



Parashat Vayigash



English version

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The Art of J.O.M.O.

Sometimes I wonder if I am the only person in Israel who is not planning a trip to Dubai. I was brought up in a culture that feeds the FOMO fear. Fear of missing out. If you could go somewhere cool, why not? If you could have something cool, why not? Even if you do not need to go there, or have that item. Just because everyone else is doing or having.

Recently, a book has been published, the Joy Of Missing Out, written by a Danish professor, discounting the belief of many Americans, that more is better. This book is a cold-water shower on the Western mindset that has brought us to the brink of disasters on global levels (like global warming, hoarding, depletion of ecosystems, etc.) and has already caused personal disasters (divorce, family feuds, stress, jealousy, guilt, fear, conformity, etc.). Western culture has created a lifestyle where “winning isn’t the only thing; it is everything”. This book claims that from childhood, America teaches us to want all the wrong things - a house in the suburbs with a three-car garage, a Mercedes or Lexus, perhaps both, exotic vacations... Why is this so bad? We lost the validation of quiet, of singularity, of living the life “I” love, and have become accustomed to looking outside of ourselves to find meaning in life and in things we want: if others have it, it probably has a purpose. We look outside ourselves to meet standards and expectations in every area of human achievement. If we can’t keep up with the Jones and their pursuit of materialistic happiness, no

matter how successful we are in our unique own way, we label ourselves as a failure. How dumb.

This is almost as dumb as the forty-year-old bridge that was just taken down in the Ramat Eshkol neighborhood, on Karl Neter street. The Municipality built the bridge the wrong way! The bridge was supposed to be a crosswalk for pedestrians over the busy Levi Eshkol Blvd. for school children, crossing from Ramat Eshkol to their school in Maalot Dafna. There were many accidents in the area, and the pedestrian bridge was, and is, badly needed. Instead, the bridge was built to cross over a side street in Ramat Eshkol, which is of no help to anyone, in any way, whatsoever. This Karl Netter bridge teaches that people spend 40 years of life building bridges, that, at 120, they realize were built the wrong way, in the wrong place, and those bridges got them to where they never needed to go, or led them to live a life they never really loved. If I do not have something, and someone else has it, good for him... and better for me! G-d wants us to live in that mindset that, if I don’t have something, or I can’t go somewhere, Hakol Beseder! I.e., everything in life has a Seder, order. G-d is in control of everything.

When Pharaoh said to Yosef, I heard that you know how to interpret dreams, Yosef responded, “It is not me; it is G-d.” What? Yosef, are you crazy?!? You are in jail for life. Now is your time, your only chance! Show Pharaoh how smart you



are, or, at least, credit G-d *after* you get out of your mess!

Yosef introduced self-restraint to the world, the first mention of restraint, איפוק in the Torah, is in reference to Yosef. Yosef used restraint in according due credit to G-d. Even if it may seem that doing so was not for his own good, Yosef was faithful to the Big Boss. This actually brought Pharaoh to trust in Yosef to work for him as well, and to be the one who would teach both Pharaoh and the Egyptian people to use the restraint that was needed, to help them through the years of famine. To be לְאֹב לְפָרְעֹה וּלְאֶדוֹן לְכָל־בְּיֹתוֹ וּמִשָּׁל בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: A teacher to Pharaoh, and a master to his whole house, and a ruler in all of the land of Egypt. Yosef told his brothers to relay this message, of his standing in Egypt, to his father Yaakov. Why would Yaakov care that his son, who was his top student, had become Ruler of Egypt! Phew! That was not an achievement for Yosef, in Yaakov's eyes! But Yosef was telling his father, *I did not only rule over Egypt, I ruled over the WHOLE of Egypt, i.e., I ruled over myself. I taught the whole Egypt self-restraint.*

The Midrash tells us exactly why G-d gave Yosef this power and success. It was all in the merit of his restraint with Potiphar's wife. (Y. Shimoni Miketz 50;1) Yosef did not get this position from Heaven, gratis. He earned it. If Yosef could practice self-restraint with Potiphar's wife, he would be the perfect candidate to lead Egypt to live 7 years of self-restraint during the 7 years of plenty. Yaakov knew deep down, that all along Yosef was alive (see 44;28); he even wrote down Yosef's dream, knowing that it would come true. (37;11) He just did not think he would ever see him *G-d fearing* again. (48;11) Yaakov was worried sick that Yosef was not *spiritually* alive. Yaakov's spirit was revived, when he said, רַב עוֹד־יִוָּקֵר בְּנֵי הָיָה This passuk means that Yosef's power was great in staying a Tzaddik, despite the difficulties he went through. (B. Rabba) Yosef is *spiritually alive*! Yosef *lives* with G-d in his life, a life of Hakol Beseder, and this empowered Yosef to practice self-restraint. When Yosef finally has a chance to take revenge on his brothers, he promises them not to worry,

because *G-d* sent me to Egypt; it wasn't you! Living with G-d is the secret to self-restraint, not to take revenge, and, to master J.O.M.O. This is the secret of our Forefathers and what made them so great: that "Hakol Beseder" - G-d has a plan for everything. When Yaakov met Yosef for the first time, after so many years of absence, the joy was so great that Yaakov wanted to restrain that precious moment to connect with G-d, to live the moment with Him. This concept of living with G-d is the whole concept of Tefilah. If you do not have this in mind when you are praying, it is as if you did not pray. (R' Chaim Halevi H. Tefillah)

This "Hakol Beseder" mindset empowered Yosef to have איפוק. He exercised restraint, in general, and in many instances recorded in the parsha. Instead of revealing himself to the brothers immediately, he awaited the moment when his brothers would master the trait of caring for each other. (If there is unity, brotherhood, G-d has mercy, even on idol worshippers. See Rashi 11;9) In contrast, Yosef did not have איפוק, he could not bear seeing his brothers embarrassed in front of the Egyptians when he revealed himself to them. In order for there to be brotherhood, brothers need to practice self-restraint. There is just one other time in Tanach that this word, איפוק, restraint, is used, and our Rabbis tell us to compare and contrast between the two. וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הָמָן And Haman held himself back from killing Mordechai.

Haman was the antithesis of the Hakol Beseder mindset. How long did Haman hold himself back from implementing his plan to kill Mordechai? Just a couple of hours. From after his first meal with K. Achashverosh and Q. Esther, until he started to build the tree to hang Mordechai; and when he finished, he headed straight to King Achashverosh for permission to proceed with the hanging, at 1 A.M! Haman, why can't you wait for the morning? Every minute that Mordechai existed drove Haman mad! Haman could not go to sleep, or wait until tomorrow! If Haman would have had just a little more patience, he would not have been around when Achashverosh was looking for advice on how to reward Mordechai. He would not have had to parade Mordechai around on Achashverosh's

horse! He would not have built the gallows he did not have permission to build, those very gallows that would now be ready for Haman to be hung upon!

In the merit of Yosef's restraint with Potiphar's wife, וַיִּגְדַּל הַחַוְצָה we were able to cross the Yam Suf. הַיָּם הַרְאָה וַיִּגְדַּל. Punishment for extramarital relationships is חֲנָק, choking, so in the merit of

Selfie steps to master the art of J.O.M.O.

Yosef's restraint, measure for measure, we were saved from drowning at sea, which is a form of choking. (See Kli Yakar Breshit 39;12) Yosef taught us that the way to save yourself emotionally and spiritually, to save your brotherhood, to save your future, and the future of your nation, is through self-restraint, and through the joy of missing out.

1. Adapt the "Hakol Beseder" mindset. If for whatever reason, they are going and not you, if they have and you don't, it is best for you. Nothing could be better for you, and be genuinely happy for them!
2. When you can't have something that others have, pause and become aware, if you actually need it or you just want it, and if at all, it is good for you.
3. The world around us is increasingly encouraging greed and devaluing restraint. Connect with G-d, bring G-d into your life, enjoy your relationship with Him when you pray, when you serve Him, and empower yourself to say no to what you don't need or does not serve you any purpose.
4. Look inward, to find your unique version of success, and build your bridges to get you to the life you love.

THE POWER OF N.A.G.

Self-help that the Torah offers is always more effective and genuine than the self-help ideas of the Gentiles. It is always an octave above. That is the idea of eight nights of Chanukkah, and it is the concept that we fought the Greeks about. We fought for being on a different octave, a different level of a person, a ישרא-ל.

The only way we can actualize this new octave, this spiritual level, is through the key element called happiness. In the Jewish religion, one is punished for not serving G-d with joy (see Devarim 28; 47), for not being cognizant that it is an honor, a precious gift, to have a relationship with the Almighty G-d. If your religion is down, not vibrant, not full of excitement, it is not authentic Judaism. Because when you are down, you're connection is down. Even a man as great as Yaakov Avinu, who was on the level of an angel, when he was down about losing Yosef, he lost his Ruach Hakodesh, his high-level connection.

אֵת הַנְּבִיאַ (Psalm 51) When David Hamelech was reprimanded by Natan

Hanavi for his act with Bat Sheva, he composed a Mizmor for his own Teshuvah and for all those who will repent in future generations. Why does David call it a Mizmor? Why isn't it a קִינָה, a lamentation? The answer is that even to do Teshuva, you need to get into a positive state. King David knew that you can't change if you are down.

R' Wolbe writes that the challenge of learning mussar is that when you realize how wrong you were, how you lied to yourself for so long, and in such a bad way, it is hard not to feel guilty, down and depressed (AleI Shur 2 161). And when someone takes Mussar as a "guilt trip", instead of using it to bring him to awareness, he can't change. One of the greatest challenges for the coach is to help the client see his shortcomings while keeping him positive. A big enough, strong enough person, faces his biggest mistakes, his biggest lies and says "I am happy I realize how wrong I was, because I am big enough to take responsibility, to leave the

past, and make a new beginning.” This mindset is fundamental to learning Mussar.

The Baal Shem Tov (צוואת הריב"ש) would teach that sometimes the Yetzer Hara dresses up as your Rebbe, Mashgiach, Yetzer Tov, etc., and makes you feel bad – that you could be greater, holier, more religious. And that you should be on a higher level than you are. Why does the Y. Hara do this? Because when he gets you down about your spiritual level, he can get you to give up much more than you are willing to bargain for, otherwise. The Yetzer Hara knows that although depression is not a sin, it can bring you to the worst sins. So, how do I know if the spiritual drive to do “extra” inside me is a Yetzer Tov or a Yetzer Hara? It depends where it is taking you. If it brings you to serving G-d with more happiness and love, with more motivation and alacrity, it is your Yetzer Tov. If it prevents you from serving with love, with passion, from keeping the Shulchan Aruch, it is your Yetzer Hara. And he is pushing you, so that you fall flat on your face.

How do we stay happy serving G-d, no matter what? How do we turn on that fire, and reignite the soul? Let us step back for a moment, and take a drone’s-eye view. So many people in the world are depressed – more than 350 million people (World Health Organization). David Burns, author of Feeling Good, talks about depression and how to cure it. “Depression has been called the world’s number one public health problem. In fact, depression is so widespread it is considered the common cold of psychiatric disturbances. But there is a grim difference between depression and a cold. Depression can kill you.” A quick Google search will tell you what that the world offers to fight depression.

But what I found amazing is that the Torah is giving us another octave, a new dimension of self-help that is way ahead of everything the gentiles offer. And that is the Power of N. A. G. It is the secret the Yosef shared with his brothers. ועתה אל-תעצבו ואל-יחר בעיניכם כי-מכרתם אתי הנה כי למחלה שלחתי אתי: And now, be not depressed and do not be angry in your eyes for selling me here,

for I was sent by G-d, before you, to be a sustenance (a provider). ועתה לא-אתם שלחתם אתי. הנה כי השלחתי אתי. And now, you did not send me here, for it was G-d...”

What type of solution was this? How could it prevent them from feeling down about the biggest and only mistake of their lives, about the lie they lived for 22 years? How did the fact that Yosef would be the sustainer of the family help them not to be down about their terrible mistake, that caused their father so much pain? And, why “Now”?

In these words, Yosef revealed to his brothers the three powers of staying positive. The first answer is the Power of Now. Yosef kept saying the word עתה, now. Most people get down and suffer from stress, worries, guilt, etc., because they are not in the Now. They are living in the past or the future. My favorite question as coach is, what are your options? Because that is the best question to take them out of past/future thinking and bring them back into the now. Anything that is actionable, is in the now. G-d’s present to you is the present, and only the present. Only He is in the past/present/future at the same time. You have no control over the past or future, so let go of it. The word עתה is usually referring to Teshuva (Breshit Rabbah 21; 6), because Teshuva it is not about living in the past, living in regret. Teshuva is about living in the Now, recognizing the sin as something that you find disgusting, despise, and disconnect from, so that in the Now you will learn new habits and behaviors. Teshuva is not about feeling bad about “you”. It is realizing how bad the action, decision, or behavior was.

The second power is the Power of Anyway. Yosef told his brothers, I was, anyway, going to come down to Egypt. G-d sent me here before you sent me here. לפניכם. Had I known how things were going to turn out, I would have paid to go to Egypt. You sold me, but I would have gone anyway. The power of Anyway is the power that keeps people positive. It gives us the power to deal with the past.

And the third power is the Power of Give. Yosef told his brothers not to get down, because he is in this to be a giver, למחיה שלחתי, for I am a

sustainer. The Baal Shem Tov taught that depression and being down comes from wanting, valuing, and according too much importance to this World and its desires. When a person becomes a Giver, and despises taking from this world, from the honor, fame, and desires, the Baal Shem Tov promises, he will not get down. (צוואת הריב"ש)

A JEW COVERED IN FISH GOOK

One of the greatest psychological challenges we all deal with throughout life is defining who we are and discovering our value. G-d made Man with a need to feel he has value. This is why when Man cannot find an intrinsic value within himself, he searches for an external solution. This is why people "need" brand name clothing, luxury cars and houses and exotic vacations. Fame and fortune. In great contrast, animals, as long as they have enough food for the day, do not become stressed. Because they were not created with the drive to find self-importance, self-value, they are not subject to the stress that keeps after human beings.

The Mishna in Avot brings to light this essence of Man. The Mishna relates directly to a person's worth, and tells you how much value you have. אם אין אני לעצמי, מה אני? וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני? *If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am concerned only with myself, what am I?*

The first part of the Mishna is teaching the first step in appreciating your worth. When you feel that no one cares about you, when you feel like a shmatta, a rag, it is usually because you do not accord yourself enough importance to devote time to taking care of yourself. You do not take out time for yourself; you do not spend money on yourself. You neglect your physical health, emotional health, spiritual health or your financial "health". When you do not take care of yourself, you are sending messages to those in your life that you don't value yourself, and neither should they.

The second part of the Mishna is giving us the secret to valuing ourselves; but notice the peculiar choice of words: אם אין אני לעצמי, מה אני? *If I am concerned only with myself, what am I?* The word מה, *What*, in this context, is so strange. The

These three Powers, that the gentiles don't list, are most powerful in helping a person stay clear of negative thoughts. And with them we can self-actualize and reach the next octave, because these lead us to serving G-d with joy.

appropriate word here should be, מי אני, Who am I? "Who" is generally used for people, and "what" is used for things!?

