



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Vayigash 5784

### Remember Me?

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered December 21, 1974)

One of the most dramatic moments in all of the Torah comes when Joseph reveals his true identity to his brothers. It is not remarkable that he has to repeat the words *אני יוסף אחיכם*, “I am Joseph your brother,” twice. That is to be expected because the shock is too great to be absorbed all at once. What is rather unusual is that the second time he says it he formulates his introduction somewhat differently. Thus, the first time, he says: *אני יוסף חי אחיכם העוד אבי חי*, “I am Joseph your brother; is my father still alive?” The second time he says, *אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה*, “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.”

The commentators discuss the differences in these two verses. What seems to concern many of them is that the first identification is more jarring and unnerving to the brothers than the second, whereas we would expect the reverse.

This morning, however, we shall take both expressions as models of two kinds of self-identification of Jews, to the non-Jewish and to the Jewish worlds.

In presenting ourselves to the non-Jewish world, we can never ignore the past. Healthy and reasonable relationships cannot be established by an act of transcendental ignorance. Our people is steeped in memories. We are a people that sanctifies memories. We can no more let the world forget what it did to us, than we can ourselves forget. “I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt!” This coming year will mark the 30th anniversary of the liberation at the end of World War II. It may be thirty years already, during which a new generation has grown up which did not know the Holocaust, but the people of Israel will never forget.

I can understand why gentiles would want to forget. Those who were guilty, or who lived in the countries where the crimes were perpetrated, find the burden of guilt simply too onerous, too crushing, too overwhelming, to be able to live with the consciousness of that guilt on a day-to-day

basis. The new generation that was born after the Holocaust feels that it cannot assume guilt endlessly, and it is not fair to make them suffer for the sins of their fathers. At times, I can appreciate what they are saying and what they are feeling.

I might even be inclined to accept such a reaction, were I to feel that the Holocaust had at least left some mark, some teaching, some lesson of value. But when I see the old anti-Semitism crawling out of the woodwork, as ugly as ever, but disguised as anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism, as anti-colonialism or as anti-Israelism; when I notice that French politicians to this day continue the policy of De Gaulle who considered us an “arrogant” people; when British politicians reveal their real intentions – in October 1973, during the Yom Kippur War a Jewish Member of Parliament arose and declared, “Israel is a steadfast and loyal ally of Britain,” whereupon Sir Alec Douglas-Home retorted, “if that is what you think, then you are neither”...; When the United States can tolerate a General Brown as its chief military officer – then it is time for us to turn to the world and say: *אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה*. Remember me? I am the Jew, the Joseph, whom you attacked in pagan Rome as a lazy parasite, and in the empires of Christendom as a pagan renegade; whom you harassed and tormented in crusades and inquisitions, in pogroms and in holocausts; by Fascists and Communists, Leftists and Rightists, atheists and saints. *אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה*. It is the selling into Egypt all over again.

Remember me! And think carefully before you lightly undertake a flirtation with bigotry again. It may be thirty years since the Holocaust, but it is only thirty years since the Holocaust...

Yet, in confronting the gentile world with the memories of the Holocaust, we should not necessarily always appear in a mournful and baleful guise. When Joseph told his brothers that “I am the one whom you sold into Egypt,” he was not whining resentfully. What he was saying is: despite all

your best efforts, I am still around!

Richard Reeves, in an important article in the current issue of New York Magazine, has the following to say:

*The Holocaust, six million murdered Jews, has as much meaning to most Americans as visions of the Japanese as slant-eyed pilots diving towards Pearl Harbor... Sleep and rain wash away all things – the Jews here are no longer victims. One does not instinctively feel sorry for his dentist or for the chairman of CBS.*

So, our self-identification as the Joseph אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה, "whom you sold into Egypt," must be positive as well as negative: you did it to us once, twice, a hundred times before – but never again, no more! Whether it is the PLO or the Third World or the Communists or the Sadat's or the Fahmi's and their incomparable insolence, we are here and we are here to stay!

Not only that, but even though our presence is interpreted by the world as a threat to peace and as a potential source of nuclear destruction, we tell the Western World what Joseph told his brothers: you may not realize it now, but you will eventually -- כי למחיה שלחני לפניכם. Providence has placed us here as a way of saving your lives! Were Israelis not in "Palestine," you might have been strangled a long time ago by the Soviets acting through the Arabs in control of oil. Some day you will thank us openly for being in the Middle East and insisting upon staying there.

The other statement of Joseph's credentials is directed to the Jewish world: "I am Joseph your brother. Does my father still live?" We must appear to our non-observant fellow Jews as the bearers of the tradition, as ambassadors of Israel's spiritual heritage. We must remind them that we are not only brothers – ethnically allied – but that we share a common spiritual patrimony, we have a mutual father. We must never let up in our efforts to educate fellow Jews in Judaism.

It is this time of the year when we suffer the usual depression, realizing the extent to which assimilation has insinuated itself into our children's lives. This past week I was coming down the elevator from my study, together with a meshulach, a white-bearded Israeli rabbi. The elevator was full of little nursery school children, all of them from Jewish homes. As soon as they saw him, they gleefully cried out, "Santa Claus, Santa Claus!" Regretfully, the old man flustered and came up with the wrong reaction. In his broken English, he said, "No, no, I am not Santa Claus, I am a businessman." What he should have said is, in a manner understandable to children that age, אני יוסף אחיכם, I am your brother, I am a Jew just like you are! Not all Jews have to look like WASPS, not all Jews

must look like tired middle-aged businessmen, or college professors, or suburbanites on a Sunday afternoon. I am a rabbi, and you had better learn what a Jew, a rabbi, looks like. העוד אבי חי. This is what my father and his father – and what your great-grandparents – looked like. You must, if not look like them, at least live like them..."

But that is not the only source to which is directed that disconcerting and unnerving question, העוד אבי חי, "Is my father yet alive?" I fear that it is directed with brutal immediacy at Orthodox Jews as well.

It gives me great pain and anguish to discuss what I now am about to mention, but I fear that should I refrain from doing so, that would be an abdication of my moral responsibility. I refer to the scandal in the nursing home industry which has been appearing on the pages of the New York Times and other newspapers, as well as other branches of the media, for the last several weeks. I know that you are bewildered. I too am bewildered, and I do not know if I can offer you guidance. But let me at least invite you to share with me some of my personal reactions.

First, we must beware from joining a hanging jury before the verdict is in or even the indictment legally prepared. Newspapers cannot convict, and such information has known to be faulty in the past. Jewish law and civil law and simple ethics all teach us: you do not hold a man guilty until you have corroborated and established the facts of his guilt. Let no one be a hangman whose own neck itches. Furthermore – although this is apparently not relevant to the issue at hand—we must make a difference between one who is guilty of a single wrong act, and one who is enmeshed in a whole pattern of systematic corruption. A man may be guilty of one crime or one misdemeanor, but we should not rush therefore to condemn him in public. כי אדם אין צדיק בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא. There is no one who is wholly innocent. Let us not be too impetuous in rendering judgment.

Second, we must beware, and make others aware, of generalizations. Because one or two or five or a thousand Jews do something wrong is no reason to blame all Jews. Because one or two or five or a hundred Orthodox Jews sin, is no reason to hold all Orthodoxy guilty. האיש אחד יחטא ועל כל העדה תקצור. "If one man sins, shall You be furious with the entire congregation?" The media have generally been restrained in dealing with the current scandal. Yet there are occasional slips, and when I see someone who is accused of wrong-doing described as "Orthodox," I am annoyed. How often is a mugger identified in the press as Black, a rapist as a Puerto Rican, a pickpocket as Episcopalian?

Third, the statement of the Reform congregational body, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, blasting the accused, seemed to me somewhat offensive in that it was overly defensive. I was somewhat amused by a group such as the Reform, which consider themselves thoroughly American, completely at home in this country, feeling constrained to dissociate themselves from other Jews who are accused of wrong-doing. Did the Pope apologize to Archbishop Capucci, who smuggled arms to the PLO in Israel to kill Jews? He did not; he even defended him indirectly! Does the President of Italy apologize to the President of America for the Mafia? Does Rev. Graham apologize for President Nixon?

And yet, despite all, speaking only in the family, as it were, who of us does not feel tainted? Who of us does not feel embarrassed to the roots of his being?

Our house is not in order. It has not been in order for a long time. We were all too lax in failing to inspect the credentials of those we permitted to take the reigns of leadership. And that holds true not only for one individual or one industry, but, may God have mercy upon us, for many other areas as well!

I now can hear the reproach of Joseph rolling down like distant peals of thunder through the ages, becoming deafeningly louder as it approaches us and ultimately envelops us: אני יוסף אחיכם, I am your brother Joseph! Remember me? Remember the Joseph who resisted temptation even when he could have gotten away with it? העוד אבי חי -- does my father yet live? Is my father Jacob still alive for you – that Jacob who was a זקן, an old man, sick and infirm, and whom you treated callously and for which you suffered? An old man who, like other elderly, ought to

## Can We All Get Along?

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l

In the beginning of this week's parsha, Yehudah pleads with Yosef not to incarcerate Binyomin, in whose bag the missing goblet was found, but to take him, Yehudah, as a servant, instead. Yehudah argues that going back to his father without Binyomin will cause his father to die, due to the strong connection they shared. The Torah tells us that Yosef, on the verge of tears, could no longer restrain his emotions, and cleared the room of all those others who were standing before him, before revealing his true identity to his brothers. He then cries and tells them that he is Yosef, and asks if his father is, in fact, still alive, as they had indicated. Seeing that they were frightened, Yosef tells

be treated with deference and tenderness, not ignored and defrauded?

העוד אבי חי -- is שבשמים, our Heavenly Father, alive for you, He who taught and teaches and always will teach צדקה ומשפט (justice and righteousness) and חסד (love) and מוסר (ethics) and דינא דמלכותא (the obligation of the Jew to respect the laws of the country)? Has your Judaism ossified into rite and rote, into mere cult, with no moral passion and no ethical dimension, and no sense of a living God? העוד אבי חי? Can we continue as we have continued, when all the labor and effort we have put into building Jewish life in this country, especially the Torah community, is undone because we are struck with such Hillul Hashem instead of arriving at a state of Kiddush Hashem?

So we must not be impetuous in passing judgment. We must never condemn before the facts are in. But the כבוד, the dignity of Orthodoxy and Torah, takes precedence over individuals. במקום שיש חילול השם אין חולקין כבוד לרב. Where the desecration of the Divine Name is concerned, no individual can deter us from our task. We must resolve that in the future we shall never allow principle to be sacrificed for expediency.

So as we read today's Sidra and Joseph's immortal words אני יוסף אחיכם, we know that these words are still relevant and germane to non-Jews, to other Jews, and to ourselves.

"I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt," and never again will we allow that to occur.

"I am your brother Joseph, is my father yet alive?"; we shall hope and pray – and even more, strive and labor – to deserve the answer and hear it loud and clear: עוד אבינו חי, our Father yet lives!

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them to draw close to him, and, when they do, he says, "I am Yosef your brother whom you sold to Egypt" (Bereishis 45:4). A number of commentators ask why Yosef, who was trying to reconcile with his brothers, would bring up the sore point of their having sold him into slavery. He had other ways of proving his true identity, as the midrash notes, such as speaking in Hebrew, or, more specifically, as pointed out by Rabbi Nosson Adler in his Nesinah LeGer, the dialect of Hebrew that his family spoke, so he did not need to mention that painful episode merely to give a proof of his identity. Why, then, did he refer to that event?

Avivah Zornberg, in her work, *The Beginning of Desire*:

*Reflections on Genesis*, writes that Yosef did, actually, mention his sale as an attempt at self-description, after seeing the initial response of his brothers to his self-disclosure. The secret of their sale was something that only Yosef could know, and, therefore, would serve as a certain indication of who he was. By also referring to himself as their brother, he was trying to mitigate any sense of shame that they may have had. In fact, argues Dr. Zornberg, Yosef's entire approach in dealing with his brothers, from the time they first came to Egypt to purchase food, was geared toward minimizing any shame they may eventually endure when they finally discovered that their brother, who they treated so harshly, was now a high Egyptian official whose policies and actions could determine their fate. Part of this tactic, she writes, was for self-protection, because he feared that their sense of shame may lead them to try to eliminate the source of their pain. However, Yosef was also filled with compassion for them, and genuinely did want to reconcile. Rabbi Raphoel Boruch Sorotzkin, in his *HaBinah VeHaberacha*, cites Rav Yerucham Levovitz, in his *Chochmah U' Mussar*, who explains that Yosef wanted to make things easier for his brothers. Usually, when someone wrongs another person, he is always worried that the wronged party will, at some time in the future, bring up the event and try to take retribution. Yosef therefore mentioned the event up front, and told them that it had worked out for the good, since as a result he reached the position he now had, and was, as a result, able to save the entire family from starvation. Rabbi Sorotzkin then goes on to explain other aspects of Yosef's self-revelation to his brothers, based on Rabbi Levovitz's insight.

What is common in the various approaches we have seen is that, according to each of them, Yosef's intention was to make the process easier for his brothers. However, there is another side to his approach which these commentators do not touch on, namely, Yosef's own feelings about his brothers, and what they had done to him. Rabbi Aryeh Leib Bakst, zt"l, in his *Kol Aryeh*, writes that Yosef, in his comportment with his brothers, was teaching us the 'Toras HaNigzal,' meaning, the proper way for someone who has been robbed, or, as in Yosef's case, kidnapped, to act. Just as there are laws in the Torah regarding a robber, so too there are guidelines in regard to the one who was robbed, and a person who was wronged by another should not think that he can vent his anger against the offending party without limit. Our master teacher in this area of Torah, says Rabbi Bakst, is Yosef. Rather than acting out of vengeance towards his brothers,

he viewed his predicament as being overseen by God, for his own benefit as well as for the benefit of his family. Therefore, as Rav Dovid Feinstein has often stated, he actually had a feeling of gratitude towards his brothers for what they had done, and expressed this feeling to them in an effort to ease their minds after he revealed himself his true identity. In a wider sense, this attitude was to serve as a guide to the Jewish people in the future, in considering what happened to them in Egypt. The Torah tells us that we should not hate the Egyptians, because we were sojourners in their land. Thus, despite the fact that we suffered under the Egyptians, we also benefited from them, and should not harbor bad feelings against them. Following Rabbi Bakst's approach, then, when Yosef mentioned their sale of him to Egypt, he did so in order to assure them that he did not harbor any ill feelings towards them for that episode.

Many years ago, I was privileged to study the sections of the Torah dealing with the sale of Yosef, under the incomparable teacher, Nechama Leibovits. I remember her remarking at the time that this account, which stretches over four parshiyos in the Torah, contains all the elements of great drama. Perhaps, then, it is not out of place to mention the comments of the dramatist David Mamet in his work "Five Cities of Refuge", concerning Yosef's strategy in dealing with his brothers, especially since it conforms to the approach of Rabbi Bakst, and can serve as an expansion of it. Mr. Mamet writes that Yosef was actually undergoing a long process of self-cleansing, trying to rid himself of any feelings of hatred towards his brothers and of any desire to take revenge for what they had done to him. The Torah is telling us, according to Mr. Mamet, that such feelings cannot be ignored, but must be dealt with and mastered. Telling all of the others in the room to leave before he revealed his identity was, symbolically, a means of driving out any inner voices that may have advised him to take retribution. Moreover, since these people were his advisers, they may have urged him to treat his brothers in the same way they had treated him. When Yosef then allowed himself to cry out loud, in contrast to previous occasions when he suppressed his tears, he was cleansing himself of any bad feelings he still retained. Following this explanation, perhaps we can suggest that Yosef mentioned his sale at this time as an outer expression of the inner process he had gone through, ridding himself of any residual feelings. Although most commentators explain Yosef's behavior towards his brothers over the course of their journeys to Egypt as a means of bringing them to repent, the approach we are now presenting does not

necessarily contradict that one. Part of repentance for sins of man to his fellow man is the requirement to appease the wronged party, who is advised by the rabbis to accept that

appeasement. Yosef, in his process of self-cleansing, was thus clearing the ground for that acceptance, thus helping his brothers achieve complete repentance for their actions.

## An Upside-Down World

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur presented at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on December 24, 2020))

In this week's Parsha there is a seemingly innocent Rashi in *perek mem-hei, pasuk tes*. After he reveals himself to his brothers, Yosef says, *Maharu va-alu el avi, ve-amartem eilav, ko amar bincha Yosef, samani Elokim le-adon le-chol Mitzrayim, r'da eilai, al ta'amod*. And Rashi comments: Why did it say *maharu va-alu el avi? Eretz Yisrael, gavoha mi-kol ha-aratzos*. It says *alu el avi*—go up to my father, because Eretz Yisrael is the highest of all the countries.

I heard a great question on this. Haven't these words appeared dozens of times already in the course of this epic? Every time they go up—*va-ya'alu mi-Mitzrayim*. And every time they go down, they say: *r'du shama*. Time and again, they go down from Eretz Yisrael to Mitzrayim and up from Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael. It's very consistent. And suddenly, at the end of the narrative, Rashi says: *Eretz Yisrael gavoha mi-kol ha-aratzos*. So why does Rashi say this *avka* here?

I heard a fantastic answer. Who's been talking until now? It's been either the brothers or Yaakov. From their perspective, you are of course going down from Eretz Yisrael to Mitzrayim. Eretz Yisrael is their home, where they reside as a *chashuv* family of great importance. Mitzrayim is where they're powerless strangers in a dangerous foreign country. So it's clearly a *yerida lahem*. On the other hand, it's an *aliya* to go home where you have your house and family. But that doesn't prove that Eretz Yisrael is *gavoha mi-kol ha-aratzos*.

Yosef, however, says: *Samani Elokim le-adon le-chol Mitzrayim, r'da eilai*. Yosef says: It's great and amazing here! I am the vice president. I'm in charge. I have everything here. Come and eat the *cheilev ha-aretz*. Because there are so many more resources down here, there's so much more money here, and I can take care of you here. The secret to your survival is here. And nonetheless, even in the midst of saying all this, he still said, *va-alu el avi*, tell him, *r'da eilai*. Even though right now I have a hundred times more money and food here in Mitzrayim than you have in Eretz Yisrael. Even though we have more safety in Mitzrayim than Eretz Yisrael, he says *va-alu el avi*. I still

know that Eretz Yisrael is *gavoha mi-kol ha-aratzos*. Even though right now I have all the *gashmirus* here, I know that Eretz Yisrael is really higher—Eretz Israel is really the better place. That's the *chidush* of Rashi that Eretz Yisrael is *gavoha mi-kol ha-aratzos*. Even when it seems like it's an *aliyah* to go to Mitzrayim—where in the short-run your *gashmirus* is better off, Rashi knew which place was the ideal and which place was not. And Yosef knew it too. And I think your soul really knows this as well. I don't know what life was like once upon a time for our ancestors, but from the stories we hear about what it was like in Europe, it doesn't seem that it was so *gevaldik*. They lived from pogrom to pogrom, poor and downtrodden and depressed. They really felt it when they said *ve-sechezana eineinu be-shuvecha le-Tzion*. *Genug* already—we really want the *Geula*! Looking forward to going to Eretz Yisrael wasn't a big *kuntz* for them. They were in a very sorry state. You know what the real test is? What about someone who has it good where they live? Maybe their friend is son-in-law of the President. And even if not, they have other influential positions in the government. And they have lots of money and good jobs, big houses (bigger than in Eretz Israel), etc. But what's really up—*va-ya'alu mi-Mitzrayim*—and what's really down? How do you look at the world? There's up, *va-ya'alu mi-Mitzrayim*, and there's down, where you have bigger houses and fancier cars. Where is the *makom Ha-Shechina*, and where is the place that Jews belong? Where is the *Eretz she-einei HaShem Elokecha ba*? That's what Yosef knew! *Maharu va-alu el avi*. You must come here. It's necessary. But it's a *yerida* to be here, and it's an *aliya* to be there. And how did the Jews survive the *galus* in Mitzrayim when life was good there? They knew where they really belonged. And I think that Rashi is really speaking to us nowadays. He does not address our great-great grandfather, who lived in between persecutions by this country and that country, being hounded by the Russians and the Ukrainians, the Germans and the Poles. He's really talking to those of us in other places—where life is very good. Maybe there are good reasons you should live somewhere else right now. But what's *gavoha* and what's *namuch*?

What's the ideal? And what's a *bed'eved*—a place where you're stuck temporarily? Yosef is reminding us that Eretz Yisroel is *gavoha mi-kol ha-aratzos*. And we know what Yosef was famous for. *Yosef chibev es ha-Aretz*. He commanded the future generations to bring his remains back to Eretz Yisroel—*Ve-ha-alisem es atzmosai mi-zeh*. From him this mesorah went down to his kids, grandkids,

and their grandkids—until Bnos Tzlofchad, who are the most *mechavevos ha-Aretz* of anyone in Am Yisrael. Yosef wanted to keep alive the *chibas ha-Aretz*—remember where you belong. And we should all take a little mussar from this and remember the correct order of the world—what's really on top, what's really on bottom, and where we belong. Shabbat Shalom.

## Ramban on Our Parshah: Lessons from Yaakov's Ignorance

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Arriving home in Israel after their dramatic and emotional meeting with Yosef, the sons of Yaakov face a difficult decision: how should they explain Yosef's resurrection? The Torah reports (Bereishit 45:27), "They told [Yaakov] all of Yosef's words." But did they really relay everything Yosef said? Including the part where he said, "I am Yosef your brother, whom you sold to Egypt?" (ibid. 45:4)"

Ramban thinks this unlikely; they would have been afraid of being censured by their father. Yosef, too, did not mention it, because of his good character. In fact, Yaakov never found out how Yosef arrived in Egypt. "He thought that Yosef had wandered through the fields, and people who found him there took him and sold him to Egypt."

Ramban supports his read by highlighting what happened after Yaakov passed away: the brothers told Yosef that Yaakov had left instructions for him to forgive them (Bereishit 50:16-17). If Yaakov knew, then why didn't they just ask him to tell Yosef directly?

This perspective on the story provides insight into the brothers; it shows us their desperation, that they would use their father's name falsely to manipulate Yosef. And it teaches us that our great patriarch Yaakov was not omniscient. Avraham seems to know everything; Hashem

informs him about future pregnancies, Sarah's laughter, Sdom's destruction, and the fate of his future descendants. But Ramban suggests (Bereishit 27:4) that Yitzchak never learned the truth about Rivkah's prophecy, and here he argues that Yaakov died in ignorance.

Our world values freedom of information. Legally and ethically, for the sake of personal autonomy, we insist on access to the information we seek in order to make decisions; withholding information offends human dignity. Our economy is built on trading information, and technological advances in data access, organization and extrapolation multiply by the minute. Restrictions on information are tightly legislated and frequently challenged in the courts.

But Judaism is more conservative. Knowledge is power, but we cede power to promote tzniut (privacy), to prevent lashon hara (harmful speech) and rechilut (gossip), and to avoid embarrassment. We do disclose information when necessary to avert harm, but otherwise we prefer to keep our cards close to the vest. As far as Ramban is concerned, there is no offense when Rivkah keeps information from Yitzchak, or when Yosef and his brothers withhold it from Yaakov. Even when ignorance is not bliss, it may be best.

## Rav Soloveitchik on Vayigash: Great Grandparents

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider (Excerpted from *Torah United, Teachings on The Weekly Parashah From Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and The Chassidic Masters* (Ktav, 2023)

In most years, Parashat Vayigash is read on the first Shabbat after Chanukah, when we begin the long stretch until Purim, with no holiday stops along the way. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik recalled the cheerless post-Chanukah gloom he and his classmates experienced one day in their small cheder in Chaslovitz, White Russia. The young boys were chanting the first verses of Vayigash in a dull monotone, in Hebrew and then in taytsh, Yiddish.

Yehudah draws near to the Egyptian viceroy, whom he still does not know is Yosef, and recounts their repeated encounters. In so doing, he mentions that Yosef had interrogated them: "Have you a father or a brother?" (Genesis 44:13). The melamed, determined to break the apathy and indolence of the boys that morning, pressed them by asking what Yosef could possibly have meant. Doesn't everyone have a father? After hearing the pupils'

answers, he gave his own. Yosef wanted to know if the brothers still respected their father and thought he had what to teach them, or if they had become completely independent and cut ties.

Years later, the Rav extended this reading of the Chabad melamed to “have you ... a brother?” Yosef did not want to know whether they had another biological brother, but whether they thought only of themselves or of the future as well. Yosef wanted to know, “Do you consider future generations as well? Do you plan for the world of tomorrow, which is enveloped in the mist of non-being?” And their answer was affirmative: “We also have a bright, vivacious, talented young child, our younger brother, who represents the world of tomorrow.”[1]

This is a major theme throughout the Book of Genesis. The Rav expresses it this way: “What does Judaism demand of a Jew? A rendezvous between the av zaken (elderly father) and the yeled zekunim (young child). That is our tradition: a merger between past tradition and a vision of the future.”[2] And as the book comes to a close, this theme of the shalshet ha-masorah, the chain of tradition, or in modern parlance, “Jewish continuity,” becomes even more pronounced.

### A Man of Tradition

In at least one respect, the Rav thinks that Yaakov surpassed Avraham and Yitzchak. Yaakov was the ba'al ha-masorah, the guardian and transmitter of tradition par excellence. He crossed the fault lines that naturally set apart generations, and effectively imparted Torah lessons and values to his children and grandchildren.

(1) The lifelong teacher: At the beginning of the Yosef saga, we are told that Yosef was seventeen years of age (Genesis 37:2); at the end, the Torah reports that Yaakov lived seventeen years in Egypt (Genesis 47:28). The Rav is convinced that this was no coincidence. For seventeen years, Yaakov inculcated his value system into an impressionable young man, which served as his lodestar when he was tossed by endless squalls of adversity. After being reunited with his son, Yaakov spent another seventeen years continuously fortifying his middle-aged son against the temptations and excesses of power.[3] Yaakov never stopped teaching his children; indeed, they always “had a father” in the sense that Yosef intended.

(2) A long reach: Yaakov managed to fully transmit his tradition not only to his children, but to his grandchildren raised in a foreign country whom he only recently met: “Ephraim and Menashe shall be to me like Reuven and Shimon” (Genesis 48:5). By placing them on equal footing

with his sons and granting them portions in the Land of Israel, Yaakov showed that he had passed on the masorah to two generations. According to the Rav, this accounts for Yaakov’s frequent designation as “the old one” (ha-zaken) or “old Yisrael” (Yisrael sava) in the Torah, the Midrash, and Kabbalah. Although in terms of longevity he did not come close to Avraham or Yitzchak, the term can be used without mentioning the name “Yaakov” because he was the only forefather to reach across two generational divides.[4]

(3) Total success: As his demise drew near, Yaakov was exceedingly concerned about the continuity of Jewish tradition. He gathered his sons and voiced this concern. In unison, they responded, “Hear, Yisrael, Hashem our God, Hashem is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4). He responded, “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.”[5] We reenact this daily when we follow the Shema with Yaakov’s formula, and relive that moment when the preservation of tradition was reaffirmed: “In reading the Shema ... we enter the presence of those persons who walked with Him, we stand in their shadow...”[6]

(4) The Children of Israel: The centrality of tradition to the entire Jewish people is evident in our collective name: “the Children of Israel,” benei Yisrael. We are not called benei Avraham or benei Yitzchak, the Rav claims, because Yaakov most symbolized the masorah. We bear the name of the Patriarch who was the ba'al ha-masorah because it is our ongoing task “to receive, accept, learn, and absorb our masorah from our parents and teachers, and then hold onto it, guard it, and pass it on to the next generation. That is the essence of Judaism.”[7]

The following story told by the Rav about his eminent grandfather Rav Chaim Brisker (Rabbi Chaim ha-Levi Soloveitchik) drives home the cardinal importance of generational transmission:

*In Brisk there was a melamed who could only take on one additional student, and the choice fell between a father and his son, both of whom were in need of the melamed. The parties involved turned to Reb Chaim for guidance. The Brisker Rav ruled that the melamed should teach the son even though the father was also an intelligent man. This ruling seemed to contradict the Talmudic statement, “If he has himself to teach and his son to teach, he takes precedence over his son.”[8] However, Reb Chaim knew the personalities of this father and his son. Reb Chaim felt that the father was only capable of learning but not of passing the knowledge on to the next generation. The son, however, would not only be able to learn but would also be able to transmit the Torah to the generation after him. Therefore, the son took precedence over the father.*

This was in accordance with another dictum: “He who teaches his grandson Torah, Scripture regards the grandson as though he received it directly from Mount Sinai.”[9] In other words, the transmitting of the Torah from generation to generation is the ultimate goal of the study of Torah.[10]

### The First Jewish Great-Grandfather

Yaakov’s achievement as ba’al ha-masorah was emulated by his son Yosef, which is the greatest measure of Yaakov’s success. In the concluding verses of Sefer Bereshit, we find an overlooked verse: “Yosef saw the children of a third generation born to Ephraim” (Genesis 50:23). Yosef actually attained a higher measure than his father in this regard. Beginning with Targum Onkelos, the commentators understand that the great-grandfather Yosef helped raise his precious great-grandchildren.[11] The first book of the Torah concludes by teaching that Yosef had the ability to communicate the Torah’s timeless teachings to one more generation than Yaakov could.[12]

### Exploring the Rav’s Insight

The Rav consistently demonstrated that the worlds of Halachah and Aggadah may look different, but they are composed of the same elements. In the Rav’s mind, technical halachic directives could be reduced to fundamental building blocks. In the above context, the Rav contended that an integral part of the mitzvah of Torah study is the transmission of our masorah.

Rabbi Yosef Caro, the great halachic codifier and kabbalist of Safed, distinguished in his Shulchan Aruch between contemplating Torah and writing down thoughts about Torah study. The former does not necessitate making the blessings recited over Torah study if one has not recited them yet, but the latter does.[13] How is silently thinking different from making jottings, also done in silence? The Rav suggests that the very act of committing Torah insights

to paper makes them fundamentally transmittable. Torah study is primarily about learning, but is secondarily about teaching, so as to preserve it and to inform others. The Rambam writes about the mitzvah of Torah study: “we have been commanded to learn Torah and to teach it to others.”[14] The Torah teaches this mitzvah in the context of passing on its teachings to the next generation.[15]

The Rav life’s mission, which he triumphantly pursued, was to transmit the Torah of a lost world to the post-Holocaust generation in the new world of America. He would often humbly remark that his role was to be a melamed, to impart Torah wisdom to his students. Like Yaakov and Yosef before him, he reached out and bridged countless generations. As one of the most effective ba’alei ha-masorah of his era, he declared, “The unity of generations, this march of centuries, this conversation of generations, this dialogue between antiquity and present, will finally bring the redemption of the Jews.”[16] Undoubtedly, he was advocating for each of us to carry on his legacy.

[1] David, Darosh Darash Yosef, 104–105.

[2] Ibid., 106.

[3] Chumash Mesoras Harav, 1:350.

[4] Besdin, Man of Faith, 18.

[5] Pesachim 56a.

[6] Koren Mesorat HaRav Siddur, 272.

[7] Ginsburg, March of Centuries, xxii.

[8] Kiddushin 29b.

[9] Kiddushin 30a.

[10] Rakeffet-Rothkoff, The Rav, 1:228.

[11] See Targum Onkelos, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra ad loc.

[12] Chumash Mesoras Harav, 1:372.

[13] Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, 47:3–4.

[14] Sefer ha-Mitzvot, mitzvot aseh §11.

[15] Schacter, Mi-Peninei ha-Rav, 27.

[16] Ginsburg, March of Centuries, xxiv.

## Effective Communication

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman

At the end of *Parshat Mikketz*, Joseph frames Benjamin and threatens to detain him. In a pivotal moment at the beginning of *Parshat Vayigash*, Judah delivers an impassioned plea to the viceroy, entreating for Benjamin to be spared. Judah’s oration is a masterful model of persuasion, providing invaluable lessons for effective communication.

The opening word “*vayigash*” means to approach or to come near. One implication of the phrase is

that Judah is courageously stepping forward, taking responsibility. *Vayigash* also denotes a decrease in physical distance between Judah and Joseph. As two prominent psychotherapists note, Judah’s physical move has psychological implications. Rabbi Zelig Pliskin writes that by moving closer to Joseph, Judah nonverbally communicates sincerity and authenticity. Similarly, Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski contends that *vayigash* also implies that Judah speaks softly. Gentleness of tone enables his



message to be heard by Joseph.

*Vayigash* does not only figuratively connote responsibility or literal physical proximity but can also indicate an approach to the mind or heart. A Midrash (*Bereishit Rabbah* 93:3) links this Biblical scene to the verse in Proverbs, “Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out” (20:5). The Midrash provides a metaphor of “a deep well full of cold and excellent water, yet none could drink of it. Then came one who tied cord to cord and thread to thread, drew up its water and drank.” Joseph’s heart was difficult to penetrate and even harder to sway. It took Judah, a man of understanding, to apprehend and influence Joseph. Elaborating on the Midrash, Dr. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg eloquently frames Judah’s skill as a “pragmatic power to communicate, to influence, to shape the public articulations of private desire and perception.”

Without relating to this Midrash, Rabbi Nissan Alpert, a past Rosh Yeshiva at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, similarly writes that Judah needed to prepare mentally by “approaching” Joseph’s psyche. To reach

## Silent Heroes, Sacred Callings

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

**H**eroes everywhere. During our nation’s war against evil, heroes have emerged from every sector of our people. Soldiers, reservists, first responders of Oct 7., wives of soldiers, volunteers from across the world, and simple people of faith. Among all these brave warriors one quiet group of heroes stands out. Those who attended the slain victims of this massacre endangered their lives as well as their mental well-being in providing honor to those from whom it was so violently taken. As the horrific images so brutally demonstrated, many victims were badly mutilated and, in some cases, burned beyond recognition. The silent and strong heroes who identified and buried the victims afforded one final semblance of dignity to the dehumanized bodies which had once cradled human souls.

The silent courage of these heroes showcased how deeply we value the dignity of a human body even after life has departed from it. Showing final respects and honoring the dead is deeply rooted both in the ethics of Torah and in our life-revering culture.

The mysterious ceremony of “*egla arufa*” typifies the care and dignity we afford the dead. If a dead and unattended-to body is discovered, it isn’t quietly buried. Instead, the public ceremony of *egla arufa* is conducted

Joseph’s innermost self, Judah thought “What type of person is he? What makes him tick? What moves him? How will I penetrate his feelings and make my appeal successful?” Judah, having actively listened to Joseph during their previous encounters, noticed that Joseph repeatedly inquired about their father Jacob. Judah therefore strategizes that to influence Joseph, he should invoke Joseph’s pity for Jacob.

Professor Nehama Leibowitz similarly notes that Judah resorts “to every psychological and rhetorical device to stir the feelings of the Egyptian.” He purposefully repeats the word “father” fourteen times in his speech. His goal, in Dr. Zornberg’s reading, is to influence Joseph “by means of rhetoric, by emotional word-painting, to change a just verdict into one inspired by compassion” for a bereaved father.

*Vayigash* intimates the ability to understand the mind of the other and connect through empathetic communication. Judah’s courage to step forward sets the stage for the relational repair and reconciliation seen subsequently between Joseph and the rest of the brothers.

which includes confessionals by the leaders of the local towns. Leaders of nearby villages are held “accountable” because a person died on their watch, even though they were not directly culpable for the death. Tragic death cannot simply be ignored.

You would think that an anonymous John Doe discovered in a barren field would not justify a public response. Typically, unidentified bodies belong to people who inhabit the margins of society. When established members of society go missing, family members and neighborhood friends conduct a search. Presumably, the unidentified corpse described in the Torah is a homeless person without much family, who has long ago fallen off the social radar.

Yet, it is precisely when the dignity of human life is most vulnerable that it must be strongly reinforced. Specifically at this moment, when life can be easily taken for granted, the shared sanctity of every human being must be underscored. The public ceremony of *egla arufa* demonstrates that every human being is created equal in the eyes of Hashem, and each possesses divine dignity. By burying the unidentified corpse, we honor the imprint of Hashem within each human being.

Surprisingly, the midrash asserts that Yosef, in his first correspondence to his father, alluded to the *egla arufa* ceremony, reminding Ya'akov that decades earlier, they had jointly studied this topic. Evidently Yosef's referencing of *egla arufa* delivered an important message to his father.

Though initially Yosef was tragically ripped from his family and sold into slavery, he had now emerged as the second most powerful man on earth and was single-handedly steering a hungry world through an nightmarish famine. Joseph's prescient wisdom and tireless dedication saved millions of lives. By preserving life and protecting human dignity, Joseph was, in effect, implementing the doctrines of *egla arufa*.

The vicious assault of Oct 7 included numerous acts of horror and barbaric indecency. One of the most repulsive aspects of this massacre was the manner in which human bodies were treated. As if torturing and murdering in cold blood weren't sufficiently nauseating, the terrorists mutilated and dismembered lifeless bodies. Pure and unadulterated evil, destruction and violence for absolutely no purpose. Their grotesque crimes demonstrated how little they regard human dignity and how cheap life is in the eyes of Islamic terrorists.

Their dehumanizing crimes made our own response and our own gentle treatment of dead bodies even more critical. Our silent heroes including soldiers, Zaka volunteers and countless others who spent weeks identifying and burying victims, solemnly restored dignity to those who had been twice victimized- in life and in death. In providing this honor, many subjected themselves to hideous sights and unforgettable images which will forever mar their inner conscience. These heroes of human dignity paid a steep price in their sacred calling of providing honor to those beyond the veil of life. In many instances they operated under fire, risking their lives to restore dignity to lifeless bodies.

This quiet heroism underscores the clash of ideologies within this military war: a battle is being waged between a culture of death and a culture of human dignity. Between a culture which cheapens human life and one which treasures it. Our war isn't merely a military encounter but a clash of cultures between competing value systems.

Though these murderers speak in the name of religion they are nothing more than brutish atheists masquerading as religious people. They describe a god who doesn't exist. Denying the traits of G-d is tantamount to denying His presence.

We believe that all powerful Hashem lovingly created

Man and endowed him with divine like traits of free will, consciousness, and creativity. Our respect for every human being acknowledges Man as the masterpiece of creation. We respect this divine masterpiece even when life has departed from it. Hashem's divine image isn't limited to our souls but to the bodies which once cradled divine essence.

By defiling human bodies these charlatans scorn any notion of *tzelem elokim*. These violent beasts fictionalize about a god of blood lust and of anger, not one of compassion and mercy. By mutilating dead bodies, they mutilate the image of Hashem in our world.

By mocking human dignity these violent murderers haven't just committed a grave theological sin but have also doomed themselves and their cultures to failure and futility. Belief in human dignity isn't just a religious value but powers human achievement and human progress.

Through our G-d-given creativity we believe that we are empowered to improve our world and redeem it for Mankind. If Hashem is compassionate he desires human prosperity. If Hashem covets well-being we must be His agents to advance and improve our world.

Prolonged human suffering isn't consistent with a merciful Hashem who crafted human beings in His image. A culture which reveres human dignity is religiously driven to improve and advance the human condition.

A culture with no concern for human dignity provides little incentive for change, growth, or progress. When life is cheap suffering is acceptable. When suffering is acceptable, progress is stunted. By mutilating bodies these barbarians don't just disfigure Hashem. They maim their own society and dismember themselves of any real progress or advancement.

It is tragic but ironic that terrorists spent billions of dollars building machineries of death. Terror tunnels have absolutely no ulterior purpose of function other than havoc and death. Instead of investing in human beings these bloodthirsty terrorists invested in death. How much potential and how much human capital was completely wasted in the pursuit of blood and revenge? How many lives could have been improved had the monies been spent on life rather than on death.

Our battle continues. They viciously defile life, and we gently protect it.

They dehumanize and we revere. They holler over corpses while we honor the stillness of the departed. They will sink into their own tunnels of hatred while we build towers of achievement. There is only one winner in this clash of cultures.

# Limud Torah, Our Survival Through the Exiles

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In parshas Vayigash, after twenty-two long, painful and productive years, Yosef and his family are reunited.

After Yehuda's passionate soliloquy to save his brother, Binyamin, from being kept as a servant by the at-times-cruel, at-times-kind, erratic and strange viceroy of Egypt, Yosef reveals himself to his stunned brothers. "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?" "I am Yosef, your brother, the one who you sold to Egypt" (Bereishis 45:3-4). Yet he reassures them that this was all part of Hashem's master plan, and he bears no ill will towards them: וְעַתָּה אֵל-תִּעַצְבוּ, וְאַל-יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם, כִּי-מִכְרַתְּם אֹתִי, הִנֵּה כִּי לְמַחְיָהּ, שָׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹקִים לְפָנֶיכֶם - *But now do not be sad, and let it not trouble you that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that God sent me before you* (ibid, v.5).

Yosef instructs his brothers to go back up to Canaan, to inform father that he is alive, and to move the entire family - Yaakov ish u'vaiso - down to Egypt, where Yosef will settle them in Goshen and provide for them during the coming years of famine.

To prepare for his arrival in, and move to, Egypt, Yaakov sends his son Yehuda ahead of him: וְאֶת יְהוּדָה שָׁלַח לְפָנָיו וְאֶת יוֹסֵף הַזֶּה לְהוֹרֹת לְפָנָיו וְיָבִאוּ אֶרְצָה גֹשֶׁן - *and Yehuda he sent before him to Yosef, to instruct ahead of him in Goshen; and they came to the land of Goshen* (46:28).

For what purpose did Yaakov send Yehuda ahead of him, and to prepare and instruct what in Goshen?

Rashi, quoting the Medrash, teaches: לְפָנָיו קָדָם שֶׁיָּנִיעַ לְשָׂם. וּמְדַרְשׁ אַגְדָּה לְהוֹרֹת לְפָנָיו - לְתַקֵּן לוֹ בֵּית תְּלִמּוּד שֶׁמִּשָּׁם תֵּצֵא הוֹרָאָה - Before he (Yaakov) would arrive there. And the Midrashic teaching explains that לְהוֹרֹת לְפָנָיו is from the lashon 'to teach, to instruct', for Yaakov sent Yehuda ahead of him to establish for him a beis talmud, a house of study, from which instruction would go forth.

And only once the yeshiva was established, did Yaakov descend to Egypt, and then we are told that Yosef harnessed his chariot and went up to meet his father, Yisrael, in Goshen (v.29).

When Rav Yaakov Edelstein zt'l (rav of Ramat HaSharon, brother of Rav Gershon Edelstein zt'l), was appointed chief rabbi of Ramat HaSharon, he asked the Chazon Ish (Rav Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, 1878-1953) zt'l what would happen to his learning (as he would have to be busy with issues regarding his new position, in a town with no yeshiva). "Open a yeshivah," the Chazon Ish answered. And so, the new Rav opened a yeshiva - Yeshivas

HaSharon - in the village.

The Israeli newspaper, Maariv, reported with excitement, "The inauguration of Yeshivat Ha'Sharon: It started with three students and today numbers one hundred. Its curriculum includes both Torah and secular studies. The students are living example of the merging of the exiles from dozens of countries. Here learn students from Kiryat Shemonah, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, settlements in the Sharon region, and even the Negev."

In the year 5713 (1953), The Chazon Ish visited Ramat HaSharon (he was sandek at Rav Edelstein's eldest son's bris). During this visit, he tested the talmidim of Yeshivat HaSharon and blessed them.

When Rav Edelstein taught Parshas Vayigash, he would discuss how Yehuda descended to Egypt in order to concern himself, first and foremost, with Torah study:

"Even before Yaakov Avinu had a place to live, before he had a bed in which to sleep, he vowed that he would have a place where he could learn. Torah study was the foundation. It is in countries where the study of Torah slackened that there was the greatest assimilation. People told themselves, 'Fine, so the children won't learn Torah, but at least they will put on tefillin and keep Shabbos.' But those things will not endure without Torah study. So the first thing I did in Ramat HaSharon was to open the yeshiva" (*Reaching to Heaven*, Artscroll Mesorah, p.57-58).

In order for our nation to survive - in every place and every time and in any place and any time - the establishment of mekomos for limud Torah are of primary, paramount and fundamental importance. Without learning, loving, and living Torah (chas v'shalom), our nation cannot thrive and persevere. It is the kochos, kedusha, and ahava that emanates from our limud Torah that fuels our nation and ensures our survival. These are the spiritual weapons necessary for the Jewish neshama to shine, and for us to fight our enemies who rise up in each and every generation to destroy us.

As Dovid ha'Melech teaches us: אֵלֶּה בָּרֶכֶב וְאֵלֶּה בְּסוּסִים - *these ones go out to battle with chariots, and these ones go to battle with horses*, וְאֵנְחָנוּ בְּשֵׁם-ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר, - *but Am Yisrael goes to battle with the name of Hashem in their hearts, minds and prayers* (Tehillim 20:8).

The Rambam teaches that if one is living in an environment of wicked sinners, who seek to prevent one from learning Torah, he should go out to caves, thickets

and deserts, rather than follow the path of sinners amongst whom he lives (cf. Hichos De'os 6:1). The Chazon Ish teaches that the yeshivos and batei medrash are the 'deserts' that the Rambam is referring to. "The only thing that we can do until Moshiach arrives is to establish one more Talmud Torah, one more yeshiva, and one more Torah shiur" (Mishpacha magazine, Chaunka edition,

12.6.23, p.224).

May our efforts in limud Torah be sweet before HKB"Y, may the Torah be a zechus for the shemirah for our brave, courageous, mighty and heroic soldiers, and may we merit the immediate and ultimate geula in our days and in our time, amen v'amen.

## The Secret of Jewish Survival in Exile?

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

In parashat Vayigash, the remarkable story of Joseph and his brothers draws to its dramatic conclusion. Joseph instructs his brothers to go up to his father in Canaan and tell him (Genesis 45:9): "So said your son Joseph, G-d has made me a master of all of Egypt, come down to me, do not delay."

In his charge to his brothers, Joseph conveys a very unusual message to share with their father Jacob, Genesis 45:10: וְיָשְׁבֶתָ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן, וְהֵייתָ קְרוֹב אֵלַי, אַתָּה וּבְנֶיךָ וּבְנֵי בְנֶיךָ... "You [Jacob] will reside in the land of Goshen, and you will be near me—you, your sons, your grandchildren, your flock and your cattle and all that is yours." Joseph then promises to provide economic sustenance for their families in Egypt, since the famine is to continue for five more years.

When Jacob hears the news that his beloved Joseph is alive, he prepares to go down to Egypt to see him. Dramatically, he says (Genesis 45:28): "How great, my son Joseph still lives. I shall go and see him before I die." Before Jacobs departs, G-d reassures Jacob that He will be with him in Egypt. The Torah then records the names of the "70 souls" that go down to Egypt, and Jacob begins his fateful journey. At that point, the Torah states (Genesis 46:28), that Jacob sent Judah ahead to Goshen to prepare for him. Ultimately, Jacob and the family arrive in the region of Goshen.

Why does Joseph set aside a special dwelling area for his family in Goshen? The rabbis speculate that perhaps Joseph understood that Jacob would be fearful of bringing his children and grandchildren into the environment of Egypt where they may be subject to the influences of widespread idolatry and other unsavory Egyptian practices.

Rabbi Yehudah Nachshoni, in his weekly parasha analysis, states that Goshen was the first "ghetto" in the history of the Jewish people. Rabbi Nachshoni further maintains that historians claim that throughout Jewish history it is always the Jews who create the ghettos in order to separate themselves from the nations of the world and

in order to live in a thoroughly Jewish environment among themselves. The gentiles "only" build the walls and the gates of the ghettos so that the Jews shouldn't leave the quarters that they themselves built.

Sometimes ghettos are meant to be a mode of protection for the Jews, but mostly the purpose of the ghetto is to seal the Jews off from close contact with their neighbors. And, since shepherding was not an acceptable profession in Egypt, Joseph probably saw the separate living area for his family as a way to allow them to freely pursue their shepherding in private, without offending the Egyptians.

Perhaps the most telling indication of the purpose of designating Goshen as a separate dwelling place is the fact that Judah was sent ahead to prepare for the family's arrival. A close analysis of Genesis 46:28 reveals several layers of meanings to the verse: וְאֶת יְהוּדָה שְׁלַח לְפָנָיו אֶל יוֹסֵף, לְהוֹרֹת: וַיִּבְאוּ אֶרְצָה גֹשֶׁן. *And Jacob sent Judah ahead of him, l'ho'rot, to show him the way, to scout out the best travel route.*

Rashi indeed writes that Judah went ahead to set things up, to clear a place for Jacob and his family, and to survey how to best settle in. But Rashi also cites Midrash Genesis Rabbah 95:3, suggesting an alternative meaning for להוֹרֹת—l'ho'rot, from the root "to teach," saying that it means that Judah went to establish for Jacob a "house of study" from which instruction shall go forth

By sending Judah before him to Egypt, Father Jacob basically establishes the primary guideline for the Jewish people regarding how they are to survive in galut (exile) and even in the Jewish homeland Israel, and that is to establish places and programs for intensive Jewish education. Intensive and extensive Jewish education is the lifeblood of the Jewish people, and has been so for the thousands of years since Jacob.

In the history of the Jewish people, there have never really been many periods of widespread Jewish ignorance and illiteracy. The American Jewish experience is one of the significant and rare exceptions. No matter where Jews

were, as soon as they settled in, they established schools. It made no difference whether one was an advanced scholar or a menial worker, every Jew was expected to study and learn. In fact, there were regular classes for different professions, including water drawers, wagon drivers and wood choppers, etc. While some of these classes might not have been on a particularly high scholarly level, it was the commitment to study that served as a vital example for the next generation, who were, as a result, able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and, in not a few instances, become serious students of Torah. In fact, the Talmud pointedly states (Nedarim 81a), הַזְהִירוּ בְּבָנֵי עֲנִיִּים, Be mindful of the children of the poor, for from them the Torah shall come forth.

Through over 3300 years of Jewish history, it has been conclusively confirmed that Jewish education has proven to be the most effective method of educating large

## Criticism With Respect

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

**P**arshas Vayigash begins with Yehuda's impassioned plea to Yosef, who served as the viceroy of Egypt, that he allow Binyamin to return home. Yosef had ordered his servant to frame Binyamin by placing Yosef's special goblet in Binyamin's luggage. When Binyamin was caught, Yosef ordered that Binyamin remain in Egypt as his slave. Yehuda, who had promised Yaakov that he would take personal responsibility for Binyamin's safe return home, begged Yosef to allow him – Yehuda – to stay in Egypt instead of Binyamin.

Yehuda began his plea by proclaiming to Yosef, כי כמוך כפרעה – “for you are like Pharaoh.” Rashi's first explanation of this phrase is, חשוב אתה בעיני כמלך – “You are as important to me as a king.” According to this reading, Yehuda opened his plea to Yosef with an expression of respect. He was about to present to Yosef all his grievances about how he and his brothers had been treated since they first arrived in Egypt. He was going to protest Yosef's accusing them as being spies, and his demand they bring him their youngest brother. But he began by expressing his respect for Yosef, by emphasizing that despite what he was now going to say, he still admired him and regarded him as a prominent, distinguished figure.

Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, in Tiferes Shmuel, writes that Yehuda's opening remark models for us the way we must approach people when we need to give constructive criticism. Whether we're lobbying a public figure, or

numbers of people, over long periods of time, to ethical and moral living. While there may be some small groups of people in the Himalayas and elsewhere, who, together with their gurus, live exalted and ethical lives, Judaism and Jewish education have been able to educate large numbers of people over long periods of time to ethical and moral living, and have maintained the Jewish people even during the long period of exiles from their homeland.

This is the secret that Jacob imparted to his family. It is this secret that has transported the Jewish people forth with strength and fortitude through all the travails and vicissitudes that they have encountered along the way. It is not the ghetto that preserved the Jewish people, it is the Torah.

That is the fundamental lesson. The rest is commentary. *Zil G'mor*, go and study.

May you be blessed.

giving criticism to a spouse, child, other family member, student or peer, we must begin with respect. We need to communicate to the other person that the complaint we are presenting does not undermine our respect for him or her, that we still appreciate the person despite what we are about to say. In Rav Berenbaum's words, חשיבותו לחוד וטענותיו לחדוד – the esteem we have for the other person must not be affected by the legitimate complaints that we have, and this must be communicated when voicing the complaints. When we express that כפרעה, כי כמוך כפרעה, that we genuinely and truly respect the other person despite the grievances which we are about to articulate, our criticism can be constructive and effective.

Too often, fights erupt because one party in a relationship “piles on.” When they have a valid grievance which they rightfully wish to bring to the other's attention, they start bringing up all the past history, all their complaints from the previous years. This is never effective. This will only cause hurt and tension. When offering criticism, it must be articulated as a problem that can be solved. It must not be spoken in a manner that expresses disrespect, hostility or resentment. Nothing beneficial will result from criticism spoken this way. It must be communicated with respect, with the clear message that there is a problem which the speaker wishes to resolve.

Dr. John Gottman, one of the world's experts on marriage, says that each and every time a couple fights,

there is a conversation that needed to take place, but didn't. Couples fight because one of them had a valid complaint or issue which he or she needed to bring up to discuss. But instead of a conversation, the couple fought. Complaints and criticism are part of any relationship. The key factor is the manner in which it is expressed, כי כמורך כפרעה – communicating with respect, in a way that preserves the other party's dignity.

Rav Berenbaum emphasizes that this is a critical

## Letting the Tears Flow

Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander

**T**hroughout Yosef's story, he cries. At numerous junctures and inflection points in the narrative, Yosef is suddenly brought to tears. As we approach eighty days of war, and as we mark the first fast day focusing on the destruction of the Jewish people since October 7, what might we learn from the teary-eyed Yosef?

Our esteemed teacher, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein of blessed memory, sees in the literary arc of the Yosef story a poignant meditation on emotional life. Yosef doesn't cry at moments of crisis: when he is thrown into the pit, sold into slavery, or thrown into jail. He cries as an emotional outlet. Yosef cries upon hearing his brothers express guilt for selling him (Bereishit 42:24), and again upon first seeing Binyamin after years of separation (ibid. 43:30). In both instances, Yosef ensures that his tears remain concealed, turning away from those around him and only letting out his cries while alone. There is certainly a tactical consideration at play – Yosef is not yet ready to reveal his identity and upend the machinations he's worked out for his brothers. Yet his repeated hiding reflects an emotional stance, too; Yosef faces a wave of emotional turmoil, with layers of nostalgia and frustration and desire and loss all surfacing together, and he insists on bottling his unresolved emotions, rather than letting them out.

Yet once Parshat Vayigash begins, as Yehuda delivers his moving soliloquy, Yosef reaches his emotional limit. He allows his emotions to swell and lets out a cry he had held tight to his chest for years and years, (ibid. 44:1-2).

There comes a point where our emotions break through,

message for chinuch, as well. When a child or student needs to be criticized, we must ensure to criticize the particular action or decision. If we say things like, "You're always a clown"; "You're such an underachiever"; "You're just impossible to deal with all the time," then the child will not try to correct his behavior. Criticism must be given with respect, the way Yehuda spoke to Yosef, expressing admiration and confidence in the listener's ability to do better.

when we embrace our estranged brethren in tears. Chazal teach that Yosef, in that moment of embrace with his current reality reunion with his estranged brethren, he cried not only for the reunion but for the eventual destruction of the two Batei Mikdash (Temples) as well (BT Megillah 16b). When we let our tears out, they may become a stream of tears for all the facets of loss and love, grief and hope, as well as brokenness and determination that reside within us side by side.

With the war raging, the losses mounting, hostages still being held captive – and most recently, the hostages who were misidentified and tragically killed by our forces – we have not yet been able to emotionally process and truly grieve the crushing catastrophes since October 7. On the contrary, we have done our best to hold it together for our spouses, children, students, colleagues, and friends, especially as the scope of the calamity continues to deepen, causing the wounds to open wider. But there is only so long we can put on our brave face without making space for the latent grief and fear we carry within us. In fact, as Yosef teaches us, it is the honest, vulnerable confrontation with our feelings that we and our children may need in order to move forward.

Opening ourselves to the floodgates of the tears is the means by which we open the gates to redemption. To be honest with one another and with ourselves about how we feel is not a sign of weakness, but of emotional maturity and strength. For it is those who sow in tears who will reap in gladness (Psalms 126:5). May we be among them.

## Haftarat Vayigash: The Mystery of Mashiach ben Yosef

Rabbi Tzvi Sinensky (From *From Within the Tent: The Haftarot, Essays on the Weekly Haftarah from the Rabbis and Professors of Yeshiva University*, YU Press, 2011)

In general, the topic of Yemot Ha-Mashiach is shrouded in mystery, so much so that Rambam famously cautioned against excessive messianic speculation. This is particularly true with respect to Mashiach ben Yosef, whose very existence is questionable. No pesukim clearly refer to Mashiach ben Yosef, rendering his legacy even more difficult to decipher. Furthermore, the narrative of Mashiach ben Yosef appears in more familiar rabbinic sources as well as eschatological chronicles such as Sefer Zerubavel and Midrash Vayosha. It is sometimes difficult to know how much weight to assign some of these more obscure texts. Finally, it is difficult to know whether to take the midrashim surrounding Mashiach ben Yosef literally or figuratively, particularly the sources that offer an incredibly detailed and fantastic account of the Messianic Era. For these reasons, our purpose in this article is not to craft a comprehensive portrait of Mashiach ben Yosef, nor to fully analyze his significance from a historical or theological standpoint. What we will aim to do is conduct a careful study of some of the classical sources on this mysterious figure, which will enable us to draw some meaningful conclusions regarding the legacy of this enigmatic personality.

The haftarah for Parashat Vayigash, taken from Yechezkel chapter 37, offers an uplifting vision of the unity that will be restored during the Messianic Era, a healing of the bitter divisions between Ephraim's Northern Kingdom, centered in Samaria, and Yehudah's monarchy, located in Yerushalayim. Dramatically portraying the peace that will reign at the End of Days, Hashem commands Yechezkel to take two staffs, one representing Malkhut Yehudah and the other Malkhut Yisrael, and miraculously fuse them into one. The two warring monarchies similarly will be reunited during messianic times.

At first glance the pesukim do not differentiate between the two staffs. Malbim (37:19), however, points out that in describing the merging of the staffs, Yechezkel first mentions the staff of Yosef and then the staff of Yehudah (ibid.). Furthermore, it sounds as if the staff of Yehudah is being grafted onto that of Malkhut Yisrael. What are we to make of these textual cues?

Malbim explains that the text is hinting to the two messianic heroes. The staff of Malkhut Yehudah represents Mashiach ben David, whereas that of Ephraim symbolizes

Mashiach ben Yosef. The prior appearance of the staff of Ephraim indicates that Mashiach ben Yosef will be active prior to Mashiach ben David. Since Mashiach ben Yosef will unify the people under his banner and only then will be joined by Mashiach ben David (as will be more fully detailed below), the pesukim depict the staff of Yehudah as being grafted onto that of Ephraim. According to Malbim's exegesis, then, our haftarah addresses not only the reunification of the two kingdoms but also alludes to the midrashic tradition of Mashiach ben Yosef.

This tradition, however, raises a number of thorny questions. As noted above, no explicit mention is made of Mashiach ben Yosef in Tanakh. Where does he come from? The very need for a second messianic figure seems odd. Is Mashiach ben David not capable of redeeming the people on his own? And why was the tribe of Yosef chosen as the progenitor of this second messianic personality?

Further investigation into the personality of Mashiach ben Yosef provides greater clarity yet raises further questions. One passage in Massekhet Sukkah (52a-b) in particular offers three foundational statements regarding Mashiach ben Yosef.

The gemara (52a) first describes Mashiach ben Yosef's demise. The prophet Zechariah (12:10) refers to a great eulogy that will take place during the Messianic Era. The gemara proposes two possible candidates for that eulogy: Mashiach ben Yosef and the Evil Inclination. The former position assumes that Mashiach ben Yosef will die, and that his death will be a source of great mourning for Kelal Yisrael. The gemara (ibid.) then recounts that Mashiach ben David makes a single request of Hashem. Upon witnessing the death of Mashiach ben Yosef, Mashiach ben David asks simply that he live. Hashem responds that David Ha-Melekh had already offered this prayer, to which Hashem responded positively. This second passage indicates that Mashiach ben David will witness the death of Mashiach ben Yosef, and that he will survive the cataclysmic events of Yemot Ha-Mashiach. The circumstances surrounding Mashiach ben Yosef's death, however, remain ambiguous, as does the significance of Mashiach ben David's survival.

Finally, based on another verse in Zechariah (2:3) and along with Eliyahu and the Kohein Tzedek (identified by Rashi as Shem, son of Noach), the gemara (ibid., 52b)

identifies Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David as “charashim” – “craftsmen.” Rashi (s.v. charashim) explains that both Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yosef will have a hand in the construction of the Third Temple. What is the significance of this partnership?

A number of midrashic texts ascribe to Mashiach ben Yosef a military role. Some sources (e.g., Agadat Bereishit 79) identify Mashiach ben Yosef as the Meshuach Milchamah, the “priest” who will lead the Jews out to battle. Yalkut Shimoni (Tehillim 621) describes Mashiach ben Yosef as “rodeh be-makel” – “ruling by the rod,” imputing to Mashiach ben Yosef a certain degree of coercive authority, perhaps of a military or at least physical nature.

Other midrashic accounts that elaborate Mashiach ben Yosef’s warrior role are perhaps best summarized by R. Saadiah Gaon in Sefer Emunot Ve-Dei’ot (8:5–6). R. Saadiah relates that eight years before the redemption, Mashiach ben Yosef will ride from the Galil to Yerushalayim, conquering the city from a heathen army. The Roman general Armilus will counterattack, however, recapturing the city and killing Mashiach ben Yosef in battle. Mashiach ben David will arrive on the scene, recapturing the city and reviving Mashiach ben Yosef. It seems fascinating that Mashiach ben David will revive Mashiach ben Yosef. What is the meaning of this event?

It is also curious that Mashiach ben Yosef is variously named “ben Yosef” (Sukkah *ibid.*), “ben Ephraim” (Midrash Tehillim 60, 87), and “ben Rachel” (Bereishit Rabba 70:5). What are we to make of these various surnames? More generally, what are we to make of Mashiach ben Yosef’s legacy?

It has been suggested that Mashiach ben David represents spiritual leadership, whereas Mashiach ben Yosef’s leadership is more physical or material in nature. This accounts for Mashiach ben Yosef’s role as Meshuach Milchamah and rodeh be-makel. It also fits nicely with Mashiach ben David’s clear superiority to Mashiach ben Yosef: The spiritual is elevated above the material. This account, however, strikes me as insufficient. Mashiach ben David too plays a significant military role, much as David Ha-Melekh was a first-rate warrior. Moreover, R. Saadiah Gaon (Emunot Ve-Dei’ot, *ibid.*) casts Mashiach ben Yosef in a spiritual light, claiming that Mashiach ben Yosef will purify the Jewish people in anticipation of Mashiach ben David’s arrival. Thus the spiritual/material distinction does not suffice in accounting for the two messianic figures.

To better appreciate our subject, I would propose that we paint the story of Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David on a broader canvas by reviewing the story of the relationship between the tribes of Yehudah and Yosef. As a brief overview will amply demonstrate, that narrative is one of tense rivalry and internecine conflict.

The rivalry between Yosef and Yehudah begins even before the two brothers are born: Rachel and Leah vie aggressively for Yaakov’s favor. Rachel is the beloved; if not for Lavan’s trickery she would have married Yaakov first. Yaakov’s love for Rachel arouses Leah’s jealousy, who names her second son Shimon “ki senu’ah anakhi” – “for I am despised.” On the other hand, Leah bears six of the twelve tribes, allowing her to claim the mantle of family Matriarch.

With the maturation of the shevatim, we witness the sequel to Leah and Rachel’s competition. Who will emerge as leader: a child of Leah or Rachel? And once Reuven, Shimon, and Levi are eliminated as possible candidates, Yehudah and Yosef emerge as the only viable contenders for the throne. Yosef dreams that his family will bow before him, and his father, at least at first, endorses his ben zekunim. Yosef ultimately rises to the position of viceroy of Egypt, apparently leading to the fulfillment of his dreams, although he never rules directly over his family. Yaakov Avinu blesses Yosef, “tiheyenah le-rosh Yosef u-lekadkod nezir echav” – “Yosef, you shall lead, and the brow of the elect of his brothers” (Bereishit 49:26). He also inherits the firstborn’s double portion, as both Ephraim and Menashe earn a share in Eretz Yisrael.

Yehudah, on the other hand, demonstrates his leadership ability on numerous occasions. He recommends selling Yosef to the merchants, and he ultimately acknowledges his sin in the episode of Tamar. It has been suggested that the incident of Yehudah and Tamar is specifically placed immediately following the sale of Yosef to hint that the latter section of Sefer Bereishit is really about the struggle for leadership of the nascent nation.

Intriguingly, at the opening of Parashat Vayigash, Yehudah approaches Yosef to offer himself in exchange for Binyamin, Yosef’s younger brother. Yehudah’s act of kindness toward Yosef and Binyamin perhaps foreshadows his revival of Mashiach ben Yosef as portrayed by R. Saadiah Gaon.

Ultimately, Yehudah clearly emerges from Sefer Bereishit with the upper hand: “lo yasur shevet mi-Yehudah” – “the staff shall not pass from Yehudah” (Bereishit 49:10). The brothers may have prostrated once



before Yosef, but they will bow far more often to Yehudah (see *ibid.*, 49:8).

Later stories in Tanakh weave new strands into this narrative. Yehoshua is descended from the tribe of Ephraim; although technically not a monarch, his position as unrivaled leader and heir to Moshe perhaps indicates that the pendulum has swung back in Yosef's direction.

That movement continues with Shaul's ascent to the throne. While the sinfulness of Kelal Yisrael's request for a ruler (see *Shmuel Bet*, ch. 8) casts a long shadow over Shaul's appointment, it is nevertheless significant that he descends from the tribe of Binyamin. David, on the other hand, is of course a scion of Shevet Yehudah. This perspective shines a bright light on Shaul's incessant attempts to assassinate David: Shaul's irrational hatred stems not only from a personal conflict but from a rivalry that has simmered for generations. A similar point can be made regarding the bond between David and Yehonatan: Their relationship is all the more remarkable in light of their families' bitter rivalry.

We now arrive at the First Temple period and the division of the monarchies. Yeravam ben Nevat – descended from Ephraim – secedes from Malkhut Yehudah and inaugurates the Northern Kingdom. The two kingdoms remain rivals until the exile of the Northern Kingdom, and at times the tension devolves into warfare (e.g., *Melakhim Aleph* 15:6, 16, 32; 16:12–13; *Melakhim Bet*, ch. 9).

Reflecting broadly on the development of the relationship between the two tribes, tensions seem to degenerate over the course of time: Leah may have been jealous of her sister, but we find no outright hostility between the wives. For the most part, much the same can be said of Yehudah and Yosef. With respect to Shaul and David, as well as the two kingdoms, however, violence is the norm.

In light of this history we can return to the narrative in *Yechezkel* with a fresh perspective. The staffs represent not only the reunification of two warring kingdoms but of two rivals whose relationship has been fraught with tension throughout.

Even more significant, we can now appreciate the true legacy of Mashiach ben Yosef. From a practical perspective, Rambam is correct: one messianic figure would have sufficed. Mashiach ben David could have captured Yerushalayim independently and Mashiach ben Yosef would have been unnecessary. Mashiach ben Yosef's role, however, is not practical but symbolic: The partnership

between Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David is a profound symbol of Messianic harmony. It overturns not only the open conflict between the kingdoms, but also the tension that had been simmering from nearly the very dawn of Jewish history.

Furthermore, our thesis takes on even greater significance in light of our previous observation that over the course of history, the relationship between the tribes had descended in a downward spiral. The reunion between the two messianic figures dramatically reverses the deteriorating relationship, miraculously restoring not only civility but even harmony.

We can now account for the anomaly that Mashiach ben Yosef is variously named "ben Yosef," "ben Ephraim," and "ben Rachel." Since the conflict originates with Rachel and Leah, these various surnames for Mashiach ben Yosef all accurately capture his lineage and significance.

Indeed, our thesis that Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David are symbols of peace was anticipated by Rashi and various midrashim. *Yeshayahu* (11:13) states that in the Messianic Era Ephraim and Yehudah will no longer be jealous of one another. Rashi understands this to refer specifically to Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yosef, explaining, "Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David shall not be jealous of one another." Support for Rashi can be adduced from the midrash (*Agadat Bereishit* 64; see also *Agadat Bereishit* 79 and *Shir Ha-Shirim Zuta* 4):

Ephraim shall not be jealous of Yehudah. But in this world, because they do not attach to one another they are jealous of one another. And so long as they [are jealous] they are in descent. But in the End of Days when they attach to one another they will be uplifted.

By invoking the term "chibur" (connection), the midrash clearly alludes to the passage in *Yechezkel* chapter 37. In doing so, Chazal anticipate Malbim's suggestion that the passage in *Yechezkel* refers not only to the two kingdoms but specifically to Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yosef. The midrash thus confirms our thesis that Mashiach ben Yosef is a symbol of harmony.

We can now more fully appreciate another dimension of the Mashiach ben Yosef narratives. Despite Yosef's previous attempts to usurp the mantle of leadership (as evident, for example, in his dreams and the Northern Kingdom's attempts to defeat the Southern Kingdom), Mashiach ben Yosef accepts his assigned role as supporting cast to Mashiach ben David. This is implicit in the aforementioned verse in *Yeshayahu*: The pasuk states that

Ephraim will no longer be jealous of Yehuda, and Yehuda will cease to be an enemy of Ephraim. The pasuk indicates that it is Yosef – not Yehudah – who will overcome his jealousy and accept Yehudah as his equal, if not superior. Yosef's willingness to cede the spotlight to Mashiach ben David further reinforces Mashiach ben Yosef's role as a harbinger of peace.

The symbolic understanding of Mashiach ben Yosef enables us to account for a number of the anomalies we noted at the outset. According to Rashi (Sukkah 52b), the two meshichim will collaborate to build the Third Temple, which will usher in the Messianic Era. This joint project concretizes their newfound partnership – what greater symbol of unity can there be than the Beit Ha-Mikdash, the locus of the Jewish people's collective worship? Moreover, our thesis points to a new interpretation of Mashiach ben Yosef's demise: perhaps more important than that event is Mashiach ben David's response. First he retakes Yerushalayim, essentially completing the task begun by Mashiach ben Yosef. Even more significant, Mashiach ben David's first act of *techiyat ha-meitim* is performed upon Mashiach ben Yosef. With this act of kindness, the reconciliation is complete.

The legacy of Mashiach ben Yosef, then, as so vividly portrayed in Yechezkel chapter 37, is one of historic reconciliation and reunification between two warring tribes and families, among whom it once seemed that internecine strife might never subside. May our generation merit to personally witness the arrival of both messianic personalities, as well as the peaceful era they so magnificently personify.