

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“Please, my master, allow your servant to now speak something in my master's ears, and do not get angry with your servant, for you are like Pharaoh” (Beraishis 44:18). Although Rashi explains Yehudah's request to speak into the Egyptian viceroy's "ears" as being figurative, i.e. his words should "enter his ears" and be taken seriously, others understand his request to be literal. Until now all communication between the brothers and the viceroy had been through an intermediary (see 42:23), and Yehudah was asking that he be able to speak with him directly. This may be what is meant by his "drawing closer," i.e. bypassing the intermediary to make the request that he be able to continue talking directly to the viceroy (see Or Hachayim), which is why he asked that the viceroy not get angry over his having already violated protocol.

The Chiskuni says that Yehudah wanted to speak to the viceroy discreetly, but doesn't say why. The Or Hachayim explains that even if Yehudah could successfully argue that Binyamin should be allowed to return home, if the conversation took place in front of others, the viceroy wouldn't admit defeat. If, however, they discussed it privately, perhaps he would accept the points Yehudah would make. The Netziv says that Yehudah wanted to speak with the viceroy discreetly because he was going to ask him to bend the rules of the land (by letting the accused thief go home while he serves the sentence instead), something that the viceroy could not publicly allow, but might agree to privately. It could also be suggested that since he was going to be, at times, confrontational, Yehudah knew that he couldn't say what he wanted to in front of others, or the viceroy would have no choice but to defend his authority by punishing the confronter. By speaking directly (and discreetly) to the viceroy, Yehudah was hoping it was the substance of the conversation that would be evaluated without risking the viceroy feeling the need to respond to the tone. The Meam Loez, based on the Chen Tov, says that Yehudah was arguing that there was a serious misunderstanding caused by the intermediary, who understood the brothers as having offered to all serve as slaves instead of Binyamin while only he returned home. They actually meant that each of the brothers

would take turns being a slave (one at a time, with Yehudah offering to go first), so that Binyamin could return home (at least until it was his turn). By speaking face-to-face with the viceroy, further miscommunication could be avoided.

Nevertheless, whichever reason (or reasons) Yehudah may have had for wanting to speak directly to the viceroy, how would they have communicated? We are told explicitly (42:23) that the brothers didn't realize that the viceroy understood their language because there was always an intermediary between them. As Rashi explains, they spoke Hebrew, which was translated into Egyptian for the viceroy by the intermediary, whose response in Egyptian was then translated into Hebrew for the brothers. If a translator was needed in order to communicate with each other, how could Yehudah have expected to speak with the viceroy without any intermediary present? This question was posed to me by Tzvi Gardenswarz, and is why, according to the Sifsay Chachamim, Rashi explained Yehudah's request to be figurative and not literal.

The Netziv says that Yehudah wanted to speak in Egyptian, which would eliminate any language barrier. However, if Yehudah was able to speak Egyptian, there would have been no need for a translator in the first place. [It should not seem foreign for the brothers to not speak other languages, as the Talmud (Soteh 36b) tells us that the angel Gavriel taught Yosef all 70 languages so that he could qualify to be a ruler in Egypt.] It is possible, though, that initially Yehudah did not speak Egyptian (making the translator necessary) but upon returning to Canaan without Shimon, and knowing that he would have to bring Binyamin down to Egypt next time, made sure to learn Egyptian before his next trip. Once the brothers were cleared of the charges of being spies there was no reason to hide the fact that he now spoke Egyptian, so Yehudah requested to speak to the viceroy directly, in his newly-learned Egyptian.

The Chasam Sofer, explaining what Yehudah meant by saying, "for you are like Pharaoh" (in 5561), asks how the brothers could have thought that the viceroy didn't understand their language just because there was a "translator" between them. After all, it was common practice for kings to have personal communicators who would speak for a subject and then relay the king's response back to the subject. As the Talmud tells us (Megilla 16a) even Queen Esther

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couldn't speak directly to Achashveirosh until she informed him that being a descendant of King Shaul made her royalty as well. We may be spoiled by being able to talk to G-d, the King of kings, directly and in first person, but human kings had to protect their honor by forbidding anyone but their contemporaries and closest advisors from speaking with them directly. The "intermediary" that relayed messages between the viceroy and the brothers was therefore very likely there because of the viceroy's stature, not because he couldn't speak their language. Why did the brothers assume that the intermediary was a translator and that they could talk freely in Hebrew in front of the viceroy?

