

Home Weekly Parsha VAYIGASH Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The statement of our father Jacob to the Pharaoh of Egypt that “my years of life have been few and most unpleasant” is most perplexing. We all know the well-known anecdote that one of the most disappointing things in life is to ask someone how he or she is and they actually tell you. One would've expected that Jacob would have answered the Pharaoh in a general, positive fashion.

Rashi interprets the answer of Jacob in the light of his deteriorated physical condition that he presented to the Pharaoh. He wanted Pharaoh to realize that the lines in his face were well-earned. He also wanted him to realize that the lives of even the most righteous of people and the holiest of families can also be troubled and difficult.

He was teaching the Pharaoh the great lesson that in this world good is its own reward and that it does not necessarily carry with it physical comfort and emotional serenity. He was telling the Pharaoh not to judge him or his family by the shortsighted yardstick of material success and lifelong leisure.

This was his explanation of the great Jewish lesson, ‘that the race is neither to the swift nor success to those who deem themselves to be wise.’ The Pharaoh is accustomed to immediate reward and benefit, to royal garments and gilded chariots. Jacob informs him that that this is a false measure of life and achievement. Though Jacob lived a stormy and often tragic life, it is he who blesses the Pharaoh for he, Jacob, possesses the gift of the future and of immortality.

How sad it is if a person has to look back at one's lifetime and feel that somehow life cheated him or that he deserved better! The ability to deal with the vicissitudes of life, its downs as well as its ups, in the strength of belief that everything is from the hand of our Creator, has always been the great characteristic of the Jewish people.

Jacob can look back upon the life of turbulence, disappointments and sadness and yet see for himself and his progeny greatness and immortal memory. The Pharaoh must have realized that a blessing from this old broken Jewish stranger was of enormous value to him in Egypt. Often times in history it is the unlikely and seemingly downtrodden individual who holds the

key to future developments and to the correct worldview of situations and conditions.

As long as Jacob lives there will no longer be a famine that will affect Egypt. The Pharaoh must have undoubtedly realized the gift of this blessing to Egypt. But like many people who will receive blessings in this world, he seems not to be impressed sufficiently by the matter to change policies, attitudes or behavior. But Jacob and his descendants will haunt Egyptian society for centuries until it finally will overwhelm it. This has been the lot and mission of Israel over its very long, troublesome but great history.

Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

Reframing VAYIGASH Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Maimonides called his ideal type of human being – the sage – a rofeh nefashot, a “healer of souls”.^[1] Today we call such a person a psychotherapist, a word coined relatively recently from the Greek word psyche, meaning “soul”, and therapeia, “healing”. It is astonishing how many of the pioneering soul-healers in modern times have been Jewish.

Almost all the early psychoanalysts were, among them Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank and Melanie Klein. So overwhelming was this, that psychoanalysis was known in Nazi Germany as the “Jewish science”. More recent Jewish contributions include Solomon Asch on conformity, Lawrence Kohlberg on developmental psychology and Bruno Bettelheim on child psychology. From Leon Festinger came the concept of cognitive dissonance, from Howard Gardner the idea of multiple intelligences and from Peter Salovey and Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence. Abraham Maslow gave us new insight into motivation, as did Walter Mischel into self-control via the famous “marshmallow test”. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky gave us prospect theory and behavioural economics. Most recently, Jonathan Haidt and Joshua Green have pioneered empirical study of the moral emotions. The list goes on and on.

To my mind, though, one of the most important Jewish contributions came from three outstanding figures: Viktor Frankl, Aaron T. Beck, and Martin Seligman. Frankl created the method known as Logotherapy, based on the search for meaning. Beck was the joint creator of the most successful form of

treatment, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Seligman gave us Positive Psychology, that is, psychology not just as a cure for depression but as a means of achieving happiness or flourishing through acquired optimism.

These are very different approaches but they have one thing in common. They are based on the belief – set out much earlier in Chabad Hassidim in R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi's Tanya – that if we change the way we think, we will change the way we feel. This was, at the outset, a revolutionary proposition in sharp contrast to other theories of the human psyche. There were those who believed that our characters are determined by genetic factors. Others thought our emotional life was governed by early childhood experiences and unconscious drives. Others again, most famously Ivan Pavlov, believed that human behaviour is determined by conditioning. On all of these theories our inner freedom is severely circumscribed. Who we are, and how we feel, are largely dictated by factors other than the conscious mind.

It was Viktor Frankl who showed there is another way – and he did so under some of the worst conditions ever endured by human beings: in Auschwitz. As a prisoner there Frankl discovered that the Nazis took away almost everything that made people human: their possessions, their clothes, their hair, their very names. Before being sent to Auschwitz, Frankl had been a therapist specialising in curing people who had suicidal tendencies. In the camp, he devoted himself as far as he could to giving his fellow prisoners the will to live, knowing that if they lost it, they would soon die.

There he made the fundamental discovery for which he later became famous:

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.[2]

What made the difference, what gave people the will to live, was the belief that there was a task for them to perform, a mission for them to accomplish, that they had not yet completed and that was waiting for them to do in the future. Frankl discovered that “it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather

what life expected from us.”[3] There were people in the camp who had so lost hope that they had nothing more to expect from life. Frankl was able to get them to see that “life was still expecting something from them.” One, for example, had a child still alive, in a foreign country, who was waiting for him. Another came to see that he had books to produce that no one else could write. Through this sense of a future calling to them, Frankl was able to help them to discover their purpose in life, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

The mental shift this involved came to be known, especially in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, as reframing. Just as a painting can look different when placed in a different frame, so can a life. The facts don't change, but the way we perceive them does. Frankl writes that he was able to survive Auschwitz by daily seeing himself as if he were in a university, giving a lecture on the psychology of the concentration camp. Everything that was happening to him was transformed, by this one act of the mind, into a series of illustrations of the points he was making in the lecture.

“By this method, I succeeded somehow in rising above the situation, above the sufferings of the moment, and I observed them as if they were already of the past.”[4]

Reframing tells us that though we cannot always change the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we can change the way we see them, and this itself changes the way we feel.

Yet this modern discovery is really a re-discovery, because the first great re-framer in history was Joseph, as described in this week's and next's parshiyot. Recall the facts. He had been sold into slavery by his brothers. He had lost his freedom for thirteen years, and been separated from his family for twenty-two years. It would be understandable if he felt toward his brothers resentment and a desire for revenge. Yet he rose above such feelings, and did so precisely by shifting his experiences into a different frame. Here is what he says to his brothers when he first discloses his identity to them:

“I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life... God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God.”

Gen. 45:4-8 And this is what he says years later, after their father Jacob has died and the brothers fear that he may now take revenge:

“Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as He is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.”

Gen. 50:19-21 Joseph had reframed his entire past. He no longer saw himself as a man wronged by his brothers. He had come to see himself as a man charged with a life-saving mission by God. Everything that had happened to him was necessary so that he could achieve his purpose in life: to save an entire region from starvation during a famine, and to provide a safe haven for his family.

This single act of reframing allowed Joseph to live without a burning sense of anger and injustice. It enabled him to forgive his brothers and be reconciled with them. It transformed the negative energies of feelings about the past into focused attention to the future. Joseph, without knowing it, had become the precursor of one of the great movements in psychotherapy in the modern world. He showed the power of reframing. We cannot change the past. But by changing the way we think about the past, we can change the future.

Whatever situation we are in, by reframing it we can change our entire response, giving us the strength to survive, the courage to persist, and the resilience to emerge, on the far side of darkness, into the light of a new and better day.

[1] Rambam, *Shemoneh Perakim*, Ch. 3. [2] Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 75. [3] *Ibid.*, 85. [4] *Ibid.*, 82.

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayigash (Genesis 44:18 – 47:27) By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “And Joseph fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his [Joseph’s] neck” (Genesis 45:14).

This poignant moment when these two brothers are reunited after a separation of twenty-two years is one of the most tender scenes in the Torah.

After a long chronicle of difficult brotherly relationships – Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his other siblings – we finally come across two brothers who truly love each other. The only children of Jacob’s beloved Rachel,

Joseph and Benjamin shared the same womb, and when their mother died in childbirth, we can feel assured that Joseph drew Benjamin close to him, protected him, and shared with him the precious memories of the mother Benjamin never knew. Their exclusive relationship must have made their eventual separation even more painful and traumatic. After all, Benjamin was the only brother totally uninvolved in the family tension and sibling rivalry against Joseph.

But I’m left wondering: Where is the joy, the elation, the celebration? Why does the Torah only record the weeping of the brothers at this dramatic moment of their reunion?

Rashi cites and explains a midrashic interpretation which suggests that these tears relate to the future destruction of the two Temples allotted to the portion of Benjamin, and to the destruction of the sanctuary in Shilo allotted to the portion of Joseph. Rashi stresses that Joseph’s tears are for Benjamin’s destruction, and Benjamin’s tears are for Joseph’s destruction.

But why should Rashi extrapolate such terrible events in the future from the tears of the brothers? I believe that the answer lies in our being mindful of the two archetypal sins in the book of Genesis: The first is the sin of eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which symbolizes rebellion against God, and the second is the sin of the sale of Joseph by his brothers, which epitomizes the sins of enmity between people, internecine strife.

Of the two, the Zohar considers the latter more severe. In the tradition of ‘the events of the fathers foreshadow the history of the children,’ we can see that all tragedies to befall the Jewish people have their source in the ‘DNA’ of the sale of Joseph as a slave. This act was the foundation of causeless hatred between Jews.

The Talmud [*Gittin* 55b], in isolating the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple, reports an instance of brotherly hatred within Israel. A wealthy man had a party and wanted to invite his friend Kamtza. Inadvertently, his avowed enemy Bar-Kamtza was invited instead. Thrown out and shamed, Bar-Kamtza took revenge. He went to the Roman authorities and lied in order to implicate the Jews in crimes against the state. The rest is history. Josephus writes that even as the Romans were destroying the Temple, Jews were still fighting amongst themselves. Down to this very day, we find the Jewish people hopelessly split in enemy camps politically and religiously, with one

group cynically and sometimes even hatefully attacking the other.

Thus it is the sin of causeless hatred, the crime of the brothers against Joseph, that can be said to be our 'original sin'. Indeed, during the Yom Kippur additional Amida, the author of the mournful Eileh Ezkera hymn of doxology, links the Temple's destruction and the tragedy of Jewish exile with the sin of the brothers' sale of Joseph.

Now Rashi's interpretation assumes profound significance. In the midst of brotherly hatred, the love between Joseph and Benjamin stands out as a shining example of the potential for unconditional love. Rashi links their tears during their meeting to the destruction of our Sanctuaries – the result of jealousy and enmity between Jew and Jew. Indeed, they each weep for the future tragedies that will befall their descendants. But although each brother will be blessed with a Sanctuary on his allotted land, the brothers weep not for themselves, but each for the other. This act of selfless weeping and unconditional love, becomes the only hope against the tragedies implicit in the sale of Joseph into slavery. The only thing which can repair that sin – and by implication the sins of all the causeless hatred between factions down the long road of Jewish history – is nothing less than a love in which the other comes first, causeless love, when one weeps for the other's tragedy rather than for his own.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook taught that if the Temples were destroyed because of causeless hatred, the Temple will only be rebuilt because of causeless love, exemplified by the tears of Joseph and Benjamin. Rashi is providing a prescient lesson as to know we can achieve true peace and world redemption in this very special period of our return to Zion.

Shabbat

Shalom!

Parshat Mikeitz – Mashiach ben Yosef By Rav Yehuda Hakohen

In Parshat Mikeitz, we see that "Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him." (B'reishit 42:8)

On this verse, the Gaon Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna explains: "This is one of Yosef's attributes. Not just in his generation but in every generation, Mashiah ben Yosef recognizes his brothers and they do not recognize him. It is an act of Satan, which conceals Mashiah ben Yosef's attributes such that the Jews

unfortunately do not recognize his footsteps and in fact even scoff at them... If not for this, our troubles would already be over. If Israel recognized Yosef, Mashiah ben Yosef's footsteps comprising the ingathering of the exiles, etc., we would already be completely redeemed." (Kol HaTor 2:39)

Kol HaTor, the Vilna Gaon's teachings on Israel's redemption process, was compiled by his student Rabbi Hillel Rivlin of Shklov. In it are found deep insights pertaining to some of the most critical questions of recent generations. Foremost among these is the rarely discussed concept of Mashiah ben Yosef – a teaching the Gaon reveals to be deliberately withheld from us due to it possessing the secret of Israel's salvation.

"According to the Gaon, all the work involved in gathering the exiles, building Jerusalem and broadening the settlement of the land of Israel so that the Shkhina will return to it, all the principles of the work and all the major and minor details are connected to the mission and role of the first Mashiah, Mashiah ben Yosef. Mashiah ben Yosef is the miraculous power that will assist every act done when the awakening begins from below, in a natural manner, because he comes from the earth. Mashiah ben David, however, will come from heaven as revealed by the different aspects of Raḥel and Leah, and as known regarding the footsteps of the Mashiah and the revealed end. Mashiah ben Yosef himself is a composite of two aspects: on the one hand, he is Yosef the son of Raḥel of the land; on the other hand, he is Yosef son of Yaakov from heaven. It is therefore incumbent upon us to learn and to understand all the one hundred and fifty six characteristics, appellations and all aspects and special attributes of Mashiah ben Yosef. These will be a light for our feet and direct us what to do and how, in connection with what lies ahead, with the help of the Redeemer of Israel, may it be speedily in our day." (Kol HaTor 1:2)

Who Or What is Mashiah ben Yosef? The Vilna Gaon describes the process of Mashiah ben Yosef both as the material rebuilding of the Hebrew nation in our land and as the Divine assistance accompanying that process, beginning with an awakened national consciousness within the Jewish people.

Mashiah ben Yosef is the physical rebuilding of Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael through practical natural human endeavors. Mashiah ben David will then be the spiritual force that comes to rest on that already constructed vessel. Like Yosef, who spoke seventy

languages, served as the viceroy of Egypt and looked like an actual Egyptian (to the extent that his own brothers couldn't recognize him), the force of Mashiah ben Yosef represents that which Israel shares in common with other nations, specifically the dominant world power of any given generation. It focusses on the material wellbeing of the Jewish people, primarily concerning itself with the strengthening of Israel's security, economy, diplomatic standing, etc.

