

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The 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." (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

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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 realizes 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. © 2012 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The apparent hero and victor in the epic narrative of the saga of Yosef and his brothers that reaches its culmination in this week's parsha is certainly Yosef. His dreams and ambitions are fulfilled. His brothers and father have bowed down before him as the prophecy of his reams indicated. He takes no further revenge against his brothers. He houses them and Yaakov in security and prosperity in the land of Goshen and is assiduous in caring for all of their needs.

He certainly emerges from the entire bewildering and tragic events as a heroic and noble figure, still the beloved son of his father and the heir to the double portion birthright of the first-born. Yet, in terms of the long range view of Jewish history, Yosef is not the vehicle of Jewish survival.

His kingdom of the northern ten tribes of Israel is relatively short-lived and riddled with wicked kings and widespread idolatrous practice. The kingdom of Yosef is never restored and the remnants of the northern ten tribes are eventually absorbed into the kingdom and tribe of Judah.

Yosef's triumph is seen in Jewish history as being legitimate but essentially temporary. It is his brother Yehudah who emerges as the ultimate hero and guarantor of Jewish survival and as the true head of Yaakov's family. The Jewish people are called upon his name and it is through his descendants that legitimate royalty comes to Israel.

The future salvation of Israel and the messianic vision of full and complete redemption and a better world for all are assigned to the family and descendants of Yehudah. He is the ultimate and victor in the debate between Yosef and himself that this week's parsha highlights.

The obvious question that presents itself is why this should be. After all it is Yosef who is the righteous one, the one who resisted physical temptation and who persevered in his loyalty to the ideals of the patriarchs of Israel under the most trying and difficult of circumstances.

Yehuda on the other hand can be superficially judged and found wanting in his behavior regarding Tamar and in his leadership role in the sale of his brother as a slave. So why, in historical terms, is he the hero and savior of Israel while Yosef is not?

Though G-d's will, so to speak, in all of these matters remains hidden and inscrutable to us mere mortals, a glimmer of understanding can come to us from the words of Yaakov that will appear in next week's parsha. Yaakov blesses Yehudah for his ability

to rise from error and tragedy and continue forward. It is Yehudah's resilience that marks his character and behavior.

He redeems himself from the error of his treatment of Yosef by his unconditional and self-sacrificing defense of Binyamin. He admits his error in condemning Tamar and their children become the bearers of Jewish royalty. The secret of Jewish survival lies in Jewish renewal and resilience. It is the one national trait that outweighs all other factors in Jewish history. It certainly is the one most in demand in our current Jewish world today as well. © 2012 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 SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“For your servant took responsibility for the youth... Now let your servant remain as a servant instead of the youth [Benjamin] to my lord...” (Genesis 44: 32,33)

In his perfectly crafted and emotionally stirring speech before the "Grand Vizier" of Egypt, Judah manages to move his powerful "adversary" to the point of revealing who he really is and so repairing the fractured family of Jacob.

It is precisely this function - uniting the people of Israel - which is the most important criterion for the leader of the emerging nation, who will stand as prototype for King Messiah. After all, Israel will never be able to unite the world unless it first unites itself.

Unless we understand this crucial element of Jewish leadership, we will never understand why the patriarch Jacob sent his beloved son Joseph into the "lion's den" to seek "the welfare of his brothers." Although he had pronounced Joseph heir apparent by presenting him with the striped cloak of many colors - indeed, the very symbol of a single entity which combines and unites within itself many different hues, attitudes and ideas - Jacob was painfully aware of the deep divide within the family engendered by Joseph's arrogance and dreams of domination. Hence, Jacob sends Joseph as an agent (shaliah) "to look after the peace of your brothers" (Genesis 37:13, 14) - to unite them through his concern for their welfare.

In the very next verse, an anonymous passerby asks Joseph: "What are you searching for?" He responds, "It is my brothers [or brotherliness, sibling harmony] for whom I am searching." But alas, Joseph's agency (shlihut) is not sufficient to mend the break in the family.

