

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON VAYIGASH - 5760

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From: Kenneth Block[SMTP:kenblock@worldnet.att.net] Subject: NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah - Parshat Vayigash

Parshat Vayigash RABBI HERSCHEL KURZROCK Young Israel of Kensington, NY

Daf Yomi: Yevamot 18

The highly dramatic and emotional story of Yosef's revealing himself to his brothers, presented in this parsha, on the surface poses a few difficult questions.

When Yosef revealed himself to his shocked and astounded brothers, he said, "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" (45:3). Yehuda had just finished beseeching Yosef to free Benjamin. His pleading request was based on the fact that the moment Yaakov sees the brothers return without Benjamin, the effect upon him would be fatal. Thus, Yosef had no reason to ask his brothers that question since he knew from Yehuda's words the positive answer. Aside from Yehuda's entreaties, it seems that it was clear to Yosef that the brothers claimed that their father was alive, even before his encounter with Yehuda. In last week's parsha, Parshat Miketz, when the brothers returned to Yosef with Benjamin, as demanded, the first question Yosef asked them was "Is your old father at peace? ... Is he still alive?", and they answered, "... He is still alive." (4:27-28). After spending some time with Yosef, they left to go back home to Yaakov. However, they were overtaken by Yosef's messengers, accused of stealing his special cup and had to return to Yosef in Egypt. Therefore, they couldn't have had any updated news about the condition of the father because they never got to go home. Why then does Yosef ask them again, upon revealing himself?

The midrash (Breishit Raba 93-10) states, on the verse "... And the brothers couldn't respond to him (Yosef) because they were terrified of him" (45:3), Abba Kohayn Bardila says, "Woe is to us from the Day of Judgement and woe it to us from the Day of Castigation..." Yosef was the youngest of the tribes (aside from Binyamin who wasn't involved in selling him) and yet the brothers couldn't withstand Yosef's admonishing; as stated, "And the brothers couldn't respond because they were terrified of him..." When the Al-Mighty will come and reprimand each one of us, according to his personal activities..." "Surely we will be terrified and unable to respond." Here too, one can ask on the midrash wherein do we find any reproving in the words of Yosef when he reveals himself? He just said, "I am Yosef, is my father still alive? What does the midrash mean by the double expression of "Day of Judgment and the Day of Castigation"? Also, castigation should really precede judgment of a person, why does the midrash present judgment first?

The classic explanation of the words of Yosef upon revealing himself to the brothers by Rav Yosef Ber Soloveichik (the first of the Soloveichik family rabbis of Brisk, and known as the author of the "Beit HaLevi") in his sefer on Torah, will adequately answer all the questions cited above and teach us a fundamental lesson in conducting our personal life properly, according to Torah.

The Beit HaLevi says that when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and asked if the father was still alive, he was not seeking information regarding the father! Yosef was answering and destroying Yehuda's argument with a "rhetorical question" that inherently contained a tremendous rebuke to the brothers: Yehuda had claimed that the old father Yaakov will not be able to bear the loss of Benjamin and it will prove fatal to him. Then and there Yosef decided to reveal

B'S'Dhimself feeling that now he has the proper lesson to teach the brothers.

He countered with the words "I am Yosef... Is my father still alive?" With this question he meant, "I, Yosef was the favorite of my father. How is it that you didn't consider at that time, twenty-two years ago, when you, Yehuda, advised your brothers to sell me as a slave to Egypt if my father could survive my disappearance? Why didn't you fear and worry about our father's anguish, pain and suffering at that time? It seems that then, the personal motive of hatred towards me outweighed the consideration of our father's welfare."

These few seemingly innocent words that Yosef said to the brothers "rhetorically" truly contained a most harsh and sharp admonishment for them. This is why the verse states that the brothers couldn't respond to him because they were shocked and terrified. In fact, there was no answer and Yosef didn't expect any answer from them! In this manner Yosef was able to bring them to the realization of the gravity of their iniquity when they sold him.

This elucidation of Yosef's words, answers the questions we asked on the midrash cited above. A person by his contradictory actions really judges himself and then the Al-Mighty will rebuke him "lifi ma'asehu adam" according to his very own personal actions, which actually refute the very excuses he uses to justify his transgressions. Many times a person seeks to justify his actions or inactions in spiritual matters with seemingly valid excuses and/or reason. For example, when asked by the rabbi, why didn't he attend the Shacharit minyan during the winter, his answer is "Well, it's very difficult to arise so early in the morning, the cold weather is not good for his health, etc." Yet when he has a chance for a good business deal, etc., in materialistic matters, he is not thwarted by early hours or held back from actively pursuing the matter by cold weather. His own inconsistent contradictory behavior serves to belie his so called justification for spiritual inaction. There are individuals who refuse to support needy charities claiming that they need all their money for important necessities, family needs etc., and can't afford a percentage for charity or even to donate time and effort for benevolent deeds of kindness to others. However, these very same people expend large sums for physical luxuries and have time for all types of personal bodily enjoyment and gratification. Thus, they destroy any semblance of veracity in the types of justification they offer for their reticence in expending funds for spiritual activities required by Torah law.

This, the midrash quoted above points out clearly and succinctly "Woe is to the person when after he presents his self justifying excuses on the Day of Judgment", he is confronted by these inconsistencies throughout his life and can have no answer to this harsh and sharp rebuke caused by his own paradoxical behavior.

In the Gemara Chagiga 4b, the Talmud states that when Rav Elazar read the verse in Parshat VaYigash (45-3) that we discussed above, "And the brothers couldn't respond to Yosef because they were terrified"... he started to cry and said, if the rebuke of a human can be so powerful, how much more must we tremble before the castigation of the Al-Mighty (on the Day of Judgment). It seems that Rav Elazar understood the inconsistencies of man's actions and knew that it was impossible to justify all our actions before the Al-Mighty (see Tosfot Chagiga 4b).

The midrash in Parshat VaYigash (93-8) says that the brothers had phenomenal strength and were able to destroy the whole of Egypt. How is it then that they became so terrified, subservient and cowered before Yosef when he revealed himself to them? However, their strength came from the sureness of their righteousness. As soon as they realized, upon hearing the sharp clear criticism and reproach of Yosef, that the truth is not on their side, their strength ebbed. Not from Yosef's rulership position did they cower, but rather from his representing the truth did they weaken in their resolve and become subservient to him.

First and foremost, a person must strive to act in a consistent and constant manner in all his activities in life, spiritual and material; and be

willing to accept the truth and mend his ways. With such behavior, one can expect the compassion and forgiveness of the Al-Mighty for human frailties on the ultimate Day of Judgment. May we merit to practice a Torah way of life with consistency and honesty.

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org]  
"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayigash

The Identity of a Jew

The Torah tells us that Yosef sent wagons (Agalos) laden with food to Yaakov, in order to provide proof that he was still alive [Bereshis 45:21]. There is a famous Medrash which explains that the reason Yaakov was convinced that Yosef was still alive was that this gift was really a play on words. The word Agalah [wagon] was symbolic of the word Eglah [calf]. Eglah was reminiscent of the halachic subject of Eglah Arufah [the decapitated Calf]. [Devorim 21:1-9; Sotah Chapter 9] Yaakov and Yosef were in the middle of studying this subject, Eglah Arufah, when they were separated.

As soon as Yaakov saw the wagons, he realized that Yosef was alive, and had not even a shadow of a doubt [45:27]. Yaakov immediately associated the Agalos with the Eglah Arufah, the last halachic section they had studied.

I would like to relate a very interesting incident that happened in the time of the Gaon of Vilna. Apparently, a couple had gotten married, and immediately after the wedding the husband vanished. He was never heard from again. The wife was an Agunah [a 'chained' wife]; she was unable to remarry because she was still married to her vacant husband, and the Beis Din had no way to know whether her husband was not, in fact, still alive.

Thirty years later, a fellow walked into town, went to this woman and announced, "I'm home". The halachic question was -- do we believe this fellow who claims to be the husband, or not? People change a tremendous amount in thirty years, but still, no one recognized the man. This was a very serious matter, involving an Eishes Ish [a married woman].

On the other hand, the fellow did not come unprepared. The man told the woman things that only the husband could conceivably have known. He told her all about the wedding. He even knew intimate information about her. The man provided seemingly undeniable proof that he must be the husband. The details that he presented were all things which ostensibly only the husband could have known.

The Vilna Gaon was consulted regarding whether or not the man could be believed. The Vilna Gaon told them to take the man into the shul [synagogue] and ask him to identify his makom kavuah [regular seat] where he used to pray. They took the man into the shul and asked him to identify his regular seat. The man was unable to identify his makom kavuah. The Gaon then identified the person as a fraud and a liar. Why?