The process of Mashiah ben Yosef is the building of a giant body meant to eventually house the colossal spirit of Mashiah ben David, which will ultimately come to direct and properly guide this ostensibly "secular" Israeli nation. While the Torah remains the source from which we understand our collective mission, both the physical and the spiritual strengthening of Israel are crucial to the Divine plan for mankind's redemption.

As with an individual human body that houses and expresses its soul, the colossal spiritual organism that is Knesset Yisrael requires a giant national body in order to fully reveal itself in the physical world. Just as it is ideal for any person to possess a body developed to its maximum potential with a healthy spirit to refine, guide and direct it in serving HaShem, the same holds true for the nation of Israel.

Neither man's physical or spiritual forces can ultimately negate the other because the stronger the body, the more it enables the spirit driving it to be fully expressed. Israel aims to give material expression to the Torah's deepest mystical concepts by infusing this world with spiritual content that will elevate humanity to greater awareness of our innate connection to our Divine Source.

Knesset Yisrael, the collective soul of the Jewish people, can only fully manifest itself through the vehicle of an earthly people living a national life of kedusha that reveals the Divine Ideal in all spheres of human existence. The force within Israel that wishes to enhance the nation's material status is therefore the basis for HaShem's Ideal in this world, as humanity subconsciously measures the G-D of Israel according to the international standing of His chosen people.

All facets of national life must be revealed to mankind as sanctified and pure. This can only be achieved by Am Yisrael living and uplifting every sphere of existence, as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Sh'mot 19:6) in the physical world. This is the significance of Mashiah ben Yosef. The physical

rebuilding of the Hebrew nation in our land – even if ostensibly disconnected from the Torah and devoid of mitzvot – is the first stage of redemption and the revelation of HaShem's Oneness.

Parshat Mikeitz Holds a Warning for Today The Vilna Gaon warns that the source of Israel's troubles at the end of days stems from our not recognizing Mashiah ben Yosef. The Torah world must struggle to overcome the confusion caused by the modern State of Israel's outward character.

Rather than detach themselves from the Jewish people's national rebirth, scholars should work to facilitate and guide our state's institutions on the proper path leading to universal redemption. We must realize and be confident that once the body is securely built, the soul will certainly come to infuse it with purpose.

Mashiah ben David will come to properly direct the vehicle of Medinat Yisrael to its true historic function as HaShem's earthly throne that will lead all Creation to see and experience His Divine Oneness.

Dignity To Survive By Rabbi Hanoch Teller

Before I make my pitch, I believe it is important to establish my creds. The Holocaust is a subject that I have studied assiduously for well over four decades. I still (and currently) attend courses and lectures germane to the period and have read hundreds of volumes on the subject. My most popular and awarded title is Heroic Children which chronicles the lives of nine child survivors of the Holocaust. In addition, I am a senior docent in Yad Vashem.

I hope that none of the above sounded boastful, as it was merely recounted to establish my familiarity with Holocaust literature. When I say that I have read hundreds of books, I am including books that even Holocaust scholars are unaware of, for I have visited the archives of Yad Vashem where there are over 169,000 volumes. The overwhelming majority will tragically never be read. Many survivors and witnesses published their tales and then had them sent to Yad Vashem where they are catalogued and then relegated to the crypt, unlikely to ever be discovered again.

When writing about a subject that was so widely covered, indeed the most documented crime in history, for a book to be unique it must be truly remarkable. This is indeed the case with Yona Emanuel's Dignity to Survive. To be honest, I knew

that this book would be extraordinary before I even opened it. That is because I was privileged to know Yona Emanuel zt"l, a scholar and gentleman of such gilt-edged character that he is, despite already being gone for many years, unforgettable.

I was privileged to attend a weekly shiur delivered by Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l, for fourteen years, and the star of the shiur was Yona Emanuel. An optometrist by trade, he devoted serious attention to limud haTorah, and his intellectual gifts made him the very favorite of Reb Shlomo Zalman. Whenever Reb Yona would ask a question, Reb Shlomo Zalman would turn his head in a special way, devoting his fullest attention to what was being posed. Maybe it was not just Reb Yona's piercingly analytical mind, but Reb Shlomo Zalman's keen awareness of Yona's background.

On every Tisha B'Av, when it is forbidden to learn Torah, Reb Shlomo Zalman would read Dignity to Survive in its original Hebrew. Thus, I knew what a quality book this translation would be, yet all of my anticipations were surpassed by the actual book, which is both personal and general, educational and enlightening. The book is a searing account of the ultimate capacity of man to overcome the harshest of obstacles and defeat the most maniacal of adversaries. I shall cite but one.

Yona's family was imprisoned in the Bergen-Belson concentration camp. On Tisha B'Av 1944, the entire camp was subjected to the collective punishment of no food ration for an entire day as punishment for someone having burned a lice-infested mattress. For the destruction of (worthless) German property, everyone had to suffer even more acutely.

Yona's mother attempted to prepare some food for her four-year-old daughter to tide her over the day of exquisite starvation, but was caught in the act by the Jewish police. For attempting to violate camp rules she would be tried and punished by a Jewish magistrate, which always provided entertainment to the Germans who relished watching Jews punish their fellow Jews.

The trial, which had all of the components of a proper civilian court, including condemnation by a prosecutor, vindication by a defense attorney, and the calling of witnesses, took place on a Friday night. All of the participants in the legal procedure, including the judges, were Jewish prisoners. Yona's mother refused her right to deny any of the wild accusations lodged against her, rendering the procedure very brief. The

woman even refused to allow her attorney to argue that the "crime" was the consequence of her trying to alleviate the hunger of her four-year-old daughter. She would say nothing nor allow anything to be said on her behalf.

Without a word of defense, the verdict was swift and harsh. Mrs. Emanuel was to be deprived of bread rations for two days.

Yona asked his mother why she did not utilize her right to defend herself. She was reluctant to respond, but upon repeated badgering, she finally explained, "Every word I would have said in my defense would have been transcribed by the clerk who jotted down the minutes of the trial. I remained silent, for I'd rather starve even more than to cause another Jew to desecrate the Shabbos." -

Letting Go of My Expectations "I Am Who I Am Because You Sold Me" Rabbi YY Jacobson

Do You Know Who I Am?

It was the final examination for an introductory Biology course at the university. Like many such freshman courses, it was designed to weed out new students, having over 500 students in the class!

The examination was two hours long, and exam booklets were provided. The professor was extremely strict and told the class that any exam that was not on his desk in exactly two hours would not be accepted and the student would fail. Half an hour into the exam, a student came rushing in and asked the professor for an exam booklet.

"You're not going to have time to finish this," the professor stated sarcastically as he handed the student a booklet.

"Yes, I will," replied the student. He then took a seat and began writing. After two hours, the professor called for the exams, and the students filed up and handed them in. All except the late student, who continued writing. An hour later, the last student came up to the professor who was sitting at his desk preparing for his next class. He attempted to put his exam on the stack of exam booklets already there.

"No, I'm not going to accept that. It's late."

The student looked incredulous and angry.

"Do you know who I am?"

"No," replied the professor with an air of sarcasm in his voice.

"Do you know who I am?" the student asked again in a louder voice.

