

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Vayigash 5772

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ECHOES FROM THE PAST :: Rabbi Berel Wein

In spite of all of the claims to the contrary by their biological and spiritual descendants, Eastern European style Jewish life has passed from the scene. All of the social, religious and political movements that dominated pre-Holocaust Eastern European Jewish life are no longer active nor are they even relevant in our current society.

The yeshiva system of education that was prevalent in nineteenth and twentieth century Lithuania was basically a school system built only for the elite, concentrating on memory retention and creative commentary upon existing texts. It was a system that was never intended to include the "average" student and therefore the numbers attending these yeshivot were relatively small, certainly in comparison to the tens of thousands of students attending yeshivot today in Israel and the Diaspora.

Though the yeshivot themselves attempt to perpetuate the legacy that they exist only for the elite, the truth of the matter is that this is no longer true. In our world a yeshiva education has become mandatory, even for the "average" student. In fact, without a yeshiva education in one's life, it is unlikely that the young man will grow up to be a truly observant Jew.

Where the Lithuanian yeshivot once produced almost all of the great rabbinic leaders of Israel, today those institutions frown upon producing rabbis and many of them do not even have a rabbinic ordination program as part of its curriculum. The yeshiva world, in its entire broad spectrum, has changed radically from what it was a century ago.

The nascent Bais Yaakov women's school system begun in the 1920's by Sarah Schneier in Cracow, Poland was originally intended to produce teachers for the Jewish world. It was also intended to help stem the tide of radical assimilation and anti-religious ideologies that swept the Jewish youth of that time. Today's women's seminaries, though still paying lip service to the goal of producing teachers, concentrate upon preparing their students to marry Torah scholars and become the primary breadwinner of the family.

They are to be the superwoman of our time – wife, mother, breadwinner, housekeeper, good neighbor and moral force of the family all at one and the same time. Since there is currently a large surplus of women teachers in the religious society everywhere in the Jewish world and the pay scale for such employment is usually quite poor, the seminaries are forced to facilitate programs that will allow most of their students to enter all sorts of fields of endeavor commensurate with the employment opportunities present in the general world.

As a result, these women are shifted from a most sheltered environment of many years of gender separated education and thrust into the very rough and tumble of today's work place. And women who wish to pursue an academic or professional career face the challenge of academic life and the society of its educational institutions. The challenges are great and varied and most of them were completely unimaginable in Cracow in the 1920's.

The great ideological movements and goals of the past centuries have all been consigned to the ash heap of history in our time. Marxism in all of its permutations has proven to be a very false god. The Left still pays lip service to its ideals and axioms but it really only wants more benefits and wealth and political power for itself.

Most of the rhetoric about fairness in society really means "give me more of the pie." The kibbutz movement has, in the main, become privatized and capitalistic and no one really looks to North Korea or Cuba for advice or as a role model for a fair and just society. The Zionist movement in its various forms has also apparently shot its bolt and no longer commands the loyalty of the Jewish street – and even of many Jews living in the Jewish state that it so heroically created and fashioned.

Jews have become blasé about Israel and there are generations that no longer remember the Exile or the War of Independence. The great movements that shook and motivated the Jewish world a century ago have all passed from the scene. It is only their echoes that remain with us.

History teaches us that all past solutions and tactics fade in the face of different circumstances and changing societal pressures.

Though our future always contains an element of uncertainty, we can be certain that Jewish society will have to develop answers to new problems - especially in regard to the process of nation building here in Israel which will require ongoing innovative thinking and clever execution in order to succeed. But succeed we will!

Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: VAYIGASH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

As the story of Yosef and his brothers unfolds and reaches its climactic end in this week's parsha, we are left with the bewildering sense that there is no absolute right or wrong in the unfolding tale. Yosef is judged wrong in his original behavior towards his brothers in bringing inaccurate tales regarding them to their father. The brothers are judged wrong in casting him in a pit and thereafter selling him into slavery.

All of the brothers including Yosef are judged to have caused their aged father pain and suffering in not revealing to him the story and Yosef himself is criticized for not revealing himself to Yaakov for the first nine years of his rise to power in Egypt. Yet in spite of all of the negativity and guilt involved, the Torah portrays the reunion of the family in happy and complimentary terms.

This is true even though all of them realize that the family will reside in Egypt for a long time and that the return to the Land of Israel is to be a long postponed dream yet to be realized. Families are not perfect and events within them do not always proceed smoothly. However the parsha emphasizes that the family unit must overcome all of the obstacles that lie in its way and must strive at all costs to preserve the sense of family amongst all of its members.

The story of Yaakov's family is the story of almost all later Jewish family life – of quarrels, misunderstandings, misjudgments, and yet somehow of goodness, kindness, tolerance and reconciliation. Jewish tradition teaches us that all later disputes within the Jewish world - and there have been many bitter ones over the millennia - are already foretold in the story of Yosef and his brothers. And yet in spite of it all, the Jewish people remain a family with shared ideals and an optimistic vision for its future.

The Torah records for us that Yosef's revelation of his identity to his brothers was a simple two word statement – ani Yosef – I am Yosef. Implicit in that statement is the demand of Yosef to be seen by the brothers as a unique individual and not as a carbon copy of his father or of any of his brothers. Yosef is the ultimate nonconformist in the family and the entire dispute arises due to his brothers' unwillingness to allow him that nonconformist role in the family.

Every family has nonconformists in its midst. How the family deals with this situation is truly the measure of its inherent unity and purpose. Many of the problematic issues that plague the Jewish world generally stem from the fraying of family bonds and the loss of an overriding sense of family under all circumstances. All human failings – greed, jealousy, mean-spirited behavior, spitefulness and even violence – are evident in family situations. Recognizing the symptoms of such behavior before they develop – and become chronic - is one of the keys of maintaining the necessary sense of family bonds that alone can prove vital and successful under all circumstances.

Shabat shalom

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayigash
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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

The Good Life

“The years of my dwelling have been one hundred and thirty years. Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life.” (47:9)

Most of us think of life as a trip through a treasure house of experiences.

“Living it up” is synonymous with living itself: White-water rafting, paragliding, sipping Margaritas around the pool, seeing the Mona Lisa or the Pyramids or climbing Everest. That’s what life is all about!

The eulogy “He had a good life” usually means that the person used his time to maximize his experiences in the world. According to this view, someone who lives his life without tasting any of this world’s countless experiences hasn’t really lived.

Judaism’s view of the world is the total opposite.

Life experiences are like Cinderella. They last, by definition, as long as one experiences them. However sweet, however exciting they may be, there comes the moment when the gilded coach turns back into a pumpkin. Every moment of life is constantly passing and vanishing forever. As soon as the taste of one moment expires, we must seek a new taste, a new experience.

If life is the sum total of our experiences then life is really a kind of ongoing death, running from moment to moment, never being able to possess the moment itself.

We tend to think of this world and the next world like two chapters in a novel. One finishes and the other begins. This is not the case. There is nothing in the next world that is not in this world already. One of the blessings that we say on the Torah says, “and He has planted within us eternal life...” A plant does not make an appearance out of nowhere. The plant will never be more than what the seed contained. Similarly, our eternal existence is no more than what G-d has planted within us in this world.

If we live for the moment by perceiving life as a series of fleeting experiences, then the taste of the moment lives on our lips for that second and disappears forever.

However, if we take all those moments and connect them to the Source of Life itself, if we understand that our entire life, our entire existence, is just one facet of what the Creator wishes to express and reveal in His creation, then in the next world all those passing moments return to live eternally.

The seed that was planted within is nurtured and flowers into eternal life.

In this week’s Torah portion Pharaoh asks Yaakov, “How old are you?” To which Yaakov replies, “The years of my dwelling have been one hundred and thirty years. Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life.” To answer Pharaoh’s question required no more than a number, “One hundred and thirty.”

Why, then, did Yaakov see fit to give such a long answer?

You can dwell in this world without truly living in it.

On Yaakov’s level, “living” meant a life of constant Divine inspiration. Hence, he felt that he had not truly lived during the many years that he had been deprived of Divine inspiration.

Yaakov was telling Pharaoh that life is not a mere compendium of possibilities and that he who dies with the most toys wins. Life means immortalizing every second through connection to the Source.

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Vayigash

But his brothers could not answer him, because they were left disconcerted before him. (45:3)

It had become clear to the brothers. The ambiguities with which they had lived for these last twenty-two years were all resolved, as everything that had transpired fell into perspective. Likewise, explains the Chafetz Chaim, when our exile is finally concluded and Hashem lifts the veil from our eyes, we will see clearly how the events of history all fit into place. What has up until now seemed to be an inexplicable puzzle will be revealed as a Divine master plan.

In the Midrash Rabbah, a quotation from Abba Kohen Bardela has set the standard for understanding the concept of mussar/tochachah, ethical guidance and rebuke, throughout the generations, “Woe is to us from the

Day of Judgment; woe is to us from the Day of Rebuke. Yosef was the youngest of the brothers, yet the other brothers could not respond to his rebuke. If so, what will we say when Hashem will rebuke each and every one of us according to what he is?” The statement begs elucidation. First, where do we find Yosef offering rebuke to his brothers? He said the words: “I am Yosef!” That is it. He issued no rebuke. Second, what kind of rebuke can one expect in the World to Come? By the time we get there, rebuke is a foregone conclusion. It is all over. We no longer have the possibility for teshuvah, remorse, correcting our iniquity. Olam Habba is a place for s’char v’onesh, reward and punishment. One receives either one or the other. It is too late for teshuvah.

Horav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, zl, posits that, actually, one question answers the other. We wondered when did Yosef rebuke them? The answer is that the mere fact that he did not articulate his reproof is in itself the greatest and most compelling rebuke. His brothers had built a solid foundation of complaint against Yosef. He was a slanderer who was out to destroy them. They painted a picture of Yosef that was contemptible. This is not unusual. When we have issues with someone, we justify our actions towards him by presenting him in the most iniquitous manner. Yosef, however, said nothing. He did not rebuke; he did not even censure. He treated his brothers royally, respectfully, decently. Something was wrong. This was not the “Yosef” that they had previously conjured up in their minds. Can there be a greater rebuke than discovering that the premises upon which they had built their entire life philosophy were wrong? The brothers expected castigation, rebuke. Instead, they received love and friendship. This was the noblest form of rebuke.

Rashi alludes to this idea when he explains the reason for the brothers’ disconcertment: mipnei ha’bushah; “because of the shame.” Their fear of Yosef was not a physical thing. They were not in fear for their lives. It was the humiliation that had disconcerted them. Why does the Torah use the word nivhalu, which implies fear, if, in fact, it was embarrassment? Veritably, it was fear. It was the fear of having to confront face-to-face the Yosef they thought they knew in light of the real Yosef who was presently standing before them. When one realizes the error of his ways, when he sees the depth of a life’s mistakes, he becomes fearful.

The brothers were older than Yosef. He was the ben zekunim, the child born late in Yaakov Avinu’s life. Yet, when they saw his profound piety, his all-encompassing virtue, his mentchlichkeit - they were speechless with shame and with fear. What will we say when we come “face-to-face” with the Heavenly Tribunal. Imagine our shame and fear at that moment of truth.

But his brothers could not answer him, because they were left disconcerted before him. (45:3)

The Midrash quotes Abba Kohen Bardela in what has become one of the standard catchphrases concerning the process of rebuke, remorse and repentance. Oi lanu miyom ha’din; Oi lanu miyom ha’tochachah, “Woe is to us from the Day of Judgment; woe is to us from the Day of Rebuke.” While a number of issues regarding this statement beg elucidation, we will focus on a question raised by Horav Avraham Yoffen, zl, concerning the sequence of this statement. “Day of Rebuke” follows “Day of Judgment.” Is that correct? First, one rebukes - then, one issues judgment. The Tanna apparently had a reason for altering the sequence. Why?

Horav David Budnick, zl, explains that we must first take the entire sale of Yosef into perspective. Were the brothers really that jealous of him? Would the fact that Yosef received a multi-colored coat from their father provoke such animosity between them? Can we say that Yosef’s talking about them, albeit harmful, was sufficient to stimulate hatred? Obviously, there is much more to it. They felt the slander would distance their father from them, thereby cutting off their link to the Torah of Shem and Eivar. Yosef was studying Torah with his father. Thus, by speaking ill of them, Yosef was, in fact, depriving them of spiritual development. Klal Yisrael needed the input of twelve Shevatim, Tribes. Yosef was assaulting the basic fabric of Klal Yisrael. In other words, it was not about them - personally. It was about the future collective Jewish nation.

On the other hand, Yosef certainly did not want to undermine the future Jewish nation. The last thing he wanted was to distance his brothers from their father. His intentions were pure: to correct what he felt were their

spiritual failings. The future Jewish nation had to be established upon the impeccable middos, character traits, of their forbearers. Thus, Yosef felt himself compelled to act accordingly. Much more was at stake than his public relationship with his brothers.

The brothers took the matter into their own hands without consulting with anyone other than one another. Their punishment was middah k'neged middah, measure for measure, with their own actions returning back to haunt them. For instance, it was Yehudah who asked his father if he "recognized" Yosef's garment covered with blood. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to "recognize" the chosemes, seal, that he left with Tamar after their liaison. They relied on their own decisions. Thus, they were punished with the consequences of their own decisions.

This is why Yosef demonstrated to them the error of their ways. After all, it was the brothers who rendered their own psak din, legal decision. They said that we all-together with the individual in whose possession the silver goblet is found - will be slaves. Yet, when push came to shove, they asked for leniency, lifnim meshuras ha'din, to go beyond what was the law, in order to show their compassion for their aged father's sake.

Let us take this "request" into perspective. The brothers were concerned about their father's health. The shock of losing Binyamin after the earlier loss of Yosef might be too much for his health. For this, they asked the viceroy's compassion, to go beyond the letter of the law. Indeed, when they made their request, they intimated that they were prepared to destroy the land of Egypt if Binyamin were not safely returned. They were prepared to take on the entire world if necessary - anything for their father.

Yosef gave them every opportunity to express their request for compassion. He did this, so that when he revealed himself in the words, "ani Yosef!", they would immediately see the hypocrisy of their demand. Until now, they had presented themselves as willing to do anything - even take on the world - for the purpose of going beyond the letter of the law; yet, when it came to their brother Yosef, they refused to go beyond the letter of the law. He was a rodef, pursuer, a crime punishable by death, if necessary. Why did they not show the same compassion for Yosef? Why was lifnim meshuras ha'din not an option for Yosef, as it was for Yaakov?

This is what is meant by, "Woe is to us from the Day of Judgment." Yosef showed them that they had erred in din. Their judgment call was wrong, because they did not realize that a taint of hatred towards Yosef played a subtle role in their decision process. Likewise, when each and every one of us stands before the Heavenly Tribunal, we will see that we had been wrong in interpreting the law. Not only will we be rebuked - we will be shown that our judgment call was also wrong. This is why din precedes tochachah. Our concept of the din was wrong. This is why we need rebuke. The mere fact that we thought we had been acting appropriately - when, in fact, we were totally wrong - is justifiable reason for tochachah.

I will fully provide for you there, for there will come another five years of famine, lest you, and your house and all that is yours grow poor. (45:11)

Yosef HaTzaddik pointed out to his brothers that it had all finally come together. The ambiguities that had plagued their lives could now be seen as work of the Divine, Who manipulated events for a specific purpose. It was all becoming clear. Indeed, there is hardly another narrative in the Torah that so cogently demonstrates the ways of Divine Providence. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, comments that this story is probably the most vivid commentary on Shlomo HaMelech's saying in Mishlei 26:9, "The great Master of the Universe produces all things from their smallest beginnings. Be they physical or social, He causes them all to grow from the smallest seedling. It is He who causes all things to be born. Therefore, even fools and criminals are in His service." Without awareness or will, even folly and sin serve His purposes. In this story, the threads lie revealed.

Rav Hirsch journeys back to the "two sela's worth of silk," which Chazal (Shabbos 10b) suggest that Yaakov Avinu used for the embroidery on Yosef's kesones, coat, through which the promise of the Bris Bein HaBesarim, "Covenant Between the Pieces," came to be fulfilled. When we think about it, we realize that, had Yaakov remained in Canaan, the chances of his family growing into the mighty nation that it became were unlikely. As the family grew, they would have merged with the surrounding population. In order to become a distinct people, not

intermingling with other nations, it was necessary for them to live in the midst of a nation whose character and moral compass totally contrasted with Jewish ethos. That nation was Egypt.

It was not much different in the middle ages in Western Europe. The fanaticism which gave rise to the Jews' separatism, their relegation to living in ghettos, was, in effect, the hand of G-d providing us with an opportunity to distance ourselves from the lack of culture and moral filth that characterized the European gentile at that time. It also allowed us to cultivate the family unit, creating strong domestic happiness within our insular society.

Yosef was "sent" to Egypt years ahead of the family to set the background for the Jews of Canaan to come and not feel as if they were usurpers of the land. So that no Egyptian could say, "You do not belong here; you are an immigrant," the Egyptians themselves were compelled - due to the famine - to leave their own birthplace and move around. They, too, were strangers in their land.

Likewise, by the time of our exile, when we were forced into migrating to other lands, the entire Europe was already a land of foreigners. Hence, when the expulsion edict resulting from bigoted Germanic intolerance, "Go back to Palestine where you belong," was quickly refuted with, "And exactly where were your ancestors born?"

Last, just as the first exile which saw Yaakov Avinu and his family leave Canaan for Egypt was the result of kinah and sinah, envy and enmity, our own exile, years later, was the consequence of envy and baseless hatred. Yaakov's exile set up the crucible of harsh fate; it was the beginning of the tzaros, troubles and misery, suffering and ridicule, through which all of his descendants were destined to pass. This "school of indoctrination" purifies them, so that they become capable of feelings of equality and brotherhood, which will engender the advent of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

And he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, then the spirit of Yaakov, their father, revived. (45:27)

In the previous pesukim, whenever Yaakov Avinu's name is mentioned, his relationship to his sons is not indicated. Here, in denoting his "revival," the Torah insists on underscoring that Yaakov avihem, "their father" became revived. What is the significance of his being their forebear to his revival? Horav Aryeh Malkiel Kotler, Shlita, explains this based upon a principle quoted from his father Horav Shneuer Kotler, zl. The Rosh Yeshivah focuses on the opening Mishnah of Pirkei Avos, in which the Tanna commences his treatise on ethics by first introducing the Mesorah, transmission, of Torah from Hashem to Moshe and thereafter to the spiritual leadership of every generation. It is apparent from the Tanna's emphasis on the Mesorah that the transmission of Torah from generation to generation, father to son, is a chelek, part and parcel, of Torah itself. It is not enough that one studies Torah for himself. He must see to it that it is passed on to others, to the next generation.

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that this may be the reason that none of the Torah principles and halachic decisions rendered by Achair, the name given to Elisha ben Avuyah when he apostatized himself, in mentioned in the Talmud. At one point, he had been a great teacher who had successfully mentioned some of the greatest Tannaim. What about the halachos he expounded and elucidated prior to his heretical alienation from Torah? Why can these Torah thoughts not be used? It is almost as if he had not existed. The reason is that, even if his Torah novellae were emes, true, and reliable, they are still not worthy of transmission, because of their source. Thus, his name is not mentioned in the Talmud. He may not serve as part of the Mesorah. He did not exhibit the ethical, moral and spiritual conduct of an individual with the credentials to transmit Torah. Thus, his name is not mentioned in connection with the Torah.

Rav Malkiel applies this principle toward explaining Yaakov Avinu's reaction to the news that Yosef was alive and well and living in complete spiritual harmony with them. When Yaakov saw the agalos, wagons, he realized that Yosef was sending him a message. Agalah, wagon, and eglah, calf, have similar spellings. The last sugya, halachic topic, that Yaakov had studied with Yosef was the law of Eglah Arufa, the Axed Heifer. The agalos were a sign to Yaakov that Yosef was spiritually alive and well. He even remembered the Torah his father had taught him. Apparently, Yosef was still attached to the Torah, as he had been then.

In addition to the wonderful news that his son still bonded with the Torah, Yaakov's spirits were revived because now he saw that the mesiras ha'Torah, Torah transmission, from father to son, continued on through all of his sons - even Yosef. Until now, Yaakov feared that, with regard to Yosef, he had been unsuccessful in transmitting the Torah. The Torah he had once taught Yosef would never be transmitted to Yosef's descendants. It would not survive the test of time. When he realized the profundity of Yosef's message, he as his father, the transmitter of Torah, became revived. He was doubly alive; his son was alive, and the Torah that he had taught him was alive. There would be continuity.

However, when they related to him all the words that Yosef had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, then the spirit of Yaakov was revived. (45:27)

It seems as if the brothers were now conveying something new to Yaakov Avinu. Apparently, earlier when they had told him, Od Yosef chai! "Yosef is still alive, and he is the ruler over the land of Egypt," this news did not catalyze as strong a reaction as their relating to him all that Yosef had actually told them. Furthermore, why is it that now, after hearing what Yosef had said, Yaakov suddenly noticed the wagons sent by Yosef? It is not as if the wagons had not been there earlier. Last, what is the meaning of the phrase, "Then the spirit of Yaakov was revived"? What took place "then" that so altered Yaakov's perception?

Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl, notes that Yosef HaTzaddik went through some extremely traumatic spiritual and physical challenges in his life. Pharaoh's dungeons housed some of the country's most ruthless criminals. The physical conditions left much to be desired. Overcoming the daily blandishments of Potifar's wife was no simple task. Loneliness was his constant "companion" How did he survive? What superhuman forces within Yosef gave him the ability to confront evil, loneliness, debauchery, spiritual and physical deprivation, emerging triumphant - as righteous as before? The Rosh Yeshivah suggests that, upon perusing the text, one notes that two unique forces played an integral role in Yosef's success.

First, was Yosef's emunah. His unabiding faith in the Almighty, his acute awareness that Ein od milvado, "There is no other (power) than He," fortified him with trust in Hashem. Yosef knew that there was no other power to whom he could turn; no one else who could help him. It was either Hashem or nothing! Every time Yosef spoke, he commenced his comment with the notion that Hashem was the only source of salvation, the only address for success, and that everything that He did was for the good. Second, Yosef learned Torah - constantly. He lay in the cradle of Torah study as it embraced him. His toiling in the pathways of Torah gave him insight, fortitude and courage. With faith fortified by Torah, Yosef could take on the challenges of life that were thrown at him.

We now understand why it was that after Yaakov heard about Yosef's behavior and manner of speech and then saw the wagons, he became a believer. Yosef had made it! He had survived the ordeals of the past twenty-two years. At first, when he heard that Yosef was alive, Yaakov was quite frightened. There was no way that Yosef's original spiritual plateau could have survived the challenges that had accompanied him in his descent into Egyptian culture and society. His years in the Egyptian dungeons were truly the "pits." When his sons related the manner in which Yosef had expressed himself, how he spoke about Hashem, Yaakov's heart began to beat rapidly. Maybe, he could dare to have hope. Perchance, Yosef did survive. When he saw the wagons, which Rashi says were an allusion to the Eglah Arufah, Axed Heifer, the last topic Yaakov had studied with Yosef, the Patriarch's spirit was revived. His son had not forgotten his learning. He still bonded with the Torah through study and practice.

Yes, Yosef was truly alive - in the spiritual sense. Certainly, Yaakov cared about Yosef's physical being, but it was his spiritual well-being that concerned him most. He could now rest assured.

The days of the years of my sojourns have been a hundred and thirty years. Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life. (47:9)

Daas Zekeinim M'Baalei HaTosfos quotes the Mishnah that says Yaakov Avinu was punished for making the above statement, condemning the years of his life as being "few and bad." As a result of the Patriarch's "complaint," his life was shortened thirty-three years, which coincides with

the thirty-three words (Pesukim 8-9). The question is obvious and glaring: How could Yaakov have made such a statement? The Patriarch was an individual who served the Almighty with all of his heart and soul. How could he declare that his years were few and bad? Furthermore, that he would make such a statement to a pagan like Pharaoh is beyond belief. There is one more question that must be addressed, which, incidentally, the commentators seem to accept as fact. To state that his years were few is understandable. After all, he did live thirty-three years fewer than Yitzchak Avinu. How could he say, however, that his years had been bad? What was really so difficult about Yaakov's life? Until age sev-

enty-three, he had done nothing all day but learn Torah. The first fifteen years he had served his grandfather, Avraham Avinu; the following fifty years he served Shem ben Noach. What is so bad about that? During this time, he was living at home with Yitzchak Avinu and Rivkah Imeinu. What is there not to like about such an arrangement? Even after he was compelled to leave out of fear for his life, he stopped for fourteen years to study in yeshivah. In other words, out of the one hundred and thirty years of his life, Yaakov spent the majority (seventy-six years) in a calm, idyllic Torah setting. Can anyone complain about that?

Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl, explains that for a tzaddik, righteous person, to be relegated to live in the proximity of a rasha, evil person, is misery. For a tzaddik to be compelled to offer respect to a rasha is misery at its nadir. Yaakov lived in the exalted home of his parents - together with Eisav. From early on in his youth, Yaakov was acutely aware of his father's love for Eisav. Thus, out of respect for his father, Yaakov was compelled to respect Eisav. Can we begin to imagine how painful it must have been for our Patriarch, who was the embodiment of the attribute of emes, truth, at its zenith, to live under such circumstances? It was living in this tension-filled environment that provoked Yaakov to assume that his life had been bad.

Additionally, we may suggest that although Yaakov was free to live as he pleased, the sword of Eisav constantly hung over his head. This idea applies in any situation in which a person is uncomfortable, never knowing when his position of favor will suddenly change, leaving him out in the cold. An individual can have a well-paying job, but, if his boss is fickle and he never knows where he stands in his eyes, his position is no longer secure. For centuries, Jews in Germany went to shul and to the bais hamedrash, never knowing at what point the gentiles surrounding them would decide to kill a few Jews just for fun. This is how they lived. It surely was not pleasant. Yet, they continued davening, learning, persevering as observant Jews, even at great risk to their well-being.

Perhaps this is what shocked Pharaoh. Before him stood a man whose countenance bespoke an individual who was quite aged. Yet, in speaking to him, Yaakov came across as being much younger than his appearance indicated. Pharaoh was incredulous: Was Yaakov old or older? To this the Patriarch replied, "I am not old. What you see are the effects of a life of tension and fear." Yaakov reflected the image of the galus Jew. Living in exile is not pretty. One perseveres and continues on, despite the hardships that accompany him at every juncture. There is, however, one thing worse than being in exile: Not knowing that he is in exile.

Yaakov Avinu taught us that there is nothing "wrong" with "few and bad." It is how one reacts to such a life that determines its true adversity.

Keil baruch gadol deah.

G-d, who is blessed, great in knowledge.

It is interesting that when we wish to praise Hashem and to explain why He is blessed, the first attribute we touch upon, is deah, knowledge. Indeed, the first and foremost quality which Hashem has is the quality of deah, true knowledge. Authentic understanding may seem simple to us, but it is the most powerful of all attributes, because to say that Hashem is gadol deah is to express that He is perfect in knowledge. Hashem knows and understands everything; thus, He is able to do whatever is best for mankind. Many people are capable of amassing incredible storehouses of knowledge, yet they remain incapable of implementing this knowledge in a practical manner. Hashem is perfect in His knowledge; since He knows everything, He is now able to do everything that is necessary. Because of His infinite knowledge, He knows exactly what is necessary, what is

beneficial, and when to do what He must do. Regrettably, sometimes a man may have tainos, complaints, about Hashem's actions. This

is analogous to a person with limited knowledge and vested interests attempting to "sit down by the table" with someone who knows everything. Sponsored in memory of our dear father and grandfather Harry Weiss Zvi ben Yoel a"h by Morry & Judy Weiss, Erwin & Myra Weiss and Grandchildren Gary & Hildee Weiss, Jeff & Karen Weiss, Zev & Rachel Weiss, Elie & Sara Weiss, & Brian "Love and memories are gifts from G-d that death cannot destroy"

Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Vayigash

Parents Love Children More Than Children Love Parents

The Shalo"h Hakodesh writes a concept (which is also found in secular circles): One parent can take care of ten children but ten children cannot take care of one parent. The Chiddushei HaRim finds a source for this idea in this week's parsha. When Yehudah made his impassioned plea to the Viceroy in Egypt (who he did not yet realize was his brother Yosef) to release Binyamin, he made the argument -- "How can you not let him go? If his father finds out that he did not return, he will not be able to survive!" The Chiddushei HaRim points out that at that time, Binyamin had 10 children. Why did Yehudah not use the argument -- how can you not let Binyamin go, you will leave 10 orphans, they will not be able to survive without their father? Apparently, says Chiddushei HaRim, 10 children can somehow manage with out a father, but a father cannot manage without one of 10 remaining sons.

This concept that a father's attachment to his children is stronger than the children's attachment to their father is the source for the Shaloh's comment and for the similar concept that circulates in the world at large.

This may be an upsetting idea to all of us who are parents, but that is the truth. Our children love us and respect us, etc., but it is not the same as our love for them. I once saw a very interesting explanation for this phenomenon. Every single human emotion that exists is something we received from Adam, the first human being. Adam had children and therefore he had in him the emotion of a parent's love for his children. However, Adam did not have a father. He is the only person in the history of the world who did not have parents. Consequently, the emotion of love of child for parent was something he did not possess. It was an acquired skill developed in later generations, but it never had the strong genetically passed down roots that existed in the emotion of love towards children, which is innate in our personalities.

For this reason, Yehudah recognized that the stronger argument for the release of Binyamin would be "his father can't survive his loss" rather than "his children will not be able to survive his loss."

The Shemen HaTov uses this concept to interpret a Rashi in our parsha. The last part of Pasuk 29 in Perek 46 is very ambiguous. The pasuk reads: "Yosef harnessed his chariot and went up to meet Yisrael his father to Goshen; and he appeared to him, fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck excessively." Who appeared to whom? Rashi says that Yosef is the subject and Yaakov is the object in this sentence. Yosef appeared to Yaakov. How does Rashi know this? Why was Rashi so sure that the interpretation is not that Yaakov appeared to Yosef?

The Shemen HaTov explains, based on the earlier stated concept, that the emotion of Yosef appearing to Yaakov was far more dramatic and powerful than the emotion of Yaakov appearing to Yosef. The love of parent to child is much deeper, much more profound, much more intense and innate than the reverse relationship. Therefore, the Torah emphasizes the more dramatic of the two relationships in this reunion: Yosef appeared to his father.

The Apparent Tangent Is Crucial To The Story

The end of the parsha contains the story of Klal Yisrael's descent to Egypt. "Yosef settled his father and his brothers in the land of Egypt, in the prime portion of Ramses, as Pharaoh had commanded. Yosef took care of them and provided for them... Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; they took holdings in it and they were fruitful and multiplied greatly." [Bereshis 47:11-12; 27] It is noteworthy that there is a 14 pasuk

gap in the narrative of how the Children of Israel came down to Egypt and settled. We might have written the story exactly as quoted above, just without a break in the narrative.

The Torah describes the events of the first two pesukim, but then goes off on a tangent. The Torah says that the famine grew more intense. The people came to Yosef and asked them what they were going to eat. Yosef told them he would sell them food. They said that they had no money to pay for the food. Yosef told them he would take their cattle in payment. The following year they had neither food nor cattle to pay for food. Yosef took ownership of their land and in effect bought the entire country for the government. There remained no private property in Egypt. The government bought all land holdings, lock stock and barrel. Then, to demonstrate government ownership of the land, Yosef made everyone relocate. Yosef changed the whole country around. Those who had lived in Alexandria moved to Cairo, those who lived in Cairo moved to Alexandria, etc. The only exception to this rule was the Priests of Egypt. Pharaoh did not acquire their land; it remained their own. Yosef made one final decree. He instituted an across the board 20% income tax payable by the entire population, again, except the Priests who had a tax exemption.

Finally, the Torah concludes the earlier narrative and states "Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt in the Land of Goshen..."

There are several difficulties with this narrative. First, why is the Torah telling us the history of land ownership and tax system in Egypt? Why is this germane? More to the point, why is this stuck into the middle of the story of the Jews' descent to Egypt and their settling there?

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky makes a fundamental comment here. Yosef haTzadik was a man of great vision. He understood what was coming and he knew what to do about it. He knew the real fear that a small minority in a large country might eventually assimilate, acculturate, and become like the rest of the population. Yosef asked himself, "What can I do to save my family? What am I going to do in order to preserve the family traditions in Egypt?" Yosef devised a brilliant plan.

When Jews came to America in the 1920s, the 1930, and the 1940s, they were called "greenhorns". They were refugees whose strongest desire was to become Americans. They wanted to become like everyone else. They hated being considered outsiders from the old country who did not know what to do in the new land. Yosef's plan was to see to it that there was no such thing as a "permanent citizen" (toshav) in Egypt. Everyone will be a foreigner and greenhorn. The entire population was stripped of their land and moved to "foreign cities". No one felt at home. There were no long-standing aristocrats for the Children of Israel to want to emulate. The entire population was "the new guy on the block".

Then, Yosef imposed a tax and codified in the bylaws of Egypt that clergy would be exempt from national taxes. Later on when the Egyptians decided to enslave the Jews, they appointed over them "tax collectors" (Sarei Misim) and imposed a labor tax. However, per the national precedent, they exempted the priestly tribe from taxes -- the Tribe of Levi.

Yosef created a precedent that resulted in one tribe that learned all day throughout the sojourn in Egypt. There was a portion of the nation that was guaranteed to be the "keepers of the faith" (Shomer Emunim). They would therefore never become acculturated and never become assimilated.

Now we understand why the Torah mentions this here and why the tangent is not such a tangent. Before the Torah tells us the story of the Jews in Egypt, before they could really settle down, Yosef had to make sure that the assimilation that would occur to so many Jews throughout the millennia would not happen to the Jews in Egypt. Yosef attempted to do that by (a) making everyone feel not at home and (b) by inventing the concept of the priestly exemption, so that there would always be a "Shevet Levi" amongst the Jewish people to provide them with the moral compass, pointing in the direction of what the Torah wants. This is what preserved Klal Yisrael in the Exile of Egypt. Then and only then can the Torah conclude the story and tell us: "Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; they took holdings in it and they were fruitful and multiplied greatly."

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Rabbi Dr. Asher Meir
Adjoining Geula to T'fila

The gemara tells us that there is special merit in adjoining geula (the blessing gaal yisrael following the shema) to t'fila (the amida prayer), meaning that he makes no interruption in between (B'rakhot 4b,9b). And this is the ruling of the Shulchan Arukh (OC 66:8, 111:1, 235).

The Zohar mentions this rule in our parsha (I 205b), and while the passage there doesn't connect it to the events of our parsha, a number of commentators do.

In the commentary cited by Yedid Nefesh, Yehuda represents geula. This is logical because geula or redemption is naturally associated with kingship, as the essence of our redemption is the restoration of Jewish sovereignty. This in turn is identified with Yehuda, who was promised kingship by Yaakov (B'reshit 49:10) and was the progenitor of King David, from whose line will arise the Moshiach.

Yehuda's approach to Yosef is parallel to the approach of the blessing of redemption to prayer. His appeals and pleadings before Yosef represent the need to justify and defend the Jewish people prior to standing before Hashem in prayer. The implication is that this is accomplished by the recitation of shema and its blessings, which augment and recount the merits of the Jewish people particularly at the time of the Exodus.

