

BS"D



To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com
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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYIGASH - 5766

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[from last year - came out too late for last year's parsha sheet]

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Vayigash

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa

portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #442 - The Umbrella On Shabbos. Good Shabbos!

Yosef Provides Us With A Lesson In Etiquette

When Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers, they are shocked and frightened. He tries to console them by telling them "It was not you who sent me down here, but G-d; He has made me father to Pharaoh, master of his entire household, and ruler throughout the entire land of Egypt." [Bereshis 45:8].

Rav Yerucham Levovitz cites an interesting Medrash in Parshas Tetzaveh in reference to this pasuk [verse]. G-d gave the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash to the Jewish people. The Medrash states "It is not that I need the light of the Menorah. I am, after all, the Light of the World. Rather, I command you to light for Me just as I provided illumination for you (in the Wilderness). This will give you the opportunity to return the favor, so to speak."

Rav Yerucham says that we learn a powerful lesson in proper etiquette from this Medrash. When someone does a tremendous favor for his friend, the beneficiary may approach the benefactor and ask how he might be able to repay the kindness. What is the proper response of a benefactor in such a situation?

Most people would say that the proper response is to shrug off the favor and say, "Forget about it! Don't worry! You don't have to pay me back." This Medrash teaches otherwise. The proper response is in fact to suggest a way in which the beneficiary can pay the benefactor back. Someone who is truly sensitive for the feelings of his friend will not want the friend to feel indebted.

If you do not give to the beneficiary the opportunity to return a favor, the relationship will remain as one of debtor and benefactor. Deep down, the benefactor is thinking "this guy still owes me big time," and the beneficiary is thinking the same thing. Maintaining such a relationship is not proper etiquette. It is not being a mensch. A person with outstanding character traits will tell his beneficiary, "You know, there is something you CAN do for me..."

Even if that which the beneficiary will do in return is not as significant or as important a favor, it at least gives the person the opportunity to feel "I've paid him back," so that the recipient does not have to go through life thinking, "I owe this guy. I owe this guy. I owe this guy."

This is what G-d is teaching by asking Klal Yisrael for a "favor" - to light a light for Him in His Temple. We would not have been able to move 5 feet forward in the Wilderness without G-d's Light. What is more, He doesn't

need our light. But nevertheless, in His Kindness, He gave us an opportunity to "pay Him back."

The Rosh, in the Orchos Chaim l'haRosh, states that not only does this have ramifications when someone does us a favor -- it also has implications when someone commits an offense against us. The Orchos Chaim consists of very cryptic sayings from the Rosh. In this case, he says, "Don't consider it a sin if a person wishes to excuse himself in front of you."

The scenario that the Rosh is speaking of is when Reuvin hurts Shimon in a very profound way. Two weeks later, Reuvin comes before Shimon and says, "You know, I realize I acted horribly towards you, but - I want to explain."

Again, what is our normal reaction to such a situation? "Forget it. I don't want to hear your explanation. I don't need to hear your explanation. It is done already - just forget it!" The Rosh explains that reacting in that way is not practicing exemplary midos. Shimon is refusing to hear the explanation because he wants Reuvin to suffer. He knows that from this point forward, every time Reuvin sees him, he will feel bad. Shimon, by not being willing to listen to Reuvin's explanation is setting up a future relationship where Reuvin will always "owe him something."

Therefore, the Rosh says, if a person sins against you and comes to explain - do not consider this a further sin on his part. On the contrary, hear him out. Listen to his excuse - whether it is a good excuse or not. Even if his excuse is total nonsense, let him say it anyway. Let him have the satisfaction of being let off the hook, as though he in fact settled his debt to you. Such a practice represents super character traits. One who is prepared to let his neighbor "off the hook," even if perhaps he does not deserve to get off so easy, is most praiseworthy.

Rav Yerucham finds an example of this in Yosef's response here to his brothers. Imagine how the ten brothers felt. They took Yosef, intending to kill him. In the end, they sold him into slavery. Their behavior toward him was almost inexcusable. What can they say to him now? What kind of apology can they hope to offer under such circumstances?

Yosef tells them, "You did not sin toward me. It all turned out for the best. This was all part of G-d's Divine plan. You were just pawns - puppets in the hands of the puppeteer." Yosef was attempting to relieve his brothers of their unbelievable burden of guilt. This, says Rav Yeruchem, demonstrates the pristine quality of the midos of Yosef haTzadik.

What's Your Hurry?

Before sending them back to Canaan, Yosef gave his brothers the following instructions: "Do not become agitated on the way" (al tirgezu b'derech) [Bereshis 45:24]. The Gemara [Ta'anis 10b] interprets these words to mean "Do not take big steps". What does this mean?

The Kotzker Rebbe explains that Yosef knew exactly what was going through his brothers' minds. They just found out that Yosef was still alive. They knew what this would mean to their father. These were the days before the telephone, before the telegram, and before other means of instant communication that we have today. It took several days to travel from Egypt back to Eretz Canaan. They were thinking, "We can't wait to tell our father the news. This is a three day trip. We are going to make it in a day and a half!" Yosef therefore told them to travel at a normal pace.

Why? The Kotzker explains that when G-d brings suffering upon a person, He decrees that the suffering will end on such and such a day at such and such an hour at such and such a minute and at such a such a second. It will not depart a moment earlier or a moment later. Therefore, it does not help for them to think that they can make it happen quicker. The exact amount of time that Yaakov had to suffer thinking his son was murdered was preordained. If the brothers would have tried to speed up or take short cuts, they would not have gotten there any sooner.

The Imrei Shammai cites a similar explanation from the Baal HaTurim. According to the Baal HaTurim, Yosef's message when he told his brothers "Al Tirgezu b'Derech" was: don't go through fields that have already been sown. In other words, don't think you are on such a holy and urgent mission

that it justifies stepping on someone's corn crop thinking "this is important! So what if this guy has a little less corn this year?" Yosef instructed them, "don't do that. Don't use your connections with the viceroy in Egypt to justify physical or moral shortcuts. Stay on the main highway. Don't take special privileges. Shortcuts are not going to help. It will happen whenever it is going to happen."

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Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayigash are provided below: Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadvechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadvechiel.org/> for further information. Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington. Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim. Rav Frand Books and Audio Tapes are now available for sale! Thanks to www.yadvechiel.org and Artscroll.com.



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By Rabbi Abraham J. Twersky

Parashas Vayigash

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: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Thursday, January 05, 2006 3:09 PM To: weeklydt@torahweb2.org Subject: [TorahWeb] Rabbi Mayer Twersky - Consistency



<http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

Rabbi Mayer Twersky

Consistency

One of the subplots of the drama of Yosef and his brothers is consistency. In Parshas Vayeshev that Torah records that "[the brothers] hated [Yosef]; and they could not speak to him peaceably." Rashi elaborates that this remark, while disparaging of the brothers, also praises them. They did not speak echad b'peh v'echad b'lev - with one sentiment on their lips but a different one in their heart. Since they could not speak genuinely peaceably, they did not speak at all. They did not speak insincerely.

In Parshas Miketz Potipahr's wife attempts to induce Yosef to sin. He adamantly refuses, explaining that to do so would betray his master's trust. Betrayal is an especially egregious form of inconsistency.

And finally in Parshas Vayigash when Yosef reveals himself to his brothers - "I am Yosef; is my father still alive?", according to Chazal (as explained by the Beis Halevi), he rebukes them for their inconsistency. You claim, chastises Yosef, to be solicitous of our father's concern for Binyamin. How then could you have tortured him so by selling me into slavery?

Arguably the brother's inconsistency triggers the chain of events which results in galus Mitzrayim, the Egyptian exile. At any rate, apropos of this season's krias haTorah, it is especially appropriate to reflect and introspect about consistency.

There are several aspects of consistency. First of all, consistency entails complete congruence between belief and practice. According to Rabbeinu Bechaye, the mitzvah of "tamim t'hiye im Hashem Elokecha" mandates this facet of consistency. How can a ma'amin, believer, steal, cheat on his taxes or engage in other forbidden business practices if he believes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu ordains to the penny a person's livelihood? Does Hakadosh Baruch Hu expect us to cheat to receive the sustenance He provides us?

Consistency also demands that our actions be internally consistent. To paraphrase the Beis Halevi: how can we plead a lack of resources to give generously to tzedaka when we have ample money for luxurious cars and vacations and homes?

Yet another stricture of consistency is tocho k'baro, that the external manifestations of one's avodas Hashem not exceed the reality or substance of one's actual avodah. Thus, if a certain mode of dress bespeaks a certain level of learning, one must ensure that what is intimated by his garb is indeed true.

