

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1446 DEC 11TH '21 ז' שבח תשפ"ב

פרשת ויגש

PARSHAT VAYIGASH

ב"ה

OU
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כל־הנפש לבית־יעקב הבאה מצרימה שבעים

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Reconciliation

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh
Weinreb

OU Executive Vice President,
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page 12



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ISRAEL

Aviyah Atkin

Director of
Engagement, Yachad Israel

page 52



YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIGASH

Candles 4:00PM • Havdala 5:16PM • Rabbeinu Tam 5:53PM

This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!

Photo By: Daniel Santacruz **Place:** Shilo

Meaning: The photo is meaningful for me because in Shilo you feel as a link in a chain of tradition that goes back thousands of years.

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Asher Manning // Moshe Domnitch

HELPFUL REMINDERS:

KIDDUSH LEVANA



7 Days After Molad 8 Tevet/ Motzei Shabbat Dec. 11

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana Until 15 Tevet/ Motzei Shabbat Dec. 18, all night

The fast of **ASARAH B'TEVET** is this coming Tuesday, December 14.
The fast begins 5:13 am (Jerusalem)

(Eating of a settled character - אכילת קבע - may not be started during the half hour immediately preceding dawn. Please consult your Rabbi for details.)

Fast ends 5:06 pm (Jerusalem)

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed.- Shabbat
Dec. 8-18 / 4-14 Tevet

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:32 - 5:38
Sunrise	6:27 - 6:33
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:59 - 9:04
Magen Avraham	8:20 - 8:25
Sof Zman Tefila	9:49 - 9:55
<i>(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)</i>	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:31 - 11:35
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:01 - 12:05
Plag Mincha	3:31 - 3:34
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:40 - 4:43

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CANDLES	VAYIGASH	HAVDALA	VAYECHI	
			Candles	Havdala
4:00	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	5:16	4:02	5:18
4:18	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	5:19	4:20	5:21
4:19	Beit Shemesh / RBS	5:17	4:21	5:19
4:16	Gush Etzion	5:17	4:18	5:19
4:16	Raanana / Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	5:17	4:18	5:19
4:16	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	5:17	4:18	5:19
4:15	Netanya	5:16	4:17	5:19
4:18	Be'er Sheva	5:19	4:20	5:21
4:16	Rehovot	5:17	4:19	5:20
4:00	Petach Tikva	5:17	4:02	5:19
4:15	Ginot Shomron	5:16	4:17	5:18
4:04	Haifa / Zichron	5:15	4:06	5:17
4:14	Gush Shiloh	5:15	4:16	5:17
4:16	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	5:17	4:18	5:20
4:15	Giv'at Ze'ev	5:16	4:17	5:18
4:16	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:17	4:18	5:19
4:18	Ashkelon	5:19	4:20	5:21
4:17	Yad Binyamin	5:17	4:19	5:20
4:17	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	5:13	4:09	5:15
4:11	Golan	5:13	4:13	5:15

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 5:53PM • next week - 5:56pm

Times According to MyZmanim (20 min. before sundown in most cities, 40 min. in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva, 30 min. in Tzfat/Haifa)



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



Chanukah is a time to focus on being thankful. We express our thanks to Hashem for the miracles which he performed in the time of the Maccabim and in modern times as well as the other blessings in our lives. One of my reflections this past Chanukah was how thankful I am for the incredible OU Israel staff. I feel truly blessed to work with an incredible team here at OU Israel. My staff works tirelessly around the clock to ensure that the Jewish people are better today than they were yesterday. The OU Israel team is comprised of hundreds of staff throughout the country who are self-motivated – by Torah, Hashem, and their love of the Land of Israel and the Jewish people.

Since the OU Israel staff is very busy running programs in Yerushalayim and across Israel, it is a challenge to find time to bring everyone together for staff bonding. This past Chanukah, we had two opportunities to get together as a team, and these events reinforced the Hakarat HaTov I have for my staff as well as the importance of making the time to get to know each other and spend more time together.

It's not always easy to find activities which are suitable for everyone. As many of you know, we have staff that speaks only Hebrew, staff that speaks only English, and staff that speaks both. We have staff dedicated to OU Israel Center English adult education and family programming, NCSY

Israel teens, JLIC campus programming, OU Israel Youth Centers and Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center, The Jack E. Gindi Oraita Program for at-risk native Israeli youth, Camp Dror, and more.

While our staff is very diverse, they have a common goal of being passionate about working for Klal Yisrael. The diversity puts my colleague Sara Berelowitz, OU Israel comptroller and head of HR, in a challenging spot when it comes to finding staff activities for everyone. Last week she once again hit the target when we got together for a Sufganiya workshop. I must be honest that when she first mentioned the idea, I was somewhat hesitant – would the staff really enjoy decorating donuts? But, it was a fun staff bonding experience in which we not only ate delicious Sufganiyot,



but we learned new things about each other. Thank you to Sara and Efrat Shitrit - from Sameiach BaMitbach - and her daughter for running such an enjoyable and well prepared activity.

The fact that this activity was so clearly connected to Chanukah provided me with the opportunity to share Divrei Torah about Chanukah. I shared with my staff that when we eat a Sufganiya and say a Bracha

Achrona, we think about the Mizbeach (alter) and are reminded how much we miss having the Beit HaMikdash and the ability to bring sacrifices there. The story of Chanuka really comes down to few people that went against the flow of what was acceptable in order to rekindle the flame and keep Klal Yisrael alive, just like our staff aims to do on a daily basis.

For me, it was very special for us to take a few hours off and really spend time together as a team. When you are part of a staff whose days are full from early morning until late at night, with phone calls, deep one-on-one discussions with teens, programming, etc., it's important to take advantage of opportunities such as this Sufganiya workshop.

The second staff program we had this Chanukah was a very unique experience. One of our Zula alumnae, who I remember from 15 years ago when she was in the Zula, invited the OU Israel staff and their families to her beautiful farm in the hills of Gush Etzion. This young woman, along with her husband and children work extremely hard day and night to build up their farm, taking care of the animals and trying to successfully build up the Land which is very important to all of us. For this, I give them a lot of credit. The children had a great time playing with the sheep, donkey and others animals, and she and her wonderful family cooked a delicious lunch for everyone. What made this program so special is that she and her family hosted us out of a sense of HaKarat HaTov for the unconditional love and support the Zula provided her with a decade and a half ago, which is a testament to the

incredible woman she is. She told me, "Avi, when I was in the Zula, never in a million years would I have dreamt that one day I would have my own home, my own farm and the honor of hosting OU Israel team members and their families in my farm to say thank you." I was extremely moved by her statement and saw that it came from deep in her heart. Her husband and young children, ages 6 and down, were literally doing everything to help us because they saw it was very important to their mother.

My team dedicates an endless amount of hours and unconditional love to the teens and adults in all of our programs. Sometime people take it for granted that the OU is here in order to help, and many times people reciprocate and show their Hakarat HaTov by making a donation or helping out in other ways. We would like to give a tremendous thanks to all those who donate to OU Israel and enable us to do what we do.

If it wasn't for the generous donations that come in, we wouldn't be able to provide you and others across Israel with the services, Torah, and inspiration that we offer. This week, we are launching our end of year Torah Tidbits and OU Israel Center campaign. I encourage you to donate since every donation directly enables us to continue providing you with Torah Tidbits and programming on a weekly basis.

Wishing you an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Avi,
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

VAYIGASH



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



**Rabbi Reuven
Tradburks**
Director of
RCA Israel Region

The Parsha begins in the middle of the story. Yosef has just told Yehuda and all the brothers that Binyamin, the thief, will become a slave to Yosef. All the others are free to leave. Our Parsha begins with Yehuda's long and impassioned plea to Yosef to allow Binyamin to return home, while Yehuda will assume his place as a slave. Yosef is overcome. He orders all to leave. And tells his brothers, "I am Yosef". He instructs them to bring Yaakov. Paro sends the brothers home with wagons to bring Yaakov and the rest of the family. Yaakov

reunites with Yosef. The entire family settles in Goshen. Yaakov meets Paro. The famine gets worse. Yosef acquires all of Egypt for Paro.



1st Aliya (44:18-30) Yehuda pleads with Yosef: this is our father's dear child. While you asked us to bring him here, we told you that leaving his father would break our father's heart. When we needed to buy food, our father told us that if anything happened to Binyamin, he would descend to the depths. And now, if I return to my father without the boy, and his soul is bound to his....

The aliya ends suspended in air. Yaakov and Binyamin, their souls are bound... There could be no better way to convey the drama; ending the aliya with their bound souls.

Yehuda earns leadership by this dramatic moment. He is assuming responsibility. He hasn't said it yet, but he will in the next aliya – he will do anything to ensure Binyamin's return home. His entire argument is one of concern for his father. His father will die of a broken heart, losing the only 2 sons from his dear wife.

Now, while Yehuda is the only actor in this aliya and while his actions are heroic and of powerful substance, there is a silent actor; Yosef. Let's place ourselves in Yosef's shoes. When *we* hear Yehuda's words it is familiar to us, because *we* know the whole story until here. *We* were there when the brothers returned home, *we* heard the interactions with Yaakov, his anguish at the thought of Binyamin leaving.

Yosef knows nothing of this. What happened when I never returned home? Was my father pained? Did he miss me?

It is with great sorrow
that we announce the passing
of our dear husband, father, brother,
grandfather and great-grandfather
Reuven (Ronald) Markowitz ז"ל

Shiva at Hakablan 13/5, Har Nof,
Jerusalem

Thursday until 21:00

Friday until 14:00

Miriam Markowitz

Gershon and Debbie Markowitz

Yaakov & Joyce Markowitz

Rena Markowitz

We know Yaakov was inconsolable when the brothers brought the bloody coat. But **Yosef** doesn't know. Everything that happened after he was thrown in the pit is a blank to **him**. Is my father alive? What did he know about what happened to me? Why didn't he come seeking me?

Yehuda's speech to Yosef is like drawing the curtain – Yosef is now privy to what his father thought happened to him, how much his father loves Binyamin, who is like a replacement Yosef to Yaakov. Dramatic is the moment when Yosef tells the brothers who he is; this moment for Yosef is equally so. It is a glimpse into the home of his father, a home he has known nothing of for 22 years. This is the first time he hears that his father was heartbroken at what he thought was Yosef's death. He didn't seek me because he thought I was dead.



2nd Aliya (44:31-45:7) Yehuda guaranteed Binyamin's return.

He will not be able to bear seeing Yaakov's pain. Yehuda will stay in his stead as a slave. Yosef cannot bear this any longer. He orders all the others out. Alone with his brothers he states: I am Yosef your brother. Is our father still alive? The brothers are dumbstruck. He reassures them that his sale to Egypt was G-d's plan in order to save the family through this famine.

What did Yehuda say that Yosef could no longer bear? The commentators read this in the context of Yosef's intent throughout this story. Why did he accuse the brothers of being spies? And demand they bring Binyamin? And plant his goblet in Binyamin's bag? It would seem he is trying to recreate the scene of the crime. They sold Yosef, their brother as a slave. Would they

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sell Binyamin as a slave again; or have they repented? Yehuda's offer to stay in Binyamin's stead is a victory, teshuva.

It could be understood entirely differently. Binyamin is Yosef's replacement in the family. With Yosef gone, Binyamin assumes his place. When Yehuda relates how much Yaakov loves Binyamin, Yosef is not hearing Binyamin, he is hearing Yosef. Binyamin is a substitute Yosef to Yaakov. Yaakov's love of Binyamin is really his love of Yosef in Yosef's absence. Yosef, hearing of his father's love for him is overcome. He needs to not only hear, but to see his father. And that is what he tells his brothers.



3rd Aliya (45:8-18) Yosef continues: G-d has sent me to be a master in Egypt. Quick, go tell our father that Yosef is a ruler in Egypt. And to come. You will settle in Goshen. Tell our father, bring our father. He hugs and kisses Binyamin, hugs and kisses the brothers. Paro hears and is pleased. He helps facilitate Yaakov's journey.

Yosef is called Yosef Hatzadik not just because he withstood Potiphar's wife's advances. He mentions G-d 4 times. His speaks of G-d and he believes all his travails are G-d's plan. He overlooks his personal travails by peering into the Divine. His ascent to rule in Egypt is not him; it is G-d's plan. He does not deny his powerful position, but views himself as but a pawn in the Divine Hand to help his family survive.



4th Aliya (45:19-27) Paro gives wagons to bring Yaakov. Yosef gives his brothers food and clothing; to his father, animals laden with provisions. The brothers tell Yaakov that

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Yosef is alive, ruler in Egypt. His heart skips a beat. Yaakov's spirit revives.

Why does Yosef give his brothers clothes? And why, if Yaakov is to come quickly to Egypt, why send him animals laden with food?

The brothers took Yosef's coat; Yosef gives the brothers clothes.

And the dreams. Yosef dreamt of sheaves of wheat bowing to him. And of the stars bowing to him. Agriculture and power. Yosef sends word to Yaakov; I am the ruler. And look at the agricultural bounty. The dreams came true. But not in the land of Israel. In the land of Egypt.



5th Aliya (45:28-46:27) Yaakov offers offerings in Beer Sheva. G-d calls to him; Yaakov, Yaakov.

And he says, Hineni. Don't be afraid. I will go down with you and I will bring you back up. The entire family descends. The Torah lists the genealogy of the family; the 70 souls who came to Egypt.

This simple aliyah changes everything. The twists and turns of the story of the brothers is now seen in wide angle; the camera moves from close up, to a wide lens. Yaakov is thinking Jewish history. Avraham was told his children will be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years. Yaakov, while anxious to see Yosef, is nervous about moving his entire family to Egypt. Will they ever return? Is he complicit in abandoning the promise that the Jews will live in the land of Israel?

G-d calls him with that phrase that rings of drama: Yaakov, Yaakov. Hineni. G-d reassures him; I will bring you back.

And the next paragraph, the genealogy begins and ends with the same phrase:

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these are the Bnei Yisrael that came to Egypt. Jewish history now leaves the Land of Israel. And will not return for the entire rest of the Torah. Yaakov was justified in his fear. This is the moment of exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel.



6th Aliya (46:28-47:10) Yaakov and Yosef reunite, with hugs and tears. Yosef plans carefully with the brothers. They are to tell Paro they are shepherds. They will settle in Goshen. Paro agrees to what Yosef has planned. Yaakov blesses Paro.

The dramatic reunion is 2 verses. Somewhat anti climactic. Yosef successfully arranges for his family to be preserved; both materially and by remaining together and away from the Egyptians.

Oh, what a bitter irony. Because we know what comes next. The Torah has moved on from the story of Yosef and his brothers and his father. The Torah is now describing the story of the Exodus from Egypt. You know how the Exodus story began? Yosef moved his whole family to Egypt. He settled them successfully; perhaps too successfully?



7th Aliya (47:11-27) Yosef supports his family. The food in

Egypt becomes scarce; all is precarious. Yosef acquires gold, livestock and land for Paro. Save the land of the priests. The people become slaves to Paro. Yaakov and the family dwell in Goshen, take root there and prosper.

The irony continues. Yosef creates a hugely powerful Paro; money, livestock, food stores, slaves. Control over all of Egypt. What irony; Yosef has created the first chapter of the Egypt story. A hugely powerful Paro. The entire Jewish people in Egypt. Remember Yosef Hatzadik, so called because he saw G-d's plan. As he told his brothers, "G-d has placed me here to save you in the time of famine." Well, Yosef was wrong. He only saw chapter 1 of the story. The real story is that G-d has placed me here to bring you all to Egypt, to solidify the power of Paro. That will result in your being slaves. And leaving Egypt amidst signs and wonders. Yosef *is* a pawn. But in a much bigger story than he can imagine.

HAFTARAH VAYIGASH YECHZEKEL 37:15-28

This week's haftorah highlights the unification of the kingdoms of Yehudah and Yosef that will ultimately transpire in the Messianic Era.

This theme clearly echoes the beginning of this week's parsha: "And Yehuda approached Yosef."

The great prophet Yechezkel shares a communication he received from God in which he was instructed to take two sticks and write on one, "For Yehuda and the children of Israel his companions" and on the

May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory and לעינ

LILY BIBER ז"ל

לאה ביבר בת אשר זעליג ז"ל

On her 2nd Yahrzeit **ז' טבת**

*Dearly missed and always in the thoughts of her
children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren*

Biber and Frankfurter Families

other, “For Yosef, the stick of Ephraim and all the house, his companions.” After doing so he was then told to put the two sticks near one another - and the Almighty fused them together into a single stick.

God explains the meaning of the symbolic gesture. These sticks represent the warring kingdoms within the House of Israel. The fusing of the sticks represented the merging of the kingdoms that will transpire during the Messianic Era. The Mashiach, a descendant of David, will arrive and lead the unified people of Israel.

The haftorah ends with a promise from Hashem that “they shall dwell on the Land that I have given to My servant, to Yaakov, wherein your father lives; and they shall dwell upon it, they and their children and their children's children, forever and My servant David shall be their prince forever.” ■

STATS

11th of 54 sedras; 11th of 12 in B'reishit
 Written on 178.07 lines (ranks 34th)
 Vayigash is composed of 3 parshiyot, all closed, one VERY closed. Actually, Vayigash has only 2.89 parshiot; it ends after 34 p'sukim of a 38-pasuk parsha; Vayigash is the only sedra that does not end with a parsha break. (This shows up in a printed Chumash by there not being a PEI-PEI-PEI or SAMACH-SAMACH-SAMACH between Vayigash and Vayechi.)
 106 p'sukim - ranks 28th; tied with Tol'dot and Bo.
 It is much smaller than Bo, a bit larger than To'll dot
 1480 words (30th); 5680 letters (29th)
 9th (of 12) in B'reishit in all 3 categories

MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Vayigash One of 17 sedras without mitzvot.

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THE PERSON

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

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IN THE PARSHA

Reconciliation

I have known more than my share of families that are torn by discord. I think most of us, perhaps even all of us, are familiar with families in which brothers and sisters have not spoken to each other in years, sometimes even having forgotten the original reason for the destruction of their relationship. My background and experience in the field of family therapy has given me even broader exposure than most to this unfortunate phenomenon.

Colleagues of mine in the practice of psychotherapy will concur that overcoming feelings of hatred and urges toward revenge is one of the most difficult challenges that they face in their practice. Reconciling parents and children, husbands and wives, is a frustrating process for those of us who counsel families. The successful reconciliation of ruined relationships is a rare achievement, especially after the misunderstandings have festered for years.

The great 18th century moralist, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, contends that these difficulties are intrinsic to our human nature. Thus, he writes:

“*Hatred and revenge.* These, the human

heart, in its perversity, finds it hard to escape. A man is very sensitive to disgrace and suffers keenly when subjected to it. Revenge is sweeter to him than honey; he can not rest until he has taken his revenge. If, therefore, he has the power to relinquish that to which his nature impels him; if he can forgive; if he will forbear hating anyone who provokes him to hatred; if he will neither exact vengeance when he has the opportunity to do so, nor bear a grudge against anyone; if he can forget and obliterate from his mind a wrong done to him as though it had never been committed; then he is, indeed, strong and mighty. So to act may be a small matter to angels, who have no evil traits, but not to “those that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust.” (*Job 4:19*) (*Mesilat Yesharim [The Path of the Upright]*, Chapter 11)

Granted that one must approximate the angels in heaven in order to overcome the natural human inclinations to hate and take revenge. How, then, do we explain the astounding reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, which occurs in this week’s Torah portion? (*Genesis 44:18-47:27*)

Joseph’s brothers came to hate him because of what they saw as his malicious arrogance. Joseph certainly had reason to hate his brothers, who cast him into a pit full of snakes and scorpions. We can easily understand that he would attribute his years of imprisonment to their betrayal of

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him. And yet, in last week's Torah portion, we learned that they came to regret their actions and to feel guilty for what they did to him. "Alas, we are at fault...because we looked on at his anguish, yet paid no heed as he pleaded with us." (Genesis 42:21)

It is in this week's *parsha* that we learn of the forgiveness that Joseph demonstrated toward his brothers. We read of a dramatic reconciliation—a total triumph over hatred and revenge. What inner strengths enabled Joseph and his brothers to attain this rare achievement?

I maintain that quite a few such strengths help Joseph's brothers to rejoin him harmoniously. One was their ability to accept responsibility for their actions. Over time, they reflected introspectively and concluded that they were indeed wrong for what they did. Self-confrontation, and a commitment to accepting the truth when it surfaces allowed them to forget whatever originally prompted them to hate Joseph.

I further maintain that the underlying dynamics of Joseph's ability to forgive were very different. He came to forgive his brothers because of two fundamental aspects of his personality: his emotional sensitivity and his religious ideology.

Joseph's sensitivity becomes apparent to the careful reader of this and last week's Torah portions. The most reliable indication of a person's sensitivity is his ability to shed tears of emotion, his capacity to weep. Joseph demonstrates this capacity no less than four times in the course of the biblical narrative:

Subsequent to his initial encounter with his brothers, we read that "he turned away from them and wept..." (Genesis 42:24); when



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he first sees his younger brother Benjamin, “he was overcome with feeling...He went into a room and wept there...” (*ibid.* 43:30); unable to contain himself after Judah’s confrontational address, “his sobs were so loud that...the news reached Pharaoh’s palace...” And finally, as we will read in next week’s Torah portion, this is Joseph’s response to his brothers’ plea for explicit forgiveness: “and Joseph was in tears as they spoke to him.” (*ibid.* 50:17).

No doubt about it. The biblical text gives us conclusive evidence of Joseph’s emotional sensitivity. But there is another secret to Joseph’s noble treatment of his brothers. It relates to his philosophy, not to his emotional reactivity.

If there is one lesson that Joseph learned from his father Jacob during his disrupted adolescence, it was the belief in a divine being who ultimately controls man’s circumstances and man’s destiny. When a person wholly has that belief, he is able to dismiss even the most painful insults against him. He is able to attribute them to God’s plan and not to blame the perpetrators of that insult. Thus was Joseph able to say, “So, it was not you who sent me here, but God...” (*ibid.* 45:8)

The power of genuine faith to instill the awareness that even hurtful circumstances

are part of the divine plan is, in my opinion, best described in this passage from the anonymous 13th century author of *Sefer HaChinuch*, in his comments on the commandment to desist from revenge:

“At the root of this commandment is the lesson that one must be aware and take to heart the fact that everything that happens in one’s life, whether it seems beneficial or harmful, comes about because of God’s intervention...Therefore, when a person is pained or hurt by another, he must know in his soul...that God has decreed this for him. He should not be prompted to take revenge against the perpetrator, who is only indirectly the cause of his pain or hurt. We learn this from King David who would not respond to the traitorous curses of his former ally, Shimi ben Gera.”

The author of *Sefer HaChinuch* sees King David as the exemplar of this profound religious faith. In these final Torah portions of the *Book of Genesis*, we learn that Joseph was King David’s mentor in regard to the capacity to rise above the misdeeds of others and to see them as but part of God’s design.

It is not easy for us lesser believers to emulate Joseph and David, but we would be spared much interpersonal strife if we would at least strive to do so. ■



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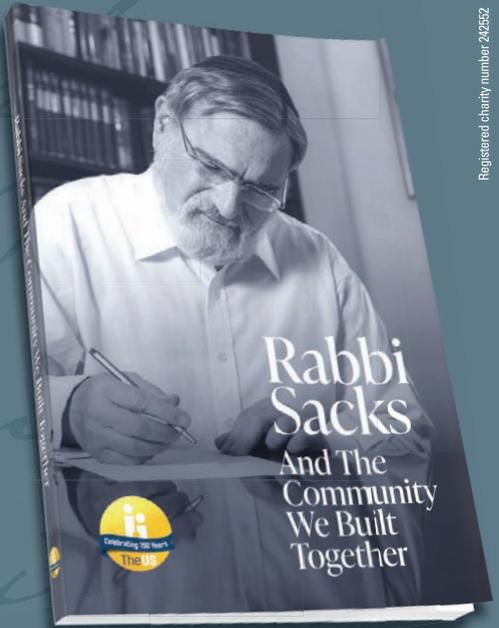
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Dedicated by
Dr. Robert Sreter DDS., M.S.

The Birth of Forgiveness

There are moments that change the world: 1439 when Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable-type printing press (though the Chinese had developed it four centuries before); 1821 when Faraday invented the electric motor; or 1990 when Tim Berners-Lee created the World Wide Web. There is such a moment in this week's parsha, and in its way it may have been no less transformative than any of the above. It happened when Joseph finally revealed his identity to his brothers. While they were silent and in a state of shock, he went on to say these words:

"I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you...

it was not you who sent me here, but God." (Gen. 45:4-8)

This is the first recorded moment in history in which one human being forgives another.

According to the Midrash, God had forgiven before this, but not according to the plain sense of the text. Forgiveness is conspicuously lacking as an element in the stories of the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and Sodom. When Abraham prayed his audacious prayer for the people of Sodom, he did not ask God to forgive them. His argument was about justice, not forgiveness. Perhaps there were innocent people there, fifty or even ten. It would be unjust for them to die. Their merit should therefore save the others, says Abraham. That is quite different from asking God to forgive.

Joseph forgave. That was a first in history. Yet the Torah hints that the brothers did not fully appreciate the significance of his words. After all, he did not explicitly use the word 'forgive'. He told them not to be distressed. He said, "It was not you but God." He told them their act had resulted

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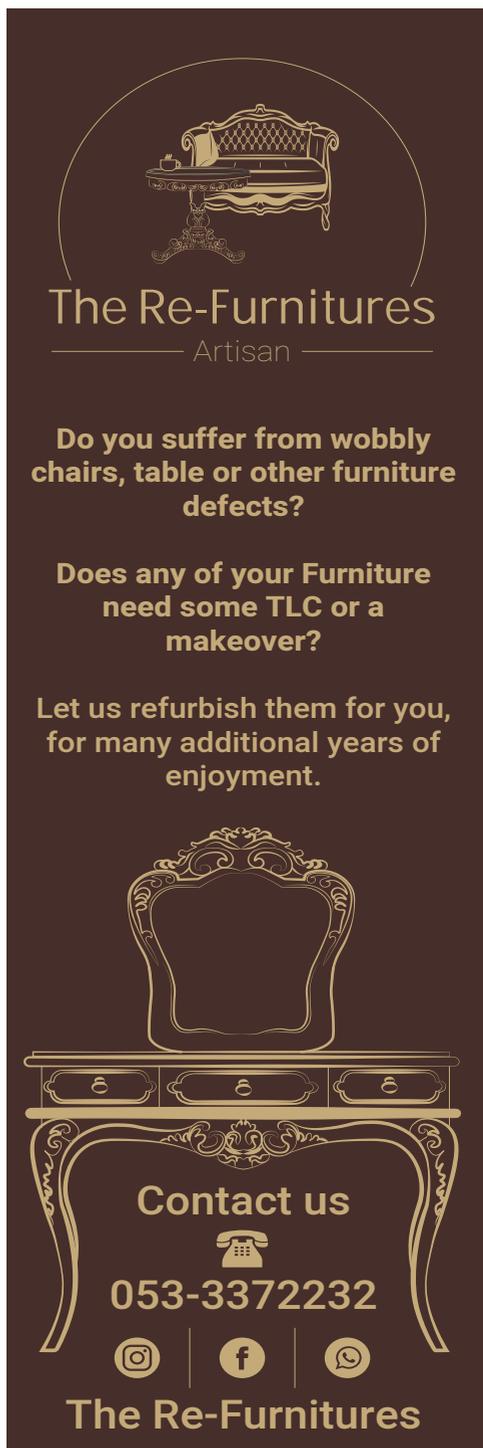
in a positive outcome. But all of this was theoretically compatible with holding them guilty and deserving of punishment. That is why the Torah recounts a second event, years later, after Jacob had died. The brothers sought a meeting with Joseph, fearing that he would now take revenge. They concocted a story:

They sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to *forgive* your brothers for the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please *forgive* the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept. [Gen. 50:16-18]

What they said was a white lie, but Joseph understood why they said it. The brothers used the word “forgive” – this is the first time it appears explicitly in the Torah – because they were still unsure about what Joseph meant. Does someone truly forgive those who sold him into slavery? Joseph wept that his brothers had not fully understood that he had forgiven them long before. He had no anger, no lingering resentment, no desire for revenge. He had conquered his emotions and reframed his understanding of events.

Forgiveness does not appear in every culture. It is not a human universal, nor is it a biological imperative. We know this from a fascinating study by American classicist David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea* (2010).¹ In it he argues

1 David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: the origins of a moral idea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.





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that there was no concept of forgiveness in the literature of the ancient Greeks. There was something else, often mistaken for forgiveness: *appeasement of anger*.

When someone does harm to someone else, the victim is angry and seeks revenge. This is clearly dangerous for the

perpetrator and they may try to get the victim to calm down and move on. They may make excuses: It wasn't me, it was someone else. Or, it was me but I couldn't help it. Or, it was me but it was a small wrong, and I have done you much good in the past, so on balance you should let it pass.

Alternatively, or in conjunction with these other strategies, the perpetrator may beg, plead, and perform some ritual of abasement or humiliation. This is a way of saying to the victim, "I am not really a threat." The Greek word *sugnome*, sometimes translated as forgiveness, really means, says Konstan, *exculpation* or *absolution*. It is not that I forgive you for what you did, but that I understand why you did it – you could not really help it, you were caught up in circumstances beyond your control – or, alternatively, I do not need to take revenge because you have now shown by your deference to me that you hold me in proper respect. My dignity has been restored.

There is a classic example of appeasement in the Torah: Jacob's behaviour toward Esau when they meet again after a long separation. Jacob had fled home after Rebecca overheard Esau resolving to kill him after Isaac's death (Gen. 27:41). Prior to the meeting Jacob sends him a huge gift of cattle, saying "I will *appease* him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." (Gen. 32:21). When the brothers meet, Jacob bows down to Esau seven times, a classic abasement ritual. The brothers meet, kiss, embrace and go their separate ways, not because Esau has forgiven Jacob but because either he has forgotten or he

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and giving them a good word is who he was
and what made all the difference
in his interaction with others.

So if we can take this message during
and after this Chanukah period by adding
more light and good to our world,
the light of Aharon z"l will carry on shining.

יהי זכרו ברוך

has been placated.

Appeasement as a form of conflict management exists even among non-humans. Frans de Waal, the primatologist, has described peace-making rituals among chimpanzees, bonobos and mountain gorillas.² There are contests for dominance among the social animals, but there must also be ways of restoring harmony to the group if it is to survive at all. So there are forms of appeasement and peace-making that are pre-moral and have existed since the birth of humanity.

Forgiveness has not. Konstan argues that its first appearance is in the Hebrew Bible and he cites the case of Joseph. What he does not make clear is *why* Joseph forgives, and why the idea and institution are born specifically within Judaism.

The answer is that within Judaism a new form of morality was born. Judaism is (primarily) an ethic of guilt, as opposed to most other systems, which are ethics of shame. One of the fundamental differences between them is that shame attaches to the person. Guilt attaches to the act. In shame cultures when a person does wrong he or she is, as it were, stained, marked, defiled. In guilt cultures what is wrong is not the doer but the deed, not the sinner but the sin. The person retains their fundamental worth (“the soul you gave me is pure,” as we say in our prayers). It is the act that has somehow to be put right. That is why in guilt cultures there are processes of repentance, atonement and forgiveness.

2 Frans de Waal, *Peacemaking among Primates*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.



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That is the explanation for Joseph's behaviour from the moment the brothers appear before him in Egypt for the first time to the point where, in this week's parsha, he announces his identity and forgives his brothers. It is a textbook case of putting the brothers through a course in atonement, the first in literature. Joseph is thus teaching them, and the Torah is teaching us, what it is to *earn* forgiveness.

Recall what happens. First he accuses the brothers of a crime they have not committed. He says they are spies. He has them imprisoned for three days. Then, holding Shimon as a hostage, he tells them that they must now go back home and bring back their youngest brother Benjamin. In other words, he is forcing them to re-enact that earlier occasion when they came back to their father with one of the brothers, Joseph, missing. Note what happens next:

They said to one another, "Surely we deserve to be punished [*ashemim*] because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us" ... They did not realise that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. [Gen. 42:21-23]

This is the first stage of repentance. They *admit they have done wrong*.

Next, after the second meeting, Joseph has his silver cup planted in Benjamin's

sack. This incriminating evidence is found and the brothers are brought back. They are told that Benjamin must stay as a slave.

"What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup." (Gen. 44:16)

This is the second stage of repentance. They *confess*. They do more; they admit collective responsibility. This is important. When the brothers sold Joseph into slavery it was Judah who proposed the crime (Gen. 37:26-27) but they were all (except Reuben) complicit in it.

Finally, at the climax of the story Judah himself says "So now let me remain as your slave in place of the lad. Let the lad go back with his brothers!" (Gen. 42:33). Judah, who sold Joseph as a slave, is now willing to become a slave so that his brother Benjamin can go free. This is what the Sages and Maimonides define as *complete repentance*, namely when circumstances repeat themselves and you have an opportunity to commit the same crime again, but you refrain from doing so because *you have changed*.

Now Joseph can forgive, because his brothers, led by Judah, have gone through all three stages of repentance: [1] admission of guilt, [2] confession and [3] behavioural change.

Forgiveness only exists in a culture in which repentance exists. Repentance presupposes that we are free and morally responsible agents who are capable of change, specifically the change that comes about when we recognise that



something we have done is wrong and we are responsible for it and we must never do it again. The possibility of that kind of moral transformation simply did not exist in ancient Greece or any other pagan culture. Greece was a shame-and-honour culture that turned on the twin concepts of character and fate. Judaism was a repentance-and-forgiveness culture whose central concepts are will and choice. The idea of forgiveness was then adopted by Christianity, making the Judeo-Christian ethic the primary vehicle of forgiveness in history.

Repentance and forgiveness are not just two ideas among many. They transformed the human situation. For the first time, repentance established the possibility that we are not condemned endlessly to repeat the past. When I repent I show I can change. The future is not predestined. I can make it different from what it might have been. Forgiveness liberates us from the past. *Forgiveness breaks the irreversibility of reaction and revenge.* It is the undoing of what has been done.

Humanity changed the day Joseph forgave his brothers. When we forgive and are worthy of being forgiven, we are no longer prisoners of our past. The moral life is one that makes room for forgiveness. ■

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As the saga of Yosef and his brothers draws to an end in this week's parasha, we read of the emotional reunion of the children of Ya'akov, of Yosef with his younger brother and of Ya'akov with his beloved "ben z'kunim". After the struggles and the enmity that filled the last two parshiyot, after the sorrow and the regret that was expressed in the past seven prakim, the Torah leaves us with a satisfying conclusion.

The family is finally reunited!

The Maharal makes an interesting comment regarding the tears shed by Yosef upon his embrace of Binyamin. Certainly, these were tears of emotion upon Yosef's long-awaited reconnection with his mother's only other son. However, the Maharal suggests that the tears were also shed as Yosef foresaw the very prophecy of Yechezkel that we read in this week's haftarah, the promise that Ephrayim, the tribe of Yosef, would eventually reunite with Binyamin, who remained part of the kingdom of Yehuda. More importantly, that meant that the Northern Kingdom, Ephrayim, would return to the Kingdom of Yehuda and, therefore, to the Davidic dynasty.

Often, when preparing these articles, I will experience an "epiphany". Well, not exactly. But I will uncover something about the haftarah that was always there but that I never realized before. It is a very

exciting moment - but also rather humbling ("Why didn't I think of this before!"). That happened to me while preparing this essay. I suddenly realized that the nevuah of Yechezkel relates to more than the reunion of the brothers alone. In fact, there are parallels between the two stories that we might not see at first glance.

We are seeing the words of the prophets and the promises of Hashem coming true before our very eyes!

The story of Yosef begins with the clear preference shown to him by his father ["K'tonet Passim"] which causes resentment and the distancing of the brothers from Yosef. In the same - but reversed way - the resentment of the tribes (led by Shevet Yosef) was caused by the clear preference shown by to Yehuda by Shlomo in taxing them less than he taxed the other tribes, something which led the tribes to distance themselves from the Solomonic Kingship. The brothers' resentment led to arguments and fights with Yosef ("v'lo yachlu dab'ro l'shalom"); the tribes' anger led them to fight and even war against the Judean Kingdom. Eventually, the tribes of Yosef are forcibly exiled to a foreign land and to a different culture, much as Yosef

was driven from his land and his family to a foreign land and foreign culture.

Of course, the critical difference between the stories is precisely what we read in our parasha: the reunification of the shattered family which never took place between the ancient tribes. In fact, the rabbis of the Talmud disagree as to whether the prophesied rapprochement between the kingdoms is still relevant. And clearly, it has not happened.

Or has it?

Today, we see remnants of the tribes of Ephrayim, of Dan, of Reuvan and others returning to Yehuda – or, more correctly, to a united Yisra'el. We witness the very fruition of the prophecy of Yechezkel that we read in the haftarah. We are seeing the words of the prophets and the promises of Hashem coming true before our very eyes! “Mah tov chelkeinu” – “How fortunate is our portion!”

And so, when you hear the brachot recited over the haftarah, and you hear it said: “v'davar echad mid'varecha achor lo yashiv reikom”, that not one of your promises will be unfulfilled, just remember what our haftarah promise.

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Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

Yosef and Binyamin's Tears and *Asara B'Teves*

In this week's parsha we have one of the most emotional and captivating *parshiyot* in the Torah. Following the cliffhanger from last week, when we are left in suspense as to what will transpire between Yosef and his brothers, we encounter their reunion. After Yosef discloses his identity to his brothers, he and Binyamin cry on each other's shoulders and then Yosef kisses and cries with his remaining brothers.

After not seeing his maternal brother Binyamin for more than 20 years it seems natural that Yosef would be caught up in emotion and shed a few tears. Why is it then, that Rashi attributes the tears to the future destruction of the *Besei Hamikdash* that was located in Binyamin's territory and the *Mishkan* that dwelled in Yosef's territory? Why did Rashi choose to ignore

the simple interpretation of sincere emotion caused by the reunification of two brothers?

The Drash Dovid offers an explanation as to why Rashi is not satisfied with the simple *p'shat* – and seeks a deeper understanding of the sobbing of Yosef and Binyamin. When Yosef and the other brothers reunite, the Torah uses the phrase: וַיִּנָּשֶׂק לְכָל־אֶחָיו וַיִּבְרֶךְ; וַיִּלָּחֶם – “*And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them.*” When the Torah depicts a cry that stems from emotion due to absence and missing one's siblings– it is accompanied by the term וַיִּנָּשֶׂק – kisses were present along with tears. Kisses are absent between Yosef and Binyamin. That is why Rashi seeks an additional factor, other than an expression of love that was the cause of such weeping.

The Oznayim L'torah offers an explanation as to why Yosef and Binyamin's tears at this juncture related to the destruction of the *Besei Hamikdash*. Once Yosef instructs the brothers to bring Yaakov to Mitzrayim, they come to the realization that this is beginning of the exile that was prophesied to their grandfather Avraham: וְיָדַעְתָּ כִּי־יָנֹכַח אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֵלֹהִים – “*You shall surely know that your offspring will be strangers*

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in a foreign land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and oppress them, for four hundred years.” (Bereshis 15:13). Once they comprehended the start of the first exile, they also *b’ruach hakodesh*, foreshadowed the future exiles and the destructions of the *Besei Hamikdash* and the *Mishkan*. That is what led Hazal to interpret the weeping of Yosef and Binyamin on each other’s shoulders as relating to the *churban*.

The Tifferes Shimshon offers another explanation. When Yosef and Binyamin reconnect, their renewed bond finds favor in the eyes of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and the *shechina* then resides among them. Love between brothers is adored by God and invites His presence. Once the *shechina* is present among them, they are given a glimpse into the future and envision the destruction of the *Besei Hamikdash* – which

led them to sadness.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that in a few days we will fast on the tenth of Teves to commemorate the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar—an event that began on that date and ultimately culminated in the destruction of the first *Beis Hamikdash*, the downfall of the Kingdom of Judah, and the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people. Although today, after two thousand years, we are privileged to return to Jerusalem, the *geula* is not yet complete. For the *shechina* to reside among us, we need to spread that brotherly love that Yosef and Binyamin shared. To respect others irrespective of differing opinions and *hashkafos*. Through *Ahavas Achim*, may we merit to reunite our lost brothers and be zoche to the building of the third *Beis Hamikdash!* ■

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Coming Close

“*Vayigash Yehudah*” (*Bereisheet 44:18*), Yehudah advances towards Yosef to plead his case for the safety of Binyamin. The root *n,g, sh*, expresses approaching, coming close. From the very first word of the *parashah*, we can learn powerful, significant lessons in personal initiative, in interpersonal relationships, and in the long-term vision every Jew should be compelled to have.

Rashi notes that Yehudah drew near Yosef with an aggressive stance. Rav Yehudah Leib Bloch attempts to reconcile Yehudah’s original conciliatory tone to Yosef (*Bereisheet 44:16*) by explaining that after his placating response, Yehudah recalled the pledge he made to his father to guarantee the safety of Binyamin. That thought generated a fresh strength to accomplish his mission with renewed conviction. At times we lose

our passion to carry out our obligations. However, when we recall a *kabbalah* that we accepted upon ourselves in the past, we are inspired to fortify our resolve and devote ourselves to achieving our goal.

Rav Rabinowitz in *Tiv Hatorah* understands from the single word *Vayigash* the importance of approaching an opponent to try and reconcile differences. Often, we make incorrect assumptions that prevent us from extending ourselves towards someone with whom we have disagreed. Inevitably the dispute continues with negative consequences that could easily have been avoided had we just taken that step to make peace. At the same time, the insulted or affronted party must be open, receptive, and willing to listen.

We find three individuals in *Tanach* with whom the word *vayigash* is used. Let us discuss the uniqueness of each one’s circumstance and their relationship to our own *tefilah*. “*Vayigash Avraham*” (*Bereisheet 18:23*), Avraham appeals to

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Hashem to save the city of Sedom saying, “Shall the whole world’s Judge not act justly?” We hear a universal plea to save humanity. This reverberates in the global layer of our prayer. “*Vayigash Yehudah*”, Yehudah addresses Yosef to have mercy on a member of his own family. His is a heartfelt prayer that is often echoed as we implore Hashem on behalf of our brethren. Finally, “*Vayigash Eliyahu el kol ha’am*” (*Kings I 18:20*). Eliyahu Hanavi addresses the people at the showdown on *Har HaCarmel*, praying for a *kiddush Hashem*, for Hashem’s glory to be revealed as a fire descends on his sacrifice. We too daven “*lema’an shemo*”, for the sake of Hashem Himself. We take three steps forward when beginning *Shemoneh Esrei*, reminding us of these three aspects of prayer. Further, the first three *brachot* of the *Amidah* tap into these three components, kindness, justice, and the sanctification of Hashem’s name.

The *midrash* sees this “coming close” as an allusion to the Ultimate Redemption, when Yehudah will come close to Yosef, the two representing the future Messianic monarchy, Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben Dovid. As we open the *parashah* with the word *Vayigash* we should be filled with yearning to draw near the fulfillment of this ultimate vision, *bemeheirah beyameinu, Amen*. ■

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Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

Teshuvah, Today! (Why Wait?)

Rebbe Saadia ben Joseph al-Fayyumi, known affectionately as Reb Saadia Gaon, was one of the last and most famous *Gaonim*. He was Rosh Yeshiva of Sura in Bagdad, and the author of dozens of works in Lashon haKodesh and Arabic, including *Emunos v'De'os* and a *peirush* on all of Tanach. In addition to his awesome intellectual prowess, R' Saadia Gaon was respected as a holy man, one of the great *tzadikim* of his era.

Talmidim of the great Sage once overheard their great Rabbi *krechting* (or whatever the Arabic word for 'groaning' is!) and calling out to Hashem in teshuvah. Curious as to what the *tzadik* could possibly have to do such intense teshuvah for, the talmidim unabashedly asked their teacher for an explanation. Smiling, R' Saadia Gaon

turned to them. "Let me tell you a story that happened to me many years ago," he said.

...Soon after I began to be known for my Torah knowledge and writing, I chose to spend a few months of self-imposed exile, wandering from town to town, incognito. Dressed in simple garments, I took some time to be alone, to ensure the trappings of honor and fame would not have a negative effect on my *midos* and *avodah*.

During the course of my travels I stayed for a short period at a small inn run by an elderly Jew, a sincere and simple man. The owner of the inn served me generously, and I enjoyed my time there, learning and davening uninterrupted. Unknown to me, a few of my talmidim were searching throughout the countryside and arrived at the inn, confronting the *baal ha-bayit* as to my whereabouts.

"What?! The great R' Saadia Gaon at my humble inn? It can't be!"

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forgive me Rav Saadiah! I didn't know that it was you!"

"My brother", I assured him, "you have nothing to apologize for."

"No, no, dear Rebbe, if only I would have known your true identity, who you really are, I would have served you *completely* differently!"

"Since then," said Rav Sa'adia to his talmidim, "every night before going to sleep I make a *cheshbon ha-nefesh*, a spiritual accounting, and review that day's *avodat Hashem*. I think of that old innkeeper, and say to myself: 'If only I had known the true identity of the *Ribbono shel Olam* — Who He really Is — in the beginning of the day, I would have served Him *completely* differently."

So when I awaken each morning, I take a few minutes to call out to my Creator, to plead with Hashem that He forgive the shortcomings in my service, and that He open my heart and eyes to draw me close in teshuvah...

.....

In our sedra this week, Yosef reveals himself to his long lost brothers in a moment charged with dramatic emotion, and he

knows that his brothers will immediately feel the soul-breaking weight of having intended to kill him and having sold him into slavery. Therefore, Yosef pleads with them: *וַעֲתָה אֵל תִּתְעַצְבוּ וְאֵלֵי־יְחִיר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם*, "*V'atah*, and now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves. It was to save life that God sent me ahead of you!" (*Bereishis*, 45:5) 'My brothers! Don't be consumed with guilt and sadness!' And as you return to our father, *אֵל תִּקְדְּוּ בַדֶּרֶךְ*, "do not quarrel on the way" (45:24). 'Take care not to become argumentative and blame one another or dwell on the pain of the past.' Yosef thus charts a path of *teshuvah* for them, teaching them to embrace mercy, magnanimity and forgiveness — and reconciliation and compassion for themselves.

"*V'ata*, 'now' is synonymous with *teshuvah*. Chazal teach us that whenever the Torah uses the term *v'atah*, "and now", it implies the possibility and opportunity for spiritual realignment and a new beginning: *Ein "v'atah" elah teshuvah*, "There is no mention of *v'atah* that does not refer to *teshuvah*." A prime example is the *pasuk*, *וַעֲתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ שָׂאֵל מֵעַתָּה*, "*V'atah*, and now, Yisrael, what does Hashem require

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"ויברך יעקב את פרעה" (מ"ה:י')

"And Yaakov blessed Pharaoh" (47:10)

What blessing did Yaakov give to Pharaoh? Rashi answers, quoting Midrash Tanchuma, that the blessing was that the Nile should rise and overflow its banks at his coming.

Was there no other blessing more suitable like the blessing of health or long life? Wouldn't such a blessing be more appropriate since Pharaoh just asked Yaakov how old he was?

One can answer that a blessing of health or long life would be an insult to Pharaoh, for as a god he grants those requests to others. Yaakov understood that any blessing should fit the individual. With the Nile rising at the coming of Pharaoh, such a blessing would strengthen Pharaoh's contemplation that he was a god. Until that time Pharaoh saw himself as human, able to receive a blessing. Rashi concludes that from then on, Pharaoh would come to the Nile, and it would rise towards him and water the land.

Shabbat Shalom

of you...?” This becomes ‘*Teshuvah* is what Hashem requires of you, here and now...’ (*Midrash Beshalach*)

Rebbe Baruch of Medzibuz interprets the *pasuk*, וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל קָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׂאֵל מִעֲמֶךָ, “*And now, Israel, what does Hashem your God ask of you...*” (*Devarim, 10:12*): *V’atah*, and from now on, Yisrael, live like a *Yid!* Don’t focus on the negative; focusing on what we have done wrong and how we have failed, can lead to disproportionate worry and depression, sapping our vitality and life force. “*V’atah*, and now” means disregard your past *aveiros*, failures and guilt, and embrace the *now*, the new reality that lies before us in the present moment. *V’atah*, “and now” is a reference to *teshuvah* (*Midrash Rabbah, Bereishis, 21:6*)

Teshuvah is not only a response to an *aveirah*, a sin or failing. And while *Teshuva* ‘season’ might be the primary undertaking and focus during Chodesh Elul and in preparation for Yom Kippur — drawing close, strengthening our relationship with Hashem is an opportunity that exists now, and all year ‘round.

May the lesson learned by Rav Saadiah Gaon from the holy innkeeper encourage us in our *avodas Hashem*, now: ‘If only I had known the true identity of the *Ribbono shel Olam* — Who He really Is — in the beginning of the year, in the way I know Him now, I would have served Him *completely* differently...’

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(And... if you haven’t yet gotten your copy of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuvah*, why wait?) ■

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9:00 AM

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Tehillim: Divine Poetry

10:15 AM

Rabbi Aharon Adler

The Impact of Chanuka upon
Jewish History

11:30 AM

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

Shir haShirim (L'Ayla)

2:00 PM

Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld

Men's Gemara Chabura S,T,TH

<https://zoom.us/j/887981820>

4:30 PM

Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

Men's Gemara B'Iyun S,M,W,Th

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8:00PM

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Hilchot Shabbat (L'Ayla)

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Rabbi Shmuel Herschler

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4:30PM

Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

7:00 PM

Rabbi Baruch Taub

(Zoom only-Resumes Dec. 20)

8:30PM

Rabbi Elyada Goldvicht

The Bais – Semichas Chaver
Program (men only)

TUE, DEC 14

9:15 AM

Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)

9:30 AM

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

Minchat Chinuch

10:30 AM

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

Parshat HaShavua

12:15 PM

Dr. Deborah Polster

Jewish History

2:00 PM

Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld

5:00 PM

Rebbetzin Sylvie Schatz

Chazal: Insights Into Our

Times (L'Ayla) <https://zoom.us/j/85177782268> (Zoom Only)

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 Medina and Halacha
- 10:15 AM**
Rabbi Anthony Manning
 Contemporary Issues in Halacha and Hashkafa
- 11:30 AM**
Rabbi Alan Kimche
 Great Jewish Thinkers
- 4:30PM**
Rabbi Hillel Ruvell
- 7:00 PM**
Rabbi Baruch Taub
 Halacha (Zoom only) (Resumes December 22)

8:30 PM
Rav Meir Goldwicht
 Parshat Hashavua (Hebrew)
<https://zoom.us/j/2244321902>
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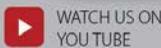
8:30 PM
Rabbi Aschi Dick
 The Bais- Halachic Controversies (Men Only)

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THURS, DEC 16

- 9:00 AM**
Rabbi Ari Kahn
 Parshat HaShavua
- 9:15AM**
Rabbanit Shani Taragin
 Sefer Kohelet (L'Ayla)
- 10:15 AM**
Rabbi Baruch Taub
 Parshat Hashavua
- 11:30 AM**
Rabbi Finkelstein
 Unlocking the Messages of Chazal
- 2:00 PM**
Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld
- 4:30PM**
Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

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BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

Special Projects Consultant, OU Israel Center
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A Story Within a Story

Parshat Vayigash contains many a story within a story. Outwardly, we see how things progress between Yosef and his brothers – but we intuitively understand that some historic destiny is unfolding under the surface. We are perhaps astounded at Yosef’s treatment of his brothers, yet we know that the siblings are subjected to their brother’s calculating moves so that his dreams would be fulfilled.

No! There is yet a deeper level of interpretation of the unfolding drama. With Nechama Leibowitz, let us enter the room where Yosef reveals himself to his brothers (Bereishit 45:4-5; 7). Let us analyze his monologue:

“I am Yosef, your brother!” – The stark fact is revealed to the brothers, who are now in shock.

“Whom you sold to Egypt.” – The shock of their crime rings home; the guilt sets in.

“Now be not grieved...because you sold me here.” – Immediately Yosef assuages their conscience. The sale is now relegated to the second clause. And why? *Because – “To save life, Hashem sent me ahead of*

you...” – You thought you sold me, but that is not the case. (Don’t feel so bad.) You were tools in God’s hands – and for a good cause. And I was a *shaliach*, a messenger sent here [to Mitzrayim] by God.

So, now, Yosef is no longer talking of a wicked sale. Moreover, Hashem has entered the picture, and Yosef’s message takes a new turn:

“... To ensure your survival on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”

In their terrified state, the brothers could easily relate to their survival on the existential plane. But Yosef Hatzaddik has added a new dimension to his speech: survival for a noble purpose. The sale of Yosef is forgotten, dismissed. Now, Yosef declares that the brothers are Hashem’s agents realizing the ultimate sublime mission of the Jewish people.

Now the brothers are entirely vindicated because *“It was not you who sent me here – but God!”*

Reading this story surely makes us ponder: “What, if at all, is my place in the unfolding destiny of our people? What misdemeanor or seemingly innocuous action on my part might have triggered an episode or series of events that ultimately revealed the hand of God?” Surely this is food for thought. ■

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The Exile of the Shechinah

Ya'akov's worst fears are coming true. Having already spent twenty-two years outside his homeland, adrift in a Northern exile, Ya'akov had hoped to return to Israel and enjoy the tranquility of "retirement". Yet, Hashem had other plans for him, as his life turned both chaotic and tragic. He suffers the crushing "loss" of his favored son Yosef, and watches as Shimon is incarcerated and Binyamin is imperiled. Upon finally discovering that all his children are safe, Ya'akov faces a new and more arduous challenge: Should he join Yosef in Egypt? He is inexorably drawn to his son but is anxious and even hesitant about departing the Land of Israel. Filled with uncertainty, he visits the city of his father- Be'er Sheva-looking for divine guidance.

He receives his answer in a nighttime visit from Hashem. Ya'akov is instructed to journey to Egypt, but this time- unlike his first departure from Israel- he will not be traveling alone. Hashem assures him - אנכי ארד עמך - promising to personally escort him down to Egypt. Not only will Hashem escort him, but one day Ya'akov's return to Israel will also be accompanied by Hashem- ואנכי אעלך גם עלה . Confident that he would not be abandoned in a foreign land, Ya'akov leaves

his Homeland- never to return alive.

This divine promise is not just a private assurance extended to Ya'akov. This announcement establishes an important historical condition known in Kabbalah as שכינתא בגלותא. Hashem is infinite and exists beyond space and outside of time. Yet His concentrated presence in our world- the Shechinah- inheres in particular locations. Ideally, the Shechinah resides in Yerushalayim and is pivoted upon the Mikdash. What happens to the Shechinah after the Mikdash is destroyed and the Jews depart Yerushalayim?

The gemara in Rosh Hashanah describes the ten stages of the Shechinah gradually vacating the Mikdash. Stage by stage it withdrew from the inner sanctum of the kodesh hakodoshim , to the outer sections of the Temple mount, ultimately, entirely fleeing Yerushalayim and settling in a desert retreat. Was this the final destination of the Shechinah? As the Jews journeyed to foreign lands would the Shechinah remain sequestered in the desert mountains surrounding Yerushalayim? The doctrine of שכינתא בגלותא, coded in this pasuk and elaborated in kaballah, provides the encouraging answer: Wherever the Jewish people are exiled to, the "presence of Hashem" or the Shechinah accompanies them. We are never fully alone.

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violently discharged from their Homeland and angrily scorned by the very G-d who awarded them this Land. Being irately cast away by a loving G-d is devastating! The doctrine of שכירתא בגלותא comforts us that, as furious as Hashem may be, our historic bond is never fully broken. We may be distant from Yerushalayim but we are close to the Shechinah.

Even in foreign lands it wasn't too difficult to locate the Shechinah's presence and its new home. Jews always constructed batei kneset and batei midrash- houses of prayer and of study- to shelter the exiled Shechinah. In the 6th century BCE, during the initial stages of the first exile, Jews resettled to areas near modern day- Baghdad. Carrying stones and dirt from the Mikdash, they built a legendary beit kneset called the 'relocated shul' or שף יתבי, highlighting the new Babylonian home for the Shechinah. This historic beit hakneset (which according to some accounts lasted close to 1600 years) was just the first beit kneset to fulfill the guarantee to Ya'akov of the Shechinah accompanying Jewish exile.

The doctrine of שכירתא בגלותא doesn't just promise us the intimacy and protection of the Shechinah in foreign lands. By phrasing His promise with the term אנכי ארד

-which can also be read as "I will descend", Hashem promises that His Shechinah will suffer alongside Jewish suffering. The fate of the Shechinah in this world has now been hitched to the fate of the Jewish people. As the Jews suffer, the Shechinah falls, just as the Shechinah is restituted as the Jews are redeemed. This promise about descent and ascent bonds the fate of the Shechinah to Jewish destiny. Tikun chatzot is a practice to arise at around midnight to pray for redemption. The opening paragraph of this prayer stresses that we are also praying for the redemption of the exiled Shechinah or שכירה בגלות.

In the 18th century, at a very dark point of Jewish history, Chassidut arose, to reassure the Jewish people that, despite an interminable exile, the love between nation and their G-d was inalienable. This reassurance based upon the doctrine of שכירתא בגלותא invigorated a demoralized nation whose faith had been battered by centuries of persecution. This message provided the national confidence to begin the modern return to our Homeland. Wherever a Jew traveled- literally and figuratively- the Shechinah was present- even in the darkest and most remote regions of a ceaseless galus. The promise to Ya'akov is everlasting. ■

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Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem. With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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Moving Potted Plants During Shemittah

Plants and produce that are grown in pots, both perforated and sealed, are obligated in the laws of shemittah. The extent of the obligation varies based on what form of labor is being done and the location of the potted plant.

Moving from outdoors to indoors

The *Talmud Yerushalmi (Orlah 1:2)* debates whether planting indoors (under a roof and with minimal walls; see *Mishpetei Eretz 7:4*) is permissible during *shemittah*. The *Chazon Ish (22:1)* rules that a sealed pot indoors is not obligated in any laws of *shemittah*. As such, it would be permitted to plant and do any type of agricultural labor on plants in sealed pots that are indoors.

In regards to moving a plant from

outdoors into a closed structure during *shemittah*, one may assume that there is no halachic concern as the level of obligation in regards to *shemittah* is reduced when the plant is moved indoors. Furthermore, since there is generally no improvement in moving a potted plant indoors, it is permitted to bring it inside. (The separate issue of greenhouse agriculture will be discussed in future articles.) However, later authorities clearly state that moving a potted plant indoors in order to perform labor that is forbidden outdoors and then returning the plant to its original location is strictly prohibited. Such a loophole to circumvent *shemittah* in order to improve the plant is prohibited. The same would be true for planting in a sealed pot indoors in order to grow the potted plant outdoors (see *Shulchan Shlomo* p.90).

Moving an indoor potted plant

Authorities discuss how to handle a potted plant indoors. Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (*Halichot Sadeh* 48) rules that it is prohibited during *shemittah* to make a sealed pot into a perforated one, even indoors. Rav Elyashiv writes that even if one does not intend to improve the status of the plant, such an action is still prohibited. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Minchat Shlomo* 1:41) disagrees, maintaining that if one has no intention to improve the potted plant, there is no transgression. He argues that since handling a potted plant is not the original

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form of working the ground on *shemitah*, once there is no intent, any change in the status of the potted plant inside is permitted.

Movement that would improve the potted plant

Later authorities allow moving an indoor potted plant (perforated or sealed), such as from a table to a floor with ceramic tiles. However, there is a dispute regarding actions that would improve the growth of a potted plant. Rav Nissim Karelitz (*Chut Shani* 1:22) writes that opening a window near a potted plant in order to improve air-flow is prohibited, since it benefits the plant. The same would be true when moving a potted plant to somewhere with more sun. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is lenient even if the intent is to improve the plant. He argues that since the potted plant is indoors (which is essentially permitted) and actions like opening a window or moving to a sunny location are far removed from the original laws of *shemitah*, such actions are completely permissible.

In Summary:

- It is permissible to move a potted plant from outdoors to indoors if the intention is for it to remain indoors.
- Intentionally planting in potted pots indoors in order to have them blossom outside is prohibited during *shemitah*.
- Moving an outdoor potted plant indoors in order to perform agricultural labor and then move the pot back outside is

prohibited.

- It is permissible to turn a plant in a non-perforated pot into a perforated one indoors if one does not intend to improve the plant.
- It is permissible to open a window for better airflow or to relocate a potted plant to a sunnier area indoors even if the intention is to improve the status of the plant. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Our *Sedra* this week, *Parshat Vayigash*, features the climactic moment of *Yosef* revealing his true identity to his brothers. These two *pesukim* paint the picture of that great revelation, as the brothers are shocked to learn that this nobleman standing before them, is their long-lost brother.

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעֶדּוּ אֲבִי חַי וְלֹא-יָכֵל אֶחָיו לַעֲנֹת אֹתוֹ כִּי בָּהֶן מִפְּנֵיו : וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו גִּשְׂרֹ נָא אֵלַי וַיִּגְשׂוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אֶחֶיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרַיִמָּה:

Yosef said to his brothers, "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, as they were caught off guard on account of him. Then Yosef said to his brothers, "Come forward to me." And when they came forward, he said, "I am your brother Yosef, who you sold into Egypt..."

The *Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh* points out that *Yosef* twice told his brothers "*Ani Yosef*," and the second time he added the word "*acheichem*," "your brother" (*Bereisheet* 45:3- 4). The *Ohr HaChayim* explains that *Yosef* repeated this phrase twice, because while the brothers were embarrassed at the fact that they had sold *Yosef*, they did not truly believe that this person was their brother. Therefore, *Yosef* addressed both concerns by telling them that he was indeed *Yosef*, and despite the fact that they sold him into slavery, he always loved them and would deal with

them as a loving **brother**, and not seek any vengeance or compensation at their expense.

Despite all that had transpired between *Yosef* and his brothers, despite the many years which had passed, *Yosef* reassures his brothers that he is indeed *Yosef*, and though he has risen to a position of influence and power, he remains *acheichem* - "*your brother*."

Inevitably within every family dynamic, both immediate families or even within the collective family of *Am Yisrael*, there are periods of conflict and tension. There may even be extended periods of dissonance and distance. *Yosef HaTzadik*, with this one seemingly superfluous word-*achechem*, teaches us a profound lesson in bringing those conflicts to conclusion-by recognizing that though we may have wronged one another or even caused trauma or harm to one another, the key to reconciliation is to never lose sight of the spirit of brotherhood.

Yehi Ratzon, may this beautiful insight of the *Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh*, serve as the impetus to bring unity, brotherhood and reconciliation to *Klal Yisrael* and to the entire world... ■



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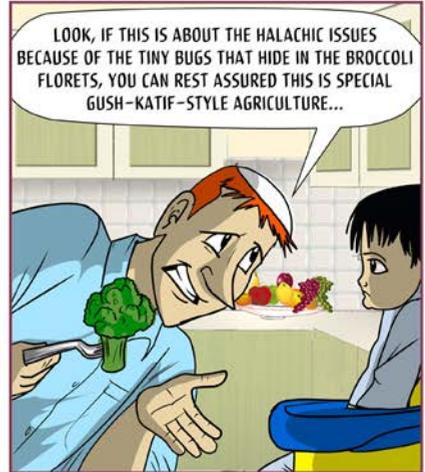
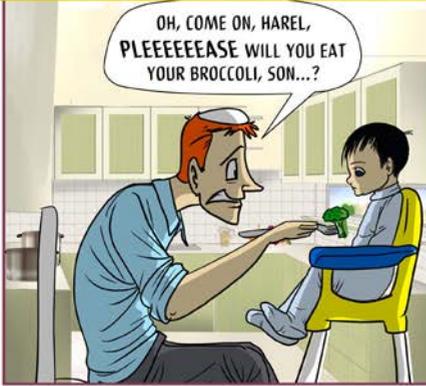
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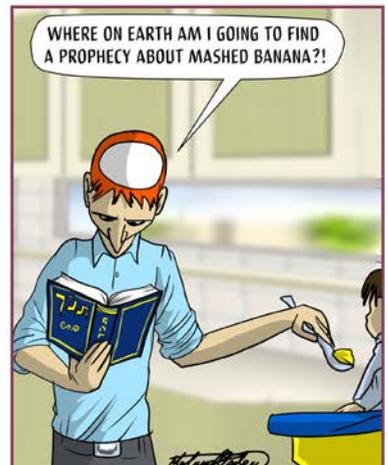
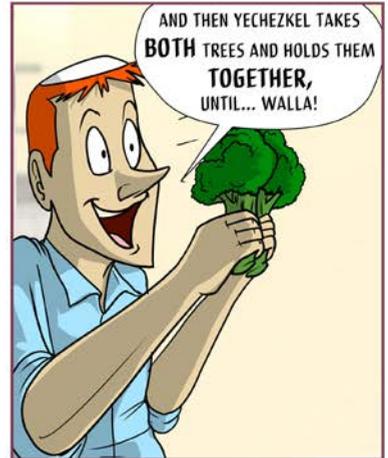
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RABBI AARON

Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

Clashing “Truth” and “Peace”

When studying the teachings of a particular sage in the pages of the Talmud, often a picture emerges revealing a unique aspect of their personality. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik set out to do just this regarding the sage, Rav Safra.

In one Talmudic passage (*Makkot* 24a) Rav Safra is described as a person who embodied the verse in Psalms “*dover emet bilvavo*” (speaking the truth in his heart) (15:2). Rashi explains how Rav Safra was once reciting the *Shema* when a nobleman made an offer to purchase an item. Misinterpreting Rav Safra’s silence, the buyer increased his offer. When Rav Safra finished his prayer, he insisted on accepting the lower offer- having mentally accepted it when it was made.

A second passage concerning Rav Safra recounts when he was traveling with a colleague and they encountered Mar Zutra. Mistaking their purpose, Mar Zutra asked, “Why did you go out of your way to meet me?” Rav Safra replied with utmost truth “that this was not their intent”; they just happened to have been in this place at this time. Rav Safra later turned to his traveling

companion who questioned why it was necessary to be so transparent, and explained his actions: “Not to do so would have misled Mar Zutra.” Rav Safra believed that it is necessary to speak not just the truth but the unspoken truth, in its entirety. (*Chullin* 94b)

With this background the Rav was puzzled by a third Talmudic passage where Rav Safra penned a prayer to be inserted at the end of his daily Amidah. Surprisingly the theme is not truth, rather it places a major emphasis on pursuing “peace.”

“After finishing the Amidah, Rav Safra would say “May it be Your will O God of our fathers that You establish peace in the Heavenly assembly and in the assembly below, as well as among those that engage in the study of your Torah, whether they do it for its own sake or for ulterior motives. As for those who study Torah with ulterior motives, may it be Your Will that they engage in it entirely for its own sake.” (*Berachot* 16b)

The first two requests relate to making peace which often requires one to compromise one’s position and find common ground with the other. Perhaps the reason Rav Safra authored this particular prayer, suggested the Rav, was due to the fact that he epitomized truth; he also knew from personal experience the potentially divisive consequences of single minded and consistent devotion to truth. Hence, he pleaded with God to strengthen the

attribute of peace.

The Rav, in his analysis, returns to the prayer of Rav Safra and brilliantly explains the third plea in his daily request. An essential ingredient to arrive at the correct conclusion when legitimate positions are at odds with one another is unbiased study and analysis. "May it be Your Will that they [those not studying Torah for its own sake] will engage in it entirely for its own sake." Knowledge itself is insufficient. One must also have studied *Torah lishma*, i.e., with no ulterior motive, with no preceding agenda. We do not look for texts or opinions in the Torah literature that conform to our pre-existing ideas. Rather we must study Torah so that the objective *retzon Hashem* (the Will of God) will become clear to us.

Thus we understand that Rav Safra prayed that Jews should strive to learn Torah *lishmah*, for in so doing they will come to fully embrace *tiferet* (the beauty of Torah), thereby achieving both truth and peace. "Whoever studies *Torah Lishmah* merits many things...He is called friend, beloved, he loves God and he loves people...: (*Avot* 6:1). Learning *lishmah* directs a Jew to apply Torah wisdom to concrete situations and worldly realities.

In closing, the Rav offered a deeper meaning to the phrase we declare daily in the *Amidah* and *Kaddish*: *Oseh shalom bimromav* (He makes peace in His heights), i.e., in the celestial world God reconciles these conflicting values, even if we cannot comprehend how that is achieved. With the help of God and His Torah we endeavor to accomplish the same in this world, *hu ya'aseh shalom alienu ve'al kol yisrael*, for all us and all of Israel. Amen. ■



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Aviyah Atkin
Director of Engagement, Yachad Israel



Torah Tidbits is proud to share a dvar Torah from OU Israel's remarkable Yachad program! Thank you for all your outstanding work in providing for the special needs community throughout Israel.

In this week's parsha, we read the meaningful declaration of Yehuda on behalf of his younger brother, Binyamin. "Ki Avdecha Arav Et HaNa'ar," "For your servant assumed responsibility for the boy..." Yehuda is willing to sacrifice his future to be a servant in place of Binyamin. Due to tremendous Hashgacha Pratit, Yehuda is unknowingly speaking to his brother Yosef. This situation stands as true testimony to the truth and sincerity in the brothers' words. From Yehuda's perspective, he is speaking to a powerful and rigid Egyptian leader as he speaks the truth, and the truth speaks.

Yosef hears this "Areivut", assumed responsibility, which leads to one of the sources in the Gemara (Bava Batra) for the Laws of Areivut. An "Areiv", a guarantor, is one who is "Mit'arev", in essence involves himself in a matter that technically isn't connected to him. For example in a loan, a guarantor is coming and taking responsibility for the one taking the loan. One who is glancing from the outside might ask, why would someone do such a thing? Is he looking for trouble? Why get involved in something that you don't need

to be involved in? Rav Akiva Kashtiel gives a beautiful explanation, that if the answer is not obvious as to why someone gets involved in something, it's because deep down inside - they truly are involved.

"Kol Yisrael Areivim Ze L'Ze." The Tanya describes all of Bnei Yisrael to have one Neshama divided by different bodies. This is a tremendous foundation that is said clearly in Yehuda's declaration, and when Yosef hears this - "V'lo Yachol Yosef L'Hitapek." He couldn't hold back.

Each and everyone of us can identify with certain sects of society, things that they feel connected to and get involved in. We raise money, we donate, we volunteer in different ways that feel right. Whether it be Torah Learning, Outreach, Gemachs, Hachnasat Orchim, etc. We, as Jews, are super involved in one another. We assume responsibility, even when sometimes we don't have a direct connection. However, it is important to point out that often there are areas of Jewish involvement that can get less attention and perhaps we can improve in. "It's not my thing" "It's not my responsibility." "It's for the young single volunteers." "I don't know enough." Particularly in the field of inclusion for people with disabilities, caring for the elderly, mental health advocacy and more. It is so important to look within ourselves, and think - am I accessing my inner Yehuda? Am I taking responsibility for Klal Yisrael

where I can? Can I do better? Can I show more support? Do I really care about this for Klal Yisrael? Or Chas Vishalom, am I making the mistake of the brothers in Parshat Vayeshev, where I hear the cries of my brother and choose to walk away.

Our chachamim tell us that the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash was due to a lacking in “Areivut Hadadit.” In Sefer Yechezkel (9) Hashem tells Gavriel to warn the Older Tzadikim, as they were the first who were going to be punished. Rav Mordechai Eliyahu explains that these big tzadikim kept all of the torah, from Alef to Tav, A to Z. However, they did not do all that was in their ability to make a difference and impact Klal Yisrael. Tzidkiyahu, who according to his name was a tzadik, yet did wrong in the eyes of Hashem. The gemara explains that he didn’t protest his guards who chased after Yirmiyahu. He did not protest the rich who did not free their slaves. He didn’t take responsibility for the spiritual state of Am Yisrael, and the result was the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash.

From Yehuda, we can learn so much about learning from our mistakes, taking responsibility for ourselves and for others in Klal Yisrael. We learn what it means to assume responsibility, and get involved even when technically we don’t need to be. Each of us is capable of this, perhaps one of the many reasons we identify as “Yehudim”, from Yehuda’s name. We can each take one more step in these directions that perhaps are less comfortable and be more involved in areas of society that truthfully deep down, we do care about and do want to see improvement in. By doing so, may we

all merit in coming closer to one another - bringing Nachat to Hashem and bringing the Geula closer, B’mheira B’yamenu - Amen! ■

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A Harmless Lie?

Question: Kids in camp often ask counselors when color war will be, and they often respond that they don't know, when they actually do. Does this violate the prohibition of lying?

Answer: The term *sheker* in the Torah's halachic contexts is found regarding oaths (Vayikra 19:12), testimony (Shemot 20:12), and "Distance yourself from falsehood" (Shemot 23:7, in the context of instructions to judges). The *gemara's* (Shvuot 31a) several examples are in the realm of adjudication, referring to any of the participants (including the litigants) giving a false impression even without lying.

The Yereim (235) posits that the prohibition applies even to non-judicial matters, but in cases where the lie causes damage. The *gemara* (Chulin 94a) forbids doing even nice things without lying if it may cause the recipient to be more grateful than he would be if he knew the truth, which could cause him to reciprocate at a cost. In

non-judicial cases, we find an assortment of leniencies. The *gemara* (Yevamot 65a) allows distortions to preserve peace, citing three biblical precedents: 1) The brothers told Yosef that Yaakov had asked to forgive them; 2) Shmuel told Shaul he was going to Beit Lechem to bring a sacrifice, when his goal was to choose David as Shaul's successor; 3) Hashem told Avraham that Sarah had called herself, rather than Avraham, too old to have a baby. Whereas #3 was to save someone else from dispute, #1 and #2 allow even saving oneself; whereas #1 and #2 carried the potential of grave danger, #3 refers to only hurt feelings. Torah Lishma (364) brings dozens of Talmudic examples of altering the truth for altruistic reasons. The *gemara* (Bava Metzia 23b) permits denying having learned a certain Talmudic *massechet*, out of humility (Rashi ad loc.). Another is lying to hide matters of relations between spouses (ibid.), which extends to not divulging when a woman is going to the *mikveh* (Rama, Yoreh Deah 198:48).

It is not limited to cases when the need could outweigh the prohibition, as not all the needs are great. Beit Shamai say that one violates lying if he praises the beauty

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The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



of an unattractive bride, whereas Beit Hillel (Ketubot 17a), whom we accept, posit that this is okay, to make the *chatan* happy. The need there or due to humility (above) is not enough to overcome prohibitions. Rather, whereas most *mitzvot* are more absolute, the prohibition of non-judicial lying is contextual, and benevolent lying is not morally or halachically problematic.

Our answer is that counselors may, at least usually, say they do not know when color war is. Let us use your case to highlight some of the many distinctions that affect what is permitted. The accepted practice regarding color war in camp is that the staff tries to make it a surprise. The camper who is trying to find out is in essence saying, "It is my 'job' to try to guess; it is your job to try to deceive me." This is equivalent to what I answered a young child of mine, who asked how I could try to fake out defenders when playing basketball. Along similar lines, if the counselors do not hide the truth, the campers, including the one who asked, will be damaged (i.e., have less fun). Misleading and even lying is permitted when the benefit to others outweighs any disadvantage (see Chulin *ibid.*; Titen

Emet L'Yaakov p. 334).

When it is justified to alter the truth, one should try to limit the degree of deception. It is better to mislead than to directly tell a lie (see Aruch La'ner, Yevamot 65a). "I don't know," when one does know, is particularly palatable. In fact, *Chazal* instruct us to get used to saying we do not know (Berachot 4a). Kalla Rabbasi (4:22) learns this from Achima'atz, who knew that Avshalom had been killed and told David he did not know. It is not only farther from a full lie but apparently is also a "self-fulfilling prophecy." In other words, once it is acceptable to say "I don't know," when is told that, he should consider that it might mean "I would rather not say" (one may use a literally incorrect statement when it is not particularly misleading). ■

Eretz Hemdah has begun a participatory Zoom class - "Behind the Scenes with the Vebbe Rebbe" - an analytical look at the sources, methodology, and considerations behind our rulings, with Rav Daniel Mann. Contact info@eretzhemdah.org to join.

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בס"ד

Buying flowers during shemita

We would like to thank agronomists Yechiel Steinmetz and Yair Nishri – Flower Department, Extension Service, Ministry of Agriculture, for the information we used to prepare these tables.

The information in the tables below relates to buying bouquets and flower arrangements, not to buying plants in nurseries. Do not purchase flowers from growers who grow them in a forbidden manner to avoid aiding wrongdoers. Buy them only from vendors who present proof that the flowers grew in a permissible manner, under halachic supervision or *heter mechirah*.

Flowers that may be purchased even without halachic supervision include:

1. Flowers generally planted latest before the beginning of *shemita*; it stands to reason they were planted beforehand.
2. Perennials were not necessarily planted during *shemita* and may have been planted before.

Even in these cases it is best to purchase flowers only from places with supervision, to ensure they are tended to during the *shemita* year in a permissible fashion. Furthermore, the year following *shemita* we need to make sure to buy plants planted in a permissible manner (*heter mechirah*/detached platforms).

Kedushat shevi'it – Fragrant flowers picked during the *shemita* year not grown on detached platforms or employing *heter mechirah* have *kedushat shevi'it*, *shemita* sanctity. This week we will cover the flowers that do not require supervision during shemita. Fragrant flowers are marked .

Perennials that do not require supervision during shemita



Flower Name	Hebrew	Name	Hebrew	Name	Hebrew
Anthurium	אנטוריום	Great horsetail	שבטיבט	Phlox	פולקס
Acacia	שיטה	Grevilla	גרובילאה	Pittosporum	פיטוספורום
Aralia (Fastia)	ארליה	Gypsophila (Baby's Breath)	גיבסנית	Protea	פרוטאות
Asparagus	אספרגוס	Heliconia	הליקוניה	Rice flower	פרח האורז
Aspedistra	מגינית	Lady Banks rose	בנקציה	Roses ⁴	ורדים
Bird of Paradise	ציפור גן עדן	Laurel-leaved snail tree	סהרון	Ruscus	רוסקוס (עצבונית)
Cestrum	צסטרום	Limonium	לימוניום	Leucadendron	לאוקדנדרון
Myrsine	מרסינה	Orchid	סחלב	Safari Sunset	ספארי סנטס
Eucalyptus	אקליפטוס	Pampas grass	פמפס	Solidaster	סולידסטר
Fern	שרך	Peony	אדמונית	Waxflower	פרת שנוה
Gerbera	גרברה	Philodendron	פילודנדרון	Willow (salix)	ערבה סליקס
Golden rod	סולידגו	Philodendron xanadu	קסנדו		

Next week we will present lists of flowers that require supervision for part of shemita or throughout the entire year.



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Choosing Gender

Last time we asked whether parents can decide that a particular trait is unwanted and any embryo carrying such a trait be destroyed? When dealing with a serious genetic disease most Rabbis, ethicists, medical professionals and members of the public agree that we should allow access to such technology that can eradicate such a trait.

But when dealing with other genetic traits the opinions become more diverse. One case in point is the issue of gender selection. The technology currently exists that enables us to offer couples to undergo an in-vitro fertilization, to check the gender of any fertilized eggs, and decide which to transfer to the uterus and which to discard.

While we are able to do so, the question remains as to whether we should do so. Can couples decide that they would like to choose their children's gender? The government can decide that they will not pay for such treatment, but couples who have the financial resources may choose to pay for such a procedure. They are willing to face the potential health risks, burden of treatment and costs, due to their strong desire for a child of their preferred gender.

The law in Israel permits couples to

utilize this technology, if they are willing to pay for it, but each couple must apply for specific permission. This is done through the Ministry of Health and there are quite rigorous conditions for such permission being granted.

The couple must have at least four children of one gender and have a good reason for deciding to use gender selection. In cases of no medical need the committee usually does not approve this treatment. Couples can appeal this decision and in some cases the appeal is accepted, but in many cases the appeal is also rejected.

Only after receiving permission can the couple start the medical process of preparing for and undergoing the treatment. Many couples, facing the committee and the hurdles in place to receive permission, decide not to pursue such treatment. The entire process of receiving authorization is designed to limit the use of such technology for this purpose.

Many couples prefer not to undergo what may be an unnecessary medical procedure. Some couples do persist and choose to undergo this treatment. It is not always effective but couples have been successful and have delivered babies of their desired gender.

We are able to choose gender, the Government of Israel permits, but should the halacha allow it, condone it, encourage it?

More on this next time. ■



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Asher Manning Gush Chapter Director **Yosef and The Wheel of Time**

Threaded throughout the long and convoluted tapestry of our people's history is a golden thread of hope, woven and spun by undying prophecies, calling us ever towards a redemptive future. One of Judaism's gifts to the world is the prophetic outlook.

As the control group of human history; we have seen it all and we know, with the benefit of foresight, that we shall see it all again. Jewish prophecy is not a dream but a reality. Our predictions for the future are based on the experiences of our past.

Men and women of vision have throughout the ages stepped forward from within our nation to guide us and point us in the right direction. The first of these was Yosef, a realizer of dreams who saw the unfolding of history in his mind's eye. For him, his own life story, tragic and traumatic, was but a premeditated step from on high, guiding his family to safety and a better future. Throughout his life Yosef foresaw three steps forward, envisioning, predicting and dreaming with his eyes wide open.

Today we must do the same.

Reading carefully the patterns of our history we know that all golden eras of Jewish power, prosperity and influence have had

an expiration date. During the golden eras of Persian, Spanish & German Jewry we climbed to the highest levels of influence and power, only to be cast down violently in ignominy and bloodshed. Each time we convince ourselves that: "this time it will be different, the circumstances have changed and the world is in a much better place" and yet the revolving wheel of time brings forth ever-new revolutions and we the Jews find ourselves snarled once more in between its cogs.

Looking out upon the world today, we find an unprecedented level of Jewish integration into the multi facets of culture and governments worldwide.

If we harken to the warning bells of history this fact may be slightly worrisome.

Golden eras are easily stripped of their golden shine, leaving an eerie state of apprehensive anticipation. We must look to our past when dreaming of our future and at all times be wary of repeating its mistakes in the present.

The story of Yosef teaches us to act upon our dreams, and even our nightmares, especially if it involves the future of the Jewish people.



Moshe Domnitch 12th Grade, Efrat **From Yaakov to Yisrael**

In this week's parshah, Hashem appears

to Yaakov Avinu in a dream, on his way down to Egypt:

”ויאמר א-לוהים לישראל במראת הלילה ויאמר יעקב יעקב ויאמר הנני” [בראשית מו:ב]

Why does the pasuk first call him “Yisrael” and then later in the same pasuk Hashem calls to him with the name “Yaakov”? To understand this, we first have to look at the meaning of each name.

Yisrael is the name he was given by G-d Himself. It represents his victory in his struggles with both men and the Divine, as stated in Parshat Vayishlach.

”Yaakov” on the other hand comes from the word Akev, meaning heel, the lowest point at the very bottom of the body. This name was given to him at birth and represents the complex nature of the struggles he faced throughout life, often ending up on the bottom and at a disadvantage.

Why then does this pasuk include both names?

The Ramban teaches us that Hashem uses the name “Yaakov” here because Yaakov is about to go into galut. The other name – “Yisrael” represents his full potential which he will have to leave behind since it can’t be reached in galut outside of the land of Israel.

The same is true for us as Bnei Yisrael today. When we are in galut, we are limited from reaching our full potential, but when we are back in our own land that is when we can achieve our full potential as an Ohr LaGoyim. ■

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CHESED FUND **Important Announcement!**

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EMTs save a man's life after he collapsed in front of his father

A few weeks ago, on a Sunday afternoon, just after 4:00 p.m., a man in his 40's, who suffered from pre-existing medical conditions, collapsed in his home on Dror Street in Rishon LeZion. The man's father saw what happened and called emergency services for help.

Shmuel Gross is a teacher in a school in Rishon Lezion and had just finished his last class for the day when he received the alert notifying him about the medical emergency occurring nearby. Gross, a United Hatzalah volunteer EMT quickly got on his emergency electric bicycle and sped to the location arriving in under three minutes.

When Shmuel arrived he found the man unconscious on the floor without a pulse and not breathing. He attached his defibrillator, which did not advise a shock, and then launched into CPR alternating between chest compressions and assisted ventilation with another volunteer EMT who arrived.

"The man was in the state of asystole, and therefore the defibrillator did not advise a shock," Shmuel recounted.

After a few rounds of compressions other United Hatzalah volunteers began to arrive, one of whom brought a newly trained military medic who happened to be passing by and saw the commotion. She asked the volunteer what was going on and he told her that there was a CPR in progress. The newly minted military EMT raced in with the United Hatzalah volunteer and joined in the effort to save the man's life. It would turn out to be the first successful CPR that she had ever been a part of in her life.



The team of volunteers was joined by a mobile intensive care ambulance a few minutes later and the combined team spent 10 minutes fighting to enable the man to regain his pulse and breathe once again. 20 minutes after Shmuel initiated CPR, the miraculous occurred and the man's pulse returned, much to the joy of his onlooking father.

"Returning a Son to his father is one of the greatest gifts a person can give to another," Shmuel said. "I am proud to have been a part of the group of people who helped save this man's life. Without our quick intervention, I don't think he would have survived his ordeal and I am thankful to have the opportunity to be a part of something that makes miracles like this one happen.

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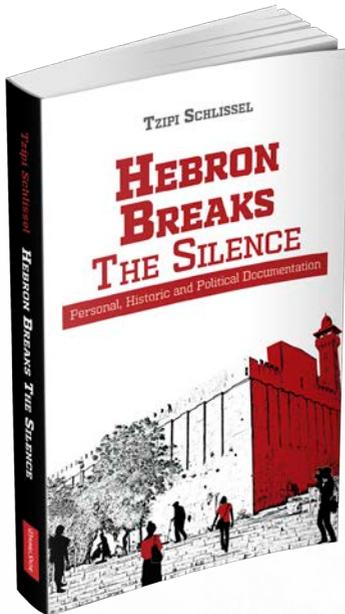


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Tzipi Schlissel engages on the ground with all sides of the Hebron conflict, with only justice and truth as her guiding lights. What has emerged is an erudite, lucid and (at times) humorous account of her unfailing activism for true human rights. All those interested in the Middle East, Judaism, and the ongoing conflict of deeds and ideas, would do well to read Tzipi's important work

Josh Rabinowitz
Veteran Tour Guide
of The West Bank/ Judea & Samaria



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