

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

What do porcupines do in winter? asked Schopenhauer. If they come too close to one another, they injure each other. If they stay too far apart, they freeze. Life, for porcupines, is a delicate balance between closeness and distance. It is hard to get it right and dangerous to get it wrong. And so it is for us. That is the force of the word that gives our parasha its name: Vayigash. "And he came close."

Then Judah came close to him and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself." (44: 18)

For perhaps the first time in his life, Judah came close to his brother Joseph. The irony is, of course, that he did not know it was Joseph. But that one act of coming close melted all of Joseph's reserve, all his defences, and as if unable to stop himself, he finally disclosed his identity: Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" (45: 3)

How can we be sure that Vayigash is the key word? Because it contrasts with another verse, many chapters, and many years, earlier.

But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. (37: 18)

Right at the beginning of the story, when Joseph was sent by his father to see how the brothers were doing, tending the sheep, they saw him from far away, from a distance. Imagine the scene. They can't see his face. All they can see is the richly ornamented cloak, the "coat of many colours," that so upsets them because it constantly reminds them that it is he not they whom their father loves. From far away, we don't see people as human beings, and when we stop seeing people as human beings, and they become instead symbols, objects of envy or hate, people can do bad things to one another. The whole tragedy of Joseph and his brothers was distance. They were too far apart in every way. Which is why it was only when Judah came close to Joseph - Vayigash - that the coldness between them thawed, and they became brothers, not strangers to one another.

Too much distance and we freeze. But if we get too close we can injure one another. That was the story of Jacob and Esau. Think about it. Jacob bought Esau's birthright. He stole his blessing. He wore Esau's clothes.

He borrowed his identity. Even when they were born, Jacob was clutching Esau's heel.

It was only when there was a distance between them - the 22 years in which Jacob was away from home, with Lavan - that the relationship healed, so that when they met again, despite Jacob's fears, Esau embraced and kissed him and treated him like a brother and a friend.

Too close and we hurt one another. Too distant and we freeze.

How then do we make and sustain relationships if the balance is so fine and it is so easy to get it wrong? The Torah's answer - already there in the first chapter of the Torah - is, first separate, then join. The verb *lehavdil*, "to separate," appears five times in the first chapter of Bereishit. God separates light from darkness, the upper and lower waters, sea and dry land. Separation is at the heart of Jewish law - between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. In Judaism *kadosh*, holy, means separation. To sanctify is to separate. Why? Because when we separate, we create order. We defeat chaos. We give everything and everyone their space. I am I and not you. You are you and not I. Once we respect our difference and distance, then we can join without doing damage to one another.

The most beautiful symbol of the problem and its resolution is the ceremony of *havdalah* at the end of Shabbat and especially the *havdalah* candle. The wicks are separate but the flame they make is joined. So it is between husband and wife. So it is between parent and child. And so it is, or should be, between brothers. Distance damaged the relationship between Judah and Joseph. Vayigash - Judah's act of drawing close - restored it. © 2010 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

All is well that ends well is a popular and well known aphorism. Apparently that should be the case here in this week's parsha when Yosef and his family are at last reconciled after over twenty years of pain and estrangement. Yaakov comes down to Egypt to embrace his long lost beloved son and the Jewish people begin the long sojourn in Egypt with the first century of that sojourn being successful and benign.

However, as is the case with many a popular saying or belief, the aphorism stated above is not exactly accurate. The enmity, discord and bitterness of

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the dispute of decades between Yosef and his brothers is not easily forgotten. We will see in next week's parsha how the brothers still suspect Yosef of ill intentions towards them and how Yosef after the death of Yaakov subtly distances himself from them.

Wounds may heal but they always leave their marks and scars. And the competition between Yosef and Yehuda, which is the centerpiece of the first part of this week's parsha. This continues for millennia in Jewish history almost splitting the Jewish people as a whole and not just its kingdom into two warring factions.

