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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to:
ravfrand@torah.org date: Jan 2, 2025,

Rav Frand

The Sfas Emes Answers Some Old and Pressing Questions About the Story of Yosef

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1318 – Ectogenesis: Artificial Wombs – The Coming Era of Motherless Birth? Good Shabbos!

At the beginning of Parshas Vayigash, Yehuda recounts the events that have been transpiring throughout Parshas Miketz. Yehuda does not really say anything new in this review of his arguments to Yosef that would potentially convince Yosef to act differently than he has been acting until now. The only argument that seems to make an impression is when Yehuda says "If I go back up to Canaan and Binyomin will not be with me, then my father will die."

Many times, as a manner of speaking, people say, "If such and such happens the person won't be able to take it. He will have a heart attack and will die." Such loose talk is highly speculative. Maybe yes; maybe no. But if Yehudah makes that statement and the Torah records it, then it is a reality. This is not some kind of an empty threat or a negotiating tactic.

In fact, this argument of Yehudah did carry the day with Yosef. Yosef did not want to be a party to the death of his father. The question is why and how Yehudah knew definitively that "it will be that when he sees the lad is not there then he will die." (Bereshis 44:31)?

The Sfas Emes explains a principle about the Avos Hakedoshim (the holy Patriarchs) and the Shevatim (Twelve Tribes).

We all have families. We work for our families. We put effort into our families. We support them. We are driven to build them. These are our children. "I see this as my mission in life – to develop this family entity." The Sfas Emes says that in the case of the Avos, it was much more than just "building a family." Each of them had a mission to "build Klal Yisrael." Their lives were focused on creating a nation. Just like on a micro level, we are willing to work very hard and to put in long hours because "I need to do

this for my family," so too the Avos were doing this on a macro level. They were willing to do whatever it takes to build Klal Yisrael.

Out of all the Avos, Yaakov Avinu in particular had a very difficult life. He experienced trials and tribulations with his brother Eisav, with his uncle and father-in-law Lavan, with his daughter Dina, and with his son Yosef. He had a very difficult life. How was he able to survive? It was because he understood that what was happening to him was what the Ribono shel Olam wanted to happen to him, because somehow, in one way or another, this was purifying him and purifying, im yirtzeh Hashem, Klal Yisrael. Therefore, Yaakov was able to take and accept whatever came his way, confident that he could somehow get through it, as the price that needed to be paid to build Klal Yisrael.

The Sfas Emes points out that Yaakov used a rather uncommon form of the name of Hashem when he sent his sons back to Mitzraim: "Keil Shakai should grant you mercy before this man..." (Bereshis 43:14). Rashi explains the nuance of the use of Keil Shakai here: The One who said (during the process of creation) to My world dai (enough already) should now say dai (enough already) to my troubles." The name of Hashem that is spelled Shin-Daled-Yud is an acronym for She'amar l'olamo dai. Yaakov told his sons, "I have had enough already. I can't take it anymore!"

Yaakov is saying "I can't take it anymore." This is the Yaakov who we just said had the attitude "If I need to go through the troubles with Eisav, I'll take it. If I need to go through the troubles with Lavan, I will take it, etc., etc. – all so that he could build a Klal Yisrael. What suddenly happened that here Yaakov says "I can't take it anymore?"

Yaakov is not speaking in frustration, like we might say in frustration, "I can't take it anymore! I can't take this job! I can't take this boss! I can't take this aggravation!" No. That is not Yaakov Avinu. Yaakov knew he had a limit. He knew that he just would not be able to survive another tragedy of the magnitude of the loss of Binyomin. Yehudah knew this because that is what he heard from the mouth of Yaakov himself when he invoked the name Shin Daled Yud and proclaimed that Keil Sha-dai must say 'Enough already' to my troubles."

The Sfas Emes says that with this understanding, we can answer a question that everyone asks: Yosef is number two in the Egyptian ruling hierarchy. He can do whatever he wants. Why didn't he send a message to his father, Yaakov, informing him that he is still alive? Yosef was a compassionate son. He loved his father. Why didn't he relieve his father's intense suffering by sending him a courier and letting him know he was alive and well? The answer is that Yosef was also aware that Hashem deemed everything that Yaakov experienced appropriate for him to experience. This was somehow necessary for the creation of Klal Yisrael. Yaakov was the father of the Shevatim. Yaakov needed to experience everything that he experienced. Therefore, Yosef said to himself, "I am not going to intervene. I am not going to try to be smarter than the Ribono shel Olam. If the Ribono shel Olam wants to keep it hidden from Yaakov, that is His business." Yosef was not going to second guess the plan of the Almighty because that would interfere with the mission of Yaakov Avinu.

Using this idea, the Sfas Emes explains something else that occurs at the end of the parsha. The pasuk says that when Yosef finally revealed himself to his brothers "...he fell on the shoulder of Binyomin his brother and he cried, and Binyomin cried on his shoulder." (Bereshis 45:14) Rashi explains the reason for the crying. They were not merely tears of joy: "Yosef cried regarding the destruction of the two battei mikdash (temples) that would be built in the territory of the Tribe of Binyomin and would eventually be destroyed." Why do those particular historical events hit Yosef so hard specifically at this moment? The Sfas Emes explains an incredible thing. The pasuk says that when they met, Yosef could not take it anymore (v'lo yachol Yosef l'his-apek) and he broke down and started crying. The Sfas Emes says that from the fact that the pasuk says that Yosef could not do it anymore, we can infer that if Yosef could have held back longer, he would have. Were it not for the fact that he couldn't control himself, he would have made his brothers go through more stress and anguish.

