

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

There are rare and special moments when the world changes and a new possibility is born: when the Wright brothers in 1903 made the first man-made flight, or in 1969 when Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon, or when, almost 6,000 years ago, someone discovered that marks made in clay with a stick could, when the clay dried, become permanent signs and thus writing, and civilization, were born.

There is such a moment in this week's parsha, and arguably it has had a greater influence on the course of history than any of the above. It happens when Joseph finally reveals his identity to his brothers and then, while they are silent and in a state of shock, goes on to say these words: "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt! 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. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But 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 then, it was not you who sent me here, but G-d." (Gen. 45:4-8)

This is the first recorded moment in history in which one human being forgives another.

It may be the case that G-d has forgiven before this. Certainly according to some midrashic readings of previous episodes, G-d has. But in the plain sense of the text, He hasn't. Did G-d forgive Adam and Eve? Did G-d forgive Cain after he had murdered Abel? Probably not. He may have mitigated their punishment. Adam and Eve did not immediately die. G-d places a mark on Cain's forehead to protect him from being killed by someone else. But mitigation is not forgiveness.

G-d does not forgive the generation of the Flood, or the builders of Babel, or the sinners of Sodom. Significantly, when Abraham prays for the people of Sodom he does not ask G-d to forgive them. His argument is quite different. He says, "Perhaps there are innocent people there," maybe fifty, perhaps no more than ten. Their merit should, he implies, save the others, but that is quite different from asking G-d to forgive the others.

Joseph forgives. That is a first in history. There is even a hint in the Torah of the newness of this event. Many years later, after their father Jacob has died, the brothers come to Joseph fearing that he will now take revenge. They concoct a story: "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 for 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." [Gen. 50:16-18]

The brothers understand the word "forgive"-this is the first time it appears explicitly in the Torah-but they are still unsure about it. Did Joseph really mean it the first time? Does someone really forgive those who sold him into slavery? Joseph weeps that his brothers haven't really understood that he meant it when he said it. But he did, then and now.

Why do I say this was the first time in history? Because of a fascinating recent book by an American Classics professor, David Konstan. In *Before Forgiveness: the origins of a moral idea* (2010), he argues that there was no concept of forgiveness in the literature of the ancient Greeks. There is something else, often mistaken for forgiveness. There is appeasement of anger.

When someone does harm to someone else, the victim is angry and seeks revenge. This is clearly dangerous for the perpetrator and he or she may try to get the victim to calm down and move on. They may make excuses: It wasn't me, it was someone else. Or, it was me but I couldn't help it. Or, it was me but it was a small wrong, and I have done you much good in the past, so on balance you should let it pass.

Alternatively, or in conjunction with these other strategies, the perpetrator may beg, plead, and perform some ritual of abasement or humiliation. This is a way of saying to the victim, "I am not really a threat." The Greek word *sungnome*, sometimes translated as forgiveness, really means, says Konstan, exculpation or absolution. It is not that I forgive you for what you did, but that I understand why you did it-you couldn't really help it, you were caught up in circumstances beyond your control-or, alternatively, I do not need to take revenge because you have now shown by your deference to me that you hold me in proper respect. My dignity has been restored.

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Konstan argues that forgiveness, at least in its earliest form, appears in the Hebrew Bible and he cites the case of Joseph. What he does not make clear is why Joseph forgives. There is nothing accidental about Joseph's behaviour. In fact the whole sequence of events, from the moment the brothers appear before him in Egypt for the first time to the moment when he announces his identity and forgives them, is an immensely detailed account of what it is to earn forgiveness.

Recall what happens. First he accuses them of a crime they have not committed. He says they are spies. He has them imprisoned for three days. Then, holding Shimon as a hostage, he tells them that they must now go back home and bring back their youngest brother Benjamin. In other words, he is forcing them to re-enact that earlier occasion when they came back to their father with one of the brothers, Joseph, missing. Note what happens next: "They said to one another, 'Surely we deserve to be punished [ashemim] 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." [Gen. 42:21-23]

This is the first stage of repentance. They admit they have done wrong.

Next, after the second meeting, Joseph has his special silver cup planted in Benjamin's sack. It is found and the brothers are brought back. They are told that Benjamin must stay as a slave.

"What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? G-d has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves-we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup." [Gen. 44:16]

This is the second stage of repentance. They confess. They do more: they admit collective responsibility. This is important. When the brothers sold Joseph into slavery it was Judah who proposed the crime (37: 26-27) but they were all (except Reuben) complicit in it.

Finally, at the climax of the story Judah himself says "So now let me remain as your slave in place of the lad. Let the lad go back with his brothers!" (42:33).

Judah, who sold Joseph as a slave, is now willing to become a slave so that his brother Benjamin

can go free. This is what the sages and Maimonides define as complete repentance, namely when circumstances repeat themselves and you have an opportunity to commit the same crime again, but you refrain from doing so because you have changed.

Now Joseph can forgive, because his brothers, led by Judah, have gone through all three stages of repentance: [1] admission of guilt, [2] confession and [3] behavioural change.

Forgiveness only exists in a culture in which repentance exists. Repentance presupposes that we are free and morally responsible agents who are capable of change, specifically the change that comes about when we recognise that something we have done is wrong and we are responsible for it and we must never do it again. The possibility of that kind of moral transformation simply did not exist in ancient Greece or any other pagan culture. To put it technically, Greece was a shame-and-honour culture. Judaism was a guilt-repentance-and-forgiveness culture, the first of its kind in the world.

Forgiveness is not just one idea among many. It transformed the human situation. For the first time it established the possibility that we are not condemned endlessly to repeat the past. When I repent I show I can change. The future is not predestined. I can make it different from what it might have been. And when I forgive I show that my action is not mere reaction, the way revenge would be. Forgiveness breaks the irreversibility of the past. It is the undoing of what has been done (a point made by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*).

Humanity changed the day Joseph forgave his brothers. When we forgive and are worthy of being forgiven, we are no longer prisoners of our past. © 2011 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“Reuven spoke to them saying 'Did I not speak to you saying 'Do not sin against the boy,' but you would not listen...' (Genesis 42:22)

Harking back to the Biblical portion of Toldot, it is fairly clear that Isaac's initial intention was to divide the material blessings (berakhot) and the religious leadership (bekhorah); Jacob was to receive the bekhorah of religious leadership and Esau the berakhot of material blessings. Rebecca convinces him that Jacob can and must utilize the techniques (hands) of Esau when the occasion demands it, so both the blessings and the first-bornship must go to the same son! Jacob's tent of Torah study must have the technological, financial and military back-up to spread the values of ethical monotheism throughout the world.

However, we will see that Jacob himself repeats the division that his father had attempted. He gives the material blessings - fruitfulness and a double

portion of land - to Joseph, while the prize of religious leadership - the scepter of leadership goes to Judah (Gen 49:8-10, see Targum and Rashi). Why does Jacob pass over his first-born, Reuven, in favor of his fourth son, Judah?

We cannot help but admire the virtuous "stiff upper lip" of a self-sacrificing Reuven, who attempted to quell his brothers' anger against Joseph and save him from destruction at their hands. Even though he is the one with the most to gain from the removal of Joseph, it is Reuven who comes to Joseph's rescue.

The Midrash emphasizes this when Leah names Reuven: "And Leah conceived and bore a son, calling his name Reuven, because she said the Lord has seen into my affliction, now my husband shall love me." (Genesis 29: 32) In Hebrew, these words may be seen as an acrostic from Reuven. Hence the Midrash, expands on the acrostic, "See (re'u) the difference between my son (Reuven) and the son of my father-in-law (Esau); Reuven did not sell his birthright to Joseph and still he did not protest when Jacob gave Joseph the coat of many colors; moreover, he sought to extricate him from the pit" (Gen 39:20-22).

My revered teacher Harav Joseph B. Soloveitchik suggested that Reuven received his capacity to express largesse towards Joseph from his long suffering mother, Leah. When Leah says: "The Lord has seen my affliction," the Targum explains, "My shame has been revealed before G-d" - that is to say before G-d and not before anyone else, Leah sobbed into her pillow but she did not say a word to anyone else. She swallowed her pride and accepted her status in the eyes of her husband as long as she could fulfill her mission to bear and nurture many of the future tribes of Israel! Similarly, Reuven believed that as the first-born, he had to protect the brothers from jeopardizing their position as "the tribes of G-d" even if that meant forfeiting his own chance for the bechorah patrimony.

However, with all his good intentions Reuven does not succeed in saving Joseph from imminent death. He doesn't read his brothers' thoughts and feelings perceptively enough. When the brothers said, "Let us kill him and cast him into one of the pits", Reuven responded, "Let us not destroy a life . . . Do not shed blood, cast him into this pit which is in the desert, but lay no hand upon him" (Genesis 37: 21,22).

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 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

As the story of Yosef and his brothers unfolds and reaches its climactic end in this week's parsha, we are left with the bewildering sense that there is no absolute right or wrong in the unfolding tale. Yosef is judged wrong in his original behavior towards his brothers in bringing inaccurate tales regarding them to their father. The brothers are judged wrong in casting him in a pit and thereafter selling him into slavery.

All of the brothers including Yosef are judged to have caused their aged father pain and suffering in not revealing to him the story and Yosef himself is criticized for not revealing himself to Yaakov for the first nine years of his rise to power in Egypt. Yet in spite of all of the negativity and guilt involved, the Torah portrays the reunion of the family in happy and complimentary terms.

This is true even though all of them realize that the family will reside in Egypt for a long time and that the return to the Land of Israel is to be a long postponed dream yet to be realized. Families are not perfect and events within them do not always proceed smoothly. However the parsha emphasizes that the family unit must overcome all of the obstacles that lie in its way and must strive at all costs to preserve the sense of family amongst all of its members.

The story of Yaakov's family is the story of almost all later Jewish family life-of quarrels, misunderstandings, misjudgments, and yet somehow of goodness, kindness, tolerance and reconciliation. Jewish tradition teaches us that all later disputes within the Jewish world-and there have been many bitter ones over the millennia-are already foretold in the story of Yosef and his brothers. And yet in spite of it all, the Jewish people remain a family with shared ideals and an optimistic vision for its future.

The Torah records for us that Yosef's revelation of his identity to his brothers was a simple two word

statement-ani Yosef-I am Yosef. Implicit in that statement is the demand of Yosef to be seen by the brothers as a unique individual and not as a carbon copy of his father or of any of his brothers. Yosef is the ultimate nonconformist in the family and the entire dispute arises due to his brothers' unwillingness to allow him that nonconformist role in the family.

Every family has nonconformists in its midst. How the family deals with this situation is truly the measure of its inherent unity and purpose. Many of the problematic issues that plague the Jewish world generally stem from the fraying of family bonds and the loss of an overriding sense of family under all circumstances. All human failings-greed, jealousy, mean-spirited behavior, spitefulness and even violence-are evident in family situations. Recognizing the symptoms of such behavior before they develop-and become chronic- is one of the keys of maintaining the necessary sense of family bonds that alone can prove vital and successful under all circumstances. © 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

The viceroy's goblet was found in Binyamin's bag, so the brothers must return to Egypt to face him as adversaries once again (B'raishis 44:14). The punishment discussed went from the thief being executed and everyone else becoming prisoner-slaves (44:09, before they knew where the goblet was, when they assumed they didn't have it), with the viceroy's emissary saying that only the thief will be a prisoner-slave while everyone else goes free (44:10), to everybody becoming prisoner-slaves (44:16), with the viceroy maintaining his emissary's position that only the thief would be his prisoner-slave. This was unacceptable to the brothers (as they realized that this was a punishment from G-d for having sold Yosef into slavery and Binyamin was the only one who was not part of that), so Yehudah approaches the viceroy (44:18) to try to somehow convince him to allow Binyamin to return home (44:34).

Among the arguments put forth by Yehudah (B'raishis Rabbah 93:6) is that the viceroy's punishment is inconsistent with the customs and laws of the Children of Israel. Although it is true that a thief can become a servant (Sh'mos 22:2), it is only true if he can't pay back what was stolen and an equal amount in punitive damages. If the thief can pay back what is owed (double the value of what was stolen), he does not become a servant. (There is no mention of the fact that the thief does not necessarily become the servant of the person whom he stole from, nor is there any mention that the thief does not become a slave, but a

temporary servant-worker. Nevertheless, since Binyamin and his family could pay whatever was owed, these details becomes insignificant.) However, the notion that the viceroy of Egypt would give up his claim to Binyamin based on Torah law seems rather farfetched. Why would the Egyptian viceroy set aside the laws of his own country because of a claim that it was inconsistent with the defendant's local laws? The viceroy could do whatever he wanted; did Yehudah really expect him to back off once he found out he was violating Torah law?

When the brothers initially said that the thief should be put to death (44:9), Or Hachayim explained that it was based on Noachide law. Violating a Noachide law is a capital offense, and since the prohibition against stealing is one of the seven Noachide laws, this was the punishment the brothers mentioned when they were accused of stealing the goblet. Rabbi Eli Steinberg, sh'lita (Minchas Eliyahu) suggests that the rejection of this punishment by the viceroy indicated that he would not treat them as Noachides, but as Israelites. Therefore, Yehudah responded that according to their laws a thief does not become a servant if he can pay what he owes. However, the Noachide laws are also part of the laws of the Israelites, i.e. the section that applies to those that are not a part of the Israelite nation. Why would the Egyptian viceroy care what a foreign set of laws says? The rejection of using capital punishment was not based on treating the brothers as Israelites instead of Noachides, but because that wasn't the law in Egypt. Why would Yehudah think the Egyptian viceroy would follow Torah law rather than Egyptian law?

Tanchuma Yoshon (Vayigash 5) expands Yehudah's argument by having it include Torah law without limiting it to only Torah law. After referencing the viceroy's previous statement that he "fears G-d" (42:18), Yehudah said it's not true, as he is not following either Egyptian law or Torah law: "According to G-d's law a thief pays double and is sold for his theft [only] if he doesn't have [enough to pay]; according to the laws of the government, all of his (the thief's) things are taken." Yehudah was not arguing that the Egyptian viceroy has to follow Torah law, just stating that it would be acceptable if he did, as would following the normal governmental law. The problem, Yehudah argued, was that neither was being followed. However, in B'raishis Rabbah only Torah law is referenced. If Rabbi Si'mon (who made the statement in B'raishis Rabbah) meant that Yehudah was saying that keeping Binyamin as a slave was inconsistent with every system of law (and not just inconsistent with Torah law), we would have expected him to mention those other systems of law as well. By mentioning only "our law," the implication is that Yehudah expected the Egyptian viceroy to follow it. The questions remains, though, why he would.

Neizer HaKodesh (a commentary on Midrash Rabbah; this particular comment is quoted by Eitz

Yosef) suggests that Yehudah never phrased it as “our law;” it was only Rav Si’mon who put it that way. Yehudah’s intent was that this was the standard law, and therefore expected the viceroy to follow it. I’m not sure why it would be assumed that most law systems were/are similar to ours, especially when it comes to the consequences of not being able to pay for what was stolen. Midrash Tanchuma says explicitly that Torah law was not the same as governmental law; since it is not obvious that Egypt followed “our laws,” Rabbi Si’mon would not have worded his statement in a way that could be misunderstood to mean only Torah law.

