

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Bereishit ends on a sublime note of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. His brothers were afraid that he had not really forgiven them for selling him into slavery. They suspected that he was merely delaying his revenge until their father died. So after Jacob's death they express their fear. Joseph however insisted: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of G-d? You intended to harm me, but G-d intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Gen. 50: 19-21)

This is the second time he had said something like this to them. Earlier he had spoken similarly when he first disclosed that he - the man they thought was an Egyptian viceroy called Zophenat Paneakh - was in fact

their brother Joseph: "I am your brother Joseph, the one 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 ploughing 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: 3-8)

This is a crucial moment in the history of faith. It marks the birth of forgiveness, the first recorded moment at which one person forgives another for a wrong they have done. But it also establishes another important principle: the idea of divine providence. History is not what Joseph Heller called it, "a trashbag of random coincidences blown open in the wind." It has a purpose, a point, a plot. G-d is at work behind the scenes. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends," says Hamlet, "rough-hew them how we will."

Joseph's greatness was that he sensed this. Nothing in his life, he now knew, had happened by accident. The plot to kill him, his sale as a slave, the false accusations of Potiphar's wife, his time in prison, and his disappointed hope that the chief butler would remember him and secure his release - all these events that might have cast him into ever deeper depths of despair, turned out in retrospect to be necessary steps in the journey that eventuated in his becoming second-in-command in Egypt and the one person capable of saving the whole country - as well as his own family - from starving in the years of famine.

Joseph had in double measure one of the necessary gifts of a leader: the ability to keep going despite opposition, envy, false accusation and repeated setbacks.

Every leader who stands for anything will face opposition. This may be a genuine conflict of interests. A leader elected to make society more equitable will almost certainly win the support of the poor and the antagonism of the rich. One elected to reduce the tax burden will do the opposite. It cannot be avoided. Politics without conflict is a contradiction in terms.

Any leader elected to anything, or more loved or gifted than others, will face envy. Rivals will say, "Why wasn't it me?" That is what Korach thought about Moses and Aaron. It is what the brothers thought about Joseph when they saw that their father loved him more than them. It is what Antonio Salieri thought about the



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more gifted Mozart according to Peter Shaffer's play Amadeus.

As for false accusations, they have occurred often enough in history. Joan of Arc was accused of heresy and burned at the stake. A quarter century later she was posthumously declared innocent by an official court of inquiry. More than twenty people were put to death as a result of the Salem witch trials in 1692-3. Years later, as their innocence began to be perceived, a priest present at the trials, John Hale, admitted, "Such was the darkness of that day ... that we walked in the clouds, and could not see our way" (quoted in Robert A. Divine, T. H. Breen, George M. Fredrickson, R. Hal Williams, *America Past and Present*, Volume 1, Pearson, 2001, 94). The most famous false accusation of modern times was the trial of Alfred Dreyfus, a French officer of Jewish descent accused of being a German spy. The affair rocked France during the years 1894 and 1906 before Dreyfus was finally acquitted.

Setbacks too are part of the life-story of the most successful. J. K. Rowling's initial Harry Potter novel was rejected by the first twelve publishers she sent it to. Another writer of a book about children suffered twenty-one rejections. The book was called "Lord of the Flies," and its author, William Golding, was eventually awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

In his famous commencement address at Stanford University the late Steve Jobs told the story of the three blows of fate that shaped his life: dropping out of university, being fired from Apple, the company he founded, and being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Rather than being defeated by them, he turned them all to creative use.

For twenty-two years I lived close to Abbey Road, North London, where a famous pop group recorded all their hits. At their first audition, they performed for a record company who told them that guitar bands were "on their way out." The verdict on their performance (in January 1962) was: "The Beatles have no future in show business."

All this explains Winston Churchill's great remark that "success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm."

