Vayigash 5783 Volume XXX Number 13

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

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.

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 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 אֲדֹנִי, יְדַבֶּר-נָא עַבְדְּךָ דָבָר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנִי, וְאַל-יִחַר אַפְּךָ בְּעַבְדֶּךָ, כִּי כָמוֹךָ, כְּפַרְעֹה.

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 ד׳ מאות פרסה... שני שילטונין זולגות דם...וחמשה לבושים היה לובש, נימה אחת היתה לו בלבו כיון שהיה כועס קורע את כולם (ב״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 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.

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Covenant & Conversation

Maimonides called his ideal type of human being -- the sage -- a rofe nefashot, a "healer of souls". (Rambam, Shemoneh Perakim, ch. 3) Today we call such a person a psychotherapist, a word coined relatively recently from the Greek word psyche,

meaning "soul", and therapeia, "healing". It is astonishing how many of the pioneering soul-healers in modern times have been Jewish.

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

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

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

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

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

What made the difference, what gave people the will to live, was the belief that there was a task for them to perform, a mission for them to accomplish, that they had not yet completed and that was waiting for them to do in the future. Frankl discovered that "it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us." (Ibid., 85) There were people in the camp who had so lost hope that they had nothing more to expect from life. Frankl was able to get them to see that "life was still expecting something from them." One, for example, had a child still alive, in a foreign country, who was waiting for him. Another came to see that he had books to produce that no one else could write. Through this sense of a future calling to them, Frankl was able to help them to discover their purpose in life, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

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

Yet this modern discovery is really a re-discovery, because the first great re-framer in history was Joseph, as described in this week's and next's parshiyot. Recall the facts. He had been sold into slavery by his brothers. He had lost his freedom for thirteen years, and been separated from his family for twenty-two years. It would be understandable if he felt toward his brothers resentment and a desire for revenge. Yet he rose above such feelings, and did so

precisely by shifting his experiences into a different frame. Here is what he says to his brothers when he first discloses his identity to them: "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life... God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God." (Gen. 45:4-8)

And this is what he says years later, after their father Jacob has died and the brothers fear that he may now take revenge: "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as He is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." (Gen. 50:19-21)

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

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

Whatever situation we are in, by reframing it we can change our entire response, giving us the strength to survive, the courage to persist, and the resilience to emerge, on the far side of darkness, into the light of a new and better day. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl zt"l*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"And Joseph fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his [Joseph's] neck" (Genesis 45:14). This poignant moment when these two brothers are reunited after a separation of twenty-two years is one of the most tender scenes in the Torah.

After a long chronicle of difficult brotherly relationships – Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his other siblings – we finally come across two brothers who truly love each other. The only children of Jacob's beloved Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin shared the same womb, and when their mother died in childbirth, we can feel assured that Joseph drew Benjamin close to him, protected him, and shared with him the precious memories of the mother Benjamin never knew. Their exclusive relationship must have made their eventual separation even more painful and traumatic. After all, Benjamin was the only brother totally uninvolved in the family tension and sibling rivalry against Joseph.

But I'm left wondering: Where is the joy, the elation, the celebration? Why does the Torah only record the weeping of the brothers at this dramatic moment of their reunion?

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

But why should Rashi extrapolate such terrible events in the future from the tears of the brothers? I believe that the answer lies in our being mindful of the two archetypal sins in the book of Genesis: The first is the sin of eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which symbolizes rebellion against God, and the second is the sin of the sale of Joseph by his brothers, which epitomizes the sins of enmity between people, internecine strife.

Of the two, the Zohar considers the latter more severe. In the tradition of 'the events of the fathers foreshadow the history of the children,' we can see that all tragedies to befall the Jewish people have their source in the 'DNA' of the sale of Joseph as a slave. This act was the foundation of causeless hatred between Jews.

The Talmud [Gittin 55b], in isolating the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple, reports an instance of brotherly hatred within Israel. A wealthy man had a party and wanted to invite his friend Kamtza. Inadvertently, his avowed enemy Bar-Kamtza was invited instead. Thrown out and shamed, Bar-Kamtza took revenge. He went to the Roman authorities and lied in order to implicate the Jews in crimes against the state. The rest is history. Josephus writes that even as the Romans were destroying the Temple, Jews were still fighting amongst themselves. Down to this very day, we find the Jewish people hopelessly split in enemy camps politically and religiously, with one group cynically and sometimes even hatefully attacking the other.

Thus it is the sin of causeless hatred, the crime of the brothers against Joseph, that can be said to be our 'original sin'. Indeed, during the Yom Kippur additional Amida, the author of the mournful Eileh

Ezkera hymn of doxology, links the Temple's destruction and the tragedy of Jewish exile with the sin of the brothers' sale of Joseph.

Now Rashi's interpretation assumes profound significance. In the midst of brotherly hatred, the love between Joseph and Benjamin stands out as a shining example of the potential for unconditional love. Rashi links their tears during their meeting to the destruction of our Sancturies – the result of jealousy and enmity between Jew and Jew. Indeed, they each weep for the future tragedies that will befall their descendants. But although each brother will be blessed with a Sanctuary on his allotted land, the brothers weep not for themselves, but each for the other. This act of selfless weeping and unconditional love, becomes the only hope against the tragedies implicit in the sale of Joseph into slavery. The only thing which can repair that sin – and by implication the sins of all the causeless hatred between factions down the long road of Jewish history – is nothing less than a love in which the other comes first, causeless love, when one weeps for the other's tragedy rather than for his own.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook taught that if the Temples were destroyed because of causeless hatred, the Temple will only be rebuilt because of causeless love, exemplified by the tears of Joseph and Benjamin. Rashi is providing a prescient lesson as to know we can achieve true peace and world redemption in this very special period of our return to Zion.

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.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

When Jacob meets his son Joseph after twenty-two years of separation, the Torah states, "And he wept on his neck" (Genesis 46:29). The sentence speaks of only one individual crying: "And he wept." To whom is the Torah referring? Was it Jacob or Joseph who cried?

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

On the other hand, Jacob must have also felt deep regret, which may have prompted his crying. Jacob, who grew up in a family wrought with friction due to his parents playing favorites, should have known

better than to play favorites himself. His favoring of Joseph eventually led to Joseph's sale. Jacob also made the mistake of sending Joseph to his brethren to make peace with them. This plan backfired and led directly to Joseph's being sold to Egypt. Tears of remorse would have been understandable.

There is another approach that goes beyond feelings of regret, relating more generally to one's psychological state. Here, the classical commentaries disagree. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch argues that Jacob, who lived isolated in one place for twenty-two years, was immersed in the pain of the loss of his son. When meeting Joseph, he didn't cry because "his tears had long since dried up." When the reunion finally took place, Jacob had no more tears left. Joseph, however, had experienced "many changes of fortune" since he left home and never had time to dwell on his homesickness. When he met his father, those suppressed feelings rose to the surface. His crying showed the sudden rush of this pent-up emotion.

Nachmanides takes a different approach and offers perhaps the most penetrating psychological insight. He argues that Jacob was more likely to have wept than Joseph. 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 Nachmanides'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. Jacob breaks this pattern. His tears reflect an openness of emotional love that allows a father to cry freely before his child.

Built into our personal lives are profound tears that reflect deep emotions. The expression of such feelings should not be denied but encouraged. Just as there are times when joy and smiles should be shown to everyone, so are there times of pain and angst. In such times, children are, in a certain sense, blessed to glimpse the depth of their parents' emotions and witness a spontaneous flowing of tears.

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"I will go down with you to Egypt and I will, with you, go up as well, and Yosef will place his hand upon your eyes." (Beraishis 46:4) When Yosef asked that his father come down to Egypt to be with him, though he promised to take care of all Yaakov's needs, Yaakov was afraid. He understood that his descendants were destined to be strangers in a foreign land for 400 years, and that they would be enslaved and tortured. He hesitated to participate in bringing them there.

Hashem appeared to him in a dream and reassured him. Though he would go down to Egypt, both he and his children would be returned to the land promised by Hashem to Avraham and Yitzchak. Rashi teaches here that Yaakov was guaranteed by Hashem that he would be buried in Canaan where he came from, and indeed, he was buried in Me'aras HaMachpela with his ancestors.

Having had a promise from Hashem that he would be buried there, it seems strange that next week, in Parshas Vayechi, Yaakov would make such a big deal of making Yosef swear to take him up to Canaan and bury him with his parents. Yaakov had a guarantee from Hashem. Why was he so concerned about this that he summoned Yosef?

The simple answer, of course, is that one does not rely on miracles and is supposed to do what he can to achieve things. Yaakov therefore reached out to the son most likely to be able to achieve his burial back at home, and urged him to take care of this matter.

However, though Yaakov was promised that he would be buried in Canaan, and that Yosef would not die in his lifetime, Yaakov was still concerned for Yosef's welfare. Of all Yaakov's children, Yosef was the one most integrated into Egyptian society, and it would be hardest for him to escape it. Yaakov was concerned about Yosef's spiritual wellbeing.

Therefore, though Hashem had promised that Yaakov would be buried in Chevron, he wished for that to come to fruition through Yosef. This would serve as an opportunity for Yaakov to ensure that Yosef was able to leave the country. Since Hashem promised Yaakov would go, if he asked Yosef to be the one to fulfill that promise, it would give Yosef an opportunity he might not otherwise have.

We find a fantastic lesson in this. Hashem has His plans and they will be carried out. We, however, can choose to be part of them or not. And this is something to choose carefully. We should choose to be part of the good that will happen, even if we don't know we'll succeed. We can try to teach and help and support others. Even if we aren't successful, we will have chosen wisely. At the same time, when it comes to meting out punishment or revenge, we can step back and leave that to Hashem, as if it is meant to be it will happen, but we needn't be part of it. Choose your battles carefully, for though victory or defeat are not in your hands, you can decide to be on the side of right.

R' Elazar Menachem Schach zt"l, the Ponevizher Rosh Yeshiva, was once speaking to a young man who was getting married. The fellow was an

orphan and it was very difficult for him not to have his parents with him at this time. R' Schach said, "Let me tell you my story:

When I got married and lived in Europe, most of my friends had in-laws who were able to provide them with a house and a financial stipend so they could learn Torah without worry. Neither my wife's parents nor my own had such resources. We rented an apartment.

When Hitler ym"s came to power, we all wondered what would happen. Those with homes waited in hopes that our area would be spared. As my wife and I had no home, no resources, and little to keep us in Europe, we came to Eretz Yisrael and were saved. Sometimes the lack we feel so acutely is the best thing that could have happened to us." © 2022 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

Cross-Currents

Imagine the emotions of Yosef's brothers at the start of the parsha. They have been grievously treated by Tzafnas Pa'ene'ach, the Egyptian king's viceroy, who accused them falsely of being spies, then insisted that they bring their youngest brother Binyamin to him from Cna'an, even after being informed of how their father would be terribly pained to part with the boy. And when they give in and manage to convince Yaakov to let them show Binyamin to the viceroy, and bring him to Egypt, they witness their young brother being accused falsely of stealing the viceroy's prized divination-goblet.

And when they offer to pay for the non-crime with their own imprisonment, the viceroy insists that only Binyamin be imprisoned and that they go back home, where their father is awaiting the return of all of them -- especially Binyamin.

It's been remarked that there is no word in Hebrew for "fair," in the sense of an experience being comprehensible as just. There is mishpat, or judgment; and tzedek, which is rightness; and hogen, implying propriety. But even those words are limited to technical human interactions.

"Fair," in the sense of life making sense, isn't a Jewish concept. An Israeli expressing exasperation over a happening in his life that seems arbitrary or unjustifiable would thus be limited in expressing himself and say "Zeh lo fair!"

And if ever there were human beings justified in feeling that what has happened to them was unfair, they were Yosef's brothers.

But they learned soon enough that what they saw as unfairness was simply the result of their being like the proverbial blind men palpating the elephant. They were perceiving only part of a larger picture.

A picture that, in an instant, became clear to them, with the viceroy's two words: "I am Yosef."

We are seldom shown, as Yosef's brothers were, why the things that make us say "no fair!" are in fact, well, fair. But the equivalent of "I am Yosef" throughout our lives exists, even if we cannot recognize it. And in moments of exasperation at life's unfairness, we should remember that. *© 2022 Rabbi A. Shafran and torah.org*

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Solidifying Par'oh's Rule

A detailed description of the method by which Yosef brought all of Egypt under Par'oh's command occurs near the end of our parasha: "Yosef gathered all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan for the purchases that they were purchasing and Yosef brought the money to the House of Par'oh. And when the money was exhausted from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Yosef saying 'Give us bread why should we die in your presence for the money is used up?' And Yosef said bring me your livestock, and I will provide for you in return for your livestock if the money is used up. And they brought their livestock to Yosef and Yosef gave them bread in return f orthe horses, for the flocks of sheep, for the herds of cattle and donkeys and he managed them with bread for all their livestock during that year. And when that year ended, they came to him in the second year and said to him, 'We will not keep secret from my lord, that the money and the herds of animals have been exhausted to my lord, nothing is left before my lord except our bodies and our lands.' Why would we die before your eyes both we and our land; acquire us and our land for bread and we with our land will become servants of Par'oh and provide seed so that we may live and not die and the land will not become desolate. And Yosef acquired all the land of Egypt for Par'oh for the Egyptians, each one of them, sold his field because the famine overwhelmed them and the land became Par'oh's. As for the nation, he transferred them by cities, from one end of Egypt's borders to the other end. Only the land of the priests he did not acquire for there was a stipend for the priests from Par'oh, and they ate their stipend that Par'oh had given them, therefore they did not sell their land. And Yosef said to the people, behold I have purchased you this day and your land for Par'oh; here is seed for you, sow the land."

Yosef had to consider several factors: the needs of the people for food, the needs of Par'oh to control his country, the future of the Jews, and the emotional needs of all involved. The Mizrachi explains that, for a complete picture, the Torah returns to the first year of the famine before the brothers came. It was not until the end of the second year of the famine that Ya'akov and his family moved to Egypt at Yosef's urging. The Mizrachi also explains that the famine, as predicted, did not say that there would be seven bad

years in the Land of Egypt, it spoke instead of the famine being in the Land of Egypt and all the surrounding countries. Once Ya'akov moved to Egypt, the famine ceased in Egypt but continued in the surrounding areas.

The Ramban explains that the Torah begins with Yosef gathering the money of Egypt for Par'oh. The rest of the story is to help us see the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of Yosef. His plan placed all the land into Par'oh's hands, all the money and all the people also under Par'oh's control. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin points out that there is no mercy in judgment or politics. The Egyptians enslaved the Jews and made them work strenuously. They threw male children into the Nile to drown, and they created many orphans by working their parents to death. In contrast, Yosef knew that the Egyptians were to be slave-masters to the Jews. Nevertheless, though Yosef purchased the lands and the animals for Par'oh, he did not make the Egyptians slaves even though they suggested it. "Acquire us and our land for bread and we with our land will become servants of Par'oh and provide seed so that we may live and not die and the land will not become desolate." Yosef made them serfs on Par'oh's land, and maintained their freedom and dignity. The Meshech Chochmah explains that the concept of one man owning another was distasteful for Yosef. Yosef did understand that the people, however, needed a temporary solution, one that would apply for a short time, so "Yosef said to the people, behold I have purchased you this day and your land for Par'oh; here is seed for you, sow the land."

Yosef also demonstrated his wisdom and compassion for the people when purchasing their land. The Torah explains, "Yosef acquired all the land of Egypt for Par'oh for the Egyptians, each one of them, sold his field because the famine overwhelmed them and the land became Par'oh's. As for the nation, he transferred them by cities, from one end of Egypt's borders to the other end." Yosef understood that the people would begrudge Par'oh the land that they sold to him, once the famine was over. This feeling would be intensified were they to remain on the very land that they had sold yet no longer owned. Yosef redeployed the entire population, moving them to different cities within the borders of Egypt. HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explains that "Yosef's wisdom tempered the edict [to vacate their lands] by arranging that the residents who had always lived together remained together and found themselves still together with their friends but only in a fresh environment." The Or HaChaim differs, suggesting that one way to demonstrate ownership of an object is to move that object to another place. Yosef demonstrated Par'oh's ownership of the people by moving them around.

The Kli Yakar did not feel that the brothers would be embarrassed by being called strangers, as they were always strangers from the time of Yitzchak. The Kli Yakar understood that this move was done for a different time, not when the brothers would originally move to Egypt but later when the Torah tells us that a new Par'oh emerged who did not know Yosef. That new Par'oh would be interested in the ancestral land on which the people lived. He would then discover that each person had continued to live on his ancestral land and could show ownership for that land. Only the Jews would be found living on land that was not theirs, and Par'oh would use that as an excuse to confiscate this land from them. With this redeployment no one lived on his ancestral land and the Jews would not be placed in such a difficult situation.

We see that Yosef combined wisdom and compassion in the way that he ruled the people and served Par'oh. No good leader can be successful without both of those qualities. A leader must speak and act, but a leader must also learn to listen and feel. These are qualities that it is important for all of us to acquire even if we will never be in a leadership position. Compassion is a key component in midot. Some people are born with a sense of compassion and others must learn to sensitize themselves to the needs of others. May we each develop within ourselves the midah of compassion, and may we exercise it always with everyone.

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.