What does that mean? Was Yosef a sadist? Did he enjoy seeing his brothers suffer? The answer, says the Sfas Emes, is the same idea that we just mentioned: Just as Yaakov Avinu needed to endure his very difficult life for the Divinely planned creation of Klal Yisrael, so too, the Shevatim needed to endure this entire parsha of selling Yosef and then feeling guilty about it for all these years. The Shevatim saved us by going through all this suffering. They spared us from tzores (troubles) that could have befallen Klal Yisrael in later years.

Certainly, the Jewish people have suffered immeasurably for the last 3,000+ years, but it would have been much worse had the Shevatim not endured what they needed to endure. Yosef knew this, and he knew that all the suffering his brothers were enduring would eventually pay dividends and save Klal Yisrael from future tzores. Therefore, Yosef would in fact have continued this charade longer: Let them go through this suffering even more because it will pay off in the future. Eventually it will save us. However, "Yosef could not hold back any longer." He had no other choice but to end the charade right then. However, had he been able to hold out longer and prolong this national suffering at the moment of Klal Yisrael's creation, the Beis Hamikdash would never have been destroyed. The brothers suffering at that point in time was akin to the goat being pushed off the Azazel cliff on Yom Kippur. The brothers were akin to the Ten Martyrs executed by the Roman Government. Their suffering was an atonement for all of Klal Yisrael. Yosef knew the secret that "the death of the righteous atones for the masses of Klal Yisrael." He was trying to accomplish that atonement through the prolonged suffering of his brothers, until he could continue no longer.

Imagine that! We would not have needed to experience the destruction of the two battei mikdash! Imagine if we had not needed to experience 2,000 years of exile! That all came about because "Yosef could not hold back any longer." That, says the Sfas Emes, is why Yosef cried on the shoulder of Binyomin, crying about the destruction of the battei mikdash.

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FROM THE DESK OF **RABBI MOSHE HAUER**
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Grief and Resilience

Resilience Resilience is essential to the Jewish experience. As a nation, we have endured unparalleled tragedy and setbacks, yet - like the righteous man described in the proverb - even if we may fall seven times, we get back up. Yosef personified this quality, cast away repeatedly but always rising again.

Key to his resilience was his readiness to act on every opportunity to make things better. Yosef correctly understood that the butler's impending release was the pathway to gaining his own freedom, even though he should not have placed his trust in the butler. Similarly when a bit of liberation came, he turned Pharaoh's dreams into a sketch of his own future role. He may have grieved, but he would not be paralyzed by that grief. To quote one of our own modern-day heroines, Hadas Lewenstern, "ani almana; ani lo miskeina, I am a widow but I am not helpless."

The Imrei Emes of Ger and Rav Aharon Belzer were two of the great Chasidic masters who had survived the Holocaust. When they saw each

other for the first time after the Holocaust in Eretz Yisrael in 1947, they broke down in tears.

After their emotions subsided, Rav Aharon Belzer asked the Imrei Emes about a Rashi in our parsha. When Yosef and Binyamin were reunited, the verse states, "he fell on the necks of Binyamin his brother and he wept, and Binyamin wept on his neck." Rashi shares a midrashic interpretation to explain why the Torah refers to Binyamin's neck in the plural: Yosef wept over the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash that would be located in the tribal portion of Binyamin. Binyamin, on the other hand, cried over just the one destruction of Mishkan Shiloh, the Temple which for more than 300 years was in Shiloh within the portion of Yosef. Asked the Belzer Rebbe, why did each of them cry over what would happen in the other's portion rather than cry over what happened in their own? Rav Aharon Belzer was trying to understand not only the reactions of Yosef and Binyamin of long ago, but also his own actions and those of the Gerrer Rebbe. Why did they cry so intensely over each other but could not express the same emotions over their own losses and pain?

The Imrei Emes responded that over some body else's losses, over the task of rebuilding that lies ahead of them, we cry. Over one's own losses, one doesn't cry, one is moved to act, acknowledging the loss and then starting the work of rebuilding. That is key to our resilience.

from: Aish.com Weekly Torah Portion <newsletterserver@aish.com> date: Dec 31, 2024, 12:04 PM subject: Vayigash (Genesis 44:18-47:27)

Sanctified Speech

Rabbi Avraham Twerski's Insights on the Torah

Vayigash (Genesis 44:18-47:27) "Behold! Your eyes see as do the eyes of my brother Benjamin that it is my mouth that is speaking to you" (45:12) Rashi comments that the words, "my mouth is speaking to you" mean "in lashon hakodesh (the holy tongue)." Purportedly, this means that Joseph offered as proof of his identity that he knew Hebrew.

But in what way was this a proof? Until now, they communicated through an interpreter, whom they assumed to be an Egyptian who obviously knew Hebrew.

Rashi's words may have an additional meaning. All matter is divided into four categories: domem (inanimate), tzomeach (vegetative), chai (living) and medaber (speaking). The last is the category of man, the only being that can speak.

But is this really so? Is man the only creature that can communicate by sound? We know that many forms of life communicate by sound. Are the sounds they make not a form of speaking? Granted, human speech is much more sophisticated, but that makes it only quantitatively distinct from animal verbalizations, but it is not a qualitative distinction. More types of sounds and a greater vocabulary are not enough to give man the distinction of being "a speaker".

The uniqueness of man is not just that he has a more sophisticated form of speech, but that he can elevate his speech to being holy. By using his speech properly, by not speaking foolishly, by avoiding defamatory speech and carrying tales, man can sanctify his speech. This is something that animals cannot do, and it is this ability to sanctify speech that merits the designation "speaker".

Although the brothers' action cannot be justified, Joseph was not totally innocent. The Torah says that "he would bring evil reports about them to his father" (Genesis 37:2) The Midrash states that all the evil reports were groundless, and Joseph was, therefore, guilty of lashon hara. During his enslavement and imprisonment, Joseph did teshuvah to purify himself of lashon hara, derogatory speech.

However, Jewish law states that an offense against another person is not forgiven until one makes proper amends and asks for forgiveness from that person. In revealing himself to his brothers, Joseph wished to tell them that he had repented for the derogatory speech he had spoken about them. "I have corrected that defective trait. I have sanctified my speech. I am now truly a medaber, a speaker," Rashi's comment means more than that I speak Hebrew. Being polylinguistic does not yet warrant the designation of

medaber. One is a "speaker" only if one's speech is kodesh, only if one sanctifies his speech.

We should indeed take pride in having the gift of speech, but unless we sanctify our speech, we are not yet unique. Avoiding the abuse of this precious gift is what makes us unique as humans.

Tidbits • Parashas Vayigash 5785 Inbox

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Parashas Vayigash • January 4th • 4 Teves 5785

After Chanukah, used wicks, cups and oil should be disposed of in a respectful manner (i.e. by placing them in a plastic bag before disposing of them). Some have the minhag to burn the wicks on the last day of Chanukah; others do so at Bi'ur Chametz before Pesach.

As of this Motzaei Shabbos, January 4th, thirty days will have passed with the inclusion of V'sein Tal U'matar. From Maariv on Motzaei Shabbos and onward, one who is unsure if he correctly said V'sein Tal U'matar (instead of V'sein berachah) does not need any corrective measures, since he is considered "accustomed" to have davened properly.

Next Friday, January 10th is the fast of Asara B'Teves. (This is the only fast day that can fall on Erev Shabbos.) During Chazaras HaShatz of Shacharis, only the Shaliach Tzibbur adds Aneinu. Chazaras HaShatz is followed by Selichos, Avinu Malkeinu, Tachanun, and Krias Hatorah. Mincha includes Krias Hatorah followed by the Haftarah. Those fasting add Aneinu in Shemoneh Esrei. Nusach Ashkenaz says Sim Shalom in place of Shalom Rav. The Shaliach Tzibbur adds Aneinu and Bircas Kohanim in Chazaras HaShatz. As it is Erev Shabbos, Avinu Malkeinu and Tachanun are omitted. All the regular Shabbos preparations such as hot showers etc. are permitted. While the fast ends at the regular z'man for a Ta'anis (tzeis hakochavim), one may not eat or drink until after he hears Kiddush.

The final opportunity for Kiddush Levana is late Monday night, January 13th at 4:34 am EST.

Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Sanhedrin 18 • Yerushalmi: Shabbos 39 • Mishnah Yomis: Sanhedrin 6:2-3 • Oraysa: Next week is Beitza 37b-39b • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 34:14-35:7

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

The fast of Asara B'Teves is next Friday, January 10th.

VAYIGASH: Yehudah protests Yosef's persecution of the shevatim • Yosef reveals his identity • Yosef instructs the family to settle in Goshen • Yosef sends wagons with provisions for the brothers' journey to Canaan • Yosef gives the brothers gifts • Yaakov is informed that Yosef is alive • The members of Yaakov's family descending to Egypt are listed; they number 70 all together • Yehuda travels ahead to open a Yeshiva • Yosef and Yaakov's reunion • Yosef instructs his brothers how to speak with Pharaoh • Yaakov meets with and blesses Pharaoh • At the beginning of the years of hunger, the Egyptians can no longer afford food • Pharaoh supports the priests • The Egyptians seek to sell themselves and their property to Yosef and Pharaoh. Haftarah: The Parashah relates the episode of the brothers' reunion in Mitzrayim after years of separation. Yechezkel (37:15-28) relates the prophecy that the Shevatim will one day join with true unity under the Melech HaMashiach.

Parashas Vayigash: 106 Pesukim • No Mitzvos Listed

"וַיֵּרָא אֶת־הַעֲגֻלֹת אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף" "And he saw the wagons which Yosef sent" (Bereishis 45:27)

Chazal explain that Yaakov was rejuvenated when he saw the wagons his son Yosef sent, as they symbolized the last Torah topic they had studied together: Eglah Arufah. What was this message which Yosef was sending to his father?

Rav Uren Reich shlit"a answers: Chazal say that when Yosef set out to find his brothers, his father began escorting him out. Yosef protested, "I do not require this escort, as I am not a guest, but rather a member of the household." Yaakov responded that a lone traveler may face dangerous

circumstances along the way. Escorting a departing traveler even just a short distance provides a symbolic accompaniment and a sense that he is not alone, giving him confidence to persevere on his journey. Thus, it was important that he escort Yosef as well. This discussion of Yaakov and Yosef regarding escorting guests was thus related to the laws of Eglah Arufah, which pertains to properly escorting a departing traveler.

By sending the wagons, Yosef hinted to his father that he was, in fact, alive and well, both physically and spiritually. For despite their geographical distance, he constantly felt his father's presence, as this feeling of never being alone enabled him to withstand the spiritual challenges he faced over the many lonely years in a land devoid of spirituality.

from: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabiyy@theyeshiva.net> date: Jan 2, 2025, 3:4 PM

Letting Go of My Expectations - Essay by Rabbi YY Jacobson

"I Am Who I Am Because You Sold Me"

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 Aryeh 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 horrific traumas, you mistreated her emotionally. After years of all forms of healing, 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.

Imagine that due to emotional dissociation caused by your own painful past, you neglected your children. They did not have an emotionally present father, or mother, and then after profound inner work you discover your core, untarnished self, and you discover the pain you caused (even if unintentionally). The sense of remorse is heart-wrenching.

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.

