

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

One of the most amazing moments in the entire Bible is the dramatic and poignant meeting between Jacob and Joseph after 22 years of separation. What led to that meeting was the opening speech of Judah, in which he pleads with the Grand Vizier not to keep Benjamin—who is being charged with stealing the Grand Vizier's goblet—as his servant in Egypt. It is the substance, and most probably the delivery of Judah's defense of Benjamin that causes the Grand Vizier to reveal himself as Joseph. And which ultimately leads to the rapprochement between father and son.

But even if the speech was delivered with most heartfelt feeling and emotion, its substance does not at all appear powerful enough to move an individual such as the Grand Vizier. Judah goes on about the fact that Benjamin is now the only remaining son of Rachel, the beloved wife of his father (Genesis 44:20) and he recounts that when the sons were about to return to Egypt for food and he explained to his father that they could not face the Grand Vizier without Benjamin, Judah puts in Jacob's mouth the following plea: "You know that two sons were born to me by my wife; one has left me, and I must say that he has been torn, yes torn, and I have not seen him until this moment. And now would you take also this last one from me? If an accident would occur to him, my old age would be brought down into the nether world in distress" (44:28,29). Judah then concludes that he acted as co signer for Benjamin, and so he begs that he be taken into the Grand Vizier's bondage and that Benjamin be allowed to return to his father. As soon as he concludes his words, Joseph cannot restrain his emotion, breaks out into weeping and reveals himself to his brothers. What is there about Judah's plea which caused Joseph to give up the disguise he had so preciously guarded during his period as Grand Vizier?

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Together with the fundamental question of why Grand Vizier Joseph did not contact his father is a second question of no less weightiness: why didn't the brothers understand earlier that this Grand Vizier must be Joseph? After all, no other group who came to purchase food had been treated the way they had been treated: first they were all thrown into a dungeon, then everyone was sent back to the Land of Canaan to return with Benjamin with Simon being held as hostage. Simon had been, together with Levi, the most active against Joseph, and had not they cast Joseph into a pit-dungeon when they tore his coat from him?! Who else but Joseph would have been so anxious for them to return with Benjamin! And then, when they returned with the youngest brother they were all seated in the order of their ages. Who else but Joseph would have known the respective ages of each of the brothers?! So why didn't they understand that this Grand Vizier must have been Joseph?

I believe there were two reasons. First of all, they were so overwhelmed with their guilt that they were certain that it was G-d who was punishing them, G-d and not necessarily any human being. Secondly, they could not possibly have imagined that Joseph were he indeed alive, would not have contacted the father who had loved him so much and had given him the Coat of Many Colors. Hence it never dawned on them that the Grand Vizier was Joseph.

Once, the Grand Vizier rejected Judah's offer that all of them remain as slaves (with the exception of Benjamin) it became clear to the brothers that it was not G-d who was punishing them. After all, they were all guilty for the sale of Joseph. Judah however still had to figure out why the Grand Vizier, if indeed he was Joseph, had not made contact with his old father. He realized why not. Joseph was angry even at his father for having managed the family relationships so poorly. His father should never have demonstrated such blatant favoritism. It was this anger which prevented him from contacting his father, even after he rose to such great heights in Egypt.

Now we can appreciate the brilliance with which Judah crafted his speech. He dwells at length upon the fact that Joseph and Benjamin were the sons of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. In this way he tries to make Joseph understand that his father couldn't help himself, that Joseph was the most precious thing he had left of the wife for whom he had labored 14 years.

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He is trying very hard to get the Grand Vizier to repent for having disguised himself so completely—even from the father who loved him so much.

Judah also understands that Joseph cannot repent unless he feels the brothers repented. Our Sages have always taught us that before your words will move others, you yourself must be free of guilt. Therefore Judah emphasizes the fact that he—the one who suggested that Joseph be thrown into the pit in the first place—had served as a co-signer for Benjamin, the Joseph substitute in his father's eyes. Not only that but the same Judah is willing to be enslaved himself rather than to see his father grieved a second time.

Joseph is profoundly struck by the powerful impact of Judah's words, his anger against his father completely melts. He fully accepts Judah's repentance, and that gives him the inner strength to repent himself. The family is now ready to become re-united, under the dual leadership of the brilliant Judah and the new Joseph, both of whom have demonstrated willingness to overcome their individual ambitions for the sake of family unity and the centrality of G-d. © 2005 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Although Paro's dreams had indicated that there would be seven years of famine following the seven years of plenty, our Sages tell us (see Rashi on 47:19) that in Egypt itself, because of Yaakov's blessing, it only lasted for two years. It was for this reason, Rashi tells us, that in the second year the Egyptians asked Yosef to provide enough grain for food *and* to plant next year's crop. They saw that the famine had ended (as the Nile was once again flooding its banks and irrigating the land), so knew that they needed to seed the ground.

However, if we look at how Rashi explains the sequence of events, several problems arise. The Torah tells us that in order to pay for their sustenance, the Egyptians spent all of their money (47:14-15) and gave up all of their livestock (47:16-17). Then, in the "second" year (47:18-19), the Egyptians pleaded with Yosef not to let them perish, asking him to give them grain in exchange for their land and their servitude. But when was this "second" year? It could refer to the

second year of the famine, the second year after Yosef's family moved to Egypt, or the second (i.e. next) year after having paid for grain with their animals. If the famine only lasted until Yaakov moved down to Egypt, the middle possibility is eliminated. Rashi explains the verse to mean the "second year of the famine." The clear implication is that all of their money and animals were already gone in the first year of the famine. Is it really possible that *all* of it was needed for just one year's worth of grain?

Besides, the Torah says that Yosef "fed them in exchange for all of their livestock in that year," (47:17), implying that it was *only* for the livestock that year (whichever year it was), not for both the livestock *and* their money. How can Rashi imply that both were spent in the same year?

Additionally, if in the second year of the famine they asked for grain to eat and—because they knew that the famine was over—grain to plant, Yaakov must have already moved down to Egypt. Yet, when Yosef first revealed himself to his brothers (45:6), he told them that two years of the famine had already passed (see Rashi there). How could the Egyptians have known that the famine would be over (and therefore asked for extra grain to plant) when they asked for food *for* the second year if the brothers didn't even head back to get Yaakov until *after* the second year? Rashi himself (Yechezkel 29:11) tells us that this grain was planted in the third year, not the second, as the famine lasted for 2 years. So how can Rashi here tell us that this purchase was in the second year of the famine?

Based on these questions, Rav Menachem Mendel Brachfeld, in *Sefer Yosef Hillel*, suggests that a variant printing of Rashi is really more accurate. This version of Rashi explains the "second year" to mean "the third year of the famine," with "second" really meaning the "next" year. If this is really what Rashi wrote, then the Egyptians paid with money the first year, with their animals the second, and then, in the third, after Yaakov had blessed Paro that the Nile should overflow its banks to greet him, they requested grain to eat (as nothing had grown in the second year) and additional grain to plant.

Nevertheless, the standard, traditional versions of Rashi do say that it was "the second year of the famine," and it is possible to explain how Rashi could say so.

Everyone (at least in Egypt) knew that the famine was coming, and tried to prepare for it. The problem was (as Rashi told us on 41:55) that everything that everyone had stored became rotten, except for what Yosef had gathered. It would be difficult to say that only what was stored for future years had rotted, but the amount they would usually have anyway for the coming year was fine. It is much more likely that once the famine started *everything* spoiled, so that they there was nothing left, not even the amount that would

have normally lasted until to the next harvest (had there been one). This would explain how Yosef's brothers really had food that first year, buying food only to avoid arousing jealousy (see Rashi on 42:1); while everyone else's food spoiled, as G-d protected Yaakov's food. If the grain that normally would be eaten until the next harvest had spoiled, then the "deficit" that first year of the famine was really the equivalent of two years.

The brothers made two trips to Egypt before finding out who Yosef was. The first one seems to have been in the first year, when they still had food left. Yaakov tells them to "go down" to Egypt (42:2), with Rashi pointing out that the numerical value of the word "go down" ("redu") is 210, symbolizing the 210 years the nation would spend there. When Yosef sends them back to get Yaakov after their second trip, he tells them to tell him to "come down" to see me (45:9). Some of the Baalei Tosfos (see Chizkuni, for example) point out that the numerical value of "come down" ("redah") is 209, as one year had passed since Yaakov had sent them down. This second trip, then, which was shortly followed by Yaakov reuniting with Yosef in Egypt, occurred during the second year of the famine. It was only necessitated by an actual lack of food (43:2), which would have been the second half of that year, when the lack of that second harvest meant that they needed food for the remainder of the second year and the first part of the third year.

During that second trip, the brothers expressed an unusual fear of their animals being taken (43:18), and the Torah goes out of its way to tell us that this fear was unrealized (44:3). The Brisker Rav explains that this fear was based on the fact that no one else had any animals, as they had to use them to buy food. Since this fear was not mentioned in their first trip, we can assume that this trip was made before everyone else's animals belonged to the Egyptian government. Which implies that there were two separate buying seasons, one when only money was used (which is when the brothers first went down), and the second when grain was acquired for livestock. The brothers, who still had money, didn't need to pay with their animals, but feared they would be taken nonetheless.

Using these tidbits, we can try to explain how Rashi says that the Egyptians spent all of their money *and* their livestock in the first year of the famine, and knew that it was over before their purchase in the second year. That first year, there was a food shortage even before the harvest would have occurred, as all stored grain had rotted. The Egyptians were forced to purchase grain from Yosef, depleting all of their money. But they had only purchased enough grain to replace what had spoiled, hoping that somehow the Nile would overflow and there would still be a harvest. Yes, they bought more than what they would have had in stock during a normal year, because they knew that even if the famine ended immediately, that harvest would be

delayed. When there was no harvest at all, they had to purchase grain from Yosef a second time in that first year, this time to replace that first lost harvest. This is what the Torah means when it says that Yosef fed them that year in exchange for their livestock; not that all of their purchases in that calendar year were with animals, but that that year's harvest was replaced with grain purchased with livestock.

That purchase lasted well into the second year (even past when the normal harvest would have lasted, as they had made this purchase well after the harvest would have been, since they had been hoping for a delayed harvest) Before the Egyptians are willing to sell their land and freedom to replace that second lost harvest, the brothers come down for a second time, try to go home but are dragged back because of the "stolen goblet," find out that Yosef is the Viceroy, and then go get Yaakov. Yosef tells them that two years of the famine have passed because they just purchased grain to replace the second lost harvest, not because the third year was about to start. He tells them that they will have to deal with five more lost harvests, but he will feed them.

When Yaakov arrives and blesses Paro, the famine ends (in Egypt). It is still the middle of the second year, and the second harvest has already been lost, but now that the Egyptians see the Nile overflowing again, they purchase grain to replace that second lost harvest and to plant for the third year.

Because the Egyptians had to replace part of the harvest from the year before the famine (due to spoilage), there were two purchases that first year; one made with money at the beginning of the year to replace what had spoiled, designed to last late into the year until the hoped-for delayed harvest, and the second made with animals late in the year, well after the first lost harvest would have been available. This second purchase lasted well into the second year, even after the brothers had to replace their second lost harvest. By the time the Egyptians made their first (and only) purchase in the second year, they knew that the famine had ended and there would be a harvest in the third year. © 2005 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Our portion opens with Yehudah (Judah) standing before Yosef (Joseph). Through Yehudah's plea, the entire family of Ya'akov (Jacob) is kept intact. It is fitting that it is Yehudah, among all of the brothers, who is responsible for this large family reunion because he succeeded in bringing his smaller nuclear family together again.

Yehudah, earlier in the book of Genesis, is blessed with twins-born from Tamar. His twins fundamentally differ from the other set found in Genesis.

From the womb possibly the most famous set of twins, Ya'akov and Esav (Esau) struggle. Rivkah (Rebecca), their mother, is in fact told that their struggle is indicative of an ongoing battle they would be engaged in throughout their lives. In fact the words used in this prophecy, *verav ya-avod tzair* (Genesis 25:23) can either mean the older one (*rav*) will serve the younger one or that the younger one will be in great (*rav*) service of the older one. This difference reflects their endless battles, not only in their lives, but throughout their nations' histories.

When Yehudah's twins, Zerach and Peretz, are born to him and Tamar the picture differs. Zerach puts his hand out first. The midwife ties a scarlet string (*shani*) on his hand to indicate he was first. (Genesis 38:28) But the emergence of the hand does not constitute being born first. Rabbi David Silber beautifully points out that the word *shani* spelled with a *shin*, *nun* and *yud* can also be revocalized as *sheni*, meaning second. In other words through the midwife's action it becomes clearer that Zerach would be second; the eldest would be Peretz who would at the last moment spring forward from his mother's womb first. For the first time in Genesis, all children in the family find their true place.

This is in marked contrast to what had transpired until now. Of Adam, only Shet survives as Noah comes from him. From the children of Noah, Shem is selected, as Avraham (Abraham) is his descendant. It is Yitzchak (Isaac), not Yishmael, and it is Ya'akov, not Esav who are chosen as patriarchs. Yehudah's case was the first in which neither of his children was cast aside. Both count. Conflicts within the family were resolved.

Rabbi Silber argues that Yehudah therefore knows the importance of bringing the entire family of Ya'akov together having done so with his inner family.

This in fact is the flow of Genesis. It moves from family fragmentation to family reconciliation. Only after Ya'akov embraces all of his children can the nation of Israel be born. The model of our nation is family and the cornerstone of family is that everyone counts, everyone can make a contribution.

In these times of great stress in the State of Israel, each of us, along with all of Am Yisrael, needs to desperately heed Yehudah's message of unity, togetherness and respect....the true message of family.

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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." It would be easy fall into a mistake in translation here. That mistake would be to translate 'hoda'a' as 'gratitude'. In fact, *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]. 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' reflects a much more positive and forthcoming attitude. Thus, 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 a naive observer would perceive HaShem as definitely absent-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- do 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. For this reason, before Yosef revealed himself to his brothers-and thus showed them the *penimiyus* (the inner reality) 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 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. That is, 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., YHHDH-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 such 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 in the situation of 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 classic, far out, Chassidische" reading? The answer: none other than the classic literalist 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!

Footnote 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 "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.

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MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

Yehuda's emotional speech to Yosef is one of the most dramatic passages in the Torah (Bereishit 44:18-34). For the first time since his encounter with the hostile ruler of the land and his tactics of harassment, Yehuda finds the courage to turn with emotion to the man, attempting to find a balance between the ruler's evil on one hand and his own desire not to go too far on the other hand. At the end is the high point of his speech-the proposal that Yehuda replace Binyamin as a slave. But it is very surprising that in this very important speech Yehuda's description of the events is quite different from the way the Torah

itself described them, as we read in last week's Torah portion.

In the portion of Mikeitz, we read about the first meeting between Yosef and his brothers. Yosef accuses them, "You are spies, you have come to spy out the secrets of the land" [42:9]. In response, the brothers tell him more about themselves: "We are twelve brothers, sons of one father, but the youngest one is with his father, and another one is no longer with us" [42:10]. Yosef replies, "Here is how you will be tested. I swear by Pharaoh's name that you will not leave here unless your youngest brother joins you here." [42:15]. As opposed to this, Yehuda in his talk to Yosef presents a completely different picture of the events. First, he notes that it was Yosef who asked, "Do you have a father or a brother?" [44:19]. He also modifies the words of the brothers, "We have an old father who has a young child of old age. But his brother has died, and he alone remains from this mother, and his father loves him." [44:20]. However, this was never mentioned in Mikeitz, last week's portion. In addition, when Yehuda repeats Yosef's request, he adds details that were not mentioned before. Yosef is quoted as saying, "Bring him to me and I will look at him" [44:21]. But there was no hint of this in Yosef's original demand. Yehuda also quotes the brothers as saying things that were not mentioned in the earlier portion. "And we said to our master, the boy cannot leave his father, because if he leaves his father he will die." [44:22]. Why then does Yehuda describe the events so differently from the way they were described at first?

Evidently, Yehuda is not attempting to describe objective absolute truth but rather the way the events affected him. There are two main elements in this subjective description of the events. First, Yehuda understood that the ruler of the land was interested in the family of the brothers, even though this was not mentioned explicitly, and he was especially interested in the youngest of the brothers. In addition, Yehuda was giving vent to his feelings-which were also not mentioned explicitly but correspond to his words throughout-that included a strong worry about his father and his health, based on the special link between his father and Binyamin.

There can be no doubt that Yosef understood these elements, since he knew very well that Yehuda was not giving a historically accurate description of the events. It is reasonable to assume that Yosef also understood that Yehuda's subjective description was an expression of his own feelings, which corresponded to Yosef's wishes, including full repentance by the brothers. It was clear that the brothers were no longer jealous of the youngest brother because of a special bond with their father but rather that they were worried for the brother and for their father's health. When Yosef understood these facts, he could no longer hold back and he identified himself.

"Go to Him! Talk to Him!"

by Rabbi Ariel Farajun, Hesder Yeshiva and Graduate Yeshiva, Maaleh Efraim

The sages have taught us that just as appearances are different for different people, so are the opinions of people different from each other (see Berachot 58a). When there are different approaches on specific issues, the ground is ripe for an argument. And when an argument is ready to begin, Satan steps in. Satan comes, acting in the opposite way from Aharon, the High Priest. He goes to one of the sides and describes the other one as being mistaken and misleading, acting out of a desire for evil and not out of pure intentions. He then continues to the second person and reminds him of all the faults of the first one. He insists that he caused harm on purpose, and that he is a hypocrite. And Satan goes back and forth, returning again and again, and he is not satisfied until he has turned righteous people into evil ones and lovers into enemies.

The magic bullet for solving the problems caused by Satan is easy to obtain, and it is amazing how simple it is. His only power stems from his ability to cause people to imagine bad things about other people. A face to face meeting with reality has the power to destroy these illusions, almost as if one is using a magic wand. When a person approaches a friend and talks to him face to face, most of the problems and the disputes become miniscule and collapse into nothing, and the adversary begins to look a lot less evil than the image we built up with the aid of the evil inclination.

The wisdom of the Torah encompasses the entire universe, and there is nothing that is not hinted at in the Torah. Rabbi Akiva knew how to derive many laws out of every crown on the letters of the Torah (Menachot 29b), and therefore when he passed away without leaving another person who knew how to do the same the "glory of Torah" disappeared from the world (Sottah 49a, see Rashi). This is the honor and the glory of Torah, when it becomes clear that everything in it is made with detailed precision, and that it contains many examples of supreme wisdom (Zohar, Acharei Mot 79b).

The essence of solving disputes, based on meeting face to face, can be seen in this week's Torah portion, which begins with the words, "He approached him-Yehuda" [Bereishit 44:18]. If we were writing this verse, it can be assumed we would have written as follows: "Yehuda approached him..." Starting with the word, "Vayigash"-he approached-places the emphasis on the approach as the most important element of the story. Perhaps the brothers discussed the matter, and they chose Yehuda to represent them. In addition, the exact text of the verse places the word "him" before the name of the subject, "Yehuda," implying that the main

element of solving a dispute is the approach itself, while the fact that Yehuda had the traits of royalty was not as important as it may seem at first.

Thus, the Torah has taught us a technique for solving a conflict. It makes no difference who you are and who the antagonist is, the important thing is to approach him and talk to him!

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah 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 descendant 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.

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RABBI LABEL LAM

Dvar Torah

“**A**nd he sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef ('lehoros') to prepare (or literally to teach) ahead of him in Goshen, and they arrived in the Goshen region." (Breishis 46:28)

"Lehoros" ahead of him: What does "lehoros" mean? Rabbi Nechemia says: "To prepare for him a house of study where he could instruct Torah and where the Tribes could study the Torah....to teach you that every place that Jacob went he was involved with Torah just as his fathers were. (Breishis Rabba)

See how much is packed into one word, "lehoros". At first glance it looks like just a nice thing to send Yehuda in advance to establish a learning center but "why not just wait till he gets there and set things up later?" Why send Yehuda ahead? That place of learning must be pretty important.

I was involved one winter with a group of Hebrew Day School students that we were hoping would choose to continue past 8th grade and on to Yeshiva High School. We went away together for Shabbos and as the sole chaperone I had to keep these energetic teenagers engaged in productive activities a whole Shabbos long. I wasn't convinced they had the patience or I had the skills for what we were about to enter. I called a veteran Shabbaton leader and asked for advice. One

game/activity/workshop he suggested went like this:

I had written on each of fifty or so index cards before Shabbos single statements such as, Kosher Pizza Shop, Land of Israel, Jewish Community Center, Torah Learning, Israeli Dancing, Israel Parade, Jewish Cooking Classes, Bar Miztvah Lessons, Yiddish-Culture, Ulpan, Holocaust-Museum etc. The deck of cards was shuffled and dealt out to the students who were divided into three groups. I had also prepared on a large piece of oak-tag an outline of a pyramid of sorts with boxes the size of the index cards. One box was on the top with a #1 written boldly within. The next row had two boxes, #2 and #3 and the third row you guessed had three boxes etc. Each group was instructed to work together as a team that has been put in charge of the survival of the Jewish People. They are asked to place the cards that rank highest as the best strategy to advance the survival of the Jewish People. They are to be ready to defend and debate with the other groups the reasons for their prioritization. I was the moderator. It was surprised to observe the process that unfolded. You'll never guess which card found its way to the top spot when the dust of debate has settled. When given that sober responsibility of advancing the cause of the Jewish Nation they all agreed that the most critical feature would have to be establishing Yeshivas. Amazing!

With the benefit of hindsight looking over the demographics of the American-Jewish landscape one can observe how many Jewish communities and individuals have been lost along the way. In certain places there were hundreds of synagogues but a generation later, a mere turn of the page, and tragically these synagogues and their members are no more.

Not wishing to diminish the importance of a Schul but it has not proven adequate by itself to promote a second or third generation of devotees. A Schul alone is a like a 10 minute lube job. People stop off for short periods of time to tune up intermittently. That's nice and valuable for spiritual maintenance. If there's a Scholarly-Rabbi then it's like a having a gas station with a sign that reads; "Mechanic on Premises". If something breaks there is someone there to help fix it. The individual seeking that help can travel a little further. When there's a Yeshiva in town then that's analogous to living in Detroit Michigan or wherever the next, newest, and current model of cars are rolling off the assembly line. There's the future!

It can be openly observed that only those communities that established Yeshivas have remained and grow today, while other places have emptied out. Jacob understood this all too well and entering exile this is his number one priority! © 2005 Rabbi L. Lam & torah.org