The viceroy mentioning that he “feared G-d” does not indicate that he followed G-d’s laws, especially if they were different than Egypt’s laws; it would be very problematic (for Egypt) if its second-in-command disregarded the laws of the land. Rather, the viceroy was explaining why he retracted his original demand that all the brothers but one stay in Egypt (42:16); he feared that G-d would punish him for allowing their elderly father (etc.) starve to death (see Radak and S’fornu). Therefore, he let all of them go back, with food, keeping one brother as collateral to make sure that they returned with their youngest brother (42:19-20). Even though the viceroy expressed his “fear of G-d,” there is no implication in this exchange that he followed G-d’s law—especially if it was not the same as Egyptian law. Nevertheless, as I discussed last week, the viceroy’s instructions regarding the preparation of the feast (43:16) included making sure it was kosher (and that the brothers knew it was kosher), and did not violate the Sabbath (see Chulim 91a, B’raishis Rabbah 92:4 and Midrash Agadah). It is possible that this display of sensitivity towards their religious needs led Yehudah to believe that the viceroy might change his mind about how to punish Binyamin as well. Not that he expected him to, but that it was worth a try. However, there is a big difference between being sensitive to the religious needs of others and disregarding the local civil laws in favor of a belief system’s civil laws. (This whole discussion does indicate that the notion that our forefathers kept the Torah even before it was given is not limited to their relationship with G-d, but extended to how they dealt with other people as well.) It seems a bit awkward that Yehudah should even suggest to the Egyptian viceroy that he disregard his own law and follow theirs instead.

Until now I have written from the perspective that it was Yehudah who brought up the fact that according to Torah law Binyamin should be allowed to go free (provided he pays for what he was accused of stealing). Perhaps, though, the Midrash is picking up the conversation in the middle. There was a back-and-forth between the brothers regarding what the punishment for stealing the goblet should be, and the Midrash is trying to tell us what happened “between the lines.” It is therefore possible that just as the viceroy communicated to them that their meal was 100%

kosher, when he insisted that Binyamin become his slave he drew a comparison to their laws as well. “Don’t tell me it’s so outlandish that your brother will become my slave because he stole my goblet, for even your laws include a similar provision that a thief becomes a servant.” It was to this argument that Yehudah responded that “ours laws only have that provision when the thief cannot make retribution for what he stole; in this case we can pay for it, so he should go free.” Torah law couldn’t be used to justify keeping Binyamin in Egypt, and Yehudah made sure the viceroy knew it.
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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 Yaacov 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 Yaacov 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 Yaacov’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 Yaacov 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. © 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 YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrand

The Shalo"h Hakodesh writes a concept (which is also found in secular circles): One parent can take care of ten children but ten children cannot take care of one parent. The Chiddushei HaRim finds a source for this idea in this week's parsha. When Yehudah made his impassioned plea to the Viceroy in Egypt (who he did not yet realize was his brother Yosef) to release Binyamin, he made the argument-"How can you not let him go? If his father finds out that he did not return, he will not be able to survive!" The Chiddushei HaRim points out that at that time, Binyamin had 10 children. Why did Yehudah not use the argument-how can you not let Binyamin go, you will leave 10 orphans, they will not be able to survive without their father? Apparently, says Chiddushei HaRim, 10 children can somehow manage without a father, but a father cannot manage without one of 10 remaining sons.

This concept that a father's attachment to his children is stronger than the children's attachment to their father is the source for the Shaloh's comment and for the similar concept that circulates in the world at large.