"No, and I don't care," replied the professor with hubris.

"Good," replied the student, who quickly lifted the stack of completed exams, stuffed his in the middle, and walked out of the room.

A Brother's Identity Disclosed

The story of Joseph revealing himself to his brothers after decades of bitter separation is one of the most dramatic in the entire Torah. Twenty-two years earlier, when Joseph was seventeen years old, his brothers loathing their younger kin, abducted him, threw him into a pit, and then sold him as a slave to Egyptian merchants. In Egypt, he spent twelve years in prison, from where he rose to become viceroy of the country that was the superpower at the time. Now, more than two decades later, the moment was finally ripe for reconciliation.

Genesis chapter 45 described the emotional reunion: Joseph could not hold in his emotions, he dismissed all of his Egyptian assistants from his chamber, thus, no one else was present with Joseph when he revealed himself to his brothers. He began to weep with such loud sobs that the Egyptians outside could hear him. And Joseph said to his brothers: 'I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?' His brothers were so horrified that they could not respond.

Joseph said to his brothers, 'please come close to me'. When they approached him, he said, "I am Joseph your brother – it is I whom you sold into Egypt.

"Now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourself for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you... G-d has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival in the land and to sustain you for a momentous deliverance."

Analyzing the Encounter

There is something amiss here. Joseph reveals his identity, saying, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" His brothers were so horrified that they could not respond, the Torah says. Then the narrative continues: "Joseph said to his brothers, 'please come close to me'. When they approached him, he said, "I am Joseph your brother – it is I whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be distressed..."

Ostensibly, he is trying to bring them solace and offer them comfort. Yet his words to them after they are horrified seem to have the opposite effect: "I am Joseph your brother – the one you sold into Egypt." He now makes it clear that they are the ones who committed this heinous crime. Why would he do this at this point when he's attempting to relax them?

(Especially considering that Benjamin perhaps did not know what they did to him; and now for the first time he was shaming them in front of Benjamin!)

Besides, he already said to them, "I am Joseph." Why the need to repeat it: "I am Joseph your brother – the one whom you sold into Egypt."

What is more, did he think that they forgot that they sold them into Egypt? Did they have another brother Joseph?! And even if he felt compelled to share this piece of evidence to prove that he was indeed Joseph, for no one else would know the story, why didn't he say this the first time around when he revealed his identity to them?

Remorse

It was the second Rebbe of Ger, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Altar (1847-1905), known as the Sefas Emes, who presented a moving explanation.[1]

When Joseph revealed his identity, the brothers realized that all this time they were only seeing the external Joseph, not the true one. They thought they were interacting with the gentile Prime Minister of Egypt when in reality he was their brother. Suddenly they realized that their vantage point of reality was external. They were completely deceived by their eyes.

This opened them up to yet a deeper painful truth: They never knew their brother. Even when they saw him, they never really knew him.

"Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him," the Torah states. The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812) explains it thus: Joseph easily identified the holiness within his brothers. They lived most of their lives isolated as spiritual shepherds involved in prayer, meditation, and study. Yet these very brothers lacked the ability to discern the moral richness etched in Joseph's heart. Even when Joseph was living with them in Canaan, they saw him as an outsider, as a danger to the integrity of the family of Israel. Certainly, when they encountered him in the form of an Egyptian leader, they failed to observe beyond the mask of a savvy politician the heart of a soul on fire.

But when Joseph declared "I am Joseph" it was not merely a revelation of who he was on the outside, but also of who he was on the inside. They suddenly realized how both of his dreams materialized, and how indeed he was destined to influence the world and save so many from famine. For the first time in their entire lives, Joseph's brothers saw the greatest

holiness in the world emerging from the face of an Egyptian vizier.

“His brothers were so horrified that they could not respond,” relates the Torah. What perturbed the brothers was not only a sense of fear. What horrified them more than anything else was the inner remorse and brokenness, that they can cause so much pain to such a beautiful soul.

Imagine you were married to the most beautiful, amazing woman in the world. But due to your own traumas, you mistreated her emotionally. After 22 years of therapy, your brain is cleansed, and you discover what you did to your innocent spouse. How do you feel about it? The pain is far deeper than the punishment and consequences that might come your way; it is more than guilt. The inner devastation you experience when you realize what you have done to such a good person is agonizing.

That is what the brothers felt like at that moment—they discovered what a tragic error they have made. They were locked in their own orbit, deaf to the cries of their brother, oblivious to the horizons that extended beyond theirs, incapable of appreciating his true soul. The sense of a profound crime and an irreplaceable loss tormented them.

They were crushed because of the pain they caused their holy brother; the pain they caused their holy father--and the pain they caused the world: separating Joseph from Jacob for 22 years. Who knows, they thought, how much light they deprived the world of by separating the son from his father? It was at this moment when "Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Please come close to me’.” Joseph wanted them to approach even closer and gaze deeper into the divine light coming forth from his countenance.

“When they approached him,” relates the Torah, “He said, ‘I am Joseph your brother – it is I whom you sold into Egypt.’” Joseph was not merely repeating what he had told them earlier (“I am Joseph”), nor was he informing them of a fact they were well aware of (“It is I whom you sold into Egypt”), rather, he was responding to their sense of tormenting pain, guilt and irrevocable loss.

The words “I am Joseph your brother – it is I whom you sold into Egypt” in the original Hebrew can also be translated as “I am Joseph your brother – because you sold me into Egypt.” What Joseph was stating was something incredibly powerful. I am the person I am today only because you sold me into Egyptian slavery.

The brothers were trying to harm him, they separated him from his beloved father and family, he endured much torment and pain. Yet at this profound moment of healing Joseph can look at his life and say to his brothers: “Now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourself for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you... G-d has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival in the land and to sustain you for a momentous deliverance.”

The powerful trials and adversity he faced in the spiritual jungle of Egypt are precisely what unleashed the atomic glow the brothers were presently taking in. They have made him the person he was now. Their mistakes have allowed him to become an ambassador of light, hope, love, and healing to the world.

Had Joseph spent the two decades voyaging with his father down the paved road of spiritual serenity, he would have certainly reached great intellectual and emotional heights. But it was only through his confrontation with the abyss that gave Joseph that singular majesty, which turned him into one of the greatest leaders of the time, responsible for saving much of humanity.

Joseph was not indifferent to his pain. He cries more times than anyone else in the Tanach. He did not repress or deny his agony and torment. But as he gazed into the pain and sobbed, and as he surrendered his ego, expectations, and dreams of what life must look like, to G-d’s will, he discovered profound meaning and purpose in his journey, one that he could have never planned on his own.

ל"חזו ש"כמ. אותי מכרתם אשר בפסוק: ג"תרמ ויגש אמת שפת ידי על זה לכל זכה כי אותם יוסף ניחם כן. כהך י"שר שברת אשר המכירה.

(The Sefas Emes movingly interprets the Hebrew phrase used by Joseph “asher mechartem,” as “thank you for selling me.” “Our sages offered another take on the verse[2] "on the first tablets that you broke (al haluchot harishonim asher shibarta)," namely, "congratulations for breaking the tablets," yashar koach she'shibarta.[3] So too, here, Joseph comforted his brothers with the words, "that you sold" (asher machartem oti), the deeper meaning of which was "congratulations for selling me (yashar koach asher machartem oti). By doing so, I was sent to restore life, save the world from famine, and save the Jewish family from death.)

If Only...

Just as the brothers, many of us, too, live our lives thinking “If only...” If only my circumstances would

have been different; if only I was born into a different type of family; if only I would have a better personality. If only I would have treated my spouse or children differently; if only I would not have been abused; if only I would not have this mental or emotional challenge; if only I would not have this insecurity.

Yes, you may sob. It is painful. Sad. Tough. But then take a deep breath. Surrender your expectations. And allow yourself to entertain the idea that the individual journey of your life, in all of its ups and downs, is what will ultimately allow you to discover your unique mission in this world and impart your singular light to the cosmos. Can you discover deep in your heart that the mistakes you made are somehow part of a plan that will allow more light to come into the world?

A Struggling Boy

It was 1986. There was a young man suffering from homosexual tendencies. In utter despair, he penned a heart-wrenching letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe responded with a three-page correspondence.[4] One point startled me.

The Rebbe told this boy, that he does not know why he needed to endure this profound challenge, it was surely one of the mysteries of Divine providence. But then he added this: Sometimes, a person possesses an incredible inner light that can change the world. There is no way for this person to discover that secret power within themselves and call it his own, without being compelled to overcome a major life challenge.

Some would look at this young man and sadly feel disdain; many more would feel empathy. But it was the Rebbe, the teacher of oneness, who saw his crisis as an opportunity. There was pain here, but no tragedy here. The dark challenge was a catalyst for this person to touch his own infinity. He was not a victim of an unfortunate condition; he was a Divine ambassador sent to places most people are not sent to because his potential was of a different magnitude.

This does not ease the pain or minimize the difficulty. But it allows me to remain present in my life, look at my story in honesty, and grow from my past and my experiences in extraordinary ways.

I can't always figure out how it will work out. That's fine. I need not wrap my brain around my life story. But I must surrender my expectations of what life is supposed to look like; I need to open myself up, with profound humility, to G-d's plan for me and my loved ones.

Dancing at MetLife

Three years ago, on January 1, 2020, a short time before the Corona outbreak, I attended a gathering of 90,000 fellow Jews, at MetLife Stadium, in New Jersey. They all united to celebrate the completion of a seven-year cycle of studying the 2,711 pages of the Talmud, known as Daf Yomi.

At the mass event, I noticed Jews, men, and women, of all ages. But my heart swelled with tears and pride as I noticed one Jew, close to 100, an Auschwitz survivor, who attended the celebration together with four generations of descendants. I noticed some other twenty Holocaust survivors dancing together in MetLife. It was the classic Jewish "revenge" against Nazi Germany.

The chairman of the event, Mr. Sol Werdiger, shared with me an incredible story. Sol is the Founder & CEO of Outerstuff, the leading designer, manufacturer, and marketer of children's sports apparel for the major sports leagues in North America. Sol is a well-known activist and philanthropist in New York, who also serves as chairman of Agudath Israel of America and of the Siyum Hashas.

"I never knew why G-d put me into this type of business, when I have no interest in sports, and can barely name ten players of the major sports leagues.

"But nine years ago, we needed a location to house 90,000 Jews who study Talmud over seven years. And that is when the idea popped into my mind: Let's do it at MetLife.

"MetLife Stadium is an American sports stadium located at the Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford, New Jersey, 8 miles west of New York City. It is the home stadium of two National Football League (NFL) franchises, the New York Giants and the New York Jets, as well as the New York Guardians of the XFL. At an approximate cost of \$1.6 billion, it was the most expensive stadium ever built at the time that it opened, in 2010.

"My friends thought I was crazy, but I called the owners of Metlife, some of them nice Jewish boys (Mr. Tisch and Mr. Johnson), and they agreed to give it to us for the Siyum Hashas.

"We came to a final meeting, where we would sign the contract and finalize the deal. At the meeting, a man stood up and said he wants to say a few words. He introduced himself as the man who designed and built the stadium for Mr. Tisch and Johnson, a project which cost them 1.6 billion dollars.

This is what he said at the meeting:

“It took me ten years to design and build MetLife. As I got older, I began to become more introspective. And I started to ask myself what the purpose of my life was, what did I achieve in all my years. A sense of emptiness came over me. I dedicated ten full years to building a stadium, for what? What was its ultimate meaning? Is this the reason my soul came down to this world? Was this worth ten years of my life and 1.6 billion dollars?”

“For those ten years, I did not do much more. And I was feeling remorse. I am a Jew, and my soul was yearning for real meaning...”

“But when I hear today that my stadium will be used to house 90,000 Jews, praying and learning Torah together, dancing, and celebrating their Judaism, uniting together against anti-Semitism and bigotry, committing themselves to bring the light of Torah into the world—I say: Ah, now I know why I spent ten years and 1.6 billion building this gigantic stadium!”

We need to let go of the notion that life must look a certain way. G-d’s plans are mysterious, and every step in our arduous journeys is there to help each of us cast our unique infinite light on the world.

[1] The perspective was explained by the Lubavitcher Rebbe during his address on 5 Teves, 5747 (1987), and a Chassidic discourse presented on Shabbos Parshas Kedoshim, 13 Iyar, 5721 (1961). Likkutei Sichos vol. 30 Vayigash. Sefae Haamarim Melukat vol. 5. [2] Exodus 34:9. [3] Shabbos 87. [4] Lubavitcher Rebbe's Letter on Homosexuality & Transgender

Flavor and Fragrance – The Bracha on Fragrant Fruits Rabbi Kaganoff

At the beginning of our parsha, Yosef is still a prisoner in Egypt. But remember, that when he was first sold into slavery to Egypt, it was to a caravan that carried pleasant smelling products....

This article will explain the halachos of the bracha Hanosein rei’ach tov ba’peiros “He who bestows pleasant fragrances in fruits.” Many authorities prefer that one recite the version Asher nasan rei’ach tov ba’peiros, in past tense, “He who bestowed pleasant fragrances in fruits” (Elyah Rabbah 216:5; Mishnah Berurah 216:9).

Here are some curious questions about this bracha that we need to resolve:

1. Do we recite this bracha on a food that is not a fruit? 2. Assuming that we recite this bracha on any food, do we recite this bracha on a seasoning that is not eaten by itself, such as cinnamon or oregano? 3. If I am eating a fragrant fruit, do I recite a bracha when I smell it while I am eating it? 4. Do I recite this bracha when smelling a delicious cup of coffee or a freshly-baked pastry? After all, the coffee bean is a fruit, and the flour of the pastry is a grain, which is also halachically a fruit. As we will see, the answer to this question is not so obvious.

Origins of the Bracha “Hanosein Rei’ach Tov Ba’peiros”

The Gemara (Berachos 43b) teaches that someone who smells an esrog or a quince should first recite Hanosein rei’ach tov ba’peiros.

Question: Why did Chazal institute a unique bracha for aromatic fruits?