The final aspect of consistency which I would like to mention is to be, in the idiom of Chazal, na'eh doreish v'na'eh mekayeim. In current cliché, this translates as practice what you preach.

The current forum does not allow for a discussion of all the aforementioned aspects of consistency. Let us, however, reflect upon and consider applications of this final aspect.

The Gemara in Yevamos quotes a braysa with the teaching of Ben Azai that if one does not [attempt to] procreate it is as if he had committed murder and diminished the divine image. The braysa then proceeds to record the Sages' indictment of Ben Azai. "Some people are na'eh doreish v'na'eh mekayeim (preach well and perform well), others are na'eh mekayeim v'eino na'eh doreish (perform well but do not preach well). You, however, are na'eh doreish veino na'eh mekayeim (preach well but do not perform well).

The chachamim do not simply indict Ben Azai for not performing well. They indict him for the contrast between his exalted words and substandard behavior. [It should be noted that Ben Azai felt that, due to his all-consuming involvement with Talmud Torah that he was exempt from the mitzvah of procreation. And, in fact, the halacha follows Ben Azai's opinion.] To preach well without performing well is not simply ineffective; it is wrong.

Preaching without practicing is wrong on several levels. First of all, it is hypocritical to do so. Chazal [Bava Metzia 87a], contrasting the behavior of Avraham Avinu and Efron, comment that tzadikim speak sparingly but act generously, whereas reshaim speak grandiloquently but do nothing.

Na'eh doreish without na'eh mekayeim is also potentially damaging. The following scenario sometimes unfolds in shul. Someone who himself talks

at times during shushes others for talking. His protests are, at least, ignored or, more likely, met with derision. The effort to maintain a sense of sobriety and decorum for davening and shul becomes identified with inconsistency. As a result people are more likely then ever to continue talking during davening.

The potential for damage is greatest when dealing with children who are especially impressionistic. Moreover, due to the innocence of youth, they are ill-prepared for inconsistent behavior, especially on the part of parents and teachers. As a result, they are more prone to being damaged by inconsistency.

Consider the example of a father who constantly exhorts his son to learn Torah. He enrolls him in a yeshiva with little, if any, vacation. He pushes his son to maximize his time and potential. The father is indisputably na'eh doreish. If the father would also be na'eh mekayeim, the combination of his deeds and words would be especially influential and inspirational. But if the father does not exert himself in learning or push himself to maximize his own time and potential, then the disparity between his words and actions can easily breed cynicism. In the son's mind Talmud Torah becomes associated with his fathers inconsistency. In this instance the father's na'eh doresh might very well deter his son from learning. [To be sure, no two people are identical. Thus, for example, there are cases where the son possesses the temperament and abilities to excel in Talmud Torah, whereas the father does not. Maximizing their respective potentials will take father and son along different paths. In such cases when the son is old enough to appreciate this distinction, the father can and should urge his son along a path which differs from his own.]

Similarly it is certainly an instance of na'eh doreish to instruct our children regarding middos. "Keep calm." "Maintain perspective. Don't blow things out of proportion." "Anger is a terrible, destructive emotion." But if we fail to keep our composure, maintain perspective or restrain our anger, we risk breeding cynicism in our children, rachmana litzlan.

Cynicism is especially insidious because it is antithetical to faith. Faith, while firmly rooted in knowledge, requires a trusting disposition. Faith involves trusting Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The distrust which a cynic feels for his fellow man can eventually, rachmana litzlan engulf even Hakadosh Baruch Hu as well. The Rambam (end of Hilchos Tum'as Tsora'as) vividly describes a progression which begins with lashon hara (speaking ill of a fellow Jew) and culminates with heresy. The cynicism which leads one to focus and comment on his friend's shortcomings rather than his virtues will, rachmana litzlan, if unchecked, poison his relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Hopefully, b'ezeras Hashem we can be na'eh doreish v'na'eh mekayeim. But if we are not na'eh mekayeim, it is better that we not preach at all.

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From: Avi Lieberman <AteresHaShavua@aol.com>

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EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU

HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

[Translated by Ephraim Weiss <Easykgh@aol.com>]

We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' sheep... and now may your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

The Baal Hagaddah shel Pesach derives from this pasuk that it was not Yaakov's intention to settle in Mitzrayim for any length of time, but rather to briefly visit there. However, as we know, in the end Bnei Yisroel stayed

in Mitzrayim for many years. What changed that permitted Bnei Yisroel to settle in Mitzrayim for an extended period of time?

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt"l explains this phenomenon, based on the understanding of this entire portion of the parsha. The Torah relates that Yosef placed his family in the land of Goshen, and supported them there. The Torah then interjects with the seemingly unrelated story of how Yosef bought all the land of Mitzrayim in exchange for supporting them during the famine. Yosef then proceeded to move all the Mitzriim from place to place, forcing them to live in land that was not their own, and levied a twenty percent tax on all the Mitzriim. Finally, the Torah emphasizes that Yosef neither took the land from the 'kohanim' of Mitzrayim, nor charged them the standard tariff, as the custom in Mitzrayim was that the 'kohanim' were exempt from such duties. Only after describing these events in great detail does the Torah conclude that Bnei Yisroel settled in Goshen, and multiplied greatly there. Why did the Torah deem it necessary to interrupt with this seemingly extraneous information?

Rav Yaakov explains that Yosef's handling of the Mitzriim was done for the express purpose of making Bnei Yisroel's move to Mitzrayim easier. Yosef acquired the land from all of the Mitzriim so that no one in Mitzrayim could claim to be the rightful owner of the land that Bnei Yisroel settled on. Furthermore, Yosef decreed that the Mitzriim settle on land that was not their own, in order to ensure that everyone in Mitzrayim, not only Bnei Yisroel, would be strangers in a strange land. Finally, Yosef established a precedent that exempted the 'kohanim' of Mitzrayim from the various taxes. Yosef wanted to ensure that one shevet of Klal Yisroel, shevet Levi, would be able to continue learning Torah throughout the slavery. Yosef established the tax exemption for 'kohanim,' so that when the entire Mitzrayim was drafted into Pharaoh's workforce, as a preparation for the eventual forced labor, shevet Levi would not have to participate. Indeed, as Yosef had planned, shevet Levi remained engrossed in Torah for the entire two hundred and ten years that Bnei Yisroel remained in Mitzrayim. When Bnei Yisroel left Mitzrayim, it was shevet Levi, with its strong background in limud haTorah that carried Bnei Yisroel through the years in the midbar. Shevet Levi alone remained clean from the chet ha'eigel, the chet ha'meraglim, and even fought with other shevatim of Klal Yisroel who wished to return to Mitzrayim after Aharon's passing. As such, Yosef's executive decisions are discussed in the parsha that deals with Bnei Yisroel's settling in Mitzrayim; all that Yosef did, he did for Bnei Yisroel's benefit.

Now we may answer our original question, as to why Bnei Yisroel remained in Mitzrayim on a permanent basis, as opposed to the temporary visit that was originally intended. Yaakov was concerned that Bnei Yisroel would assimilate amongst the Mitzriim, and as such, he was only willing to live in Mitzrayim permanently. However, once he saw that Yosef had arranged that all of Mitzrayim be demoted to the state of wanderers, he was no longer concerned that Bnei Yisroel would assimilate amongst them. When Yaakov saw that one shevet, come what may, would always be engrossed in limud haTorah, he agreed to remain in Mitzrayim for an indefinite period of time.

May we be zocheh to see the day on which we will understand how all the events of our long, bitter galus, were similarly intended for the ultimate geulah, the coming of Moshiach, bi'mihayra bi'yameinu, amen.

From: Rabbi Goldwicht [rgoldwicht@yutorah.org] Sent: Thursday, January 05, 2006 11:06 AM Subject: Parashat VaYigash 5766

WEEKLY INSIGHTS BY RAV MEIR GOLDWICHT
Parashat VaYigash

When Yosef meets Binyamin for the first time in two decades, Rashi writes, quoting Chazal, that he asks Binyamin as to whether he has children. Binyamin replies that indeed he has ten sons, all of whom are named in some way related to Yosef. For example, Bela, because Yosef was nivla (swallowed up) among the nations; Becher, because Yosef was

the bechor of his mother; Chupim, because Binyamin and Yosef were not present at each other's chuppah. When Yosef heard this, he could not restrain himself and fell upon Binyamin's neck in tears.

This outburst is certainly a natural release of Yosef's pent-up longing for his brother. Were Yosef not to burst out in tears, we would probably be quite surprised. These tears need no explanation. Yet Rashi explains that Yosef cried not because of this emotional reunion, but because he foresaw the future destructions of the First and Second Beit HaMikdash, which would be built in Binyamin's portion in Eretz Yisrael.

The Sfat Emet poses the obvious question: Why does Yosef cry over the Churban at this exact moment? Why can't he cry because of the emotional reunion with his brothers? The Churban hardly seems relevant.

The answer is that Yosef had a goal to unite his brothers. He understood that the only way to realize this goal given the current circumstances was to cause them tzarot – through the tzarot they would bond together and come to the realization, as they did, that the current stressors were punishment for the sale of Yosef. The genius of Yosef is apparent in the parallelism between the tzarot he causes them and their cruelty to him twenty-two years prior:

1) At first, Yosef imprisons all of the brothers and declares that one brother will go home to bring Binyamin while the rest remain behind. He then changes his mind and sends nine of the ten brothers who came to Mitzrayim back to bring Binyamin while one remains behind. The brothers immediately declare, "Aval asheimim anachnu al achinu, We are truly guilty concerning our brother" (Bereishit 42:21), recognizing the first parallelism: twenty-two years earlier, ten brothers had left home and only nine returned from the bor (pit), leaving Yosef behind; now, ten brothers had left home for Mitzrayim and only nine would return from the bor (prison), leaving Shimon behind.

2) When Yosef's brothers find their money in the sacks of grain they had purchased, they have their second sign. Nine brothers had returned home with money from the sale of Yosef as well.

When Yosef's brothers return home and Yaakov sees their money, he doesn't say a word. But when they tell him that they must bring Binyamin to Mitzrayim, he adamantly opposes them. Twice, he says, you've come home with money and without a brother: first Yosef, now Shimon. Would I let the same fate befall Binyamin? What convinced him to let up and allow Binyamin to be brought down to Mitzrayim was Yehudah's personal guarantee – when Yaakov saw that a son of Leah, indeed the most important son of Leah, was prepared to guarantee the safety of a son of Rachel, he was prepared to let them go.

When Yosef heard from Yehudah that he had personally guaranteed the safety of Binyamin, Yosef understood that his mission was nearing its end. Yosef only needed to hold a little longer in order for the achdut to become complete before revealing himself to his brothers. But for some unknown reason, the Torah tells us that Yosef was unable to hold back his emotions, despite the fact that he knew he was revealing himself before the right time, that the brothers' achdut was not 100% perfect. If there is a flaw in the "foundation," it would become apparent once the "building" was built – at some point, the building would fall to ruins because of this tiny flaw in its foundation. This was the Churban Bayit, and this is why Yosef mourned its destruction at this moment, showing his brothers that the key to future generations' strength and completeness in our land is achdut. Against our achdut, none can stand.

The more we feel true areivut, responsibility for one another—the more we fulfill Yehudah's promise to Yaakov, which resulted in the proclamation of "Ani Yosef, I am Yosef" (Bereishit 45:3)—the sooner we will hear the proclamation of "Ani Hashem, I am God" speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom!

Meir Goldwicht

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From: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com Sent: Thursday, January 05, 2006 7:45 AM
Subject: Coming Full Circle by Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

Coming Full Circle

By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

While we hear about in shul the saga of the Jews in Egypt, there is much to reflect upon. The Medrash informs us that this was the first case of Jewish assimilation. The Medrash relates, "K'shemeis Yosef, hefeiru bris milah – When Yosef passed on, the Jews stopped circumcising themselves. Amru, nihiye k'Mitzrim. They declared, Let us be like the Egyptians." As a safeguard against the erasure of Jewish identity, Hashem caused the Egyptian masses to despise us, thereby leading to the afflictions in Egypt. This dynamic would repeat itself throughout history. When the Jews started assimilating to the ways of the culture of Spain they were expelled from the land, thus ending the golden era of Spanish Jewry. When myriads of Jews tried to blend into the European scene, many of them even accepting baptism, Hashem orchestrated that they should have to wear yellow stars with the word Jude upon it to bring them back to their Jewish identity.

The Medrash informs us of another reason for the more than a century of Jewish suffering in Egypt. The Jews had to suffer the fate of harsh slavery in Mitzrayim due to the mechanics of the Divine retribution of midah kneged midah, measure for measure. Since we sold our brother Yosef into slavery, we had to be sold as slaves. (The first reason given for assimilation explains why even the descendents of Yosef and Binyamin also had to be sold as slaves.)

Moshe Rabbeinu, discerning the justice of midah kneged midah, understood that we would not be able to leave Egypt without fulfilling the mission of returning Yosef to the place from where he was kidnapped. Since we sold Yosef in Shechem, Moshe Rabbeinu knew that the Jews would have to bring him out of Egypt and bury him in Shechem. Therefore, while all of the other Jews were becoming fabulously wealthy borrowing gold and silver and fancy apparel from the Egyptians, Moshe Rabbeinu was scouring Mitzrayim for the coffin of Yosef. Ultimately, Serach bas Asher would inform Moshe Rabbeinu that Yosef was buried in the Nile. (Rabbeinu Efraim teaches us a nifty gematria. Yosef is the exact numerical value of l'Nilus, which means 'in the Nile'.) Then Moshe Rabbeinu threw a plate of gold inscribed with the words. "AleI Shor – Rise O Ox!" [Ox being a metaphor for Yosef], and Yosef's coffin rose.

We are taught, "Eizahu chacham? Haroeh es a nolad – Who is wise? He who sees the future," and is able to forecast upcoming needs. The Medrash tells us, "Ma raah hayam sheyanos – What did the Red Sea see that it fled? Raah arono shel Yosef – It saw the coffin of Yosef." Once again, the climax of the Jewish salvation from Mitzrayim, namely the splitting of the Red Sea, was only able to happen because they were engaged in returning Yosef back to Shechem. It was Moshe Rabbeinu's foresight in recovering Yosef that saved the lives of 3,000,000 Jews from a watery grave. Eventually, Bnei Yisroel fulfilled its mission and successfully buried Yosef in Shechem, where we find that Yosef came full circle having been sold in Shechem and returned to Shechem.

I believe this is why the gematria of Shechem is 360, the degrees of a circle, indicating Yosef's coming full circle in Shechem. The Medrash notes that the only shevet, tribe, which has the letter 'samech' in his name is Yosef. Perhaps this is also because the samech is a circle indicating as well Yosef's coming full circle. The name Shechem also has the same letters as the word mashach, which means to pull. Perhaps this indicates that it was in

Shechem that Yosef was pulled apart from his family. It is also the place where the wicked person Shechem pulled Dina away from her family and brutally violated her. Much later on, it would be in Shechem that Rachavam and Yeravam ben Navat would pull apart from one another, ripping asunder the Malchus Beis Dovid, the Kingdom of David.

It is fascinating to note that these three occurrences that transpired in Shechem all have a common thread. They all are rooted in the terrible sin of sinas achim, hatred amongst brothers. In the case of the sale of Yosef, this is obvious. So too in the division of the throne of David. But the mishap of Dina also has an undercurrent of brotherly strife, for Rashi informs us that Yaakov was punished by Dina meeting the terrible fate since he concealed her in a box so that Eisav should not see her and desire her. For keeping Dina from possibly reforming his brother Eisav, Dina fell into the clutches of Shechem. (It is not the place here to discuss why Yaakov was faulted from trying to protect his daughter from the rasha Eisav while Leah, Dina's mother, was praised for carefully begging not to be stuck with Eisav.) It would seem to be however, that if Yaakov had a deep loving relationship with his brother Eisav, he would have given Dina the chance to attempt to reform him. Thus, we find again in Shechem another example of a deficiency in brotherly relationships.

May it be the will of Hashem that in our own lives we experience, "Hinei matov u'ma naim, sheves achim gam yachad – How good and how sweet it is when brothers live in harmony," and may we merit the blessings of long life, good health and everything wonderful.

To receive a weekly cassette tape or CD directly from Rabbi Weiss, please send a check to Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss, P.O. Box 140726, Staten Island, NY 10314 or contact him at RMMWSI@aol.com. Attend Rabbi Weiss's weekly shiur at the Landau Shul, Avenue L and East 9th in Flatbush, Tuesday nights at 9:30 p.m. Rabbi Weiss's Daf Yomi shiurim can be heard LIVE on Kol Haloshon at (718) 906-6400. Write to KolHaloshon@gmail.com for details. (Sheldon Zeitlin transcribes Rabbi Weiss' articles. If you wish to receive Rabbi Weiss' articles by email, please send a note to ZeitlinShelley@aol.com.)