It may be that what sustains people through repeated setbacks is belief in themselves, or sheer tenacity, or lack of alternatives. What sustained Joseph, though, was his insight into Divine providence. A plan

was unfolding whose end he could only dimly discern, but at some stage he seems to have realised that he was one of the characters in a far larger drama and that all the bad things that had happened to him were necessary if the intended outcome was to occur. As he said to his brothers, "It was not you who sent me here, but G-d."

This willingness to let events work themselves out in accordance with providence, this understanding that we are at best no more than co-authors of our lives, allowed Joseph to survive without resentment about the past or despair in the face of the future. Trust in G-d gave him immense strength, which is what we will need if we are to dare greatly. Whatever malice other people harbour against us - and the more successful you are, the more malice there is - if we can say, "You intended to harm me, but G-d intended it for good," we will survive, our strength intact, our energy undiminished.

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RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“Gather yourselves and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father" (Genesis 49:2). Death-bed scenes are usually fraught with tragedy; deep sadness at the specter of a life coming to an end with the inevitable frustrations of thwarted dreams, wrongs not yet righted, potential accomplishments now forever beyond grasp. Even under the best of circumstances, with the individual leaving the world in an advanced age without pain, it must nevertheless remind the onlookers of our mortality, our frailty and vulnerability, "as a driven leaf, a broken potshard, a vanishing cloud, a passing dream...."

But our Biblical portion is called Vayehi", which literally translates as "and he shall live." This does not convey an unraveling and unwinding denouement to past reminiscences, but rather an optimistic and uplifting climax to future prophecies. "Death, be not proud"; Angel of Death, be not arrogant! Jacob, who entered the world as a grasping "heel-sneak", struggling desperately to circumvent and overtake his elder brother, now leaves the world as a triumphant champion of Divine righteousness, Yisra-El. How is it that Jacob-Israel leaves not as one who has "passed away" but rather as one who still walks within eternity?

The answer to this question is the major message of the Book of Genesis and is clearly expressed in the Talmud: "Jacob our father did not die" (Ta'anit 5b). But, you will argue, the Bible itself records that he died, and was embalmed and is buried in the Cave of the Couples (Ma'arat HaMachpela) in Hebron (Gen 49: 33). No, father Jacob never died. As long as his children, his descendants, live, he still lives.

The leitmotif running through the pages of Genesis is Abraham's mission to bring compassionate

righteousness and moral justice to the world (Gen 18:18, 19). It remains the major goal and responsibility of his progeny to convey that message and its blessings to the next generation - until it is accepted by all of humanity. We are the people of the unfinished symphony - and each purveyor of the music lives on within the music from generation to generation....

Hence, Jacob is called the "chosen" of the Patriarchs; all of his progeny remained within the family of Israel, no one was banished (like Yishmael) or defected from the ranks (like Esau). Jacob is the most precisely delineated of all of the personalities of the Bible; just as he progresses from the one who circumvents and sneaks from behind to the one who confronts honestly and champions (from Ya'akov to Yisrael), so does he mature from the father who is interested only in Joseph - "These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph..."(Gen 37:1) to the patriarch who blesses (and honestly evaluates) each of his sons.

This maturation of Jacob was not straightforward. We can readily understand the father's special feelings for the eldest son of the love of his life (for whose hand in marriage he labored under Laban for fourteen years) who then died in the prime of her life.

Moreover, the other brothers hated Joseph - and Jacob most certainly suspected them of foul play when they showed him Joseph's bloodied tunic, claiming that "wild beasts have torn him apart".. When twenty-two years later, he discovered that Joseph was alive; he most certainly figured out that, at the very least, they must have commandeered him into Egypt. Jacob even swallowed his furious anger when Reuven slept with his secondary wife, Bilhah - apparently in order to maintain the integrity of the twelve sons- tribes, the unity of the family and continuity of the message. (Gen 35:22)

What enabled father Jacob to be so forgiving - and even forgiving of his beloved Joseph for not having contacted the father who had lavished him with so much love and favor? Apparently, it was because Jacob understood that through his favoritism he was an unwitting accomplice to - indeed, even the main cause of - the dysfunction of the family. At the very least, he would have to forgive his sons (even Reuven, whose immoral act could well be seen as a silent protest by the son who had been rejected as his father's rightful heir in favor of the more beloved Joseph) if he would ever be able to forgive himself!

It was Jacob's ability to repent and change himself which enabled him to believe that his sons could and would repent and change themselves. From repentance emerges forgiveness, the special forgiveness fueled by familial unity and love, the G-dly forgiveness which the Almighty has for His children and which every parent must have for their children. We must retain under the familial umbrella as many of our children as we possibly can - for it is through our children that we and G-d's mission continue to live....

Forgiveness begets forgiveness. The young and arrogant Joseph, who had seen himself - and not G-d- at the center of his dreams is ultimately able to forgive his brothers. This happens twenty-two years later- when he learns that we are all subject to G-d's plan- and that it was G-d who planned for him to become Grand Vizier of Egypt in order to save the Abrahamic mission from extinction (Gen 45:4,5). Joseph too understands how his immature hubris engendered his brother's enmity; he too must forgive them if he is to forgive himself. The leader of the family must unite the family in love and forgiveness! © 2013 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Vayechi, the last in the first Sefer (book) of Bereishit, is where Yaakov (Jacob) gives all of his sons their blessings. Ironically, though, Yaakov starts with the blessings for Ephraim and Menashe, who were Yosef's sons that were born to him in Egypt. It all started when Yosef found out that Yaakov was sick (48:1), Yosef "took his two sons with him." (presumably to bring them to Yaakov, although it doesn't say that anywhere). When Yosef and his sons got there, Yaakov "strengthened himself" (48:5) (which also seems strange), sat up on the bed, and told Yosef that his two sons would now be considered like Yaakov's children, and will get a portion in the land just like the rest of the brothers. Yaakov then called over the 2 children, placed his hands on their heads, and started blessing Yosef, giving him the famous "Hamalach" blessing (48:16), that the angel that protected Yaakov from evil should also protect Yosef's sons, and that Yaakov's name should be associated with them, along with Avraham and Yitzchak, and they should multiply in the land. All these events seem inconsistent, unless we put it in perspective.

When Yaakov got sick, the Torah doesn't say that Yosef brought his sons to Yaakov, but that Yosef took his sons with him. What it could mean is not that Yosef brought his sons physically to Yaakov, but that Yosef kept them close to himself, so that they wouldn't be spiritually influenced by their non-Jewish surroundings. Yaakov recognized this, which is why he felt strengthened when Yosef came to him with his sons. That's also why when Yaakov claimed the sons as his own, he made sure to stress that it was those two sons that were born in Egypt (48:5), because their greatness and Yosef's greatness was that they were Jews despite living in Egypt. And finally, although his hands were on the two sons, Yaakov's blessing was that Yosef's children, and anyone who has to live in a non-Jewish world, should be protected throughout history so that we can all be proudly called the children of Avraham and Yitzchak. But it won't happen unless we learn to put our hands on their heads and guide the next

generation. The adults have a duty to take along and guide the kids, and the children have an equal responsibility to let themselves be guided. © 2013 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Supply Side Diplomats

After Yaakov's passing the brothers were worried. After all, Yoseph was the ruler of Egypt and their father Yaakov was now gone. And so the Torah tells us at the end of this week's portion, "Yoseph's brothers perceived that their father was dead, and they said, 'Perhaps Joseph will nurse hatred against us and then he will surely repay us all the evil that we did him.' So they instructed that Joseph be told, 'Your father gave orders before his death, saying: 'Thus shall you say to Joseph -- 'O please, kindly forgive the spiteful deed of your brothers and their sin for they have done you evil; so now, please forgive the spiteful deed of the servants of your father's G-d.'"

The Torah continues by telling us that "Yoseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers themselves also went and flung themselves before him and said, "We are ready to be your slaves. But Joseph said to them, "Fear not, for am I instead of G-d? Although you intended me harm, G-d intended it for good -- in order to accomplish -- it is as clear as this day -- which a vast people be kept alive. So now, fear not -- I will sustain you and your young ones.' Thus he comforted them and spoke to their heart." (See Genesis 50 15-21)

Yoseph seems very benevolent. He committed himself to sustain his brothers, despite their having sold him into a life of slavery. Yet, maybe they truly wanted some form of retribution. After all it is quite hard to bear the burden of guilt for the rest of your life, and if that is the case, perhaps Yoseph's benevolence may have defeated the purpose of their request.

An old yarn that I heard as I was still unmarried has the wealthy father of the prospective bride interviewing her suitors before they got a chance to meet her.

Each one of the young men who discussed their anticipated financial plans was rebuffed.

One said that he would be going to medical school another was going to law school, and yet a third was waiting for an inheritance that would come any day. Each eager beau was barraged with a series of questions about the details of his future life and none had the proper answer.

Finally, a young Yeshiva fellow came to see the tycoon's daughter. After talking to the young man for twenty minutes, the man was beaming. He proudly introduced the prospective groom to his daughter with the highest recommendation.

His wife and assistants were all astounded. What had this young man said that the others had not?

The man was still beaming when he repeated the conversation. "When I asked him where he plans to live when he first gets married he replied, 'G-d will provide!' When I asked him how he plans to feed a family if he is sitting and studying he looked at me and declared, 'G-d will provide!' When I asked when there are children, how does he plan to pay for their education and welfare, he beamed once again and exclaimed, 'G-d will provide!'"

The man's entire household was baffled. "Why do those responses please you so much?"

The man smiled as he puffed out his chest, "He thinks I'm G-d!"

It is said that Yoseph Dov HaLevi Soleveitchik of Brisk once remarked in wit that Yoseph was telling the brothers, "If you are afraid of retribution, I will provide you with the sweetest revenge. I will be your sole source of support and you will have to rely upon me for your sustenance."

The Talmud in Beitzah 32 states, "R. Natan ben Abba also said in the name of Rav: If someone is dependent on someone else's table, the world looks dark to him, for it says, "He wanders about for food -- where is it? -- he realizes that the day of darkness is ready, at hand" (Job 15:23). The Rabbis taught: One of three whose life is no life, is a person who is dependent on someone else for his meals."

And so, Yoseph was telling his brothers, perhaps I will not employ physical retribution but perhaps your greatest punishment will be that your livelihood will be dependent on the little brother you thought was only worthy of a place in a pit. In the Grace After Meals we beseech the Almighty, "Please do have us rely upon the gifts of flesh and blood, but rather sustain us from Your hand." To live a life dependent upon others is no blessing. So according to this insight, Yoseph gave them something the brothers may really have asked for -- the sweetest and most benevolent punishment they could have desired. © 2013 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org

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. © 2012 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Our father Yaakov lived for seventeen years in the Goshen area of the land of Egypt. These were undoubtedly the most peaceful, serene and happiest years of his long and troubled life. He is

reunited with his beloved son Yosef who has risen to power and greatness, albeit in a strange land. No Eisav, no Lavan, no Shechem, no Canaanite neighbors are present to disturb his peace and security. And, with his family in all of its many generations surrounding him, at peace with him and, superficially at least, with one another, Yaakov is content.

Yaakov is finally vindicated in his life's work and can enjoy the last years of his life. In effect we can understand why the parsha begins -vayechi Yaakov - for it is in these seventeen years that Yaakov truly lived, finally achieving satisfaction and harmony.

The Talmud records for us that the great Rabi Yehuda HaNassi -Rabi - lived in the city of Zippori for seventeen years and the Talmud explicitly connects Rabi's seventeen year sojourn in Zippori with Yaakov's seventeen years of life in Egypt.

Aside from the apparently magic number of seventeen being involved in both instances, what connection is there if any between these two events, especially since they took place millennia apart? The seeming word games of the Talmud, linking like words that appear in the Torah, always have deeper meaning attached to them. There is an underlying motif and relevant message to all generations in this Talmudic assertion. It certainly should demand our attention and study.

Rabi was the editor and publisher of the Mishna, the one book that guaranteed the survival of the Jewish people throughout the long exile that stretched forth and that he saw in his mind's eye. Rabi saw himself, as did his ancestor Yaakov, ensconced in a rare bubble of serenity and opportunity, freed temporarily from the constant persecution of Rome due to his personal friendship with the Roman emperor.

He grasped the moment and exploited the opportunity to codify the Oral Law of Sinai and preserve it for all eternity amongst the Jewish people. Those seventeen years of serenity in Zippori afforded him the opportunity to do so. Yaakov's seventeen years of family harmony and spiritual strengthening in the land of Goshen enabled him to provide the necessary guidance and insights to his family that would enable them to weather the long night of Egyptian bondage and exile.

The last seventeen years of Yaakov's life were the preparation for the centuries of hardship that would follow. Yaakov's ability to shape and guide his family so that they would remain loyal and true to G-d's covenant with them was matched by the seventeen years of the development of the Mishna by Rabi in Zippori many millennia later.

The actions of the forefathers became the instructional template for the later generations. Thus the lives and patterns of behavior and events of Yaakov and Rabi are bound together over the vast passage of time. Just as Yaakov lives so does Rabi live. And this living is not constricted by years or time but is endlessly eternal. © 2013 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author

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RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrand

Transcribed by David Twersky

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In reference to the blessings that Yaakov gave his sons, the pasuk says: "Yehudah, you your brothers will praise (ata yoducha achecha) Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down before you..." [Bereshis 49:8]. There are many interpretations for the phrase "Yehudah, ata yoducha achecha". Both the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel as well as a Medrash we will quote shortly say this expression refers specifically to the incident of Tamar. The expression is translated (at least homiletically) as "Yehudah, you admitted in the incident with Tamar."

Yehudah had a daughter-in-law named Tamar. His previous two sons had died. Tamar was not supposed to marry outside of the family. Tamar disguised herself and tricked Yehudah into performing a form of levirate marriage with her. She became pregnant. Yehudah, who did not realize that she had been impregnated by him, suspected her of being like the daughter of a priest who committed adultery and sentenced her to death. As she was about to be burned alive, she picked up the deposit Yehudah had left her when he visited her thinking she was a harlot and showed it to him. He admitted "she is more righteous than I".

This pasuk in Vayechi referring to Yehudah's admission relates back to that incident. The Medrash generalizes that this pasuk is referring to righteous people who conquer their evil inclinations and they admit when they are wrong. "For everyone who confesses his (improper) deeds merits the world to come." The Medrash describes the Almighty telling Yehudah: "You saved Tamar and her two sons (she was pregnant with twins) from being burnt by fire, by My Life I will save your sons as well."

Let's recast this scenario. Everyone thinks Tamar is guilty. Yehudah, who occupied a position of power announced, "This woman has to be put to death". She is taken out to the stake and the fires are lit. Yehudah is standing there in front of everybody. Tamar announces she is pregnant from the person who gave her the tokens she presents. Yehudah admits that she is more righteous than he. The Medrash says for this he merits the world to come and a great many blessings.

But let us remember that three people's lives were on the line here. Would we not have expected any moral person to do exactly what Yehudah did? What is so noble about his confession, which saved him from having the unjust killing of three individuals on his

conscience? Wouldn't any of us have done the same thing?

The answer to this question is a resounding 'NO!' We would not have done the same thing. Let us examine the other side of the coin. Look at all the rationalizations that Yehudah could have gone through. "If I admit that I was the one who did this, it could be a catastrophic desecration of G-d's Name!" For Yehudah, the pride of the Tribes, to admit that he had promiscuous relations with this apparent prostitute would be a tremendous Chilul Hashem. Not only that, but "If I admit that I did this, it will be so devastating to my father that he is not going to survive. My father has suffered so much already. If I cause a Chilul Hashem now, who knows what this could do to him! Therefore it is 'Pikuach Nefoshos' (a matter involving saving of life) NOT TO ADMIT! It is a Chilul Hashem TO ADMIT. Everything argues in favor of "DON'T ADMIT!" All of these rationalizations went through Yehudah's mind.

But were these really moral options? Would he allow 3 people die? Did he have no decency or conscience?

The answer is that Yehudah really had another option: He could have suddenly announced "New evidence has been uncovered. We need to halt the execution and start a new investigation." He could have dragged out the investigation for six months or a year. In the meantime, Tamar and her children would be saved, and ultimately people would forget about the tumult and he would never need to incriminate himself. This is what most of us, if not all of us would have done.

To have the strength of character to admit the truth and let the chips fall where they may, took rare moral courage. This is what Yehudah did. About this Yaakov said in his blessing: Yehudah ata yoducha achecha.

But this is only part of the greatness of Yehudah, because Chazal say another thing: "Yehudah admitted and he was not ashamed." Let us continue the scenario. Yehudah admits: "I did it." What would happen to most people? For most people, such an experience would break them. They would never recover from it. They would be so humiliated they would crawl into a hole and live out the rest of their life in anonymity. "How can I ever show my face again?"

But what did Yehudah do? He did not crawl into a hole. He dusted himself off, got up, and went on with his life. He became the patriarch of the King of Israel. The Sefas Emes writes a beautiful comment. The pasuk refers to Yehudah as a lion who lies down and crouches. The Sefas Emes writes that the greatness of Yehudah is that even in his moments of "lowness" -- when he is crouching down as it were, even when he has suffered defeat, even when he is humiliated, he still retains the dignity of a lion.

The pasuk refers to Yehudah not as a "lion who roars" but as a "lion who crouches", the lion who is sitting down. Yehudah remains a lion despite the terrible

fall and humiliation he suffered. He remains strong and majestic. Anyone who has ever seen a picture of a lion knows that when a lion sits, it still looks like a lion. It still has the majesty of a lion. It is still the king of the jungle even when at rest.

This is a lesson that all of us need to learn. In the course of a lifetime, we all have our setbacks, whether they are financial or personal or family related. There is an inclination to say "I can never recover from this. I can't show my face. How can I go on?" This is not the attitude of Yehudah and this should not be the attitude of any Jew.

The Sefas Emes concludes by explaining that all the Children of Israel are called Yehudim (tracing themselves to their ancestor Yehudah), because this attribute is the strength of the Jewish people. No matter what defeats they have suffered, they go on. If one thinks of the defeats that we have experienced as a nation on the national level, they are staggering. Nevertheless, we have persevered. This is not only a quality that applies to us as a people; it applies to each of us as individuals as well. Each and every one of us is called Yehudah. Each of us has this capacity of Yehudah that despite the terrible, terrible incident, he survived and remained a lion. He was crouching, he was in a state of lowness, he was down -- but he remained a lion.

These were the two strengths of Yehudah: The ability to recognize and admit the unvarnished unadulterated truth, rather than rationalize and fabricate self-serving justifications and excuses; and the capacity that no matter how devastating the setback one has suffered, the ability to brush oneself off and go on with life. © 2013 Rabbi Y. Frand and torah.org

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

During the journey from Egypt to Chevron to bury Yaakov, a stop is made at Goren Ha'atad for a seven-day period of mourning and eulogies (B'raishis 50:10). The shortest path from Egypt to Canaan was "via the land of the P'lishtim" (Sh'mos 13:17), going west then south, while Yaakov had come down to Egypt via B'er Sheva (B'raishis 46:1), going south then west (a similar traveling distance). Yet the Torah tells us (twice, 50:10 and 10:11) that Goren Ha'atad was "on the other side of the Jordan (River)," implying that they took a circuitous route from Egypt to Chevron (as Goren Ha'atad was either on the eastern side of the Jordan, or, if it was in Canaan, the "other side of the Jordan" is mentioned because they crossed the Jordan from east to west to get there; see Torah Sh'laima 50:29). Why did Yosef go so far out of the way to get to Chevron, traveling all the way east before coming back west?

Although it would be nice and tidy to suggest that Yosef took the same route that the Children of

Israel would eventually take when they left Egypt (which fits with the notion that Yaakov had his sons carry his coffin in the same formation that the Tribes would travel to the Promised Land, see Rashi on 50:13), it is unlikely Paro would have allowed his army and dignitaries to travel so far out of the way, and be away from Egypt for so much longer, if there wasn't a practical reason to do so. It was only because of the oath Yosef had taken that Paro let him go at all (see Rashi on 50:6); letting him go for longer than necessary would seem to be out of the question. Besides, if Yosef knew the route that would be taken during the exodus, why did his descendants, the B'nai Efrayim, take a different route when they left 30 years too early?

Rashi explains why it was called Goren Ha'atad; "all the Canaanite kings and the princes of Yishmael came to wage war. Since they saw Yosef's crown hanging from Yaakov's coffin, they got up and hung their crowns there as well, surrounding it with crowns just as a threshing area (goren) is surrounded by a fence of thorns (atad)." [A similar explanation is put forth in the Talmud (Sotah 13a), although the Talmud says it was the children of Eisav, Yishmael and Keturah that had come to attack but changed their minds upon seeing Yosef's crown on Yaakov's coffin. Midrashim (i.e. Tanchuma) say it was the Canaanites (who are mentioned explicitly in the text, see 50:11), but only mention their crowns surrounding Yaakov's coffin without mentioning that they were coming to wage war. B'raishis Rabbah doesn't mention the crowns, but does say that the Canaanites would have been heavily defeated had they not honored Yaakov (in other ways than placing their crowns on his coffin). I would suggest that Rashi synthesized the Midrashim, with the war being averted and the reason for the name "Goren Ha'atad" expressed the way the Talmud and some Midrashim describe it, the Canaanites included as opponents the way the two sets of Midrashim have it. Rashi may have left out the children of Keturah because they are sort-of included in "Yishmael," and left out Eisav because he was an adversary until his death (see Rashi on 27:45), making it unlikely that at Goren Ha'atad he paid homage to Yaakov. The Talmud does have Eisav, or at least his descendants, in both places (placing their crowns on Yaakov's coffin at Goren Ha'atad and protesting Yaakov's burial in Chevron), so Eisav could have mourned his brother's death while contesting where he should be buried. Nevertheless Rashi avoids the issue by having Eisav present at only one of them.]

There are two ways to understand what happened with the crowns; either the Canaanites and/or the other nations came to attack the Children of Israel as they attempted to bury their patriarch but backed off once they saw Yosef's crown on Yaakov's coffin, realizing that the Egyptian military was protecting the Children of Israel so it would be foolish to attack, or they came to attack Egypt because they thought this large

Egyptian entourage was coming to assert Egyptian control over their land, but backed off once they realized it was a large funeral procession, not an invading Egyptian army. When the "inhabitants of the Canaanite land" said "it is a great mourning for Egypt" (50:11), were they emphasizing "Egypt," because Egypt was mourning too, not just the Israelites, or were they emphasizing "mourning" because this large faction, including chariots and horseman (50:9) were there to mourn, not to fight? Did Yosef's crown protect Yaakov's coffin, or did Yaakov's coffin protect Yosef's crown?

The Talmud discusses the crowns surrounding Yaakov's coffin to explain why on the trip there the Egyptian nobles were given precedence (50:7-8) while on the trip back Yosef's brothers were (50:14); after seeing the honor given to Yaakov by the other nations, the Egyptians realized how special and important he, and by extension his family, were, so the Children of Israel were treated with greater respect. (Rashi, on 50:14, quotes this part of the Talmud too.) If the other nations only put their crowns on Yaakov's coffin because they saw Yosef's crown there, it could not have caused the Egyptians to have additional respect for the Children of Israel. If, on the other hand, it was Yaakov's coffin that prevented the nations from attacking the Egyptians, and rather than just back off they put their crowns on his coffin, we can understand why the status of Yaakov's family had improved. From a practical standpoint as well, it is much more likely that the nations were planning to attack the Egyptian entourage because they thought the Egyptians were attacking rather than because they were accompanying Yaakov's body, as it would have been difficult for them to ascertain that Yaakov's coffin was part of the entourage until they were already close to it.

This is supported by a Midrashic manuscript quoted by Torah Sh'laima (31), which says that Yosef realized the eulogy had to be made outside the boundaries of Canaan, as otherwise the people of Canaan would think the Egyptians were coming to conquer their land and would launch a pre-emptive attack. Some of the Tosafists explain that Yosef did not continue past Goren Ha'atad, as these nations still feared that he would try to conquer their land. This would explain why the seven-day period of mourning started before Yaakov was buried; since Yosef did not accompany his brothers any farther, he started sitting shiva then. Once his mourning started, Yaakov's other relatives, who had come to meet the entourage (according to B'chor Shor this included the families of Eisav, Yishmael, Keturah and Lavan) joined in the mourning.

The Torah's description flows very nicely: "And chariots and horsemen went up with him (Yosef), and they were a very large camp" (50:9). This large group, including horses, chariots and Egyptian officials, could easily have been mistaken for an invading army. Whether the chariots and horsemen went to honor

Yaakov or as a preventative measure in case the Canaanites (or Eisav) would try to stop them from burying Yaakov in Chevron is unclear. Either way, Yosef knew how it could be perceived, and therefore took a circuitous route, to an area where it would be easier to hold a eulogy for those relatives who were not in Canaan, traveling through the wilderness to the other side of the Jordan River. Defending armies came to meet them, but when they saw that it was a funeral procession ("Yosef's crown was hanging from Yaakov's coffin"), they joined in the mourning. "And they came to Goren Ha'atad which is on the other side of the Jordan, and held a very large and touching eulogy, and mourned for his father for seven days" (50:10). [It wasn't for "their" father (i.e. all the brothers), but for Yosef's father, since he was not continuing any farther.] Why did the nations change their minds and not attack the large Egyptian contingent? "And the people of the Canaanite land saw the mourning at Goren Ha'atad, and they said 'this is a large group of Egyptian mourners' (50:11), and not, as they first thought, Egyptian invaders. By taking a circuitous route, Yosef avoided an immediate confrontation with the Canaanites, and allowed Yaakov's relatives on the eastern side of the Jordan to join in the mourning. © 2013 Rabbi D. Kramer

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayon

“Do kindness and truth with me -- please do not bury me in Egypt. When I will lie down with my fathers and you shall transport me out of Egypt and bury me in their tomb.” (47:29-30)

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) asks: Shouldn't the phrase "please do not bury me in Egypt" have come after the phrase "I will lie down with my fathers"? He explains:

Our Sages give three reasons why Yaakov did not want to be buried in Egypt: (1) He was afraid that the Egyptians would deify him; (2) he knew that the soil of Egypt would turn to lice during the Ten Plagues and he didn't want to be buried in that soil; and (3) those buried in Eretz Yisrael will arise first at the time of Techiyat Ha'meitim.

R' Kluger writes: The first two reasons alone did not require Yaakov to be buried in Eretz Yisrael, only that he be buried outside of Egypt. Only the third reason required burial in Eretz Yisrael.

R' Kluger continues: Burial in Eretz Yisrael requires special merit (see Bereishit Rabbah 96:5). Therefore, said Yaakov: Whatever you do, please do not bury me in Egypt. And, if I merit to lie down with my fathers, i.e., if I am deserving of being buried in the Land of my fathers, then bury me in their tomb. (Imrei Shefer) © 2013 S. Katz and torah.org

