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SHABBAT SHALOM: The myths we live by

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

(December 20) Parashat Vayigash Genesis 44:18-47:27

"And he [Joseph] fell on the neck of Benjamin his brother and he wept." (Gen. 45:14).

Fifteen months ago, at the conclusion of the second Camp David summit, where the division of Jerusalem was discussed, Yossi Beilin and the editorial page of Ha'aretz praised the development as "the long overdue explosion of myths."

What is myth and what is history?

History records events which occur at a specific time; myths are events which constantly recur - ideas and ideals which create history, and even determine its course. Oedipus may or may not have lived in a certain place at a certain time; but Oedipus lives eternally in many if not all of us. A specific ruler is an individual limited by his life span and period of power; a national flag is a myth which encapsulates the entire history and aspirations of a nation.

Because myths are eternal, they are greater than any one individual and transcend any specific time or place; because myths are eternal, they are the symbols for which individuals dedicate - and even sacrifice - their lives. If history is temporal truth, then myth is transcendent truth. For our myths do we die; by our myths do we live.

Jerusalem, and specifically the Temple Mount, is our primary and most seminal myth. The Bible mentions it as the place where God was first recognized as the owner of heaven and earth, and whose ruler, King-of-Righteousness (Malki-Zedek) recognized Abraham's successful war to save his captive nephew from terrorist marauders as a victory of the Divine; indeed, Malki-Zedek merited homage and tithes from Abraham himself, (Gen 14:18-20).

Hence Jerusalem, eternally City of Peace and Wholeness (shalom, shalem) and capital of the Land of Canaan (divinely bequeathed to the nation Israel) is the place from which ethical monotheism emerged, even pre-dating Abraham.

Probably it was for this reason that the Almighty presented to Abraham the supreme test by commanding him to "take his son, his only son, the son whom he loved, Isaac, and dedicate him as a whole burnt offering" - specifically at the Temple Mount, in Jerusalem.

The exquisitely ambiguous language of this awe-ful and awe-some account teaches all subsequent generations two paradoxical lessons: First of all, that the divine will is against any human sacrifice; and, second, that only the individual who is willing to sacrifice his future for an ideal will merit having a future.

Based on these biblical accounts, King David unified the 12 tribes of Israel - albeit only for two glorious generations - by purchasing and establishing Jerusalem as our capital. His son Solomon (Shlomo - peace, wholeness, Jeru-Shalayim) built the first Temple at the sacred spot of the holy mount.

And virtually all of our prophets - even those whose ministries post-dated the Temple's destruction - envisioned a re-established Temple which would serve as a "house of prayer for all nations" from whence peace would reign, "the lion would lie down with the lamb," "nation will not lift up sword against nation and humanity will not learn war any more" (Isaiah 2, 11; Micah 4,5; Zechariah 7,8,9).

This national aspiration of, and faith in, Jerusalem rebuilt, the cry of "next year in Jerusalem" at the conclusion of each Passover seder and Yom Kippur fast, and the martyr's gasp with his last breath "I believe with a

perfect belief in the coming of the messiah" has kept us alive as a people for almost 2,000 years.

Even the rabbinical commentary on this week's Torah reading features the significance of Jerusalem. After Joseph reveals himself to his brothers: "[Joseph] fell on the neck of Benjamin his brother and he wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck." (Gen 45:14) Rashi comments that Joseph wept for the two holy temples which would be built on Benjamin's portion of Israel, but which would be destroyed, and Benjamin wept for the sanctuary at Shilo which would be built in Joseph's portion, but would be destroyed. This is the great symbol of brotherly love achieved: each brother wept for the tragedy of the other!

"The deeds of our forefathers foreshadow the experiences of their descendants;" from this perspective, the biblical stories are all myths. The enmity between Joseph and his brothers warns us of the eventual causeless hatred which would bring about the destruction of our Holy City.

But similarly and happily, the ultimate rapprochement between the brothers holds the promise of our eventual return to Israel, and the unification of ourselves and the world.

And so the prophetic haftarah reading this week speaks of God's promise that the stick of Judah and Ephraim (Jerusalem and Samaria-Galilee) will be welded together: "And I shall establish for them (Israel) the covenant of peace, the eternal covenant... and the nation will know that I am God. When my temple will be in their midst forever." (Ezekiel 37:26-28)

Immediately after the Yom Kippur War, I made a condolence visit to Rav Schwartz, who had lost his first family in Auschwitz and now his only remaining son. A heavy silence filled the room which seemed to scream to the very heavens. I passed by the despondent mourner, reciting the familiar formula "May the Almighty (Makom, literally Place) comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

Rav Schwartz looked up "Rav Riskin, why does the text say HaMakom?" Yes, I know it's a synonym for God, but why not Elokim or HaShem (the Name)? I'll tell you why! When my first family was murdered, I could not be comforted; their death was so inexplicable. And now I've lost my last son; my sacrifice is greater than Abraham's. I hurt so deeply I can barely speak. But I am comforted. The Place comforts me. This son died for Israel and Jerusalem. Jerusalem comforts me."

For our myths do we die. By our myths do we live.
Shabbat Shalom

From: Rabbi Dr. Nisson E. Shulman May 20, 2001
[YEHUDA AND YOSEPH]
[SUMMARY OF SHIUR BY RAV YOSEPH DOV HALEVI
SOLOVEITCHIK ZT"L]
Dedicated to the memory of "The Rav", Rav Yoseph Dov Halevi Soloveitchik zt"l

For a number of years Rabbi Soloveitchik would teach Jewish Philosophy or Hashkafah during the summer months. This was not a course in philosophy per se. It was a philosophical analysis of concepts or mitzvot of Judaism. Thus one summer was devoted to the philosophy of prayer. Another to the philosophy of the mitzvah of tzedakah. The closest he came to actual philosophy was in the title of one year's summer lectures on "Philosophical Symbolism in the Story of the Patriarchs". Even then, it was halachic, aggadic, musar symbolism, rather than philosophical, even though he was quite capable, were he to have desired, to clothe his thoughts in the mantle of philosophical language. But he did not choose to do so in these particular courses. And what emerged were beautiful and profound insights deep in the hidden meanings of halakhah, of history and of the Torah narrative.

On occasion, some of the thoughts of those classes would re-emerge in his halakhah or agaddah shiurim. One of these was given in Moriah Synagogue, approximately 1950. I rely only on my notes made during the summer course and during the shiur, and others who were there might remember what I have omitted.

KEDUSHA UMALCHUT

Bas hayta leAvraham, u"Bakol" shema, says the Midrash. The Midrash means that the community of Israel is composed of all attributes, all powers, or midot, such as hod, netzach, rahamim, din. No attribute can stand by itself. There must be a blending of all these powers, and the blend yields tiferet, glory; and when that comes about, it is called, "bakol". That is why the community of Israel is called "kallah".

The heritage of Abraham came through individuals, Isaac and Jacob. Only in the house of Jacob was there a community formed of twelve unique individuals, and each of them represented a different and separate power of the attributes, Reuben pahaz kamayim, Yehudah, gur aryeh. The bakol of Avraham was divided into twelve parts, or powers, and had to come together again. Thus the narrative teaches how the Hashgachah guided all their steps to bring a great schism to the fore, so that each of the two great protagonists should develop his own particular character and power, until ultimately they would come together again fully formed as the Kneset Yisrael. And that is why the sale of Joseph had to happen.

Ultimately, all the powers were crystallized into two main streams of conflict, Judah and Joseph, Joseph and Benjamin in this regard are interchangeable, and in these two tribes we see especially the development of conflict and the resolution of that conflict which would shape the destiny of Israel. And the symbol of all this is that the Chamber of Hewn Stones where sat the Sanhedrin is in the portion of Judah, while the alter and Holy of Holies is in the portion of Benjamin.

Judah on the one hand, and the two brothers Joseph and Benjamin on the other, stand for the two mothers, Leah and Rachel. Each symbolizes a certain characteristic bequeathed to their representative child.

The Almighty decreed that Jacob should take two wives even though Isaac and Abraham each took one. Why? And why did the Hashgachah decree the very strange manner in which these two wives were taken: by trickery? Furthermore, Vatezta Dina bat Leah. It does not say bat Yaakov. Rashi points out that al shem yetzieata niret bat Leah, sheaf hi yatzanit hayta, sheneemar (Bereshit Rabbah) vatezta Leah likrato. Vealeha nimshelu mashal, keima, kebata (Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin, 2:6). Of course the Torah did not mean to suggest that Leah acted improperly when saying to Jacob "I have hired you for the mandrakes of my son", for that night Yesaschar was conceived. But rather it suggests that Leah had a strong and steadfast character. Sometimes hutzpah; the attribute of umilu et haaretz vekivshuha. Leah's chief characteristics were steadfastness and initiative. Vatomer lah, hameat kachtech et ishi, ulekachtech gam et dudaey beni? (Bereshit 30:39).

The Midrash points out Veeynei Leah rakot; yafot hayu, as Unkelos translated yain hayu. Particularly because they were red and spoiled they were beautiful, for she spoiled them with weeping lest she be given to Esav for whom she heard she had been destined. She fought against that lot and won. So Leah symbolized the attribute of gevurah.

Rachel had a different character altogether. She sacrificed herself for her sister, giving over the signs of identification Jacob needed to identify his bride as the right one. She was gentle as a lamb, and so her name connotes. She loved Jacob with all her heart and yet sacrificed herself for her sister. She symbolized Kach et mincha, et yehidcha, asher ahavta, et Yitzchok, velech lecha el eretz Hamoriya, vahaalehu sham ola al achad heharim asher omar elecha (Bereshit 22:2). And the greatest sacrifice of all came with her early death. Why? Because her death was a consequence of her effort to empty her father's house of its idols. Nor could she be buried with Jacob in the grave of the forefathers, but on the road to Efrat, in the region of Bet Lechem, all alone. While Leah was buried with Jacob.

Joseph had the character of Rachel, Judah had the character of Leah.

This does not mean that Joseph was reconciled to his role. He had two dreams. The first was the produce of the brothers - the results of their labour - bowing down to his produce, the sheaves bowing down to sheaves. The connotation is that he will be all-powerful in wealth and blessing of plenty. There is no indication in this dream of bowing down to Joseph himself, but only to his sheaves. But in the second dream the sun and moon and eleven stars of heaven are bowing to Joseph himself! Joseph was not satisfied with wealth, he wanted Jacob to bequeath to him the kingdom malchut! For this it would be necessary for Jacob himself to bow to him, and Jacob would never do so willingly, so Joseph in Egypt thought if Benjamin were detained, the father would be forced to descend, and without knowing who he was bow to him. That would be the symbol of malchut, for only to the king would Jacob bow. That is the meaning of Vayizkor Yoseph et hahalomot asher chalam lahem (Bereshit 42:9). He remembered both dreams, and that one came true; and now was the time for the second one. That is why he insisted that Benjamin be brought down to him.

It was not to be. The Hashgachah did not permit Joseph to be the king. So immediately after he was sold, events began to prepare Judah for that role.

Vayehi baet havi vayered Yehuda meieit echav ... Vayaker Yehuda vayomar, tzadka mimeni (Bereshit 38:1-30).

And ultimately the great struggle between Judah and Joseph climaxed in their confrontation: Vayigash elav Yehuda vayomer, bi adoni, yedaber na avdecha davar beazney adoni. Says the Midrash Rabbah, Hahu diktiv, hine hamelachim moadu, avdu yachdav. Hine hamelachim ze Yehuda veYoseph. Avdu yachdav, ze nitmale hema al ze veze nitmale hama al ze (Bereshit 44:18).

On the result of this struggle depends the future of the Jewish people. Joseph could not contain himself. He lost the battle because he allowed his emotions to overcome him, and confessed who he was before his plan could be carried out. Behold, I was sent to be the provider, to give you life, to be the ruler in all of Egypt, all this, but not the kingdom of the people of Israel, that is denied me, for the second dream will now never come true and it doesn't.

So when Jacob descends to Egypt he refuses even to kiss Joseph, but recites Kriat Shema instead, lest by means of a kiss there be somehow an attribution of malchut. And in the blessing at the end of his life he gave the malchut to Yehuda, Yehuda ata yoducha acheycha; yadcha beoref oyevecha; gur arye Yehuda, miteref beni alita, kara ravatz kearye, ulekavi mi yekimenu. Lo yasur shevet miYehuda umehokek miben raklav, at ki yavo shilo velo yikhat amim (49 8-12).

Joseph on the other hand, receives Birchot shamayim meal, birchot tehom rovetzet tachat. (49:12); Everything in the world, but not malchut.

Yoseph, like Rachel, does not change. He is the same Yoseph in his father's house as in Egypt. Like Rachel who gave the signs to her sister, Joseph yielded the kingdom to Judah. Joseph was like Rachel, symbolic of hesed. He therefore merited kedushah, and was called Yoseph Hatzadik, characterized as nezir echav. That is not the stuff malchut is made of, for malchut is made of gevurah. So Yoseph and Yehudah comprise Kedushah Umalchus, and that is the essence of Kneset Yisrael, the Bakol of Abraham. Ki lecha naeh Hashem Eloke avotenu, shir ushevacha, halel vezimra, oz umemshala, netzach ugevura, tehila vetiferet.... Vekulam nichlalim be"Kedusha uMalchut".

Why did Judah merit Malchut? Because like Leah his mother, he has a power that could change the world, and he used that power to change himself.

Rambam in Shemone Perakim talks about two kinds of human greatness: one is the hasid hameuleh, the other is the gibor umoshel benafsho. The first yearns to do good and pursues it as part of his very nature. The second is not righteous by nature, and in fact can do evil things, but rises above them and harnesses his character and his soul's power and becomes a righteous person. Yoseph was the former, Yehudah the latter.

From Vayeshev till after Vayehi Yoseph's character does not change, except perhaps at the very beginning, until some childish characteristics are lost. Even those was for the sake of seeking good and doing good, however mistaken he was to tell his father about the brothers - Vayave Yoseph et dibatam ra el avihem. He was always the Nazir, and perhaps that is also part of why the brothers could not stand him. Veyoseph haya beMitzrayim. Says Rashi, Lehodia shevach shel Yoseph; hu Yoseph haroeh et tzon aviv, hu Yoseph hamoshel bechal eretz Mitzrayim. His righteousness is seen in that the father sends him to the brothers. He knows they hate him, yet he goes anyway, because of obedience. When a man finds him in the desert and warns him that "They have departed from brotherhood, beware", he goes to them anyway. That is the type of the personality born to sanctity, and which is steady throughout life without change. Jacob's blessing and Moshe's is identical in substance for Joseph alone. Nothing changes.

But with Judah everything changes. He recreates his character and rises from the depths. Judah is the symbol of Teshuvah. 1. Ma betza ki naharog et achinu vechisinu et damo (Bereshit 37:26). He knows it is wrong, but compromises with the evil. "At least, only sell him". Rav Meir omer, kol hamevarech et Yehuda harey ze menaetz (meharef umegadef) sheneemar botzea berech nietz Hashem (Sanhedrin 6a). 2. His episode with Tamar, tzadka mimeni. 3. And in Egypt the Yehudah of "Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites" is gone, and instead we have the Yehudah of Vayigash elav.

Gur Aryeh Yehudah, because he moulded himself miteref beni alita, you raised yourself from the sale of Joseph symbolized by tarof toraf Yoseph, to become a different person.

Joseph did not receive malchus because he was nezir echav. The king cannot be divorced from reality and from his people. He cannot be a nazir. A king cannot be a hasid. He who has not passed through personal purification in the crucible of changing one's very soul, cannot lead the

people. Only such as Yehudah, who could understand failings and failures, and could recognize how it is possible to rise from them and become a new person, could be the king.

In all of our history we find these two archetypal personalities. It is illustrated by the tradition that Mashiach ben Yoseph will pave the way for Mashiach ben David.

Many leaders in every generation wore the crown of nezirut they inherited from Joseph. They were formed from the womb for righteousness. They are the Kedoshim, and their destiny was similar to that of Joseph. Other leaders came from Judah, the symbol of gevurah. Like him, they conquered their inclinations and shaped their personalities. They had to struggle mightily to achieve their righteousness. And their lives were full of contradictions.

The Rov's maternal grandfather, Rav Elya Pruzener, was of Rachel and Joseph's type. From childhood he walked the golden road. His life was created from and completely enveloped by chesed.

The Rov's paternal grandfather, Rav Chaim Brisker, was full of contradictions. There was no order in his life except in learning where there was strict order. He not only revolutionized halachah and the method of learning, but he revolutionized himself as well.

The Mesorah can be divided into two parts; that which you see by example and that which you learn intellectually. The former is symbolized by the Joseph character. The great Hasidim of our history in every generation, did not gather many students. They did not teach publicly. Like Joseph the nazir of his brothers, separated from them, they too desired aloneness. The Hasid hides himself. His sanctity is separated from everyone. Joseph, on the outside, appeared like the mighty ruler of all Egypt, nevertheless, vayavo hachadra vaveyk sham (43:30). To find out his true character, one must spy on him, go step by step after him, as Rabbi Akiva. But one who did approach near a Yoseph, found themselves inexorably drawn to them, Bein porat Yoseph, bein porat aley ayin, benot tzaada, aley shur (49:22). Not every woman saw Joseph, but those who did could never forget him.

The second stream of mesorah is characterized by Yehudah. Yehudah's characteristics are public, the teaching of Torah in the open, Berov am hadrat melech. They seek to communicate themselves to everyone. Yehudah cannot be alone. They wish for Yoseph's second dream, Vehine hashemesh vehayareach veachad asar kochavim mishtachavim lo. This is the bowing of a student to the master. And that is why Sanhedrin behelko shel Yehuda, Kodosh Kodoshim behelko shel Binyamin.

Which quality is more important for the future of our people? This is not answered.

The Talmud relates: Rabi Elazar ben Shamua mikatnuto ad sof yamav lo shama adam shehotzi tiftut mipiv velo hitkotetu alav chaverav. Haya ani veyoshev betaanit shemonim shana. Veoto yom shemet, Yom Hakippurim hata. Amru lo talmidav: Ma ata roeh? Amar lahem, roeh ani at rabi Yehuda ben Baba umitato, umitat rabbi Akiva semucha etzlo.

Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua was the man of kedusha vahasidus. Rabbi Yehudah ben Baba was like him, a hasid hameule. Rabbi Akiva was a man of malchut. He was a gibor hamoshel benefsho. The whole story of his life teaches this, his beginning to learn at 40 years, before which he would say, "Show me a Talmid Chacham and I will split his head open". His departure from home, his overhearing his wife saying if he stayed another twelve years I would be happy and his turning around without a word, his ascent to greatness, his acknowledgement, like Yehudah said, tzadka mimeni. he said, shli veshelachem shela. He was the son of proselytes, and he conquered all, especially himself. And his teaching was for everyone, 24,000 students, and no surprise that he sought a Jewish meluchah and led the revolt. Both beds were together: malchut with kedusha. Both are necessary for our people. The ancient debate continues through the present, and is the heart of Judaism. Who decides which is the more weighty and important? There is no answer. Both are important. Both are crucial for the working out of our people's destiny.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/parsha/rsch_vayigash.html
torahweb from last year
RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACHTER
GALUS HASHECHINA

In this week's parshah we see that Yaakov was very concerned about leaving Eretz Yisroel. Hashem appears to him and tells him not to worry.

He Himself would go down to Egypt with him, and would return the Jewish people to Eretz Yisroel at the proper time. Hashem's gdesending into galus is with klal yisroel is known as "galus hashechina".

This concept of "galus hachechina" has been understood in the classic literature on several different levels:

Firstly, the Torah tells us that when someone kills accidentally, he must run away to stay in one of "the cities of refuge". But it is not necessary that he suffer there. Quite the contrary. The Torah says, "he should live there" (until the death of the high priest.) The connotation of that phrase is that the murderer should have a pleasant stay there. It is for this reason that the rabbis of the Talmud commented that if the murderer is one who enjoys learning Torah, we must provide him with a shiur. His rabbi must also visit the "city of refuge" to present Torah lectures for the enjoyment of the murderer. The punishment of going into galus is bad enough, and should not be made worse by having him miss his regular Torah studies.

Similarly, when Hashem punishes the Jewish people and sends them into galus He personally accompanies us into that galus so that we will not suffer more than is necessary, and so that our stay will not be too terrible.

Secondly, the Talmud recalls instances when the rabbis had to place a cherem on a Torah scholar (for having violated sins), and would simultaneously put themselves into cherem. This was in order to remind themselves to be "mattir" the cherem on the Talmid Chochom at the same time they would be "mattir" their own cherem.

So too, Hakadosh Baruch Hu goes into galus along with us, "suffering along with Am Yisroel" so to speak. He will certainly not be able to forget about redeeming us from galus, since He will need to redeem Himself from the galus.

In the Tanya, Kabbalistic sources are quoted where a totally different understanding of the term (galus hasheschina) is presented. When Hashem created the entire world ex nihilo, the basic and fundamental nature of all things was nothingness; that nothing else existed (outside of Him). Even when everything in the world was brought into existence, if not for the continuous will of G-d that all these things continue to exist, everything would revert to the state of non-existence. (Ramban on Parshas Bereishis understands that this is the meaning of the phrase which is oft repeated, "G-d saw that everything was good", i.e. He willed that everything should continue to exist). This continued will of G-d is referred to as "sparks of sanctity" (nitzotzos of kedusha). These "sparks of sanctity" preserve all things that continue to exist in the world of holy (people and objects), secular, and profane alike. In this sense there is a galus hashechina, because these "sparks of holiness" are "arrested" (so to speak) in unholy things, places, and people. One can truly refer to this state as one of "melech assur borehotim" (as if the King is imprisoned). Everything in the world yearns (so to speak) to have a meaningful existence. This will only come about if and when each created item will serve to heighten the glory of Hashem; i.e., if it will be used in the performance of some mitzvah or another. This is the symbolic meaning of the Talmudic comment as to what positive result was accomplished by sending the Jews into galus? Many non-Jews converted to Judaism, i.e., more of the secular world became involved in the observance of mitzvos, and had thereby attained a meaningful existence.

From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: Wednesday, December 19, 2001 Subject: Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - The Beginning of Exile to subscribe, email: weekly@torahweb.org for anything else, email: torahweb@torahweb.org

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/parsha/rsob_vayigash.html
RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY
THE BEGINNING OF EXILE

Galus Mitzrayim serves as the prototype for all future exiles. This, the first galus of the Jewish people begins in Parshas Vayigash, as Yaakov and his family descend to Mitzrayim. The lessons we can glean from galus Mitzrayim will enable us to endure our present exile.

The Torah enumerates the descendants of Yaakov who arrived in Mitzrayim. Although the Torah presents the sum total as 70, only 69 people are recorded. This led Chazal to the conclusion that Yocheved, the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu was born at the same time as Yaakov's family entered the borders of Mitzrayim, marking the Jews' entry into galus. What is the divine message to be found in these simultaneous events? The birth of Yocheved represented the very beginning of the redemption from Mitzrayim. Hashem would not send us into galus, without ensuring from the very onset, that a geulah would take place. Although yetzias Mitzrayim was

not to take place for many years, the seeds of the geulah had been planted at precisely the moment that galus had begun.

Anticipating geulah at the onset of galus was taught by Yaakov. Chazal tell us that Yaakov brought cedar wood to Mitzrayim because he knew that eventually his descendants would be commanded to construct a mishkan from this material. Although the mishkan would only be built several generations later, Yaakov could not enter galus without carrying with him the seeds of geulah. This was not the first time that Yaakov had been exiled. He had already been forced to flee from Eretz Yisroel and had lived in Lavan's house for 20 years. Yaakov taught us that as a Jew goes into exile he must prepare the way for his return.