Answer: Whenever one benefits from this world one must recite a bracha. Thus, Chazal instituted brachos that are appropriate for fragrances. However, all the other brachos on fragrance are not appropriate for smelling fragrant foods, since the other brachos praise Hashem for creating fragrances, whereas esrog and quince are not usually described as fragrances, but as foods that are fragrant. Therefore, Chazal established a special bracha for aromatic fruits (see Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim, end of Chapter 297). It is noteworthy that even though quince is edible only when cooked, it is still considered a fruit for the purpose of this bracha. More on this question later...

Do We Recite This Bracha on Fragrant Foods That Are Not Fruits?

This leads us to a fascinating halachic discussion with a surprising conclusion.

A Bracha on Smelling Bread?

Several early poskim contend that one should recite a bracha before smelling hot fresh bread (Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim Chapter 297, quoting Avudraham and Orchos Chayim). However, when discussing what bracha one should recite, these poskim contend that mentioning besamim (such as Borei isvei or minei besamim) is inappropriate since bread is not a fragrance but a food. It is also inappropriate to recite on it Hanosein rei’ach tov ba’peiros, since it is not a fruit. They therefore conclude that one should recite Hanosein rei’ach tov bapas, “He who bestows pleasant fragrance in bread.” Indeed, one contemporary posek rules that someone who smells fresh cookies should recite Hanosein rei’ach tov

ba'ugah, "He who bestows pleasant fragrances in cake."

However the Beis Yosef and other poskim disagree, contending that one does not recite a bracha before smelling bread or cake, pointing out that the Gemara and the early halachic sources never mention reciting a bracha before smelling bread. These poskim contend that we do not recite a bracha on smelling bread because its fragrance is not significant enough to warrant a bracha (Beis Yosef, Chapter 297).

This question creates a predicament: according to the "early poskim," one may not smell bread without first reciting a bracha; whereas according to the Beis Yosef, reciting a bracha on its fragrance is a bracha recited in vain! The only way of resolving this predicament is by trying not to smell fresh bread, which is the conclusion reached by the Rama (216:14).

(Incidentally, the Rama's ruling teaches a significant halacha about the rule of safek brachos le'kula, that we do not recite a bracha when in doubt. Although one may not recite a bracha when in doubt, one also may not smell a fragrance or taste a food without reciting the bracha because that would be benefiting from the world without a bracha. This halacha applies in any case when someone has a doubt about reciting a bracha. Although he may not recite the bracha, he may also not benefit without finding some method of resolving the safek.)

The concept, introduced by the Beis Yosef, that one recites a bracha only on a significant fragrance is hard to define. The following is an example in which poskim dispute whether a fragrance is considered significant.

Wake Up and Smell the Coffee!

The Mishnah Berurah (216:16) rules that someone who smells fresh-roasted ground coffee should recite a bracha of Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros. However, the Kaf Hachayim (216:86), one of the great Sefardic poskim, rules that it is uncertain whether the fragrance of coffee is significant enough to warrant a bracha. Thus, most Sefardim will not recite a bracha prior to smelling fresh-roasted coffee, whereas those who follow the Mishnah Berurah will.

As we have discussed, although some poskim (Avudraham and Orchos Chayim) limit the bracha of Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros to fruits, other poskim contend that this bracha should be recited before smelling any fragrant food. This dispute influences the next discussion. Do We Recite Hanosein Rei'ach Tov Ba'peiros on a Fragrant Seasoning?

The question here is what defines an edible fruit for the purposes of this bracha. Do we recite Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros only on fruit or do we recite it on any edible item? Furthermore, assuming that we recite Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros on any edible item, is a flavoring or seasoning considered a food for the purposes of this bracha?

Spices that are used to flavor but are themselves never eaten, such as bay leaves, are not considered a food. For this reason, there is no requirement to separate terumos and maasros on bay leaves, even if they grew in Eretz Yisrael (Tosafos, Yoma 81b; Derech Emunah, Terumos 2:3:32). A seasoning that is never eaten by itself, but is eaten when it is used to flavor — such as cinnamon, oregano, or cloves — is questionable whether it is considered a food. Therefore, we separate terumos and maasros on it without a bracha, and, if it is eaten by itself, we do not recite a bracha of borei pri ha'eitz or borei pri ha'adamah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 202:16). What bracha do we recite before smelling a seasoning?

Cloves

A clove is the dried flower bud that grows on a tree; the clove is consumed only as a spice, but is not eaten on its own. The poskim dispute what is the correct bracha to recite before smelling cloves, there being a total of four opinions:

Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros: The Shulchan Aruch (216:2) rules that this is the correct bracha to say before smelling cloves, despite the fact that cloves are never eaten alone (Taz 216:4). He contends that we recite Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros on anything that is consumed, even if it is eaten only as a seasoning.

Borei atzei besamim: Many poskim rule that we recite Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros only on items that are eaten on their own, but not if they are eaten solely as a flavoring. Cloves are therefore discounted as a food item and treated exclusively as a fragrance. Since the clove grows on a woody stem, these poskim rule that we should recite Borei atzei besamim before smelling the spice. This approach is followed by some Sefardic poskim (Yalkut Yosef 216:4).

Borei isvei besamim: In a different article, I pointed out that some poskim contend that one recites Borei atzei besamim only on a fragrance that grows on what is considered a tree for all other halachos. The stem of the clove is hollow, which according to some opinions precludes it being considered a tree. (In a different article, I pointed out that some poskim contend that

the correct bracha before eating papaya is Borei pri ha'adamah because the papaya plant has a hollow trunk [Shu't Rav Pe'alim Vol. 2, Orach Chayim #30].) Because of the above considerations, some rule that the clove is not considered a food or a tree, but a herbaceous (non-woody) plant upon which the correct bracha is Borei isvei besamim. This is the common custom among Yemenite Jews (Ohr Zion Vol. 2 pg. 136; Vezos Haberacha, pg. 174). (It should be noted that some varieties of forsythia also have a hollow or semi-hollow stem. According to the Yemenite custom, the bracha recited before smelling these would be Borei isvei besamim rather than Borei atzei besamim. However, non-Yemenites should recite Borei atzei besamim before smelling forsythia since it is a woody, perennial shrub.)

Borei minei besamim: Because of the disputes quoted above, many poskim rule that one should recite Borei minei besamim on cloves (Elyah Rabbah 216:9; Mishnah Berurah 216:16). This is the accepted practice among Ashkenazim and many Sefardic poskim (Birkei Yosef 216:5; Kaf Hachayim 216:34; Ohr Zion Vol. 2 pg. 136).

Is It Wood or Food?

Based on this last opinion, we can derive a different halacha. Assuming that there is a dispute whether the bracha on cloves is Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros or Borei atzei besamim, why do we recite Borei minei besamim when we are in doubt? Shouldn't the correct bracha be Borei atzei besamim, since it grows on a tree? From this ruling we see that Borei atzei besamim and Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros are mutually exclusive categories. Either an item is a fragrance or it is considered an edible food that is fragrant, but it cannot be both. Thus, if the correct bracha is Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros then it is considered to be a food, not wood, and the bracha Borei atzei besamim is in vain. On the other hand, if the correct bracha is Borei atzei besamim then we have concluded that clove is not food and the bracha Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros would be in vain. For this reason, Ashkenazim and most Sefardic poskim recite the bracha Borei minei besamim whenever there is a question on what bracha to recite (Aruch Hashulchan 216:5; Elyah Rabbah 216:9; Mishnah Berurah 216:16; Birkei Yosef 216:5; Kaf Hachayim 216:39 and Ohr Tzion Vol. 2 pg. 136; compare, however, Yalkut Yosef 216:4).