But that's the whole idea that the Mishna is teaching us. If you are worried only about yourself, you are like an animal, and you have no value as a human being! You have only as much value as the value you bring to others. Of course, you need to take care of yourself first. But if that's all you are worried about, then you have no more value than an animal. You are just a "what", not even a "who". It's the healthy balance of both taking care of yourself first and then being responsible for others that makes man the great Man he was intended to be.

Holocaust survivors said that this is the only thing that kept them sane. The Nazis hated the Jews, because the Aryans believed that they were the Chosen people, and that there could not be another Chosen people; the Jewish People were a contradiction to that idea. So the solution was to treat the Jews like animals and break them psychologically. To take away all their feelings of self-value, and to reduce them to the status of animals in their own eyes; or to completely annihilate them. The Nazis tattooed numbers on our arms, just as cows are branded with numbers. The Nazis transported us in cattle cars, to make us feel like cattle. But Holocaust survivors who wanted to retain their humanity and not fall into this psychological trap, say that there was only one thing that helped them avoid it: caring for each other and taking responsibility for each other. They had nothing else. They possessed nothing except the G-dliness they had inside. Caring for others preserved the spark of humanity within them. It



preserved the G-dly feeling that every Jew has inside.

There is a word in the beginning of the Parasha that teaches us the power of responsibility. ויגש אליו , יהודה ויאמר בי אדני (Yosef) and said to him, *please my master...*” Yehuda approaches Yosef to speak to him, at the climax of the drama. When Yosef really had “all the cards on his side”, and Binyamin was to go to jail, for he had been caught “red handed”. At this point, what right did Yehuda have to ask Yosef to free Binyamin?

Yehuda started his claim with the words, בי אדני. The word בי is translated by the Targum as ‘please’. But the word בוי has another explanation. It means, according to the Baal Haturim, that Yehuda was telling Yosef, if you want to take Binyamin as a slave, take me, instead. I took responsibility for him. I am holding myself responsible.

On a deeper level, the word בי is really referring to ”יב” , the number 12 . Yehuda was telling Yosef, “I am not coming to stand up for myself. I am not standing up for Binyamin. I am standing up for the 12 Shevatim. I am going to do whatever I need to do to get Binyamin back and to get Yosef back. You are tampering with the destiny of the twelve Shevatim, and I am willing to take you on. Because I am responsible. And that gives me the right to speak. When Yosef saw that Yehuda had learnt the lesson of responsibility, he broke down, crying. Because now Yosef wanted to be a part of them again. The more responsible you are, the greater you are. Because the more responsible you are, the more G-dly you are.

But there is an even deeper explanation. בי אדני , according to the Arizal, Yehuda was saying, G-d is in me (בי אדני). Because Yehuda has, in his name, the Name of G-d, יהודה. And every Jew has a piece of G-d inside him, a חלק אלוה ממעל, and this is why we are called יהודים. Yehuda was saying, You are not dealing with me. You are dealing with my G-d.

This reminds me of a story that I heard from Rabbi David Pinto. He recalled how when he was a thirteen- year-old in Morocco, he would go to the market place on Friday morning to collect money for the poor, money that his father would later distribute. “I remember a man from Morocco. His name was R’ Mordechai. He was a Jew typical of those times – a hardworking, G-d-fearing man. Not a great Rabbi or Mekkubal, but a man who had to struggle for his parnassah. One Friday, I saw him at the market place, next to the fish stand. The Arab who was selling and cutting up fresh fish had a bucket of fish heads. People don’t buy fish heads, as there is little meat on them. But R’ Mordechai was struggling financially, and he desperately wanted fish for Shabbat. So he offered the Arab a couple of coins and said, “Please. I can’t afford fish for Shabbat. If you could let me buy the fish heads from you with the change I have left, I will pick out the meat from there.” Rav Pinto watched from the side to see how this was going to turn out.

At first, the Arab ignored him. But R’ Mordechai was persistent. “Please. All I want is to taste some fish on Shabbat! It’s all I got!” The Arab looked at him and screamed, “Get out of here, you filthy Jew!” But R’ Mordechai was not going home without some fish for Shabbat. He just stood there, contemplating what to do next. The Arab blew it. “I told you, GET OUT OF HERE, YOU FILTHY JEW!” And with that, the Arab took some fish intestines, and threw them in R’ Mordechai’s face. There was silence in the marketplace. Everyone was watching to see what would happen next.

Then, R’ Pinto relates, the most amazing thing happened. Rav Mordechai removed the fish gook from his face and looked the Arab in the eye, and said, “I can forgive you for embarrassing me in front of everyone. But I will not forgive you for embarrassing a Jew, and disgracing my G-d.” With those words, on the spot, in front of everyone in the marketplace, the Arab dropped dead.

All of these explanations of בי, each on its own level of פרדס, blend with each other. Because if you want to find the G-dliness inside yourself, you need to take on responsibility for Klal Yisrael. When



you look at the G-dliness in yourself, you will see a greater you than the you that you see in the mirror. Amazing things happen when we tap into that piece of G-d inside of us. When we stand up for

PAIN IN THE NECK

When the goblet of Yosef was found in Binyamin's bag, all the brothers of the Tribe started to hit Binyamin on his neck saying, "Thief! Son of a thief! Just as your mother stole the idols from her father Lavan's house, you, too, followed in her footsteps and stole the goblet that the man (Yosef) uses for his witchcraft." But Binaymin did not respond. (תנהומא מקץ י')

Binyamin was hit hard on his neck, and for those blows that he was hit on his shoulders, he is called 'ידיד ה', "G-d's friend", and he merited having G-d's Glory, the Holy Temple, situated in the portion of his tribe. Binyamin's tribe was blessed, ובין כתפיו שכן, *He (the Shecinah) shall dwell between his shoulders (territory of Binyamin).*

After 22 years, Binyamin and Yosef hug for the first time. They cry on each other's shoulders. Our Rabbis tell us what these tears were about. Not about being separated for 22 years. But for the destruction of the Mishkan in Shiloh, in Yosef's territory. And for the two Temples that will be destroyed in the territory of Binyamin. Hence, it says, Binyamin cried on the shoulder (singular) of Yosef, and Yosef cried on the shoulders (plural) of Binyamin.

What is the idea of the neck or the shoulder? The neck is the connection between the body and the Neshama, the physical and spiritual. The Temple is the connection between the materialistic world and the spiritual world. The Temple was a place of peace. Peace between G-d and His People, peace between the Worlds, Peace between the nations. How did Binyamin merit having this in his territory? How did Yosef merit having this in his territory? Because of their necks. Allow me to explain. But first, a bit of coaching tools.

There are a lot of people in your world that may be difficult for you to get along with, including yourself. How do we deal with the person who is

that part of G-d inside of us. And when we take on responsibility for Klal Yisrael.

inconsiderate, accusing, impolite, egoistic, annoying, haughty, etc.? How do we deal with our own shortcomings, mishaps, weaknesses, mistakes?