The Chasam Sofer explains that the brothers didn't think that the viceroy had the full authority of a king, and so the intermediary must be there to translate. However, once they saw that he had the authority to decide their fate (and Binyamin's) without first consulting with Pharaoh, they realized that he was on the level of a king. Since Egyptian kings had to know all 70 languages, the viceroy must be able to understand them as well, and the intermediary was only there because of his stature, not because a translator was needed. Therefore, Yehudah requested that he be able to speak directly to the viceroy, adding that he shouldn't take the request as an accusation that the intermediary was there to trick the brothers into thinking he didn't understand them, "for you are like Pharaoh," who has one because of his stature.

Although this answers how Yehudah could ask to speak to the viceroy directly if they had thought that he doesn't speak their language (as they now realized that he does), it would seem to contradict the most widely given explanation of Yosef's words to his brothers after telling them who he was. "For you see, as does my brother Binyamin, that my mouth is speaking to you" (45:12) is usually understood as a proof that he was really Yosef because he was speaking to them in Hebrew, implying that up until that point they thought he couldn't speak it. According to the Chasam Sofer, however, Yehudah had already known the viceroy could speak Hebrew! One way to reconcile it would be to say that the Chasam Sofer understands this verse differently (and there are other explanations), perhaps even that Yosef speaking directly ("with my own mouth") to them indicated that he was their

brother, as otherwise there would be an intermediary. There is another possibility, however.

When Rashi describes the role of the translator (42:23), he refers to the language the brothers spoke in as "Lashon Ivri," the Hebrew Language, but when describing the language Yosef spoke "with his mouth" (45:12), he calls it "Lashon Hakodesh," the Holy Language. The Nachalas Yaakov (at the end of 45:12) suggests that the former refers to the language spoken by those that came from the other side of the (Euphrates) River, a language that every Egyptian king had to know, while the latter refers to what is now called "Biblical Hebrew," which was only spoken by Yaakov's family. Yehudah may have requested speaking directly to the viceroy in "Lashon Ivri," while Yosef proved who he was by speaking "Lashon Hakodesh." © 2007 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

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

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

Netziv, R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah of Berlin, sees it differently. For him, living in Goshen was a way in which Yaakov's family could have the opportunity to build a life of holiness. The fundamental difference between these approaches is the following: Arama sees Goshen as a way to distance oneself from a negative—from the Egyptian political scene. Goshen in of itself had nothing positive to offer. Its only attraction was what it was not; the center of Egyptian life.

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

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

Netziv, whose life was meshed with the return to Zion, saw Goshen as a move towards realizing a dream: the building of a state within a state, as a

hopeful step towards returning to Israel and developing our national homeland.

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

This is an important message for Diaspora Jewry today: No matter how developed and sophisticated we are, the dangers of assimilation exist when we are living under the rule of a society that is not Jewish. To be sure, individuals may maintain their Jewish identity in the exile; but for the community of Israel, our destiny lies not in the Goshens of this world, not in Egypt-but in a place where Judaism is the main compass, in the land of Israel. © 2007 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI NAFTALI REICH

Legacy

It was a moment of the purest joy. After so many years of estrangement and separation, Joseph and his brothers were finally being reunited. Most poignant of all was the reunion between Joseph and Benjamin, the only sons of Jacob's wife Rachel. The Torah describes this emotional reunion, how Joseph hugged his beloved younger brother and burst into tears. Why did Joseph weep on this occasion? The Talmud (Megillah 17) tells us that Joseph knew prophetically that the First and the Second Temples would be built in the portion of Benjamin, and he foresaw their eventual destruction. And as he embraced his brother Benjamin, he wept for the terrible tragedy which would one day befall the Jewish people.

Why does the Talmud find it necessary to give an explanation for Joseph's tears? Isn't it only natural to shed tears of joy on occasions of transcendent happiness? Furthermore, why was Joseph moved on this particular occasion to weep for the destruction of the Temple, a tragedy that would take place a thousand years later?

Let us reflect for a moment. Why indeed do people cry at the weddings of their children and other times of supreme joy? Why do tears course down their cheeks when their faces should be wreathed in beaming smiles?

It is the realization of the transience of life that injects undertones of sadness into these moments of joy. A person who experiences moderate joy still

aspires to greater joy, and he is not inclined to reflect on its impermanence. But once he reaches a pinnacle of transcendent joy, when his heart is full to bursting with gladness, he is struck by the knowledge that this ecstasy cannot continue forever, that nothing in life is permanent and this too will also come to an end. This sobering thought, whether conscious or subconscious, is what causes people to "cry for joy."

We live in a material world, a world of temporal joys and satisfactions, and all of life is but a fleeting shadow, a dream that flashes by. Only joys and satisfactions of the divine soul have permanence because they are experienced in the spiritual dimension, which is timeless and unlimited.

When Joseph embraced Benjamin, his joy knew no bounds. Reunited at long last, his thoughts were thoroughly absorbed with his beloved younger brother and everything he represented. Benjamin was more than the man of flesh and blood standing before him. He stood for a unique set of qualities, concepts and principles that characterized his part of the future Jewish people. Benjamin's greatness had earned him the honor of privilege of having the Temple situated on his land. Clearly, he was a man with a role and a destiny, and all these Joseph perceived at this wonderful moment of reunion. This was the precious gift that had been returned to him after all these years of separation.

As Joseph's heart filled with an overwhelming love and appreciation for this outstanding young man who was his brother, he realized that after all is said and done we live in a material world, that even someone as outstanding and pure as Benjamin would suffer tragedy and pain, that even the Holy Temple, the most spiritual point in the world, also had its material side and would someday be destroyed. And Joseph wept.

Two climbers exuberantly scaled a high mountain. As they sat down to rest, one of them became sad and dejected. "You should be thrilled by what we've accomplished," remarked his companion. "Why are you so sad?"

"Because tonight I will sleep in a bed like an ordinary person."

"But didn't you know that an hour ago?"

"An hour ago, my next step was up. Now, my next step is down."

In our own lives, we all have moments of superlative joy, precious times we yearn to capture and preserve forever. But all the snapshots and film footage in the world cannot trap a fleeting moment of joy. All they preserve are fading memories, the bittersweet echoes of happy days gone by. There is no permanence in the material dimension, not people not things, not experiences. We can only preserve a precious moment by infusing it with spirituality, by linking it to a continuous process of spiritual growth, of

enriching our immortal souls, of drawing closer to our Creator. Then, even when the material aspects of that precious moments fade away, its glowing spiritual core will endure forever. © 2007 Rabbi N. Reich & torah.org

RABBI ZEV LEFF

Outlooks & Insights

“**A**nd he [Jacob] saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father Jacob was revived.” (Genesis 45:27) From this verse it would seem that Joseph sent the wagons to Jacob. And indeed the Midrash relates that Joseph used the wagons to remind Jacob of the last topic they were learning when he left home that fateful day 22 years previously eglah arufah—the calf that is beheaded by the elders of the city closest to where a murdered body is found without any clues pointing to the murderer. The word for calf (egel), is hinted to in wagon (agala).

But this is highly problematic, for the Torah explicitly states that it was Pharaoh who commanded Joseph to send wagons to transport the family, and that Joseph sent wagons “according to the word of Pharaoh.” Although the Midrash says that the wagons Pharaoh sent were bedecked with idolatry and Judah burnt them and Joseph sent other wagons, this too presents difficulties, for the Torah later refers to the wagons in which Jacob’s family was transported as those sent by Pharaoh.

If the wagons were sent at Pharaoh’s behest, where was there a hint to eglah arufah? And since the wagons were needed to transport Jacob’s family, where did Jacob see an added hint linking the wagons with calves? Upon closer analysis of Pharaoh’s command to take wagons and Joseph’s response, the answer to all these questions will become evident.

Pharaoh told Joseph: “And now I command you to do the following: Take for yourselves from the land of Egypt wagons for you and your wives and transport your father and come here. And do not be concerned about your possessions, for the best of the land of Egypt will be yours.” (Genesis 45:19)

Pharaoh greatly desired that Joseph’s whole illustrious family come to live in Egypt, especially after witnessing the great benefit brought to the kingdom by Joseph. Pharaoh sought to remove any barriers to Jacob’s coming. He reasoned that Jacob might be deterred by the difficulties of acclimating to a new culture and society, and therefore told Joseph to tell his father not to worry about bringing his wardrobe, furniture, or utensils from Israel. He would be furnished with the best Egypt had to offer so that he could blend comfortably into Egyptian society. Therefore Pharaoh instructed Joseph to send wagons for the people but not for their possessions.

Joseph, however, knew that if this plan were conveyed to Jacob, he would never descend to Egypt.

On the contrary, Jacob would need assurances that every precaution was being taken to combat the possibility of assimilation. Thus Joseph sent wagons “according to the word of Pharaoh”—not exactly according to the command of Pharaoh, but in accord with Pharaoh’s intention of enticing Jacob to Egypt. Joseph added wagons for their possessions so that they could recreate totally the environment of Israel in Egypt and remain insulated from Egyptian society and culture. Thus, Jacob’s family went down to Egypt with all “their livestock and all of their possessions which they acquired in the Land of Canaan...” (Genesis 46:6).

When Jacob saw the wagons that Pharaoh had sent and was informed of the extra wagons that Joseph added for their possessions, it revived his spirit. He recognized that Joseph understood the importance of guarding against possible assimilation and the need to remain insulated from Egyptian culture.

