

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYIGASH

DECEMBER 26-27, 2014

5 TEBET 5775

**The fast of Asarah B'Tebet will be on Thursday, January 1.
DEDICATIONS: In memory of my grandmother Esther (Mizrahi) Bibi – 11 Tevet**

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Editors Notes

Yesterday evening I spoke at the areyat of Mr. Nat Franco, A'H who passed away on Shabbat. A number of people asked me to post my remarks in the newsletter. I'll do my best. I apologize that its so late, and obviously some in Israel and Europe will not get the newsletter until after Shabbat.

I knew the Niftar since I was a young boy. The Franco family sat in front of us in Deal Synagogue Mr. Franco was my friend Joey's uncle. He was my friend Michelle's dad. My mom told us how she grew up with the Franco Family and how close Nat was to my Uncle Moe Gindi.

But when our son Jonah married Lauren, Morris and Penny Dweck in their amazing and legendary warmth, really made Chantelle and me part of their family and Nat Franco became Grandpa Nat.

I once asked Rabbi Abittan, what the purpose was of an areyat. (An Areyat in the Sephardic Community is generally held towards the end of the week of Shiva. The book of Tehilim is read and speeches are made.) The Rabbi explained that it was about inspiring people through the example of the life of the niftar to make changes for the better in their own lives and in doing so there is a tremendous Aliyah for the Neshama. So each of us has a job and a goal today to be inspired by what we hear from the speakers and to commit to becoming better people

At the Bet HaChayim on Sunday, I thought about the Name of the Niftar, what an amazing Hebrew name, Nissim ben Mazal. Nes is a miracle, but it is also a banner; a symbol of rising above. Mazal is often translated as luck, but I believe a better translation for Mazal is destiny. And the power of the Jewish people

and the task of a Jew is to rise above; beyond our destiny and beyond what is to what could be.

I believe this was Nissim ben Mazal, this was Grandpa Nat

We are taught that the Torah is very conservative with words. Each letter is weighed and each dot valued and nothing is repeated even once needlessly. Yet The Torah warns us twelve times - not twice, not three times, not even ten times, but twelve times - to have special consideration towards the orphan (yatom) and the widow (almana).

Hashem is begging us to get the message. And the first such commandment is followed directly by a dreadful description - so terrible that I shiver at letting these words even pass my lips - of the consequences for society in its entirety if the command is violated.

Do not take advantage of any widow or orphan. If you take advantage and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children orphans. (Shemot 22:21-23)

The rabbis teach us that when The Torah takes the time to list a punishment and that punishment is so harsh, we can know that the reward is inversely so great and so unimaginable. Thus is the great reward for someone who steps out of their comfort zone and steps in to care for the widow in the orphan.

I want you to imagine for a moment the following scene. There is a young beautiful lady and she is pregnant ... can you see her? And on her right side she is carrying a little boy, her son. Now follow her left hand down and you see that she is holding the hand of a little girl, girl her daughter. What a pretty picture.

And suddenly, her husband dies and she finds herself a widow and the mother of orphans. No matter how wonderful a family she has and no matter how supportive her sibling are, one can just imagine her thoughts.

Me-ayin yavo ezri - Where will help come from?
Where will salvation come from? Who will be their father? Will I ever again be married?
Imagine for a moment that darkness!

And then out of that darkness, a light. A light in the twinkle in his eye. A light in the sparkle of his smile. A light in the glow of his soul. Nat Franco, the niftar, was and still is that light

We asks as King David asksin Psalms, Meayin yavo ezri? And he answers Ezri me'im hashem - Help will come from G-d

One of the fundamental principles of Jewish ethics is "Ve-halakhta bi-drakhav" modeling our behavior after that of God. And when Nat Franco came into the lives of Fritz and Eddie A'H and of Barbara and Morris May - Hashem bless them - he acted as G-d. And that is what we are supposed to do, each and every one of us must find some way to model our own lives after the attributes of Hashem.

Our forefather Abraham is the pillar of Kindness, but I bet few know of his first act of Kindness.

In Ur kasdim, Abraham is sent into the raging furnace to die for his beliefs by Nimrod. He emerges from the fire unscathed, but his brother Haran dies in that same fire. Haran leaves behind three children. He leaves behind three orphans. They are Sarai, Milkah and Lot. What would become of the them? We don't even know what became of their mother.

