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To: parsha@parsha.net
From: cshulman@gmail.com

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What do porcupines do in winter? asked Schopenhauer. If they come too close to one another, they injure each other. If they stay too far apart, they freeze. Life, for porcupines, is a delicate balance between closeness and distance. It is hard to get it right and dangerous to get it wrong. And so it is for us. That is the force of the word that gives our parasha its name: Vayigash. "And he came close." Then Judah came close to him and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself." (44: 18) For perhaps the first time in his life, Judah came close to his brother Joseph. The irony is, of course, that he did not know it was Joseph. But that one act of coming close melted all of Joseph's reserve, all his defences, and as if unable to stop himself, he finally disclosed his identity: Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" (45: 3) How can we be sure that Vayigash is the key word? Because it contrasts with another verse, many chapters, and many years, earlier. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. (37: 18) Right at the beginning of the story, when Joseph was sent by his father to see how the brothers were doing, tending the sheep, they saw him from far away, from a distance. Imagine the scene. They can't see his face. All they can see is the richly ornamented cloak, the "coat of many colours," that so upsets them because it constantly reminds them that it is he not they whom their father loves. From far away, we don't see people as human beings, and when we stop seeing people as human beings, and they become instead symbols, objects of envy or hate, people can do bad things to one another. The whole tragedy of Joseph and his brothers was distance. They were too far apart in every way. Which is why it was only

when Judah came close to Joseph – Vayigash – that the coldness between them thawed, and they became brothers, not strangers to one another. Too much distance and we freeze. But if we get too close we can injure one another. That was the story of Jacob and Esau. Think about it. Jacob bought Esau's birthright. He stole his blessing. He wore Esau's clothes. He borrowed his identity. Even when they were born, Jacob was clutching Esau's heel. It was only when there was a distance between them – the 22 years in which Jacob was away from home, with Lavan – that the relationship healed, so that when they met again, despite Jacob's fears, Esau embraced and kissed him and treated him like a brother and a friend. Too close and we hurt one another. Too distant and we freeze. How then do we make and sustain relationships if the balance is so fine and it is so easy to get it wrong? The Torah's answer – already there in the first chapter of the Torah – is, first separate, then join. The verb lehavdil, "to separate," appears five times in the first chapter of Bereishit. God separates light from darkness, the upper and lower waters, sea and dry land. Separation is at the heart of Jewish law – between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. In Judaism kadosh, holy, means separation. To sanctify is to separate. Why? Because when we separate, we create order. We defeat chaos. We give everything and everyone their space. I am I and not you. You are you and not I. Once we respect our difference and distance, then we can join without doing damage to one another. The most beautiful symbol of the problem and its resolution is the ceremony of havdalah at the end of Shabbat and especially the havdalah candle. The wicks are separate but the flame they make is joined. So it is between husband and wife. So it is between parent and child. And so it is, or should be, between brothers. Distance damaged the relationship between Judah and Joseph. Vayigash – Judah's act of drawing close – restored it.

THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [<http://www.tanach.org/>]

In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag

Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Rabbi Menachem Leibtag 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 of 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 mizbeich 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 Seforno 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 & Seforno.] [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-bitarim' 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 mizbeich (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 mizbeich. 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'amad 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'amad 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 mizbeich... 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 sukum 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

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 mizbeich 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	MOSHE
(leaving Canaan)	(at the burning bush)
(Breishit 46:2-4)	(Shmot 3:4-8)

=====	=====
God called to Yisrael in a vision:	God called out to Moshe:
YAAKOV, YAAKOV, va-yomer hineini	MOSHE, MOSHE, va-yomer hineini

And he said: I am the God of your father...	And he said: 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 elyona" (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-aroach" (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.

<http://matzav.com/>

“Vesein Tal Umatar” Begins in Chutz La’aretz Tonight ..

{Shmiel Gellman-Matzav.com Newscenter}

December 4

At Maariv, December 4th, in chutz la’aretz, we began to say Vesein Tal Umatar during Shemonah Esrei in the bracha of Boreich Aleinu. Residents of Eretz Yisroel already began saying Vesein Tal Umatar on the 7th of Cheshvan.

If one became aware after completing the bracha of Mevareich Hashanim that one omitted Vesein Tal Umatar, one should wait to insert it right before “Ki atah shomeiah” in Shema Koleinu.

If one has already completed the bracha of Shomeiah Tefillah, one may insert Vesein Tal Umatar before saying Retzei. If one has already started Retzei, one must return to the bracha of Boreich Aleinu, which is the proper place for Vesein Tal Umatar. If one already completed the Shemonah Esrei and stepped backward, one must repeat the entire Shemonah Esrei (Shulchan Aruch with Mishna Berurah 117:5. See also Bi’ur Halacha).

(It is advisable to repeat 101 times [and at the very least 90 times] “Ve’es kol minei sevu’asah letovah vesein tal umatar” so as to make the inclusion of Vesein Tal Umatar habitual and fluent, thus eliminating any future doubt as to whether one included Vesein Tal

Umatar in Shemonah Esrei or not....

<http://blog.joelhoffman.com/2012/12/04/how-the-secular-date-of-dec-5-made-its-way-into-the-jewish-calendar/>

How the Secular Date of Dec. 5 Made Its Way into the Jewish Calendar **Joel M. Hoffman**

December 5 may be the most arcane date of importance in the Jewish calendar. It's when we start saying the winter prayer for rain.

Right off the bat, a question presents itself: Why do we use a secular date to delineate this Jewish custom, when all of the others are based on the Jewish calendar? And secondly, what's the magic behind December 5? The answers take us on a fascinating journey through Jewish text, nature, astronomy, history, infrastructure, and politics.

There are in fact two times we add a mention of rain to our service.

The first, more familiar now, is the short insertion in the Amida prayer about God's power: mashiv ha-ru'ach umorid ha-gashem. God makes the wind blow and the rain fall. The second is an addition to the prayer petitioning God for bountiful produce: ten tal umatar livracha. Grant us the blessing of dew and rain.

The 1800-year-old Mishnah — the initial compilation of Jewish law and practice — discusses both of these in the chapter called Ta'anit (“fasting”), starting with the first one.

