

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYIGASH

Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

JANUARY 7, 2017 9 TEBET 5777

The fast of Asarah B' Tebet will be on Sunday January 8th

DEDICATION : In memory of Esther Bibi a'h and in memory of Molly Jemal a'h – 11th Tebet
And in memory of Former Justice Minister and Finance Minister Professor Yaakov Neeman

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Editors Notes

The Wagon, The Ring and the Message

We continue the story of Joseph in Egypt this week. After the confrontation with Judah, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and explains to them that the famine is slated to continue for five more years. He tells them to inform their father that he is still alive and sends them with provisions and gifts back to Canaan.

The Torah tells us that the brothers arrived in Canaan. Now how do they break the news to their father? Remember that Joseph has been assumed dead for 22 years. Would Jacob go into shock, would he survive? The midrash explains that asked one of their nieces, Serach the daughter of Asher to use her beautiful voice and musical talents. Serach, playing a harp, sings to Jacob poetically of Joseph alive in Egypt with children at his knees. The midrash tells us that not only does Jacob survive but according to our sages, Ruach ha-kodesh, the spirit of prophecy, returns to him. Through her gentle and wise way of poetry and song, Serach breathes life back into her grandfather and is rewarded. Jacob promises her that she will never die, that she will enter Paradise alive.

Still the verses tell us that Yaakov had a very hard time believing his sons. They told him that Joseph

was not only alive but that he ruled over the entire land of Egypt. "Yet his heart stood still for he did not believe them". So the brothers continued relaying all of Joseph's words, but it was when Yaakov saw the agalot – the wagons – which Joseph sent to transport him, "the spirit of Yaakov was revived".

The question must be asked. What was the content of Joseph's message and what was so special about the wagons? Rashi explains that Joseph reminded his father of the last Torah lesson the learned together, the passage of "eglah arufah." And this is why the verse specifically says, "And he saw the wagons agalot (eglah -calf and agalot –wagons, suggest a play on words) that Yosef had sent," and it does not say: "that Pharaoh had sent."

There are a number of messages one can discern from this play on words. I believe the simplest is a sign. Who else would have known what their last lesson was? And the fact that Joseph recalled the lesson meant that he was still connected. In addition the lesson of eglah arufah is one of communal responsibility for others, perhaps Yosef was communicating to his father that he had learned from his father and in his position accepted his role in being responsible for the family. Many of us have heard these explanations since we were children.

I came across an answer recently brought by Rabbi Pinches Friedman in the name of the Shem MiShmuel written by Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztein the grandson of the Kotzker Rebbe in the early twentieth century which helped to answer a question I have had for a long time.

Rabbi Abittan z'sl, would often tell us the story of a king, a jeweler and a special ring. The Ben Ish Chai brings the parable as well, as does Abraham Lincoln. I was curious if there was a source to this story which has grown more elaborate over the years undoubtedly by Jewelers hoping to sell rings. The latest versions make Solomon the king in the story and the great sage, sadik and warrior, Benayahu Ben Yehoyada as his advisor. I will retell as posted, but keep in mind, this story is completely one of fiction, though it still offers a wonderful lesson.

Long ago there lived a man named Benaiah, the captain of King Solomon's palace guards, and also the king's good friend. Benaiah was a noble man, with a handsome face and a beautiful soul. Some say he was among the 36 men of his generation chosen to exist so that the world might continue.

Benaiah served his king well, but one day King Solomon was passing through a courtyard and happened to overhear his soldiers gossiping. His heart sank when he heard Benaiah boast, "No task is too difficult for someone like me. I can accomplish anything."

The king went to his chambers and there he thought about pride. "Pride can harm a man," he thought. "I must give my captain a task that is impossible. Only in this way will he understand that he is but a man."

That evening he called Benaiah to appear before him. "I have a job for you, my friend," said the king. "Whatever you ask," Benaiah said. "Your wish is my command."

"I want to own a magical ring," said the king. "As you wish," Benaiah said. "Describe the ring for me so that I may find it."

King Solomon smiled. "All I can tell you is this: If a person is happy and puts this ring on his finger, he will become instantly sad. But a sad man who places this ring upon his finger will become happy." Of course the king understood that there was no such ring, but he knew his friend would never rest until he found it.

"I shall find it for you," Benaiah said.

"And you will surely succeed," said the king, "for I know you can accomplish anything."

Benaiah set out for the marketplace, where one by one he visited the jewelers of Jerusalem. "I am looking for a magical ring that makes a happy person sad and a sad person happy," he told each merchant.

Each one shook his head. "Never heard of such a ring," each said, and by sunset, Benaiah realized he would have to travel far to fulfill his king's desire.

That evening he prepared a caravan, and at dawn he set out to find the trader who possessed the magical ring. Benaiah and his men traveled for days and met many traders along their way, but each time he asked where he might find the magical ring that altered moods, he heard the same response: "I've never heard of such a treasure."

Benaiah visited the seaports, and there he met captains from every foreign land. Once again he asked where he might find this ring of wonders.

"Never heard of such a ring," each captain said.

Benaiah traveled on, but after many weeks his heart began to feel heavy. Perhaps he would fail to fulfill his king's desire. He could not bear the thought.

Still, he had no more ideas about where to look for the treasure, and so he returned to Jerusalem. He decided he would look one last time in the local marketplace, and as he was visiting the jewelers, he happened past a young man he had never before seen. The young man wore ragged clothes and sat upon the ground, and before him was a threadbare carpet laden with simple bracelets and rings.

"Surely this lad won't have the magical ring," Benaiah thought, but he decided he must at least look. He bent down and said, "I am looking for a ring that makes a sad person happy and a happy person sad. Have you ever heard of such a treasure?"

The boy's eyes lighted up, and he reached into his pocket and handed a single gold band to Benaiah. "This is a ring my grandfather gave me long ago," said the boy. "He inscribed it. Read what he has written."

Benaiah shrugged. Such a plain ring could not be magical. Still, he reached out and held the ring in his palm. He turned it over, and when he read the words inscribed, his heavy heart lifted. "This is it!" he cried.

Benaiah fulfilled one lad's dream as he handed over all the silver and gold coins he carried in exchange for the ring. "Your grandfather was a wise man, indeed," he told the young man. And then, the ring in hand, he returned to the palace.

When Benaiah appeared before King Solomon, he bowed low, and at the sight of his good friend, the king felt suddenly sad. He did not wish to humiliate such a friend.

"Ah, poor man," Solomon said softly, "the task I gave you was impossible, but you have tried your best ..." But before he could finish his sentence, Benaiah held out the ring. "I have found it!" he exclaimed. King Solomon could not believe his ears, but he reached out and took the ring. The moment he read the inscription, his smile vanished, and when he looked out at the grand things surrounding him, he felt so sad that tears welled in his eyes.

"What has happened?" the king's guards whispered.

King Solomon passed them the ring. "Read the inscription," he said, and soon the whole court understood.

"Gam zeh ya'avov -- this too shall pass," were the words the boy's grandfather had written inside the ring. King Solomon now realized that all his treasures would one day turn to dust, and those who felt sad realized that one day their sadness would leave them and they might feel happiness again.

The king reached for Benaiah's hand. "Forgive me, friend," he said. "From this day on you shall wear my jewels, and I will wear the magical ring."

For King Solomon was wise, and he understood those words would keep him forever balanced.

Rabbi Abittan would explain that the man facing challenges would look at this ring and know that these challenges too would pass and the man filled with haughtiness would be humbled when looking at the ring and see the same words.

As to the source, I believe it is the message shared between Joseph and Jacob via the agalot, the wagons. The Shem MiShmuel explains: The matter of the wagons represents an allusion. The wheels of the wagon are constantly turning; this is why a wagon is called an "agala," because its wheels rotate in a circle—"igul." They illustrate that that which is currently on top will inevitably go down; and that which is on the bottom will begin to rise upward from there.

This provides a vital lesson for every human being. Even if a person has reached rock bottom, he should not give up hope. On the contrary, he should consider that perhaps this is the end of his descent; from this moment forward, he will begin to ascend. Similarly, when he is on top and doing well, he should consider the possibility that perhaps he has reached the summit of his success; and that from this moment forward, he will begin to plummet; because life is a cycle which repeats itself.

This is the allusion inherent in the fact that Yosef sent Yaakov wagons. He didn't want his father to worry about descending to Mitzrayim. For, this descent would ultimately turn into an ascent. This is why the Torah emphasizes Joseph sent the wagons, "to transport him and elevate him". Yosef does not employ terminology related to descent at all.

Jacob realized that Joseph applied this same message to his own situation. Even though he was currently the ruler of Egypt and at the pinnacle of

success, he did not forget for a moment that this could be the end of his success; very shortly, he could begin to fall. Hence, he did not become haughty; he remained humble, as if he was on the downward part of the cycle. This was the ultimate proof that he had remained righteous despite his enormous success.

We should all realize that this in truth was the outstanding attribute of Joseph. The same Joseph who shepherded his father's sheep was the very same Joseph who became king. This characteristic served Joseph well throughout his life—both when he was in dire straits and when he rose to greatness. Therefore, upon realizing the message Joseph was conveying by means of the wagons, Yaakov's spirit was revived.

What an incredible lesson for all of us to take into this Shabbat and the entire year.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Three Days in Tevet: The 8th: The Septuagint

"It happened with King Ptolemy, that he gathered seventy-two elders, and gathered them in seventy-two houses, and did not reveal to them the purpose for which he had gathered them, and he went in to visit each of them, one by one, and he said to them, "Write for me the Torah of Moshe your teacher." The Holy One, Who is Blessed, gave to the heart of each of them, one by one, wisdom, and all of them arrived at a single understanding." (Tractate Megillah 9a)

The incident described in the above quoted text took place in the third century BCE in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, then under the rule of the Greek Ptolemaic dynasty, which emerged after the demise of Alexander the Great. Were King Ptolemy's motives pure? Did he simply want to enable the study of Torah for non-Hebrew speakers? Or were his motives less than sincere, seeking to create a breach in the integrity of Torah? Truly, what was Ptolemy's motivation behind separately sequestering each of the seventy two sages? Was he perhaps seeking to receive seventy two translations of Torah replete with discrepancies? If this was not the case wouldn't it have been advantageous to convene the seventy two in a single study hall so that they could pool their wisdom and create a single flawless translation?

As it transpired, the seventy two sages were each visited with ruach hakodesh - Divine inspiration - and each sage produced a translation identical to the

others. Even more remarkably, each of the seventy two sages saw fit to amend the Hebrew text of the Torah in fifteen different verses, due to misunderstandings that could arise in a literal translation. Again, guided by ruach hakodesh, each of the seventy two made the exact same amendments.

Yet, despite the remarkable accomplishment of the seventy two sages, who produced a brilliant translation of the Hebrew Torah into Greek, the day of the completion of the Septuagint, (literally, Greek for "seventy" referring to the seventy two sages), the eighth day of the Hebrew month of Tevet, is considered to be a dark day in the annals of Jewish history. Why is that so?

The five books of Torah, (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), are each comprised of verses, which are comprised of words, which are made up of combinations of Hebrew letters. Each Hebrew letter is made up of strokes of a quill. Each quill stroke is made with black ink on the white surface of the Torah scroll. Every letter of the Hebrew alphabet is a world unto itself, multi-dimensional, multifaceted, containing worlds within worlds of meaning. These individual bursts of Divine energy are grouped into words, each of which, in turn, possesses layers upon layers of meaning. Books have literally been written which are entirely devoted to the revealing of the myriads of meanings contained in single words of the Hebrew Torah. When we then factor in the vowelization of the Hebrew words, (whose alphabet contains only consonants), the punctuation of each verse, the musical cantillation of each word, and, finally, the silent "crowns" which are added to the tops of specific letters when written in a Torah scroll, (all of which have been assiduously preserved throughout the millennia) and the spiritual insights and worlds of meaning which each of these elements possess, it becomes evident that any translation of the Hebrew Torah into a foreign language, even when done with the finest of intentions and by the greatest and most scrupulous of sages, can only capture but a fragment of the meaning contained in the original.

Perhaps an analogy would more succinctly describe the matter: A translation of the Torah into a foreign language can be compared to taking a cellphone snapshot of the Milky Way. On a certain extremely rudimentary level it can be considered to be an accurate rendering of the galaxy, but certainly not even beginning to approach the very thing it has endeavored to capture. But let's now imagine, not a cellphone, but the great Hubble telescope. Docked in the fathomless infinity of outer space, the Hubble

telescope is able to transcend light years of time and space and capture brilliant images of the very forces of creation. By studying these images, scientists have been able to increase mankind's knowledge of the nature and origin of our world. Truly a master translation of the very stuff of our world! But, alas, not the thing itself!

And so it is with biblical, (Torah), translation. The Hebrew text of Torah is not a description of the world that G-d created, it is that world. It is not a photographic depiction of the primordial sparks of creation, it is the sparks themselves!

The tragedy of the Septuagint translation, as understood by our tradition, is not the the translation itself. Today, most of the world knows Torah through translation, and it is good that this is so! The sincere study of Torah via translation can be ennobling and enlightening in ways unparalleled. What is essential is that the studier bear in mind always, that the translation he or she is studying is not Torah itself, but a human attempt at approximating Torah. Even the most insightful and inspired translations, which can reveal layers of understanding, are no more than brilliant Hubble telescopes casting their electron beam into great universe of Torah.

Unfortunately, Torah translation can become corrupted and misleading, in the best of hands, unintentionally, and in the worst of hands, intentionally so. Torah's truth can be twisted and distorted, falsified and invalidated. Unscrupulous men of ambition can manipulate translations in order to justify false and destructive doctrines and ensnare innocent and well intentioned people. Such scenarios have occurred repeatedly throughout history, thereby justifying our sages' misgivings concerning the original translation of Torah into Greek. Fortunately, today, laudable translations of merit do exist, as does access to the Hebrew sources and to Jewish scholars and rabbis who faithfully uphold four thousand years of unbroken Torah tradition. Any Jew or Gentile, who sincerely wishes to avail himself of true Torah study, today can do so.

The 9th: The Passing of Ezra and Nechemiah

The ninth of Tevet marks the day of the passing of both Nechemiah and the great sage Ezra who each played essential leadership roles in the return of a small community of exiled Jews from Babylonia to Jerusalem. In the year 538 BCE, the Persian king Coresh (Cyrus) declared that G-d had spoken to him, commanding him to reestablish the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. He called upon the Jews living in exile to return to Jerusalem. However, only 42,360 Jewish

exiles, a small minority of the entire community in exile, took up the call and journeyed back to Jerusalem. There they found the city in a state of ruin. In addition, many rival communities living in the land of Israel were opposed to the reestablishment of a Jewish presence in Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. They physically threatened the nascent Jewish community of Jerusalem and embarked upon a series of political intrigues designed to prevent the Temple's rebuilding.

Nechemiah, a prominent figure among the Jews of Babylon, and cup-bearer to the king Artaxerxes (later successor to Cyrus), and the priest and sage Ezra, were both authorized by the king to take charge of the Jews of Jerusalem. Three major tasks stood before Ezra and Nechemiah: the building of the walls of Jerusalem, in order to insure the city's survival against enemies, the rebuilding of the Holy Temple and the return of the people to the observance of the Torah commandments. Ezra is credited with the accomplishment of this last task. He convinced the assimilated Jews to divorce their foreign wives and to re-devote themselves to Torah observance. Ezra established the public reading of Torah on the second and fifth day of each week, (a tradition that is followed to this day in synagogues). He also established the Great Assembly, a forerunner of the Sanhedrin, as the authoritative body concerning matters of Jewish law.

Ezra is seen by our sages as having rescued both Israel and Torah from the danger of oblivion. Likewise, Ezra and Nechemiah together reestablished a Jewish political entity in Israel, which would grow in power and influence and remain unbroken until the destruction of the Second Holy Temple by the Romans some six centuries later.

The community of returnees was small and impoverished, and therefore the Holy Temple that they built was much more modest than the previous Temple built by King Solomon. As the generations passed and the nation grew in strength and wealth, the Holy Temple underwent renovations and improvements, culminating in the magnificent structure built during the reign of Herod.

It is important to note that Ezra and Nechemiah immediately rebuilt the altar upon the Temple Mount, and renewed the Divine service, even before the walls of Jerusalem were completed or the Holy Temple was built.

Jewish tradition grants Ezra a near Moses-like status, out of recognition for his historical accomplishment of replanting the Jews back in the land of Israel and

replanting the Torah of Israel back in the hearts of the Jews.

Many of the great challenges that faced Israel in the generation of Ezra and Nechemiah still face the nation of Israel today: physical security, political survival, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the rekindling of Torah in the hearts of the Jews, the reestablishing of the Sanhedrin, and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple.

Undeniably, the passing of Ezra and Nechemiah was a bitter blow to the still tender community of Jerusalem and its environs. No doubt the people questioned what would happen next. Fortunately, Ezra had established the Great Assembly, which would ensure the continuation of responsible leadership.

May we merit today leadership of the magnitude of Ezra and Nechemiah, as we too grapple with the challenges of rebuilding our nation, reestablishing the Holy Temple and renewing the Divine service.

The 10th: Breaching the Walls of Jerusalem

The Divine sequence of the Hebrew calendar presents a wondrous opportunity for spiritual growth, if we would but hear the call. The Holy One, blessed be He, literally beckons to us through the very days of our lives, as the verse alludes: "He stands behind our wall, observing through the windows, peering through the lattices" (Song of Songs 2:9). The progression of our observances constantly reminds us that the timeless message each holiday imparts to us is just as vital in our own time as ever.

Chanukah, which we recently celebrated, is the only holiday that begins in one month and continues into the next. Chanukah begins on the 25th day of Kislev and continues into this present month of Tevet. This Hebrew month of Tevet may initially appear somewhat perplexing or contradictory. One the one hand it is associated with a certain degree of anguish: it was during this month that the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, in the time of the First Temple, lay siege around the walls of Jerusalem. Indeed, we observe a fast day on the Tenth of Tevet, the day this siege began. The siege lasted for three years, until the city was finally breached during the month of Tammuz, leading to the Temple's destruction.

But in contrast, Tevet begins right smack in the middle of Chanukah - the holiday that commemorates the rededication of the Holy Temple! And we know that the beginning of a month contains the core of its energy and expresses its true essence! What an ironic seesaw! From Temple joy and celebration, to

mourning for destruction, in the same month? What extremes!

This timing is not mere coincidence... the very structure of the calendar itself expresses profound spiritual lessons. Our consciousness is never disconnected from the Temple. Chanukah, the time of our miraculous victory over the forces of the Greek empire that defiled the Temple, is a time when we really feel the light of G-d's protective presence in our lives, helping us to stand against all adversity. But we know that G-d only makes miracles happen for those who are willing to take a stand for Him... once we have made the first move. We carry that lesson from Kislev into Tevet... and although this is the month which ultimately saw the beginning of the process that led to the destruction of the First Temple, still, this very month of destruction began with the pure light of Chanukah... and some of that illumination remains with us, guiding us throughout this month.

What a beautiful example of G-d's compassion! Even this time of Tevet began with the remaining days of Chanukah, instilling this month with the hope of redemption and reminding us that nothing can stop the people of Israel from fulfilling their Divinely-appointed destiny.

At the time of Chanukah, when the enemy entered the Holy Temple and defiled it, the invaders also broke breaches in the sereg, the fence around the Holy Temple. They made these breaches in order to humiliate the Jews, and to show their contempt for the G-d of Israel whose Divine Presence rests within.

When the Chashmonean priests succeeded in driving the Greeks out and purifying the Temple, the sages of that generation chose not to close and repair these breaches, but rather, to leave them open. They made an edict that called for the pilgrims who arrived at the Holy Temple to prostrate themselves in front of these breaches towards the Holy of Holies, in order to commemorate the miracle of the Chashmonean victory and to give thanks to the Almighty for delivering His people.

Earlier in history, on the Tenth day of Tevet, the siege around Jerusalem began, and as mentioned above, this eventually led to a breach in the city walls and ultimately, to the destruction of the Holy Temple. The people of Israel are constantly confronting these forces of opposition. Then as now, there are always those who seek to surround Jerusalem, to lay siege to our land and our lives, to hold the people of Israel hostage... to break breaches in our consciousness and sever our connection to our Torah, our Land, and our G-d. But we continue to prostrate ourselves in

thanksgiving in front of these very breaches, recognizing that the hand of the Almighty is upon us and giving Him thanks: "For G-d will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His heritage" (Psalms 94:14).

Indeed, we believe that our lives are still full of miracles - and that G-d still expects us to take the first step to make these miracles happen. Thus we continue to stand up against those who would seek to diminish the Divine light in this world. By working towards the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in our time and the resting of the Divine Presence, we work towards a future of hope, peace and prosperity for all mankind.

Former Senior Minister Prof. Yaakov Neeman

Former Justice Minister and Finance Minister Professor Yaakov Neeman was niftar on Sunday 3 Teves at the age of 77. Neeman was battling a difficult illness R"L.

Neeman served as Justice Minister twice in Netanyahu-led governments, once as Director-General of the Finance Ministry and once as Finance Minister. He was a founding partner of the law offices of Herzog, Fuchs, & Neeman. He opened the law firm with former President Chaim Herzog in 1972.

The late minister was born in Tel Aviv 1939 and studied in Yeshiva University High Court. He served in the Golani Brigade in the IDF and became an officer. He attended Hebrew University Law School and a master's degree in law from NYU.

From 1979 to 1981 he served as Director-General of the Finance Ministry. This was during PM Netanyahu's first tenure, and Neeman became a close confidant of the Prime Minister. He served again in the 32nd Government as Justice Minister.

Those close to him explain he was a gentle person with exemplary midos, adding that even during his busiest days in government, he never pushed aside his daf yomi and limud Torah.

'Dividing Jerusalem is like asking Solomon to cut the baby in half'

Mati Tuchfeld and Israel Hayom Staff

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee visited the Knesset Tuesday and advocated for Israel's continued control of Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria.

Huckabee, a Republican, arrived in Israel Monday as part of a delegation representing the Jewish Chamber of Commerce in the U.S., and is set to leave Thursday.

"Dividing the city of Jerusalem is like asking Solomon to cut the baby in half," Huckabee said during the visit.

"We're here in the first week of a new year to remind the world that Jerusalem is one city, it's not a divided city, never has been, it's been the capital of only one people in all of its history. It's been the capital of the Jewish people."

Huckabee, who met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday before traveling to the Jerusalem suburb of Maaleh Adumim and the controversial Samaria outpost of Amona, lambasted the Dec. 23 Security Council resolution denouncing the settlement enterprise.

The U.N. "embarrassed itself with its recent action," as did the U.S., by not only standing idly by and allowing the resolution pass, but also by "encouraging it to happen," Huckabee told the Jerusalem Post. "It is not the settlements that are illegitimate, but rather the actions of the U.N. -- it is the one acting without regard to reality."

Huckabee further said it was "absolutely stunning that the Obama administration would spend four years doing absolutely nothing in the Middle East of any significance, other than helping to arm Iran, which is foolish and destructive, and in the last days decide to try and take one last shot at Israel and its sovereignty, and to do it in such a way that is shameful."

Fighting BDS in the courts Ariel Bolstein

A significant blow was inflicted to the anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanctions movement recently when a Spanish court ruled that a decision to boycott Israel by the northwestern municipality of Santiago de Compostela violated Spanish law and would be repealed.

Spanish courts have previously repealed similar decisions by other municipalities to endorse a boycott, and this is clearly a judicial trend. Judicial policy in Spain prohibits a boycott of Israel, which is an immense achievement for supporters of the Jewish state.

It is also proof that Israel and its allies have learned the secrets of judicial warfare -- lawfare -- which until now has been mostly directed against us.

In times past, all wars took place on the battlefield, and the weapons caused direct physical harm to the enemy. Trade and conscience wars, meant to harm morale, followed later. Now judicial wars have been added to the arsenal, in which political or other bodies try to inflict or contain damage through the courts: petitions, prosecutions, legal proceedings and litigations.

Israel has become the first major target of lawfare. Enemies of the Jewish state have learned to abuse legal systems and have shamelessly taken advantage of every mechanism originally intended to fight actual criminals. This hostile takeover caught the enlightened world -- including Israel -- unprepared. When Britain and Spain adopted legislation that allowed for the arrests, trials and sentencing of tyrants and war criminals, anti-Israel activists immediately took advantage of the system to try to bring about the arrest of Israeli leaders and officers.

Democratic countries worked to establish the International Criminal Court to put an end to war crimes in Africa -- and that too quickly veered from that path and directed its fire at Israel.

In a terrible role reversal, the victim was placed in a pillory. Humanitarian law became a joke, exalted principles became pawns in the hands of the worst extremists, and the courts became refuges for people who fan the flames of murderous hatred toward Israel. It seemed the state of the Jewish people would forever remain a permanent defendant in every legal forum. The attempts to harm Israel even reached the judicial system of Israel itself: As Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman recently stated, Israeli courts have been inundated with petitions and legal proceedings by foreign-funded radical leftist organizations, with the aim of wearing out the system.

Nevertheless, when it became clear that judicial warfare is a fact, ideas to harness the methods in Israel's favor arose. If terrorists' supporters can take advantage of legal loopholes, why not turn the lawfare weapon against them? Non-governmental organizations acting in the spirit of freedom, democracy and human rights took this important role upon themselves. The Shurat Hadin organization began to file claims for compensation from the perpetrators of terrorism, the American Lawfare Project organization successfully proved that the policy of companies in the Arab world to discriminate

against Israelis violates U.S. law, and Spain's ACOM lobby group is waging a noble war against every attempt to boycott Israel on the Iberian Peninsula.

The weapon of judicial lawfare can pose a threat in the hands of a trained enemy, but it can also provide new opportunities. Now is the time to learn how to take up arms skillfully and wisely.

Ariel Bolstein is the founder of the Israel advocacy organization Faces of Israel.

Summary of the Perasha

In this week's parasha Yosef reveals himself to the brothers and in just two words, "ani Yosef", all of the brothers' questions regarding what took place over the last two years were answered. All the events that were so unclear and made no sense to them were not only explained but they were no longer even a question. And I have heard the idea that this is how it is going to be when we get to the next world. All the questions we had about events in our lives, they will all be answered. And it will all be clear. And I was thinking that this is such an important concept to remember. We all have questions. Why do righteous people suffer? Why do "religious" people sometimes act a certain way? Why do certain halachot seem not to make sense or to be out of touch with our times? There is no shortage of questions. And sometimes these questions cause us to become weak in our service of Hashem. Because we doubt a little so we don't push as hard as we could and make the most of our opportunity in this world. These questions are all part of the test. And one thing we have to remind ourselves is "ani Yosef"! One day we will merit to see things from a different perspective and the truth will be so clear!

Va'yigash- Yosef reveals his identity. Yaacov and his family come to live in Mitsrayim.

- 1- Yehuda pleads with Yosef to let Binyamin return home to his father.
- 2- Yosef reveals his true identity
- 3- Yosef tells the brothers to bring Yaacov and move to Mitsrayim as the hunger will last another 5 years
- 4- The brothers return home and tell Yaacov that Yosef is alive
- 5- Yaacov heads to Mitsrayim. The parsha lists the 70 people from Yaacov's family that ended up in Mitsrayim.
- 6- Yosef and Yaacov re-unite. Yaacov and the brothers settle in Goshen. Yaacov meets Paroah.
- 7- Details regarding the past 2yrs of hunger and how Yosef sold food to the people and acquired all the wealth of Mitsrayim for Paroah.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE "Behold! Your eyes see and the eyes of my brother Benjamin." (Beresheet 45:12)

After Yosef reveals his true identity to his brothers, he proves that he is really Yosef. Rashi explains that he tells them he is circumcised like they are, and that he speaks the holy language. Yosef emphasizes that all of your eyes and the eyes of Benjamin see that I am Yosef. Why does he single out Benjamin? Rashi explains: "He considered all of them together, equal, as if to say that just as I have no hatred toward my brother, Benjamin – for he was not present at my sale – so is there no hatred in my heart towards you."

Rabbi Yosef Kalatzky asks, how can it be that he had no ill feelings? After all, he was young and he was traumatized by his brothers. Even the brothers didn't really believe him, as we see later when Ya'akob passes away, they approach him again for forgiveness. They feared that now that Ya'akob is dead, Yosef will get even. So the question is glaring: How could it be that he had no hard feelings?

The Rabbi answers that the hint is found in an earlier pasuk in last week's parashah. "Yosef called the name of his firstborn Menashe, for G-d has made me forget all my hardship, all of my father's household (41:51)." The answer to our question of how he didn't harbor any hateful thoughts, was that it was done by Hashem! Hashem made him forget that trauma, and Yosef realized that this was a miracle, so he named his son after this miracle. But why did Hashem make this miracle? The answer is that Yosef had a mission to carry out. He was the one to take good care of his family in Egypt and feed them. If he had any hatred toward them, he wouldn't be able to carry out this mission effectively to bring his family to Egypt. Therefore, when he told them that he viewed them like he viewed Benjamin, he was telling the truth. Hashem will not let trauma get in the way of his mission, his mission to serve Hashem.

The truth is that we all have our own mission to serve Hashem. We live in a time where every person thinks that he has really tough problems. Everyone says, "I'm scarred!", "I'm traumatized!" Everyone is a candidate for major therapy.

From Yosef we see that Hashem performs miracles for his people in order to enable them to carry out their mission to serve him. Hashem will remove the effects of the biggest trauma and obstacles in order to allow us to serve Him properly.' Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And Ya'akob saw the wagons that Yosef sent him." (Beresheet 45:27)

Rashi tells us that Yosef sent his father, Ya'akob, a sign that he still remembers the Torah that

he was taught, and he reminded Ya'akob of the last subject they had learned together. When Ya'akob saw that, he knew that his son was truly alive in a spiritual sense, and he rejoiced! Similarly, when Ya'akob sent his son, Yehudah, to Egypt before the whole family, he instructed him to establish a Torah academy so that they could study Torah in Egypt. We see from here how important the Torah was to our forefathers. Although we only read of their deeds and their character in the perashah, the Midrash is teaching us how pivotal the study of Torah was to them. They were engaged in it constantly, and this is what kept them alive. Ya'akob mourned very deeply for his son for twenty-two years, yet the only thing that kept him strong was Torah study. Yosef was in a very difficult position for many years in Egypt, spending twelve years in jail, yet his faith and trust never wavered because he was constantly reviewing the Torah he learned.

This should be an inspiration for us to strengthen our Torah learning, especially when the going gets tough. The more we are connected to Hashem through Torah study, the more we can endure all of life's challenges. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Accept or Demand

Little Abraham was very cranky. His mother patiently tried a variety of different "bribes" to improve his mood. She gave him some toys, and then a few more when he got tired of the first batch. Next, she whipped out a coloring book and a bunch of markers. Finally, she took out a cookie and gave it to him. When he saw the supply, he asked for another. She patiently gave him a second cookie – whereupon Abraham demanded the entire box!

"No, my little friend. You have had enough for now. You had better start behaving, or, rather than a cookie, you will get a punishment," his mother warned.

The frustrated five-year-old sat on the floor, kicked his legs, and began to cry.

"You can cry if you like," said his mother, "but I can assure you you've had enough and you're getting no more."

One of the reasons happiness is so hard to achieve is that we insist on having "everything." When our attitude is "I want it all!" the lack of even a small pleasure can make us miserable. Excessive demands, said Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, zt"l, can even lead some people to consider their entire lives as worthless (Michtav meEliyahu, volume 1).

It is a very productive exercise in the business of achieving happiness to soften our demands on ourselves, our family and friends, and Hashem. Being satisfied with our lots is a trait no

one is born with; we must work on it daily if we expect to be happy.

At least once today, accept rather than demand. It is probably not what you are used to, but it will give satisfaction that was previously hard to achieve. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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Rabbi Wein
THE ENDING REVEALS ALL

One of the verses of our prayers on the eve of the Sabbath states that the end of the action reveals the original thought in the matter. Naturally the prayer refers to God and the process of creation as it is revealed throughout the week and through the ages. The Jewish people have been struck by the adverse, and nevertheless collectively applied it to many situations in life.

In many instances in life we don't know exactly what someone else is thinking or truly believing, but their behavior and action at the end reveals their original intent. In my opinion, this certainly is true regarding the abstention of the United States regarding the Security Council's resolution against Israel that recently passed. It is long been obvious that Pres. Obama does not like Prime Minister Netanyahu. But we were naïve enough to believe that his personal animus would not carry over against the state of Israel itself.

After all, Obama has allowed Israel to purchase very advanced weaponry and technology that certainly continues to give Israel a qualitative edge over its enemies here in the volatile Middle East. He has also sent Secretary of State Kerry here numerous times to try and resuscitate peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. And though we were always troubled by his ambivalence and his weakness in front of Islamic terrorism, somehow we convinced ourselves that he was not a broken reed and when push came to shove we could rely upon the United States doing the right thing in support of Israel.

Well, the abstention of the United States regarding the Security Council resolution has dramatically proven that our confidence was sorely misplaced.

President Obama began his presidency with a speech in Cairo in which he pretty much threw Israel under the bus. He hoped to win the Moslem world to his side and seemed ready to sacrifice Israel in the process. However, the Moslem world somehow had no faith in him either and after a period of time it became clear that the Cairo speech was nothing more than a speech.

Through all this, we felt that the American commitment to Israel, which Pres. Obama himself has always reaffirmed, especially at election time, would remain firm and reliable. The American policy always was a logical one. Since the parties themselves could not come to an agreement, the UN and outside parties would somehow impose a settlement.

As long as Israel retained leverage – control of the West Bank and the creation of settlement blocs – the negotiating table could be a fairly balanced one and the chances for a positive agreement would be enhanced. However, the United Nations resolution has now seriously weakened Israel's leverage and negotiating ability. Instead of facilitating an agreement between the parties, the resolution makes such an agreement an even more distant and unlikely event.

There is no question in my mind that the United States State Department recognized and recognizes this fact of diplomatic life. So, why the abstention?

It reveals to us Pres. Obama's distaste for Israel from the beginning. He comes from a Chicago church that had as its preacher a bigoted, Jew-hating person whose sermons were inciting and not insightful. Though his advisers, cabinet, Supreme Court picks, major donors and electorate were disproportionately Jewish, many of them were no longer advocates for the state of Israel. They succumbed to the siren song of the Left that Israel is to be punished for existing and being successful while the poor Palestinians, corrupt and violent as they are, somehow are entitled to be rewarded for their hatred and duplicity.

President Obama, as a lame-duck president, has revealed by his parting gift what his innermost thoughts and policies regarding Israel were all along, during his eight years as president. I think there is no other reasonable explanation for this breach of American commitment and trust. It is not only personal pique that has driven this decision, though a great deal of that is undoubtedly present as well, but it is a determination to change long standing policies in such a way that they cannot easily be reversed no matter what the mood of the American people may

be and no matter the wishes of the succeeding president.

President Obama has always felt that he and he alone knows what is best for the United States and for the world generally. He is never wrong. And that personal hubris was revealed in the abstention on the vote in the Security Council condemning Israel.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks 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 God 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. (Gen. 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 God.” 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 he raised his voice in weeping" (45:2)

Why did Yosef weep? His brothers did not weep. In the Midrash Raba it states: Just as Yosef wept, so also will we weep when we return to Hashem after the Galut. He wept not out of remorse/Teshuba but because of lost opportunity. All the years he lost by not being in his father's house and learning from Yaacob Abinu.

When we lose an opportunity to learn Torah or perform Mitzvot, it can never be made up. Whereas, should a person commit a sin (which is terrible) there are prescribed remedies such as Teshuba and Yom Kippur or imposed ones such as affliction and Gehinom.

The worst type of sin is a 'Chet'. The word 'Chet' means 'to miss'. As it states: "Each one could sling a stone and not miss- "velo yachate" (Shoftim 20:16). The sin of not accomplishing in this lifetime is the most terrible since one cannot make up for Miztvot which they did not perform when they had the opportunity. The reward for doing a Mitzvah is forever while the punishment for most sins is limited and they will be removed.

Therefore, our great purpose in life is to thank Hashem for the opportunities He gives us by bestowing on us the gift of life each day. To take full advantage by picking up the many diamonds/Mitzvot which are available only at this time. Each one is our ticket to unlimited and eternal reward and pleasure which Hashem has guaranteed.

Yosef Hatzadeek, our great hero and model, had learned this fundamental principle from Yaacob while he was still in his home. For the past 22 years Yosef could not learn from his Great father. Therefore he 'missed out' eternally and hence he wept.

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