

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd Yosef said to his brothers, 'please come closer to me,' and they came closer, and he said, 'I am Yosef your brother, whom you sold to Egypt' (Beraishis 45:4). Rashi explains that after seeing that his brothers were taken aback after he had identified himself, Yosef asked them to come closer so that he could show them that he was circumcised. One of the questions many of the commentators ask is what purpose showing that he was circumcised would serve, since (as Rashi pointed out on 41:55) Yosef had forced all of the Egyptians to become circumcised before he would sell them food. If all of Egypt was also circumcised, how would Yosef showing that he was circumcised prove that he was really their brother Yosef?

The whole idea of Yosef forcing the Egyptians to circumcise themselves seems a bit strange. First of all, why do such a thing if non-Jews are not required to have a "milah" (circumcision)? This is especially difficult since the midrash (Beraishis Rabbah 90:60) indicates that the Egyptians later thanked Yosef for doing so, as it enabled that to merit the world to come; if there is no requirement (or reward) for a non-Jew getting a "milah," how could it bring them reward in the next world? Additionally, while we may be getting used to security checks when traveling, it seems inappropriate for Yosef to have insisted on a strip-search before anyone purchased food, to verify that they were circumcised. Besides, logistically it would be impossible to verify that everyone who stayed at home, and didn't wait on line to purchase food, was also circumcised. It would therefore behoove us to try to understand what was going on when Yosef initiated this requirement before trying to understand what purpose showing his brothers that he was also circumcised served.

The Rambam (Laws of Kings 10:8) says that the descendants of the sons of Keturah are required to get a "milah." Rabbi Menachem Kasher z"l (Torah Shelaimah, Beraishis 41:138) suggests that it was only those who were already required to have a "milah" that Yosef forced to get one before selling them any food. Although the implication from Rashi is that it was the Egyptians themselves that complained to Paro that Yosef insisted that they get circumcised (as he asked them why they didn't follow Yosef's advice to store food,

which would not apply to those who didn't live and own land in Egypt), it would be consistent with the notion that Yosef was trying to help others do the right thing. And we would expect that, put in a position of power and authority, Yosef would make every effort to reshape Egyptian society, and those living in it, to better follow G-d's commandments.

One of the reasons given for the mitzvah of "milah" is that it minimizes the desire for physical relations. Adultery (and other forbidden relations) are included in the 7 categories of commandments that non-Jews are required to keep, and the Egyptians were said to be "awash in licentiousness" (see Rashi on 20:15). The Yefas To'ar therefore suggests that the Egyptians weren't required (by Yosef) to physically circumcise themselves, but to "circumcise their hearts" by taking steps to become a more modest society that was not as conducive to fostering illegal relationships. Such radical social change would surely bring about protestation, and would explain why, after implemented, the Egyptians acknowledged that Yosef had given them "life in the next world." Yosef took advantage of the opportunity to do "outreach" to the Egyptians by insisting on a societal "milah," and to those who were required to be circumcised by insisting that they get a physical "milah."

Getting back to Yosef and his brothers, numerous commentators explain Yosef "showing" his brothers his "milah" not in the literal sense, but conceptually. Rabbeinu Bachya (45:4) understands it to mean an expression of brotherhood; after they were taken aback, Yosef was telling them that "even though you sold me to Egypt, I am your brother, and will not lord it over you at all" (despite his being the Viceroy). The "holy Rabbi Shelomo Anstruk" (quoted by the Sha'arai Aharon on 45:4 and by the Torah Shelaimah 45:17) wrote that "the intent [of the midrash that says that Yosef showed them his "milah"] is not that he himself was circumcised, for there were many others that were also circumcised, such as the Givonim and the Arabs, [so] the intent is not that he revealed himself, for this is inappropriate for a ruler, [even] in front of his brothers and his sons. Instead, he showed them that he is a descendent of Avraham, a member of G-d's covenant, who does not take revenge or bear a grudge, but forgives those that sinned [against him]." Again, the "showing of his milah," the place where the covenant is inscribed, refers to explaining to his brothers that he is one of them, and they need not worry.

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA NEWSLETTER
DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB.
SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR MORE
INFORMATION
EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG
COPIES OF TORAS AISH ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE
FOLLOWING ADDRESS ON THE WEB (WWW) :
HTTP://AISHDAS.ORG**

The material presented in this publication was collected from publicly available electronic mail, computer archives and the UseNet. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is solely the work of the AishDas Society, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any given synagogue.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
973-472-0180 OR EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

This would explain Rashi's context on 45:12, after Yosef promises to sustain his entire family, where Rashi understands Yosef's words as "your eyes have seen what honor I have, and that I am your brother, for I am circumcised like you, and also that I am speaking to you in the holy language (Hebrew)." By seeing that his position allows him to provide all there needs, and that he is one of them (saying "I am your brother" rather than "I am Yosef"), and that he speaks their language (and does not make them speak Egyptian), showing he wants to provide for them, Yosef is allaying any fears they may have about whether he will really sustain them.

If Yosef didn't show, or mention, his "milah" in order to prove that he was really Yosef, but to prove that he was part of their team- and on their side- despite what had occurred between them, then having forced the Egyptians to improve their society would not undermine his argument, but improve it. For in the end, he was fulfilling the ultimate mission of the Children of Israel to bring people closer to G-d. And that mission was far more important than any internal problems that may have previously occurred between them. © 2004 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

In this week's reading, Yosef (Joseph) reveals himself to his brothers with the simple words "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?" (Genesis 45:3)

Commentators point out a degree of harshness in Yosef's words. Keli Yakar (Rabbi Ephraim of Luntshitz, 16c.), for example, states that, although Yosef proclaimed I am Yosef, he failed to include the words, "your brother."

Keli Yakar adds that the brothers also sense that Yosef's words "is my father still alive?" contain a rebuke. Yosef refers to Yaacov (Jacob) as his father,

not as the father of his brothers. He purposely chooses these words to drive home to his brothers, that by selling Yosef, they did not show concern for their father—it was, therefore, as if Yaacov was not the father of his brothers.

The omission of the words "your brother" and the portrayal of Yaacov as Yosef's father alone startled his siblings. In the words of the Torah "and his brothers could not answer him, for they were frightened by his presence." (Genesis 45:3)

In the very next sentence, however, Yosef softens his words. (Genesis 45:4) There, he repeats, "I am Yosef," but this time as Keli Yakar notes, he deliberately adds the words "your brother." The healing process seems to have started.

The healing seems to reach another level when Yosef tells his brothers that they should not be upset at having sold him. God had a deeper plan for Yosef to save Egypt and the world from famine. In other words, from the evil of the sale, good had come. (Genesis 45:5-7) As the Yiddish expression teaches, a mensch tracht, un Gut lacht, a person thinks and God laughs.

Yosef concludes this section by strengthening his comments with the words "and now, it was not you that sent me here, but God." (Genesis 45:8) Hence, Yosef seems to take a middle path. He's part conciliatory and part harsh; conciliatory in that he assures his brothers that it was all for the good, and harsh in that the good did not come from them, but from God.

As Rabbi Zvi Dov Kanotopsky, in his wonderful work, "Night of Watching" writes: "Yosef feels duty-bound to reply that all they have contributed is a transgression. They are not the senders, but the sellers. This transgression may not call for despair [as the outcome was good]...but it does call for repentance."

