

B'S'D'

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS VAYIGASH - 5756

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Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayigash

- "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayigash -

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 36, Taxing the Community Good Shabbos!

Parshas Vayigash:

From One Son (Chushim), Dan Became the Second Most Populous Tribe

The Torah in the this week's Parsha lists, tribe by tribe, each of the "70 souls" that went down to Egypt. In connection with the tribe of Dan, the verse (46:23) says "And the children of Dan (were) Chushim". This verse has perplexed the commentaries because the verse begins by saying "u'Bnei Dan" meaning the children (plural) of Dan, and then it goes on to apparently list only one individual -- Chushim.

The Ibn Ezra resolves this difficulty by saying that Dan had two sons, both of whom were named Chushim. He had a first son named Chushim who died, and he subsequently had a second son who he gave the same name.

The Gemara in Bava Basra (143b) tries to use this verse to prove (in the case of a man with a son and a daughter who leaves his property to 'banai', i.e. -- my children) that one son can be referred to as 'my children'. The Gemara rejects the proof and suggests the interpretation of the verse means something totally different. 'Chushim' means (rapidly growing) underbrush. The verse is telling us that Dan only had one son, but that one son was like Chushim, destined for explosive growth.

In Sefer Bamidbar, we discover that Dan became the second most populous tribe even though the first generation (after the tribe founder) consisted of only a single individual. With this we can understand, says Rav Eliyahu Munk zt"l, a beautiful peshat in a Medrash: The Medrash states that in the Tanna, Rabbi Meir's sefer Torah, it was written "U'Ben Dan Chushim" (singular rather than plural).

The Medrash is not suggesting that Rabbi Meir actually had a different text in his sefer Torah. Rather, Rabbi Meir is the individual who is always 'Choshesh l'miyut'. He is of the opinion that we can never discount the minority. His proof is from the fact that from one small son (a 'miyut') of Dan came out the second most populous tribe.

Letting Needs of Others Take Precedence Over One's Own Needs

The verse (46:29) describing the dramatic meeting between Yosef and his father tells us "Yosef (personally) harnessed his chariot, and went to greet his father in Goshen. He appeared to him, and he threw himself on his shoulders, and he wept on his shoulders for a long time." The Ramba"n is bothered by the apparently extra expression in this verse which should be obvious from the context: "He appeared to him". The Ramba"n remains with a difficulty.

Rash"i was actually bothered by the same question. Rash"i says something which is almost impossible to explain. On the words "Vayera Elav" (and he appeared to him) Rash"i says "Yosef appeared to his father".

What is Rash"i adding? Of course "Vayera Elav" means Yosef appeared to his father!

Rav Leib Chassman, z"tl, suggests that we see from here a tremendous insight into the type of personality that Yosef was. This was a very emotional meeting after a long absence between father and son. Each obviously brought their own emotions, their own "agenda", to this meeting. Yosef very much wanted to see his father. Yaakov very much wanted to see his son.

The verse is telling us that Yosef was able to control his feelings and suppress the fact that he wanted to see his father by remembering that his father also wanted to see him, and therefore, that is what interested him. My own needs can take the back seat, while I see to it that someone else's needs are met -- that my father can see me.

This is what Rash"i is emphasizing -- Yosef was passive. He allowed himself "to be seen" by his father, for that was his father's primary interest. He suppressed his own needs for the sake of his father's needs.

If we look earlier in the Parsha, we see another example of this great attribute. We find (45:14) when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers "And he fell on the shoulders of Binyomin his brother and he cried, and Binyomin cried on his shoulder".

Rash"i says that Yosef saw with Ruach haKodesh that the two Batei Mikdash which would be built in Binyomin's portion in Eretz Yisroel would be destroyed and over this he cried. Binyomin saw with Ruach haKodesh that the Mishkan in Shilo which would be built in Yosef's portion in Eretz Yisroel would be lost and over this he cried.

Here again, Yosef is crying for Binyomin's needs and Binyomin is crying for Yosef's needs. But it is even more poignant -- Why were the Batei Mikdash destroyed? Because of Sinas Chinam (baseless hatred). Yosef, thus, was crying because he saw why the Beis haMikdash would be destroyed -- because of Sinas Chinam, because people don't care enough about each other. The healing process for Sinas Chinam is this very ingredient -- to cry and to be worried and concerned about another person's needs. That is why they cried for each other -- to preempt the reason for which the Temples would be destroyed.

Reb Aryeh was comforted on his way to comfort another

Reb Aryeh Levine, the Tzadik of Jerusalem, used to make it his business to visit mourners. His particular custom was that on Chol HaMoed he would go around just to visit widows. Reb Aryeh knew that during the year people are distracted and they forget their problems, but when a Yom Tov comes, one is left alone to remember past Yomim Tovim with family, one becomes depressed.

One time, Reb Aryeh went to visit a young widow with children whose husband, a Talmid Chochom, was killed in one of the wars that took place in Eretz Yisroel. During Shiva, he came to the door and was overcome by emotion and could not go in. He came back the next day to try again, and again he broke down and could not enter. In the meantime, the widow heard someone at the door, she opened the door and found Reb Aryeh Levine crying like a baby. She said to him, "Reb Aryeh if it was decreed in Heaven that I had to become a widow, at least I can take comfort in the fact that I lost my husband while he was defending Jerusalem." She, in this way, comforted Reb Aryeh.

This is an example of raising oneself above one's own needs and being able to perceive and address the needs of others.

Personalities & Sources:

- Rav Leib Chassman -- Mussar personality of last generation, author of Ohr Yahel
Rav Elyahu Munk (1900-1980) -- Rabbi in Paris, prolific author of many works, including the popular World of Prayer and a French commentary on Chumash translated into English as The Call of The Torah.
Ramba"n (1194-1270) -- Rav Moshe ben Nachman, one of the leading spiritual leaders of his time. Gerona, Spain.
Emigrated at the end of his life to Eretz Yisroel.
Rash"i (1040-1105) -- R. Shlomo Yitzchaki. Considered the commentator par excellence on both Bible and Talmud.
Reb Aryeh Levine (1885-1969) -- emigrated to Eretz Yisroel in 1905; noted for piety and character traits. Subject of book A Tzaddik in our Time (Ish Tzadik haya) by Simcha Raz.

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This weeks write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#36). The corresponding halachic portion for tape #36 is: Taxing the Community. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 for further information.

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From: "Ohr Somayach <ohr@jer1.co.il>"
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Date: 12/27/95 10:34am
Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayigash

* TORAH WEEKLY *
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros Parshas Vayigash
For the week ending 7 Teves 5756 29 & 30 December 1995

This issue is dedicated by Israel & Chaim Neustadter, on the occasion of the Yahrzeit of wife and mother
Sarah Golda bas Harav Chaim Eliezer Alter, Zichronah Livracha.

Summary

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are frozen in confusion. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself in his stead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so, he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother Yosef. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of Hashem's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov, with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions set out for Goshen. Hashem communicates with Yaakov in visions by night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that Hashem will establish the Children of Yisrael as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring, and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt where Yosef is reunited with his father after twenty-two years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Yaakov/Yisrael become settled and their numbers multiply greatly.

Commentaries

The Articulate Speech of the Heart
"And Yehuda approached (Yosef) and said `Please, my master, allow your

servant to speak in the ears of my master..." (44:18)

In Czarist Russia, there were times of hard decrees against the Jewish People. The Chafetz Chaim once went to plead against such a decree before a high government official. As the Chafetz Chaim spoke no Russian, and the government official spoke no Yiddish, an interpreter stood waiting. The Chafetz Chaim spoke with the feeling and sincerity that can only emanate from a heart as pure as his, and when he finished, a pregnant silence filled the room. The interpreter started to speak. "Your honor, the Jew claims..." The Russian government official raised his hand and said "No translation will be necessary...I understood every word..." As a result of this meeting, the decree was subsequently revoked.

Until he revealed his true identity, Yosef spoke to the brothers only through an interpreter, and thus Yehuda was under the impression that he didn't understand Hebrew. Nevertheless, Yehuda approached Yosef and wanted to speak "in his ears." He was aware that the content of his words would not be understood, but he wanted to communicate to Yosef the depth of his feelings, for it is the words which come from the heart that enter the heart of another.

(Based on Rabbi Yosef Dov, Rosh Yeshivas Brisk in Yerushalayim)

WHEN TWO WORLDS MEET

"And Yehuda approached..." (44:18)

Two worlds. Yehuda and Yosef. The world of revelation and the world of concealment. Yehuda is the line of King David, the revealed majesty of Israel, apparent and clear for all to see. Yosef is the majesty of Israel which is hidden. Yosef recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize him. He is the spark of Israel which is hidden, burning away in exile, in all the Egypts of history. The spark which never goes out. The eternal flame. Even if from the outside he looks like the ruler of a gentile nation, inside is the spark of his Jewishness, the indelible engraving of the holy tongue on his heart, even if he never learned alef beis. He is bound to his inescapable holiness, even when he is dragged through the spiritual sewers of a hostile world. Yehuda approaching Yosef. Revealed majesty meeting concealed majesty. Yosef. Like the deep waters of a well, hidden, sealed over by a great stone. Sealed by the constrictions of a physical world and all its cares. Yehuda. Like a bucket reaching down into the depths to draw up from him the pure still waters. To reveal Yosef to himself.

"And Yehuda approached Yosef..." The meeting of two worlds. A foreshadow

of the ultimate redemption. Yosef crying at his re-uniting with his brothers. When we cry for Israel, when we cry for all our brothers who are still in Egypt, when we cry for all the hate and the violence, remember that just as Yosef was revealed to his brothers in tears, so too, the ultimate complete redemption comes in tears. Then, the descendant of King David, the scion of Yehuda will gather us from the four corners of the earth, and he will rule in revelation, in majesty with head held high.

(Based on Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin, L'Torah Ul'Moadim)

I'll go first!

"I (Hashem) will descend with you (Yaakov) to Egypt, and also I will surely bring you up" (can be read: "also I will come up"). (46:4)

Two people standing at the mouth of a deep cavern. One an experienced and confident expert. The other, nervous and fearful -- his first descent.

Obviously the expert is the one to lead the way. That's what Hashem is saying here to Yaakov "I'll go first, and you come after Me, and I will be with you. And when you come up from the cave, you will go first, and only then will I come up."

Haftorah: Yechezkel 37:15-28

TWO CHIPS OFF THE OLD BLOCK

One of the ways that a prophecy becomes irreversible is if it is reinforced by a symbolic action. In this week's Haftorah, the prophet Yechezkel foretells that, in the time of the final redemption, the two halves of the Jewish people, symbolized by Yehuda and Yosef, will be brought together like two blocks of wood. Hashem tells Yechezkel "Join them together (so that they) look like one. They shall be one in your hands." (37:17) Even though nothing could be more separate than two blocks of wood, eventually these two blocks will become one. And even though only Hashem can perform the miracle of making one block out of two, for us to deserve that Hashem will accelerate the redemption, we must "look like one": The Jewish People must be united and free from malice and baseless hatred. For although the redemption is irreversible and inevitable, it is in our hands to delay it or to make it happen today.

(Based on The Midrash Says)

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

The Rock, from Whose food we have eaten - Tzur Mishelo Achalnu

Avraham Avinu, says the Midrash, utilized his hospitality to educate people to an awareness of the Creator. After the wayfarer had finished eating and drinking at Avraham's table and wished to thank him he would be told to bless and praise Hashem for the food had been provided by Him. In similar fashion the host turns to his household and guests and invites them to direct their thanks and blessings to the Divine Rock, for it is His food they have eaten.

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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PARSHAS VAYIGASH -- AGE-OLD QUESTIONS

12/29/95 Vol. 2 Issue 11

It was the ultimate encounter. Yaakov, the consummate theologian, meets Pharoh, the king of the powerful land of Egypt. What could they have discussed? The meaning of life? The geopolitics of famine? They don't. Instead, the Torah records that meeting as having to do with something quite mundane. Age. Yet that trite discussion had severe ramifications for our forefather Yaakov.

The Torah relates how Yosef presents his father to Pharoh. Genesis 47: 9-10: "Pharoh asked Yaakov, 'How old are you?' Jacob answered, 'the years of my sojourns are one hundred thirty; few and bad ones; they have not reached the days of my forefathers in their sojourns.' "

There is a Midrash that notes the bitterness of Yaakov's response and makes an amazing calculation. Yaakov lived to the age of 147. His father lived 'till 180. There is a difference of 33 years. Yaakov, explains the Midrash, lost 33 years of his life due to the 33 words that were used as he cursed his life's struggles.

The Midrash needs explanation. In the Torah's version of the story (and even in my loose translation), Yaakov did not use 33 words to curse his fate. That number is only arrived at if the original question "How old are you," including the words "and Pharoh asked Yaakov," are also counted. I can understand that Yaakov was punished for the words that he spoke: after all, he was saved from his brother Esau, his daughter Deenah was returned to him,

and he did leave Lavan's home a wealthy man. But why should Yaakov be punished for a question posed to him, even if the response was improper?

Why count the words that Pharoh used, and even more difficult, why count the words, "Pharoh asked Yaakov," which are obviously the Torah's addition? At most, Yaakov should only be punished for the 25 words that he actually used.

Though Rebbitzin Chana Levin the wife of Reb Aryeh, the Tzadik of Jerusalem, endured a difficult life she never let her own misfortunes dampen the cheer of friends or neighbors. During the terrible years of famine in Palestine during World War I, tragedy struck. After an epidemic induced illness, on a Shabbos morning, her beautiful 18 month-old son, succumbed. She and Reb Aryeh were devastated.

However, until Shabbos was over, there were no noticeable cries coming from the Levin home. The Shabbos meal was accompanied by the regular z'miros (songs) recited with the weekly enthusiasm. The children discussed the Torah portion at the table, and the Rav and his Rebitzen greeted their neighbors as if nothing had occurred. Reb Aryeh's own sister had visited on Shabbos and left with no inkling of the catastrophe. When news of the tragedy was revealed after sunset, her neighbors were shocked. "How is it," they asked, "that you didn't diminish your normal Shabbos cheer in the face of striking tragedy?"

The Rebitzen tearfully explained. "On Shabbos one is not allowed to mourn. Had we not continued our Shabbos in the usual manner, everyone would have realized the end had come. We would have destroyed the Shabbos of everyone in the courtyard, as you all would have shared our terrible pain."

In order to understand the Midrash one must understand diplomacy. Ramban (Nachmanides) notes: World leaders do not normally greet each other with mundane questions such as, "how old are you?" Yet those are the only recorded words of the conversation that ensued between Yaakov and Pharoh. "Obviously," explains the Ramban, "Yaakov looked so terrible and so aged that Pharoh could not comprehend. He therefore dispensed with diplomatic etiquette and asked the discourteous query. Yaakov's response explained why his appearance overbore his numeric age. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, (1902-1978) the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, explains why

the Midrash is upset with Yaakov. Had Yaakov worn his suffering with more cheer, on the inside, he would not have looked as old as he did. Pharoh would not have been astonished and would never have asked the undiplomatic question, "how old are you?" Yaakov was punished for prompting a query that resulted in open discontent of the fate he endured. And for that unfortunate repartee, an entire portion of the Torah was added and Yaakov lost 33 years of his life.

The Torah teaches us a great lesson. No matter what life serves you, do not let the experience wrinkle your spirit. One must never let his pain get to him in a way that it gets to someone else. Especially when you represent Hashem's word. Good Shabbos

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In memory of Irving M. Bunim Reb Yitzchok Meir ben HaRav Moshe -- 4
Teves by his children Rabbi & Mrs. Amos Bunim

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Date: 12/28/95 7:58am
Subject: PARSHAT VA'YIGASH

MAZEL TOV TO LAURENCE ('84) AND MICHELLE BERKOWITZ
(JERUSALEM) ON THE BIRTH OF THEIR BABY BOY.
MAZEL TOV TO RABBI ZVI AND SHARON RON (RICHMOND,
VIRGINIA), ON THE BIRTH OF THEIR TWINS, BABY GIRL AND BOY.
AND TO THE PROUD UNCLE AND AUNT - RONNIE AND Yael
ZIEGLER

PARSHAT VAYIGASH

by Menachem Leibtag

DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF YEHUDA BEN H'RAV YOSEF DOV.
DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF YECHIEL BEN SHLOMA
YITZCHAK.
DEDICATED IN HONOR OF THE BIRTH OF ALECK ZIMBALIST,
SON OF JONATHAN ('88) AND HILI ZIMBALIST.

Surprisingly, we find in the middle of this week's Parsha, the very same phrase which opens Sefer Shmot :
"V'ayleh SHMOT Bnei Yisrael ha'ba'yim mitzrayma..." (46:8)
This key pasuk points to a thematic connection between Sefer Breishit and Sefer Shmot. It is this thematic connection which serves as the topic of this week's shiur.

BACKGROUND - REVIEW

God communicates His message to mankind through "n'vuah" (prophecy). Each "sefer n'vuah", therefore, encompasses an aspect pertaining to God's relationship with man. Not only does each "sefer" of Chumash (the five 'books') contain a particular theme, those themes are interconnected and they progress from sefer to sefer.

In our study of Sefer Breishit, the first "sefer n'vuah", we have been discussing its primary theme - "bchira", i.e. how God establishes a relationship with all mankind through his choice of a special Nation to represent him. This "bchira" process, we explained, began with God's choice of Avraham Avinu in reaction to the events of Migdal Bavel, and continued with His choice of Yitzchak and Yaakov. It is concluded in Parshat Va'yigash with the enumeration of the twelve sons of Yaakov and their offspring - the seventy souls from which the Nation of Israel will develop.

In our previous shiurim, we have paid special attention to each "hitgalut" (revelation) to the Avot. Those revelations have carried the primary message of the Sefer, i.e. God's decision to establish a Nation from the OFFSPRING of Avraham ("zera"), in the LAND of Canaan ("aretz"), in order to represent Him among the Nations ("v'nivrchu b'cha kol mishpachot ha'adamah"). In this week's Parsha, we find the final "hitgalut" recorded in Sefer Breishit - God's revelation to Yaakov prior to his departure from Eretz Canaan. We will examine this "hitgalut" carefully, as it not only forms the conclusion of Sefer Breishit, it also 'sets the stage' for Sefer Shmot.

APPLYING FOR AN EXIT VISA

Yaakov hears that Yosef is still alive and immediately begins his journey to Egypt to see his forgotten son (45:26-28). However, Yaakov's actions at Beer Sheva, prior to his departure from Eretz Canaan, are rather peculiar:

"And Yisrael travelled with all that was his, and came to Beer Sheva, and he offered "zvachim" (sacrifices, peace offerings) to the God of his father YITZCHAK."

Not only is this the first instance in Chumash where we find the sacrifice of "ZVACHIM" to God, it is the only time where Hashem is referred to specifically as 'the God of Yitzchak'! Is He only the God of Yitzchak, and not the God of Avraham? In almost every other instance when the God of our forefathers is mentioned, we find mention of the God of AVRAHAM AND YITZCHAK (and Yaakov), while here we find only Yitzchak mentioned!

There have been many instances in Sefer Breishit where korbanot were offered. We find "olot" offered by Noach (8:20) and by Avraham (at the Akeydah /see 22:13). We also find many examples of the building of a mizbayach and calling out in God's Name. Yet, we never find "zvachim". [Note that in 31:54, "zevach"

refers to a joint feast between Yaakov and Lavan, not a sacrifice to God.]

How do we explain Yaakov's offering of "zvachim" at this time, and specifically to the 'God of Yitzchak'?

We will show that these peculiarities relate precisely to the special situation which Yaakov now faces.

Undoubtedly, Yaakov must be worried by the fact that he is leaving Eretz Canaan. The first time he left, he had little choice, for his life was in immediate danger (27:42-43). Now, survival in Eretz Canaan, although difficult, is still possible: food could be purchased in Egypt and transported back. Nevertheless, Yaakov resettles his entire family in Egypt.

Yaakov's father, Yitzchak, faced a similar predicament. During a time of famine in Eretz Canaan he considered resettling in Egypt, yet God did not permit him to leave:

"And there was a famine in the Land... and God appeared to him (Yitzchak) and said to him: Do not go down to Egypt, stay in the Land that I show you..." (26:1-3)

During that very same "hitgalut", God re-stated to Yitzchak his "bchira", as the reason why he could not leave:

"... reside in this Land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and your offspring I have given these Lands, and I will fulfill the OATH which I have sworn to Avraham (at the Akeydah)..." (26:3-4)

Although Avraham was permitted to leave the Land during a famine, Yitzchak, the CHOSEN son, was commanded to stay in the Land. Yaakov now fears that his departure to Egypt may either be against God's will or may possibly threaten his "bchira". Because of this precedent, Yaakov beseeches Divine guidance specifically from the 'God of Yitzchak', for it is from this perspective of his relationship with God that he fears his journey may be in error. Therefore, he offers sacrifices at Beer Sheva, the southern border of Eretz Canaan. [See Sforno 46:1, compare with Rashbam and Rashi. See also Ramban!].

The second question remains, why did Yaakov choose to offer specifically "zvachim"?

A "zevach", also known as a "shlamim" (see Vayikra 3:1, 7:11), indicates "shlaymut" - fullness or completeness. Later in Sefer Vayikra, we learn that one offers this 'voluntary' sacrifice ("korban n'dava") to express a feeling of 'completeness' in his relationship with God.

It will be helpful to note the other three special instances when "zvachim" are offered, prior to Sefer Vayikra, as they provide further proof to this nature of "zvachim":

- 1) Korban Pesach - the completion of our physical redemption.
- 2) Brit Har Sinai - the completion of our spiritual redemption.
- 3) Yom Ha'Shmini - upon the completion of the Mishkan.

1) Prior to the exodus, as Bnei Yisrael were preparing to leave Egypt, each FAMILY was commanded to bring a "ZEVACH PESACH L'Hashem" (Shmot 12:27) - a korban pesach. This marked the COMPLETION of the process of Yetziat Mitzrayim and our birth as a Nation.

[Note : in mesechet Zvachim, chazal tell us that the Korban Pesach falls under the category of "shlamim".]

2) The most interesting proof is from Ma'amad Har Sinai, when Bnei Yisrael offer "zvachim" in front of twelve pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. As Bnei Yisrael prepare to enter into the covenant of "naaseh v'nishma" at Har Sinai, the Torah tells us:

"And Moshe wrote down God's commandments, then early in the morning, he set up a "mizbayach" at the foot of the mountain and erected TWELVE pillars for the TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL. He then designated some young men of Bnei Yisrael who offered burnt offerings, "VA'YIZBCHU ZVA'CHIM SHLA'MIM l'Hashem parim", [and they offered "zvachim" - peace offerings to God]. (Shmot 24:4-5)

Here, we find not only the completion of a process, but also the highest level of "hitgalut"; and the unity of the twelve tribes of Israel!

3) Upon the completion of the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan, on the unique 'eighth day', once again we find a Korban "shlamim" offered to symbolize the COMPLETION of a process:

"And behold on the eighth day, God commanded Moshe & Aharon ... [to offer special korbanot including:] "v'shor v'ayil l'SHLAMIM l'ZVBOACH lifnei Hashem..." [an ox and a ram for a "shlamim" to God]" (Vayikra 9:1-4)

Therefore, Yaakov's choice of offering "zvachim" at this time is more than incidental. It relates to the very purpose of his descent to Egypt - to re-unite the chosen family. This unity of Yaakov's twelve sons marks the COMPLETION of the "bchira" process - the fulfillment of God's promise to the Avot. By offering "zvachim", Yaakov is not only asking for Divine permission to leave Eretz Canaan, he is explaining the reason for his departure.

UNITY PLUS ...

God's reply to Yaakov's offering of "zvachim" at Beer Sheva adds even deeper meaning to the descent of Yaakov's family to Egypt. God not only permits this departure, he informs that in Egypt they will become a great nation:

"Then God spoke to Yisrael in a vision by night saying: YAAKOV YAAKOV and he answered "HI'NAY'NI" (here I am)... Fear not to go down to Egypt, for I will make you there a GREAT NATION." (46:2-3)

Note the unique style of God's opening statement to Yaakov. It creates a linguistic parallel which points us both (A) backward - to the Akeydah, and (B) forward - to Moshe at the burning bush.

(A) "HI'NAY'NI" - BACK TO THE AKEYDAH

God's response is reminiscent of His opening statement at the Akeydah:

"... and God tested Avraham, and called out 'AVRAHAM' and he answered 'HI'NAY'NI" (see 22:1)

Besides symbolizing the ultimate in devotion to God, the Akeydah narrative concludes with a Divine oath: Yitzchak will be heir to the earlier covenants and promises which God had made with Avraham Avinu. Accordingly, in reply to Yaakov's appeal to the 'God of YITZCHAK', Hashem affirms the deeper purpose for Yaakov's descent to Egypt, i.e. the fulfillment of that earlier oath:

"... Fear not to go down to Egypt, for I will make you there a GREAT NATION. I Myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I Myself will also BRING YOU BACK..." (46:3-4)

God informs Yaakov that his descent to Egypt serves a two-fold purpose: (a) it will unify his family and (b) it will transform his family into a nation. Not only will the prophetic dreams of Yaakov and Yosef be fulfilled, but slowly the dream of Avraham Avinu at Brit Bein Ha'tarim will also become a reality!

[To appreciate this two-fold purpose, we must recall the difference between the two covenants which God had made with Avraham Avinu - Brit Bein Ha'tarim and Brit Milah. In addition to the promise of Eretz Canaan as a family inheritance (Brit Milah / 17:1-11), God had also promised Avraham that his offspring would first become a nation under bondage in a foreign Land, from which God would redeem them and then lead them, as a sovereign nation, to conquer the Promised Land (Brit Bein Ha'tarim / 15:1-21). Until this point, it was not clear to the Avot precisely how, when, or where this would happen. Now, God's 'master plan' begins to unfold.]

Thus, God informs Yaakov that Bnei Yisrael's descent to Egypt, although leaving Eretz Canaan, is not a breach of the Divine covenant with his family. Rather, it is a critical stage in His master plan of becoming God's special Nation. Now, the stage is set for the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, i.e. Sefer Shmot.

(B) HI'NAY'NI - FORWARD TO THE BURNING BUSH

Just as we find a linguistic parallel to God's call to Avraham answered by "hi'nay'ni" at the Akeydah, we find a similar parallel to God's call to Moshe Rabeinu at the burning bush:

"... and God called him from the bush saying: 'MOSHE, MOSHE, and he answered "hi'nay'ni" (Shmot 3:4)

But, God's "hitgalut" to Moshe at the burning bush contains more than just a linguistic parallel. It is God's FIRST revelation to man since the time of Yaakov's departure from Eretz Canaan! In other words, the prophecy 'picks up right where it left off!

Note the comparison between these two revelations, as it points to their thematic connection:

YAAKOV (leaving Eretz Canaan) (Breishit 46:2-4)	MOSHE (at the burning bush) (Shmot 3:4-8)
-----	-----
God called to Yisrael in a vision: "YAAKOV, YAAKOV, va'yomer hi'nay'ni" And he said:	God called out to Moshe: "MOSHE, MOSHE, va'yomer hi'nay'ni" And he said:

I am the God of your father... I am the God of your father...

Do not fear going down to Egypt for I will make you there a great Nation... I have seen the suffering of My People in Egypt and I have heard their crying...

I will go DOWN with you to Egypt and I will surely GO UP with you... I have come DOWN to rescue them from Egypt in order to BRING YOU UP from that Land to the Land flowing with...

[It is highly suggested that you compare the psukim in Hebrew.]

Just as the linguistic parallel is obvious, so too the thematic parallel: At God's "hitgalut" to Moshe (at the burning bush), He instructs Moshe to inform Bnei Yisrael that God has come to fulfill the covenant of Brit Bein Ha'Btarim, i.e. to bring them out of bondage, to become a sovereign Nation and to conquer the Promised Land.

[Iy"eh, the shiur on Parshat Shmot will continue this topic.]

FROM "TOLDOT" TO "SHMOT"

Let us now return to the psukim in Parshat Va'yigash which we were discussing (46:1-4), i.e. God's promise to be with Yaakov and his family during their stay in Egypt.

Immediately after this final "hitgalut" to Yaakov, the Torah describes the actual journey of the entire family to Egypt (46:5-7). The Torah then enumerates, in a special 'parsha', the list of the seventy souls of Yaakov's family:

"These are the names ["v'ayleh shmot"] of Bnei Yisrael who were coming to Egypt..." (46:8).

This special 'parsha'-'v'ayleh SHMOT" - marks the conclusion of the "bchira" process of Sefer Breishit, for from these seventy souls, the Jewish nation will develop. The process of "bchira" which has progressed by God's choosing of specific "TOLADOT" is now complete. The chosen family is now presented as "SHMOT".

This may explain why Sefer Shmot begins with the very same phrase, and its opening psukim (1:1-4) actually summarize this 'parsha' in Sefer Breishit (46:8-27). The first primary theme of Sefer Shmot is the story of how those seventy souls multiply, become a multitude, are enslaved, and then are redeemed, i.e. the transformation of the chosen family into a sovereign Nation - God's fulfillment of Brit Bein Ha'Btarim.

The remainder of Sefer Breishit (46:28-50:26) completes details of the inter-relationship between the brothers, their dwelling in Egypt, and deaths of Yaakov and Yosef, etc. Sefer Shmot, which discusses the fulfillment of Brit Bein Ha'Btarim, must begin where the primary theme of Sefer Breishit left off: "v'ayleh Shmot Bnei Yisrael" (Shmot 1:1-5). From these seventy souls God's special Nation will emerge.

shabbat shalom
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Ramban (46:1) asks the same question as we did concerning "zvachim" and offers a different approach. See also the Ramban on the first pasuk in Parshat Va'yetze where he mentions a Midrash which claims that Yitzchak's blessing of Yaakov and Eisav actually took place in Chevron, and Yaakov went down to Beer Sheva on his way to Charan 'in order to ask permission' from God before leaving (see Ramban on 28:12 towards the end).

1. Explain that Midrash based on this week's shiur.
2. Explain the difference between Ramban's approach and the answer suggested in this week's shiur.
2. Another Midrash in Parshat Va'yetze claims that Yaakov took twelve stones at Bet-el, which later united into one under his head. Explain this Midrash based on the above shiur, relate especially to the psukim in Shmot 24:4-6, and the connection between Mikdash and Matan Torah.

B. In this week's shiur, we noted the connection between God's blessing of Avraham at the Akeyda (22:15-18), God's instruction to Yitzchak not to leave Eretz Canaan and the ensuing blessing (26:1-5), and Yaakov's final "hitgalut" at Beer Sheva (46:1-4). We also noted their thematic connection to Brit Bein Habtarim (15:1-20).

1. Examine all of these sources carefully, noting the key words and concepts which repeat themselves. Use this comparison to explain how we were able to jump from the concept of family to the concept of a Nation in the above shiur.
 2. Relate to the phrase "'eykev asher shamah Avraham b'koli"
 3. Relate to the concept of "yirah" = fear.
- compare 22:16-18 to 26:1-5! / see further iyun section].

C. ARAMI OVED AVI - VA'YERED MITZRAYMAH...

From one perspective, one could view Yaakov's life as being primarily in Galut. His thirty some years with his family, living in Eretz Canaan could be viewed as a 'stop over' on his way from Charan to Mitzrayim. At a relatively young age, and before he is married, he runs away to Charan. Upon returning to Eretz Canaan, his life is very troubled: the incident with Dina at Shchem, and then "mchirat Yosef". Upon hearing of Yosef's position in Egypt, he resettles his entire family in Goshen.

Never do we find that Yaakov builds a Mizbayach and calls out in God's name (b'shem Havyah) as Avraham and Yitzchak had done, nor does he establish any positive ties with his surrounding neighbors. Neither do we ever find (upon his return to Eretz Canaan) that God speaks to him "b'shem Havaya".

1. Use this to explain the pasuk from "mirkra bikurim" - "Arami oved avi, va'yered mitzrayim, va'yagar sham ..." (Dvarim 26:5).
2. Use this to explain Shmot 6:2-4!
3. Use this to explain why the 400 year 'clock' of Brit Bein Ha'Btarim (see 15:13) includes the entire lifetime of Yaakov.

D. In Parshat Pinchas, a census is taken which was to serve as the basis for the final "nachalah" of Eretz Canaan to the twelve tribes.

1. Compare the family names in the census (Bamidbar 26:2-56!) to the list of the "shivim nefesh" which go down to Egypt (46:8-26).
2. Explain the reason for the similarities, and for the differences.

E. Yosef and Yehuda

In last week's shiur, we discussed various explanations for Yosef's treatment of his brothers. According to Rav Yoel bin Nun's approach, Yosef was not aware that his father had assumed him dead. His "shitah" is based heavily on Yosef's final 'breakdown' in response to Yehuda's speech.

1. Take note (in Yehuda's speech) of each mention of his father's understanding of the events, and compare them with earlier statements made by the brothers to Yosef when they first arrived.
2. What is the importance of the statement "ki shnayim yaldah li ISHTI", and "v'amarti ach tarof toraf".
3. According to our explanation last week, that Yaakov wanted the brothers to prove to themselves that they were worthy of re-uniting, did Yosef 'break' at the proper time, or could there have been another 'stage' in his master plan. If so, what would that be.

F. The emotional confrontation between Yehuda and Yosef at the beginning of this week's Parsha is symbolic of future struggles between shevet Yehuda and shevet Yosef.

1. Note that in this week's parsha they are arguing over Binyamin. How do the "nachalot" of the shvatim represent this struggle?
2. Relate this to the location of the Mikdash in the "nachala" of Binyamin.
3. Relate this to civil war against Binyamin in Sefer Shoftim (perek 20).

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PARASHAT VAYIGASH SICHU OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT" A

Summarized by R. Yosef Tzvi Rimon and Danny Orenbuch

DEDICATED IN HONOR OF THE BIRTH OF ALECK ZIMBALIST, SON OF JONATHAN ('88) AND HILI ZIMBALIST

There are two very moving moments in this week's parasha: when Yaakov learns that Yosef is alive, and when they finally meet. Let us deal with each episode.

1. "Yosef sent wagons to his father and when Yaakov saw them, the Torah teaches us 'the spirit of Yaakov their father revived.'"

Rashi, based on the midrash (Bereshit Rabba 94:3), explains that by sending wagons (agalot), Yosef was hinting to the parasha of eglu arufa, which he and his father had been

studying together before Yosef disappeared (agalot and eglu are spelled identically in Hebrew). The Yerushalmi, on the other hand, maintains that this was a hint to the wagons which the nesi'im brought in parashat Naso.

It is noteworthy that Yaakov and Yosef had been studying the parasha of eglu arufa at their last meeting, since by accompanying Yosef out of the city, Yaakov had been fulfilling what was demanded by the law of eglu arufa. In the circumstances of eglu arufa, the elders can state that their "hands did not spill this blood" only if they provided the victim food and accompanied him out of the city. Otherwise, in his loneliness and desperation, he might have attacked someone and been killed. Yaakov, in order to alleviate his son's loneliness, especially in light of his relations with his brothers, accompanied Yosef out of the city. Yaakov practiced what he preached; he embodied the compassion and concern which the laws of eglu arufa seek to instill within us.

However, the wagons which Yosef sent may also hint to the wagons donated by the nesi'im at the time of the dedication of the altar. The Torah is relevant in each generation, and is appropriate for every period and age. The leaders of the nation are responsible for upholding the Torah in every age and in every place. They must have the sensitivity to apply the timeless Torah in changing circumstances. This is symbolized by the wagons, which are mobile, showing that even when Am Yisrael is wandering, the Torah is carried with us.

Yosef had spent a long time in Egypt, and Yaakov was worried that Yosef had lost his link with Torah, that he had not succeeded in applying the Torah in Egypt. Yosef specifically sends him wagons in order to show that he recognizes the "mobility" of the Torah, and that he kept the Torah even in Egypt. Therefore, "the spirit of Yaakov their father revived."

2. "And Yosef made ready his chariot and went up to meet Yisrael his father... and he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while." (Bereishit 46:29) It seems from here that it was Yosef who wept on Yaakov's neck, indicating that Yaakov did not weep. Chazal explain that at that moment Yaakov was reciting Keri'at Shema.

We may ask the question, could Yaakov find no other time to recite Keri'at Shema? Why specifically now, as he was meeting with Yosef?

It is well-known that people desire to approach God when they are in a crisis. But when all is well, at times of rejoicing, they forget this previous desire. But Yaakov, in his great religious sensitivity, felt the need to acknowledge God precisely at the moment of his greatest joy - his reuniting with his son after so many years of anguish.

There is another possible explanation for Yaakov's behavior. Judaism has two ways of explaining the concept of

"God is One" - what is this "oneness" of God? The philosophers, on one hand, explain that any characteristic found in God is unique, and there is nothing comparable to it. If God is powerful, then His power is one that exists in nothing else; only in Him. (This is not only a matter of quantity, but of quality - we cannot refer to God's kind of power when we are dealing with humans.) The same applies to God's wisdom, etc. Anything that exists in God cannot exist in anyone or anything else.

The kabbalists, on the other hand, maintain that "God is One" in that His "rule" is one. Outwardly, while all types of people may sometimes seem to be in positions of power and authority, it is in fact God who controls everything; it is He who "pulls all the strings." In the days to come all will know that "God is One and His Name is One" - all will recognize that it is God who in fact rules and controls everything.

The fact that Am Yisrael would, at some stage, descend to Egypt, was known in advance. At the Berit Bein ha-Betarim God told Avraham: "Your descendants will be strangers in a land not their own, and they shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years..." Chazal explain that Yaakov should rightfully have descended to Egypt in iron chains, but God had mercy on him and he went in a respectable manner. When Yaakov arrived in Egypt and stood before Yosef, he suddenly realized how God had, in essence, brought him there. He suddenly realized how God's promise to Avraham at the Berit Bein ha-Betarim had materialized, how God had caused it to come about that Yaakov should go down to Egypt, seemingly in a most natural way. Suddenly he perceived God's unity (according to the kabbalistic view), and how God's rule is truly one, and that it is God who controls all. And so at that moment the only appropriate response escapes his lips: "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu HASHEM ECHAD."

(Originally delivered at Seuda Shlishit, Shabbat Parashat Vayigash, 5753. Translated by Karen Fish.)

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MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH
PARSHAS VAYIGASH
Yechezkel 37:15

In this week's haftorah we read about the ultimate unification of the Jewish people. The prophet Yechezkel is instructed to take two pieces of wood and inscribe on them the name of the two kingdoms of Israel, Yehuda and Yosef Hashem says, Bring them near one another to appear as one piece and they shall unite in your hands.⁹⁴ The Radak understands this to mean that

Yechezkel should hold them near each other and then, miraculously, they will unite to become one piece of wood. He explains that this symbolism refers to the miraculous experience which will occur during the era of Mashiach. Each piece of wood represents a distinct entity, one of the

kingdoms of Israel. Although Dovid Hamelech received an unconditional guarantee that his household would be kings over Israel this did not preclude fragmentation of the kingdom. Therefore when his grandson strayed seriously from the path of his predecessors a severe split occurred. Ephraim, a tribe which descended from Yosef, led a powerful revolution against the dynasty of Dovid Hamelech, the descendants of Yehuda. The split was so intense that the seceding camp of Yosef totally severed its relationship never to return again throughout all the years of Israel's reign. Yechezkel prophesized that these kingdoms would eventually unite and form one entity. Their unification would be so firm that they would permanently become one people with no trace of their previous division. This sense of kinship and unity will be so prevalent that the Jewish nation will be then likened to one piece of wood, void of any factions or fragmentation.

The prophet continues and states, 93 And I (Hashem) will purify them and they shall be a nation to Me and I will be G-d to them... My divine presence will rest upon them... forever.⁹⁴ These passages refer to the final phase of unity when Hashem will reunite with His people. The time will eventually come for Hashem to return to His nation. In the era of Mashiach total unity will be achieved. All the Jewish people will unite as one inseparable entity and Hashem will reunite with His people. This unification will be similar to that of the Jewish people, an everlasting and inseparable one. It is worthwhile to take note of the order in which the prophet presents these two unities. The first step will be the unification of all the Jewish people and then, and only then, Hashem will reunite with His people.

The Sefer Hacharedim (chapter 5) shares with us an important perspective about this order. He reflects upon the distinctive character of Hashem's oneness and explains that this can only be felt and appreciated through the oneness of the Jewish people. If they are fragmented and divided into factions their perception and experience of Hashem is a divided one. Hashem, being one, cannot unify with us unless we are one united entity allowing expression for His perfect oneness. It follows logically that the prerequisite to Hashem's unity with His people is our unity within ourselves.

Once the Jewish people become one, it will then be possible for Hashem to unite with them and display His perfect unity to the world. The foundation for this unity was actually laid in this week's sedra. Yosef, through his remarkable scheme, succeeded to counter his brothers' suspicions and convinced them of their indescribable error in judgment. After their jealousy and hatred was gone, all the sons of Yaakov united and embraced one another. Yosef and Yehuda, the two powers to be, united as one family and a true sense of kinship and unity was felt. Although a split would inevitably occur at a later time, the groundwork for unity had been established and would eventually yield the total unity of our people. The immediate result of the brothers' unity is recorded in this week's sedra. After Yaakov discovered Yosef's existence and well-being the Torah says (Beraishis 45, 27), 93 And their father, Yaakov's spirit was restored to life.⁹⁴ Rashi (ad loc) quotes Chazal who explain this to refer to the return of Hashem's Divine Spirit to Yaakov. Due to Yosef's absence from Yaakov's household Hashem's Divine Spirit ceased to rest upon Yaakov. Now, after twenty-two long years the household of Yaakov was reunited and the Divine Presence of Hashem returned to it. This episode is indicative of the future experience of the Jewish people. They will be divided for thousands of years and the presence of Hashem will cease to rest amongst them. The time will finally come for the Jewish people to reunite and become one inseparable entity. In response to this glorious moment Hashem will return and rest His Divine Presence amongst us and the spirit of Israel will be restored to life.

This lesson is so apropos to our times where so much diversity exists amongst our people. We pray to Hashem that we will soon merit total unification amongst ourselves which will ultimately yield our unification

with Hashem and the return of His Divine Presence amongst His people.

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel, Rosh Kollel (Dean) Kollel Toras Chesed of Skokie

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VAYIGASH - The Tactics of Joseph

by Rabbi David Munster - Post-graduate Research Student - Jews College

The last section of this week's Sidrah (chapter 47) deals with events
surrounding Jacob's arrival in Egypt. The order of these events is as
follows:

Pharaoh meets Joseph's brothers and he asks them the nature of their
occupation and gives them the land of Goshen, then Jacob meets Pharaoh and
gives him a blessing. The Torah then relates that Joseph helps his family
to settle in Goshen and provides for their needs. The Torah turns from the
subject of Jacob's arrival in Egypt and deals with the plight of the
Egyptians during the years of the famine. The inhabitants of Egypt are
starving and are forced to give their money, livestock and land and then
finally themselves to Pharaoh in order to obtain food. Joseph having
acquired ownership of the land of Egypt for Pharaoh ultimately relocates the
inhabitants of the land to different districts of Egypt and a tax is imposed
upon their farm production. All Egyptians are included in the upheaval
except for the priests who were exempt from repopulation and the tax charge.
The final verse of the Sidrah states that "Israel settled in the land of
Egypt"

At the beginning of the chapter (verse 4) it is explained that Joseph's
brothers only intended to stay temporarily in Egypt. "We have come to
sojourn in the land" they said. Yet the Sidrah concludes "Israel settled in
Egypt, in the land of Goshen, and they took possession of it and they
multiplied in number". It appears that at some stage they re-evaluated
their position in the land and decided to stay. Does the Torah explain the
reason for this change of heart?

Furthermore the subject order of the section appears puzzling in that while
relating how Jacob came to the land of Egypt and settled in the land of
Goshen, the Torah deviates from the narration of this subject and explains
how the Egyptians pleaded for food and then the Torah returns to the
narration "and Israel settled in the land of Goshen". Also the Torah
repeats the fact that the land belonging to the priests was not taken by
Pharaoh, and in consequence, they were not required to pay taxes to Pharaoh.
Why does the Torah emphasise this fact?"

The 20th century scholar Rabbi Jacob Kamenetsky zatzal, provides a
perspective on this section which answers these questions. His explanation
is based on the fact that this section cannot be perceived as a mere
historical account of the events of the famine years in Egypt. Rather, in
his opinion, the Torah relates the strategies adopted by Joseph in order to
preserve the unique stature of his family as the true servants of G-d. He
intended to maintain the cultural divide between the family of Israel and
the other nations. He explains that Jacob was initially reluctant to go to
Egypt and in fact asked permission from G-d before going there (chapter 46
verse 3). He feared that the environment of Egypt would prove permanently
detrimental to his family. The immorality and the idolatrous ideology of
the Egyptians threatened the very existence of Jacob's family on a spiritual
level.

Joseph, therefore, adopted a strategy which would preserve the unique
spiritual qualities of his family throughout the turbulent years of their
stay in Egypt. He transferred the whole population in order that his
brothers should not feel as strangers in the land if they perceived
themselves as being inferior to their neighbours; this would make
assimilation a more attractive and even necessary option. Moreover he set a
precedent by absolving the priests from giving their land to Pharaoh. The
priests represented the religious element of the community and they held an
exalted position. He impressed upon his own family and the entire
population of Egypt the importance of respecting religion and its officials.
The Levites were the spiritual representatives of Jacob's family and were
also respected. This ensured that the Levites did not have to serve Pharaoh
during the 210 years of Egyptian slavery. This most likely proved to be the
factor which preserved the identity of Jacob's family. Rabbi Baruch Ha-Levi
Epstein (20th century Russian Talmudic scholar) also makes the point that it
is from the fact that the land of the priests was not taken away,
demonstrating respect for the clergy, which provided the Levites exemption
from the Egyptian slavery. He explains that they were able to continue the
traditional service of G-d and make an impression on others and teach them
how to serve G-d. They did this at the incident of the Golden calf and of
the evil report of the Twelve spies.

Thus the passage is consistent, containing one theme how Joseph helped to
settle his family in the land of Goshen. They only agreed to remain there
when they saw that Joseph had constructed a society which could contain
their own ideals of service to G-d. We learn from the efforts made by
Joseph to enable his family to maintain their service of G-d, firstly the
importance of ensuring that in our community there are talmidei chachamim -
Torah scholars. This idea is stated by the 12th century scholar Rabbi Judah
He-Hasid in his Sefer Hasidim. He asks why should the fate of the Egyptian
priests be of interest too us? He explains that the Torah records this in
order that we recognise the importance of the religious scholar and the need
to support him. And secondly, that if we are to maintain the religiousness
of the Jewish community then these scholars must impart their knowledge
and

ideals. Joseph recognised that education was the source of continuity, it is the only way we can survive.

Rav Sherira Gaon (906 - 1006) by Rev Bernard Koschland, Editor - Daf Hashavua

With the death of Saadia Gaon, the Yeshivot of Sura and Pumbedita declined.

Inquiries to the Geonim from abroad decreased as did therefore also the financial contributions. The spread of Torah, emanating from Babylon, enabled centres of learning to grow in other parts of the Diaspora, e.g Fostat in Egypt, Kairouan in North Africa, Cordova in Spain. In a way the success of the Yeshivot caused some of their own decline.

Against these difficulties, the Yeshivah of Pumbeditha blossomed again under the leadership of Rav Sherira ben Hanina Gaon and his son Hai; Sherira became Gaon at the age of 70. He renewed the bonds between Babylon and the Golah with his letters to the leaders of the communities. Questions on halachah, aggadah, history and philosophy and other topics began to arrive again. Numbers of these Sh'elot u'teshuvot (Responsa) have survived in other works or in the Cairo Genizah.

Towards the latter days of this life, he and his son, were denounced by "some lawless Jews" (Sepher Haqabbalah by Abraham ibn Daud 12th century; a vital source book of Jewish History) to the Caliph Al-qadir and were imprisoned and their property confiscated. The basis of the calumny was that they were disloyal to the Caliphate by associating with areas hostile to the Baghdadi caliphate, e.g. Byzantium, Spain. Through the agency of friends they were released. Three years before his eventual deal, Sherira retired in favour of his son. On the Shabbat after Sherira's death, verses were added to the Reading of the Torah and the Haftarah in his honour.

There are references to writings other than Responsa, such as commentaries on Tenach and Talmud. His main responsum is the Iggeret Rav Sherira Gaon (The letter of R. Sherira Gaon), written in rabbinic Aramaic. The lengthy letter (988 CE) is a reply to R. Jacob ben Nissin of Kairouan regarding the formulation of the Mishna, Talmud, Tosefta, Beraitot and the teachers of these works. The community of Kairouan were motivated to write because of the constant discussions between themselves and the Karaites, the latter who denied the authenticity of the Mishnah and Talmud. The letter answered all these questions, and in so doing presents an accurate historical review and is still to this day a vital, primary source for information up to his period.

His own life is described briefly in the Sefer Haqabbalah. Sherira descended from the Exilarchs who in turn traced their descent to the house of David. Ibn Daud has seen his seal which had " a lion on it just as the pennant of the camp of Judah and the kings of Judah."

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To: CSHULMAN
Date: 12/27/95 10:32am
Subject: Torah Studies - Vayigash

B"H
Torah Studies
Adaptation of Likutei Sichos
by
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of Great Britain
Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion
VAYIGASH
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VAYIGASH

Not only did Joseph save the Egyptians from the seven years of famine, by arranging for grain to be stored during the previous years, but he also provided for his family during that time, as Sidra Vayigash tells us, despite the harm that his brothers had earlier sought to do him.

Because of this, the entire Jewish nation is called by his name in one of the Psalms.

The Rebbe investigates the underlying meaning of this appellation, and of a Midrash which makes three requests to G-d to treat Israel in the way that Joseph treated his brothers.

JOSEPH THE PROVIDER

"And Joseph supported his Father and his brothers and all his Father's household, according to their little ones."

Amongst the many things that the Torah tells us about the relations between Joseph and his brothers, it specifically mentions that he sustained them and their families: And there is no detail of the stories of the Torah which does not have a profound meaning for us, waiting to be uncovered.

This particular act of Joseph's is so esteemed that because of it, the entire Jewish nation is called, in perpetuity, by his name, as we find in the Psalms: "He (G-d) leads Joseph like a flock." His act, as it

were, is a permanent heritage to us.

The Comment of The Midrash

There is a Midrashic commentary on this verse from the Psalms, to the effect that G-d not only leads His people (who are called "Joseph") but that He does so in the manner of Joseph: "Just as he stored food from the years of plenty as provision for the period of famine, so may G-d store up blessings for us from this world to enjoy in the world to come.

"Just as Joseph provided for each according to his deeds, so may G-d sustain us according to our deeds.

"Rabbi Menachem said in the name of Rabbi Abin: Just as Joseph's brothers acted badly towards him, but he repaid them with good, so we act badly towards You (G-d) - and may You bestow good on us in return."

Now, this Midrash is puzzling in a number of ways:

- (i) When Joseph laid up food from the years of plenty, had he not done so, it would have gone to waste. But what analogy is there with our good deeds in this world? They will not go to waste, so why need they be "stored up" for the future life?
- (ii) How can we compare this world to the time of plenty, and the next to the years of famine, when we are told that this world is only a "vestibule" leading to the "hall" of the world to come?
- (iii) Joseph's virtue was that he bestowed good on those who had done bad to him. How can the Midrash state, therefore, that he "provided for each according to his deeds" (and not "according to his needs")?
- (iv) Why, in any case, did the Midrash need to request that G-d sustain us according to our deeds: For this is no more than the strict requirements of the law, and we did not need to infer it from the conduct of Joseph?

THE BLESSINGS OF THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT

We can understand the first request of the Midrash, that G-d stores blessings for us from the "years of plenty" of this world to enjoy in the "years of famine" of the world to come, once we realize that the nature of our reward in the world to come is a revelation of what our acts have achieved in this world - an outflowing of G-d's essential presence.

The world to come is thus, as it were, a "time of famine" - in it we are sustained by a flow of spiritual life that we brought about in the "time of plenty," in this world. And though we find it written in the Mishnah that "an hour of blissfulness of spirit in the world to come is better than all the life of this world," this is only from the point of view of man, who finds his reward in the future life.

From the point of view of G-d and of the Divine purpose of human

existence, "an hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life in the world to come." Only here can we fulfill our task, and create the spiritual pleasures that will be revealed to us in the world to come.

Now, if we were to follow the logic of the strict requirements of the law, it could be said that many of the occasions when we obey G-d's will, we do so for ulterior motives. We do not align ourselves with the essence of the commandment, which seeks no other reward than the act itself.

Therefore, though "the essential thing is the act," and though such acts do indeed bring about an outflowing of G-d's essence, surely they should not be rewarded in the world to come by a revelation of that essence?

So, when we ask (in the second request of the Midrash): "Sustain us according to our deeds (and not according to our motives)" we are not merely asking G-d to follow the strict requirement of the law. Instead we are asking that He look only at our outward acts, and not to judge us by the shortcomings of our motives. And in terms of acts, "even the sinners of Israel are as full of good deeds as a pomegranate (with seed)."

And indeed, this is what Joseph himself did, when he said to his brothers: "You intended evil against me; but G-d meant it for good, to act, as it is this day, to save many people alive." Although they intended to harm Joseph by selling him into slavery, it transpired that their act brought Joseph to a position where he was able to save many lives by his prudential policy of storing food for the imminent famine. And Joseph judged them on their action (which turned out well), not their intention.

We can take the argument a stage further. The advocate of strict adherence to the law might concede that even though a man does good for ulterior motives, in the subconscious depths of his soul he desires closeness to G-d for its own sake, and should be rewarded for it. But surely when he sins he can have no such holy desires, however subconscious; for the soul in its unfelt depths dissociates itself from the sin.

How then can G-d allow us retroactively to transform our sins into merits by the act of repentance, when our sins have no saving grace?

This is the extra act of mercy for which the Midrash, in the name of Rabbi Menachem, asks as its third request:

"Just as Joseph bestowed good on those who had harmed him, so we acted badly toward You: May You bestow good on us in return."

May You judge us, in other words, in the light of the ultimate good (our act of repentance) as if it had been our original intention, at the moment when we sinned, only to bring about good.

THE MEANING OF JOSEPH

Why is it on the strength of Joseph's conduct that we make these three requests of G-d?

The difference between Jacob and Joseph is that while Jacob lived on the highest plane of spiritual existence, Joseph translated this spiritual reality into material terms.

In the individual, this is the power that allows the perception of G-d's essence to enter the dimensions of the human mind, emotions - and actions even into actions done from ulterior motives.

Because the depths of the Jewish soul can make themselves be felt in this world (the capacity which derives from Joseph), he is able to bring into the world the outflowing of G-d's essence in the world to come.

And thus his innermost intentions - which are pure even though his conscious motives are not - have a tangible reality even in this world: So that G-d may bestow good on him even when his acts have been bad.

This is Joseph's heritage to every Jew. In his act of feeding his family in a time of famine, despite all their wrongs towards him, he has given us the power to reach beyond the surface of our fellow Jew, with all its superficial failings, and to penetrate to the core of his being and respond to its fundamental holiness. And when we treat another Jew in this way, we arouse that core of holiness in him, and in ourselves as well, so that in time it breaks through its coverings, and the essence of our soul stands revealed.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. V pp. 239-50 (adapted))

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Subject: Parshas Vayigash

HALACHA FOR 5756

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAYIGASH

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

"The sons of Asher.. and their sister Serach (46:17)" According to Ramban (Bamidbar 26:46), Serach was Asher's stepdaughter, but because he raised her, she was called Asher's daughter.

Adoption in Halacha

QUESTION: What are the possible Halachic problems and solutions regarding adoption?

A. Is it proper?

When the adoption process conforms to Halachic guidelines, it is considered to be an extremely noble and rewarding deed. In numerous places in the Talmud, Chazal praise one who raises another person's child as his own(1).

B. Child's origin - Jew or non-Jew?

Both of these choices have their advantages and disadvantages. Theoretically, a Jewish child would be preferable, since it is a great Mitzvah to raise a Jewish child who otherwise may not have a Jewish home. Practically, however, it may prove difficult to verify the lineage (Yichus) of the child. Many unforeseen problems can arise regarding the future entry of this child into a Jewish marriage. Thus, before adopting a Jewish child, one should thoroughly investigate the child's background to clarify his Yichus.

A non-Jewish child, however, has no Yichus problem. At the time of the adoption the child undergoes a conversion, which allows the child to marry any person permitted to wed a convert. The drawback, however, is that the child must be told of his conversion when he or she reaches the age of maturity, 13 for a boy and 12 for a girl. At that time, the child is given the option to reject the earlier conversion which took place without his consent. Should the child choose to reject his conversion, he would be rendered a non-Jew. Obviously, a non-Jew can not be adopted or raised as one's own son.

There is a possible solution that circumvents this possibility. At the time of adoption, the parents need to stipulate that the

child is being Halachically bought as an Eved (a slave). When the time comes, the parents will Halachically free the child. The freedom would render him a complete Jew (a convert) who cannot reject his conversion(2).

C. How close a relationship?

Adopted children should be told of their origin at the earliest possible time. People who choose to hide the origin of their adopted children from them, may unwittingly cause them grave Halachic hardships in the future(3).

Although in a spiritual sense an adopted child may be considered as one's own child, the Poskim stress that this doesn't refer to physical contact. Yichud (being alone), hugging, kissing etc. is not permitted as it is with one's natural child. Many Poskim strictly forbid this type of behavior(4).

There is, however, a view(5) that tends to be lenient on this issue. This view holds that when a child is adopted at a young age, we assume that a basic father/daughter or mother/son relationship has developed between them. We do not fear that any illicit behavior will take place and we, therefore, do not restrict the parents from treating their adopted children as their own.

This leniency, therefore, is only applicable to children who were adopted before the age when Yichud is prohibited, 3 for a girl and 9 for a boy. A couple may not adopt a child of an older age unless they will observe all restrictions of Yichud and physical contact(6). [Note that these Halachos concern foster children and step children as well.]

D. Name

An adopted child should not be called to the Torah as the son of the adoptive father(7). When witnessing a deed or a contract, an adopted child may identify himself as the son of his adoptive father(8).

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1 The Steipler, among other Gedolim, endorsed the practice for those unable to have children of their own, See Dvar Halcha on Hilchos Yichud, addendum to fourth edition. See also Chochmas Shlomo (Even Haazer 1:1) who holds that the Mitzva of procreation can be accomplished through adoption. Most other authorities do not agree with this.
- 2 Igros Moshe Yd 162. Obviously, a complex Halachic procedure

- such as this can only be done under the direction of a Rov who is well-versed in these Halachos.
- 3 Minchas Yitzchok 4:49; Otzar Haposkim vol. 9 p. 130
- 4 See Otzar Haposkim. ibid p.132 quoting the Steipler and the Tchebiner Rov; Minchas Yitzchok, ibid; Dvar Halacha on Hilchos Yichud 7:20 quoting the Chazon Ish.
- 5 Tzitz Eliezer 6:40-21; 7:44,45: It is important to stress that this is a minority view. Note, also, that his view is stated as a Limud Zchus and in order to make it easier for abandoned children to find good, Jewish homes that would adopt them.
- 6 Tzitz Eliezer, ibid. Possibly, Yichud with such a child may be more stringent than with a stranger, since it would fall under the category of "Libo Gas Bah".
- 7 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Titen Emes L'yaakov p. 96); Minchas Yitzchok 4:49. See also Igros Moshe EH 99 regarding the proper writing of an adopted child's name in a Kesuva.
- 8 Rama Choshen Mishpat 42.

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 Project Genesis LifeLine
 "It is a tree of life to all who cling to it."
 D'var Torah and News from Project Genesis - learn@torah.org
 Volume III, Number 13 Vayigash

This week's LifeLine is dedicated in memory of Malia Bas Freida a"h, Rebbetzin Maisie Lapin, wife of Rabbi Avraham H. Lapin. Rabbi Lapin served the San Jose, CA community as leader of Congregation Am Echad for 15 years. Rebbetzin Lapin passed away Motzei Shabbos Mikeitz at the age of 82.

 This Dvar Torah was written by Rabbi Yehudah Prero of our YOMTOV class.

In this week's Torah portion of VaYigash, we reach the dramatic conclusion of the episode dealing with Yosef and his brothers. Yosef, in an outpouring of emotion, revealed his identity to his brothers. When they were able to regain their composure, the brothers were astonished by this news. Yosef was now reunited with all of his brothers. The Torah specifically focuses in on the reactions of Yosef and his younger brother Benyamin, to this whole turn of events. The Torah tells us that "and he (Yosef) fell upon the shoulders of Binyamin and wept, and Binyamin wept of his (Yosef's) shoulders." [45:14]

The renowned commentator Rash"i fills us in on what was going on at that specific time. He writes that the reason why Yosef was weeping was because of the eventual destruction of the two Temples that were to be built in the portion of Israel allotted to the tribe of Benyamin. Binyamin was weeping because of the eventual destruction of the Tabernacle, the mobile precursor

to the Temple, which was to be constructed in the portion of the land allotted to Yosef.

HaRav Dovid Lebowitz zt"l said that we can glean an astonishing insight from these actions. We see how great the pain of our forefathers was over the destruction of the holy sanctuaries. It was so great that it was even able to totally nullify any feelings of joy that should have been evident and natural when Yosef was reunited with his brother after a separation of over 22 years. >From this incident, we can get an idea of how we, who live after the destruction, should mourn the loss and yearn for the return of our Temple.

It is very fitting that this lesson appears in the Torah portion of this week. Next week, on Tuesday, is the fast of the Tenth of Tevet. This fast day marks the beginning of the end, so to speak, of the Temple. On the Tenth of Tevet, Nevuchadnezzar laid siege on the city of Jerusalem. This action was the beginning of the events that led to the destruction of the Temple. Why do we mourn the "beginning of the end," especially when we know that we have fast days set aside to mourn the end, the destruction itself? The answer, as we see from the week's Torah portion, is clear. We have to truly feel the loss, feel that we are lacking something, feel that we are pained by a void in our lives, as our forefathers were. If we really felt the impact of this tragic event, the day on which the downfall started would carry with it great meaning and significance. We know that our forefathers felt the impact of the event, and we, on the Tenth of Tevet, should try to internalize the loss and feel the sorrow that our forefathers did. Hopefully we, unlike our forefathers, will merit to see the building of the Third Temple speedily and soon.

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Subject: Parashat Vayigash - "The Mitzvot that our forefathers kept"

The Weekly Internet

P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E

by Mordecai Kornfeld

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Parashat Vayigash 5756

HOW MANY MITZVOT DID OUR FOREFATHERS KEEP?

INTRODUCTION

[Yaakov] sent Yehudah ahead to Yosef in Egypt, to "teach" ("L'horot") before Yakov's arrival, to Goshen. (Bereishit 46:28)

"He sent Yehudah before him" -- to set up a House of Study before Yakov's arrival, where Yakov would teach the words of the Torah and where his twelve sons and their families could study the Torah... This teaches us that wherever Yaakov went

he studied the Torah, just as his fathers had. The Torah had not yet been given, yet we are told concerning Avaraham, "He kept My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees and My teachings" (Bereishit 26:5)... [Avraham] kept all the minutiae of the Torah, teaching them to his children as well, as it says, "I chose him because he will command his children and his household after him to follow in the ways of Hashem; to carry out righteousness and justice" (ibid. 18:19). (Bereishit Rabba 95:3)

The Midrash asserts that although they lived long before the Torah was given to us at Mount Sinai, our forefathers kept all the Mitzvot [=Divine commandments] that the Torah would command their descendants in the future. This idea is reiterated by Chazal in many other places (see e.g. Yoma 28b; Rashi to Bereishit 26:5; Rashi to ibid. 32:5 -- "Yaakov said, 'I dwelt by Lavan, yet I kept all of the 613 Mitzvot' "). The patriarchs taught these Mitzvot to their children, the twelve tribes. They, in turn, also kept all of the Mitzvot of the Torah (Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Ch. 6). And not only were our forefathers mindful of future *biblical* commands, they even heeded future *rabbinic* ordinances (Yoma 28b).

Hashem revealed to our forefathers the Mitzvot that he was going to give to the Jews at a later time. The forefathers, out of their profound love to do the will of God, voluntarily accepted upon themselves to perform these Mitzvot "ahead of schedule." It is an accepted principle that even if one is not subject to a given commandment, it is nevertheless considered meritorious for him to observe that Mitzvah. He is even rewarded for doing so (Rambam, Melachim 10:10).

Upon further investigation, however, there would seem to be scriptural and Midrashic evidence that contradicts the assertion that our forefathers kept all the Mitzvot of the Torah. In the specific area of marital laws, it would seem that they did not keep the laws of the future Torah:

[1] Rashi tells us (in this week's Parasha, 46:10), that Shimon married his sister Dinah. This marriage would seem, in fact, to contravene not only the laws of the Torah given to the Jews, but even Noachide Law! This system of law, which the Torah expects *all* human beings from the beginning of time to adhere to, includes laws against incest. There is, however, an opinion (in Sanhedrin 58a) that asserts that the Noachide laws against incest do not prohibit marital relations with a sister. Apparently, the Midrash that Rashi quotes is also of that opinion. However, our original question -- that as one who observed the Mitzvot of the future Torah, Shimon should not have married Dinah -- remains.

Another Midrash (quoted by Rashi to 46:26), posits that all of the twelve tribal ancestors were born with twin sisters, whom they subsequently married. This presents the same problem as the previous question. If the sons of Yakov kept the Torah of the future, how could they have married their own sisters?

[2] The Torah tells us specifically (Shemot 6:20) that Amram married his father's sister -- Yakov's granddaughter. This is an explicit violation of Torah law (Vayikra 18:12, 20:20). Although a *gentile* may marry his father's paternal sister (Sanhedrin 58b), how could the Midrash assert that the forefathers kept the laws of the future, *Jewish,* Torah.

[3] As Rashi explains (Bereishit 38:26), Yehudah married his daughter-in-law Tamar. Even if such a relationship is permitted for a gentile, isn't this a violation of Torah law for Jews (Vayikra 18:15)?

[4] Yaakov married two sisters (Bereishit 29:16), which is in violation of Torah law (Vayikra 18:18). We find, in fact, in the words of Chazal [our Sages] in various places that Yaakov's marriage of two sisters is frowned

upon (see Pesachim 119a, end of Midrash Ruth Rabbati).

Why didn't our ancestors keep the future marital laws of the Torah in the above-mentioned cases? This question has been raised by numerous commentators throughout the ages. (See especially Perashat Derachim *ibid.*; Pardes Yosef to Bereishit 26:5.) Many commentators have discussed, at length, possible ways to deal with these difficulties. Let us take a brief look at some of their suggestions.

I

The Ramban (12th cent. Spain) is among the earliest of the commentators to address this issue. In his commentary on the Torah (Bereishit 26:5 and Vayikra 18:25), the Ramban suggests the following rule. The Midrash only means to assert that our forefathers kept all the Mitzvot of the Torah while they were in Eretz Yisrael [=Israel]. Out of Eretz Yisrael, however, they did not make a point of keeping all the Mitzvot of the future Torah. Yaakov's marriage of two sisters took place in Charan, which was outside of Eretz Yisrael. Similarly, Amram married his aunt in Egypt. (This approach does not seem to help for problems [1] and [3], however, since Yehudah, and presumably his brothers too, married their wives in Israel.)

My rebbi, Hagaon Rav Yisroel Zev Gustman of blessed memory, explains the Ramban's reasoning in his work "Kuntresei Shiurim" on Gemara Kiddushin (20:6):

There are two facets to the fulfillment of any Mitzvah in the Torah, Rav Gustman explains. The first is, that we benefit directly from keeping the Mitzvot. We derive personal gain, whether physical or spiritual in nature, or both, from the performance of each and every Mitzvah. The second aspect to keeping the Mitzvot, is that we have obeyed a Divine commandment

-- an order decreed by Hashem which we must follow, regardless of any benefit derived. (See also Kovetz He'arot, Chiddusei Agadot 3:2.)

The Midrash tells us that when we are outside of Eretz Yisrael, we keep the Mitzvot only "in order to retain our familiarity with them so that we may perform them as prescribed when we eventually return to Eretz Yisrael" (Rashi to Devarim 11:18). The Ramban (Vayikra 25:10) explains this

to mean that the main purpose of the Mitzvot is accomplished only in Israel. What that means is that outside of Israel, the first aspect of the Mitzvot is lacking. The spiritual or physical benefit that we have from the Mitzvot accrues only through performing them in Eretz Yisrael. Nevertheless, we are certainly *obligated* to perform the Mitzvot even outside of Israel, since Hashem has commanded us to keep the Mitzvot there too -- even if He did so only so we should "retain our familiarity with them" (Gur Arye to Devarim *loc. cit.*). Thus, all that is left to the observance of Mitzvot outside of Eretz Yisrael is the other facet of Mitzvah observance -- the fact that they are commandments of Hashem, which must be obeyed.

In the days of our forefathers, there was not yet any Divine commandment to keep the Mitzvot of the Torah. Their observance of the Torah was only in order to reap the great spiritual benefits that come from Mitzvah observance. Hence, when they were outside of Eretz Yisrael there was no longer any point at all in their following the Torah's commandments. The first aspect -- that of personal benefit -- does not apply outside Israel according to what we have explained, while the second aspect -- that

of following the decree of God -- did not apply before the Torah was given at Sinai.

II

A number of early commentators suggest another approach to our question (Yefe Toar on Bereishit Rabba, 16:6; Mizrachi to Vayikra 20:17; "the opinion of some" quoted by Maharal to Bereishit 46:10; Levush Ha'ora to Bereishit 32:5. These commentators were actually preceded in this suggestion by the Radbaz [14th cent. Spain] in his responsa, vol. 2, #696).

In Chagigah (3a) the Gemara refers to Avraham as "the first proselyte." This can be understood in a figurative sense -- Avraham was not technically a proselyte and he never underwent any formal process of conversion. The Gemara merely means to say that Avraham severed his ties with idol-worship and idol-worshippers, and began to serve Hashem (see Tosafot *loc. cit.*). However, it is also possible to take the comment of the Gemara literally, and to assert that Avraham was considered to be a proselyte in the strict sense of the word.

According to Jewish law, when a proselyte adopts the Jewish religion he is considered to have been "born afresh" at that time. He is no longer considered to have familial ties with his former, non-Jewish, family, at least as far as marital laws are concerned. He may therefore marry his own biological mother, sister, or daughter, if they later convert to Judaism (Yevamot 97b).

With this in mind, we can understand how the forefathers married what would seem to have been forbidden relatives according to Jewish law. The two "sisters" that Yaakov married were actually not sisters at all. After they adopted Yakov's way of life (which they certainly did before Yaakov married them), they were halachically considered to be converts. They thus became "reborn," losing all familial relationships that they had previously had.

Similarly, Yakov's sons and their sisters were technically not related to each other. Before the giving of the Torah, each individual had to accept upon himself the service of Hashem on his own, even if his father already had done so. Thus, the sons and daughters of Yakov were themselves considered to be converts, and to have lost all familial ties to each other in the process. Amram's aunt was not prohibited to him because of their familial relationship, either. (Problem [3], of Yehudah marrying his daughter-in-law, is not resolved by this approach. Tamar presumably "converted" before marrying Yehudah's son, so she was by any account his full, halachic daughter-in-law.)

III

Some commentators suggest that the Midrash does not mean to say that the forefathers kept all the Mitzvot of the Torah *unequivocally.* Rather, that they did so *in general* -- provided that there were no circumstances that called for them to refrain from keeping them. For instance, when Shimon married Dinah, Rashi (Bereishit 46:10) explains that there were very specific reasons that compelled him to do so. Because of these reasons, he was willing to forego his usual habit of observing all the future Mitzvot of the Torah. The same may perhaps be said of the other cases in question.

What circumstances prompted the other "transgressions" of Jewish marital law? Some commentators suggest that Yakov, and perhaps his children too, had Kabbalistic reasons for marrying the people they married (see Rashba, responsa, vol. 1, #94; Radbaz, responsa, vol. 2, #696; Ohr HaChaim to Bereishit 49:3; Midrash Talpiot, Anaf Yaakov). Alternatively, perhaps when it came to finding partners in marriage, they did not accept upon themselves to necessarily adhere to the Mitzvot of the future Torah. Appropriate mates are always difficult to find (and they were especially so

at that point in time), so once a fitting wife was found they could not afford to pass up the opportunity to marry her (Maharal to Bereishit 46:10).

IV

The Maharal (to Bereishit 46:10 and Vayikra 20:17) proposes a very original approach. The forefathers, suggests the Maharal, kept only the positive commandments of the Torah, not the negative ones. The forefathers kept the Mitzvot as one who is not commanded to, yet takes it upon himself to keep the Mitzvot anyhow. Such a course of action is praiseworthy, and indeed rewarded, only if it is done through positive actions. *Refraining* from transgressing what one is not prohibited from doing, though, is not an act that is rewarded, the Maharal asserts. The laws of marriage that were abrogated by the forefathers were, of course, all negative commandments. Thus, these laws were not relevant to them!

(See also Chidushei HaGriz, stencil edition, Parashat Lech Lecha, for another interesting approach to our subject.)

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||
---- V A Y I G A S H ----
| | Gen. 44:18 -47:27 | |

---- Editor : Zev S. Itzkowitz ----
||

Dvar Torah of the Week

"[Hashem] said [to Jacob],
I am the G-d of your father.
Do not be afraid to go to Egypt,
for there, I will make you into a great nation.
I will descend with you, and I will bring you up..." (Genesis 46:3 -4)

Why did Jacob fear to go to Egypt? Jacob was greatly pained that he would have to leave the Land. In addition, Jacob knew that if he left, he would remain in Egypt for the rest of his life. He feared that he would, then, be buried in Egypt, outside of the Promised Land, and away from the burial grounds of his parents and grandparents. Hashem assured Jacob that it would be alright to leave the land. Moreover, Hashem promised Jacob that, in fact, he would not be buried in Egypt but in Canaan (Rashi).

Another possibility is that Jacob was afraid to leave the land without Hashem's permission. He remembered that his father, Isaac, had tried to go to Egypt to escape a famine in Canaan, but Hashem had stopped him. Jacob,

thus, feared that Hashem would stop him from going to Egypt too. Hashem came to Jacob not only to let him know that he was permitted to go down to Egypt, but also to tell him, that He would accompany Jacob's family to Egypt and would make them into a great nation before returning them to the land (Sephorno).

Alternatively, Jacob was afraid to go down to Egypt, because of the prophecy to Abraham. This prophecy stated that Abraham's descendants would live and be enslaved in a land not of their own. As Jacob was preparing to leave the Land he remembered the prophecy and became fearful for his family's future. Surely the Egyptians would enslave them! Hashem came to him not only to reassure him that everything would turn out alright, but also to remind him that there is a second part to the original prophecy: "there I will make you into a great nation" (Chizkuni).

Mussar of the Week

"And the sons of Dan are Chushim." (Genesis 46:23)

Why does the Torah refer to Dan's lone son, Chushim, in the plural rather than the singular? The reason is that even though Dan only has one son now, in the future he will be one of the most populous tribes (Baba Basra 143b).

We never know what the future can bring. Just as Dan's one son grew into a huge tribe, so too can our seemingly small beginnings blossom into a remarkable conclusion.

From: "galia@algorhythmics.com (G. Tylman)"
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Date: 12/27/95 10:27am
Subject: Parshas Vayigash

This week's parsha, Vayigash opens with Judah pleading with Joseph to spare Binyamin. Last week's parsha ended with Joseph planting a silver goblet in Binyamin's bag. Judah begs Joseph not to take Binyamin and even offers himself instead. Joseph is very overcome and he reveals his identity to his brothers and reassures them that he bears no grudge for all that happened was G-d's will. He sends them to bring Jacob to Egypt.

Jacob travels with his family to Egypt. On the way, G-d speaks to him and tells him not to fear going down to Egypt because it is there that they will become a great nation. Jacob has an emotional reunion with Joseph. Jacob then goes to meet Pharaoh who offers him the land of Goshen to settle with his family.

The parsha concludes with a description of how Joseph taxed the people of Egypt when they came to get food during the years of famine.

This parsha is a critical turning point in the history of the Jewish people. It discusses the first exodus into the galut (diaspora). When the Jews leave the land of Egypt, they will leave as a Jewish nation, united. There are several clues in Vayigash that can help us learn how Jacob's family was able to cling to and even enhance their Jewish identity.

(44:20): When Judah is pleading for Binyamin, he says, "We have

an old father and the youngest child of his old age..." These two extremes represent two parts of Jewish identity. The first is our old, traditional heritage that has been passed down to us from previous generations. We must keep true to our past, our "old father" and it is our duty to pass on the teachings and such to our children and future unborn generations, the "youngest child".

(45:21): Joseph sends wagons to bring Jacob to Israel. The Hebrew word used is AGALOT. Rashi comments on how this is similar to the word EGLA which means heifer. Joseph sent the wagons as a code to his father. Before he left home, Jacob and Joseph studied Torah together. Their last lesson had been on EGLA ARUFA (beheaded heifer), from Deuteronomy 21:1-9. Joseph sent the wagons with the hidden message that showed his father that he remembered where they had left off in their studies.

Even though 22 years had passed, Joseph never forgot the Torah lessons of his youth. Even though he lived in Egypt, he did assimilate but remained true to his heritage. As we read in last week's parsha, he did not succumb to Potiphar's wife's advances, and was ultimately jailed.

When it came time to marry, Joseph did not take on an Egyptian wife. According to Midrash, Osnat was actually the daughter of Dinah and Shchem who was sent out of Jacob's house. He raises the first two Jewish children born in the Galut, Menashe and Ephraim.

(46:2): Jacob was concerned about taking his family into the Galut. G-d speaks to Jacob and tells him that it is His will that they go down to Egypt. G-d says that He will be with them in Egypt and that there, they will become a great nation. Why did they have to settle in Egypt to become a great nation? Rabbi Sampson Rafael Hirsch says that in The Land

of Canaan they would not have been able to form as a nation. As their numbers grew, they would have been scattered among the inhabitants. In Egypt, they lived in Goshen where they worked as shepherds. The Egyptians worshipped cattle and they hated shepherds. Amidst this bigotry, the Jews would form into a great nation. Goshen was comparable to the Jewish ghettos of the middle ages that kept the Jews in a confined but vibrant community while insulating them from secular pressures.

(46:28): On the way to Egypt, it says that Jacob sent Judah ahead to Goshen to show the way. The Hebrew word used is L'HOROT. This is from the same root as the word Torah. The Midrash says that Judah was sent ahead to establish a school for Torah study. From this we learn that Jewish education for children is of paramount importance. The survival of the Jewish people depends on it. If schools don't exist in a certain neighbourhood, the community needs to establish them.

This week's parsha shows us that the keys to Jewish survival include community and family life combined with Torah study. Jacob's family was able to emerge from Egypt as a great nation by keeping to these principles and we should learn from their example how to live as Jews in the Galut and to make sure that we pass these lessons on to our children.

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Tor...
Date: 12/29/95 2:35pm
Subject: enayim l'torah -- vayigash

vayigash

Parashat Vayigash
Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University

Better Not to Know
by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

A number of difficult and perplexing questions present themselves when we analyze how Yosef dealt with his brothers in Egypt. In the last few parashot, Yosef's behavior towards his brothers seems to have been overly cruel. First, he imprisons Shimon until Binyamin is brought to Egypt. Moreover, after Binyamin is finally brought to Egypt, Yosef frames him with the crime of stealing one of the royal cups. Was Yosef simply out for revenge? If so, why make Binyamin suffer; after all, he was the only brother not involved in selling Yosef twenty-two years earlier? Furthermore, how could Yosef justify making his father suffer? Yosef could surely have anticipated Yehuda's plea that Binyamin's kidnapping might even send Yaakov to the grave? Lastly, why during his nine years as viceroy of Egypt had Yosef still not sent word to his father that he was still alive? Yosef could have saved Yaakov nine terrible years of torment, yet he did not. Why?

These are extremely difficult questions. Commentators throughout the generations have attempted to find solutions to these problems. One such attempt posits that Yosef was bound by his dreams to behave in just such a manner. This is problematic, as it remains unclear in what way the dreams could have bound Yosef to this specific perplexing behavior.

In any event, I would like to suggest my own approach, an approach based on a Shiur I once heard from moreinu, the Rav zt"l.

Each one of the three avot had a Tefikid - a major responsibility and project which was the unique focus of their lives. Avraham channeled his energies into spreading awareness and knowledge of G-d in the world. Yitzchak focused on Avodat Hashem - personal service of the Almighty (as exemplified by the Akeidah). Yaakov concentrated on building his family.

All of Yaakov's parental decisions were singularly motivated to facilitate the building of his family. The creation of the Shivtei Yah was the raison d'etre of Yaakov's life. His children were to be the foundation of a holy people. The establishment of the twelve pillars of Yisrael was his life's work.

It is for this very reason that Yaakov could never have been informed of Yosef's sale. Had Yaakov discovered that his nine sons had sold their brother Yosef into slavery, he surely would have cursed them and driven them out of Beit Yaakov forever. Rather, the Bnei Yaakov had to be the foundation of Bnei Yisrael. Even today, we are still known as the children of Israel and the House of Yaakov.

This approach explains a tremendously difficult Midrash in Parashat Vayeshev (122). The Midrash tells us that following Yosef's sale, the brothers proceeded to bind themselves with a cherem, a solemn pact of silence. They wanted to guarantee that Yaakov would never discover what they had done. But, the Midrash continues, Reuven had left the scene and there were only nine brothers present -- one short of the

required number to enact a cherem. However, Hashem joined the nine brothers to complete the required quorum of ten needed to enact the cherem. Thus the cherem, as it were, had the approval of heaven. Upon his return, Reuven was informed of the events that had transpired, and was included in the cherem from that moment on. Since even Hashem, Kiv'yachol, could not reveal to Yaakov what had transpired, it was impossible for Yaakov to find out about Yosef's sale.

Hashem approved of the cherem so that the brothers would not suffer the same fate as Yishmael and Esav before them -- being driven away from the fold, never to return. The fate of klal Yisrael would have been sealed. For this very reason, Yosef HaTzaddik also knew that he too must keep this secret from his father. Despite having been sold into slavery and almost certain death, Yosef knew that in order to allow the perpetuation of the brit avot, he had to stay out of sight.

In a demonstration of the highest level of righteousness, Yosef would not return to Yaakov's household until accepted by his brothers; in unity they could build Beit Yaakov. He imprisoned Shimon and heard the brothers remark that this was a punishment for mechirat Yosef. Yet, the brothers did not accept the awesomeness of their punishment. Therefore, Yosef imprisoned Binyamin and then heard from Yehuda -- who had instigated Yosef's sale -- how much the brothers regretted the pain they had caused their father by their sale of Yosef. Once Yehuda offered to take Binyamin's place in jail, Yosef was confident that the brothers had recognized the awesomeness of their crime and the extent to which they had betrayed Yaakov. After Yosef saw that the brothers had achieved a complete teshuva, he knew that the time had come to reveal his identity and rejoin the Shivtei Yah.

Yet, Yaakov remained forever ignorant of the crime which the brothers had committed. Yaakov died unaware of this episode, thereby maintaining the unity of Beit Yaakov and laying the foundation for Am Yisrael.

Different Directions For Your Devotion
by Yosef Markowitz

In this week's parasha, Yaakov and Yosef reunite after a 22 year separation:

Yosef harnessed his chariot, and went up to meet Yisrael his father in Goshen, and he...fell on his [father's] neck and wept. (46:29)
Rash"i, commenting on this verse, asserts that Yosef wept while Yaakov was reciting the shema. Two questions immediately arise. Why, we may ask, did Yaakov pick this unusual moment, during an emotional reunion with his son, to say shema? Furthermore, if this was the appropriate time for reciting shema, why didn't Yosef join his father in its reading?

The MaHaRaL explains that this meeting did not occur during zeman kriat shema, the proper time for reading shema. Rather, during this moving reunion, Yaakov experienced an awakening of his love for Yosef, a love he had suppressed for the past 22 years. Yaakov decided to channel this immense joy directly towards his service of G-d. Yaakov passionately desired closeness with Hashem; he wished to thank Him for all the good He had bestowed upon himself and his family. Precisely at this moment, through his recitation of shema, Yaakov accomplished this lofty goal.

Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin, offers a similar explanation. He insists that Yaakov's love for Yosef had grown since their last meeting. Both Yosef's high position in the Egyptian government and his ability to support his family led Yaakov to a new appreciation of Yosef's greatness. Yaakov realized that Yosef had remained righteous despite the evil and immoral surroundings of Egypt. Yaakov, not wanting to waste this emotional high, directed his newfound love towards G-d.

Rav Yitzchak Yerucham Diskin, using an idea of Rabbeinu Yonah,

expands upon these thoughts. Rabbeinu Yonah asserts that heretical ideas emerged when man could not understand that a single G-d created both light and darkness. Man refused to believe that both good and apparent evil spring from the same source. We, vehemently disagreeing with these ideas, emphasize our beliefs in the first blessing preceding the shema: He creates light - yet fashions darkness, he brings peace...

When Yaakov was reunited with Yosef, he realized that Hashem had arranged the seemingly unfortunate events of the past 22 years in order that Yaakov and his family survive the severe famine. He realized how everything that had happened to him - both the good and evil - had been ordained by G-d for his own good. Now, with his recitation of shema, he could truly proclaim the unity of G-d. Therefore, the recitation of shema was uniquely appropriate for Yaakov but not for Yosef.

From these answers we may discern several important elements of ahavat Hashem, love of G-d. We should always try to direct our love for G-d's creations towards their true source - Hashem himself. We should understand that everything has a distinct purpose. We must acknowledge, despite our failure to understand, that what appears contradictory or evil is really part G-d's plan. Additionally, we should use all the good that comes our way as a vehicle to increase our love of G-d. The S'fat Emet contends that every Jew has an innate ability to love Hashem. We must strive to actualize this potential, not allowing superficialities to obscure our true goals.

Egyptian Political Theory
by Carl Hochhauser

When Pharaoh heard that Yosef's brothers came to Egypt, the pasuk says:

and it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. (45:16)

Why was Pharaoh suddenly happy to hear about Yosef's family reunion? Why would he and his household care about Yosef's family life?

Egyptians held a special place in their hearts for Jews - they despised them. When the brothers originally came to Egypt looking for food, Yosef had to seat them at a separate table because the Egyptians considered it a "to'evah" - an abomination - to eat with Jews (43:32). One of the reasons for this disgust was that Yaakov's family made their living as shepherds, a profession the Egyptians hated (46:34) either because the Egyptians worshipped sheep (Rash"i) or because they considered sheep disgusting animals (RaShBa"M). This hatred is apparent at the beginning of last week's parasha. When the butler told Pharaoh about an interpreter of dreams he had known in jail, he described Yosef as negatively as possible. He called him a "Na'ar Ivri Eved" - 'a young Jewish slave' (41:12, see Rash"i).

This idea might help explain why Yosef never contacted his grieving father so as to spare him additional anguish. Pharaoh and the rest of the government simply wouldn't let him. They needed Yosef, but were embarrassed about his background. Had they revealed that a Jewish ex-con, recently freed from slavery, was running the country a political scandal would have ensued. Only Pharaoh and his closest ministers knew this secret, and they kept it quiet. Of course, the butler knew as well, which might explain why he was never heard of again.

Many archaeological finds have indicated that the Semitic people of that era grew beards. Thus, the Egyptians shaved Yosef immediately after they released him from jail. This made it harder for anyone to identify him as an Ivri. For the same reason Pharaoh gave Yosef an Egyptian name when he assumed his position - to conceal the secret.

These palace politics now explain why Pharaoh and his household were so happy to hear of the arrival of Yosef's brothers. They didn't really

care about Yosef's family life, but rather were relieved to hear of his eminent lineage. According to the Ramba"n, Yosef had always told him of his background, but now Pharaoh saw for himself. Although Yosef was an Ivri, he was from the family of Avraham, who, according to the RaDa"K, was highly esteemed throughout the region. Although he was at one point a slave, he wasn't truly from that caste. He only ended up in slavery because his brothers had kidnapped him and sold him to Egypt. And although the lowly butler had expressed doubts about Yosef due to his alleged immaturity, the wise Pharaoh had seen enough of his brilliance and wisdom to allay his concerns.

The only issue not put to rest by the arrival of Yosef's family was his criminal record. He had been in prison for greater than two years; how could Pharaoh have ignored this blemish? The answer, however, is obvious when one considers Yosef's alleged crime. He was convicted (although unjustly) for adultery with Potiphar's wife. Considering the moral level of Egyptian society, it's not surprising that Pharaoh glossed over this flaw in Yosef's r1 sum 1. Egypt was one of the most corrupt and promiscuous lands in all of history. The Talmud says that ten portions of : / FA were given to the world, and Egypt took 9. Egypt was a very corrupt and haughty society (RaShBa"M and Chizkuni on 43:32); although reputation and image meant a great deal to them, character and middot were worth little.

Yo Man - Take A Downer!
by Shraga Goldenhersh

In the first pasuk of this week's parasha the Torah recounts how Yehuda appealed to Yosef after the brothers' arrest:
Please, my Lord, allow your servant to speak a word in my lord's ears, and may his anger not burn against his servant, for he is like the Pharaoh. (44:18)

Rash'i infers from Yehuda's plea that he intended to speak harshly. Translating the rest of the pasuk in the same indignant tone, Rash'i comments that Yehuda's association of Yosef with Pharaoh implies that he distrusted both. Moreover, Rash'i alleges that Yehuda threatened Yosef with divine retribution.

Rabbeinu Bachya, however, interprets these verses in a completely different vein. Before even beginning to elucidate the section he cites the verse:

A soft answer turns away wrath; but grievous words stir anger. (Mishlei 15:1)
Yehuda, he says, did not approach Yosef in a disrespectful manner. On the contrary, Yehuda appealed to Yosef gently and graciously. Only this courteous behavior, claims Rabbeinu Bachya, prompted Yosef's anger to subside.

The rift between Yosef and his brothers was the first altercation between Jewish brothers. Rabbeinu Bachya seems intent on emphasizing that the quarrel was only resolved because of Yehuda's soft tone and rational, level-headed approach. Similarly, we now find our nation deeply divided, recent events only exacerbating the situation. We must, in these difficult times, remember the lesson of the parasha. A gracious respect for another's opinion and a tolerant approach to different positions will help to heal these national wounds.

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Ness Gadol Hayah Sham

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Shiur HaRav on Parshas Vayigash

"My brothers and the house of my father that was in the land of Canaan have come to me... And the men are shepherds, for they have been men of cattle... And they told Paroh that they have come to dwell in the land for there is no pasture available to the sheep of your servants for the famine is strong in the land of Canaan, your servants request that they be permitted to live in the land of Goshen" (Breishis 46:31-47:4).

The Rav ZTL asked why did Yosef feel it necessary to tell the brothers to inform Paroh that they were shepherds by trade? Would the brothers, who were honest people, not have told Paroh what their true profession was? The Rav explained this based on the statement the brothers made that they have "come to dwell in the land for there is no pasture available to our cattle" in the land of Canaan due to the famine. The thrust of their statement was that though they personally would be able to survive the hardships of the famine, their animals would not. Their coming to Egypt was an act of mercy for their animals (Tzaar Baalei Chaim).

There are 2 terms used to represent shepherds: Anshei Mikneh and Ro'ay Tzon. The Ramban (41:32) explains that the brothers told Paroh that they own much cattle. However, they were different from other cattle ranchers in that they were "hands on" owners. They tended their cattle in the tradition of Avraham Avinu where the owners themselves tend the cattle. Though they could well afford it, there are no slaves that are relegated to performing the menial tasks. There is no class distinction between owner and servant in that all had the same title: Ro'eh Tzon. The simple question is: why should the owners work at such a job when the servants could be assigned the task instead (Ya'akov was clearly wealthy and had many servants of his own (as indicated in Breishis 30:43) yet he personally tended the sheep of Lavan and his sons tended his own sheep (30:35 and 37:12))?

The Rav explained that the truly caring shepherd must develop the characteristic of patience. He must care for each individual little lamb. To the shepherd the individual is extremely important. These are required traits for the kings of Israel. For example the prophet Nathan is commanded to tell King David that Hashem has chosen him from out behind the sheep corral (2 Samuel 7:8). This is what Yosef told Paroh, that his brothers are Ro'ay Tzon, they have the characteristics of shepherds, even though they are Anshei Mikneh, great cattle ranchers. They still tend personally to each animal even though they economically do not have to.

The goal of this scripted conversation between the brothers of Yosef and Paroh was that the brothers should emphasize to Paroh that they had no desire to assimilate into the Egyptian lifestyle and culture. They were to emphasize that they have been shepherds from their earliest youth, it is in their genes, handed down to them by their forefathers. Yosef, having lived among the Egyptians for some time, knew that if the brothers did not keep their traditions, the pull of the Egyptian culture would be too strong. He was well aware that if his brothers gave up their shepherding, they would fall victim to assimilation in Egypt. By saying that shepherding was their only profession, Yosef knew that Paroh would allow them all to settle in Goshen as a family unit. Paroh would not scatter them around Egypt. "How good is it and how pleasant is it when brothers dwell together" (Tehillim 133:1). Keeping the Jewish family intact is the insurance against assimilation.

When the brothers said that they have "Come to dwell in the land" they were stating clearly that the intention of their father Yaakov was not to assimilate with the people of the land. He did not want to immerse himself in their culture and lifestyle so as to live there permanently (as stated in the Sifri on Parshas Ki Tavo and as we recite in the Haggadah "Shelo Yarad Yaakov Avinu L'hishtakeah Sham"). Indeed, the entire section of the Parsha that deals with Yosef orchestrating and maneuvering Paroh into allowing Bnay Yisrael to remain intact and to settle in Goshen speaks to the singular goal of remaining a unique and

separate family for the duration of their temporary stay in Egypt.

Paroh answered Yosef that his brothers are welcome to spread out and assimilate into Egyptian society and to take from and become a part of the culture and lifestyle, as he said "settle your father and brothers in the finest parts of the land". However I, Paroh, recognize that they do not want to assimilate, but rather their intention is to remain for a short time and to return to their homeland as soon as the economic conditions there can once again support their lifestyle as shepherds. To facilitate their return they wish to remain together as a family unit and to do that I will allow them to dwell in Goshen for the duration of their stay.

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