There is only one way. Seeing G-d in our relationships. Seeing G-d in ourselves and others. The Baal Shem's teaching is that שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד, *I place G-d in front of me always*, can be given a Hassidic twist. The word "Lenegdi" means "opposite me", but also means by my opposition, over the shoulder of the one who opposes me. You want to say 'hello' to G-d? Say hello to an ex-friend. G-d is right there. Bring G-d into your relationships. Realize that He put you in the family you are in, He made you your shidduch, He gave you this difficult child. He made that guy your roommate, your sibling, your teacher or your boss. But this "G-d in Relationships" goes much deeper than that. G-d is not only in the vacuum *between* "me and you". *He is in Me and You.*

There is a song from Abie Rottenberg that I remember from my childhood. I might have heard it only a few times, but for over twenty years, I can't get the beautiful tune, or the beautiful words, out of my head. *There is a small piece of Heaven, in everyone's heart, a glorious gift from above. It will sparkle and shine, if we each do our part, to reach out and touch it with love.* As I learn more about coaching people, I realize that this is all I am doing, and this is what coaching is all about. Touching a piece of Heaven inside a G-d-like being and letting it sparkle and shine.

You see, the worst thing a person can do to himself, or to others, is to stereotype, or label. Shy, Loud, Dumb, Lazy, Not serious, Perfectionist, Addict, ADD, ADHD, OCD, DVD, etc. It is important to be aware of our tendencies, of our shortcomings, but not to look at the Person as being defined by those shortcomings – as limited



or disabled. Awareness is a good thing; labeling can be the worst. The pessimistic nature of many people who are stuck gives them a negative filter: they notice and remember only weaknesses, shortcomings, mishaps and bad times, while ignoring all the good. Or, they insist on believing that “the childhood” is “the destiny”. The only way to coach them is by touching their G-dliness, by relating to the positive aspects of their negativity. For example, the way to help someone who gets angry is not by calling him a hothead, but by respecting the fact that he has things that are important to him that he is getting angry about. The only way to help someone who is shy is by complimenting him for being gentle. The only way to help someone who is a perfectionist is by complimenting his perfectionism, his nature to strive for the best. Even the pessimist can be praised as an optimist with experience. Or the Lazy, for being laid back. Find that good part of every trait, of every human, and you have touched his G-dliness, for G-d makes no mistakes. With nobody. If we look only at the down side of the trait, if we cannot respect the good side of the bad trait and value it, then we have just made the person small, labeling him and putting him into a

box. You took a Tzelem Elokim, a G-d-like being, and reduced it to something lowly.

When Yosef and Binyamin cried, they cried about baseless hatred. They saw our quarrels, the ones that we have had now in 2014, and they cried, for they knew that we will continue living in Exile, until we learn how to love. Until we learn how to see G-dliness in ourselves and others, until we see G-d in our relationships. Our Rabbis tell us that the brothers did not do something wrong in their sale of Yosef. They did do something wrong when they were unable to say hello to him. ולא יכלו דברו לשלם (see 'תנ"י וישב ז)

So the next time you have someone who is being a pain in your neck, know that you can build the Temple by accepting him and dealing with him. This is the shared secret of Yosef and Binyamin. Acknowledging G-d in their lives, acknowledging G-d in their relationships, and acknowledging G-d in others. With this trait, the ability to accept your brother, no matter what he has done to you, because you see G-d there, you can rebuild any relationship. You can even rebuild the Holy Temple.

NEVER, EVER, ALONE

Yaakov was afraid of going down to Egypt. וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי הָאֵל אֲלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב: *And G-d said, I am the G-d of your father. Do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there.* אָנֹכִי אֶרְדּוּ עִמָּךְ: *I will go down with you to Egypt and I will take you up as well, and Yosef will place his hand on your eyes.*

The Or HaChaim asks a few questions. *What was Ya'akov's great fear in going down to Egypt? Was he afraid of being enslaved? Yaakov was not afraid of anything! He believed in the power of a ישראל; he used this power to fight angels! So, what was he afraid of? Also, how did G-d console him? After all, they did go down to Exile, and they were enslaved!*

The Netivot Shalom continues this train of thought. We find another time when the Jews went into Exile. עַל נְהַרֹתוֹ בְּבַל שָׁם יִשְׁבּוּ גַם-בְּכִינּוֹ בְּנֹכְרָנוּ: *On the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, and we also wept, when we remembered Tzion.* (Tehillim 137) What were they crying about? Were the Jews afraid of the Babylonian Exile? A Jewish soul is strong enough to go through the worst conditions. So, what were they afraid of?

The Zohar tells us how Yechezkel consoled those weeping Jews. *G-d called out to all of His angels, to His ministering angels, to His multitudes, and to all of the hosts of the Heavens, and He said to them, What are you doing here? My Children are in exile, and you are here? Get up, all of you, and go down to Bavel, and I am coming with you.*

When the prophet Yechezkel said to them that G-d would be with them in Bavel, it consoled them. Because that was all that they wanted to hear (Zohar Shemot B).

And this was Ya'akov's fear. That he would be alone, that G-d would not be there with him, or with his children. But G-d said, יעקב אל תירא עבדי *Yaakov, my servant, do not fear.* I will come down with you; I will be there with you. In the Shmutz of Egypt. Down till the lowest level of impurity. And if you become too deeply caught up in the impurity of Egypt, I will save you, before you reach the point of no return.

No matter what you are up against. No matter *who* you are up against, G-d is there. When Moshe had to face Pharaoh, what was he worried about? How could Pharaoh be so, so far from G-d? After experiencing seven plagues, how could his heart still be as rigid and immovable as a stone? How did G-d calm Moshe down? בא אל-פרעה קיי-אני *Come* to Pharaoh- I am already there waiting for you; for **I** have hardened his heart. It is all ME! I am in his heart, and that is why it is so hardened! (Shem Mishmuel)

The Baal Shem Tov would teach that there is no person on earth who does not have his own, custom-fit exile. קרבה אל-נפשי גאולה (Tehillim 69). There is a beautiful prayer that many Jews say before Kiddush on Friday night. שתרחמי עוד בגלותי *May You, Hashem, have mercy on me, even in my exile, to redeem me.* No two people's problems are alike. Each one has his/her own darkness. How does one deal with his/her own exile?

The Brisker Rav would teach the trick – King David said it best: שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתְּךָ תִּמָּה יְיָהֲמִנִי G-d, Your שִׁבְט Your rod that You rebuke with, and Your walking stick (that one leans on), will console me (Psalms 23). What? I can understand how the cane on which one leans can be a consolation. But how can the stick that one is struck by be a consolation? The answer is that if it is G-d behind the stick, if it is one's own Father who is delivering the blows

only out of love, that, itself, is a consolation. For it means that G-d is there with you the whole time.

The Shem Mishmuel writes, that in the perspective of Judaism, *all the problems in your life are because you do not feel that you have G-d in your life.* As the passuk says, וְהָרָה אִפְי כּוּ בַיּוֹם-הַהוּא וְעִזְבוּתַיִם וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי מִפְּנֵי מַהֵם וְהָיָה לְאֵל לְיִמְצָאָהוּ רַעוּת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא הֲלֹא עָלַי כִּי-אֵין אֱלֹהִי בְקִרְבִי מִצְאוּנֵי וְצָרוֹת וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא הֲלֹא עָלַי כִּי-אֵין אֱלֹהִי בְקִרְבִי מִצְאוּנֵי *And I will be angry on that day, and I will leave them, and I will hide My Face from them, and they will be devoured and many evils and tragedies will befall them. And they will say on that day, it is because there is no G-d in my midst that these evils have been visited upon me.* וְאָנֹכִי הִסְתַּר אֶסְתִּיר מִפְּנֵי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא עַל כָּל-הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כִּי פָנָה אֶל-אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים *And I will hide My face on that day, from all the evil that is done, for they turned to other gods.* (Devarim 31; 17)

How do these pesukim make sense? How could it be that the fellow who realizes the cause of his pain and suffering and even says Viduy that it is because G-d is not in his midst... that G-d will continue to punish him with the worst punishment- that G-d will hide His face from him?