The Talmudic sages teach us that "the agent of an individual is like the person on whose behalf he undertakes the mission" (Shulhan Aruch, Hoshen Mishpat, 183, 1), which means that he is also limited by

his "sender"; he cannot transcend the limitations of his sender. And since it was Jacob who set the stage for the division by so blatantly expressing his favoritism, Joseph's mission fails; the chosen brother becomes the cast-out brother, first in a pit and then in the exile of Egyptian slavery.

Now, let us turn to the most dominant and influential of the other brothers, Judah. Yes, he probably prevented Joseph's life from ending in a deadly, deserted pit, but he was ultimately directly responsible for Joseph's separation from the family; it was his idea to sell him into Egyptian serfdom.

This story continues with the subsequent deterioration of Judah, how he continues to move further and further away from brotherly love and unification. "And it happened at that time [after the sale] that Judah went down [and away] from his brothers..." (Gen. 38:1).

Judah takes a Canaanite woman to wife (against the Abrahamic command), with whom he fathers three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. Er marries Tamar, but dies without leaving progeny. When a man dies without leaving an heir, his brother marries the widow, providing her with financial security, and giving her a child who will bear the name and receive the inheritance of the deceased brother.

Onan, however, selfishly refuses to provide his brother with continuity, withholding his seed from her. When Onan also dies without progeny, Judah refuses to give Tamar his third son, Shelah, in levirate marriage, giving as his reason that Shelah is too young. Judah himself is now left without an heir, having raised sons who lack sibling responsibility. This is hardly the way to continue the Abrahamic covenant.

Tamar, anxious to continue Judah's family line and produce offspring for her deceased husbands, poses as a harlot, seduces Judah, and becomes impregnated by him. When the widowed Tamar is seen to be pregnant, she is about to be killed. Judah takes responsibility, declaring, "She is more righteous than I" - because she understood better than I sibling and familial responsibility.

Twin sons are born, one of whom, Perez, is the ancestor of Boaz who, together with Ruth, will be the grandparents of David, progenitor of the Messiah.

When Judah thought Tamar was a prostitute, he had given her a pledge of responsibility: his signet, his cloak and his staff (eravon, as in arev, co-signer). When she returned these to him, he finally recognized his familial responsibility to her, and to his family and to his continuity.

When Jacob is frightened of sending Benjamin to the Grand Vizier, a chastened Judah declares, "I shall personally be his guarantor," his arev (Gen. 43:9).

And when the Grand Vizier hears that Judah is ready to stand in as a slave instead of Benjamin in order to save his father the grief of losing yet another son of Rachel, he realizes how far Judah has come.

Familial unity can only be achieved when familial love demands mutual responsibility one for the other, each truly acting as his brother's keeper. Now Joseph can be revealed, ready for the family to heal and unite behind the one brother ready to bear co-signership responsibility for the welfare of each of his siblings.

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RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

This weeks Parsha, Vayigash, gives us an incredible glimpse into the depths of all facets of the Torah. The gemara Megilah teaches us that the 'truppe', the 'melody notes' upon which the tune of the laining is based, were passed down from Moshe on Sinai. The Vilna Gaon shows us just what can be learned from the names of these notes.

Just to first get our bearings straight, let's recall what occurred in last weeks parsha. Yosef had sent the brothers back home with food but had warned them not to return without bringing Binyamin with them. Yaakov agrees to send Binyamin only after Yehuda guarantees his return. Yehuda had accepted upon himself that if he wouldn't bring back Binyamin alive, he would be excommunicated in both this world and the next.

They arrive, are greeted warmly by Yosef who inquires about the welfare of their father, and food is again sent back with them. Yosef has his goblet planted in Binyamin's bag. When Binyamin is 'caught' at the start of their return journey, they are all brought back and Binyamin is sentenced to be enslaved to Yosef.

One might wonder why Yosef chose this course of action causing his brothers all this anguish. Furthermore, Yosef could have well imagined his father's suffering and mourning. Wouldn't it have been proper for Yosef to inform his father that he is alive and well, the moment he became king?

This issue is discussed by the Ramban and the Ohr Hachaim. The Ramban explains that Yosef understood that his dreams were prophesies. He needed to ensure that first all of his brothers would bow down (the dream of the sheaves), and only then have the brothers and the parents bow down (the dream of the sun, moon and 11 stars).

The Ohr Hachaim understands that had Yosef acted in any other way, he would have been in danger of his brothers killing him. (According to the Medrash Tanchuma, once they knew it was him, they did try to kill him and the Malach Gavriel needed to intercede to protect him.) There also would have been the danger of Yaakov Avinu cursing the brothers in his anger. }

Our Parsha begins with Yehuda drawing close to argue with Yosef on Binyamin's behalf. The Vilna Gaon points out that the 'truppe' for these words is 'kadma v'azlah rve'ee, zarka munach segol'. The meaning of these 'truppe' words is that 'the fourth one got up and went'. The fourth one being Yehuda, the

fourth son, got up and went to speak to Yosef. Why the fourth son and not Reuven the first born? Because 'zarka munach segol'. Because he had 'thrown away his eternal rest with the am segulah', the treasured nation, in olam habah!

On a similar note (bad pun, sorry), we were supposed to be enslaved in Mitzraim for 400 years but instead we left early, after 210 years. One of the explanations given for this is that we were oppressed to such a degree that we endured 400 years of slavery in those 210 years. This is based on the pusek "Vayemarru es chayayhem", they embittered our lives. The Gr"a points out that the truppe for these words is, once again, kadma v'azlah, we got up and went. In other words, the reason for our kadma v'azlah was that they had embittered our lives! Even more amazing is the fact that the gematria (numerical value) of kadma v'azlah is 190, which is, of course, the amount of years that we 'kadma v'azla'd (left early) (400-210=190, please pardon the grammar)!!!

The posuk says "Yosef told his brothers 'I am Yosef, is my father still alive?. The brothers were unable to answer him because they were flustered before him'."

The Beis Halevi is troubled by Yosef's question. The brothers haven't yet returned home and therefore have no news on their father. Furthermore, the whole gist of Yehuda's argument is that Yosef should have compassion on their poor father! Why does Yosef then ask them if Yaakov is still alive and why can't the brothers answer?!

The Medrash Rabbah learns from this pusek, "Woe to us on the day of judgment (din), woe to us on the day of reproof (tochacha)". If the brothers couldn't answer Yosef, the youngest of the shvatim, we certainly won't have any answers for Hashem."

The Beis Halevi asks two questions: (1) Where do we see in the posuk that Yosef was giving his brothers, reproof? (2) What is the difference between din and tochacha?

He explains that Yosef was indeed giving very sharp reproof to the brothers. Yehuda was pleading with him to release Binyomin out of compassion for their poor father. He wouldn't be able to bear the pain of losing his youngest son. Yosef destroys his whole argument with the words, "I am Yosef, is my father still alive!". You Yehuda, yourself, have disproved your entire argument. I am Yosef, don't speak to me about concern for our father. Where was your concern when you sold me and passed me off for dead!

On this, the medrash teaches us "Woe to us on the day of judgment, woe to us on the day of reproof". The day of judgment is when Hashem takes an account of our actions. The day of reproof is when Hashem deals with our answers. The Beis Halevi explains that on the day of judgment our explanations for lack of doing mitzvos will be refuted by Hashem based on our own actions. For example: A person will be judged for not giving enough tzedakah. The person will try to

defend himself by saying that "finances were tight". Hashem will say, let's go to the video tape. (Warner Wolf, are you still out there or am I dating myself?!) The 'tape' shows that person skiing in Vale, Colorado. Why wasn't enough Torah studied? The person will answer that there wasn't enough time. Let's go to the video, there he is watching the fencing finals in Japan on ESPN. Hashem, like Yosef, will use our own actions to show us how we aren't being honest with ourselves.

May Hashem grant us the strength to examine ourselves and our priorities with the full force of kadma v'azlah. To look at ourselves with honesty and see if we are really using our precious time to accomplish all that we can. On that final day, may we be able to say with conviction, we have maximized our potential, Yaakov is still alive! © 2012 Rabbi Y. Ciner and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Vayigash starts in the middle of the story of Yosef confronting his brothers. After holding back as long as he could, Yosef finally revealed his identity, and eventually asked for his father to be brought down to him. When Yaakov, his father, finally did come, Yosef took him to meet Paroh, setting up a confrontation between two opposing powers; Yaakov was the spiritual leader in his generation, while Paroh ruled the physical. Their conversation seems (47:8-10) strange at first glance. The only question Paroh asked Yaakov was (literally) "How many are the days of the years of your life?" which is not only a strange question, but is obviously worded strangely, too. The response seems even more bizarre, when Yaakov answers that "the days of the years of my (physical) living is 130 years, (but) the days of the years of my life are few and bad, and did not surpass those of my fathers." What does all the obscure language mean? Why didn't Yaakov answer Paroh's question directly by just telling him how old he was? And who asked about Yaakov's forefathers?

Rav Hirsch helps us by explaining that Paroh actually asked Yaakov how many truly meaningful, spiritual days he had had in all the years of his lifetime. Yaakov answered by first explaining to Paroh that although his physical years were 130, he didn't look at those physical numbers. Instead, his focus was on achieving the spiritual greatness of his forefathers, and answered that he hadn't reached that goal. Physical numbers meant nothing unless there was a spiritual purpose attached to it. And although Yaakov didn't reach his own personal goals, he's our forefather BECAUSE he struggled to reach them. That's the lesson Yaakov taught Paroh, and that's the lesson we must learn: We mustn't get caught up in our clothing designers, cars and bank accounts, but must strive to be more spiritual, where the only thing that really 'counts' is effort. We should all commit to doing at least

one action a day (give charity, read a chapter of a Jewish Book, learn one Jewish Law) to make deposits into the only bank account that really counts -- the spiritual kind. © 2012 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

When Yaakov (Jacob) meets his son Yosef (Joseph) after seventeen years of separation the Torah states, "And he wept on his neck." (Genesis 46:29) Since the sentence speaks of only one individual crying, "and he wept," who is the Torah referring to? Was it Yaakov or was it Yosef who cried?

One could argue that it was more likely that Yosef did the crying. After all, Yosef must have been filled with feelings of deep regret. Regret for having stirred his brother's jealousy through his dreams and regret for having failed to contact his father during the years of separation.

On the other hand, Yaakov must have also felt deep regret which may have prompted his crying. Yaakov, who grew up in a family wrought with friction due to his parents' playing of favorites, should have known better than to play favorites himself. His favoring of Yosef eventually led to Yosef's sale. Yaakov also made the mistake of sending Yosef to his brethren to make peace with them. It was this plan that backfired and led directly to Yosef being sold to Egypt. Tears of remorse would have been understandable.

There is another approach, one that doesn't emphasize tears of regret but rather tears of emotion. Here, the classical commentaries disagree. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh argues that Yaakov, who lived isolated in one place for twenty two years, was immersed in the pain of the loss of his son. When meeting Yosef he doesn't cry because "his tears had long since dried up." When the reunion finally takes place, Yaakov has no more tears left. Joseph however, had experienced "so many changes of fortune" since he left home and did not have time to dwell on his homesickness. When he meets his father, all the feelings that had been suppressed, rose to the surface. His crying showed the sudden rush of this pent up emotion.

Ramban sees it differently. He offers perhaps the most penetrating psychological insight. He argues that Yaakov was more likely to have wept. After all, when considering the emotions of an elderly father on the one hand, and the emotions of a young strong son, it seems clear that the father is more apt to shed tears. In Ramban's words: "By whom are tears more easily shed? By the aged parent who finds his long lost son alive after despairing and mourning for him, or the young son who rules?"

When addressing this text, I often ask my students: "How many of you have seen your mother cry?" Invariably, many students respond in the

affirmative. But when I ask the same about their fathers, very few hands are raised. Somehow, we mostly associate crying with women and not men. This should not be. Indeed, the Torah never mentions Avraham (Abraham) or Sarah, Yitzchak (Isaac) or Rivka (Rebecca) crying before their children. Yaakov is the first. His tears reflect an openness of emotional love that allows a parent to cry freely before his / her child.

No wonder we are called the children of Yaakov (b'nei Yaakov) or the children of Israel (Yisrael), Yaakov's additional name. Built into our personal lives and the lives of our nation, are profound and deep tears. They are reflective of deep emotional feelings. The expression of such feelings should not be denied, but encouraged. Just as there are times where joy and smiles should be shown to everyone, there are times that almost demand the flowing of tears.

Blessed are the children who have the privilege and chance to glimpse into the depths of their parents' emotions and witness a spontaneous flowing of tears.
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RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd 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' (B'raishis 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 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 (even if it was sometimes ruled by Pharaohs), so ownership of the property must have remained the same. At the point that the Egyptians had to give up their cattle and then their land in order to obtain more grain from Yosef, how did others procure more for themselves?

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 grain when the Egyptians did, we still don't know how they paid for the food they bought from those other lands. Did they give their cattle as payment? It is possible that the intent of the verse is not that there was no more money left in Canaan, but that there would be no more money coming to Egypt from Canaan (since they were now buying their food elsewhere), so there was no reason for Yosef not to sell grain to the Egyptians (see Ramban on 47:15). However, the context of the verse seems to indicate that there was no more money left in Canaan,

not that they still had money but were spending it elsewhere.

It should be noted that Rashi (47:18), based on Chazal, says that the purchase of grain with animals and land all happened before Yaakov and his family moved to Egypt (see Ramban on 47:18; the purchase of grain with land may have occurred afterwards, with the Egyptians needing grain for the third year because the next crop hadn't grown/been harvested yet); if so, when the brothers came down the second time, the Egyptians had already given the government all of their livestock. (The Brisker Rav points out that this could explain why the brothers were so concerned that their donkeys would be taken away, see 43:18 and 44:3; if their donkeys were taken by the government, there were no donkeys for sale privately to replace them.) Yet, the brothers, who came from Canaan, paid for their grain with money even in the second year, indicating that not all the money from Canaan was gone. Nevertheless, they might have been the exception (see Rashi on 42:1), allowing the statement that the money from Canaan was finished (i.e. all the money from almost all Canaanites) to be true. [Radak, following p'shat, is among the commentators who say that grain was paid for with animals and land well after the first two years of the famine.]

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 livestock. Those who had money went down to Egypt to purchase grain, and were able to eat normally. When their 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 Yosef had stored. [This explains how Yaakov was able to put together a present for the viceroy of Egypt during the famine (43:11), and why it would have been appreciated; none of those things were available in Egypt.] However, the argument Yehuda used to persuade Yaakov to let Binyamin go with them to Egypt was that if they don't buy more food they would all die (43:8). Rashi spells it out more clearly, explaining that Yaakov was afraid that Binyamin might die, but if they didn't get more grain they would all definitely die. This indicates that they could not have survived solely on what the land in Canaan was producing; Yaakov wouldn't have put Binyamin's life at risk just to ensure the continuation of gourmet (at least by famine standards) meals.

It could be suggested that because there were other options for those living in Canaan (other foods available in Canaan, the ability to buy food from other countries), the Egyptians consumed much more of the

grain Yosef had stored (per capita) than the Canaanites did. And 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, therefore purchased less grain, and their money lasted till the end of the famine. (If their money ran out then, as opposed to two crop years before the famine ended as it did for the Egyptians, the statement that "the money in Canaan was finished" could refer to there being no more money in Canaan at all, not just that no more money would reach Egypt.) There are several possible reasons why the Egyptians may have consumed more grain than the Canaanites did, thus depleting their cash more quickly.

(1) If, as Netziv suggests, some things 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 with them directly. 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). Abarbanel says 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 Yosef's appointees were not as scrupulous about selling only the amount needed for each family, the Egyptians would have purchased more grain per person than the Canaanites did.

(3) When explaining why the Egyptians' money ran out so quickly (despite having seven years of plenty), Abarbanel (41:54) says that they were so confident that the famine would soon be over that they sold most of their excess grain to foreigners. I would add that this would have caused an initial drop in the market price, so that those coming from Canaan paid less for their first purchase of grain, and likely bought enough to last for a while. By the time the Egyptians needed to buy grain, the price went up, while those in Canaan were still using grain they had bought when it was much less expensive.

Although Abarbanel's suggestion seems to assume that the grain held privately by Egyptians did not spoil (see Rashi on 41:55), it is possible that it just didn't spoil right away, and others were able to buy cheap grain when the famine first started (when the first crop to be affected wouldn't have been ready yet anyway). Bearing in mind that the Nile not overflowing and irrigating Egypt would occur after the lack of rain in Canaan would cause a drought there (due to the time it would take for the lack of water in the Blue Nile and White Nile to affect the fields irrigated by the Nile), it is certainly possible that people in Canaan knew they had to buy grain before the Egyptians realized they needed their grain for themselves. If the grain stored by the

Egyptians spoiled between the time the Canaanites bought some and the time the Egyptians would have used it themselves, the Egyptians would have had to buy more grain from Yosef than the Canaanites did, and the Egyptians' money would have run out sooner.

Egyptian confidence in a short famine may have also 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) ran 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 make a long journey to get more, 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 had to pay with their money, their animals and their property. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah is devoted to the Jewish nation's future unification. It opens with Hashem instructing the Prophet Yechezkel to take two pieces of wood and inscribe them with names of the Jewish kingdoms, Yehuda and Yosef. Hashem then said, "Bring them near one another to appear as one and they shall unite in your hands." Radak interprets this to mean that Yechezkel should hold the pieces alongside each other and they will miraculously unite into one solid piece of wood. He explains that this refers to the future miraculous unification of the Jewish kingdom. The individual pieces of wood represent the individual kingdoms of Israel. Although Hashem unconditionally granted Dovid Hamelech's dynasty the kingdom of Israel this did not preclude fragmentation. In fact, soon after Shlomo Hamelech's passing the kingdom suffered a severe split. Yeravam ben Nvat, a descendent of the tribe of Yosef led a powerful rebellion against the Judean dynasty and gained control over most of the Jewish nation. The split was so intense that the seceding camp of Yosef totally severed ties with its brothers never to return to them. Yechezkel prophesied that these kingdoms will eventually reunite and form one inseparable unit. The unification will be so perfect that it will leave no trace of any previous dissension. The entire nation's sense of kinship will be so

pronounced that it will be likened to one solid piece of wood, void of all factions and fragmentation.

Yechezkel continues and states in Hashem's name, "And I will purify them and they shall be a nation to Me and I will be G-d to them...My Divine Presence will rest upon them... forever." (37:23,28) These verses predict the final phase of unity -- Hashem's unification with His people. In the Messianic era all aspects of unity will be achieved. The entire Jewish nation will become one inseparable entity and Hashem will reunite with His people. This unification will resemble that of the Jewish people, an everlasting and inseparable one.

It is important to note the order of this unity. The first phase will be our nation's unification and after this is achieved Hashem will return to His people. Sefer Charedim sensitizes us to the order of this development. He reflects upon Hashem's distinct quality of oneness and explains that it can only be appreciated and revealed through His people's harmonious interaction. Hashem's favor and kindness emanates from His perfect oneness and reveals this quality in full. When the Jewish people function as a harmonious body they deserve Hashem's favor and kindness. They project and reflect Hashem's goodness and express His oneness and bring true glory to His name. However, if the Jewish people are fragmented and divided they display -- Heaven forbid -- division in Hashem's interactive system. Their divisive behavior gives the impression that Hashem's influence is disjointed and fragmented and not achieving its ultimate purpose. At that point Hashem removes His presence from His people and disassociates Himself from their inappropriate ways. The Jewish people's lack of success and accomplishment is then attributed to Hashem's unwillingness to remain involved in their lives.

We now understand that the Jewish people's unity is a prerequisite to Hashem's return to His people. Sefer Charedim explains with this the introductory words of the Shabbos afternoon Amida service. We state therein, "You are one, Your identity is one and who can is likened to Your people Israel one nation in the land." He interprets these words to refer to the glorious Messianic era. During that period Hashem's oneness will be recognized through His harmonious interactive system reflected in the oneness of His people. Their perfect unity will provide the perfect setting for Hashem's revelation to the world. During that time Hashem's master plan will be expressed through the perfect interaction of His people. Every detail of Hashem's kindness will serve its intended purpose and reveal His absolute oneness and control over every aspect of this world. Undoubtedly, this will require the Jewish people's total cooperation and perfect harmonious interaction with one another. Indeed, it can be said that when Hashem's people unite as an inseparable entity His identity and perfect quality of oneness will be recognized throughout the world. (adapted from Sefer Charedim chap. 7)

In truth, the foundation for this unity was laid in this week's sedra. Yosef developed an ingenious scheme to silence all his brothers' suspicions and convince them of their grave misjudgment of his actions. He successfully removed their deep seeded jealousy and hatred and brought about a sincere unification to the household of Yaakov. Yosef and Yehuda, the two powers to be, embraced one another and displayed a true sense of kinship. Unfortunately, irrevocable damage already occurred that would ultimately yield a severe split in the Jewish kingdom. Yosef's descendant, Yeravam would eventually sever relations with Yehuda's descendant Rechavam and establish his own leadership. (see Gur Aryeh to Breishis 48:7) However, groundwork was already established to reunite these kingdoms and return the Jewish nation to its original perfect unity.

This week's sedra records the immediate result of the unity of the household of Yaakov. After Yaakov Avinu discovered Yosef's existence and salvation the Torah states, "And their father, Yaakov's spirit was restored to life." (Breishis 45:27) Rashi quotes the Sages who explain these words to refer to the return of Hashem's Divine Spirit to Yaakov. (ad loc) Yosef's absence from Yaakov's household indirectly prevented Hashem's Divine Spirit from resting upon Yaakov. Now, after twenty-two dark years Yaakov Avinu's household was reunited and Hashem returned His Divine Presence to Yaakov. This development is indicative of the Jewish people's future experience. The ten lost tribes representing the kingdom of Yosef will be divided from the Judean kingdom for over two thousand years. This will result in Hashem's removing His Divine Presence from amidst His people and throughout their long dark exile they will have no direct contact with Him. However, the time will eventually arrive for the Jewish people to reunite and become one inseparable entity. This miraculous unity will immediately lead to a second unity, that of Hashem and His people. In response to their total unification Hashem will return His Divine Presence and rest amongst His people us and "The spirit of Israel will be restored to life".

This lesson is apropos for our times where so much potential diversity exists. We pray to Hashem that we merit total unification thereby yielding Hashem's return to us resting His Divine Presence amongst us.

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