Having been separated from his brothers for twenty two years, the rendezvous of Yosef and his brothers contains different elements. Much like any dispute between siblings, the first words uttered by the aggrieved party is laced with contradictions—indicating that the healing process does not occur in an instant, it takes time and patience. © 2004 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftarah

This week's haftarah is devoted to the Jewish nation's future unification. It opens with Hashem instructing the Prophet Yechezkel to take two pieces of wood and inscribe them with names of the Jewish kingdoms, Yehuda and Yosef. Hashem then said, "Bring them near one another to appear as one and they shall unite in your hands." Radak interprets this to mean that Yechezkel should hold the pieces alongside each other and they will miraculously unite into one solid piece of wood. He explains that this refers

to the future miraculous unification of the Jewish kingdom. The individual pieces of wood represent the individual kingdoms of Israel. Although Hashem unconditionally granted Dovid Hamelech's dynasty the kingdom of Israel this did not preclude fragmentation. In fact, soon after Shlomo Hamelech's passing the kingdom suffered a severe split. Yeravam ben Nvat, a descendent of the tribe of Yosef led a powerful rebellion against the Judean dynasty and gained control over most of the Jewish nation. The split was so intense that the seceding camp of Yosef totally severed ties with its brothers never to return to them. Yechezkel prophesied that these kingdoms will eventually reunite and form one inseparable unit. The unification will be so perfect that it will leave no trace of any previous dissension. The entire nation's sense of kinship will be so pronounced that it will be likened to one solid piece of wood, void of all factions and fragmentation.

Yechezkel continues and states in Hashem's name, "And I will purify them and they shall be a nation to Me and I will be G-d to them...My Divine Presence will rest upon them... forever." (37:23,28) These verses predict the final phase of unity—Hashem's unification with His people. In the Messianic era all aspects of unity will be achieved. The entire Jewish nation will become one inseparable entity and Hashem will reunite with His people. This unification will resemble that of the Jewish people, an everlasting and inseparable one.

It is important to note the order of this unity. The first phase will be our nation's unification and after this is achieved Hashem will return to His people. Sefer Charedim sensitizes us to the order of this development. He reflects upon Hashem's distinct quality of oneness and explains that it can only be appreciated and revealed through His people's harmonious interaction. Hashem's favor and kindness emanates from His perfect oneness and reveals this quality in full. When the Jewish people function as a harmonious body they deserve Hashem's favor and kindness. They project and reflect Hashem's goodness and express His oneness and bring true glory to His name. However, if the Jewish people are fragmented and divided they display—Heaven forbid—division in Hashem's interactive system. Their divisive behavior gives the impression that Hashem's influence is disjointed and fragmented and not achieving its ultimate purpose. At that point Hashem removes His presence from His people and disassociates Himself from their inappropriate ways. The Jewish people's lack of success and accomplishment is then attributed to Hashem's unwillingness to remain involved in their lives.

We now understand that the Jewish people's unity is a prerequisite to Hashem's return to His people. Sefer Charedim explains with this the introductory words of the Shabbos afternoon Amida service. We state therein, "You are one, Your identity is one and who can is likened to Your people Israel one nation in the land." He interprets these words to refer to the

glorious Messianic era. During that period Hashem's oneness will be recognized through His harmonious interactive system reflected in the oneness of His people. Their perfect unity will provide the perfect setting for Hashem's revelation to the world. During that time Hashem's master plan will be expressed through the perfect interaction of His people. Every detail of Hashem's kindness will serve its intended purpose and reveal His absolute oneness and control over every aspect of this world. Undoubtedly, this will require the Jewish people's total cooperation and perfect harmonious interaction with one another. Indeed, it can be said that when Hashem's people unite as an inseparable entity His identity and perfect quality of oneness will be recognized throughout the world. (adapted from Sefer Charedim chap. 7)

In truth, the foundation for this unity was laid in this week's sedra. Yosef developed an ingenious scheme to silence all his brothers' suspicions and convince them of their grave misjudgement of his actions. He successfully removed their deep seeded jealousy and hatred and brought about a sincere unification to the household of Yaakov. Yosef and Yehuda, the two powers to be, embraced one another and displayed a true sense of kinship. Unfortunately, irrevocable damage already occurred that would ultimately yield a severe split in the Jewish kingdom. Yosef's descendant, Yeravam would eventually sever relations with Yehuda's descendant Rechavam and establish his own leadership. (see Gur Aryeh to Breishis 48:7) However, groundwork was already established to reunite these kingdoms and return the Jewish nation to its original perfect unity.

This week's sedra records the immediate result of the unity of the household of Yaakov. After Yaakov Avinu discovered Yosef's existence and salvation the Torah states, "And their father, Yaakov's spirit was restored to life." (Breishis 45:27) Rashi quotes the Sages who explain these words to refer to the return of Hashem's Divine Spirit to Yaakov. (ad loc) Yosef's absence from Yaakov's household indirectly prevented Hashem's Divine Spirit from resting upon Yaakov. Now, after twenty-two dark years Yaakov Avinu's household was reunited and Hashem returned His Divine Presence to Yaakov. This development is indicative of the Jewish people's future experience. The ten lost tribes representing the kingdom of Yosef will be divided from the Judean kingdom for over two thousand years. This will result in Hashem's removing His Divine Presence from amidst His people and throughout their long dark exile they will have no direct contact with Him. However, the time will eventually arrive for the Jewish people to reunite and become one inseparable entity. This miraculous unity will immediately lead to a second unity, that of Hashem and His people. In response to their total unification Hashem will return His Divine Presence and rest amongst His people us and "The spirit of Israel will be restored to life".

This lesson is apropos for our times where so much potential diversity exists. We pray to Hashem that we merit total unification thereby yielding Hashem's return to us resting His Divine Presence amongst us.

© 2004 Rabbi D. Siegel & www.torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The towering personalities of the Bible—and especially of the book of Genesis—must be seen on two levels: on the one hand, as living, breathing flesh and blood human beings who live, love, fail, succeed, and on the other hand, as symbols of a nation which will develop from their loins and direct the course of history. This is what Nachmanidies teaches when he says that "The deeds of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs adumbrate and reverberate through the subsequent history of their descendants". And what Professor Nachama Leibowitz (and Rabbi Elchanan Samet) often emphasize as the "double track" biblical message. I would also add a third element, which is the psychological motivations inherent in the activities of our biblical personalities. Let us investigate four seminal incidents recorded in the stories of Jacob, Esau, Joseph and his brothers which will more than justify our analysis.

When Jacob initially departs from his parent's home and sets out for Haran, the Bible provides a number of different motivations: 1. "Behold Esau your brother is ready to mourn for you by killing you"(Genesis 27:42,43). 2. "You shall not take a woman from among the daughters of Canaan" (Genesis 28:1,2). 3. "And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth and you shall spread out towards the western sea, towards the east, towards the north and towards the south" (Genesis 28:13,14).

Initially the Bible is telling us that Jacob the individual must flee to Laban's household in order to save his life from his sibling who wishes to destroy him; Israel the Patriarch, however, must father children from the proper family background who will be worthy of forming the twelve tribes of a nation guaranteed by G-d to bring blessings to all the families of the earth (the covenant between the pieces). Furthermore, from a psychological perspective Jacob is seeking to learn how to be more like the entrapping and glib Esau in order that he may perhaps thereby gain his father's love and acceptance. The master of Esau-like personality traits is none other than Jacob's uncle Laban in Haran.

Twenty years later, Jacob decides to leave Haran and return to his birthplace Canaan. The Bible records, "And Jacob saw that the face of Laban was not sympathetically with him as it had been one and two days before" (Genesis 31:1,2), but then continues to inform us that G-d Himself tells Jacob to return to the land of his fathers, a message reinforced by a heavenly angel who comes to him as part of a dream (Genesis

31:3,11-13). Jacob, the individual, sees that he no longer has a future in Laban's business, possibly because the younger sons of Laban have apparently entered the scene and expect to be their fathers' inheritors. Israel, the Patriarch, realizes that his destiny can only be carried out in the land of Israel; moreover, the fact that whereas he initially dreamt of a ladder connecting heaven and earth—the vision of Israel's mission to perfect this world in the kingship of the divine—his dream of speckled, striped and spotted cattle after twenty years in Laban's employ informs him in no uncertain terms that he must return not only to the home of his youth but more importantly to the dream—vision of his youth.

It takes Jacob further wanderings within the land of Canaan before he returns to Bet-El and his father's home. He first stops off in Shekhem, where his daughter Dina is raped and his sons Shimon and Levi rescue her by killing all of the male inhabitants. He cries out at his two sons in anger, "You have muddied me to cause me to stink amongst the inhabitants of the land...I and my household will be destroyed" (Genesis 34:30). G-d then informs him "go up to Bet-El and build there the altar..." (Genesis 35:1). Jacob, the individual, is frightened of retaliation by the nations bordering on Shekhem and so finally sets out for Bet-El and his father's house; Israel, the Patriarch, knows that he must fulfill his oath of twenty-two years before in order to realize his mission of the birthright. Jacob's reaction to Shimon and Levi, likewise demonstrates the psychological change in his personality; his success in having exorcized the aspect of Esau-Laban which had invaded his character. No longer Jacob the deceiver, he abhors the fact that his sons were not forthright with Hamor and Shekhem in their meeting together. Now, the new Jacob-Israel is ready to return to his father's home having shed himself of any proclivity towards deception.

Finally, in our Torah portion of this week, Father Jacob makes the difficult decision to leave the land of Canaan-Israel and to descend to Egypt and re-unite with his beloved son Joseph. After all, he is being summoned by the Grand Vizier, who is indeed his own beloved flesh and blood, "Come down to me....and I shall support you there....lest you your household and all that is yours become impoverished...and he saw the wagons (agalot) which Joseph sent to transport him, and the spirit of Jacob their father was revived" (Genesis 45:9-11,27,28). At the same time, the Almighty comes to Israel in a dream, telling him: "I am the Lord G-d of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt because I will make you a great nation there"(Genesis 46:2,3). Jacob, the individual, requires the fundamental sustenance of food in order for his family to survive; Jacob the bereaved father likewise yearns to see his most beloved son after an estrangement of twenty-two years. Jacob is also smitten with guilt over the manner in which he directed his

family. He understands that his blatant favoritism for his son Joseph caused the sibling rivalry and even enmity which almost resulted in Joseph's tragic death. The sign of the wagons, or agalot, is reminiscent of the broken headed heifer, eglal, which the elders of the city wherein a murder has occurred must bring as expiation for their faulty leadership. Jacob feels that he has been forgiven by his son and so his spirit is revived. Israel, the Patriarch, however, goes down to Egypt in order to further realize the vision of the covenant between the pieces, which called for a black and frightening exile which would teach an emerging nation the value of freedom. From this cosmic perspective, the rapprochement between father Jacob and son Israel reflects the ultimate reunion between our father in heaven and His beloved first born son Israel in the era of redemption.

The motivations of our patriarchs are personal, psychological, and cosmic. In just such a magnificent manner, human free will merges with divine providence to ultimately redeem the world. © 2004 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"Ä

Summarized by Dov Karoll

The Torah lists at length Yaakov's descendants as they go down to Egypt (46:8-27). The family of each wife of Yaakov is listed separately: first the children and grandchildren of Leah, then the children of Zilpa, followed by the children of Rachel, and finally the children of Bilha. The Torah makes no attempt to homogenize or blur the differences between them. Each group stands alone, with its own approach. The Torah hints to us here that each approach is valid, and they should all coexist. The mistake Yosef made at the beginning of Parashat Vayeshev, which resulted in his sale, was that he tried to impose his own approach on all the brothers.

The Vilna Gaon, in his commentary on Mishlei (16:1, s.v. le-adam), says that each person has his own unique approach to the Torah. In the days of the prophets, you could go to a prophet to find out how to go about following that intuition. In our post-prophetic era, the Gaon recommends that a person should not rely on this intuition, but he does claim that it still exists. Nevertheless, the Chidushei HaRim says that it is the task of the sages of each generation to articulate a new understanding of the Torah appropriate to that generation.

The same holds true in the contemporary State of Israel. Some of the early Zionists wanted to create a melting pot, where everyone would come out the same. Our parasha teaches us that, to the contrary, each person and each group must be allowed to make its

own contribution. The greatness of the Jewish people is that each individual and each group complements the others. Anyone who accepts the basic principles of Judaism, such as the divinity of the Torah, should be allowed to operate independently and contribute to the whole. Once you have this basic common ground, the rest is just details, and should be treated that way.

In recent years, one of the songs that has become popular is "Yachad." At a recent tisch, I pointed out that this song is based on a part of the Kedusha that refers to people giving praise to God "along with" with the ministering angels. "The angels above, along with Your people below, shall crown You together, O Lord our God; together they shall proclaim Your three-fold sanctity..." (Kedusha of Musaf, Nusach Sefarad). It is relatively easy to have unity with the angels. The hard part is having unity among the Jewish people. It is this we must strive for. [*This sicha was delivered at se'uda shelishit, Parashat Vayigash 5762 (2001).*]

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." I would translate it as I suggest that the accurate translation of 'hoda'a' in this context is: 'concession' or 'acknowledgement'. [For further support of this translation, see endnote 1]. This translation implies a tense, and likely, a conflicted relationship. For a person can 'concede' a point reluctantly or grudgingly—perhaps only between gritted teeth.. Thus, the Sfas Emes is telling us that we 'Yehudim' are a people who acknowledge that—whether we like it or not—HaShem's Presence is everywhere. And 'everywhere' includes situations in which an observer without Torah would bemoan HaShem's absence.

We move on to another line of thought. The Sfas Emes tells us that when a person encounters a rough patch in life, he should realize that he is also gaining the opportunity for a richer relationship with HaShem. Further, the Sfas Emes advises 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.

The Sfas Emes has just given us a radically new nonpshat on our parsha's first sentence. The text says: "Vayigash eilav Yehuda". As noted above, 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!

Note another feature of this model on how to handle a rough patch in life. To come closer to the penimiyus, we must first remove 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): 'Hotzi'yu 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.) "Vekol dinim mis'abrin minei". Thus, when Shabbos arrives and we come closer to the penimiyus, we try to remove all the extraneous 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 not only what we do, but also what we say, and indeed, what we think. That is, on Shabbos, we should strive not only for: shinui ma'aseh but also for shinui dibur; and even for shinui mach'shava. Clearly, this lineup has implications for 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 ARIZL on this phrase and on the name "Yehuda". The ARIZL 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 ARIZL'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 (perhaps 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 includes in this one 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. Being a guarantor means taking the responsibility for making good if the one being guaranteed does not come up to standard. In our context, the metaphor seems to be saying, that if HaShem seems to under-perform, we— klal Yisroel— have the responsibility of compensating for His apparent deficiency. I find this idea totally mind-boggling.

You may wonder who is the author of the far out, apparently Chassidische understanding of the word "rei'acha" that we cited above? The answer is Rashi, a mainline commentator reputed to be an extreme pashtan. Thus, we see here another case in support of a key Sfas Emes theme: namely, 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.

Endnote 1. In 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 "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.) © 2004 Rabbi N.C. Leff and torah.org

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

After Yosef and his brothers are reunited, the brothers return to Yaacov and the whole family moves to Egypt. The Torah gives a list of all the members of Yaacov's family (Bereishit 46:8-27), and the passage is well known for how difficult it is to reach a total of seventy people in all. It is written, "These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore Yaacov in Padan Aram, together with his daughter Dina. There were thirty-three sons and daughters in all." [46:15]. However, as Rashi asks, "When you count them, there are only thirty-two!" This is true: the total number of Leah and her children is thirty-two. The simple way to solve this dilemma, as suggested by Ibn Ezra and Rashbam, is to include Yaacov in the count. That is, Yaacov is included with Leah and her children.

This, however, seems to contradict what is written at the end: "All the souls who came to Egypt, Yaacov's children except for his wives, were sixty-six souls" [46:26]. This list includes all his offspring, except for Yosef and his sons (that is, it includes eleven sons of Yaacov and fifty-five grandchildren), and it clearly implies that Yaacov himself is not part of the total. Why is there a difference between the list of Leah's children, which includes Yaacov himself, and the summary, which does not include Yaacov?

It would seem that the main significance of this passage in the Torah is the duplication itself. As we have seen, Yaacov is included with Leah's children. But at the end of the list, after noting that there were sixty-six in all, it is written, "And the children of Yosef who were born in Egypt were two; all the souls of the house of Yaacov who came to Egypt were seventy" [46:27]. In this case it is clear that the difference between sixty-six

and seventy includes four more people: Yosef, his two sons, and Yaacov. Now Yaacov and Yosef, with his two sons, are suddenly included in the count.

Thus, it can be assumed that the Torah purposely shows that Yaacov belongs to two different lists—among Leah's children and together with Yosef and his sons. In this way, we can see that Yaacov himself drew the proper conclusion from the affair of the sale of Yosef, no longer giving special treatment to one side over the other. The cycle which had begun with Yaacov's one-sided love for Yosef, in preference to the other brothers, and the separation between Yosef and Leah's children (see 37:2-3), had now come to an end. The list of seventy people gives us not only genealogical information, it is an expression of the full unity that was experienced by Yaacov and his offspring at the end of the dramatic events in Egypt.

Now, for the second time in his life, Yaacov sends one of the brothers to meet another one. In the past, he sent Yosef to Yehuda and the others, and now was the appropriate time for the opposite mission. "And he sent Yehuda before him to Yosef, to show him the way to Goshen" [46:28]. The path of Yaacov will be continued by his messengers, the sons of Yehuda and Yosef, for all time to come.

Starting with this point, the number seventy will serve as a model for the behavior of the nation of Yisrael, beginning with the desert and on to the Sanhedrin. This presents a picture of seventy men who may have disagreements among themselves but who are still able to work in unity.

Alienation, Abandonment, and Loneliness

by Rabbi Shaul Farber, Head of the "Itim" Association

The philosopher Jeanne-Paul Sartre described three successive stages in the existentialistic experience: alienation, abandonment, and loneliness. When Yosef, the main figure in the Torah Portion of Vayigash, begins his process of assimilation, he passes through exactly these three stages.

In the very first verse that appears in the portion of Vayeishev, the Torah describes the deep feeling of alienation between him and his brothers as a result of his youthful acts. In the next stage, the brothers abandon Yosef. This can be seen when Yosef meets a man who tells him his brothers "have journeyed away from this" [Bereishit 37:17]. Following the Tanchuma, Rashi explains that the brothers "removed themselves from brotherhood." The feeling of abandonment reaches its high point when Yosef is thrown into a dry pit.

In the Torah portion of Vayigash, we see the Torah's answer to the existential frustration. In spite of the difficulty and the pain, the lonely one returns to his family, his community, and in the end to his nation.

In his attempt to defend Binyamin, Yehuda seven times uses the term "na'ar"—youth—which is what caused the original alienation. "And we said to our

master, the youth will not be able to leave his father" [Bereishit 44:22]. "And now, when I come to your servant, my father, and the youth will not be with us" [44:30]. "And when he sees that the youth is not with us" [44:31]. "Your servant guaranteed the youth's safety to my father" [44:32]. "And now, let your servant remain instead of the youth as a slave to my master, and let the youth return with his brothers" [44:33]. "How can I ascend to my father, when the youth is not with me?" [44:34]. Yehuda now understands and is willing to admit that accusing somebody of "youthful actions" is not good. Moreover, the youngest brother, who has less experience, needs a larger measure of protection. This atones for the fault of alienation.