There was general agreement that the insertion should commence during the rainy season, roughly Sukkot. The Mishnah records a disagreement about the details. Rabbi Eliezer considered the first day of Sukkot a good time to start praying for rain, but Rabbi Yehoshua countered that no one wants rain on Sukkot, so it would be better to wait until the end of the holiday.

But Sukkot is a pilgrimage holiday, when it was common to ascend to Jerusalem by foot. If we start praying for rain right after Sukkot, it might rain on those who are walking home.

So regarding the second insertion, Rabbi Gamaliel says that we should wait until 15 days after Sukkot to start praying for rain, that half-month being a reasonable amount of time to walk back to the farthest extent of the Land of Israel.

The Talmud — the great codification of Jewish law and practice that contains the Mishnah and meandering commentary on it — expands on the Mishnah and explains that in Babylonia they didn't start saying the prayer for rain until 60 days into the rainy season of fall.

Jewish geography is exceedingly simple. There are essentially only three places: Jerusalem, the rest of Israel, and the rest of the world. Therefore, we in New York live in the same place (“the rest of the world”) as the Babylonians, so we follow their custom. We start saying the prayer for rain 60 days after the equinox.

The equinox is either September 22 or September 23.

But the careful reader may notice that 60 days after September 22 or 23 is November 21 or 22, not December 5. So we keep digging.

Shmuel, in the Talmud section known as Eruvin, calculates the four seasons as each lasting 91 days and 7.5 hours, and assigns September 23 as the start of fall. Because his became the official Jewish secular calendar, the Jewish equinox is always September 23. But we still wonder why we don't start praying for rain on November 22. Shmuel's year of four seasons lasted 364 days and 30 hours, or 365.25 days. The solar year, though, is actually 11 minutes and 14 seconds shorter. Because of this discrepancy, the Jewish equinox has slowly moved forward compared to the solar equinox, at the rate of approximately one day every 128 years.

The Catholic Church (by coincidence) also used Shmuel's calendar, but unlike in Judaism, most of the Christian holidays are based on the solar date. By 1582, the official and solar calendars were 10 days out of sync, one result of which was that the springtime holiday of Easter was marching forward into summer.

So Pope Gregory fixed the calendar by doing two things. He dropped 10 days in October (the day after October 4 was October 15 that year), and, moving forward, he dropped 3 leap years every 400 years: years that are divisible by 100 would no longer be leap years unless they were also divisible by 400. (That's why 2000 was a leap year even though 1900 wasn't, and 2100 won't be.)

In America and elsewhere in the world we use the Gregorian calendar. The Jews, though, didn't [care] about Pope Gregory. So in 1582,

the Jewish equinox moved ahead 10 days to October 3, the Gregorian equivalent of the Shmuelian September 23. Since then, 1700, 1800, and 1900 have been Shmuelian leap years but not Gregorian leap years. So now the Shmuelian equinox is the Gregorian October 6. Sixty days after October 6 is December 5. And there you have it. But don't get too used to that date. In the year 2100 (a Shmuelian leap year) the day moves ahead to December 6.

<http://blog.joelhoffman.com/2013/11/20/why-hanukkah-and-thanksgiving-will-never-again-coincide/>

Why Hanukkah and Thanksgiving will Never Again Coincide
November 20, 2013

Joel M. Hoffman

Hanukkah-5774-Thanksgiving-2013

Try to keep up with me on this.

I know that's an ominous way to start, but it's worth it.

This month, Hanukkah and Thanksgiving will overlap for a joint celebration that will never happen again. Here's why.

Thanksgiving is the 4th Thursday in November. Hanukkah is the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev.

The 4th Thursday in November can range from the 22nd to the 28th. If the 29th is a Thursday, then so is the 1st, so the 29th would be the fifth Thursday, not the fourth. And if the 21st is a Thursday, then it's only the third Thursday. On average, then, Thanksgiving falls on the 28th about every seven years. It will fall on the 28th this year, then again in 2019, 2024, 2030, and 2041, or four times in the next 28 years. (It's not exactly every seven years because leap days throw things off a little.)

The Jewish month of Kislev can currently start as early as November 3 or as late as December 2, which means that the first day of Hanukkah can come as early as November 28 or as late as December 27.

The reason for the broad range of possible dates is that the Jewish calendar is lunar-solar. The months are based on the cycles of the moon. But the calendar changes the lengths of those months, and even how many months are in a year, to make sure that Passover always falls in the spring. This complex system — put in place by Rav Shmuel in the first half of the first millennium CE — ensures that the Jewish date and the secular date match up every 19 years. (By contrast, the Muslim calendar is purely lunar, which is why Ramadan can fall during any time of the solar year. The Christian religious calendar is almost entirely solar, but Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox [around March 21], a calculation that involves the moon as well as the sun.)

Because of this Jewish 19-year cycle, 19 years from now, in the year 2032, Hanukkah will again fall on November 28. But Thanksgiving in that year falls three days earlier, on the 25th.

On average, we would expect the 19-year Jewish cycle and the 7-year Thanksgiving-on-November-28 cycle to coincide about every 19×7 years, which is to say, approximately every 133 years. And they sort of do.

One-hundred and fifty-two years ago, in 1861, the first day of Hanukkah and the 4th Thursday in November were both on November 28th. But there was no Thanksgiving back then.

In 152 years from now, in 2165, Thanksgiving falls on the 28th, and you'd expect Hanukkah also to fall on the 28th, but it doesn't.

If you've been paying attention (and if you haven't given up yet), you may have noticed that I said "currently" when I explained when Kislev can begin.

Remember Shmuel, who fixed the details of our current Jewish calendar in the first place? He, like everyone else back then, thought that the year was 365.25 days long. This is why we have a usual year of 365 days, but every 4th year we add a leap day in February to make 366.

But Shmuel — again, like everyone else — was off by a little more than 11 minutes. The year is not quite 365.25 days long, but, rather, closer to only 365.2425 days, or about 11 minutes shorter than 365.25 days. For a long time no one noticed those 11 minutes. For a longer time no one cared. But by the time of Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, those 11 minutes per year — or about 3 days per 400 years — had added up to about ten days.

This meant that March 21, which had once been the approximate date of the spring equinox, was now 10 days later than the spring equinox. Or, conversely, the spring equinox fell on March 11. This was a problem for the Church, because the springtime holiday of Easter was shifting further and further away from spring. Pope Gregory fixed the problem in two ways. First, he lopped off 10 days from the calendar. For Catholics, the day after Thursday, October 4, 1582 was Friday, October 15, 1582. Secondly, he eliminated 3 leap days every four hundred years. He decreed that years divisible by 4 would still be leap years, unless they were also

divisible by 100 but not by 400. So 1600 would be a leap year (divisible by 100 and by 400), but 1700 would not (divisible by 100 and not by 400). This became known as the Gregorian calendar, and it gradually spread through the Christian world.

In 1752, the British empire adopted the Gregorian calendar, making the day after Wednesday, September 2, 1752 not the 3rd but rather the 14th. (An 11th day was necessary because 1700 was not a leap year in the Gregorian calendar.)

The Jews, of course, didn't [care] what Pope Gregory said. They kept using the Shmuelian calendar for their calculations. The Shmuelian calendar and the Gregorian calendar have been diverging at the rate of about 11 minutes a year, or 3 days every 400 years. Furthermore, the year 2100 will be a leap year in the Shmuelian calendar (because it's divisible by 4) but not in the Gregorian calendar (because it's divisible by 100 but not 400). So not long after the year 2100, the Jewish calendar and the secular calendar will diverge by an additional 1 day — though the details are even a little more nuanced, because Shmuel used a simplification of the final Jewish calendar.

This is why (remember the question from several paragraphs ago?) in the year 2165, when we'd expect Thanksgiving and Hanukkah to coincide again, Hanukkah will actually be one day later.

And that is why Thanksgiving and Hanukkah will never again coincide.

Well, almost never. If the Jews don't ever abandon the calculations based on the Shmuelian calendar, Hanukkah will keep getting later and later — moving through winter, then into spring, summer, and finally back into fall — so that tens of thousands of years from now they will again coincide. But long before then the springtime holiday of Passover will have moved deep into summer, so be on the lookout for a memo with a calendar update in the next several thousand years.

And in the meantime, don't miss this opportunity to enjoy an exceedingly rare confluence of celebrations.

Happy Hanukkah. And Happy Thanksgiving.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The Truth Of Satire

There is a wickedly funny and enormously sad piece of satire making the rounds about a "Lithuanian" charedi father attempting to explain to his inquisitive child the story of the Hasmoneans and their triumph over the Greeks. On the one hand the Hasmoneans were staunch "Lithuanian" "charedim who learned all day, while on the other hand they apparently had weapons, organized an army that they themselves led in actual warfare against the Greeks.

They also engaged in commerce and agriculture, albeit always wearing only white shirts. And, apparently, they wanted to establish an independent Jewish state in the Land of Israel. The child realizes the enormous disconnect between the traditional story of Chanuka and the Hasmoneans and what he has been taught at home, in school and amongst his peers about the country and society he currently lives in. The father admits to himself the existence of this savage disconnect with reality and the Chanuka story, but says one may not state so publicly lest one be accused of being a Zionist.

Here, as in all good satire, there exists more than a bit of exaggeration.

But, there is no doubt that more than a kernel of truth also exists in this fictitious conversation. The charedi world in the main, especially the "Lithuanian" branch (with whom I identify myself as belonging to) has yet to come to grips with the realities of today. It is still fighting the battle of the nineteenth century against secular Zionism, a battle long ago ended and not relevant any longer in today's Jewish world.

Part of the problem in changing this mindset of complete disconnect with reality. We have grown so comfortable over the past centuries of Jewish life as being the persecuted victim, that we are frightened to shuck off that protective mantle. We see the world in black and white

colors only – the good guys and the villains. There is no room for nuance or moderation in such a worldview.

If we are involved in rabbinic scandal, financial misdeeds, abusive physical and sexual behavior, violence against police, corrupt elections (and those elected thereby) and are caught by the authorities for so doing, the immediate knee-jerk reaction is that we are being persecuted because of our religious practices, different dress, traditional lifestyle and distinct societal mores.

Somehow we have forgotten that idleness, poverty and a persecution complex all are, in the long run, self-destructive conditions. These were the conditions that secularized much of Ashkenazic Jewry over the past three centuries. Eventually a system built on declining governmental welfare allotments and unending charity from others - a system decried by Maimonides and other great rabbinic sages and religious leaders throughout the ages – is a Ponzi scheme that inexorably will collapse of its own weight.

And we are ill served by religious political leaders and the handlers of old and revered great Torah scholars who, for purposes I have never really understood, oppose any change of the current miserable status quo. And, there is never any plan advanced to help rescue their adherents from the deepening abyss of poverty and personal despair.

So, a little clever satire can be a good thing for us. A good look at the absurdity of some of our societal practices, at the disconnect with reality, at an educational system that impoverishes its students for life and stifles creativity and different opinions can only help us in the long run to advance the cause of Torah in Israel and in the Diaspora!

A middle-aged person recently came to see me before embarking on a trip to the United States to raise money to pay for his crushing debts accumulated over the years that he has not worked. The irony is that he graduated university and is a qualified engineer and is easily employable. So when I asked him why he doesn't go to work instead of undergoing the humiliation of canvassing door to door in the American winter for a month to receive charity, much of it given begrudgingly, I sighed deeply at his answer: "I have daughters to marry off and the husbands they want to marry will not accept daughters of someone who is working!"

I wanted to answer him harshly: "But they will accept daughters of someone who begs others for charity!" However, I bit my tongue and wished him success (?) on his journey. I was impotently outraged all day at how this type of mindset has corrupted such a wonderful people.

Perhaps we need more satire to have the truth of the situation sink into our society.

Shabat shalom

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Vayigash

Yehuda finally confronts Yosef and in his frustration at the way events have developed, he speaks to the ruler of Egypt with direct and even harsh words. But what is most amazing in the whole Torah narrative regarding the brothers and Yosef is that not for a moment do the brothers realize that the Egyptian ruler, who has so unfairly tormented them, is in fact Yosef, their brother.

The brothers ask themselves all of the right questions – "Why does he ask about our father and our family? Does he think that we wish to marry into his family? What does Heaven want from us that we are so severely tested and tried? How could Binyamin steal the cup – is he the same type of 'holy' thief that was his mother? How come Shimon looks so fit after his imprisonment? Who put the money into our food sacks? How did the

Egyptian ruler know our ages and our proper seating arrangement at his table? But they never arrive at the right answer.

Somehow they cannot connect the dots, obvious as the connection now appears to be. There are many explanations offered by the commentators throughout the ages as to the blindness of the brothers to the matter. But all of the reasons advanced trace themselves back to one basic explanation and idea.

And that idea is that the preconceived notion that the brothers had of Yosef's insufferable behavior and wild dreams that so affected and frightened them did not allow them to recognize Yosef and they could not imagine that somehow Heaven voted in his favor and that they were completely wrong in their assessment of him and the future of the house of Yaakov.

Many times in the Jewish world and in its history, Jews have tended to fall into this trap of preconceived notions and ideas. The brothers of Yosef were great and holy personages. They are the founders of our people and are our very ancestors. Yet, their error of preconceptions and fixed ideas blinded them to recognizing their brother and to the unexpected, even unwanted on their part, fulfillment of his dreams.

It is dangerous, both physically and spiritually to assert that events in the Jewish world will or never will happen. The Divine plan and its execution in real time is always hidden from us. "For your thoughts are not My thoughts nor are your paths (of their execution) necessarily My paths, says the Lord."

Since the State of Israel did not come into being according to anyone's preconceived program, many cannot bring themselves to deal with its reality even today, sixty-five years later. There are so many Jews that do not look like us and perhaps do not behave like us - therefore there are many who cannot recognize them as the true brothers to us that they are. Letting go of preconceptions, even those that we deemed to be holy and once infallible, is a necessary step in the process of national redemption and brotherly reconciliation. Necessary is not always easy.

Shabat shalom

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

to: weekly@ohr.edu

subject: Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayigash

For the week ending 7 December 2013 / 4 Tevet 5774

By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

It's Nothing, Really!

"I am Yosef — is my father still alive?" (45:3)

Often when you apologize to someone, you hear the person reply, "It's nothing, really!" Sometimes they mean: "Why are you making such a business out of it? What did you do, after all? Forget it! It's really nothing."

Now for those people, saying, "It's nothing" is genuine forgiveness. It really is nothing to them. However, most of the time what people really mean is, "It's nothing really?! You must be joking! I don't even want to hear your voice! I just want to see you squirm around in front of me! I'm not letting you off the hook for anything. Apologize away! It's nothing really!"

A person who refuses to accept an honest apology can make himself guiltier than the "guilty party". Just as Judaism prescribes the appropriate behavior for one who needs to apologize, so too there is a correct way to behave towards someone seeking forgiveness. Indeed, someone who turns a plea for forgiveness into an opportunity for vengeance, however subtle it might be, will very probably end up committing a graver sin than the original offense.

Picture Yosef's brothers standing in front of him, the utter humiliation and guilt of facing their young brother whom they had wronged so

terribly. Now they were facing a king who had the power of life and death over them. How did Yosef react in this situation? Human nature would suggest that Yosef would, at least, have laid out in some detail all the hardship and suffering they had caused him. However, what we read in the Torah sounds more like an extended "thank-you" note than a reproach.

"And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you. Thus G-d has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival in the land and to sustain you. It is not you who sent me here but G-d."

The Torah teaches us that, as important as it is to say "Sorry", it's equally important to know how to say "I forgive you" in a way that genuinely comforts the offender.

Source: Da'at Torah

Temporary Amnesia

"I am Yosef — is my father still alive?" (45:3)

Why, at this climactic moment when Yosef finally revealed his true identity to his brothers, did he ask whether his father was still alive? The brothers had already confirmed the fact several times. In fact, Yehuda had just finished an impassioned plea to free Binyamin on the grounds that Yaakov would not have survived the loss of Binyamin.

And here lies the understanding of Yosef's question. Yosef wasn't asking for information about his father's well-being. Rather, he was rebuking Yehuda. He was saying to him, "You're so concerned that our father will not survive the loss of his son Binyamin? Where was that concern when you sold another of his sons into slavery? Don't forget to whom you are talking! I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?"

Source: Beit HaLevi

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas Vayigash

Then Yehudah approached him and said. (44:18)

To approach someone prior to speaking to him is self-evident. Unless one wants to shout across the room, he must move over towards the individual with whom he is about to speak. Why does the Torah seem to underscore that Yehudah "approached" Yosef? It could have written simply that Yehudah spoke with Yosef, without mentioning that he approached him. Indeed, every word in the Torah has a purpose. The Torah is Divinely authored. Hashem places a word in the Torah for a distinct reason, to convey an important and meaningful message. What is Vayigash, "And he approached," teaching us?

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, quotes the Midrash Rabbah which teaches that the word Vayigash indicates three things: an act of war; an action intimating appeasement; a move to prayer; milchamah, doron and tefillah. Rav Alpert relates that he heard from a prominent scholar that a similarity exists among the three hagashos, approaches. Just as departure from war demands preparation, so, too, do appeasement and prayer require an element of preparation. One must gather himself together, prepare himself physically and emotionally to mollify someone; likewise he must prepare himself when he is about to entreat Hashem.

Rav Alpert adds another similarity. In anticipation of battle, one must know his enemy, his strengths and weaknesses, his vulnerabilities and fortified strongholds. If one lacks proper reconnaissance, he will fall in battle. This applies equally to prayer. One must reconnoiter the area - but this time the reconnaissance is introspective; it is turned inward towards himself. He must prove himself, taking advantage of his strengths, and addressing his weakness as well. He must question himself concerning his relationship with Hashem. Only after self-examination and intense scrutiny of one's inner-self and attaining proper emotional composure, may one begin pouring out his heart in supplication to Hashem.

Similarly, when one needs to win over an individual in an attempt to appease him, the process of discovery is much the same. He asks himself: What type of person is he? What motivates him? What makes him happy? How can I penetrate his emotions, so that my appeal to him will be successful?

