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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

True Free Love

“And he (Yosef) fell on his brother Binyamin’s neck and wept. And Binyamin wept on Yosef’s neck.” (45:14)

“Free love” truly exists in its purist form. When someone loves his fellow man not for any reason, but merely and purely because he is a creation of the Master of the World and a reflection of His Majesty, then this “free love” is a love which hastens the final redemption.

The Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple) was destroyed because of ‘free hate’ – baseless hatred. What will hasten its return is the reverse – ‘free Love’. Love which doesn’t depend on any conditions.

“And he wept” – Yosef wept about the two Batei Mikdash to be built in Binyamin’s portion of the land that would eventually be destroyed. “And Binyamin wept” about the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting) that would be erected in Yosef’s portion of the land and also would eventually be destroyed.

Why were Yosef and Binyamin crying now, at this time of consummate joy at their reuniting, over events that were thousands of years in the future? Furthermore, why were they crying over the other’s loss and not their own?

When the brothers encountered each other after 22 years of separation, they realized that what had kept them apart was “free hate,” the hatred of the

brothers for Yosef. Immediately, they saw the future destruction of the Temple that would be caused by “free hate.” They cried, for just as free hate had separated them all these years, so too it would destroy the Temple in the future.

The cure for free hate is “free love.” To feel such empathy that the pain of one’s fellow is as one’s own.

That is why each cried over the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash of the other. Yosef and Binyamin were showing a path for generations unborn, teaching us the way to cure free hate.

For even though Binyamin’s Beit Hamikdash would not be built until Yosef’s Mishkan would be destroyed – its existence was predicated on the others demise – nevertheless Binyamin cried over the destruction of the Mishkan.

Binyamin would have preferred the Beit Hamikdash never to have been built, and then Yosef’s Mishkan would have stood forever. Such is the power of “free love.”

Source: Based on Rabbi Y. M’Kuzmir in Iturei Torah

Q & A

Questions

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?

Answers

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.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Famishing Famines

When famine struck the Land of Canaan after Abraham had finally reached that Promised Land, it led the first of the patriarchs to sojourn to Egypt to ride out the calamity (Gen. 12:10). In the next generation, when a famine again hit the Holy Land, it prompted Abraham's son Isaac to relocate to the kingdom of the Philistine ruler Abimelekh (Gen. 26:1). Finally, the third patriarch, Isaac's son Jacob, also eventually left the Land of Canaan due to a famine and ended up in Egypt (see Gen. 45:11). The standard Biblical Hebrew term for "famine" or "hunger" is ra'av, and that was the word used in all the above-mentioned cases. Various permutations of this word appear around 130 times throughout the Bible. Yet, in two places, a different word is used to mean the same thing – kafan (Iyov 5:22, 30:3). In this essay we explore the words ra'av and kafan, investigating whether they are truly synonyms or are slightly different from one another.

To be honest with you, it is quite possible that ra'av and kafan are not actually synonyms in the classical sense, but are simply two different words in two different languages that happen to mean the same thing. I say this because the standard words in the Targum for ra'av are k'fan, kafna, or kfina. All of these words seem to be related to the Biblical Hebrew kafan, as they are all derived from the common trilateral root KAF-PEH-NUN. This point has been made by multiple commentators, the earliest of whom seems to be Menachem Ibn Saruk (920-970) in *Machberet Menachem*. This would suggest that ra'av is Hebrew, while kafan is Aramaic. Nonetheless, the fact that kafan appears in the Book of Iyov (which is not clearly written in Aramaic), and in that case it also appears alongside the Hebrew word ra'av, suggests that kafan is indeed a Hebrew word but means something slightly different than ra'av (at least when it appears in Hebrew).

The prophet Ezekiel compares the relationship of Zedekiah (the last king of Judah) and the Pharaoh of Egypt (on whose protection Zedekiah relied) to a grapevine that seeks to grow outwards under the protection of an eagle (Ezek. 17:7). The term used to denote the grapevine's wish to "expand outwards" is kafnah. Rashi explains this term to be a cognate of kafan by personifying the grapevine as though it were hungry and desirous of reaching more.

Radak (as well as an anonymous gloss printed within Rashi's commentary) explain kafnah as meaning "gathering," understanding the term as a metathesis of the word *kenufia* ("gathering/assembly") used in the Talmud (see Rashi to Shabbat 73b, Pesachim 66b, Zevachim 117a). Interestingly, Ibn Ezra (to Iyov 5:22) defines kafan itself as "gathering." Rabbi Shmuel Masnuth (a 13th century Bible exegete from Syria) in his work *Ma'ayan Ganim* (to Iyov 5:22) also goes with this approach, but he actually explains that kafan does not refer to a "famine," but to a different sort of national disaster – a "gathering" of enemy soldier.

Rabbi Yosef Kimchi (1105-1170) writes in his work *Sefer HaGalui* that the word kafan means "deficiency/lack," and refers to a situation whereby a person might stick his hand into his pocket to take out some money and then realize he has nothing in his pocket. Rabbi Yosef Kimchi's son, Rabbi David Kimchi (1160-1235), perhaps better known as the Radak, cites his father's explanation in his work *Sefer HaShorashim*.

Rabbi Yosef Kimchi himself repeats this explanation in his commentary to Iyov 5:22, but then adds another point. He writes that the words ra'av and kafan connote two different types of "famines." One implies a sort of famine whereby food is simply unavailable, while the other implies the sort of famine whereby food is still available

but has become prohibitively expensive. Unfortunately, a scribal error in the copying of Rabbi Kimchi's commentary makes it impossible for us to know which of these two types of famines is called ra'av and which is kavan.

Nevertheless, Gersonides/Ralbag (to Iyov 5:22) goes in a similar direction, explaining that kavan

refers to a famine caused by people hoarding food and making the prices rise, while ra'av refers to a famine caused simply by the scarcity of food. Gersonides' explanation is also cited by Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach Duran (1361-1444) in Ohev Mishpat (to Iyov 5:22), who praises it and concurs with it.*

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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 Hashem'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. Hashem 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 Hashem will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation although 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.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

The Amidah (Part 31) – The Final Paragraph: Personally Speaking

“Prayer is not a miracle. It is a tool, man’s paintbrush in the art of life. Prayer is man’s weapon to defend himself in the struggle of life. It is a reality. A fact of life.”
(Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer)

“May Hashem, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully. To those who curse me, let my soul be silent, and let my soul be like dust to everyone. Open my heart to Your Torah, then my soul will pursue Your commandments. As for all those who design evil against me, speedily nullify their counsel and disrupt their design. Act for Your Name’s sake, act for Your right hand’s sake, act for Your sanctity’s sake, act for Your Torah’s sake. That Your beloved may be given rest, let Your right hand save and respond to me. May the expressions of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You, Hashem, my Rock and my Redeemer. He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace upon us and upon all Israel. And let us say: Amen.”

The final paragraph continues, “Open my heart to Your Torah, then my soul will pursue Your commandments.” Our Sages teach that the Torah is not the private domain of any one person (Eruvin 54a and Nedarim 55a). Rather, it belongs to everyone. This is why the Torah was given in the empty and unclaimed desert, a place belonging to no one and is accessible to all. So, too, the Torah belongs to anyone who seeks it and is prepared to toil over it. However, the Rabbis teach that the first prerequisite to accessing the pure and holy Torah is to be able to overlook insults. Only after a person has proven a dedication to not reacting to personal insults is the person capable of truly acquiring Torah wisdom. In the eloquent and powerful words of Rabbi Shimon Schwab, “The wider a person’s heart is opened, the easier it is to absorb every detail of the Torah.”

However, the simple understanding of asking Hashem to open our hearts to His Torah is because learning Torah is hard. It can be so difficult to want to invest so much energy and time into spiritual pursuits when the more physical dimensions are beckoning to us and enticing us to partake of them.

An extremely respected and renowned Torah scholar related a story that happened to him as a child. He was an extremely lively child who didn’t have patience to study Torah. Finally, in desperation, the boy’s teacher brought him to the rabbi of the city, hoping that the rabbi could influence the boy to settle down and study Torah. The rabbi told the child, “I had an interesting case that came before me today and I want to hear your opinion. The two ‘litigants’ were a Sefer Torah and a pair of shoes. The shoes said, ‘We both came from the same source – the hide of a cow. We grew up in the same barn, ate the same fodder and drank from the same trough. Why is it that an expert scribe bought you, turned you into parchment and made you into a Sefer Torah, while a shoemaker bought me and turned me into a pair of shoes? Why is it fair that we ended up in such different circumstances? When the scribe finished writing you, a silver crown was placed on your head and you were danced all the way to the Shul with such joy. Whenever you are taken out of the holy ark, people stand up for you, and hug and kiss you. And when you are finally worn out, you will be buried in honor. But me? I’m just a pair of shoes. I get dragged through the mud. I don’t get treated with respect. I get scuffed and worn out, and, when the time comes, I will be thrown out without a second thought. Is it fair that we should share such vastly opposing fates?’”

The rabbi asked the boy for his opinion. The young boy thought long and hard, finally deciding that the shoes were right. It wasn't fair. The rabbi then explained that the preparation and the writing of a Sefer Torah requires many, many hours of hard work. The scribe must write each letter perfectly until the entire Sefer Torah is complete – column after column of flawless words. Making shoes, on the other hand, doesn't take too long. Compared to a Sefer Torah, no great toil is involved. The boy listened carefully to the rabbi and changed his mind. The boy agreed that the Sefer Torah deserves more respect because so much effort and hard work was invested in its creation.

The rabbi concluded, "My dear boy, you should know that if you truly desire to attain the crown of Torah, you must toil diligently. You must invest a lot of effort and time. If you don't want to work hard, you will be a pair of shoes."

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (6:4) states, "This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, live a life of deprivation – but toil in Torah. If you do so, you will be happy and it will be good for you. You will be happy in this world, and it will be good for you in the World to Come." Rabbi Gershon Edelstein, the venerated head of the legendary Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Berak, explains that the Mishna is not hyperbole. Rather, it is stating a fact. If a person learns Torah, despite all of his hardships, he will be happy. One might think this means that when he learns Torah he forgets about his difficult life. But when he is not learning Torah – when he is eating his bread and water and sleeping on the floor – he is indeed suffering. However, this is not what the Mishna is saying. The Mishna actually means that even when he is eating bread, drinking water and sleeping on the floor, he will be happy. He will be filled with joy and satisfaction because he lives a life of Torah. He is satisfied with his learning and he is excited about the Torah he will learn in the future. And that knowledge fills him with tremendous joy.

To be continued...

PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

The Song of the Fly

The Fly says, at a time when the Jewish people are not engaged in Torah study: A voice says "Call!" and I said, "What shall I call? All of flesh is like grass and all its kindness like the sprouts of the field. The grass will have dried up and the sprout will have withered, but the word of our G-d will stand forever." (Yeshayah 40:6, 8)

"I create speech of lips that brings peace to the far and the near," says Hashem, "and I have healed him." (ibid., 57:19)

The ever-buzzing, pestering, and relentless fly symbolizes the yetzer hara. Just as a fly is attracted to rotten matter, the yetzer hara sits by the entrance of the heart and advises it to commit repulsive acts. It flies from impulse to impulse and from thought to thought, and it may go so far as to convince a person that a sin is a mitzvah. Since the yetzer hara uses a person's intellect against him, even the wise are vulnerable to its wiles. In the same way that a few insignificant flies can fall in and ruin the finest perfumed oils, the yetzer hara can topple even the greatest of people.

The yetzer hara cannot be defeated by the mere desire to avoid sin. The very definitions of "good" and "evil" are subjective, and even truly virtuous deeds are often fueled by selfish motives. Hashem's one prescribed

antidote for the yetzer hara is the study of Torah, which clearly teaches right from wrong and purifies the mind. If its study is abandoned, the fly returns.

The fly's song is about how Hashem told the prophet Yeshayah to call out to the nation about the redemption. Yeshayah responds, "Why shall I call? All flesh are like grass, and all its kindness are like the sprouts of the field." That is, the people are feeble of spirit, and even their kindness are influenced ulterior motives. With accomplishes that are like "a withering sprout," they are undeserving of the redemption. The song concludes that Hashem's promised redemption will come when we are engaged in the study of His Torah, whose "speech brings healing." Until that promised time, flies intrude everywhere, not letting us forget their message.

Sources: Koheles 10:1 with Rashi ad loc. (see also Targum and Tikunei Zohar 30); Berachos 61a; Yerushalmi Berachos 5:5; Nefesh HaChaim; Shir HaChaim; Chafetz Chaim al HaTorah (p. 46); Ksav Sofer (Inyanei Teshuvah); Ta'ama D'Kra to Yeshayah 40; see also Perek B'Shir.

*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Nedarim 51-57

Big Fish, Little Fish

“Perhaps the big fish (“dag”) spit him (Yona) out, and a small fish swallowed him?”

This suggestion is how Abayei answers Rav Papa’s question in our sugya. In a beraita, Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar teaches that a person who makes a neder not to eat “dag” forbids large fish, whereas if he says “daga” he forbids “small fish.” Rav Papa questions this distinction based on verses in Sefer Yona that seem to use these two words interchangeably. Abayei defends Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar by answering that the verses may be speaking of two different fish: a large fish that first swallowed Yona, and then afterwards spit him out into a small fish. This would explain the distinct words in the verses, in accordance with the beraita.

This suggestion is also in accordance with the Midrash, which locates Yona at first in a spacious (i.e. “large”) male fish (“dag”), and since he had enough space there he did not feel a need to pray to Hashem. However, Hashem wanted him to pray and realize that he was wrong to flee from his mission to rebuke Ninveh to atone. Therefore, Hashem caused him to be spit out by the male fish and swallowed up by a female, pregnant (i.e. “small”) fish (daga), and since he was cramped there, he prayed to Hashem to get out.

The gemara concludes that in the Written Torah there is really no distinction between the two words – they both refer to all fish in general. However, when examining a neder, such as in the case of the beraita, the way that people speak is what matters. People use “dag” for large fish and “daga” for small ones. (See the Maharal, who points out an apparent difficulty to the answer of Abayei, since the verse states that in response to Yona’s prayer, Hashem spoke to the “dag” – not “daga” – to spit him out.)

Nedarim 51b

Humility and Torah

“If a person makes himself like a desert, which is available to all, the Torah is given to him as a gift.”

Rava said this to Rav Yosef on our daf and derives it from a verse in Sefer Bamidbar. (21:18) His intent was to warn Rav Yosef to be exceedingly humble, as seen in the context of the sugya. (Rabbeinu Nissim)

What is meant here by stating that the Torah is given to him “as a gift”? Only a person who is humble, like Moshe Rabbeinu, can truly connect to the Torah. He is given the gift of Torah if he has the proper humility and lack of haughtiness that are pre-requisites for being a ben Torah. (Maharal) And although one who lacks humility may indeed learn Torah, he is likely to forget it as well. But if he “works on himself” to acquire the character trait of humility, Hashem will give him the Torah as a gift, and he will not forget what he learns. (Maharsha)

Nedarim 55a

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Family Offering

The unfolding drama climaxes in Yosef's revelation to his brothers, and climaxes again when they return to Canaan to share this longed-for news to an incredulous Yaakov. His heart stood still in a disbelief that melted into unspeakable joy. His spirit lived once more.

Yaakov chooses to mark the occasion with a special offering of thanksgiving. But it was a different sort of offering. Until now, all offerings in the Torah – by Noach and his descendants, by Avraham and Yitzchak – have been *olot*, “burnt offerings,” where the animal is consumed entirely by the altar's fire.

For the first time, Yaakov offers *zevachim*, also known as *shelamim*, literally “peace offerings.” This offering is brought freely to G-d, often as an expression of thanksgiving. In contrast to one offering an *olah*, the person offering a *shelamim*, and his family, partake in the meat of the animal, and in the abundant bread that accompanies the *shelamim*. Whereas *olah* expresses complete personal devotion to G-d, the *zevach* is a family meal. It consecrates the family's home and table as a temple and altar, and celebrates G-d's presence in the midst of a faithful family.

While non-Jews are invited to bring *olah* offerings to the Temple, the *shelamim* is a distinctively Jewish offering. The idea of being absorbed by G-d, and devoting oneself completely to Him is one that occupies non-Jewish minds as well. But the idea that everyday life can be imbued with the spirit of G-d is unique to Judaism. Spirituality is not only in the realm of the Temple and the altar; it exists at the dinner table and in the family rooms. Our physical and private lives, when lived in faithful commitment, become a dwelling place for G-d. If, in the *olah* one expresses the notion of going to G-d, then the *shelamim* expresses the notion of G-d coming to us.

For the first time, Yaakov experiences the joy of a complete family life. The fissures have been repaired, and he is about to be reunited with his long-lost son. With this feeling, he brings this “family offering” to G-d. Notably, he brings this offering to “the G-d of his father Yitzchak.” In his humility, Yaakov does not celebrate the faithfulness of his harmonious family, but attributes these achievements to the merit of his father. With this awareness, his newly-complete family is prepared to begin their journey into nationhood.

- *Source: Commentary, Genesis 46:1*

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