The second stage, abandonment, is also treated in this week's Torah portion. For the first time, the Torah uses the words, "And Yosef said to his brothers" [45:3]. The response to abandonment is direct communication. According to most of the commentators, until Yosef identified himself to his brothers he only spoke to them in roundabout ways.

Alienation, abandonment, and loneliness are being experienced in these times by many people in our nation. Ironically, it is here in the nation of Jews that a substantial part of the new immigrants feel estranged from the rest of the people, especially from the religious sector and its practices.

We have a narrow window of opportunity to remove our own people from the pit of assimilation and transform them once again into part of our nation and our family. What we need today from the religious community are direct communication, self criticism, and above all the courage to admit that "Yosef is still alive" [45:26]. There are many opportunities to act. Examples are to adopt a family that is undergoing the process of conversion and to provide personal guidance when necessary, putting out a helping hand to new immigrants in general, and opening the doors of one's home, the synagogues, and the schools to the immigrants in a pleasant way.

Let us hope and pray that we will learn to appreciate that G-d has sent us to the earth in order to leave a remnant in the land (35:7).

RABBI ZVI MILLER

The Salant Foundation

When Yosef invited his father to Egypt, he said to Yaacov, "Come to Egypt and I will sustain you."

There was a famine in Israel. Yosef was a mighty king who controlled the plentiful Egyptian storehouses of grain. Wasn't it obvious that he would provide food for his father? Was he inviting his beloved father to Egypt to starve, while he held the only food supply in the region?

In relationships, common courtesy usually calls for the recipient to go to his provider in order to receive

his gift. Classically in father and son relationships, the father is the provider and the son the recipient. Hence it is the son who goes to his father.

Yosef anticipated that Yaacov would feel uncomfortable being cast as the beneficiary to his son. By coming to Egypt, Yaacov might feel to some degree that he was imposing his needs on Yosef, his son.

Therefore, Yosef said to his father, "Come to Egypt and I will sustain you." Yosef is expressing to Yaacov that he considers it a privilege to provide for his beloved father. Due to the current food shortage conventional protocol is suspended. Therefore, Yosef is lovingly beseeching his father to accept provisions from him without suffering embarrassment. Sensitivity is the key in relationships. Often a spouse or friend feels uncomfortable with aspects of their relationships. By thinking about and anticipating these tender areas, we can design a way to resolve the problem and bring them relief.

When we view relationships as an opportunity to show kindness to others, there is no end to the good that we can bestow upon them.

Implement: Reflect on one of your relationships and determine how you can show more sensitivity to that individual. [*Even Yisrael of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter*]

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

In this week's Parsha, Vayigash, Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers, after making sure they didn't resent him still. As Rabbi Haber points out, what's more amazing is that Yosef forgave his brothers, after being stuck in a dangerous pit crawling with poisonous snakes, screaming out for help while catching a glimpse of your brothers sitting down to break bread, ignoring your pleas for mercy. If your brothers sold you as a slave, would you ever be able to forgive them, kiss and embrace them, and adhere to all the families laws and customs after they caused you such profound pain? Yosef did all of these things. He didn't assimilate; he didn't become an anti-Semite. He defied every law of human nature.

How? Rabbi Haber goes on to explain that Yosef was empowered by one sentence: "You didn't send me here, G-d did!" The fact is they DID send him there. But from Yosef's point of view that was between his brothers and G-d. That was something they had to deal with. As far as Joseph was concerned, it was all an act of G-d. He was not the judge, he was a brother and he was a Jew. He would act like a brother and he would act like a Jew. We can learn SO much from Yosef today! It is not for us to play G-d. If we could just memorize and adapt one line into our lives - "it wasn't you that sent me here; it was G-d" - we'd all be closer to all our "brothers", and we'd all be better Jews. © 2004 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.