Cinnamon, Spice and Everything Nice

What bracha does one recite before smelling cinnamon?

The Tur quotes a dispute between the Rosh, who contends that the bracha is Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros, and the Maharam, who contends that one should recite Borei atzei besamim. In the Rosh's opinion, cinnamon should be treated as a food. Thus, we may assume that he contends that the bracha before smelling all spices is Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros, even though they are not eaten by themselves. We can also draw a conclusion from this Rosh that we recite the bracha Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros even on the bark of a tree that is eaten, such as cinnamon. Thus in his opinion, the word ba'peiros in the bracha should be translated as food rather than as fruit. (In truth, the word pri in the bracha Borei pri ha'adamah should also not be translated as fruit, since we recite it on stems, roots, and leaves when we eat celery, carrots, and lettuce.)

On the other hand, the Maharam contends that Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros is inappropriate, presumably because cinnamon is usually not eaten by itself. Alternatively, the Maharam may hold that Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros is inappropriate for cinnamon because it is a bark and not a fruit.

Either way, many Ashkenazi poskim rule it is a safek whether the bracha on cinnamon is Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros or Borei atzei besamim and therefore one should recite borei minei besamim (Elyah Rabbah 216:9; Mishnah Berurah 216:16). Many Sefardim recite Borei atzei besamim before smelling cinnamon (Yalkut Yosef 216:4). Everyone agrees that the bracha before smelling cinnamon leaf is Borei atzei besamim. **And the Lemon Smells So Sweet!**

But the fruit of the poor lemon is impossible to eat! Is the bracha before smelling a lemon Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros because it is after all a fruit, or do we recite a different bracha since it is too bitter to eat by itself?

Some poskim rule that one should recite Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros before smelling lemons (Ginas Veradim 1:42; Yalkut Yosef 216:7), whereas others contend that one should recite Borei minei besamim before smelling a lemon, treating the lemon as a safek as to whether it is considered a fruit or not (Ketzos Hashulchan 62:9 in Badei Hashulchan).

However, this latter opinion causes one to wonder why the bracha before smelling a lemon is different from the bracha before smelling an esrog? After all, the Gemara teaches that before smelling an esrog we

recite Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros, although an esrog is also too bitter to eat. Possibly, the esrogim in the days of Chazal were less bitter and were edible. This is implied by the Gemara (Sukkah 36b), which mentions that Rav Chanina took a bite out of his esrog, something difficult to imagine doing to a contemporary esrog.

An alternative approach is that an esrog is a fruit because it can be made edible by adding sugar. However according to this reason, a lemon should also be considered a fruit, since one can eat candied lemon, which I presume would require the bracha of Borei pri ha'eitz (Vezos Ha'beracha pg. 366). Similarly, some people eat the slice of lemon they used to season their tea, and lemon is also eaten as a pudding or pie filling. I presume that the bracha on these items when eaten alone would be Borei pri ha'eitz. The fact that lemon cannot be eaten unsweetened should not affect what bracha we recite before eating or smelling lemon just as the bracha before smelling fresh quince is Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros even though it is also not edible raw.

Furthermore, we noted above that Chazal instituted the bracha Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros on fragrant fruits and foods because one cannot recite a bracha on them by calling them fragrances. Few people would describe lemon as a fragrance, but as a fruit.

Because of these reasons, I believe the bracha before smelling a lemon should be Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros, but I leave it for the individual to ask their rav.

Incidentally, the correct bracha to recite before smelling citrus blossoms or flowers is Borei atzei besamim, since the flower is not edible.

As a side point, one should be very cautious about eating esrog today. Esrog is not a food crop and it is legal to spray the trees with highly toxic pesticides. Because of the rule of chamira sakanta mi'isurah (the halachos of danger are stricter than that of kashrus), I would paskin that it is prohibited to eat esrogim today unless the owner of the orchard will vouch for their safety. However, this will get me into a controversial debate with many rabbonim who give hechsherim on esrog orchards, so I am not going to discuss this issue anymore. Simply — although Aunt Zelda may have a great recipe for making esrog jam, I suggest substituting lemon or lime instead.

Incidentally, the bracha on eating lemon jam should be Borei pri ha'eitz, which is additional evidence that the bracha before smelling a lemon is Hanosein

rei'ach tov ba'peiros. There is a major shaylah in halacha whether one may smell one's esrog and hadasim during Sukkos. I have written a separate article on this subject.

Eating and Smelling a Fruit

If I am eating a fragrant fruit, do I recite a bracha before I smell it even though I am not deliberately trying to?

One does not recite the bracha on fragrance if one is picking up the fruit to eat and happens to smell it at the same time (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 216:2). However, if one intends both to smell the food and also to eat it, then it would seem to be a question of dispute whether one should recites both brachos, Borei pri ha'eitz and Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros. This issue is dependent on a dispute between poskim whether one recites a bracha on a fragrant item that is intended to be used for another purpose. I analyzed this subject in a different article in which I discussed when one should not recite a bracha before smelling a fragrance. Which Bracha Should I Recite First?

The poskim disagree as to whether one should first recite the bracha on eating the fruit because this is considered a greater benefit (Olas Tamid), or whether one should first recite the bracha on smelling it, since the fragrance reaches your nose before you have a chance to take a bite out of it (Elyah Rabbah 216:6). The Mishnah Berurah (216:10) rules that one should recite the bracha on smelling the fruit first, although he also cites another suggestion: have in mind not to benefit from the fragrance until after one has recited the bracha on eating it and has tasted the fruit. Then, recite Hanosein rei'ach tov ba'peiros and benefit from the fragrance.

Many poskim state that the custom today is to not make a bracha on smelling a fruit unless it has a pronounced aroma (see Vezos Haberacha pg. 174). For this reason, some hold that one should not make a bracha when smelling an apple since apples are often not that fragrant, but one could recite a bracha when smelling guava which is usually much more aromatic. (However, note that Rambam and Mishnah Berurah [216:8] mention reciting a bracha before smelling an apple, although it is possible that the apples they had were more fragrant than ours.)

The Gemara (Berachos 43b) teaches "How do we know that one must recite a bracha on a fragrance, because the pasuk (Tehillim 150:6) says, 'Every neshamah praises Hashem,' – What exists in the world

that the soul benefits from, but not the body? Only fragrance.”

Although the sense of smell provides some physical pleasure, it provides no nutritional benefit. Thus, smell represents an interface of the spiritual with the physical. Similarly, we find that we are to offer korbanos as rei'ach nicho'ach, a fragrance demonstrating one's desire to be close to Hashem. We should always utilize our abilities to smell fragrant items as a stepping stone towards greater mitzvah observance and spirituality.

The author acknowledges the tremendous assistance provided by Rabbi Shmuel Silinsky for the horticultural information used in researching this article.

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rav Shmuel Ben Rav Usher Zelig HaLevi z"l, father of Kalman Finkel.

True or False?

Yosef could not endure the presence of all those that stood before him and he commanded; “Remove everyone from before me!” Therefore there was no one with him when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers (45:1).

