

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

At almost every stage of fraught encounter between Joseph and his family in Egypt, Joseph weeps. There are seven scenes of tears:

1. When the brothers came before him in Egypt for the first time: "They said to one another, 'Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us'... They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again." [42:21-24]

2. On the second occasion, when they brought Benjamin with them: "Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there." [43:29-30]

3. When, after Judah's impassioned speech, Joseph is about to disclose his identity: "Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, 'Have everyone leave my presence!' So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it." [45:1-2]

4. Immediately after he discloses his identity: "Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them." [45:14-15]

5. When he meets his father again after their long separation: "Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon

as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time." [46:29]

6. On the death of his father: "Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him." [50:1]

7. Some time after his father's death: "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?' So they sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the G-d of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept." [50:15-17]

No one weeps as much as Joseph. Esau wept when he discovered that Jacob had taken his blessing (Gen. 27:38). Jacob wept when he saw the love of his life, Rachel, for the first time (29:11). Both brothers, Jacob and Esau, wept when they met again after their long estrangement (33:4). Jacob wept when told that his beloved son Joseph was dead (37:35). But the seven acts of Joseph's weeping have no parallel. They span the full spectrum of emotion, from painful memory to the joy of being reunited, first with his brother Benjamin, then with his father Jacob. There are the complex tears immediately before and after he discloses his identity to his brothers, and there are the tears of bereavement at Jacob's deathbed. But the most intriguing are the last, the tears he sheds when he hears that his brothers fear that he will take revenge on them now that their father is no longer alive.

In a fine essay, "Yosef's tears," Rav Aharon Lichtenstein suggests that this last act of weeping is an expression of the price Joseph pays for the realisation of his dreams and his elevation to a position of power. Joseph has done everything he could for his brothers. He has sustained them at a time of famine. He has given them not just refuge but a place of honour in Egyptian society. And he has made it as clear as he possibly can that he does not harbour a grudge against them for what they did to him all those many years before. As he said when he disclosed his identity to them: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that G-d sent me ahead of you... G-d sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So

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Mr. Hyman Weisberg ז"ל
חיים ניסן בן יצחק אייזק ז"ל
נפטר ט"ו טבת תש"כ
and
Alta Chana bas Yosef ז"ל
עלטה חנה בת יוסף ז"ל
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then, it was not you who sent me here, but G-d" (45:5-8). What more could he say? Yet still, all these years later, his brothers do not trust him and fear that he may still seek their harm.

This is Rav Lichtenstein's comment: "At this moment, Yosef discovers the limits of raw power. He discovers the extent to which the human connection, the personal connection, the family connection, hold far more value and importance than does power-both for the person himself and for all those around him." Joseph "weeps over the weakness inherent in power, over the terrible price that he has paid for it. His dreams have indeed been realised, on some level, but the tragedy remains just as real. The torn shreds of the family have not been made completely whole." ("Yosef's Tears" was published in *Alei Tziyon* (Vol. 16, Iyar 5769): Special edition in honour of HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein, 109-128. Also available online: <http://www.vbm-torah.org/alei/16-04yosef-final.rtf>)

On the surface, Joseph holds all the power. His family are entirely dependent on him. But at a deeper level it is the other way round. He still yearns for their acceptance, their recognition, their closeness. And ultimately he has to depend on them to bring his bones up from Egypt when the time comes for redemption and return (50:25).

Rav Lichtenstein's analysis reminds us of Rashi and Ibn Ezra's commentary to the last verse in the book of Esther. It says that "Mordechai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by most of his brethren" (Est. 10:3) -- "most" but not all. Rashi (quoting Megillah 16b) says that some members of the Sanhedrin were critical of him because his political involvement (his "closeness to the king") distracted from the time he spent studying Torah. Ibn Ezra says, simply: "It is impossible to satisfy everyone, because people are envious [of other people's success]." Joseph and Mordechai/Esther are supreme examples of Jews who reached positions of influence and power in non-Jewish circles. In modern times they were called Hofjuden, "court Jews," and other Jews were often held deeply ambivalent feelings about them.

But at a deeper level, Rav Lichtenstein's remarks recall Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic, an idea that had huge influence on nineteenth century, especially Marxist, thought. Hegel argued that the early

history of humanity was marked by a struggle for power in which some became masters, others slaves. On the face of it, masters rule while slaves obey. But in fact the master is dependent on his slaves-he has leisure only because they do the work, and he is the master only because he is recognised as such by his slaves.

Meanwhile the slave, through his work, acquires his own dignity as a producer. Thus the slave has "inner freedom" while the master has "inner bondage." This tension creates a dialectic-a conflict worked out through history-reaching equilibrium only when there are neither masters nor slaves, but merely human beings who treat one another not as means to an end but as ends in themselves. Thus understood, Joseph's tears are a prelude to the master-slave drama about to be enacted in the book of Exodus between Pharaoh and the Israelites.

Rav Lichtenstein's profound insight into the text reminds us of the extent to which Torah, Tanakh and Judaism as a whole are a sustained critique of power. Prior to the Messianic age we cannot do without it-consider the tragedies Jews suffered in the centuries in which they lacked it. But power alienates. It breeds suspicion and distrust. It diminishes those it is used against, and thus diminishes those who use it.

Even Joseph "the righteous" weeps when he sees the extent to which power sets him apart from his brothers. Judaism is about an alternative social order which depends not on power but on love, loyalty and the mutual responsibility created by covenant. That is why Nietzsche, who based his philosophy on "the will to power," correctly saw Judaism as the antithesis of all he believed in.

Power may be a necessary evil, but it is an evil, and the less we have need of it, the better. © 2011 *Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd Jacob called to his sons and said "Gather together and I shall tell you what will befall you at the end of days." (Genesis 49:1) The mesmerizing, magnificent and majestic historical parable of Jacob and his sons, Joseph and his brothers comes to a riveting, but nevertheless peaceful climax-denouement this week. Each of his twelve sons gathers around the patriarch's death bed for a final assessment of their respective characters and blessing which will carry them into their future collectively as the Children of Israel. Jacob has matured as a result of his years of suffering and struggle. He is starkly honest in his short but pithy charges: "As fickle as quixotic as water... cursed be their anger for it is fierce." Nevertheless, he paints a broad canvas which concludes with: "And to him shall be the gathering of the nations... until he shall apportion the spoils in the evening," when the enemies will be vanquished and the ultimate peace "Shiloh" will

arrive. The picture which emerges is a bit nebulous and unclear. Still it makes clear that at the end of days, the brothers - together - will realize the mission of the Abrahamic covenant in a world blessed by compassionate righteousness and social justice.

Having said all of this, however, is it not strange that a Biblical portion whose central feature is Jacob's deathbed scene with "Joseph falling on his [dead] father's face weeping over him and kissing him" and "all of Egypt weeping [for Jacob] for seventy days" (50: 2-4) opens with the word which is the name by which this portion is identified "Vayehi" - "And he lived." It is not true! Jacob - Israel whom we have come to know, love and identify with is now dead and not alive. Similarly, the earlier portion which deals with Mother Sarah's death and burial - and tells how "Abraham eulogized her and wept over her" is called "Hayei Sarah" - the life of Sarah. Is this not a strange pattern?

Dr. Eric Cohen, in his important study; *In the Shadow of Progress: Being Human in the Age of Technology*, makes the telling point that death, an inescapable fact of life is not tragic as long as one leaves behind individuals who will continue our narrative. Much the opposite, a death which is surrounded by those who will take the baton carried by the deceased, is a triumph and not a tragedy. In such a case, we may rightfully declare: "Death be not proud; You have been overcome."

Let us hark back to the first time death is described in the Bible, when G-d punishes Adam for eating the forbidden fruit: "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread until you return to the earth from which you were taken, because you are dust and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19). The very next verse, the penultimate verse in the chapter continues with what appears to be a non -sequitur: "And Adam named his wife Hava, for she was to be the mother of all life (Hay)" (3:20). Now if the significance of the name was to be Mother-of-all-life, her name should have been "Haya" and not "Hava"; Hava means the one who narrates, who expresses story, a prayer, or a lesson (See Abarbanel and Baal HaTurim ad loc). What does "Hava," to narrate, have to do with "Haya," to continue life?