From: **Rabbi Berel Wein** [rbwein@torah.org] Sent: Thursday, January 05, 2006 11:06 AM To: rabbiwein@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Wein - Parshas Vayigash Weekly Parsha January 06, 2006 <http://www.rabbiwein.com/parsha-index.html> <http://www.rabbiwein.com/column-1118.html> VAYIGASH

Reunions are often times painful and disappointing. People change, become older and are rarely the same as we remember. The reunion of Yosef and his brothers as described in this week's parsha is an especially difficult and painful one. Yosef's brothers are deeply mortified at seeing him as the viceroy of Egypt, the man to whom they have bowed numerous times. Yosef's dreams have been fulfilled and the brothers find themselves guilty of a great wrongdoing – of having wrongly sold a brother into slavery and possible death. Yosef is also disappointed in the reunion. He now realizes that the gulf between his brothers and him will never quite be completely bridged. He occupies himself mainly with his father's needs while his relationship with his brothers is not discussed in the Torah. Later, after the death of Yaakov, the scars of mistrust between Yosef and his brothers are reopened when the brothers, afraid that Yosef will yet exact revenge upon them, tell him an obvious untruth about their father's instructions not to harm them.

In fact, Yosef's demeanor throughout the entire process of reunion with his brothers is one of weeping and sadness. His reunion with the brothers is perhaps a vindication of his dreams and his true dominant stature within the family but he is hardly in a triumphant mood. Too many memories and events cross his mind and the past can be forgiven but it is never completely forgotten or can its events be undone.

The great Chasidic masters, among other commentators and Torah scholars, state that the rift between Yosef and his brothers is implanted within the DNA of Israel and that every dispute thereafter in the long history of disputes within the Jewish world stems from this original bitter disagreement about the place of Yosef in the founding family of Israel. This being the case, even after reunions, reconciliations and changed circumstances that alter the basis for the original dispute, the residue of that dispute still remains within the Jewish community. The Jewish people and its body politic have a long memory and even when history and events seemingly settle the matter, the scar caused by the original dispute is still quite recognizable.

Much of the division and strife that is visible in our current Jewish world reflects dispute that are centuries old. And now that the Jewish people, so to speak, have had

a fateful reunion here with one another in the Land of Israel with its great mix of different Jews thrust together rather suddenly into one small society, the reunion is not without pain, recrimination and unpleasant memories. We pray that we will forgive each other our past wrongs and errors of judgment and behavior. It would be a great accomplishment if we not only forgave but also forgot a lot of the past events of the Jewish exile that gave rise to great friction and enmity within the Jewish world. Yosef and his brothers are finally fully reconciled on the great breastplate of Aharon, the Kohein Gadol/High Priest of Israel. Aharon is the symbol of peace and love for all Jews. We should attempt to fashion that breastplate once again for our society and for its eternal well-being.

Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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From: Peninim-bounces@shemayisrael.com on behalf of Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com] Sent: Thursday, January 05, 2006 6:08 AM To: Peninim Parsha

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

He (Yosef) then kissed his brothers and wept upon them. (45:15)

Yosef seems to be a baal bechi, one who is often reduced to tears. In the previous parsha, we find a number of times in which he had been forced to leave the room, lest he begin to cry in front of his brothers. In this parsha, the revelation of his identity was accompanied by much weeping. This seems to continue on into Parshas Vayechei. What are we to learn from all this? Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, explains that one who is the victim of much anguish, whose companion in life is agony and persecution, whose burdens and troubles are overwhelming, weeps frequently even during his moments of peace, tranquility and harmony. This is because he is sensitive to -- and is pained by -- the troubles of others. On the other hand, the brothers, who did not sustain the burdens that were so integral to Yosef's life, did not cry even when tears were appropriate. They were just not forthcoming. Yosef was used to crying. Indeed, his concern and sentiment towards others are what catalyzed his rise to greatness.

Yosef was an individual who put another person's needs before his own. At least, he was sensitive to the needs of another person as if they were his own. The Torah teaches us that when Yaakov Avinu and Yosef were finally reunited, Yosef "appeared to him." Rashi explains that Yosef appeared to his father. Horav Leib Chasman, zl, explains that the meeting between father and son after all these years was truly an emotional one. Yaakov had waited for twenty-two years, mourning and weeping for his special son. Yosef's love was certainly reciprocal. He waited longingly to see his father before it would be too late. They each had an agenda. The Torah tells us that despite Yosef's compelling emotions, he deferred to his father and gave him the opportunity to view him and derive the maximum pleasure from the meeting. Yosef remained passive so that his father could experience the greatest enjoyment. He wanted his father to see him, so that he could fully enjoy what had eluded him for these past years.

It was not just Yosef who had this unique character trait. It seems that this was a family trait. Chazal tell us that Binyamin, Yosef's brother, had ten sons. Rashi explains that each son had a name that in some way alluded to his missing brother, Yosef. Interestingly, one of the sons was called Chuppim, a derivative of the word chuppah, marriage canopy. Binyamin gave his son a name that expressed his grief over Yosef not being able to participate in his chuppah. Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl, derives from here that being unable to join in a brother's chuppah is a tragedy for which it is worth naming a son. What was the source of this incredible sensitivity for one another? It was their mother, Rachel Imeinu. She was concerned that her sister not be humiliated. Consequently, she assisted her sister in marrying the man whom she thought would become her husband. This selflessness and sensitivity were transmitted through her genes to her two sons. They had not seen each other for

twenty-two years . Yet, when they met, their tears were not for themselves, but, rather, for the Batei Mikdash and the Mishkan that would be destroyed in their respective portions of Eretz Yisrael.

Indeed, this is the innate nature of man. In his preface to the Ketzos HaChoshen, the Kunteres HaSefekos cites the Mahari Muskato, zl, who says that "if a human being could possibly ascend to Heaven and gaze at the Divine beauty and order of the Heavenly Hosts, he still would not be satisfied with this incredible revelation unless he could relate this wondrous sight to his friends." He adds that everyone wants to share the knowledge that he acquires with his friends. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz posits that this desire to share is not a negative trait, but an inherently positive aspect of the human psyche. One does not derive complete satisfaction unless he is able to share his newly- found wisdom with his friend. How often do we learn a penetrating dvar Torah or develop a novel Torah thought and immediately seek to share it with someone?

This type of sensitivity for another Jew has been the hallmark of our gedolim, Torah leaders. The story is told that Horav Avraham Pam, zl, was once asked by a man for assistance in resolving his financial problems. He was in need of a large sum of money in order to return to his original financial position. Rav Pam listened sympathetically and then wrote the man a check. The man began to weep profusely, as he begged the Rosh Yeshiva to phone his talmidim, students, to ask them to contribute to his check. Rav Pam apologized, saying that he had just called upon them to aid in another matter, and he simply could not do it again.

The man accepted this reason and thanked Rav Pam for his help. A short time later, a talmid came in to speak with the Rosh Yeshiva and noticed that his rebbe was going through a roll of index cards and crying. "Rebbe, what is it about the index cards that is making the Rebbe cry?" he asked.

"I just sent a man away empty-handed, because I could not help him. He asked me to call my well-to-do talmidim and implore them to help him. I told him I could not do it. I just went through the index cards to see if maybe there was possibly someone I could ask, but, alas, there is no one."

"But why is the Rebbe crying?" the talmid asked again.

"I am crying because he was crying. How could I not cry, if another Jew is in pain?"

This is the type of love that Rav Pam had for every Jew. It was a love borne of a personality who was sensitive to the needs of his fellow Jews, of a character who was not satisfied unless he shared what he had with his fellow.

Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, tells the story of the Z'viler Rebbe, Horav Gedaliah Moshe Goldman, who was interred in a Siberian labor camp during World War II. It was a miserable, back-breaking experience, but at least the one solace was that it was not a Nazi extermination camp. One Shabbos, the commandant summoned both the Rebbe and another Jew, a frail, old man, to his office. "You are both free to go. All you have to do is sign these papers and go," he said.

Rav Gedaliah Moshe reached for the papers and stopped. How could he write on Shabbos? True, it was a release, but could he desecrate the holy Shabbos? After all, as bad as it was, it was not life-threatening. He was young and strong. Even if he would be detained there for a few more years, he would survive.

"No, I am sorry, sir. While I appreciate your kind gesture, I cannot desecrate my Shabbos," the Rebbe replied.

"Are you insane?" the commandant screamed. "I am granting you freedom. How can you waste such an opportunity?"

"I understand and appreciate your kindness, but it is my day of rest. I may not write."

"If you do not sign, you will rot in this place," the commandant responded with disgust. He then pushed the papers to the old Jew and said, "Okay, now, you sign the release papers."

"I am afraid that I cannot sign either. The same law applies to me," the old man said.

"You two are both insane," the commandant said in disgust and retrieved the papers.

"Wait!" said Rav Gedaliah Moshe. "I will sign his papers. Let him go free."

"I do not understand. You just told me that you cannot write on Shabbos. Yet, you are willing to sign his papers. Have you taken total leave of your senses? Why are his papers different from yours?"

"There is a major difference," the Rebbe explained. "I am young and strong. I can survive here. He, on the other hand, is old and weak. He will not make it. Therefore, if he is not prepared to sign, I will sign for him."

The commandant was so impressed by this act of selflessness that he allowed them both to leave without demanding their signatures.

The Rebbe demonstrated sensitivity at its zenith.

And they told him, saying, "Yosef is still alive"...then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived.

Targum Onkelos interprets the phrase, "then the spirit of their father Yaakov Avinu was revived," to mean that the Divine Spirit which had left Yaakov twenty-two years ago had returned. This is because Yaakov was in a state of depression due to mourning for his lost son, Yosef. Now that he had heard the wonderful news that he was still alive, the Divine Spirit could return to him. We wonder why Hashem did

not reveal to Yaakov that Yosef was alive. We understand that until Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, there was a "prohibition" against divulging to Yaakov anything regarding Yosef's whereabouts. Now that Yosef had disclosed the truth about himself to his brothers, however, why did Yaakov have to wait until his sons returned to hear the wonderful news? It seems that Hashem specifically wanted the brothers to be the bearers of the news. Why?

The Ozrover Rebbe, zl, explains that since the brothers had caused Yaakov so much grief, it was necessary that they be the ones to engender the good feeling that Yosef's being alive would generate. This good feeling would increase Yaakov's love for his sons and affirm his relationship with them. Thus, the good news that they shared made up for the bad news they had conveyed twenty-two years earlier.

Perhaps we might add another reason. In order to perform teshuvah properly, one must be sensitive to the negative consequences of his sin. Only after one realizes the evil that he wrought, can he properly offer penance. When the brothers saw the incredible joy that overcame their father when he heard that Yosef was still alive, they were able to comprehend and sensitize themselves to the pain he had experienced as a result of Yosef's loss. Until they understood and felt the terrible pain that Yaakov had suffered, they could not perform the teshuvah necessary to expunge their sin. When they saw Yaakov's joy, they could ascertain his pain and repent accordingly.

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From: **Rav Kook** List [RavKookList@gmail.com] Sent: Thursday, January 05, 2006 4:49 AM Subject: Rav Kook: For the Honor of Torah

For the Honor of Torah

Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook related the following story:

While living in Boisk, Rav Kook and his family would occasionally take a late summer vacation at the Dobeln summer resort along the Baltic seashore. There, he used to meet Rabbi Zelig Reuven Bengis, and the two would spend time together in the hotel and its surrounding woods.

Near the Dobeln beach, a small structure was designated as a makeshift synagogue, where the bathers would gather for "Mincha" and "Ma'ariv" - the afternoon and evening prayers. One day, Rabbi Bengis had a "yahrzeit" for one of his parents, and he wanted to lead the prayers, as is customarily done. However, only nine men showed up, making them one short of a "minyan" (a religious quorum). One of the men, a go-getter by nature, went outside to find a tenth for the "minyan". As it happened, a rather domineering man of means also had "yahrzeit" that day, and he was arranging his own "minyan" outside. Not noticing how many men were outside, the "go-getter" asked one of them to come inside and join Rabbi Bengis' "minyan", where Rav Kook was also waiting.

Unfortunately, the outside group had numbered exactly ten, and now they were short a "minyan". (When Rabbi Bengis retold the story, he explained that he had no idea that this Jew was the tenth man in the other "minyan", otherwise he would never have allowed this to happen.) When the domineering man realized what had happened, he stormed into the room where Rabbi Bengis was praying and berated him with a barrage of curses and insults.

When Rav Kook saw the humiliation of this great Torah scholar, he immediately approached the assailant and gave him a resounding slap across the face. "In my presence," he said firmly, "no one degrades a Torah scholar!"

The wealthy man was so angered that he summoned Rav Kook to court. Indeed, the news of a rabbi slapping someone across the face made a shocking impression on everyone who heard about it.

When Rav Kook returned to Boisk, some of his devoted followers approached him and expressed concern over the fact that he might be taken to prison. In an effort to avoid this, they advised him to apologize to the man and beg forgiveness for slapping him. Rav Kook, however, refused to do so. He explained,

"Concerning my own honor, I am permitted to forgive and forget. In fact, I am obligated to be humble and forbearing, as we say in our prayers, 'Let my soul be like dust to everyone.' However, if I apologize to this man, I am, in effect, condoning the affront to that great Torah scholar and consequently, the desecration of the Torah's honor."

Quite unexpectedly, the domineering man showed up at Rav Kook's door a short while later and begged forgiveness from the Rav! Thus the whole incident came to an end ... for the time being, at least.

The Gold Watch

Many years later, when Rav Kook was on a trip to the United States, a man came up to him and announced that he was the one whom the Rav had slapped in Dobeln.

He then pulled out a golden watch from his pocket and said, 'I give you this, O honored Rav, in return for the slap that you gave me. You see, that whole incident brought me nothing but disgrace. I was so humiliated that I left town and came to America, where I became extremely wealthy. Thus, my good fortune is all thanks to you.'

Rav Kook refused to accept the gift, but the wealthy man would not take 'no' for an answer. He kept on insisting until Rav Kook finally agreed to take the watch. Yet, Rav Kook still had misgivings. He felt very uncomfortable about accepting this gift and benefiting, in some way, from the humiliation of a Torah scholar.

Some time later, there was a knock on the Rav's door, and in came an old man with a heartrending story. A close relative had fallen gravely ill, and the old man needed a large sum of money in order to transfer the patient from his home to a hospital.

Rav Kook searched his drawers, but found only small change. What did he do? He took his precious gold watch and said to the man: 'Use this watch as a pledge, and you will surely receive a sizeable loan in no time. Then, with God's help, I will try to raise enough money to redeem the watch from the money-lender.'

The old man hurried off to a well-known financier, who was close to Rav Kook, and asked him for an urgent loan against the security of the golden watch. The wealthy financier looked at the watch and immediately recognized it as the Rav's. Without delay, he gave his visitor loan; and the next day, he returned the precious watch to Rav Kook.

[from 'An Angel Among Men' by R. Simcha Raz, translated by R. Moshe Lichtman, pp. 76-78]

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<http://ravkook.n3.net> - Rav A.I. Kook on the Weekly Parasha

From: **Rabbi Kalman Packouz** [<mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com>] Sent: Wednesday, January 04, 2006 10:06 AM Subject: Shabbat Shalom - Vayigash Dvar Torah based on based on **Growth Through Torah**

by **Rabbi Zelig Pliskin**

When the brothers realize that Pharaoh's right hand man is none other than their brother Joseph whom they sold into slavery, they are overcome with remorse for their actions. Joseph tries to lessen their feeling of guilt and says to them:

"... it was not you who sent me here, but the Almighty. And He made me a vizier to Pharaoh and a master over all of his house and ruler over the land of Egypt."

What can we learn from Joseph's action?

When a person is wronged, there is a tendency not to fully accept the apology of the offender in order to keep him guilty forever. This gives the wronged person a feeling of being "one-up" and the other person "one-down."

Joseph wanted to do an act of kindness so that they should not feel guilty. He even expressed gratitude for the good he gained from their selling him.

If someone asks you for forgiveness, be sensitive to his feeling of guilt and regret. Make it your goal to save the person from emotional stress and suffering. Ask yourself, "What can I do or say now to make this person feel better?" You will be a bigger person for your effort and have fulfilled the mitzvah of Emulating the Almighty. You will gain more respect from the other person and your peers. And remember, the way you treat others is the way that the Almighty will treat you.

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>

Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago 5764]

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Vayigash

It is one of the most dramatic moments in Bereishith, a book full of dramatic moments. Judah has made a passionate plea for Benjamin's release. Yes, the missing silver cup has been found in his possession. Judah does not challenge the facts. Instead he throws himself on the mercy of the Egyptian ruler, of whose identity he is still unaware. He asks him to think of the impact Benjamin's imprisonment will have on his father. He has already lost one beloved son. The shock of losing another will kill him.

Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.

These are the words that finally break Joseph's heart. He is overcome with emotion. He commands all his attendants to leave, turns to his brothers, and reveals his identity:

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

Their silence is eloquent. They are bewildered. The stranger turns out to be their brother. The ruler of Egypt is the young man that, years earlier, they had sold as a slave. The combination of shock and guilt paralyzes them.

Breaking the silence, Joseph continues. He has yet another surprise for them. He does not hold them guilty. There is no anger in his words. Instead he does the least expected thing. He comforts them. He forgives them. He speaks with a majestic graciousness:

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that G-d sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But G-d sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but G-d."

With this, the long story reaches closure. The estrangement, which began with the words, "[The brothers] hated him and could not speak peaceably to him," is at an end. Joseph is, as he twice dreamed he would be, a ruler. His brothers have bowed down to him. He has survived their attempt to kill him. He has risen from slavery to become the second most powerful man in the most powerful empire of the ancient world. But a question remains. What kind of story is this? What is its theme? What has been driving Joseph in these successive encounters with his brothers?

First, let us recall the sequence of events. Some time earlier, the brothers had come before Joseph for the first time. He recognises them. They do not recognise him. He "speaks harshly" to them, accusing them of being spies. He puts them in prison for three days.

He then releases them, holding Shimon as a hostage, telling them that they must bring Benjamin with them next time, to verify their story. Unbeknown to them, he has the money they had paid for the grain put back into their sacks. When they discover this, they are unnerved again. Something is happening to them, but they do not know what.

Eventually the food runs out and they have to return. It takes much persuasion on the part of Judah to convince Jacob to let Benjamin come with. This time, Joseph greets them with warmth, inviting them to eat with him. Eventually, having provided them with fresh supplies of grain, he sends them on their way. Now, however, he does more than place money in their sacks. He has his favourite divination cup placed in Benjamin's grain.

The brothers have left the city, relieved that the visit has been unexpectedly painless. No sooner have they gone than they are overtaken by Joseph's steward. Someone has stolen his master's silver cup. The brothers protest their innocence. The steward searches their bags, starting with the eldest. Finally they reach Benjamin, and there, in his sack, is the cup. It is their worst nightmare come true. They knew that having once come home without Joseph, they could not lose Benjamin also. Judah had staked his honour on it. So the brothers appear before Joseph once more, and the drama moves toward its climax.

What is the logic of this sequence of events? The first possibility, suggested by the Torah itself ("Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them: You are spies"), is that Joseph was acting so as to fulfil his childhood dreams, in which his family bowed down to him.

This, however, cannot be the case. Before Joseph acts like a stranger, we read "When Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground" (42: 6). If the story were simply about the fulfilment of Joseph's dreams he should have devised a strategy that would bring the whole family, including Jacob and Benjamin, to Egypt. Jacob would have bowed down to him, the dreams would be fulfilled, and Joseph could then reveal his identity. Nothing of this kind happens. Joseph's actions do not advance, but actually delay, this outcome. Therefore Joseph was not acting so as to fulfil his dreams.

The second possibility is that the Joseph story is a tale of revenge. He is making his brothers suffer as they once made him suffer. This too is untenable. At every significant stage (42:24, 43:30, 45:1-2), Joseph turns aside to weep, careful not to let the brothers see him in this state. People engaged in revenge do not weep. That is why we are told this detail three times – precisely to exclude the possibility that Jacob was acting out of desire to do to his brothers what they once did to him. Those who repay evil with evil take satisfaction in so doing. Joseph takes no satisfaction at all. It is clear that he is acting against his inclination and that it causes him pain. The question therefore returns in full force. What is the logic of Joseph's carefully constructed plot?

One of the key concepts of Judaism – the theme of its holiest days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur – is teshuvah, a complex term involving remorse, repentance and return. The abstract noun teshuvah is post-biblical, but the idea it embodies is central to the Hebrew Bible. It is what the prophets call on Israel to do. It is what Jonah is sent to Nineveh to achieve. In a related sense it is what certain sacrifices (guilt and sin offerings) were intended to accompany.

Teshuvah, as analysed by the sages and later by Maimonides, has certain key elements. The first is confession and acknowledgement of wrongdoing:

How does one confess? The penitent says, "I beseech you, O Lord, I have sinned, I have acted perversely, I have transgressed before you, and have done such and such, and I repent and am ashamed of my deeds."

The second in to commit oneself not to repeat the offence:

What he has repentance? It consists in this, the person abandon his sin, remove it from his thoughts, and resolve in his heart never to repeat it, as it is said, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts."

There is a further condition of complete repentance. This is how Maimonides puts it: What is perfect repentance? It occurs when an opportunity presents itself for repeating the offence once committed, and the offender, while able to commit the offence, nevertheless refrains from doing so because he is penitent, and not out of fear or failure of vigour.

As soon as we understand these three points, the logic of Joseph's course of action becomes clear. The drama to which he subjects his brothers has nothing to do with the dreams, or with revenge. To the contrary, Joseph is not acting for himself but for the sake of his brothers. He is taking them – for the first time in recorded history – through the three stages of teshuvah.

Recall what happened as a result of his intervention. His initial move was to accuse them of a crime they have not committed (of being spies) to see whether this would remind them of a crime they did commit (selling their brother into slavery). The effect is immediate:

They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished [aval ashemim anachnu] because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us." . . . They did not realise that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

The brothers have confessed and expressed remorse for what they did. The first stage of teshuvah has taken place.

The second takes place far away from Joseph, but he has so arranged matters that he will know whether it has happened or not. Joseph is holding Shimon as hostage (This is a significant detail. Shimon is the second oldest of the sons. By rights he should have held Reuben, the eldest. However, he knows that Reuben was the one brother who tried to save him. Shimon is therefore the eldest of those who conspired to kill Joseph). He tells the brothers that he will only release him if they return with Benjamin. Knowing his father as he does, Joseph has calculated, rightly, that Jacob will only let Benjamin go if his sons have convinced him that they will not let happen to him what they let happen to Joseph. This indeed happens when Judah says to Jacob:

"I myself will guarantee [Benjamin's] safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life."

The second condition of repentance has been achieved: a commitment not to repeat the offence. Judah, on behalf of the brothers, undertakes not to let happen this time what happened last time, namely that they returned without their youngest sibling whose safety they should have guaranteed.

The third act is a master-stroke. Joseph constructs a scene – one could almost call it a controlled experiment – to see if his brothers have indeed changed. They had once sold him into slavery. He now puts them in a situation in which they will have overwhelming temptation to repeat the crime by abandoning Benjamin to slavery. That is why he plants the cup in Benjamin's sack, arranges for him to be accused of theft, rules that his punishment will be to remain in Egypt as a slave, and tells the other brothers that they are free to leave.

Why Benjamin? Because he, like Joseph, is a son of Rachel – and therefore envied and despised by the other brothers. There is, of course, one difference. The brothers' resentment of Joseph was heightened by the jealousy they felt at the sight of the many-coloured robe Jacob had given him. How can he put them into a similar situation now? How can he provoke them into being jealous of Benjamin? This is what he does: when he sits the brothers down for a meal he arranges that they be seated in order of age (Benjamin is the youngest) and then that "Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's" (43:34). There is only one explanation for this strange detail. Joseph is trying to make them jealous of their youngest brother.

As far as possible, the circumstances of their original crime have now been replicated. Their youngest brother, a child of Rachel, is about to be taken as a slave in Egypt. They have reason to be jealous of him as they were of Joseph. They rise to the challenge. As Benjamin is about to be taken into custody, they offer to join him in

prison. Joseph declines: "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you go back to your father in peace."

The moment of trial has now begun. Joseph has offered the brothers a simple escape route. All they have to do is walk away. It is then, when "Judah went up to him and said . . ." that the story reaches its climax. Judah, the very brother who was responsible for selling Joseph into slavery, now offers to sacrifice his own freedom rather than let Benjamin be held as a slave.

The circumstances are similar to what they were years earlier, but Judah's behaviour is now diametrically opposite to what it was then. He has the opportunity and ability to repeat the offence, but he does not do so. Judah has fulfilled the conditions set out by the sages and Maimonides for "complete repentance." As soon as he does so, Joseph reveals his identity and the drama is at an end.

Not dreams, not revenge, but teshuvah is what has driven Joseph all along. His brothers once sold him as a slave. He survived – more than survived, he has prospered. He knows (he says so constantly) that everything that has happened to him is somehow part of G-d's plan. His concern is not for himself but for his brothers. Have they survived? Do they realise the depth of the crime they committed? Are they capable of remorse? Can they change? The entire sequence of events between the brothers' first arrival in Egypt and the moment Joseph tells them who he is, is an extended essay in teshuvah, a precise rehearsal of what will later become normative Jewish law.

Why now? Because – unbeknown to any of the participants – the family of Abraham is about to undergo exile in Egypt, prior to their becoming a nation under the sovereignty of G-d. That will place more demands on Israel than on any other people in history. G-d knows that they will often fail – they will sin, complain, worship idols, break His laws. That He accepts, though at times it gives Him great grief. G-d does not demand perfection. By giving us freewill He empowers us to make mistakes. All He asks is that we acknowledge our mistakes and commit ourselves not to make them again – in a word, that we are capable of teshuvah. Judah showed they were. Jewish history, starting with exile and exodus in Egypt, could now begin.

From: Ohr Somayach Sent: Wednesday, January 04, 2006 6:51 AM To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Vayigash TORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 7 January 2006 / 7 Tevet 5766 - from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu -- Parshat Vayigash

by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**
<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/2450>
INSIGHTS

Visions In The Night "And G-d spoke to Yisrael in visions of the night..." (46:2)

Remember bedtime as a small child? Remember as your father closed the door you said, "Daddy, don't close the door all the way!?"

What is it about the dark that is so frightening? And why is it that even when we grow up and we know with a mere flick of the switch we can bathe the room in light, that total darkness still can be so disturbing?

In total darkness, we lose contact with the world. In total darkness, we have no contact with our surroundings whatsoever. All that is left is the memory of what the world looked like in the light.

In Hebrew the word for "darkness", choshech, comes from the same root as the word meaning "to withhold" (see Bereshet 22:12). Real darkness is the withholding of any reality outside us. Deprived of an outside world to give us orientation, we are forced to rely entirely on ourselves.

"And G-d spoke to Yisrael in visions of the night..." (46:2)

G-d did not appear either to Avraham or Yitzchak at night. It was only to Yaakov that He appeared. It was Yaakov who had to go into the long night of exile. In exile, a person is detached from his roots, from his surroundings. G-d appeared to Yaakov to indicate that even in the darkness of the long exile of the Jewish People in which we still languish, G-d would never desert us.

The avot, the Fathers of the Jewish People, each instituted one of the three prayers daily prayers: Avraham established Shacharit, the morning prayer; Yitzchak founded Mincha, the afternoon prayer; and Yaakov originated Ma'ariv, the evening prayer. Ma'ariv is the prayer of the night, the prayer of exile, the prayer that calls from the depths of disconnection to the Source.

The three prayers also correspond to the daily korbanot (offerings) of the Holy Temple. Both Shacharit and Mincha represent offerings that may only be brought during the hours of daylight. Ma'ariv, however, represents the parts of the offering that can be brought both by day and by night.

The spiritual Masters teach that the Divine Presence cannot rest on someone when he is outside the Holy Land unless he had already experienced the Divine Presence in the Land. Yaakov's ability to draw down the Divine Presence to him even when he

was outside the Land of Yisrael derives from the fact that the Divine Presence already rested on him while he was in the Land. Thus, his is the service in the Holy Temple, which starts in the day and continues into the night. Yaakov could draw the light of the day into the night. He could draw the Divine Presence while he was in the Land into the night of exile.

Chanukah is the time of year when we celebrate the triumph of the light over the darkness. We are the Children of Yisrael, of Yaakov. To the extent that we see ourselves as the continuation of Yaakov and all he stood for, however deep the darkness of exile might seem, to that same extent will we experience the brilliance of the Light.

- Sources: Based on the **Meshech Chochma** and others.

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[From last year]

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: Wednesday, December 15, 2004 4:57 AM To: yhe-parsha@etzion.org.il Subject: PARSHA65 - 11: Parashat Vayigash
YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

This parasha series is dedicated in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

<http://vbm-torah.org/archive/parsha65/11-65vayigash.htm>

PARASHAT VAYIGASH

This shiur is dedicated in memory of Stanley (Yisrael Menachem ben Chaim Meir) Fuchs z"l, whose yearzeit will be observed on yud aleph Tevet.

Yosef and Yehuda

By Rav Yaakov Medan

At the beginning of our parasha, Yehuda and Yosef clash over Binyamin's fate. The Midrash, in addressing this tension, teaches: "They [the brothers] said: Kings are negotiating with each other; of what concern is it to us?" (Bereishit Rabba 93, 2).

If the brothers refer to Yehuda and Yosef as "kings," these two tribes must clearly be special in some way. This will be the subject of our shiur.

A. "These are the generations of Yaakov; Yosef was seventeen years old when he was a shepherd with his brothers..." (37:2) The commentators have a difficult time with this expression at the beginning of parashat Vayeshev, for a list of Yaakov's children appears nowhere in the parasha. Various explanations have been offered to resolve this problem. Among the better known are the following: i. "Generations" (toldot) is meant here in the sense of "events of his life," as in "What the day will bring forth (yeiled)" (Ibn Ezra, Radak, Seforno, Abarbanel, Malbim and others); ii. "Toldot" refers here to "sons," and the sons of Yaakov are indeed Yosef and his brothers, who are referred to in the parasha, although not listed by name (Ramban, in his first explanation); iii. The heading ("the generations of Yaakov") refers to chapter 46: "These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt," where Yaakov's children and grandchildren are all listed (Rashbam, and Ramban in his second explanation); iv. The word "dwelled" in the previous verse is carried into this verse; what the Torah means is, "These are the DWELLING PLACES of the generations of Yaakov" (Rashi). I shall not discuss in detail the difficulties presented by each of these interpretations; suffice it to say that I find them unsatisfactory. I prefer to adopt the midrash quoted by Rashi, with a slight change which, in my view, enables it to sit more squarely with the literal sense of the text: "These are the generations of Yaakov: Yosef... - What the text should have said here is, These are the generations of Yaakov: Reuven..." Why, then, does it say Yosef? To tell us that all that happened to one of them likewise happened to the other." (Bereishit Rabba 84:6) The Midrash regards Yosef the most important of Yaakov's offspring, for it was to Yosef that Yaakov passed down "the image of his face," and similar events happened to both of them (see Rashi). In my understanding, the "generations of Yaakov" are Yosef and Yehuda, to whose lives and families the next few chapters of Sefer Bereishit are devoted. It appears that this is the fundamental explanation for why the story of the establishment of Yehuda's family is interwoven with the establishment of Yosef's family. The two stories even parallel one another: 1. Yehuda: Ill-fated marriage to Bat-Shua Yosef: Ill-fated relationship with the wife of Potifar 2. Yehuda: True, lasting marriage to Tamar Yosef: True, lasting marriage to Osnat 3. Yehuda: Birth of Peretz and Zerach Yosef: Birth of Menashe and Efraim 4. Yehuda: the younger bursts forth (paratz) and takes the birthright Yosef: the younger is blessed with power and royalty

B. The story of Yaakov's "generations," then, concludes with chapter 41, and the beginning of the years of famine, when the respective families of Yehuda and of Yosef are fully established. I have proceeded from the assumption that just as each of the initial matriarchs - Sara and Rivka - had one son who was most important, so did the latter matriarchs -

Yaakov's wives. Leah's most important son was Yehuda, while Rachel's most important son was Yosef. The fact that Yaakov had two principal heirs - Yehuda and Yosef, rather than one principal heir, as his forefathers had, results from Yaakov having had two wives of full status (as opposed to maidservants or concubines), while Avraham and Yitzhak each had only one wife of full status. Let us elaborate on this matter of Yosef and Yehuda as being the most important of Yaakov's sons. Some of the points that make Yosef and Yehuda stand out among their brothers are well known; the following is a brief summary of them: 1. After Reuven's violation of his father's privacy, the birthright was given to Yosef, and the leadership to Yehuda. Only Yosef (aside from Reuven) is worthy of the birthright, since only he is a firstborn of a wife of Yaakov. The leadership, on the other hand, passes naturally to the eldest among the brothers. Since Shimon and Levi had lost their chances of being considered worthy candidates because of what they had done in Shekhem, the leadership passed to Yehuda. The verse tells us: "...Because he violated his father's bed, his birthright was given to the children of Yosef, son of Israel - but not to have the birthright attributed to him by genealogy. For Yehuda prevailed over his brothers; the chief ruler came from him, but the birthright was given to Yosef" (Divrei ha-Yamim I 5:1-2). 2. We have already mentioned that even the brothers themselves (according to the Midrash) referred to Yosef and Yehuda as "kings." Yaakov also recognized this; he chose to send Yehuda, specifically, to Yosef, "to show the way before him to Goshen" (46:28). 3. When the kingdom split, following the death of King Shelomo, Rechavam and his descendants, of the house of David, ruled in Jerusalem, while Yeravam, of the house of Yosef, ruled in Tirtza. Later on, too, most of Yeravam's successors - up until the Destruction of the Temple - were from the house of Yosef, and the kingdom of the ten tribes is very often referred to by the prophets by the name "Efraim." 4. The Mishkan resided in the portion of Yosef and the Temple in the portion of Yehuda. The tribe of Binyamin was part of both of them - both in Jerusalem and in the strip emerging from their portion towards Shilo. 5. In the days to come, the prophecy of Yechezkel (chapter 37) is destined to be fulfilled, concerning the joining of the branch of Yehuda and the branch of Efraim into a single royal house. According to tradition and Kabbala, two messiahs are destined to arise: Messiah son of Yosef and Messiah son of David. What is common to all of these points is that all are related to the royalty and to the Temple. These points are the basis for the tradition that the two messiahs that will arise in the days to come will be from the descendants of Yosef and of Yehuda.