In Parshas Vayigash we learn another critical message concerning galus. Prior to Yaakov's arrival in Mitzrayim he had sent Yehudah ahead to prepare the way. Chazal tell us that Yehudah was instructed to establish a place of learning before Yaakov set foot in Eretz Goshen. Again, Yaakov was instructing us in how to go into galus. The only way to ensure the Jewish people's survival in galus is to immediately build places of learning. The slightest delay exposes the Jewish people to the dangers of galus without the Torah as protection.

The manner in which galus begins sets the tone for its duration. The Jewish people must go into galus knowing from the onset that they will return. They must carry the Torah with them from the very beginning to ensure their survival.

<http://www.tzemachdavid.org/thepracticaltorah/vayigash.shtml>

RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

THE PRACTICAL TORAH

Parshas VaYigash:

THE INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE

No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

After Yosef reveals who he really is to his brothers, he instructs them to quickly "go up" (V'Alu) to his father Yaakov (who was in Eretz Yisrael) and tell him that he is alive and now a leader in Egypt, and that he should hurry down to see him (Bereishis 45:9). In his commentary on this Posuk, Rashi (Ibid. s.v. V'Alu), apparently troubled by the word V'Alu, go up, used to describe the journey to Eretz Yisrael, writes that Eretz Yisrael is higher than, or above, all other lands; to get there, then, one must indeed "go up." This idea would appear to be based on the Gemara in Kiddushin (69a) which makes this very statement about Eretz Yisrael, adding, based on a Posuk later in the Torah (Devarim 17:8), that the site of the Beis HaMikdash (in Yerushalayim) is higher than any other place in Eretz Yisrael; this latter point, though, is qualified by Tosafos in Sanhedrin (87a s.v. She'Beis) where these statements also appear. Although the Pardes Yosef on the Posuk in this Parsha (Bereishis Ibid.) quotes those who explain that Chazal's intent here is merely to teach that the Beis HaMikdash and Eretz Yisrael are higher than other places in the world in terms of stature and honor, the Maharsha in Kiddushin (Chiddushai Aggados Ibid. s.v. Beis HaMikdash) writes that the earth is a sphere, and the site of the Beis HaMikdash and Eretz Yisrael are at the center -or on top- of that sphere; the place is thus indeed higher than any other place in the world. He apparently understood the statements of the Gemara (Ibid.) in the literal sense.

This idea that Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalayim are at the "top" of the world, and the idea expressed in the Gemara earlier in Sanhedrin (37a and see Ibid. in Rashi s.v. B'Tiburo) that the site of the Beis HaMikdash (in Yerushalayim where the Sanhedrin had its chambers) is at the center of the world, may impact the issue of how to determine the location of the International Date Line according to the Halacha. It is the accepted practice in the secular world to begin the new calendar day at midnight. Since, however, midnight does not arrive at the exact same moment all over the world, the new calendar day will not begin at the exact same moment all over the world. The further west one travels, the "later" midnight -and the new calendar day- arrives. For example, when Sunday evening concludes and it becomes Monday at midnight in New York, it is still Sunday evening for three more hours in California. And it will not become Monday for another few hours after that in Hawaii, and several hours after that, it would become Monday in the Orient, and so on. Eventually, one will "travel" all the way back to New York, where it will again be midnight. Obviously, though, it cannot again be the midnight which begins Monday, because that already happened 24 hours earlier; this midnight will have to begin Tuesday. It is clear, then, that at some point, somewhere along the line,

midnight will no longer be the beginning of Monday, but of Tuesday, and this "cycle" of the new day begins again. This point is what is known as the International Date Line, and at the International Meridian Conference in 1884, it was decided that this date line would be at the point which is 180 degrees (that is, twelve hours) from Greenwich, England, a point which cuts primarily through the Pacific Ocean.

The question is, where exactly is this date line according to the Halacha, which obviously assigns no significance to Greenwich, England? Of course, midnight is of no relevance in terms of the date according to the Halacha either, but the same problem naturally presents itself regarding sunset, which obviously is an important time in Halacha. The Radvaz (Sheilos V'Teshuvos HaRadvaz Chelek 1 Siman 76) already asserts that this matter is the subject of a dispute among Rishonim, and, as documented by Rav Shlomo Zevin (Sefer L'Or HaHalachah, page 285), many others have dealt at length with this issue. Some point to a Gemara in Rosh HaShanah (20b) which indicates that the Beis Din would not declare a day to be Rosh Chodesh unless the new moon was visible in Eretz Yisrael before noon on that day; if it appeared after noon, the next day would be Rosh Chodesh. Although certain Rishonim explain the Gemara (Ibid.) as referring only to details concerning the declaration of Rosh Chodesh, the interpretation of the Ba'al HaMaor (Ibid. 5a in Rif s.v. Ki) and others relates it directly to this issue of the date line.

The Gemara (Ibid.) states that the reason Beis Din would not declare a day to be Rosh Chodesh unless the moon appeared before noon in Yerushalayim is that this Rosh Chodesh must last a full 24 hours somewhere in the world. In other words, it is required that there be some place on earth that will be experiencing nightfall at the time of (or after) the Molad, the first appearance of the moon in Eretz Yisrael, so that the newly declared Rosh Chodesh will last a full 24 hours in at least that one place. Therefore, the Ba'al HaMaor (Ibid.) explains, if Rosh Chodesh is declared in Yerushalayim anytime between nightfall and noon (18 hours later), there will be places in the world that will have a full 24 hours of the new Rosh Chodesh. Even if it is noon in Eretz Yisrael at the time of the Molad, in which case only 6 hours remain of Rosh Chodesh there, there is still some place on earth where it is just nightfall, and where Rosh Chodesh will thus last a full 24 hours. If, however, the Molad appears in Eretz Yisrael after noon, there will no longer be any place which will not yet have experienced nightfall of that day; Rosh Chodesh thus cannot be that day because no location would experience it for a full 24 hours. The Gemara here is thus suggesting, according to this interpretation of the Ba'al HaMaor (Ibid.), that noon in Yerushalayim is the latest time at which there is still some location on earth which has not yet begun the new day. Since noon is 18 hours after nightfall, this means that there is a location far west of Yerushalayim which is 18 hours "behind" it in terms of time. Apparently, more than 18 hours west of Yerushalayim, it is already the next day, 6 hours "ahead" in terms of time. It would thus seem that the Gemara has determined that the date line is 18 hours (270 degrees) west, or 6 hours (90 degrees) east of Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Chaim Zimmerman, in a lengthy work on this subject (Sefer Agan HaSahar), suggests that it may also be because the Baal HaMaor (Ibid.) considers Eretz Yisrael (and Yerushalayim) to be the "top" of the world, as mentioned above, that he holds that the date line must be 90 degrees east of Yerushalayim. He explains that at the moment of creation, when the sun was placed in the sky, it was placed above Yerushalayim which, at that first instant, was naturally on "top" of the world in relationship to the sun, as every part of the globe eventually is. This means that the area 90 degrees east (6 hours ahead) of Yerushalayim was then experiencing nightfall (sunset) and was already beginning the next day. That location, then, must be the date line because that was the first place on earth to go on to the next day; this indeed is where the Baal HaMaor (Ibid.) places the date line, as shown above.

This position about the date line is articulated as well in the Sefer HaKuzari (Maamar 2 Siman 20), and is clearly accepted by the Ran in Rosh HaShanah (Chidushai HaRan to Rosh HaShanah Ibid. s.v. Tzarich), and, apparently, by the Ritva there (Ibid. s.v. Ki). The Chazon Ish, in an essay on this topic (Kuntres 18 Shaos, printed in Sefer Chazon Ish on Orach Chaim-Moed, Siman 64) asserts forcefully (Ibid., Ot 4, 13, 16, and summary and the second letter in the end of the Kuntres) that this is indeed the position of all the Rishonim who discuss this matter. Although Rav Chaim Zimmerman, throughout his Sefer cited above, discusses views which in fact appear to disagree with this position, he suggests (Ibid. Perek 12) that the Rambam (in Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh) may be added to the list of those who subscribe to it. Despite the fact that the Chazon Ish

writes elsewhere (Kovetz Iggaros L'HaChazon Ish, Chelek 2 Iggeres 166) that the issue is simple and that there is no room for debate, there are nevertheless other recent authorities who disagree, as documented by Rav Shlomo Zevin in his aforementioned article (Ibid. Pages 287-288).

In particular, he cites (Ibid. Page 288) Rav Yechiel Michel Tukatchinsky, author of the Geshet HaChaim, who wrote a Sefer (HaYomam B'Kiddur HaAretz) on this subject (to which the Chazon Ish's Kuntres 18 Shaos is a response, according to its Hakdamah). He shows that in fact the new day begins 12 hours to the east of Yerushalayim, and finally ends 12 hours to its west; this means that the date line is 180 degrees (in either direction) from Eretz Yisrael. As Rav Zevin notes (Ibid. Page 287), one advantage of this position is that Eretz Yisrael is actually in the center of the world according to this calculation (with 180 degrees to the date line on each side of it); this works out nicely, therefore, with the statement of the Gemara in Sanhedrin (Ibid.) cited above that Eretz Yisrael is the center of the world. As reported in the biography of the Chazon Ish (Sefer Pe'er HaDor/Chayei HaChazon Ish, Chelek 3 Perek 24), at a meeting convened in 1941 by the Chief Rabbinate in Eretz Yisrael to respond to the questions of Jews who had fled Europe and were living in the Orient, this position was officially accepted; Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (Sheilos U'Teshuvos Har Tzvi Orach Chaim Chelek 1 Siman 138) ruled this way as well.

The Chazon Ish, however, continued to insist that his position is correct, writing in another letter (Kovetz Iggaros Ibid. Iggeres 164) that he dislikes getting involved in this type of situation, but feels that he can't keep silent about this issue, especially since, in his view, all the Rishonim support the position that the date line is 90 degrees east of Yerushalayim. In another letter (Ibid. Iggeres 165), he describes the responsibility he feels to render a decision in consonance with the view of the Rishonim. In terms of Eretz Yisrael being the center of the world, the Chazon Ish (Kuntres 18 Shaos Ibid. Ot 2, and Ibid end of Michtav 2) explains that we are to consider only the upper hemisphere of the globe, because that's where Eretz Yisrael is, and where human civilization began and developed. If we place Eretz Yisrael at the "top" -or center- of that originally inhabited hemisphere, the eastern edge is 90 degrees east of it and the western edge is 90 degrees to its west. The eastern edge is where the new day begins; that point, 90 degrees or 6 hours- east of Eretz Yisrael, is the date line.

One practical problem with this position of the Chazon Ish is that "his" date line, 90 degrees east of Yerushalayim, cuts through land masses in eastern Russia, China, and Australia, which means that within one country, or even one city, Shabbos could be on two different days. He explains, however (Ibid. Ot 5), that this would not happen because any land mass which has a significant portion to the west of the date line is considered Halachically to be fully in the area west of the date line, even if it physically is not. In other words, the date line, according to him, "bends", and follows the coastline of those land masses; all of eastern Russia, China, and Australia are thus considered to be east of Eretz Yisrael (ahead in time) and west of the date line. It is noteworthy, though, that according to the Chazon Ish, Japan is undoubtedly to the east of the Halachic date line, and thus is behind Eretz Yisrael in time, even though it is west of the official International Date Line; the same is true of New Zealand, and Shabbos in those locations must thus be observed on their Sunday, not their Saturday. Since there are numerous Halachic questions which can come up when one crosses the date line, such as about Shabbos and davening, a competent Halachic authority should be consulted.

<http://www.artscroll.com/parashah.html>
Parashah Talk
Parashas Vayigash
Excerpt from Living Each Week, by RABBI ABRAHAM J. TWERSKI,
MD.

Joseph said unto his brothers, "I am Joseph!" (Genesis 45:3).
From the moment the brothers set foot in Egypt they were bewildered by the inexplicable events that were occurring: Why is the viceroy accusing us of being spies? Where in the world did he get that absurd notion? Why is he insisting on our bringing our younger brother? Why did he take Shimon hostage? How did the money we paid for the grain get into our sacks? How does the viceroy know our birth order so precisely? Why the plot to accuse Benjamin of thievery? In their anguish the brothers cried, "What is this that G-d has done to us?" (42:28).
When Joseph uttered the two simple words, "Ani Yosef (I am Joseph),"

all their questions were suddenly answered. Everything became crystal clear, everything made perfect sense, and not even the smallest item remained unexplained. No elaborate explanations were needed, and indeed, not a single explanatory word was said. "Ani Yosef" accounted for everything.

"We, too," said the Chofetz Chaim, "are bewildered. We have many vexing questions. 'What is this that G-d is doing to us?' we have so often asked. There are so many unfathomable mysteries. Not even the wisest among us has been able to shed any light on the repetitious suffering and the tragedies we have experienced throughout history. How can any of this make sense?"

The Chofetz Chaim states that one day G-d will reveal Himself to us and say, "Ani Hashem (I am G-d)," and suddenly everything will make sense. Everything that had heretofore been totally inexplicable will be understood by all. Everything will fall neatly into place, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

We have every right to request an accounting, and indeed, we will receive a full accounting. But there will be no need for long dissertations and complex explanations. As with Joseph and his brothers, when two words were sufficient, the two words "Ani Hashem" will, at that time, explain everything.

From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org] Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Vayigash Edited by Shlomo Katz Vayigash Sponsored by The Rutstein family, in memory of father and grandfather, Nachman ben Asher Halevi a"h (Nathan Rutstein)

"He said, 'I am the God -- God of your father. Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up; and Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes.'" (46:4) R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) explains: In these verses, G-d revealed to Yaakov the secret of the Jewish people's exile: Only in Egypt would Yaakov's descendants grow into a "great nation." Do not worry that the teachings of your grandfather Avraham and the hopes of your father Yitzchak will be forgotten in Egypt, Hashem told Yaakov. To the contrary, your great-grandson Moshe will develop in Egypt into the greatest prophet the world has ever known. Hashem further told Yaakov: Perhaps you are skeptical about the future that I foretell. How can a person such as Moshe develop in Egypt? Do not be skeptical. "Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes" - Yosef, who left your house as a child and who became a full-fledged tzaddik in Egypt, is proof that your descendants can grow into a great nation there. (Yemei Zikaron p.98)

"[Yosef] appeared before him, fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck excessively." (46:29) Rashi comments: Yaakov, however, did not fall upon Yosef's neck, nor did he kiss him. Our Rabbis say that the reason was that Yaakov was reciting the Shema. Numerous commentaries ask: Why was Yaakov reciting the Shema? If it was the time to recite the Shema, why did Yosef not do so? If, on the other hand, it was not the time for Shema, why did Yaakov recite it?

R' Moshe Shick z"l ("Maharam Shick"; Hungary; 1805-1879) answers that it was not the time for reciting the Shema, and Yaakov recited it for a different reason. He explains: One of the basic lessons of the verse Shema Yisrael is that "Hashem is Elokeinu." By saying Shema, we acknowledge that there is only One G-d, despite the fact that we see various manifestations of Him, sometimes merciful and sometimes strict. (The Name "Hashem" represents G-d's Attribute of Mercy, while the Name "Elokim" represents G-d's Attribute of Justice.) Although we rarely understand how this is so, what we perceive as G-d's strictness is ultimately for our own good; in the long-run, it is merciful. For twenty-two years, the number of years that Yosef was missing, Yaakov saw only the strict side of G-d's actions. But when he saw Yosef's royal entourage, he understood that Yosef's disappearance was part of Hashem's plan for saving Yaakov and his family from famine. Ultimately, everything that had happened was for the best; "Hashem is Elokeinu."

Realizing this, Yaakov recited the Shema. Yosef, however, had already learned this lesson when he was freed from jail and appointed viceroy. He had no reason to recite the Shema at this moment. (Maharam Shick Al Ha'Torah)

R' Asher Zelig Schwartz z"l (Romania; 1920's) offers another answer to the above question: In verse 28, immediately preceding Yaakov's

reunion with Yosef, we read, "[Yaakov] sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen." (Rashi explains that Yaakov sent Yehuda to establish a yeshiva for the arriving immigrants.) In verse 30, immediately preceding Yaakov's reunion with Yosef, we read, "Then Yisrael said to Yosef, 'Now I can die, after my having seen your face.'" The connection between verses 28 (establishing a yeshiva), 29 (reciting the Shema), and 30 (being willing to die) is as follows: The gemara states: "If someone meets the yetzer hara and cannot prevail against it, he should drag it to the bet midrash [where he should study Torah]. If he thus defeats the yetzer hara, good! If not, he should recite the Shema. If he thus defeats the yetzer hara, good! If not, he should imagine the day of death." Says R' Schwartz: Yaakov was afraid that seeing Yosef in all his glory would make him (Yaakov) feel pride, or would bring out some other improper feeling. Yaakov therefore took all of the steps suggested by the gemara: he established a bet midrash, he recited the Shema, and he imagined the day of death. R' Schwartz adds: If imagining the day of death is an effective means of conquering the yetzer hara, why is it only the fall-back strategy? Why does the gemara suggest first learning Torah and reciting Shema? The answer is that we are expected to serve Hashem with joy, something to which the third strategy does not lend itself. (Bet Asher)

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] To: weekly-halacha@torah.org

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav. MECHITZAH IN SHUL: WHY AND HOW?

The halachah that requires men to be separated from women while davening in shul has its origins in the procedure followed in the Beis ha-Mikdash. Our Sages in the Mishnah(1) report that a major "adjustment" was made in the Beis ha-Mikdash during the festive holiday of Succos. The Talmud explains that the adjustment consisted of building a balcony over the men's section so that the women could witness the festivities of Simchas beis ha-shoeivah. Had they stood where they normally did, the mingling of the crowds and the festive holiday air would have led to kalus rosh, excessive frivolity. The Talmud attests that the need for a balcony was so pressing that its construction was approved even though it is generally prohibited to expand or modify the original structure of the Beis ha-Mikdash. The Biblical source for the separation of men and women, says the Talmud, is found in the verse in Zechariah in which the prophet foretells the eulogy of Mashiach ben Yosef, where men and women will be seated separately. If separate seating is required even at so solemn an affair as a eulogy, how much more so must separate seating be required on a joyous occasion!

Following the example set by our Sages in the Beis ha-Mikdash, the age-old tradition has been to make a clear division and a separation between the main sanctuary and the women's section. Some shuls built a balcony, like the Beis ha-Mikdash had, while others constructed a thick wall that completely separated the two sections. This arrangement was so taken for granted, so undisputed, that it is not even explicitly cited in the Shulchan Aruch as a requirement(2). About a hundred years ago, when some shuls in Germany and Hungary began to question the need for a mechitzah, all the leading rabbis(3) strictly prohibited davening in any shul that lowered or removed the traditional separation between the two sections.

With the mass immigration of Jews to the United States in the late 1800's, many modern synagogues did not insist upon a mechitzah that completely blocked off the women's section. First Reform and Conservative temples, and then even more traditional ones, began to openly defy our hallowed tradition and gradually lowered or removed the barrier which separated the men from the women. The following questions were then posed to the venerable poskim in the U.S.: Is this practice justified? Is a mechitzah halachically required? How high does a mechitzah have to be?

REASON FOR THE BALCONY IN THE BEIS HA-MIKDASH

In order to answer these questions correctly, we must first examine what, exactly, was the purpose of the balcony in the Beis ha-Mikdash. We explained earlier that a balcony was constructed to prevent kalus rosh, excessive frivolity. The Talmud does not, however, elaborate on how the

separation was effective in guaranteeing that kalus rosh did not prevail. There are two possible ways to understand this:

A. Kalus rosh prevails when the men can freely gaze at the women. It interferes with their concentration and profanes the sanctity of the Beis ha-Mikdash. By seating the women on a balcony over the men's section, the men can no longer view the women(4). To accomplish this purpose, the balcony was constructed in one of two ways: 1) The men's section was directly underneath the balcony, hidden from the women's line of vision. The women were nevertheless able to see a small clearing in the middle of the men's section where the few dancers would perform(5). (The majority of the men did not actively participate in the festivities; they were merely spectators(6).) 2) The balcony was built above the sides of the men's section, but it was enclosed with a curtain or a one-way mirror. This permitted the women to watch the men from above but completely blocked the men's view of the women(7).

B. Kalus rosh prevails when men and women are free to mix socially with one another. By relegating the women to a balcony and physically separating them from "mixing" with the men, the proper decorum and sanctity of the Beis ha-Mikdash was duly preserved(8). According to this understanding, then, the balcony did not completely block the men's view. Rather, it separated the two sections and prevented the men and women from communicating or interacting with each other in any way.

The question, then, as it applies to present day mechitzos, is as follows: Do we follow the first interpretation and require a mechitzah that completely blocks the men's view, or is it sufficient to have a mechitzah that divides the two sections in a way that prevents frivolity?

THE TWO VIEWS OF THE POSKIM

There are two schools of thought among contemporary authorities as to the practical halachah. Many poskim(9) hold that the purpose of the mechitzah is that the men should not be able to view the women. Accordingly: The mechitzah must be high enough to completely block the entire women's section. The mechitzah must be made entirely from an opaque material. Glass, flowers and decorative wood slats are not acceptable for any part of the mechitzah. Even a balcony must be completely encircled by a curtain, etc.

As stated previously, this practice was universally accepted, wherever Jews davened. The women's section, whether in the balcony or at the back of the shul, was totally separated from the men's. Such a separation was a fundamental feature of shul architecture, as basic as positioning the amud at the front of the shul and a bimah in the middle. It was and still is part of the standard model for a Jewish place of worship.

Harav M. Feinstein(10), however, after establishing that the basic requirement for separating men and women during prayer services is a Biblical obligation, holds that the basic halachah follows the second approach that we mentioned earlier. Although he agrees that it is commendable and praiseworthy to maintain the age-old traditional mechitzah, he nevertheless rules that the widespread practice of many shuls to lower the mechitzah somewhat is permitted according to the basic halachah. As long as the mechitzah is high enough to effectively block out any communication or interaction between the men's and women's sections, it is a halachically valid mechitzah. Accordingly:

1. The minimum height for a mechitzah is shoulder-high, which the Talmud(11) calculates to be 17 to 18 tefachim high. Allowing for a difference of opinion concerning the exact size of a tefach, Harav Feinstein rules that a 66-inch mechitzah is permitted(12), while in extenuating circumstances 60 inches will suffice(13). Any mechitzah lower than that, however, is not considered a mechitzah at all. 2. A balcony does not need to be encircled with a partition or a curtain. It is preferable and recommended, however, to do so if possible(14). 3. Although, technically, the upper part of the mechitzah may be made out of glass since it serves as a physical barrier between the sections, it is self-defeating and inadequate to use glass, as many women, unfortunately, come to shul improperly dressed and/or with their hair not covered properly(15). 4. A mechitzah which has sizable gaps towards the top is not acceptable since it does not effectively guard against kalus rosh(16). A mechitzah which has tiny openings in the lattice work is permitted(17). 5. The mechitzah must reach the required height (60") in both the men's and women's sections. Raising the floor of the women's section-which in effect lowers the height of the mechitzah-defeats the purpose of the mechitzah(18).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Succah 51a. 2 Tzitz Eliezer 7:8. 3 Led by Rav Shlomo Ganzfried, author of Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, and Maharam Ash, disciple of Chasam Sofer, and countersigned by the Divrei Chayim. The proclamation is published in Lev ha-Ivri. See also Maharam Shick 79 and Zichron Yehudah 1:62 who also voiced strong objections to any tampering with the traditional mechitzah. 4 Rambam

(commentary to the Mishnah Succah 5:2) 5 Tosfos Yom Tov (commentary to the Mishnah Succah 5:2). 6 Rambam Hilchos Lulav 8:14. 7 Piskei Rid Succah 51; Meiri Midos 2:5; Korban Eidah (Yerushalmi Succah 5:2) as explained in Divrei Yoel 1:10. 8 Rambam Hilchos Lulav 8:12 and Hilchos Beis ha-Behirah 5:9; Meiri Succah 51a; Tiferes Yisrael Sukah 5:6; Aruch ha-Shulchan ha-Asid 11. 9 M'haram Shik 77; Divrei Yoel (Satmar Rav); Harav E. M. Bloch (Taharas Yom Tov, vol. 6); Shevet ha-Levi 1:29. 10 Igros Moshe O.C. 1:39 and in various other responsa; Seridei Eish 2:14. See also ruling of Harav E.E. Henkin (quoted in Teshuvos Bnei Banim, pg. 12). 11 Shabbos 92a. 12 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:31. 13 Ibid. O.C. 3:23; 3:24; 4:30; 4:31. 14 Ibid. O.C. 1:42. 15 Ibid. O.C. 1:43; 3:23. 16 Ibid. O.C. 4:29. 17 Ibid. O.C. 4:32. 18 Ibid. O.C. 3:23; 3:24; 4:31. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright 1 2001 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross@torah.org . Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B learn@torah.org Baltimore, MD 21208

[It was pointed out to me by my good friend Dr. Kazlow that a year ago I printed part 1 of an essay by Rabbi Bin Nun on Miketz but neglected to print part 2 on Vayigash. So I print it now. CS] Part 1: <http://www.vbm-torah.org/parsha.61/10miketz.htm> reprinted in <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/parsha/message/147>

PARASHAT MIKETZ The Intractable Question: Why Did Yosef Not Send Word to his Father? By Rav Yoel Bin-Nun

Seven hundred years ago, Ramban (Bereishit 42:9) posed a difficult question, one which continues to puzzle whoever studies the book of Bereishit: "How is it that Yosef, after living many years in Egypt, having attained a high and influential position in the house of an important Egyptian official, did not send his father even one message to inform him (that he was alive) and comfort him? Egypt is only six days' travel from Chevron, and respect for his father would have justified even a year's journey! ... [It would] have been a grave sin to torment his father by leaving him in mourning and bereavement for himself and for Shimon; even if he wanted to hurt his brothers a little, how could he not feel pity for his aged father?"

... In summary, I believe that our question outweighs all its proposed solutions.

What, then, do I believe to be the correct understanding of Yosef's behavior? The answer will have to wait until next week's shiur. In the meantime, I invite readers to submit answers of their own to parsha@etzion.org.il.

<http://www.vbm-torah.org/parsha.61/11vayiga.htm>

Parshat HaShavua Yeshivat Har Etzion

PARASHAT VAYIGASH

WHY DID YOSEF NOT SEND WORD TO HIS FATHER? A SOLUTION
By RAV YOEL BIN-NUN

Last week, we explored a variety of explanations for Yosef's puzzling behavior vis-a-vis his brothers and father. None of these could adequately answer the glaring question: Why, during all his years of servitude and his rise to power, did Yosef not send a letter to his father telling him that he was still alive? What could possibly justify the anguish he caused his aged and loving father?

I would like to propose a solution which accounts for many perplexing aspects of the story.

Our entire outlook on this story changes if we accept the fact that Yosef did not know that his brothers had fooled his father with the coat, the blood, and the lie that Yosef had been devoured by wild animals. Such thoughts never occurred to him! Hence it was Yosef who spent thirteen years of slavery in Egypt and the following years of greatness wondering: "Where is my father? Why has no one come to look for me?"

All the factors are now reversed, when seen from Yosef's point of view. Egypt is, after all, close to Canaan, and Ya'akov was a rich, important and influential man, with international familial and political connections. The Midianites or Yishmaelites who brought Yosef to Egypt were his cousins; is it possible that no one from that caravan could be located in all those years? Yishmael, Medan and Midian were all children of Avraham; even after they had migrated to Eastern lands, they certainly could be located. Ya'akov had manpower enough to marshal herds and flocks as a gift for Esav; surely he had manpower to search for Yosef. We know that Ya'akov does not search for his son, as he thinks Yosef is dead, but Yosef has no

way of knowing this.

Yosef's wonder at his father's silence is joined by a terrible sense of anxiety which grows stronger over the years, as seasons and years pass by and no one comes. Yosef's anguish centers on his father: the voice inside him asking "Where is my father?" is joined by another harsh voice - "Why did my father send me to my brothers that day? Why did they strip off my coat the moment I arrived and throw me in the pit? Didn't he know how dangerous Shimon and Levi are, especially since I had brought him negative reports about them? What did my brothers tell him when they returned? Can he really have had no idea at all of what they had done?"

The voices resound and intertwine, eliciting alternating waves of fear and helplessness, of anger and hatred. Being thrown into the pit, the kidnapping to Egypt, slavery - a few months would be enough to drive him mad - and no one ever comes.

Finally, a quiet acceptance of his fate replaced the anguish. His brothers must have succeeded in convincing Ya'akov, and HE HAD BEEN DISOWNED. Leah must have convinced Ya'akov that his vain and arrogant son, who dreamt of ruling over them all, had to be disposed of before he destroyed the household. Had Avraham not consented to Sarah's insistence that he expel Yishmael, despite his love for Yishmael? Had not God Himself sanctioned this? Had not Esav lost his birthright? And had not Yitzchak capitulated to Rivka in choosing one son over another? Perhaps God Himself had told Ya'akov that Yosef had sinned and had to be expelled.

Thirteen years of torment brought in their wake a quiet acceptance of his fate. He would live according to his father's traditions but apart from his home. He would not sin against God even though He had rejected him; he would not be seduced by his master's wife. Years later, when Yosef rides in the viceroy's chariot, when he shaves his beard and stands before Pharaoh, it is clear to him that God must have decreed that his life would be lived separately from his family's.

Yosef gives expression to this feeling expression in the name he gives his eldest son, born of an Egyptian wife:

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

To forget his father's house! Yosef is more subdued when his second son is born:

[He named him] Efraim, because "God has made me fruitful (hifrani) in the land of my suffering." (41:52)

Yosef's entire world is built on the misconception that his father has renounced him, while Ya'akov's world is destroyed by the misconception that Yosef is dead. Yosef's world is shaken when his brothers stand before him, not knowing who he is, and bow down to him. At that moment, he must question the new reality he has created for himself; "he remembers the dreams he dreamt about them" and he is thrown back into the past.

Stalling for time, he begins a line of inquiry - and action - which is geared to one end: to find out why his father had rejected him, if at all. He aims to keep Binyamin behind, so that his maternal brother can tell him all that has transpired. After the conversation with Binyamin, he will be able to decide whether to remain silent or to speak out.

All Yosef's actions from this point onward - including arresting Shimon - are directed towards this goal. He wanted both to get information (could Shimon have been interrogated in prison?) and to force Ya'akov to send Binyamin to Egypt. The cup was planted in his sack not to test Yehuda - how could he have predicted his older brother's outburst? - but just the opposite. Yosef assumed the brothers would not be able to save Binyamin, and this would be his means of keeping Binyamin with him, ostensibly as his prisoner.

This was Yosef's plan to find out what had happened and how to deal with it.

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

Your servant our father said to us:

You know that my wife bore me two sons.

One has left me; I said he was devoured and I have not seen him since.

[If] you take this son too and tragedy befalls him, you will bring my old age down to She'ol in agony. (44:24-30)

Yosef needs to hear no more. He finally realizes the naked truth: No one has cut him off at all! Not Leah, not his brothers and, least of all, his

father. He has not been forgotten!