In an act of Chesed of Kindness, Abrahams brother Nachor takes responsibility for one neice. He married Milkah and remained in Charan, Through that marriage would come our mothers Rivka – their granddaughter and Rachel and Leah – their great granddaughters.

Abraham took responsibility for his niece and married Sarah and through that marriage would come their son Isaac, their grandson Jacob and their great grandchildren, the 12 tribes

And Abraham took also took his nephew Lot under his wing almost as a son and through Lot would come Ruth, King David and the Messiah, may he come speedily in our days.

The Torah begins with in act of kindness when G-d creates the world and ends with an act of Kindness when Hashem buries Moses and is filled with kindness in the pages in between. Abraham emulated his Creator and embodied Kindness. And this act of taking in and caring for those orphans was where it all began. Abraham merited to become the father of all that is sacred

In more ways than we can imagine. Abraham was a light in a world of darkness

So too, Grandpa Nat was a light in our harsh world. The light emanated from the twinkle in his eye, the sparkle in his smile and the glow of his soul. And he too merits beli ayin HaRah and with prayers of

beracha, children. grandchildren and great grandchildren. Among them talmidei hahamim and baaley Sedaka and chesed . And I have sat and learned with some of those great grandchildren. They are incredible kids who have this spark and glow and who will B'H grow into leaders and scholars in the Zechut of their great grandfather.

What a blessing to him! What an amazing daily boost to his Neshama as he rises from level to level in the world of truth bolstered by the wings of each word of Torah they learn, each misvah they preform and each act of kindness they do.

Nissim Ben Mazal

A message in a name!

To rise above the ordinary!

To rise above out destiny!

To reach a greater potential!

Grandpa Nat did that and Grandpa Nat set an example. May we all be worthy to do the same. May each of us to commit right now, to do something extraordinary, to raise a banner high and to do something unexpected.

May each of us who knew him and even those that didn't, be inspired to draw down light, a reflection from the twinkle in his eye, the sparkle is his smile and the glow of his soul.

May his merits be an advocate in Heaven, for his amazing wife Claudia, May Hashem bless her and comfort her for undoubtedly a wife feels the pain more than any other. To his children Eddie, AH, Barbara, Morris, Joey and Michelle. To his siblings, his grand children and great grandchildren Tehi Zichro Baruch – May his memory be blessed. Tehi Nafsho Serurah BeSror HaChayim - May his soul be bound in the place of true life.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi David Bibi

**The coming boycott of Jewish businesses
December 21, 2014, 12:52 pm 229
Shmuley Boteach**

I saw a nasty thing walking with my children in New York City on the Sabbath. On Madison Ave in the mid-sixties, we saw a group of people, chanting, singing.

Was it Christmas carolers? As we got closer we saw it was a protest. An anti-Israel protest.

But this one was not outside an Israeli Consulate or Embassy. It was outside a commercial, retail store. A diamond store. Owned by Lev Leviev, the Israeli billionaire businessman and philanthropist.

"Glitz and glam. He steals Palestinian land."

I was appalled. I got closer. The protesters were accusing Leviev, a private Jewish citizens, of stealing Palestinian land, persecuting Palestinians, and supporting an imperial Israel.

I asked the protesters who Leviev was and why they were protesting him. Was he Israel's Prime Minister or Foreign Minister? At least the Ambassador. How else to explain why they would be protesting outside a business simply owned by a Jew.

They told me he was an Israeli who supported Israel's persecution of the Palestinians. He was a known, high-profile Jewish businessman. They were there to make sure no one bought his products.

I had had enough. I raised my hands into the air, in the mist of the protest, and said loudly, "Long Live Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. The only country in that dark region that is a bastion of liberty and human rights. A place where Palestinian women need never fear honor killings. A place where Israeli Arabs have more guaranteed rights than any Arab nation. A place where gay Palestinians need not fear being shot in the head on false charges of collaboration. A place where Arabs can protest publicly, just like all of you, and not be shot. Long live righteous and majestic Israel."

Instantly, all the protestors forgot about Leviev and turned their ire toward me. I was now the devil. They were shouting at me, abusing me. "F—ck off. Go F—ck yourself."

I got louder. "How revolting of all of you to protest a business because it's owned by a Jew." What is this? Nuremberg 1934? Absolutely reprehensible.

My kids were now engaged in the fight, singing "Am Yisrael Chai. The Jewish people are alive and well." We were louder than the protestors.

I started saying "Down with Hamas which allows honor killings of innocent Palestinian women. Down with Hamas that slaughters innocent Palestinian gay men. Down with the Palestinian...." and I was about to say "... Authority for refusing to go to elections in 10 years and creating a dictatorship, robbing the Palestinian people of their freedom" when I saw that someone was filming me on the Sabbath.

The police came over, trying to quell the confrontation. They have a permit, he said. They have the right to protest.

God bless America. I respect their right for public demonstration. But I also respect my right to write this in a column.

Jews of the world. Wake up. There has never been an assault on us like this in our lifetimes. And we are allowing it. Through our timidity and through closing our eyes and pretending not to see, it's growing. Our enemies are arraying against us. They have substituted anti-Semitism for Anti-Israelism. But it's the same sentiment.

Jew-hatred, pure and simple.

This holiday season the world's anti-Semites are giving thanks for the existence of the State of Israel. If not for Israel they would not have camouflage for their Jew-hatred. Israel has given them cover. It's not the Jews we hate, but just the Jewish state. It's not because we have an inherent dislike of Jews. We just hate occupation.

But then they call each other on their iPhones, even though they're made in China which has been occupying Tibet since 1950.

But only a weak community would give these haters a fig leaf to cover over their clear bigotry, prejudice, and hatred.

My kids were flabbergasted that a private Jewish business could draw major accusations of Palestinian persecution. It suited the protesters well that it was a diamond dealer. Perfect stereotype.

But who would be next? Which Jewish business would they target next?

A few hours later we went to the Chabad public Menorah lighting outside the Plaza hotel on 5th Ave. There was a small protest against Israel there was well. Joining the protest was a 20-something man who told us all that the Jews owned all of 5th Avenue. He pointed across the street at the famous Apple 5th Avenue store. "Apple is owned by Jews."

I looked at him. "Um, erg, hmmm. Did you know that Steve Jobs was the son of an Arab-American? So how does that square with the Jews owning Apple?"

"Well the Jews bought it from Jobs with the endless money they have."

Aha. I thought to myself, Is there no respite from all this Jew-hatred? Can we not get away from them even at a Menorah lighting?

The other day Harvard University kicked out SodaStream from their cafeteria for the terrible sin of employing hundreds of Palestinians at a plant in Maale Adumim that treats Arabs as the absolute equals of their Israeli counterparts. Without SodaStream these Palestinian families would be destitute. But Palestinian activists at Harvard, animated by hatred of Israel over love for Palestinian lives, demanded a boycott and the caterer capitulated.

And so it goes. Jewish timidity in the United States is allowing more and more of these outrages to take place.

I wonder if we recognize the seriousness of what's happening or will it engulf us before we take decisive action?

What is needed is an immediate move to organize Jewish students on campus to respond publicly to the anti-Israel onslaught at Universities. We need public demonstrations against Israel-hatred, anti-Semitism, and in favor of freedom and democracy in the Middle East. Jewish students should not just be fighting BDS but should be going on offense to push through resolutions in the City Councils sanctioning Hamas and the Palestinian Authority for not holding elections in a decade and transforming Palestinian society into dictatorships.

Organizations who dare hold ordinary Jews responsible for actions in the Middle East – which would be the equivalent of protesting an Arab-owned department store in Detroit for the butchery of Bashar Assad in Syria – should themselves be targeted for public demonstrations, calling them what they are: anti-Semites.

And let's honor those brave individuals who have stood up to BDS.

Every June our organization hosts the International Champions of Jewish Values Gala Awards Dinner in New York. Last year the Hollywood celebrity we honored was Sean Penn for his unrivaled bravery in going to Bolivia and rescuing the life of a Jewish businessman who had been wrongly incarcerated.

The year before we honored my dear friend Dr. Mehmet Oz, a Muslim, for his tireless efforts to promote the value of human life by getting us all to live more healthy lives and for his continued

friendship with the Jewish people. A few months after the award we hosted Mehmet and his family in Israel.

This year we intend to honor Scarlett Johansson for standing up to the pressure to abandon SodaStream, a company that is a model of Arab-Israeli brotherhood and fraternity.

Scarlett, if you're out there, please come to New York and accept. The dinner is on 3 June, 2015.

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

"He sent Yehudah ahead of him...to prepare."
(Beresheet 46:28)

Ya'akob sent Yehudah ahead of him to Goshen. The Midrash explains: to establish a yeshivah where he could teach Torah.

Since the times of the Patriarchs, the Jewish people always maintained yeshivah study (Yoma 28). Their ancestor Shem established the first one. It therefore comes as no surprise that Ya'akob did not

wish to go down to Egypt until he opened a yeshivah there.

The Oznayim Latorah asks: But why did Ya'akob assign the mission to Yehudah and not to Levi, the Jewish people's future teacher of Torah (Debarim 33:10) or Yissachar, whose wisdom the Torah praises (Dibre Hayamim I, 12:33)?

The answer is that Ya'akob had already decided to hand over the mantle of leadership to Yehudah, and wished to teach him a lesson about government. The lesson is that religion and state must not be separated (when it comes to the Jewish people), contrary to the demands of "progressives" in recent generations. It is the king who must see to spreading Torah and observance among the Jewish people, and it is he who must go before the people, teaching and establishing yeshivot from which the Torah can go forth. Shabbat Shalom. 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. Shabbat Shalom! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

**Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
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The Sacred Tongue**

Parashat Vayigash tells the story of Yosef's revealing his identity to his brothers, who had come to Egypt to

purchase grain. Though Yosef immediately recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him, and all along figured that they were dealing with a native Egyptian. Now, Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers.

The brothers initially could not believe that the Egyptian vizier was actually their younger brother whom they had sold into slavery over twenty years earlier. As part of his effort to convince his brothers, Yosef declares, "And here, your eyes see...that it is my mouth speaking to you" (45:12). Rashi explains this to mean that Yosef spoke to them with "Lashon Ha'kodesh" (literally, "the sacred tongue"), which is generally understood as a reference to the Hebrew language. Yosef pointed to the fact that he spoke fluent Hebrew as proof that he was their brother, as no native Egyptian was familiar with the language spoken by the sons of Yaakob.

Some, however, understood Rashi's comments differently, as referring not to Hebrew, but rather to refined speech.

It is commonly assumed that what distinguishes man from animal is the capacity of speech, verbal communication. Indeed, a number of Torah sources refer to human beings with the term "Medaber" ("speaker"), as opposed to the animal kingdom, which is called simply "Hai" ("living"). However, scientists have discovered a form of "speech" used even by animals. Birds, dogs and other creatures communicate with members of their own species through various noises. What, then, is the difference between man and animal? Is this simply a quantitative difference, that man uses a richer and more specific vocabulary than animals?

The answer is that man can exercise control over his speech; he does not speak on instinct. No dog has ever criticized another for speaking Lashon Ha'ra (negative speech) about their fellow dog. Neither has a bird been censured for chirping "Nibul Pe" (obscenity). The human being, however, is endowed with the intelligence and discipline required to speak in a refined manner, and to avoid improper and hurtful speech. As such, one who is not careful how he speaks, and talks indiscriminately and on impulse, is really nothing more than an intelligent animal. Such a person fails to utilize the unique quality that characterizes the human being and sets him fundamentally apart from the animal world.

This is what "Lashon Ha'kodesh" – the "sacred tongue" – means. It refers to speech that is carefully weighed and calculated, rather than instinctive and

indiscriminate – the kind of speech that makes a person "holy" and distinct from other creatures.

This is what Yosef is telling the brothers. As a young man, he made the mistake of reporting his brothers' wrongful behavior to their father, thereby arousing their jealousy and ill-will. To one extent or another, he bore responsibility for the tragic events that followed, by not exercising sufficient care in how he spoke. But like all Sadikim, who undergo an intensive process of Teshuba for even minor transgressions, Yosef repented for this mistake. For the next twenty-two years, he focused his attention on correcting this flaw, and ensuring to speak properly.

At this point, when he reveals himself to the brothers, he wants to emphasize that he has learned the lessons of his past. "It is my mouth that speaks to you" – I now speak in a proper, refined, positive manner; I have overcome my past mistakes, and now speak with "Lashon Ha'kodesh" – with a sacred tongue. He tells them that he no longer has the tendency to speak negatively, and has committed himself to speaking in only a refined, dignified and respectful manner.

Rabbi Wein EUROPE IS GONE

What can one say about Europe? I imagine that if one wants to be bitterly truthful then one could easily say that Hitler has in effect triumphed. He branded the Jews as the root of all troubles and proclaimed that the "final" and only solution to the "Jewish problem" was to eradicate all Jews from the face of the earth. And as we all know, he followed through on his genocidal program.

A great deal of Europe, its leaders, intellectuals and common folk, willfully and almost gleefully cooperated in this genocide. Many did so actively while many more Europeans did so passively. Once the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed after the war ended, this irrational and pathological hatred of the Jews went underground. After all, it was too shameful to admit that the continent that prided itself on the advancement of civilization could be guilty of such organized, government-sponsored inhumanity and cruelty.

So, most Europeans shielded themselves from any true feelings of guilt by simply stating that they were ignorant as to what was occurring. The Vatican and other Christian churches aided many Nazis and other war criminals in escaping from Europe and settling

rather comfortably in other continents, notably South America.

As penance for their atrocious behavior, many European countries, though not all, voted for the establishment of the state of Israel and granted the nascent nation diplomatic and sometimes even economic recognition and help. There the matter seemed to rest during the decade of the 1950s.

But the state of Israel, always being the burr under the world's saddle, would not let the matter rest. The wound was too deep and raw and the world would not be allowed to so easily forget what had happened.

So, Israel captured Adolf Eichmann and placed him on trial for his crimes against the Jewish people and humanity. The trial, which lasted almost a year, revealed in a stark and graphic way what had happened to the Jewish people on European soil from 1939 to 1945. It was not only Eichmann and the Nazis that were the defendants in that most bruising and bitter trial, but in a very real sense, Europe itself was on trial.

And, when Eichmann was justifiably found guilty and executed for his crimes, subliminally Europe was also judged to be guilty and complicit in the horror of the Holocaust. Europe has never forgiven Israel for that trial and verdict. It is well aware that it is guilty but can never own up to this guilt.

In line with its time-honored obsession with the Jewish people and its innate necessity to scapegoat Jews for all of Europe's problems, Europe has turned its enmity, in an unremitting fashion, against the Jewish state. Israel should be pilloried and boycotted, delegitimized and isolated, while the noble Palestinians – fomenters of worldwide terrorism, intifadas and recurring wars – are worthy of diplomatic recognition, media support, financial aid and moral justification.

This is Europe's revenge against the Jews for surviving the Holocaust and thereby instilling the unease and guilt that Europe feels towards Jews, Judaism and the Jewish state.

To use a Christian phrase, Europe is sorely in need of redemption. Catholic countries such as Ireland, Portugal and Spain have not digested the lessons of history vis-à-vis the relationship of the Church and the Jews over the centuries. The liberal Left refuses to deal with its history of oppression and anti-Semitism that Marxism, the Soviet Union and the Left generally has inflicted on European and world Jewry.

It again bans circumcision and kosher slaughter, all in the name of some lofty ideals of infant and animal rights. All of this naturally occurs in the background of rampant child abuse and slaughter of humans, the repression of women, the elimination of minorities and the other pernicious facets of intolerant social norms, which characterize Palestinian and Islamic society.

Perfidious and hypocritical as it is, Europe nonetheless claims the high moral ground for itself, sneering condescendingly at the United States and feels justly entitled to be the moral judge over the state of Israel. Europe regrets not so much the Holocaust itself, but that the Jews survived it and because of it were allowed to create a nation state for themselves.

It will allow for the creation of Holocaust memorials and museums but objects to the state of Israel being included in the Jewish story that it depicts. Hamas is no longer a terrorist organization as far as Europe is concerned, but Israel should be hauled before the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

Even George Orwell would be astounded to see how skewed the vision and policies of Europe are today. Only time will tell if Europe is ever able to right its perverse attitude towards Jews and Israel. History teaches us that it will be doomed somehow if it does not do so.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Birth of Forgiveness

There are moments that change the world: 1439 when Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable-type printing press (though the Chinese had developed it four centuries before), or 1821 when Faraday invented the electric motor, or 1990 when Tim Berners-Lee created the World Wide Web. There is such a moment in this week's parsha, and in its way it may have been no less transformative than any of the above. It happened when Joseph finally revealed his identity to his brothers. While they were silent and in a state of shock, he went on to say these words:

"I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by

a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God." (Gen. 45: 4-8)

This is the first recorded moment in history in which one human being forgives another.

According to the Midrash, God had forgiven before this,[1] but not according to the plain sense of the text. Forgiveness is conspicuously lacking as an element in the stories of the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and Sodom and the cities of the plain. When Abraham prayed his audacious prayer for the people of Sodom, he did not ask God to forgive them. His argument was about justice not forgiveness. Perhaps there were innocent people there, fifty or even ten. It would be unjust for them to die. Their merit should therefore save the others, says Abraham. That is quite different from asking God to forgive.

Joseph forgave. That was a first in history. Yet the Torah hints that the brothers did not fully appreciate the significance of his words. After all, he did not explicitly use the word 'forgive.' He told them not to be distressed. He said, 'It was not you but God.' He told them their act had resulted in a positive outcome. But all of this was theoretically compatible with holding them guilty and deserving of punishment. That is why the Torah recounts a second event, years later, after Jacob had died. The brothers sought a meeting with Joseph fearing that he would now take revenge. They concocted a story:

They sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers for the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. [Gen. 50: 16-18]

What they said was a white lie, but Joseph understood why they said it. The brothers used the word "forgive" – this is the first time it appears explicitly in the Torah – because they were still unsure about what Joseph meant. Does someone truly forgive those who sold him into slavery? Joseph wept that his brothers had not fully understood that he had forgiven them long before. He no longer felt ill-will toward them. He had no anger, no lingering resentment, no desire for revenge. He had conquered his emotions and reframed his understanding of events.

Forgiveness does not appear in every culture. It is not a human universal, nor is it a biological imperative. We know this from a fascinating study by American classicist David Konstan, Before

Forgiveness: the origins of a moral idea (2010).[2] In it he argues that there was no concept of forgiveness in the literature of the ancient Greeks. There was something else, often mistaken for forgiveness. There is appeasement of anger.

When someone does harm to someone else, the victim is angry and seeks revenge. This is clearly dangerous for the perpetrator and he or she may try to get the victim to calm down and move on. They may make excuses: It wasn't me, it was someone else. Or, it was me but I couldn't help it. Or, it was me but it was a small wrong, and I have done you much good in the past, so on balance you should let it pass.

Alternatively, or in conjunction with these other strategies, the perpetrator may beg, plead, and perform some ritual of abasement or humiliation. This is a way of saying to the victim, "I am not really a threat." The Greek word *sugnome*, sometimes translated as forgiveness, really means, says Konstan, exculpation or absolution. It is not that I forgive you for what you did, but that I understand why you did it – you could not really help it, you were caught up in circumstances beyond your control – or, alternatively, I do not need to take revenge because you have now shown by your deference to me that you hold me in proper respect. My dignity has been restored.

There is a classic example of appeasement in the Torah: Jacob's behaviour toward Esau when they meet again after a long separation. Jacob had fled home after Rebekah overheard Esau resolving to kill him after Isaac's death (Gen. 27: 41). Prior to the meeting Jacob sends him a huge gift of cattle, saying "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." (Gen. 32: 21). When the brothers meet, Jacob bows down to Esau seven times, a classic abasement ritual. The brothers meet, kiss, embrace and go their separate ways, but not because Esau has forgiven Jacob but because either he has forgotten or he has been placated.

Appeasement as a form of conflict management exists even among non-humans. Frans de Waal, the primatologist, has described peacemaking rituals among chimpanzees, bonobos and mountain gorillas.[3] There are contests for dominance among the social animals, but there must also be ways of restoring harmony to the group if it is to survive at all. So there are forms of appeasement and peacemaking that are pre-moral and have existed since the birth of humanity.

Forgiveness has not. Konstan argues that its first appearance is in the Hebrew Bible and he cites the case of Joseph. What he does not make clear is why Joseph forgives, and why the idea and institution are born specifically within Judaism.

The answer is that within Judaism a new form of morality was born. Judaism is (primarily) an ethic of guilt, as opposed to most other systems, which are ethics of shame. One of the fundamental differences between them is that shame attaches to the person. Guilt attaches to the act. In shame cultures when a person does wrong he or she is, as it were, stained, marked, defiled. In guilt cultures what is wrong is not the doer but the deed, not the sinner but the sin. The person retains his or her fundamental worth ("the soul you gave me is pure," as we say in our prayers). It is the act that has somehow to be put right. That is why in guilt cultures there are processes of repentance, atonement and forgiveness.

That is the explanation for Joseph's behaviour from the moment the brothers appear before him in Egypt for the first time to the point where, in this week's parsha, he announces his identity and forgives his brothers. It is a textbook case of putting the brothers through a course in atonement, the first in literature. Joseph is thus teaching them, and the Torah is teaching us, what it is to earn forgiveness.

Recall what happens. First he accuses the brothers of a crime they have not committed. He says they are spies. He has them imprisoned for three days. Then, holding Shimon as a hostage, he tells them that they must now go back home and bring back their youngest brother Benjamin. In other words, he is forcing them to re-enact that earlier occasion when they came back to their father with one of the brothers, Joseph, missing. Note what happens next:

They said to one another, "Surely we deserve to be punished [ashemim] because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us" ... They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. [Gen. 42: 21-23]

This is the first stage of repentance. They admit they have done wrong.

Next, after the second meeting, Joseph has his special silver cup planted in Benjamin's sack. It is found and the brothers are brought back. They are told that Benjamin must stay as a slave.

"What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied.

"What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup." [Gen. 44: 16]

This is the second stage of repentance. They confess. They do more: they admit collective responsibility. This is important. When the brothers sold Joseph into slavery it was Judah who proposed the crime (37: 26-27) but they were all (except Reuben) complicit in it.

Finally, at the climax of the story Judah himself says "So now let me remain as your slave in place of the lad. Let the lad go back with his brothers!" (42: 33). Judah, who sold Joseph as a slave, is now willing to become a slave so that his brother Benjamin can go free. This is what the sages and Maimonides define as complete repentance, namely when circumstances repeat themselves and you have an opportunity to commit the same crime again, but you refrain from doing so because you have changed.

Now Joseph can forgive, because his brothers, led by Judah, have gone through all three stages of repentance: [1] admission of guilt, [2] confession and [3] behavioural change.

Forgiveness only exists in a culture in which repentance exists. Repentance presupposes that we are free and morally responsible agents who are capable of change, specifically the change that comes about when we recognise that something we have done is wrong and we are responsible for it and we must never do it again. The possibility of that kind of moral transformation simply did not exist in ancient Greece or any other pagan culture. Greece was a shame-and-honour culture that turned on the twin concepts of character and fate.[4] Judaism was a repentance-and-forgiveness culture whose central concepts are will and choice. The idea of forgiveness was then adopted by Christianity, making the Judeo-Christian ethic the primary vehicle of forgiveness in history.

Repentance and forgiveness are not just two ideas among many. They transformed the human situation. For the first time, repentance established the possibility that we are not condemned endlessly to repeat the past. When I repent I show I can change. The future is not predestined. I can make it different from what it might have been. Forgiveness liberates us from the past. Forgiveness breaks the irreversibility of reaction and revenge. It is the undoing of what has been done.[5]

Humanity changed the day Joseph forgave his

brothers. When we forgive and are worthy of being forgiven, we are no longer prisoners of our past.

[1] There are midrashic suggestions that God partially forgave, or at least mitigated the punishments of, Adam and Eve and Abel. Ishmael was said to have become a penitent, and there are midrashic interpretations that identify Keturah, the woman Abraham married after the death of Sarah, with Hagar, implying that Abraham and Isaac were reunited and reconciled with Sarah's maidservant and her son.

[2] David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: the origins of a moral idea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

[3] Frans de Waal, *Peacemaking among Primates*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.

[4] See Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

[5] Hannah Arendt makes this point in *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, 241

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

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