This person wanted to trick the poor woman... He obviously had spoken to the real husband and bothered to find out many "important" details, but since he was not an honest, God-fearing, Jew, he did not bother to find out about matters of spirituality (Devorim she'b'Kedusha). The man could identify the color of his suit on the wedding day, the color of the flowers, the name of the band, all the 'foolish' matters. But there is one thing that a person who does not take his Judaism seriously will not think about finding out: the Devorim she'b'Kedusha, the holy matters in the life of a Jew.

The important thing in our lives is not what color our car is. The important thing in our lives is where we pray in synagogue, what tractate of Talmud we are studying, etc. Therefore the Gaon knew that this

person was a con artist and was not the real husband.

We learn this lesson from Yosef and Yaakov. When Yosef wanted to give undeniable proof to his father Yaakov that he was indeed Yosef, the incontrovertible piece of evidence he presented was the halachic portion that they were studying. On the day that Yosef left, what was the 'Daf' [folio of Talmud] that they studied? What was the 'sugyah' [Talmudic subject] that they were studying? That is the way serious Jews identify themselves. Not by where they went fishing together, nor by where they played ball together, nor by all the other foolish aspects of life. Yosef identified himself to Yaakov by the essence of Jewish identity -- the Torah topic that they last discussed.

The Vilna Gaon was not engaged in miraculous revelation. This was just common sense. A Jew knows where he prays and where he learns -- because those are the key aspects of his life.

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From: Yated USA [SMTP:yate-usa@ttec.com]  
PENINIM AHL HATORAH: PARSHAS VAYIGASH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef to prepare ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28) Yaakov sent Yehudah ahead of the family to prepare for their arrival. The Midrash understands the word "I'horos" according to its Hebrew definition, 'to teach.' Yaakov sent Yehudah to found a yeshivah, a place where their family could study Torah. We infer from Yaakov's action that Torah study takes priority over any other endeavor. When a community is being developed, one must first establish a Torah institution, nurturing its inhabitants spiritually. The commentators address the fact that Yehudah, not Yosef, was chosen to establish the yeshivah, even though Yosef was a distinguished talmid chacham, who had already been in Egypt. The consensus of opinion is that apparently Yehudah was more suited to be the Rosh Yeshivah than Yosef. Some feel that Yosef, as a world leader, would be inclined to inject a degree of secular perspective into the yeshivah's 'mission statement.' Survival in galus, exile, requires pure Torah study. Yehudah represents Torah study in its most pristine form. Horav Avigdor Nebentzhal, Shlita, explains that Yosef was unequivocally a tzaddik. He had remained totally committed to Torah and mitzvos even during his twenty-two year separation from his father. He accorded a greater distinction to politics and the running of the government, however, than to pure Torah study. This is evident from Yosef's desire that Yaakov place his right hand upon Menashe's head. Menashe was directly involved with his father in governing Egypt, while Efraim spent his entire day studying Torah. Menashe certainly spent a part of his day immersed in Torah study, but Efraim was totally immersed in it. The establishment of a yeshivah and its spiritual maintenance must be under the leadership of an individual who is exclusively dedicated to Torah study. We may wonder, if Yehudah represents the ideal, why did Yaakov establish that the basic blessing a father gives his son is 'May Hashem make you like Efraim and Menashe' Why not aspire for the optimal choice - Yehudah? Some commentators suggest that Yaakov foresaw that most of Am Yisrael would not be devoted entirely to Torah study. He, therefore, blessed the

masses in such a manner that those who do not have the opportunity to engage in Torah study exclusively, should be as Menashe-who exemplified the ben Torah who was also involved in secular pursuits. Yaakov hoped that the relationship between Efraim and Menashe-the son who engaged exclusively in Torah and the son who was also involved in areas of 'derech erez'-would set the standard for their descendants. He hoped that they would co-exist in harmony with love and respect for one another. We suggest another idea that might be implied by Yaakov Avinu's brachah. Yaakov linked Efraim and Menashe together for the express purpose of teaching us that since Efraim is the ideal, we must approach Menashe's way of life from Efraim's perspective. In other words, Menashe's hashkofas ha'chaim, philosophy of life, his dealings in the secular world-his relationship with people, must reflect a Torah view. Menashe should represent the ben Torah in the broader world. This distinction should be evident in every area of his endeavor whether one is like Efraim or like Menashe, Torah must reign supreme in his life and be manifest in his lifestyle. Perhaps there is another reason that Yaakov selected Yehudah to be the Rosh Yeshivah in Goshen. Yehudah was granted malchus, sovereignty over Klal Yisrael, because of his ability to be 'modeh al ha'emes,' concede the truth. He did not shy away and blame others, which has lately become a mode of life for so many. He owned up to his responsibility. If he erred, he confessed to his sin, accepting the consequences. An educator, be it a parent, teacher, or Torah scholar, must be able to say that he made a mistake. One who cannot or will not concede his mistakes should not be a mentor-of any sort. Yehudah's yeshivah, like every yeshivah that has followed after it, was built upon the foundation of emes. The ensuing success of any institution is dependent upon adherence to this standard.

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From: RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY [SMTP:podolsky@hakotel.edu]  
Soul Brothers

It's interesting. At first, Yaakov had refused to send Binyomin with his brothers to Egypt. His reasoning: Both Rachel and Yosef had died while traveling (Rashi 44:22). Chances were that a similar fate awaited Binyomin. Better safe than sorry!

Even after Reuven assured Yaakov that he would assume full responsibility for Binyomin's safety (42:37), Yaakov was not convinced. Binyomin remained at home.

So why is it that Yaakov ultimately agreed to let Binyomin go? What changed?

The answer is, Yehuda guaranteed Binyomin's safe return. "I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him... (43:9)." The enigma: What's the difference. What distinguished Yehuda's guarantee from Reuven's?

My rebbe, Rav Nison Alpert zt"l, answered as follows (Limudei Nison): True, Reuven was willing to sacrifice of himself on behalf of Binyomin. "You may slay my two sons if I fail to bring him back to you. Put him in my care and I will return him to you (42:37)." For Binyomin's sake Reuven was willing to forfeit his future in this world and his allotment in Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, Reuven was willing to forego all worldly gain. Nevertheless, Reuven reserved for himself his portion in the World-to-Come.

Yehuda went the extra mile. "...If I do not bring him back to you and stand him before you, then I will have sinned to you for all time (43:9 and Rashi ad. loc.)." Yehuda literally bound up his soul with Binyomin's (Rashi 44:32). They fused into one. Without Binyomin, Yehuda's meaningful existence would obsolesce.

Consequently, Yaakov acquiesced. Binyomin was no longer alone. The danger to his life was reduced to nil by an interweaving of souls.

This bond between Yehuda and Binyomin waxed eternal. When the ten tribes seceded from the Kingdom of Dovid, establishing a separate monarchy, Binyomin remained indivisible from Yehuda. They were not

just brothers; they were soul brothers.

The dividend: After the ten tribes were exiled, never to be heard from again, Binyomin and Yehuda maintained an inseparable partnership. "Two are better than one... For should they fall, one can lift the other; but woe to him who is alone, when he falls and there is no one to lift him (Koheles 4:9-10)!" Yehuda and Binyomin thus supported one another throughout their long and arduous journey through the Diaspora -- Soul brothers forever.

The Hebrew term that demarcated Yehuda's commitment is Arvus. It is a commitment that transcends both time and space, both physical and spiritual. Like nuclear fusion, it is exceedingly potent.

"Kol Yisrael Arevim zeh bazez -- Every Jew is bound up with every other (Shavuos 39a)." Note the Hebrew. It does not say that every Jew is Achara'i (responsible) for the other. Rather, the soul of every Jew is immutably intertwined with that of every other. As such, it is exceedingly potent.

We stand at a very pivotal crossroads in our history. Who will endure this challenging period? Who will survive the ordeals that lie ahead? Yehuda teaches us a secret of survival. All we have to do is implement it.

May Hashem help us.

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From: Yated USA[SMTP:yate-usa@ttec.com]  
Halacha Discussion: ADOPTION IN HALACHAH BY RABBI  
DONIEL NEUSTADT

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

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, our Sages 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 may otherwise not have a Jewish home. In practice, however, it may prove difficult to verify the lineage (yichus) of the child, in which case unforeseen problems may arise regarding the child's future entry 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 adoption the child undergoes conversion, which allows the child to marry any person permitted to wed a convert. The drawback, however, is that the child must(2) be told of his conversion when he or she reaches the age of maturity, thirteen for a boy and twelve 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 would not be adopted or raised as one's own child. [There is a possible solution that circumvents this eventuality. At the time of adoption, the parents can stipulate that the child is being halachically bought as an eved (a slave). When the time comes, the parents will halachically free the child. Freeing him renders him a complete Jew (a "righteous convert") who cannot reject his conversion(3).] C. How close a relationship? Adopted children should be told of their origin at the earliest possible time(4). People who choose to hide the origin of their adopted children from them may unwittingly cause grave halachic hardships or complications in the future and it is

forbidden to do so(5). Although in a spiritual sense an adopted child may be considered as one's own child, the poskim stress that this does not apply to physical contact. Yichud (being alone), hugging, kissing, etc., are not permitted as they are with one's natural child. Most poskim strictly forbid this type of physical contact(6). Yichud with an adopted child may even be more stringent than with a stranger, since it would fall under the category of "libo gas bah"(7). [Note that these halachos apply to foster children and stepchildren as well.] There is, however, a view(8) 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 relations will take place and hence do not restrict the parents from treating their adopted children as their own. This leniency applies only to children who were adopted before the age when yichud is prohibited, three for a girl and nine for a boy(9). A couple may not adopt a child of an older age unless they observe all restrictions of yichud and physical contact(10). Harav M. Feinstein(11) also holds that yichud is permitted with adopted children, but for a different reason. No adoptive father, he suggests, would dare commit an illicit act with his adoptive daughter for fear of being found out by his wife upon her return home. That intimidation factor alone is enough to permit yichud. Consequently, as long as both adoptive parents are alive, married and living together in one home, yichud with a stepchild [in their home] is permitted(12). According to Harav Feinstein, it is also permitted to kiss and hug an adopted child, since the kissing and hugging is done as any parent does to his or her child, which is permitted(13). Others allow this only till the age of five or six(14). D. How is he called to the Torah? The poskim disagree as to whether an adopted child should be called to the Torah as the son of the adoptive father(15). Harav S.Z. Auerbach(16) rules that if the biological father's name is known, then the child should be called to the Torah by that name. If the biological father's name is not known, then he may be called to the Torah as the son of the adoptive father.

1Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky, among other eminent Torah giants, endorsed the practice for those unable to have children of their own - See Devar Halachah (addendum to fourth edition). See also Chazon Yechezkel (preface to Tosefta Yevamos). R' Shlomo Kluger (Chochmas Shelomo E.H. 1:1) holds that the mitzvah of procreation can be accomplished through adoption. Most other authorities do not agree with this. 2Igras Moshe Y.D. 1:161-162; Kisvei Harav Henkin 2:86. 3Igras Moshe Y.D. 1:162, who notes that it is permitted to free a slave if the original purchase was made in order to be able to free him. Obviously, a complex halachic procedure such as this can only be done under the direction of a rav who is well-versed in these halachos. 4Harav Y. Kamenetsky (oral ruling) advised that adopted children be told of their origin before their teenage years. 5Igras Moshe E.H. 4 64-2; Kisvei Harav Henkin 2:99; Minchas Yitzchak 4:49; 5:44; 9:140; Otzar ha-Poskim vol. 9, pg. 130; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Nishmas Avraham vol. 5, pg. 132). 6Chazon Ish (quoted in Devar Halachah 7:20); Otzar ha-Poskim. vol. 9, pg. 132 - written responsum from Tchebiner Rav and Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky; Minchas Yitzchak 4:49; 9:140; Shevet ha-Levi 5:205; 6:196; Devar Yehoshua E.H. 3:16; Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Nishmas Avraham vol. 5, pg. 134. See also Yashiv Moshe pg. 191). 7Devar Halachah 7:20. 8Tzitz Eliezer 6:40-21; 7:44, 45. Note that his view is stated as a limud zechus and in order to make it easier for abandoned children to find good, Jewish homes that would adopt them. 9See Discussion on Parashas Vayishev and Hebrew Notes, pg. 237, for an elaboration of the halachos concerning the age when yichud applies. 10Tzitz Eliezer, ibid. 11Igras Moshe E.H. 4:64-2. See also E.H. 4:71 [concerning marrying a woman who has a daughter]. 12Harav Feinstein also does not limit this leniency, as the Tzitz Eliezer does, to a child who was adopted before the age of three for a girl or nine for a boy. See also Avnei Yashfei 2:89-12. For further discussion, see Hebrew Notes, pg. 240. 13Based on the Shach Y.D. 157:10. 14Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav Y.Y. Neuwirth (quoted in Nishmas Avraham vol. 5, pg. 135). For further explanation, see Discussion on Parashas Vayeishev and Hebrew Notes, pg. 237. 15Minchas Yitzchak 4:49; 5:46; 6:151 strictly prohibits this practice, while other contemporary poskim find room for leniency - see Lev Aryeh 1:55 and Nachalas Tzvi pg. 31. 16Quoted in Nishmas Avraham vol. 5, pg. 136. The same ruling applies to writing the adopted child's name in a kesubah or a get. See, however, Igras Moshe E.H. 1:99. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 1999 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Project Genesis, Inc. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos.

From: Yated USA[SMTP:yate-usa@ttec.com]  
KORTZ UN SHARF-SHORT AND SWEET PARSHA VERTLACH  
BY SHAYA GOTTLIEB

"Vayigash Elov Yehuda" And Yehuda approached him. 44:18 In sefer Pri Megadim, we find the following allusion. The word Vayigash, yud, vov, gimel, shin, can also be read as the beginning of four words, "Yom vov, gimel Shvat." If the sixth day of the week, Friday, coincides with the third of Shevat (it won't occur this year), then "yipol sheleg v'kor godol," the winter will be cold and snowy. The Berditchever Rebbe added another version, "Vayigash spelled backwards reads 'Sova godol v'zol yehi,' it will be a year of satiety and affordable prices for food." Both versions are correct; it depends on the merit of the generation.

Vayigash Elov Yehuda. Why was Yehuda so furious and full of complaints? Hadn't he told Menashe earlier that the one in whose sack the goblet will be found will remain Yosef's servant along with his brothers? Yosef didn't even demand that they all remain as slaves; he just demanded that Binyomin become a slave. So why did Yehuda exchange sharp words to anger the viceroy? Yehuda was originally certain that the brothers were being punished for selling Yosef, and that's why they were being taken into servitude. Earlier, he said, "What can we say; Hashem has found your servant's sin." Yet when he realized that only Binyamin who didn't partake in Yosef's sale was being punished, Yehuda realized it was a libel and they were being framed. Therefore, he became angry and spoke harshly. -Alshich

"Bi Adoni, Yidaber No Avdecho Dovor B'oznei Adoni," Let your servant speak in my master's ears 44:18 Yehuda had suspected that the troubling communication was caused by the interpreter, who was not repeating their words correctly. Originally, when the brothers had said, "There are twelve of us," Yosef replied, "Just like I thought; you are spies." The answer did not fit the question, making Yehuda think the interpreter gave a different answer. Therefore, he said, "Let us speak directly to each other, without an interpreter, so that there be no more misunderstandings." -Rav Wolf Maggid

Another similar interpretation - Let us speak face to face, without an interpreter, in order to avoid misunderstandings. For example, take the simple words, "for you are like Pharaoh." They seem innocent enough, and their simple explanation is "You are as distinguished in my eyes as the king." However, an interpreter can twist their meaning to say, "You will be plagued with leprosy like the king," or "Just like Pharaoh, you promise and don't fulfill," or "I can kill you and your king." Therefore, let us speak face to face without an interpreter to avoid all problems. -Rav Michaelson, Plinsker Rav

Yehuda said, "Let your servant speak in your ears." Let the servant who chased after us to find the goblet whisper the true story into your ears, so you will realize all these rumors have no basis. -Maasei Hashem, Rav Ashkenazi

Why would Yehuda insult the viceroy by saying "You are like Pharaoh who decrees and doesn't fulfill," when pleading for Binyomin's release? Yehuda's words had another meaning. He wanted to say, "True, we have sinned. Yet just like Pharaoh has the power to decree punishment and not fulfill-he can pardon criminals, so do you. You can also grant us a pardon." -Afikei Yehuda

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] OHR SOMAYACH  
TORAH WEEKLY Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat  
Vayigash

Witnesses

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

Once there was a tramp standing by a traffic light. Suddenly, a big Rolls Royce limousine, about half a block long, pulls up next to him. One of the tinted windows in the back of the limo rolls down with an expensive electronic purr. From inside the car emerges a hand wearing a white silk glove. The hand is waving a crisp \$50 bill, beckoning to the tramp with the money. Like a silent Charlie Chaplin comedy, the tramp does a double take and looks behind him, convinced that the hand must

be beckoning to someone else. Then he realizes the \$50 bill is for him. He can't believe his luck. He beams from ear to ear, walks up to the car and takes the money. Just as quietly and mysteriously as it arrived, the Rolls Royce glides away and disappears in the traffic. He stands there gazing after it for a long time.

The next day, the Rolls Royce again draws up next to him. This time, the tramp is somewhat less surprised, but no less grateful.

Overjoyed, he again takes the money.

The next day the same thing happens, and the next day, and the next...

After about a month, the Rolls Royce draws up at the lights, but the window doesn't go down. After a few seconds the tramp knocks on the glass, but there is no response. So he knocks harder and harder, but there is no response. As the car pulls away, the tramp shouts: "Where's my fifty dollars! Where's my fifty dollars!"

Gratitude is proportionate to the extent that we understand that we received something that wasn't our due. If we think that something is due us, why should we be grateful?

"And Yehuda approached him."

The name Jew (Heb. Yehudi) comes from the name Yehuda. We are not called Jews by coincidence. In Hebrew, a name defines the very essence of a thing. If the name Yehuda means to thank, that must be the essence of being Jewish. We are the "thankers." The Hebrew for "to thank" is l'hodot. However, there is another meaning to the word l'hodot. It can also mean "to admit." What's the connection between giving thanks and admitting?

To the extent that we admit we received something that we didn't deserve -- to that extent will be our gratitude, to that degree we will give thanks.

We are Jews because we thank G-d for everything we have, however big or small. A Jew admits that everything comes from G-d. That is how Yehuda -- the Jewish People -- are able to approach, to come close to G-d.

"And Yehuda approached Him."

The job of the Jewish people in this world is to be quite literally "G-d's witnesses." (Not to be confused with Brand X who would also like to claim this job as their own.) Our job is to testify by the way we live our lives -- and, if necessary, with our lives -- that there is a G-d in the world. As it states in the prophetic writings: "You are My witnesses."

So if our job is to be the Witnesses, why are we called the Thankers, or the Admitters?

The foundation of all belief in G-d is to admit that life is one gigantic gift. If a person doesn't feel that he was given anything, he will never look for G-d, he will never look further than his own nose. If I sensitize myself to the gift, I will sensitize myself to the Giver. Atheism is not the root of ingratitude. Ingratitude is the root of atheism.

Source: Sfat Emet, Isaiah 43:10

Written and Compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR  
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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash[smtpr:ye@vbm-torah.org] Subject: Sichot: 11 - Vayigash Parashat Vayigash SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A YA'AKOV'S ANGUISH: THE RAMIFICATIONS OF FRATERNAL STRIFE Translated by David Silverberg

Parashat Vayigash opens with the dramatic confrontation between Yosef and Yehuda. Yosef, the Egyptian viceroy, sits motionless throughout Yehuda's monologue, until the very end. Finally, Yosef breaks down, no longer able to control his emotions, and reveals his identity to his brothers. At what point in Yehuda's speech does this occur? When Yehuda declares, "For how can I go back to

my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not be witness to the woe that would overtake my father" (Bereishit 44:34). The moment he hears of his father's pain, Yosef breaks down. When Yosef sees Binyamin for the first time, he cries, but not in the presence of his brothers (43:30). The pain of his brothers did not affect him to the point where he needed to identify himself to them. Here, too, as Yehuda (the initiator of Yosef's sale) speaks of his own crisis, Yosef is unmoved. But once Yosef hears of his father's agony - "Yosef could no longer contain himself" (45:1).

Commentaries throughout the centuries have struggled with the obvious question: if Ya'akov's suffering pained Yosef to such an extent, why did he prolong his father's agony until this point? Why did he keep his identity concealed and insist that Binyamin join his brothers in Egypt, adding further to his father's grief?

The key to the solution lies in the verse, "He [Yosef] recalled the dreams which he had dreamt about them" (42:9). Yosef remembered not the brothers' hatred and hostility, but rather the dreams about his attainment of superiority over them. The Ramban thus explains that Yosef needed to bring about the fulfillment of his prophecy, the eleven stars prostrating before him. In the absence of Binyamin, only ten "stars" were present. Yosef therefore arranged that the brothers would have to bring Binyamin, so that the prophetic dream would see its realization.

Many later commentators found the Ramban's explanation troubling. If, indeed, Yosef's dreams constituted prophecy, then it was God's responsibility, as it were, to ensure their fulfillment. Yosef's responsibility was to treat his father respectfully and let the Almighty decide how to fulfill Yosef's prophecies. The Abarbanel therefore suggests an alternative explanation, that Yosef wished to punish his brothers for their cruelty towards him. But this answer, too, seems difficult. Why would Yosef include Binyamin in this punishment, if Binyamin had nothing to do with the other brothers' mistreatment of Yosef? Moreover, why would Yosef cause his father such emotional turmoil just so that he could punish his brothers?

The answer to this problem requires that we reexamine the narrative of the sale of Yosef and the events preceding it. How could the brothers - the offspring of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov - not take into account the anguish they caused to their elderly father?

We have no choice but to turn back the pages of the Chumash to the birth of Ya'akov's sons. "God saw that Leah was unloved and He opened her womb... She declared, 'This time I will praise God!' She therefore named him Yehuda" (29:31). Leah saw her first three sons as compensation for her having been disliked by her husband. Only upon the birth of her fourth child did Leah realize that the birthright had been transferred to her children, and that she had been granted more than mere recompense for her distress. Rachel, apparently, also recognized this, and thus, upon the birth of Leah's fourth son, "Rachel saw that she had borne Ya'akov no children, and she became envious of her sister..."

Leah's children were convinced that this was, in fact, the divine will, a conviction reinforced by Rachel's premature death. Ya'akov, however, was not convinced. Though Leah's children presumed that upon Rachel's passing Ya'akov would establish his permanent residence with Leah, their father moved in with Bilha, Rachel's handmaid. The oldest of Leah's sons, Reuven, assumed the responsibility to react: "Reuven went and slept with Bilha, his father's concubine." Whether we understand this verse according to its simple reading, or if we accept the Midrash's clarification that Reuven moved his father's bed from Bilha's tent to Leah's, Reuven's involvement in his father's marital life underscores the sentiment that Ya'akov's erred in his decision.

Similarly, when Ya'akov began treating Yosef as the favorite and made him a special cloak - "as a sign that he is destined to rule"

(Seforno) - the brothers were confident once again that their elderly father was severely mistaken, as his father had been before him. Their keen historical awareness led them to believe that the fulfillment of the promise to the Patriarchs would emerge specifically through their side of the family. They cast their younger brother into the pit under the assumption that they acted in accordance with the divine will, that the birthright had been transferred from the children of Rachel to the descendants of Leah. Rashi (verse 33) notes that they "included the Almighty in their oath," indicating their confident conviction that Providence offered its stamp of approval to Yosef's sale. They understood the emotional distress they would undoubtedly cause their father. They reasoned, though, that Ya'akov was bound to eventually come to the realization that he had been mistaken all along. However, this never happened: "He refused to be comforted, saying, 'No, I will go down mourning to my son in Sheol.'"

Ya'akov's children thus possessed a deep sense of historical awareness and a consciousness of destiny that they inherited from their great-grandfather, Avraham; they knew that they constituted the fulfillment of the divine promise, "I will make you into a great nation." They lacked, however, a sense of historical RESPONSIBILITY. They overlooked the fact that, by their actions, they were determining the future character of that great nation, Benei Yisrael. Therein lies the true meaning of the celebrated expression, "Ma'aseh avot siman la-banim," the actions of the forefathers foreshadow those of their children. Only Ya'akov realized this.

As Rachel's firstborn, Yosef was infused with this unique sense of responsibility, continuing the tradition of the Matriarchs' active concern for ensuring the singular character of the Nation of Israel. Sarah demands the banishment of Yishmael from her home, "for the son of this maidservant will not inherit together with my son, Yitzchak." Likewise, Rivka ensured that Avraham's blessing be passed to Ya'akov, rather than Esav.

With the emergence of the twelve tribes, the process of choosing and discarding came to an end. They all combined to form the composite whole of Keneset Yisrael. Yosef, however, was convinced that were Rachel alive, she, like her predecessors, would have concerned herself with the moral and spiritual image of the nation. To this end, she would have undoubtedly seen to it that one of the brothers would bear the historical responsibility of ensuring that the character of Keneset Yisrael would not be adulterated by the behavior of Ya'akov's children. The actions of the forefathers foreshadow those of their children, and thus the behavior of the twelve sons would determine the image and specific quality of the Jewish People for all time.

Aware of the critical nature of this historic task, Ya'akov encourages Yosef by making him the special cloak, "as a sign that he is destined to rule." And, indeed, indications of this awareness of Yosef's part can be detected in his behavior. "Yosef brought bad reports of them to his father" (37:2). Yosef concerns himself with his brothers' moral sensitivities, and thus informs his father of their violations with regard to the consumption of limbs of live animals and their mistreatment of the sons of the handmaids, which threaten family unity. Out of his extreme sensitivity to modesty, he suspected his brothers of sexual misconduct (Rashi, citing the Midrash). Not only does Ya'akov not restrain Yosef's initiatives, but, specifically in the aftermath of Yosef's negative report, Ya'akov gives him the special cloak. It almost seems that Ya'akov knowingly charges Yosef with the historical responsibility of supervising the brothers' behavior. The brothers, however, responded with scorn and rejection. Yosef understands his dreams as signifying divine approval of his appointment by his father. Whereas the brothers again react with intense hatred and hostility, "his father kept the matter in mind."

Ya'akov later summons Yosef to observe "how your brothers are and how the flocks are faring." Although Ya'akov had many servants

whom he could have sent and although he was keenly aware of the animosity between Yosef and his other sons, he nevertheless insists that Yosef continue to monitor his brothers' behavior and oversee their moral and spiritual conduct.

So strong is Yosef's sense of historical mission, that even when he finally reveals his identity to his brothers, he adds, "Do not be distressed. It was not you who sent me here, but God..." (45:5-8). However, his mission as guardian of family morality had been cut short when he was sold into slavery. Thus, when Yosef sees his brothers in Egypt, he once again faces an opportunity to continue his historical mission, to ensure the proper character of Keneset Yisrael: "Yosef remembered the dreams he had dreamt about them" (42:9). Yosef recalls his special historical duty, which had been expressed through his dreams. This duty guides Yosef's treatment of the brothers from this point on.

Significantly, the narrative never mentions Yosef's anguish throughout the entire drama. We know of this only through the brothers' own confession: "Alas, we are being punished on account of our brother, because we looked on at his anguish, yet paid no heed as he pleaded with us" (42:21). The text describes only the anguish of Ya'akov. The Torah thus teaches us that the fundamental problem of fraternal hatred and mutual animosity relates not to the suffering of one part of the nation or another, but rather to the pain and anguish of "Ya'akov." In other words, the greatest tragedy of internal strife lies in the consequent damage to "Keneset Yisrael" as a whole. The entire nation suffers, not just one segment or another.

Out of his historical responsibility, Yosef recognizes the need for his brothers to internalize this notion - that beyond the personal suffering they caused him, ignoring his cries of pain, the real crime was committed against their father, Ya'akov, the eternal symbol of the nation as a whole.

When the eternal character of Keneset Yisrael was at stake, it was clear to Yosef that even with all the distress he caused his father, he was operating as his agent. He therefore arranged that the brothers would once again face the same situation, only this time with Binyamin.

They again had to face the possibility of hurting their father - "For how can I go back to my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not be witness to the woe that would overtake my father!" The internalization of this message, that fraternal hatred damages Keneset Yisrael as a whole, constitutes a critical prerequisite for the establishment of the character of the nation. Clearly, this eternal lesson could not prevent occasional flares of hatred throughout our history, but at every such moment this warning accompanies us like a torch, a torch with the capability to illuminate our history, to guide and enlighten, but also, Heaven forbid, to burn and destroy.

(This sicha was originally delivered on Leil Shabbat, Parashat Vayigash 5759 [1998].)

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash [SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org] Subject: Journal - Asara B'Tevet ASARA BE-TEVET 5760 [The Tenth of Tevet (which falls this coming Sunday) has traditionally been observed as Yom Ha-Kaddish Ha-kelali, the day we recite Kaddish for people whose date of death is unknown. Consequently, many rabbis have designated it as a day of remembrance for the Holocaust. We therefore present here some of Harav Amital's reflections on the Holocaust. Also see our webpage: <http://www.vbm-torah.org/10tevet.htm>. May we merit seeing this fast day turned into a day of joy, as prophesied by Zekharia.] CONFRONTING THE HOLOCAUST AS A RELIGIOUS AND A HISTORICAL PHENOMENON BY HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL "On the Ninth of Av, both the First and Second Temples were destroyed" (Mishna Ta'anit 4:6). Indeed, our mourning for the burning of God's House stands at the center of the fast day of Tisha Be-av. Yet there is a tragedy worse than the destruction of the Temple. We read in Tehillim (79:1-3):

A psalm of Assaf: God, foreigners have come to Your inheritance; they have defiled

Your holy sanctuary - they have made Jerusalem into ruins! They have given the corpses of Your servants as food for the birds of the heavens, the flesh of Your pious to the beasts of the land. They have spilled blood like water around Jerusalem; but no one buries. Concerning the heading of this psalm, the Sages comment (as cited by Rashi, Kiddushin 31b, s.v. Istaya):

"A psalm of Assaf?" It should be "a dirge of Assaf!" Rather, interpret it thus: Assaf sang over the fact that God spent his fury on the sticks and stones of His House, and thereby He left a remnant of Israel; otherwise, there would not be a survivor left. Thus it says: "God has spent his fury, for he has ignited a fire in Zion" (Eikha 4:11).

To add any explanation to this midrash would merely detract from it.

A short time ago, someone said to me, "I have gone through a great deal of Holocaust literature, and I now find it difficult to recite the Kinot of Tisha Be-av or to read the book of Eikha. Everything described there pales in comparison to the Shoah!" I replied to him: "Is this a problem? On the contrary, this is exactly how Tisha Be-av should be. If one does not feel that Eikha and the Kinot pale in comparison to the Shoah, the only explanation is that he is suppressing the memory of the Shoah."

To our great distress, we are witness today to the widespread suppression of the Holocaust from our religious consciousness. Admittedly, it is difficult to deal with the Shoah. One of the ways of dealing with it, which certain people have employed, is simply removing it from our minds, ignoring it - not in the historical sense, but in the religious and spiritual sense. I am not speaking of the pernicious phenomenon of Holocaust denial, which maintains that the Shoah never happened. Rather, I am referring to the absencing of the Shoah from the public memory and from our religious awareness, whether consciously or unconsciously - particularly here in Israel.

#### BELITTLING THE HOLOCAUST AND THE DEGRADATION OF LANGUAGE

When people use loaded words like "Auschwitz," "Majdanek," "Nazis," etc., to describe other phenomena - serious though they may be - we find a belittling of the Shoah. Using terms derived from the Shoah to describe acts of terrorism will cause future generations to come to a point where only the historians among them will be able to differentiate between the Holocaust and Israel's wars. The carelessness of such speech is bound to bring us to a future where the term "Shoah" itself will come to be a general term for a disaster to the Jewish people, and perhaps "World War II" will be a synonym for the German destruction of our people.

When Jews use against Jews terms borrowed from the world of Holocaust images, they too belittle the Shoah. Whether it is leftists calling Israeli soldiers "Judeo-Nazis," or rightists shouting "S.S." and "Gestapo" at police officers - both belittle the Shoah, even if the ultimate intent of their protests is good and their aim is for the sake of Heaven.

#### THE OMISSION OF THE SHOAH FROM OUR RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

A more serious phenomenon is the suppression of the Shoah from our religious consciousness. We stand silent before the enormity of the Shoah, and we have no answer. "And Your faithfulness in the nights" (Tehillim 92:3) - even when it is darkest, we believe that God is faithful to us. This is one of the tests with which God tries us. Despite everything, we continue to cling to God, echoing the ironic lament: "We fled from You to You." But as for a reply, there is none.

Certain groups and certain rabbinical authorities presume to provide an explanation for every tragedy and disaster; they know how to answer, for example, why a certain number of children were killed in an accident. Many times, they attribute this to the sins of others. Let us imagine: if we asked one of those rabbis, "You have before you two scenarios: here a million and a half children were killed, and here ten; now explain this" - what would he say? "I have an answer for the ten, but none for the 1,500,000?" Hardly. Thus, the compulsion to provide an answer for the deaths of ten children compels us to remove the Shoah, a tragedy on a scale that we cannot begin to comprehend, from our collective religious memory - for one who has not done so can never claim, for any tragedy, "I have an answer!" I do not even speak of the educational implications of such an approach - if there is an "explanation" or a pat "answer" for everything, what will you tell your child when he or she asks: "Why did the Shoah happen?"

In the National-Religious camp as well, which sees the rebirth of the Jewish people in its land as part of a process of redemption, there are those who disregard the Shoah. The claims are familiar: "The redemption process began in the time of the aliyah of the students of the Gaon of Vilna and continues to our day, like the morning star's light shines forth and grows ever brighter." They thus ignore, in pragmatic terms, the Shoah.

Is redemption expressed only by the blossoming of the Land of Israel and measured only by the extent of our control over it? And what about the Nation of Israel? Is what happens to the Jewish People not tied to the concept of redemption?

Such a destruction never happened before to the Nation of Israel. Can this destruction truly be made to fit into the redemption process? Seeing the redemption process as continuous and unwavering, constantly gaining strength and progressing, implies ignoring the Shoah.

In 1996, I was asked to participate in a panel discussion. At one point, one of the participants asked me: "Is it still possible to refer to the State of Israel as 'the dawn of our redemption' now, after four cities were given over to the Palestinians as part of the Oslo Accords?" Immediately, a rabbi, one of the leaders of the National-Religious camp, stood up and replied, "It is an a fortiori argument: if, seventy years ago, Rav Kook in his correspondence could refer to the embryonic State of Israel as 'the dawn of our redemption,' certainly we can, all the more so, do likewise today!"

Yet, in my mind, a question remained: "All the more so?" Is that really true? Was not our world destroyed in the intervening seventy years? Did the most terrifying event not happen in the meantime?

This approach, found among some members of the National-Religious community, also ignores the Shoah, springing from a personal inability to deal with it. In the past, very grave opinions were expounded regarding the Holocaust: there were those who claimed that the Holocaust was a sort of price that the Jewish People had to pay in order that the Jewish

State could be established. There are those that claimed that the State of Israel is the divine compensation for the destruction of the Holocaust. There were even those who claimed that the Shoah was the only way - or, at least in practical terms, became the impetus - to compel the Jews of Europe to make aliyah to the Land of Israel. These are very disclaims, approaches that I find hard to countenance at all. Moreover, these sorts of claims inspire a gut reaction, a natural aversion that causes me to worry less about them than about the historical and religious view that ignores the Shoah, disregards and omits absolutely from our collective memory - which is infinitely more dangerous.

#### THE ABSENCE OF THE SHOAH FROM OUR SERVICE OF GOD

A third point that I wish to address relates to the basis for our divine worship at the present time.

In "Chovot Ha-levavot" (Duties of the Heart), Rabbenu Bachya ibn Pekuda develops the notion that our service of God is based on gratitude to Him. "The Gate of Unity" and "The Gate of Distinction" precede "The Gate of Divine Service." In "The Gate of Distinction," Rabbenu Bachya expands on the need to constantly think about God's kindness; the obligation of divine service thus springs from belief in His unity and recognition of His good. Rabbenu Bachya addresses this at the opening of "The Gate of Divine Service" as well.

More than a few modern rabbis and preachers have continued to espouse the idea of gratitude as a basis for worshipping God. Such, for example, was Rav Dessler's approach, in the years preceding the Shoah (Mikhtav Me-eliyahu, Vol. I, p. 50). The question is, understandably: after the awesome devastation of the Jewish People in the Holocaust, how - if at all - can we still talk about our worship of God being based on gratitude or recognition of God's grace?

On my first Yom Kippur after being liberated from a Nazi labor camp, I prayed with other survivors in a cramped cellar. I cannot fully describe the storm of emotion that I felt then, but I will try to reconstruct some of that feeling.

I was young then. I had no children. My parents had been murdered along with most of the population of our town. Among the survivors in that small room, there were people who had lost their children, parents, spouses and siblings. They prayed, and I with them. Was their worship of God based on gratitude? Can a Jew who has lost his wife and children possibly serve God on the basis of recognition of His kindness? Can a Jew whose job was the removal of the charred remains of corpses from the crematoria of Auschwitz be capable of serving God on the basis of gratitude?

No, not in any way, shape, or form! But where, then, does that leave us?

"EVEN IF HE KILLS ME, I WILL STILL TRUST IN HIM!"

The Talmud records (Yoma 69b):

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: Why were they called "The Men of the Great Assembly?" Because they returned the [divine] crown to its ancient glory. Moshe came and referred to God as "The Great, Mighty, and Awesome God" (Devarim 10:17). Yirmiyahu came and said, "Foreigners are prancing in His sanctuary; where is His awesomeness?" - so he did not call Him "The Awesome" (Yirmiyahu 32:18). Daniel came and said, "Foreigners subjugate His children; where is His might?" - so he did not call Him "The Mighty" (Daniel 9:4). [The Men of the Great Assembly] came and said, "On the contrary! This is His might, that he subdues His inclination and shows patience to evildoers; this is His awesomeness, for if God were not awesome, how could one nation [i.e. the Jews] survive in the midst of all the others?" How then could [those prophets] have acted so and uprooted a Mosaic decree? Rabbi Elazar said: Since they knew that God is truthful, they would not lie to Him. The parallel passage in the Yerushalmi (Megilla 3:7) cites an even more strongly-worded answer to the final question:

Rabbi Yitzchak bar Lazar said: These prophets knew that their God is truthful, therefore they would not [hypocritically] flatter Him.

The term used here is particularly harsh - "chanufa," which refers to insincere flattery designed to ingratiate oneself with someone more powerful. This behavior is abhorrent to God, as the Korban Ha-eda (ibid.) notes:

They told the truth, "for a flatterer will not be allowed to come before Him" (Iyov 13:16).

Divine service must be built on truth, not on falsehood or fawning flattery. Therefore, the prophets who felt that attributes such as "The Great," "The Mighty," or "The Awesome" could not in their times be used accurately to describe God, refrained from using such terms - despite the fact that they realized that they were deviating from the Torah's language and from the text that Moshe had instituted.

This is true also of our issue. Within the era that saw the greatest destruction in the history of the Jewish People, it is impossible to base our divine worship on the foundation of "recognition of His good." Of course, we must always remain aware of God's daily acts of kindness, and must sincerely pray, "Modim anachnu Lakh" - "We thank You... for Your wonders and kindnesses at all times, evening, morning and afternoon." But while gratitude should certainly constitute one component of our divine service, it cannot serve as the entire foundation of our worship.

Rabbenu Bachya, in the tenth section of his Chovot Ha-levavot, "The Gate of Love of God," sets out a different path of divine service:

... One of the pious men would rise in the middle of night and declare: "My God, You have starved me, You have left me naked, You have set me to dwell in the gloom of night; and You have taught me Your strength and Your greatness. If You incinerate me in flame, I will continue only to love You and rejoice in You." It is as Iyov (13:15) said, "Even if He kills me, I will still trust in Him," and to this idea [Shelomo] the wise man hinted when he said, "A bundle of myrrh (zeror ha-mor) is my beloved to me, and he will sleep between my breasts" (Shir Ha-shirim 1:13). Our sages said, by way of derivation, "Though He constricts and embitters me (meitzer li u-meimer li), He will sleep between my breasts."

At the highest rung of religious development depicted in Chovot Ha-levavot, "The Gate of Love of God," Rabbenu Bachya bases divine love not on gratitude but on faith, which

persists even in an era of divine concealment.

The Mishna (Sota 5:5) states:

On that very day, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hyrcanus preached: Iyov served God solely out of love, as it says: "Even if He kills me, I will still trust in Him."

The gemara (Sota 31a) adds that it is only possible to explain the verse the way it is read, not according to the way it is written. Thus, the word "lo" in the verse "Hen yikteleini, lo ayachel" is to be spelled lamed-vav, yielding the translation above. It is impossible to interpret the verse as it is written, with the word "lo" spelled lamed-alef, yielding the translation, "If He kills me, I will no longer trust in Him."

This is also the explanation of the verse "Were Your Torah not my delight, I would have perished in my misery" (Tehillim 119:92). The verse is not directed only to the "delight" of Torah study in particular, but rather to the whole concept of clinging to God (devekut). We do not know how to explain this devekut, but it is a bond that lies at the core of our very being.

In the wake of the Shoah, to whom can we still flee? To where can we flee? The answer is clear: "We have fled from You to You."

I have recounted the following story many times. Shortly after I arrived in Eretz Yisrael, I visited Kfar Etzion and chanced upon a friend whom I had known during those dark days. When he saw me, he cried out, "Yehuda - is it you? You were saved? You, who always preached to us that we have no hope and should prepare to die as martyrs sanctifying God's Name - you were saved!?" His next question was: "Did you remain religious?" I replied, "Had I not stayed religious, would all of the questions have been answered? Would the whole phenomenon then be understandable?"

I once had a conversation with Abba Kovner, may he rest in peace. He was a leader of the revolt in the Vilna Ghetto and an important Hebrew poet. I said to him, "I don't know whose test was greater, mine or yours. Your banner was faith in man. After the Shoah, can you still believe in man? I believe in God, Whom I cannot understand. But man should be fathomable - so what do you believe in now?"

The v"v "Were Your Torah not my delight, I would have perished in my misery" has a broader meaning. Knesset Yisrael wonders, "How could I ever have persevered without God? How can anyone survive without God? Without God, one simply could not cope with all the problems besetting him. It is not in spite of undergoing a test of this magnitude, but rather because of it, that we need our faith in order to survive. "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me; he shall rest between my breasts" - although He constricts and embitters me, He shall rest between my breasts. (Shabbat 88b)

(Based on a sicha delivered in Av 5758 [1998]. Transcribed by Roni Goldenberg; translated by Yoseif Bloch; adapted by Rav Reuven Ziegler.)

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash [SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org] Subject: Shabbat: 10 - kiddush (part 4)  
THE LAWS OF SHABBAT BY RAV DANIEL SCHREIBER Yhe-shabbat Is Dedicated in Loving Memory of Aaron Moshe Ben Yosef Zev Schreiber Z"l, by Members of the Family.  
KIDDUSH ON SHABBAT DAY - cont.

G. Ein Kiddush Ela Be-makom Se'uda

According to the Shulchan Arukh (OC 273:1), as noted in "Kiddush - part 2," one is required to recite kiddush in a place where the meal will follow (ein kiddush ela be-makom se'uda). There are two ways to interpret this requirement: 1. The meal establishes the significance of the kiddush; or 2. The kiddush dedicates the meal as a Shabbat meal. (For further research: These two interpretations may be rooted in the Rashbam on Pesachim 101a, s.v. Af yedei kiddush).

These differing interpretations lead to important practical differences. For example, what kind of "meal" is required to satisfy the requirement of "kiddush be-makom se'uda?" According to the first approach, the meal is merely required to enhance the kiddush, one does not need a true meal to fulfill this requirement. Even eating mezonot, such as cake or cookies, or drinking an additional revi'it of wine, suffice to enhance mitzvat kiddush. Since the goal of the meal is to insure that kiddush not stand alone, it is sufficient if even a basic meal accompanies it. This is the opinion of the Geonim (OC 273:5).

According to the second interpretation that kiddush preceding a meal establishes the meal as se'udat Shabbat, then a true meal consisting of bread (see Berakhot 49b and Tosafot ibid. s.v. Iy baiy akhil) is required since otherwise it is not a Shabbat meal. This is the opinion of the Vilna Gaon (Sefer Ma'aseh Rav no. 122) and Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (Igrot Moshe YD, vol. 2, no. 163, and ibid. OC vol. 4, no. 63). See Eretz Ha-Tzvi by m"v Rav Hershel Schachter shlita, pp. 46-47, par. 8.

A second practical difference between these two approaches may be whether one fulfills mitzvat kiddush without eating or drinking anything afterwards. According to the first approach (i.e., the position of the Geonim) that kiddush cannot stand alone, one clearly does not fulfill kiddush in this manner. Furthermore, it would be prohibited to drink the kiddush wine if one will not eat afterwards. This is because if one does not fulfill kiddush by eating afterwards, by drinking the kiddush wine one has violated the prohibition of drinking prior to reciting kiddush.

Does one fulfill kiddush without eating according to the approach which emphasizes the role of kiddush in establishing a Shabbat meal? This depends upon how we interpret this requirement. On the one hand, it might mean that although the Shabbat meal must be preceded by kiddush, kiddush can be fulfilled independent of a meal. In fact, this is the ruling of R. Moshe Feinstein zt"l (Igrot Moshe YD, vol. 2, no. 163, and ibid. OC vol. 4, no. 63; see, however, OC 273:3). On the other hand, one could interpret kiddush's role in the

Shabbat meal as organic. According to this approach, Chazal specifically legislated the mitzva of kiddush al ha-kos (kiddush on a cup of wine) in the context of a true meal consisting of bread. Thus, not only would one not fulfill kiddush without eating afterwards, but even if one ate mezonot following kiddush, it would not be sufficient. One would only fulfill kiddush if the kiddush was followed by a meal consisting of bread. This is the position of the Vilna Gaon (Sefer Ma'aseh Rav no. 122) as understood by the Rav zt"l, Maran R. Joseph B. Ha-levi Soloveitchik. See Shiurim Le-zekher Abba Mari z"l, vol. 2, 'Kiddush ve-haydala', pp. 105-122, Eretz Ha-Tzvi by m"v Rav Hershel Schachter shlita, pp. 46-47, par. 8, Bi'ur Halakha 273:5, and Ha'got R. Akiva Eiger 273:5. See also OC 273:3 which seems to reflect this opinion.

In light of the above dispute, what is the justification for the widespread custom Shabbat morning after tefilla of reciting kiddush and merely eating mezonot afterwards? What is the rationale to be lenient in practice? According to Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, regardless of whether one rules like the Geonim or not, this custom is readily understood, because kiddush does not have to be followed by a true meal. Kiddush may not require a meal at all. At most a mere "meal" of mezonot would suffice. Thus, a kiddush which is followed by a "meal" of mezonot satisfies all opinions according to R. Feinstein zt"l.

However, according to the position of the Rav zt"l, this custom is difficult to understand. This is because he understands that the Vilna Gaon, who disputes the Geonim, requires that kiddush be followed by a true meal. What is the justification, then, to be lenient in practice? Why do we not follow the opinion of the Vilna Gaon? The Rav zt"l suggested that the custom of following kiddush with mezonot Shabbat morning is rooted in a safeik sefeika (a double doubt). First, it is possible that the law is accordance with the Geonim who are satisfied with kiddush being followed by a "meal" of mezonot; and second, even if the law is that kiddush must be followed by a true meal, perhaps the law is in accordance with the Ra'avad (Shabbat 29:10) who allows one to eat prior to kiddush on Shabbat day. Thus, explained the Rav zt"l, the custom on Friday night, where this safeik sefeika does not exist, is to follow kiddush with a true meal. There is no safeik sefeika Friday night because even the Ra'avad forbids eating prior to Friday night kiddush.

Although, on Shabbat day, many people do not repeat kiddush at home after kiddush in shul, according to the Rav zt"l the more correct custom would be to recite kiddush again at home prior to eating one's Shabbat meal. This is because while eating mezonot after kiddush may be justified by relying on the above safeik sefeika, there is no such safeik sefeika to justify dispensing with kiddush prior to the Shabbat meal. All that exists is a dispute amongst the poskim as to whether the Shabbat meal must be preceded by kiddush or not. Therefore, it is preferable to satisfy all opinions and recite kiddush again prior to the meal.

A more lenient opinion is that of the Magen Avraham (OC 274:2). He asserts that if one does not wish to eat a meal Friday night, one may eat three meals on Shabbat day. In this case, he rules that one should recite kiddush Friday night and rely on the Geonim that it is sufficient for kiddush to be followed by merely mezonot or an additional revi'it of wine. This ruling also supports the widespread custom of following kiddush Shabbat morning with merely a "meal" of mezonot. Moreover, this opinion of the Magen Avraham, which clearly rules in accordance with the Geonim, justifies the custom of not reciting kiddush again at home after fulfilling kiddush with mezonot in shul. This is because the Geonim only require a "meal" of mezonot for kiddush; they do not require kiddush for the Shabbat meal.

Finally, the extreme position held by Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (Igrot Moshe YD, vol. 2, no. 163, and ibid. OC vol. 4, no. 63) - as mentioned above, he rules that the Shabbat meal requires kiddush, but that kiddush does not require any meal whatsoever - leads to an interesting halakhic ruling. According to Rav Moshe zt"l, one may recite and fulfill kiddush in shul without even eating mezonot afterwards. However, one would have to recite kiddush again prior to eating the true meal in order that the meal be established as a Shabbat meal.

How much must one consume to meet the requirements of "se'uda" (a meal) for the purpose of kiddush be-makom se'uda? Depending upon how one rules in the above dispute, the mekadesh and those who hear this kiddush must eat either a kezayit (olive size) of bread or even a kezayit of mezonot (pastries) or an additional revi'it of wine (MB 273:25,27) or grape juice (Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l cited in The Radiance of Shabbat, p.61, note 21), but not chamar medina (the drink of the land - see previoshiur, and MB 273:25). The bread or pastries must be made from the five species of grain - wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye (MB 273:25). This kezayit must be eaten tokh kedei akhilat pras (the time it takes to eat a half a loaf of bread), which is between 2-9 minutes.

Those who are stringent on Pesach not to eat 'gebrockt' (matza mixed with water) must eat matza following kiddush to fulfill kiddush be-makom se'uda, since their 'cookies' are made merely of potato starch.

However, according to Rav Moshe zt"l, as mentioned above, there is no need to follow kiddush with any "meal" whatsoever. It is only the Shabbat meal which must be preceded by kiddush. Nonetheless, the prevailing custom seems to require kiddush to be followed by minimally a kezayit of mezonot.

If one is weak, we are lenient in fulfilling the specifications of kiddush be-makom se'uda for Shabbat morning kiddush by allowing fruit to satisfy the requirement of "se'uda." This is because the She'iltai Giborim writes that all forms of meals are considered complete meals on Shabbat, even those consisting solely of fruit. While this is not the accepted opinion, in a case of need we rely on it for kiddusha rabba, inasmuch as it is a rabbinic law. (OC 273:26)

H. Must One Sit or Stand for Kiddusha Rabba?

There are different minhagim as to whether one should sit or stand for Shabbat morning kiddush. (See Sha'arei Teshuva, OC 289:1, and Sefer Mishnat Chassidim 1:5.)

We will discuss the obligations of lechem mishneh (the two loaves) and eating three meals on Shabbat in the forthcoming shiur.

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash Alon Shevut, Gush Etzion

From: Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz[SMTP:jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu] Subject: Internet Chaburah--Parshas VaYigash

Prologue: The reconciliation of the brothers led Yaakov to fear for the future. Yes, he was finally going to be able to see Yosef, but at the cost of the Galus. Yaakov feared the cost. Hakadosh Baruch Hu tried to ally Yaakov's fear and told him he'd become a great nation while in Mitzrayim (Berashis 46:3). If Yaakov merely feared the pain and hardship of the ensuing Galus, what was to be the Nechama in knowing the great numbers that would be involved in such enslavement?

The Sforno explains that Yaakov's true fear was the effects of Galus. When one is among the Umot HaOlam, the potential for intermarriage is great. (Historically, Jews have tried many different means to join the nations of the world to avoid the hardships that are associated in being Jewish.) Yaakov, knowing his children were going to a foreign land, worried that Bnei Yisroel might not be able to withstand the hardships of the Galus and would opt for the intermarriage route to avoid enslavement. To that, Hashem promised him that the opposite was true. He told Yaakov that in Mitzrayim, where the Jew was easily recognized due to the names, language and clothing they utilized, would be unable to join the mainstream Egyptian life enough to assimilate. Hence in Mitzrayim (as opposed to Eretz Canaan) the Jews would be able to become a great nation. Yaakov thus received his greatest consolation, that despite the impending Galus, the nation would emerge and Klal Yisroel would continue, a strong nation.

In fact, the Brisker Rosh Yeshiva (Rav Dovid shlita, See also Beis HaLevi to Berashis 46:4) pointed out that this is the connection between the different paragraphs within the davening of Yamim Noraim. While expressing Kedushas Hashem we ask Hashem to place his fear onto all living things and immediately ask Hashem to bring glory to his people. The connection between the two ideas becomes clear. Through the glorification and building of the nation, the name and fear of Hashem becomes apparent to the nations of the world. Hence when expressing Kedushas Hashem, it is appropriate to express Kedushas Ha'Am as the vehicle for the achievement of that Kedusha. Yaakov learned that this very Kedusha comes from a nation where even in Galus, we are able to avoid assimilation. The avoiding of assimilation leads to the glorification of Shem Hashem (see M. Twain "Not so the Jew") among the nations of the world.

The basis of nation building (and destruction) is the sanctity of marriage. Interestingly, we are Mikadesh the marriage with wine and Berachos during the wedding ceremony. What happens when wine is unavailable? Can one turn to the nations and their tastes (Chamar Medina) to invoke the Kedusha that separates us from them? This week's Chaburah examines this topic entitled:

Made in Heaven, On what?: Sheva Berachos and Chamar Medina

The Rambam (Hil. Ishus Chap. 6) Rosh and Tur all note that the Birchot Nissuin (7 blessings recited at the Chuppah) are to be recited on wine. The Shulchan Aruch (Even Ha'ezer 62:1) cites this view L'Halacha. He writes that one must recite the Birchot Ha'nissuin in the home of the Chosson if there is wine, on wine and if no wine is available, one can recite these Berachos on Beer.

It appears that the source for the Psak of the Shulchan Aruch is the Shut Ha'Rambam (siman 6) who notes that if there is no wine available at a wedding ceremony, the Birchot Eirusin and Birchot Nissuin can be recited on beer and this is a common practice daily. It appears from the wording of the Rambam that even if there is wine available elsewhere in the city but not in the hall, the Berachos can still be recited on Chamar Medina since wine is not readily available. The comment of the Rambam in Hilchos Nissuin refers to the availability of wine within the home of the Chosson (or the hall as the practice of today continues).

Rav Bentzion Abba Shaul (Beth Chassanim 4:5) is cited as accepting this lenient view of the Rambam in respect to Sheva Berachot recited under the Chuppa. However, when at a Sheva Berachot, he requires one to drink actual wine. His argument is as follows: Since the regular wine following a meal (in the cup used for benching) specifically must be wine and not beer even if it is Chamar Medina. (See Rosh and Tur, (Orach Chaim, 182) and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 182:2) in its absence, Benching cannot be recited on a Kos Shel Beracha. If Benching cannot be recited on a Kos Shel Beracha, Sheva Berachot should not be recited either. This is based upon the position of Rabbeinu Meshulam who is of the opinion that the Kos of Benching allows one to utilize the Kos of Sheva Berachos which is a natural outgrowth of the Benching. If there is no Kos for Benching (since there is no wine) there should be no Kos of Sheva Berachos either. (This opinion is also advanced in Shut Chazon Ovadiah I, 48).

When we come to the Birkat Nissuin under the Chuppah, things are different. The reason is that the Beracha of Borai Pri HaGafen falls on the Kos of Nissuin (and not vice versa as by regular Sheva Berachos). Nissuin can be done with Chamar Medina as seen above and as a result, Sheva Berachot under the Chuppa can be recited. It becomes understood in a situation like this one, where Chamar Medina is being used, one recites She'Hakol in place of Borai Pri haGafen. This She'Hakol does not replace the She'Hakol beracha in the Sheva Berachot (See Sefer Atzei Arazim 62:3). The Rosh, Tur and Ran all take the opinion that if Chamar Medina is used in place of wine at a Sheva Berachot, all 6 other Berachot are recited (See Shut Yabia Omer V, 10:6 to know exactly when and how the substitution of Chamar Medina for wine might be permitted at a wedding ceremony).

Battala News

Mazal Tov to Internet Chaburah founder, Ron Samet and family upon his Aufruf and Forthcoming marriage

Mazal Tov to Shmuel Maybruch and family upon his Aufruf and Forthcoming marriage

mazel tov to Menachem and Maya Katz on the birth of a baby boy.

mazel tov to Rafi and Fradi Pearl on the birth of a baby boy.

mazel tov to Ari and Allison Wolfshin upon the birth of a baby boy. The bris will be this Friday at 7:00 Am in Congregation Orach Chaim on Lexington Avenue b/t 95th and 94th streets.

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] The Weekly Daf #305 Yevamot 13 - 19 Parshat Vayigash By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions ... Cow-Herder and Shepherd

A major debate raged between the schools of Hillel and Shammai over the issue of "tzarat habat" -- if a man died childless and left behind two widows, one of whom was the daughter of the surviving brother, who is supposed to perform yibum by marrying one of them. The position of Beit Hillel, based on a gezeirah shavah deduction, was that just as yibum cannot be performed with his daughter, who is forbidden to him, so too yibum cannot be performed with the other widow and she is free to marry anyone else. Beit Shammai's position was that the second widow is unaffected by the fact that she shared her first husband with his niece; thus, the surviving brother may perform yibum by marrying her, and she is not free to marry outside the family unless he releases her through chalitzah.

Yonatan ben Hirkinus was a brilliant member of the Shammai school who had 300 arguments to support its position. Rabbi Akiva and two other leading Sages visited his brother, Rabbi Dossa ben Hirkinus, to investigate rumors that he had ruled like Shammai against the prevailing ruling of the main body of the Sages who held like Hillel. Rabbi Dossa told them that, despite all of Yonatan's arguments, he could testify with certainty that the Prophet Chaggai had ruled that a "tzarat habat" was forbidden, exactly as Hillel later did. Yonatan accosted Rabbi Akiva on his way out of his brother's home and logically challenged his Beit Hillel position on this issue. When the latter failed to refute his challenge and clung to the tradition going back to the prophets, Yonatan chided him by saying: "You are the Akiva whose reputation as a scholar is known throughout the world? How fortunate are you that you have reached such fame without even reaching the level of a cow-herder!" Rabbi Akiva's response was, "Even the level of a shepherd!"

This enigmatic dialogue is thus explained by Maharsha:

Yonatan's mention of a cow-herder was a reference to one of the earlier prophets, Amos, who described himself as such (Amos 7:14). This was intended as a putdown of his brother's claim that the Beit Hillel's view had a tradition all the way back to the Prophet Chaggai, for Chaggai was one of the last prophets. "You do not have a tradition going back to an early prophet like the cow-herder Amos," Yonatan argued, "and even if you did, you could not rely on it because the Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah) says that Amos had difficulty with his speech." Rabbi Akiva's response was that the information received from a prophet, even one with speech difficulty, was reliable, and that the position of Beit Hillel went back to the earliest prophet, the shepherd Moshe, who also had a speech difficulty, and from whom the gezeirah shavah was originally received.

Yevamot 16a

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