

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Maimonides called his ideal type of human being -- the sage -- a rofe nefashot, a "healer of souls". (Rambam, Shemoneh Perakim, ch. 3) Today we call such a person a psychotherapist, a word coined relatively recently from the Greek word psyche, meaning "soul", and therapeia, "healing". It is astonishing how many of the pioneering soul-healers in modern times have been Jewish.

Almost all the early psychoanalysts were, among them Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank and Melanie Klein. So overwhelming was this, that psychoanalysis was known in Nazi Germany as the "Jewish science". More recent Jewish contributions include Solomon Asch on conformity, Lawrence Kohlberg on developmental psychology and Bruno Bettelheim on child psychology. From Leon Festinger came the concept of cognitive dissonance, from Howard Gardner the idea of multiple intelligences and from Peter Salovey and Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence. Abraham Maslow gave us new insight into motivation, as did Walter Mischel into self-control via the famous "marshmallow test". Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky gave us prospect theory and behavioural economics. Most recently, Jonathan Haidt and Joshua Green have pioneered empirical study of the moral emotions. The list goes on and on.

To my mind, though, one of the most important Jewish contributions came from three outstanding figures: Viktor Frankl, Aaron T. Beck and Martin Seligman. Frankl created the method known as Logotherapy, based on the search for meaning. Beck was the joint creator of the most successful form of treatment, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Seligman gave us Positive Psychology, that is, psychology not just as a cure for depression but as a means of achieving happiness or flourishing through acquired optimism.

These are very different approaches but they



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have one thing in common. They are based on the belief -- set out much earlier in Habad Hassidim in R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi's Tanya -- that if we change the way we think, we will change the way we feel. This was, at the outset, a revolutionary proposition in sharp contrast to other theories of the human psyche. There were those who believed that our characters are determined by genetic factors. Others thought our emotional life was governed by early childhood experiences and unconscious drives. Others again, most famously Ivan Pavlov, believed that human behaviour is determined by conditioning. On all of these theories our inner freedom is severely circumscribed. Who we are, and how we feel, are largely dictated by factors other than the conscious mind.

It was Viktor Frankl who showed there is another way -- and he did so under some of the worst conditions ever endured by human beings: in Auschwitz. As a prisoner there, Frankl discovered that the Nazis took away almost everything that made people human: their possessions, their clothes, their hair, their very names. Before being sent to Auschwitz, Frankl had been a therapist specialising in curing people who had suicidal tendencies. In the camp, he devoted himself as far as he could to giving his fellow prisoners the will to live, knowing that if they lost it, they would soon die.

There he made the fundamental discovery for which he later became famous: "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." (Viktor Frankl, man's search for meaning, 75)

What made the difference, what gave people the will to live, was the belief that there was a task for them to perform, a mission for them to accomplish, that they had not yet completed and that was waiting for them to do in the future. Frankl discovered that "it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us." (Ibid., 85) There were people in the camp who had so lost hope that they had nothing more to expect from life. Frankl was able to get them to see that "life was still expecting something from them." One, for example, had a child still alive, in a

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foreign country, who was waiting for him. Another came to see that he had books to produce that no one else could write. Through this sense of a future calling to them, Frankl was able to help them to discover their purpose in life, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

The mental shift this involved came to be known, especially in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, as reframing. Just as a painting can look different when placed in a different frame, so can a life. The facts don't change, but the way we perceive them does. Frankl writes that he was able to survive Auschwitz by daily seeing himself as if he were in a university, giving a lecture on the psychology of the concentration camp. Everything that was happening to him was transformed, by this one act of the mind, into a series of illustrations of the points he was making in the lecture. "By this method, I succeeded somehow in rising above the situation, above the sufferings of the moment, and I observed them as if they were already of the past." (Ibid., 82) Reframing tells us that though we cannot always change the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we can change the way we see them, and this itself changes the way we feel.

Yet this modern discovery is really a re-discovery, because the first great re-framer in history was Joseph, as described in this week's and next's parshiyot. Recall the facts. He had been sold into slavery by his brothers. He had lost his freedom for thirteen years, and been separated from his family for twenty-two years. It would be understandable if he felt toward his brothers resentment and a desire for revenge. Yet he rose above such feelings, and did so precisely by shifting his experiences into a different frame. Here is what he says to his brothers when he first discloses his identity to them: "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for G-d sent me before you to preserve life... G-d sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but G-d." (Gen. 45:4-8)

And this is what he says years later, after their father Jacob has died and the brothers fear that he may now take revenge: "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place

of G-d? Though you intended to do harm to me, G-d intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as He is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." (Gen. 50:19-21)

Joseph had reframed his entire past. He no longer saw himself as a man wronged by his brothers. He had come to see himself as a man charged with a life-saving mission by G-d. Everything that had happened to him was necessary so that he could achieve his purpose in life: to save an entire region from starvation during a famine, and to provide a safe haven for his family.

This single act of reframing allowed Joseph to live without a burning sense of anger and injustice. It enabled him to forgive his brothers and be reconciled with them. It transformed the negative energies of feelings about the past into focused attention to the future. Joseph, without knowing it, had become the precursor of one of the great movements in psychotherapy in the modern world. He showed the power of reframing. We cannot change the past. But by changing the way we think about the past, we can change the future.

Whatever situation we are in, by reframing it we can change our entire response, giving us the strength to survive, the courage to persist, and the resilience to emerge, on the far side of darkness, into the light of a new and better day. ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd Joseph went up to greet Israel his father; he fell on his neck and he wept on his neck exceedingly" (Genesis 46:29) In these few words, our Torah describes a dramatic meeting between an aged father and his beloved son who had been separated for twenty-two years. Indeed, the father, who had given the coat of many colors to this favored son as a sign that he would bear the mantle of the Abrahamic legacy, had been led to believe that his beloved Joseph had been torn apart by a wild beast, in consequence of which he had been engulfed by inconsolable mourning for more than two decades. The son, who had basked in the glory of paternal favoritism, had been consumed with the agonizing possibility that his father had been so angered by his dreams that he had sent him on a suicide mission "to seek after the welfare of his brothers...."

And so they stand together now, father and son, each still with unanswered questions, but nevertheless each with unfathomable joy at their reunion.

But which one of the two wept on the other's neck? Our most classical commentary, Rashi, maintains that it was Joseph who wept on his father

Jacob's neck but Jacob did not fall on Joseph's neck. Our Sages say that Jacob was reciting the Shema prayer at that time. The Shema? Was it then early in the morning or late evening that, specifically at that emotionally poignant moment, father Jacob had to recite the Shema? Moreover, Ramban (Nahmanides) maintains that if indeed only one of them was weeping, logic dictates that it most likely was the aged Jacob who wept, rather than the much younger and more calculating Joseph.

And if indeed Ramban is correct and not Rashi, then it was Joseph who was reciting the Shema, while father Jacob was weeping. But this interpretation still begs the question, why the Shema at this particular moment? Let us return to Joseph's initial dreams (Gen. 37:5-11), which ignited jealous hatred unto death against the "dreamer." How can we justify the sons of Jacob, progenitors of the tribal children of Israel, being overwhelmed with such base emotions? First he dreams that he and his brothers are binding sheaves of grain, and that the brothers' sheaves are all bowing down to his sheaves. What upsets the brothers is not merely Joseph's vision of his economic and political superiority over them; it is rather Joseph's hankering after the fleshpots of Egypt in all of Egypt's cultural ramifications. Remember that the Abrahamic traditional profession was shepherding, a nurturing pursuit which left much time for spiritual meditation and which was especially conducive to Israel's climatic condition and terrain. Egypt, "the gift of the Nile," specialized in back-breaking agriculture and the slave labor and dissolute lifestyle of the overlords which went with it.

Joseph then dreamt of the sun, the moon and the stars bowing down to him. From the brothers' perspective, this was nothing short of megalomania.

How different were those dreams from that of grandfather Jacob's dream of uniting heaven and earth with G-d at the center stage (not Joseph), promising to bring Jacob home to Israel (not to Egypt). They felt that they had to prevent this recipient of the coat of many colors from ever receiving the firstborn's legacy. He was a "turncoat" to the Abrahamic tradition.

The Bible, however, concludes Joseph's dream sequence with "his brothers were jealous of him, but Jacob observed the matter and anxiously anticipated its coming to pass." Jacob as well as Joseph understood that Abraham's mandate was a universal one, to spread "compassionate righteousness and moral justice to all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:3, 18:18-19), allegorically speaking to the sun, the moon and the stars.

To be sure, Joseph was still an arrogant youth, who identified the Abrahamic legacy with his own eventual leadership; when a more mature Joseph stands before Pharaoh, ready to interpret his dreams, he declares, "This has nothing to do with me; G-d will answer in accordance with the welfare of Pharaoh"

(Gen. 41:16).

And at the end of his life, with his very last breath, Joseph makes his brothers take an oath that when the Hebrews leave Egypt, they will take Joseph's remains to be buried in Israel. Egypt is merely a way-station on the road to world redemption; the great powers must learn the importance of vanquishing terror and depravity if divine peace and morality are to reign supreme.

Ultimately, all the nations will come to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem to learn the word of G-d from Zion; but along the way, unless there is an America to act as the world's policeman on behalf of democracy and freedom, the dark forces of suicide bombers will control the global village.

Hence, when Joseph meets his father-who twenty-two years before seemed to have been vexed at him for the arrogance of his dreams-he responds to his father's tears with the fundamental purpose of Jewish being; "Hear, Israel my father, the G-d who is now our G-d, the G-d of love and peace who is now accepted by the family of Israel, will one day be the one G-d of the entire universe." In effect, his recitation of the Shema is telling his father that Egypt was a necessary way-station in bringing our G-d of redemption to the world.

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The opening verses of this week's Torah reading are among the most dramatic and challenging in the entire Torah. Two great, powerful personalities in the house of the children of Yaakov, Yehudah and Yosef, engage in a clash and debate of epic proportions, regarding the release of their brother Binyamin.

At first glance it seems obvious that Yosef has the upper hand in his struggle. After all, he is the viceroy of Egypt, the commander of the palace guard who are armed and ready to do his bidding. On the other hand, Yehudah has very limited options as to what to say and what to do in order to obtain the release of Binyamin. Yosef's position of power appears to prevail but the impassioned plea and tone and contents of the words of Yehudah are not to be easily ignored.

So in a sense one could say that Yehudah will himself prevail over Yosef. But in a clear analysis one should come to the conclusion that neither of the two great antagonists, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, is the victor in this clash of ideas and worldview.

The true champion that will emerge from this entire baffling and fascinating story is the old hoary Yaakov, seemingly isolated back there in the land of Canaan, morning and despondent as to what has happened to his family. In anguish, he shouts: "Yosef is no more, Shimon is no more; both of them will be lost to

me!"

It is that image of their father that haunts both Yehudah and Yosef. And each, in his own way, wishes to do justice to their father and to everything that he represents. And it is this image of Yaakov that brings Yosef to the climax of the story and to his ability, nay, necessity to reveal and reconcile himself with his brothers.

Jewish rabbinic thought over the ages has always attempted to make the story of Yosef and Yehudah relevant to each individual generation of Jews. I think that the most relevant message that all of us can gain from this great narrative is that it is the image of our ancient father Yaakov that truly hovers over all of our current struggles.

It is our task, not merely to win the debate with our other brothers or even with outside powers that are seemingly stronger and greater than we are, but rather to somehow remain faithful to the old man that we can no longer see but who is somehow always with us. What gives both Yehudah and Yosef troubling pause in the midst of their impassioned debate is the question as to what their father thinks of their words and their actions.

It is this unseen presence of Yaakov that drives the brothers to reconciliation and to restoring a common purpose in their lives and those of their families. In effect they are thinking: "What would our father think of this conversation and of this confrontation?" Father Yaakov has looked down at all of the generations of the Jewish people and in one way or another, every generation has been forced to ask itself what would Yaakov think of us, our words and our behavior.

It is that ever-present idea in Jewish life that has been an aid and a boon to our seemingly miraculous survival as a people and as a faith. We may not see him but we can be certain that he is there with us today as well. ©2015 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 Y'huda approached him (Yosef)" (B'reishis 44:18). "Approached [him] to wage war, as it says (Sh'muel II 10:13), 'and Yo'av and the people that were with him approached to wage war with Aram" (B'reishis Rabbah 93:6). Although Y'huda did try to reason with the Viceroy after he threatened to keep Binyamin as his slave, his words were spoken harshly (see Rashi), and apparently, had Yosef not revealed himself, Y'huda would have led his brothers into battle in order to bring Binyamin back home. Having

guaranteed his father that Binyamin would return alive, Y'huda would have started a war with all of Egypt to make sure he did. However, if Y'huda was willing to use force to bring Binyamin home, shouldn't he have done so earlier, when the Viceroy's messenger had caught up with them after they had already left? Weren't his odds much better then, only having to battle whomever was with the messenger, rather than first going to war after returning to Yosef's house and having to face the entire Egyptian army?

Although this question could easily be brushed aside, as perhaps using force hadn't occurred to him until afterwards (especially since, as I discussed last week, Yosef purposely kept his brothers' stress level high in order to keep them off-balance, and their stress level had to have gone through the roof after the goblet was found in Binyamin's bag), and they may have only left "the city" (see 44:4 and 44:18) but not Egypt, and would have still have had to battle the Egyptian army in order to leave the country, a similar question is asked that can not be brushed aside as easily; by discussing possible answers to that question, this question may be addressed as well.

After the goblet had been found in Binyamin's bag, Y'huda had offered that all 11 brothers would become the Viceroy's slaves (44:16), but this offer was politely declined (44:17), with only Binyamin having to remain as a slave while the rest were free to return home. This was a much better offer (as either way Binyamin would be a slave; the only difference was the brothers' status), making Y'huda's threatening response quite puzzling. Why did he speak harshly with the Viceroy after he had countered Y'huda's offer with a more generous one? Shouldn't he have been thankful before (gently and calmly) asking for something else instead?

Or Hachayim (44:17) explains that if all the brothers had become slaves, it would have been understood to be a punishment from G-d for having sold Yosef into slavery. However, when it became apparent that only Binyamin, who was not involved in the sale, would have to stay, Y'huda knew it wasn't a heavenly decree, and therefore confronted the Viceroy for deciding to keep Binyamin as a slave. Netziv (44:17) has a similar approach, while the Nesivos (Nachalas Yaakov, 44:18) adds that besides the sin of selling Yosef, the brothers thought that perhaps the exile into Egypt had begun. After being told that they were free to return home, they realized this was not the case, and Y'huda took a more threatening stance. This would also explain why he didn't "go to war" with Yosef's messenger, as he still thought that the Viceroy would institute the appropriate punishment, and only had to resort to "war" when he didn't.

[That the Viceroy would reverse the decision told to them by his messenger was bolstered by their discussion with the messenger, a conversation that

needs an explanation. First of all, why did he first agree that the brothers' offer (44:9), that they should all become slaves -- except for the one whose bag the goblet was found in, who would be executed -- was appropriate (44:10), but then insist that only the "thief" would be kept as a slave while everyone else went free? And why is there no "but" in the transition, making it seem as if it was their offer in the first place (and not his counter-offer)? Additionally, as Yitz Weiss pointed out to me last Shabbos, the messenger made it seem as if Binyamin would be his slave, not the Viceroy's. Both the messenger (44:10) and the Viceroy (44:17) said, "the one whom the goblet was found with shall be MY slave." How could the messenger be speaking as if he was the Viceroy, or claim that the slave would be his and not the Viceroy's? However, the conversation can be easily explained as follows: The brothers said that if they have the goblet they would all be slaves, except for the "thief," who would be executed. The messenger responds that this punishment would be appropriate, if not that he had explicit instructions from the Viceroy that stated otherwise, specifically (quoting the Viceroy's words) "only the thief shall be my slave." Since he is quoting the Viceroy directly, the "my" in 44:10 refers to the same person as the "my" in 44:17, and since he transitioned from his own thoughts (agreeing with them) to quoting his boss' thoughts, no other transitional phrase is needed. Getting back to our discussion, the messenger agreeing that, according to Egyptian law, they should really all be punished (not just the thief), supported their belief once they returned to Egypt this would occur. When it didn't, which meant it wasn't a punishment directed at them, the confrontation started.]

Nevertheless, had the Viceroy (or his messenger) been the one who threatened to keep all of them as slaves, we can understand why they thought it was a divine punishment. However, from the very beginning they were told that only the one who had the stolen goblet would be kept as a slave. It was the brothers who first suggested that they should all be kept as slaves (44:9), and Y'huda who made that offer to the Viceroy (44:16). If it was only a suggestion/offer made by the brothers, and was never even considered by the Egyptians, how could they have thought that it was either a punishment from G-d, or the beginning of Egyptian servitude?

Another possibility is that the brothers were hoping that becoming slaves would atone for the sin of selling Yosef as a slave, but when that possibility was denied, they had to go to "plan B." When they were all taken into custody (42:17) they may have thought that their imprisonment would atone for having sold Yosef, but after being released three days later (42:19), knew that this was not the case, and that they still had to pay for this sin, so tried to impose it upon themselves. However, there is a discussion in the traditional literature whether self-imposed "y'surin" (afflictions) are

a viable means of avoiding punishment. If one can avoid "y'surin" being decreed via self-imposed suffering, then the brothers might have tried to put themselves into slavery to atone for the sin of selling Yosef. If, however, such self-imposed suffering would not have removed the punishment due, this approach would face the same obstacle as the previous one.

The first conversation amongst the brothers about being guilty for the way they treated Yosef (42:21) didn't take place when the Viceroy put them in prison (42:17), but after they were released. Or HaChayim (42:21) says that being forced leave Shimon in prison while they returned home is what triggered this conversation. Originally, the Viceroy had said that all of them must stay in prison while one of them goes back for Binyamin, but when only one had to remain locked up while the rest could go back, it reminded them of what they had done to Yosef, abandoning him to be sent to a foreign land. Had the brothers now left Binyamin behind, they would also be doing to him what they had done to Yosef (and then to Shimon). [It is interesting to note that the two times Yosef couldn't control his emotions were when the situations reminded him of being abandoned.] Having learned this lesson, the brothers were unwilling to do this a third time, and offered to all remain slaves rather than leaving Binyamin behind all by himself. When this was declined, Y'huda put his foot down, and insisted that he be the one forced to stay in Egypt instead.

Until faced with actually having to leave Binyamin behind, and doing to him what they had done to Yosef (and Shimon), Y'huda wasn't ready to start a war. Not before they returned to the Viceroy (even if the odds at winning the war were much better then), nor when told that they didn't all have to become slaves. However, when the Viceroy told them to "go in peace [back] to your father" (42:17), which meant abandoning their youngest brother right then and there, Y'huda was going to whatever it took to make sure it didn't happen, even if it meant going to war. ©2015 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

What makes Yosef (Joseph) so keen on settling his families in a suburb of Egypt—a place called Goshen? Goshen seems so attractive that it even appears that the assurance of living in Goshen helps 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. ©2015 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 SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

In this week's Parsha, Vayigash, Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers, after making sure they didn't harbor any resentment. As Rabbi Haber points out, what's more amazing is that Yosef forgave his brothers, after being stuck in a dangerous pit crawling with

poisonous snakes, screaming out for help while catching a glimpse of his brothers sitting down to break bread, ignoring his pleas for mercy. If one's brothers sold them as a slave, would they ever be able to forgive them, kiss and embrace them, and adhere to all the families' laws and customs after they caused you such profound pain? Yosef did all of these things. He didn't assimilate; he didn't become an anti-Semite. He defied every law of human nature. How?

Rabbi Haber goes on to explain that Yosef was empowered by one sentence: "You didn't send me here, G-d did" The fact is they did send him there, but from Yosef's perspective that was something THEY had to deal with. As far as Yosef was concerned, it was all an act of G-d. He was not the judge, he was a brother and he was a Jew. He would act like a brother and he would act like a Jew.

We can learn SO much from Yosef today, if we could just memorize and adapt one line into our lives -- "it wasn't you that sent me here; it was G-d" -- we'd all be closer to all our "brothers", and we'd all be better Jews. ©2015 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

RAB SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

Bais HaMussar

After Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, he sent wagons to Cana'an to bring his father and extended family to Mitzrayim. The Torah enumerates all of Yaakov's descendants and ends with a tally of those mentioned: "All the person[s] of Yaakov's household who came to Mitzrayim numbered seventy."

Rashi, citing the Medrash, comments that while the Torah only enumerates six of Eisav's descendants, the Torah refers to them in the plural: "the people of his house" because the few people of his house all served different gods. In contrast, Yaakov had seventy descendants and, nevertheless, the Torah refers to them in the singular: "All the person coming with Yaakov." Since they all served a single G-d, they are referred to in the singular.

Rav Wolbe (Shiurei Chumash, Vayigash 46:26) explains that the description of Bnei Yisrael as a singular unit was not meant to imply that they all had the exact same outlook on the world. A large group of people who all profess the exact same mindset in all areas of life is sometimes found among people devoid of spirituality. Those with a connection to spirituality will develop their individual talents and intellect into a unique approach to life which will determine the way they think and respond to any given situation.

Rather, Bnei Yisrael's quality of oneness was an expression of their living in harmony with one another (after making amends with Yosef). They loved each other and cared deeply about one another. Indeed, such solidarity is only possible if all those involved are serving a single G-d. When one finds a

group of religious people who do not love and care about each other and are oblivious to the plight of those around them, it is a sign that they are not all serving a "single G-d." Such people must be serving the "gods" of desire, haughtiness and honor, for if they were truly serving Hashem then their service would breed love and friendship and not the opposite.

What is the secret ingredient that threads its way through all those who serve Hashem and fuses them into a single unit? It is precisely their common desire to serve Hashem -- the single G-d -- which unites them. One might be a fiery Chassid and his neighbor a mussar oriented Litvak, but as long as they are focused on the same goal, then love and friendship will reign. However, when personal desires sneak into their spiritual pursuits it will automatically promote animosity since every person has their own set of desires and preferences.

A difference in dress should not be the impetus for a lack of harmony. Distinctions such as wearing a velvet or knitted kippah, a white or blue shirt, a long or short jacket or a baseball cap or striemel, are not grounds for feelings of animosity. Nor should one's nusach ha'tefillah be a reason for enmity. If such differences irk a person, he must check his GPS to determine what life goal he is pursuing. For as Rav Meir Shapiro (the famed founder of Daf Yomi) put it, "Whether davening Nusach Ashkenaz, Sefard or Eidut HaMizrach, everyone joins together by Yehi chavod Hashem L'olam, because regardless of how one gets there the ultimate goal of every Jew is to bring glory to Hashem!" ©2015 Rav S. Wolbe, zt"l and AishDas Society

RABBI PINCHAS WINSTON

Perceptions

"**B**ut now do not be sad, and let it not trouble you that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that G-d sent me before you." Bereishis 45:5 Nothing like a family reunion. Twenty-two years is a long time to be away from each other, especially if one of the parties is assumed to be dead. Unless, of course, there were some serious questions that had to be answered, some of which may have made some of Yosef's brother's wish for separation again.

After all, the brothers had told their father that Yosef had been eaten by a wild animal. Unless they agreed to lie to their father, his sale to Arab merchants had to have come up. That would take some major explaining and even more major apologizing.

Then there was the matter of Yosef not sending word back to his father at some point that he was indeed alive. Aside from making Ya'akov feel better, it would have given his father the opportunity to try and save him. It could have been a whole different history.

There was also the matter of Yitzchak knowing the entire that Yosef was alive. How could he have kept his knowledge a secret while his son suffered so much?

How did he interact with his other grandsons knowing that they were the cause of all of it? Yes, theirs was a family reunion with many loose and unseemly threads left hanging.

Until, that is, you discuss the idea of "Providential Pattern." As Yosef tells his brothers: "But now do not be sad, and let it not trouble you that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that G-d sent me before you." (Bereishis 45:5)

History is not what it seems to be on the surface, Yosef told them, and a person has to make a point of understanding how and why.

For example, current Jewish history runs hot and cold. There are times when it is intense, and times when it is more laid back. How many times has a war in Israel occurred that seemed existential, only to end in victory and some measure of peace, thank G-d? Is this just natural for a country living in a veritable lion's den, or is it specific Divine Providence and intended to teach us something?

In a Sefer Torah there are many breaks. Since most of a Sefer Torah is just one long run-on sentence, the question arises as to their purpose. Rashi explains:

"These short breaks were given [together with the Torah by G-d] to allow Moshe Rabbeinu the opportunity to contemplate from one parshah to the next, [in order] to understand the flow from one topic to another." (Rashi, Vayikra 1:1)

Even Moshe Rabbeinu, in spite all the Heavenly help he received to learn and remember the Torah he was taught, required time to process what he learned. Both the human mind and emotions are limited when it comes to information absorption, which is crucial for comprehension, and G-d took this into account when giving His Torah over to man.

History is just Torah in 3D. It is dynamic Torah. If Torah is the blueprint for Creation, and everything is in it, then history, including the evil, is just Torah being acted out. If something is not in Torah then it cannot exist in Creation.

Therefore, history too, like a Sefer Torah, must have "pesuchos" and "stumos" to give people a chance to absorb, and then comprehend, what has just been taught. The breaks are not about moving on and leaving the bad behind. They are about reflecting on it, extracting implications about life and the direct -- ion of history, and preparing for the next one event.

For example, the first Intifada began in 1987. It was vicious and a nightmare for Israel, catching the attention and invoking the sympathy of many nations around the world. This put new found pressure on the Jewish people who, for the first time, had to contend with being cast as Goliath, and not David.

We survived it, thank G-d, and there was a measure of peace after it.

The second Intifada began in the Fall of 2000. It was more intense than the first one. The world by that

time was also getting tired of having to pay attention to Middle East affairs when local ones were concerning enough. They wanted the Middle-East conflict to just "go away," one way or another.

Since the Arabs became increasingly more relentless and the Israelis, increasingly more apologetic, it became easier for the world to side with the Arabs over the Jews. Standing up to the Arabs, 9-11 confirmed, just invited trouble on home turf.

If it was a question of right vs. wrong, the facts on the ground would support the Israelis. Instead, it became, and it remains to be about paths of least resistance. Pressing the Israelis to make concessions is clearly this. Today, there is an Arab terrorist state where once peaceful and industrious Jewish farmers cultivated new techniques to grow food. The world found it easier to destroy their lives than push the Arab world to take care of their own.

There was a break of sorts after this intifada as well, but now the Arabs are back with a vengeance with far more allies around the world than in the past. They have supporters on some of the most important campuses in the West, and countries that once had nothing to do with the conflict have turned to injuring the Israeli economy to "help" the Palestinians.

It does not help the situation that over the last couple of decades Muslims have been imported by many Western countries around the globe. Nor does it help that they hold fast to their Muslim beliefs even as they settle down in foreign countries. Much of the violence in the headlines today is either Muslim created or inspired. This makes local leaders nervous and only to willing to blame the Israelis for all of it.

Is it only natural that the situation becomes increasingly worse each time? Not necessarily, at least from a historical point of view. Many major conflicts throughout history have dissipated over time.

It is though from a Hashgochah point of view, if the Jewish people mistake the "breaks" as times to kick back and return to "normal" life once again. The "breaks" are really quite miraculous and given to us, by G-d, to contemplate what has happened, what it means, and what it is supposed to lead to, from G-d's point of view.

In other words, if after the first Intifada, rather than sit back and enjoy the break, the Jewish people considered what happened and where history was going, there may not have been a second Intifada. We thought the world was moving on from the first one when in fact Heaven was giving us a chance to avoid a second one, and a third one, etc.

The reason for the discrepancy



between what Heaven wants and what we actually do has to do with a discrepancy in points of view of what is driving the Arab world in the first place. From a secular perspective it is a combination of an irrepressible desire for statehood and a tremendous hatred of the Jewish people. From a Torah perspective, it is some -- thing far more profound.

From a Torah viewpoint, history is not primarily about the rise and fall of nations. That is merely its backdrop. It is about Tikun Olam, the rectification of Creation, which is achieved basically in two ways: Torah and mitzvos, or the events of history, especially the ones that hurt.

Therefore, history is about the Jewish people and how the nations treat them. Many Jews wish that it was not so, since their mission often stalks and haunts them. Jews who gave up their Judaism were still shipped off to the Nazi death camps with Jews who did not and were treated the exact same way.

The true number today of the Jewish people may only be around 10 million people. This is not even a drop in the bucket of the overall world population of over seven billion people. Yet, the 10 million are always in the news, one way or another, and captivate so much of the world's attention.

There are just over six million Jews living in Eretz Yisroel today. There are billions of people around the planet who have become preoccupied with what they call the Jewish occupation of Arab land. This is in spite of the weak historical connection of the Palestinians to the land they demand. The world response is historically incorrect and wildly out of proportion. "This is from G-d, that which is wondrous in our eyes." (Tehillim 118:23) This says that the only way to explain the situation today is that it is direct Hashgochah Pratis, or Divine Providence. G-d is doing this. The Jewish attitude towards life, history, and the land, is holding up the Final Redemption.

We don't listen to our Divine messages, so G-d has to send more intense and radical messengers to get our attention. They do this until we get a break in the action to think about and absorb the message they were sent to deliver, which apparently, and unfortunately, we do not do well enough.

This is why each time the enemy returns he does so more fiercely than before. This is why the world seems to be following a path to international catastrophe, in spite of the lessons learned from past world wars. This is why nothing ever seems to get better, just worse, until a major crisis comes along and changes the page for us.

Will the pattern ever be different? Will we ever respond to the breaks in the Divinely-intended way and head off a worsening situation? So far, the prognosis has not been good. Changing the pattern seems hopeless. Preparing for its inevitable result is, therefore, wise. © 2015 Rabbi P. Winston & torah.org