The Shem Mishmuel answers that this is the reason why this fellow is suffering and will continue to suffer. *Because he believes that G-d is not with him in the darkness.* And that is why G-d will continue to hide His face! Because the person does not recognize that this difficulty, this darkness, has G-d behind it. Judaism explains that darkness is not the absence of light. Darkness is *also* G-d's creation. Darkness means that G-d is *causing* lack of light. G-d gives a person difficulties to enable him to grow. And just like the Jews needed the Egyptian exile to become a great nation, so, too, each person has his own exile, because He wants to enable a great G-dliness to shine through it into the world. So, when a person does not recognize that whatever “goes wrong” in his life is being orchestrated by G-d – for a very good reason – G-d hides Himself even further. He brings darkness, then more darkness...until the intensity of the darkness is so great, that it could not have been caused by anything other than Alm-

ghty G-d. Once the one who is in suffering realizes this, the amazing happens: The darkness vanishes, in a blink.

The Zohar tells us the story of Chananya, Mishael and Azarya. Nebuchadnezzar threatened to throw them into the raging flames of a huge furnace, if they would not bow down to the idol. When they were tied up to be thrown in, each one raised his voice, in front of all the nations, kings and ministers that were gathered there to bow down. Chananya said, *G-d is for me; I will not fear. What can man do to me? G-d is with me through my helpers, therefore, I can face my foes.* Mishael opened his mouth and said, *And you, do not fear, my servant Yaakov, said G-d... For I am with you, to save you...* When the gentiles present heard that these youths still trusted G-d's promise to be with Yaakov and his descendants in Exile, they burst out laughing. Azarya cried out -

Shema Yisrael... And at that moment, HKBH said to His Throne, to the Shechina, "Tell me, in the merit of which of these three statements should I save these three Tzaddikim?" And the Shechina answered, in the merit of the statement that was laughed at, the mention of Your promise to be with Yaakov and his descendants in Exile". So, G-d saved the three tzaddikim in that merit, and all those who laughed were burnt to death, instead of these three (Zohar Acharei Mot 57a).

How does one bring G-d into his own exile? How does one see that G-d is with him, no matter what? One needs wide screen, panoramic, full high-definition awareness for this. One needs time, alone. To think in quiet. As Rabbenu Bachye explains, the reason why so many of our leaders were first shepherds was to give them an opportunity to do *התבודדות*, to have time with G-d. And when we spend time alone with G-d, only then do we realize how we are never, ever alone.

Yehuda = Honesty, Nobility and Responsibility

The inner strength of Yehuda during stressful times got him very far. Many of us know that the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was situated in the portions of Yehuda and Binyamin. The reason for the Temple being located in Binyamin's lot was for something he *did not* do. All the tribes, excluding Binyamin, bowed to Esav. Binyamin had not yet been born. Yehuda, however, merited his share of the Temple by actively choosing to take responsibility for returning his brother, Binyamin, to his father. Yehuda also merited being the direct forefather of King David and the royal family, including Mashiach. He won these significant honors for having confessed his intimacy with Tamar.

Yehuda's descendant, Nachshon Ben Aminadav, preceded the Nesiim of all other tribes in bringing the inaugural sacrifice of the Mishkan. Yehuda merited this by humbling himself in front of Yosef in their heated discussion in this week's parasha.

Yehuda Humbles Himself

In the Midrashim, we see the extent of Yehuda's efforts and exactly how he humbled himself. In Yehuda's defense for freeing Binyamin, Yehuda attempted to accuse Yosef of wanting to enslave Binyamin for no just reason. *A thief who has money to compensate the stolen goods should be able to pay and not be punished by enslavement.* Yosef replied that the magical goblet that Binyamin had stolen was priceless, and no amount of money could possibly be sufficient to free Binyamin for such a theft. Yehuda reinforced his claim by saying that all the brothers were willing to be enslaved in Binyamin's stead. Yehuda made this offer in an attempt to check if their lot was punishment meted out to the brothers by G-d for selling Yosef. Binyamin did not take part in the sale of Yosef. If he were to be the only one enslaved, this would prove that the predicament the brothers were put in was not a Divine punishment. Rather, this would be an expression of the



wickedness of the Egyptian leader they faced. Had he reached such a conclusion, Yehuda would have led the tribes in a war against Egypt. With the help of G-d, he thought, they would release their brothers Binyamin and Shimon and search Egypt for Yosef. This was Yehuda's line of reasoning in the dispute.

Yosef, however, replied that he saw in his magical cup that Reuven and Levi were Yehuda's elders. "Why are you, Yehuda, speaking before your elders, Reuven and Levi?" To this, Yehuda replied that it was because he had taken upon himself the responsibility to return Binyamin to his father. Yosef then remarked that he saw in his cup that Yehuda had once sold a brother Yosef (that Yehuda claimed, in his story, was dead) for 20 silver coins as a slave and told his father that Yosef was torn to pieces by an animal. Yehuda heard this, and he cried out an earth-shattering cry. "How can I return home after all that I have done and see my father's face?"

Yehuda, at this point, recognized and outwardly admitted his grief for selling his brother. This realization prompted him originally to offer to take responsibility for Binyamin. Confession was followed by assuming responsibility, and therefore, Yehuda was rewarded with kingship. We find that this trait was hereditary as well. *King Shaul sinned once by not annihilating Amalek (sparing King Agag) and he was not pardoned. King David sinned twice (both in the episode with Uriah and through counting the people) and was pardoned.* (Yoma 22b) David was pardoned because he immediately confessed to the Prophet Natan. Shaul, on the other hand, first denied his sin to the prophet Shmuel. *It seems that confession and successful kingship go together.*

Lionhearted

We may ask why the combination of confession and responsibility was rewarded so highly. We may wonder why Yehuda merited such great things for his actions. The Yalkut states, concerning Yehuda (on the passuk, יהודה אתה יודוך אחיך), *One who overpowers his Yetzer and admits his misdeeds*

– he merits the World to Come. R' Dessler deduces that one can truly admit his shortcomings only if he first overpowers his Yetzer.

What are the ramifications of this statement? Many confessions are made. Few are made out of an understanding of the severity of the transgression and out of an inner will to respect justice. This purity of motivation was reflected by Yehuda, who did not *have to* admit his deed to Tamar. No one else knew what had happened. His confession was an act of answering his own inner truth, and was not affected by any external considerations.

He did not *have to* take responsibility for Binyamin. He *wanted to*. Yehuda realized that his life went downhill following his having arranged the sale of Yosef. His sons, Er and Onan, married Tamar and lived lives with unacceptable behavior before G-d. He lost his sons as punishment for having taken away Yaakov's son from him. When Yehuda confessed **to himself** what he had done, *he wanted to take responsibility for his actions.* This is *the trait of a lion*, a symbol that Yehuda so much deserved. The strength of a lion is that he does not care what any other animal thinks. He eats large quantities of meat, sleeps most of the day and lives the way he wants. What he does and how he acts is dictated by what he feels. To overcome the yetzer and do a genuine form of Teshuva, one's actions must come from a feeling that *I am not doing this in order to impress others. I am going to do what is **right** and take responsibility for my actions, because that is what I really want to do.*

This is the greatest and deepest aspect of the rebuke of the End of Time mentioned in the Midrash (Rabba 93:10). The Midrash compares Yosef's rebuke of his brothers to the rebuke of G-d to humanity. *G-d will come and reprove each and every person according to who he is.* R'S. Pincus explains that the most frightening judgment we will endure at that time is hypothetical judgment. Suppose that the negative acts we refrained from would have been accepted socially: would we still have refrained from them? This judgment will reveal the true self, not that which was dictated by



social mores. Let us take murder for instance. How different is a person who did not commit murder because it was not accepted in his social circles from a person who refrained from such an act in obedience to G-d's commandment. If, for example, killing would be socially acceptable, as it was in Nazi Germany, many people would "go along" with what was then the "norm", without examining their actions against any absolute concept of right or wrong. If, for some reason, the doctors in a hospital were on strike, and it was accepted that doctors were at present off duty, would a particular doctor still keep his hands in his pockets, refraining from treating patients who could be healed? The judgment of the End of Days reveals if we are who we are because that's who we **want** to be, or because we are the product of social pressure. We will be tested to see if we would have passed the test, even if no one would ever know our mark.

Noble Intentions

This nobility in the act of Yehuda shined forth in a very unique way. We know that Reuven, also, took responsibility for his brother, Yosef. He convinced his brothers not to kill Yosef, but instead, to throw him into the pit. We do not see that Reuven was rewarded for this. In what way was his act different from that of Yehuda?

To pursue the question further: there is a Midrash (Mechilta Beshalach ch. 5) that offers a second reason as to why Yehuda merited royal descendants. While the brothers wanted to kill Yosef, Yehuda saved him by persuading his brothers to sell him as a slave. This act afforded Yehuda with great merit. (see Rashi 49:9) Although we saw in other Midrashim that Yehuda lost his children as punishment for causing his father to lose *his* children. Also, Yehuda was excommunicated by his brothers for selling Yosef (וירד יהודה), after they saw that their father, Yaakov, could not be consoled. Still, it remains to Yehuda's credit that Yosef was not killed. Reuven, for the same act, was not rewarded at all.

The Siftei Chachamim (37, 40) states that Reuven's motivation was partially due to the fact that he was worried that his father would blame him. He had already angered his father once (by moving Yaakov's bed from Bilha's tent to Leah's), and he wanted to avoid doing so again. Reuven was more concerned with keeping his good name than he was with taking responsibility to save Yosef's life. Yehuda, on the other hand, was credited for saving Yosef's life by selling him because he did not care what anyone would say. He knew that this was the only way he could save his brother and he knew that he might be excommunicated for it. He merited having the Holy Temple in his territory, for he had taken responsibility for Binayamin out of his sense of duty alone. He did not act in order to exonerate himself from Yaakov's suspicion that he had had a hand in the sale of Yosef. His father would not look at him in a bad light if he did not take responsibility, for Yaakov did not know that Yehuda was a main character in the selling of Yosef. And still, Yehuda felt that *he wanted* to take responsibility.

We find this nobility of dedication to doing what is right in the testimony of the Torah in regard to Yosef. When Yosef kept his distance from his master Potiphar's wife, he told her that his reason for restraining himself was *והטאתי לאלקים* And (*by being with you*) *I would sin to G-d*. Not because the master would find out his action. Not because Yosef's family would find out. Not because of social status. Rather, because such an act is forbidden by G-d. This inner strength was unique in Yosef. It was also unique in Yehuda, expressed through his confession. This is the inner strength we find in Yehuda. For Yehuda to become a real *baal teshuva* from his actions with Tamar and in selling his brother, he had to be honest with himself and overcome all self-justification.

Battling Evil Inclination /Recognizing G-d

R' Simcha Zissel would say in the name of the Ibn Ezra: "However well a person recognizes his Yetzer (יצר), that is how well he recognizes his Creator (יוצר)". The reason we do not see the



Creator in the world is because the Yetzer does not let us see Him. The more we realize that we are in the dark, the more we can appreciate the light.

This is the greatness of Yehuda . Yehuda was able to get up and recognize his Yetzer. The root of the name Yehuda is both “confession” and “thanks”. The natural tendency of the human psyche is to deny gratitude for a favor. This is the root of being ungrateful. The Yetzer makes a person egocentric. Confessing means realizing one’s shortcomings and shortsightedness. And it also means taking responsibility for showing gratitude or rectifying wrongdoings.

HOW ABOUT NOW

We find something in this week’s parasha that blows my mind every time I think about it. והנה . עיניכם ראות ועיני אחי בנימין כי פי המדבר אליכם . Rashi tells us here, in accordance with the Talmud in Meggilah 16, *Yosef told his brothers – just as I do not have anything against my brother Binyamin, who was not involved in selling me, so, too, I do not have anything against you* . How was Yosef able to accomplish this? To put the years of jail, degradation being sold as slave and separation from his father all behind him? Not only did Yosef forget about what they did to him, he even called his son Menashe, כי נשני אלקים את כל עמלי . Yosef named his son after his ability to forget all of his troubles from the past. How did Yosef master this astounding ability to forget and forgive? What was the trick that Yosef had that allowed him to “let go” of the past? So much of human psychology today is focused on helping people who are entangled in their past emotions to break free of them. What did Yosef do, without the assistance of a psychologist, to get over things?

Yosef told his brothers his secret... ועתה אל תעצבו ואל יחר בעיניכם כי מכרתם אותי הנה כי למחיה שלחני אלקים ועתה לא אתם שלחתם אתי הנה כי ...לפניכם האלקים... *And now, do not be sad, do not get angry at your having sold me to this place, because G-d sent me out before you to sustain you... And now, you did not send me here , but rather G-*

We can learn from Yehuda responsibility for our family. We can learn responsibility to the truth and to justice. We can learn to do good things just because they are good. Nothing to do with how it makes us look. And we can learn the traits of the lion and humble ourselves and relinquish our honor for things that are more important. This behavior is fit for kings. These royal traits can be found in each and every one of us. *All Jews are princes.(Shabbat 111a)*

Transcendence is a uniquely Jewish trait: it means rising above ourselves, above petty considerations, and doing what is ultimately right.

d... What was Yosef repeating to them with the word ועתה, Now? Just skip the word “Now”!

The answer is the secret that preserved Yosef’s true identity. ועתה , Now. Yosef did not try to forget about the past. He just lived in the present, the present being whatever G-d had made his reality , and the past was automatically forgotten.

This is extremely difficult to explain. But it is very easy to understand. There are different levels of Now. Anything that we can see, hear, smell, feel, or taste is in the Now. Anything that is actionable is in the Now. Anything and everything else is past or future. All the sadness, anger and stress that we humans just can’t let go of are thoughts of the past or future, not thoughts of Now. We cannot do anything about the past or the future, and that is why thoughts about the past and future (about 80 percent of average human thoughts are past / future thoughts) are so stressful. I will repeat that. The reason why thoughts from the past are so stressful is because we cannot do anything about them; they are not actionable. Even when we try talking to others about these thoughts of past and future, they can never fully see ,feel , hear what we mean, just the way it is in our mind. So, we remain alone in our thought. The thought does not exist anywhere else in the world except in the mind of the person suffering from it. Most people, by now, may think that I am exaggerating when I say 80 percent of



“thoughts” are past and future. But I will prove this to you. Next time you notice that your mind was not focused while you were praying, try to remember the thoughts to which your mind drifted – they were either past or future. If it had been thoughts of the present, the Now, then you would have been focused in your prayers. Any other thought is not actionable during prayers, because you were standing with your feet together, just in middle of praying. At that time you could not do anything else, so they could not have been thoughts of Now or actionable thoughts.

I once saw that someone wrote, “Any thought that you think about more than once is a stressful thought. If it is actionable, then, just do it. If it is not, then it is just slowing you down, so forget about it.” This is what Yosef said – ועתה אל תעצבו . Now- in the Now, after your repentance, there is nothing to be sad about. Don’t start digging up the past, regretting that you sold me. The Chasam Sofer actually points this out. The Midrash (ב”ר , פכ”א) tells us that the word, ועתה is a word that connotes Teshuva. Whenever we see that word, there is something that relates to repentance. The reason is that Teshuva is bringing a person into the Now. The person repenting makes the most out of the Now. The penitent leaves the past behind him. In the Now, he is a new person. Teshuva is not about ripping out the past. That is impossible for us humans to do. Only G-d can do that for us. When a person wants to go to the past and change things, he is making an unrealistic request; that is not Teshuva. When a person wants to make the best out of the Now, to assure that whatever it is that he regrets will never happen again, that is Teshuva. Once he does that , he gets closer to G-d. And connecting to G-d uproots all evil, including the evil of the past .The person that he was before his proper repentance no longer exists. It is just a

thought. And this is what Yosef told his brothers, as well. I love you now, because the brothers that I see in front of me have repented and do not want to be the same as they were in the past. Now that you did Teshuva out of love, your past action is nullified. My being sold as a slave was solely an act of G-d. (חתם סופר על התורה)

A step further. There is no greater tool to bring one success than his own mind. And, conversely, there is no greater tool for self destruction than one’s own mind. We all have thoughts, all the time. This does not mean that we are thinking. “Thinking” is facilitation thoughts that are actionable in the present, in the Now. No one ever got hurt from thinking. People get hurt only from thoughts. Thoughts are past and future. “Thinking” is in the present. When we get into the present we are connecting with reality, not just theoretical thoughts, and if there is something to do, there is no stress.

The “Now” is not only a concept of time. It is a concept of bechira, of remaining in the field of free choice presented to me by G-d, where I can be the most “actionable” . Not only past and future thoughts bring stress, stopping one from being in the Now, and doing the most effective, actionable thing that can be done. When we look around us, feeling that we are competing with others and not with “our self of yesterday”, this is another cause for stress that removes us from the Now. Yosef told his brothers אל תרגזו בדרך , *Don’t get angry on the way*. The Rebbe from Kretchenif (תורת היים) (ואמונה) has a great Chassidic take on this passuk. Yosef told the tribes that each one has his own unique way of getting close to G-d; each shevet has *his* way of being *mekadesh shem shamayim* in the world. Don’t start fighting which way is the right way. When we do that, we are missing “our way”. We are missing the Now.

THE MOST NOBLE OF ALL

Many of us know that the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was situated in the portions of Yehuda and Binyamin. The reason for the Temple being

located in Binyamin’s lot was for something he *did not* do. All the tribes, excluding Binyamin, bowed to Esav. Binyamin had not yet been born. Yehuda,



however, merited his share of the Temple by actively choosing to take responsibility for returning his brother, Binyamin, to his father. Yehuda also merited being the direct forefather of King David and the royal family, including Mashiach. He won these significant honors for having confessed his intimacy with Tamar.

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The Yalkut states, concerning Yehuda (on the passuk, יהודה אתה יודוך אחיך) *One who overpowers his Yetzer and admits his misdeeds – he merits the World to Come*. R' Dessler deduces that one can truly admit his shortcomings only if he first overpowers his Yetzer. What are the ramifications of this statement? Many confessions are made. Few are made out of an understanding of the severity of the transgression and out of an inner will to respect justice. This purity of motivation was reflected by Yehuda, who did not *have to* admit his deed with Tamar. No one else knew what had happened. His confession was an act of answering his own inner truth, and was not affected by any external considerations.

Yehuda did not *have to* take responsibility for Binyamin. He *wanted to*. Yehuda realized that his life went downhill following his having arranged the sale of Yosef. His sons, Er and Onan, married Tamar and lived lives with unacceptable behavior before G-d. He lost his sons as punishment for having taken away Yaakov's son from him. When Yehuda confessed **to himself** what he had done, *he wanted to take responsibility for his actions*. This is *the trait of a lion*, a symbol that Yehuda so much deserved. The strength of a lion is that he does not care what any other animal thinks. He eats large quantities of meat, sleeps most of the day and lives the way he wants. What he does and how he acts is dictated by what he feels. To overcome the yetzer and do a genuine form of Teshuva, one's actions must come from a feeling that *I am not doing this in order to impress others. I am going to do what is right and take responsibility for my actions, because that is what I really want to do*.

This is the greatest and deepest aspect of the rebuke of the End of Time mentioned in the Midrash (Rabba 93:10). The Midrash compares Yosef's rebuke of his brothers to the rebuke of G-d to humanity in the future. *G-d will come and reprove each and every person according to who he is*. Rabbi S. Pincus explains that the most frightening judgment we will endure at that time is hypothetical judgment. Suppose that the negative acts we refrained from would have been accepted socially: would we still have refrained from them? This judgment will reveal the true self, not that which was dictated by social mores. Let us take murder, for instance. How different is a person who did not commit murder because it was not accepted in his social circles from a person who refrained from such an act in obedience to G-d's commandment? If, for example, killing would be socially acceptable, as it was in Nazi Germany, many people would "go along" with what was the "norm", without examining their actions against any absolute concept of right or wrong. If, for some reason, the doctors in a hospital were on strike, and it was accepted that doctors were, at present, off duty, would a particular doctor still keep his hands in his pockets, refraining from treating patients who could be healed? The judgment of the End of Days reveals if we are who we are because that's who we **want** to be, or because we are the product of social pressure. We will be tested to see if we would have passed the test, even if no one would ever know our mark.

This nobility in the act of Yehuda shined forth in a very unique way. We know that Reuven also, took responsibility for his brother, Yosef. He convinced his brothers not to kill Yosef, but instead, to throw him into the pit. We do not see that Reuven was rewarded for this. In what way was his act different from that of Yehuda?

To pursue the question further: there is a Midrash (Mechilta Beshalach, ch. 5) that offers a second reason as to why Yehuda merited royal descendants. While the brothers wanted to kill Yosef, Yehuda saved him, by persuading his brothers to sell him as a slave. This act afforded Yehuda great merit. (see Rashi 49:9) Although we



saw in other Midrashim that Yehuda lost his children as punishment for causing his father to lose *his* child. Also, Yehuda was excommunicated by his brothers for selling Yosef (וִירַד יְהוּדָה) after they saw that their father, Yaakov, could not be consoled. Still, it remains to Yehuda's credit that Yosef was not killed. Reuven, for the same act, was not rewarded at all.

The Siftei Chachamim, (37, 40), states that Reuven's motivation was partially due to the fact that he was worried that his father would blame him. He had already angered his father once (by moving Yaakov's bed from Bilha's tent to Leah's), and he wanted to avoid doing so again. Reuven was more concerned with keeping his good name than he was with taking responsibility to save Yosef's life. Yehuda, on the other hand, was credited for saving Yosef's life by selling him, because he did not care what anyone would say. He knew that this was the only way he could save his brother, and he knew that he might be excommunicated for it. He merited having the HolyTemple in his territory, for he had taken responsibility for Binayamin *out of his sense of duty alone*. He did not act in order to exonerate himself from Yaakov's suspicion that he had had a hand in the sale of Yosef. His father would not look at him in a bad light if he did not take responsibility, for Yaakov did not know that Yehuda was a main character in the selling of

Yosef. And still, Yehuda felt that *he wanted* to take responsibility.

We find this nobility of dedication to doing what is right in the testimony of the Torah in regard to Yosef. When Yosef kept his distance from his master Potiphar's wife, he told her that his reason for restraining himself was וְהִטַּאתִי לְאֵלֵיכֶם *And (by being with you) I would sin before G-d*. Not because the master would find out his action. Not because Yosef's family would find out. Not because of social status. Rather, because such an act is forbidden by G-d. This inner strength was unique in Yosef. It was also unique in Yehuda, expressed through his confession. This is the inner strength we find in Yehuda. For Yehuda to become a real *baal teshuva* from his actions with Tamar and in selling his brother, he had to be honest with himself and overcome all self-justification.

We can learn from Yehuda responsibility for our family. We can learn responsibility to the truth and to justice. We can learn to do good things, just because they are good. Nothing to do with how it makes us look. And we can learn the traits of the lion and humble ourselves and relinquish our honor for things that are more important. This behavior is fit for kings. These royal traits can be found in each and every one of us. *All Jews are princes*. (Shabbat 111a)

HACHAM OVADIA'S SECRET MEMORY TECHNIQUE

What is the earliest memory you have of your life? I'll bet that the first memory you have from your childhood has to do with some emotion. Some kids not letting you play with their blocks. Or getting upset that it rained on Purim, and your Purim costume got ruined. Most early memories are connected to, *associated with*, an *emotion*. Sad, happy, frightened, etc. It seems that we all have good memories; we can remember things from way back. If so, how is it that some remember things better than others? The difference between those who have a good memory and those who don't has much more to do with how they remember things,

how they store information, how they associate things, and how they retrieve their memory, than it has with having a plain old "blessing of good memory". Those who have a "good memory" are merely using it more efficiently. They are born knowing how to use the right techniques. It is obvious to them that this is the way to think and remember. If others would also use those same techniques, they would get much better results and remember things more efficiently. I studied this topic of improving memory for a while, and I found that it not only helps me improve my own memory, but enables me to help others improve



their memory, as well. Instantly. There is no magic. It all has to do with sharpening the tried and proven techniques.

A Torah scholar once asked Hacham Ovadia Yossef, zt”l, for some memory tips. Hacham Ovadia asked the young man what masechet (tractate from Talmud Bavli) he was learning. Hacham Ovadia took out that volume from the Talmud and handed it over to the fellow. Hacham O. asked him to open to the longest Tosefot in the Massechet. R’ Ovadia started to say the Tosefot word for word, by heart, while the student followed along with his finger. R’ Ovadia explained that this amazing recall is not from any reading technique or learning technique. **It is from learning that Tosefot 200 times!!!**

This story is unique, for it tells us that the geniuses, the Torah giants, had a system. It was not just good memory. Why don’t most Torah scholars learn a Tosefot 200 times, whereas Hacham Ovadia did? Tune into the Hespel heard in a eulogy by his son, Harav David Yossef.

*As a yeshiva boy, before getting married, I would learn every night with my father, at a set time. After I got married, a set time was not possible. Each night, my father would take out his personal phone book and look up my home phone number to call me and set a time when it would work out for both of us. After a while, with the Rabbi always asking Rabbanit Margalit to bring the phone book, she wondered out loud to him, “How can it be that the Rav, who knows so many sefarim by heart, does not yet know the phone number by heart? You store so much information in your head, so much Torah; is it so hard to remember your son’s phone number, as well?” So, the Rav told her that he would try to memorize his son’s home phone number. He said R’ David’s number over and over to himself, ten times, but he could not remember it!! He explained to his wife, “It seems that I remember the things that are important to me. Torah, I can remember, because **it is so important to me**. A phone number, a couple of digits, even if it is my son’s number, just slips my mind!!! I can always just look it up...”*

Rav David explained this with something R’ Ovadia said from our parasha. Yaakov had not seen his son Yosef for 22 years, and thought that he was dead. Yaakov’s spirits were greatly dampened by this. The Midrash tells us. *His children feared to inform him suddenly that Yosef was indeed alive; their father’s soul might depart from him at receiving such a great shock. Serah, daughter of Asher, waited for an opportunity when Yaakov would be in the middle of his prayer. (Serah knew that during prayer, her grandfather, Yaakov, had the greatest control over his emotions. This might have been the reason why she picked such a time to reveal the exciting news!) Then, she wondered out loud, near Yaakov, while he was praying, “Is Yosef still alive? Did he have two boys, Menashe and Efraim?” Yaakov heard this and his heart melted, while he stood in prayer. Once he had finished praying, he looked out the window. (Yaakov did not stop his prayers to see if this was true, or to look out the window, despite this having been the greatest shock of his life!! Some people today just feel a vibration in their pocket in the middle of the Amidah, and they can’t help but take a quick peek!) And he saw the Agalot, the wagons (this was Yosef’s way of alluding to the law of Eglah Arufa, the last law which he had learned together with his father before their separation. The word “egla” – calf – sounds like the word “wagon” – agalah – in Hebrew.) Yaakov understood, immediately, the clever allusion to the law that he had last learned together with Yosef.*

The Midrash tells us the story. *Yosef told his brothers, If Yaakov, our father, will believe you that I am still alive, great. If not, ask him the following. Wasn’t it the Parasha of Eglah Arufah that I was learning with him, before I left?... This is why the passuk says, וירא את העגלות ותחי רוח יעקב, ויאמר ישראל רב, עוד יוסף בני חי* And he saw the carriages, and the spirit of Yaakov was refreshed, And Yaakov said (I am blessed with) **much** (joy)! My son Yosef is still alive!!

The question that needs to be answered is, why did Yosef think of bringing their having learned this law together as proof that he was alive, rather than

any other proof? Why was it this that revived his father's spirit, and not anything else?

R' Ovadia would explain. Yosef knew that even if his father would find out that he was alive, he would have been worried that Yosef, who was only 17 years old the last time he saw him, had fallen from the lofty spiritual stature of the Tribes. The good news would not yet be very fulfilling and happy, until his father heard that his dear son still loved to learn Torah, *and felt connected to it*. Once Yaakov realized the fact that his son still remembered his learning, this showed Yaakov that despite everything that Yosef had gone through, *he still felt close to Torah; it was still important to him. When something is very important to you, you will remember it*. And this is what Yaakov needed to know, so that his spirit would be revived.

If something is very important to you, if it is personal, you will associate it with yourself, and memory works mostly on associations. If you associate and identify yourself with being a sports fan of a certain team, you will find it easier to remember the stats of the players. Memory has a lot to do with what is important, and thus, relevant and meaningful, to you. With your identity. With what you are all about. We see in this parasha, over and over, what the family of Yaakov Avinu was all about. Torah, Torah and more Torah. Before Yaakov went down with his family to Egypt, he sent his son Yehuda ahead to make a Beit Midrash

where they could learn the laws of the Torah. After Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and asked them to go back home to bring Yaakov to Egypt, he warned them **אל תרגזו בדרך**, do not get angry on the way. Our rabbis tell us, according to one interpretation, that Yosef feared that they might get so deeply involved in a disagreement on the way home *that they might lose their way*. What was it that worried Yosef? After having had such a profound shock, finding out that Yosef was alive and king of Egypt, what could they have a disagreement about? Not about who was to blame for their mistake in selling Yosef, **but he feared that they might get involved in a deep discussion of Torah !!!**

When Yaakov first met Yosef after 22 years, Yosef cried a lot on the shoulder of his father, but Yaakov did not cry. He did not kiss his son. Why not? *Yaakov was too busy for that, at the time*. Our Rabbis tell us Yaakov was reciting Kriat Shema!! At such an *exciting* moment in his life, at a time when he felt *his whole soul*, Yaakov wanted to dedicate this moment to and **associate it** with his love of G-d. **Because that is of the utmost importance to Yaakov**. That this *love for his son* can be linked to his *love for G-d*. And, to take on himself at this time, when he realized how everything had worked out for the best, a new level of obligation to serve G-d. Yaakov wanted to forever remember his gratitude to G-d, so **he linked it** to the happiest moment of his life.

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A"H

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