This may be an upsetting idea to all of us who are parents, but that is the truth. Our children love us and respect us, etc., but it is not the same as our love for them. I once saw a very interesting explanation for this phenomenon. Every single human emotion that exists is something we received from Adam, the first human being. Adam had children and therefore he had in him the emotion of a parent's love for his children. However, Adam did not have a father. He is the only

person in the history of the world who did not have parents. Consequently, the emotion of love of child for parent was something he did not possess. It was an acquired skill developed in later generations, but it never had the strong genetically passed down roots that existed in the emotion of love towards children, which is innate in our personalities.

For this reason, Yehudah recognized that the stronger argument for the release of Binyamin would be "his father can't survive his loss" rather than "his children will not be able to survive his loss."

The Shemen HaTov uses this concept to interpret a Rashi in our parsha. The last part of Pasuk 29 in Perek 46 is very ambiguous. The pasuk reads: "Yosef harnessed his chariot and went up to meet Yisrael his father to Goshen; and he appeared to him, fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck excessively." Who appeared to whom? Rashi says that Yosef is the subject and Yaakov is the object in this sentence. Yosef appeared to Yaakov. How does Rashi know this? Why was Rashi so sure that the interpretation is not that Yaakov appeared to Yosef?

The Shemen HaTov explains, based on the earlier stated concept, that the emotion of Yosef appearing to Yaakov was far more dramatic and powerful than the emotion of Yaakov appearing to Yosef. The love of parent to child is much deeper, much more profound, much more intense and innate than the reverse relationship. Therefore, the Torah emphasizes the more dramatic of the two relationships in this reunion: Yosef appeared to his father.

The Apparent Tangent Is Crucial To The Story

The end of the parsha contains the story of Klal Yisrael's descent to Egypt. "Yosef settled his father and his brothers in the land of Egypt, in the prime portion of Ramses, as Pharaoh had commanded. Yosef took care of them and provided for them... Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; they took holdings in it and they were fruitful and multiplied greatly." [Bereshis 47:11-12; 27] It is noteworthy that there is a 14 pasuk gap in the narrative of how the Children of Israel came down to Egypt and settled. We might have written the story exactly as quoted above, just without a break in the narrative.

The Torah describes the events of the first two pesukim, but then goes off on a tangent. The Torah says that the famine grew more intense. The people came to Yosef and asked them what they were going to eat. Yosef told them he would sell them food. They said that they had no money to pay for the food. Yosef told them he would take their cattle in payment. The following year they had neither food nor cattle to pay for food. Yosef took ownership of their land and in effect bought the entire country for the government. There remained no private property in Egypt. The government bought all land holdings, lock stock and barrel. Then, to demonstrate government ownership of the land, Yosef

made everyone relocate. Yosef changed the whole country around. Those who had lived in Alexandria moved to Cairo, those who lived in Cairo moved to Alexandria, etc. The only exception to this rule was the Priests of Egypt. Pharaoh did not acquire their land; it remained their own. Yosef made one final decree. He instituted an across the board 20% income tax payable by the entire population, again, except the Priests who had a tax exemption.

Finally, the Torah concludes the earlier narrative and states "Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt in the Land of Goshen..."

There are several difficulties with this narrative. First, why is the Torah telling us the history of land ownership and tax system in Egypt? Why is this germane? More to the point, why is this stuck into the middle of the story of the Jews' descent to Egypt and their settling there?

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky makes a fundamental comment here. Yosef haTzadik was a man of great vision. He understood what was coming and he knew what to do about it. He knew the real fear that a small minority in a large country might eventually assimilate, acculturate, and become like the rest of the population. Yosef asked himself, "What can I do to save my family? What am I going to do in order to preserve the family traditions in Egypt?" Yosef devised a brilliant plan.

When Jews came to America in the 1920s, the 1930s, and the 1940s, they were called "greenhorns". They were refugees whose strongest desire was to become Americans. They wanted to become like everyone else. They hated being considered outsiders from the old country who did not know what to do in the new land. Yosef's plan was to see to it that there was no such thing as a "permanent citizen" (toshav) in Egypt. Everyone will be a foreigner and greenhorn. The entire population was stripped of their land and moved to "foreign cities". No one felt at home. There were no long-standing aristocrats for the Children of Israel to want to emulate. The entire population was "the new guy on the block".

Then, Yosef imposed a tax and codified in the bylaws of Egypt that clergy would be exempt from national taxes. Later on when the Egyptians decided to enslave the Jews, they appointed over them "tax collectors" (Sarei Misim) and imposed a labor tax. However, per the national precedent, they exempted the priestly tribe from taxes-the Tribe of Levi.

Yosef created a precedent that resulted in one tribe that learned all day throughout the sojourn in Egypt. There was a portion of the nation that was guaranteed to be the "keepers of the faith" (Shomer Emunim). They would therefore never become acculturated and never become assimilated.

Now we understand why the Torah mentions this here and why the tangent is not such a tangent. Before the Torah tells us the story of the Jews in Egypt, before they could really settle down, Yosef had to make

sure that the assimilation that would occur to so many Jews throughout the millennia would not happen to the Jews in Egypt. Yosef attempted to do that by (a) making everyone feel not at home and (b) by inventing the concept of the priestly exemption, so that there would always be a "Shevet Levi" amongst the Jewish people to provide them with the moral compass, pointing in the direction of what the Torah wants. This is what preserved Klal Yisrael in the Exile of Egypt. Then and only then can the Torah conclude the story and tell us: "Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; they took holdings in it and they were fruitful and multiplied greatly." © 2011 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL ZT"L

Adapted by Matan Glidai; Translated by Kaeren Fish

“**A**nd when he saw the wagons which Yosef had sent, to carry him, the spirit of Yaakov, their father, was revived." (Bereishit 45:27)

"He [Yosef] conveyed a sign to them. What had he been involved in when he left him [Yaakov]? The parasha of the eglarufa [the heifer whose neck is broken in the event that a murder victim is found and the murderer is unknown]. This is why the text says, 'when he saw the wagons (agalot) which Yosef had sent'- rather than 'which Pharaoh had sent.'" (Rashi ad loc.)

The midrash teaches that before Yosef became separated from his father's house, he and Yaakov had been studying the parasha of the eglarufa. What idea is the midrash trying to convey by this? The Da'at Zekenim (one of the Ba'alei Tosafot) teaches:

"Rashi explained, 'He conveyed a sign to them, for when he left them he had been learning the parasha of the eglarufa.' But his explanation in turn requires explanation, and it seems most likely that the meaning is as follows:

When he took leave of his father, [Yaakov] accompanied him... and Yosef said to him, 'Go back,' but Yaakov said, 'My son, great is [the mitzva of] accompanying [one who leaves]; for its sake a parasha was added to the Torah'... and that is the parasha of eglarufa, which is what they had been studying."

When Yaakov sent Yosef to his brothers, he accompanied him on the way. Yosef, not wishing to impose upon his father, suggested that he return. To this Yaakov replied that the mitzva of accompanying one who sets out on a journey should not be taken lightly, since an entire parasha in the Torah pertains to it- the parasha of the eglarufa. Now, when Yosef is about to be reunited with his father, he recalls to him that exchange, by sending him the wagons.

What does the parasha of the eglarufa have to do with escorting someone who sets off on a

journey? Da'at Zekenim bases his words above on Rashi's well-known comment (deriving from Sota 45b) on the declaration which the Torah stipulates for the elders of the closest locations to where a murder victim is found: 'Our hands have not spilled this blood':

"Would anyone have imagined that the elders of the court are murderers? [Surely not.] Rather, [what they mean is,] 'We did not see him and let him go without food and an escort.'" (Rashi on Devarim 21:7)

Thus, the parasha of eglarufa teaches us the importance of the mitzva of escorting guests. The Rambam counts this mitzva along with several other positive rabbinical laws arising from the obligation of kindness (*gemilut chasadim*):

