

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS

The Conflict Between Judah and Joseph

The prime subject of the last portions that we read in the book of Braishit is the struggle between Yehudah and Joseph. Joseph is presented to us as a person who has lofty dreams. He dreams of the stars and the moon- of a time when he will gain influence and rule over his brothers. To a great extent these dreams resemble the dreams of his father Jacob. Jacob also dreamed of a ladder extending to the heavens and angels ascending and descending upon it.

Joseph's dreams always come to fruition. In fact, whatever Joseph sets his mind to accomplish, he is successful. When he arrives in Egypt after being sold by his jealous brothers he works for an influential person in Egypt's government. When he is thrown into jail he finds favor with the head of the prison. And when he finally interprets Pharos dream he is elevated to the position of Viceroy, perhaps the most powerful position next to the king himself. Everything that Joseph touches seems to turn to gold.

Judah on the other hand is depicted as a person of seemingly good intentions but nothing seems to work out for him. He presents to his brothers his bright idea to sell Joseph into slavery only to later be confronted by the deep sorrow of his father. He has a relationship with his daughter-in-law without his knowing, only to be shamed into admitting his guilt and to be publicly embarrassed. He finally meets his brother Joseph, only to be humiliated into owning up to his mistake of initiating and carrying out his sale into slavery-and realizing that he is standing before his long lost brother, the dreamer-and that his dreams have come true!

Yet despite the apparent shortcomings of Judah, the future king of Israel and the one whom we proclaim will lead us in messianic times, King David, is

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in memory of
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נפטר ט"ו טבת תש"כ

a direct descendent of Judah not Joseph. It would seem more logical that this exalted position representing the forerunner to the Messiah would come from Joseph rather than Judah!

Our sages explain that perhaps one reason for this, is because Judah possessed a sincere caring for his brethren. He was the one who ultimately undertook responsibility for his brother Benjamin and swore to Jacob his father that he would bring him back safely. Judah, by his act of caring and assuming responsibility for his brother, set the tone for all Jews to be named after him as "Yhudim", Jews, and for his descendent, David, to be designated to herald the messianic times.

But even more important -and this is the character trait that is so compelling to me and brings me to identify with Judah-is his humanness and the fact that he makes mistakes in his lifetime yet has the strength and ability to confess his wrongdoings and start over. His descendent, King David has these same personality traits. David, on a simple level-displays poor judgment with reference to Bat Sheva, and a host of other incidences as stated in the book of Samuel, but is always able to rise up from his mistakes and begin anew. His character, which is essentially the character of his ancestor Judah, is one who is represented by the typical Jew who is faced daily with religious challenges and sometimes falters and sometimes is successful. The strength of the Jew is the ability to admit wrongdoing and then start anew.

This appreciation of the fallibility of the human being is one that parents should keep in mind when judging their children and placing undue burdens and responsibilities on them expecting them to be perfect in every way. Parents very often use their children as scapegoats to realize their dreams, without concern for what is really good for their children. Teachers also, often, have unreasonable expectations of their students not allowing them to falter even one bit, without concern that they are after all only dealing with children and that everyone should be given some slack at different times in their lives. I have seen parents who make sure that their children are enrolled in every conceivable activity after school, without keeping in mind that children need some down time and space for themselves and sometimes make mistakes.

One of the strengths of our people is that we resemble and yes even aspire to the character of Judah who is not all perfect but is human in his frailties

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yet continually tries until he is able to ascend and reach great heights. © 2006 Rabbi Weiss is the Principal of the Bess and Paul Sigel Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford. Any comments may be e-mailed to him at Ravmordechai@aol.com

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 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.

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Yehuda confronts Yosef regarding all of the false accusations he has piled on to his brothers. Both Yosef and Yehuda have right on their side. Yehuda is certainly correct in sensing that Yosef has a personal agenda of animosity towards him and his brothers that has expressed itself in all of the false accusations that he has leveled against them. Yosef is justified in his behavior towards his brothers in order to bring them to the realization of the terrible sin they committed against him and Yaakov when they sold him as a slave and covered up the event for over twenty years.

Both Yehuda and Yosef are strong personalities, each convinced in the rectitude of one's cause and opposition. Yosef has the upper hand since the brothers are under his jurisdiction and arrest. Yet Yosef is weakened by the knowledge that these are his

brothers and that any act of revenge that he may take upon them may at the end rebound negatively to him and his family. This knowledge of the difficulty and ambivalence of the situation is the reason for his weeping and finally, of his revealing himself as their long lost brother.

His pursuit of ultimate justice and full repentance of the brothers appears to be too dangerous a course to pursue further. The unity of the family, the knowledge of the grief of his father and his compounding of that grief by his behavior towards the brothers until now, finally takes precedence over the strict justice that he apparently intended to inflict upon them. Sometimes truly, discretion is the better part of valor.

Yehuda and all of the brothers are shocked and dismayed, speechless in fright and shame, at the revelation of Yosef to them. They realize that they were wrong in discounting his dreams and in taking such a drastic step as to remove him from their immediate family. Yet the tear between Yosef and his brothers lingers and will reawaken itself after the death of Yaakov.

Even later in Jewish history when the kingdom of Solomon splits into two it is Yehuda and Yosef that still confront each other. Each then also has right on its side but that division turns into disaster for the Jewish people and its sovereignty in the Land of Israel. There are many times in life when pushing right and justice to the limit can have very negative consequences in the long run of events.

Yosef's revelation to his brothers before he exacted a full measure of justice from them allowed the family to reunite, albeit with tensions and past wrongs not fully resolved. This course of behavior is analogous to the idea of the Talmud that there are many times that a person must behave *l'fnim meshurat hadin*-in a fashion that is beyond the demands of justice alone. The behavior of both Yosef and Yehuda in this confrontation and its resolution for the benefit of family unity testifies to their wisdom and holiness in a most dangerous and volatile situation. © 2006 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

When Yaakov (Jacob) meets his son Yosef (Joseph) after seventeen years of separation the Torah states, "And he wept on his neck." (Genesis 46:29) Since the sentence speaks of only one individual crying, "and he wept," who is the Torah referring to? Was it Yaakov or was it Yosef who cried?

One could argue that it was more likely that Yosef did the crying. After all, Yosef must have been filled with feelings of deep regret. Regret for having stirred his brother's jealousy through his dreams and regret for having failed to contact his father during the years of separation.

On the other hand, Yaakov must have also felt deep regret which may have prompted his crying. Yaakov, who grew up in a family wrought with friction due to his parents' playing of favorites, should have known better than to play favorites himself. His favoring of Yosef eventually led to Yosef's sale. Yaakov also made the mistake of sending Yosef to his brethren to make peace with them. It was this plan that backfired and led directly to Yosef being sold to Egypt. Tears of remorse would have been understandable.

There is another approach, one that doesn't emphasize tears of regret but rather tears of emotion. Here, the classical commentaries disagree. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh argues that Yaakov, who lived isolated in one place for twenty two years, was immersed in the pain of the loss of his son. When meeting Yosef he doesn't cry because "his tears had long since dried up." When the reunion finally takes place, Yaakov has no more tears left. Joseph however, had experienced "so many changes of fortune" since he left home and did not have time to dwell on his homesickness. When he meets his father, all the feelings that had been suppressed, rose to the surface. His crying showed the sudden rush of this pent up emotion.

Ramban sees it differently. He offers perhaps the most penetrating psychological insight. He argues that Yaakov was more likely to have wept. After all, when considering the emotions of an elderly father on the one hand, and the emotions of a young strong son, it seems clear that the father is more apt to shed tears. In Ramban's words: "By whom are tears more easily shed? By the aged parent who finds his long lost son alive after despairing and mourning for him, or the young son who rules?"

When addressing this text, I often ask my students: "How many of you have seen your mother cry?" Invariably, many students respond in the affirmative. But when I ask the same about their fathers, very few hands are raised. Somehow, we mostly associate crying with women and not men. This should not be. Indeed, the Torah never mentions Avraham (Abraham) or Sarah, Yitzchak (Isaac) or Rivkah (Rebecca) crying before their children. Yaakov is the first. His tears reflect an openness of emotional love that allows a parent to cry freely before his / her child.

No wonder we are called the children of Yaakov (b'nei Yaakov) or the children of Israel (Yisrael), Yaakov's additional name. Built into our personal lives and the lives of our nation, are profound

and deep tears. They are reflective of deep emotional feelings. The expression of such feelings should not be denied, but encouraged. Just as there are times where joy and smiles should be shown to everyone, there are times that almost demand the flowing of tears.

Blessed are the children who have the privilege and chance to glimpse into the depths of their parents' emotions and witness a spontaneous flowing of tears.

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RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd Paro said to Yosef, saying, 'your father and your brothers have come to you' (Beraishis 47:5). But didn't Paro know that Yosef knew they were there? Yosef saw them before Paro did, telling them that he will go tell Paro that they have arrived (46:31), and giving them instructions about what to say when they meet him. Yosef then told Paro himself that they've arrived (47:1), and escorts 5 of his brothers in to see him (47:2). Since Paro clearly knew that Yosef was aware that they'd arrived, why did he feel the need to state the obvious? Additionally, the word "saying" seems superfluous as well. The Torah could have just told us what Paro said to Yosef; what purpose does the word "saying" serve?

When Paro instructed Yosef to tell his family to move down to Egypt (45:17-18), he told them to "come to me." It would therefore seem that the point Paro was making was not that they had arrived, but that things were not as he had originally said; rather than coming "to Paro," they came "to Yosef." The question then becomes what significance (or difference) is there if they came to Yosef instead of Paro, and what caused this change.

There are three theoretical possibilities as to why Paro changed from asking them to come to him (Paro) and telling Yosef that they came to him (Yosef). It could be a miscommunication, where Paro meant the same thing both times but it came out wrong; we would then need to explain the significance of the miscommunication. The Netziv suggests that G-d caused Paro to say something that he didn't intend on saying, so that instead of "coming to Paro" and being subject to his authority, Yosef was told that they "came to him," and therefore were not required to put their energies and talents towards the betterment of Egypt. Perhaps the Torah adds that this is what Paro "said" because it wasn't really what he meant to say.

It's also possible that Paro changed his mind, and originally wanted them to come "to him," but later decided that they should be Yosef's guests instead (see Midrash Seichel Tov and Moshav Zekainim, that "to you" meant that they were Yosef's responsibility).

Perhaps Paro never really changed his mind, but told Yosef to "say" that they were his guests (not Paro's) so that the Egyptians wouldn't pester Paro about foreigners moving in and using their resources (see Kesav Sofer).

The third possibility is that Paro wanted them to come "to him," but realized that they really "came to Yosef." We would then need to explain what difference that made, and how Paro realized that things didn't turn out the way he had hoped or planned. By looking at what transpired between Paro's invitation and the arrival of Yosef's family, we may be able to figure out what changed.

Yosef was always an enigma in Egypt. He started out as a slave, but wherever he was his talents and leadership abilities led to his rise in power (first in Potifar's house, then in prison, and finally as Viceroy over all of Egypt). Where did he come from? Paro was constantly forced to defend his decision to elevate this foreign slave to such a high position, but knew that Yosef had to come from nobility. When it became known that the 10 brothers from a noble family in Canaan were really Yosef's brothers, Paro was vindicated, and he and the rest of Egypt were thrilled to learn the Viceroy's true roots.

Paro had even grander plans. If Yosef was the younger brother, and despite his great abilities was somehow forced out of the family by his siblings, the older brothers must possess talents as great as Yosef (or greater). One Yosef had brought so much success to Egypt; how much better would Egypt be if 10 (or 11) more like him could put their energies towards the betterment of Egypt! He therefore extended an invitation for Yosef's family to join him in Egypt. Since (Ancient) Egyptian civilization was so advanced, he was sure that they would appreciate the offer and take him up on it.

Instead, Yaakov sends Yehuda ahead to build a separate society (see Rashi on 46:28), the brothers make a point of telling Paro that they are shepherds, a profession hated by Egyptian culture (see 43:32), and say that they don't intend on staying long, only living there temporarily because their livestock can't graze in Canaan due to the famine (47:4). Paro may have even realized (after getting a full report on the brothers from those who saw them) that Yosef purposely chose the 5 weakest brothers to meet him so that he won't make them work for the government (see Rashi on 47:2). The message has become abundantly clear; Yosef's family did not come to Egypt to become a part of it (as Paro had hoped), but came "to Yosef." Paro was telling Yosef that he not only accepted this, but that it was okay to tell others (i.e. the Egyptians, who took pride in their advanced culture) that the Children of Israel are a separate and distinct people, so that they would let them build their own society and culture without pressure to become part of their host country.

A similar approach was published about 35 years ago by Rabbi Peretz Steinberg, shlita (Pri Eitz Hachayim), and it is very possible (even likely) that without having remembered it, growing up in Kew Gardens Hills I heard it from him directly (during a shiur or derasha), or had seen it previously in his sefer.

There is one more possibility that I'd like to add, based on what one of my chavrusas (Rabbi Aryeh Weiss) thought my "creative" approach to our original question might be. Since Paro knew that Yosef was originally sold to Potifar as a slave, he realized that there must have been some serious strife with his family. It would be beneficial to Paro if Yosef's noble family moved down to Egypt, as it would show that Paro made a worthy choice for Viceroy. However, because of their past problems, Yosef may not want his family to join him in Egypt. Paro therefore offered to have them come to him instead. After seeing that the family was able to get along, Paro told Yosef that they came to him (Yosef), their brother (and son, etc.). This may even be why Paro now told Yosef that it would be his responsibility to take care of them. © 2006 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Why is Yosef, of all the awesome figures of the Bible, the only individual to merit the title Hatzaddik (Righteous one)? And if indeed Yosef is the Tzaddik, then why is kingship and the ultimate prize of redeemer ("The scepter shall not depart from Yehuda, nor the law giver from between his feet until peace shall come, and unto him shall be the ingathering of nations" Gen 49:10) bestowed upon Yehudah in Father Jacob's final blessings, rather than upon the Tzaddik Yosef?

Conventional wisdom in Biblical commentary would suggest that Yosef is the Tzaddik because he has the inner strength and self discipline not to be seduced by the feminine wiles of the beautiful and powerful wife of Potifar, despite the fact that he was a strange man in a strange land and could have gotten away with almost anything he might have wanted to do. Indeed, right before the Biblical account recording Yosef's extraordinary power of self control (Genesis 3), the Bible reports the relative weakness of Yehudah when he succumbs to the advances of Tamar in the guise of a prostitute (Genesis 38). From this perspective, Yosef emerges as the Tzaddik who never wavers in his righteousness, whereas Yehudah is the baal teshuva who publicly admits his transgression with Tamar ("She is more righteous than I" Genesis 38:26) and makes more than amends for his having sold Yosef into Egypt by offering to remain Yosef's slave if the Grand Vizier will only free Benjamin. (Our Torah reading of Vayigash, Genesis 44:33,34). A King must not only be respected but must also be loved by his

people, and citizens can only love a leader who is human, who may fall but who then rises and who is able to admit his weakness; redemption can likewise only emerge from repentance, because it is only the transgressor who has to be redeemed. Hence, it is the baal teshuva Yehudah rather than the more perfect Yosef who receives the birthright of King Messiah.

However, the more I think about these magnificent Yosef stories, I begin to believe that the major reason that he is called Yosef Hatzaddik is because he forgives his brothers in such a magnanimous and non-judgmental fashion. After all, they wanted to kill him! And even though more than two decades have passed since that time, I cannot believe that the trauma of Yosef's having been cast in a pit with snakes and scorpions by his own flesh and blood ever left his consciousness. And yet our Biblical portion records Yosef as revealing himself to his sibling-assassins with the words, "Now do not be grieved and do not be angry with yourselves because you sold me here; it was in order that (the family) would survive that G-d sent me (to Egypt) before you... G-d sent me before you to establish for you a remnant in the land and to enable you to live for the purpose of a great salvation." (Gen 45:5-7) If it is true as the poet suggests that "to err is human and to forgive divine", then the most profound expression of Yosef's righteousness is his vision of a Divine plan which transforms his having been sold from an act of jealous transgression to Divine realization of Israel's mission.

If my hypothesis is correct, then Yosef is indeed also a baal teshuva (penitent). After all, this is the same Yosef whose dreams constantly placed him at the very center of his vision, with the entire family - and even the entire cosmos bowing down to him, to him, and not to G-d. Apparently Yosef's trials and tribulations have caused him to come a long way, have enabled him to see life and the world from a totally different perspective. This much more enlightened Yosef understands that although human wisdom, intelligence and initiative may play an important role in the unfolding of events, it is G-d and not man, the Almighty and not Yosef, who remains at the center of the universe. And so in the final analysis it was G-d's design to appoint Yosef to a leadership position in Egypt so that the family of Abraham would be saved to accomplish their ultimate mission of perfecting the world.

Then why is Yosef not the king redeemer? Yes, Yosef had to rise to leadership in Egypt in order to save his family, but as a consequence all of his energies and wisdom were directed towards the creation of a wealthier and better run Egyptian leadership. Yosef spent his life as an expert political statesman and as an economist par excellence in a foreign country. He dreamt of Egypt as a young man (the agricultural sheaves are reflections of the agricultural "gift of the

Nile" which was Egypt) and his dreams of mastery over family and society were realized within the Egyptian context. It was Yehudah who spent the best and most creative years of his life in Israel with the family of Abraham, and even when he does come to Egypt, it is (at least according to the Midrash) as the Rosh HaYeshiva who established a Torah Academy for Jacob's family in Goshen. (Genesis 46:28, Rashi ad loc) Furthermore it is Yehudah who admits to his own wrongdoing; Yosef never makes such an admission. And finally, it is Yehudah who is willing to sacrifice himself for the good of his father and family when he offers himself to remain as a slave with the Grand Vizier instead of Benjamin; this too, was something that Yosef is never pictured as having done. From Yosef will come a Messiah, the forerunner of the ultimate and eternal Messiah, perhaps the Messiah whose task it will be to bring G-d's morality to the Gentile world; but it is Yehudah, the regal and beloved confessor of his guilt who gives himself completely to his family, his family mission, and his ancestral homeland who will be progenitor of the eternal redeemer whose message of peace will come from Zion and Jerusalem. © 2006 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

Yosef brings his father to Pharaoh for a "summit meeting" between the ruler of the civilized world, Pharaoh, and the father of the second in command in the land. But in the end the only thing that is revealed to us from this meeting, except for Yaacov's blessings at the beginning and the end, is the strange dialogue between the two men. Pharaoh asked Yaacov, "How many years have you lived?" [Bereishit 47:8], and Yaacov replied, "The years of my life are one hundred and thirty years, the years of my life have been few and harsh, and they have not reached the years that my fathers lived" [47:9]. This implies that Yaacov looked like he was very old, so that Pharaoh did not see anything impolite in asking about his age. Yaacov, on the other hand, corrected the mistaken appearance. Even though he appeared to be extremely old, the cause was the troubles that he had experienced during his life, but in reality he had not even reached the ages of his fathers. This entire dialogue can only lead us to wonder: Why is this significant, and why did Yaacov answer with a complaint about his harsh life?

Evidently, the purpose of the Torah is to emphasize Yaacov's difficult mental state. From his reply, noting that he had not reached the ages of his fathers, it may be concluded that he felt he was near death, and it was thus reasonable to compare his age to that of his fathers. There are two other places in this Torah portion, specifically at moments of great happiness, where Yaacov made it clear that he felt he

was near death. When he heard that his son Yosef was still alive, his reaction was, "I will go and see him before I die" [45:28]. And when he met Yosef, he said, "I will die this time, after I have seen your face, because you are still alive" [46:30].

But as opposed to his initial premonitions, Yaacov lived seventeen years in Egypt. Evidently the meeting with Yosef invigorated Yaacov much more than he had anticipated. The Torah hints that as far as Yaacov was concerned Yosef had been reborn. There are only two instances where the number "seventeen years" is mentioned in the entire Torah. "Yosef was seventeen years old, tending sheep with his brothers..." [37:2]. "And Yaacov lived in the Land of Egypt for seventeen years" [47:28]. Yosef lived in his father's house seventeen years before he disappeared for a long time, and at the end of his days Yaacov spent another seventeen years together with Yosef, ending his life in pleasant old age.

"A spoonful of satisfaction is better than two handfuls of labor and evil spirits' [Kohellet 4:6] -- The seventeen years that Yaacov spent in Egypt were better for our father Yaacov... spending them in pleasant surroundings, with the tribes around him and his grandsons multiplying, giving him joy because of what he saw... better than 'handfuls of labor and evil spirits'- when compared to one hundred and thirty years that were filled only with labor... As people tend to say, 'If your end is good, then everything was good.'" [Lekach Tov, Bereishit 47:28].

RABBI ABBA WAGENSBERG

Between the Lines

In this week's parsha, Joseph reveals his true identity to his brothers. After Yehuda's impassioned plea for Binyamin's release, the Torah tells us (Genesis 45:1) that Joseph could not restrain himself any longer. Rashi explains that Joseph could not bear the thought of embarrassing his brothers in front of the Egyptians in the room. The revelation of his true identity would mean revealing that his brothers had sold him, and that this would be intensely humiliating for them. Therefore, Joseph ordered all his Egyptian servants to leave the room, before he stated, "I am Joseph."

We might wonder how Rashi knows that Joseph was primarily concerned with preventing his brothers' embarrassment. Perhaps he sent out his servants because it would not be proper for a great leader to cry in front of his subordinates. In other words, maybe Joseph was interested only in preventing his OWN embarrassment!

The Iturei Torah counters this claim by pointing out that Joseph, immediately after sending out his servants, raised his voice and cried so loudly that all of Egypt and everyone in Pharaoh's palace heard his sobbing (Genesis 45:2). Clearly, Joseph was not concerned with maintaining his own dignity if this is how

he behaved. Therefore, he must have dismissed the Egyptians only in order to prevent his brothers' public humiliation.

Joseph's behavior teaches us how far we must go to keep from embarrassing others. Shortly after Joseph breaks down in tears, he tells his brothers, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold down to Egypt" (Genesis 45:4). The Ohr HaChaim comments that the word "your brother," which seems superfluous in this context, actually conveys an important message. Through the intentional addition of this word, Joseph is telling his family, "Even when you sold me down to Egypt, I was still your brother. Even in the midst of that incredibly challenging time, I still loved you and still felt connected to you."

Furthermore, the Sfat Emet points out that the word *asher* ("whom") in this verse can have the connotation of *yasher kochacha*, an expression that means "congratulations" or "thank you" (literally, "Your strength should be upright"). We see an example of this definition in Exodus 34:1, when G-d tells Moses to carve a second set of Tablets like the first ones "that you broke" (*asher shibarta*). The Talmud (Shabbat 87a) explains that the word *asher* here means *yasher kochacha*-in other words, that Moses deserved congratulations for breaking the first set of Tablets.

Based on this interpretation, we can understand the word *asher* in our verse the same way. Joseph tells his brothers, "I am Joseph your brother, whom (*asher*) you sold down to Egypt." According to the Sfat Emet, Joseph is implying, "I congratulate you for selling me down to Egypt, because it enabled me to support our entire family."

Instead of being bitter or angry about his treatment, Joseph sees how the brothers' actions actually led to great benefit. They should not be condemned for selling him; rather, they should be congratulated!

Imagine how we would feel if we were in Joseph's place-how difficult it would be for us to rise above our own hurt and resentment. Yet Joseph goes to great lengths to treat his brothers respectfully. Not only is he concerned with their possible humiliation, sending out his entourage so that no disparaging information will be overheard, but he even thanks his brothers for selling him!

We can learn from here how to approach situations where we feel slighted. Joseph does not allow himself to be dominated by feelings of bitterness about the past. Rather, he emphasizes the positive aspects of the situation, to where he is able to relate to his brothers with true warmth and respect.

May we learn to cultivate a warm, loving attitude toward every other person. May we learn to overcome resentments about the way we were treated in the past, rising above our own hurt so we can see the ultimate good in every situation.

Just as Joseph was reunited with his family, which brought about redemption for all of the Jewish people at that time, so may we deserve to see unity and camaraderie among all the Jewish people and our final redemption. © 2006 Rabbi A. Wagensberg & aish.com

RABBI ZVI MILLER

The Salant Foundation

Yoseph's brothers originally planned to settle their score with him through murder. Eventually, in order to incur less culpability, they tore off his tunic and threw him into a deep pit creeping with snakes and scorpions. They ignored his screams for help and then sold him off as a slave. To make matters worse they felt no remorse, believing they were totally justified in their actions.

Years later, when they came to Egypt, they did not recognize Yoseph who was king. Yoseph put them through a series of heart-rending events designed to open their eyes to their unspeakable cruelty.

At the climax of the drama, Yoseph says to his brothers, "I am Yoseph. Is my father still alive?" With these few words, Yoseph revealed himself to his brothers. He did not scold, nor confront his brothers. Neither, did he scream, nor try to make them feel guilty. He simply told them the fact that he was Yoseph. They then intuitively understood their terrible mistake.

Yoseph teaches us the proper method of rebuke. When one person rebukes another he should not say any accusing, inflammatory, or hurtful words. Admonishment is not an excuse to unleash cruelty or anger. In light of this, concerning rebuke, the Torah states (Vayikra 19:17), "Do not bear a sin." That is, when offering rebuke, do not embarrass or hurt the person you are advising.

If a person humiliates his fellow through rebuke, the Torah counts his rebuke as a grave sin. In such a case, the admonisher usually feels self-righteous for 'setting his friend straight.' However, if he wounded his friend's self-esteem, the Torah clearly faults him and his ruthless rebuke.

Even in a case where a person committed a terrible crime, such as Yoseph's brothers, HaShem forbids the rebuke to be delivered in the form of an attack. Yoseph did not scream out, "You bums-you tried to kill me, your own flesh and blood." He effectively made the point by simply saying, "I am Yoseph. Is my father still alive?"

May HaShem bless us with the tact to avoid all hurtful words, and the wisdom to find words that will inspire others to rise to their true potential. [Based on the writings of Rav Dovid Leibowitz]

Today's Implement: Refrain from saying all hostile words and do not engage in any criticism.

Quote of the Day: According to the degree that a person refuses to embrace foolishness, so will his

wisdom increase. (Ohr Yisrael) © 2006 Rabbi Z. Miller & aish.com

RABBI SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

In this week's parashah, Yosef is reunited with his brothers after a 22-year separation. Yosef gives each of them gifts and encourages them to bring their father to Egypt. The Torah records (Bereishit 45:23), "To his father he sent the following-ten he-donkeys laden with the best of Egypt..." Rashi comments: "The following'-According to this calculation. And what was the calculation? Ten he-donkeys." What is Rashi adding to our understanding of the verse?

R' Moshe Zuriel shlita (former mashgiach ruchani of Yeshivat Sha'alvim) writes in the name of R' Shmuel of Bialystok: Rashi was disturbed by the fact that Yosef was encouraging his father to leave Eretz Yisrael, an action that our Sages equate with idol worship. Therefore, Rashi explains that Yosef was hinting to his father that it was halachically permitted to leave the Land.

How so? The Gemara (Bava Batra 91a) teaches that it is permitted to leave Eretz Yisrael if there is a famine so severe that two say'im of barley (a certain volume) sell for a coin called a selah. Now the Torah records that Yosef gave his brother Binyamin 300 silver coins. The smallest silver coin is a dinar; thus, Yosef presumably gave his brother 300 dinar, which is equal to 75 sela'im (plural of selah).

Yosef sent his father ten he-donkeys laden with the best of Egypt. How much can a donkey carry? R' Ovadiah of Bartenura writes in his commentary to the Mishnah (Bava Metzia 6:5) that a donkey carries 15 say'im. Thus, ten donkeys carry 150 say'im. When compared to the 75 sela'im that Yosef gave Binyamin, we find the ratio of two say'im to a selah-an allusion to the circumstances that permitted Yaakov to leave Eretz Yisrael.

R' Zuriel adds: Why this complex hint? This demonstrates the lengths to which a person should go to avoid speaking ill of Eretz Yisrael. (Otzrot Ha'mussar p.88) © 2006 Rabbi S. Katz & torah.org



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