שפת אמת ויגש תרמ"ג: בפסוק אשר מכרתם אותי. כמו שאמרו חז"ל אשר שברת יישר כחך. כן ניחם יוסף אותם כי זכה לכל זה על ידי 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

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

Rav Kook on VaYigash: The Hazards of Leadership Inbox

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VaYigash: The Hazards of Leadership

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.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II on Berachot IX: 25)

from: **Michal Horowitz** <contact@michalhorowitz.com> date: Jan 2, 2025, 11:04 AM

subject: Vayigash 5785: Yaakov, Yosef & Family Unity

In Parshas Vayigash, the narrative of Yosef and his brothers reaches its climax. Twenty-two years after the brothers threw Yosef into the pit and twenty-two years after he was sold to Egypt, Yosef – the viceroy of Egypt, the most powerful man in the ancient world at that time – reveals himself to his shocked brothers.

With his stunning declaration – "I am Yosef, is my father still alive? I am Yosef, who you sold to Egypt" (45:3-4) – the sons of Yaakov are reunited. Yosef, ever benevolent and forgiving – reassures his brothers that his sale was all part of G-d's master plan to sustain the family through the famine. He comforts them and tells them not to be sad or angry. Rather, they should hurriedly ascend to Canaan, inform Yaakov that his son Yosef lives, that he is the ruler over the land of Egypt, and that the family should move to Goshen, in Egypt, where Yosef will continue to provide for them.

A question, however, remains. Why, over the span of the twenty-two years that Yosef was in Egypt, did he not once attempt to contact his father? Egypt is not very far from Canaan. Why did he never send a letter, a messenger, or some mode of communication, to his father, to let Yaakov know that he was still alive?

While many answers are provided by the various commentators, I will share one compelling and fascinating answer with you, as quoted by Rabbi Shmuel Goldin. In his Unlocking the Torah Text, Bereishit, Rabbi Goldin quotes a contemporary Israeli scholar of Torah and Bible, Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, who suggests a novel answer towards Yosef's silence to his father.

Perhaps Yosef had no way of knowing that at the time of his sale, his brothers deceived their father. "For all Yosef knew, Yaakov never believed him to be dead. Yosef was therefore plagued for years with the question: 'Where is my father? Why has no one come to look for me?'"

Given the close distance between Egypt and Canaan, Yosef deduces that his father, Yaakov, certainly had the wherewithal to search for him! Why then, Yosef wonders to himself, has no search by my father ever taken place for me? It must be, he mistakenly concludes, that there is no interest in finding me.

"Eventually, Yosef's questions concerning his father's silence lead to deeper suspicions. Why, he wonders, did his father send him to seek his brothers in the first place? Wasn't he aware of the hatred that the brothers harbored towards Yosef and the potential danger?"

Hence, Yosef comes to the erroneous – yet pressing – conclusion, that his father was part of the sale! Not only, Yosef reasons, did Yaakov not know what the brothers did to him. Just the opposite! Yosef reasons that the whole sale was orchestrated by his father, with the assistance of his brothers! "In Yosef's mind, someone – perhaps the brothers, perhaps Leah, perhaps even G-d Himself – clearly persuaded Yaakov to cast Yosef off from the family, as Yishmael and Esav had been cast off in earlier generations."

Rabbi Goldin notes that after years of emotionally suffering with this erroneous belief, Yosef accepts his fate. He incredibly maintains his connection to his heritage, past, morals, and traditions, even while he accepts that fact that he has been cast off and cut away from his family. This belief is expressed in the name he gives his first born son, Menashe. "And Yosef called the name of his firstborn Menashe, וְאֶת בְּרִית, וְאֶת כָּל-עַמְלִי, וְאֶת כָּל-אֲבִי – for G-d has made me forget all my hardship and my father's entire household" (41:51).

"When Yosef's brothers suddenly and unknowingly appear before him, he is driven by a desire to [finally, once and for all] determine the truth. All of his actions from this point on are designed to obtain information concerning his father's apparent rejection of him. Finally, Yehuda, rising in defense of Binyamin, inadvertently proclaims what Yosef has, for years, desperately desired to hear: 'Your servant, my father, said to us: אַתָּם יָדַעְתֶּם, כִּי שְׁנַיִם יָלְדָה-לִי – you know that my wife (Rachel) bore me two (sons); וַיֵּצֵא הָאֱלֹהִים, מֵאֵתִי, וְאֶחָד – and one has left me, and I presumed – alas – he has surely been torn to pieces, and I have not seen him since' (44:27-28)."

Suddenly, when Yosef hears these words uttered by Yehuda, he realizes that, all these years, his father has assumed him torn to shreds and dead. His father, then, was never involved in the sale. His father has always loved him and believed Yosef was no longer. When Yosef realizes that he was never rejected by his father, "moved by uncontrollable emotion, he reveals himself to his brothers" (Unlocking the Torah Text, Bereishit, p.244-245).

While this is certainly a novel and compelling proposition, and an eye-opening approach to understanding the story of Yaakov, his sons, and the sale of Yosef, it seems that a further lesson can be derived from this approach. Perhaps the Torah is teaching us a difficult, tragic and frightening truth; one that every person must exert great effort to save his/herself from, b'ezras Hashem. Perhaps we can deduce from here that through assumptions, misunderstandings, lack of effective communication, and covered truths, families can, R"l, be torn apart.

As it happened to the family of Yaakov Avinu, the Torah is warning us to be considerate, cautious, kind, and careful with one's family. One must never assume, one must strive to correct wrong-doings as quickly as possible, one must be able to forgive and move on, and one must realize that the greatest nachas to Hashem is when His children are b'achdus. Just as Hashem is Echad, One, His children – our families and our great nation – must strive to be echad b'achdus, working together and loving each other.

On the very last mishnah in all of Shas (Uktzin 3:12), which speaks of the blessing of shalom, peace, the Tosfos YomTov comments: גדול השלום

שכשמשלך המשיח יבא אינו פותח אלא בשלום

– how great is shalom, for when the King Messiah comes, he will herald the redemption with none other than the blessing of peace.

May we merit it, immediately and in our days,

Be'er Moshe - Putting It All Together

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein <ravadlerstein@torah.org> Wed, Jan 1, 7:5 PM (2 days ago) to targumim

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Parshas Vayigash Putting It All Together print
Yehudah drew close to him.[2]

There is more to this gesture than meets the eye. It is not just about an emboldened Yehudah who seizes an opportunity to ask for mercy. The preposition "eilav" gives it away. So does the phrase, "May your servant please speak to the ear of my master." Both indicate a move towards great, not casual, closeness.

The Zohar[3] penetrates the deeper layer of meaning that our pasuk alludes to. "This was an approach of one world to another, so that the two would unite and become one. Yehudah is a melech, and Yosef is a melech...Coming together and becoming one brought great good: peace between the shevatim, peace between the two of them, and the revival of Yaakov's spirit." This restoration of harmony would play out again in the

times of Moshiach, say Chazal,[4] citing the verse, “Ephraim [i.e. Yosef] will not be jealous of Judah, nor Judah hostile toward Ephraim.”[5]

The revival of Yaakov’s spirit is a great part of achieving complete unity among his descendants. We allude to this frequently in our davening: May He who makes peace on high, create peace among us.” Are there fights in shomayim that Hashem has to referee?

In a sense, yes! There is tension between Gavriel and Michael – between the din and chessed that they champion. Hashem pacifies them; He brings them together. This is also the hallmark accomplishment of Yaakov, whose tifferes takes from both chessed and din, merging them together. We daven that Hashem should bring all of Klal Yisrael together through their common shoshon neshamah, which is Yaakov/Yisrael!

This idea is part of the message that Yosef sent to Yaakov through the wagons he sent, alluding to the eglah arufah. The eglah arufah ceremony responds to and counters, says the gemara,[6] those with a begrudging disposition. Yosef meant to signal to his father that he bore no jealousy towards his brothers, and held no grudge towards them for their early mistreatment of him.

Similarly, when Yosef inquired, “Is my father still alive?” he knew full well that Yaakov had not perished. All the conversation between the brothers and Yosef centered on that fact. Yosef, however, meant the following. Is there anything left of the true Yaakov, who admits of no dissension and enmity? Yaakov would live on till the end of time, through his children, even after his death. As Chazal say, “Yaakov didn’t die.”[7] But how much of the core, essential Yaakov exists as we stand here, together in Egypt? Have all of you banished infighting and jealousy from yourselves? Only if you can testify that this is true about yourselves can you fully claim that our father is still alive – for true “chaim” implies unity. Yaakov can be said to be alive only when his children are at one with each other.

We take our national name Yisrael from Yaakov, alone among the avos. His integration of chessed and gevurah is the surefire way to display Hashem’s greatness. Achdus among Jews is nothing less than kevod shomayim.

Adapted from Be’er Moshe, by the Ozharover Rebbe zt”l ↑ Bereishis 44:18 ↑ Zohar 1 206a ↑ Bereishis Rabbah 94:3 ↑ Yeshayahu 11:13 ↑ Sotah 38b ↑ Taanis 5b ↑

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Potomac Torah Study Center: Devrei Torah for Shabbat Vayigash 5785

External Inbox

From: **Alan Fisher** <afisherads@yahoo.com>

I strongly recommend downloading the Internet Parsha Sheet, available shortly after midnight at parsha.net. This compilation includes new insights from outstanding outstanding of our time.

Shabbat Shalom, Alan

BS”D January 3, 2025

Potomac Torah Study Center Vol. 12 #11, January 3-4, 2025; 4 Tevet 5785; Vayigash 5785 Note: Tzom Asarah B’Teves is next Friday

Vayigash opens with one of the most emotional episodes in Tanach.

Yehuda approaches the Viceroy of Egypt to try to convince him to release the youngest brother (Benjamin, Yosef’s only other child from Rachel) and to take him instead as a slave. The impact of Yehuda’s words causes Yosef to break down emotionally. He dismisses everyone except the brothers from the room, confesses that he is their brother Yosef, and asks them to reassure him that their father is alive and well. Yosef tells his brothers that they are not to blame for his ending up in Egypt, because God arranged for him to be there so he could save the family and everyone else from an extended and severe famine.

Vayigash is the emotional climax of Sefer Bereishis. One interpretation of Sefer Bereishis is that it analyzes the effects of a series of dysfunctional families. For example, Avraham takes his beloved son Yitzhak to a mountain to be a korban (sacrifice) to Hashem. The Torah does not discuss

the impact on Yitzhak of his father’s willingness to offer him as a sacrifice. We must conclude that Yitzhak did not object, because Yitzhak continues the religious practices of his father and permits his father to send a servant to arrange a marriage for him. Yitzhak favors his son Esav over Yaakov and apparently wants to make Esav the leader of the next generation. Yaakov favors Rachel over Leah and ignores Leah’s sons – something that the Torah later rules violates Torah law. Yaakov dotes on Yosef over his other twelve children, and when Yosef is gone, he favors Benjamin. With this family history, and given Yosef’s immature boasting to his brothers, it is easy to understand why Leah’s sons cannot speak to Yosef in peace. Rabbi David Fohrman explains that Paro’s dreams follow Yosef’s life during his exile in reverse (see my introduction for Miketz), so it is easy for Yosef to understand and explain the dreams. Yosef finally realizes that his youthful dreams were not about his family but were a preview of what would be happening to his part of the world later in his life (seven years of plenty and then seven years of extreme drought). He also realizes that his exile to Egypt is part of God’s plan to enable him to save the family and others in his part of the world from starving. Once he realizes Hashem’s role in what happened to him, he is able to forgive his brothers – as long as they show that they have done teshuvah and would not abandon another family member.