"It is a positive commandment, based on Chazal's teachings, to visit the sick, and to comfort mourners, and to escort the dead [to burial], and to provide for a bride, and to accompany guests...." (*Hilkhot Avel* 14:1)

He then continues: "The rewards for accompanying [guests] is greater than all of the others, and it is a law laid down by Avraham our forefather, and it is the manner of kindness which he practiced, feeding wayfarers and giving them drink and accompanying them, and welcoming guests is greater than receiving the Divine Presence... and accompanying them [when they leave] is even greater than welcoming them. Our Sages taught: 'Anyone who does not accompany [a guest on his way] is considered as though he spilled blood.'" (*ibid.*, 14:2)

Why is this mitzva so important? Unquestionably, its essential purpose must be something other than protection of the guest—since in any case we do not accompany him as far as his own home, but rather only part of the way (see Rambam *ibid.*, 14:3, concerning how far one is to accompany him). Seemingly, the crux of the matter lies in the guest's feeling of security; he feels that he is being attended to, that he is not alone. This strengthens his self-confidence, thereby making it easier for him to face the dangers of the journey.

Today, in the age of motor transport, people do not generally walk by foot from one city to another, and the mitzva has accordingly fallen away. However, its fundamental message remains relevant: every person deserves our attention; we must not allow a situation in which a person feels alone.

In fact, it is specifically in today's mass culture that there is a real danger of a person feeling alone: people can live and die in a big city without anyone knowing of their existence. This feeling of loneliness takes a terrible toll on society and the people living in it. In this sense, the idea behind the mitzva of accompanying a guest remains relevant in our time, perhaps even more than it was in the past. Therefore, in any given framework, we must take an interest in the wellbeing of people in general, and of guests or

newcomers in particular, and to ensure that they are not alone.

The Gemara states: "Rabbi Yochanan said: One who smiles at his friend is better than one who gives him milk to drink, as it is written, 'and his teeth white from milk' (*Bereishit* 49:12) -- do not read 'leven shinayim' (his teeth white) but rather 'libun shinayim' (showing the white of the teeth—i.e., smiling)." (*Ketubot* 111b)

Sometimes a smile is what someone else needs even more than food or drink. A smile gives him a good feeling of warmth and of someone taking an interest. Another Gemara says:

"Rabbi Chelbo said in the name of Rav Huna: Anyone who knows that his friend usually greets him, should greet him first... and if [his friend] greeted him and he did not respond, he is called a thief...." (*Berakhot* 6b)

Apparently the Gemara refers here not only to someone who fails to respond altogether, but also to one who was greeted with a smile and in a friendly manner, but responded begrudgingly, as though fulfilling an obligation and nothing more. Seemingly, this is also the meaning of the beraita (*Avot* 6:6) that teaches that one of the ways in which Torah is acquired is "bearing a yoke with his friend." A person must give his friend the feeling that he is not carrying everything on his own shoulders; there is someone who cares and who shares the yoke together with him. Yaakov wanted to impart this message to Yosef before he left, and now Yosef wants to give that message to Yaakov. (*This sicha was delivered at seuda shelishit, Shabbat parashat Vayigash* 5756 [1995].)

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

“Now, do not be saddened, nor be angry, for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you.” (45:5)

Commentaries ask: Yosef's words are inherently contradictory, for "sadness" is a trait of humble people, while "anger" is a trait of haughty people!

R' Shlomo Flam z"l (1740-1813; early chassidic leader, popularly known as R' Shlomo Lutzker) explains that Yosef's words were addressed to different people. To Shimon and Levi, who originally hatched the plan to kill him (see Rashi to 42:24), he said, "Do not be saddened." On the other hand, to Reuven, who had previously castigated the brothers for not accepting his advice to spare Yosef (see 42:22) and might do so again, he said, "Nor be angry." [Why? "For it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you." It was all part of His plan.] (*Dibrat Shlomo*) ©2011 S. Katz & torah.org