

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS**

### Judah vs. Joseph

**T**he prime subject of the last portions that we read in the book of Braishit is the struggle between Yehudah and Joseph. Joseph is presented to us as a person who has lofty dreams. He dreams of the stars and the moon- of a time when he will gain influence and rule over his brothers. To a great extent these dreams resemble the dreams of his father Jacob. Jacob also dreamed of a ladder extending to the heavens and angels ascending and descending upon it.

Joseph's dreams always come to fruition. In fact, whatever Joseph sets his mind to accomplish, he is successful. When he arrives in Egypt after being sold by his jealous brothers he works for an influential person in Egypt's government. When he is thrown into jail he finds favor with the head of the prison. And when he finally interprets Pharos dream he is elevated to the position of Viceroy, perhaps the most powerful position next to the king himself. Everything that Joseph touches seems to turn to gold.

Judah on the other hand is depicted as a person of seemingly good intentions but nothing seems to work out for him. He presents to his brothers his bright idea to sell Joseph into slavery only to later be confronted by the deep sorrow of his father. He has a relationship with his daughter-in-law without his knowing, only to be shamed into admitting his guilt and to be publicly embarrassed. He finally meets his brother Joseph, only to be humiliated into owning up to his mistake of initiating and carrying out his sale into slavery-and realizing that he is standing before his long lost brother, the dreamer-and that his dreams have come true!

Yet despite the apparent shortcomings of Judah, the future king of Israel and the one whom we proclaim will lead us in messianic times, King David, is a direct descendent of Judah not Joseph. It would seem more logical that this exalted position representing the forerunner to the Messiah would come from Joseph rather than Judah!

Our sages explain that perhaps one reason for this, is because Judah possessed a sincere caring for his brethren. He was the one who ultimately undertook responsibility for his brother Benjamin and swore to Jacob his father that he would bring him back safely. Judah, by his act of caring and assuming responsibility

for his brother, set the tone for all Jews to be named after him as "Yhudim", Jews, and for his descendent, David, to be designated to herald the messianic times.

But even more important -and this is the character trait that is so compelling to me and brings me to identify with Judah-is his humanness and the fact that he makes mistakes in his lifetime yet has the strength and ability to confess his wrongdoings and start over. His descendent, King David has these same personality traits. David, on a simple level-displays poor judgment with reference to Bat Sheva, and a host of other incidences as stated in the book of Samuel, but is always able to rise up from his mistakes and begin anew. His character, which is essentially the character of his ancestor Judah, is one who is represented by the typical Jew who is faced daily with religious challenges and sometimes falters and sometimes is successful. The strength of the Jew is the ability to admit wrongdoing and then start anew.

This appreciation of the fallibility of the human being is one that parents should keep in mind when judging their children and placing undue burdens and responsibilities on them expecting them to be perfect in every way. Parents very often use their children as scapegoats to realize their dreams, without concern for what is really good for their children. Teachers also, often, have unreasonable expectations of their students not allowing them to falter even one bit, without concern that they are after all only dealing with children and that everyone should be given some slack at different times in their lives. I have seen parents who make sure that their children are enrolled in every conceivable activity after school, without keeping in mind that children need some down time and space for themselves and sometimes make mistakes.

One of the strengths of our people is that we resemble and yes even aspire to the character of Judah who is not all perfect but is human in his frailties yet continually tries until he is able to ascend and reach great heights. ©2006 Rabbi M. Weiss. Rabbi Mordechai Weiss is the former Principal of the Bess and Paul Sigal Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford and the Hebrew

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**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

## Covenant & Conversation

**T**he sequence from Bereishit 37 to 50 is the longest unbroken narrative in the Torah, and there can be no doubt who its hero is: Joseph. The story begins and ends with him. We see him as a child, beloved – even spoiled – by his father; as an adolescent dreamer, resented by his brothers; as a slave, then a prisoner, in Egypt; then as the second most powerful figure in the greatest empire of the ancient world. At every stage, the narrative revolves around him and his impact on others. He dominates the last third of Bereishit, casting his shadow on everything else. From almost the beginning, he seems destined for greatness.

Yet history did not turn out that way. To the contrary, it is another brother who, in the fullness of time, leaves his mark on the Jewish people. Indeed, we bear his name. The covenantal family has been known by several names. One is Ivri, “Hebrew” (possibly related to the ancient apiru), meaning “outsider, stranger, nomad, one who wanders from place to place.” That is how Abraham and his children were known to others. The second is Yisrael, derived from Jacob’s new name after he “wrestled with G-d and with man and prevailed.” After the division of the kingdom and the conquest of the North by the Assyrians, however, they became known as Yehudim or Jews, for it was the tribe of Judah who dominated the kingdom of the South, and they who survived the Babylonian exile. So it was not Joseph but Judah who conferred his identity on the people, Judah who became the ancestor of Israel’s greatest king, David, Judah from whom the messiah will be born. Why Judah, not Joseph? The answer undoubtedly lies in the beginning of Vayigash, as the two brothers confront one another, and Judah pleads for Benjamin’s release.

The clue lies many chapters back, at the beginning of the Joseph story. It is there we find that it was Judah who proposed selling Joseph into slavery:

Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? Let’s sell him to

the Arabs and not harm him with our own hands. After all – he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed. (Gen. 37:26-27)

This is a speech of monstrous callousness. There is no word about the evil of murder, merely pragmatic calculation (“What will we gain”). At the very moment he calls Joseph “our own flesh and blood” he is proposing selling him as a slave. Judah has none of the tragic nobility of Reuben who, alone of the brothers, sees that what they are doing is wrong, and makes an attempt to save him (it fails). At this point, Judah is the last person from whom we expect great things.

However, Judah – more than anyone else in the Torah – changes. The man we see all these years later is not what he was then. Then he was prepared to see his brother sold into slavery. Now he is prepared to suffer that fate himself rather than see Benjamin held as a slave. As he says to Joseph: “Now, my lord, let me remain in place of the boy as your lordship’s slave, and let him go with his brothers. How can I return to my father without the boy? I could not bear to see the misery which my father would suffer.” (44:33-34)

It is a precise reversal of character. Callousness has been replaced with concern. Indifference to his brother’s fate has been transformed into courage on his behalf. He is willing to suffer what he once inflicted on Joseph so that the same fate should not befall Benjamin. At this point Joseph reveals his identity. We know why. Judah has passed the test that Joseph has carefully constructed for him. Joseph wants to know if Judah has changed. He has.

This is a highly significant moment in the history of the human spirit. Judah is the first penitent – the first baal teshuvah? – in the Torah. Where did it come from, this change in his character? For that, we have to backtrack to chapter 38 – the story of Tamar.

Tamar, we recall, had married Judah’s two elder sons, both of whom had died, leaving her a childless widow. Judah, fearing that his third son would share their fate, withheld him from her – thus leaving her unable to remarry and have children. Once she understands her situation, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute. Judah sleeps with her. She becomes pregnant. Judah, unaware of the disguise, concludes that she must have had a forbidden relationship and orders her to be put to death. At this point, Tamar – who, while disguised, had taken Judah’s seal, cord and staff as a pledge – send them to Judah with a message: “The father of my child is the man to whom these belong.”

Judah now understands the whole story. Not only has he placed Tamar in an impossible situation of living widowhood, and not only is he the father of her child, but he also realises that she has behaved with extraordinary discretion in revealing the truth without shaming him (it is from this act of Tamar’s that we derive the rule that “one should rather throw oneself

into a fiery furnace than shame someone else in public"). Tamar is the heroine of the story, but it has one significant consequence. Judah admits he was wrong. "She was more righteous than I," he says. This is the first time in the Torah someone acknowledges their own guilt. It is also the turning point in Judah's life. Here is born that ability to recognise one's own wrongdoing, to feel remorse, and to change – the complex phenomenon known as teshuvah?– that later leads to the great scene in Vayigash, where Judah is capable of turning his earlier behaviour on its head and doing the opposite of what he had once done before. Judah is ish teshuvah, penitential man.

We now understand the significance of his name. The verb lehodot means two things. It means "to thank," which is what Leah has in mind when she gives Judah, her fourth son, his name: "this time I will thank the Lord." However, it also means, "to admit, acknowledge." The biblical term vidui, "confession," – then and now part of the process of teshuvah, and according to Maimonides its key element – comes from the same root.

Judah means "he who acknowledged his sin."

We now also understand one of the fundamental axioms of teshuvah: "Rabbi Abbahu said: In the place where penitents stand, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand" (Berachot 34b). His prooftext is the verse from Isaiah (57:19), "Peace, peace to him that was far and to him that is near." The verse puts one who "was far" ahead of one who "is near." As the Talmud makes clear, however, Rabbi Abbahu's reading is by no means uncontroversial. Rabbi Jochanan interprets "far" as "far from sin" rather than "far from G-d." The real proof is Judah. Judah is a penitent, the first in the Torah. Joseph is consistently known to tradition as ha-tzaddik, "the righteous." Joseph became mishneh le-melekh, "second to the king." Judah, however, became the father of Israel's kings. Where the penitent Judah stands, even the perfectly righteous Joseph cannot stand. However great an individual may be in virtue of his or her natural character, greater still is one who is capable of growth and change. That is the power of penitence, and it began with Judah. ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd Joseph fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on [Joseph's] neck." [Gen. 45:14] The poignant moment when these two brothers are reunited after a separation of twenty-two years is one of the most tender scenes in the Torah. After a long chronicle of difficult sibling relationships – Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers – we finally come across two siblings who truly love each other. What

made these two bond together so deeply? Apparently, since Joseph was isolated by the children of Jacob's other wives, it was logical that he would seek companionship from the only other sibling born of his own mother, Rachel.

After Rachel died in childbirth, we can feel assured that Joseph drew Benjamin close to him, protected him, and shared with him the precious memories of the mother Benjamin never knew. Indeed, their exclusive relationship must have made their eventual separation even more painful and traumatic. But I am still left wondering: Where is the joy, the elation, the celebration? Why does the Torah only record the weeping of the brothers at this dramatic moment of their reunion?

Rashi cites and explains a midrashic interpretation suggesting that these tears relate to the future destruction of the two Temples allotted to the portion of Benjamin, and to the destruction of the sanctuary in Shilo allotted to the portion of Joseph. Rashi stresses that Joseph's tears are for Benjamin's eventual loss, and Benjamin's tears are for Joseph's eventual loss.

But why does Rashi assume that the tears are tears of pain for future tragic events, rather than tears of joy over their reunion in the here and now? And why does each brother weep for the loss of the other, rather than for his own?

I believe the answer lies in what Rashi wants us to learn from this meeting in future generations, in accord with the rabbinic principle that "the events of the fathers foreshadow the history of the children." Our Sages rightly believed that all tragedies that befall the Jewish people have their source in the sale of Joseph as a slave. This sin, the foundation of causeless hatred between Jews, has plagued our people throughout our history.

The Talmud [Gittin 55b-56a], in isolating the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple, reports an almost mundane, personal event. A wealthy man had a party and wanted to invite his friend Kamtza. Inadvertently, his avowed enemy, Bar-Kamtza, was invited instead. Thrown out from the party and publicly shamed, Bar-Kamtza took revenge. He went to the Roman authorities and slandered the Jews in order to implicate them in crimes against the state. The rest is history.

Josephus writes that even as the Romans were destroying the Temple, Jews were still fighting amongst themselves. To this very day, we find the Jewish people split in enemy camps politically and religiously, with one group cynically and sometimes even hatefully attacking the other.

Indeed, during the Yom Kippur Musaf prayer, the author of the mournful Eileh Ezkera hymn of doxology, links the Temple's destruction and the tragedy of Jewish exile with the sin of the brothers' sale

of Joseph.

Now Rashi's interpretation assumes profound significance. In the midst of brotherly hatred, the love between Joseph and Benjamin stands out as a shining example of the potential for unconditional love. Indeed, it foreshadows the eventual healing of the sibling hatred, amongst the Jews themselves, and how that hatred can be removed.

Rashi links their tears during their meeting to the destruction of our Sanctuaries – the result of jealousy and enmity between Jew and Jew. And so they each weep for the future tragedies that will befall their descendants. However, although each brother will be blessed with a Sanctuary on his allotted land, the brothers weep not for themselves, but each for the other. Their love is truly "other"-directed, selfless and not at all self-serving.

This act of selfless weeping and unconditional love becomes the only hope against the tragedies implicit in the sale of Joseph into slavery. The only thing that can repair that sin – and by implication the sins of all the causeless hatred between factions down the long road of Jewish history – is nothing less than a love in which the other comes first, causeless love, when one weeps for the other's tragedy rather than for his own.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, z"l, taught that since the Temples were destroyed because of causeless hatred, the Third Temple will only be rebuilt because of causeless love, exemplified by the tears of Joseph and Benjamin. Rashi is providing a prescient lesson for our fateful times. ©2017 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**A**s the dramatic story of Joseph and his brothers comes to its climax in this week's Torah reading, one is struck by the comparison between Judah and Joseph, the main antagonists in this final act of the biblical narrative. Joseph is the righteous one, the person who lives by dreams, the one who resists temptation and pays a dear price for so doing.

The brothers did him wrong, very wrong. Even though there are many justifications for their behavior towards Joseph, the simple narrative of the story as portrayed for us in the Bible – and their own admission that they were cruel towards their brother – places them in an awkwardly guilty situation.

And Judah is the brother that advises selling Joseph as a slave. As such, he appears to have a special burden upon him in the whole story of the disunity in the family of Jacob. And his behavior with Tamar raises questions of morality and probity. So, from the reading of this narrative alone, one could easily come to the conclusion that the future of the Jewish people lies with Joseph and not with Judah, that

the greatness of the piety of Joseph should certainly override the leadership qualities and strength of Judah.

Yet we find from the blessings of Jacob onwards that Judah is the leader of the Jewish people through the dynasty of King David. The Jewish people are called by his name and he and his descendants are the catalyst of survival, which has characterized Jewish life throughout the ages.

Why is this so? The Talmud indicates to us that leadership does not necessarily belong to those whose closets are bare of skeletons. Somehow, in order to be a truly successful leader one must first have tasted failings and defeat, physically and even spiritually. The perfect person, the most righteous of people, is not necessarily the right choice for leadership.

Because the nation and the people are never perfect, therefore the leader must clearly understand what the failings and shortcomings are, and work one's leadership through that framework of imperfection. This does not mean that we should overlook shortcomings and previous sins of those who aspire to leadership currently. But it does mean that past errors are not necessarily fatal to the cause of current leadership and even national greatness.

Judah's greatness lies in his willingness to assume the burden of his actions and words and to attempt to rectify past wrongdoings. We see that in his reaction to the judgment of Tamar, where he vindicates her at his own expense and shame. We see that in his defense of Benjamin and his willingness to allow himself to become a slave in order to save his brother. He had vouched for him and personally guaranteed to return him to his father.

Leadership is taking responsibility and owning up to commitments and situations that are difficult and taxing but inescapable. That becomes the true test of leadership and that is what defines Judah as the leader of the brothers and eventually the leader of Israel through all of its generations. ©2017 *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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)*

#### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

### **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**I**n this week's reading, Yosef (Joseph) reveals himself to his brothers with the simple words "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?" (Genesis 45:3)

Commentators point out a degree of harshness in Yosef's words. Keli Yakar (Rabbi Ephraim of Luntshitz, 16c.), for example, states that, although Yosef proclaimed I am Yosef, he failed to include the words, "your brother."

Keli Yakar adds that the brothers also sense that Yosef's words "is my father still alive?" contain a

rebuke. Yosef refers to Yaacov (Jacob) as his father, not as the father of his brothers. He purposely chooses these words to drive home to his brothers, that by selling Yosef, they did not show concern for their father—it was, therefore, as if Yaacov was not the father of his brothers.

The omission of the words “your brother” and the portrayal of Yaacov as Yosef’s father alone startled his siblings. In the words of the Torah “and his brothers could not answer him, for they were frightened by his presence.” (Genesis 45:3)

In the very next sentence, however, Yosef softens his words. (Genesis 45:4) There, he repeats, “I am Yosef,” but this time as Keli Yakar notes, he deliberately adds the words “your brother.” The healing process seems to have started.

The healing seems to reach another level when Yosef tells his brothers that they should not be upset at having sold him. G-d had a deeper plan for Yosef to save Egypt and the world from famine. In other words, from the evil of the sale, good had come. (Genesis 45:5-7) As the Yiddish expression teaches, a mensch tracht, un Gut lacht, a person thinks and G-d laughs.

Yosef concludes this section by strengthening his comments with the words “and now, it was not you that sent me here, but G-d.” (Genesis 45:8) Hence, Yosef seems to take a middle path. He’s part conciliatory and part harsh; conciliatory in that he assures his brothers that it was all for the good, and harsh in that the good did not come from them, but from G-d.

As Rabbi Zvi Dov Kanotopsky, in his wonderful work, “Night of Watching” writes: “Yosef feels duty-bound to reply that all they have contributed is a transgression. They are not the senders, but the sellers. This transgression may not call for despair [as the outcome was good]...but it does call for repentance.”

Having been separated from his brothers for twenty two years, the rendezvous of Yosef and his brothers contains different elements. Much like any dispute between siblings, the first words uttered by the aggrieved party is laced with contradictions—indicating that the healing process does not occur in an instant, it takes time and patience. ©2017 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 KALMAN PACKOUZ**

## Shabbat Shalom Weekly

**T**he Torah states: "Then Judah approached him (Joseph) and said, 'If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears' " (Gen. 44:18). What did Judah intend to do?

Judah indicated that he wished to speak very

softly, virtually whispering "a word in my lord's ears." What was the purpose of that? Furthermore, why does the Torah bother to tell something that does not appear significant?

The Torah is coming to teach a lesson in communications: If what you have to say really has merit, speaking softly and gently will enable you to be heard. Shouting is a giveaway that your argument is weak; the other person will tune you out and just think of his rebuttal. King Solomon says, "The gentle words of the wise are heard above the shouts of a king over fools" (Ecclesiastes 9:17). A soft voice can actually drown out a shout.

Judah believed that his argument for the release of Benjamin was very convincing. In order to impress Joseph that what he was about to say was valid, Judah said, "I am going to say it to you softly."

*Dvar Torah from Twerski on Chumash by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. ©2017 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*

**RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER**

## Weekly Dvar

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

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

Additionally, it was important for the brothers themselves to be able to get past their earlier pettiness by proving to themselves that they could speak of Yosef's prestige and not feel bitter, just as they were happy and didn't feel jealous when Binyamin received

more than they did. Yosef knew that they might still suspect themselves of jealousy with regard to him, and this way he enabled them to see that they had indeed overcome the obstacle and were better people than before. ©2017 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

### ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

## Flattery

*Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

In this week's portion, Yehudah confronts Joseph with the sharp words, "For you are like Pharaoh", whose hidden meaning our sages explain; just as Pharaoh decrees and does not execute so you do as well. With this statement Yehudah fulfilled the Mitzvah of "Thou shalt not bring guilt upon the land" ("Bamidbar35;33"). Thus one is not permitted to flatter a killer citing his good points or his strengths or his family. In our case, since Joseph had the power to execute a person at will, similar to Pharaoh, Yehudah could have chosen the path of flattery but instead uttered the truth.

We are commanded not to flatter a person to their face even if they act properly, and even not in their presence if these qualities and words are untrue. This was the sin of our sages quoted in the Talmud. Agrippas whose lineage was questionable (he was a non-Jew) was the king of Israel. When reading from the Torah on Succot he cried when reaching the words "Thou shalt not place over you a foreign man who is not your brother" (Devarim 17;15). In response our sages flattered him and said "Do not fear for you are our brother". Because of this they were punished, for no one has the right to flatter a person if their words are not true for people will rely on these words and ultimately this can harm many people.

However, one is permitted to flatter another if it is a question of saving lives ("Pikuach Nefesh"), or to promote peace ("Darkei Shalom") even though he might not be telling the entire truth ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

### HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

## Bais Hamussar

When Yosef revealed himself to his brothers they were dumbstruck. The Torah describes the ensuing exchange: "Yosef said to his brother's, 'Please come close to me' and they came close. And he said, 'I am Yosef your brother whom you sold into Egypt'" (Bereishis 45:4). Rashi explains that when Yosef saw his brothers shrinking away from him, he was worried that they felt embarrassed. Therefore, he spoke to them in a gentle manner and entreated them to draw near to him.

If Yosef was truly looking to make the encounter more pleasant, why did he continue speaking so brusquely and tell them to their faces, "I am Yosef whom you sold into Egypt"? Why bring up their misdeed at the time of appeasement?

Rav Wolbe cites the answer given by the Alter of Kelm, who enlightens us with a timely message. At some point, Yosef was going to have to make mention about what had occurred. Hence, he preferred to immediately say everything that needed to be said, so that they would be able to move on and achieve true reconciliation. Had he kept his feelings bottled up inside, there would be a constant internal barrier between him and his brothers.

In people's relationships with family members and friends, many times there are certain behaviors that irk a person to the degree that it jeopardizes the relationship. If in truth it is something trivial, then one should work on himself instead of trying to change his friend. However, if the friction was caused because the person was wronged, then it is crucial not to bottle up the feelings inside himself. Not only does such behavior not accomplish the desired result, it can also cause the bottled up feelings to explode at a later date making the possibility for a continued good relationship much harder. After receiving guidance on how to broach the topic, one should take the initiative and discuss the matter. It might not be easy, but it is short term pain for long term gain!

After being informed that his son Yosef was still alive, Yaakov packed his bags and set off toward Mitzrayim. While still on the way, the Torah tells us, "He sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen" (ibid. 46:28). Rashi cites the Medrash which explains that he sent Yehuda to open a Beis HaTalmud, so that it would be ready upon their arrival.

Rav Wolbe points out that Yaakov obviously felt that they could not enter Mitzrayim unless there already was a Beis Medrash in working order. Why did Yaakov feel so strongly about this, to the point that he would not set foot into a country without a Yeshiva?

When the Shevatim were all in Eretz Canaan, they were living in familiar territory. Yaakov was the Patriarch of the Jewish tribe and it was relatively easy for them to maintain their own identity. They were now about to enter a foreign land and their Jewish identity would be put in jeopardy. A person's surroundings have the ability to affect a person and blur his identity. So what does a Jew in galus do?

He makes sure that there is a Yeshiva nearby.

Throughout the generations, the Yeshiva has been more than just a school designated for learning Gemara. It is the place which protects the identity of the Jewish People. Every Yeshiva is a link in the chain which spans millennia, back to Matan Torah and our forefathers (and from them back to Shem and Ever, Noach and Adam). The Yeshivos and Kollelim are the nuclei of the Jewish Nation, and creating a connection to these places is in effect creating a connection with Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov! ©2017 Rav S. Wolbe z"l and The AishDas Society

RABBI DOV KRAMER

## Taking a Closer Look

"**A**nd all of the money from the Lands of Egypt and Canaan was finished, and all of Egypt came to Yosef, saying, 'give us bread, for why should we die before you, since there is no more money.'" (Beraishis 47:15) With Canaan and Egypt being in the same predicament, we wouldn't have expected the request to come only from the Egyptians. And, just as we are only told about the Egyptians asking for more food, it is only the cattle and then the land of the Egyptians that are mentioned as subsequent payments. How did those from Canaan pay for additional sustenance? We don't find that Canaan became a province of Egypt, so ownership of the property must have remained the same.

At the point that the Egyptians had to give up their land in order to get more grain from Yosef, how did the others procure more for themselves? The Radak says that the Canaanites went to other lands (not Egypt) for more food. While this may explain why they didn't ask Yosef for more when the Egyptians did, we still don't know how they paid for the food from those other lands.

The Netziv says that the famine affected Egypt more than Canaan. When the Nile didn't rise, absolutely nothing grew in Egypt. In Canaan, however, the lack of rainfall only prevented the crops of grain from growing. Other vegetation was able to grow, allowing its inhabitants to survive on the vegetables and grass that would normally be given to the livestock. When they had money, they went down to Egypt to purchase grain, and were able to eat normally. When the money ran out, though, they were forced to subsist on whatever the land produced. Meanwhile, in Egypt, where there was no other option, the inhabitants had to give anything and everything they had in order to purchase the only food available—the grain that Yosef had stored. (This explains how Ya'akov was able to put together a present for the viceroy of Egypt during the famine (43:11), and why it would have been appreciated— as none of those things were available in Egypt.)

However, the argument that Yehuda used to persuade Ya'akov to let Binyamin go with them to Egypt was that if they don't go down to buy more food they would all die (43:8). Rashi spells it out more clearly, explaining that Ya'akov was afraid that Binyamin might die, but if they didn't go they would all definitely die. This indicates that they could not have survived solely on what the land in Canaan was producing. Otherwise, they wouldn't have died even if they had not gone down to buy more grain. And Ya'akov wouldn't have put Binyamin's life at risk just to ensure the continuation of gourmet (at least by famine standards) meals.

It would seem, then, that the reason the Egyptians had to give up more than the Canaanites

was tied to their level of consumption. Because the Egyptians consumed more grain, their money ran out faster. The Canaanites, on the other hand, who were able to survive on less grain, spent less to purchase grain, and their money lasted till the end of the famine (at which point it, too, was gone).

The Ramban (47:15) explains that the Egyptians mentioned the situation in Canaan to Yosef in order to show that there was no reason to hold back from giving them grain, as he wouldn't make any more money from Canaan by doing so. This would be true whether the money in Canaan had already run out or if the amount they had left (and could therefore purchase grain with) would not cover all of the grain left in Yosef's warehouses.

There are several possible reasons why the Egyptians would have consumed more than the Canaanites, thus depleting their cash quicker:

(1) If, as the Netziv says, there were things that grew in Canaan, the Canaanites could supplement their mostly-grain meals with side dishes that were locally produced. They may not have been able to survive without the grain, but it allowed them to stretch the grain they had, further.

(2) Yosef personally handled each sale of grain so that when his brothers came down he would deal directly with them. He also asked each buyer how many people the grain was being purchased for, and sold them precisely what they needed (no more and no less). The Abarbanel says that Yosef only dealt directly with those coming from outside of Egypt (as that's where his brothers were coming from), and appointed others to sell grain to the Egyptians. If so, and we assume that Yosef's appointees were not as scrupulous about selling only the amount of grain needed for the family, we can easily see how the Egyptians were purchasing more grain per person than the Canaanites were.

(3) When explaining why the Egyptians' money ran out so quickly (despite having seven years of plenty), the Abarbanel says that the Egyptians were so confident that the famine would be over quickly that they sold most of their excess grain to foreigners. This not only necessitated the Egyptians having to buy grain for themselves (as well as having caused a drop in the initial market price), but it may have prevented them from conserving. While those in Canaan ate sparingly during the famine, the over-confident Egyptians ate normally, assuming that the famine would end before the supply of grain (and their money) would run out.

(4) The warehouses, for the Egyptians, were local. Therefore, not only was there an ample supply of grain, but it was not difficult to get to. Whereas in Canaan they knew that when the grain ran out they would have to take a long journey in order to restock, the Egyptians could just go to their corner grain warehouse. This not only led to additional conservation

by the Canaanites, but probably also caused the Egyptians to eat more than was absolutely necessary.

These factors (and possibly others) combined to raise the per capita consumption of the Egyptians, while lowering that of the Canaanites. This allowed the money in Canaan to last longer than the money in Egypt, which in turn allowed the Canaanites to spend only their money, while the Egyptians paid with their money, their animals and their property. ©2002 Rabbi D. Kramer

### **RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

## **All in a Day's Work**

**R**evenge. Though the Torah warns us against acting on our emotions, it's hard to control the desire. In fact, a dogma of modern society preaches to us not to get mad, rather to get even.

But Yoseph discloses his real identity in this week's portion, and despite a 22-year backdrop filled with excuses for anger, revenge, and retribution, he stays calm and fulfilled. Surely, we should expect to find harsh words of criticism if not acts of payback. But we don't. After Yoseph reveals his identity, and the brothers are shocked, rather than chastising his brothers, Yoseph appeases them! "Come close to me if you please, and they came close." And he said, "I am Joseph your brother-it is me whom you sold into Egypt. And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you"(Genesis 45:4-5). He explains to them that the entire scenario was not even their doing but part of a Divine plan to contend with the world-hunger. "Thus Hashem has sent me ahead of you to insure your survival in the land and to sustain you for a momentous deliverance. And now-it was not you who sent me here, but G-d; He has made me father to Pharaoh, master of his entire household, and ruler throughout the entire land of Egypt" (ibid v6-7). What type of man has the capacity not only to ignore horrible injustice totally, but to revel in it, saying that it was all meant to be, without the slightest display of bitterness or animosity? It takes an unique attitude about life.

Joel Mandel and Julius Rosenzweig have a large electrical supply house in Long Island City, NY. Their vast warehouse occupies over a million cubic feet of space containing thousands of different electrical components, from transformers as large as the average-size garage to tiny cathodes that could dance on the head of a pin.

It was a couple of years ago when some electrical doo-dad, that seemed to be a vital organ of one of my children's battery-operated what-nots, went on the blink. With zero electrical know-how, I decided to bring the component to my friends at Globe Electrical Supply and maybe they could find me a replacement. Weaving my way through a labyrinth of shelves, boxes, and drawers, I climbed some metal steps and made my way to the old office that appeared out of a 1950s Hollywood set. An old wooden desk was the pedestal for a dusty computer that probably strained harder than their human principals to maintain the vast inventory. I showed the part to Joel, who looked at the tiny part and smiled. He called over one of the workers, "Warren," he said, "please get the rabbi a..." I couldn't make out the exact name, but it sounded like flux-capacitor, though I highly doubt that my kid's toy was dying for lack of a lack of a flux-capacitor! Like a Tomahawk missile directed toward a predestined mark, Warren took the injured electrical component, weaved through the myriad rooms, the barrage of boxes, and an almost unlimited array of electrical paraphernalia.

Homing in on the exact location, Warren scaled a ladder that looked as if it could have been used to wash the windows of a Manhattan skyscraper, and about 30 feet off the ground, with amazing agility and precise guidance, he reached for his target-a small cardboard box. Its edges were yellowed with age, but I knew it had not been touched in five years. He placed his hand into the box and plucked out a component, which exactly matched my broken one.

As if he had rehearsed this scene from the day he started working, he held the component between his thumb and forefinger, then smiled, opened the human vise, letting the piece drop into my palm. "Here's the sucker!"

Stunned at both the accuracy and speed of the retrieval, I reacted as if I had just seen a minor miracle. "Warren!" I exclaimed, "how'd you do that?"

"Do what?" he asked with a shrug.

"Do what?" I repeated with an air of incredulity.

"You just found a microscopic part hidden like a needle in all the hay in Kansas! And you knew exactly where it was."

Warren just shrugged. "I didn't do nothin' special. That's my job!"

When a person understands his mission, no portion of its fulfillment merits undue emotion. In Pirkei Avos, 2:9 Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai tells us, "If you have learned much Torah, do not pride yourself in it, for this is the purpose for which you were created." If a person thinks "that's my job" about his every good deed, if his mission is clearly mapped in front of him, then all obstacles become insignificant pittance, easily overcome and able to be ignored because after all, they are in fact all in a day's work. ©2001 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org



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