But that is precisely the point: when G-d elected Abraham and charged him with the mission of bringing blessing (the message of compassionate righteousness and moral justice (Gen 18:18,19) to all the families of the earth, He didn't expect him to complete the job in his lifetime. He expected the march of the generations of people within the Covenant of Abraham to eventually succeed as a holy nation and a Kingship of Priest-Teachers to the world. The generation that succeeds will usher in Messianic Times; but they will not have done it by themselves. They are the result of the myriads of parents, teachers and enablers who came before them, and passed on the mission. The mother-of-all-life is the bearer of the narrative from generation to

generation; in so far as you have a successor (one you have borne or one you have influenced) who takes over your baton, and sets out to transmit the as-yet-unfinished symphony, you continue to live as well.

The first time I visited Munich, Germany, I was struck by the fact that I didn't see any children; when I commented on this at a public lecture, someone in the audience responded: "We Europeans have no patience for whatever makes noise and dirt which we cannot control." As I pondered his retort, I realized that in the era of contraception, unless you have a compelling narrative to transmit, there is really no reason to have children; they take a lot of time, effort and money, and the results are far from certain. Most of Europe has a minus population growth - apparently because they do not feel compelled to continue their narrative. Hopefully, we Jews do feel compelled, and some day we shall conclude the symphony - at a time when the entire world will be blessed.

When Reuven sees that they want Joseph dead, he implores them not to strike the death blow, but rather to allow Joseph to die "naturally" in the pit. The verse concludes by informing the reader that Reuven's intent was to rescue Joseph after the brothers dispersed - but by then it may be too late. Reuven might well find a dead brother when he is finally able to come to the rescue. Reuven gets an "A" for effort, but he does not fulfill his mission to save Joseph.

When Jacob hears that that the brothers have told the Grand Vizier about their youngest brother Benjamin and that he has insisted that Benjamin accompany them on their next journey to Egypt, he is disconsolate. Jacob refuses to give up Benjamin saying, "You have made me bereft of children; Joseph is gone, Simeon is gone, and now you wish to take Benjamin away [from me] . . ." (Genesis 42: 36).

Reuven again courageously "steps up to the plate," but with a strange promise: "You can slay my two sons if I do not bring [Benjamin] back to you. Put him in my care and I will return him to you" (Genesis 42: 37). Father Jacob obviously refuses to accept such a guarantee - and doesn't even mention it in his refusal.

In both of these instances, Judah succeeds where Reuven fails; Judah not only has the right intentions, he also has the ability to enter the minds of his adversary and make the kind of offer they will willingly accept. © 2011 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The conclusion of the book of Bereshith not only completes for us the picture of the founders of the Jewish people-our fathers and mothers- but to a great extent also concludes the purely narrative portion of the Torah. There are precious few commandments or

laws and ritual that emanate from this first book of the Torah.

From now forward the Torah, while continuing to be a narrative of early Jewish existence and life, develops into a law book detailing the commandments of the Creator to the Jewish people. If so, then what is the purpose of this lengthy beginning narrative? This is really the essence of the question that Rashi quotes at the beginning of his commentary to the Torah: "Should not the Torah have begun from the commandment regarding the new moon?"

It is there that Rashi answers why it began with the story of creation but the question remains: Why does the Torah continue the narrative regarding the personal lives of our ancestors? To this question the rabbis responded by stating that the events that occurred to our ancestors are sign posts for the later events that would occur to their descendants.

Since this idea can only be validated in hindsight-only after the event occurs to later generations can it be glimpsed as having been foretold by events that occurred to our ancestors-it still begs the original question somewhat. It is important to know that otherwise inexplicable events somehow fit into a preexisting pattern. But what particular lessons can be learned from the detailed narrative of the lives of our great ancestors?

There are general lessons about Jewish life that can certainly be gleaned from the Torah narrative of Bereshith. And perhaps this idea of general lessons is one of the reasons why the Torah invests so many words and descriptions in this eternal book.

One lesson is that Jewish life is not an easy one. Being a small minority and yet preserving a unique identity is no easy task. The struggle of our ancestors to do so is therefore clearly delineated for us. Another life lesson is that there are no guarantees in life especially as regarding children. Yishmael and Esau are prime examples of this disturbing truth.

Another lesson is that in the absence of tolerance for the differences in personalities and outlooks that will always be part of Jewish life and society, terrible things can happen to the Jewish people as a whole. Witness the narrative regarding Yosef and his brothers. A further lesson is that others will always threaten Jewish survival, often by violence and murderous intent. Nimrod, Abimelech, Pharaoh, Lavan, Shechem, Esau are but a few that illustrate this point.

All of our ancestors were forced to face up to enmity, jealousy and the duplicity of others. Another teaching to us is the power of the individual and the power of an idea. Abraham and Sarah, practically alone, changed the world with their idea and teachings of monotheism. The Torah further informs us that "good" exiles such as Goshen Egypt can eventually turn out to be less good. All of these lessons are essential to Jewish life and its survival. The wise will ponder upon them and apply them well in one's own life and current

society. © 2011 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 DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd Yisrael (a.k.a. Yaakov) saw Yosef's sons and said, 'who are these?' And Yosef said to his father, 'they are my sons, whom G-d gave me with this' (B'raishis 48:8-9). What was the "this" that Yosef referred to? The "sh'tar eirusin" and "kesubah," the legal documents through which Yosef married his wife (Rashi, based on Maseches Kallah Rabasi 3); Yosef was showing his father that he was legally married to his wife, and that his sons were therefore legitimate. Tzaidah LaDerech (a commentary on Rashi) explains that Yaakov was concerned that Yosef didn't really want to marry his wife, Usnas, but was given no choice by Pharaoh (see B'raishis 41:45), so never formalized the relationship into a full marriage, keeping her as a pilegesh (concubine) instead. (Whether Yaakov thought this was why the divine presence left him when he wanted to bless Yosef's sons or Yosef thought this was what his father thought is irrelevant; either way Yosef produced the documentation of his full marriage to alleviate this concern. Since it was a full marriage, and this couldn't have been the reason why the divine presence had left, Yosef had to plead for mercy so that the divine presence would return.)

According to Jewish law, in order for a document to be legal, it has to be signed by valid, kosher witnesses. When Yosef got married, the Children of Israel were all still in Canaan; where could he find any kosher witnesses in Egypt to sign his marriage contract(s)? Without witnesses, the documents weren't legal, and, according to Jewish law, Usnas would not have been Yosef's wife. How did Yosef produce valid marriage documents to show his father if there were no witnesses who could sign them?

Midrash HaGadol says that Yosef produced "a kesubah and marriage document of the time." In other words, they may not have been documents that would be accepted by Jewish courts after the Torah was given, but were the official documentation used in ancient Egypt for marriages (see Torah Sh'laimah 48:65), and therefore proved to Yaakov that Usnas was Yosef's full, legal, wife rather than just his pilegesh.

Maskil L'Dovid (Rabbi Dovid Pardo's commentary on Rashi) suggests that when there was no other option, G-d fearing, righteous individuals could be used as witnesses, even if they were not descendants of Yaakov and therefore did not qualify as "Children of Israel." He mentions the possibility that Yisro and Iyov, who were Egyptian advisors and were righteous, may have been those witnesses. [Although according to some Iyov married Dina, Yaakov's

daughter (see B'raishis Rabbah 57:4), and one of Iyov's close friends was Yosef's cousin, Elifaz (see <http://www.aishdas.org/ta/5769/vayeitzei.pdf>, pg. 2), so could have been at Yosef's wedding, Yisro would have had to live for hundreds of years if he was a witness when Yosef got married and gave advise to Moshe after the Exodus from Egypt.]

Rabbi Yitzchok Sorotzkin, sh'lita (Rinas Yitzchok II) raises the possibility that Yosef used converts as witnesses, an idea Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe) says is "certainly" true. Rabbi Sorotzkin acknowledges that the conversions couldn't have been done in the exact same way conversions were done after the Torah was given (as there was no Jewish court in Egypt), but says that before the Torah was given there had to have been a different conversion process, as otherwise how could "Avraham convert the men and Sarah convert the women" (see Rashi on B'raishis 12:5). (Rabbi Sorotzkin deals with the specifics of pre-Matan Torah conversions in G'vuros Yitzchok, B'raishis 51.)

That Yosef was proactive in trying to help others get closer to G-d is clear, as one of the conditions Yosef set in order to buy grain from the Egyptian government during the famine was to become circumcised (see Rashi on 41:55, see also <http://www.aishdas.org/ta/5765/vayigash.pdf>). If the witnesses on his marriage documents were converts, he would have had to have converted them before he got married, which was right after he was appointed viceroy. The implication is that Yosef must have been converting people while he was in prison, and likely even before he was imprisoned. This would explain why Pharaoh gave him Usnas as a wife; even if she wasn't Dina's daughter (see Pirkay D'Rebbe Eliezer 38), if she had converted to Yosef's religion, she would be an appropriate wife. It would also make sense that Iyov had joined this group of converts, and was therefore allowed to marry Dina (see B'raishis Rabbah 57:4, where there is a discussion about whether Iyov was a "Yisraeli" or not).

There are other implications of there being a community of converts in Egypt at the time. First of all, when Yosef tells the brothers that he "fears G-d" (42:18), it would be his way of informing them that he was a member of that community. Yosef didn't eat with the other Egyptians (43:32) because he was a member of a group that ate meat; since the brothers already knew that he "feared G-d" and was part of that group, this didn't surprise them. The very fact that "Egyptians couldn't eat with Hebrews" implies that there was already a group of Hebrews they couldn't/didn't eat with, even before the brothers arrived in Egypt.

When Yosef instructed his staff to prepare a royal feast for his brothers, it including serving them meat (43:16) and showing them that it was slaughtered (Chulin 91a). Numerous commentators ask how the brothers could have eaten the meat, since kosher

slaughtering can only be done by a member of the Children of Israel. Rav Sorotzkin discusses this as well (in Rinas Yitzchok I and II), without coming to a resolution. If the brothers knew that the "shochet" (the one who slaughters the animal) was a convert, we can understand how they could have eaten the meat.

Last week I discussed how Yehudah could tell the Egyptian viceroy that since according to Torah law a thief only becomes a servant if he can't pay what he owes, and Binyamin could make such a payment, Binyamin couldn't be kept as a slave (see B'raishis Rabbah 93:6). Did Yehudah really expect the Egyptian viceroy to follow Torah law instead of Egyptian law? Well, if the viceroy presented himself as a member of a community of converts who followed Torah law, telling him that he was going against Torah law would be a very powerful argument. © 2011 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Describing the brothers' feelings after the death of their father Yaacov (Jacob), the Torah states, "Now Yosef's (Joseph) brothers saw that their father had died, and they said, 'perhaps Yosef will hate us and return to us all the evil that we did to him.'" (Genesis 50:15)

On a simple level the brothers concern was well founded. While Yaacov was alive, the brothers thought their father would protect them from any acts of revenge on the part of Yosef. Once Yaacov died, the brothers felt vulnerable. They feared that Yosef's anger would finally be unleashed at them for selling him.

However, it seems strange that the brothers would have such a fear, since Yosef had so embraced them in Egypt, providing for their every need.

Commenting on the words "now Yosef's brothers saw" the Midrash suggests that the brothers actually "saw" as they returned from burying Yaacov that Yosef stopped at the very pit into which he was thrown. (Midrash Agur quoted by Nechama Leibowitz) No doubt, they thought, he did so to plan an action against them in the very place that his life hit such a low point. Rashi adds that the brothers "saw" that Yosef no longer invited them to dine with him. (Rashi, Genesis 50:15) No doubt, the brothers thought, because Yosef was still incensed at the way he had been mistreated.

In both cases, however, the brothers misunderstood Yosef's actions.

In the first, the Midrash notes that Yosef returns to the pit to thank G-d for having saved him. In the second, Yosef may no longer have eaten with his brothers, reasoning that after Yaacov's death, the Egyptian persecution was soon to begin. He, therefore, feared that dining with his brothers could provoke the Egyptians to suspect that he was allying himself with his brothers to rebel against Egypt. (Gur Aryeh)

Note in the text that after the reunion between Yosef and his brothers, the brothers never say a word to Yosef until their father's death. The coming together after a long separation was so traumatic that they may have run out of emotional energy for the important everyday communication.

In the case of Yosef and his brothers, the trend is compounded by the fact that the separation was due to a deep division. So deep, that even after the reunion, the brothers didn't feel free enough to talk openly with Yosef to express their deep feelings of fear. Had they been more open, Yosef would have told them that his intent was not to harm them. In the same breath, Yosef can be faulted for leaving false impressions rather than explaining his actions to his brothers.

Whether there has been a traumatic separation or not, often it is the case that disagreements arise because people don't express what is in their hearts. If we would only speak openly and honestly, we would find out that on many occasions, our concerns are based upon misunderstandings.

Although it exposes us to the risk of pain, openness is the pathway to healing and growth. © 2011 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and President of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School - the Modern and Open Orthodox Rabbinical School. He is Senior Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, a Modern and Open Orthodox congregation of 850 families. He is also National President of AMCHA - the Coalition for Jewish Concerns.

RABBI YONASON SACKS

TorahWeb Foundation

The Rashbatz interprets the Mishnah "Im Ain Ani Li Mi Li-if I am not for myself who will be for me", (Avos 1:14) as teaching that each person must earn merit for himself, and not be overly reliant on others, as it says in the Gemara (Yevamos 109b), a teacher whose students act laudably based on his teaching is not rewarded unless he himself acts. Similarly, the Gemara (Sotah 21a) relates the case of Hillel, who was occupied with Torah, and his brother Shevna, who was occupied with business. When Shevna suggested that they divide and share in each other's benefits, a Heavenly voice went out, quoting the possuk in Shir Hashirim (8:7), "im yiten ish es kol hone beiso b'ahava, boz yavozu lo-If a man give all the treasure of his house for love, he would be scorned", meaning, just as money can't buy love, it can't buy the merit accrued by learning Torah. But if he had proposed such an arrangement at the outset of Hillel's learning-as had Azariah to his brother Shimon, and the Nasi to R' Yochanan-there is no deed greater than that, and he would have shared equally in Hillel's reward. Likewise, the Rama (Yoreh Deah 246:1) cites this case and says that a person may make such a stipulation with his friend, provided that his friend had not already started his learning career.

In a related vein, someone once asked the Maharam Alshakar (n. 101) what he thought of arrangements people made to sell their merits to each other. He answered by citing Rav Hai Gaon's response to a similar query, that such behavior was absurd. How could one hope to receive the reward for another's good deeds? Just as a man cannot become responsible for his fellow's sins, he cannot acquire the reward for his mitzvos. Certainly, one who enables others to do mitzvos, to learn or to teach others, will be rewarded on his own. But that is a far cry from bringing cash to the marketplace to try and purchase the rewards for other people's mitzvos. Such rewards are not commodities to be traded or liquid assets to be disposed of, and one who tries to purchase them will properly be scorned, as was Shevna. But such sharing arrangements as between Shimon and Azariah and between R' Yochanan and the Nasi are indeed legitimate.

The Beis Yosef (Teshuvos Avkas Rochel, n. 2) outlines the contours of such legitimate arrangements. The stipulation must be made at the beginning of the venture, and only with someone who doesn't earn enough to support himself and would have otherwise been forced to abandon his learning completely and go to work. A person so situated is permitted to give half of the reward for his learning to his friend, and to receive half of his friend's profits. He then becomes like someone who learns half the day and works half the day (as does his supporter). However, if the learner does already earn enough for his needs, he may not make such an arrangement, and one who does is considered as scorning the word of HaKadosh Baruch Hu (see Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah, 4:37).

Likewise, when Yaakov blessed Yissachar, he said (Bereishis 49:15) "vayehi l'imas oved-and he became an indentured worker". The Meshech Chochmah explains that this refers to the "tax" Yissachar gives to Zevulun from his labor in Torah [for the financial support that Zevulun provides Yisachar], as expounded by Chazal on the verse (Devorim 33:18), "semach Zevulun b'tzeitzecha v'Yissachar b'ohalecha-rejoice Zevulun in your goings out, and Yissachar in your tents."

R' Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz (Hafla'ah on Kesuvos, n. 43), however, holds that the agreement between Yissachar and Zevulun was not an actual partnership, and that Yissachar's reward was not diminished at all because of Zevulun's support. Moreover, no talmid chacham will ever lose any of his spiritual reward via such an arrangement. Though arrogant people may think they can buy part of a scholar's reward for his Torah just as they might transact any other business, they are entirely mistaken. It is unthinkable to R' Horowitz that spiritual reward for earning is transferable. Rather, Zevulun and all others who support Torah scholars receive their own reward from Hashem for enabling Torah study, without reducing at all the reward of the scholars. Just as a

flame may kindle other flames without being reduced itself, so too the reward of Torah study may benefit multiple people, without diminishing the reward of the individual who actually learns. © 2011 Rabbi Y. Sacks & The TorahWeb Foundation, Inc.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg
Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

When Yaacov wants to bless Yosef's sons, Yosef puts Menasheh to Yaacov's right and Efraim to his left, but Yaacov crosses his hands and puts his right hand on Efraim's head and his left hand on Menasheh's head. The Torah explains this by the phrase, "for Menasheh was the firstborn" [Bereishit 48:14]. But this is remarkable and appears to be backwards. Since Menasheh was the firstborn, Yaacov should have made sure to put his right hand on the boy's head! And in any case, instead of crossing his hands Yaacov should have simply moved the boys and put Efraim to his right instead of crossing his hands.

In his commentary Ha'amek Davar, the Natziv explains in more than one place that Menasheh was the firstborn only in the material sense, "following the laws of nature," but his younger brother Efraim was greater in spiritual strength. For example, he was the ancestor of Yehoshua Bin Nun, the one who passed the Oral Torah on to Bnei Yisrael.

The difference between the two boys influenced later generations, in such matters as the census of the various tribes and the arrangement of the tribal banners in the desert. During the first forty years after the nation left Egypt, the nation was guided through the use of miracles, and therefore Efraim was treated as the firstborn. In the fortieth year, as the nation prepared to enter the land, things changed and the guidance became more according to nature and less spiritual. Therefore, in the first census in the book of Bamidbar Efraim is listed before Menasheh, but in the second census, in the Torah portion of Pinchas, close to the time when they entered the land, Menasheh comes first. This is why Bamidbar is called "The Book of the Census." This is indeed what is unique about this volume, with the Divine guidance moving from that of the desert to that of Eretz Yisrael. "In the desert they acted in the way of 'tiferet' (glory), since they went alongside Moshe, which is a path beyond nature." But in Eretz Yisrael the guidance is natural. This is seen from the fact that in the fortieth year Moshe no longer held his staff in his hand, and the wars against the Canaanites and Sichon were fought in a natural way, not by miracles as when they left Egypt. (Natziv, introduction to Bamidbar.)

The hands follow instructions from the head and the intellect, as opposed to the feet, which are used by the body for motion and which act automatically,

without any directed thought process. Therefore Yaacov did not want to move Efraim to his right side and Menasheh to his left side. Yaacov wanted Efraim to stand in front of his left foot and Menasheh to stand in front of his right foot, since from a worldly point of view Menasheh was the firstborn and he should not be put opposite the right side. But in spiritual matters Efraim should come first. And that explains why Yaacov specifically "crossed his hands" but did not change the way the boys were standing—Menasheh was the firstborn, and it was most appropriate that he stand opposite Yaacov's right side.

Yonatan Ben Uziel writes in his translation that the custom throughout all the generations has been to repeat the blessing "Let G-d make you as Efraim and as Menasheh" [48:20] during the ceremony of a circumcision. At this point, it is not yet known how the young child will behave when he grows up. Thus, the blessing refers to Efraim—if the boy will grow up to spend his time studying Torah—and to Menasheh—if the boy will be mainly involved in the natural world. © 2011 Rabbi A. Bazak and Machon Zomet

RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

This week's parsha, Vayechi, deals with the last years of Yaakov's life. "And Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim {Egypt} for seventeen years. And the days of Yaakov's life were one hundred and forty seven years. [47:28]"

Yosef, told that his father Yaakov was ill, brought his two sons to see him. Yaakov blessed Yosef's sons and then turned to Yosef. "And behold I have given you (the city of) Shchem as one (portion) over your brothers, that which I took from the Emori with my sword and my bow. [48:22]"

What does the Torah mean that Yaakov took it with his sword and bow?

Rashi explains that, when Shimon and Levi killed out the inhabitants of Shchem for violating Dina, all of the neighboring villages came to fight against them. Yaakov, girded with his weaponry, stood up against them.

The Ramban explains that this is actually referring to a time much later in our history. When Bnei Yisroel {the Children of Israel} entered Eretz Yisroel {the Land of Israel} they fought against the Emori for control of the land. Why then does it say that Yaakov took it with his sword and bow? The Ramban explains that it was the merit of Yaakov's mitzvos {observance of the commandments} and good deeds that powered the later battles to victory. The true sword and bow of Bnei Yisroel is the merit of our service to Hashem. (The Medrash Rabbah in fact defines sword and bow to mean mitzvos and good deeds.) The passuk is teaching us that it was Yaakov's 'sword and bow' that brought us the victory generations later. He actually conquered.

The Ozneyim l'Torah shows that the order of the passuk clearly indicates that the battle described here is of a spiritual, not physical, nature. He writes that in a physical battle, one first uses the bow when the enemy is at a distance. As the enemy draws closer, one draws the sword to fight a close proximity battle. As such, were it a physical battle, the order of the passuk should have been that Yaakov took it first with his bow and then his sword. However, in the struggle against sin and temptation, one must first push the enemy away from the immediate area in order to create an environment conducive to mitzvos and good deeds. Such a battle is represented by the sword. Once that has been done, the challenge is to prevent any incursions from the enemy into that purified territory. That is represented by the bow. Yaakov who first used the sword and then the bow was clearly involved in a spiritual battle. Once that had been won, the outcome of the physical battle was a foregone conclusion.

The Torah is called Toras Chayim-instructions for life. We must remember what the true weaponry of Bnei Yisroel is. It is our service to Hashem that powers our military hardware. In the difficult times we are presently living through, we must keep our focus.

Arab riots are not a new phenomenon. When Arab riots broke out in 1919-20, Jews who ventured out of their doorways were putting their lives in danger. The book Guardian of Jerusalem relates that on the day before the outbreak, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenefeld, the venerable Rav of Jerusalem, had agreed to perform a bris {circumcision} in the new city. (At that time, majority of the Jews lived in the Old City while a few lived in the new neighborhoods outside the Old City walls.) The pleadings of his family that he remain at home fell on deaf ears. Wrapped in his tallis {prayer shawl} and tfillin {phylacteries} Rav Chaim walked alone through the most dangerous areas to the Damascus Gate and from there to the bris.

When asked why he had chosen to go through the most dangerous gate, he replied, "Shall we relinquish our claim on the quarter near the Damascus Gate? If we refrain from traveling that street out of fear, they will think that they have indeed succeeded in driving us out of that quarter. No! It is forbidden to relinquish any quarter or corner of Yerushalayim {Jerusalem} out of fear!"

A similar incident took place nine years later. On the bitter Friday of the seventeenth of Av, 1929, the fury of Arab rioters burst on the land. The murder and destruction reached its climax with the cruel massacre of fifty-nine Jews in Hebron.

With the conclusion of the Friday prayers at the Dome of the Rock, thousands of Arabs, incited by the Mufti, y'mach shmo, descended on Yerushalayim yielding swords and clubs. Considering the ferocity of the rioters, Jewish casualties were miraculously low with seventeen Jews killed and thirty-eight wounded.

The following day was Shabbos and, with tensions still at their peak, Rav Chaim had once again agreed to perform a bris in the new city neighborhood of Meah Shearim. He made Kiddush {sanctification of the Shabbos over a cup of wine} and ate a short meal. He then donned his caftan and, to his family's utter amazement, announced that he was going to perform the bris. As Rav Chaim was nearly eighty years old, several people offered to accompany him. Upon reaching the end of the Jewish Quarter, Rav Chaim saw that they were terribly frightened and ordered them to return home. He then turned to proceed out of the Damascus Gate, through an extremely hostile Arab neighborhood that was dangerous even in normal times. On the same road that thousands of bloodthirsty rioters had surged just one day before, the awe-inspiring, tallis-clad figure of Rav Chaim now walked with confident steps to enlist another Jewish child in the covenant of Abraham.

After the bris, Rav Chaim visited his son who lived in that neighborhood and then began to return home. Against the protests of his family, Rav Chaim calmly explained that no harm befalls those who are doing a mitzvah, not on the way there and not on the way back.

Later Rav Chaim was asked why he went through the Damascus gate when the Jaffa Gate was much safer. "I chose to specifically use the Damascus Gate to inform the Arabs that they have not succeeded in frightening Jews out of even one section of the Holy City," was his emphatic reply.

As Rav Chaim's weaponry was his mitzvos and good deeds he had nothing to fear. Though imitating his actions without having his merits would be foolhardy, we must focus on our true weaponry in the face of a similar situation eighty years later. © 2011 Y. Ciner & torah.org



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