Yosef could no longer restrain himself before all who were standing before him, and cried:

"Have every one leave me!"...
and he cried out loud...

and he told his brothers:

"I am Yosef; is my father still alive?" (45:1-3)

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

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

All the "forgetting" is revealed to have been a tragic mistake. Ya'akov symbolically acknowledges the divine plan when, even though he is blind, he knows that he must take his hand off the head of Menashe (whose name connotes forgetting) and place it on the head of Efraim (whose name connotes fruitfulness).

The misunderstanding, however, does have its results. Not Yosef, but his two sons, will replace him in the list of twelve tribes.

And now, your two sons born to you in the Land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt are mine; Efraim and Menashe, like Reuven and Shimon, belong to me. (48:5)

The ten tribes who were exiled and not heard from since (see the dispute in Sanhedrin 110b-111a about whether they will return), the division of the Israelite kingdom into two, all the "forgetting" of our ancient forefather - are but illusions. All of what we consider reality is revealed as secondary to the Divine plan - "Our father is still alive."

If we look at the text, and the text alone, this conclusion is well-nigh unavoidable. This interpretation is directly based on Yehuda's words, paraphrasing his father: "I said he was devoured and I have not seen him si." Now we see why these words caused Yosef to break down and reveal himself - for he learned for the first time that his father was deceived; his father did not reject him! Now we understand why Yosef names his son Menashe, "forgetting." Only this interpretation is free of the assumption that Yosef meticulously planned exactly what transpired, while the Torah itself presents the climax as a total surprise to all who were involved in it.

This explanation is also mandated by the historical paradigm, as it is presented in the Torah's view of Jewish history:

Is Efraim My cherished son, the child I played with, that when I speak of him, I should be reminded of him? But My insides pine for him; I will be compassionate toward him, says the Lord. (Yirmiyahu 31)

Jewish history reverberates until our times with questions of forgetfulness and dispossession (see esp. Yirmiyahu 3 and 31) - and, on the other hand, the discovery of errors and repentance.

"Twelve brothers are we" - not one is missing! If one seems missing, it is only an illusion, a tragic misconception which will, at the correct time, be revealed.

And finally, only this explanation merges with the Jewish mystical tradition, which differentiates between the revealed and the hidden, between the best-laid plans of even the purest of men and the plans of Providence, and weaves even failings and misunderstandings into the light of the Redemption, bringing all twelve tribes together at last.

From: listmaster[SMTP:listmaster@shemayisrael.com]
Subject: PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
PARSHAS VAYIGASH

And the sons of Yissacher were Tola and the sons of Zevulun were Sered(46:13, 14)

The genesis of the unique partnership between Yissacher and Zevulun was in Egypt, at a time when Torah study and material sustenance were equally difficult to accomplish. Yet, as Chazal imply, even in Egypt Zevulun would take from his meager portion and share with Yissacher, who - after a day of back-breaking debilitating work - found the time to delve into the profundities of Torah. This defines the paradigmatic partnership: for better or for worse, under all circumstances, regardless of the situation, one is obligated to study Torah and, concomitantly, one must support and sustain those who do.

Nachlas Tzvi cites the following story which emphasizes this idea. Horav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, zl, the distinguished rav of Kovno, had grown up in abject poverty. His poverty was to the extent that one winter his

shoes became so worn out that he could not possibly wear them. He decided to go to the local shoe factory, which happened to be owned by a wealthy Jew, to ask if he could have a pair of irregular or not-saleable shoes. He borrowed a pair of shoes from a friend in order to make the cold trek to the factory. He met the owner who, after taking one look at the strong, healthy yeshivah student, said, "Under no uncertain terms will I give you a pair of shoes. You seem to be quite healthy. Go out and get a job to earn a living so that you can buy yourself a pair of shoes. I am not prepared to support lazy people!" Rav Yitzchak Elchanan had no choice but to leave, dejected and humiliated. He returned home and prayed to Hashem to help him, to enable him to continue his Torah study uninterrupted.

A few days later, one of the students in the yeshiva came to Rav Yitzchak Elchanan with a complete outfit of used clothing, which included a pair of shoes. "You know that I am getting married," the student told him, "and I purchased a new outfit for the wedding. Please take this, so that you can continue your Torah studies."

A number of years went by, and Rav Yitzchak Elchanan achieved fame for his brilliance in Torah erudition and his leadership abilities. He was asked to become Kovnor Rav, a position which he accepted. In a short time he became one of the gedolei Yisrael, Torah luminaries of his generation. During his tenure as rav in Kovno, Czar Nikolai issued a terrible decree against the Jews. The communities decided to send two distinguished representatives to intercede on their behalf before the Czar: the Kovnor Rav and the wealthy owner of the shoe factory.

When they arrived in Moscow, they had to wait a few days for the Czar to give them an appointment. When their meeting finally took place, the Czar was so impressed by Rav Yitzchak Elchanan's holy countenance and demeanor that he nullified the decree. He then asked the wealthy Jew to leave the room, so that he could converse with the rav in private. The Jew had no alternative but to leave. After a few hours the doors opened, and the rav came out accompanied by the Czar. As the rav was walking down the steps of the palace, the wealthy Jew turned to the Czar and queried, "What impressed the Czar most about our rav?" The Czar responded, "I sense that his wisdom is that of a Heavenly Angel, and everything he says is as if it emanates from a holy source."

As they were returning back home, the wealthy man requested of Rav Yitzchak Elchanan, "Rebbe, let us make a Yissacher/Zevulun partnership. I will give you half my assets, and you will grant me half of your Torah." "I am sorry," the rav responded, "you are too late. I cannot make a business deal for what has already occurred. It must be arranged prior to the Torah study. I must tell you, furthermore, that you could have accumulated much more years ago in exchange for a simple pair of shoes than you can today with all of your wealth. Regrettably, now it is too late."

If those of us who have the wherewithal to sustain the Torah study of potential gedolei Yisrael would only use foresight, instead of hindsight, the material situation in the yeshivah world would be considerably improved.

While "Zevulun" has incredible merit for his actions on behalf of "Yissacher," it goes without saying that Torah study is still the greater option - if it is at all possible. Charity, kindness, and good deeds are of noble worth, but, as the Tanna says in Meseches Shabbos Peah 127a, "V'Talmud Torah K'neged Kulam." "And the study of Torah is equivalent to all of them." Nachlas Tzvi cites another meaningful story that demonstrates the remarkable merit to be obtained by supporting an individual, availing him the opportunity to learn Torah. A distinguished rav once came upon a poor, elderly street vendor who was selling sandwiches and drinks from his little stand. The rav was moved by this sight, and he went over to purchase something, just to enable the elderly gentleman to earn some money. The seller noted that before him stood a venerable Torah scholar. He began to pour out his heart, sharing with the rav the vicissitudes of his life. Suddenly, in middle of their conversation, the old man interrupted himself to tell the rav about a young boy, his age, in a small village in Lithuania, who was so poor that his parents had not been able to gather sufficient funds to send him to yeshivah. The boy wept and wept, begging his parents to find some way to send him to yeshivah.

"One day," said the old man, "I overheard the boy entreating his father to please let him go. The father looked into his son's pleading eyes and said, 'My child, I would give everything I have so that you could go on to yeshivah, but I have nothing.' The boy could not accept this answer, and he began to cry with such bitter tears that I also began to cry with him."

"I resolved that night that I had to do something to help another boy who wanted so badly to go study Torah in a yeshivah. I was fortunate to have a job. The hours were long, the physical labor was difficult, and the pay was less than sufficient. Nevertheless, I decided that I was going to set

aside a portion of my earnings so that I could send that young boy to yeshivah. Imagine the excitement in his eyes when I knocked on his door and gave his parents the necessary sum for their son to go to yeshivah."

The man finished his story and looked at the rav, asking, "Perhaps you know whatever became of that young boy?" The rav asked him, "What was his name?" "Aharon Kotler," the man responded. When the rav heard this, he took hold of the man with both hands and exclaimed, "Do you know who he is? He is the gadol hador, the Torah leader of our generation. Your selfless act of charity gave the world its gadol hador!"

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