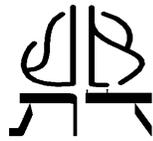


Toras



Aish

Thoughts from across the Torah spectrum

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Torah this week deals with the topic dearest to modern Jewish leadership in the United States - Jewish unity. After having given up on its previous public-relations, slogan-based, sincere-sounding but not sincere-doing, campaign on Jewish continuity begun only a few years ago, the Jewish organizational machinery in this country has now cranked up its efforts to promote the new mantra of Judaism – unity. When translated, this means tolerance, which in turn when translated again means pluralism, and which, when finally translated means anything goes, everything is Judaism and anybody is Jewish. All of this is happening in a Jewish world where the public representatives of those sections of the Jewish people, who are determinedly non-observant and militantly non-traditional and who see themselves to be on the cutting edge of every new social fad and cause and who call these causes and fads Judaism, are clearly destroying themselves demographically and Jewishly. And, they are not satisfied to do this only to themselves but are determined to bring down all of the traditions of Jewish life as taught and practiced over the centuries. And all of this is done under the guise of tolerance, forcing their will and agenda on Israel, the people and the state.

The old campaign for Jewish continuity failed because it was based on a falsehood. That falsehood was that one could achieve Jewish family or community continuity without demanding sacrifice or change of lifestyle. There is no need for weekly and certainly not daily synagogue worship, no need for at least minimal Sabbath observance, for intensive Jewish education, for stronger standards of social, business and sexual morality, in order to guarantee Jewish continuity. The motto of continuity will do it by itself. But that strategy somehow didn't work. So now we are on to the next undemanding, non-binding, easy-sounding slogan that will save the Jewish community from itself - unity. But, my dear friends, this slogan is also based on a falsehood - on an illusion, and will also find itself in the wastebasket with all of the other progressive and modern ideas that have been tried over the last century in America to guarantee Jewish survival.

This falsehood is illustrated in the reconciliation and unity between Joseph and his brothers as recorded in the Torah reading of the week. Joseph is forgiving

and in a reconciling mood, but he nevertheless reminds the brothers of how they got themselves into this monumental mess. He states to them: "I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egyptian slavery." I didn't just happen to come to Egypt on a visit, nor am I particularly satisfied that my dreams have had to have been realized in this fashion and at such family expense. But the Lord ordained it so and I am able to be a savior now to my father and family. But none of this changes the fact that you and you alone sold me as a slave. Later in the Torah, Joseph will tell his brothers again that "you thought to do me harm, but the Lord arranged the sale to be good and a blessing." Joseph does not shield his brothers from the statement that "you thought to do me harm." For family unity, to be lasting, it cannot be built on the obfuscation of facts and the ignorance of past family occurrences and the consequences of that behavior.

Let us look at the record of the past that has brought the proud American Jewish community to its knees, in this the hour of its greatest material affluence and most abject Jewish spiritual poverty. If we are honest as to what works in preserving a Jewish community - Torah study, ritual observances, Jewish pride and self-worth - and as to what does not work - feel-good prayers, avant-garde social issues, and sloganeering - Jewish unity may yet be preserved. © 2003 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

What makes Yosef (Joseph) so keen on settling his families in a suburb of Egypt—a place called Goshen? Goshen seems so attractive that it even appears that the assurance of living in Goshen helps Yaacov agree to leave his home and travel to Egypt. (Genesis 45:10,27,28)

Isaac Arama suggests that Goshen was not a special place. As is the case with many attractive areas, its importance lies in its location—far from the capital of Egypt. In the center of the politics of the Egyptian empire, one could easily fall prey to the intrigues and contradictions inherent in the Egyptian political system. Yosef and Yaacov understood the appeal of remaining far away from such a place.

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Netziv, R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah of Berlin, sees it differently. For him, living in Goshen was a way in which Yaacov's family could have the opportunity to build a life of holiness.

The fundamental difference between these approaches is the following: Arama sees Goshen as a way to distance oneself from a negative-from the Egyptian political scene. Goshen in of itself had nothing positive to offer. Its only attraction was what it was not; the center of Egyptian life.

Netziv disagrees. Goshen had something positive to offer. It was there that the infrastructure of an autonomous sovereign people could be developed.

My Rebbe in Chumash Nehama Leibowitz notes that, as is often the case, the background of these commentators contributes to the differing views presented here. Arama lived in fifteenth century Spain and was involved in the Spanish political system. He knew the possible corruption of political office and understood how Yaacov would have wanted to keep his family far from the center of political life.

Netziv, whose life was meshed with the return to Zion, saw Goshen as a move towards realizing a dream: the building of a state within a state, as a hopeful step towards returning to Israel and developing our national homeland.

But as Nehama remarks, "in spite of all of Yosef's endeavors to prevent them settling down permanently in the land and becoming enmeshed in the attractions of the surrounding society, they forgot the temporary nature of their sojourn in Egypt. The last verse of our portion alludes to the dangers of assimilation when it states, 'and Israel settled in the land of Egypt and in the land of Goshen; they acquired holdings therein and were fruitful and increased greatly in numbers.'" (Gen. 47:27)

This is an important message for Diaspora Jewry today: No matter how developed and

sophisticated we are, the dangers of assimilation exist when we are living under the rule of a society that is not Jewish. To be sure, individuals may maintain their Jewish identity in the exile; but for the community of Israel, our destiny lies not in the Goshens of this world, not in Egypt—but in a place where Judaism is the main compass, in the land of Israel. © 2003 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Parshat Vayigash opens with one of the most dramatic, fatefully persuasive and inexplicable monologues in the entire Bible: Judah's opening address to Joseph, which inspires the Grand Vizier to cast off his disguised identity, his very Egyptian persona, and expose himself as the Hebrew son of Jacob who was sold by his brothers into Egypt.

What makes it inexplicable is first and foremost the blatant manner in which it breaks from everything which has been said previously. When the brothers were initially charged with the theft of the Grand Vizier's goblet, they exclaim in righteous indignation, "With whomever of your servants it is found, he shall die, and all the rest of us will be servants to my lord" (Genesis 44:9). Apparently they are so certain of their innocence that they propose a much exaggerated collective punishment for the stealing of one item. The Grand Vizier's servant responds with judicious prudence: ". The one with whom it is found, he shall be my servant, but you shall be innocent, free men" (Genesis 44:10). When the goblet is discovered in Benjamin's sack, and the brothers are ushered into the presence of the Grand Vizier himself, it is then Judah who after articulating his stunned speechlessness ("what can we say, what can we speak, how can we justify ourselves?"), does he express his willingness for them all to be punished collectively, but mentions the penalty of servitude rather than death ".we have now become slaves to my Master, also we and also the one in whose possession the goblet was found" (Genesis 44:16). And it is the Grand Vizier who demurs, rejecting the collective punishment: "Far be it from me to do such a thing; the one in whose hands the goblet was found shall be my slave. The rest of you shall go up in peace to your father." (Genesis 44:17).

With these compassionate and just words of the Grand Vizier, following upon the almost wordless admission of guilt and request for collective punishment by Judah, the previous portion of Miketz ends—and so, would one have suspected ends this unpleasant incident of the goblet. The brothers without Benjamin should now return to Father Jacob in the Land of Canaan.

But inexplicably, this is not what transpires. The guilt—stricken wordless Judah suddenly finds his voice—and opens our Torah portion with one of the

most wordy of any speech in the Bible (Genesis 44:18-34, an uninterrupted monologue of 16 verses). Even more striking is the content of his words: he makes a seemingly ungrateful, outrageous and unjust request that the thief-sinner Benjamin be let free, and that he Judah—be enslaved to the Grand Vizier in his stead. Why should the Grand Vizier comply with this most lenient of all prior suggestions which allows the guilty party to go home with impunity. And not only is Judah not chastised for his impudence, but his words cause the Grand Vizier to burst out in tears and reveal his true identity. Why?

I believe an obscure midrash, which identifies Joseph with the very pit into which he had been cast in his youth and identifies Judah with a hauling rope provides the answer. "Then Judah drew near to him 'the designs in a person's mind are as deep waters, but a wise individual can plumb the depths and draw them out.' (Proverbs 20:5). 'the designs.' refer to Joseph, and Judah came and defeated him. To what may this be compared? A deep pit into which no one could enter (to draw out the water). Then a wise individual came and brought a long rope that reached into the water to draw from it. So was Joseph deep, and Judah came near to draw from him" (Tanhuma 3).

I would interpret the midrash to mean that Joseph was a complex and profound pit of deep waters, whose true persona was hidden from view. Judah discovered the key, or the rope, which would enable the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to reclaim Joseph and benefit from his life-giving waters. This happens at the conclusion of Miketz, when Judah suddenly glimpses the true persona of the Grand Vizier.

How so? We must understand that the brothers are smitten with guilt over their betrayal of mother Rachel's first-born. It is for this reason that they gratuitously mention "the one (brother) who is not" in their first encounter with the Grand Vizier, and—when trying to understand why they are singled out for suspicion of espionage by the grain-apportioning Grand Vizier—they declare, "But we are guilty because of our brother. therefore this tragedy had come upon us (Genesis 42:21).

It is also because of this guilt that they are ready for collective punishment, as Judah declares, "The Lord has discovered the sin of your servants, we shall all be slaves to my master" (Genesis 44:16). But when the Grand Vizier insists that only the guilty Benjamin be punished and not the other brothers, Judah perceives that what is happening is not a Divine punishment for the sale of Joseph. After all, Benjamin was not at all implicated in the sale. It must be something else.. And, when he puts together the Grand Vizier's uncanny knowledge of their relative ages (Genesis 43:33) and the favoritism with which he treated Benjamin, he suddenly realizes the true identity of this Grand Vizier.

Hence the content of Judah's new speech in the Torah portion of Vayigash. He understands that the Grand Vizier was obsessively trying to get them to repent—first putting them into a dungeon-pit, then sending all minus Shimon (the main perpetrator of the sale) to old Jacob, then seeing how they react to favoritism and now exile for this youngest son of Rachel, by making them re-live their crime and demonstrate that they learned their lesson. Therefore Judah, who had come up with the original idea of the sale, now seeks to prove to the "Grand Vizier" that he had indeed repented since he was now willing to serve as a slave himself rather than deprive his aged father of Benjamin. In this context Judah's speech is even more profound. Judah invokes the image of an old, grieving father Jacob in order to inflict guilt upon the Grand Vizier Joseph—who never contacted Jacob even after he had risen to Egyptian prominence. Judah is also giving Joseph an opportunity to repent. And Joseph internalizes the message. He reveals himself to his brothers and makes plans to meet his father.. © 2003 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

As Yosef sends his brothers back to Canaan to tell their father that he is still alive (and doing rather well), he tells them "do not get angry on the way" (Beraishis 45:24). Rashi gives three possible explanations of this request, the first one being "do not get involved in matters of [Jewish] Law, so that the way will not get upset with you." This approach is based on the Talmud (Ta'anis 10b), where Rashi explains the words "the way getting upset with you" to mean you will get lost. The Talmud is explaining Yosef's words as "although you are required to study Torah on the way, don't get too deeply involved in it, as you will lose track of where you are going."

Of the three explanations Rashi brings, this seems the least straightforward. The second (also brought in the Talmud) is that he was warning them not to travel too fast, and the third is that they shouldn't quarrel over having sold him into slavery. We can understand why Yosef would be concerned that they might now fight with each other over having pushed him away for revealing his dreams of royalty- now proven to be true. Or that in their haste to tell their father the good news they would try to get there too quickly. But why would Yosef all of a sudden become so concerned that they might get distracted by becoming too involved in Torah study? And why is this the first of the three explanations that Rashi brings, seeming to give it more prominence?

Another question that deserves a closer look is asked by Rav Mordecai Gifter, z"l (Pirkay Torah): Rashi (46:28) brings the midrash that says that Ya'akov sent Yehuda ahead in order to set up a "House of Learning,"

i.e. a place to study Torah, before the rest of the family arrived. Since Levi was designated to be the Tribe that would teach Torah to the rest of the nation (see Devarim 33:10), why was Yehuda chosen to set up the Torah study center(s) rather than Levi?

When Ya'akov left Canaan to go to his uncle in Charan, our sages say that he first spent 14 years studying Torah in the Yeshiva of Shem and Eiver (see Rashi on Beraishis 28:11). Rav Ya'akov Kaminetzky z"l (Emes L'Ya'akov, *ibid*) explains why, despite having learned Torah with his grandfather Avraham until he was 15 years old, and with his father Yitzchok until he left at age 63, Ya'akov felt it necessary to study Torah for an additional 14 years in Yeshivas Shem va'Eiver: There was a different type of Torah study there than taught by our forefathers. Avraham and Yitzchok had created environments protected from outside influences (to the extent that Sarah had Yishmael sent away when she realized he was becoming a corrupting influence). Shem, on the other hand, lived through the generation whose sins brought the flood, and had learned how to avoid being affected by them. Eiver had similarly lived through the generation that rebelled against G-d when they built the Tower of Babel. On his way to living with Lavan, Ya'akov knew that he had to learn how to survive in a spiritually antagonistic environment, and therefore first spent time studying Torah with them, the Torah of exile. (See also Pri Eitz Hachayim 37:3, where Rabbi Peretz Steinberg, Shlita has a similar approach.)

This was the same Torah that Ya'akov had taught exclusively to Yosef (see Rashi in 37:3), which had aroused jealousy in the brothers. Ya'akov knew that his descendents would eventually be exiled to Egypt, and that this Torah had to be known by at least one of his sons, in order to teach it to those that would be exposed to Egyptian culture. As it turned out, it was Yosef himself that needed it the most, and it helped him survive all those years away from home.

Now that the brothers saw that Yosef was still alive, and that the whole family would be relocated to Egypt, Yosef may have been concerned that they would think that they would also have to learn this Torah. He therefore warned them to go straight back to Ya'akov, without making a stop along the way at Yeshivas Shem va'Eiver. Just as it makes sense that Yosef would be worried that they would try getting home too quickly, or that they would quarrel about his being sold in the first place, we can understand why Yosef would be worried that they might spend time learning the Torah that would prepare them for their new lives in Egypt.

Ya'akov wanted to avoid having his entire family exposed to Egyptian culture. (We see that Yosef only brought the "weaker" brothers before Paro so that they would not be asked to work for the government- see Rashi to 47:2.) He therefore sent Yehuda down ahead of everyone else in order to build a protective Torah environment in Goshen- an environment where the Torah learned by Avraham, Yitzchok and Ya'akov could

thrive, not just the Torah of Shem and Eiver. Rav Gifter z"l says that Yehuda was asked to build the Yeshiva because Levi's strength was the actual teaching of Torah, not the building of the infrastructure within which the Torah would be learned. Since the role of the king is to ensure that the country runs properly, it follows that it was Yehuda who was sent to build the society that would allow Torah to flourish.

Ya'akov knew it was necessary that his children knew how to pass on both types of Torah, the Torah free of outside influences and the Torah that must fend them off. Several years ago, I used this concept to explain the two "camps" that Ya'akov had divided his family into when he was about to face Eisav (32:8). However, he didn't expect the same son to pass on both. Just as he had one son build the Torah infrastructure while another taught the Torah, he had only one son trained in the Torah of exile.

Although we are all in exile now (even those living in Israel), many have attempted to create a protected environment. Others are attempting to live a Torah lifestyle in a less protected environment. The important thing is to recognize which one is best for each individual, and help them to best succeed in it- without negating the attempt others are making at succeeding within the other approach. By focusing on our own growth and helping each other find their way to the Creator, we can merit seeing the descendant of Yehuda (re)create the society within which the descendant(s) of Levi will once again teach us Torah in its purest form. © 2003 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI NOSSON CHAYIM LEFF

Sfas Emes

The parsha begins: "Vayigash eilav Yehuda". The simple/pshat translation of which is: "Yehuda approached him [Yosef]." But these words prompt the Sfas Emes to recall a comment of his Grandfather on the name "Yehuda". The Chidushei HaRim's comment is especially pertinent because our people takes its name from Yehuda. That is, we are called "Yehudim". Thus, this comment on the name Yehuda sheds light on what the Chidushei HaRim and the Sfas Emes view as the essence of being a Jew.

As the Sfas Emes sees it, the name "Yehuda" is related to the word "hoda'a." The question is : how to translate the word 'hoda'a'. It would be a mistake to translate 'hoda'a' as 'gratitude'. Leshon ha'kodesh has a word for gratitude: namely, 'hodaya'. I suggest that the correct translation of 'hoda'a' in this context is: 'concession' or 'acknowledgement'. [For further support of this translation, see footnote ¹].

¹ In further support of translating "hoda'a" as "acknowledgement" rather than as "gratitude", I cite the Sfas Emes's ma'amar on the third night of Chanuka, 5631. In that that ma'amar, he quotes the Chazal's phrase: "u'modeh—mich'lal dipligei". That is, when a Mishna uses the word

This difference in translation is crucial; for it changes the whole nature of the relationship. A person can 'concede' a point reluctantly or grudgingly -- perhaps only between gritted teeth. By contrast, 'gratitude' is a much more positive and forthcoming attitude. The Sfas Emes is telling us that 'Yehudim' are people who acknowledge that—whether they like it or not— HaShem's Presence is everywhere. And 'everywhere' includes situations in which an observer without Torah would bemoan HaShem's absence—that is even in the midst of hester (contexts in which HaShem is hiding his Presence). More generally, this understanding of the word *hoda'a* implies that—perhaps only reluctantly, and perhaps only after a long interval that they need to think things through—Yehudim concede that all comes from HaShem.

We move on now to another point. The Sfas Emes tells us that when a person encounters a hard patch in life, he should realize that in fact, he is encountering HaShem—hiding behind the hester. Further, the Sfas Emes tells us that the way to handle such an encounter is to come closer to the *penimiyus* (the inner reality) of the situation; that is, to HaShem. Thus, in the present case, Yehuda reviewed in his mind the events that had befallen the brothers. Acknowledging that the entire episode came from HaShem, he accepted it "*besimcha*" (with joy)! Yehuda could then take what was for him the obvious next step: To come closer to HaShem.

Note: The Sfas Emes has just given us a radically new nonpshat on our parsha's first sentence. The text says: "*Vayigash eilav Yehuda*". The conventional reading of this phrase is: Yehuda approached Yosef. By contrast, the Sfas Emes is reading this text as: Yehuda came closer to HaShem.

To come closer to the *penimiyus*, we must first remove all the intellectual and emotional blockages that obstruct our access to HaShem. Thus, before Yosef revealed himself to his brothers—and thereby showed them the *penimiyus* of what they had been experiencing—he had to have the room cleared. Hence, we hear Yosef saying (Bereishis, 45:1): '*Hotziyu kohli ish*'.

The Sfas Emes points to a similar process in our own lives. He quotes a passage in the Zohar, a text that we also saw him cite a few weeks ago. (Nusach Sfarad says this paragraph before "*Borchu*" on *leil Shabbos kodesh*.) "*Vekol dinim misabrin minei*." Thus, when Shabbos arrives and we come closer to the *penimiyus*, we try to remove all the extraneous

"*u'modeh*" it is saying that on this point under dispute, the tanna concedes. However, on other points, he continues to disagree. As this example indicates, translating the word '*u'modeh*' as "concedes" makes sense; translating it as "expresses gratitude" does not.

For another instance in which being "*modeh*" is clearly used to express a person's conceding something, see Rashi on Bereishis, 33, 9.

elements in our minds, to have those distractions leave us. Yosef had to take a concrete action to remove impediments to perceiving the *penimiyus*. Similarly, to free ourselves on Shabbos from thoughts that are not "*Shabbosdick*", we too must take action. If we want to experience Shabbos as coming closer to HaShem, we must be careful about what we read and what we talk about on Shabbos.

The Sfas Emes moves on, and we attempt to follow. Yehuda says (Bereishis, 44:18): "*Bi adoni*". The pshat translation of this phrase is: "Please my lord." But the Sfas Emes quotes a nonpshat of the ARIZAL. The ARIZAL read the words "*bi adoni*" as: "My Lord is within me." That is, if we examine the letters with which the name Yehuda is written—i.e., YHDH—we find the letters of HaShem's name ("YKVK")!

At this point, a basic question may arise in your mind. The ARIZAL's reading -- "My Lord is within me"—bespeaks a close, positive relationship between Yehudim and HaShem. But this *ma'amar* began with the Sfas Emes observing that we are a people who (sometimes) are willing to concede (only reluctantly) that all that happens in life comes from HaShem. Is this not a blatant contradiction with the picture of a people who can say "*bi adoni*"?

In addressing this question, it helps to be aware of a key feature of the Sfas Emes. The Sfas Emes is not afraid of internal inconsistencies and blatant contradictions. As we look at the world, we observe many contradictions between what we (think we) know and what we (think we) see. Part of the *gadlus* (greatness) of the Sfas Emes is his willingness to make such inconsistencies explicit; indeed, to put them up for all to view. In practical terms, the Sfas Emes has given us a model to follow: demonstrating that we can take apparent contradictions in stride as obvious facts of life, and continue our lives as *Ovdei HaShem be'simcha*.

In the present context, however, we need not posit inconsistency. For, in fact, a person may live both relationships with HaShem—i.e., "*bi adoni*" and "*hoda'a*"—at different times of his life. Likewise, a person may live both relationships with HaShem at different times of the same day. Indeed, a person may well live both relationships with HaShem simultaneously! That state of mind has a name; it is called "*ambivalence*". It is important to recognize that *ambivalence* is not an aberration or a deviation from normal behavior. In fact, such feelings are so common that the Torah takes them explicitly into account. Where? In a basic text, the Shema, in which the Torah tells us to serve HaShem "*bechol levavecha*". The word "*levavecha*" is plural, connoting multiple mindsets—for example, both '*bi adoni*' and '*hoda'a*'.

We conclude with still another line of thought that the Sfas Emes introduces into the *ma'amar*. He quotes the first Medrash Rabba on Parshas Vayigash. Remember the context within which this parsha begins. Yehuda had put himself forward as the guarantor of

Binyomin's safe return. The situation of guarantor ("oreiv") evokes for the Medrash a posuk in Mishlei (6:1) in which a guarantor figures prominently. The pasuk says: "Beni, ihm oravta le'rei'echa..." (That is: "My son, if you have gotten into the situation of being a guarantor (oreiv) for your friend...").

A question: Who is this 'friend' of whom the posuk speaks? One commentary on Mishlei provides an answer to this question. He tells us: "Rei'echa, zeh Hakadosh Baruch Hu". ("The friend to whom you have made this commitment is: HaShem."). Seeing 'rei'echa' as HaShem is daring enough. But seeing klal Yisroel as—kivyachol (so to speak) -- guarantor of HaShem is extreme in the extreme. You may wonder: who is the author of this "far out, Chassidische" reading? The answer: none other than a commentator reputed to be an extreme pashtan : Rashi. Thus, we see here further support for a key thesis of the Sfas Emes: that we live in a complex world, a world in which things are not always what we initially perceive them to be.

We conclude with an exhortation of the Sfas Emes. Echoing the Medrash, he tells us: If you have made this commitment—to be a guarantor of HaShem:

'kabeil adnuso". Accept His kingship! By which the Sfas Emes means: do it in a conscious, active mode! © 2003 Rabbi N.C. Leff and torah.org

BRIJNET/UNITED SYNAGOGUE - LONDON (O)

Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi Yitzchok Schochet, Mill Hill Synagogue

The portion this week brings the story of Joseph's encounter with his brothers to a climax. The Torah relays that "Joseph recognised his brothers but they did not recognise him." On a practical level, Joseph had developed over the years. Now sporting a beard and perhaps a sharper look, in place of his earlier youthful innocence, his brothers didn't recognise him.

On a deeper level however, the Joseph the brothers knew was self-indulgent, concerned solely with the ego, prepared to step on the heads of his brothers in his climb to the top and into his father's heart.

The man that stood before them now however, was giving and compassionate, concerned with the welfare of their family and lavishing gifts upon them.

It is often the case that you think you know someone, yet when they act so out of character you assume you must be mistaken. Thus "Joseph recognised his brothers." They looked the same and acted much like before. "But they did not recognise him." This was not someone whom they could readily identify.

What prompted this change in Joseph? It is rare for people to make such radical character overhauls in life. The pattern that is set from childhood and moulded through adolescence, is one that is likely to be followed all the way through. It may manifest itself

in varied forms and on different levels, but the essence of the persona remains the same.

A further example is Daniel. The Persians conspired against him and the Jewish people. Eventually a decree was issued by King Darius prohibiting the worship of any god other than the king himself (Daniel 6:7). Daniel openly defied this decree and refused to recognise Darius as the deity that his people considered him to be. "Then the king commanded and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions" (6:16). Not only was he saved from this fate but, incredibly, ended up being appointed chief counsellor to the king!

It is a psychological fact that most people, having experienced trauma in their lives, become nicer and indifferent to the trivial anxieties and irritations which obsess so many of us. Such was the case with Joseph. He began as his father's favoured child and was always the centre of attention. He abused that standing and took advantage of that paternal affection. Then, suddenly, his life takes a sharp twist as he is reduced to a mere slave and treated with disdain. Still later he rises to prominence again in the household of Potiphar and becomes narcissistic and egotistical, entertaining lustful thoughts and obsessed with his image. Yet again he is cast into darkness imprisoned in Egypt. Each time he merited Divine grace he lost sight of his primary objectives. Only after having endured the intense pain and ordeal that often comes in the wake of selfishness does he mature, putting life in better perspective and changing his moral fibre in the process.

Joseph's big leap warranted the accolade—"Joseph the Righteous" as he was henceforth known. For anyone who is prepared to face his own shortcomings and completely reinvent himself accordingly, is deserving of the title "righteous."

When we begin developing a negative trait we must take control before it controls us. It may be difficult to abandon our grudges or self-centred behaviour. Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed unless it is faced. Confronting our imperfections is the first step in the pursuit of righteousness, enabling us, like Joseph, to emerge a hero in our individual worlds. © 2003 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

THE SALANT FOUNDATION

The Sages of Mussar

by Rabbi Zvi Miller

From the time of the destruction of the Temple, and the subsequent 2000 year exile, we often assume that Hashem has distanced Himself from us. In fact, it is just the opposite—He has never been closer!

When Yaacov set out on his journey to Egypt, he experienced a prophecy at night. Hashem promised him: "I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will bring you back up." Our Sages (Megilla 29a) explain that the

Shechinah accompanied Klal Yisrael to Egypt, as well as, to all of our subsequent exiles.

This constant closeness of Hashem pertains both to the community as a whole, as well as, every individual Jew. No matter how spiritually deficient we are, no matter how remote our location, no matter how desperate our predicament— Hashem is right besides us. Indeed, the more desperate one's condition—the closer Divine providence is to him. If he will but open his heart in sincere prayer or repentance Heavenly compassion would be aroused. And immediately He would deliver him from all of his troubles. As the verse states: Hashem is close to those of broken hearts, and He will save those who are crushed in spirit.

Since the unbounded love of the Shechinah is close to us, we should never despair. Rather, we should strengthen our faith in Hashem and our Torah observance. If we would but cry out to HaShem in heartfelt prayer, and awaken a spirit of repentance within our souls—He will protect and deliver us immediately.

Implement: Speak to HaShem and unburden yourself from all your troubles—for He is right beside you. *[Based on The Chofetz Chaim on the Torah, parshas V'yegash]*

RABBI DAVID FINE

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Recently, the Sichot Mussar (the moral-ethical lectures) given by Rav Avigdor Neventzal, the Chief Rabbi of the Old City of Jerusalem, on Parshat HaShavua, have been published in Israel. I believe that one of his ideas relating to this week's Parsha, Parshat VaYigash is perhaps the most critically important message for the Jewish people today. Rav Neventzal uses the story of Yehuda, Yosef and Binyamin as a springboard for a discussion about the concept of arevut—accepting responsibility upon ourselves for the behavior and condition of our fellow Jews. He begins his discussion by asking why, from a Halachic perspective, was Yehuda permitted to make Yosef the deal that he does, that Yosef should allow Binyamin to return to his father, Yaakov, and that he, Yehuda, would remain in Egypt as Yosef's servant in Binyamin's stead (see Breishit 44:33). Here Yehuda was putting himself in harm's way. Yosef (who Yehuda still did not realize as actually being Yosef), being second in command over all of Egypt, had the power to kill Yehuda at any moment. Was Yehuda allowed to endanger his life for Binyamin's sake? Is not there an explicit rule in the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 425:2) which states "Ayn dochin nefesh mipnei nefesh"—that one life does not supersede another and that therefore one is not permitted to risk one's own life to save another's?

Some Halachic defenses are offered for Yehuda's questionable behavior. However, says Rav Neventzal, the answer is explicitly given by the Torah, Yehuda was an arev, a guarantor. He says this to Yosef (44:32): "For your servant (i.e. Yehuda) pledged ("arav") himself for the boy to my father, saying: If I do not bring him back to you, I will be culpable for sin against my father all the days to come," reminiscent of what Yehuda said to Yaakov a few chapters earlier (41:9): "I will act as his pledge ("E'ervenu"), at my hand you may seek him if I do not bring him back to you and set him in your presence, I will be culpable for sin against you all the days to come." Yehuda felt that he had made a promise, a guarantee of Binyamin's return and that therefore, he had the obligation to do whatever was necessary in order to bring about his return, including putting his own life at risk.

What is the Halachic meaning of being an arev, a guarantor? Arevut is a legal concept and is covered in the Shulchan Aruch. One of the laws applicable to an arev (Choshen Mishpat 129:10-11) states that if someone acts as a guarantor for a loan, the lender, in certain instances may collect directly from the guarantor without even approaching the borrower. In order to understand how this could be so, it is necessary to understand the underlying nature of arevut. The word arev or arevut comes from the word "eruv" which mean to mix. If one person becomes an arev for another, then it is as if the arev is actually mixing himself together with the person he is guaranteeing. This means that the two people are in fact becoming mixed into one person. The two, in a legal sense, become one. This is why a lender is permitted according to Halacha to collect on his loan in certain cases directly from the guarantor without even approaching the borrower.

The guarantor, according to what we just explained, is not simply some external factor who is guaranteeing that the money will be returned to the lender. Rather, the essence of arevut means that the two (i.e. the guarantor and the borrower) become one which ultimately means that there is really no difference between the two. If we follow this explanation to its logical conclusion what we are really saying is that the guarantor himself is the one who actually lent the money and that is why the lender can approach him!

This is also what Yehuda felt had happened to him. He was the arev for Binyamin. He and Binyamin had thus become one and therefore it made no real difference which one of them stayed in Egypt and which one returned to their father Jacob. The question that we began with becomes moot when we look at the story in this way. One cannot ask why Yehuda was permitted to endanger his life in order to save Binyamin because once Yehuda became an arev, their lives became so intertwined that they were no longer considered two separate lives.

Jews from all along the religious spectrum like to quote the saying of Chazal, "kol Yisrael arevim zeh

bazeh," that all Jews are responsible for one another. However, we in the Orthodox world must behave not only as if this is simply a nice slogan, a good idea. We must act as if we are arevim, in the full legal sense of the word, for all Jews everywhere. We must live not only believing that we are responsible for other Jews as this phrase is usually translated. We must believe that our lives are so intertwined with all other Jews that there is actually no difference between them and us. All Jews are arevim, are mixed and connected so that if one Jew sins it is as if we all have sinned. After one hundred and twenty years, when we appear in front of the heavenly court, we will not only be judged on how we lived our personal lives, on whether we were observant as individuals. Rather we will be held responsible as guarantors, for all achenu Beit Yisrael, our Jewish brothers and sisters. Did we act in a way that brought others closer to living a life of mitzvot? Did we care enough when others did not see the centrality of the Torah in their lives? Did it pain us as if we, ourselves, were suffering?

The same idea is expressed in a story told about the sainted Rav Aryeh Levin of Jerusalem. He once went to the doctor with his wife because her leg was in pain. When the doctor called the couple into his office and asked what was wrong, Rav Levin responded that "our leg hurts." Only after further questioning did the doctor understand that it was Rebbitzen Levin's leg that was the problem. Rav Levin was not trying to be cute. Rather, his life was so intertwined with the life of his wife and he cared for her so deeply that he actually felt her pain.

The Torah in Parshat VaYigash tells us that Yehuda feared returning to his father without Binyamin because he knew that (44:30) "his (Jacob's) soul was bound up with the boy's (Binyamin's) soul" and that Jacob would be deeply pained. We see through his behavior that Yehuda also felt that his soul was bound up with Binyamin's soul. He felt, because of his status as an arev, that his soul and Binyamin's soul were identical.

Only when we use Yehuda and people like Rav Levin as our role models and feel pained by the pain and travails of others will we be able to live in a world where the phrase "kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh" is actualized to the fullest extent of its meaning.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

At the end of this week's Torah portion, we read about how Yosef led the government of Egypt during the years of famine. After he had gathered all the money and the cattle in the land, with the famine continuing just as before, the inhabitants came to Yosef to beg him: "Why should we die in front of you, both ourselves and our land? Buy us and our land for bread,

and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh. Give us seeds, and we will live and not die, and the land will not become desolate." [Bereishit 47:19]. The Egyptians ask to become slaves to Pharaoh, in order that they will at least receive the food which is a minimum wage of a slave.

At first, Yosef agreed to their request. "And Yosef bought all of the land of Egypt for Pharaoh... And he transferred the people to cities, from one end of the land to the other." [47:20-21]. However, then Yosef seemed to change his mind. "And Yosef said to the people, I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh today, here are some seeds for you to plant in the land. And when the crops arrive, you will give one-fifth to Pharaoh, while four parts will remain for you to plant in the field and to eat, for your homes and for food for your children." [47:23-24]. Why did Yosef decide that the people would not be slaves living in the cities but rather share croppers living on the land, and that they would receive four-fifths of the crops?

Evidently as Yosef matured he began to understand that there is a price to pay for the power of authority. It is only in a dream that the sun, the moon, and the stars all bow down to a person without any effort on his part. The reality that follows a dream is much more complex. Perhaps at first Yosef enjoyed all the power he had when he bought all of the people of Egypt as slaves for Pharaoh. However, on further reflection, he understood that this approach would lead to bitterness by the people, since the famine would one day come to an end. True authority over the people would only be a result of kindness. And this is in fact what can be seen from the reaction of the people. "And they said, You have saved our lives. We will find favor in our master's eyes, and we will be slaves to Pharaoh." [47:25]. Now, a second time, the people have proposed that they will be slaves, but see how great a difference there is! The first time, the people offered to become slaves because of great distress, while now they made the proposal again, but this time out of a feeling of deep appreciation.

Later, Yosef's brothers will also come with the same proposal. "His brothers bowed down to him and said, We will be slaves to you." [50:18]. However, Yosef knows very well that his position of authority had a specific purpose. "G-d had good intentions, so that it would be possible to keep a large nation alive today." [50:20]. Once again, Yosef follows a path of kindness. "And now, do not be afraid, I will feed you and your children. And he consoled them and spoke to them intimately." [50:21]. By following this approach, Yosef was rewarded that his request, "G-d will remember you, and you shall raise my bones up from here" [50:25], was remembered for a very long time. "And Moshe took Yosef's bones with him, for Yosef had caused Bnei Yisrael to take an oath: G-d will remember you, and you shall raise my bones up from here, with you." [Shemot 13:19].