Prayer, warfare and appeasement - all require a Vayigash, an approach of coming closer. Yehudah's Vayigash to Yosef was an essential preamble to his successful appeal. If he had just barged in and begun speaking, he would have been met by a stone wall.

Yehudah needed to reach Yosef's innermost self. It was necessary for him to appeal to that which was closest to Yosef, to that which would effect the greatest success. This was reflected in Yosef's constant queries about their father, Yaakov Avinu. Even when he sent the brothers on the return trip, he told them to go in peace to their father. Yehudah understood that he had to play the "Yaakov card" with Yosef if he wanted to convince him to release Binyamin. Therefore, he told Yosef that his father would be grief-stricken if Binyamin did not return. His plan worked, as his "approach" led to Yosef's "revelation."

Now Yosef could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him... Thus no one remained with him when Yosef made himself known to his brothers. (45:1)

If ever a passage in the Torah has been laden with ambiguity, it is the episode of Yosef with his brothers. Clearly, whatever explanation we offer is superficial. The story of Yosef and his brothers is replete with profound esoteric principles that absolutely defy our ability to understand. These are the ways of G-d. We are not capable of understanding Hashem's reasons for causing Yaakov's troubles, Yosef's loneliness, and the brothers' envy which precipitated the twenty-two year separation of the father from his beloved son. The manner in which Yosef and his brothers finally became reunited and reconciled is no less difficult to grasp. Among the many questions with which we grapple is the reason that Yosef withheld the information from his father. Why did he not immediately notify him that he was alive and well, living amid royalty and success in Egypt? Such behavior is not sensible, or so it seems to the casual reader. As originally mentioned, however, nothing in this parshah is simple, nor does that which appears to the naked eye represent the reality and hidden purpose of Hashem's Divine plan.

One question that is elementary in nature, but no less compelling, is: Why did the brothers not recognize Yosef during their encounter in Egypt? Does a person's appearance change that much in a span of a little over two decades? Furthermore, we know that Yosef's countenance matched that of his father, Yaakov Avinu. How could the brothers not notice this? The Midrash records much of the dialogue that ensued between Yosef and his brothers. He seems to have known so much about their family background. Why did this not raise suspicion in their minds?

The Alshich HaKadosh explains that everything Yosef did was in order to expunge his brothers' sin, so that they would not have to be punished in Olam Habba. By making them suffer in this world, they would atone for selling Yosef. Every aspect of the sin was cleansed middah k'neged middah, measure for measure. For example, the brothers caused Yosef to fear for his life. Likewise, Yosef gave them reason to be anxious about their own futures. They attempted to cover up their reuse concerning Yosef's disappearance by producing his bloodied tunic. Yosef repaid them with his own guile, concerning the silver goblet that was planted in Binyamin's sack. Shimon was the one who first suggested that Yosef be killed. Thus, he was the one whom Yosef imprisoned. It was tit for tat, for the purpose of atoning for their sins. The pain experienced in this world is nothing compared to that which one sustains in the World to Come.

Yosef understood that Heaven had given him a role to play in order to help his brothers. The dreams were part of the scenario. Thus, he was compelled to wait it out and not notify his father prematurely. It reached the point that he could no longer contain himself; he could not stand idly by as his brothers suffered. This, however, does not explain why the brothers did not recognize Yosef. How was he able to conceal himself from them?

In his Nachal Kedumim, the Chida, zl, teaches an important principle. As a result of the overwhelming animus that emanated from the brothers towards Yosef, they were blinded from the apparent truth that stood before them in all clarity without embellishment. This was why the truth evaded them. When enmity exists between people, they become blind to one another. The ability to discern and recognize one another is the direct result of the relationship which exists between them. If there is hatred - over time - they will no longer recognize one another. Yosef, however, did not hate his brothers. Thus, he recognized them. In contrast, they were blinded by animus. They could not see him standing before their eyes.

What was Yosef to do? He made all kinds of references to their family past, in the hope that something would click in their minds, and they would recognize that he was none other than Yosef standing before them. When this did not work, he became concerned. He understood what this psychological blindness meant: they still hated him. He could no longer constrain himself, feeling that he might as well reveal himself to them. Apparently, they were not going to realize who he was on their own. Their eyesight was limited by a strain of myopia that had its roots in the

"heart." The brothers were not emotionally tuned into him. Despite all of the joy generated by Yosef's revelation, the pain that his brothers' envy and hatred had not yet been completely expunged distressed Yosef. He knew that the hatred that his brothers harbored towards him would not cease. The scourge of animosity fueled by envy and bitterness would fester until it would ultimately bring down the Bais Hamikdash.

This is why all of them - Yosef, as well as his brothers - broke into bitter weeping. They were overwhelmed by the truth, as they saw the "fruits" of the tree of prejudice.

Now Yosef could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him. (45:1)

Rashi explains that Yosef could not allow the Egyptians to be present when he was putting his brothers to shame. The Midrash goes further, claiming that Yosef had placed himself in great danger, for if his brothers had decided to kill him, no one would have known one way or the other. He said, "Better I should be killed than I should humiliate my brothers in front of the Egyptians." Embarrassing someone is an egregious sin for which one loses his portion in Olam Habba, the World to Come. Ish L'reieihu quotes Horav Yosef Chaim Blau, Shlita, Rav of Ashkelon, who adds another rationale to explain Yosef's willingness to sacrifice his life rather than shame his brothers in public. Yosef sought to atone for his earlier sins as a youth, when he had tattled on his brothers. The message he was conveying to his father was that his brothers were up to no good. This caused them great embarrassment. Thus, he wanted to repair his earlier indiscretion by preventing his brothers' shame. The following story is told concerning Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl. He was attending a conference of gedolei Yisrael, the most prominent rabbinic leaders of the time. During the course of the conference an issue arose which required a special subcommittee, to be comprised of a select group of whom we might call the "executive leadership." As is often the case, there is the general membership and, exclusive of them, are the executives, the movers and shakers, who are the individuals that establish policy and make the decisions on which everybody else "votes."