C. In this section, I shall address the importance of Yosef and Yehuda from other perspectives, not only that of royalty: 1. The Torah refers to the tribes as "Yehuda and his brothers" (44:14) and "Yosef's brothers" (42:6). Nowhere is the group ever referred to as "Reuven and his brothers," "Dan's brothers," etc. 2. The details that the Torah provides concerning Yehuda's family and Yosef's family are far more numerous than those provided with regard to all the other brothers and their families. We know that Yehuda's wife's name was Tamar, and that Yosef's wife's name was Osnat. We are also told of the circumstances in which Yehuda married Tamar, and of the circumstances surrounding Yosef's marriage to Osnat. Likewise, we know the reasons for the names that Yehuda chooses for his sons and the circumstances of their birth, as well as the reasons for the names of Yosef's sons and when they were born. From this perspective, Yosef and Yehuda resemble the forefathers, concerning whom the Torah details the circumstances of their marriages, the names of their wives, the circumstances of their children's births, and the reasons for the names given to them. As for the rest of the tribes, we have no idea what Yissakhar's wife's name was, or why Zevulun called his children Sered, Elon and Yachle'el. 3. The phenomenon discussed in (2.) may be related to another one: all the brothers married Canaanite wives [1], deviating thereby from the practice of the forefathers and from the oath that Avraham made his servant swear: "You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell" (24:3). The only brothers who did not marry Canaanite wives were Yosef and Yehuda. Admittedly, Yehuda's first marriage was to the daughter of a Canaanite (38:2), but the failure of this marriage (the premature death of his wife and the death of her two sons, both childless) appears to prove that it was not proper for him to have married a Canaanite wife, for he was the most important of the "generations of Yaakov." This may be the reason why the Canaanite woman's name is not mentioned explicitly, nor are we told about the circumstances of their marriage, the birth of their children or the meanings of their names [2]. In marrying the daughter of Shua, Yehuda resembled the rest of his brothers, not Yosef. When Yehuda married the daughter of Shua, the Torah says, "Yehuda DESCENDED from among his brothers" (38:1) - i.e., his status became diminished; only when he married Tamar did he regain the level of "the generations of Yaakov" [3]. Yehuda and Yosef, then, are the only two sons who establish families like the forefathers. 4. Like the forefathers, Yehuda and Yosef are the only two of Yaakov's children concerning whom the Torah recounts at length what happened during their lives, and especially the challenges

they faced. They are the only brothers whose good deeds are recorded in the Torah: Yosef is depicted as a righteous man for standing firm against the advances of Potifar's wife, while Yehuda is described as stumbling and later repenting in the story of Tamar. Likewise, Yosef is righteous for forgiving his brothers, while Yehuda stumbles in selling Yosef but then repents and is ready to sacrifice himself for Binyamin [4]. 5. The special Divine providence that rests upon Yehuda and Yosef seems to be hinted at in their very names. These two are the only ones among Yaakov's children who have God's Name within their own names: Yehuda's name includes the original form of God's name [5], as does Yosef's name in its form in Tehillim 81 ('Yehosef'). Their names are also the only ones that include an inherent appeal to God: Yosef - in the prayer, "May G-d add (yosef) for me another son," and Yehuda - in praise (hoda'ah) to God. 6. It is not difficult to see that in Yaakov's will to his sons (chapter 49), he blesses his other sons in brief language, while the blessings to Yehuda and Yosef are lengthy [6]. It is likewise clear that the size of the inheritance of Yehuda and of Yosef, larger than that of their brothers, is directly linked to the "size" of the blessing they received from their father.

D. We shall now turn our attention to some more general issues, related not only to Yehuda and Yosef personally, but to the tribes that descended from them. By their nature, the scope of these issues exceeds the bounds of Sefer Bereishit. 1. The tribe of Yehuda and the combined House of Yosef are the largest of the tribes in both of the censuses that are conducted in the desert. 2. In the war against Amalek (Shemot 17), four leaders emerge: Moshe and Aharon - the permanent leaders, and also Chur of the tribe of Yehuda (at the top of the mountain) and Yehoshua of the tribe of Ephraim (on the battlefield). Throughout the forty years in the desert, we find no other instance of additional or auxiliary leaders on the national level. 3. In the story of the spies, the only two who do not fail are Yehoshua (tribe of Ephraim) and Kalev (tribe of Yehuda). 4. In addition to their inheritances in the land, Yehuda and Yosef are each given a special city from among the cities of the forefathers, in special circumstances. Moreover, both earn their special city even before they receive their inheritance. Yosef is given Shekhem, as Yaakov tells him - "I have given you one portion (shekhem ehad) more than your brothers" (48:22). Apparently, Yosef earns Shekhem as reward for his courage for going off to Shekhem at his father's bidding, although he is aware of the dangers awaiting him. Kalev, the prince of the tribe of Yehuda, is awarded the city of Chevron for his courage in going there at the bidding of Moshe, although he knew of the dangers involved in this mission and despite the four giants that threatened the city [7]. It is in Chevron that the royal house of Yehuda starts out (Shemuel II 2), while the royalty of the house of Yosef begins in Shekhem (Melakhim I 12-13). 5. We have already noted that the inheritances of Yehuda and of Yosef are considerably larger than those of their brothers; they occupy most of the area of Eretz Yisrael. It should also be noted that in Sefer Yehoshua, their inheritances are given special attention: we find a list of their cities, their borders, and many other details. The number of verses devoted to their inheritances attests to this fact [8]. We may also note that the children of Yehuda and the children of Yosef were the only ones who possessed "the inheritance at its [proper] time" - at the time when they were commanded to conquer and possess the land. The children of Gad and Reuven carry out a "hurried inheritance," before its time; they are rebuked by Moshe and are even punished by being the first of the tribes to go into exile. The other seven tribes have a "delayed inheritance," they are rebuked by Yehoshua (chapter 18) for their feebleness, and are punished by being deprived of their inheritance. It should also be remembered that stories of selfless love for Eretz Yisrael are found only among the children of Yehuda - who demand to receive Chevron and to conquer it (Yehoshua 14) - and the children of Yosef, who claim for themselves an additional inheritance (Yehoshua 17). Yehoshua also makes mention of the love of the women who inherited the land: the daughters of Tzelofhad, of the tribe of Menashe, and Ikhsa, daughter of Kalev, from the tribe of Yehuda. E. Let us conclude with the two messiahs: Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David. The image of these two figures may be seen in Yehoshua (as Mashiach ben Yosef) and David (as Mashiach ben David). The primary task of the king is to destroy the seed of Amalek. The war against Amalek was initiated by Yehoshua in Refidim (Shemot 17) and was successfully completed by David (Shemuel I 30), unlike Shaul, who failed in this respect. Yehoshua, who initiated the war, was ultimately the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael. David, who concluded the war, was ultimately the conqueror of Jerusalem - may it be established and rebuilt speedily in our days [9]. NOTES:

[1] This is the opinion of R. Nechemia, which seems more likely than the interpretation of R. Yehuda, who maintains that the twin daughters were born with them. According to R. Yehuda, we must assume (as Rashi does) that all the women died at the age of about forty, prior to the descent to Egypt, and therefore they are not listed there (see Rashi on 37:35). [2] The third son - Shela - has a separate unit devoted to him. It is possible that we do have an explanation for his name (see Ramban), but the scope of the shiur does not allow for elaboration.

[3] I elaborated a little on this in my article in Megadim #2 (<http://www.herzog.ac.il/main/megadim/2medan.html>). The story of this marriage may be regarded as a parallel to the stories of Sara and Hagar, Yishmael and Yitzhak, but I shall not elaborate here. [4] I expanded on this idea in the above-mentioned article in Megadim 2, and in my shiur last week. [5] I assume that in order to express the idea of praise and thanks (as Yehuda's name is explained at his birth), the name did not necessarily need the three first letters as they appear. [6] Admittedly, Yaakov speaks at length also to Shimon and Levi, but what he conveys there is not a blessing. It should also perhaps be mentioned that among the six tribes that are compared to various creatures in the blessings of Yaakov and Moshe, Yehuda (lion) and Yosef (ox) are the only ones whose representative animals form part of the basis of the celestial chariot (Yechezkel chapter 1). [7] See my article in Megadim 10, where I elaborate on this. [8] Concerning this point, we may say the same of the inheritance of Binyamin. [9] There are many other points that are unique to Yehuda and Yosef; I have omitted them here for the sake of brevity. Translated by Kaeren Fish
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