It was no coincidence that the last subject Jacob and Joseph were discussing was eglah arufah. The commentators Daas Zekeinim and Maharal both explain that when Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers, he bid him farewell and began to escort him as Jewish law dictates. Joseph, a boy of 17, begged his father, then 108 years old, not to accompany him down the steep hill from Hebron, which would necessitate a difficult climb back up. Jacob replied that the Mitzvah of escorting people on a journey is of great importance.

We learn the importance of escorting people from the Mitzvah of eglah arufah. As part of the Mitzvah of eglah arufah, the elders of the city proclaim that they did not shed his blood. The Talmud (Sotah 45b) asks: Could anyone have really suspected the elders of the city of having shed his blood? The Talmud answers that the meaning of the elders’ oath is that they did not knowingly permit the deceased to leave the city without an escort, since such an escort is a protection for the person embarking on a journey.

Maharal explains that although one is required to accompany his friend no more than four amos (approximately eight feet), even that suffices to show the one being accompanied that he is not alone but is connected to others. This spiritual connection gives the one accompanied a communal merit, which is a potent protection against harm.

The Mitzvah of escorting shows us that a person’s physical location is not as significant as the spiritual locus to which he is attached. One can be physically alone, yet spiritually connected to the body of the Jewish people through his connection to the one who escorts him on the beginning of his journey. Similarly, one may physically be in exile, far from Israel, but spiritually connected to it. Jacob’s realization that Joseph still lived in accord with this concept caused his spirit to revive.

When Joseph coached his brothers prior to their first meeting with Pharaoh, he told them to

emphasize that they were shepherds from time immemorial so that they would be sent to live apart in Goshen, for shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. Instead of bidding them to conceal that they were shepherds so that they would be more readily accepted, Joseph emphasized that fact. He realized that their ability to survive the Egyptian exile depended on their capacity to remain apart, and Goshen was well-suited to that purpose. Joseph told his brothers that he was going to inform Pharaoh, "My brothers and my father's household, who are in the land of Canaan, have come to me," hinting to them that they were not from the land of Canaan, but still in the land of Canaan, despite temporarily residing in Egypt.

Before actually descending to Egypt, Jacob sent Judah ahead to prepare the way. The Sages say that his function was to establish a Yeshiva in Goshen. Seemingly this task should have been given to Levi, the teacher of the Jewish people, not to Judah, the king. But this Yeshiva was not merely a place of Torah study, it was the means of transferring the holiness of Israel to Egyptian soil. Goshen was to become a spiritually sovereign region within the environs of Egypt. Areas adjacent to Israel conquered in war take on some of the spiritual status of Israel. Thus the king, Judah, was needed to conquer Goshen as a spiritual extension of the Land of Israel.

It was Judah who exercised his royal power by bringing the extra wagons back to Jacob for all their possessions. He thereby nullified Pharaoh's purpose of promoting Jacob's assimilation. When the Sages say Judah burnt the idolatry of Pharaoh's wagons, they mean that he destroyed them by negating their intended function. The Sages tell us that the study halls and Shuls in exile are parts of Israel transplanted to foreign soil. It is in them and around them that we must build a temporary physical dwelling place that is spiritually rooted in the holiness and purity of Israel. As long as one is physically prevented from being in Israel, he must transplant Israel to foreign soil. In this way the Jew insulates himself from assimilating into the host society and culture.

May we strengthen our houses of prayer and study in the Diaspora lands, so that they can all be soon transplanted to their proper location in the Land of Israel. © 2007 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Joseph, the renowned Grand Vizier of Egypt, brought his seventy relatives to Egypt, where he promptly placed them in Goshen, far away from the royal seat into what quickly became the first Jewish Ghetto in history.

The very word "ghetto" evokes negative images of anti-Semitic persecution and pogrom. But is a self-imposed Jewish ghetto - such as Goshen was -

necessarily a problematic situation for the Jewish people? When we look around at the most successful Jewish Diaspora community today, in the United States of America, we have decreased from almost seven million Jews in 1950 to barely five million today (with another million calling themselves not Jews but merely being of Jewish descent), with at least another million of those having no relationship whatsoever with the organized Jewish Community in any way, shape or form. In effect, we are halving ourselves; so much for the glories of a completely open society!

In this week's Biblical portion, we read of Joseph's instructions to his brothers: "When Pharaoh summons you and inquires as to your occupation, you must say, 'We and our fathers have dealt in livestock all our lives.' You will then be able to settle in the Goshen district, since all shepherds are taboo in Egypt" (Gen. 46:33).

On a certain level, Joseph's plan was quite logical. The lamb was one of the gods exalted by the people of the Nile, and contact between those who venerated sheep and those who grazed them for their wool, milk and flesh would have been disastrous. Since the brother's occupation was shepherding - and it was a preferred occupation over Egyptian agriculture since it provided ample time for study of the traditions and communication with G-d - it was necessary that they be placed in a separate area, a far enough distance away from the Court of Pharaoh and any well-settled Egyptian community.

The possibility also exists that Joseph wanted his foreign, conspicuously Jewish, relatives as far from sophisticated and idolatrous Egyptian sight as possible. But there's no textual proof for such a reading. Indeed, Joseph does not seem to be ashamed of his Israeli roots; on the contrary, he seems proud of his father, even brings him for a meeting with Pharaoh, and he apparently desires his family to join him in Egypt.

Rabbenu Bachaya (1263-1340) gives a purely economic reason for Goshen: given the Egyptian attitude towards sheep, Hebrew shepherds wouldn't have any competitors. Moreover, their sheep would yield wool, providing garments, as well as basic foods such as milk and cheese, automatically giving the new immigrants their basic physical sustenance.

But the Kli Yekar (1550-1619) and the Ha'amek Davar (1817-1893) agree that Joseph as well as his family wanted the new immigrants to Egypt to be in a remote area as a protection against assimilation; that is precisely why so many Jews today insist upon living in areas such as Monsey and Monroe in America.

Far off in Goshen, away from the fleshpots of Egyptian nightclubs, bars and discos, the descendants of Jacob would guard what was unique about them as a people. In effect, they'd be establishing their own culture and society, their own yeshivas, day schools, synagogues, free loan societies, hospitals. This is how

the Midrash understands that immediately prior to Jacob's entering Egypt, he "...sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to show the way before him unto Goshen..." (Gen. 48:28). The Hebrew word for 'to show the way' is l'horot, which can also mean to teach (Moreh is a teacher, one who gives direction) and especially to teach Torah; Rashi quotes the Midrash that Judah was sent on ahead to establish a yeshiva (School of Jewish learning) without which the family would never have come.

To strengthen this interpretation, allow me to interpret an halakhic curiosity. It is strange that Jews in every country of the Diaspora begin to pray for rain in the daily Amida prayer ("Ten tal umatar", please give us rain and dew) on December 4 or 5, about ten days ago, at the onset of the rainy season in Babylon (B.T. Taanit 10). It would be understandable either to pray for rain when the rainy season begins in Israel, our universal Jewish homeland (on the seventh day of Mar Heshvan), or when the rainy season begins in the host country of the Jew who is praying, each country in accordance with its specific climatic need. Why does the Jew in America link his request for rain to the winter in Babylon?

I believe that our Sages - in choosing the Babylonian climatic needs for all of the Diaspora Jews in all time - are teaching a crucial lesson as to how we can survive in the exile as Jews. They want to impress upon us that if we must live in the Diaspora our only chance of survival is by establishing a system similar to the one we had in Babylon for close to one thousand years, a State within a State, a Jewish exilarch (Monarch of the Jews within Babylon), a Jewish educational system, a Jewish Judicial system, and a Jewish cultural environment in Jewish neighborhoods.

Indeed, the Goshen factor, especially insofar as it stresses the critical importance of Jewish learning including the High School and College years, of serious Jewish cultural expression as demonstrated in Jewish camping experiences, and meaningful Jewish communities in close proximity to Synagogues, has been proven invaluable to those who succeed in giving over their Judaism from generation to generation.

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

There is no fight as bitter as a family fight. The bitterness and scars remain long after the incident that may have originally sparked it is long since gone and sometimes even forgotten. Many times the bitterness and hard feelings remain even in generations of descendants of the original antagonists, as though somehow genetically transmitted. Yosef and his brothers reconcile in this week's parsha. But the divisions within the Jewish people then and now are apparently never really healed and forgotten. The

commentators point out that the rebellions against Moshe in the desert, that of Korach of the tribe of Levi and Zimri of the tribe of Shimon and Datan and Aviram of the tribe of Reuven, are all part of the residue- of the fallout of the tragedy of the disagreement of Yosef and his brothers.

So too is the tragedy of the splitting of the Jewish people living in the Land of Israel into two disparate and even warring kingdoms after the death of King Shlomo. In fact, the later commentators opine that all later controversies in Jewish life are but an echo of this original controversy between Yosef and his brothers.

The fact that Yaakov in his final words to Shimon and Levi recalls this dispute and its consequences to them only serves to continue the pain and bad feelings that were papered over when Yaakov came down to Egypt. But now that he is gone, the brothers and Yosef remain wary of each other, with the memories of their dispute irrevocably burned into their psyches.

Such is unfortunately the way in family disputes. That is why one must go to all lengths to prevent such disputes, no matter what or how large the seeming cause may be.

Part of the problem, in my opinion, is that in the dispute with Yosef and the brothers, one side-Yosef-was eventually right and the other side- the brothers-seemingly wrong and guilty. This feeling of guilt and being proven wrong only provokes a greater defensive attitude and a determination not to abandon the blind self-justification that led originally to the divisive incident itself.

Contrast this with the disagreements of Beit Shamai and Beit Hillel, numerous and contentious (312 of them) as they were, that never led to any sort of breakup within the society of Israel. There both sides were right, even though as a practical matter, the opinions of Beit Hillel were in the main followed in halachic practice. The Talmud proclaimed that the opinions of both groups were "the words of the living God." By avoiding unnecessary condemnation of Beit Shamai, even though its opinions were not to be adopted and practically implemented, the Talmud guaranteed the harmony of the rabbis and of Jewish society.

Within the framework of halacha and tradition there are many varying opinions. Not all of them can be given equal weight and followed but none of them should be the basis of personal dispute and vilification. The lessons of Yosef and his brothers and their controversy should remain for us as a guide in our times and difficulties as well. © 2007 *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.*

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

Yehuda's emotional speech to Yosef has many elements which might have brought Yosef to abandon the alien way he spoke to his brothers and reveal his true identity to them. Aside from the contents of his talk, which we have discussed in part in the past, there is one aspect of the text itself which also seems to be especially significant.

Up to this point whenever the brothers turned to Yosef they described their father with the phrase, "our father." This was true at the beginning of their words, "Your servants are twelve brothers, all sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and the youngest one is with our father today, while one is missing" [Bereishit 42:13]. It was also true when they returned to Egypt with Binyamin, in their reply to Yosef's question, "Your servant our father is well, he still lives" [43:28]. And Yehuda indeed begins his discourse in the plural, describing all of the actions of the brothers. "And we said to my master... And we said to my master... And behold, when we rose up..." [44:20-24]. However, when Yehuda mentions Yaacov, he changes from plural to singular. "And when we ascended to your servant, my father, and told him my master's words... [44:24]. From then on, Yehuda repeatedly uses the phrase "my father." This is seen with special emphasis at the end of his speech:

"For how can I ascend to my father without the boy, lest I see the evil which will befall my father?" [44:34]. It is no surprise that this key phrase appears seven times in Yehuda's speech. (Note that the Hebrew word "avi" is also embedded one more time in Yehuda's words, "For your servant guaranteed the youth, saying, if I do not bring him to you..." [44:32]. The word for "I will bring him" is "avi'enu.")

Evidently this phrase made a great impression on Yosef. The personal tone, which seemed to imply a special relationship between Yehuda and his father, was not lost on Yosef. In his reaction, he uses the same phrase, from the very beginning of his words: "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?" [45:3]. And he repeats it when he cautions his brothers how to take care of Yaacov. "Tell my father about all my glory in Egypt and all that you have seen, and bring my father here quickly" [45:13]. Between the lines, Yosef seems to be saying: It is not only for you, Yehuda, that he is "my father," he is also "my father!"

It seems that Yaacov was aware of the special link that his two prominent sons felt for him, one the son of Leah and the other one the son of Rachel. Therefore, when he declares, "My son Yosef is still alive, I will go and see him before I die" [45:28], he is also careful to recognize Yehuda too:

"And he sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare for him in Goshen" [46:28]. Evidently the reason for the emphasis in the Torah on this subject is to show that Yaacov learned his lesson from the way matters had developed and was careful to maintain a balanced relationship with the two sons who called him "my father."

RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG

TorahWeb

Yosef shall place his hands on your eyes ("einecha") (Braishis 46:4). The Netziv interprets the word "ainecha" as "your essence", the basic characteristics of Yaakov upon which he focused his eyes, i.e. his attention.

"Yisrael shall dwell secure, solitary in the likeness of (ain) Yaakov" (Devarim 33:28). Secure means to live in peace with great love for others. Solitary indicates not intermingling more than necessary with other nations.

These goals, the Netziv adds, are usually achieved through Torah and Avoda. In Egypt, however, it was Yosef whose hand protected Yaakov's essence. He exhibited kindness and great love to all, and he arranged for Am Yisroel to dwell in Goshen, removed from Egyptian society.

If we do not separate ourselves from non-Jewish society with honor and tranquility, we will be forcibly separated from and by the nations. Instead of the reward of "betach badad", we will be punished by, "Eicha yashva badad" (Sanhedrin 104a).

The rampant assimilation and intermarriage in America, highlighted in December (see New York Times, 12607, "A Holiday Melody, Off Key"), require additional safeguards to establish proper separation from non-Jewish society and religion.

The challenge of the contemporary workplace include the difficulty of balancing appropriate politeness and kindness to all with the necessity to maintain a lifestyle that is at odds with the practices and values of general society. Yaakov and Yosef, who successfully balanced betach and badad, are our role models.

"Yaakov encamped before the city" (of Shechem, Braishis 33:18). The Netziv explains that he did not enter the city, since his essence was badad, solitary. But he sent gifts [and established currency, markets and bathhouses-Shabbos 33b], honoring the city's inhabitants and teaching future generations how to interact with other nations.

In his commentary to the Hagada (V'he Sheamda), the Netziv states that we survive only because of our being strangers in foreign lands (Braishis 15:14). The nations seek to destroy us because we do not separate ourselves. Yaakov went to Egypt "lagur", to dwell as a stranger.

Yet Yaakov was also betach, seeking to live in peace with those who harmed him, and teaching his

descendants to follow his example. He involved his sons in gathering stones to make a mound of demarcation from Lavan to emphasize this lesson (Netziv, Braishis 31:46).

"Hashem does not withdraw his eyes from a tzaddik" (Iyov 36:7). As a reward for the modesty of Rachel, she merited that Shaul descended from her. As a reward for the modesty of Shaul, he merited that Esther descended from him (Megillah 13b).

Here, too, the Netziv interprets "aino" as the essence. Rachel did not reveal the story of the password, Shaul did not reveal that he was anointed as king, and Esther did not reveal her origin. Rachel's selflessness was recognized by Hashem when He ignored the Avos and Moshe Rabeinu but acceded to her request that her children return from exile to their boundaries (Medrash Eicha Psicha 24).

While Shaul and Esther descended from Rachel's son Binyamin, Yosef also exhibited great modesty. His children are compared to fish, which are covered by water (Braishis 48:16). As a result the evil eye, which results when one flaunts his blessings, has no power over them (49:22 and Berachos 20a).

Yosef ruled for eighty years, the longest tenure in biblical history (Seforno 37:7). Yosef, like Yaakov, helped everybody (42:6), and, despite his involvement in matters of state for eight decades, remained separate from the mores of Egyptian society and retained his righteousness (Rashi Shemos 1:5).

The longevity of his rule can be attributed to his modesty. He served Pharaoh loyally and sought neither primacy nor honor. He did not display excessive wealth. Thereby, he avoided the evil eye for himself and his descendants.

Indeed Yaakov preceded Yosef in this laudable trait as well. He asked his sons, why do you make yourselves conspicuous (Braishis 42:21)? Why do you display yourselves before the sons of Yishmael and Esav as wealthy and satiated at a time of famine? (Rashi).

The Kli Yakar (Deavrim 2:3) bemoans the fact that Jews flaunt their wealth, ignoring Yaakov's advice. This behavior arouses the jealousy of the nations and causes the problems that Am Yisroel faces.

Ostentation is related to both excessive competition and assimilation. To achieve betach and badad, modesty is required. If one does not crave wealth and honor, he can be friendly and kind to all, and remain separate from the nations. The essence of Yosef, as Hashem promised, protects the essence of Yaakov. © 2007 Rabbi M. Willig & aish.org

RABBI ADAM LIEBERMAN

A Life Lesson

When Jacob and his family arrived in Egypt, Joseph brought Jacob, his father, to meet Pharaoh. The first words Pharaoh said to Jacob

were: "How many are the days of the years of your life?" (Genesis 47:8) Of all the things that Pharaoh could ask Jacob, why did he first want to know how old Jacob was? Or did he?

Pharaoh didn't really care to know Jacob's chronological age. Rather, Pharaoh wanted to know how many days that Jacob actually felt alive in his life. Just how many days were there where Jacob lived life to its fullest? It was these days that would actually determine the years of his life.

People often confuse activity with accomplishment. We can be busy all day long, but how much was actually accomplished? And it gets even worse. What if someone spent the entire day watching television and eating ice cream? Would that really be a day that could be counted as a fulfilling day in our lives? Of course not.

Sadly, many of us are watching television and eating ice cream in our own way. God gave each of us a unique and special talent that He wants us to use. Living each day as though it might be your last is a true day in your life.

A task will contract or expand depending on how much time we're given. People will inevitably wait until the last minute to finish most anything. Whether it's packing for a trip, buying gifts, or completing a project, we all seem to take as much time as we've been given. On Friday night, minutes before the Sabbath begins, Jews around the world are rushing to complete their Sabbath preparations. It doesn't matter whether it's winter and the Sabbath arrives at 4:00 or the summer time when it arrives at 8:00, everyone always uses all the time they've been allotted.