In this week's parsha, the Torah describes the climactic confrontation between Yosef and his brother Yehuda. This dramatic scene is the conclusion of a three parsha story line; one that leads to the somewhat uneasy reunion of Yosef and his brothers, and later, an emotional reunion with his father who thought him dead for twenty-two years.

Rashi (ad loc) explains that Yosef could not bear the thought of Egyptians present when he revealed himself to his brothers because they would be embarrassed by their shame.

Maharal, in the Gur Aryeh (ad loc), is bothered by Rashi's assumption that Yosef was concerned about their embarrassment once he revealed himself to them. The Torah never even introduced the concept of Yosef revealing himself! If Rashi is right, the Torah should first discuss that Yosef intended to reveal himself and was therefore concerned for their shame and embarrassment in front of the Egyptians.

Remarkably, Maharal seems to conclude that Rashi is wrong. Instead, Maharal suggests an alternative reason for their embarrassment, and why Yosef asked all the Egyptians to leave. Looking back on last week's parsha, we see that Binyomin was accused of

stealing Yosef's “magic” goblet. Maharal therefore concludes that their embarrassment was rooted in the accusation that they were common thieves. It is for this reason, he explains, they were embarrassed, and therefore Yosef ordered all the Egyptians out of the room.

Still, if possible, it is important to try to understand Rashi's perspective and why he didn't agree with Maharal's conclusion.

When it comes to gossip, stories generally fall into two categories: 1) Stories that are essentially true, if perhaps somewhat embellished and 2) stories that are patently false. In halacha, these two categories are known as 1) loshon hora and 2) motzi shem ra.

One would naturally assume that it is more wicked to spread stories that are patently false than to simply relay stories that are essentially true. In fact, this is exactly what the Chofetz Chaim says; Motzi shem ra is worse than loshon hora (Chofetz Chaim, Hilchos Loshon Hora 1:1).

Still, it is a little puzzling that in the Gemara, and countless Chazal, much more attention is given to the evils of loshon hora. The Gemara actually compares the sin of loshon hora to the three cardinal sins of murder, adultery, and idolatry. How are we to understand this dichotomy?

Perhaps the answer lies in looking at these sins from two different perspectives; that of the perpetrator and that of the victim. To completely make up a terrible story about someone (motzi shem ra) requires malevolence; one has to have a real character flaw to fabricate stories about someone in order to hurt them. From the perspective of the perpetrator, it is a critical failing of one's humanity and is positively evil; this requires a complete overhaul and rehabilitation of one's character.

On the other hand, when it comes to the emotional harm to the victim, loshon hora is a far greater sabotage. In other words, if one is accused of something false, one may feel outraged and wronged, but he can still hold his head up high because he knows the story isn't true. But if one's innermost vulnerabilities and failings are exposed to all, there is simply nowhere to hide; everyone knows exactly what you have done - there is no defense. This is quite devastating; in this sense, loshon hora is far more sinister and damaging.

Perhaps that is why Rashi didn't agree with Maharal's assessment of what happened with Yosef and his brothers. Being accused of stealing the goblet, while

terribly unpleasant and outrageous, wouldn't lead to embarrassment. After all, they knew they didn't steal it. However, being faced with their treachery to Yosef when he revealed himself would lead to an incredible shame and they would be very embarrassed if anyone else were present. That's why Yosef asked the Egyptians to leave.

Daddy Duty

It wasn't you who sent me here, rather it was Hashem. He has made me as a father to Pharaoh [...] (45:8).

Yosef, upon revealing his identity to his brothers, seeks to lessen the burden of their betrayal to him. He explains that his coming down to Egypt was really all part of Hashem's plan; and that he had been uniquely placed in a high position in the Egyptian hierarchy.

Yosef asks that they convey his stature in Egypt to his father, along with his request that Yaakov and his entire family come down to Egypt to join him. The initial way that Yaakov describes his position within the hierarchy is that of a father to Pharaoh.

Rashi (ad loc) gives us a remarkable definition of what it means to be a father: "a friend and patron." As Yosef expects his brothers to convey his position to Yaakov – without any elaboration on what he means by "as a father to Pharaoh" – Yosef is obviously using Yaakov's own definition of fatherhood.

Different cultures have very different definitions of what it means to be a proper father. As an example; the mid-20th century European definition of how fathers should relate to their children was very different than the American definition of fatherhood.

Rashi's description of what Yosef understands Yaakov's definition of fatherhood to be is very instructive. According to Rashi, the first role of a father is to treat his child as a colleague, not an indentured servant. Secondly, one has to recognize that a child cannot survive on his own, therefore one has to be a patron to his child – that is, provide unwavering support.

Perhaps most remarkably is that, in the entire Torah, the only father who has absolute success with children is Yaakov. The Torah makes a special note of the fact that all of his sons were equal and righteous (see 35:22 and Rashi ad loc). There is no other model in the Torah for successful fatherhood; not in Adam Harishon, Noach, Avraham, Yitzchak, Moshe, or Aharon. It is therefore crucial that we take special note of what Yaakov's definition of fatherhood was, and try to incorporate those principles into our own families. -

Rav Kook Torah Joseph Dies First The text implies that Joseph was the first of Jacob's twelve sons to die: "Joseph died, and then his brothers and everyone else in that generation" (Exod. 1:6).

Why was Joseph's life shorter than that of his brothers?

The Sages suggested that Joseph's early demise was due to his position of public office. When one assumes a position of authority, "one's days and years are shortened" (Berachot 55a).

Yet this hardly seems fair. Why should those who dedicate their lives to public service be penalized by having a shorter life?

Joseph's Mistake Working for the public good is certainly laudable. However, there are certain hazards inherent in such a path. Precisely because one is busy attending to important communal affairs, one may neglect one's own personal needs. A communal leader may come to view his own needs — whether material, spiritual, or moral — as insignificant.

We may observe this phenomenon in Joseph. As viceroy, Joseph was busy supervising the national and economic affairs of Egypt. He saw his position of public office as the vehicle through which God's covenant of Bein HaBetarim — which foretold the exile of Abraham's descendants in a foreign land — would be realized.

When Joseph heard his father referred to as "your servant," he did not object to this display of disrespect toward his father. Joseph was occupied with the overall objective; he did not want it to be compromised due to his obligation to show his father respect.

Joseph's error is not uncommon. This is a universal lesson for all leaders: they should not allow any goal or aspiration, no matter how lofty, to lead them to disregard lesser obligations.

The King's Sefer Torah We find a similar idea in the special laws pertaining to a Jewish king. The Torah instructs the king to write his own sefer Torah and keep it with him at all times. In this way, "his heart will not be raised above his brothers, and he will not stray from the Law to the right or to the left" (Deut. 17:20). The Torah specifically cautions the monarch that, despite his involvement in critical national affairs, his public service should not lead him to neglect his private obligations. He is obligated to

observe the law in his personal life, like every other citizen.

The Torah promises that a king who heeds this warning will be blessed with a long reign. Unlike those who fail the tests of public office, such a king will not live a life of “shortened days and years.”

Life is not just major goals and aspirations. All of us, even those serving in high public office, must conduct ourselves appropriately in all facets of life. Those who maintain their integrity in their personal lives will be

blessed with success in their most important and loftiest goals.

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה אנה מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה