefore, coronavirus and all, I went the shoe store to buy a replacement pair of shoes.

While there, I decided that I would buy a lighter weight shoe to wear during the weekdays. At my stage of life, anything that helps me walk more easily becomes a necessity. Naturally, the shoes that I bought had to be black, as befitting the Rabbi of the important congregation that I serve. However, suddenly on impulse, I also purchased a much more expensive and stronger shoe that I decided I would now dedicate as my Shabbat shoes. It took almost 3 weeks for the shoes to finally arrive at the shoe store, but when they did and I began to wear them, I am happy to report, they fit perfectly and are most comfortable. But then I experienced a sudden surge of nostalgia and even excitement because I felt I was re-enacting the experience of my little children when they put on their Shabbat shoes on Friday afternoon. They were always so proud of how they looked in those shoes. I have no doubt that it enhanced their Shabbat, and now I felt that it enhanced my current Shabbat experience markedly. I have the delicious experience at my age, of being like a child, with all the wonder, excitement and optimism that is reserved for the very young.

Now I know you will say that I am reading too much into the mundane and ordinary experience such as buying a pair of shoes. But all my life I have believed that there really are no small matters in life, and that everything, ordinary as they may appear on the surface, have an importance far beyond the act itself.

Shoes are important item in our minds. It is not for naught that there are holy days in the year when we are meant to mourn and afflict ourselves, when wearing comfortable leather shoes is forbidden. Part of this concept is that the rest of the year shoes are important. In fact, one of the blessings that we make in the morning, according to Jewish tradition, is that the Lord has fulfilled everything that is needed, and this includes having a good pair of shoes to wear. Having special shoes for Shabbat really does make a lot of sense for us, both spiritually and psychologically.

Shabbat shalom

Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha VAYIGASH 5781

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The brothers and Joseph finally meet each other head-on, without pretense and subterfuge. When Joseph reveals himself to the brothers, the veil of secrecy, role-playing, distrust, and enmity is ripped away. The dreams that apparently were the cause of this gripping family drama now reappear in their stark and simple meaning.

The sheaves of grain are the brothers and the constellation of stars in heaven are to be taken literally as the brothers bowing down to Joseph. It is noteworthy that the brothers never asked why Joseph is entitled to such respect and discipline from them. They apparently never search out the merit or qualities that have made Joseph their ruler.

There are many commentators who believe that Joseph never recounted to them the story of his life with Potiphar and how he had risen to such glory and power. For the brothers, as perhaps for Joseph himself, it was sufficient that the dreams had meaning and had come true. All the rest of the story became almost incidental and unimportant. It was the dreams that were the central issue, and when proven to be accurate and effective, that was all that really mattered.

No longer would the brothers, or their descendants, mock dreams, or dreamers. In effect, they now realize that somehow the dreamers were more practical than the pragmatic people of the world. Certainly, as part of Jewish life was to be concerned, it would only survive and prosper based on dreams and not based on data.

When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, they are naturally shocked by the turn of events. Until now, they had always believed that they were within their rights, and that the actions that they had taken against Joseph were not only justified, but necessary. They saw him as a mortal threat to their very survival and to the necessary nation-building process that would create the Jewish people.

Then, in a moment, this entire understanding and assessment of the situation with Joseph was turned on its head. This occurred because they had refused to give credit or to display confidence in the dreams that Joseph had related to them. It is, thus, superfluous to state that the Jewish people have survived only based on dreams.

The return of our people to the land of Israel in our time is perhaps the greatest of dreams. We are taught in the book of Psalms that the return to Zion must be viewed as a dream, for based on pragmatism alone it could never have happened. The same thing is true regarding the revival of Torah in Jewish society in our time. Only dreamers could imagine, that at some level, the long-standing tides of ignorance and hostility towards Judaism and Jewish values could be checked. The great Ponovizher Rav summed up the situation succinctly when he told me: "I sleep little, but I dream all the time."

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

The Unexpected Leader (Vayigash 5781)

Rabbi Sacks zt"l had prepared a full year of *Covenant & Conversation* for 5781, based on his book *Lessons in Leadership*. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

I was once present when the great historian of Islam, Bernard Lewis, was asked to predict the course of events in the Middle East. He replied, "I'm a historian, so I only make predictions about the past. What is more, I am a retired historian, so even my past is passé." Predictions are impossible in the affairs of living, breathing human beings because we are free and there is no way of knowing in advance how an individual will react to the great challenges of their life.

If one thing has seemed clear throughout the last third of Genesis, it is that Joseph will emerge as the archetypal leader. He is the central character of the story, and his dreams and the shifting circumstances of his fate all point in that direction. Least likely as a candidate for

leadership is Judah, the man who proposed selling Joseph as a slave (Gen. 37:26-27), whom we next see separated from his brothers, living among the Canaanites, intermarried with them, losing two of his sons because of sin, and having sexual relations with a woman he takes to be a prostitute. The chapter in which this is described begins with the phrase, “At that time Judah went down from among his brothers” (Gen. 38:1). The commentators take this to indicate Judah’s moral decline. At this point in the story, we may have no doubt who will lead and who will follow.

Yet history turned out otherwise. Joseph’s descendants, the tribes of Ephraim and Menashe, disappeared from the pages of history after the Assyrian conquest in 722 BCE, while Judah’s descendants, starting with David, became kings. The tribe of Judah survived the Babylonian conquest, and it is Judah whose name we bear as a people. We are Yehudim, “Jews.” This week’s parsha of Vayigash explains why.

Already in last week’s parsha we began to see Judah’s leadership qualities. The family had reached deadlock. They desperately needed food, but they knew that the Egyptian viceroy had insisted that they bring their brother Benjamin with them, and Jacob refused to let this happen. His beloved wife Rachel’s first son (Joseph) was already lost to him, and he was not about to let the other, Benjamin, be taken on a hazardous journey. Reuben, in keeping with his unstable character, made an absurd suggestion: “Kill my two sons if I do not bring Benjamin back safely.” (Gen. 42:37) In the end it was Judah, with his quiet authority – “I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him” (Gen. 43:9) – who persuaded Jacob to let Benjamin go with them.

Now, as the brothers attempt to leave Egypt, and return home, the nightmare scenario has unfolded. Benjamin has been found with the viceroy’s silver cup in his possession. The official delivers his verdict. Benjamin is to be held as a slave. The other brothers can go free. This is the moment when Judah steps forward and makes a speech that changes history. He speaks eloquently about their father’s grief at the loss of one of Rachel’s sons. If he loses the other, he will die of grief. I, says Judah, personally guaranteed his safe return. He concludes:

“Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that it would bring my father.” (Gen. 44:33-34)

No sooner has he said these words than Joseph, overcome with emotion, reveals his identity and the whole elaborate drama reaches closure. What is happening here and how does it have a bearing on leadership?

The Sages articulated a principle: “Where penitents stand even the perfectly righteous cannot stand.” (Brachot 34b) The Talmud brings a prooftext from Isaiah: “Peace, peace, to those far and near” (Is. 57:19) placing the far (the penitent sinner) before the near (the perfectly righteous). However, almost certainly the real source is here in the story of Joseph and Judah. Joseph is known to tradition as ha-tzaddik, the righteous one.^[1] Judah, as we will see, is a penitent. Joseph became “second to the king.” Judah, however, became the ancestor of kings. Hence, where penitents stand even the perfectly righteous cannot stand. Judah is the first person in the Torah to achieve perfect repentance (teshuva gemurah), defined by the Sages as when you find yourself in a situation where it is likely you will be tempted to repeat an earlier sin, but you are able to resist because you are now a changed person.^[2]

Many years before Judah was responsible for Joseph being sold as a slave:

Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed. (Gen. 37:26-27)

Now, faced with the similar prospect of leaving Benjamin as a slave, he has a very different response. He says, “Let me stay as a slave and let my brother go free.” (Gen. 44:33) That is perfect repentance, and it is what prompts Joseph to reveal his identity and forgive his brothers.

The Torah had already hinted at the change in Judah’s character in an earlier chapter. Having accused his daughter-in-law Tamar of becoming

pregnant by a forbidden sexual relationship, he is confronted by her with evidence that he himself is the father of the child, and his response is to immediately declare: “She is more righteous than I” (Gen. 38:26). This is the first time in the Torah we see a character admit that he is wrong. If Judah was the first penitent, it was Tamar – mother of Perez from whom King David was descended – who was ultimately responsible.

Perhaps Judah’s future was already implicit in his name, for though the verb le-hodot from which it is derived means “to thank” (Leah called her fourth son Judah saying, “This time I will thank the Lord,” Gen. 29:35), it is also related to the verb le-hitvadot, which means “to admit or “to confess” – and confession is, according to the Rambam, the core of the command to repent.

Leaders make mistakes. That is an occupational hazard of the role. Managers follow the rules, but leaders find themselves in situations for which there are no rules. Do you declare a war in which people will die, or do you refrain from doing so at the risk of letting your enemy grow stronger with the result that more will die later? That was the dilemma faced by Chamberlain in 1939, and it was only some time later that it became clear that he was wrong and Churchill right.

But leaders are also human, and their mistakes often have nothing to do with leadership and everything to do with human weakness and temptation. The sexual misconduct of John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton and many other leaders has undoubtably been less than perfect. Does this affect our judgment of them as leaders or not? Judaism suggests it should. The prophet Nathan was unsparing of King David for consorting with another man’s wife. But Judaism also takes note of what happens next.

What matters, suggests the Torah, is that you repent – you recognise and admit your wrongdoings, and you change as a result. As Rav Soloveitchik pointed out, both Saul and David, Israel’s first two kings, sinned. Both were reprimanded by a Prophet. Both said chattati, “I have sinned”.^[3] But their fates were radically different. Saul lost the throne, David did not. The reason, said the Rav, was that David confessed immediately. Saul prevaricated and made excuses before admitting his sin.^[4]

The stories of Judah, and of his descendant David, tell us that what marks a leader is not necessarily perfect righteousness. It is the ability to admit mistakes, to learn from them and grow from them. The Judah we see at the beginning of the story is not the man we see at the end, just as the Moses we see at the Burning Bush – stammering, hesitant – is not the mighty hero we see at the end, “his sight undimmed, his natural energy unabated.”

A leader is one who, though they may stumble and fall, arises more honest, humble and courageous than they were before.

Shabbat Shalom: Vayigash (Genesis 44:18-47:27)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “And Joseph could not hold himself back in front of all who were standing around him... And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph; Is my father still alive?’”(Genesis 45:1-3)

Why does Joseph suddenly wake up to his familial ties and reveal himself as the long-lost son and brother? Apparently, he was inspired by Judah’s stirring speech which opens our Torah reading of Vayigash. How did Judah strike such a responsive chord in a Joseph whose heart had previously been so impervious to filial and sibling sensitivity? I believe that the crucial phase is, “because your servant guaranteed my father that I would serve as a surety for the youth” (Genesis 44:32); Judah informs Joseph that he is an arev, a co-signer, a stand-in for Benjamin.

This concept is quite radical for these warring siblings and resonates in subsequent Jewish legal and ethical literature in the axiom that “all Israel are co-signers (or sureties) for each other.”

Joseph was born into a family of jealousy and hatred.

The six sons of Leah, the “hated” wife who had been forced upon Jacob under false pretenses, refused to recognize the beloved wife Rachel’s son as a legitimate brother; hence the 17-year-old Joseph had no recourse but to find his companionship with the younger brothers, and

compensated by “shepherding” his siblings, the sons of Leah, acting the big shot, and reporting all their foibles to his adoring father (Gen. 37:2). Joseph always refers to his siblings as his brothers, but they never refer to him as “brother”: “And he [Joseph] said, I am seeking my brothers... and Joseph went after his brothers... And they saw him from afar. The men said, each one to his brother, behold, that master of dreams is coming, let us kill him and throw him in one of the pits and say that an evil animal devoured him” (Gen. 37:16-20).

The young Joseph was desperately seeking a brotherly relationship with his siblings – but he was constantly rebuffed. When he tried to overcome their rejection of him by recounting his (perhaps compensatory) dreams of grandeur, it only caused them to hate him even more.

Even Reuben, who attempts to rescue Joseph, never calls him “brother,” only referring to “him” as a pronoun (Gen. 37: 21, 22). It is only Judah who refers to him as a brother, but since he is desirous of making a profit by selling him as a slave, the use of the term may be ironic: “What profit have we in killing our brother? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, for he is our brother, our flesh” (Gen. 37:26-27).

As the story progresses, the lack of brotherliness towards the sons of Rachel is emphasized even more: “And the ten brothers of Joseph [they felt towards each other as brothers] went down to Egypt to purchase grain, but Jacob did not send Benjamin, brother of Joseph” (but not the brother of the other 10).

And when the sons of Jacob stand before the Grand Vizier, the Bible stresses the inequality in their relationship with a ringing declaration, pregnant with a double meaning, “Joseph recognized his brothers [their identity as well as a sibling relationship to them], but they did not recognize him” (Gen. 42:8).

The Hebrew word ah (brother) means to be tied together, the verb ahot meaning to sew or to stitch, even, if you will, to patch up. It derives from a sense of unity, oneness (ehad, ahut) which comes from the understanding of having emanated from one father.

Since the source of their unity is their common father; they should not want to cause pain to each other and certainly not to their father. Apparently, the hatred of the 10 brothers for Joseph even overwhelmed their filial concern for their father’s welfare – and so they seemingly had no difficulty in telling Jacob that his beloved Joseph had been torn apart by a wild animal! When Judah declares to their father Jacob that he will stand as surety for Benjamin, he is expressing his newfound recognition that this youngest son of Rachel is truly an ah, a brother, an inextricable part of him, Judah, even though he was born of a different mother. When he tells the Grand Vizier that he is willing to be a slave instead of Benjamin – so that this son of Rachel may be restored to his loving father in order to save Jacob further pain – he is demonstrating the bond of ultimate unity between siblings, and between them and their father. This is ahva (brotherliness) and ahut (unity) which creates an indissoluble bond (hibur, haverut, profound attachment). It is at this point of Judah’s self-sacrifice for Rachel’s youngest son that Joseph recognizes his brothers’ repentance and is ready to forgive and reunite with them.

The prophet Ezekiel provides the ultimate vision of a united Israel when he is told by God to take one stick and write upon it “For Judah and the children of Israel his friends” (haver, hibur, bond), and to take another stick and write upon it, “for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and the entire house of Israel his friend,” and to join both sticks so that they are united in his hand (Ezekiel 37: 15-20). This is the Jewish goal, learned from Judah, when every Israelite sees themselves as a co-signer (surety) for every other Israelite for the greater glory of our common Father in heaven.

Shabbat Shalom!

Insights Parshas Vayigash - Teves 5781

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rav Shmuel ben Rav Usher Zelig Halevi z"l. Sponsored by Kalman & Chana Finkel.

“May his Neshama have an Aliya!”

In Pieces or In Peace?

Then Yehuda approached him and said, “If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word [...] and may your anger not flare up at your servant...” (44:18)

This week’s parsha opens with the epic showdown between Yehuda and Yosef. Rashi (ad loc) comments that Yehuda spoke to him harshly, and for this reason, Yehuda felt compelled to ask Yosef not to get angry. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 93:8) further elaborates on this theme: “Yehuda asked his brother Naphtali ‘How many markets (full of people) are there in Egypt?’ Naphtali went to check and told Yehuda, ‘There are twelve.’ Yehuda turned to his brothers and told them, ‘I will destroy three of them and you destroy the rest until no one remains.’ When Yosef saw that the brothers threatened to destroy the entire country he said, ‘It is better that I reveal myself to them.’”

Seemingly, Yehuda and the brothers were preparing for a violent confrontation with Yosef. However, Rashi in Parshas Vayeira seems to paint an entirely different picture: “And Avraham approached and said...” (18:23). Rashi (ad loc) says we find three types of “approaching” in the scriptures; we find 1) approaching for war (by Yoav captain of King David’s army), 2) approaching for appeasement (by Yehuda and Yosef), and 3) approaching for prayer (by Eliyahu). This Rashi in Vayeira indicates that Yehuda was approaching Yosef to try to appease him, yet in this parsha Rashi says that Yehuda spoke harshly to him and, according to the Midrash, even threatened him. How can Rashi in Vayeira conclude that Yehuda’s approach was to try to appease Yosef?

The classic example of appeasement is that of Neville Chamberlain’s response to Germany’s demands for territorial conquest and rapprochement of areas that they had lost in the Great War. After many meetings and detailed negotiations, Chamberlain’s response, in brief, was “okay.” Believing he had forestalled another European World War, he came back to London declaring that he had achieved “peace in our time.” Winston Churchill, Chamberlain’s main foe in the British parliament, later termed Neville’s efforts as “the great surrender.”

This distinction is key. Appeasement is not the same as surrender. In fact, surrender is one of the worst responses to conflict because capitulation merely indicates that you have no interest in fighting, but it doesn’t resolve anything. Appeasement comes from the French “apaiser” – to bring to peace. Surrender doesn’t create peace, just a ceasing of hostilities for the time being.

The only way to create a real peace is through negotiations, and negotiations can only be successful when both parties come from a position of strength. This is true in relationships as well. When one party in a relationship feels aggrieved, the proper response isn’t merely “you’re right.” This just indicates that you surrender because you don’t want to fight. The person who feels wronged hasn’t really been validated, in fact the message received is “it’s not worth the effort to fight with you.” The better approach is validating their feelings and conveying your desire to resolve the issues through conversation and actions.

Yehuda is in effect warning Yosef: “I am perfectly capable of going to war with you – I am prepared to inflict heavy damage as well as take some losses myself. But I would prefer to work out some sort of arrangement between us.” Yehuda is not trying to beg Yosef for mercy, hoping that he will get what he wants through a surrender. He is negotiating from a position of strength, looking for a compromise that will bring an understanding between them and a lasting peace. That is what appeasement is supposed to be.

My Son, My Father

And they told him, “Yosef is still alive, and he is ruler over the entire land of Egypt.” But he had a turn of heart, for he did not believe them (45:26).

Upon returning to Eretz Yisroel with the incredible news that Yosef was still alive, the brothers were initially met with disbelief from their father Yaakov. He finally accepted that his son Yosef was still alive when “he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him” (45:27). This is difficult to understand. Even if Yaakov suspected that the brothers had a role in Yosef’s disappearance, what possible reason could they have for

spinning another lie, one that with some effort could be verified? Furthermore, his son Binyamin, who had no part in Yosef's disappearance, could also confirm that his brother Yosef was still alive. Why did Yaakov choose not to believe Binyamin?

Rashi (ad loc) is bothered as to why the Torah says that Yosef sent the wagons to transport Yaakov when the Torah previously stated that they were sent by Pharaoh (45:19). Rashi answers that although they were sent on the word of Pharaoh, Yosef told his brothers to use them as a sign in reference to the last Torah subject he studied with his father all those years ago. In Hebrew the word wagons has the same root as the word calf – Yosef was reminding Yaakov that they had last studied the laws of a calf whose neck is broken to atone for a city that didn't properly care for a stranger who left their city unaccompanied.

One must wonder why Yosef, who had now been gone for several decades, never sent a message earlier to his father, whom he must have known would be worried sick over his disappearance. Though we will never know for sure, a component of his reticence was that for almost all of the time he was gone he was either a slave or a convict sitting in jail; not exactly uplifting news to give his father. He may have preferred that his father think him dead than languishing as a slave or a prisoner, which would cause him ongoing grief.

Yaakov, upon hearing the news that his son was still alive, must have been incredibly conflicted. On one hand, he was relieved that his son was still alive, long after giving him up for dead. On the other hand, Yosef had been steeped in the Egyptian culture of depravity for over two decades. What remained of his son Yosef, the one Yaakov taught all of the Torah he had learned in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever?

When Yaakov saw that Yosef sent him a sign indicating that his mind was on the last subject that they had studied before departing, he realized that his son, the one he had forged a real Torah bond with, was indeed still alive. This is why the Torah says, "He saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived [...] My son still lives! I shall go and see him before I die" (45:27-28).

Similarly, earlier in the parsha upon revealing himself to his brothers, Yosef asks, "Is my father still alive?" (45:3). On the surface this is a very odd question; for the last several interactions with his brothers they had been discussing Yaakov's welfare. They had explicitly told him that their father was still alive. What was Yosef really asking?

Some have tried to answer this question by saying that it was a rebuke of the brothers, in effect saying: "After all you have done to him, is my father still alive?" This is difficult to accept because that would make Yosef's rebuke sharp and sarcastic. Even if Yosef had said such a thing to his brothers, why would the Torah record it for posterity? Besides, the Torah portrays Yosef as sad and even weeping; the Torah doesn't indicate that he was speaking angrily with them.

Perhaps we can answer this question in a similar vein — Yosef is yearning to know if there is any part of his father still alive. Meaning, before Yosef was sold by his brothers, he had a special relationship with Yaakov; thus he's really asking them if his father still misses him, in the way that a father misses a son. Yosef wants to know if there is any part of his father still left in Yaakov. Yosef isn't asking about Yaakov's physical wellbeing, he is asking about his personal father-son connection.

Did You Know...

In this week's parsha Yosef instructs his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds, and since shepherds are a **תַּנִּזֵּב** to Egypt, he would send them to Goshen (45:33-34). The common translation of this word (Rashi, Onkelos, and others) is an abomination; since the Egyptians worshipped their sheep as deities, once they informed Pharaoh that they were shepherds by occupation, he would become disgusted and send them away from him to Goshen.

However, the Zohar has a completely different take on this exchange. According to the Zohar, shepherds were actually revered in Egypt, even considered like deities themselves. This can easily be understood as shepherds actually take care of their deities – the sheep.

Pharaoh would therefore want to remove himself from their presence, and this is why he would send them to the best area in the land of Egypt (he calls it that in 47:6).

As we find in Rashi (Shemos 8:22), **תַּנִּזֵּב** does mean abomination, but not because it was an abomination to the Egyptians. Rather, we translate it like that because the Egyptians did revere them and worshipped them, and to us as the Jewish people, worshipping other deities is an abomination. Although this is not the common understanding, this would explain two instances in the parsha where we see the Egyptians owning sheep. First, Pharaoh himself asked them to watch his own sheep immediately after learning they are shepherds (47:6), and later the people of Egypt sold Yosef their sheep for food (47:17).

But why shepherds and sheep? The Egyptians were, unsurprisingly, a very superstitious lot. They had literally over 2,000 gods that they worshipped regarding every single conceivable aspect of life, often with multiple gods per subject. However, several of the gods were similar as they were depicted through sheep imagery, most notably Khnum (the "First One" who created everything) who had a sheep's head, and the more well-known Amun-Ra (the greatest of all the gods), who's symbol was a ram headed Sphinx.

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Parshat Vayigash

Nuclear Fusion

"And you, son of man, take to yourself one piece of wood and write upon it 'For Yehuda and the Children of Israel, his associates,' and take another piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yosef, the stem of Ephraim and the whole House of Israel, his associates.'" (Haftarah, Yechezkel 33:16)

One of the fascinating facets of the A-bomb story is that the vast majority of the players were Jews. Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity paved the way for investigation into nuclear fission. In 1939 he urged President Roosevelt to build an atomic bomb before Nazi Germany did so. Leo Szilard (1898-1964), born in Budapest, helped Italian Enrico Fermi (married to a Jew) conduct the first controlled nuclear chain reaction. Niels Bohr (1885-1962) was the first to apply quantum theory to explain nuclear structure. Born in Denmark to a Christian father and Jewish mother, Bohr won a Nobel Prize in 1922, and narrowly escaped Denmark in 1943, pursued by the Nazis. He worked on the Manhattan Project with his son Aage. Lise Meitner (1878-1968) was born in Vienna and became a pioneer of research into nuclear fission. She analyzed her results with her nephew, Otto Frisch. Walter Zinn and Fermi directed the first controlled nuclear chain reaction in 1942 at the University of Chicago. Hungarian-born Edward Teller led the US team that developed the first hydrogen bomb. And the list goes on.

But maybe the most fascinating of the all those who built the atom bomb was J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967), the US-born theoretical physicist who was chosen to direct the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos in 1942. It was his team that, on July 16, 1945 exploded the world's first atomic bomb. Three months later he resigned as project director and opposed development of the H-bomb. Oppenheimer was accused of being a Communist, he was vilified in public, and, although exonerated, the experience broke him. Oppenheimer came from a wealthy, assimilated New York Jewish family. He was an aesthete, an intellectual and a philosopher. His colleague I. I. Rabi once wrote about him:

"He reminded me very much of a boyhood friend about whom someone said that he couldn't make up his mind whether to be president of the B'nai B'rith or the Knights of Columbus. Perhaps he really wanted to be both, simultaneously. Oppenheimer wanted every experience. In that sense, he never focused. My own feeling is that if he had studied the Talmud and Hebrew, rather than Sanskrit, he would have been a much greater physicist." (From "Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb" by Richard Rhodes)

Commenting on this week's Haftara, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch bewails the continuing strife between the "Ephraim" Jew and the "Yehuda" Jew. The "Ephraim" Jew, "by his systematic disavowal of the Divine Torah, seeks salvation in political greatness and tries to find a substitute for the lack of protection from G-d by vain efforts to obtain alliance with the nations, among whom it hopes to 'blossom out in brotherhood' (Hoshea 23:15) by complete assimilation. But, for giving up all Jewishness, he only experiences contempt and repulsion."

On the other hand, "Yehuda, who in principle certainly acknowledges Hashem as its G-d... is still far off from unreserved trust in G-d." Rabbi Hirsch criticizes the "Yehuda" Jew for failing to apply the same standards in his relation with his fellow man as he does with regard to his kashrut.

"And you, son of man, take to yourself one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yehuda and the Children of Israel his associates,' and take another piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yosef, the stem of Ephraim and the whole House of Israel, his associates.' And bring them near... and they will become united to one union in your hand."

The two chips of wood representing the two tribes will eventually be united, not in a watered-down compromise but in a genuine elevation "in an everlasting faithfulness towards G-d."

When we look at our divided nation, how we long for that "nuclear fusion" that will bathe the whole world in Hashem's light!

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Parshas Vayigash: "Reconciliation"

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

I have known more than my share of families that are torn by discord. I think most of us, perhaps even all of us, are familiar with families in which brothers and sisters have not spoken to each other in years, sometimes even having forgotten the original reason for the destruction of their relationship. My background and experience in the field of family therapy has given me even broader exposure than most to this unfortunate phenomenon.

Colleagues of mine in the practice of psychotherapy will concur that overcoming feelings of hatred and urges toward revenge is one of the most difficult challenges that they face in their practice. Reconciling parents and children, husbands and wives, is a frustrating process for those of us who counsel families. The successful reconciliation of ruined relationships is a rare achievement, especially after the misunderstandings have festered for years.

The great eighteenth-century moralist, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, contends that these difficulties are intrinsic to our human nature. Thus he writes:

"Hatred and revenge. These, the human heart, in its perversity, finds it hard to escape. A man is very sensitive to disgrace, and suffers keenly when subjected to it. Revenge is sweeter to him than honey; he can not rest until he has taken his revenge. If, therefore, he has the power to relinquish that to which his nature impels him; if he can forgive; if he will forbear hating anyone who provokes him to hatred; if he will neither exact vengeance when he has the opportunity to do so, nor bear a grudge against anyone; if he can forget and obliterate from his mind a wrong done to him as though it had never been committed; then he is, indeed, strong and mighty. So to act may be a small matter to angels, who have no evil traits, but not to 'those that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust.' (Job 4:19) (Mesilat Yesharim [The Path of the Upright], Chapter 11)

Granted that one must approximate the angels in heaven in order to overcome the natural human inclinations to hate and take revenge. How, then, do we explain the astounding reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, which occurs in this week's Torah portion? (Genesis 44:18-47:27)

Joseph's brothers came to hate him because of what they saw as his malicious arrogance. Joseph certainly had reason to hate his brothers, who cast him into a pit full of snakes and scorpions. We can easily understand that he would attribute his years of imprisonment to their betrayal of him. And yet, in last week's Torah portion, we learned that they came to regret their actions and to feel guilty for what they did to him. "Alas, we are at fault...because we looked on at his anguish, yet paid no heed as he pleaded with us." (Genesis 42:21)

It is in this week's parsha that we learn of the forgiveness that Joseph demonstrated toward his brothers. We read of a dramatic, reconciliation—a total triumph over hatred and revenge. What inner strengths enabled Joseph and his brothers to attain this rare achievement?

I maintain that quite a few such strengths help Joseph's brothers to rejoin him harmoniously. One was their ability to accept responsibility for their actions. Over time, they reflected introspectively and concluded that they were indeed wrong for what they did. Self-confrontation, and a commitment to accepting the

truth when it surfaces allowed them to forget whatever originally prompted them to hate Joseph.

I further maintain that the underlying dynamics of Joseph's ability to forgive were very different. He came to forgive his brothers because of two fundamental aspects of his personality: his emotional sensitivity and his religious ideology. Joseph's sensitivity becomes apparent to the careful reader of this and last week's Torah portions. The most reliable indication of a person's sensitivity is his ability to shed tears of emotion, his capacity to weep. Joseph demonstrates this capacity no less than four times in the course of the biblical narrative:

Subsequent to his initial encounter with his brothers, we read that "he turned away from them and wept..." (Genesis 42:24); when he first sees his younger brother Benjamin, "he was overcome with feeling...He went into a room and wept there..." (ibid. 43:30); unable to contain himself after Judah's confrontational address, "his sobs were so loud that...the news reached Pharaoh's palace..." And finally, as we will read in next week's Torah portion, this is Joseph's response to his brothers' plea for explicit forgiveness: "and Joseph was in tears as they spoke to him." (ibid. 50:17).

No doubt about it. The biblical text gives us conclusive evidence of Joseph's emotional sensitivity. But there is another secret to Joseph's noble treatment of his brothers. It relates to his philosophy, not to his emotional reactivity.

If there is one lesson that Joseph learned from his father Jacob during his disrupted adolescence, it was the belief in a divine being who ultimately controls man's circumstances and man's destiny. When a person wholly has that belief, he is able to dismiss even the most painful insults against him. He is able to attribute them to God's plan and not to blame the perpetrators of that insult. Thus was Joseph able to say, "So, it was not you who sent me here, but God..." (ibid. 45:8) The power of genuine faith to instill the awareness that even hurtful circumstances are part of the divine plan is, in my opinion, best described in this passage from the anonymous 13th century author of Sefer HaChinuch, in his comments on the commandment to desist from revenge:

"At the root of this commandment is the lesson that one must be aware and take to heart the fact that everything that happens in one's life, whether it seems beneficial or harmful, comes about because of God's intervention...Therefore, when a person is pained or hurt by another, he must know in his soul...that God has decreed this for him. He should not be prompted to take revenge against the perpetrator, who is only indirectly the cause of his pain or hurt. We learn this from King David who would not respond to the traitorous curses of his former ally, Shimi ben Gera."

The author of Sefer HaChinuch sees King David as the exemplar of this profound religious faith. In these final Torah portions of the Book of Genesis, we learn that Joseph was King David's mentor in regard to the capacity to rise above the misdeeds of others and to see them as but part of God's design.

It is not easy for us lesser believers to emulate Joseph and David, but we would be spared much interpersonal strife if we would at least strive to do so..

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah Asarah b'Tevet and Parshat Vayigash

A Fast on a Friday? Asarah b'Tevet: Treating the root cause, not the symptoms.

This week shabbat will commence in a most unusual way. We'll be fasting, and we'll only be able to eat or drink after kiddush on Friday night. That's because Friday will be Asarah b'Tevet – the Fast of Tevet. You might wonder, why is this fast different from all other fasts? Our calendar does not usually allow fasts on Fridays, in order that we should be able to have the health and the energy to prepare for Shabbat. However, Asara b'Tevet is the one exception. That's because, in the book of Ezekiel, Chapter 24, the day is described as 'etzem hayom hazeh' – 'this very day,' the identical terminology used by the Torah to describe Yom Kippur. So in the same way as Yom Kippur must take place on that very day, so too with Asara b'Tevet. If it falls on Friday, we must fast on Friday.

The Root of our Problems

This highlights for us the significance of this particular fast day. You see, Asarah b'Tevet was the very beginning of the troubles that followed. It was on this day that Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army laid siege to the city of Jerusalem. You might say, "What was so important about that? It pales into insignificance compared with the 17th of Tammuz when the walls of the city were breached and the 9th of Av when the temple was destroyed!"

Actually Asara B'tevet is significant because that's when it all began. That was the root of our problems.

If a river is badly polluted, in order to clean up the waters, you could go downstream, but whatever you clean will last just a few hours. Instead, you should go upstream in order to block off the original source of the pollution. Instead of treating the symptoms, we need to treat the cause.

There is a story of the mythical town of Chelm in Poland in which there was just one little bridge over the valley. People noticed that there was a crack in the bridge, causing some people to trip and fall. The crack widened until some people were breaking their legs. It widened further and there was a danger that people might fall through it, and then when the gap became exceptionally wide, people, wagons and horses were falling down it to the valley below.

The council of the sages of Chelm decided to deliberate on the issue. At the end of an entire day's discussions they announced their decision: They would build a hospital in the valley below.

Causeless Love

That's what happens when you treat the symptoms instead of the cause. Ever since the destruction of our Second Temple within the diaspora we have experienced some wonderful highs and some very tragic lows. Let's look back to the origin of it all – it was the sin of sinat chinam, of causeless hatred.

Now close to two millennia after that time, we have not yet repaired the original cause. Sadly today there is still so much damaging and unnecessary sinat chinam, causeless hatred, within our ranks.

Let us therefore heed the call of Asara b'Tevet – let us treat the original cause, and in the spirit of the teaching of Rav Kook, let us now engage in 'ahavat chinam', causeless love, for one another.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

Drasha Parshas Vayigash - Age Old Questions

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

It was the ultimate encounter. Yaakov, the consummate theologian, meets Pharaoh, the king of the powerful land of Egypt. What could they have discussed? The meaning of life? The geopolitics of famine? They don't. Instead, the Torah records that meeting as having to do with something quite mundane. Age. Yet that trite discussion had severe ramifications for our forefather Yaakov.

The Torah relates how Yoseph presents his father to Pharaoh. Genesis 47: 9-10: "Pharaoh asked Yaakov, 'How old are you?' Jacob answered, 'the years of my sojourns are one hundred thirty; few and bad ones; they have not reached the days of my forefathers in their sojourns.' "

There is a Midrash that notes the bitterness of Yaakov's response and makes an amazing calculation. Yaakov lived to the age of 147. His father lived 'till 180. There is a difference of 33 years. Yaakov, explains the Midrash, lost 33 years of his life due to the 33 words that were used as he cursed his life's struggles.

The Midrash needs explanation. In the Torah's version of the story (and even in my loose translation), Yaakov did not use 33 words to curse his fate. That number is only arrived at if the original question "How old are you," including the words "and Pharaoh asked Yaakov," are also counted. I can understand that Yaakov was punished for the words that he spoke: after all, he was saved from his brother Esau, his daughter Deenah was returned to him, and he did leave Lavan's home a wealthy man. But why should Yaakov be punished for a question posed to him, even if the response was improper? Why count the words that Pharaoh used, and even more difficult, why count the words, "Pharaoh asked Yaakov," which are obviously the Torah's addition? At most, Yaakov should only be punished for the 25 words that he actually used.

Though Rebbitzin Chana Levin the wife of Reb Aryeh, the Tzadik of Jerusalem, endured a difficult life she never let her own misfortunes dampen the cheer of friends or neighbors. During the terrible years of famine in Palestine during World War I, tragedy struck. After an epidemic induced illness, on a Shabbos morning, her beautiful 18 month-old son, succumbed. She and Reb Aryeh were devastated.

However, until Shabbos was over, there were no noticeable cries coming from the Levin home. The Shabbos meal was accompanied by the regular z'miros (songs) recited with the weekly enthusiasm. The children discussed the Torah portion at the table, and the Rav and his Rebbitzin greeted their neighbors as if nothing had occurred. Reb Aryeh's own sister had visited on Shabbos and left with no inkling of the catastrophe. When news of the tragedy was revealed after sunset, her neighbors were shocked. "How is it," they asked, "that you didn't diminish your normal Shabbos cheer in the face of striking tragedy?"

The Rebbitzin tearfully explained. "On Shabbos one is not allowed to mourn. Had we not continued our Shabbos in the usual manner, everyone would have realized the end had come. We would have destroyed the Shabbos of everyone in the courtyard, as you all would have shared our terrible pain."

In order to understand the Midrash one must understand diplomacy. Ramban (Nachmanides) notes: World leaders do not normally greet each other with mundane questions such as, "how old are you?" Yet those are the only recorded words of the conversation that ensued between Yaakov and Pharaoh. "Obviously," explains the Ramban, "Yaakov looked so terrible and so aged that Pharaoh could not comprehend. He therefore dispensed with diplomatic etiquette and asked the discourteous query. Yaakov's response explained why his appearance overbore his numeric age.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, (1902-1978) the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, explains why the Midrash is upset with Yaakov. Had Yaakov worn his suffering with more cheer, on the inside, he would not have looked as old as he did. Pharaoh would not have been astonished and would never have asked the undiplomatic question, "how old are you?" Yaakov was punished for prompting a query that resulted in open discontent of the fate he endured. And for that unfortunate repartee, an entire portion of the Torah was added and Yaakov lost 33 years of his life.

The Torah teaches us a great lesson. No matter what life serves you, do not let the experience wrinkle your spirit. One must never let his pain get to him in a way that it gets to someone else. Especially when you represent Hashem's word.

Dedicated In memory of Irving M. Bunim Reb Yitzchok Meir ben HaRav Moshe

— 4 Teves. By his children, Rabbi & Mrs. Amos Bunim

Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayigash

Yehudah's Sudden Switch: Analysis of the Opening Pesukim of Vayigash

At the end of last week's parsha (Miketz), Binyomin is "caught red handed with stolen goods." Of course, it was a ruse, but the brothers did not realize this at the time. The pasuk says, "And Yehudah said, 'What can we say to my master? How can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? G-d has found the sin of your servants. Here we are: We are ready to be slaves to my master – both we and the one in whose hand the goblet was found.'" [Bereshis 44:16]. Yosef responds: "It would be unseemly for me to do this; the man in whose possession the goblet was found, he shall be my slave, and as for you – go up in peace to your father" [Bereshis 44:17].

This statement of Yehudah, "What can we say? How can we speak? How can we justify ourselves?" is an act of great contrition on his part. "We are your slaves. You caught us red-handed!" He could not have been more contrite. That is the end of Parshas Miketz. Then, at the beginning of Parshas Vayigash, Yehudah suddenly seems to be a different person. "...May your anger not flare up at your servant..." [Bereshis 44:18]. Rashi says: "From here we see that Yehudah spoke harshly to Yosef." Two pesukim ago, this same Yehudah expressed such contrition. Now he changes his tune and is letting Yosef have it! What happened to cause this metamorphosis?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains what happened. Until now, the brothers felt that all of this was happening to them as a result of Divine punishment. The Almighty was paying them back for the way they treated Yosef. "Aval asheimim anachnu" ("indeed we are guilty!") [Bereshis 42:21]. They sensed that this was all a case of "From the L-rd this has happened" (may'ais Hashem hayesa zos) [Tehillim 118:23]. Now suddenly Yosef says "No. You can go free. It is the youngest brother, Binyomin, who will be my prisoner." As a result, their previous explanation of the events they were experiencing had to be rethought.

Yehudah said, "Wait a minute! This is not from the Ribono shel Olam. This could not be a punishment for what we did, because Binyomin was not involved in that incident at all. So why is this happening? It must be happening strictly because of the perverseness of this Egyptian ruler. I am going to give him a piece of my mind!" This is the great change that happened.

The Vilna Gaon shares a very interesting insight on the pasuk "Vayigash eilav Yehudah..." [Bereshis 44:18] Rashi explains regarding the words "Ki avdecha arav es hana'ar" [Bereshis 44:32] that Yehuda promised his father "If I do not bring Binyamin back to you, I am going to be excommunicated both in this world and in the world to come."

Yehudah stood to lose the most over here. The Gaon comments: The trop (cantillation notes) for the expression “Vayigash elav Yehudah va’yomer bi Adonee...” is as follows: Vayigash elav has the cantillation notes Kadma v’azla. Yehudah has the note reviye. Va’Yomer bi Adonee has the notes zarka munach segol.

The Gaon interprets the trop as providing a hidden message: Vayigash elav – Kadma v’azla, meaning “Yehudah came forth.” Yehudah says – You might ask why I am acting as the spokesperson for the family – after all I am only the fourth son (reviye). The reason the fourth son (reviye) is coming forth (kadma v’azla) is that zarka munach segol – meaning I will be thrown away (zarka) from resting (being munach) in the World-to-Come among the Am Segulah (the Chosen People). Therefore, it is my life that is on the line – both here and in Olam HaBah. That is why I put protocol aside and came forward to speak, even though I am only the fourth son.

Do Not Waste the Precious Years of Youth

As part of Yehudah’s plea to the Egyptian ruler (who he did not yet know was his brother Yosef) Yehudah said, “For how will I be able to go back to my father if the youth is not with me.” [Bereshis 44:34]. To appreciate the thought that I am about to express, it may be necessary to have a bit of an inclination for Chassidishhe Torah. Also, please remember that Chazal say “one does not ask questions on Drush.” This may not be the true interpretation of this pasuk, but the message it delivers is certainly true.

One day, each of us will go up to the Yeshiva on High after we leave this world. The above cited pasuk can be read; “How am I going to go to my Father (in Heaven) when the na’ar is not with me.” — Meaning, if I wasted my youth, the easiest years of my life, on matters of nonsense – how will I be able to answer for myself before the Master of the Universe in that Final Judgement?

If there is one message my students at Ner Yisroel have heard from me over and over again throughout my entire teaching career it is: Do not waste these precious years. They are not repeatable. This is not to say, of course, that life ends at age 22 or 23. However, the care-free life that a typical yeshiva bochur lives today—from the age of say 18 until he gets married—is blissful. Baruch Hashem, most bochrim have parents. Their tuition is paid. Their cell phone bills are paid. Their car insurance is paid. Their health insurance is paid. They typically do not have to worry about earning a living or about chronic illness. These are the carefree years.

“How will I be able to ascend to my Father and the (years of my) youth will not be with me?”

I know that the demographic of the crowd I am speaking to tonight is well past the years of na’arus. But as I always say: The job of raising your children never stops, and the job of raising your grandchildren never stops. If there is one message that we should impart to our children and grandchildren and, IY”H, our great-grandchildren, it is: Do not waste these years. They are not going to repeat themselves!

The Kotzker Rebbe cited a pasuk from Tehillim: “Like the arrow in the hand of the mighty archer, such is youth” [Tehillim 127:4]. The Rebbe taught: When an archer pulls back his bow and is about to shoot his arrow, he still is in control of what is going to happen with that arrow. He can shoot it up, he can shoot it down, he can shoot it right, or he can shoot it left. Once the arrow leaves the bow, it is on its own. He cannot take it back. He cannot guide it. It is not like a ‘smart bomb’ that can be redirected mid-course. The Rebbe said, “So too it is with youth.” When a person is young, he is in control. He does not have illness, he does not have all the worries that come with older age, and that frustrate his ability to accomplish what he wants to accomplish with the talents and strengths the Almighty has granted him.

There is a famous quip – Youth is wasted on the young. When a person reaches a certain stage in life, that youth-like freedom is there no more. I knew an older Jew who was in a retirement home. He used to get up in the morning and his fellow residents would ask him “What hurts today?” A person loses all kinds of powers and capabilities that he once had when he reaches old age. Ah, for the days of youth – bnei ha’neurim!

This is a message that we need to impart to our children, and even if our children are grown, we need to impart it to their children. “You must not waste the precious years of youth.”

Sensitive News Must Be Delivered with Sensitivity

“They told him that Yosef was still alive and that he ruled the entire land of Egypt...” [Bereshis 45:26] The Sefer HaYashar says that the brothers were afraid that if they would suddenly break the news to Yaakov that his beloved and presumed-dead son Yosef was still alive, he would die on the spot. The news would be too shocking. An older person can die from sudden shock.

So, what did they do? Serach, daughter of Asher, knew how to play violin. She played her violin and kept on singing “Od Yosef Chai; Od Yosef Chai.” Yaakov Avinu thus already had put into his consciousness these words stating that Yosef was still alive.

Consequently, when the brothers came in and they said “Od Yosef Chai!” it was not the same shock as it would have otherwise been. Yaakov had been inoculated, so to speak, to the concept that Yosef was still alive.

This is all well and good. But what is the lesson we learn from this Medrash? Rav Pam writes in his sefer that the lesson we learn is how sensitive we need to be about how we say certain things. We need to anticipate how our words will be taken by the intended recipient. Sometimes news needs to be broken softly. In all cases, we must speak sensitive words with sensitivity!

Rav Pam writes that Rav Yaakov Bender (Rosh Yeshiva of Darkei Torah in the Five Towns) has two rules whenever he calls a parent on the phone. The first thing he says is, “Hello. This is Rabbi Yaakov Bender. Your child is fine.” Why? Because whenever a parent gets a call from the principal the parent braces himself: “Okay. What did my kid do now? What did he break? What happened to him?” Therefore, the first thing out of the principal’s mouth is “Your child is fine” thus relieving the parent.

The second policy Rabbi Bender has is that whatever a child has done, he never suspends a child on Erev Shabbos. That is all that is needed to ruin a Shabbos. The kid gets thrown out of school; the kid is suspended; the kid flunked.... The kid will sit there at the Shabbos table with this just having happened to him. It will put a pall over the entire Shabbos for the whole family.

Maybe the child will be suspended... but that can always wait until Sunday morning. On Friday afternoon, he does not suspend students. That is a lesson learned from the Medrash about Serach bas Asher. “Od Yosef Chai.” We must always break news gently, softly, — even good news. This is the sensitivity we must have when dealing with people.

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Vayigash: Fake Righteousness

Ben-Tzion Spitz

Keep thy smooth words and juggling homilies for those who know thee not. - Lord Byron

Joseph has finally sprung his trap, while his brothers still haven’t discovered that he, the Viceroy of Egypt, is their long-lost brother. Joseph got them to bring brother Benjamin to Egypt, and he had incriminating evidence placed among Benjamin’s belongings. The brothers, not realizing they were being set up, had brazenly declared that if Joseph’s men would find the thief in their midst, the thief would be put to death and the rest of them would become Joseph’s slaves.

When the stolen goblet is found in Benjamin’s possessions, the brothers realize they are in big trouble. Joseph, however, presents himself as a magnanimous judge. He states that only the thief himself will become his slave, while the rest of the brothers are free to return home.

This is the situation in which Judah steps forward and asks for a private audience with the Viceroy. Judah recounts the recent history, of how the Viceroy had insisted on Benjamin coming to Egypt, despite pleas that their father Jacob’s life was highly dependent on Benjamin’s wellbeing.

If anything untoward were to happen to Benjamin, it would almost certainly kill their father Jacob.

The Bechor Shor on Genesis 44:32 reads an accusatory statement in Judah's plea to the Viceroy. He explains that Judah is saying that the Viceroy's magnanimity is ultimately false. The Viceroy is only pretending to be generous by saying the other brothers are free to go, while only Benjamin will remain enslaved. While the Viceroy seems to be saying that the other brothers are likely innocent and there's no need for them to be punished, in effect, by enslaving Benjamin and separating him from their father, the Viceroy will be killing Jacob, who is completely innocent. How can the Viceroy justify the exoneration of people who may have been accomplices to the crime, while he inflicts a fatal punishment on Jacob, someone completely innocent?

At that point, Judah offers himself to be a slave to the Viceroy instead of Benjamin, in order to save Jacob's life. Moved by Judah's valiant gesture, the Viceroy finally reveals himself to be Joseph. The brothers are shocked into silence, and the process of family reconciliation can begin.

May our family reunions be less duplicitous than that of our ancestors.

Dedication - To Israeli politics. Never, ever boring.

Shabbat Shalom

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parashat Vayigash

Exile as a Moral Foundation

In this week's Torah portion, Vayigash, we read about the Jewish nation that is not actually a nation yet, but rather is an extended family of seventy. They leave Canaan (later to be called the Land of Israel) to their first exile in Egypt. In this strange land, the family becomes a nation with its own unique identity. Why there? Wouldn't it have been more natural to leave the nation to form its identity in the land intended for it?

It is very difficult to exist within a foreign society and culture, and yet this is the reality chosen as the environment for the nation to establish itself. There are several reasons for this, but we will focus on two of them. Firstly, being in a foreign environment causes a person to adopt a world view in which reality is incomplete and necessitates repair. It was therefore appropriate for a nation about to be given the mission and goal of "tikun olam", repairing the world morally and spiritually, to grow into a reality that did not suit its existence. A person who grows up in a seemingly-perfect social reality does not feel the inner motivation to change and repair the world. The Jewish nation that came into being in an alien environment is a nation that carries within it a vision of a repaired world. As such, it is called upon to work toward advancing the world – morally, socially, culturally, and spiritually.

Also, the nation began in a demeaned social status suffering from great discrimination. One of the biggest issues any society deals with is how it treats foreigners. This question is especially important in an agricultural society like those in ancient times. Any foreigner entering the land is checked to see what advantages or disadvantages he has: Does he create more than he uses or vice versa?

The Jewish nation's time in Egypt created the basis for the repeated warnings in the Torah regarding the proper treatment of foreigners – that person who has been disconnected from his homeland and often also from his family when exiled to a foreign land. The memory of the exile in Egypt is a foundational memory meant to inform Jewish society as one that does not reject the foreigner or stranger, but respects him and makes it possible for him to live respectfully. Again and again, the Bible repeated the connection between the exile in Egypt and the obligation to respect foreigners. "And you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, since you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23, 9); "The stranger who sojourns with you shall be as a native from among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your G-d" (Leviticus 19, 34); "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10, 19).

A nation that rose in exile can see a stranger and respect him, give him space and allow him to exist and integrate. The book of Genesis contains almost no laws or commandments because it is a book that describes the foundation upon which the Jewish nation was built: the period of the forefathers. During this time, the nation's spiritual foundations were formed and this is when its first exile – the exile to Egypt – began. That was where the important foundation of appropriate treatment of foreigners was laid, a foundation that was to impact the independent Jewish state from ancient times until today.

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Rav Kook Torah

The Holiness of the Synagogue

"On account of two sins, ignoramus die young: because they call the Torah ark 'the cabinet,' and because they call the synagogue 'Beit Am' - the house of the people." (Shabbat 32a)

What is so terrible about this behavior? Are there no worse sins committed regularly by ignorant people?

Superficial Perception

We are good at seeing the functional purpose of things. You do not need not be a genius to realize that a Torah ark is meant to store Torah scrolls. Even a cursory observation indicates that a synagogue is a place where people assemble together. Yet these functional definitions are so superficial that they fail to recognize the true essence of these objects. To perceive a Torah ark as simply a cabinet, and a synagogue as a community center, is to lose sight of the unique qualities that make them a source of spiritual influence in our lives.

This is a grave mistake. Failing to see the sanctity of a Torah ark and the holiness of a synagogue is a fundamental error in how we look at life and our relationship with God.

Holiness in the External Aspects of Life

When we reflect on God's infinite grandeur and transcendental nature, our initial response is to view all human concerns as petty and inconsequential. All of our actions appear to be of no lasting significance, disconnected from that which is infinite and eternal.

Therefore, the most important study is precisely in this area: to understand how life's external aspects, when they are expressions of serving God, connect to the highest levels of inner Divine knowledge. By binding the entire gamut of human activity to the loftiest contemplations, we can elevate and sanctify all aspects of life.

Life is not just the "still, small voice" - moments of calm introspection, uplifting revelations, inspiring words of prayer and supplication. Life is full of conflicts and challenges. It is noisy and rushed, flowing with joy and grief, anger and satisfaction. Deep contemplation, however, will help us recognize that God's holiness can find us everywhere, even in our lowly physical state.

This awareness cannot come from intellectual inquiry alone; it requires profound and constant study. For this reason, the Torah is compared to water: just as water flows from mountains to lower regions, so, too, the Torah is not confined to the rarified spheres of metaphysical inquiry, but "flows down" to elevate the emotional and practical aspects of life.

Now we may better understand the true significance of the Torah ark and the error of the ignorant. The ark is not just another cabinet. By virtue of its serving as a receptacle for a sefer Torah, the Torah ark is also a holy vessel. When we recognize the holiness of the Torah ark, we acknowledge the sanctity of life's external aspects - our actions and deeds - when they are a receptacle for Torah and mitzvot.

The Holiness in Communal Life

While the Torah ark reflects the holiness in the life of the individual, the synagogue reflects the holiness in the life of the community.

One who sees the synagogue as simply a place for people to meet fails to grasp the intrinsic sanctity of the Jewish people. Israel is not just a collection of individuals who pool together their resources for utilitarian purposes, for mutual support and protection. The true value of Israel is in the communal Divine soul that resides within them, a force of collective holiness that transcends the holiness of its individual members.

This quality of the community is especially revealed in the synagogue, a place of communal prayer and study. It is our communal holiness that transforms the synagogue into a House of God and a mikdash me'at, a miniature Temple.

As the ignorant grow in wisdom and Torah knowledge, they will come to recognize the holiness of the Torah ark. They will see that life's external aspects, our actions and deeds, can be a source of holiness. And they will recognize the special collective holiness of Israel, realizing that the synagogue is not a "house of the people," but rather a house of God's Presence.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, pp. 169-170)

See also: VaYigash: The Hazards of Leadership

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Vayigash

פרק ו' יגש תשפ"א

אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אתי מצרים

"I am Yosef, your brother, it is me, whom you sold into Egypt."
(45:4)

Abba Kohen Bardela says, "Woe is to us from the Yom HaDin, Day of Judgment; woe is to us from the Yom HaTochacha, Day of

Rebuke. Yosef, who was the smallest (youngest) of the tribes, and (when he rebuked his brothers) they were unable to withstand his rebuke. Similarly, what will we say/do when Hashem rebukes each and every one of us in accordance with what he is (or could have been)?” Many commentators have commented on this well-known *Midrash* throughout the millennia as the paradigm of *tochachah*, rebuke. After all, what did Yosef actually say to them? Two words: *Ani Yosef!* “I am Yosef!” This was sufficient rebuke for the brothers, enough for them to realize that they had committed a grave error. Yosef was not the man they had made him out to be. Standing before them was the *baal ha'chalomos*, the ne'er-do-well dreamer, whom they had ruled deserved to die for his evil machinations against them. Now they saw and, with two words, it all became crystal clear: they had made a terrible mistake. They just realized that they had been living a lie, believing that they had been justified in their actions against their younger brother, only to be rudely awoken from their false reverie to the stark reality that they had been wrong.

One day, the unavoidable meeting with Hashem will occur. He will utter two words: *Ani Hashem*, “I am G-d.” How did you live an entire life of falsehood? How did you frivolously waste away your time and strengths, the numerous gifts that I gave you? We will stand there dumbstruck, mute, with nothing to say. We will have no excuses, because the time for prevarication will be over. We are before Hashem, Who is the essence of truth. All our excuses, rationales and lies – gone.

Yosef added, “that you sold me.” I am the Yosef whom you sold. He could have simply said, “I am Yosef.” Why did he add whom you sold? Even if they had not sold him, nonetheless, what happened to him was an unpardonable injustice, a tragedy of epic proportion. What difference does it make whether they sold him or gave him away? *Horav Yaakov Galinsky*, zl, explains that this was part of Yosef’s rebuke. “For what did you sell me? For a pair of shoes? Is that all a human being is worth? How could you sell me for such a paltry reimbursement?” Likewise, when the day of reckoning arrives, Hashem will ask us: “For what did you exchange the life of the spirit? What was so valuable that you felt it prudent to renege the Torah for it? What did you do with the time allotted for *davening*; with the time that should have been spent learning Torah? How did you spend it? For what did you exchange the spiritual opportunities that I gave you?” Imagine, if Yosef’s holy brothers were left speechless, what will we “say” when Hashem asks us these questions?

We make the mistake of exchanging spirituality for the material and physical, thinking that it is an equal trade, ignoring the simple fact that nothing physical endures. Only the spiritual prevails over time. A father who had a good life lay on his deathbed. Shortly before he took his last breath, he handed his eldest son an envelope: “This is my will, my last testament to you, which I would like you to open prior to my funeral.” He passed away a few hours later. Word spread throughout the community. The deceased was known as a benevolent, generous man who viewed his fortune as nothing more than a Heavenly deposit to be used to help others. Material assets are not here for one to be wed to them. They are here to serve a Divine purpose.

The family convened in the side room off the main chapel to open and read the contents of the envelope, their father’s last epistle to his family. They anxiously wanted to hear his message. The son opened up the large envelope only to discover within it two smaller envelopes. One envelope was marked: “to be opened after the *shivah*,” seven-day period of bereavement. The other envelope had a note in it: “I ask that you bury me in my socks. Totty.” A strange request which actually was not consistent with *halachah*. Thus, the son decided that he must first confer with the *rabbanim*. A Jew is buried in *tachrichim*, shrouds. He does not pick out his burial clothes.

The *rabbanim* apologized, but they could not permit the family to follow the wishes of the deceased. The *halachah* was straightforward concerning the garments in which a deceased is to be buried. Socks are definitely not among the permitted items. Indeed, at the funeral, each *rav*, after singing the praises of the deceased, apologized for not fulfilling his last wish. Following the funeral and burial, the family

observed the seven bereavement days. On the last day, following the Morning Prayer service, they ended the *shivah* and then proceeded to their late father’s study for the reading of the second envelope. After what was contained in the first letter, they truly wondered what the second letter would say. In the back of their minds was their father’s division of assets. Who was receiving what held a captivating position in everyone’s mind. While they were all equal as siblings, people often have novel interpretations concerning the term equal – especially when it applies to one’s inheritance. In addition, everyone knew that the deceased was a charitable man. As such, everyone who had even an “imagined” organization had his call in for a contribution. Sad, but this is reality.

The eldest son opened the envelope and removed a note: “My dear children. By now, you have confronted the grim reality that nothing material in this world endures. When they say, ‘You cannot take it with you,’ they are correct. When a person leaves this world, he cannot even take his socks along with him! With this in mind, I hope that you will continue to focus your life on matters of the spirit, and, thus, use the material assets that I bequeath to you for the performance of *mitzvos* and good deeds. Nothing in this world leaves with you, only *mitzvos* and good deeds. This is how I encourage you to spend your newly acquired wealth.”

ייפול על צוاري בנים מני אחיו ויבך ובנים מני בכח על צוاري

Then he fell on Binyamin’s neck and wept; and Binyamin wept upon his neck. (45:14)

When Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers, the Torah writes that he and Binyamin fell on one another’s shoulders and wept profusely. *Chazal* explain why they wept: Yosef cried over the *Batei Mikdash* which would be destroyed in Binyamin’s portion of *Eretz Yisrael*. Binyamin cried over the *Mishkan Shiloh* that was once situated in Yosef’s portion, which would be destroyed. The obvious question is not why they wept, but rather, why should they not weep? Who would not cry after years of separation with one brother longing for the other, not knowing if he were dead or alive, spiritually connected or not, then discovering how everything was for the good and all was well? Of course they should cry when they met! What is the question? These were tears of joy, for finally seeing that their hopes had been realized.

Horav Eliyahu Svei, zl, cites the *Yalkut (V'Zos HaBrachah)* which quotes *Chazal*’s reasons concerning the *Shechinah*’s reposing in Binyamin’s portion of *Eretz Yisrael* in the (*Batei Mikdash*). One reason is that Binyamin was the only brother who had not been involved in the selling of Yosef. Hashem said, “I am instructing the builders of the *Bais Hamikdash* to erect it as a place for Jews who pray for Heavenly compassion to come to pray. How can it be built in a portion of *Eretz Yisrael* belonging to one of the brothers who had been involved in selling Yosef? When he pleaded with them to have mercy on him, did they listen? No! I will not have the *Bais Hamikdash*, the place where one seeks Heavenly mercy, to be erected in a place that does not represent compassion.”

The *Yalkut* implies that the primary purpose of the *Bais Hamikdash* was to serve as a center where a Jew could turn to pray to Hashem for mercy. As such, the *Bais Hamikdash* could not stand in a portion of *Eretz Yisrael* apportioned to a tribe which earlier had not responded with compassion to their brother’s pleas. Even Yosef could not have the *Bais Hamikdash* in his portion of *Eretz Yisrael*, because, he, too, played a role in the *mechirah*, sale. The only brother who had had no involvement whatsoever in Yosef’s sale was Binyamin. Therefore, he was worthy to have the *Bais Hamikdash* in his portion.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* derives from here that in order to be worthy of having the *Bais Hamikdash*, one must represent the *middah*, attribute, of *achavah*, brotherhood/brotherly love, *b'shleimus*, in complete perfection. Binyamin was worthy. How sad it was that the Second *Bais Hamikdash* was taken from us as a result of *sinaas chinam*, unwarranted hatred, between brothers.

Let us now return to the encounter between the two sons of Rachel *Imeinu* – Yosef and Binyamin. When they fell on each other, they exhibited brotherly love at its apex. Nonetheless, they wept. Why?

They saw that the *Batei Mikdash* and *Mishkan Shiloh* would ultimately be destroyed. This in and of itself was an indicator that the *achvah* which should have reigned was deficient. Had the *achvah* been faultless, had it achieved perfection, the Sanctuaries would not have been destroyed. They wept because they saw that the perfect love that currently existed would eventually deteriorate and no longer retain its perfection. Indeed, when *Klal Yisrael* was divided, the tribe of Binyamin was no longer “perfect.” This would happen in the End of Days.

Mah tov u'mah na'im sheves achim gam yachad, “How good and how pleasing for brothers to sit together in unity” (*Pele Yoetz*). Two famous brothers whose relationship with one another was flawless were *Horav Zalman* and *Horav Chaim Volozhiner*. They personified holiness and purity from their very entrance into this world. The love and esteem they manifested for one another was exceptional. Their father, *Rav Yitzchak*, was a *parnes*, leader and supporter, of the Volozhin community. He had a massive library in his house. In those days, any person who owned a complete *Shas*, all the folios of the *Talmud*, was considered wealthy and distinguished. As a result, his home was filled with Torah scholars from all areas, who came to delve in his priceless treasures. *Rav Yitzchak* and his *Rebbetzin*, who was a deeply righteous woman, opened their home and enabled these scholars to spend days and nights engrossed in Torah study, with the greatest comfort and ease of mind.

One Torah giant who spent time in *Rav Yitzchak*’s home was *Horav Aryeh Leib Heller*, zl, author of the *Ketzos Hachoshen*. One day, as *Rav Aryeh Leib* was engrossed in learning, *Rav Yitzchak*’s *Rebbetzin*’s labor began in earnest. She called for the midwife who came forthright to assist her in the birthing process. It was a difficult birth which went on for hours, accompanied by serious pain. Never once did the prospective mother utter a sound, for fear that she might disturb *Rav Aryeh Leib*’s learning. Finally, she gave birth to her first son, *Rav Zalman* (Zalmele). When *Rav Aryeh Leib* heard of her sacrifice, he blessed her to have sons who would illuminate the Torah world with their knowledge and leadership. The relationship between these two Torah giants was one of pure, unmitigated love and respect, with each one considering the other the true *gadol*. They were two different personalities with distinct outlooks on life, but, with regard to the esteem in which they held one another their feelings coincided fully.

When the *Chortkover Rebbe*, *Horav Yisrael*, zl, left this world, his *chassidim* took it for granted that his two sons, *Horav Nuchem Mordechai* and *Horav Dov*, would ascend to his position. *Rav Nuchem Mordechai*, the older brother, had spent his life in total devotion to Hashem, spiritually perfecting himself to the point that he was an undisputed *tzaddik*. The younger brother, *Rav Dov*, was greatly respected for his erudition in all areas of Torah. His brilliance shone, not only in his scholarship, but also in his wisdom and ability to give sage advice. Yet, despite their obvious suitability to become *Rebbe*, neither one felt worthy of “sitting in his holy father’s place.”

After much convincing by the closest *chassidim*, the brothers finally relented and agreed to sit at the head of the table. Nonetheless, they each adamantly refused to become *Rebbe*. The issue came to its resolution when their mother decreed that they must accept the position. They relented, and the two brothers together led their *chassidim*. Their followers were awestruck by the brotherly love and esteem they gave to one another. Neither one acted without prior consent of the other. Even when a *chassid* entered with a *kvittel*, written petition, both brothers sat together and, after each one read it, they would take turns giving their individual *brachah*. A *chassid* who sought advice had to speak to both brothers, who would then issue a joint response. Any letter sent to them had to be addressed to both, or they would not read its contents. They redefined brotherhood. *Chazal* establish the barometer for *achdus*, unity, as *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, “Like one man with one heart.” The *Chortkover Rebbe*s were not “like” one man. They were one man; each one totally abrogating himself to the other.

וְאֵת יְהוָה שָׁלֵחْ לִפְנֵי ... לְהוֹרֹת לִפְנֵי גְּשֻׁנָּה

He sent Yehudah ahead of him... to prepare ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

Rashi quotes the well-known *Chazal*: Yaakov *Avinu* sent Yehudah to prepare the way for the family. He sent Yehudah to establish a *bais Talmud*, house of Torah study, a *yeshivah*, from where Torah would be disseminated. No one questions that Yehudah was a capable leader, a spokesman for the family, but was he appropriate to be a *Rosh Yeshivah*? Levi and Yissachar were the two brothers who devoted their days and nights to spiritual pursuits. One would have expected that Yaakov would have selected either or both of them to be his emissaries to build a *makom Torah*. The answer lies in how we define a *Rosh Yeshivah*, whose function is to be *mechanech*, educate, a generation of *bnei Torah*.

The *Tiferes Shlomo* (*Horav Shlomo Ganzfried*, zl, author of *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*) explains that Yehudah demonstrated his ability to be *mekabel achrayos*, accept responsibility, when he told Yaakov, *Anochi e'erenu miyadi tevakshenu*; “I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him” (*Ibid.* 43:19). The Patriarch hesitated to send Binyamin to Egypt, for fear that he would lose him, as he “lost” Yosef. Yehudah countered that he would assume responsibility for his safe passage to Egypt and back. To build a *makom Torah*, an institution in which Torah study would thrive and be disseminated to others, it is critical that its leader never shirk responsibility.

A responsive leader is prepared to “own” the problem, present a solution and never make the same mistake twice. This way, he builds trust among his colleagues and subordinates, achieving the respect of those around him. Thus, he gets better results. While we often confuse responsibility with accountability, they represent diverse mindsets. An accountable leader is answerable, and he is willing to accept the results of a project or activity, regardless of its negative or positive outcome. A responsible person goes further. He views himself as the one who must make the project “happen,” even if it is not something in which he personally believes. If it is his job or a position he has assumed, he is relentless in seeing it through to the finish line, because he has taken responsibility for its completion.

How does *achrayos* play itself out in the area of Torah *chinuch*? A Torah leader (*rebbe*, *Rav*, *Rosh Yeshivah*, *menahel*, *Rosh Kollel*) is concerned for each and every *talmid*, student, regardless of background, acumen, pedigree or financial portfolio. He cares and worries about everything that involves his *talmid*, both spiritually and materially, because an unhappy student who has external, troubling concerns does not learn well. He shares both in his student’s joy and his pain and makes every effort to address his needs. Indeed, each and every one of the *gedolei Yisrael* who achieved the pinnacle of greatness in the area of *chinuch* manifested the highest degree of *achrayos* for his *talmidim* and their institutions. *Horav Shlomo Wolbe*, zl, cared for each and every *talmid* as a father cares for his son. His care extended far beyond the student’s spiritual growth. Every aspect of his student’s life was important to him. During the winter, if he would notice a student walking around without a sweater (buildings were not heated), he would tap the student on the shoulder and ask, “Where is your sweater? Are you cold?” Undoubtedly, his caring nature “warmed” the student. When a student knows that his *rebbe* cares about him, he feels a sense of obligation and gratitude to the *rebbe*. To absorb oneself in the sea of Torah requires a calm, relaxed and happy mind. When one is troubled, learning successfully is a challenge. When the *talmid* perceives that a *rebbe* is devoted to him, it makes all of the difference in the world.

Horav Shimon Shkop, zl, was a brilliant Torah scholar whose volumes on *Talmud* are staples in every *yeshivah*. He was also a *Rebbe* par excellence who cared for every *talmid* as if he were his own child, as well as for those who were not yet his *talmidim*. Every Jewish child has enormous potential, and one never knows how and when it will be realized. The following story is a classic which demonstrates this Torah giant’s love for a Jewish child and how it played itself out years later.

The Bolshevik Revolution took its toll on Russia and, as always, its Jewish population, which suffered whenever an upheaval occurred. The *bachurim* studying under *Rav Shimon* in his *yeshivah* in

Grodno were suddenly shocked out of their idyllic Torah study when they heard loud shots. Apparently, the war was being brought to their doorstep. As the sounds of battle came closer, their thoughts slowly drifted from the *Gemorah* to their lives. Would they survive this incursion? Would they ever see their families again? Would their spiritual status be impugned as a result of the impending troubles?

Suddenly, the door burst open, and a group of gun-wielding soldiers burst into the room. They had the *bachurim* line up against the wall. They looked at their *Rebbe*, who instructed them to follow the orders. *Rav Shimon* arose from his seat and stood with his students. The *bachurim*, many of whom were still boys, were overcome with fear. Whatever composure they maintained was due to their revered *Rebbe*, who stood there staring into the faces of the soldiers, without fear. As the head of the soldiers stepped forward, *Rav Shimon* told him, “We are prepared to follow your orders and do what you ask of us. We are simply studying our Torah.” The soldier did not reply. He just kept staring at *Rav Shimon* with penetrating eyes, as if he were trying to place *Rav Shimon*, to recall an incident in his life that included the *Rosh Yeshivah*.

“*Rebbe*, is that you?” The *Rosh Yeshivah* looked at the man, but was unable to recognize him. The man removed his military cap and ordered his men to lower the rifles.

“*Rebbe*, I know that you do not remember me, but I will never forget you. When I was a young man, I came to *Telshe Yeshivah* (where *Rav Shimon* had been *Rosh Yeshivah*) for an entrance *bechinah* test. As I was walking from one building to the next, you looked at me and the first thing that you noticed was that a button was missing from my coat. I told you that it did not really matter. You would not take no for an answer, and you insisted that I come to your house, where your wife would sew on a button. You said that it was bitter cold outside and, thus, important that my coat be properly buttoned to protect me from the elements. Your concern and compassion for a total stranger left a strong, enduring impression on me. In the end, I decided that *yeshivah* was not really for me, and soon thereafter I was drafted into the army. While my life took a different turn than many had hoped for, I never forgot the warmth you showed me that cold, frigid day.” He turned to the boys and told them how fortunate they were to have such a *Rebbe*. He then ordered his men to leave. They marched away, leaving the entire village unscathed, all because of the caring and concern of a *Rebbe*.

Horav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, zl, was the consummate *Rebbe* whose love for his *talmidim* was palpable. In a biography of his life, Rabbi Yechiel Spero relates a number of stories that demonstrate his love and concern for each of his *talmidim*. One vignette particularly moved me. One of his *talmidim*, who was now a *Rosh Yeshivah*, asked his *Rebbe* for a *brachah* for one of his *talmidim*. Apparently, he was struggling and in need of Divine assistance. As *Rav Scheinberg* listened to his student relate the issues confronting his student, *Rav Scheinberg*’s face manifested pain. It was obvious from his expression how much he cared for the struggle of a student whom he did not personally know. He asked his student for the boy’s name and the name of his mother, so that he could *daven* for him. His student, the *Rosh Yeshivah*, admitted that he did not know his student’s mother’s name.

Rav Scheinberg looked at his student with disappointment: “How could a *rebbe* not know the name of his student’s mother? Do you not *daven* for him?” *Rav Scheinberg* immediately rattled off this *talmid*’s name along with his mother’s name. “Seventeen years ago, you were undergoing an issue that was troubling you and occupying your mind. I began *davening* for you then, and I have not stopped *davening* for you for the last seventeen years.”

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“Love and memories are gifts from G-d that death cannot destroy”

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Fasting on Friday?

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Asarah B’Teves: Not Your Ordinary Fast Day

One of the fascinating characteristics of 5781 is that the Taanis Tzibbur of Asarah B’Teves (the 10th of Teves) will fall out on Friday. Or to be precise, this Friday. This remarkable status of a ‘Friday Fast’ is actually exclusive to Asarah B’Teves – as it is the only one that we do actually observe as a communal fast on a Friday.[1]

Although to many the only notable aspect of Asarah B’Teves is that it is by far the shortest fast day in the Jewish calendar for anyone in the Northern Hemisphere (my heartfelt sympathies to the South Americans, So’Africans, Aussies, and Kiwis), nonetheless, it turns out that the Fast of Asarah B’Teves is actually quite unique. Indubitably, to maintain this distinction of being the only Taanis Tzibbur that we actually do observe on Friday, there is much more to the Fast of Asarah B’Teves than meets the eye. Indeed, upon closer examination, Asarah B’Teves has several exceptional characteristics that are not found in any other fast day.

Why This Fast?

The reason given for fasting on Asarah B’Teves is that it is the day that the wicked Babylonian king Nevuchadnetzar started his siege of Yerushalayim,[2] foreshadowing the beginning of the end of the first Beis Hamikdash, which culminated with its destruction on Tisha B’Av several years later. Therefore, Chazal declared it a public fast, one of four public fast days that memorialize different aspects of the catastrophes and national tragedies associated with the destruction of both Batei HaMikdash.[3]

A Friday Fast

However, of these four public fast days, as mentioned previously, only Asarah B’Teves is actually observed on a Friday. Proof to Asarah B’Teves’ exceptionality can perhaps be gleaned from the words of Yechezkel HaNavi referring to Asarah B’Teves, that the siege of Yerushalayim leading up to the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash transpired “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh – in the middle of this day,”[4] implying that the fast must always be observed on that exact day, no matter the conflicting occurrence. This would help explain why it is fully observed on Friday, with no dispensation given.[5]

Yet, this uniqueness is fairly interesting, as there is a whole debate in the Gemara about how to conduct fasts on a Friday, when we must also take *kavod Shabbos* into account,[6] implying that it is a common occurrence. However, according to our calendar, a communal Friday fast is only applicable with Asarah B’Teves, and it actually does occur quasi-frequently. The last few times Asarah B’Teves fell out on a Friday were in 1996, 2001, 2010, and 2013; the latter of which, quite appropriately, coincided with a “Yerushalmi Blizzard.”[7]

Asarah B’Teves is next expected to occur on a Friday in 2023 (5784), 2025 (5785), 2034 (5795), and 2037 (5798). In another interesting calendrical twist, but not the Jewish calendar, due to the differences between the Jewish lunar-based year and the Gregorian solar-based year, this fast, curiously (and perhaps appropriately) falling out on December 25th,[8] is actually the second Asarah B’Teves fast to occur in 2020. The first was back on January 7th (anyone remember that B.C. – Before Covid-19?).[9]

Halachos of a Friday Fast

The halachos of a Friday fast generally parallel those of a regular fast day:[10] including *Aneinu* and the *Kriyas HaTorah* of “*Vayechal*”[11] twice (along with the *haftarah* of “*Dirshu*” at *Mincha*), albeit with no *Tachanun* or *Avinu Malkeinu* at *Mincha*, as it is *Erev Shabbos*.[12] In fact, even though there is some debate in the *Rishonim* as to the Gemara’s intent that “*Halacha – Mesaneh U’Mashlim*”, a Friday fast should be completed” whether or not one may be *mekabel Shabbos* early and thereby end the fast before nightfall,[13] nonetheless, the halacha follows the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rema* that since Asarah B’Teves is a public fast (Taanis Tzibbur) and not a Taanis Yachid, one must fast the whole day and complete it at nightfall (Tzeis HaKochavim) before making *Kiddush*.[14]

There are many Poskim who maintain that it is preferable to daven Maariv somewhat earlier than usual on this Friday night, to enable making Kiddush, and breaking the fast exactly at Tzeis HaKochavim.[15] On the other hand, there are those who maintain that if one generally waits until Zman Rabbeinu Tam (Shiur 4 Mil, commonly observed as 72 minutes after Shkiya) to break his fast, he should do so as well this Erev Shabbos Asarah B'Teves, but nonetheless should make Kiddush immediately at the Zman.[16] Some maintain that it is preferable to begin the Leil Shabbos Seudah directly with Kiddush and only recite Shalom Alechem and Eishes Chayil after being somewhat sated and relaxed.[17]

Three Day Fast?

Another fascinating and unique aspect of this fast, is that according to the special Selichos prayers recited on Asarah B'Teves,[18] we are actually fasting for two other days of tragedy as well; the 8th and 9th of Teves. In fact, and although in his Beis Yosef commentary the great Rav Yosef Karo, notes that he has never seen nor heard of anyone fasting on these days, nevertheless, both the Tur and in his own later Shulchan Aruch, Rav Karo asserts that it is proper to try to fast on all three days.[19] However, it is important to note that of the three, only Asarah B'Teves was actually mandated as a public fast day.[20]

The 8th of Teves

On the 8th of Teves, King Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.E.) forced 72 sages separately to translate the Torah into Greek (the Septuagint). Although miracles guided their work and all of the sages made the same slight but necessary amendments, nevertheless this work is described as “darkness descending on the world for three days,” as it was now possible for the uneducated to possess a superficial, and frequently flawed understanding of the Torah, as well as providing the masses with a mistaken interpretation of true morality.[21]

The 9th of Teves

Although several decisors, following the Megillas Taanis, write that the reason for fasting on the 9th of Teves is unknown,[22] nonetheless many sources, including the Kol Bo and the Selichos recited on Asarah B'Teves, as well as many later authorities, explain that this is the day on which Ezra HaSofer, as well as possibly his partner in rebuilding the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael after the 70 year Galus Bavel, Nechemiah, died. Ezra, the Gadol HaDor at the beginning of the time of the Second Beis HaMikdash, had a tremendous impact upon the nascent returning Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael. He drastically improved the spiritual state of the Jewish people and established many halachic takanos, many of which still apply today.[23] With his passing, the community started sliding from the great spiritual heights Ezra had led them. Additionally, since Ezra was the last of the prophets,[24] his passing signified the end of prophecy.

Other sources attribute fasting on this day to the passings of other specific Tzaddikim on this day, including the enigmatic Shimon HaKalpus and Rav Yosef HaNaggid, or to the birth of ‘Oso HaIsh’, the founder of Christianity, in whose name myriads of Jews over the millennia were R”l murdered.[25] [26] The Sefer HaToda’ah posits that it’s possible that Chazal’s expression of “darkness descending on the world for three days” alludes to the triple woes of these three days: the 8th, 9th, and 10th of Teves.[27]

A Shabbos Fast?!

The third and possibly most important attribute of Asarah B'Teves is that according to the Abudraham, if Asarah B'Teves would potentially fall out on Shabbos, we would all actually be required to fast on Shabbos![28] (Notwithstanding that with our calendar this is an impossibility.[29]) He cites proof to this from the words of Yechezkel referring to Asarah B'Teves that the siege transpired “B’Etzem HaYom HaZeh,” implying that the fast must always be observed on that exact day, no matter the conflicting occurrence – not only Friday, but even on Shabbos.

Yet, the Abudraham’s statement is astounding, as the only fast that halachically takes precedence over Shabbos is Yom Kippur, the only Biblically mandated fast. How can one of the Rabbinic minor fasts push off the Biblical Shabbos? Additionally, Asarah B'Teves commemorates

merely the start of the siege, and not any actual destruction. How can it be considered a more important fast than Tisha B’Av, which commemorates the actual destruction and loss of both of our Batei HaMikdash, which get pushed off when it falls on Shabbos?[30] In fact, the Beis Yosef questions this declaration of the Abudraham, stating that he “does not know how the Abudraham could know” such a ruling. As an aside, this does not seem to be the actual halacha, as other Rishonim, including Rashi and the Rambam, as well as the Tur and Shulchan Aruch and later poskim explicitly rule, that if Asarah B'Teves falls out on Shabbos it gets pushed off.[31] [32]

Commencement Is Catastrophic

Several authorities, including Rav Yonason Eibeschutz and the Bnei Yissaschar,[33] understand the Abudraham’s enigmatic statement as similar to the famous Gemara in Taanis (29a) regarding Tisha B’Av. It seems that historically the Beis HaMikdash only started to burn toward the end of the 9th of Av (Tisha B’Av) and actually burned down on the 10th. Yet, Chazal established the fast on the 9th, since “Aschalta D’Paranush Adifa,” meaning that the beginning of a tragedy is considered the worst part. Likewise, they maintain that since the siege on Asarah B'Teves was the harbinger to and commencement of the long chain of tragedies that ended with the Beis HaMikdash in ruins and the Jewish people in exile, its true status belies the common perception of it as a minor fast, and potentially has the ability to push off Shabbos.

Indeed, the Midrash Tanchuma[34] teaches that it was already fitting for the Bais HaMikdash to actually be destroyed on Asarah B'Teves, but Hashem, in His incredible mercy, pushed off the destruction to the summertime, so that Klal Yisrael would not have to be exiled in the cold. Hence, Asarah B'Teves’s role as the ‘beginning of the end’ underlies the severity of this fast day.

The famed Chasam Sofer[35] takes this a step further. He wrote that the reason Chazal established a fast for the siege on Asarah B'Teves, as opposed to every other time Yerushalayim was under siege over the millennia, is that on that day in the Heavenly Courtroom it was decided that the Bais HaMikdash was to be destroyed a few years hence. There is a well known Talmudic dictum that any generation in which the Beis HaMikdash has not been rebuilt is as if it has been destroyed again.[36] Therefore, he explains, every Asarah B'Teves the Heavenly Court convenes and decrees a new Churban. He adds though that, conversely, a proper fast on Asarah B'Teves has the potential to avert future Churbanos.

Accordingly, we are not fasting exclusively due to past calamities, but rather, similar to a Taanis Chalom, a fast for a dream, we are fasting to help prevent a tragedy from occurring. The Chasam Sofer even refers to such a fast as an oneg, a delight, as our fasting will help stave off potential future catastrophes. That is why the fast of Asarah B'Teves, even though it is considered a minor fast, nonetheless has the potential to possibly override Shabbos. These explanations would also certainly elucidate why we would fast on a Friday for Asarah B'Teves.

The Rambam famously exhorts us to remember the real meaning underlying a fast day. It’s not just a day when we miss our morning coffee! The purpose of fasting is to focus on the spiritual side of the day and use it as a catalyst for inspiration towards Teshuva.[37] In this merit may the words of the Navi Zechariah, “The Fast of the Fourth (month, 17th of Tamuz), the Fast of the Fifth (month, Tisha B’Av), the Fast of the Seventh (month, Tzom Gedalyah), and the Fast of the Tenth (month, Asarah B'Teves) shall be (changed over) for celebration and joy for the household of Yehuda”[38] be fulfilled speedily and in our days.

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

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Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

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[1] See Meiri (*Megillah* 2a), Abudraham (*Hilchos Taanis*), Magen Avraham (O.C. 550:4), *Ba'er Heitiv* (ad loc. 4), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. end 2), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 10). Although the *Erev Pesach Taanis Bechorim* can also technically fall out on a Friday, nevertheless, it is not a true communal fast, as it is not incumbent upon all of Klal Yisrael, rather exclusive to firstborns, of whom the vast majority exempt themselves with a *siyum* - see Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 470:5) and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 10). Moreover, the common *minhag* is that when *Erev Pesach* occurs on *Erev Shabbos*, like it does this year, 5781 - the *Taanis Bechorim* is actually observed on Thursday. See *Terumas Hadeshen* (126), *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rema* (O.C. 470:2), *Ben Ish Chai Ben Ish Chai* (Year 1 *Parshas Tzav*, *Halachos Im Chal Erev Pesach B'Shabbos Kodesh* 1), and *Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin's authoritative *Ezras Torah Luach* (reprinted in *Shu't Gevuros Eliyahu* O.C. vol. 1:126, 7). However, as noted by the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 249:3; citing *Gemara Eruvin* 40b and *Yerushalmi Taanis* Ch. 2, *Halacha* 12), *Anshei Maaseh* would have the custom of fasting every *Erev Shabbos*.*

[2] *Melachim* II (Ch. 25:1), *Yirmiyahu* (Ch. 52:4), *Yechezkel* (Ch. 24:1-2). Interestingly, it seems that *Yechezkel HaNavi's* wife also died on *Asarah B'Teves*, as the same prophecy on that day continues with his wife's passing (Ch. 24:15-19). See *Gemara Moed Kattan* (28a) and *Ya'aros Dvash* (vol. 2, *Drush* 12 s.v. *ulefi zeh*).

[3] See *Zecharia* (Ch. 8:19), *Gemara Rosh Hashana* (18b), *Rambam* (*Hilchos Taaniyos* Ch. 5 1-5) and *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 549 and 550).

[4] *Yechezkel* (Ch. 24:2).

[5] See *Rambam* (*Hilchos Taaniyos* Ch. 5:5), *Abudraham* (*ibid.*), *Beis Yosef* (O.C. 550 s.v. *u'mashekasav v'im*), *Rema* (ad loc. 3), *Magen Avraham* (ad loc. 6), and *Mishnah Berurah* (ad loc. 4). Although technically speaking, if other fasts (with the possible exception of *Taanis Esther*) would fall out on Friday, an impossibility in our calendar, we would also have to fast.

[6] *Gemara Eiravin* (41a).

[7] Yes, this author is familiar with the 'Coincidences' involved with that memorable *Yerushalayim* snowstorm. According to the *Targum* (*Rav Yosef*) to *Divrei Hayamim*, 'Yom Hasheleg,' 'The Day of Snow' that *Benayahu ben Yehoyada* 'smote the lion in the pit' (*Shmuel II*, Ch. 23:20 and *Divrei Hayamim* I, Ch. 11:22; see also *Gemara Brachos* 18a), is none other than *Asarah B'Teves*! Additionally, since it was a fast, the *haftarah* read by *Mincha* included the apropos verse (*Yeshaya* Ch. 55:10) referring to 'Ka'asher Yet'reid *Hagesh* *Vehaseleg* min *Hashamayim*, when the rain and snow fall from the heavens.' Furthermore, that day's *Daf Yomi* was *Yoma* 35, which includes the famous account of *Hillel* almost freezing to death on the roof of *Shmaya* and *Avtalyon's* *Beis Midrash*, while trying to listen to their teaching 'Divrei Elokim Chaim', when he could not afford the admission fee. That day was described by the *Gemara* as an *Erev Shabbos* in *Teves*, that a tremendous amount of snow (three amos) fell upon him from the heavens. Moreover, this incident ostensibly occurred in *Yerushalayim*, as it is well known that *Shmaya* and *Avtalyon*, the *Gedolei HaDor*, lived in *Yerushalayim*. (See *Mishnayos Ediyus* (Ch. 1:3 and Ch. 5:6), *Gemara Brachos* (19a), *Shabbos* (15a), and *Yoma* (71b).) Thanks are due to *Rabbi Dovid Alexander* for his paper on these 'Coincidences.'

[8] Well, perhaps not so curious, but possibly rather apropos. You see, according to the *Selicha* for *Asarah B'Teves* that starts with the word *Ezkerah*, generally attributed to *Rav Yosef Tov-Alem* (*Bonfils*), a unique aspect of *Asarah B'Teves* is that we are actually fasting for two other days of tragedy as well; the 8th and 9th of *Teves*. According to the *Megillas Taanis*, regarding the 9th of *Teves*, "lo noda bo eizo hi hatzara she'eera bo," the reason for the fast is unclear. One theory posited over the centuries is that the real reason for fasting is that the 9th of *Teves* is the true birthday of 'Oso Halsh', in whose name myriads of Jews over the millennia were *R'li* murdered. The origin of this claim seems to be the 12th century *Sefer Halbur* by *Rav Avraham bar Chiya* (pg. 109). In fact, the *Netei Gavriel* (*Hilchos Chanuka*, *Inyanei Nittel*, pg. 416) cites that some say that *Nittel*, the name used for the Christian December holiday, actually stands for *Nolad Y etshu T es L* *Teves*. This is discussed further in the article.

[9] Interestingly, in 2022 there is no *Asarah B'Teves*. It is set to next occur on December 14, 2021 and the following one on January 3, 2023. This is because the corresponding Jewish year, 5782, is a leap year with an added *Chodesh Adar*; hence there are 384 days between the two fasts of *Asarah B'Teves* - 19 days longer than the solar/Gregorian calendar year. Thanks are due to *R' Abraham Schijveschuuder* for pointing out this calendar quirk.

[10] However, even those who advise not to bathe on a regular fast day, nevertheless allow one to do so on a Friday fast *L'Kavod Shabbos*, with hot water as usual. See *Bach* (O.C. 550:3; although cited by both the *Ba'er Heitiv* and *Mishnah Berurah* as the source for this rule, nevertheless, this author has been unable to locate where exactly the *Bach* states an explicit *Erev Shabbos* exception for bathing), *Elyah Rabba* (ad loc. 2), *Ba'er Heitiv* (ad loc. 3), *Shu't Ksav Sofer* (O.C. 100), *Shulchan HaTahor* (249:4), *Mishnah Berurah* (ad loc. end 6), and *Shu't Siach Yitzchak* (247).

[11] *Parshas Kis Siya* (*Shemos* Ch. 22:11). *Haftarah* is *Yeshaya* (Ch. 55:6).

[12] See *Abudraham* (*ibid.*), *Maharil* (*Hilchos Taaniyos* 17), *Rema* (O.C. 550:3 and 566:1), *Magen Avraham* (O.C. 550:6), *Yad Efraim* (ad loc. 1), and *Mishnah Berurah* (550:11 and 566:5). The halacha is not like the *Shibolei Haleket* (263, *Hagahos*; as cited by the *Agur*, 880, and later the *Beis Yosef*, *ibid.*) who maintains that we also do not *lein* the special *Fast Day Kriyas HaTorah* at *Mincha Erev Shabbos*.

[13] Although the *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 41a; also in *Midrash Tanchuma Bereishis* 2) concludes 'Halacha - Mesaneh U'Mashlim' even so, there are many *Rishonim* [most notably *Tosafos* (ad loc. 41b s.v. *v'hilchasa*), the *Rashba*, and *Ritva* (ad loc. 2)] who understand this dictum to mean that one may conclude his *Erev Shabbos* fast at *Tzais HaKochavim*, even though it means he will enter *Shabbos* famished (a situation that is normally disfavored), and not that one must conclude his fast on *Friday night* at *Tzais HaKochavim*. An additional *shittah* is that of the *Ravaad* (*Sefer HaShkhol*, vol. 2, pg. 18; cited by the *Beis Yosef*, O.C. 550:3), who maintains that 'mashlim' in this instance is referring to completing the fast by *Shkiya*, as otherwise it will infringe upon *Tosefes Shabbos*. A further complication is that this also may depend on whether one is fasting for personal reasons (*Taanis Yachid*) or an obligatory public fast (*Taanis Tzibbur*). The *Rema* (O.C. 249:4) concludes that for a *Taanis Yachid* one may rely upon the lenient opinions and end his fast after he accepted *Shabbos*, prior to *Tzais HaKochavim* (especially if he made such a stipulation before commencing his fast), yet for a *Taanis Tzibbur* he rules that we follow the *Rishonim* who mandate strict interpretation of the *Gemara*, and we must fast until actual nightfall on Friday night. It is debatable whether the *Shulchan Aruch* is actually fully agreeing with this approach or not. See explanation of the *Mishnah Berurah* (ad loc. 21 and *Biur Halacha* s.v. *v'im*) at length. This has since become normative halacha. See next footnote.

[14] See *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rema* (O.C. 249:4), based on the *Rosh* (*Taanis* Ch. 2:4) and *Maharil* (*Shu't* 33); *Magen Avraham* (ad loc. 8), *Bach* (ad loc. end 6), *Ba'er Heitiv* (ad loc. 7), *Elyah Rabba* (ad loc. 10), *Korban Nesanel* (*Taanis*, end Ch. 2:60), *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* (ad loc. 12), *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (121:6), *Ben Ish Chai* (Year 2, *Parashas Lech Lecha* 23), *Aruch Hashulchan* (ad loc. 10), *Mishnah Berurah* (ad loc. 21 and *Biur Halacha* s.v. *v'im*), *Kaf Hachaim* (ad loc. 29 and 31), *Shu't Yabea Omer* (vol. 6, O.C. 31), *Shu't Yechaveh Daas* (vol. 1:80), *Netei Gavriel* (*Hilchos Chanuka*, *Shu't* 14), *Yalkut Yosef* (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 249:7 and 559:25), and *Rav Mordechay Eliyahu's* *Darchei Halacha* glosses to the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (121:5). The *Netei Gavriel* adds that *B'shaas Hadchach* and *l'torech gadol* one may be *mekabel Shabbos* early and rely on the lenient opinions, as long it is after nightfall according to several opinions (meaning, an earlier *Zman* of *Tzais HaKochavim* than the faster would usually observe).

[15] See *Shulchan HaTahor* (249:13) who writes that usually it is assur to complete a Friday fast until *Tzais HaKochavim*, even an obligatory fast, as it is an affront to *Kedushas Shabbos*; rather, he maintains that one should be *mekabel Shabbos* early and have his *seudah* before nightfall. Yet, in his explanations (*Zer Zahav* ad loc. 4) he maintains that regarding *Asarah B'Teves* on Friday, since we are beholden to follow the ruling of the *Rema*, one should still be *mekabel Shabbos* early, and daven *Maariv* earlier than usual, to enable us to end the fast with *Kiddush* at the exact *zman* of *Tzais HaKochavim*. This is also cited by the *Netei Gavriel* (*Hilchos Chanuka*, Ch. 63:6). The *Steipler Gaon* (cited in *Orchos Rabbeinu*, new version, vol. 1, pg. 203:7 and vol. 2, pg. 200:8) was noheig this way, that in his shul on *Asarah B'Teves* on a Friday, they davened *Maariv* earlier than usual and announced that everyone should repeat *Kriyas Shema*. It is also mentioned (*Orchos Rabbeinu* *ibid.* and vol. 3, pg. 160:5) that this was the *Chazon Ish's* *shittah* as well, regarding any *taanis*, that *Maariv* should be davened somewhat earlier than usual, with *Kriyas Shma* repeated later on (the *Chazon Ish* held to start from 30 minutes after *Shkiya*, instead of his usual *shittah* of

40 minutes). This idea is also found in the *Matteh Efraim* (602:29), albeit regarding *Tzom Gedalia*, not to tarry extraneously regarding *Maariv* on a *Motzai Taanis*. He explains that there is no *inyan* of *tosefes* (adding extra time to) on a fast day aside from the Biblically mandated *Yom Kippur*, and therefore it is worthwhile to synchronize the ending of *Maariv* with the fast ending, and not wait for the full *Tzeis HaKochavim* to start *Maariv* as is usually preferred. *Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner* (*Shu't Shevet Halevi* vol. 6:72 and vol. 10:81 and *Halichos Shevet Halevi* Ch. 21:4, pg. 172) ruled this way as well, that it is proper to daven *Maariv* earlier on a standard fast day, shortly after *Bein Hashmashos* of the *Gaonim*'s *shittah*, in *Eretz Yisrael* approximately 20 minutes after *Shkiya*. It is known that *Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv* (*Hanhagos Rabbeinu* pg. 308:133, and in his *Talmid*, *Rav Nochum Eisenstein's* *Dvar Halacha*, #160, *Parshas Vayigash* 5781) as well, would daven *Maariv* on *Motzai Taanis*, even *Motzai Tisha B'Av*, twenty minutes after *Shkiya* (instead of his usual thirty minutes). *Rav Shmuel Salant*, long time *Rav of Yerushalayim* in the late 1800s, ruled similarly (*Toras Rabbeinu Shmuel Salant* z"l vol. 1, pg. 102:5) that on a *Motzai Taanis*, *Maariv* should be recited earlier than usual, in *Yerushalayim* from 10 minutes after *Shkiya*, and making sure *Kriyas Shema* is repeated afterwards. See also *Halichos Even Yisrael* (*Moadim* vol. 1, pg. 370:39 and vol. 2, pg. 145:1) that even on *Motzai Yom Kippur* and *Motzai Tisha B'Av* (which have a *din* of *tosefes*), *Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer* held to daven *Maariv* 20 minutes after *Shkiya*.

[16] See the *Sanzer Dayan*, *Rav Yitzchak Herskovitz's* *Shu't Divrei Ohr* (vol. 2:47), as well as the *Klausenberger Rebbe's* *Shu't Divrei Yatziv* (O.C. vol. 2:230); maintaining that those who are *makpid* on *Zman Rabbeinu Tam* for *Tzeis HaKochavim* should keep the same for fasting, and certainly not break fasts before 60 minutes after *Shkiya*.

[17] See *Rav Yitzchak Yaakov Fuchs'* (author of *Halichos Bas Yisrael* and other *sefarim*) recent *Taanis Asarah B'Teves* 5781 *B'Erev Shabbos Kodesh*, based on the *Mishnah Berurah's* comments (271:1 and *Shaar Hatziyun* 639:67).

[18] See the *Selicha* for *Asarah B'Teves* that starts with the word *Ezkerah*, generally attributed to *Rav Yosef Tov-Alem* (*Bonfils*). As pointed out by *Rabbi Moshe Boruch Kaufman*, at the end of said *Selicha*, it seems to include a fourth tragedy worth fasting for - the *tzara* of *Bavel* first hearing the news of the *Churban Beis Hamikdash* on the 5th of *Teves*. This 'Yom Hashma' is mentioned in *Gemara Rosh Hashana* (18b) and *Yerushalmi Taanis* (Ch. 4, *Halacha* 5). See *Rabbi Yitzchok Weinberg's* recent excellent *Lechem Yomayam* (*on Chodosh Kislev and Teves, Chodesh Teves*) at length as to why this *shittah* of *Rabbi Shimon*'s, to fast on the 5th of *Teves*, is not the practical *halacha*.

[19] *Tur*, *Beis Yosef*, and *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 580).

[20] *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 549 and 550).

[21] As told at length in *Gemillas Taanis* 9a. For a slightly different version see *Maseches Sofrim* (Ch. 1:7-8). This quote is found in *Megillas Taanis* (Ch. 13), and cited by the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 580). See *Sefer HaToda'ah* (vol. 1, Ch. 8, *Chodesh Teves*, par. *Yom Kasheh*) at length.

[22] See *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 580; quoting the *BeHa* "G", *Hilchos Tisha B'Av V'Taanis* 18), "lo noda bo eizo hi hatzara she'eera bo." This quote is essentially originally found in *Megillas Taanis* (*ibid.*). However, many poskim, including the *Ba'er HaGolah* (ad loc. 4), *Magen Avraham* (ad loc. 6), *Taz* (ad loc. 1; who concludes "tzarich iyun rav" on the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* for not knowing that *Ezra HaSofer* died on that day), *Elyah Rabba* (ad loc. 5), *Rav Yaakov Emden* (*Siddur Amudei Shamayim* vol. 2 pg. 149b), *Pri Megadim* (ad loc. 5), *Mishbetzos Zahav* 1), *Ba'er Heitiv* (ad loc. 6), *Mishnah Berurah* (ad loc. 13), and *Kaf Hachaim* (ad loc. 20), all cite the *Kol Bo* (63), *BeHa* "G" (*ibid.*), or the *Selichos* of *Asarah B'Teves* (*ibid.*) that the *tzara* on that day is that *Ezra HaSofer* died. The *Aruch Hashulchan* (ad loc. 3) diplomatically states that originally they did not know which tragedy occurred on that day to mandate fasting, and afterwards it was revealed that it was due to *Ezra HaSofer's* passing on that day. [Interestingly, the *Kaf Hachaim* (*ibid.*) cites the *Shulchan Gavoah* (ad loc. 3) and others who maintain that *Ezra* really passed away on *Asarah B'Teves*. But, since it was already a scheduled fast day due to *Nevuchadnezzar's* siege, its observance of fasting due to *Ezra's* passing was pushed to the ninth of *Teves*.] *Rav Yonason Eibeschutz* (*Ya'aros Dvash* vol. 2:192-193) gives an interesting variation on this theme. He maintains that since *Ezra's* role in *Klal Yisrael* in his time was akin to *Moshe Rabbeinu's*, *Chazal* wanted to withhold publication of the day of his passing, similar to the *Torah* stating that "no one knows of *Moshe's* burial place" (*Devarim*, V'Zos HaBracha Ch. 34:6). However, the *Chida* (*Birkei Yosef*, *Orach Chaim* 580) points out that the statement in *Megillas Taanis* (and later cited by the *BeHa* "G") that "lo kasvu Rabboseinu al mah hu" seem to be referring to a separate occurrence than its next listing, that *Ezra HaSofer* died on that day, and that they are not exclusively one and the same. The *Chasam Sofer* (*Toras Moshe*, *Parshas Vayigash*, *Drush* for 8 *Teves* s.v. *kasav BeHa* "G") answers that *Ezra* was similar to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, and drastically improved the spiritual state of the Jewish people, and yet, even after he died, *Klal Yisrael* felt satisfied and blessed simply to have been led by him when he was alive, and did not see any reason to fast on the day he died. Yet, when the *Torah* was later translated into Greek, enabling the "Tzaraas of the Minim", only then did they realize the import of *Ezra's* passing and established it as a fast day (similar to *Moshe Rabbeinu's* passing on the 7th of *Adar* also being on the list of proper days to fast in *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 580: end 2). Yet, previously, they did not know why to fast on the 9th of *Teves*.

[23] As found throughout *Shas* - see for example *Bava Kama* (82a) and *Kesuvos* (3a).

[24] This follows the consensus that the last of the *Neviim*, *Malachi*, was none other than *Ezra HaSofer*. See *Gemara Megillah* (15a), *Targum Yonason* on *Malachi* (Ch. 1:1), and *Tosafos* (Yevamos 86b end s.v. *mpnei*). It is also implied in *Gemara Zevachim* (62a) and *Sanhedrin* (21b), regarding who established the *Torah's* script as 'Ashuris.' Thanks are due to *Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein* for pointing out several of these sources. [25] *Rav Baruch Teumim-Frankel* (author of the *Imrei Baruch*, in his *glosses* to *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 580) cites several other sources opining different *tzaddikim's* passings on the 9th of *Teves* as the reason for fasting, including the enigmatic *Shimon HaKalphus*, "who saved *Klal Yisrael* during the days of the *Pritzim*," and to whom 'Nishmas' and 'Etein Tehilla,' a *Piyut* that is part of *Yom Kippur* liturgy, is attributed (see the *Haggadah Marbeh Leksaper* of *Rav Yedidya Weil*, son of the *Korban Nesanel*, pg. 114; and *Seder Avodas Yisrael*, pg. 206, in the commentary to 'Nishmas'). This reason is also cited by *Rav Aharon Wurmish*, renommedalmid of the *Shaagas Aryeh*, in his *Me'orei Ohr* (vol. 4, pg. 110b, on *Taanis*; this volume is also called *Od L'Moed*), citing a *Sefer Zichronos* that he once saw. Known as *Patrus*, it has been surmised that *Shimon HaKalphus* was a Jewish people, placed by *Chazal* to infiltrate the early Christians, to ensure that Christianity became a separate religion (see *Otzar Midrashim* [*Eisenstein*] vol. 2, pg. 557-558 and the *Oz VeHadar* edition of *Gemara Avodah Zarah* 10a, *Haghos U'Tzitzunim* 30; citing an original manuscript of *Rashi's* that had been censored for hundreds of years). Some opine that he was 'Ben Patura' mentioned in *Gemara Bava Metzia* (62b). Although we do find *Shimon HaKalphus* (or *Kippa*) mentioned derisively as 'Shimon Petter Chamor' by several *Rishonim*, including the *Machzor Vitry* (Pesach 66), and *Rav Yehuda HaChassid* (*Sefer Chassidim* 193), on the other hand and quite interestingly, while referencing the laws of the *Yomim Noraim* (325) the *Machzor Vitry* himself refers to *Shimon Kippa* quite approvingly, if not downright reverently. In the footnotes of the Berlin edition of the *Machzor Vitry* (from 1893; pg. 362, footnote 5) the editor, *Rav Shimon Halevi Ish Horowitz*, posits that this is not actually an outright contradiction in the *Machzor Vitry*, but rather a *machlokes* between his mentors, *Rashi* and *Rabbeinu Tam*. He postulates that the first mention in the *Machzor Vitry*, that 'Shimon Petter Chamor' was certainly not the composer of 'Nishmas,' and all who claim such will have to bring a *Korban Chatas Shmeiniyah* when the *Beis HaMikdash* will be rebuilt, was from a handwritten manuscript of *Rashi's*. Conversely, the second mention, that 'Shimon Kippa was the one who set the order of the *Yom Kippur* tefillos and composed 'Etein Tehilla,' was the opinion of *Rabbeinu Tam* (whom the *Machzor Vitry* quoted as the source of the ruling of that paragraph about allowing *Piyutim* and personal additions during *Shemoneh Esrei*), who held that *Shimon Kippa's* *kavannah* in all that he did was exclusively *Lesheim Shamayim*. The *Sefer Chassidim* (*ibid.*) takes an alternate approach, explaining that even though *Shimon Kippa* was indeed a *tzaddik*, nevertheless since he was technically a *meshumad*, and people followed in his ways, he was called a derogatory nickname, 'Shimon Petter Chamor,' as is the proper custom to do with *meshumadim*, as fulfillment of the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (Ch. 116:8) "Kimohem Yihyu Oseihem." On the other hand, it must be noted that this description was not accepted by all. In fact, even the controversial Italian scholar *R' Shmuel Dovid Luzzato* (*Shada* 1), in his *Mevo L'Machzor K'Minhag Bnei Roma* (published 1856; pg. 7) wrote that he pondered and wondered about *Rabbeinu Tam's* words for over twenty years, until he realized that *Rabbeinu Tam* must have believed in the 'shamuos shav,' 'false rumors,' about the founding of Christianity, that were spread, albeit with good

intention, during the years of persecution and forced conversions, "k'kavana tova l'chazek emunas hamon."

[26]The second tzaddik's passing on that day that Rav Teumim-Frankel cites was Rav Yosef HaLevi, son of Rav Shmuel HaNaggid, who was assassinated on the 9th of Teves in 1066, thus ending the Golden Age for Jewry in Spain. He quotes the Raavad's Sefer HaKabbalah that "when Rabboseinu HaKadmonim wrote Megillas Taanis and established a fast on the 9th of Teves, they themselves didn't know the reason. Later on, after Rav Yosef HaNaggid was assassinated we knew that they foresaw this tragedy with Ruach HaKodesh." An additional reason for fasting on this day is cited by the Rema in his commentary to Megillas Esther (Mechir Yavin, Ch. 2:16) that we fast on the 9th of Teves as Esther was forcibly taken to Achashveirosh's palace in the month of Teves (possibly on this day). Interestingly, some posit, as heard in the name of Rav Moshe Shapiro; also found in the Davar B'Ito calendar (9 Teves) and in Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Chanuka, Inyanai Nittel, pg. 416; quoting the Tosafos Chadashim on Megillas Taanis; also referred to as the 'Mefareish' of the Vilna Edition of Megillas Taanis), that the real reason for fasting is that the 9th of Teves is the true birthday of 'Osa Halsh', in whose name myriads of Jews over the millennia were R'I murdered. The origin of this claim seems to be the 12th century Sefer Halbur by Rav Avraham bar Chiya (pg. 109). In fact, the Netei Gavriel (*ibid.*) cites that some say that Nittel, the name used for the Christian December holiday, actually stands for Nolad Y eishu T es L'Teves. The author wishes to thank R' Yitzchak Goodman, as well as Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Brodt, for pointing out several of these invaluable sources.

[27]Sefer HaToda'ah (vol. 1, Ch. 8, Chodesh Teves, end par. Yom Kasheh).

[28]Abudraham (Hilchos Taanis), cited with skepticism by the Beis Yosef (O.C. 550).

[29]According to our calendar Asarah B'Teves cannot fall out on Shabbos. The Abudraham (*ibid.*) himself mentions this, as does the Magen Avraham (O.C. 550:4 and 5), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 3), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 2), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 8). Everyone can easily make this calculation themselves. See Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 128:2) regarding which days various Roshei Chodesh can fall out on. For the month of Teves, Rosh Chodesh cannot fall out on a Thursday. That means Asarah B'Teves, ten days later, cannot fall out on Shabbos.

[30]See Mishnah and Gemara (Megillah 5a), Rashi (ad loc. s.v. aval), Rambam (Hilchos Taaniyos Ch. 5:5), Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 550:3 and 552:10). This was discussed in a previous footnote. Rav Asher Weiss (in his Kuntress Shavu'i, Parshas Vayechi 5778, Year 17, vol. 12, [631]: 'Tzom Asarah B'Teves V'Shaar Tzomos Shechulu B'Shabbos, 3') offers a novel approach as a solution to this conundrum. He opines that perhaps the Abudraham's intent was not that the fast of Asarah B'Teves would push off Shabbos, but rather that as only regarding this fast it is stated "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh", perhaps he meant that it wouldn't be merely pushed off until after Shabbos, but rather it would not be observed that year at all. Meaning, it is possible that the Abudraham was simply asserting that there would be no reason to fast for Asarah B'Teves if it would not be observed on that actual day. So, if Shabbos would push it off, it would get pushed off in its entirety until the next year. However, Rav Weiss concludes that this approach is indeed a chiddush and concedes that none of the Acharonim seem to learn this way, bein lehakel bein lehachmir.

[31]BeisYosef (O.C. end 550), Rashi (Megillah 5a s.v. aval) and the Rambam (Hilchos Taaniyos Ch. 5:5) both explicitly rule that if Asarah B'Teves falls out on Shabbos then it gets pushed off. Other Rishonim who write this way include the Meiri (Megillah ad loc. and Taanis 30b), Kol Bo (end Hilchos Tisha B'Av), and Maharil (Hilchos Shiva Assar B'Tanuza), that if any of the Arba HaTzomos fall out on Shabbos they get pushed off until after Shabbos. Similarly, the Ibn Ezra, in his famous Shabbos Zemer 'Ki Eshmera Shabbos' explicitly states that Yom Kippur is the only fast that can override Shabbos (although admittedly, he may have just been referring to the metzu'is – that in our set calendar, it is the only one that can actually fall out on Shabbos – and hence trump its observance). This is how the Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 550:3), as well as later poskim rule as well. See for example, Shu"t Shoel U'Meishiv (Mahadura Kama vol. 3:179), Shu"t Maharam Brisk (vol. 3:99), and Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 549: end 2).

[32]However, there are many who defend the Abudraham's statement based on the verse "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh." See for example Tikkum Yissachar (pg. 28a, Teves s.v. v'ode; interestingly citing this ruling as precedent from 'Teshuvos HaGonim,' and not mentioning the Abudraham by name; although this might be a form of honorific) who actually rules that way. In fact, there is even a minority opinion (see Toras Chaim on Shulchan Aruch O.C. 550:4) who is choshesh for the Abudraham's shittah lemaaseh and extends it, holding that one should not treat Asarah B'Teves as a minor fast, but rather observe it with similar restrictions as the major fasts: meaning keeping the five inyim, akin to Yom Kippur. The Minchas Chinuch (Parshas Emor, Mitzva 301:7), explaining why nowadays we do not observe fast days for two days (as opposed to other Yomim Tovim, due to the safek yom), writes that the Nevim established fast days in specific months, but did not set the actual day it must be observed, hence the ambiguity in the Gemara on which days to observe them. Since they were never established as being mandated on one specific day, they are unaffected by the safek yom, and nowadays only one day must be observed. [A similar assessment regarding the establishment of fast days was actually expressed by several Rishonim, including the Ritva (Rosh

Hashana 18b s.v. v'ha) and Tashbatz (Shu"t vol. 2:271).] The Minchas Chinuch adds that since both of these seemingly conflictory observances - the fasts for the destructions of the Batei Hamikdash, as well as the Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbos - are essentially Divrei Kabbalah (meaning, instituted in the times of the Nevim), why shouldn't such a fast day be able to trump Oneg Shabbos? Especially one that was established as "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh." Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk (Chiddushei HaGra"ch V'HaGri"z al Shas, 'Stencils,' pg. 27:44) takes this idea a step further to explain the Abudraham's statement (although quite curiously, he inexplicably credits the BeHa"G with this statement, who in fact makes no mention of this; and does not mention the Abudraham; quite possibly a typo). He asserts that Asarah B'Teves is the exception to this rule of the Nevim's ambiguity of exact day, since it is stated about it that it must be observed "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh," and therefore would be fasted upon even if it fell on Shabbos. Similarly, the Ohr Somayach (Hilchos Taaniyos Ch. 5:6 s.v. v'hinei, in the brackets) defends the Abudraham's statement, based on a divuk in the Gemara's (*Erugin ibid.*) choice of question about whether we complete a Taanis Yachid on Friday, with no mention of a Taanis Tzibur. He posits that the reason the Gemara did not cite such a case, is that Asarah B'Teves is the only Taanis Tzibur that can fall out on Friday, and if it can override Shabbos due to "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh," then certainly one would be required to fast the whole Friday for it! Hence, there was no reason for the Gemara to ask it. In other words, the Gemara's question only starts if the fast would be pushed off if it fell on Shabbos, as then we are uncertain what the divuk would be regarding completing it if it fell out on Friday. As the Gemara only asked germane to a Taanis Yachid, this implies that regarding a Taanis Tzibur the fast would triumph. Moreover, the Ohr Somayach posits that perhaps the fact that we complete the fast, fasting into Shabbos when Asarah B'Teves occurs on Erev Shabbos, would help prove that if it fell out on Shabbos, we would do the same - as it is possible that it is only problematic to observe a full 24-hour fast on Shabbos. But, as Asarah B'Teves is only a daytime fast, perhaps it is not conflictory with proper Shabbos observance. On the other hand, the Torah Temimah, in his Tosefes Bracha (Parshas Emor, pg. 211-212; thanks are due to Rabbi Hershel Russ for pointing out this invaluable source) argues that "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh" should not prove a Shabbos fast, as when the pasuk says the same regarding Yom Kippur (Parshas Emor, Vayikra Ch. 23:29), it is a command that we must afflict ourselves on that exact day. That is why we fast on Yom Kippur that falls out on Shabbos. Yet, when referring to Asarah B'Teves, Yechezkel HaNavi was simply detailing when the siege actually started: that it was on that day, in the middle of the day; similar to the wording used to describe the animals entering Noach's Teiva and Avrohom Avinu's Bris Milah; with no connection to the fast that was later declared to commemorate this tragic incident. Accordingly, he avers that we would not fast if Asarah B'Teves would fall out on Shabbos. For more on this fascinating topic, as well as varying approaches, see Rav Avrohom Gurwitz's Ohr Avrohom (Ch. 5, page 164 and on) and Rav Asher Weiss's Minchas Asher (Moadim vol. 2, Tzomos 43).

[33]Ya'aros Dvash (Vol. 1, Drush 2 for 9 Teves 32-33; see also vol. 2:191-193 s.v. v'hinei yadua), Bnei Yissaschar (Maamrei Chodesh Kislev/Teves 14:1), and Shu"t Shoel U'Meishiv (Mahadura Kama vol. 3:179); see also Shu"t Maharam Brisk (vol. 3:99). The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Parshas Vayigash pg. 40b s.v. vad"z) also cites this reason and explains that it is only at the end of a tragedy when salvation has a chance to sprout. We see this from the famous Gemara at the end of Makkos (24a-b) with Rabbi Akiva, who laughed when he saw foxes wandering through the ruins of the Beis HaMikdash. Only when a tragedy is complete can there be a glimmer of hope for the future redemption. See also sefer Siach Yitzchak (pg. 293) and R' Moshe Chaim Leitner's sefer Tzom Ha'Asiri at length. Rav Yonason Eibeschutz adds that according to his calculations, Nevuchadnetzar's actual siege on that first Asarah B'Teves commenced on Shabbos; meaning that that Asarah B'Teves that Yechezkel wrote "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh" about was actually Shabbos. The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Parshas Vayechi, Drush for 8 Teves 5599, s.v. ksiv) agrees with this assessment and offers a variation, that the reason Nevuchadnetzar was successful in his conquest of Yerushalayim, as opposed to Sancheirev, was due to lack of Shemiras Shabbos among its inhabitants!

[34]Midrash Tanchuma (Tazria 9). However, in Parshas Bereishis, the Midrash Tanchuma (ad loc. 2 and 3), actually takes a very strong stance against fasting on Shabbos, as "Kavod Shabbos is adif than one thousand fasts"!

[35]Toras Moshe (vol. 2, Parshas Vayikra, Drush for 7 Adar, pp. 9b-10a, s.v. kasuv).

[36]Yerushalmi Yoma (Ch. 1, Halacha 1, 6a).

[37]Rambam (Hilchos Taaniyos Ch. 5:1); see also Mishnah Berurah (549:1).

[38]Zecharia (Ch. 8:19), as per the understanding of Rabbi Akiva (Rosh Hashana 18b). See also Knesses HaGedolah (O.C. 550, He'aros on Beis Yosef) for a fascinating hesber.

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שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ቢילא בת (אריה) ליב ע"ה

PARASHAT VAYYIGASH: ADDENDUM
R. YOEL BIN-NUN'S ARTICLE ON YOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS
Why Didn't Joseph Contact His Father?

Adapted by Zvi Shimon

The following is an abridgement of articles written by Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, a teacher in the Herzog Teachers' College affiliated with Yeshivat Har Etzion, and Rabbi Yaakov Medan, a teacher in the yeshiva, which originally appeared in Hebrew in Megadim 1. Ramban poses a difficult question, one which continues to puzzle whoever studies the book of Genesis:

"How is it that Joseph, after living many years in Egypt, having attained a high and influential position in the house of an important Egyptian official, did not send his father even one message to inform him (that he was alive) and comfort him? Egypt is only six days' travel from Hebron, and respect for his father would have justified even a year's journey! (It would) have been a grave sin to torment his father by leaving him in mourning and bereavement for himself and for Shim'on; even if he wanted to hurt his brothers a little, how could he not feel pity for his aged father (Ramban to Gen. 42:9)?"

Abarbanel poses the same question, but more bluntly:

"Why did Joseph hide his identity from his brothers and speak harshly to them? It is criminal to be as vengeful and recriminating as a serpent!... How is it that as his brothers were starving and far from home, having left their families and small children and, above all, his aged, worried and suffering father waiting for them, did he not show compassion, but rather intensified the anguish by arresting Shim'on?" (chap. 4, question 4)

1) RAV YOEL BIN-NUN'S SOLUTION:

The usual solution, advanced by the Ramban that Yosef was trying to fulfill the dreams, is rejected by R. Bin-Nun, chiefly because it doesn't address, in his opinion, the moral question. How could Yosef have left his father in torment, only to bring his dreams to fruition?

Our entire outlook on this story changes, however, if we accept the fact that Joseph did not know that his brothers had fooled his father with the coat, the blood, and the lie that Joseph had been devoured by wild animals. Such thoughts never occurred to him! Hence it was Joseph who spent thirteen years of slavery in Egypt and, the following years of greatness wondering: "Where is my father? Why has no one come to look for me?" All the factors are now reversed, when seen from Joseph's point of view. Egypt is, after all, close to Canaan, and Jacob was a rich, important and influential man, with international familial and political connections. The Midianites or Ishmaelites who brought Joseph to Egypt were his cousins; is it possible that no one from that caravan could be located in all those years? We know that Jacob does not search for his son, as he thinks Joseph is dead, but Joseph has no way of knowing this.

Joseph's wonder at his father's silence is joined by a terrible sense of anxiety which grows stronger over the years, as seasons and years pass by and no one comes. Joseph's anguish centers on his father: the voice inside him asking where is my father? is joined by another harsh voice: Why did my father send me to my brothers that day? He concludes that his brothers must have succeeded in convincing Jacob, and he has been disowned. Years later, when Joseph rides in the viceroy's chariot, when he shaves his beard and stands before Pharaoh, it is clear to him that God must have decreed that his life would be lived separately from his family's. He gives expression to this feeling in the name he gives his eldest son, born of an Egyptian wife:

...he called him Menashe, because God has made me forget (nashani) all my labor and my father's house (41:51).

To forget his father's house!

Joseph's entire world is built on the misconception that his father has renounced him, while Jacob's world is destroyed by the misconception that Joseph is dead. Joseph's world is shaken when his brothers stand before him, not knowing who he is, and bow down to him. At that moment, he must question this new reality -

("he remembers the dreams he dreamt about them")

and is thrown back into the past. Stalling for time, he begins a line of inquiry - and action - which is geared to one end: to find out why his father had rejected him, if at all. He plots to keep Benjamin, so that his maternal brother can tell him all that has transpired. This was Joseph's plan to find out what had happened and how to deal with it.

Judah's response was an attempt to obtain Benjamin's release by appealing for mercy for his aged father. In so doing, he tells Joseph - totally unintentionally - exactly what he wanted so desperately to hear, thereby freeing him and eventually Jacob, from their mutual errors.

"Your servant our father said to us: 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. One has left me; I said he was devoured and I have not seen him since. (If) you take this son too and tragedy befalls him you will bring my old age down to She'ol in agony' " (44:24-30).

Joseph needs to hear no more. He finally realizes the naked truth: No one has cut him off at all! He has not been forgotten! Joseph could no longer restrain himself before all who were standing before him, and cried: 'Have every one leave me!'...and he cried out loud...and he told his brothers: I am Joseph: Is my father still alive? (45:1-3)

Does he live? Is he yet my father, who loves me and has not forgotten me? Is it possible?

Each of the players in our scene had a plan, and pursued that plan. But the plan which was finally revealed was a higher plan, geared at bringing Jacob's family to Egypt and creating the Jewish people.

2) RAV YAAKOV MEDAN'S CRITIQUE OF RAV BIN-NUN'S SOLUTION

This thesis of Joseph's suspicion towards his father is untenable. Joseph knew that he was, after all, his father's favorite son and that his father had made him the striped coat. He also knew that his father had loved Rachel most of all his wives. Above all, would a man like Jacob behave deceitfully, sending Joseph to his brothers on the false pretext of ascertaining their well-being, intending in fact that they sell him as a slave? Is there a son who would suspect his father of such a deed? This assumption is totally unrealistic.

It also remains unclear why Joseph, surprised that his father did not seek him out, came to harbor the kind of suspicions attributed to him by R. Bin-Nun. How could he be certain that his father knew of the sale, but refrained from searching for him? Why did it not occur to him that his father regarded him as dead? To this day, a person who disappears without a trace is presumed dead. Why should we assume that Joseph did not believe that the brothers were lying to his father? It was precisely because the brothers did not habitually report their actions to their father that Joseph found it necessary to tell his father all their misdeeds (37:2).

In addition, R. Bin-Nun claims that Joseph's stubborn silence was broken upon hearing Judah say he was surely devoured and I have not seen him since (44:28). Joseph realized at this point that his father had not deserted him. However according to the simplest reading of the text, Joseph's resistance broke down when Judah offered himself as a slave instead of Benjamin:

Therefore please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not see to the sorrow that would overcome my father! ...Joseph could no longer control himself (44:32- 45:1).

R. Bin-Nun claims that Joseph's feelings of rejection by his family are the foundation for the naming of his first born Menashe, meaning God has made me forget my hardship and my father's home (nashani - made me forget).

In my opinion, the meaning of the verse is different. My hardship (amali) is to be understood as follows (see Ibn Ezra - Genesis 6:13): God has made me forget completely my hardship and the HARDSHIP of my parental home. Joseph does not offer thanks to God for having made him forget his parental home, but rather offers thanks for enabling him to forget his tribulations (his labors) in his father's house. It is only after Joseph rises to the throne that he is able to make sense of his suffering in the two previous episodes, in prison ("amali") and in his father's house (beit avi).

3) RAV MEDAN'S SOLUTION: "THE PATH OF REPENTANCE"

Abarbanel offers the following explanation for Joseph's not contacting his father while in Egypt:

"Even after Joseph tested his brothers by accusing them of espionage, he was still not certain whether they loved Benjamin or whether they still hated Rachel's children, so he focused on Benjamin to see whether they would try to save him." (chap. 42, qests. 4, 6)

Joseph's behavior is part of an overall scheme to test the brothers and provide them with an opportunity to fully repent for selling him into slavery. The sin of Joseph's brothers is one of the more serious sins related in the book of Genesis. Both the Torah (Exodus 21:17, 20:13; see Rashi ibid; Deut. 24:7) and the Prophets (Joel 4, Amos 2:6-10 and many others) equate this sin of selling a free man into bondage with the gravest of sins. The penitence of Joseph's brothers is not an incidental event appearing as part of another story, but a major theme of the narrative.

Reuben and Judah were vying for the family leadership, Jacob having effectively ceased playing the leadership role (see for example 34:5, 34:13-14, 35:22, 43:5). After Shim'on and Levi are excluded from the race for leadership, the struggle continues between Reuben and Judah. It finds expression in their argument as to Joseph's fate (37:22,26- 27), in the recognition of the sin of his sale (42:22 contra 44:16), in the assumption of responsibility for Benjamin in Egypt (42:37 contra 43:8-9) and in additional verses in the Torah.

Reuben and Judah were each engaged in a process of penitence for similar sins, Reuben for having slept with his father's wife (as appears from the simple textual reading), Judah for having lain, albeit unknowingly, with his son's wife. It would seem clear that their individual repentance is also part of the leadership struggle.

At first glance there seems to be no connection between Reuben's sin with his father's wife or Judah's sin with his son's wife and the selling of Joseph. This, however is misleading. According to the simple reading of the text, Reuben's intention was to inherit his father's leadership in his lifetime, like Absalom who slept with David's concubine. His attempt to rescue Joseph and his dreams of royalty (37:20) is part of his repentance for his sin with Bilhah.

The proximity of the story of Judah and Tamar to the selling of Joseph indicates a connection as well. The chain of disasters that strike Judah, the loss of his wife and two sons, is apparently a punishment for selling Joseph. Reuben later advances the strange suggestion that Jacob kill his two sons, should he fail to return Benjamin from Egypt (42:37). It would seem that he was influenced by the punishment Judah had received for selling Joseph - the death of his two sons. This terrible punishment for a terrible sin is branded into Reuben's consciousness. Reuben is ready to receive the same punishment if he deserts Benjamin in Egypt.

Initially, Judah did not imagine that his sons died due to his sin, saying Tamar's fate is that her husbands will die (Yevamot 34 and Genesis 38:11). Finally, Judah realizes that Tamar was in the right and he admits she is more righteous than I.(38:26). Only at this stage did he realize that she was not destined to have her husbands die but rather that it was his destiny to lose his sons. The sin was his. From this recognition he rebuilds his shattered home.

The process of repentance accompanies the brothers wherever they go. When the Egyptian viceroy commands them to bring Benjamin, the second son of Rachel's, the brothers are immediately reminded of the sale of Joseph. The two contenders - Reuben and Judah - respond in character. Reuben sees only the punishment for the crime, and he does not suggest any means of rectification.

And Reuben answered them: 'Did I not tell you, do not sin against the child, and you did not listen; now his blood is being avenged.' (Gen. 42:22)

Judah acknowledges his sin, but also suggests a positive path of repentance for the evil done. He is not satisfied with sackcloth and fasting, which are merely expressions of mourning and acceptance of the verdict. And they tore their clothesAnd Judah said, 'What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has divulged the sin of your servants; we have become my lord's slaves' (44:13- 17).

And further on,

Let your servant stay instead of the boy as a slave to my lord and let the boy go up with his brothers (44:33).

From Judah's speech it is apparent that he did not confess to stealing the cup. He considered the whole episode of the stolen goblet as a fabrication. Otherwise there is no sense in telling us of Benjamin's journey to Egypt, or his suggesting that he replace Benjamin. This is how Rashi and other commentators interpret Judah's words. His words, God has revealed the SIN of your servants, undoubtedly relate to the selling of Joseph.

Similarly, Judah's words to his father, If I bring him not to you and set him before you, then I shall have SINNED to you forever (43:9), indicate his understanding of the connection between Joseph's being brought down to Egypt and Benjamin being brought down to Egypt. Benjamin's abandonment in Egypt would be a continuation of his grievous sin of selling Joseph. What sin is there and why should he be punished if Benjamin is forcibly taken? We must therefore see the necessity of bringing Benjamin down to Egypt as a consequence of the sin. For Judah, protecting Benjamin at all cost is the atonement demanded for the selling of Joseph. In offering their respective propositions, Reuven and Judah remain faithful to their personalities: Reuven through acceptance of the punishment, and Judah through confrontation with the sin itself.

Our assumption is that Joseph too was plagued by his brother's sin and, consequently, with the future of the house of Israel, no less than with his own fate. From the time he was sold, he had begun to rebuild not only his own life, but his family's unity. This unification was not to be forced upon his brothers, but rather achieved by willingness and love. Joseph desired a unification born of his brother's regretting their sin, a product of wholehearted repentance. Joseph believed in his own ability to initiate such a process or at least to test its existence.

Joseph had commanded his brothers to bring Benjamin to Egypt. When the brothers actually brought Benjamin to Egypt, despite the danger, in order to redeem Shim'on and to buy food (in a way similar to how Joseph was sold for shoes), Joseph, who was unaware of Judah's assumption of guardianship and its importance, presumably saw the brothers' action as yet another failure to meet the test and challenge that he had set before them.

Joseph cries three times. The first two times are inner, bound by self-restraint. The third time he breaks down totally and cries, openly and without control. R. Bin-Nun ignores the obvious connection between three instances.

A) The brothers are subjected to an intensive interrogation during three days of imprisonment, inducing them to repent for their sin and accept the punishment and suffering, with Reuven in the lead (42:21,22). We have previously defined this kind of repentance as Reuven's repentance, a repentance which involves submission and acceptance of the verdict, but lacks a program for improvement and change. Joseph is prepared to accept his brothers' confession and their submission. He witnesses the newly reestablished connection of the ten brothers to the sons of Rachel, and he cries (42:24). But this is not sufficient for him. He requires a fuller, deeper repentance.

B) Joseph expected that the brothers would return to him empty-handed, placing themselves in danger by explaining to him that they had decided not to endanger Benjamin for the sake of Shim'on and were willing to suffer the shame of hunger. This is what would have happened, had Jacob had his way. Thus Joseph was disappointed when it became clear to him that the brothers had brought Benjamin in order to redeem Shim'on, despite the danger to their youngest brother. Joseph is unaware of Judah's assumption of responsibility for Benjamin. His mercy is aroused when he realizes that his younger brother's fate is to be no better than his - Joseph views Benjamin's being brought to Egypt as a reoccurrence of his own sale. True, in this case it is brought on by hunger and circumstances and is not the outcome of jealousy or hatred. Nonetheless, this was not the total repentance that was expected in the wake of the confessions he had heard from the brothers and Reuven in Egypt.

The verse tells us that Joseph feels compassion towards Benjamin, and weeps in private. Joseph believes that Judah, the man who proposed his sale, had prevailed over Reuven, the man who tried to save him. This is the only possible explanation of Joseph's crying over Benjamin, his tears being tears of mercy for him and not tears of happiness at the event of their meeting. Why else, should the exiled, beloved brother, who had spent a third of his life in prison, have pitied his thirty-year old brother, who had remained with his father and raised a large family?

C) Joseph decided to test his brothers once more. This time, however, the test would be more difficult. He makes his brothers jealous of Benjamin in the same way as they had once been jealous of him. He displays more outward affection for Benjamin than for them and increases his portion five times over as well as giving him a striped coat (and five other garments, 43:34). He also attempts to arouse the brothers' hatred towards Benjamin, for having stolen his goblet, an act which re-implicated them for the crime of espionage. Joseph's aim is to test their reaction to the prospect of Benjamin's permanent enslavement in Egypt.

The brothers rent their garments (parallel to Joseph's coat 37:23). Judah says, God has found the iniquity of your servants, and then offers himself into permanent slavery as atonement for his lifelong sin towards his father. At this point, Joseph is convinced of their total repentance. Judah's act combines two kinds of repentance. The first form of repentance is that required by the early mystics, (foremost, Rabbi Eliezer of Worms, author of the Sefer Rokeach), whereby penance must counterbalance the crime. Judah, in a torn garment as a permanent slave in Egypt, is in the exact position he had placed Joseph. Secondly, we have the repentance as defined by the Rambam (Law of Repentance 2:1):

....what is complete repentance? When a person is confronted with the opportunity to repeat his sin but restrains himself because of repentance, and not because of fear or weakness.

Judah now is prepared to give his life to save Benjamin. Joseph comes to realize his mistake in crying for pity over Benjamin. He understands that Benjamin's being brought down to Egypt was not the result of the brother's disdain for Benjamin but rather the result of Judah's becoming Benjamin's guarantor. Judah's repentance, including his attempt to amend the past, is a continuation and completion of Reuven's atonement. His weeping for the third time is a continuation of his weeping the first time, when Reuven submitted. When the repentance is complete Joseph is no longer capable of restraining himself, and he weeps openly. At this stage

the brother's repentance for selling Joseph into slavery is complete and Joseph can reveal himself to them.
4) RAV BIN-NUN RESPONDS

After carefully reading Rabbi Medan's detailed arguments, I nevertheless maintain that my presentation of the events is the correct one. There is clearly a process of repentance and rectification on the part of Joseph's brothers, and this is our guide to understanding the affair. But all this is God's plan. All Medan's evidence proving a process of teshuva and restoration is correct; but there is no reason to credit Joseph with this. The challenge of repentance offered the brothers regarding Benjamin is a challenge issuing from God. Joseph was forever acting according to natural, human considerations. It should be noted that Rabbi Medan gives an extremely contrived interpretation of the verse for God has forced me to forget all my tribulations and my father's house. The verse seemingly coheres with my explanation. He also totally ignores Judah's words, You have know that my wife bore me two, one departed from me and I said he was surely devoured.

R. Yoel Bin-Nun's Article On Yoseph And His Brothers: Why Didn't Joseph Contact His Father?

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

Adapted by Zvi Shimon

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Joseph's entire world is built on the misconception that his father has renounced him, while Jacob's world is destroyed by the misconception that Joseph is dead. Joseph's world is shaken when his brothers stand before him, not knowing who he is, and bow down to him. At that moment, he must question this new reality –

("he remembers the dreams he dreamt about them")

and is thrown back into the past. Stalling for time, he begins a line of inquiry – and action – which is geared to one end: to find out why his father had rejected him, if at all. He plots to keep Benjamin, so that his maternal brother can tell him all that has transpired. This was Joseph's plan to find out what had happened and how to deal with it.

Judah's response was an attempt to obtain Benjamin's release by appealing for mercy for his aged father. In so doing, he tells Joseph – totally unintentionally – exactly what he wanted so desperately to hear, thereby freeing him and eventually Jacob, from their mutual errors.

"Your servant our father said to us: 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. One has left me; I said he was devoured and I have not seen him since. (If) you take this son too and tragedy befalls him you will bring my old age down to She'ol in agony'" (44:24-30).

Joseph needs to hear no more. He finally realizes the naked truth: No one has cut him off at all! He has not been forgotten!

Joseph could no longer restrain himself before all who were standing before him, and cried: 'Have every one leave me!'...and he cried out loud...and he told his brothers: I am Joseph: Is my father still alive? (45:1-3)

Does he live? Is he yet my father, who loves me and has not forgotten me? Is it possible?

Each of the players in our scene had a plan, and pursued that plan. But the plan which was finally revealed was a higher plan, geared at bringing Jacob's family to Egypt and creating the Jewish people.

2) RAV YAAKOV MEDAN'S CRITIQUE OF RAV BIN-NUN'S SOLUTION

This thesis of Joseph's suspicion towards his father is untenable. Joseph knew that he was, after all, his father's favorite son and that his

father had made him the striped coat. He also knew that his father had loved Rachel most of all his wives. Above all, would a man like Jacob behave deceitfully, sending Joseph to his brothers on the false pretext of ascertaining their well-being, intending in fact that they sell him as a slave? Is there a son who would suspect his father of such a deed? This assumption is totally unrealistic.

It also remains unclear why Joseph, surprised that his father did not seek him out, came to harbor the kind of suspicions attributed to him by R. Bin-Nun. How could he be certain that his father knew of the sale, but refrained from searching for him? Why did it not occur to him that his father regarded him as dead? To this day, a person who disappears without a trace is presumed dead. Why should we assume that Joseph did not believe that the brothers were lying to his father? It was precisely because the brothers did not habitually report their actions to their father that Joseph found it necessary to tell his father all their misdeeds (37:2).

In addition, R. Bin-Nun claims that Joseph's stubborn silence was broken upon hearing Judah say he was surely devoured and I have not seen him since (44:28). Joseph realized at this point that his father had not deserted him. However according to the simplest reading of the text, Joseph's resistance broke down when Judah offered himself as a slave instead of Benjamin:

Therefore please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not see to the sorrow that would overcome my father! ...Joseph could no longer control himself (44:32- 45:1).

R. Bin-Nun claims that Joseph's feelings of rejection by his family are the foundation for the naming of his first born Menashe, meaning God has made me forget my hardship and my father's home (nashani – made me forget).

In my opinion, the meaning of the verse is different. My hardship (amali) is to be understood as follows (see Ibn Ezra – Genesis 6:13): God has made me forget completely my hardship and the HARDSHIP of my parental home. Joseph does not offer thanks to God for having made him forget his parental home, but rather offers thanks for enabling him to forget his tribulations (his labors) in his father's house. It is only after Joseph rises to the throne that he is able to make sense of his suffering in the two previous episodes, in prison ("amali") and in his father's house (beit avi).

3) RAV MEDAN'S SOLUTION: "THE PATH OF REPENTANCE"

Abarbanel offers the following explanation for Joseph's not contacting his father while in Egypt:

"Even after Joseph tested his brothers by accusing them of espionage, he was still not certain whether they loved Benjamin or whether they still hated Rachel's children, so he focused on Benjamin to see whether they would try to save him." (chap. 42, qests. 4, 6)

Joseph's behavior is part of an overall scheme to test the brothers and provide them with an opportunity to fully repent for selling him into slavery. The sin of Joseph's brothers is one of the more serious sins related in the book of Genesis. Both the Torah (Exodus 21:17, 20:13; see Rashi ibid; Deut. 24:7) and the Prophets (Joel 4, Amos 2:6-10 and many others) equate this sin of selling a free man into bondage with the gravest of sins. The penitence of Joseph's brothers is not an incidental event appearing as part of another story, but a major theme of the narrative.

Reuben and Judah were vying for the family leadership, Jacob having effectively ceased playing the leadership role (see for example 34:5, 34:13-14, 35:22, 43:5). After Shim'on and Levi are excluded from the race for leadership, the struggle continues between Reuben and Judah. It finds expression in their argument as to Joseph's fate (37:22,26- 27), in the recognition of the sin of his sale (42:22 contra 44:16), in the assumption of responsibility for Benjamin in Egypt (42:37 contra 43:8-9) and in additional verses in the Torah.

Reuben and Judah were each engaged in a process of penitence for similar sins, Reuben for having slept with his father's wife (as appears from the simple textual reading), Judah for having lain, albeit unknowingly, with his son's wife. It would seem clear that their individual repentance is also part of the leadership struggle.

At first glance there seems to be no connection between Reuben's sin with his father's wife or Judah's sin with his son's wife and the selling of Joseph. This, however is misleading. According to the simple reading of the text, Reuben's intention was to inherit his father's leadership in his lifetime, like Absalom who slept with David's concubine. His attempt to rescue Joseph and his dreams of royalty (37:20) is part of his repentance for his sin with Bilhah.

The proximity of the story of Judah and Tamar to the selling of Joseph indicates a connection as well. The chain of disasters that strike Judah, the loss of his wife and two sons, is apparently a punishment for selling Joseph. Reuben later advances the strange suggestion that Jacob kill his two sons, should he fail to return Benjamin from Egypt (42:37). It would seem that he was influenced by the punishment Judah had received for selling Joseph – the death of his two sons. This terrible punishment for a terrible sin is branded into Reuben's consciousness. Reuben is ready to receive the same punishment if he deserts Benjamin in Egypt.

Initially, Judah did not imagine that his sons died due to his sin, saying Tamar's fate is that her husbands will die (Yevamot 34 and Genesis 38:11). Finally, Judah realizes that Tamar was in the right and he admits she is more righteous than I. (38:26). Only at this stage did he realize that she was not destined to have her husbands die but rather that it was his destiny to lose his sons. The sin was his. From this recognition he rebuilds his shattered home.

The process of repentance accompanies the brothers wherever they go. When the Egyptian viceroy commands them to bring Benjamin, the second son of Rachel's, the brothers are immediately reminded of the sale of Joseph. The two contenders – Reuben and Judah – respond in character. Reuben sees only the punishment for the crime, and he does not suggest any means of rectification.

And Reuben answered them: 'Did I not tell you, do not sin against the child, and you did not listen; now his blood is being avenged.' (Gen. 42:22)

Judah acknowledges his sin, but also suggests a positive path of repentance for the evil done. He is not satisfied with sackcloth and fasting, which are merely expressions of mourning and acceptance of the verdict.

And they tore their clothesAnd Judah said, 'What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has divulged the sin of your servants; we have become my lord's slaves' (44:13- 17).

And further on,

Let your servant stay instead of the boy as a slave to my lord and let the boy go up with his brothers (44:33). From Judah's speech it is apparent that he did not confess to stealing the cup. He considered the whole episode of the stolen goblet as a fabrication. Otherwise there is no sense in telling us of Benjamin's journey to Egypt, or his suggesting that he replace Benjamin. This is how Rashi and other commentators interpret Judah's words. His words, God has revealed the SIN of your servants, undoubtedly relate to the selling of Joseph.

Similarly, Judah's words to his father, If I bring him not to you and set him before you, then I shall have SINNED to you forever (43:9), indicate his understanding of the connection between Joseph's being brought down to Egypt and Benjamin being brought down to Egypt. Benjamin's abandonment in Egypt would be a continuation of his grievous sin of selling Joseph. What sin is there and why should he be punished if Benjamin is forcibly taken? We must therefore see the necessity of bringing Benjamin down to Egypt as a consequence of the sin. For Judah, protecting Benjamin at all cost is the atonement demanded for the selling of Joseph. In offering their respective propositions, Reuven and Judah remain faithful to their personalities: Reuven through acceptance of the punishment, and Judah through confrontation with the sin itself.

Our assumption is that Joseph too was plagued by his brother's sin and, consequently, with the future of the house of Israel, no less than with his own fate. From the time he was sold, he had begun to rebuild not only his own life, but his family's unity. This unification was not to be forced upon his brothers, but rather achieved by willingness and love. Joseph desired a unification born of his brother's regretting their sin, a product of wholehearted repentance. Joseph believed in his own ability to initiate such a process or at least to test its existence.

Joseph had commanded his brothers to bring Benjamin to Egypt. When the brothers actually brought Benjamin to Egypt, despite the danger, in order to redeem Shim'on and to buy food (in a way similar to how Joseph was sold for shoes), Joseph, who was unaware of Judah's assumption of guardianship and its importance, presumably saw the brothers' action as yet another failure to meet the test and challenge that he had set before them.

Joseph cries three times. The first two times are inner, bound by self-restraint. The third time he breaks down totally and cries, openly and without control. R. Bin-Nun ignores the obvious connection between three instances.

A) The brothers are subjected to an intensive interrogation during three days of imprisonment, inducing them to repent for their sin and accept the punishment and suffering, with Reuven in the lead (42:21,22). We have previously defined this kind of repentance as Reuven's repentance, a repentance which involves submission and acceptance of the verdict, but lacks a program for improvement and change. Joseph is prepared to accept his brothers' confession and their submission. He witnesses the newly reestablished connection of the ten brothers to the sons of Rachel, and he cries (42:24). But this is not sufficient for him. He requires a fuller, deeper repentance.

B) Joseph expected that the brothers would return to him empty-handed, placing themselves in danger by explaining to him that they had decided not to endanger Benjamin for the sake of Shim'on and were willing to suffer the shame of hunger. This is what would have happened, had Jacob had his way. Thus Joseph was disappointed when it became clear to him that the brothers had brought Benjamin in order to redeem Shim'on, despite the danger to their youngest brother. Joseph is unaware of Judah's assumption of responsibility for Benjamin. His mercy is aroused when he realizes that his younger brother's fate is to be no better than his – Joseph views Benjamin's being brought to Egypt as a reoccurrence of his own sale. True, in this case it is brought on by hunger and circumstances and is not the outcome of jealousy or hatred. Nonetheless, this was not the total repentance that was expected in the wake of the confessions he had heard from the brothers and Reuven in Egypt.

The verse tells us that Joseph feels compassion towards Benjamin, and weeps in private. Joseph believes that Judah, the man who proposed his sale, had prevailed over Reuven, the man who tried to save him. This is the only possible explanation of Joseph's crying over Benjamin, his tears being tears of mercy for him and not tears of happiness at the event of their meeting. Why else, should the exiled, beloved brother, who had spent a third of his life in prison, have pitied his thirty-year old brother, who had remained with his father and raised a large family?

C) Joseph decided to test his brothers once more. This time, however, the test would be more difficult. He makes his brothers jealous of Benjamin in the same way as they had once been jealous of him. He displays more outward affection for Benjamin than for them and increases his portion five times over as well as giving him a striped coat (and five other garments, 43:34). He also attempts to arouse the brothers' hatred towards Benjamin, for having stolen his goblet, an act which re-implicated them for the crime of espionage. Joseph's aim is to test their reaction to the prospect of Benjamin's permanent enslavement in Egypt.

The brothers rent their garments (parallel to Joseph's coat 37:23). Judah says, God has found the iniquity of your servants, and then offers himself into permanent slavery as atonement for his lifelong sin towards his father. At this point, Joseph is convinced of their total repentance. Judah's act combines two kinds of repentance. The first form of repentance is that required by the early mystics, (foremost, Rabbi Eliezer of Worms, author of the Sefer Rokeach), whereby penance must counterbalance the crime. Judah, in a torn garment as a permanent slave in Egypt, is in the exact position he had placed Joseph. Secondly, we have the repentance as defined by the Rambam (Law of Repentance 2:1):

....what is complete repentance? When a person is confronted with the opportunity to repeat his sin but restrains himself because of repentance, and not because of fear or weakness.

Judah now is prepared to give his life to save Benjamin. Joseph comes to realize his mistake in crying for pity over Benjamin. He understands that Benjamin's being brought down to Egypt was not the result of the brother's disdain for Benjamin but rather the result of Judah's becoming Benjamin's guarantor. Judah's repentance, including his attempt to amend the past, is a continuation and completion of Reuven's atonement. His weeping for the third time is a continuation of his weeping the first time, when Reuven submitted. When the repentance is complete Joseph is no longer capable of restraining himself, and he weeps openly. At this stage the brother's repentance for selling Joseph into slavery is complete and Joseph can reveal himself to them.

4) RAV BIN-NUN RESPONDS

After carefully reading Rabbi Medan's detailed arguments, I nevertheless maintain that my presentation of the events is the correct one. There is clearly a process of repentance and rectification on the part of Joseph's brothers, and this is our guide to understanding the

affair. But all this is God's plan. All Medan's evidence proving a process of teshuva and restoration is correct; but there is no reason to credit Joseph with this. The challenge of repentance offered the brothers regarding Benjamin is a challenge issuing from God. Joseph was forever acting according to natural, human considerations. It should be noted that Rabbi Medan gives an extremely contrived interpretation of the verse for God has forced me to forget all my tribulations and my father's house. The verse seemingly coheres with my explanation. He also totally ignores Judah's words, You have know that my wife bore me two, one departed from me and I said he was surely devoured.

Parshat Vayigash: The Unmasking

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

PREPARATION FOR PARASHAT VAYIGASH:

Before we dig into Parashat Va-Yigash, let us just take a moment to review the narrative units of Sefer Bereishit as we have understood the Sefer in these shiurim. If you would like to receive shiurim you missed, please drop me a line at emayer@ymail.yu.edu (not at one of my other email addresses!).

1) The nature of humanity and its relationship with Hashem:

- a) Parashat Bereishit: the human as image of Hashem (Tzelem Elokim)
- b) Parashat No'ah: Humanity's failures and Uncreation (Flood)

2) The selection and development of Avraham:

- a) Parashat Lekh Lekha: Developing faith (Berit bein HaBetarim and Berit Mila)
- b) Parashat VaYera: Ultimate sacrifice (Akeida, rejection of Yishmael)
- c) Hayyei Sara: A personal foothold in Canaan (Cave of Mahpela)

3) The selection and development of Ya'akov:

- a) Parashat Toledot: Deception and flight (Theft of blessings)
- b) Parashat VaYeitzei: Measure for Measure (Lavan's deceptions)
- c) Parashat VaYishlah: Regeneration (returning the berakhot)

4) Selection and development of Yosef and Yehuda (& rejection of Re'uvein):

- a) Parashat VaYeshev: Yosef's development
- b) Parashat Mikketz: Yehuda's development
- c) Parashat VaYigash: see below!

Although we devoted VaYeshev to Yosef and Mikketz to Yehuda, it should be noted that both of these parshiot are about both Yehuda and Yosef. I found it easier to develop each figure separately, but the stories are deeply intertwined.

PREP FOR PARASHAT VAYIGASH:

VaYigash is where Yosef reveals himself to his brothers, whom he has been manipulating since Parashat Mikketz. The (many) questions below are in response to requests from subscribers for more guidance in preparing for the shiur. Hopefully, the questions will help bring out the meaning of the events in the parasha, although we may not have time to deal with all of the questions. Ideally, questions should occur to us naturally as we read the Torah. Attempting to respond to questions and draw themes from them will acclimate us to formulating questions on our own.

1) Once Yosef rises to power, why doesn't he send a messenger to Ya'akov with the news that he is alive and well? What could possibly justify letting his father suffer a moment longer than necessary?

2) Why does Yosef play all of these games with his brothers? What is the point of treating them harshly, accusing them of spying, demanding that they produce Binyamin, repeatedly returning the money they have paid him for Egyptian grain, imprisoning them, and planting his chalice on Binyamin so he can accuse him of theft? What does Yosef hope to accomplish?

3) Look closely at every single interaction between Yosef and his brothers. What is Yosef trying to accomplish in each case?

- a) Why does he accuse his brothers of being *spies,* in particular?
- b) What does he hope to accomplish by throwing his brothers into jail?
- c) Why does he then release them all -- except Shimon -- and why does he give the brothers the reason he does?

d) What seems ridiculous about Yosef's first plan -- to send one brother home to Canaan to get Binyamin while the rest remain in jail -- and his second plan -- letting all the brothers (except one) go home to get Binyamin in order to prove that they are not spies?

e) Why does Yosef secretly return the brothers' money to them?

f) When the brothers return to Egypt with Binyamin, why does Yosef entertain them at his house?

g) Why does Yosef's servant bother to tell the brothers that the money they found in their sacks was a gift from Hashem? Why not just inform them that he received their payment for the grain, and leave it to them to wonder about the source of the mystery money?

h) Why does Yosef bless only Binyamin and give him more gifts than he gives the others?

i) Why does Yosef seat the brothers by age order?

j) Why does Yosef *again* arrange to have the brothers' money returned to them secretly?

k) Why does Yosef plant his chalice in specifically Binyamin's sack?

4) What seems to be the disagreement between the brothers and Yosef's servant over the fate of the one whose sack contains the chalice, and the fate of the rest of the brothers? Why are they arguing? Where have we seen such an incident before? What other parallels are there between this incident and the previous one?

5) [Parenthetically: what hint is there in Yehuda's speech to Yosef that Yaakov still maintains the hope that Yosef is alive somewhere?]

6) [Again, parenthetically: what linguistic parallels are there between this story and Megillat Esther?]

7) Once Yosef has revealed himself, why does he again ask if Yaakov is alive -- didn't he ask this question to the brothers during the feast at his house?

8) If Yosef really believes that the brothers were only doing Hashem's work in selling him to Egypt (see 45:5 + 7-8), why has he been manipulating them? Why not just reveal his identity immediately?

9) What ironic reversal is there in this story in the use of the word "yarad" ("to do down")?

10) What meanings are hinted to -- besides the obvious -- in the use of the word "mihyah" in 45:5 and "le-ha-hayot" in 45:7?

11) What exactly does Yaakov mean in 46:30?

12) [Parenthetically: what hints are there of cultural/ethnic/etc. friction between Yaakov's family and the Egyptians (with an eye toward Sefer Shemot)?]

13) [What is funny (humorous) about the interaction between the brothers and Paro about their occupation of shepherding?]

PARASHAT VAYIGASH:

Two basic questions challenge us as we read the story of Yosef's manipulation of his brothers (no negative connotation intended): Why he does not send word ASAP to his suffering father that he is alive? What does he aim to accomplish by this process of manipulation? The answer to both questions may be the same. Hopefully, analyzing the story will yield answers.

In the course of the story, Yosef accuses his brothers of particular crimes, arranges situations which will make them appear guilty of certain other crimes, and threatens or executes particular punishments. The brothers react in particular ways to these situations. In this shiur, we will summarize these events and "unpack" them.

A) THE SPYING ACCUSATION:

Yosef first accuses his brothers of spying on Egypt, an accusation they deny. Later, we learn that Yosef asks them at this time about their family. The brothers respond by mentioning Yosef, Binyamin, and Yaakov. Yosef rejects their

explanations, insisting that the brothers are spies; he imprisons all of them, but then allows one to go home to bring Binyamin in order to prove that their story is true. After three more days, Yosef decides to allow all of them to go home, and holds back only Shimon as "collateral."

Why does Yosef accuse the brothers of spying, in particular? What purpose does this serve in his plan? This accusation allows him the opportunity to ask about their family, which he wants to do for the following reasons:

- a) In order to find out if his father is still alive.
- b) In order to demand that Binyamin be brought to him, so that he can carry out the rest of his plan.

In our discussion of Parashat VaYeshev, we mentioned that Yosef might accuse the brothers of spying as a mida ke-neged mida ("measure for measure") reaction to their having hated him for "spying" on them and reporting to Ya'akov about their misdeeds (see Abravanel). This should start us looking for other signs of mida ke-neged mida patterns in what Yosef does to the brothers as the story continues.

Let us now look closely at this spying accusation and the question of what Yosef wants the brothers to think: imagine you are a counterintelligence agent and you think you have caught a ring of agents spying on your country. Can you imagine letting one of the spies go home to get proof that he and the other suspects are not spies? If he really **is** a spy, what would prevent him from returning home, reporting to his CIA (Cana'anite Intelligence Agency) superiors what he has seen in Egypt, and then returning to Egypt to try to prove that he is not a spy!

Imagine if, when Moshe Rabbeinu sent spies to scout out Eretz Yisrael, the spies had been caught -- can you imagine that their captors would have let one of them go home under any circumstances? If the people of Yericho (Jericho) had caught the spies Yehoshua had sent to scout the city, would they have let one return to Yehoshua for any reason?

If Yosef really wants the brothers to take him seriously in this accusation of spying, how can he agree to send one of them home to get Binyamin? And how can he then decide to let **all** of them (except one) go back home? Does Yosef really want the brothers to believe that he thinks they are spies? If not, what does he want them to think?

Perhaps he wants them to know that even he **himself** does not take the accusation of spying seriously. He wants them to see how transparent the accusation is, that he is not really giving them all this trouble because he truly believes they are spies.

YOU FEAR **WHO*?*

This fits well with what happens next: when Yosef changes his mind and decides to allow almost all of the brothers to go home, he gives the brothers a reason: "Because I fear Hashem." Now, remember that Egypt is a thoroughly pagan society; when the brothers hear from Yosef, the vice-king of the thoroughly pagan country, that he fears not the sun-god, or the river-god, or the harvest-god, but Hashem ("Ha-Elokim," the One God), it must sound to the brothers as strange as it would have been to hear Yosef say, "You know, I really think Egypt stinks. I'd much rather be king of Cana'an any day." It also makes this situation even stranger than before: not only is the Egyptian vice-king willing to let all of the accused spies (besides Shimon) go home, he says he is doing so because he fears and worships the same God they fear and worship!

What impression is Yosef trying to encourage in the brothers' minds?

THE KEY TO YOSEF'S STRATEGY:

Yosef is trying to do something he has done before: to portray himself as merely a conduit for Hashem. In our discussion of Parashat VaYeshev, we traced Yosef's development as a leader and moral figure. One of the high points we identified was when Yosef stood before Paro and gave Hashem all the credit for his dream-interpreting abilities. We also noted that Yosef's giving Hashem all the credit is not only humble, it is **smart.** Paro cannot take advice from a foreigner/slave/prisoner, but he can certainly take advice from a Deity (**The** Deity), so Yosef couches his fourteen-year famine survival plan as part of the Hashem-given interpretation of the dream. Throughout his interaction with Paro, Yosef is but a vehicle for Hashem's communication with Paro. Paro recognizes this and stresses Yosef's connection with Hashem as crucial in selecting him to execute Egyptian agro-economic policy and save Egypt from starvation.

Yosef now employs the same strategy of trying to convey the impression that he is only Hashem's emissary. But this time, he is trying to convince his own brothers. He accuses them of spying (which may start them searching their own past for mida ke-neged mida triggers of this accusation), but then behaves in a manner which reveals that he himself does not believe this accusation! When he mercifully decides to let them all (but one) go home, his rationale is his fear of Hashem! The improbability of monotheistic faith in the ruler of pagan, polytheistic Egypt is more than the brothers can be expected to take as simply coincidence. Yosef means for them to believe that Hashem is using him, the "Egyptian ruler," as a puppet, that He is manipulating the vice-king in order to punish them.

This becomes even clearer to them when the Egyptian ruler allows all of them to go home *except one.* They then realize that Hashem is punishing them, mida ke-neged mida, for their cruelty to Yosef: just as when they sold him, they returned home with one less brother and had to face their father with the news, so they now return home with one less brother and must face their father once again. But this time, the missing brother is missing because he helped make Yosef "missing." All of the brothers are jailed for three days to demonstrate what Yosef felt when he was thrown by them into the "bor," the pit (we have seen earlier that the Egyptian jail is referred to as a "bor," a pit); and Shimon is kept in jail to parallel the sale of Yosef.

The brothers clearly see the "hand of Hashem" raised against them for what they did to Yosef. Yosef's strategy is smashingly successful, as Re'uvein now turns to the others and castigates them for ignoring his warnings not to harm Yosef. Yosef himself confirms what the brothers suspect -- that Hashem is behind all of this -- by saying that he is releasing them because he fears Hashem.

B) RETURN OF THE MONEY:

Yosef now commands that the brothers' grain money be secretly returned to them and placed in their luggage. On the road back to Canaan, one brother discovers his returned money; the others discover their money once they have returned home. They fear that when they return to Egypt, they will be accused of having stolen the money. Indeed, when the brothers eventually do return to Egypt with Binyamin and are led to Yosef's house, they fear that they have been brought there in order to be enslaved, in punishment for stealing the money they found in their luggage. But Yosef's servant assures them that their money has been received by Yosef.

How does planting the brothers' money in their sacks serve Yosef's plan?

When they find the money, the brothers ascribe its appearance in their sacks to Hashem: "What has Hashem done to us?!" (42:28). Clearly, they believe that Hashem is using the "Egyptian ruler" to wreak vengeance on them. But what do they believe is Hashem's purpose in putting the money in their sacks?

When they return to Egypt for the second time, they reveal their concern: they are afraid that Yosef has invited them to his house in order to capture and enslave them for stealing their grain-money from him. Hashem, the brothers believe, has returned their money so that the Egyptian ruler will believe that they have stolen it from him. They fear that they will become slaves through these ill-gotten gains -- exactly the fate to which they sent Yosef in return for ill-gotten gains (the money they made from his sale)! They see Yosef as Hashem's tool in executing a mida ke-neged mida punishment on them for selling Yosef. They probably suspect that Yosef planted the money in their sacks (Abravanel supports this idea), but they see him as a tool of Hashem -- which is exactly what he wants them to think.

The brothers are nervous about entering Yosef's house, afraid that bad things are in store for them; before they enter, they confess to Yosef's servant that as they journeyed toward Canaan, they found their money returned to them, hidden in their sacks. They insist that they do not know who put their money back in their sacks. Yosef's servant, who has been told to expect precisely this admission from them, assures them that he has received their money, that the money they found in their sacks could only be a "treasure" planted there by . . . "Hashem!"

But the servant is laughing at them on the inside as he reassures them: he sees how his master, Yosef, has woven a web around the brothers, nudging them into concluding that Hashem is punishing them for their mistreatment of their brother. As he assures them that the returned money they found was a gift for them from Hashem, he knows that they are drawing a different conclusion: Hashem can hardly be "in the mood" (so to speak) to reward them. Recent strange events have convinced them that they are enmeshed in a divine process aimed at paying them back for selling Yosef. Perhaps the servant dispels their fear that the money is being used by Hashem to land them in slavery, but he confirms their suspicion that Hashem is somehow behind the whole matter. Perhaps, they conclude, Hashem only wanted to make them nervous.

C) THE FEAST:

Yosef then entertains the brothers at his house with a feast and presents them with gifts.

[Side point: when Yosef greets the brothers at his house, he greets them with the word "Shalom," and then asks after the "shalom" of their father; they respond that their father has "shalom," he is in peace. It is ironic, of course, that Yosef, the brother about whom the Torah told us long ago, "lo yakhlu dabero le-**shalom**" -- "they could not speak to him peaceably" -- has a whole conversation with them about "shalom"!]

Yosef's gifts to the brothers create an opportunity to see how the brothers will deal with his favoring Binyamin by giving him five times as much as he gives to each of them. Once again, a child of Rahel is receiving special treatment: how will the other brothers deal with it this time?

But the test is not a subtle one, meant only for Yosef's private purposes, to see if the brothers will react with their old jealousy; it is clearly meant for them to *know* it is a test. Yosef wants the brothers to believe that he is the tool of God, the puppet of Hashem, sent to test them. That this is Yosef's goal is suggested also by the next point: Yosef seats the brothers in age order, to their amazement; he wants them to see that he has access to information he would have no way of knowing besides having a secret link to Hashem. This contributes to their impression that this Egyptian ruler is a tool of Hashem; either he is in direct communication with Hashem, or Hashem has taken some sort of subtle control of him and is acting through him.

These strategies -- seating his brothers in age order and lavishing more gifts on Binyamin than on the other brothers -- are so transparent, so obvious to the brothers, that it seems clear that Yosef wants them to understand that Hashem is "present" in this entire affair, addressing their old sin, their sale of Yosef.

D) THE CHALICE:

Yosef then commands that his own chalice be hidden in Binyamin's sack. And once again, he instructs that all of the brothers' money be hidden in their sacks. He loads the brothers with grain and sends them home, off to Cana'an, but then sends a servant to pursue them and accuse them of having stolen the chalice. The brothers deny the theft, condemn the "theoretical" thief to death, and bind themselves to slavery in the event the chalice is found (to express their certainty that none of them are involved in the theft). When the chalice is found in Binyamin's sack, the brothers contritely return to Egypt to face Yosef; in his presence, they condemn themselves to slavery. Yosef, however, offers to release them all except for the "thief." It is here that Yehuda steps in with his impassioned plea to Yosef to free Binyamin. Yosef can no longer hold back; he reveals his identity to his brothers.

Why does Yosef hide the brothers' money in their sacks once again?

By now, it is "clear" to the brothers that the Egyptian ruler has been "possessed" by Hashem; he has become Hashem's puppet to punish them for their sin. They see the pattern this ruler has set, a pattern of accusing them of crimes he does not really believe they have committed: first accusing them of spying (and then allowing them to go home!), then planting their money in their sacks (and, shockingly, explaining that Hashem has given them a gift!). They also note his repeated mention of Hashem, his inexplicable faith in the same God they worship. They gape at his unexplainable access to knowledge of their family (from out of the blue, he asks them if they have a brother and a father, as they report to Ya'akov; and he also seems to know in what order they were born!). They also notice that he performs actions which remind them of their sin (accusing them of spying, imprisoning one brother and sending the others home without him, providing them with ill-gotten gains which they believe will result in their own enslavement, testing them by openly favoring Binyamin).

Now, as they leave Egypt for the second time, he plants their money on them again. But they seem to have no fear this time that they will be punished for the theft. This makes sense: they know that Yosef planted the money on them the first time as well, and he did not accuse them of theft that time. So why does he plant the money at all?

Yosef wants them to know that he has put the money there now because he wants them to understand that just as he put the money in their sacks, he put the chalice in Binyamin's sack as well. And just as they know that Yosef knows they have not stolen the money, Yosef wants them to know that he does not truly believe that Binyamin has actually stolen anything. He wants them to see that the accusation against Binyamin is a fabrication, an entrapment sprung by him, just as he filled the sack of every brother with the money he brought. Yosef wants them to know that Binyamin is being used in order to pressure them: will they sacrifice themselves in order to free him?

Binyamin is the obvious choice for Yosef because he is Rahel's son, as Yosef is. Will they protect their younger, favored brother? Yosef also assumes (correctly) that Binyamin has replaced him in his father's affections. Will the brothers protect their father this time from the pain of losing his most beloved son?

The hiding of specifically the chalice, as opposed to something else of Yosef's, adds a nice touch to the picture: Yosef's servant tells the brothers that this is the cup his master uses to perform "nihush," divination. He uses this very cup to discover secret knowledge and see the future. The cup is valuable not because it is silver or because Yosef is sentimental about it, but because it is his divining-tool. Not only have the brothers stolen his cup, they have stolen his special "nihush" cup! [Scholars point to the Ancient Near Eastern practice of using a cup to divine: the diviner would examine the configuration of drops of water, wine, or oil, and judge the future from them. Another practice was to put precious metal pieces into the cup and judge by their positions.] The divination cup adds one more piece to the picture they have of Yosef as possessing supernatural knowledge: he is a confidant of Hashem's, a diviner.

Before the chalice is found, the brothers deny the theft and condemn the thief to death and themselves to slavery if the chalice is found. But Yosef's servant seems not to accept their self-condemnation. The servant says, "Yes, it shall be

exactly as you say," but then proceeds to change the verdict: no one is to die, not even the thief, and the innocent brothers are not to be enslaved. Why?

It is interesting that the brothers' suggestion for punishment -- death and enslavement -- parallels in some way the fate they had in mind for Yosef long ago: first they planned to kill him, then they decided to sell him into slavery. The brothers pronounce this sentence on themselves to show how sure they are of their innocence, but Yosef's servant, who knows of their guilt, knows that the sentence must be modified for Yosef's plan to unfold properly.

There is also an echo here of Ya'akov's death sentence on whoever among his camp has stolen Lavan's "terafim," his household gods. Lavan, we know, practices "nihush" (he says so himself); Yosef does as well. Yosef practices "nihush" with his chalice, which is what is stolen here; some mefarshim suggest that Lavan practiced "nihush" with his "terafim," which are stolen by Rahel. In both cases, the accused (Ya'akov, his sons) pronounce a death sentence on the thief (Rahel, Binyamin); in the first case, Rahel appears to suffer an early death as a result, so it is no shock that Yosef wants to avoid getting anywhere near repeating that tragic event -- after all, it was his own mother who was the casualty of Ya'akov's unwitting curse!

A similar "disagreement" over the fate of the guilty takes place between Yehuda and Yosef once the chalice has been found and the brothers have returned to Egypt: the brothers (represented by Yehuda) volunteer to suffer enslavement along with Binyamin, but Yosef insists that only Binyamin will be enslaved. What is this disagreement really about?

While before, the brothers' willingness to be enslaved for the theft is a rhetorical device to express their certainty of their innocence, here it is a sincere offer, motivated by the overpowering sense of guilt which has taken hold of the brothers as a result of all of Yosef's efforts to make them believe that Hashem is punishing them. Yehuda, who speaks for the brothers, does not admit that Binyamin actually stole the chalice -- they all know that just as Yosef placed the money in their sacks last time and this time, he also placed the chalice in Binyamin's sack. But the brothers believe that Hashem has created circumstances which have brought them to justice: they are being punished for a theft they did *not* commit in retribution for a theft they *did* commit. Yehuda's words ("*God* has found the sin of your servants") confirm that he recognizes the hand of Hashem in the story: Hashem has found their sin and is punishing them. Yosef's accusations are transparent; he has successfully convinced them that he is a tool of Hashem.

But Yosef refuses Yehuda's offer. Why? Is it not enough that the brothers -- especially Yehuda, whose advice it was to sell Yosef in the first place -- feel remorse for their action and are willing to suffer for it? What more does he want? As we have discussed in previous weeks, Yosef wants to see the brothers take responsibility for two things: 1) Binyamin and 2) Ya'akov. It is only once Yehuda mounts a powerfully emotional assault on Yosef, expressing concern for his father's feelings, that Yosef recognizes the depth of the brothers' teshuva and decides the time has come to end the charade.

ADDED POINTS:

- 1) There are many situational and linguistic parallels between the Yosef story and Megilat Ester. Find them and explain the relationship between the stories.
- 2) The story of Avraham's servant's search for a wife for Yitzhak is an excellent example of someone's trying to increase the likelihood of the success of his mission by making it appear as if Hashem is really behind the whole mission. Comparing a) Avraham's command to the servant and the story of the servant's encounter with Rivka to b) the servant's retelling (to Rivka's family) of Avraham's command and his encounter with Rivka, shows that the servant greatly emphasizes the role of Hashem in guiding him to select Rivka. Once he has done this, the family can only respond "me-Hashem yatza ha-davar" -- "The matter has been decreed by Hashem!", and they have no choice but to agree to the proposed marriage to Yitzhak. (One other example is discussed in the shiur on Parashat Mattot regarding the Bnei Gad and Bnei Re'uvein.)
- 3) It is quite ironic, after reading through this story in which Yosef more or less "plays Hashem," punishing his brothers with mida ke-neged mida punishments, guiding them to teshuva, etc., to hear him say in Parashat VaYhi, "Ha-tahat Elokim Anokhi?", "Am I in Hashem's stead?" How would you explain this apparent inconsistency?

Shabbat shalom

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PARSHAT VAYIGASH

When Yaakov and family depart for Egypt, they appear to be planning just a short visit, i.e. to see Yosef and to survive the famine. Yet, for some reason, they never return to Eretz Canaan (not at least for the next several hundred years)!

Was life in Egypt simply too good?

Could it be that the 'Promised Land' was not important to them? Could it be that Yaakov's family did not care about God's covenant with Avraham & Yitzchak? [See for example Breishit 26:1-4!]

While answering these questions, this week's shiur will also lay the groundwork for our study of the thematic transition from Sefer Breishit to Sefer Shmot.

INTRODUCTION

In Parshat Va'yigash, God appears to Yaakov Avinu - one last time - prior to his departure to see Yosef. In our study of Sefer Breishit thus far, we have shown how each "hitgalut" [revelation] to the Avot has been thematically significant. Therefore, we should expect for this final "hitgalut" to be no less significant.

We begin our shiur with a study of the events that lead up to this "hitgalut", in an attempt to uncover its message and importance.

EVERYONE HAS A PLAN

As soon as Yaakov hears that Yosef is still alive, he immediately decides to go visit him: "And Yisrael said... my son Yosef is still alive; I must go and see him before I die" (see 45:28).

Does Yaakov plan to return immediately to Eretz Canaan after this visit? Was there any reason why he shouldn't?

Even though it is not quite clear what Yaakov's original intentions may have been, Yosef had already informed his brothers concerning the framework of his original 'invitation':

"... Quickly go up to my father and tell him, thus says your son Yosef: God has made me master over all of Egypt. Come down to me, do not stay [in Canaan], for you should dwell in the land of Goshen to be near me; you and your children... And I will provide for you there, for ANOTHER FIVE YEARS OF FAMINE still remain, lest you PERISH, you and your entire household..." (45:9-11).

Clearly, Yosef intends for his family to stay for more than just a 'long weekend'. However, he makes no mention that he intends that they make Egypt their permanent home. It seems more likely that his invitation is for five years, as he states specifically "because FIVE years of famine still remain, lest the family perish"!

What will be once the famine is over and economic conditions in Canaan improve? Most likely, Yaakov and his family plan to (& should) return to their homeland.

Even though Yaakov, Yosef, and the brothers may not have been quite sure how long this visit would last, God had a very different plan - a plan that He reveals to Yaakov in a ".:hitgalut" before his departure from Eretz Canaan.

To better appreciate God's plan, let's take a careful look at the opening psukim of chapter 46:

"And Yisrael traveled with all that was his, and came to BEER SHEVA, and he offered 'ZEVACHIM' (sacrifices, peace offerings) to the God of his father YITZCHAK" (46:1).

When studying this pasuk, several questions arise:

- Why does Yaakov stop specifically at BEER SHEVA? In fact, we could ask, why does he stop at all?

- Why does he offer these sacrifices specifically to the "God of his father YITZCHAK"? [Is He not the God of Avraham, as well? / See 32:10 where Yaakov prayed to the God of both Avraham AND Yitzchak!]
- Why does he find it necessary at this time to offer korbanot?
- Why does he offer specifically ZEVACHIM?
- Why is Yaakov's new name - Yisrael - used in this pasuk?

To answer these questions, we must first consider Yaakov's predicament at this point in time.

First of all, it should be clear that Yaakov is quite worried. To prove this, simply note the opening words of God's response to Yaakov's offering: "Don't worry..." (see 46:1-3)

Most probably, Yaakov is worried first and foremost because he is leaving Eretz Canaan. Recall that his father Yitzchak, even in times of famine, was not permitted to leave the land: "And there was a famine in the Land... and God appeared to him (Yitzchak) and said to him: Do not go down to Egypt, stay in the Land that I show you..." (see 26:1-3).

In that very same 'hitgalut' to Yitzchak, God even explained the reason why he could not leave - because he was the 'chosen' son of Avraham Avinu:

"... reside in this Land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and your offspring I have given these Lands, and I will fulfill the OATH which I have sworn to Avraham..." (26:3-4).

Although Avraham himself was permitted to leave the Land during a famine, Yitzchak, his CHOSEN son, was required to stay in the Land. Understandably, then, Yaakov had reason for concern prior to his settlement in Egypt.

Even though Yaakov himself had once received permission to leave Eretz Canaan (in Parshat Vayetze, see 28:10-20), his situation then was quite different, as he faced immediate, life-threatening danger (see 27:41-43). And even then, Yaakov still required divine reassurance that ALTHOUGH he was leaving Eretz Canaan, God would continue to look after him and BRING HIM BACK: "And behold I will be with you and take care of you on your journey, and I WILL BRING YOU BACK TO THIS LAND..." (28:15). [Note that on that first journey from Eretz Canaan, Yaakov also left specifically from BEER SHEVA (see 28:10)!]

Now (in Parshat Vayigash), Yaakov's situation is quite different. Survival in Eretz Canaan, however difficult, is still possible, as food could be imported from Egypt. Furthermore, if it was so important for Yosef to see his father, why couldn't Yosef come to visit Yaakov in Eretz Canaan? Was it absolutely necessary for Yaakov to resettle his entire family in Egypt at this time? On the other hand, he and his entire family had received an open invitation from his 'long lost son'. How could he say no?

Unquestionably, Yaakov has what to worry about.

APPLYING FOR AN EXIT VISA

This analysis provides us with a simple explanation for why Yaakov first stops in Beer Sheva before departing to Egypt. As he fears his departure may be against God's will (or possibly even threaten his 'bechira'), Yaakov stops to pray to God, 'asking permission' to leave Eretz Canaan.

Now we must explain why Yaakov stops specifically at Beer Sheva. The commentators offer several explanations:

- * Rashbam (46:1) explains that Beer Sheva was the site of Yitzchak's place of prayer. [See 26:25, where Yitzchak builds a mizbeach in Beer Sheva. Note also that God offers him reassurance at that site - see 26:24!]
- * Ramban (46:1) adds to Rashbam's explanation that Yaakov chooses Beer Sheva to parallel his first excursion outside Eretz Canaan (from Beer Sheva to Charan /see 28:10).
- * Radak considers Beer Sheva the 'official' southern border of Eretz Canaan, thus the appropriate place for Yaakov to 'apply for an exit visa'.

[See also Sefer 46:1 (like Radak) and Chizkuni.]

Although each commentator quotes different sources to explain why specifically Beer Sheva is chosen, they all concur that Yaakov's primary worry is indeed his departure from Eretz Canaan.

This background also explains why Yaakov prays at this time specifically 'to the God of YITZCHAK'. Considering that Yitzchak had not received permission (when he faced a very similar situation), Yaakov now prays to 'the God of Yitzchak [i.e. who did not allow Yitzchak to leave]. [See Radak & Sefer.]

[Note that Ramban offers a different approach (based on what he calls 'sod'), that Yaakov recognizes that his departure to Egypt marks the beginning of the long historical process of 'brit bein ha-btarim' and hence their future enslavement by the Egyptians. Realizing that this process may entail terrible suffering (including God's 'midat ha-din'), Yaakov prays specifically to 'pachad Yitzchak', the manifestation of God's providence through 'midat ha-din', in hope that his children will suffer as little as possible.]

THE FIRST 'ZEVACH'

Similarly, this backdrop can also help us understand why Yaakov may have offered specifically 'zevachim'.

Significantly, this is the FIRST instance in Chumash where we find the offering of a 'zevach' to God. As Ramban (on 46:1) points out, until this time the children of Noach (and Avraham as well) offered only 'olot'.

[The technical difference between an 'olah' and 'zevach' is quite simple. In Sefer Vayikra we learn that an 'olah' is totally consumed on the mizbeiah (chapter 1). In contrast, the meat of a 'zevach' - alternately referred to as 'shlamim' (see Vayikra 3:1, 7:11) - can be eaten by the owner, while only a small portion is offered on the mizbeiah. Conceptually, its name -'shlamim' implies a certain 'shleimut' - fullness or completeness, that this voluntary offering can express a feeling of 'completeness' in one's relationship with God. Although it is unclear if at this time Yaakov actually ate these 'zevachim', it is significant that the Torah refers to them with the term 'zevach'.]

There are three other seminal events in Chumash where specifically 'zevachim' are offered:

- 1) The KORBAN PESACH (at Yetziat Mitzrayim)
- 2) Brit NA'ASEH VE-NISHMA (at Ma'amat Har Sinai)
- 3) YOM ha-SHMINI (the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan).

At first glance, these three examples appear to involve joyous and festive occasions, quite the opposite of Yaakov's current situation (worrying about leaving Eretz Canaan). However, if we look a bit more closely, all three examples share a 'common denominator', which can help us appreciate Yaakov's offering of 'zevachim' at this time. Note how each event marks the COMPLETION of an important process:

1) The KORBAN PESACH, called a "ZEVACH pesach l-Hashem" (see Shmot 12:27), marks the COMPLETION of the process of Yetziat Mitzrayim. [See Shmot 11:1>12:14. Note also that Chazal include Korban Pesach under the general category of 'shlamim'.]

2) At Ma'amat Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael offer special 'zevachim' as part of the ceremony where they accept the mitzvot: "Moshe wrote down God's commandments, and then, early in the morning, he set up a mizbeiah... and they offered ZEVACHIM, SHLAMIM to God..." (Shmot 24:4-5).

Here we find the COMPLETION and fulfillment of the ultimate purpose of Yetziat Mitzrayim - Bnei Yisrael's readiness to accept God's commandments.

3) On YOM ha-SHMINI, upon the COMPLETION of the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan, Bnei Yisrael offer a special korban 'shlamim':

"And behold on the 8th day, God commanded Moshe [to offer special korbanot] ... and an ox and a ram for a SHLAMIM - liZVOACH - to offer..." (see Vayikra 9:1-4)

As the name 'shlamim' implies ['shaleim' = complete], a ZEVACH SHLAMIM usually implies the completion of an important process. But if we return to Yaakov, what 'process' is being completed with his descent to Egypt? Why does Yaakov offer 'davka' [specifically] ZEVACHIM?!

One could suggest that Yaakov's offering of 'zevachim' relates to an entirely different perspective. However anxious (and fearful) Yaakov might have been prior to his journey to Egypt, he was also very THANKFUL that Yosef is alive (and that he even has the opportunity to visit him). In this regard, these 'zevachim' could be understood as a 'korban TODAH' - a THANKSGIVING offering. [Note that the 'korban TODAH' is a subcategory of 'shlamim' (see Vayikra 7:11-12).]

By offering 'zevachim' at this time, Yaakov may actually be thanking God for re-uniting his family.

Furthermore, considering that the purpose of Yaakov's descent to Egypt was not only to visit Yosef, but also to RE-UNITE his twelve sons, this journey could also be considered the COMPLETION of the 'bechira' process. Without Yosef, the 'bechira' process was incomplete, as a very important 'shevet' (tribe) was missing. Now, by offering 'zevachim', Yaakov thanks God for re-uniting the family and hence COMPLETING the 'bechira' process.

Finally, this interpretation can also explain why the Torah refers to Yaakov as YISRAEL in this pasuk.

As we explained in our shiur on Parshat Vayishlach, the name YISRAEL reflects God's choice of Yaakov as the FINAL stage of the 'bechira' process. In contrast to the previous generations where only one son was chosen, ALL of Yaakov's children have been chosen to become God's special nation. Now, as Yaakov descends to Egypt to re-unite his twelve sons, it is only appropriate that the Torah uses the name YISRAEL.

THE END, AND THE BEGINNING...

Even if we consider these 'zevachim' as a thanksgiving offering (for the completion of the 'bechira' process), we must still explain why Yaakov is fearful at this time. Let's take another look at God's response to Yaakov's korbanot:

"Then God spoke to YISRAEL... Fear not to go down to Egypt, for I will make you there a GREAT NATION. I Myself will go down with you and I Myself will also BRING YOU BACK..." (46:2-4)

God's response adds an entirely new dimension to his departure, a dimension that most likely catches Yaakov totally by surprise: Let's explain:

Yaakov, we explained earlier, may have been planning only a 'short visit' to reunite the family. Yosef was planning for the family to stay for several years to survive the famine. Now, God reveals a totally new plan: Yaakov and family are departing on a journey of several HUNDRED years. They will not return until they have first become a great NATION in the land of Egypt. God Himself brings them down, and there the family is now commanded to remain in Egypt until they emerge as a populous nation. Then, when the proper time comes, God Himself will bring them back.

Hence, when Yaakov goes down to Egypt, not only will the prophetic dreams of Yosef be fulfilled, but so too God's promise to Avraham Avinu at Brit Bein Ha-btarim (see Breishit 15:13-18). The long and difficult process of Yetziat Mitzrayim has begun.

In this manner, God informs Yaakov that although his descent to Egypt involves leaving Eretz Canaan, it does not constitute a breach of the Divine covenant with his family. Rather, it forms a critical stage

in His master plan of transforming Yaakov's family of 'seventy souls' into God's special Nation.

[The fuller meaning of this final 'hitgalut' of Sefer Breishit will be discussed in our introductory shiur to Sefer Shmot.]

FROM "TOLDOT" TO "SHMOT"

To support understanding, we conclude our shiur by noting the 'parshia' that immediately follows this final 'hitgalut' to Yaakov.

After its brief description of the family journey down to Egypt (see 46:5-7), the Torah then devotes a special 'parshia' to the enumeration of the seventy members of Yaakov's family:

"These are the names ["ve-eileh shmot"] of Bnei Yisrael who were coming to Egypt..." (see 46:8)

The header of this special 'parshia' - "ve-eileh SHMOT..." - may be reflective of this conclusion of the 'bechira' process, for it will be from these seventy 'nefesh' (souls) that the Jewish nation will emerge.

Recall that at each stage of the 'bechira' process thus far, Sefer Breishit has always introduced each list of children with the phrase: "ve-eileh toldot". Now, for some reason, the Torah prefers to introduce this list with "ve-eileh shmot". This new phrase may mark the fact that the 'bechira' process is now complete. As such, the Torah presents the chosen family with the word "SHMOT" instead of "TOLADOT".

This observation can also explain why Sefer Shmot begins with this very same phrase "ve-eileh shmot". Note how the opening psukim of Sefer Shmot (see 1:1-4) actually summarize this 'parshia' (i.e. 46:8-27). Furthermore, the first primary topic of Sefer Shmot will be how God fulfills His promise of Brit Bein Ha-Btarim. We will be told of how these seventy 'nefesh' multiply, become a multitude, are enslaved and then how they are finally redeemed.

Even though there remain a few more 'loose ends' in Sefer Breishit (i.e. 46:28->50:26 /e.g. the relationship between the brothers, Yosef and Egypt, etc.), it is from this point in Sefer Breishit that Sefer Shmot will begin. From these seventy souls, God's special Nation will emerge.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. There are several instances in Sefer Breishit where korbanot are offered, most notably the 'olot' offered by Noach (8:20) and Avraham (at the Akeida /see 22:13). We also find many examples of the building of a mizbeiach and calling out in God's Name. Yet, we never find 'zvachim'. Note that in 31:54, 'zevach' refers to a joint feast between Yaakov and Lavan, not a sacrifice to God.

B. HINEINI...

The final 'hitgalut' to Yaakov in Sefer Breishit begins as follows: "Then God spoke to Yisrael in a vision by night saying: YAAKOV YAAKOV, and he answered "HINEINI" (here I am)... Fear not to go down to Egypt..." (see 46:2-3).

The unique style of God's opening statement to Yaakov creates a linguistic parallel pointing us both (A) backward - to the Akeida, and (B) forward - to the burning bush.

(A) "HINEINI" - BACK TO THE AKEIDA

God's response is reminiscent of His opening statement at the Akeida:

"... and God tested Avraham, and called out 'AVRAHAM,' and he answered, 'HINEINI.'" (see 22:1).

Besides symbolizing the ultimate devotion to God, the Akeida narrative also concludes with a Divine oath naming Yitzchak as heir to the earlier covenants and promises God had made with Avraham Avinu. This may explain why in God's reply to Yaakov's korbanot to the 'God of YITZCHAK,' He affirms the deeper purpose for Yaakov's descent to Egypt - the fulfillment of that earlier oath to Avraham Avinu.

(B) HINEINI - FORWARD TO THE BURNING BUSH

Just as we find a linguistic parallel to God's call to Avraham at the Akeida, we find a similar parallel to God's call to Moshe Rabeinu at the burning bush:

"... and God called him from the bush saying: 'MOSHE, MOSHE,' and he answered 'hineini.'" (Shmot 3:4).

However, the significance of God's 'hitgalut' to Moshe at the burning bush extends beyond this linguistic parallel. It is God's FIRST revelation to man since Yaakov's departure from Eretz Canaan! In other words, prophecy 'picks up right where it left off'!

Note the comparison between these two revelations, clearly suggesting a conceptual relationship between them:

YAAKOV (leaving Canaan) (Breishit 46:2-4)	MOSHE (at the burning bush) (Shmot 3:4-8)
God called to Yisrael in a vision: YAAKOV, YAAKOV, va-yomer hineini	God called out to Moshe: MOSHE, MOSHE, va-yomer hineini
And he said:	And he said:
I am the God of your father...	I am the God of your father...
Do not fear going down to Egypt for I will make you there a great Nation....	I have seen the suffering of My People in Egypt and I have heard their crying...
I will go DOWN with you to Egypt and I will surely GO UP with you..	I have come DOWN to rescue them from Egypt in order to BRING YOU UP from that Land to the Land flowing with...

[It is recommended that you compare these psukim in the original Hebrew.]

Just as the linguistic parallel is obvious, so is the thematic parallel. At God's 'hitgalut' to Moshe (at the burning bush), He instructs Moshe to inform Bnei Yisrael that God has come to fulfill the covenant of Brit Bein Ha-Btarim, to bring them out of bondage, establish them as a sovereign Nation and bring them to the Promised Land.

C. The emotional confrontation between Yehuda and Yosef at the beginning of this week's Parsha is symbolic of future struggles between shevet Yehuda and shevet Yosef.

1. Note that in this week's parsha they fight over Binyamin. How do the 'nachalot' of the shvatim represent this struggle?
2. Relate this to the location of the Mikdash in the "nachala" of Binyamin, as well as to Yehoshua 18:11.
3. Relate this to the civil war waged against Binyamin, as described in chapter 20 of Sefer Shoftim.

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND SOURCES

Yosef's plan:

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, in his commentary, "Oznayim La-Torah", explains Yosef's selection of Goshen as his family's home in Egypt as further evidence of his intention that they would come to Egypt only temporarily. He cited earlier sources to the effect that Goshen sat on the border between Egypt and Eretz Canaan, such that his family would easily return home after the famine.

Additionally, Yosef may have ideally preferred to send food packages to his family in Canaan rather than having them relocate in Egypt. Rav Chayim Dov Rabinowitz, in his "Da'at Sofrim", suggests that for political reasons, Pharaoh adamantly insisted that Yosef's family join him in Egypt rather than shipping food. Quite reasonably, the king feared Yosef's allegiance to another country; to retain his position as viceroy, Yosef had to sever any ties with his former country and direct all his loyalty to his kingdom. Therefore, Pharaoh ordered Yosef to bring his family to Egypt, rather than sending them food. This explains the

king's somewhat suspicious enthusiasm and generosity upon hearing of the arrival of Yosef's brothers (45:16-20).

Yaakov's plan:

Rav Sorotzkin claims, as we did in the shiur, that Yaakov's stopover in Be'er Sheva reflects his ambivalence towards his move to Egypt. Only he takes this ambivalence one step further: in his heart-of-hearts, Yaakov hoped that God would forbid his descent to Egypt just as he had ordered Yitzchak not to continue to Egypt to escape the famine. Though this speculation appears to have little basis in the text, the fact that we find such a suggestion by a prominent commentator underscores Yaakov's fear of moving to Egypt.

[See also Abarbanel, who claims that Yaakov planned simply to see Yosef and return home immediately.]

An even more extreme view is posited by the Netziv (in his "Ha-amek Davar"). He suggests that Yaakov had no intention of going to Egypt at this point. This is how the Netziv understands Yaakov's comment, "It is great - my son Yosef is alive; I will go and see him before I die" (45:28). Yaakov here declares that he is satisfied with the knowledge that Yosef is still alive; he will therefore not go to Egypt immediately, but rather at some point before his death. The news regarding Yosef gives Yaakov a renewed revitalization ("and the spirit of their father Yaakov lived" - 45:27), which prompted him to move and settle in Be'er Sheva, the place where his father, Yitzchak, had managed to survive harsh famine conditions with prosperity. He thus offers sacrifices to "the God of Yitzchak", asking for assistance in braving the drought. That night, however, Hashem appears to Yaakov and informs him of the Divine plan, by which Yaakov must continue on to Egypt. The Da'at Sofrim suggests such a notion, as well, building on the pasuk, "Va-yakam Yaakov mi-Be'er Sheva" - Yaakov 'picked himself up' from Be'er Sheva. Like the Netziv, the Da'at Sofrim claims that Yaakov had originally planned to settle in Be'er Sheva, and only after Hashem told him to continue on to Egypt did he 'pick himself up' and go.

Startling as this theory may sound, a Midrash familiar to all of us seems to state this explicitly. We recite from the Haggadah, "He [Yaakov] descended to Egypt - [he was] forced [to do so], by the Divine word" ("Va-yered Mitzrayim - annus al pi ha-dibbur"). Apparently, Yaakov did not want to move to Egypt; he did so only to obey Hashem's commandment. [The conventional understanding, that Yaakov decided to move to Egypt on his own, would presumably read this Midrash to mean that Yaakov would not have decided to relocate in Egypt if Hashem hadn't placed him in a situation warranting this move. By bringing famine and arranging that Yosef could provide food for Yaakov and his family in Egypt, Hashem indirectly 'forced' Yaakov to move there.]

On the opposite end of the spectrum, we find several mefarshim who claim that Yaakov in fact knew that his move to Egypt marked the beginning of the exile. Most prominently, the Ramban claims that Yaakov here appeals to the 'midat ha-din' (Hashem's attribute of justice), knowing that the exile has now begun. The Chizkuni concurs, explaining this as the source of Yaakov's fear.

Yaakov's Fear

The Abarbanel lists several reasons as to why Yaakov experienced fear at this point, and his list encompasses most of the explanations offered by other commentators (including that which we mentioned in the shiur):

- a) Ever since Avraham's brit mila and akeidat Yitzchak, Avraham's descendants were guaranteed special "hashgacha elyonah" (supreme Divine protection) only in Eretz Canaan. Yaakov thus feared the loss of this 'hashgacha' as he descended to Egypt.
- b) Yaakov also worried about maintaining his 'nevu'a' in Egypt. Hashem therefore guarantees him, "I will go down with you to Egypt...".

- c) The relationship between his family and the Egyptians also concerned Yaakov. He feared that the Egyptians would kill his descendants in an effort to keep their numbers low - which is precisely what happens in Parshat Shemot.
- d) As Rashi, the Akeidat Yitzchak and others commentators, Yaakov very much wanted to be buried in his family plot in Chevron.
- e) Surprisingly, the Abarbanel claims that Yaakov was also concerned about Yosef; if Yosef would die in his lifetime, Yaakov's immense joy would suddenly turn to anguish.
- f) Finally, Yaakov worried about his descendants' eventual return to Eretz Canaan. He feared that they may assimilate permanently within Egyptian society and remain there forever. The possibility that Yaakov feared his descendants' assimilation appears in several other sources, including the Akeidat Yitzchak and the Netziv's Ha-amek Davar.

One source of fear not mentioned by the Abarbanel, but to which we alluded in the shiur, is raised by the Alshich: that the special brachot promised to the avot would perhaps be fulfilled only in Eretz Canaan. This is why Yaakov needed reassurance prior to his first departure from Canaan, and this is why he is afraid in Parshat Vayigash.

The Stopover in Be'er Sheva:

Bereishit Rabba 68 and Rabbenu Bachye state that when Yaakov Avinu left Eretz Yisrael the first time, when fleeing from his brother Esav, he went to Be'er Sheva to ask Hashem permission. It stands to reason that they would explain Yaakov's stopover in our parsha in the same vein, especially in light of the association drawn by the Ramban between these two journeys. Sure enough, the Midrash Hagadol writes this explicitly in our context, an approach taken as well by Rabbeinu Yosef Bechor Shor and the Abarbanel.

Returning to the Ramban's parallel between Yaakov's trip to Egypt here and his escape from Canaan to Charan in Parshat Vayetze, both the Meshech Chochma and the Netziv note an additional point of comparison. In both instances, Hashem appears to Yaakov specifically in a nighttime dream, symbolizing His Providence even in the darkness of exile.

The 'zevachim':

The various explanations given in the shiur as to the purpose of Yaakov's 'zevachim' appear in Midrashim and the works of the mefarshim. Two sources identify this sacrifice as a korban todah - a thanksgiving offering. The Torah Sheleimah quotes a Midrash that explains these 'zevachim' as a thanksgiving offering expressing gratitude over the fact that Yosef is still alive. The Tur, in his "Peirush Ha-aroch" (as opposed to his brief "Ba'al Haturim" printed in the Mikra'ot Gedolot) explains this sacrifice as a thanksgiving offering over his having arrived safely in Be'er Sheva.

Our explanation, that this sacrifice marks the end of the 'bechira' process, may be what Reish Lakish meant in Bereishit Rabbah 94 when he said, "al berit ha-shvatim hikriv" - "He offered sacrifices for the covenant of the tribes". Having discovered that Hashem had, in fact, fulfilled the promise that all of Yaakov's children will form His special nation, Yaakov offers a thanksgiving offering.

OH RNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Nuclear Fusion

“And you, son of man, take to yourself one piece of wood and write upon it 'For Yehuda and the Children of Israel, his associates,' and take another piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yosef, the stem of Ephraim and the whole House of Israel, his associates.'” (Haftarah, Yechezkel 33:16)

One of the fascinating facets of the A-bomb story is that the vast majority of the players were Jews. Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity paved the way for investigation into nuclear fission. In 1939 he urged President Roosevelt to build an atomic bomb before Nazi Germany did so. Leo Szilard (1898-1964), born in Budapest, helped Italian Enrico Fermi (married to a Jew) conduct the first controlled nuclear chain reaction. Niels Bohr (1885-1962) was the first to apply quantum theory to explain nuclear structure. Born in Denmark to a Christian father and Jewish mother, Bohr won a Nobel Prize in 1922, and narrowly escaped Denmark in 1943, pursued by the Nazis. He worked on the Manhattan Project with his son Aage. Lise Meitner (1878-1968) was born in Vienna and became a pioneer of research into nuclear fission. She analyzed her results with her nephew, Otto Frisch. Walter Zinn and Fermi directed the first controlled nuclear chain reaction in 1942 at the University of Chicago. Hungarian-born Edward Teller led the US team that developed the first hydrogen bomb. And the list goes on.

But maybe the most fascinating of the all those who built the atom bomb was J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967), the US-born theoretical physicist who was chosen to direct the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos in 1942. It was his team that, on July 16,

1945 exploded the world's first atomic bomb. Three months later he resigned as project director and opposed development of the H-bomb. Oppenheimer was accused of being a Communist, he was vilified in public, and, although exonerated, the experience broke him. Oppenheimer came from a wealthy, assimilated New York Jewish family. He was an aesthete, an intellectual and a philosopher. His colleague I. I. Rabi once wrote about him:

“He reminded me very much of a boyhood friend about whom someone said that he couldn't make up his mind whether to be president of the B'nai B'rith or the Knights of Columbus. Perhaps he really wanted to be both, simultaneously. Oppenheimer wanted every experience. In that sense, he never focused. My own feeling is that if he had studied the Talmud and Hebrew, rather than Sanskrit, he would have been a much greater physicist.” (From “Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb” by Richard Rhodes)

Commenting on this week's Haftara, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch bewails the continuing strife between the "Ephraim" Jew and the "Yehuda" Jew. The "Ephraim" Jew, "by his systematic disavowal of the Divine Torah, seeks salvation in political greatness and tries to find a substitute for the lack of protection from G-d by vain efforts to obtain alliance with the nations, among whom it hopes to 'blossom out in brotherhood' (Hoshea 23:15) by complete

assimilation. But, for giving up all Jewishness, he only experiences contempt and repulsion."

On the other hand, "Yehuda, who in principle certainly acknowledges Hashem as its G-d... is still far off from unreserved trust in G-d." Rabbi Hirsch criticizes the "Yehuda" Jew for failing to apply the same standards in his relation with his fellow man as he does with regard to his *kashrut*.

"And you, son of man, take to yourself one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yehuda and the Children of Israel his associates,' and take another piece of wood and write

upon it, 'For Yosef, the stem of Ephraim and the whole House of Israel, his associates.' And bring them near... and they will become united to one union in your hand."

The two chips of wood representing the two tribes will eventually be united, not in a watered-down compromise but in a genuine elevation "in an everlasting faithfulness towards G-d."

When we look at our divided nation, how we long for that "nuclear fusion" that will bathe the whole world in Hashem's light!

PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived.

Yaakov, together with all his family and possessions, sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual

consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation although they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption.

The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests, who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Pesachim 37-43

What are “Bitter Herbs”?

Rav Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan: “Why are the ancient Egyptians compared to *maror*? (In the verse that states, “Va’yimarraru [the Egyptians embittered their [the Bnei Yisrael’s] lives.” (Shemot 1:14 - Rashi) To teach that just as the Egyptians were “soft” at first (they paid for the Jewish labor as their hired workers - Rashi) and “hard” at the end (they made the Bnei Yisrael do back-breaking labor without pay - Rashi), so too is the *maror* [vegetable for the mitzvah of *maror*] “soft” at the beginning and “hard” (at the end (with time, its stalk becomes stiff like wood).”

Although the *mishna* lists five different vegetables that are suitable to eat at the Pesach Seder to fulfill the mitzvah of eating *maror* (“bitter herbs”), the halacha is stated by Rabbi Oshia in the *gemara*: “The mitzvah is to use *chazeret* for *maror*.” (*Chazeret*, although translated as horseradish in Modern Hebrew, in the context of Rabbi Oshia’s halachic statement it is traditionally understood to be Romaine lettuce. *Chazeret* is called *litige* in Rashi’s commentary here, which sounds to my ear like “lettuce.”) This ruling by Rabbi Oshia is the source for the widespread practice to eat Romaine lettuce – bug-free of course! – to fulfill the mitzvah of *maror*, which is a Rabbinic mitzvah nowadays, although it was a Torah mitzvah at the time of the Beit Hamikdash.

Why is it that of all the candidates listed in the *mishna*, the mitzvah of choice for *maror* is *chazeret*? One reason is based on the technical style of the *mishna*, that since *chazeret* is mentioned at the top of the list, it is the preferred vegetable to use for the mitzvah of *maror*. (Aruch Hashulchan) However, Rashi writes that two reasons for choosing *chazeret* for *maror* are taught in our *sugya*.

Rashi cites that one reason for using *chazeret* is hinted to in the teaching of Rav Shmuel bar Nachmani in the name of Rabbi Yonatan regarding the changing nature of *maror* with time. Apparently, *chazeret* best fits the description of a vegetable that starts soft and ends hard. (Although Rashi explains “hard” to mean “hard like wood,” other commentaries explain it in the context of the verse in terms of bitterness: It is a vegetable that begins its growth as being a sweet vegetable, but as it stays longer in the ground, and especially if it stays “too long,” it becomes less sweet and can even become bitter.)

Rashi explains that the other reason for choosing *chazeret* is based on the statement of Rava: “*Chazeret* is what we call *chasa* (which means ‘mercy’), and we use it as *maror* as a reminder and sign that Hashem had *mercy* on us in taking us out of the slavery of Egypt (Rashi).”

Our *sugya* takes a step back, so to speak, and Rabbi Rachumi examines why it is, in fact, that *maror* refers to a bitter herb, as taught in the *mishna* – and does not refer to something else. He suggested other bitter items as possibilities, and each time Rava explained why those other objects would not qualify as the required *maror*.

“Why not the bitter bile of a fish?” Abaye: “Because *maror* is connected to *matzah* in the verse, and just as [the grain for] *matzah* grows from the ground, so too must *maror* grow from the ground.” This would disqualify fish bile since it does not grow from the ground.

“Why not ‘*hirduf*,’ the bitter wood of a type of tree that Moshe Rabbeinu used in sweetening the bitter waters for the Bnei Yisrael at a place called Marah?” Rashi cites *Chazal*’s words that this was a “miracle inside a miracle,” being that the *bitter* waters were *sweetened* by adding to them *bitter* wood from a tree. Abayei answers this question as well: “Just as matzah is made from grain that must be planted each year, so too must *maror* be a vegetable that requires yearly planting.” This excludes wood of a *hirduf* tree, since a tree is planted “once and done.” (Apparently Rabbi Rachumi thought that eating *maror* could actually mean eating wood from a tree and not eating actual “food” – not unlike certain personalities promoting the consumption of certain tree bark for good nutrition in the ’70s as the “health food movement” began to gain steam in the States, especially in California where I was living at the time. Or he perhaps thought that that it could be made edible by cooking or some other processing method.)

And for Rabbi Rachumi’s third suggestion: “What about a bitter vegetable called *harzifo* (a type of bitter vegetable that is poisonous to animals – Rashi)?” Abayei: “Just as matzah is something which may be bought in Jerusalem with *ma’aser sheini* money, so too does *maror* need to be something which is permitted to be purchased with *ma’aser sheini* funds.” This excludes *harzifo* since it is not considered “food.” Only proper food may be bought in Jerusalem with *ma’aser sheini* money, a halacha that is taught by *Chazal* as being based on a verse in the Torah, as Rashi explains. (Perhaps Rabbi Rachumi thought that this was indeed considered as food, although people were not likely to eat it since it was poisonous to animals.)

The bottom line: *Maror* should be Romaine lettuce although it is not actually bitter to eat. Some authorities recommend eating the lettuce with a small amount of ground horseradish, for the “bitter experience.” But, by no means should one try eating a *k’zayit* measure (approximately 30 grams) of horseradish without lettuce – since it is dangerous. (Aruch Hashulchan) The mitzvahs of the Torah are ways of pleasantness and mitzvahs of life!

• *Pesachim 39a*

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Q & A

VAYIGASH

Questions

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers, "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said, "Don't dispute on the way"?
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt"?
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanit?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham. Alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *lashon hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.

10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave *Eretz Canaan*.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in *Eretz Canaan*.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - Dina bat Yaakov.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the family.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn't see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Vayigash: Coming Close

The Torah (Gen. 44:18) uses the word *vayigash* ("and he approached") when reporting that Judah "approached" the Egyptian viceroy to plead for Benjamin's release. In the Hebrew language there are two different words that denote "coming closer": *gishah* (from whence *vayigash* is derived) and *kiruv*. The latter word — *kiruv* — is used colloquially in the sense of "community outreach" because it entails bringing people "closer" to G-d and religion. If *kiruv* means "coming closer" just like *gishah* does, then why does the Torah specifically use a conjugation of *gishah* to describe Judah approaching the viceroy instead of a cognate of *kiruv*? We will see in this essay that the two terms in question are not actually complete synonyms, and are not necessarily interchangeable. Once we better appreciate the nuances connoted by *gishah* and *kiruv*, then we can see why it says *vayigash* about Judah.

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Shapira-Frankfurter (1743-1826), who was Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's great-uncle, explains that *gishah* implies approaching with trepidation, such as when one approaches a king or a dignitary. With this in mind, he accounts for an inconsistency in the Bible's wording: When a person approaches a judge for adjudication, the verb used is a conjugation of *gishah* (Deut. 25:1), yet when G-d says that He will approach us to judge us, the Bible uses a cognate of *kiruv* (Mal. 3:5). When a person appears before a judge, he does so with trepidation, and therefore the Bible uses a cognate of *gishah*, but when G-d approaches us for judgement, He does not hesitate nor does He fear us, and so the word *kiruv* is more appropriate. It is also for this reason that when Abraham "approached" G-d to dispute His decision to

destroy Sodom, the Torah uses the verb *vayigash* (Gen. 18:23).

The Malbim similarly explains that *gishah* implies "coming close" to something that one would otherwise be scared to approach or would be in awe of. *Gishah* is most appropriate when there is otherwise a power imbalance between the party who is approaching and the party whom one approaches. (The case of Judah and Joseph is a perfect example of this.) On the other hand, *kiruv* implies a situation of two equals, with one person simply coming closer to the other.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) offers another way of spelling out the difference between *gishah* and *kiruv*. *Kiruv* implies "approaching" while one is still on the way, but *gishah* implies the completion of an "approach" (i.e. one has already come *as close as possible* and cannot "approach" any further). Thus, *kiruv* means "coming closer," while *gishah* actually means "nearing as close as possible." The same approach is taken up by Rabb Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935), who offers various proof-texts from the Bible to support this understanding.

To illustrate this dynamic, Rabbi Pappenheim cites a verse that uses both words together: "And he [the donor] brings it [the meal-offering] closer to the Kohen (*hikriyah*), and he [the Kohen] brings it close (*higishah*) to the altar" (Lev. 2:8). In this verse, the Torah uses both a cognate of *kiruv* and a cognate of *gishah*. Since the donor's ultimate goal is to offer the sacrifice at the altar, when he brings it to the Kohen, this act brings it *closer* to the altar but it still has a way to go. Therefore, the Torah uses a *kiruv*-based word. Subsequently, when the Kohen actually brings the offering to the altar, he reaches the donor's goal by bringing it *as close as possible* to

the altar — so here a conjugation of *gishah* is most appropriate.

Rabbi Pappenheim traces the term *gishah* to the biteral root GIMMEL-SHIN, which refers to such “closeness” that the parties involved are actually “touching.” For example, when a blind man is said to grope about in an attempt to touch things that he cannot see, the Bible uses the word *nigshashah* (Isa. 59:10). Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) adds that since *gishah* denotes coming as close as possible, the term also came to denote “touch” or “direct contact” between two parties. Thus, the term for an ox “goring” in Targum Yerushalmi (Ex. 21:25) is *yigash* (literally, “impacting”). Similarly, when a boat is in shallow waters such that its bottom drags along on the seabed, this is called *goshesh* (*Bava Kama* 116b and *Bava Metzia* 79b), a clear reference to the direct contact between the boat and the floor.

In the Bible, a *gush* of dirt (Iyov 7:50) refers to a clump or cluster of dirt whose components are all “closely compact” together. Rabbi Pappenheim theorizes that perhaps the Land of Goshen got its name from the fact that that fertile area had much compact dirt, as opposed to the rest of Egypt, which was sandier.

From this, Rabbi Pappenheim argues that the term *geshem* (in Medieval Hebrew) came to refer to any solid object whose particles are tightly bound together. (Hence, *gashmiut* refers to “physicality”.) He also explains that *geshem* in the sense of “rain” is related to this core meaning because *geshem* refers specifically to when thick rain drops fall as the result of a higher concentration of water in the rain clouds. (Interestingly, Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh of Carpentras writes in *Ohalei Yehuda* that *geshem*, “rain,” is related to the word *gishah*, alluding to the fact that separate drops of rain never “approach” each other as they fall from the sky.)

Using Rabbi Pappenheim’s discussion as his point of departure, Rabbi Mecklenburg writes that while *gishah* refers specifically to physical closeness, *kiruv* implies a more abstract “meeting of minds” than physically coming together. He explains that when

the Torah mentions a litigant “approaching” (*nikrav*) the court (Ex. 22:7), this refers to the litigant altering his mindset to prepare himself to stand before a judge. It does not refer to the physical act of approaching the bench. Similarly, the term *korban* (commonly translated as “ritual sacrifice” or “offering”) refers to “coming closer” to G-d by seeking to align one’s own will with His. The closeness of a *korban* certainly cannot refer to “coming closer” to Him in a physical sense, because He is incorporeal and thus has no physical body to which one can approach.

Following this logic, it seems that when Judah approached Joseph, the Egyptian viceroy, he came extremely close to Joseph’s person — perhaps even in a threatening way, as is implied by certain Midrashic sources. Judah did not just “approach” Joseph (*kiruv*). Rather, he came up close and personal (*vayigash*).

As Nachmanides (in his objections to Maimonides’ *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Negative Commandment #353) correctly notes, both terms for “closeness” are also used in the Bible to imply intimacy (*kiruv* in Deut. 22:14, Isa. 8:3; and *gishah* in Ex. 19:15). However, Rabbi Mecklenburg explains that when the Torah forbids “coming close” to a woman whom one is forbidden from marrying, it uses the term *kiruv* (Lev. 18:6) because that implies that simply coming “closer” to the woman is forbidden (i.e. even without actually engaging in full intimacy, which would rather be termed *gishah* — “coming as close as possible”). As Rabbi Mecklenburg puts it, the Torah’s word choice serves as Maimonides’ source for ruling that Biblical law already forbids hugging or kissing such a woman.

That said, Rabbi Mecklenburg admits that even though *kiruv* implies coming “closer” without coming “closest,” that term can still sometimes serve as a stand-in for one’s ultimate goal in a borrowed sense. Meaning, the Bible sometimes uses conjugations of the *kiruv*-verb to mean “approaching” food *in order to eat it* (Lev. 22:3), “approaching” a person *in order to damage him* (Ps. 32:9), or “approaching” a woman *in order to engage in intimacy* (Gen. 20:4).

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Lev. 21:17) takes the opposite approach. He explains that *kiruv* refers to “absolute nearness,” the antonym of *richuk* (“absolute farness”). In that way, *karov* (“near”) simply refers to the mathematical difference between the coordinates of one location versus another, and the act of *kiruv* simply refers to bridging that distance. Rabbi Hirsch notes that the term *kiruv* in the Bible applies to animals as well as to people, because that verb simply denotes decreasing the distance between two spatial points.

By contrast, Rabbi Hirsch explains that cognates of *gishah* appear in the Bible only in respect to human beings. This is because *gishah* does not simply denote closing a distance, but it represents a step forward in reaching a specific goal. Only human beings have the independent ability to think and make decisions for themselves, so only they can be said to engage in *gishah* when they “approach” something/someone to further their goals (see also

Abarbanel’s commentary to Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed* 1:18).

In line with Rabbi Hirsch’s take on this, it seems that when Judah “approached” Joseph, he did so very deliberately, as he was trying to convey a certain message. His act of approaching Joseph was not simply intended to bring himself physically closer to where Joseph was, but to go one step further in his campaign for Benjamin’s release.

Interestingly, all of these nuances are lost in Aramaic, as the Targum typically renders cognates of both *gishah* (e.g., Gen. 18:23, 33:6, 44:18) and *kiruv* (e.g., Gen. 20:4, Ex. 14:10, Lev. 1:2) as cognates of *kiruv*. This shows us that the mystique and secrets of the Hebrew language remain tied to the Holy Tongue, and do not necessarily show up elsewhere.

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

@ OHR –The students alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

The Beit Midrash on Holiday

We firmly believe in *Hashgacha Pratis*, Divine Providence. From the path taken by the ant gathering his food for the winter, to the most cataclysmic earth-shaking events, nothing in the world happens unless Hashem wills it to happen. As *Bnei Torah*, our job is to notice and to learn. The Coronavirus pandemic is raging around the world, and Israel was not granted an exemption. I would not claim to truly understand the reasons for anything, but I can, at least, observe.

The Yeshiva, since before last Purim has been in a situation of *tzimtzum* that adds a protective element of confinement. The students have been confined to capsules of forty, and restricted in their movements, both outside the Yeshiva and within its walls. To say that it has been a challenge would be a gross understatement.

When one student in a capsule tested positive for coronavirus, the whole program had to go into quarantine. And the restrictions then became even more confining. Each apartment, consisting of ten or so students, was made to quarantine by itself for fourteen days, with all the learning, *shiurim* via Zoom, exercise and meals taking place in the close quarters of their bedrooms.

One might think that under such difficult conditions, harmony among the roommates and within the program would break down, raw emotions emerging at every little irritation. At least that is what I would have thought. And so it gives me great pleasure to relate to you the following story.

After a few students in the Beit Midrash program (which is a capsule) tested positive shortly after Succot, all members of the program were quarantined for fourteen days. During this period, a few of the students were not feeling well and the Yeshiva arranged for *Magen David Adom* to come to test the entire group. Of the thirty-two who were in the program, twenty-six of them tested positive. And so another period of quarantine began.

When they finally ended their quarantine after almost a month and were now able to leave their rooms and return to the Beit Midrash – they were elated! Their *rabbeim* wanted to do more for them and organized for them a three-day trip to the northern part of Israel.

According to the rules of the Health Ministry, the capsule had to stay together and not mix with any other group. They needed a place to rent that would accommodate them exclusively. A facility was located in Sdei Eliezer, a settlement north of Rosh Pina. The owner was hesitant at first because he had just hosted another institution the week before and they were extremely rowdy, disturbing the neighbors and incurring visits by the police. The owner told Rabbi Uriel Goodwin, who had organized the trip, that he should find another place. He had decided that the absolute maximum number of young men who could be controlled on his estate was twenty-five. The Ohr Somayach group was thirty-seven, including the *rabbeim* and the bus driver. Rabbi Goodwin assured the owner that he would vouch for the good behavior of the students, and the owner reluctantly relented – but insisted on strict rules for the pool use and the maximum noise level.

The property is beautiful. It has acres of grassy land, a basketball court, a soccer pitch, a very large swimming pool and a fruit orchard with pomegranates, tangerines, grapefruits and pomelos. With permission of the owner, they took *terumah* and *maaserot* on the ripe fruit with a *beracha* – a first for many of them. They disposed of the *terumah* appropriately and gave the *maaser rishon* to a *Levi*.

The weather for all three days was quite warm. They really enjoyed the swimming pool and the sports facilities, while also setting aside fixed times for *davening* and learning Torah.

After their first day at the estate, the owner came over to Rabbi Goodwin and told him: “I’ve never seen *bochrim* (yeshiva students) like your *bochrim*. They have real *derekh eretz* (good manners and good character). They speak beautifully to one another. They are very refined. They even play sports like *Bnei Torah*. In fact, I’m so impressed that I am going to make you an offer that you won’t believe. It’s a *zechus* (merit) for me to have them on my property. I’d love you all to stay another day for free.”

On the evening of the second day, after a *schmooze* and a *siyum*, they had a barbecue, a bonfire and a *kumsitz* with music, singing and telling stories of our great and righteous ancestors. The owner joyously participated. He again repeated his offer, this time with even more earnestness. The group stayed for an additional afternoon. They then continued on to Amuka, where they *davened* for *shiduchim*, and then returned home to the Yeshiva in *Yerushalayim*.

It is clear to me that their experience during their quarantines only increased their love and respect for one another, and created a sense of unity that can only be admired and emulated. One might perhaps say that if this alone was the purpose of their group bout of coronavirus – it was well worth it.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

LEARNING TORAH (PART 1)

LIFE IS SHORT, AND IT IS UP TO YOU TO MAKE IT SWEET!

(SARAH LOUISE DELANY)

“Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to occupy ourselves with words of the Torah. Please, Hashem, our G-d, sweeten the words of Your Torah in our mouth and in the mouth of Your people, the family of Israel. May we and our offspring and the offspring of Your people, the House of Israel, all of us, know Your Name and study Your Torah for its own sake. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who teaches Torah to His people, Israel.”

The word that the blessing uses in Hebrew for “being occupied” (in learning Torah) is “la’asok.” Rabbi David HaLevi Segal, known as the Turei Zahav (or the *Taz* for short) after his seminal work on the Code of Jewish Law, and one of the most eminent authorities in sixteenth century Poland, explains that the word “la’asok” carries with it the inference that it is something that requires much toil to achieve. Due to its incomparable depth and breadth, learning Torah in a comprehensive and thorough fashion requires extraordinary levels of concentration and an intensity that is second to none. The wording of the blessing is teaching us that learning Torah successfully requires an ability to block out the countless distractions that are forever encroaching on our lives. The word “la’asok” emphasizes that it is not easy to reach such exalted levels. But the word “la’asok” is also teaching us that such singular focus is a *requirement* for reaching proficiency in understanding Torah.

The essential concept of toiling over Torah study can be seen in G-d commanding us to toil over it “day and night.” (Joshua 1:8) The Maharal of Prague explains that the Torah is the essence of the Creation, and one therefore should be careful to use

one’s time wisely for the study of Torah – and not for superfluous matters.

Without both an overwhelming desire to learn Torah, and the power to block out every single extraneous distraction, there is no way that a person can reach the kind of levels of scholarship that create the potential for becoming an acknowledged Torah leader. Binyamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, related that on several occasions he came to discuss extremely weighty and sensitive matters with Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef (1920-2013), one of the greatest Torah authorities in the generation. Among many other things, Rabbi Yosef was renowned for becoming so engrossed in his studies that he was completely unaware of what was happening around him. Mr. Netanyahu, who was always accompanied by close aides and a significant security contingent that was always the cause of much tumult, said that when they arrived, they would wait until Rabbi Yosef became aware that he was there. Sometimes it would take a few minutes, and, often, much longer, but the Prime Minister would not interrupt the Rabbi’s studies because he felt that Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef was dealing with the past, present and future of the Jewish People as he learned the precious Torah!

To be continued.....

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Tears – Then and Now

The long-awaited reunion between Yaakov and Yosef is most unusual in one regard: Yosef cries, but Yaakov does not. Yaakov had ceased to weep, but Yosef continued to weep while Yaakov was talking with him.

Throughout all of the years of Yosef's absence, Yaakov was overcome with mourning. The few sentences recorded in the Torah during this time show the grief that occupied his heart and mind. His emotions were spent. Yosef, on the other hand, had led a most eventful life in Egypt. He does not mourn his loss. In fact, in the naming of his first child, Yosef evidences a certain gratitude for his losses.

Yosef names his first child *Menasheh* – “for G-d has ‘nashani’ all of my troubles and all of my father’s house.” This verse is ordinarily translated as “G-d made me *forget* all my trouble and all of my father’s house.” But Rav Hirsch shudders at the suggestion that Yosef is grateful for the ability to forget his aged father and his entire father’s family. That rendition would force us to conclude that Yosef was a heartless man who took no interest in his father’s fate. Instead, Rav Hirsch understands the word as its alternate meaning – to be a creditor – rendering the statement as “G-d has turned all of my trouble and all of my father’s household into my creditors.” What had seemed to be misfortune and tragedy, G-d turned into an instrument to shape my happiness, so that I find myself deeply indebted to my trouble and to my family.

This is the attitude that accompanies Yosef throughout his travails in Egypt, and upon the first opportunity he expresses this to his brothers: “*Do not be troubled... that you sold me here, for G-d sent me ahead of you, to preserve life... G-d sent me ahead of you to establish for you a remnant in the land, to preserve it for you, for your great deliverance. So it was not you who sent me here but G-d! And He has appointed me as a father to Pharaoh, master of his entire household and ruler of the whole land of Egypt.*” (Gen. 45:5-8)

But here we see Yosef's pent up sadness pouring out – he surrenders completely to the pain of separation for his father. Only now, in his father's embrace, did he feel all the pain of the separation, reliving the twenty years that had already passed.

- Sources: Commentary Bereishet 46:29; 41:51

*Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet
Harmony of a Nation – Overcoming Baseless Hatred
by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh https://ohr.edu/Sinat_Chinam.pdf*

THE RARE CALENDAR PHENOMENA OF 5781

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

(Part 8 of a new mini-series)

5781 is a year that is chock-full of rare calendar phenomena that we will *iyH* be witnessing, or, more accurately, taking an active part in. Let us continue exploring what is in store for us.

No Shabbat-Rosh Chodesh Haftarah?

An interesting issue that will arise is that for most of world Jewry, the special haftarah for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh will not be read during the entirety of 5781, notwithstanding that Shabbat Rosh Chodesh technically occurs three times this year. The first Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, technically Rosh Chodesh Tishrei, was Rosh Hashana, which as the *Yom HaDin* trumps anything Rosh Chodesh-related (except for a brief, perfunctory mention of the Rosh Chodesh offerings in *Mussaf*). The second Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, Rosh Chodesh Adar, will be *Parshat Shekalim*, which, as one of the *Arba Parshiyot*, knocks off any other haftarah. Yet, the third occurrence of Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, on Rosh Chodesh Av, is when it gets interesting.

As we know, most haftarahs share some similarity with at least one core concept that is present in the Torah reading. The Gemara in *Masechet Megillah* discusses the proper haftarah readings for the various holidays throughout the year. The Gemara states that whenever Rosh Chodesh falls out on Shabbat, a special haftarah is read: *Hashamayim Kisi*, as it mentions both the topics of Shabbat and of Rosh Chodesh.

Head-To-Head Haftarahs

Our dilemma arises when that rule goes head-to-head with another rule. The *Pesikta* (an early Midrash cited by many early authorities including *Tosafot* and the *Abudraham*) continues the teachings of *Chazal* as to the proper haftarah readings, starting with the Fast of *Shiva Assur B'Tammuz*.

During the ‘Three Weeks’ from 17th of Tammuz until Tisha B’Av, we read ‘*Tilasa D’Paranusa*,’ ‘The Three Readings of Misfortune.’ After Tisha B’Av, starting with *Shabbat Nachamu*, dubbed so due to its haftarah being *Nachamu Nachamu Ami*, until Rosh Hashana, there are ‘*Shiva D’Nechemta*’ –

‘Seven Haftarahs of Consolation’ are read. This is followed by a reading of *Teshuva* during the Shabbat between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, aptly named ‘*Shabbat Shuva*’ for its repentance-themed haftarah that begins with ‘*Shuva Yisrael*.’ The *Abudraham* and *Rabbeinu Tam* both conclude that these special haftarah readings are so important that they are never pushed off!

The \$64,000 question is: What happens when Rosh Chodesh Av falls out on Shabbat? Which ruling trumps which? Do we follow the *Gemara* or the *Pesikta*? Do we stick with the ‘*Tilasa D’Paranusa*’ or do we go with the special Rosh Chodesh reading?

The answer is that there is no easy answer! The *Beit Yosef* writes that the main halachah follows the *Abudraham*, as he was considered the expert in these topics. Consequently, in the *Shulchan Aruch* he only mentions that during the “Three Weeks,” the ‘*Tilasa D’Paranusa*’ haftarahs are read. Hence, on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Av, the Sefardic custom is to read only the regularly scheduled haftarah of “Misfortune” – *Shimu* (along with the first and last verse of *Hashamayim Kisi*).

Yet, figuring out the Ashkenazic *minhag* is not so simple. Aside from this being a divergence of *minhag* between the cities of Prague and Posen, as well as a halachic dispute among the *Rishonim*, it is also a *machloket* between *Tosafot* in different *Masechtot* (*Pesachim* vs. *Megillah*). And, although several *Poskim* conclude that whichever of the two haftarahs is read is fine, nevertheless, the majority consensus seems to be that the *minhag* to read *Shimu* is most prevalent, following the *Mishnah Berurah*’s citing of the *Vilna Gaon*’s position as the final word on the matter. Accordingly, to most of the world, the special Shabbat Rosh Chodesh haftarah of *Hashamayim Kisi* will not be read in 5781.

In fact, for most of Ashkenazic Jewry, *Hashamayim Kisi* won't be read until Shabbat Rosh Chodesh in Elul 5782, almost two years from now! And Sefardim will wait an additional eight months, until Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5783!

This is due to Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Tevet 5782 being on Chanukah, so Chanuka's haftarah trumps it due to *Pirsumei Nissa*, and the next possibility, Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Nissan being *Parashat Hachodesh*, which also trumps *Hashamayim Kisi* since it is one of the *Arba Parshiyot* (as previously mentioned). The next Shabbat Rosh Chodesh – Elul 5782 – Ashkenazim will read *Hashamayim Kisi*, due to doubling-up another of the *Shiva D'Nechemta*. Sefardim, on the other hand, as mentioned previously, will not push off any of the *Shiva D'Nechemta* and will have to wait even longer to read *Hashamayim Kisi* – Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5783.

Contrast this with *Machar Chodesh*, the special haftarah ordinarily read on a Shabbat directly preceding a Sunday Rosh Chodesh, which was recently *leined* as the haftarah this past *Parshat Bereishet* (5781), and will not be read again until Iyar 5782, a mere year-and-a-half from now.

Double-Header Haftarah?

Yet, there are those who opine, based on the mainstream Ashkenazic ruling regarding Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Elul (of doubling up haftarahs that are consecutive in the Navi to enable all readings), that there is a potential solution available to satisfy all opinions. As noted by Rav Noach Isaac Oelbaum, the haftarahs of the first two of three of the *Tilasa D'Paranusa* (*Divrei Yirmiyahu* and *Shimu*) are actually back-to-back in the original Navi (*Yirmiyahu* Ch. 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-28). As such, they posit that when Rosh Chodesh Av falls on Shabbat, on the preceding week, the first of the *Tilasa D'Paranusa*, both *Divrei Yirmiyahu* and *Shimu* should be read, thus freeing up the next week for the regular Shabbat Rosh Chodesh reading of *Hashamayim Kisi*.

Although, certainly a bit of a novel approach, nonetheless, in this manner all opinions are satisfied and all necessary readings are read. Rav Oelbaum concludes that in 5765/2005 there was a *Kol Koreh M'Gedolei Rabbanim* that this was the preferred way to follow when Rosh Chodesh Av falls on Shabbat. So, although this may not (yet) be the mainstream Ashkenazic *psak*, nevertheless, this potential double-header haftarah certainly has merit.

To be continued...

Written *l'zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha l'yeshua sheleimah teikif u'miyad.*

This author wishes to acknowledge Rabbi Shea Linder's excellent article on this topic.

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