

Monarch's Mission: Parshat Vayigash

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

As Yaakov prepared to descend to Egypt with his family, "He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen." It appears that Yehudah had two missions, to go before Yosef and to prepare Goshen for their arrival.

Rashi explains that the purpose of Yehudah's mission was to set up a house for Torah study. Netiv Hapeninim explains that Yaakov was teaching his family and future descendants that wherever one goes one should begin by dedicating space and time for holiness and Torah study. The importance of Torah in our lives, says Rabi Wolbe in *Alei Shor*, is one of our defining national characteristics. It dates back to Avraham, who sent his sons to learn in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, and to Yaakov who studied with his sons, particularly Yosef. Now for the first time as a nation they would be immersed in a culture outside the family, and it was necessary to instill the importance of the primacy of Torah into the fledgling nation.

Rabbi Pincus explains why Yaakov sent Yehuda ahead. He bases his discussion on the verse in Ezekiel to "take one stick and write on it for Yehudah, and take another stick and write on it for Yosef, the stick of Ephraim." In the future, says Ezekiel, "The two sticks will join together and become one in your hand." This prophecy refers to the northern kingdom of Ephraim and the ongoing Kingdom of

Yehudah. While these two lines will continue throughout our history, they will eventually be united in the time of the final redemption.

Yehudah and Yosef were the models for all Jews. While Yosef represented the absolute *tzadik*, the one who is always aware of Hashem's presence, the ideal to which we should all aspire, Yehudah represented the special Jew, the prince. Our first king, Shaul, was like the paradigm of Yosef. He was the absolute *tzadik* of his generation. Hashem holds *tzadikim* like Shaul to a high standard, and would not overlook his sin with Amalek. Therefore the kingship was wrested from him and transferred to Dovid.

Yehudah, on the other hand, represents the Jew who goes above and beyond, with tremendous self-sacrifice and courage and an absence of ego. He was quick to admit his sin even at the cost of his personal prestige. His great grandson, Nachshon ben Aminodov was the first to jump into the Red Sea, putting his life in danger, but trusting in Hashem who had commanded them to travel forward. This model of self-sacrifice and truth was the model upon which Hashem then built his own relationship with Yehudah. Hashem too could then ignore His own "honor" and allow David, although he too faltered, and his descendants to reign over Israel forever.

The Tosher Rebbe explains that it was

necessary for Yosef to go to Egypt first to be the model of morality as a foil for the rampant immorality of Egypt. The Jewish people also needed a model for the sanctity of speech. This was Yehudah's task, to set up a *yeshiva* where speech would be used in the holy pursuit of Torah learning. This parallels the two covenants we have with Hashem, the covenant of circumcision, which guards against promiscuous behavior, and the covenant to sanctify our speech. When one removes restraints on speech it paves the way for immorality. Man's physical offspring are his children. The "offspring" of his mind are the words he speaks. It was necessary to "marry" Yosef's circumspect morality with Yehudah's use of sanctified speech, especially in Torah learning, to protect the Jews from assimilating into the depraved Egyptian culture. Therefore, Yehudah had to go before his brothers to Yosef and together lay the foundation for the arrival of the Jewish people.

When the time for the final redemption approaches, we will have both Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid to keep us in a state of holiness. This model was created in Egypt, our first exile and the paradigm for the four subsequent exiles. May we dedicate ourselves to learning Torah and being circumspect in our speech, and merit the coming of Moshiach ben Yosef followed by Moshiach ben Dovid speedily in our day.



Tomer Devora: Who is Like G-d

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

The Sefer Tomer Devorah is a commentary on the verse in Micha, "*Mi kel komocha...*" which describes the 13 attributes of Hashem. *Klal Yisrael* are referred to as *sheirit nachaloto*, the inheritance of Hashem. *Sheirit* can be also understood as *sheir basar*, the closeness of a husband and wife. We are called *am k'rovo*, His close nation. In Bereishit the verse says, "*V'yipach b'apo nishmat chaim.*" With His very breath, Hashem blew a soul into man's nostrils. He fashioned us in His Divine Image. If someone would ask you, "Where is Hashem?" you could point to the man putting on *tefillin*, the young girl giving charity. They are bringing Goldiness into the world through their holy actions. Yisrael comes from the root letters, *shin, reish*, which spells *sar* (ambassador). We are like the envoys of Hashem representing Him wherever we go. When a child imitates his parents, they have *nachat* (spiritual pleasure). Hashem also has

nachat when we follow in His ways.

Hashem feels our pain. "*B'chol tzorotam lo tzar...*" The Jewish people's suffering is His suffering. When a person sits *shiva*, it is customary for those comforting the mourner to say, "*Hamakom yenachem etchem...*" *Etchem* is in the plural form. Hashem mourns with the mourner.

The Yerushalmi explicates, "*V'ahavata l'reiacha komocho*, You shall love our friend as yourself." A Jew is commanded to love his fellow Jew just like himself because we are part of one collective soul, not separate individuals. This means empathizing with the joy and pain of others.

The Tomer Dvora explains that if a Jew sins he affects himself and all of Klal Yisrael, because they each carry a part of him in their souls.

"*Kol Yisrael areivim zeh ba'zeh*," we all have a responsibility for each other.

"*Lo hechzek la'ad apo*," Even if man continues to sin, Hashem doesn't hold onto anger. In contrast, if you are hurt by someone, the mindset of today's society is, "Why should I forgive him? He has not made any attempt to ask me for forgiveness or to stop hurting me and I should forgive him?" But a Jew thinks differently, "Maybe he'll repent. I'll forgive him and perhaps in that merit Hashem will forgive me too." Logic may dictate that the purpose of punishment is revenge. But punishment in the Torah is meant to be a vehicle to do *teshuva*. When a parent punishes a child he should not want to get even with him, but rather to teach the child that he must rectify his ways. Likewise, when a person goes through suffering, he must ask himself, "What sin have I done that caused this?"

Honorable Mentchen: The Evil of Humiliation

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoach Teller

The Gemara teaches that humiliating someone in public is tantamount to murder. Rabbeinu Yonah explains that the blood leaves the person's face and he turns white as a cadaver. It is as if one kills the person.

There was once a guest *chazzan* in the Bluzhever Rebbe's shul. He kept repeating words of the prayer to fit the melody he was singing and people were displeased by it. Some went so far as to openly show their disapproval. As soon as the davening was over the *chazzan* ran out of the shul in shame. The Rebbe then said, "We know that you may not embarrass someone in public and if you do you forfeit your portion in the World to Come. But nowhere does it say that you forfeit your portion in the World to Come if you repeat words from the *nusach hatefilah*." Humiliating someone is considered an offense not only against the person but against Hashem. This is because when you mock someone, you're also mocking Hashem, in whose image the person was created.

The story of Tamar teaches us the severity of humiliating someone in public. Tamar refused

to shame Yehuda publicly and was ready to be burnt to death. The Rabbis learn from this that it is better to be thrown into a fiery furnace rather than shame someone publicly.

In Baronovitch, it was the job of the caretaker to stoke the furnace so that the shul was heated when people came in to pray in the morning. The caretaker argued that all the *meshulachim* who slept in the shul rent-free should take care of this chore. The *meshulachim* countered that it was the caretaker's duty. Every day the shul was cold. One day all the arguments stopped. Rav Lubchansky, the *meshulachim* of the Baranovitch Yeshiva, would get up early each morning, take in the timber, light the furnace, and disappear. The caretaker thought the *meshulachim* were finally doing what he told them to do. The *meshulachim* thought the caretaker was finally doing his job. One morning the wood was wet from the snow and Rav Lubchansky had a hard time getting the fire going. He had his face in the oven and was blowing hard, when the caretaker walked in. Thinking it was one of the *meshulachim* trying to stoke the flames, he gave the man a good kick. Rav Lubchansky realized that if he

got up and the caretaker saw who it really was he would be terribly ashamed. So he hid his face deeper in the furnace and waited until the caretaker left. When he finally removed his head, his beard had been badly singed by the fire.

In today's society, humiliation often happens when newspapers, magazines, and other media broadcast scandalous information about people that the public has no right to know. Likewise, political candidates have no qualms revealing irrelevant information about their opponents. Lawyers commonly cast aspersion on the character of their opponent to exonerate their clients. Other examples of humiliation include poking fun at physical and mental handicaps, using unpleasant nicknames, and ridiculing children.

The Gemara in Brachot recounts that when Rabbi Elazar Hagadol was on his deathbed, his students asked him, "Teach us an ethical credo to live by." Rabbi Eliezer answered, "*Hizharu b'kovod chaveiro*." Be careful with your friend's honor.