

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYIGASH

DECEMBER 22, 2012

9 TEBET 5773

Sunday is The Fast of the 10th of Tevet – a day fast from dawn til nightfall

DEDICATIONS : In memory of Esther Bat Sarah – Esther Bibi 11th Tevet

Friday, December 21, Erev Shabbat - Shabbat Candle Lighting - 4:13pm / Mincha - 4:15pm

Shabbat Day, December 22

Shacharit - 9:00am Followed by Kiddush - Mincha – 12:00 noon

Shabbat Ends - 5:14pm

Arbit at 5:35 – Havdalah at 5:55 Childrens Program at 6:00PM – Movie/Pizza/Priza

Class 6PM – Joseph and Judah – Different perspectives on the world

Daily Services

Sunday, December 23 - Fast of Asarah B'Teveis

Fast Begins - 5:58am - Shacharit - 8:00am - Mincha/Maariv - 4:05pm - Fast Ends - 4:52pm

Shacharit (Monday through Friday) - 7:00am

Saturday night children's program under the direction of Rabbi Colish who will be working with youth directors from the other area Synagogues. Each Saturday night this winter when Shabbat ends early we will have a children's program with age appropriate movies – as of next week we will have two big screens for two sets of age groups – pizza, snacks, etc, along with raffles for prizes at the end. We have extended our invitation to all of the children from all the local Synagogues. The movie will start about an hour after Shabbat ends. It will be preceded by Havdalah at 40 minutes after Shabbat ends for those who have not heard it.

Concurrent with the start of the movie, we will have a class for adults and teens on the portion of the week typically based on the thoughts of the Arizal. Again the extended community – men and women are invited. Please invite your friends. And yes, the adults can get some Pizza too!

We spoke with and met with UJA a number of times this week. They stressed that FECS is being funded to help us in Long Island and we should encourage everyone to contact Elana Marcus at 516-496-7550 ext. 302215 to make appointments or get applications. They have about \$2000 available per family.

NYLAG is wonderful resource. They can assist those in trouble with:

- a. Mortgage refinance or renegotiation related to the flood
- b. Shortages or denials from insurance
- c. Shortages or denials from FEMA

The neediest of those will get a lawyer to assist in the process. - FECS can assist with this as well

Mazal Tov to Nelson & Dr. Tara Spiess on the celebration of the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Eliana Mazal

Special Thanks to our own Sam Shetrit, Rabbi Yosef Colish and all the volunteers – THE ERUV IS UP!

Five words that were written very quickly and simply! Unfortunately the words do not convey the amount of effort and expense required to have the Eruv become operational. Everyone recognizes that Hurricane Sandy did severe damage to the Eruv. There were approximately 2-3 dozen breeches in the Eruv.

Let us take a walk around the Eruv - post Sandy. On the South Side (primarily the Boardwalk) there were significant breaks in the rope (Lechi) and several light poles were completely knocked over. On the East side the rope going over Park Avenue was severed. In addition, whereas the Eruv went around the canals using the pilings as walls this was no longer possible because of the degree of damage sustained in the canal area. Since the canals could no longer be included, the Eruv needed to be re-routed. The Eruv needed to go from Maple Avenue along the North side of Park Avenue until Neptune Avenue. At Neptune, the Eruv would proceed north until it reaches the Bay and then goes further West until the Hospital at which point it hooks into the fence that runs along the Bay. It stretches until the tennis courts (on the East side of Long Beach Road where there were several breaks. The rope going across Long Beach Road was broken as were the ropes behind the gun range and the old incinerator. The Eruv then proceeds West towards the LIRR tracks where again the line was broken from the East to the West side of the tracks. The Eruv then runs along the fence above the Bay until New York Avenue where it crosses Park Avenue going south and then attaches to the Boardwalk --thus completing a complete circle around Long Beach.

please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

Mikhayla is coming home!
**Take a peek into Kosher
 Culinary Arts School in
 Jerusalem with my daughter
 Mikhayla who is going through
 a rigorous 6 month program.
 bitemebymik.blogspot.com**

Editors Notes

I had a wonderful meeting with UJA yesterday in my continuing pursuit to find assistance for those in need due to the storm. And I must say they were kind, helpful both with funds and with advice and services offered. The orthodox community usually sets UJA off to the side these days, but when few others were jumping into the fire or in this case the flood to help, UJA was there through its myriad agencies and organizations it supports. (This deserves its own article which I hope to put together next week).

I mentioned to a friend an email I received after the meeting calling me a model Rabbi – “Once again thanks for your incredible leadership. Your community is so fortunate to have you. You saw the opportunity to bring diversity to table during this crisis to help the most vulnerable”. This was after I told those at the meeting that after all this, I’m simply looking forward to retirement. I am humbled by the accolades I have been receiving both publicly and privately and remain totally undeserving of them. (But I needed to retell so I can tell you this story).

So my friend said, “David, don’t retire too quickly”. He sent me an article where the Forward analyzed the salaries of executives leading American Jewish non-profits. Yeshiva University President Richard Joel

– who I first met before he took the job at YU – when we were furnishing his home and who I always enjoy speaking with when we see each other - earned the top salary among American Jewish executives in 2011 at \$879,821, followed by Simon Wiesenthal Center President and CEO Rabbi Marvin Hier at \$702,857 and Anti-Defamation League National Director Abe Foxman at \$688,280.

I told my friend that my position on that list was equally as important as Richard’s. Where Richard was at the very top of the list, I was proud to be at the very bottom of the list earning a salary of \$0 with neither benefits nor perks – at least not in the physical sense – although I do hope there are some heavenly credits that will in some way make up for everything else I’ve done!

He didn’t like my answer and promised to send some head hunters my way, but I’ve got a feeling that where others on the list may be concerned which number they’ll be at next year I’ll still retain my status at the very bottom – or maybe that’s really the top, depending on how you look at it.

Storm update – last week we wrote about the beautiful donations we received from the Joe Dwek Ohr Emet school in Toronto and from the community of New Haven, Ct. The communal dinner we had sponsored by the school was incredible. Every seat was reserved in advance and the booklet of notes from the students left on each table made a tremendous impression. We had about a dozen kids each come up and read one of the notes. Then we had many of the people get up and tell a story of kindness that was done for them during the past six weeks. We saw that out of the tragedy, a sense of

closeness, support and community grew. We heard about amazing acts of selflessness. It was a tremendous Kiddush Hashem.

The donation of toys, gift certificates and funds from New Haven will allow us to expand our Motsie Shabbat – Saturday night children’s program under the direction of Rabbi Colish who will be working with youth directors from the other area Synagogues. Each Saturday night this winter when Shabbat ends early we will have a children’s program with age appropriate movies – as of next week we will have two big screens for two sets of age groups – pizza, snacks, etc, along with raffles for prizes at the end. We have extended our invitation to all of the children from all the local Synagogues. The movie will start about an hour after Shabbat ends. It will be preceded by Havdalah at 40 minutes after Shabbat ends for those who have not heard it.

Concurrent with the start of the movie, we will have a class for adults and teens on the portion of the week typically based on the thoughts of the Arizal. This class is entertaining, and thought provocative. We typically will draw out the pink elephant standing in the room that we’ve come to ignore in our annual reading of the portion. We’ll touch upon the Kabbalah and hopefully walk away with a bit of Musar. For the past seven years, this class typically given for an 45 minutes to an hour during Seudat Shelishi has attracted everyone from learned scholars to high school students, from chasidim in streimels to beginners – both men and women. Again the extended community is invited. And yes, the adults can get some Pizza too! If you are in the South Shore from the Five Towns to Oceanside, please join us. Let’s begin our

week with a class and you'll still have plenty of time for your Saturday night plans. For a preview of this week's class, continue reading.

Perhaps your Synagogue somewhere in the world would like to partner up with us. Please take this idea to your Rabbi or Synagogue President. Knowing you're a part of the recovery efforts and seeing the direct results of your efforts whether it's a large amount or a small amount gives us the Chizuk – the strength in seeing that others care, putting a facing to that care. In addition to the families that need help, Long Beach needs to replace Torah scrolls and books. You might donate any percentage of \$18,000 we are looking for to get Chumashim, Sidurim, Sefarim and Machzorim. We need \$15,000 for the Mikveh. We need \$15,000 for the Eruv. We need \$20,000 for a new playroom for the kids. To give people help, we are sponsoring weekly events and need sponsors for classes, for children's programs for meals. Anything will help. You can contact me at DavidBibi@gmail.com or mail a check made out to The Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach c/o David Bibi, 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10022.

I drive in with my daughter Aryana most mornings getting to Manhattan before the sun rises. She is typically out cold from the moment we pull out of the driveway til we stop either by Ramaz where she teaches or in the parking lot. Some mornings though we get to compare notes about classes she is preparing or I am comparing. This week, the two crossed paths. I brought up some pink elephants from the first five minutes of my class on this week's portion of Vayigash. Aryana took those questions and turned them into a skit for the

kids. And instead of the detailed answer which explains the different kabalistic outlooks of Judah and Joseph, we looked for a simpler answer that would appeal and provoke even a ten year old. It provokes an adult too! (For the extended version, please join us Saturday night or perhaps we'll record and post the class so you can download and listen.)

The court case: CNN Reporter giving background to the story- I am Morah Aryana, reporting to you live from the Prime Minister's Palace room in the Egyptian capitol. Here in what has been made into a makeshift court room Zaphenath-paneah (who only we know is really Joseph), the second in command to the king has placed Benjamin, son of Yaakov the Hebrew on trial. The accused is charged with robbery from the crown. Benjamin has been caught RED HANDED with the viceroy's magical goblet, stolen from the palace and found in his sack! Yehuda the eldest son of Yaakov is moving forward acting as Benjamin's advocate or lawyer. Let's get closer to the action to get a better view of what is going on....

Zaphenath-paneah - Joseph walks in first making his way towards his throne on the podium wearing his crown and carrying his scepter.

He is followed by the guard who personally searched and found the goblet in Benjamin's sack

Benjamin is escorted by a second guard in handcuffs into the courtroom

And he is followed by his brother acting as his lawyer, Yehuda

Zaphenath-paneah – Joseph rises from his seat: order in the court. Order in the court. First we

will hear from my loyal guard. (Joseph sits).

Guard: Your majesty, you - Zaphenath-paneah sent me to chase after the Hebrew brothers from Canaan after your magical cup was discovered missing following their dinner with you. After checking in all the sacks, starting from oldest to youngest, the goblet was found in HIS SACK! (Pointing at Benjamin). I then heard the brothers grumbling that just like his mother Rachel was a thief who stole her father's idol, the son Benjamin is also a thief. You see them don't argue that he is innocent!

Yehuda: (runs up towards Yoseph on the throne to beg him) Please my master may I speak with you and don't let your anger come over us. Do you have a father or a brother? I ask, because we have a father, a father who is very old. And if Benjamin doesn't come back to his father, our father will die from sadness. Please release him. Let us return home. (pause)

And if someone must be punished and taken as a slave for this crime, then take me instead! I will be a better servant to you than him!

(All characters stop and take seats on the side. Standing quietly)

CNN REPORTER- Morah Aryana: Hold on there! STOP! What is Yehuda trying to say? He does not argue that Benjamin is innocent? He does not try to prove that this is a misunderstanding. He seems to accept the guilt. Instead he is seeking the mercy of the court with two arguments to try and save Benjamin from jail.

What are they? We have a father, a father who is very old. And if

Benjamin doesn't come back to his father, our father will die from sadness. Please release him. And if someone must be punished and taken as a slave, then take me instead! I will be a better servant to you than him!

Do you all agree? See what the students have to say.

But those arguments especially in an ancient court are crazy!

Argument 1- Let's imagine that a thief comes to a bank and robs the bank! A week later, the police catch him. He is arrested, booked and brought to trial. At the trial his lawyer does not look to get him off because he may be innocent or because the evidence is not clear. His lawyer admits guilt and uses this argument! Don't punish him! Don't send him to jail! Release him because he has an old mother at home and although she has ten other children and is being well taken care of, she will be depressed if does not come home. So for her sake, forget that he did a crime.

Would a judge ever let a person go because of a reason like this? Any judge might say he feels bad for the mom, but she'll be taken care of and the guilty must be punished. Does Yehudah really think this appeal will work? Do you think this is a good reason to let a criminal off?

Argument 2- Imagine a famous athlete. He commits a crime. He is convicted of say – training dogs to fight – and is sentenced to 23 months in jail. He sends out a tweet or posts on facebook looking for one person or even a hundred people to be willing to go to jail for him promising them a piece of his salary and promising them to join his posse when they get out of jail. Dozens of people step up to volunteer. So the athlete's lawyer gets up and tells

the judge. "We understand the athlete is guilty and deserves 23 months in jail. We also know he will be assigned a job of perhaps making licenses plates. But instead of sending the athlete, these 100 guys will go in his place and they will sit in jail and they will make license plates. Imagine how many more license plates the state will get."

Does this work? Can we call in a friend to switch places with us when we are in trouble and take the heat? Or does the guilty person have to pay the price?

What kind of arguments are these? Have we ever had a court case like this? Isn't a court all about justice? Remember the statue called justice. Justice is blind. Justice weighs only the facts.

Isn't he either guilty or innocent? Justice is about black and white!

But Yehudah is different. The letters of his name Yud Heh Vav Daled Heh Very similar to Hashem's name. And this is HIS name of mercy.

The Rabbis suggest that in the word VaYigash – And he approached, Yehudah is approaching more than Yoseph. He is perhaps approaching Hashem in prayer.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? WHAT DO YOU THINK WE CAN LEARN HERE FROM YEHUDA? WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS YEHUDA?

Who can remember when Yehudah was a judge? A couple of parshiot ago. In Vayesheb. There he judged Tamar his daughter in law and sentenced her to die. But on her way to being executed, he saw it was a mistake. Instead of saying silent, he accepted responsibility.

At first he judged Tamar thinking there was only black and white. But then he learned there is more to every story. There is more to look at. There is a grey area. And even when there isn't, there must be room for mercy.

And this is his plea to Zaphenath-paneah – the prime minister and ruler of Egypt. Don't rule from the seat of strict justice. Rule with mercy! Or perhaps this was his prayer to G-d.

Yehudah taught us that people make mistakes. That people can be forgiven. That people can change and that we should strive to judge with mercy. And because of this midah, this attribute. Yehudah and his descendants became Kings. King David, King Solomon and one day soon the Mashiah. An earthly King must model himself after Hashem the heavenly King and rule with kindness and mercy.

IMAGINE A CASE WHERE SOMEONE DID SOMETHING TO YOU. DO YOU JUDGE WITH STRICT JUSTICE OR WITH MERCY? Talk about it.

Thanks Aryana!
Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Yehuda confronts Yoseph in the aftermath of the stolen chalice. Yehuda reviews the past events, starting from Yoseph's suspicious interest in their family.

2nd Aliya: Yehuda's final plea, that he would remain a slave instead of Binyamin, triggers Yoseph to reveal himself. Yoseph mitigates his brother's shock and obvious shame by explaining to them the hidden hand of Hashem in all that had occurred.

3rd Aliya: Yoseph instructs his brothers to bring Yakov and the rest of the family to Egypt. Pharaoh, having heard the news of the brother's arrival, confirms Yoseph's offer.

4th Aliya: Yoseph sends provisions and transportation for Yakov's entire household. Yakov is told of Yoseph being, "alive and well and ruling the land of Egypt".

5th Aliya: Yakov wishes to see Yoseph, but first asks Hashem for instructions. Hashem reassures Yakov that the time of slavery and nationhood has begun, and that he must go to Mitzrayim. The 70 direct descendants of Yakov are counted.

6th Aliya: Yakov and Yoseph reunite after 22 years. Five of the brothers and Yakov are presented to Pharaoh. Yakov blesses Pharaoh. The year is 2238.

7th Aliya: The remainder of the Parsha is a flashback to the two years preceding Yakov's arrival. Yoseph's master plan for reconfiguring Egyptian society is detailed. Yoseph follows the broad outline of his advice to Pharaoh regarding the administration of the 7 years of plenty. The famine must have been of enormous intensity for Yoseph to accomplish his plan in just two years. Although the people "sell" themselves to Pharaoh in order to get food, Yoseph's plan maintains their sense of dignity and independence.

Yechezkel 37:15 - In the year 2964 - 797 b.c.e, following the death of Shlomo Hamelech, the nation was divided between Rechavam ben Shlomo and Yiravam ben Nivat. Rechavam ruled over Yehudah and Binyamin, and Yiravam ruled over the other 10 Tribes. Rechavam

was a direct descendant of Dovid Hamelech, and Yiravam was a descendent of Ephrayim. In this week's Haftorah, Yichezkel Hanavi prophesied the time when the divided kingdom's of Yehudah and Yisroel would unite beneath the single banner of the family of King David.

The connection to our Parsha is obvious. Our Parsha begins with a confrontation between Yehuda and Yoseph. Both were destined to be Kings over the Jewish people. However, Yoseph's reign was limited to necessity and circumstance while Yehuda's would be as eternal as the Jews themselves.

It is important to note that the close relationship between Yehuda and Binyamin, even though they were not from the same mothers, was maintained throughout history. It gives additional meaning to the Rashi on pasuk 40:14 that explains why Yoseph and Binyamin cried for each other at the time of their reunion. Rashi explains that the tears were for the eventual destruction of the Mishkan and the Bais Hamikdash. In truth, the removal of Hashem's presence from our midst occurs when there is hatred and divisiveness. The Tribe of Binyamin should have been closest to Ephrayim and Menashe. Instead, the division of the Land placed Yehudah closest to Binyamin, allowing for a singular unity between the two tribes that would allow them to share the actual structure of the Bais Hamikdash. It was as if Hashem was telling us that Yehuda's willingness to sacrifice for Binyamin at the beginning of Parshas Vayigash is the kind of unity that will maintain Hashem's presence in our midst.

The coming of Mashiach can only happen when a divided nation

reunites. May it happen soon, and in our life times

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“Yosef collected all the money that was found in Egypt and Canaan...into Pharaoh's palace.” (Beresheet 47:14)

A cloud of uncertainty hangs over the economic futures of countries across the globe. As believing Jews, we are aware that Hashem has something beneficial for us planned with these developments. He will utilize them to shape our future.

This is not the world's first economic crisis. Over 3500 years ago, Yosef Hasadik led Egypt through economic growth and through famine. Yosef's brilliant planning, guided by Divine inspiration, spared the people from starvation. Yosef collected all the empire's wealth and placed it in Pharaoh's coffers. He kept none of it for himself or his family, nor did he redistribute it among the Egyptians.

Did it make financial sense for Yosef to hoard all the money while reducing the entire nation to paupers? Rabbi Moshe Mizrahi (quoting Rav Menahem of Amshinov) explains beautifully that Yosef was aware of the decree of Hashem, “Your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs...for four hundred years, and then they will leave with great wealth.” In preparation for this, Yosef amassed as much wealth as possible for Pharaoh. “Yosef collected all the gold and silver in the world, bringing it to Egypt” (Pesachim 119a). Yosef deposited all this wealth in the safest place possible, in Pharaoh's coffers, so that it would be readily available for his people to assume possession of it upon their redemption.

Who would have dreamed that all those events were for the benefit of the Jewish people? This should be a model for the future for us to learn from. All that occurs is for the benefit of the Jewish people. Rabbi Reuven Semah

The parashah begins by telling us about the dialogue which Yosef, the ruler of Egypt, was having with his brother, Yehudah, about whether to release Binyamin or not. The Midrash tells us that the debate was very heated and Yehudah threatened to destroy Egypt and all of its inhabitants. When Yosef saw that Yehudah had reached the limit of his patience, he revealed his identity thereby diffusing the entire drama. The Midrash calls Yosef a wise man who can appease people. It seems that it would be obvious to anyone that this is what Yosef should have done in this situation. What great wisdom is seen from Yosef's actions?

The lesson that can be learned from here is that there is usually a point during an argument when it is wise to back down and retreat. When one is involved in a dispute, it often escalates to levels far beyond the original issues. One needs to look at it with a clear head, and know when to cut it short. Otherwise it reaches another level which can bring pain and destruction. Although it takes wisdom and foresight to be able to concede to someone else, especially during the heat of "battle," one who can muster inner strength like Yosef will diffuse the tension bringing peace and harmony among all parties involved. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

PREPARING TO FAIL

When it comes to putting things together, some people have talents that most others

lack. They unpack the box and start to assemble the bicycle, knock-down furniture, or electronic equipment without a thought of looking at the enclosed instructions. And behold! They get it done quickly and – believe it or not – correctly. But don't think that their ability is common or that throwing out the instruction manual is the key to success.

Using creativity and natural talent is great for precious few, but for most, preparation and planning works much better. Redoing jobs, backtracking, and correcting are all results of not planning in advance. A report needs an outline; a paint job needs preparation, priming of surfaces, and precautions against causing damage to other areas; and a construction job needs materials and plans to avoid finishing with an assortment of leftover building supplies.

When you are about to rush into a project, invest some time in planning and preparation. It only takes a little forethought to eliminate the "unexpected" problems that every job contains. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR The Master of Self-Control

The Torah in Parashat Vayigash tells the dramatic story of Yosef's revelation of his identity to his brothers. The revelation came on the heels of Yehuda's impassioned plea to Yosef to allow Binyamin, the youngest brother, to return home to Eretz Yisrael. Yehuda's petition pulled all the right strings, as it were, of Yosef's heart, and the Torah says that Yosef was unable to contain himself. Overcome by emotion, Yosef felt he could no longer continue concealing his identity from his brothers, and he announced, "I am Yosef."

It is noteworthy, however, that even in these moments of overpowering emotion, Yosef still remained fully in control. The Torah writes that before revealing his identity, Yosef announced that everyone else, all the Egyptian servants who were present in the room, should leave. He did not want to subject his brothers to unnecessary embarrassment by having other people hear of how they mistreated Yosef. This was a private family affair, and it would have been wholly inappropriate to expose the story to people on the outside. Yosef therefore took a moment before revealing his identity to ensure absolute privacy. Even at this moment when, as the Torah tells us, Yosef could no longer hold himself back from telling his brothers who he was, he actually was able to hold himself back long enough to ensure that this would be done in a proper, dignified fashion.

Yosef was a master of self-control. Like other great Sadikim, he always retained his composure and never lost himself. At times of overwhelming emotion, such as anger or frustration, we so often lose self-control and act in ways in which we would never normally act, only to feel sincere regret afterward. The Sadikim, however, are always in control of themselves, they always have their emotions in check. Remarkably, even when the Torah describes Yosef as "losing control," he clearly did not really lose it entirely. He still had the presence of mind, patience and discipline to act with propriety and discretion, and not with raw impulse.

While we may not be able to reach the exalted level of Yosef Ha'sadik, we must learn the lesson that emerges from his conduct in this episode. Emotions are part of the human condition,

but they must always be kept under our control. We must never allow an offensive remark or a stressful period of life to overtake us to the point where we speak and act without thinking. We can and must exert control over ourselves and ensure to speak and act in a manner that we will not regret later.

Rabbi Wein

Individuals, societies and nations are always pursuing the elusive goal of self-definition. God's question to Adam "Where are you?" can easily be interpreted as also being the question of "Who are you?" The search for our true inner self is the single most complicated and psychologically difficult pursuit of the human soul. Many people unfortunately define themselves only in terms of others. They feel that only in differentiating themselves from others or in slavishly imitating the mores and behavior of others can they somehow come to a definition of themselves.

The great rebbe of Kotzk, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern (Halperin) pointed out the fallacy of such thinking in his pithy statement: "If I am I and you are you, then I am I and you are you. However if I am you and you are me then I am not I and you are not you."

The problems of egocentricity and exaggerated self-esteem are serious personality defects. But low self-esteem and feelings of persecution and paranoia, mental depression and poor self-worth are even more serious personality problems. The history of the Jewish people has been characterized by the ability of a small, persecuted and seemingly powerless people to remain proud, steadfast and resilient in the truth of its faith and traditions.

Individual Jews throughout the ages have fallen off of the wagon and become "others" but the Jewish people as a whole have never wavered in their understanding of their special self-definition. And that has been the true source of Jewish survival over the long and mostly bitter exile of millennia.

The main obstacle as I view it in the decades long struggle with our Arab neighbors is that they define themselves almost exclusively in terms of the "other" – namely the Jews and the State of Israel. There is no real drive within them to really create a state of their own. They only want to destroy and inherit our state.

Their educational system is based almost exclusively on incitement and hatred towards Jews. There is no drive to produce a productive culture of their own, an economy not dependent on UN and European Union largesse and handouts. Destruction of the "other" is not a basis for positive self-identity or nation building. No resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly can in any way contribute to any form of self-definition.

As the words themselves indicate, self-definition and self-worth must arise from one's own self. Many revolutions, while apparently successful initially, descend into chaos, anarchy, and violence. They end up as tyrannies simply because there is no basis for further development of self-worth after the "other" has somehow been eliminated.

That was the reason for the failure of any Arab state to arise next to Israel over the past many decades. And that continues to be the reason that prospects for any sort of resolution of the Israeli-Arab dispute in the near future remains very unlikely. It is

not only that we don't have a partner to deal with. It is that our proposed partner does not know what its goals are except for the destruction of the State of Israel. It is well nigh impossible to conduct meaningful negotiations under such circumstances.

To be a Jew requires a clear sense of self-identity. That self-identity can only be achieved through a basic knowledge of Judaism and tradition. Knowing the story of our people can contribute to this necessary sense of self-identity and personal understanding that guarantees the Jewish future.

Unfortunately many in the Jewish world define themselves currently in terms of vague, high-sounding humanistic values, which do not relate to the practicalities of the world that we live in – certainly not to the position of the Jewish people and state in that world. Such Jews again define themselves in terms of the "other" and the result is that they eventually become that "other" and are lost to the Jewish fold.

More sadly, those that become the "other" have a terrible tendency to criticize and incite hatred against the very people that they themselves sprang from. Such behavior eventually destroys not only the object of its hatred but the haters themselves as well. Jewish history is littered with the debris of those who lost their self-definition and forgot... 'I am I and you are you' – the arrangement that guarantees mental and social health for both 'I and you.'

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth**

Choice and Change

The sequence from Bereishit 37 to 50 is the longest unbroken narrative in the Torah, and there can be no doubt who its hero is: Joseph. The story begins and ends with him. We see him as a child, beloved – even spoiled – by his father; as an adolescent dreamer, resented by his brothers; as a slave, then a prisoner, in Egypt; then as the second most powerful figure in the greatest empire of the ancient world. At every stage, the narrative revolves around him and his impact on others. He dominates the last third of Bereishit, casting his shadow on everything else. From almost the beginning, he seems destined for greatness.

Yet history did not turn out that way. To the contrary, it is another brother who, in the fullness of time, leaves his mark on the Jewish people. Indeed, we bear his name. The covenantal family has been known by several names. One is Ivri, “Hebrew” (possibly related to the ancient apiru), meaning “outsider, stranger, nomad, one who wanders from place to place.” That is how Abraham and his children were known to others. The second is Yisrael, derived from Jacob’s new name after he “wrestled with G-d and with man and prevailed.” After the division of the kingdom and the conquest of the North by the Assyrians, however, they became known as Yehudim or Jews, for it was the tribe of Judah who dominated the kingdom of the South, and they who survived the Babylonian exile. So it was not Joseph but Judah who conferred his identity on the people, Judah who

became the ancestor of Israel’s greatest king, David, Judah from whom the messiah will be born. Why Judah, not Joseph? The answer undoubtedly lies in the beginning of Vayigash, as the two brothers confront one another, and Judah pleads for Benjamin’s release.

The clue lies many chapters back, at the beginning of the Joseph story. It is there we find that it was Judah who proposed selling Joseph into slavery:

Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? Let’s sell him to the Arabs and not harm him with our own hands. After all – he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed. (37: 26-27)

This is a speech of monstrous callousness. There is no word about the evil of murder, merely pragmatic calculation (“What will we gain”). At the very moment he calls Joseph “our own flesh and blood” he is proposing selling him as a slave. Judah has none of the tragic nobility of Reuben who, alone of the brothers, sees that what they are doing is wrong, and makes an attempt to save him (it fails). At this point, Judah is the last person from whom we expect great things.

However, Judah – more than anyone else in the Torah – changes. The man we see all these years later is not what he was then. Then he was prepared to see his brother sold into slavery. Now he is prepared to suffer that fate himself rather than see Benjamin held as a slave. As he says to Joseph:

“Now, my lord, let me remain in place of the boy as your lordship’s slave, and let him go with his brothers. How can I return to my father without the boy? I could not

bear to see the misery which my father would suffer.” (44: 33-34)

It is a precise reversal of character. Callousness has been replaced with concern. Indifference to his brother’s fate has been transformed into courage on his behalf. He is willing to suffer what he once inflicted on Joseph so that the same fate should not befall Benjamin. At this point Joseph reveals his identity. We know why. Judah has passed the test that Joseph has carefully constructed for him. Joseph wants to know if Judah has changed. He has.

This is a highly significant moment in the history of the human spirit. Judah is the first penitent – the first baal teshuvah – in the Torah. Where did it come from, this change in his character? For that, we have to backtrack to chapter 38 – the story of Tamar. Tamar, we recall, had married Judah’s two elder sons, both of whom had died, leaving her a childless widow. Judah, fearing that his third son would share their fate, withheld him from her – thus leaving her unable to remarry and have children. Once she understands her situation, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute. Judah sleeps with her. She becomes pregnant. Judah, unaware of the disguise, concludes that she must have had a forbidden relationship and orders her to be put to death. At this point, Tamar – who, while disguised, had taken Judah’s seal, cord and staff as a pledge – send them to Judah with a message: “The father of my child is the man to whom these belong.” Judah now understands the whole story. Not only has he placed Tamar in an impossible situation of living widowhood, and not only is he the father of her child, but he also realises that she has behaved with extraordinary

discretion in revealing the truth without shaming him (it is from this act of Tamar's that we derive the rule that "one should rather throw oneself into a fiery furnace than shame someone else in public"). Tamar is the heroine of the story, but it has one significant consequence. Judah admits he was wrong. "She was more righteous than I," he says. This is the first time in the Torah someone acknowledges their own guilt. It is also the turning point in Judah's life. Here is born that ability to recognise one's own wrongdoing, to feel remorse, and to change – the complex phenomenon known as teshuvah – that later leads to the great scene in Vayigash, where Judah is capable of turning his earlier behaviour on its head and doing the opposite of what he had once done before. Judah is ish teshuvah, penitential man.

We now understand the significance of his name. The verb lehodot means two things. It means "to thank," which is what Leah has in mind when she gives Judah, her fourth son, his name: "this time I will thank the Lord." However, it also means, "to admit, acknowledge." The biblical term vidui, "confession," – then and now part of the process of teshuvah, and according to Maimonides its key element – comes from the same root. Judah means "he who acknowledged his sin."

We now also understand one of the fundamental axioms of teshuvah: "Rabbi Abbahu said: In the place where penitents stand, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand" (Berachot 34b). His prooftext is the verse from Isaiah (57: 19), "Peace, peace to him that was far and to him that is near." The verse puts one who "was far" ahead of one who "is near." As the Talmud makes clear, however, Rabbi Abbahu's

reading is by no means uncontroversial. Rabbi Jochanan interprets "far" as "far from sin" rather than "far from G-d." The real proof is Judah. Judah is a penitent, the first in the Torah. Joseph is consistently known to tradition as ha-tzaddik, "the righteous." Joseph became mishneh le-melekh, "second to the king." Judah, however, became the father of Israel's kings. Where the penitent Judah stands, even the perfectly righteous Joseph cannot stand. However great an individual may be in virtue of his or her natural character, greater still is one who is capable of growth and change. That is the power of penitence, and it began with Judah.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And Joseph said to his brothers: I am Joseph, is my father still alive? And his brothers were not able to answer him, for they were affrighted before him". (45:3)

The Torah has taken us along on the roller coaster ride which has been the life of Yosef Hatzadeek. Yosef's bitachon in Hashem's providence is the model for us.

In our Perasha, the final confrontation between Yosef and his Brothers is described in all of its depth. As Yosef says the famous words, "I am Yosef, Is my Father yet alive"?

The Brothers' response is "And they could not reply, because they were bewildered & terrified."

This tremendous lesson that even the most righteous must suspect their motives, and even the wisest can be led astray by envy, stands out as one of the great teachings of Hashem's Torah.

Our Sages have learned that from the Brothers' stunned & terrified reaction to the rebuke of the truth

of Yosef's revelation, we learn great principles.

Firstly, that on the great Day of Judgment we will have to face the truth about our own lives since Hashem will be our Judge. We will be terrified and without answers.

Secondly, we will also discover that we have deceived ourselves. Just like the Brothers who had felt they were entirely justified until Yosef finally revealed himself and the truth. They saw that they had been in error for 22 years and were shocked.

Everyone is deceived about his character flaws. Instruction (mussar) is needed before it is too late. Only by going to a Hacham to ask for advice on what and how to correct and improve your character, and by learning, can a person find out the truth about himself.

We are all deceived about ourselves and filled with flaws. Only by learning can we rescue ourselves before the Great Yom Hadin.

Adapted from "Behold a People"
By R' Miller ZT'L