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Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

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Covenant & Conversation

There are moments that change the world: 1439 when Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable-type printing press (though the Chinese had developed it four centuries before); 1821 when Faraday invented the electric motor; or 1990 when Tim Berners-Lee created the World Wide Web. There is such a moment in this week's parsha, and in its way it may have been no less transformative than any of the above. It happened when Joseph finally revealed his identity to his brothers. While they were silent and in a state of shock, he went on to say these words:

"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... it was not you who sent me here, but God." (Gen. 45:4-8)

This is the first recorded moment in history in which one human being forgives another.

According to the Midrash, God had forgiven before this, but not according to the plain sense of the text. Forgiveness is conspicuously lacking as an element in the stories of the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and Sodom. When Abraham prayed his audacious prayer for the people of Sodom, he did not ask God to forgive them. His argument was about justice, not forgiveness. Perhaps there were innocent people there, fifty or even ten. It would be unjust for them to die. Their merit should therefore save the others, says Abraham. That is quite different from asking God to forgive.

(There are midrashic suggestions that God partially forgave, or at least mitigated the punishments of Adam, Eve, and Cain. Ishmael was said to have become a penitent, and there are midrashic interpretations that identify Keturah, the woman Abraham married after the death of Sarah, with Hagar, implying that Abraham and Isaac were reunited and reconciled with Sarahs maidservant and her son.)

Joseph forgave. That was a first in history. Yet the Torah hints that the brothers did not fully appreciate the significance of his words. After all, he did not explicitly use the word 'forgive'. He told them not to be distressed. He said, "It was not you but God." He told them their act had resulted in a positive outcome. But all of this was theoretically compatible with holding them guilty and deserving of punishment. That is why the Torah recounts a second event, years later, after Jacob had died. The brothers sought a meeting with Joseph, fearing that he would now take revenge. They concocted a story: "They sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers for the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept." (Gen. 50:16-18)

What they said was a white lie, but Joseph understood why they said it. The brothers used the word "forgive" -- this is the first time it appears explicitly in the Torah -- because they were still unsure about what Joseph meant. Does someone truly forgive those who sold him into slavery? Joseph wept that his brothers had not fully understood that he had forgiven them long before. He had no anger, no lingering resentment, no desire for revenge. He had conquered his emotions and reframed his understanding of events.

Forgiveness does not appear in every culture. It is not a human universal, nor is it a biological imperative. We know this from a fascinating study by American classicist David Konstan, Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea (2010). In it he argues that there was no concept of forgiveness in the literature of the ancient Greeks. There was something else, often mistaken for forgiveness: appeasement of anger.

When someone does harm to someone else, the victim is angry and seeks revenge. This is clearly dangerous for the perpetrator and they may try to get the victim to calm down and move on. They may make excuses: It wasn't me, it was someone else. Or, it was me but I couldn't help it. Or, it was me but it was a small wrong, and I have done you much good in the past, so on balance you should let it pass.

Alternatively, or in conjunction with these other strategies, the perpetrator may beg, plead, and perform some ritual of abasement or humiliation. This is a way of saying to the victim, "I am not really a threat." The Greek word sugnome, sometimes translated as forgiveness, really means, says Konstan, exculpation or absolution. It is not that I forgive you for what you did, but that I understand why you did it -- you could not really help it, you were caught up in circumstances beyond your control -- or, alternatively, I do not need to

take revenge because you have now shown by your deference to me that you hold me in proper respect. My dignity has been restored.

There is a classic example of appeasement in the Torah: Jacob's behaviour toward Esau when they meet again after a long separation. Jacob had fled home after Rebecca overheard Esau resolving to kill him after Isaac's death (Gen. 27:41). Prior to the meeting Jacob sends him a huge gift of cattle, saying "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me" (Gen. 32:21). When the brothers meet, Jacob bows down to Esau seven times, a classic abasement ritual. The brothers meet, kiss, embrace and go their separate ways, not because Esau has forgiven Jacob but because either he has forgotten or he has been placated.

Appeasement as a form of conflict management exists even among non-humans. Frans de Waal, the primatologist, has described peace-making rituals among chimpanzees, bonobos and mountain gorillas. (Peacemaking Among Primates, Harvard University Press, 1989) There are contests for dominance among the social animals, but there must also be ways of restoring harmony to the group if it is to survive at all. So there are forms of appeasement and peace-making that are pre-moral and have existed since the birth of humanity.

Forgiveness has not. Konstan argues that its first appearance is in the Hebrew Bible and he cites the case of Joseph. What he does not make clear is why Joseph forgives, and why the idea and institution are born specifically within Judaism.

The answer is that within Judaism a new form of morality was born. Judaism is (primarily) an ethic of guilt, as opposed to most other systems, which are ethics of shame. One of the fundamental differences between them is that shame attaches to the person. Guilt attaches to the act. In shame cultures when a person does wrong he or she is, as it were, stained, marked, defiled. In guilt cultures what is wrong is not the doer but the deed, not the sinner but the sin. The person retains their fundamental worth ("the soul you gave me is pure," as we say in our prayers). It is the act that has somehow to be put right. That is why in guilt cultures there are processes of repentance, atonement and forgiveness.

That is the explanation for Joseph's behaviour from the moment the brothers appear before him in Egypt for the first time to the point where, in this week's parsha, he announces his identity and forgives his brothers. It is a textbook case of putting the brothers through a course in atonement, the first in literature. Joseph is thus teaching them, and the Torah is teaching us, what it is to earn forgiveness.

Recall what happens. First he accuses the brothers of a crime they have not committed. He says they are spies. He has them imprisoned for three days. Then, holding Shimon as a hostage, he tells them that they must now go back home and bring back their youngest brother Benjamin. In other words, he is forcing them to re-enact that earlier occasion when they came back to their father with one of the brothers, Joseph, missing. Note what happens next: "They said to one another, 'Surely we deserve to be punished [ashemim] because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us'... They did not realise that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter." (Gen. 42:21-23)

This is the first stage of repentance. They admit they have done wrong.

Next, after the second meeting, Joseph has his silver cup planted in Benjamin's sack. This incriminating evidence is found and the brothers are brought back. They are told that Benjamin must stay as a slave.

'"What can we say to my lord?' Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves -- we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.'" (Gen. 44:16)

This is the second stage of repentance. They confess. They do more; they admit collective responsibility. This is important. When the brothers sold Joseph into slavery it was Judah who proposed the crime (Gen. 37:26-27) but they were all (except Reuben) complicit in it.

Finally, at the climax of the story Judah himself says "So now let me remain as your slave in place of the lad. Let the lad go back with his brothers!" (Gen. 42:33) Judah, who sold Joseph as a slave, is now willing to become a slave so that his brother Benjamin can go free. This is what the Sages and Maimonides define as complete repentance, namely when circumstances repeat themselves and you have an opportunity to commit the same crime again, but you refrain from doing so because you have changed.

Now Joseph can forgive, because his brothers, led by Judah, have gone through all three stages of repentance: [1] admission of guilt, [2] confession and [3] behavioural change.

Forgiveness only exists in a culture in which repentance exists. Repentance presupposes that we are free and morally responsible agents who are capable of change, specifically the change that comes about when we recognise that something we have done is wrong and we are responsible for it and we must never do it again. The possibility of that kind of moral transformation simply did not exist in ancient Greece or any other pagan culture. Greece was a shame-and-honour culture that turned on the twin concepts of character and fate. (See Bernard Williams, Shame and Necessity, Berkeley: University of California Press,

1993.)

Judaism was a repentance-and-forgiveness culture whose central concepts are will and choice. The idea of forgiveness was then adopted by Christianity, making the Judeo-Christian ethic the primary vehicle of forgiveness in history.

Repentance and forgiveness are not just two ideas among many. They transformed the human situation. For the first time, repentance established the possibility that we are not condemned endlessly to repeat the past. When I repent I show I can change. The future is not predestined. I can make it different from what it might have been. Forgiveness liberates us from the past. Forgiveness breaks the irreversibility of reaction and revenge. It is the undoing of what has been done. (Hannah Arendt makes this point in The Human Condition, pg. 41.)

Humanity changed the day Joseph forgave his brothers. When we forgive and are worthy of being forgiven, we are no longer prisoners of our past. The moral life is one that makes room for forgiveness. *Covenant and Conversation 5775 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l*

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 (Genesis 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 (Genesis 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!

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

As the story of Joseph and his brothers reaches its dramatic climax in this week's Torah reading, we are left with many unanswered questions regarding this unique narrative. One unanswered question is how much did our father Jacob really know about the events previously described in the Torah readings? There are various streams of thought regarding this matter. Rashi and the Midrash seem to believe that Jacob, by the end of his life, certainly was aware of the entire drama and of the participants in the story. He indirectly refers to it on his deathbed, especially regarding Shimon and Levi, for their aggressive behavior towards Joseph.

Jacob also seemingly complements Yehuda for his original moderation in dealing with Joseph, and for his later courage and heroism in defending Benjamin and confronting Joseph. It is, perhaps, safe to say that even if Jacob was unaware of all the details of the story, he knew the general facts of the narrative, and was able to piece it together for himself.

Jacob's reaction is seen in the blessings he gives to his children, his final words to all the participants in this drama. It is difficult to believe that Jacob would not have asked Joseph how he came to live in Egypt, and how he rose to such a prominent position of power and influence. One of the hallmarks of the relationship between Jacob and Joseph was the fact that, more so than the usual relationship between parent and child, they understood each other, and were sensitive to all the nuances of character that they possessed

There are other sources and commentators that seem to feel that Jacob never really knew the entire story that led Joseph "to cover the eyes of Jacob with his hand" so that he would never know the rift in the family, and the consequences that eventually brought the children of Israel to the exile in Egypt.

All parents know that there are things about their children and their progeny that they do not wish to be informed about. Sometimes, in family matters, ignorance is truly bliss, and in his golden years, surrounded by family, Jacob felt comforted. There also is a natural tendency among children to attempt to hide unwelcome news, evil tidings, and unnecessary aggravation from their parents.

Now that the family has been reunited in Egypt and is living in the land of Goshen in comfort, if not even luxury, of what purpose would there be to retell the bitter story of family discord? The Torah seems to indicate that the last 17 years of Jacob's life were truly his golden years, surrounded by family, and respected and honored by the society it in which he now found himself living. Why burden the old man with a story that would only reopen wounds and create unnecessary anxiety and even regret?

Jacob will go to his final resting place emotionally whole, reconciled even with his brother Eisav, and certainly at peace with his children and family. Whichever of the narratives we choose to follow, the Torah has told us all we need to know about Joseph and his brothers and the descent of the Jewish people into Egyptian society, and their eventual slavery and their redemption.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Joseph reveals himself to his brothers with the simple words "I am Joseph; is my father still alive?" (Genesis 45:3).

Commentators note a degree of harshness in Joseph's words. Kli Yakar, for example, observes that although Joseph proclaims, "I am Joseph," he fails to include the words "your brother."

Kli Yakar adds that the brothers also sense that Joseph's question, "Is my father still alive?" contains a rebuke. Joseph refers to 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 him, they failed to show concern for their father – they indeed behaved as if Jacob were not their father.

The omission of the words "your brother" and the portrayal of Jacob as Joseph'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" (45:3).

In the very next sentence, however, Joseph softens his words (45:4). There, he repeats, "I am Joseph," but this time, as Kli Yakar notes, he deliberately adds the words "your brother." The healing

process has begun.

The healing seems to reach another level when Joseph tells his brothers that they should not be upset at having sold him. God had a deeper plan for Joseph – to save Egypt and the world from famine. In other words, from the evil of the sale, good had come (45:5–7). As the Yiddish expression teaches, A mensch tracht, un Gott lacht (A person plans, and God laughs). No matter how much an individual anticipates outcomes, God alone can see the bigger picture.

Joseph concludes this section by strengthening his comments with the words, "And now, it was not you that sent me here, but God" (45:8). Hence, Joseph is partially conciliatory and partially 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 God.

As Rabbi Zvi Dov Kanotopsky, in his wonderful work Night of Watching (Jerusalem: Tzur-Ot Press, 1977), writes: "Joseph 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 orchestrated by God was good]…but it does call for repentance."

After twenty-two years of separation, the reunion of Joseph and his brothers contains different elements. As in any dispute between siblings, the first words uttered by the aggrieved party are often laced with contradictions – indicating that the healing process does not occur in an instant; it takes time and patience.

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

A New Sacrifice

Parashat Vayigash contains the reunification of the family of Ya'akov. Yosef revealed his true identity to his brothers after Yehudah demonstrated his complete teshuvah by his willingness to free Binyamin and offer himself in his place. Yosef sent the brothers back to his father to bring all of Ya'akov's family down to Egypt because of the additional years of famine which were to ensue. Ya'akov gathered the family together and they traveled to Egypt by way of Be'er Sheva. There Ya'akov sacrificed z'vachim to the Elokim of his father Yitzchak. It is significant that the Torah refers to these particular sacrifices as z'vachim.

HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch discusses the importance of the different kinds of sacrifices offered by the Avot. Before this time, the Avot offered only olot sacrifices. An olah sacrifice "expresses giving oneself up completely to Hashem." An olah is burned entirely to Hashem leaving no part of it to be eaten by the person who brings the sacrifice. A zevach, on the other hand, is meant to be eaten by the family of the person who brings it. The zevach "consecrates the 'family house' and the family table to the Temple and Altar." A zevach is normally a shaleim offering and expresses "the higher thought that 'Hashem comes to us.'" The shelamim sacrifice is brought from a consciousness that "where a family lives united and faithful to duty, and feels that Hashem is caring for it, … there Hashem is present."

Hirsch explains that Ya'akov now was able to sense that his family was complete and unified for the first time. This was the idea expressed that Yosef was able to recognize that his brothers acted as one without the destructive inner feelings of the superiority of one group of sons over the other, namely Leah's sons over the other brothers. Yosef also sensed that the sons of Rachel no longer appeared threatening to the other brothers who had reconciled their differences. Ya'akov also understood this unity and therefore felt that all of the children together could now concentrate on serving Hashem instead of their own personal agendas. "This blessed state of bliss which Ya'akov has just received he does not ascribe to his own merit but to the merit of the Fathers." That is why he offers the z'vachim to the Elokim of his father Yitzchak.

The Ramban approaches the z'vachim differently. He stresses the dedication of the z'vachim to Yitzchak rather than to Avraham. In our prayers, we stress the concept that Yitzchak is associated with the word pachad, fear. "When Ya'akov was about to go down to Egypt, he saw that the exile was beginning for him and his children, and he feared it, and so he offered many sacrifices to the Fear of his father Yitzchak in order that Divine judgment should not be aimed against him." Ya'akov offered z'vachim, peace-offerings, rather than olot, burnt-offerings, "in order to bring all Divine attributes into accord towards him." Ya'akov called on the attribute of Hashem of Mercy, the Yud Kei Vav Kei, the Tetragrammaton, to watch over the B'nei Yisrael in Egypt. As we find later, Hashem tells Moshe that "My name Hashem (the Tetragrammaton) I did not make known to them." It is not that the Avot did not know the name Hashem or that Hashem functioned as the quality of Mercy, but that up until that point it was unnecessary for Hashem to exercise that quality in dealing with the Avot. Hashem had used only His quality of Elokim, the attribute of justice without mercy. Mercy is necessary only when the person being judged is not capable of being judged by his merit alone. The Avot did not need the justice of Elokim to be boosted by the name of Hashem, His Mercy.

We must examine the z'vachim more carefully to understand the full message that Ya'akov was giving his family by offering such a different sacrifice at this time. The olah offering which was the sacrifice of the Avot fits in the category of sacrifices called kod'shei k'doshim, or holy of the holies. No part of the olah

could be eaten; it was to be burned entirely on the altar. The olah could be brought either by an individual or by the community. The z'vachim were part of the category of sacrifices known as the kod'shim kalim, or sacrifices of a lower level of holiness. The z'vachim, usually represented as the sh'lamim, were primarily individual sacrifices, except for the community shelamim offered at Sukkot. Only certain inner organs of the shelamim were burned on the altar, as the rest of the animal was to be eaten by the person who brought the sacrifice, after giving a portion of it to the Kohein which was his by Divine command. While the family could eat from the sh'lamim, this had to be done within the confines of the outer machaneh or camp. The kedusha (holiness) of the animal after it was sacrificed had to be maintained. This enabled the donor to bring the kedusha of the Temple into the walls of his own house.

Ya'akov understood that only someone who was free could sacrifice himself "giving oneself up completely to Hashem." The B'nei Yisrael in Egypt would become enslaved, and they would be ruled by forces other than Hashem. They would need to understand that "Hashem comes to us" in our everyday lives. This, we saw from Hirsch, was the message of the z'vachim. This applies to even our most mundane activities such as eating. The z'vachim teach us that we can bring the spirituality of the Temple into our homes and see that our ordinary living rooms become a temple, our dining-table an altar, our sons and daughters, priests and priestesses, that through spiritualizing of our ordinary private lives, that is a gift of Judaism."

The unity that Ya'akov experienced now with his family is a crucial aspect of receiving Hashem in one's home. When Ya'akov sensed that the brothers were united, it enabled them to concentrate on serving Hashem from within the home. We must strive for this unity between our brothers within the same family and between our brothers who are in the greater family of the entirety of the B'nei Yisrael. When that unity is met, one is able to experience the fullness of Hashem's presence among us. We then can receive His blessings and His promise to us, and then we will be worthy to receive His blessings for the Land of Israel. Until which time as we can become united, our Nation will be limited in the blessing which we can receive. This is what Ya'akov understood and this was his prayer now before Hashem. May we be zocheh to unify our people and receive Hashem's full blessing.

RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS

The Conflict between Judah and Joseph

The 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 where 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.

One of the obvious differences between Jacob's and his son Joseph's dreams is that 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 is able to work for an influential person in Egypt's government. When he is thrown into jail he gains favor with the head of the prison. And when he finally interprets Pharos dream he is elevated to the position as 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 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 publicly embarrassed. He finally meets his brother Joseph after he is willing to give his life to save the life of his brother Benjamin, only to be embarrassed to own up to his mistake of initiating and carrying out the sale of his brother Joseph-and realizing that he is standing before his long lost brother, the dreamer-and that his dreams have come true.

To make things more difficult, 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 the future king of Israel the forecaster of the Messiah would come from Joseph!

One reason that our sages explain this phenomenon is because Judah possessed a sincere caring for his brethren. He was the one who undertook responsibility for his brother Benjamin and swore to Jacob 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...

But even more important –and this is the character trait that brings me closer to identify with Judah-is his humanness and the fact that he makes mistakes in his lifetime and has the strength and ability to own up to his wrongdoings and start over. His descendent, King David has these same character 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 a typical Jew who is faced daily with religious challenges and sometimes fails and sometimes is successful. The strength of the Jew is the ability to own up to responsibility and to admit wrong 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 from 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.

The strength 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 aspires to great heights. *Rabbi Mordechai Weiss is the former Principal of the Bess and Paul Sigal Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford and the Hebrew Academy of Atlantic County where together he served for over forty years . He and his wife D'vorah live in Efrat. All comments are welcome at ravmordechai@aol.com*

RABBI AVROHOM LEVENTHAL

Loving Rebuke

A group of seasoned educators were once having a discussion reminiscing about their student days. The question arose as to which particular teacher had the most impact on them. Each member of the group shared an anecdote or lesson that had made a lasting impression. The one "wining" story that seemed to impress everyone did not relate to teaching style or volume of material. This incident centered around how a teacher displayed so much sensitivity for the students that he was willing to belittle himself rather than possibly embarrass even one child.

In this classroom, the system of discipline was to write a child's name on the board for breaking any of the class rules. Each subsequent infraction would be given a check next to that child's name. At recess or lunchtime, the list of "offenders" would be addressed with the appropriate consequence for their actions. Once the "sentence" was served, the names were erased and tomorrow (or after recess) was a new beginning.

Depending on the day, there could be many names on the board for such actions as talking during class, passing a note to another or getting out of your seat without permission.

This system worked well as it didn't interrupt the flow of the class, gave those students time to reflect and soften the "blow" with a delay in the consequence.

This teacher's class had a great reputation of functioning well.

One day, the principal of the school walked into class with a group of very distinguished visitors. Before the group had a chance to see the board, the teacher backed up to the corner in which the names were written. He discreetly (and skillfully) wiped off all of the names written, using his freshly pressed suit as the chalkboard eraser.

He then welcomed the principal and his entourage, explained the lesson and cordially escorted them to the door to continue on their visit.

The teacher then turned back to the board to write the introduction to the next lesson.

That classroom of elementary school children stared in awe at the chalk stained suit of their beloved teacher. Not one child giggled as they realized his sacrifice for their dignity. Rather than have the principal et al see who might have been "misbehaving", he chose to stain his suit by erasing their names. Better to soil his suit than have even one child ashamed in front of the principal.

The lesson of sensitivity to the embarrassment of another trumped the effects that any consequence would achieve.

Although this teacher was already beloved by most of his students, the new chalk inspired design became a badge of honor and respect whose significance stayed with them for a lifetime.

In this week's Parsha we encounter what might be one of the most famous incidents of potential embarrassment and "calling out". After all of the years of separation, Yosef reveals himself to his brothers.

This revelation was not only a reunion. It was also the realization that Yosef's dreams had in fact come true. Despite their efforts to quell his prophecy, he was now a prince in Egypt and appointed by G-d to be their salvation.

Yosef would have every right to "make the most of the moment" and deliver the ultimate "I told you so". The years of pain and separation could have manifested itself through anger and punishment.

Yosef the "tzadik" however, chose to protect his brothers from as much shame and embarrassment as possible. He sent everyone out of the room and simply said אני יוסף העוד אבי חי.