Similarly, any personal goals in our life will also contract or expand depending on just how much time we have for it. And since most goals are ones which we want to accomplish during our lifetime, then in theory you have your entire life to achieve them. This is why most people never scratch the surface of their potential. Sadly, the world is full of elderly people in their rocking chairs looking back on a life gone by who are still waiting for the perfect time to begin their goals and live their dreams.

And this is exactly what Pharaoh was asking Jacob. He wanted to know how many days there were that Jacob actually lived. Pharaoh knew Jacob was such a wise and revered man, so he wanted to know just how many days it was that Jacob was able to fight his instinctive urge to put off working toward his goals and aspirations and actually live each day like it might be his last.

Since a task will contract or expand depending upon the time we've been given for its accomplishment, then you can see it's vital to begin right now to live all the days..of your life. © 2007 Rabbi A. Lieberman & aish.ocm

“Business excellence, through the lens of Torah”

By Rabbi Yoel Margolese 12/13/2007

Goal of Leadership

We discussed last week the idea of what leadership is and the fact that everyone can and will be a leader at some point in their lives. This week we will discuss the purpose of leadership, which will then lead us into the beginning discussion of qualities and characteristics necessary to be a person of influence (ie a leader).

Gregory Scott Reid and Charlie Jones in “Positive Impact” write, “The best leaders are those who are humble and care about others. A title and money won’t gain you respect – or friends. Both must be earned.” Leadership is *not* about personal gain and ‘what’s in it for me’. It’s *not* a means to acquire power or control, nor a means to be constantly served by others. The goal of leadership is really quite the opposite. The life of a true leader involves responsibility to others and to a cause. Most importantly it involves serving others. To be a leader means to be a giver, not a taker.

Author Jim Collins in his book “Good to Great” agrees when he writes, “great leaders have ambition beyond their own personal self-interest.” Focusing on others in order to be a leader can be understood at many levels. Let’s start with a simple example such as helping an elderly person across the street. If you are focused on yourself and are hurrying across are you really helping the elderly person, are you leading? Or are you crossing the street with someone in tow? A leader in this case would rather need to focus on the needs of the person being helped. Only then will you be able to accomplish the goal of helping and leading.

Let’s look how this can apply to managers, CEO’s, or organizational heads. Reid and Jones write, “Say you run a business – large or small. If it’s your true desire to help everyone succeed, from the receptionist to the CEO (yourself), guess what? You will. Just help others get what *they* want first and your own success will soon follow.... It’s simple, really. The first thing you need to do is find out what motivates the people around you and commit to helping them achieve it.... Let’s face it, the more you help others identify and pursue their dreams, the greater support and backing you get from them in return. It just makes sense! *No one wants to be just a cog in the system, a faceless wage slave, day in and day out for the rest of their lives.* When you show your people that you recognize their worth, you support not only their goals in the workplace but their hopes and dreams outside the system, they’ll do amazing things. They’ll rise above adversity and give their all to you and your business. Why? Because you’ve given them something all too rare in life – unconditional support.” Need I say more?

The Vilna Gaon in his commentary on Mishlei (11:27) writes, “When someone chases after opportunities to do good deeds and initiates kind activity for other people, it is as if he makes an appeal to have his own desires fulfilled, because through his actions the blessing of goodness will come on him.” Rabbi Moshe Gans in his book “Success” calls this the boomerang effect. He

writes, “If you help enough people get what they want, you will eventually get what you want. Work for the benefit of others and you will be rewarded; work for the detriment of others, and you will be penalized. Like a boomerang, the effort you put forth will come back to you as a corresponding gain or loss.” In order to *gain*, you must *give*.

Rabbi Orlowek once explained that ‘being alive’ means having the ability to give, and that giving to someone else, in turn, helps you renew yourself. Making a difference in someone else’s life gives meaning to our own. By giving to others, we are not only helping them but we are helping ourselves as well.

Rav Dessler writes in Michtav M’Eliyahu (vol. 1), “If one were only to reflect that *a person comes to love the one to whom he gives*, he would realize that the only reason the other person seems a stranger to him is because he has not yet *given* to him; he has not taken the trouble to show him friendly concern... It follows that if I were to start bestowing good upon everyone I come into contact with, I would soon feel that they are all my relatives, all my loved ones.” In order to lead someone I need to serve them. In order to influence someone I need to love them. In order to love someone I need to give to them. In order to be a true leader I need to take the focus off of me and focus on them!

When and where in your daily life do you see yourself as a giver?