So, even though the affair of Yosef and his brothers appears to end well and satisfactorily in the narrative of this week's parsha, the residue of suspicion, competitiveness and bitter memories remain. This is so very evident as the story continues and clouds any truly rosy assessment of the conclusion of this gripping family tale of ours.

Every human event has consequences that are much more long lasting and important than originally thought. Since we all live in a time range that is limited, far reaching results of our behavior are naturally hard to discern and appreciate. If the brothers of Yosef would have realized that their behavior towards him would, centuries later, lead to the breakup of the Jewish kingdom in the Land of Israel, perhaps they would have acted differently. And, perhaps Yosef himself might have acted differently towards his brothers as well.

It is not for naught that the rabbis taught us that the true wise man is the person who can realize the future consequences of present policies and behavior. This idea is also the basic underpinning of the rabbis' other comment that even the wise must be very cautious in their statements, to guard against the unintended consequences that may result.

Many times consequences are exactly the opposite of what is originally desired. The rabbinic ban on Spinoza immortalized him, and the ban against Chasidut translated into the most popular Jewish religious movement in Eastern Europe.

Yosef and his brothers, like all of us, are powerless to undo the past. But, in realizing the fissure that the events of the past created in Jewish life, a special attempt at true reconciliation must be attempted. It would take the slavery of Egyptian exile and the redemption that followed to achieve this unity that was expressed at the moment of revelation at Sinai.

Troubles unite us. We should learn to live together in harmony even in more trouble-free times. © 2010 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

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

When Yosef sent his brothers to bring his father, Yaakov, the Sifornu implies that Yosef urged them to hurry and bring Yaakov down "so he could be happy to see." What should Yaakov be happy to see? Some commentaries explain that Yosef stressed his position of power because he wanted to reassure his father that he could care for him and provide for his needs. But that doesn't explain why Yaakov would be "happy" with what he would see in Egypt.

Perhaps, it is true that Yaakov would be unimpressed by honor and power, and the ability to "care for" Yaakov wasn't an enticing thought because G-d always provided for him. It may be, though, that this message was exactly what Yaakov needed to hear. Yosef's brothers had been jealous of him all those years ago. They were insulted by his visions of grandeur and this strife led to his sale into slavery. If Yaakov were to go down to Egypt to see Yosef, he might fear suffering a continuation of this animosity. That is why Yosef sent the message he did. When the brothers would tell their father that Yosef had in fact ascended the throne, and when they recounted all that had transpired, Yaakov would be able to see from their expressions and tones of voice that they had repented of their jealousy and would now be able to live in peace. To see his twelve sons living together in harmony was something that would undoubtedly give him great joy, and he would rush to see it.

Additionally, it was important for the brothers themselves to be able to get past their earlier pettiness by proving to themselves that they could speak of Yosef's prestige and not feel bitter, just as they were happy when they didn't feel jealous when Binyamin received more than they did. Yosef knew that they might still suspect themselves of jealousy in regard to him, and this way he enabled them to see that they had indeed overcome the obstacle and were better people than before. © 2010 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg
Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

After the brothers had been separated, the time had come for unity and redemption. "And he sent Yehuda before him to show the way, to Goshen"

[Bereishit 46:28]. The Midrash comments, "A lion will eat straw like cattle" [Yeshayahu 65:25]. A lion refers to Yehuda, as is written, 'Yehuda is a lion cub' [Bereishit 49:9], and cattle refers to Yosef, as is written, 'The firstborn of his ox will bring him glory' [Devarim 33:17]." [Bereishit Rabba 95]. That is why Yaacov sent Yehuda ahead, to teach that Yosef and Yehuda should be united.

This explains why in the Haftara we read the prophesy, "And you, son of man, take one piece of wood" [Yechezkel 37:16]. Before his death Yaacov commands his sons unite when he says, "Gather together and I will speak to you" [Bereishit 49:1]. As is written, "Take one piece of wood and write on it Yehuda... and take one piece of wood and write on it Yosef... and put them close to each other, and they will be as one in your hand" [Yechezkel 37:16-17].

The Midrash Kohellet Rabba sees the verse, "There is a time to sew" [Kohellet 3:7], in a similar way, as stitching two things together. It is written, "put them close to each other, and they will be as one in your hand." And then, "Here is what G-d says: I am taking Bnei Yisrael from among the nations... and I will bring them to their land, and I will make them into one nation in the land" [Yechezkel 37:21-22]. And that is what is meant by, "a time to sew."

In his prophesy, Yechezkel mentions only the morning Tamid sacrifice: "A one-year-old unblemished sheep... prepare it each and every morning" [46:13]. The RADAK notes that the evening Tamid is not mentioned in the verse because it will eventually be cancelled. I heard from Rabbi Fisher that the purpose of the evening sacrifice is to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf, and that is why it is brought after the sixth hour of the day-

"For Moshe was slow to descend" [Shemot 32:1]. The word "slow" can also be read "b'shesh," after six (hours). The morning sacrifice, on the other hand, is in memory of the Binding of Yitzchak, and therefore it was tied up in a way that is reminiscent of this act.

The tragedy of the sin of the Golden Calf continued in the events of the two calves of Yeravam, who wanted to split the kingdom of Bnei Yisrael into two. In the distant future, when the two sins of the Calf will be forgiven, when all idol worship will disappear from the earth, and when the pieces of wood belonging to Yosef and Yehuda will be united-then the verse, "On that day G-d will be one and His name will be one" [Zecharia 14:9] will be fulfilled, and there will no longer be any need for the evening Tamid.

According to the Talmud, it is necessary to accompany the morning Tamid sacrifice by two wooden beams carried by a single priest, while for the evening sacrifice the two beams must be brought by two priests. In the morning, when the sacrifice is an indication of redemption, the two beams are brought by one priest, as is written, "Let them be as one in your hand." But the evening sacrifice is for a time when we are still in exile,

divided and rife with disputes. Therefore, the two wooden beams are brought by two different priests. In the future, when the sin of the Golden Calf will be absolved, there will no longer be a need for the evening sacrifice, and only the morning Tamid will remain. The two pieces of wood will then be held by a single priest.

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftarah

This week's haftarah is devoted to the Jewish nation's future unification. It opens with Hashem instructing the Prophet Yechezkel to take two pieces of wood and inscribe them with names of the Jewish kingdoms, Yehuda and Yosef. Hashem then said, "Bring them near one another to appear as one and they shall unite in your hands." Radak interprets this to mean that Yechezkel should hold the pieces alongside each other and they will miraculously unite into one solid piece of wood. He explains that this refers to the future miraculous unification of the Jewish kingdom. The individual pieces of wood represent the individual kingdoms of Israel. Although Hashem unconditionally granted Dovid Hamelech's dynasty the kingdom of Israel this did not preclude fragmentation. In fact, soon after Shlomo Hamelech's passing the kingdom suffered a severe split. Yeravam ben Nvat, a descendent of the tribe of Yosef led a powerful rebellion against the Judean dynasty and gained control over most of the Jewish nation. The split was so intense that the seceding camp of Yosef totally severed ties with its brothers never to return to them. Yechezkel prophesied that these kingdoms will eventually reunite and form one inseparable unit. The unification will be so perfect that it will leave no trace of any previous dissension. The entire nation's sense of kinship will be so pronounced that it will be likened to one solid piece of wood, void of all factions and fragmentation.

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

It is important to note the order of this unity. The first phase will be our nation's unification and after this is achieved Hashem will return to His people. Sefer Charedim sensitizes us to the order of this development. He reflects upon Hashem's distinct quality of oneness and explains that it can only be appreciated and revealed through His people's harmonious interaction. Hashem's favor and kindness emanates from His perfect oneness and reveals this quality in full. When the Jewish people function as a harmonious body

they deserve Hashem's favor and kindness. They project and reflect Hashem's goodness and express His oneness and bring true glory to His name. However, if the Jewish people are fragmented and divided they display-Heaven forbid-division in Hashem's interactive system. Their divisive behavior gives the impression that Hashem's influence is disjointed and fragmented and not achieving its ultimate purpose. At that point Hashem removes His presence from His people and disassociates Himself from their inappropriate ways. The Jewish people's lack of success and accomplishment is then attributed to Hashem's unwillingness to remain involved in their lives.

We now understand that the Jewish people's unity is a prerequisite to Hashem's return to His people. Sefer Charedim explains with this the introductory words of the Shabbos afternoon Amida service. We state therein, "You are one, Your identity is one and who can is likened to Your people Israel one nation in the land." He interprets these words to refer to the glorious Messianic era. During that period Hashem's oneness will be recognized through His harmonious interactive system reflected in the oneness of His people. Their perfect unity will provide the perfect setting for Hashem's revelation to the world. During that time Hashem's master plan will be expressed through the perfect interaction of His people. Every detail of Hashem's kindness will serve its intended purpose and reveal His absolute oneness and control over every aspect of this world. Undoubtedly, this will require the Jewish people's total cooperation and perfect harmonious interaction with one another. Indeed, it can be said that when Hashem's people unite as an inseparable entity His identity and perfect quality of oneness will be recognized throughout the world. (adapted from Sefer Charedim chap. 7)

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

This week's sedra records the immediate result of the unity of the household of Yaakov. After Yaakov Avinu discovered Yosef's existence and salvation the Torah states, "And their father, Yaakov's spirit was restored to life." (Breishis 45:27) Rashi quotes the

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

This lesson is apropos for our times where so much potential diversity exists. We pray to Hashem that we merit total unification thereby yielding Hashem's return to us resting His Divine Presence amongst us. © 2010 Rabbi D. Siegel and Project Genesis, Inc.

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 Rivka (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 [Yaakov] offered sacrifices to the G-d of his father Yitzchok" (Beraishis 46:1). Rather than these offerings being brought to "Yaakov's G-d," or to "the G-d of his fathers" (Avraham and Yitzchok, see 28:13, 31:42, 32:10 and 48:15-16), these offerings were brought to "the G-d of his father Yitzchok." Why, when explaining to everyone to Whom he was bringing these offerings, did Yaakov identify the One True G-d as "the G-d of Yitzchok" rather than as "the G-d of Avraham," if Avraham was the father of monotheism

(and Yitzchok just continued his mission)? "A person is obligated regarding the honor of his father more than the honor of his grandfather; therefore [Yaakov] connected [G-d] with Yitzchok and not with Avraham" (Rashi, based on Beraishis Rabbah 94:5).

The implication (see Bach at the end of Y"D 240 and Darchei Moshe 240:7/14) is that although Yaakov was obligated to honor both his father and grandfather, since he was obligated to honor his father more, he referenced "the G-d of his father Yitzchok." This has halachic ramifications, as the Rama (Y"D 240:24) brings two opinions regarding the obligation to honor a grandfather. "Some (referring to the Maharik) say that a person is not obligated to honor his father's father, but this doesn't seem to me to be so. [Rather], one is obligated more regarding the honor of his father than the honor of his father's father." Then, parenthetically, the Rama adds that evidence for his opinion can be found in the Midrash that Rashi quotes, as Yaakov referred to G-d as "the G-d of his father Yitzchok," not because he wasn't obligated to honor his grandfather Avraham at all, but because he was obligated to honor his father more.

