

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV LERNER

Worth Fighting For

In the first verses of this week's Parsha we confront a scene striking for its subtlety. Last week, Joseph, with his identity still masked from his brothers, decrees Benjamin's eternal servitude; the remaining siblings can return home, but Benjamin must stay. Our scene opens with Judah stepping forward and saying as follows:

בִּי אֲדֹנָי, יְדָבֶר-נָא עִבְדְּךָ דָּבָר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנָי, וְאַל-יִחַר אַפְּךָ בְּעַבְדְּךָ, כִּי כְמוֹךָ, כָּפַרְעֹה.

Please my Lord, let your servant say a word in my Lord's ears, do not flare your anger against your servant, for you are like a Pharaoh.

Judah, calm and composed, asks to whisper into the ear of Egypt's Viceroy. Let us imagine for a moment Judah's mental state: the man who, years ago, rid himself of that unrelenting dreamer, having organised Joseph's sale, must have spent the past two decades drowning in remorse. Joseph's absence meant less irritation and less aggravation, but a lead weight must have pulled hard on his conscience. Each day, Judah had to witness his father's grief, see the soul drained from him, the sparkle in his eye absent, as Jacob sat as a shell of his former self. The man who had grown up with a murderous twin, had his daughter abducted and abused, tricked in love, attacked at night, limped his way through life with only one joy, Joseph; and Judah had taken that from him. For over twenty long years, Judah had to watch Jacob wither under heartache, he had to watch his spirit shrivel into shadow.

And now, Benjamin—the child who has restored a fraction of Jacob's joy—is threatened by the Egyptian Empire. Can we not imagine the sudden panic and fear, the waves of dread washing over Judah's now fragile mind—How can this be? What can I tell my father? What can I do? At last, Judah can redeem his blunder; he has a chance to spare his father grief, to stand up to injustice and oppression, to the ruthlessness of cruel power. Yet, as we read, Judah is calm and composed; he simply whispers. With his pulse rushing, his mind racing, Judah's diplomacy stands for us as a model of self-control and restraint.

But is that it? What if the viceroy had dismissed him? Would Judah have simply meandered home, giving Jacob the bad report?

If we turn to the pages of our Sages, we see that they saw beneath the text an underworld of passion.

מיד כעס יהודה ושאג בקול גדול והלך קולו די מאות פרסה... שני שילטונין זולגות דם... וחמשה לבושים היה לובש, נימה אחת היתה לו בלבו כיון שהיה כועס קורע את כולם (בי"ר צג:ז)

In the *Midrashic* imagination there was far more than a mere whisper; there was sound and fury. Judah's essence is exposed and raw; he lets out a resounding shriek, his eyes bleed, his hair bursts through his clothing—he cannot contain the intensity of feeling. Judah is driven by his fervour to protect his family.

Where did our Sages see this energy and anger? What clue or hint lies in the text toward such a dramatic depiction? Perhaps it lies in a particular repetition; the short speech that Judah whispers to the Egyptian Viceroy contains the word 'אב'—'father' 14 times. It is clear that Judah suspects Joseph's identity and uses linguistic lunges at his soft spot, alluding to the man he missed most; father, father, father, father, father... Judah knew what the Russian Jewish writer Isaac Babel taught us not 80 years ago when he wrote, "No iron spike pierces a human heart as icily as a period in the right place." Beneath Judah's whisper lay a whirlwind of conviction; beneath his perfect calm, his complete equanimity, lay a fiery passion and fervour to protect his family.

Perhaps the text leaves this ambiguity for our sages to unveil precisely because it means to teach us the necessity of both layers. We need calm; to communicate and to convey we need equanimity, but buttressing that composure must be a heartfelt passion, and energetic and enthusiastic conviction. It is this nuance that John Stuart Mill promotes when he said that "War is an ugly thing, but uglier still is thinking there is nothing worth fighting for."

At RIETS we are trained in both these spheres. As a student, I see myself and my peers tutored in public speaking, pulpit politics, professional development; we are polished by the best in the profession. At the same time we are instilled with a conviction and confidence in our cause—to make



Take Control of
YOUR MONEY!
tinyurl.com/fitness5

...probably the best personal
finance training course I've seen! - CPA

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL
AND THE WEB AT WWW.AISHDAS.ORG/TA.
FOR MORE INFO EMAIL YITZW1@GMAIL.COM**

The material presented in this publication was collected from email subscriptions, computer archives and various websites. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is an independent publication, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any synagogue or organization.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
(973) 277-9062 OR EMAIL YITZW1@GMAIL.COM**

synagogues and study halls islands of hope—we are driven by models of excellence to embody passion for our spiritual inheritance.

We know that war is an ugly thing, that we must navigate the waters of the Rabbinate with care, with caution, and with compassion. And at the same time we know that what we have is worth fighting for. ©2012 Rabbi D. Lerner. Rabbi Lerner is pursuing a doctorate degree at University of Chicago and is currently the Assistant Rabbi at Congregation KINS of West Rogers Park.

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The phrase "Jewish thinker" may mean two very different things. It may mean a thinker who just happens to be Jewish by birth or descent -- a Jewish physicist, for example -- or it may refer to someone who has contributed specifically to Jewish thought: like Judah Halevi or Maimonides.

The interesting question is: is there a third kind of Jewish thinker, one who contributes to the universe of knowledge, but does so in a recognisably Jewish way? The answer to this is never straightforward, yet we instinctively feel that there is such a thing. To give an analogy: there is often something recognisably Jewish about a certain kind of humour. Ruth Wisse has interesting things to say about it in her book, *No Joke*. So does Peter Berger in his *Redeeming Laughter*. Humour is universal, but it speaks in different accents in different cultures.

I believe that something similar applies to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. So many of the early practitioners of psychoanalysis, with the marked exception of Jung, were Jewish that it became known in Nazi Germany as the "Jewish science." I have argued -- though my views on this have been challenged -- to the contrary, that by taking the Greek myth of Oedipus as one of his key models, Freud developed a tragic view of the human condition that is more Hellenistic than Jewish. (There were undeniably Jewish elements in Freud's work, most notably the fact that though he himself called psychoanalysis the "speaking cure," it is in fact the "listening cure," and listening is a key feature of Jewish spirituality.)

By contrast, three of the most significant post-

war psychotherapists were not merely Jewish by birth but profoundly Jewish in their approach to the human soul. Viktor Frankl, a survivor of Auschwitz, developed on the basis of his experiences there an approach he called Logotherapy, based on "man's search for meaning." Though the Nazis took away almost every vestige of humanity from those they consigned to the death factories, Frankl argued that there was one thing they could never take away from their prisoners: the freedom to decide how to respond.

Aaron T. Beck was one of the founders of what is widely regarded as the most effective forms of psychotherapy: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Among patients suffering from depression, he found that their feelings were often linked to highly negative thoughts about themselves, the world and the future. By getting them to think more realistically, he found that their mood tended to improve.

Martin Seligman is the founder of Positive Psychology, which aims not just to treat depression but actively to promote what he calls "authentic happiness" and "learned optimism." Depression, Seligman argued, is often linked to pessimism, which comes from interpreting events in a particular kind of way that he calls "learned helplessness". Pessimists tend to see misfortune as permanent ("It's always like this"), personal ("It's my fault") and pervasive ("I always get things wrong"). This leaves them feeling that the bad they suffer is inevitable and beyond their control. Optimists look at things differently. For them, negative events are temporary, the result of outside factors, and exceptions rather than the rule. So, within limits, you can unlearn pessimism, and the result is greater happiness, health and success. (Seligman admits that there are things about us that we can't change, but there is much about us that we can.)