The Sefat Emet has a similar commentary, but the roles are different. Yehuda and the house of David represent prayer, which is the service of the heart (as we find in Taanit 2a). This is presumably because we find Yehuda and David being emotional and open in their actions. By contrast, Yosef represents the brain, or rational thought. This may be because Yosef appears in the Torah to be more cerebral and calculating, or perhaps because in the encounter in our parsha Yosef is in a position of superiority, just as the brain ultimately rules over the emotions. This in turn corresponds to the recitation of shema, which the Sefat Emet describes as "hearing in the brain".

The approach of Yehuda to Yosef is thus understood as follows: The heart or emotions is in some sense intermediate between the body, or lower faculties, and the brain. On the one hand we feel emotionally the pains and sorrows of the body. On the other hand, our emotions are also capable of finding joy in the deeper understanding of our mental faculties.

As a moral lesson, this means that while our emotions need to be connected to our material experience, we also have to elevate them and teach them to appreciate the higher joys which are detached from our material existence and connected to our higher faculties, particularly our Torah learning. (While the Sefat Emet doesn't say this explicitly, it seems clear to me that when he refers to our mental faculties and identifies them with shema and with "hearing in the brain" he means our Torah insights.)

In the context of adjoining geula to t'fila, this would mean that while our prayers have to express our wants and needs, the many sorrows we feel, it has to approach also our higher faculties, in particular our Torah learning, represented by kri'at shema. This will bring us to the highest level of prayer with joy, which we can particularly attain on Shabbat. (Sefat Emet, Vayigash 5665)

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The Day Forgiveness was Born
Britain's Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

There are rare and special moments when the world changes and a new possibility is born: when the Wright brothers in 1903 made the first man-made flight, or in 1969 when Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon, or when, almost 6,000 years ago, someone discovered that marks made in clay with a stick could, when the clay dried, become permanent signs and thus writing, and civilization, were born.

There is such a moment in this week's parsha, and arguably it has had a greater influence on the course of history than any of the above. It happens

when Joseph finally reveals his identity to his brothers and then, while they are silent and in a state of shock, goes on to say these words:

"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." (Gen. 45: 4-8)

This is the first recorded moment in history in which one human being forgives another.

It may be the case that God has forgiven before this. Certainly according to some midrashic readings of previous episodes, God has. But in the plain sense of the text, He hasn't. Did God forgive Adam and Eve? Did God forgive Cain after he had murdered Abel? Probably not. He may have mitigated their punishment. Adam and Eve did not immediately die. God places a mark on Cain's forehead to protect him from being killed by someone else. But mitigation is not forgiveness.

God does not forgive the generation of the Flood, or the builders of Babel, or the sinners of Sodom. Significantly, when Abraham prays for the people of Sodom he does not ask God to forgive them. His argument is quite different. He says, "Perhaps there are innocent people there," maybe fifty, perhaps no more than ten. Their merit should, he implies, save the others, but that is quite different from asking God to forgive the others.

Joseph forgives. That is a first in history. There is even a hint in the Torah of the newness of this event. Many years later, after their father Jacob has died, the brothers come to Joseph fearing that he will now take revenge.

They concoct a story:

They sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers for the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. [Gen. 50: 16-18]

The brothers understand the word "forgive" – this is the first time it appears explicitly in the Torah – but they are still unsure about it. Did Joseph really mean it the first time? Does someone really forgive those who sold him into slavery? Joseph weeps that his brothers haven't really understood that he meant it when he said it. But he did, then and now.

Why do I say this was the first time in history? Because of a fascinating recent book by an American Classics professor, David Konstan. In *Before Forgiveness: the origins of a moral idea* (2010), he argues that there was no concept of forgiveness in the literature of the ancient Greeks. There is something else, often mistaken for forgiveness. There is appeasement of anger.

When someone does harm to someone else, the victim is angry and seeks revenge. This is clearly dangerous for the perpetrator and he or she may try to get the victim to calm down and move on. They may make excuses: It wasn't me, it was someone else. Or, it was me but I couldn't help it. Or, it was me but it was a small wrong, and I have done you much good in the past, so on balance you should let it pass.

Alternatively, or in conjunction with these other strategies, the perpetrator may beg, plead, and perform some ritual of abasement or humiliation. This is a way of saying to the victim, "I am not really a threat." The Greek word *sungnome*, sometimes translated as forgiveness, really means, says Konstan, exculpation or absolution. It is not that I forgive you for what you did, but that I understand why you did it – you couldn't really help it, you were caught up in circumstances beyond your control – or, alternatively, I do not need to take revenge because you have now shown by your deference to me that you hold me in proper respect. My dignity has been restored.

Konstan argues that forgiveness, at least in its earliest form, appears in the Hebrew Bible and he cites the case of Joseph. What he does not make clear is why Joseph forgives. There is nothing accidental about Joseph's behaviour. In fact the whole sequence of events, from the moment the brothers appear before him in Egypt for the first time to the moment when he announces his identity and forgives them, is an immensely detailed account of what it is to earn forgiveness.

Recall what happens. First he accuses them of a crime they have not committed. He says they are spies. He has them imprisoned for three days. Then, holding Shimon as a hostage, he tells them that they must now go back home and bring back their youngest brother Benjamin. In other words, he is forcing them to re-enact that earlier occasion when they came back to their father with one of the brothers, Joseph, missing. Note what happens next:

They said to one another, “Surely we deserve to be punished [ashemim] because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come on us” ... They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. [Gen. 42: 21-23]

This is the first stage of repentance. They admit they have done wrong. Next, after the second meeting, Joseph has his special silver cup planted in Benjamin’s sack. It is found and the brothers are brought back. They are told that Benjamin must stay as a slave.

“What can we say to my lord?” Judah replied. “What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants’ guilt. We are now my lord’s slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.” [Gen. 44: 16]

This is the second stage of repentance. They confess. They do more: they admit collective responsibility. This is important. When the brothers sold Joseph into slavery it was Judah who proposed the crime (37: 26-27) but they were all (except Reuben) complicit in it.

Finally, at the climax of the story Judah himself says “So now let me remain as your slave in place of the lad. Let the lad go back with his brothers!” (42: 33). Judah, who sold Joseph as a slave, is now willing to become a slave so that his brother Benjamin can go free. This is what the sages and Maimonides define as complete repentance, namely when circumstances repeat themselves and you have an opportunity to commit the same crime again, but you refrain from doing so because you have changed.

Now Joseph can forgive, because his brothers, led by Judah, have gone through all three stages of repentance: [1] admission of guilt, [2] confession and [3] behavioural change.

Forgiveness only exists in a culture in which repentance exists. Repentance presupposes that we are free and morally responsible agents who are capable of change, specifically the change that comes about when we recognise that something we have done is wrong and we are responsible for it and we must never do it again. The possibility of that kind of moral transformation simply did not exist in ancient Greece or any other pagan culture. To put it technically, Greece was a shame-and-honour culture. Judaism was a guilt-repentance-and-forgiveness culture, the first of its kind in the world.

Forgiveness is not just one idea among many. It transformed the human situation. For the first time it established the possibility that we are not condemned endlessly to repeat the past. When I repent I show I can change. The future is not predestined. I can make it different from what it might have been. And when I forgive I show that my action is not mere reaction, the way revenge would be. Forgiveness breaks the irreversibility of the past. It is the undoing of what has been done (a point made by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*).