The conference chairman announced that the next meeting was to be attended by a select group of rabbis, to whom an invitation had been extended and whose attendance was crucial to the meeting. The chairman was acutely aware that if the meeting were to be opened up to the entire assembly nothing would be accomplished. It was not as if the other rabbinic leaders were less distinguished, it was just impractical to invite everyone - only a select few. The problem was: no one was leaving the room.

The chairman once again announced that the meeting was only for those who had received prior invitations. Again, no one budged. This time the chairman became indignant and announced that, if necessary, he would have those who did not have invitations physically removed from the room. Still no one moved from their seats. Finally, the entire room stood in shock as Rav Elchanan rose from his seat and shuffled out of the room. When he did this, he was soon followed by a number of leaders who "also" did not have invitations. What happened? Rav Elchanan realized that it was embarrassing for some of the rabbinic leaders to get up and concede that they had not been included among the movers and shakers. When they saw Rav Elchanan Wasserman, one of the undisputed gedolei hador, leaving the room they also left. They did not know, however, that the venerable gaon returned by a back door. He was not going to allow anyone to feel ashamed, so he also walked out. Once he left, it was no longer embarrassing to leave. Greatness is defined not by the respect one receives, but by the respect one gives.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Project Genesis <genesis@torah.org>

Drasha Parshas Vayigash

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Whole Justice

At the onset of this week's portion, Yehuda pleads with Yoseph, Egypt's viceroy, for mercy. Binyamin was framed for a crime he did not commit. Yoseph's agents had planted a silver goblet in the saddle-pack of Binyamin the youngest of Yaakov's children. Now Yoseph wants to mete justice, holding Binyamin to be his slave forever. And Yehuda will not let that come to pass.

And so, Yehuda begs for mercy. Even though it would have been the absolute truth, Yehuda's arguments do not utilize the lawyer's ubiquitous, "He did not do it; he was framed!"

Instead he employs a different approach: he asks for mercy, not for the accused, Binyamin, but rather for his and Binyamin's father, Yaakov.

"And now, if I come to your servant my father and the youth is not with us -- since his soul is so bound up with his soul: It will happen that when he sees the youth is missing he will die, and your servants will have brought down the hoariness of your servant our father in sorrow to the grave. . . . For how can I go up to my father if the youth is not with me, lest I see the evil that will befall my father!" (Genesis 44) In truth, however, we must understand why Yehuda presented a case for Yaakov rather than for Binyamin. In modern terms, Yoseph could have easily answered, "You are the thief. Your father is not my problem."

More than twenty-five years ago, a particular Rabbi, of blessed memory, Rosh Yeshiva of Telshe Yeshiva, Cleveland, moved to Israel to establish a branch of Telshe Yeshiva there. During his tenure in Israel, he developed an extremely close relationship with the elder Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevez, Rabbi Eliezer Menachem Shach, of blessed memory. He often discussed matters pertaining to Klal Yisrael together with Rabbi Shach.

Once Rabbi Shach was disturbed by an endorsement that that Rabbi had made regarding a particular cause. Rabbi Shach felt that the Rabbi had made an error in judgment and Rabbi Shach decided to visit him personally to discuss the matter with him.

Rav Shach made the long trip from B'nai Beraq to that particular Rabbi's apartment in the village of Telshe Stone, (Abu Gush) on the outskirts of Jerusalem. He knocked on the Rabbi's door and was greeted by the Rebbitzin with surprise and with the utmost respect.

She offered him some tea as he sat down together with the Rabbi in the dining room of the small apartment. With the Rabbi's wife in the background, Rav Shach began his conversation discussing the destroyed world of Lithuanian Jewry. The Rabbi, a student of Telshe Yeshiva in Lithuania, was well acquainted with pre-Holocaust Europe. The Rebbitzin, herself a native of Lithuania, was intrigued as Rav Shach and her husband moved from topic to topic. The talk continued on every important topic - except one. Rav Shach never even brought up the intended topic of his visit.

After 45 minutes, Rav Shach excused himself and left the the Rabbi's apartment.

Rav Shach's driver and confidante asked the Rosh Yeshiva how the meeting went, and if that Rabbi was receptive of the criticism.

Rabbi Shach explained, "I was there for nearly an hour, but I did not even broach the topic. You see, the Rebbitzin was in hearing range. How would I even think of criticizing her husband where his Rebbitzin could hear it? And so, I decided not to bring up the topic at all."

Every sentence involves many more parties than the accused. Yehuda was trying to give Yoseph a sense of perspective about to the ramifications of his judgment. He was not only going to sentence a young man to slavery, he would sentence his father to death. He pleaded for Yoseph to encompass more than just Binyamin into his decision. He asked him to think of the effect that the sentence would have on his elderly father.

In our own lives, we are constantly judging. We formulate opinions and we act. Our job, however, is to extend our vision peripherally. . Only the Almighty is the true Judge whose sentences encompass both the culpable party and all those who are in his or her sphere. However, as mortals, in every conclusion we make we must also try to remember that our actions surpass the intended party. In our quest for true justice, we must try to mete comprehensive justice as well.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Toras Chaim at South Shore and the author of the Parsha Parables series.

Questions or comments? Email feedback@torah.org.. Project Genesis

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Jewish Unity

There were thirteen breeches in the wall (the soreig), made by the kings of Greece. The kohanim repaired them, and enacted thirteen bowings

opposite them (Mishna Middos 2:3). What do these thirteen breaches and their repair symbolize?

The numerical value of echad, one, is thirteen. The Greeks hoped to divide and conquer, to destroy our unity and, thereby, our spirituality. In Yerushalyaim, the eternal city in which we are to become friends with one another (Yerushalmi Chagiga 3:6), our enemies sought to sow disunity in our midst. The thirteen breaches in the walls in the Bais Hamikdash represent their attempt to poke holes in the wall of Jewish unity which is essential to our physical and spiritual survival.

When the miracles of Chanuka occurred and the Bais Hamikdash was rededicated, it was critical to restore Jewish unity. By bowing thirteen times to Hashem, we develop a proper sense of humility before Him. This eliminates the arrogance that often leads to irreconcilable feuds, and repairs the divisiveness symbolized by the thirteen breaches.

The afterglow of Chanuka, which celebrates our victory over the Greeks, demands greater focus on this elusive goal. On the last day of Chanuka we read of the menorah, whose candles symbolize Torah scholars and laymen. Only by their combined effort, symbolized by the menorah being made from one piece of gold, can Hashem's wishes be fulfilled (Sforno, Bamidbar 8:2).

Parshas Vayigash which always follows Chanuka, describes the reunification of Yosef and his brothers. This repaired the paradigmatic interpersonal sin, the first breach in the wall of the House of Yaakov. The haftora continues this theme. The ultimate redemption will reunify the kingdoms of Yehuda and Yosef which split in the days of Yeravam ben Nevat; we will all be led, successively, by leaders of Yosef and Yehuda (Malbim Yechezkel 37:19,20). The willingness to be led by a different shevet will begin with Yehuda and be completed by Yosef, just as the reconciliation of the brothers in the parsha.

A week after Chanuka we observe Asara B'Teves, when the siege of Yerushalayim began. Zecharia is told that the fasts will become holidays of joy and happiness, but only if we love truth and peace (Zecharia 8:19, Radak). We must balance our passionate devotion to the timeless truth of Torah with a powerful love and incessant pursuit of peace.

Unfortunately, we are witness to vicious disputes within families and communities, despite the fact that the protagonists are sometimes excessively humble in bowing before Hashem. This phenomenon, which borders on cognitive dissonance, is illustrated by a story my father z"l was fond of retelling.

A visitor on Yom Kippur overheard the person next to him in shul adding to the confession in Shachris. Each time he pounded his heart and said Ashamnu, we have sinned, etc., he would tearfully add "I am nothing." Imagine the visitor's surprise when, shortly thereafter, this same person was called to the Torah and berated the gabbai furiously: "How dare you give me rev'i, an aliya unbecoming my honor"? When the person returned to his seat, the visitor asked him "Excuse me, but I couldn't help but overhear your tearful confession of your nothingness. Why, then, were you so upset at the gabbai?" The person responded "I may be a nothing, but the fellow called to the Torah before me was a bigger nothing!"

In many cases, each side is convinced of the exclusive truth of its position. Usually there is some truth to both sides. Refusal to acknowledge this reality can tear apart families tragically. As members of a wise and discerning nation (D'varim 4:6) we should know better. Sometimes, the very strength of our devotion to Hashem can lead to war instead of peace. When we bow before Hashem and serve Him passionately in our own way, we must realize that other ways of service are also legitimate (Meishiv Davar I, 44). Demeaning other groups or sub-groups and their Torah leadership in the name of Hashem is a jihad which causes terrible divisions and chilul Hashem. Passion must be mediated by an equivalent emphasis on peace and harmony. Reconciliation, reunification and redemption require recognition that an

estranged brother, a different community and a leader from a different group deserve our respect and occasional submission.

The Chasam Sofer (siddur, commenting on selichos) teaches that on Asara B'Teves the heavenly judgment concerning our redemption in the upcoming year is rendered. May our dedication to the themes of truth and peace found in the parsha and the haftora, implied in the victory of Chanuka and demanded in the prophecy of Zecharia, lead to Hashem's decision to redeem us this year.

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Thursday, December 05, 2013

The 5 Towns Jewish Times

Serving Ice Cream to the Morbidly Obese

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

This week, the author received the following question from Rochel Weisz, proprietor of Inside Scoop (located in the Gourmet Glatt parking lot):

Q. My husband and I have an ice-cream store. We heard you wrote a sefer on lifnei iver, and we have a lifnei iver question: If someone is morbidly obese and comes in and orders an ice cream such as "cookies and cream," is it forbidden for us to serve him? Are we obligated to suggest that he try a fat-free, sugar-free type instead?

A. This is a good question. According to the American Obesity Association, 127 million adults in the U.S. are overweight, 60 million are clinically obese, and 9 million are severely obese. Your question probably deals with the last 9 million. It is a growing issue.

You are in luck, because we were able to pose your question to Rav Chaim Kanievsky, shlita, and we have his answer on video and in writing. Our editor, Larry Gordon, presented your question, along with seven other halachic queries, to Rav Kanievsky this past Tuesday. But let's first discuss some pertinent issues. The general prohibition is found in Vayikra (19:14). There are three forms of the prohibition of "misleading the blind." There is (a) the notion of causing someone to stumble in Jewish law, there is (b) the notion of giving someone bad advice, and there is (c) the aspect of physically placing an object before another person that is either harmful or dangerous.

To Stumble In Halachah

Most authorities hold that one who violates type (a) is also in violation of type (b) (see Igros Moshe YD I #3, Achiezer Vol. III 65:9 and 81:17). It is interesting to note that Rav Moshe Feinstein writes that violating type (a) is a sin between man and Hashem—not between man and his friend (IM OC IV #13).

Bad Advice

But you may suggest that your morbidly obese ice-cream consumer is purposefully violating his doctor's orders! That's not "the blind"—he is ordering the cookies and cream with full knowledge! The Rambam addresses this question in his comments to the Mishnah in Shviis (5:6): "This means to say that when temptation and the evil inclination have shut the eyes of an individual, do not assist him in adding to his blindness."

While this is true regarding willful type (a) violations, it is not so clear-cut, regarding a willful violation regarding under type (b)—bad advice Lifnei Iver. Rav Chaim Ozer Grozinsky (Achiezer ibid) rules that when the "victim" is willfully violating the issue—doing something against his best interests, the Rishonim hold that there is no prohibition., Rav Feinstein, zt"l, argues. The Rambam, however, (Hilchos Rotzayach 12:14) rules that there is a prohibition (Hilchos Rotzayach 12:14). Generally speaking, the rule of thumb is to be stringent.

Physical Stumbling Block

Finally, we have the type (c) variety, a physical stumbling block. Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, (YD I #3) holds that there is a violation even when the stumbler is acting willfully, while Rav Elyashiv, zt"l, (Kovetz Teshuvos I CM 219) holds that there is not. Selling cigarettes to someone or ice cream to someone who is morbidly obese would fit in the physical stumbling block department. It may also be in the earlier categories too, because it is a mitzvah to take care of one's health (veNishmartem).

Rabbinic Violation

There is another issue too. The Talmud (Avodah Zarah 6b) explains that the actual prohibition of lifnei iver is violated by the enabler only when the victim could not have violated the prohibition without the enabler. This is called "trei ivrah d'nahara—two sides of the river." The classical example is of a nazir who vowed not to drink wine, and you are the only person who can hand him the wine, since it is on the other side of the river.

If the wine is on the same side of the river, or—in our case—if there is another ice-cream shop in town, it may involve a different, rabbinic prohibition called *mesaya lidei ovrei aveirah*—assisting the hands of evildoers.

Who cares whether it is biblical or rabbinical? Well you may, for one. The reason is that the *Dagul Mervavah* (on the *Shach* in YD 151:6) holds that when the violator is willful and it is only a rabbinic violation, there is no rabbinic prohibition either. This could perhaps save you and allow you to sell the cookies and cream to the willful violator.

Two Caveats Making It Biblical Again

There is a fascinating caveat to all this given both by the *Chofetz Chaim* (Laws of LH 9:1) and the *Chazon Ish* (YD 62:13). If the enabler instigated it—even if the wine or the ice cream was available otherwise—it remains a Biblical prohibition! There is another caveat too. It is known as the *Mishnah LaMelech's Caveat* (*Hilchos Malveh uLoveh* 4:2). The author, Rav Yehudah ben Shmuel Rosanes (1657-1727), chief rabbi of the Ottoman Empire, writes: if the only other enablers are Jewish too, then the prohibition of *Lifnei Iver* is still violated.

Okay, so what do we do here with all of this information? Well, you do have non-Jewish competitors who sell *cholov Yisrael* ice cream. As far as the *Mishnah LaMelech's Caveat*, you are free and clear.

But do we rule like the *Dagul Mervavah* who says that there is no rabbinic prohibition when the violator is willfully violating it? Rav Moshe Feinstein (IM YD I #72) rules that one can only rely upon this *Dagul Mervavah* in combination with another factor. The *Mishnah Berurah* (347:7) disagrees with the *Dagul Mervavah*. Conclusion

So what is our conclusion, since you asked? The *Mishnah Berurah* would forbid it and Rav Feinstein would permit it if there were another factor that one could add to the leniency. What might that be? The *Shach* (YD 151:6) seems to rule that the prohibition of *mesaya* only applies to observant Jews. If it is questionable whether the person is observant or not, then this is a factor that would make it permitted according to Rav Feinstein's view. Thus our conclusion is that if it is a morbidly obese religious Jewish man, you must suggest the dietetic alternative—even according to the more lenient view of Rav Feinstein.

We are working with the assumption that ice cream directly affects the health of the morbidly obese, but the other 118 million Americans may not necessarily be so adversely affected by it. The question is therefore only in regard to the 9 million under discussion.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky's Answer

So what did Rav Chaim Kanievsky say about your question? He said that it is quite possible that there is a prohibition. Perhaps this discussion may give us some insight into the issues involved.

Another Issue

There is also another very important issue too. It should never be done in such a way that might embarrass the person. Indeed, the *Chazon Ish* writes (*Shviis* 12:9) that quite often one violates a bigger *lifnei Iver* or sin when trying to avoid a *Lifnei Iver* in the first place. This is something that we should be extremely careful with. Just as an aside, members of the state of Mississippi tried to make this question into law back in 2009, but the bill was set aside by the Mississippi state legislature. The author can be reached at Yairhoffman2@gmail.com.

Another example is an object whose whole purpose is to serve strangers. If you invite someone into your house, the guest generally doesn't need to ask permission to sit on the couch – that's what it's there for. (3)

At the same time, the rabbis of the Talmud were well aware of the danger of rationalization. It is just too easy to convince yourself that the owner surely doesn't mind. This tendency can be an expression of an exaggerated sense of entitlement which expresses itself in even worse ways. Consider the following story from the Talmud:

A silver cup was stolen from a boarder of [the sage] Mar Zutra Chasida. He saw a certain student who washed his hands and then dried them on his fellow's cloak. He exclaimed, This must be the person, see how he has no regard for his fellow's property! He took him aside and he confessed.(4)

I think we should err particularly on the side of caution when we are talking about a consumable product like coffee. When you borrow an object, the object is around to remind you that you have to return it. But when you take a spoonful of coffee, once you drink it is too easy to forget you ever borrowed it. In no time, all the coffee is gone. Now it is your friend who is stuck without coffee, but he doesn't have a friend to borrow from. If you don't even intend to return it the situation is even worse. A jar seems like a lot, but a private jar can go very quickly if everybody tells himself, "It's only one spoonful."

People are generally good-hearted, and are happy to help others if there is no harm to them. But people are equally aware that borrowing is a very slippery slope, and it is all too easy to forget to return something or to use it carelessly. So pass this time, and when you do see your friend ask him if he minds if you help yourself next time.

SOURCES: (1) Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 41a, Shulchan Arukh Choshen Mishpat 359:5. (2) Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 29b (3) Tur and Shulchan Arukh Choshen Mishpat 381. (4) Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 24a

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Coffee Conundrum

Rabbi Dr. Asher Meir

Q. Last week the office ran out of coffee. One coworker has a private jar, but he was nowhere to be found. Can I borrow a spoonful?

A. This is a common issue, and many people see nothing wrong with "borrowing" from a friend in this way. In order to get to the bottom of this issue, we have to start from the proper foundations. The Talmud tells us a basic principle of ownership:

"Borrowing without knowledge [of the owner] is considered stealing." (1)

The basis for this pronouncement is clear. Whether something is considered stealing or borrowing doesn't depend on the opinion of the taker; he has in any case no rights in the object. It can only depend on the opinion of the owner. Since the owner doesn't know of the "borrowing", the borrower's subjective intention to return the object has no power to change the legal status of the taking.

However, there can be cases where it is so clear that the person wouldn't mind that it can just be assumed. One example is a *mitzvah* object. In the case where borrowing would help a person do a *mitzvah* (religious commandment), and where the object is not harmed at all, our sages say, "A person agrees to have his property used for a *mitzvah*". (2) However, even this principle does not apply if there is a reasonable chance that damage will come to the object, for example borrowing a book which may become torn. (2)