What links all three thinkers is their belief that (1) there is always more than one possible interpretation of what happens to us, (2) we can choose between different interpretations and (3) the way we think shapes the way we feel. This gives all three a marked resemblance to a particular kind of Jewish thought, namely Chabad Chassidut, as developed by the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady (1745-1812). The word Chabad stands for the initial letters of the three intellectual virtues, *chokhmah*, *binah* and *da'at*, "wisdom, understanding and knowledge," which influence the more emotional attributes of *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferet*, "kindness, self-restraint and beauty or emotional balance." Unlike the other Chassidic movements, which emphasised the emotional life, Chabad Chassidism focused on the power of the intellect to shape emotion. It was, in its way, an anticipation of cognitive behavioural therapy.

Its origins, however, lie far earlier. Last week I argued that Joseph was the first economist. This week I want to suggest that he was the first cognitive therapist.

He was the first to understand the concept of reframing, that is, seeing the negative events of his life in a new way, thereby liberating himself from depression and learned helplessness.

The moment at which he does so comes when, moved by Judah's passionate plea to let Benjamin return home to their father Jacob, he finally reveals himself to his brothers:

"I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God 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 God."

Note what Joseph is doing here. He is reframing events so that the brothers will not have to live under an unbearable burden of guilt for having sold Joseph as a slave and deceived their father, causing him years of undiminished grief. But he is only able to do so for them because he has already done so for himself. When it happened, we cannot be sure. Was Joseph aware, all along, that the many blows of misfortune he suffered were all part of a divine plan, or did he only realise this when he was taken from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and then made Viceroy of Egypt?

The text is silent on this point, but it is suggestive. More than any other character in the Torah, Joseph attributes all his achievements to God. This allows him to do what, in secular terms, Frankl, Beck and Seligman would all have advised him to do if he had been one of their patients: think of a mission he was being called on to fulfill (Frankl), reinterpret misfortune as possibility (Beck) and see the positive elements of his situation (Seligman). Not only was Joseph freed from a physical prison; he freed himself from an emotional prison, namely resentment toward his brothers. He now saw his life not in terms of a family drama of sibling rivalry, but as part of a larger movement of history as shaped by Divine providence.

That is what makes me think that the work of Frankl, Beck and Seligman is Jewish in a way that Freudian psychoanalysis is not. At the heart of Judaism is the idea of human freedom. We are not prisoners of events but active shapers of them. To be sure, we may be influenced by unconscious drives, as Freud thought, but we can rise above them by "habits of the heart" that hone and refine our personality.

Joseph's life shows that we can defeat tragedy by our ability to see our life not just as a sequence of unfair events inflicted on us by others, but also as a series of divinely intended moves, each of which brings us closer to a situation in which we can do what God

wants us to do.

We can't all be Joseph, but thanks to R. Shneur Zalman of Liady in spiritual terms, and to Frankl, Beck and Seligman in secular ones, we can learn what it is to change the way we feel by changing the way we think, and the best way of doing so is to ask, "What does this bad experience enable me to do that I could not have done otherwise?" That can be life-transforming. *Covenant and Conversation 5778 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them unto him together with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hand" [Ezekiel 37:19].

Who is the most authentic claimant to leadership of the Jewish People: Judah or Joseph? The answer to this question has far-reaching implications for the future of the Jewish People, and I believe that we can find an answer in our Torah portion, Vayigash, where the palpable tension between Judah and Joseph flares up in ways that continue until today.

Can this clash be resolved? Yes, but each of them will have to change in ways unique to their divergent life paths, with each discovering the rare trait of humility.

Joseph first appears as an arrogant youth, his dreams leading him to see himself as lord over his brothers, their sheaves of wheat bowing down to his; then the sun, the moon and the stars doing the same.

To his brothers, Joseph is an elitist loner. They are not ready to accept him for what he is, a man of many colors, of manifold visions with cosmopolitan and universal dreams. Joseph accepts his brothers' judgement. He is, in fact, different, a seeker after the novel and dynamic Egyptian occupation of agriculture; a citizen of the world more than a lover of Zion. When in Egypt, he easily accepts the Egyptian tongue, answering to an Egyptian name (Tzafenat-Pane'ah), and wears Egyptian garb. He has outgrown his parochial family: not only are they not interested in him, he is not interested in them!

In contrast, as Joseph rises to leadership in Egypt, Judah stumbles, and becomes humbled in the process. He suffers the tragic losses of two sons to early deaths, and estrangement from his brothers, who faulted his leadership after the incident of the sale of Joseph into slavery.

Upon hitting rock bottom, Judah experiences a remarkable turnaround. Both with regard to acknowledging the righteousness of his daughter-in-law, Tamar [Gen. 38:26], and in his dramatic offer to

Jacob to serve as a guarantor for Benjamin's safety [ibid., 43:8-9], Judah demonstrates authentic humility and repentance, which catapults him to becoming "first among equals" in the family. By taking responsibility for Benjamin, he does what he did not do on behalf of Joseph!

Moreover, he is now well-conditioned for familial leadership, which crescendos with his soliloquy at the beginning of Parshat Vayigash.

As a result of Judah's speech, even Joseph is forced to recognize Judah's superiority. It is Judah who has apparently recognized the true identity of the Grand Vizier. If Judah had not understood that he was standing and pleading before Joseph, he never would have raised the tragic imagery of a disconsolate father bereft of his favorite son, the first child of his most beloved wife. The only one who would have been moved by such a plea would be Joseph himself!

And this moment of Joseph's understanding is also the moment of his repentance. He now sees the master plan, the hidden Divine Hand in all that has transpired. The brothers must come to Egypt not to serve him – Joseph – but rather to fulfill the vision of Abraham at the Covenant between the Pieces [Gen. 15]: to bring blessings to all the families of the earth, to teach even Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, the true majesty of the King of Kings, the Master of the Universe.

Joseph is ready to subjugate his talents in the fields of technology, administration and politics to Judah's Torah and tradition. Joseph – now able to surrender his dream of lordship over the brothers – requests that his remains be eventually brought to Israel, recognizing that the destiny of the family is ultimately in our eternal familial and national homeland. Joseph is now ready to reunite the family under the majesty of Judah.

Generations later, Ezekiel, in a prophecy that appears in this portion's Haftarah, provides an ultimate rapprochement – nay, unity – between all of the tribes. "I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them unto him together with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hand" [37:19].

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel in the 20th Century, felt the footsteps of the Messiah and the nearness of redemption. He saw in Theodor Herzl, architect of the administrative and political characteristics of the Jewish State, the Messiah from the House of Joseph-Ephraim, the necessary forerunner to the ultimate redeemer. He eulogized Herzl as such upon his death, in his famous Encomium from Jerusalem.

Rabbi Kook anxiously awaited the coming of the Messiah from the House of David-Judah, who would give spiritual meaning and universal redemptive

significance to the "hands of Esau" that so successfully waged wars and forged an advanced nation-state phoenix-like, from the ashes of the Holocaust. May this vision become reality speedily and in our time! ©2017 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The statement of our father Jacob to the Pharaoh of Egypt that "my years of life have been few and most unpleasant" is most perplexing. We all know the well-known anecdote that one of the most disappointing things in life is to ask someone how he or she is and they actually tell you. One would've expected that Jacob would have answered the Pharaoh in a general, positive fashion.

Rashi interprets the answer of Jacob in the light of his deteriorated physical condition that he presented to the Pharaoh. He wanted Pharaoh to realize that the lines in his face were well-earned. He also wanted him to realize that the lives of even the most righteous of people and the holiest of families can also be troubled and difficult.

He was teaching the Pharaoh the great lesson that in this world good is its own reward and that it does not necessarily carry with it physical comfort and emotional serenity. He was telling the Pharaoh not to judge him or his family by the shortsighted yardstick of material success and lifelong leisure.

This was his explanation of the great Jewish lesson, 'that the race is neither to the swift nor success to those who deem themselves to be wise.' The Pharaoh is accustomed to immediate reward and benefit, to royal garments and gilded chariots. Jacob informs him that that this is a false measure of life and achievement. Though Jacob lived a stormy and often tragic life, it is he who blesses the Pharaoh for he, Jacob possesses the gift of the future and of immortality.

How sad it is if a person has to look back at one's lifetime and feel that somehow life cheated him or that he deserved better! The ability to deal with the vicissitudes of life, its downs as well as its ups, in the strength of belief that everything is from the hand of our Creator, has always been the great characteristic of the Jewish people.

Jacob can look back upon the life of turbulence, disappointments and sadness and yet see for himself and his progeny greatness and immortal memory. The Pharaoh must have realized that a blessing from this old broken Jewish stranger was of enormous value to him in Egypt. Often times in history it is the unlikely and seemingly downtrodden individual who holds the key to future developments and to the correct worldview of situations and conditions.

As long as Jacob lives there will no longer be a famine that will affect Egypt. The Pharaoh must have

undoubtedly realized the gift of this blessing to Egypt. But like many people who will receive blessings in this world, he seems not to be impressed sufficiently by the matter to change policies, attitudes or behavior.

But Jacob and his descendants will haunt Egyptian society for centuries until it finally will overwhelm it. This has been the lot and mission of Israel over its very long, troublesome but great history. ©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. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Our portion opens with Yehudah (Judah) standing before Yosef (Joseph). Through Yehudah's plea, the entire family of Ya'akov (Jacob) is kept intact. It is fitting that it is Yehudah, among all of the brothers, who is responsible for this large family reunion because he succeeded in bringing his smaller nuclear family together again.

Yehudah, earlier in the book of Genesis, is blessed with twins--born from Tamar. His twins fundamentally differ from the other set found in Genesis.

From the womb possibly the most famous set of twins, Ya'akov and Esav (Esau) struggle. Rivkah (Rebecca), their mother, is in fact told that their struggle is indicative of an ongoing battle they would be engaged in throughout their lives. In fact the words used in this prophecy, *verav ya-avod tzair* (Genesis 25:23) can either mean the older one (rav) will serve the younger one or that the younger one will be in great (rav) service of the older one. This difference reflects their endless battles, not only in their lives, but throughout their nations' histories.

When Yehudah's twins, Zerach and Peretz, are born to him and Tamar the picture differs. Zerach puts his hand out first. The midwife ties a scarlet string (shani) on his hand to indicate he was first. (Genesis 38:28) But the emergence of the hand does not constitute being born first. Rabbi David Silber beautifully points out that the word shani spelled with a shin, nun and yud can also be revocalized as sheni, meaning second. In other words through the midwife's action it becomes clearer that Zerach would be second; the eldest would be Peretz who would at the last moment spring forward from his mother's womb first. For the first time in Genesis, all children in the family find their true place.

This is in marked contrast to what had transpired until now. Of Adam, only Shet survives as Noah comes from him. From the children of Noah, Shem is selected, as Avraham (Abraham) is his descendant. It is Yitzchak (Isaac), not Yishmael, and it

is Ya'akov, not Esav who are chosen as patriarchs. Yehudah's case was the first in which neither of his children was cast aside. Both count. Conflicts within the family were resolved.

Rabbi Silber argues that Yehudah therefore knows the importance of bringing the entire family of Ya'akov together having done so with his inner family.

This in fact is the flow of Genesis. It moves from family fragmentation to family reconciliation. Only after Ya'akov embraces all of his children can the nation of Israel be born. The model of our nation is family and the cornerstone of family is that everyone counts, everyone can make a contribution.

In these difficult times, each of us, along with all of Am Yisrael, needs to desperately heed Yehudah's message of unity, togetherness and respect...the true message of family. ©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 DAVID S. LEVIN

Emotional Control

In Parashat Vayigash we are reminded of the prophecy given to Avraham at the Brit Bein HaBetarim in Parashat Lech L'cha. Avraham was told that his children would be strangers in a strange land and they would eventually be enslaved by this nation. Here we find that the entire Jewish people of the time moved en masse to Mitzrayim. The Torah is careful not only to list all of the names of those who went to Mitzrayim but also to show their genealogy. Thus we have the birth of Yocheved just prior to their entry into Mitzrayim to complete the seventy souls that came with Ya'akov into Mitzrayim. There are two meetings that take place as Ya'akov and the B'nei Yisrael are entering the borders of the country. Ya'akov and Yosef meet after their prolonged separation and Ya'akov and Par'oh meet as the B'nei Yisrael approach Egypt. Ya'akov understands that entering the land of Egypt will be the beginning of the long exile in Avraham's prophecy. Each meeting has its own significance. For our purposes we will deal only with the meeting between Ya'akov and Yosef.

Yosef and Ya'akov (Israel) had not seen each other from the time that Yosef went in search of his brothers at his father's request, a period of twenty-two years. (This was the same amount of time that Ya'akov was in forced exile from his father, Yitzchak.) "And Yosef harnessed his chariot and went up to meet Israel, his father, to Goshen, and he appeared to him and he fell on his neck and he wept on his neck excessively." There is a machloket between Rashi and the Ramban as to who is acting in the two verbs "and he fell" and "he cried". Rashi explains that Yosef cried on his father's neck whereas Ya'akov was preoccupied with saying the Sh'ma (Hear, O Israel). The Pardes Yosef

explains that when Ya'akov saw Yosef he was overwhelmed by love and decided to channel that love to Hashem.

The Aznayim L'Torah gives a unique interpretation of this meeting. Ya'akov was very concerned about entering the evil land of Mitzrayim. He was worried that the evil of Mitzrayim would influence him and his children since this was the land of the Yetzer Hara, the evil inclination. When Man is confronted by the Yetzer Hara he prepares in three ways: (1) he involves himself first in Torah study, (2) then he says the Sh'ma, and (3) and then he remembers the day on which he will die. Ya'akov prepared for this first confrontation by sending Yehudah ahead of the family to establish a yeshiva in Mitzrayim. This was to ensure that Torah study would not be interrupted. In his second preparation, Ya'akov said the Sh'ma. Ya'akov wanted to assure Hashem that he would not be influenced by the tum'ah, the uncleanness, of Egypt. Even though his emotions were overwhelming, Ya'akov did not wish to interrupt his thoughts until he had performed the third preparation, namely, to remember the day of his death. "And Yisrael said to Yosef, 'I can die this time after my having seen your face that you are still alive.'" Our commentators have expressed that the Avot were masters at controlling their emotions so that their actions cannot be judged in the same way in which we judge others. There were compelling reasons for Ya'akov's actions which he felt needed prioritizing.

HaRav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch believed that the crier had to have been Yosef because Ya'akov was no longer capable of tears. He had spent the last twenty-two years of his life crying constantly over the loss of his son. He led a life that was separated from everyone else because of the emotions that were surrounding him daily. He had no more tears to shed. Yosef had been too busy with his daily activities to allow emotions to control him. He did not have the time to reflect on the pain that he felt at his separation from his father. Only now when he saw his father in front of him was he able to give in to that emotion and cry profusely. His normal control over his emotions was unable to prevent this outburst.

The Ramban, however, felt that the Avot were subject to the same emotions as we are, and he explains that it was Ya'akov who fell on his son's neck and cried. Ya'akov had waited twenty-two years to see his son. Upon seeing Yosef, Ya'akov was so overcome with emotion that he wept profusely. The Ramban gives other reasons for his conclusions. Firstly, it would have been disrespectful for Yosef to cry on his father's shoulder. He quotes from the occasion on which Yosef brought his two sons to his ill father. In that incident, Yosef stands his sons before Ya'akov and he bows down before his father. Secondly, the word "excessively" does not indicate copiousness but instead

indicates that something is added to the previous phrase. The Ramban indicates that "excessively" implies that Ya'akov cried profusely now as he had cried profusely every day that he was separated from his son.

One must ask why our forefathers were so intent on controlling their emotions. Even though the Ramban insists that the forefathers were subject to the same emotions that we each encounter, he would still agree that it was their practice to not be ruled by those emotions. Our forefathers were keenly aware of their relationship with Hashem and that others would emulate their responses to those emotions. That is why Ya'akov expressed disappointment with Shimon and Levi who destroyed the people of Shechem in their justifiable anger. Ya'akov understood that Hashem would be slow-to-anger and this placed a burden on Man to control his anger under these same trying circumstances. Shechem could not control his emotion of love which led him to rape and kidnap Dinah. Ya'akov understood that Man is constantly tested against his emotions and only by remembering what Hashem demands of us can we gain control over those emotions.

This meeting between Ya'akov and Yosef indicates the depth to which our forefathers were aware at all times of their special relationship with Hashem. They understood where every test originated and to Whom they owed their love and attention. Ya'akov saw his suffering and his joy as both coming from Hashem with love. He understood that a life which is dedicated to the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvot in serving Hashem is the only kind of life which can be called living. Even when we must work to provide for ourselves and our families, we must also study Torah and mitzvot. It is only through that study that we can learn to direct our emotions properly and to control our actions so as not to be ruled by our emotions. When we control our emotions rather than allow them to control us, we begin to emulate our forefathers and Hashem. May our daily study of Torah enable us to reach this level of behavior. ©2017 Rabbi D.S. Levin

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. ©2017 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA SICHOT OF HARAV MOSHEH LICHTENSTEIN

Adapted by Binyamin Fraenkel

Translated by Kaeren Fish

The Torah introduces the description of Yaakov's emotional descent to Egypt by noting a seemingly superfluous detail: "And he sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef, to show the way before him to Goshen, and they came to the land of Goshen." (Bereishit 46:28)

Rashi cites the midrash: "A midrash aggada teaches: To show the way -- to establish a place of learning, that instruction might emerge from there."

According to the midrash, the Torah is describing how, as he heads for Goshen, Yaakov makes immediate plans to open a "kollel," a beit midrash, so as to preserve the Jewish spark in the midst of the impurity of Egypt, and he appoints Yehuda as the "Rosh Yeshiva."

We can only imagine the tears in Yosef's eyes, the crack in his voice, and his feeling of profound disappointment upon hearing that Yehuda, rather than he himself, will head Yaakov's yeshiva. What does Yehuda know about preserving a Jewish spark in the heart of Egypt and its impurity? Has Yosef himself not succeeded in achieving honor and respect for the Hebrews right there in Egypt, and specifically at such a time of crisis?!

More than once, Yosef's faith had been put to the test, and each time he stood firm and remains faithful to his tradition and his heritage. Potifar's wife tried to tempt him into a forbidden sexual liaison, but the image of Yaakov appeared to Yosef in the window and he fled rather than succumbing.

In interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Yosef repeated over and over that he was merely God's agent, rather than taking the credit himself, although he could presumably have advanced his personal ambitions by doing so. In addition, Yosef was not ashamed of his identity; he presented himself as a

Hebrew -- in contrast to many other figures, including Moshe.

Why, then, does Yaakov appoint Yehuda as the Rosh Yeshiva, rather than choosing the seemingly obvious candidate?

Let us imagine Yosef racing towards Yaakov in his private limousine, a splendid luxury vehicle driven by his personal chauffeur -- but still part of Pharaoh's royal fleet, and therefore adorned with a symbol of idolatry. Yosef is not troubled by the symbol; he is used to it and it no longer matters to him. But Yaakov feels a stab of pain at the sight of his son, ruler of Egypt, riding in a car bearing such a symbol.

It is reasonable to assume that Yosef tried, in his official capacity, to help the Egyptians during the harsh years of famine, but he nevertheless represents a tyrannical and avaricious regime: "And Yosef gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought. And Yosef brought the money to Pharaoh's house. And when money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all of Egypt came to Yosef and said, 'Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money fails.' And Yosef said, 'Give your cattle, and I will give you for your cattle, if money fails.' And they brought their cattle to Yosef, and Yosef gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the herds, and for the donkeys, and he fed them with bread in exchange for all their cattle for that year. When that year was ended, they came to him in the second year, and said to him, 'We will not hide from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also has our herds of cattle; there is nothing left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies and our lands. Why shall we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants to Pharaoh, and give us grain, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate.' And Yosef bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for Egypt sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them, so the land before Pharaoh's. And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of the borders of Egypt, to the other end." (Bereishit 47:14-26)

This shrewd strategy gives Pharaoh control over every piece of land in Egypt, over the cattle and property of the Egyptians, and over the people themselves. We can only imagine their bitter resentment -- which, of course, is directed towards Yosef, who is the interface representing Pharaoh's regime. Yosef's likely good intentions are of no interest to the people. He is stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Moreover, not only do Yosef's actions create a harsh reality for the simple people, but he awards a tax exemption specifically to the priests of idolatrous worship: "Only the land of the priests he did not

purchase, for a portion was assigned to the priests by Pharaoh, and they ate their portion which Pharaoh gave them; therefore, they did not sell their land." (Bereishit 47:22)

This rather dismal picture of Yosef the Hebrew, who subjugates the people and enslaves them to Pharaoh, on one hand, while showing favor to idolatrous priests on the other, casts a shadow over his good intentions and casts him into the mold of an Egyptian despot just like Pharaoh.

Yosef's mingling in society is not limited to the responsibilities and commitments of his political appointment. He is also married to the daughter of a priest: "And two sons were born to Yosef before the years of famine came, whom Osnat, daughter of Poti-Fera, priest of On, bore to him." (Bereishit 41:50)

Yosef the Hebrew, son of Yaakov, is a regular guest in the home of the leader of the priests of idolatry; he eats at his table, his children receive his teachings, they listen to pagan Egyptian pop music, watch the latest movies, and have pagan bedtime stories read to them. While Moshe, too, had a father-in-law who was a priest for idolatry, it would seem that in the case of Yosef the idolatrous influence was present within his own home.

Amidst the excitement of the reunion between Yosef and his brothers, he instructs them to describe his great status and power: "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'So says your son, Yosef: God has made me lord of all of Egypt; come down to me, do not delay.'" (Bereishit 45:9-10)

Yosef is certain that his words and the awe of his status will be a matter of great pride and satisfaction to his father; he is, after all, ruler over all of Egypt. However, Ramban suggests that Yaakov's reaction to Yosef's status was quite different: "It seems to me that Yisrael's eyes were already somewhat dim from age, and when Yosef arrived in the chariot of the second-to-the-king, wearing the turban in the manner of the kings of Egypt, he was not recognizable to his father, and even his brothers did not recognize him. For this reason the text notes that when his father finally perceived and recognized him, he fell upon his neck and wept over him further, as he had wept over him all the time up until now, when he had not seen him." (Ramban, Bereishit 46:29)

Yaakov, despite his age and his poor vision, sees deeply and understands the profound significance of lengthy processes. He notes the slight but significant changes in Yosef, and understands that despite Yosef's struggle to retain his identity and his integrity, he is not the same person that he once was. He is no longer the sweet boy studying Torah with great fervor in "cheder." He is a world-class businessman who wears a turban in the style of the kings of Egypt.

When Yosef brings his sons before Yaakov, he places Menashe, his firstborn, at Yaakov's right side,

but Yaakov chooses, for some reason, to cross his hands; he places his right hand on the head of Efraim, the younger son.

The midrashim describe Menashe as a successful "mover and shaker," while Efraim is a man of spiritual and moral stature. Yaakov hints to Yosef that while Yosef's greatness is indeed inspiring and wonderful, the center of Jewish life is not material action, but rather spiritual pursuits.

Life in the Diaspora entails unavoidable foreign influences. School vacations reflect Christian holidays, the day of rest is Sunday, and parties are held at workplaces to celebrate occasions that are of no significance to us. The greater the degree of our activity in the Diaspora, the deeper the foreign culture seeps within us, leaving a profound mark that might never be erased. Even in Israel this danger exists, but it is far more limited in scope.

We must be on our guard at all times to ensure that our lifestyles and perspectives are shaped and guided by Jewish culture and spirit, and not, heaven forfend, by foreign ways. (*This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat parashat Vayigash 5775 [2014].*)

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. Aggripas 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