Humanity changed the day Joseph forgave his brothers. When we forgive and are worthy of being forgiven, we are no longer prisoners of our past.

A Nation Divided, a Nation United **Rabbi Yakov Haber , The TorahWeb Foundation**

One cannot help but be moved and inspired by the dramatic reunification of Yosef and his brothers. Much has been written about the causes of the initial hatred between the other brothers and Yosef, the lashon hara, the misunderstandings, and the miscalculations leading to Yosef’s being sold into slavery. Hashem Yisborach, Rav Ha’Aliliya, through the very process of Yosef’s descent to Mitzrayim already had planted the seeds for the situation that would lead to the reconciliation[1] of the brothers.

Yosef’s behavior toward his brothers serves as a model of reconciliation for other situations of hatred or separation between people. His opening remarks to his brothers, “Ani Yosef ha’od avi chai” (VaYigash 45:3), are interpreted by Midrash Rabba (93:10) to be words of rebuke.

Abba Kahana Bardla stated: Woe unto us from the Day of Judgment, woe unto us from the Day of Rebuke! [If even] Yosef, youngest of the tribes, [rebuked his brothers and] “they were unable to answer him,” how much more so when the Almighty comes and rebukes each individual according to who he is, all the more so [will we not be able to answer].

Beis HaLeivi elaborates that since Yosef, before revealing his identity to the brothers, had already inquired about Ya’akov Avinu’s welfare, his question now was superfluous. Therefore, the Midrash interprets his words as words of rebuke. Yosef was in effect saying to Yehuda – who had just pleaded for Binyamin’s release based on mercy for their aged father – “Where were you when you sold me?! Why were you not concerned then of the effects of selling me into slavery on our father?!”

Only after Yosef rebuked his brothers, and, by their silence, they accepted the rebuke, did he show signs of friendship and reconciliation even to the extent of telling them that they should not worry about their actions since it was not they but G-d who orchestrated the entire sale into slavery (ibid. 45:4-8).

By following this course of action, Yosef was fulfilling what would later be commanded by the Torah. “Lo tisna es achicha bilvavecha, hocheiach tochiach es ‘amisecha v’lo tisa ‘alav cheit” – “You should not hate your brother in your heart; rebuke your friend and do not bear a sin [regarding him]” (K’doshim 19:17). These phrases are translated by Chazal as two separate mitzvos: the negative commandment forbidding hatred and the positive commandment of rebuke to correct sin in others (see Seifer HaMitzvos: Mitzvas ‘Asei 205 and Mitzvas Lo Ta’aseh 302, Hilchos Dei’os 6:7)). However, Chazal also interpret both parts of the passage as related comprising two interrelated mitzvos. In the words of Rambam[2](Hilchos Dei’os 6:6,9):

When a person wrongs another, he should not hate him and be silent ... rather there is an obligatory commandment to inform him and to tell him: “Why did you do such-and-such? Why did you harm me in this matter?” as it says: “You should rebuke your friend.” If he subsequently asks him to forgive him, he must forgive, and he should not be cruel [not to forgive]. One whom his friend has wronged and he does not want to rebuke him and not to speak with him at all because the sinner is extremely simple minded (hediyot b’yosier) or mentally ill (da’to m’shubeshes) and he forgives him in his heart and does not hate him but does not rebuke him – this is an act of piety. The Torah is only concerned about the hatred.

This ruling of the Rambam, outlining two distinct approaches to preventing and eliminating hatred, serves as a crucial method of mending rifts between family members, friends, or segments of the Jewish people. Often, the first approach of rebuke is the appropriate one. However hard it is for someone to approach another and state that the latter’s actions hurt him, it is considerably worse to harbor resentment in one’s heart. The Torah demands of us that we overcome our natural tendency to be silent and allow hatred to fester, in order to remove such naturally occurring hatred against someone who harmed us. Most situations do not allow us to rise to the level of the Rambam’s midas chasidus approach of forgiving without first rebuking. However, other times, only the second approach is possible. As the Rambam writes, not all are capable of receiving rebuke. Then we must strive to overcome our natural feelings of enmity anyway.

K’lal Yisrael is one entity. As Midrashim and Kabbala sources elaborate, all Jewish souls are part of one root soul of K’nesses Yisrael. Hating each other is the equivalent of one part the body hating another. To some extent even loving abject sinners is required of us.[3] All the more so are we required to love fellow Jews who basically keep the mitzvos haTorah but follow a different lifestyle from us.

This message is as relevant today as it was during the time of the second Beis HaMikdash which was destroyed due to sinas chinam. It is incumbent upon all of us to take significant, practical steps to foster Ahavas Yisrael in ourselves, our children, and in our communities. The haftara from Yechezkel, describes the unification of the kingdoms of Yosef (the kingdom of Israel) and the kingdom of Yehuda into one nation under

one king, symbolized by Yechezkel's binding two pieces of wood together. Only in such an environment of brotherly love and unity will the final redemption unfold.[4]

[1] See Rabbeinu B'Chaye's (VaYechi 50:17) frightening comment that this reconciliation was not complete. This led to future disastrous consequences.

[2] See Rambam, Frankel Edition, M'koros V'Tziyunim, and the wonderful work, Lo Tisna, from Machon Toras Ha'Adam La'Adam for the source of the Rambam's understanding of this passage. Ramban ('al HaTorah) and Chizkuni interpret the verse similarly.

[3] See Tanya (32) and see there for exceptions; also see the seifer Lo Tisna referenced in footnote 2.

[4] See also mori v'Rabi Rav Yonasan Sack's article, Aschalta Degeula: Harmony and Reconciliation and mori v'Rabi Rav Willig's article, Ahava and Tochacha. Copyright © 2011 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

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)

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com

Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Shelled Egg, Peeled Onion, or Peeled Garlic Clove Left Overnight

Several Biblical injunctions are derived from the warning to "beware for your souls," including the Biblical prohibition of placing oneself in any type of life-threatening situation,¹ e.g., walking dangerously near the edge of a roof, exposing oneself to a disease, etc. In addition to such obviously dangerous acts, our Sages warned against other dangers which are not understood today, such as the well-known injunction against eating meat and fish together. Although we cannot define the resultant danger in terms of medical science, we accept and adhere faithfully to our Sages' warning that eating fish and meat together is a danger.²

Another practice involving food which our Sages considered dangerous is eating a shelled egg, peeled onion, or peeled garlic clove³ that was left overnight. Although this practice is less widespread than the universally accepted restriction against eating meat and fish together, the Talmud⁴ maintains that a ruach ra'ah, literally a "bad spirit" or a "spirit of impurity," rests upon these three foods when peeled and left overnight, similar to the "spirit of impurity" that rests on one's hands during nighttime sleep. One who eats these foods after they were left overnight, states the Talmud, endangers his life. Moreover, he will be judged by the Heavenly Court as a person who took his own life.⁵ In view of the severity of both the offense and the punishment, it is difficult to understand why certain communities do not comply with this restriction. How can they ignore such frightening consequences?

There is a basic difference, however, between the two prohibitions mentioned above. The prohibition against eating meat and fish together is quoted by the Shulchan Aruch as practical Halachah.⁶ All Jews—without exception—are obligated to follow the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch, whether scientifically understood or not. The prohibition against eating the three peeled foods, however, is omitted by many of the Rishonim⁷ and the Shulchan Aruch, probably because they held that the particular "spirit of impurity" in question was no longer prevalent in their times.⁸ Thus, in many communities this practice is not followed, and, indeed, many people have never heard of it.

But in many other communities the practice is in force, to one degree or another. While omitted by the Shulchan Aruch, the warning against eating these three peeled foods is cited by some Rishonim,⁹ and recorded as practical Halachah by several of the later authorities, among them the Peri Chadash, Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav,¹⁰ Aruch ha-Shulchan¹¹ and Ben Ish Chai.

Must everyone observe this prohibition?

Whoever comes from a family that adheres strictly to this custom should definitely continue to do so, since it has a Talmudic source and is surely not less valid than any other well-founded custom.

The poskim differ as to whether or not one who never followed this practice is required to adopt it. Some rule that the practice is mandatory,¹² others recommend adopting it,¹³ while others do not require following it at all.¹⁴

The prohibition applies even when the peeled food items were wrapped, sealed, and stored in a closed pot or container, or were placed in a refrigerator.¹⁵ It also makes no difference whether or not the peeled items were whole, cut up into large or small pieces, crushed or diced.¹⁶ The prohibition applies only when...

* The entire egg, onion, or garlic clove was peeled. If even a minuscule part of it was left unpeeled, or even if the root hairs on top of the onion or

garlic remain, the food is not considered to be "peeled" and the prohibition does not apply.¹⁷

* The egg, onion, or garlic clove was kept separate from any other food. It is permitted, however, to mix them together with other ingredients such as vegetables, tuna fish, vinegar, oil or mayonnaise, and leave them overnight.¹⁸ Even adding a large amount of salt or sugar to the peeled food items is sufficient to permit them to be left overnight.¹⁹

* The egg, onion, or garlic clove was peeled with the intent of using it immediately and it was then left overnight, or if it was peeled in order to be used the next day. If, however, it was shelled or peeled with the express intent of being frozen and used at a later date (as many large companies or bakeries do), it is permitted.²⁰

* Dried egg, onion or garlic powder does not fall into the category of "shelled" and is permitted.²¹

* The egg, onion, or garlic clove is uncooked. When it is cooked, roasted, or fried, several poskim hold that it may be left overnight.²²

* The egg, onion or garlic is left the entire night. If it is left for only part of the night, it is permitted.²³

B'diavad, if these items were shelled or peeled and left overnight, what can be done?²⁴

* Some poskim hold that b'diavad, one does not have to be stringent and the peeled foods should not be thrown away.²⁴ Many other poskim, however, hold that even b'diavad these items should not be eaten.²⁵

* Some poskim hold that cooking or soaking the peeled items in vinegar removes the "spirit of impurity" from them and they may then be eaten.²⁶ Other poskim do not mention this leniency.

* Washing the peeled foods does not alter their status—they still may not be eaten.²⁷

1 Berachos 32b; Rambam, Hilchos Rotzei'ach, 11:4; C.M. 427:5.

2 Pesachim 76b. See The Daily Halachah Discussion, pgs. 124-130.

3 Some people are stringent with radishes also, but this stringency has no apparent source.

4 Niddah 17a.

5 Rashi, *ibid.* as explained by Aruch l'Ner.

6 O.C. 173 and Y.D. 116:2.

7 Such as the Rif, Rambam, and Tur.

8 Explanation offered by Teshuvos Peri ha-Sadeh 3:61-2 and others, based on Yam Shel Shelomo (Chullin, Kol ha-Basar 31) and Tosafos, Yoma 77b, who state that ruach ra'ah is no longer prevalent in our midst. See also Hagoas Mordechai (Shabbos, ha-Motzi Yayin) quoting Maharam mi-Rottenburg.

9 See Tosafos, Shabbos 141a, Tosafos, Beitzah 14a, Rosh, Beitzah 1:21, Semak 171, Leket Yosher, Y.D. pg. 6, who all record this prohibition.

10 Hilchos Shemiras ha-Guf 7.

11 Y.D. 116:22.

12 Teshuvos Beis Shelomo, Y.D. 189, quoted in Darchei Teshuvah 116:74; Maharsham 4:148 (see also Da'as Torah, O.C. 513:6); Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31, in addition to all the authorities mentioned above who quote this warning as

practical Halachah. See also Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 513:13 quoting Misgeres Zahav 99:1.

13 Chafetz Chayim (Likutei Halachos, Niddah 17a, Ein Mishpat 7); Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:20; Rav Y.Y. Kanievsky (quoted in Shemiras ha-Guf v'ha-Nefesh 3:1); Yabia Omer, Y.D. 2:7.

14 Teshuvos Yad Meir 19, quoted in Darchei Teshuvah 116:74, based on the previously mentioned argument that nowadays, this ruach ra'ah is no longer prevalent. In addition, all the other poskim who do not mention this warning, including later authorities such as the Chochmas Adam, Pischei Teshuvah and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, must be included in this category.

15 Niddah 17a; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav (Shemiras ha-Guf 7).

16 Based on Tosafos, Shabbos 141a.

17 Niddah 17a (see Ya'avetz and Aruch l'Ner); Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav, *ibid.*

18 Semak 171; Zivchei Tzedek 61, quoted in Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 504:1 and Y.D. 116:92; Ben Ish Chai (Pinchas 2:14); Chazon Ish (quoted in Shemiras Haguf v'ha-Nefesh 3:5 and in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:209); Yabia Omer, Y.D. 2:7; mi-Beis Levi 3:46.

19 Minchas Yitzchak 6:75; Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31; Doleh u'Mashkeh, pg. 364. [But mixing peeled eggs and peeled onions or garlic together is not permitted; Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 33.]

20 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:20. Other poskim, however, do not mention this leniency.

21 Darchei Teshuvah 116:74 quoting Degel Efrayim 28; Yabia Omer, Y.D. 2:7; Shevet ha-Levi 6:111. [According to the previously mentioned Igros Moshe, this would also be permitted. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv is quoted (Yashiv Moshe, pg. 159) as permitting onion powder when mixed with other ingredients. See also Doleh u'Mashkeh, pg. 364.]

22 Darchei Teshuvah 116:74 quoting Beis Shelomo, Y.D. 189; Aderes (Kuntres Over Orach 4); Chazon Ish (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:209); Shevet ha-Levi 3:169. [A minority opinion holds that the prohibition applies to cooked, roasted and fried peeled items as well; see Minchas Yitzchak 4:108 and Yabia Omer 2:7 quoting several poskim, and some people are stringent about this.]

23 Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31 is unsure of this halachah, but he states that it is not customary to be stringent when these items were peeled and left for only part of the night.

24 Chazon Ish (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:210). Yaskil Avdi 8:14-4 allows these items to be used for a Shabbos meal. See also Sdei Chemed (Lamed 41:31) and Minchas Yitzchak 2:68 and 9:28.

25 Birkei Yosef, Y.D. 116:10; Shem Aryeh, Y.D. 56; Chelkas Yaakov 4:12; Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31 (who warns about severe stomach ailments that could result from being lax with this prohibition) and all the poskim mentioned above who quote this practice and do not differentiate between l'chatchilah and b'diavad.

26 Kaf ha-Chayim 116:93.

27 Artzos ha-Chayim, O.C. 4:32; Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31.

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Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com