It was a gentle introduction, made in total privacy in order to lessen the shock and preserve their dignity.

A lesson for anyone who is in the position of having to rebuke, disciple or "call out" another.

As parents, friends, teachers, supervisors and just plain people, there are times that we need guide or correct one who may be doing something harmful to themselves or others.

But often the impact of the message can be determined by the method of the messenger.

Loving and caring for someone means that we want what is best for them. By rebuking or disciplining with sensitivity, care and concern, the recipient will be much more likely to accept than by yelling, screaming or simply punitive measures.

Yosef took the time to consider the best method to reveal himself and gently rebuke his brothers. He created the optimum atmosphere in which to reunite with his brothers thus setting the stage for the Jewish people sojourn in Egypt.

Let us take this lesson from Yosef. There will be times that we must rebuke and correct those under our care.

Like Yosef, we should deliberate as to how and when our words and actions, even in discipline, will have the greatest effect in building up the other person through love, respect and dignity. *© 2021 Rabbi A. Leventhal, noted educator and speaker, is the Executive Director at Lema'an Achai lemaanachai.org*

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"And Yosef could not hold back for all those who were standing there…" (Beraishis 45:1) Yehuda's soliloquy did not take place in a private audience. Though the brothers were having a special meeting with the Viceroy, and others were not invited to eat in the palace, they were not alone. Yosef's court was full of courtiers, ministers, and even visitors awaiting their turn to plead their cases before the highest power in the land next to Pharaoh. The crowd was moved by Yehuda's words and the plight of the poor, misguided youth who dared pilfer the Viceroy's silver goblet. They looked to Yosef to see him exhibit mercy and magnanimity.

Feeling overwhelmed with emotion, Yosef wanted to be alone with his brothers so he could reveal his true identity, proven by the fact that he knew they sold him, something they had all been sworn to secrecy about. Even the people who brought him to Egypt had bought him from people who bought him from others, so the brothers were well-distanced from the story.

Unable to wait for everyone to file out in a leisurely fashion, Yosef cried out for everyone to leave his presence, which they all did, save for his brothers. Rashi says he couldn't bear for the Egyptians to hear the embarrassing and negative words that his brothers had sold him. While Yosef was able to reconcile that what they did was a result of Hashem's decree, the Egyptians would not be so forgiving and it would be a disgrace to Yaakov's family.

Others say Yosef was in a heightened emotional state and could not focus on the needs of the individuals waiting to earn his favor with their own heartbreaking stories. Therefore, he needed everyone to leave the room. But what was Yosef unable to hold himself back from? What had gotten him so emotionally charged?

The last two things Yehuda said were the linchpins to the whole story. Yosef knew the brothers had sinned against him and against Yaakov, but he also knew it was because they didn't realize the gravity of their deed. That's why he set up this whole set of circumstances where Binyomin was in jeopardy.

Unlike when Yosef was a lad, he now saw Yehuda take responsibility for his younger brother, even to the point of sacrificing himself. More than that, he expressed concern for his father's feelings should Binyomin not return. That was what Yosef had been waiting for all along.

True, he had longed for closeness to his brothers from childhood, but that could not be. Joining the line of those who wanted something they could not fully have (Rachel wanting children, Yaakov wanting Rachel's love, Leah wanting Yaakov's love and attention) Yosef still wanted his brothers to be capable of giving that love. He wanted them to improve to be the best they could be, and this is why he'd originally spoken to his father about their shortcomings. He wanted them to progress and develop, and now he saw they had arrived.

It was this watershed moment, the culmination of his life's goal to help his family to grow, that overwhelmed Yosef and he started to break down. He needed to respond in the moment and revel with pride and relief at how far his brothers had come. That could not wait.

A Russian Jew once struck up a conversation with his seatmate on a bus in Eretz Yisrael, and in the course of the conversation, described himself as a Yom Kippur Jew. His seatmate immediately thought that he meant that he went to shul only once a year on Yom Kippur. However, the Russian Jew explained to his new friend that he was referring to something else.

He was a soldier in the Russian army following WWII. In order to avoid serving on Yom Kippur, every year he would feign illness. Each Yom Kippur, he would show up at the army doctor and moan over his "toothache" and beg to have his tooth pulled. After his tooth was pulled, he was freed from his duties for the rest of the day.

The Russian Jew flashed a toothless smile to his seatmate, and said, "I was in the army for six years and I lost six teeth this way, but at least I never worked on Yom Kippur." © 2021 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr