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PARSHA INSIGHTS

IT'S NOTHING, REALLY!

"I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" (45:3)

How many times when you apologize to someone do you hear, "It's nothing, really! Why are you making such a business out of it? What did you do, after all? Forget it! It's really nothing."

Now for some people, saying "It's nothing" is genuine forgiveness. It really is nothing to them. However, most of the time what people really mean is, "It's nothing, really?! You must be joking! I don't even want to hear your voice. I just want to see you squirm around in front of me. I'm not letting you off the hook for anything. Apologize away. It's nothing, really!"

A person who refuses to accept an honest apology can make himself guiltier than the "guilty party". Just as Judaism prescribes the appropriate behavior for one who needs to apologize, so too here is a correct way to behave towards someone seeking forgiveness. Indeed, someone who turns a plea for forgiveness into an opportunity for vengeance, however subtle it might be, will very probably end up committing a graver sin than the original offense.

Picture Yosef's brothers standing in front of him, the utter humiliation and guilt of facing their young brother whom they had wronged so terribly. Now they were facing a king who had the power of life and death over them.

How did Yosef react in this situation? Human nature would suggest that Yosef would, at least, have laid out in some detail all the hardship and suffering they had caused him. However, what we read in the Torah sounds more like an extended "thank you" note than a reproach.

"And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you. Thus G-d has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival in the land and to sustain you. It is not you who sent me here but G-d."

The Torah teaches us that, as important as it is to say "Sorry", it's

equally important to know how to say "I forgive you" in a way that genuinely comforts the offender.

• Source: *Da'at Torah*

The Torah teaches us that, as important as it is to say "Sorry", it's equally important to know how to say "I forgive you."

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt

and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

YEVAMOT 86 - 92

"Because they (the Levites) did come up from Bavel"

After the Babylonian exile, the *levi'im* did not return to Israel and the Temple service, and were therefore penalized to no longer receive *ma'aser rishon* as they had in the past. This is one of the reasons stated on our *daf* for the *ma'aser* going to the *kohanim* after this exile.

Tosefot has a difficulty with this reason since that we find a reference in the *Mishna* in Kiddushin and in a verse in the Book of Ezra that *levi'im* indeed returned to Israel with Ezra after the exile. Tosefot resolves this apparent difficulty by explaining that these were only the *levi'im* whose thumbs were cut off by Nevuchadnetzer when they refused to musically perform for him in Bavel. The Temple service was hindered by the refusal of the rest of the *levi'im* to return, and therefore they were penalized to lose out on the *ma'aser*.

• Yevamot 86b

"The Torah ways are ways of pleasantness" (Mishlei 3:17)

This reason is offered in our *sugya* to exempt a woman from a need for *yibum* or *chalitza* in the event that her husband's child dies after he does. Although her deceased husband is now without descendants, she is nevertheless exempt from any connection to his brothers. Although one might think the mitzvah should apply, the Torah concept of "pleasantness" exempts her and permits her to marry outside of the family.

Various explanations are offered to explain the "pleasantness" intended here. Tosefot reasons that it would not be "pleasant" to rescind permission to marry once it has been granted her. Rashi writes that if she would require *chalitza* after marrying a second husband, it might make her appear less "pleasant" to him and this might disrupt their family harmony. The Ritva explains that if she would need to receive a divorce in order to fulfill *yibum* or *chalitza* for her first marriage, this could be most unpleasant. There appear to be practical dimensions and differences to these various explanations.

• Yevamot 87b

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers, "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said, "Don't dispute on the way"?
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt"?
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanit?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham. Alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *lashon hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave Eretz Canaan.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in Eretz Canaan.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - Dina *bat* Yaakov.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the family.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn't see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

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Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT VAYIGASH

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

When Yosef decides he can no longer hide his true identity from his brothers, “He cried in a loud voice. Egypt heard and Pharaoh’s household heard.” This was not simply a case of the emotional response of a brother who had been completely separated from his family for years with no contact. In that case he would not have cried until after having embraced his brothers. Rather, Yosef’s crying was to demonstrate to the Egyptians the superior traits and preciousness of his brothers. His relationship to them was not that of a lowly individual who had been elevated to greatness and would therefore be embarrassed to be seen with his brothers or other relatives. This would be a disgrace since they are not on his level. This was not the case with Yosef, whose brothers were honorable and superior individuals. He makes sure that the Egyptians hear his heartfelt tears, tears of love and desire for them, having been separated for so many years. Even though Yosef was such an important man in Egypt, he still missed them badly and considered himself honored through their presence in Egypt. There was no reason for the Torah to mention Yosef’s reaction other than to demonstrate Yosef’s insightful wisdom in every aspect of his life. He was aware that no matter how far he had risen there were many who knew of his previous life as a servant in Potiphar’s house who ended up in prison. By demonstrating immediately that he was the scion of an important family from Canaan he would be able to gain total acceptance from the Egyptian populace.

He then reveals himself to his brothers with the puzzling statement: “I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?” His brothers have already told him clearly that their father

Yaakov is still alive. He makes this statement simply to provide an opening to engage them in dialogue. He did not want to remind them of their having sold him into slavery, as this would only embarrass them. He chose to focus on other things first. He refers to Yaakov as “my father” instead of “our father”. This means to convey, “My father who loves me, isn’t he living with the pain over losing me, or now with the pain of losing Binyamin? Tell me the truth.” It was his intention to then ask about their wives, children and household possessions.

But the brothers panicked and were not able to answer him. Maybe they were terrified and maybe they thought that this viceroy had heard the name ‘Yosef’ from some other individuals and was playing a trick on them. As a result he found it necessary to explain the whole story to them, to remove the mask of embarrassment from their faces. He then gave them a sufficient sign that he was really Yosef by reminding them of the sale, as they had surely not revealed this to anyone else. Because he didn’t want them to think that he hated them because of their actions he emphasized “I am Yosef *your brother*.” This was to demonstrate that he had a pure brotherly love for them, something which was not apparent from his original revelation. He didn’t want the Egyptians to know what they had done as this would be humiliating, so before he told them, “I am Yosef your brother. It is me, whom you sold into Egypt” he first told them, “Come close to me if you please.” This way he could remind the brothers of the sale into Egyptian slavery, which would remove all doubt as to his identity, out of earshot of the Egyptian courtiers, a move clearly intended to uphold the honor of his brothers.

Please daven for a refuah shleimah for

Chaim Yechiel ben Malka (Ohr Somayach alumnus Chaim Howard Rothman)

Chaim Eitan ben Sarah - Yitzchak ben Chaya

Shmuel Yerucham ben Baila (Rebbetzin Heller’s son-in-law)

May we all hear Besoros Tovos.

CAIN'S FAULT

From: Coby

Dear Rabbi,

The Torah tells us that G-d accepted the sacrifice of Hevel (Abel), but not that of Cain. There doesn't seem to be any reason given as to why, just that G-d admonishes Cain and warns him to mend his ways. The only obvious difference between what they brought was that Cain brought an offering of produce, while Hevel offered an animal sacrifice. Could this have possibly been the reason for G-d's favoritism, resulting in fratricide?

Dear Coby,

This is a very intriguing and fundamental question. Let's review the relevant verses before explaining them. The Torah states (Gen. 4):

"And it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to G-d. And Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the choicest. And G-d accepted Abel's offering; but Cain's He did not. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. And G-d said to Cain: 'Why are you angry and why is your countenance fallen? If you will improve, shall it not be accepted? But if you do not improve, sin crouches at the door; and it desires [to ensnare] you, but [it is in your power] to rule over it'."

On the face of it, Cain seems to be a well-intentioned, innocent victim of Divine favoritism. But understanding Cain's actions requires putting them in context of his overall character.

The Zohar (Gen. p. 54) teaches that Cain and Hevel were very different from one another. Cain was born before Adam had repented his sin and therefore was tainted by the impurity of the Serpent. Hevel was born after Adam repented and was therefore righteous and pure.

Cain's first infraction was coveting Hevel's wife. According to the Midrash (B.R. 22:17), Cain and Hevel were born with twin sisters with whom they were to populate the

earth. Cain married his twin, but also desired Hevel's under the claim that as first-born he deserved a double portion – his wife, and that of his brother.

Hevel became a shepherd because he was reluctant to work the ground which had been cursed by G-d. Cain, however, brazenly took to working the earth to prove his own strength and to flout the authority of G-d. He became so obsessed with the earth that his preoccupation with it dominated him entirely and further distanced himself from G-d (B. R. 22:6).

It is this selfish, egotistical, brash and material nature of Cain which made the difference between their offerings.

A careful reading of the verses shows that while Hevel brought choice firstlings, Cain only brought "of" his produce. In fact, the Midrash teaches that Hevel offered generously the best he possessed – animals which had never been sheared or worked (Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer 21). Cain, on the other hand, brought the most inferior produce he could find in order to save the best for himself. In addition, he audaciously sought to conceal his stinginess by blaming the inferior quality of his offering on G-d for cursing the land while simultaneously intending thereby to exempt himself from having to serve Him (B. R. 16:8).

But G-d was aware of the true motive behind each one's sacrifice and thus sent a Heavenly fire to consume Hevel's sacrifice which was offered with purity and generosity of heart; but Cain's selfish and arrogant sacrifice remained unaccepted on the Altar (B. R. 22:10).

Thus it was not the *type*, but rather the *quality* and *intention* of the offerings that made all the difference between Cain and Hevel's submissions. Similarly, it was not Divine favoritism, but Cain's obstinate, egotistical refusal to heed G-d's warning and his subsequent unjustified jealousy which brought about such an evil result.

May G-d break and humble the "Cains" of the world and protect us from their malicious guiles and wiles.

• Sources: *The Midrash Says, Genesis, pp. 60-65*

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

BIRIYA — TOMBS OF THE GREAT

Less than a mile north of Tsefat is Biriya where two great figures in Jewish history are buried.

One is Benayahu ben Yehoyada, who was one of King David's most important aides both as a scholar and a warrior, and whose great deeds and



holiness are described in the Talmud and the Zohar.

The other is the Talmudic Sage Abba Shaul. In addition to his great scholarship he was proud of his role as a gravedigger, about which he once said "The evil inclination can't be found in the cemetery."

SHEMONAH ESREI - EIGHTH BLESSING - PART I

“Heal us, O G-d – then we will be healed.”

The name used here to address G-d is His four letter name “yud and heh and vav and heh” which signifies G-d’s power of creation and control over the natural order of things. When this level of G-d’s power is manifest in the world, miracles can be the norm. We thus find that when G-d sent Moshe to perform miracles in Egypt, he was told to use the four letter name of G-d. In contrast to this, when the Divine name “Elokim” is used it signifies the manifestation of G-d’s power that is invested within nature. Accordingly, the numerical value of the name *Elokim* (spelled with a *heh* and not a ‘k’!) is equal to the Hebrew word for “nature”, signifying that they appear one and the same. The truth is, of course, that all that happens under the sun is from God. However, the usual way in which He runs thing is in accordance with the rules of nature.

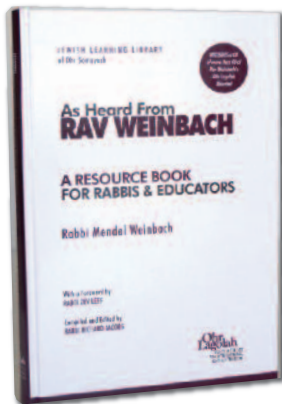
The Number Eight

It is also taught that the number eight, which is one more than seven, alludes to G-d’s ability to transcend the limitations of this world that was created in seven days, while the

number seven corresponds to nature. We thus find that a Jewish boy is circumcised on the eighth day in order to invoke G-d’s supra-natural healing powers. For this same reason the eighth blessing was established for healing.

In yet a deeper sense it can be explained that the reason that healing was chosen as the eighth blessing is because all healing can be looked at as transcending nature. Just as when something begins to rot it doesn’t reverse its pattern, so too when a person’s body begins to malfunction or become sick it would naturally lack the ability to reverse the downward course. G-d, however, in His kindness, instilled within the body the ability to become rejuvenated, thus becoming healed from sickness. This process, created by G-d, is in truth a miracle. This is true whether one’s recovery from a particular sickness seems miraculous or not. For even when doctors and medicine are used in one’s healing process, the healing ability comes from G-d.

According to the above we can explain the seemingly repetitive language of this blessing, “Heal us, O G-d, then we will be healed.” We ask that G-d causes His four letter name, which transcends nature, to be manifest — for then we will surely be healed.



As Heard From RAV WEINBACH

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