[Obviously, Yaakov did not have a Shulchan Aruch with (or without) the Rama's comments to consult with. Rather, like his father and grandfather, Yaakov was in tune with what the divine will is/was and how to best get closer to the Creator. Since following halacha is also what G-d wants/expects of us, and is the structure within which we can best get closer to Him, the actions of the Avos (forefathers) are a valid means of determining halacha. Over Chanukah, my (heilige) brother, Shmuel pointed out that this is evident from the Talmud (Kiddushin 32b), which proves that a leader (Nasi) can forego the honor due him ("k'vodo machul") from the fact that Avraham, who was a recognized leader (Nasi, see Beraishis 23:6) was able to put his own honor aside and personally serve food to the three travelers who he thought were idol-worshippers. In defense of the Maharik, Rabbi Sh'lomo Aiger (Gilyon HaMaharsha) says that (at least according to the Maharik) the Midrash the Rama refers to also falls under the category of "not determining halacha based on Aggadic Midrashim" (see Yerushalmi Paya 2:4), and therefore not a proof to the Rama's position. (Whether, or which, Midrashim can or can't be part of a discussion of halacha is beyond the scope of this piece. For illustrative purposes, the type of Midrashim usually excluded from these discussions are the ones that introduce events that are not described in the text, not the ones that explain why things described in the text occurred. For example, the Midrash that says Yosef was initially in Leah's womb and Dena was initially in Rachel's womb, until Leah asked G-d to switch fetuses, is usually excluded from impacting the halachic perspective on surrogate motherhood. According to Rabbi Aiger, whether Chazal's suggestion, that the reason Yaakov referenced Yitzchok instead of Avraham

was based on who he had to honor more, can inform us of the actual halacha, is the point of contention between the Rama and the Maharik.) Either way, the actions of the Avos were consistent with halacha (as indicated by the Talmud in Kiddushin); the only aspect disagreed upon is whether the motivation described in Midrashim for those actions impact halacha as well.]

Although Rashi on Chumash quotes this Midrash, indicating that he agreed with the Rama (yes, I know, the Rama was born centuries after Rashi died; I meant he agreed with the concept the Rama would incorporate into halacha many years later), in his commentary on the Talmud (Makos 12a), Rashi seems to agree with the Maharik (the same disclaimer applies here as well). The Talmud is discussing whether a son can be the "go'el ha'dam," the relative who chases after the murderer, if the murderer was his father. In that discussion, the Talmud establishes that if a father killed his son, his son's son can be the "go'el ha'dam" and chase after his grandfather. Rashi explains the Talmud thusly: "The Tannaic teaching that says a son cannot be the go'el ha'dam is referring to the son of the murderer (meaning the son can't chase down his father), and the Tannaic teaching that the son can be the go'el ha'dam is referring to the son of the victim, who is the grandson of the murderer, and not [obligated] in his honor (and therefore can chase down his grandfather)." In other words, the son can't chase his father because he must honor him, while the grandson can because he doesn't have to. Clearly, Rashi here is saying that there is no obligation for a grandson to honor his grandfather, whereas Rashi on Chumash implies that he is obligated to honor both his father and his grandfather.

There is a major discussion among Rashi's super-commentaries whether Rashi will use contradictory Midrashim to explain different verses (choosing a Midrash that best explains the simple meaning of one verse and a mutually exclusive Midrash that best explains another verse), or if Rashi is internally consistent, and there must be a way to explain how all the Midrashim he quotes are not contradictory. Although I have seen several commentators discuss how to reconcile this Rashi on Chumash with Rashi on the Talmud, I haven't seen anyone say that there is no need to try. Nevertheless, those commentators that see no need to reconcile different Midrashim quoted by Rashi on Chumash would likely not feel the need to reconcile Rashi's quoting a Midrash on Chumash with his explanation of a Talmudic passage.

Rabbeinu Bachye says there is a hidden, kabbalistic meaning to the notion of being more obligated to honor a father than a grandfather, and if these words are not to be taken literally, there would be no contradiction with Rashi's commentary on the Talmud. Nevertheless, Rabbeinu Bachye adds that the literal meaning of the words are also true, so unless Rashi was only trying to convey the kabbalistic

message embedded in those words (which is highly unlikely), our question still remains.

Several commentators try to answer this apparent contradiction by applying a concept suggested by the Leviyas Chein (quoted by Rabbi Akiva Eiger, Responsa #68, and Torah Sh'laima Beraishis 46:6), that honoring a grandparent is a subset of honoring a parent, as the parent is also required to honor his parent and is being honored when his parent (the grandparent) is given honor. Since this would only apply while the parent is still alive, and in the case in the Talmud the grandson was avenging his father's murder, the "connection" to the grandfather through the father is broken. However, both Avraham and Yitzchok had passed away when Yaakov brought these offerings, so the "connection" to his grandfather would have been broken as well. It is possible to differentiate between a parent who died during the lifetime of the grandparent and a parent who was murdered by that grandparent (as is the case in the Talmud); while it makes sense for a grandson to honor his grandfather on behalf of his deceased father, how could a grandson be required to honor his grandfather in order to honor his father when the father was murdered by the grandfather?

Another possibility is based on a similar concept applied to honoring a step-mother or step-father. This obligation also stems from the obligation to honor the parent, which is accomplished by honoring his or her spouse. When the parent dies, there is no longer an obligation to honor the step-parent, but it is still preferable (a "mitzvah") to do so (Y"D 240:21). If we apply this "preference" to honoring a grandparent even after the parent passes away, we can easily understand why Yaakov would still honor his grandfather, Avraham, but would honor his father more by bringing the offerings to "the G-d of his father Yitzchok." The preference to still honor a grandparent wouldn't be enough to prevent a grandson from being a go'el ha'dam (see Orach Meishor's commentary on Darchay Moshe HaAruch), which is allowed (as Rashi tells us) because there is no [longer an] obligation to honor him.

The Midrash's statement that a person is obligated to honor a parent more than a grandparent is used to explain why Yaakov referred to G-d as "the G-d of his father" rather than as the G-d that was publicized by his grandfather Avraham. This question is answered equally as well whether one is obligated to honor his father more than his grandfather (like the Rama) or only obligated to honor his father (like the Maharik). It is therefore possible that even though Rashi is of the opinion that, l'halacha, one is not obligated to honor a grandparent, since Yaakov's choice of how he identified G-d is explained just as well even if there was also an obligation to honor his grandfather (as long as there is more of an obligation to honor his father), and the only lesson we can learn from the text itself is that there is more of an obligation to honor a parent than a

grandparent, this is what Rashi tells us. © 2010 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrand

There is an interesting Rokeach (1176-1238) that is connected with our parsha. The Rokeach says the source of the Jewish custom to take three steps forward prior to reciting the Shmoneh Esrei prayer is the fact that there are 3 times in the Torah-in connection with prayer-where we find the word "vaYigash" [and he drew closer]. The first place is when Avraham pleaded with G-d that he should not destroy Sodom, as it is written: "And Avraham drew near and said 'Will You even obliterate righteous with wicked?'" [Bereshis 18:23]. The second time is in our parsha when Yehudah stepped toward Yosef before delivering his appeal [Bereshis 44:18]. The third time is in the book of Kings, regarding Eliyahu on Har HaCarmel [Melachim I 18:36]: "And it was at the time of the Mincha offering, Eliyahu the prophet drew near and said, "Hashem, G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, today it will become known that You are G-d in Israel and I am Your servant, and that it is by Your word that I have done all these things."

Thus, says the Rokeach, the source for the Jewish custom (minhag Yisrael) to take 3 steps forward before beginning our prayers is the 3 times that the word VaYigash (he came near) is used in connection with prayer and petitioning. The question, however, is obvious. While it is true that the context of the word VaYigash by Avraham and by Eliyahu was drawing near to G-d before offering a petition to Him, that does not seem to be the case with Yehudah, who drew closer to Yosef before making his plea. This is not an example of prayer so how can it be used to establish the criteria for the number of steps to take forward before reciting the Amidah prayer. What does the Rokeach mean?

There is another troublesome issue in this parsha. If we read over Yehudah's speech, we see that there is nothing new that has not been said in the previous Chumash narrative. He adds absolutely nothing to the details that unfolded in Parshas Miketz. Yosef was aware of everything in Yehudah's plea before he offered it and yet for some reason it is only now that Yosef breaks down crying and reveals himself to his brothers.

Perhaps it is possible to say that one question answers the other. Even though Yehudah may physically have been in the same room as Yosef and he may have been approaching Yosef and ostensibly petitioning him, however the Being that Yehudah is really petitioning is the Master of the Universe. What is on Yehudah's mind is not the Egyptian Viceroy but the Ribono shel Olam. All else has failed. We are in the eleventh hour. Binyomin is held captive and the brothers are looking at the specter of having to return to their

father without him. They know this will kill their father. Yehudah is desperate. He may be speaking to Yosef, approaching him and looking at him, but the petition is primarily to Him with a capital "H".

Therefore, indeed the Rokeach is correct. "Vayigash elav Yehudah" is a petition to the Ribono shel Olam and can count as one of the 3 places where the word vaYigash (he drew near) is used prior to prayer. True, it is the same information that Yehudah already told Yosef. He is adding no new information in his communication with the Viceroy of Egypt, but now it is directed primarily to someone else-to the Almighty.

The Vilna Gaon uses a similar concept to explain a Gemara [Megilla 16a]. In the dramatic 3 way meeting between Achashverosh, Esther, and Haman, Esther pleads with the king and tells him that someone is trying to kill her and her people. Achashverosh asks her to identify the culprit and she says "A wicked adversary-this evil Haman" [Esther 7:6]. The Gemara said that Esther was actually about to point her finger at the king himself until an Angel came and pushed it in the direction of Haman.

One does not have to be schooled in the art of diplomacy to know that when asking the king for a favor one does not say: "It is you, you evil, rotten, lousy king who is the cause of all this trouble." What was Esther thinking? This is her crucial moment. How did she almost blow it like that? It may be true that Achashverosh himself was part of the problem, but one cannot talk like that to a king! What does the Gemara mean?

The Vilna Gaon says that Esther may have been in the palace and she may have been looking at Achashverosh and giving him this whole speech, but she was really talking to the Almighty. Her plea for intercession to save the Jewish people from destruction was not to the King of Persia but to the King of Kings! She was so caught up in her preoccupation that she was really talking to G-d, that she did not stop to worry about diplomatic niceties vis a vis the message that Achashveorsh would be hearing. Miraculously, an Angel came and pushed her hand towards Haman to bring her back to the "real world" of where she was and who was listening to her plea in the palace.

This then is another example of a Biblical character seemingly talking to another human being, but on a deeper level, talking to the Ribono shel Olam. This too is the approach we must use to properly interpret the nature of Yehudah's speech in the presence of Yosef. © 2010 Rabbi Y. Frand & Project Genesis, Inc.

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The magnificent Torah reading recounts the denouement of the drama of Joseph and his brothers, with the Grand Vizier of Egypt revealing

his true identity in a manner totally devoid of blame or rancor: "And now do not be saddened or angry that you sold me [into slavery]... It was G-d who sent me before you... to enable you... to remain alive for a great salvation" (Genesis 45:5-8). Joseph immediately bids his brothers, "make haste and go up to my father... to come down to me, not to remain [in Canaan]... lest you and your household perish since there is another five years for the famine" (ibid 10,11).

But this seems like a rather strange request. Joseph certainly heard at the knee of his father the importance of the Land of Israel in the lives of the Patriarchs; "aliyah" was the very first commandment the Almighty gave to Abraham. Indeed, Jacob himself had risked physical danger at the hands of Esau as well as financial ruin when he left Laban's employ to return to his ancestral homeland. Moreover, Father Jacob is now 130 years old, and he looks and feels even older than his age because of the many tragedies he suffered in his lifetime (Genesis 47:9). Would it not have been far more logical and sensitive for the Grand Vizier of Egypt to have made a "state visit" to his old father, bringing with him a large supply of provisions and guaranteeing his family regular monthly stipends of grain? In keeping with the tradition of filial respect, the young vibrant Joseph should have made the arduous journey to see his ailing father, and could easily have continued to support the "Israeli family" from Egypt!

I believe there are three main responses to this question. First of all, we must always view the stories of the Book of Genesis from two perspectives: on one plane we are held spellbound by a riveting human drama of parents and children, unfolding in accordance with the freely committed actions of the personalities involved, while on another plane, we are allowed to glimpse a Divinely directed march towards salvation developing in accordance with the predestined plan of the Author of History. The "covenant between the pieces" into which G-d entered with Abraham, foretold the necessity for the children of Israel to experience Egyptian servitude and eventual redemption. Joseph must therefore bring his family to Egypt.

The late Dayan Golditch of London suggested another explanation. He presented the analogy of a son who leaves his parents' religious home in a burst of desired independence, going off to a distant university and establishing his own residence. Indeed, the son distances himself to such an extent that there is no contact between him and his parents. What kind of rapprochement would suit the parents better, a visit by the son to his family home for a Sabbath or Festival, or an invitation (with plane or train tickets included) for the parents to come to his home? Dayan Golditch insists that the latter invitation would gladden the parents' hearts immeasurably more. After all, knowing the deep religiosity of his parents, the son would hardly invite them to his home if it weren't kosher, or if he were living with a non-Jewish woman! Hence Joseph sends his

father "tickets"; he apparently wishes to impress his father with the fact that he had retained his religious commitments even as Grand Vizier of Egypt. That is why, explained Dayan Golditch, the Torah-text explains that when "he [Jacob] saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to transport him [to the Grand Vizier's house in Egypt], the spirit of Jacob their father was revived" (Genesis 45:27).

The third - and in many ways most convincing - explanation is provided by the Ramban (Nahmanides) who suggests that Joseph is not able to send to the Land of Canaan a great deal of food from Pharaoh's storehouses because he (Joseph) would then be suspected of preparing treasures of gold and silver for himself when he returns to his ancestral homeland (Ramban on Genesis 45:10). In other words, Joseph could not allow himself to be vulnerable to the charge of "dual loyalty" of preparing the way for his eventual return to an economically sound Israel.

In his Biblical commentary known as the *Meshekh Hakma*, Rav Meier Simkha of Dvinsk goes one step further, maintaining that specifically because Joseph still retained his familial religious practices in Egypt, he had to "bend over backwards" and not send large supplies of food outside of Egypt into the land of Canaan; Joseph had to take special precautions not to seem to be too generous to Israel lest he be accused of sacrificing the best interests of Egypt.

Added weight is given to this third explanation by the later Biblical description of Joseph's discomfiture in seeking to gain permission to bury his father Jacob in Israel: "And Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh saying, 'If I have found favor in your eyes please speak to the ears of Pharaoh...'" (Genesis 50:4,5). Joseph was the Grand Vizier of Egypt! He certainly could walk into Pharaoh's office at any time, without the intermediacy of a servant or a family member to whisper into Pharaoh's ear! Apparently, Joseph realized that his father's desired burial in Israel would anger the despotic Pharaoh, raising vexing questions of Jewish dual loyalty! Perhaps it is this realization more than anything else that brings home to the Grand Vizier the message that even Egypt is Exile, and inspires him to request of his brethren that he too must be buried in Israel.

In the final analysis, only Israel is the Jewish eternal homeland! © 2010 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