Yosef manipulates the bothers to bring Benjamin to Egypt if they want any more food or want him to release Shimon from prison. When the brothers come with Benjamin, Yosef invites them to his home for a meal, grossly favors Benjamin over the other brothers, and has his servant place his divining cup in Benjamin’s sack of grain. He makes it clear to the brothers that he does not believe that Benjamin actually stole the cup, but he says that the thief must become his slave. Yehuda approaches Yosef and tries to convince the Viceroy to take him rather than Benjamin as his slave. When Yehuda says that it would kill their elderly father if they returned without Benjamin, his favorite son, Yosef knows that the brothers have done teshuvah. He then reveals himself.

One consequence of Yehuda’s words to Yosef is that Yosef realizes that in focusing on the effect of being sold to Egypt, he has neglected the impact on his father. For twenty-three years, Yosef has been wondering why no one has come to look for him. During this period, Yosef does not ask himself whether his father knows that his favorite son is alive. Yehuda’s words about the effect of losing Benjamin makes him realize that his father must have been mourning Yosef for this entire period. Yosef realizes that he has been selfish and must atone for his sin to his father.

Rosh Yeshiva Dov Linzer learns from Vayigash that we must see the hand of Hashem in what happens in the world. He warns, however, that individuals who have believed that they understand Hashem’s plans have caused much evil, especially by starting holy wars. Our responsibility from the lesson of Yosef and his brothers is that we must embrace a humble religiosity that includes both a religious mandate and moral responsibility. Rabbi Marc Angel uses the concept of religious Zionism (from Rabbi Dr. Henry Mendes of a hundred years ago). To redeem Israel and the world, religious Zionism claims that we must combine Jewish life, law, and sentiment with justice and righteousness. Rav Kook adds that Yosef represents eidut (testimony) while Yehuda represents Torah and the special holiness of B’Nai Yisrael. For example, when all of Yaakov’s family go down to Egypt, Yaakov selects Yehuda (not Yosef or Benjamin) to establish Yeshivot in Egypt. Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander brings the message of the Haftarah to the situation we face now in 5785. Yechezkal’s vision of taking two branches and holding them together represents the two branches (kingdoms) of Israel (Yehuda and Yisrael) uniting in the future. The Talmud (Sukkah 52a) envisions a Mashiach Ben Yosef setting up an economic and administrative structure and then a Mashiach Ben David leading a religious revival. When these two branches unite, B’Nai Yisrael will be ready for an ultimate redemption. May the various factions in Israel and among Jews outside Israel come together soon to unite our people and make us strong. My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z”l, always reminded us of our obligation to assist fellow Jews in need everywhere. I have adopted this

obligation and have tried to pass it along to my children, and to have them pass it along to their children.

Shabbat Shalom,

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from: **Rav A. Leib Scheinbuam** <peninim@hac1.org> **Peninim on the Torah** date: Dec 30, 2024, 3:01 PM

subject: Peninim on the Torah – Parshas Vayigash, 5785

Parashas Vayigash

Then he fell upon his brother Binyamin's neck and wept; and Binyamin wept upon his neck. (45:14)

Rashi explains that Yosef wept over the two Batei Mikdash, situated in Binyamin's portion of Eretz Yisrael, which would be destroyed. Binyamin wept over the Mishkan Shiloh, which was in Yosef's portion, that would be destroyed. The question is glaring: Did they have no other time to weep over these churbanos, destructions? There is a time for everything: a time for dance; 'a time for eulogy; a time for weeping', and a time for joy. This was the moment for which they had both longed. It should have been filled with heightened joy-not weeping.

HoRav Mordechai Pogremonsky, zl, cites the pasuk, "U'macha Hashem dimah mei'al kol panim;" "And Hashem will wipe away tears from all faces" (Yeshayah 25:8). This pasuk is part of nevuah, prophecy, of the Final Redemption, the eventual end to all suffering. This word kol, all, means that all tears, even demaos shel gil, tears of joy, will be wiped away. Why is this? Tears of joy are expressions of joy. Why should they be erased? He explains that the tears of joy are the result of the reality that a person acknowledges that the simcha, joyous occasion, will not last. People are aware that all good times eventually come to an end, and this is what makes them weep. In the future when we will be blessed with the Redemption which we are all anticipating, the joy will not cease. It will be eternal. Thus, no tears will accompany it. This is why Yosef and Binyamin wept. They were acutely aware that the tenure of the Temples in their respective portions would be cut short. When the simcha is incomplete, it is reason for weeping.

HoRav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl, was walking (for his health) with a group of students, when they came upon a young girl weeping. The Rav stopped, called her over and asked what was wrong. She replied that she had worn a new outfit to gan, kindergarten, that morning, and one of the girls told her that it was not a nice dress. The Rav asked her for her name, she replied, "Shoshanah." He said, "That is a nice name-just as your dress is a nice dress." When the young girl heard this, she immediately smiled and her mood changed.

The students were surprised that a Rosh Yeshivah and Dayan of his distinction would stop to speak to a young girl. He explained, "Concerning Hashem, it is written that He will wipe away all tears. This means even tears of a young girl. Veritably, this innocent girl's tears have greater purity than other tears." It takes a great man to take note of what appears to be little things.

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen (46:28)

Yaakov Avinu sent Yehudah ahead of the family to make the proper arrangements for their transition to Egypt. Yehudah was the definitive leader of the brothers, having proven himself in his confrontation with the Egyptian "viceroy." Rashi quotes Chazal, who delve into the word l'horos, to teach, that Yehudah was actually destined to establish a yeshivah, so that when they arrived they could immediately continue their Torah study. It also shows the Patriarch's profound insight into Jewish values. Without Torah as the foundation and lodestar for navigating life, the journey is untenable. The Torah is our inspiration and guide, especially during difficult and uncertain times. While this is all true, and Yehudah certainly had an impressive resume, Yaakov had officially designated Levi as the Rosh Yeshivah (Rambam Hilchols Avodah Zarah 1:3). If not Levi, Yissaschar was the son who exemplified Torah study at its apex. The

commentators cite a number of reasons to explain the selection of Yehudah within his family dynamic. He was the king of the family. A Rosh Yeshivah must represent monarchy, as well as Torah erudition. Yehudah was the one who said, Tzadkai mimeni, confessing to his errors and taking responsibility. Yehudah stood up to Yosef, because he had assumed responsibility for Binyamin. He promised his father that he would return Binyamin. A Rosh Yeshivah assumes responsibility for his students in all aspects of their lives. It is not only about learning; it is about leading.

Perhaps we may suggest another avenue related to monarchy in which the king and the Rosh Yeshivah/spiritual leader align. Both leaders maintain immense responsibility for the lives and futures of those under their guidance. A king, particularly in times of war, makes decisions that directly impact the lives and welfare of his soldiers- deciding who goes into battle and when, with the full awareness that these decisions can determine life and death. This requires a profound sense of responsibility, wisdom, and a clear understanding of the strength and role of each individual in his army. A king must balance the needs of his kingdom with the well-being of his people, making choices that are often difficult and weighty. Likewise, a Rosh Yeshivah carries an enormous responsibility over the spiritual and emotional well-being of his students. Every decision in the manner in which he guides his students in their learning to how they should address personal issues can influence, not only the present situation, but also their future growth. Just as a king must understand the individuality of each of his soldiers, so, too a Rosh Yeshivah must recognize and be sensitive to the unique potential of each individual student. He must remember that every one of his decisions, his guidance and how he presents such guidance, can affect each student's long-term spiritual trajectory. He shapes the nation's future leaders, and his ability to nurture each student's personal and spiritual growth effectively is paramount to his success. In both cases, their decisions have a profound influence on the lives and futures of others. Whether it is the physical battlefield or the spiritual path, true leadership requires sensitivity, wisdom, and a deep sense of accountability.

In his hesped, eulogy for his revered Rebbe, HaRav Yitzchok Hutner, zl, HaRav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, addressed the concept found in Chazal of Rebbe Muvhak, a Torah scholar's primary Torah mentor. This is the Rebbe from whom one acquires the majority of his chachmah-not only in learning, but also the most significant roots of knowledge which serve as a catalyst in shaping his life. Tosfos YomTov (Bava Metzia 2:11) points out that the word muvhak is derived from the word bohak, a reference to an object that has a pronounced shine. A Rebbe Muvhak is the Rebbe who capitalizes on the student's innate talents and qualities that ultimately lead him to shine. He is the Rebbe who unlocks the repository of the treasures/characteristics that would otherwise lay dormant.

HoRav Chaim Scheinberg, zl, explains the words of Chazal who compare one's Rebbe to a malach, angel of G-D. An angel has one singular purpose, to fulfill its specific mission as Hashem prescribed. This is how a Rebbe must view his talmidim; they are his singular purpose in life. This is his only mission. Rav Scheinberg believed in the power to make people great. He infused each talmid with a desire to learn, and he instilled within him a sense of self-confidence, so that he would believe in himself. He would often tell them, "Keep smiling and keep going," as he encouraged their upward growth. He would reiterate, "if we are confronted with a challenge, we should realize that the yeshuah, salvation, will come, and that Hashgachah, Divine Providence, has something in store for us. We must view this as a passing situation, accepting that a happier time will soon arrive, bringing a sunnier day."

Rav Scheinberg was prepared to accept students who had not yet received elite status in learning. The Rosh Yeshivah explained, "We do not arrange to accept metzuyanim, excellent students, but rather to create metzuyanim." Indeed, when a young man sporting shoulder length hair, looking nothing like a yeshiva bachur, came to Yeshivah, Rav Scheinberg saw beyond his outward appearance and peered directly into his heart. He saw the beauty and sparkle from within a young man who wanted to learn Torah. Today,

this young man is a talmid chacham of distinction and an extraordinary marbitz Torah.

Prior to Rav Scheinberg moving to Eretz Yisrael, a student, who was upset about the move, and unaware of the impudence of his words, said to the Rosh Yeshiva, "I feel you have no right to move to Eretz Yisreal." The next morning, Rav Scheinberg came over to the bachur and said, "I stayed up all night ruminating over your statement. I think you are wrong."

Rav Scheinberg inculcated his students with the dual perception that he was both Rebbe and father to them. He cared not only about their spiritual growth, but also their physical well-being. I conclude with a vignette that inspired me, one that defines the Rosh Yeshiva's relationship with his talmidim. A student who went on to become a successful marbitz Torah, a Rosh Yeshiva of note, visited his Rebbe and asked for a bracha for one of his students who was struggling with a number of challenges which impaired his spiritual for the Hebrew name of the young man's mother. He would daven for him. Surprisingly, the Rosh Yeshiva replied that he was unaware of her name. Rav Scheinberg looked disappointingly at his student, "How could a Rebbe not know the name of his talmid's mother?" At this point, the Rosh Yeshiva mentioned the full name of the student standing before him-including his mother's name! "Seventeen years ago, you were going through an issue that was disturbing you. You came to me for help and advice. I began davening for you then, and I have NOT ceased davening these entire seventeen years!"

And he (Yosef) went up to meet his father.....He appeared before him. (46:29)

Yaakov Avinu could not wait to see his long-lost son, Yosef. Yosef had left home a boy, and now he was viceroy over the people of Egypt. He went from challenge to travail and emerged as righteous as when he left home. The image of his father had kept him holy. Now, after all this time, after all the tzaros, troubles, that Yosef had endured, he was finally going to embrace his father. This would be the script as presented by a secular author, a playwright who seeks to capture the drama of this face-to-face interaction between father and son. Chazal teach that the imagery was quite different. Yosef did not just go to see his father, but to appear to him. He went for the sole purpose of fulfilling the mitzva of kibud av, so that his father could see him. Maharal (Gur Arye) writes that Yaakov Avinus's attitude toward seeing his son was also quite incongruous with the secular line of thinking. Chazal say that Yaakov recited Krias Shema when he met Yosef. Maharal explains that Yaakov was so excited, so overjoyed and thankful that he could finally see his son, he wanted to apply all of this joy to serving Hashem. What better way to be mekabeil Ole Malchus Shomayim, accept upon himself the yoke of Heaven. Neither Yaakov nor Yosef took anything for themselves. It was all for Hashem. All the emotion, excitement and drama of their meeting were dedicated solely to the Almighty. The obvious question is: What harm would it have caused if father and son had allowed their natural emotions to prevail? They would have embraced, wept, laughed and then returned to their respective lives of avodas Hashem. To ask this question means that one does not understand the importance of using every Heavenly-gifted moment for Hashem. When one uses an experience for his own sake, it is soon gone. If he uses it for Hashem's, he eternalizes it and renders it worthwhile.

Ibn Ezra's maxim, "The past no longer exists; the future is not yet a reality; the present is but a fleeting moment," should be our approach to life. We must make the most of every moment. This idea can be realized one way, by: eternalizing it, by devoting it to avodas haKadesh. Veritably, in order to succeed at this endeavor, one must live intellectually, rather than emotionally. Every experience must be well-thought out, asking ourselves: What does Hashem want of me? Why am I here when others are not? When a person survives a traumatic experience while others do not, the survivor can react with guilt; he can be angry that he was compelled to endure such travail during which others paid the ultimate price; or he can grateful for being spared and use the opportunity for growth and purpose. While survivor guilt and anger are natural responses, channeling them toward

positive action can transform a painful experience into a force for good. Every life is meaningful. Survival is a signal that one has a unique mission. What that exact mission is will be played out in life, as the survivor makes the most of every opportunity Hashem grants to him. Holocaust survivors channeled their experience into educating future generations of the dangers of hatred and apathy. They demonstrated how they clung onto any vestige of hope, because a Jew never despairs; a Jew does not give up hope. While the burdens of guilt can weigh heavily on some, dedicating oneself to helping others can ease that burden. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude to Hashem for his granting a second lease on life, coupled with prayer, will help one find peace with his survival, allowing him to move forward with life and living. Recognizing that one's survival is a Divine gift is, in, and of itself, sufficient reason to reframe guilt into positivity, anger into love and support for others. HaRav Yechiel Meir Tzucker, shlita relates the following story. In 1929, Arab murderers, crazed by their hatred of our people and their chronic bloodlust, attacked the Chevron community and slaughtered members of the community, A number of students of Yeshivas Knesses Yisrael were murdered in cold blood. When the bachurim who survived returned to the Yeshiva, the Mashgiach, HaRav Leib Chasman, zl, approached one student and asked him, "How many survived from your chaburah, group of students who studied together?" The student thought for a moment, then replied, "No one else survived." The Mashgiach heard this and immediately made an about-face leaving the bachur in a state of incomprehension. Three days passed, and the Mashgiach came over to him and asked, "Do you understand what I wanted from you?" (Do you realize what I expected of you?)

The bachur replied, "Truthfully, I did not understand why the Mashgiach walked away from me" "I wanted you to make a chesbon ha'nefesh, accounting of the soul," the Mashgiach said. "You lived through a Heavenly decree of Din, Strict Justice. Everyone else in your chaburah was slaughtered. Why were you the only one to have survived? Did this question catalyze you to think? If Hashem allowed you to live, it means that He expects something special of you."

By today's educational standards, I am certain some psychologists might feel that the Mashgiach was too demanding and perhaps even counter-intuitive. I am just as certain that Rav Leib Chasman, who was one of the premier Mashgchim, knew what he was doing. This was his daas Toraah, and, as the bachur's spiritual advisor, he felt it was a prudent question which would shape his student's life trajectory. He had a choice before him: "Do I fall into depression and guilt, or do I realize that I was left to live for a purpose which Hashem knows that I can fulfill?"

The choice of taking a positive approach, as opposed to falling into the abyss of negativity and guilt, is underscored in the process of teshuvah (loosely translated as repentance, but actually means return). One who has sinned can, after experiencing significant guilt concerning his past, become morose, feeling he is "done"; nothing can be done to repair his past. One can, however, heal from past errors by focusing on personal growth. This is the process of returning to one's true self, the way Hashem wanted/expected him to be, and reconnecting with Hashem. Sincere teshuvah transcends time and allows a person to erase past indiscretions, even transforming them into merits. Teshuvah provides a person with immense hope and optimism. Regardless of how far or how low one has digressed, teshuvah offers a way back, not only as a path to rectification, but also to a place of deeper connection and understanding than before. Teshuvah is about rising up from the fall stronger and more spiritually aligned. The process does not just happen. It involves sincere and candid introspection, commitment to one's betterment and spiritual growth, and last-but not least, the profound conviction that healing is possible. Even after experiencing hardship, trauma and the spiritual ravages of sin, a person maintains the power to change and transform for the better.