

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Vayigash

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A Taste of Torah The Reunion Unity

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

The emotional moment has finally arrived. Yaakov, separated from his beloved son for twenty-two years, is about to be reunited with that son, now ruler of the Egyptian empire. Finally, Yosef arrives in his royal chariot and appears to his father, falls on his father's neck, and cries profusely. One can only imagine the intense joy and emotion experienced by Yaakov and Yosef at that exact moment.

Our Sages point out something very interesting. The verse (Bereishis 46:29) states that Yosef cried on his father's neck. However, it does not say that Yaakov cried on Yosef's neck or even cried at all. It does not say that Yaakov hugged or kissed Yosef. What could have been preoccupying Yaakov's attention at this momentous occasion, preventing him from engaging in an emotional reunion with his beloved son? Our Sages (cited by Rashi *ibid.*) answer that Yaakov, at that very special moment, was reciting *Shema*.

What is the significance of reciting *Shema* at such a moment that completely overrides the natural reaction of a father reunited with his son after so long? And why didn't Yosef also recite *Shema*? The Maharal (Rabbi Yehuda Loew; 1512/1520-1609), in his *Gur Aryeh* commentary on Rashi, explains that at the moment of the reunion of Yaakov and Yosef, a reality became clear to all. A saga that for twenty-two years had appeared to be the greatest tragedy and misfortune emerged as a masterful plan of kindness and love orchestrated by G-d. The disappearance of Yosef was, in fact, G-d's master plan of survival for the fledgling Jewish Nation. *Shema* begins with our declaration that G-d is One, meaning the one and only power in the world. *Shema* continues with the commandment to love G-d, which, the Maharal explains, we recite in order to show and evoke

our great love for G-d. Thus, for Yaakov, at a moment where G-d's greatness and kindness were revealed so clearly, reciting *Shema* was truly appropriate. Yosef already understood how all these events were Divinely orchestrated for this purpose; therefore, the reunion did not share the same significance for him and did not warrant a recitation of *Shema* at that time.

Perhaps this can be explained on a deeper level. The Radvaz (Sefer Hamitzvos 3) explains that the essence of our declaration that G-d is one through the recitation of *Shema* is an acknowledgment that although we perceive two very different attributes of G-d, one of strict judgement and one of mercy, in essence, they are one. In the greater scheme of things, the strict judgment seen in the calamities and troubles throughout the ages is really an expression G-d's kindness and love. We may not be able to understand how that is, but we firmly declare our belief that this is so. This is followed immediately by the commandment to love Hashem, which, as explained, is a declaration and revelation of our love back toward G-d. Thus, at a moment such as the reunion of Yaakov and Yosef, where what seemed to be strict judgment for the last twenty-two years was revealed as G-d's kindness and love, reciting the *Shema* was truly apropos.

The Shem Mishmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain of Sochatchov; 1855-1926) adds another element to the above explanation. The Ramban (*ibid.* :1) explains that Yaakov understood that his descent to Egypt was the beginning of the exile that was foretold to Avraham. Furthermore, the Egyptian exile was to be the forerunner of all future exiles, tribulations, and sufferings of the Jewish Nation throughout the ages.



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories for the Soul

Blameless

A man from Jerusalem by the name of Rabbi Wolk would travel the world fundraising for the needy of Jerusalem. He would make an appeal in the locale he visited, and include words of Torah and inspiration as part of his appeal.

In 1929, Rabbi Wolk spent a Shabbos in Chicago. When he spoke there, he related how special it was to live in the Land of Israel and the advantages of studying Torah there. After Shabbos, Chicago resident Rabbi Yerachmiel Wechsler informed Rabbi Wolk of his family's plans to visit Eretz Yisrael in the near future.

During the Wechsler's trip to Eretz Yisrael, they visited the Chevron Yeshiva, and Rabbi Wechsler noticed that there were American students in the yeshiva. He spoke with them, and became convinced that this was the place for his 16-year-old son Yechezkel to study. The family returned to Chicago, but Yechezkel remained in Chevron.

That summer, the terrible Chevron massacre occurred, as the Arabs rioted and murdered many Jewish residents of the holy city, including a number of the students of the Chevron Yeshiva - among them young Yechezkel Wechsler.

The following year, Rabbi Wolk returned to America, but he avoided Chicago. He simply could not face the Wechsler's, as he felt that the family might hold him partially responsible for the tragedy of their son's murder, as he had been the one who had planted the thought in Rabbi Wechsler's mind that his son ought to study in Eretz Yisrael. He maintained this practice for the next several years.

One day, as he was walking in New York, Rabbi Wolk bumped into

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Kollel Happenings

HACHNASAS SEFER TORAH ON JAN. 19

A Sefer Torah is being dedicated to the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissachar in memory of Reb Shalom Sommers, father of Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers. Dedication opportunities for the Sefer Torah at all price levels are available. A Hachnasas Sefer Torah will take place at Aish of the Rockies on Sun., Jan. 19. For dedication opportunities or more info, visit www.denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

THE ETHICAL & PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF INHERITANCE THIS WEDNESDAY AT JAN. 8 4T

Join Daniel Levin, shareholder, Levin Jacobson Japha, PC, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they examine this complex issue. Jan. 8th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfas Emes gives us a glimpse into the infinite depths of Torah and Jewish thought. Kollel Scholar Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky is an expert in this great work, and a master in bringing its timeless lessons into daily life. Join Rabbi Karnowsky on Thursdays, 8:15-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- 1) Proof of circumcision
- 2) Wine and beans
- 3) Marriage oath Foolish firstborn
- 4) Build a Torah center
- 5) Show off the weaklings
- 6) Shameless relocation

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk Part VI

When offered the position of rabbi of Jerusalem in 1906, Reb Meir Simcha initially strongly considered accepting the post, but decided to remain in Dvinsk after the townspeople entreated him to remain. Twenty leaders of the Dvinsk community wrote to Jerusalem: "We of the Russian

Golah (Diaspora) in the city of Dvinsk rise up in response to the report that the sons of Jerusalem wish to take away our master, our teacher ... not only will they destroy us, but the entire Golah for whom he is the teacher and the respondent for all who seek the word of G-d."

A Taste of Torah

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Thus, specifically at the moment of the inauguration of those exiles, sufferings, and sorrows, Yaakov focused his immense joy at meeting his son, as well as his great love for Hashem and his kind ways, and created a paradigm for all future generations. Just as the great ordeal of the loss of Yosef ultimately concluded with G-d's kindness and love being revealed, so would it be with all future trials and tribulations. Although hard to see at the time, eventually, at the end of times, G-d's kindness and unity will be revealed through it all. Eventually we will understand so clearly, like the moment of

Yaakov and Yosef's reunion, that all the pain and suffering was for our good and was G-d's greatest manifestation of love and kindness to us.

We all have the opportunity to internalize this message twice every day through the recitation of *Shema*. Let us take this message to heart and understand that even in challenging times, when things are very unclear, G-d's kindness and love are always present in the greatest of ways. And let us continue to pray for that great day when G-d's unity, love, and kindness will be revealed clear as day to all!

Stories for the Soul

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none other than Rabbi Wechsler. After exchanging greetings, Rabbi Wechsler inquired as to why Rabbi Wolk had failed to make his annual appearance in Chicago for the past several years. Rabbi Wolk awkwardly explained that he had been afraid to face Rabbi Wechsler after the tragic loss of his son.

Rabbi Wechsler was shocked. "That's what kept you from coming?! You did us a great favor! It was ordained by Heaven that Yechezkel perish at a young age. You

were the *shaliach* (agent) who allowed him to attend yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael and to die sanctifying G-d's Name as part of the holy yeshiva."

In this week's parsha, Yosef tells his brothers that he holds no grudge in his heart against them for selling him to slavery, explaining that it was Hashem's will that these events occur. We, too, must recognize that whatever occurs to us is Divinely ordained.

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| 1) Proof of circumcision 45:4 s.v. gishmu | 3) Marriage oath 46:10 s.v. Hakhim'ants |
| 2) Wine and beans 45:23 s.v. mitiv | 4) Build a Torah center 46:28 s.v. lftanav |
| 5) Show off the weaklings 47:2 s.v. umiktzat | 6) Shameless relocation 47:21 s.v. miktzat |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers