

Chazal are, in fact, addressing spiritual treasures imparted by Yosef while in Egypt. These treasures had unusual protective powers, or exceptional powers of inspiration that came to the fore later on in history – when they were most needed. The first treasure was Yosef's *middah*, attribute, of spiritual purity and *tznius*, moral modesty/chastity. Living in Egypt, which was the center of moral profligacy and decadence, was very difficult. The chances of abandonment of morality become increased when one is as exceptionally handsome as Yosef. Nonetheless, despite his exposure to the lowest echelon of humanity, housed in a dungeon with the country's most vile people, hounded by the wife of his master who would stoop to any level to have a liaison with him, Yosef remained pure and chaste, maintaining the level of moral purity which he imbibed at home. This treasure remained concealed in Egypt until Korach discovered and revealed it. Korach mutinied against Moshe *Rabbeinu*. He denied our quintessential leader's authority; yet, his followers refused to enter the home of On ben Peles while his wife's hair was uncovered. His followers had sunk to an extreme spiritual low, but *tznius* was still a mainstay. (Obviously, much can be derived from this idea.)

Second, Yosef concealed a treasury of *eisek baTorah*, occupying oneself as much as possible with the Torah, making Torah-study an inexorable part of our lives. It is our bond with the Torah that has saved us throughout the *galus*, exile, years. Yosef was the first of the children of Yaakov *Avinu* to experience the bitter taste of exile. He was alone amidst spiritual filth and moral bankruptcy, but he had the Torah that he had studied in his father's home to accompany him. This was the second treasure which he concealed in Egypt. It wasn't until generations later, during the time of Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi* and the Roman Emperor Antoninus Sevarus, that this treasure was revealed. This revelation led to Rabbi Yehudah's redaction of the *Mishnah*, made possible through the support of his friendship with Antoninus. *Torah She'Baal Peh*, the Oral Law, has been keeping us spiritually alive since then.

Last, Yosef taught and later concealed the *middah* of *achavah*, brotherly love. Yosef never gave up on his brothers and, due to his forbearance and love for them, the Yosef saga had a "happy ending." This treasure has sadly not yet been revealed. It is waiting for the advent of *Moshiach*, when brotherly love will reign and envy will be an emotion of the past.

Va'ani Tefillah

ברך עלינו את השנה הזאת לטובה – Bareich aleinu...es ha'shanah ha'zos...l'tovah. Bless on our behalf... this year... for the best.

Obviously, Hashem blesses the year for the "best." Otherwise, what kind of blessing is it? The word *l'tovah* is seemingly superfluous. *Siach Yitzchak* explains that it happens, at times, that the produce is blessed with a high yield, but, regrettably, a shortage of money precludes customers from purchasing their needs. Indeed, it is worse when produce is selling at a low price, but the buyer has no cash, than when the opposite is in effect (the person has money, but there is no produce to be found). We pray to Hashem that food should be available and that people have the funds available to purchase it.

Alternatively, *Achas Shoalti* says that when the rain descends on an area that is left unplanted, the rain is of little value. Additionally, a blessing turns into a curse when one does not properly avail himself of the blessing. If one allows his material benefits to go to his head the blessing dissipates. Furthermore, one never knows if the blessing he receives is Hashem's reward to him, and that is all; Nothing else is coming. He has just collected his Heavenly reward; nothing is awaiting him in Paradise.

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"Love and memories are gifts from G-d that death cannot destroy"

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For a yearly subscription or Parsha sponsorship, please contact:

In Cleveland – Rabbi L. Scheinbaum (216) 321-5838 Ext. 165

Outside of North America – E. Goldberg +972 2-569 5185

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Parashas Vayigash

תשע"ה

פרשת ויגש

**ולא יכלו אחיו לענות אתו כי נבהלו מפניו
But his brothers could not answer him because they were left disconcerted before him. (45:3)**

The *Midrash* notes the difficulty individuals experience in accepting rebuke. Bilaam *ha'rasha*, the evil pagan-prophet, could not stand up to the criticism of his donkey. The *Shivtei Kah*, the sons of Yaakov *Avinu*, were overwhelmed with fear when Yosef merely uttered the two words: Ani Yosef, "I am Yosef." Imagine, says Abba Kohen Bardela, when we come before the Heavenly Tribunal and each and every one of us will be rebuked *lfi mah she'hu*, according to what he is, (or what he could have been). How will we stand up to this Heavenly remonstrance?

In the *Talmud Berachos* 4b, *Chazal* distinguish between the types of *kefitzos*, leaps/flights, individual *malachim*, angels, make in carrying out their missions. The Angel Michael is charged with a mission of mercy; therefore, he goes directly to his destination in one *kefitzah*. The *Malach* Gavriel is appointed to carry out the mission of Strict Judgment; thus, he is required to pause once in between the two *kefitzos* required of him. Eliyahu *HaNavi* makes four *kefitzos*, while the *Malach HaMaves*, Angel of Death, who is charged with the ultimate mission of taking lives, allowing for a person to perform *teshuvah*, repentance, requires eight leaps. During a plague, he is speeded up to one leap.

The *Chafetz Chaim* wonders why it is important for us to know how many leaps each *Malach* makes in carrying out his mission. He explains that Gavriel carries out his mission in two leaps, because he cannot do it one leap. Michael, who is able to do it one leap, does so in one leap. Had Gavriel been able to perform his mission in one leap, he would have done so. This teaches us, explains the *Chafetz Chaim*, that each person must demand the maximum of himself. When it comes to *avodas Hashem*, serving the Almighty, we have no shortcuts, and we do not have the option to take the scenic route. One does everything that he is capable of doing in accordance with his ability and strength.

Horav Moshe Feinstein, *zl*, once asked why it happens (more often than one can imagine) that as a young boy, a child manifests wondrous ability and exceptional acumen, but, when he grows up, the brilliance and extraordinary ability seem to dissipate. He comes across as a fine, bright, intelligent young man, but definitely not one who bespeaks superlatives. He explained that when boys such as these were placed in school, they were not challenged. As long as they were better and smarter and more successful (on tests) than the other students, they

were doing well. They had no motivation to excel, since their barometer was the weaker student. They were never placed in a class where their level of acumen was challenged. When a boy is not challenged, he will eventually be unable to stand up to a challenge. When good is measured against weak and bright is compared to inept, students tend to remain mediocre.

The *Alter*, *zl*, *m'Kelm* made great demands on himself all of his life. He never settled. Despite his frail health and weak heart, he suspected that indolence was the real factor in his not having sufficient drive in performing *mitzvos*. (This was obviously not the reason, since he devoted all of himself to the performance of a *mitzvah*. Unfortunately, his frailty precluded him from doing more than he did.) On the last day of his life, as he lay in bed with absolutely no physical strength left, he thought (for a moment) that he was just lying there out of laziness. He gathered every last ounce of strength left in his weakened body, rose from his bed, bent over and tied his shoes and attempted to walk. After a few moments, he realized that it was impossible for him to continue. He turned back, bent over to remove his shoes, and, while he was untying his shoes, returned his holy soul to his Creator.

Horav Shlomo Levinstein, *Shlita*, relates that his *Rebbe*, *Horav Tzvi Kushelevsky*, *Shlita*, would remark, "The *Alter* was deathly ill; yet, he suspected that his inability to do more was due to laziness, while we are actually lazy people, but claim to be sick."

We must remember that each person must maximize his potential. Achieving eighth-grade proficiency in *Talmud* is wonderful – for an eighth grader – not an adult. This applies to every aspect of our *avodas hakodesh*. It is so easy to conjure up excuses, but we must remember that "one day" those excuses will not be acceptable.

**ולאביו שלח כזאת עשרה חמרים נשאים מטוב מצרים
And to his father, he sent the following: ten he donkeys laden with the best of Egypt. (45:23)**

We often neglect to acknowledge that we are pawns in a cosmic chess game, all of us part of a Divine plan. Each and every one of us has his/her designated place as the various moves are made, until the ultimate move, when the advent of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* takes place. Commentators express this idea time and again as they address the story of Yosef *HaTzaddik*: his alienation from his brothers; his sale as a slave, which led him to Egypt; his descent to Egypt as the precursor for his family's departure from *Eretz Yisrael* in order to be reunited with him in Egypt; our forced bondage which lasted

210 years, until the experience of our redemption, which led to our receiving the Torah and returning to *Eretz Yisrael* forty years later. History in a nutshell. All history is actually the ability to observe Hashem's Divine Hand in the manipulation of events – and our open-minded ability to learn from these experiences.

Having said this, we cite the *Maharal m'Prague* (*Gevuras Hashem* 10), who offers a powerful insight into Yosef's gift which he sent his father, Yaakov *Avinu*. The Torah states: "And to his father he sent the following: ten he-donkeys laden with the best of Egypt" (45:23). Yosef expected Yaakov to descend to Egypt. Why was he sending him such gifts? Why did he specifically send ten donkeys? *Maharal* offers a powerful insight. Everything that Yosef did had a deeper meaning, an allusion from which Yaakov would derive the true meaning. While donkeys are animals of burden who are able to work very hard, they do not know what they are doing. (It is not as if other creatures are powerful intellectuals; donkeys seem to be characteristically devoted more to laboring than to thinking.) Their masters load them with merchandise, but they are unaware of what they are carrying, or why. The donkey is the proverbial animal that is led around, follows orders, "asks no questions," carrying out its mission with total equanimity.

Yosef was indicating to his father that he should harbor no animus towards his ten sons for what had happened to him— both his ill treatment and eventual sale, for they knew not what they were doing when they sold him. This was all part of Hashem's plan to bring Yaakov and his family down to Egypt. Yosef's descent into the spiritual and moral wasteland of Egypt was the beginning of the process. When the brothers sold Yosef, they were not aware of what they were doing.

The *Maharal* writes that Yosef was intimating to his father, "Do not punish them. They were unaware what they were doing. It was a Heavenly decree." His brothers were no different than a loaded donkey that does not know why it is carrying a load.

If Yosef was a great *tzaddik* who could see through the veil of ambiguity surrounding his life experiences, then certainly Yaakov, *b'chir ha'Avos*, chosen one of the Patriarchs, was availed this perspective. Why was it necessary for Yaakov to be "reminded" by Yosef that everything that happens is part of a Heavenly decree?

Perhaps Yosef's message was: "I know why you are not rebuking my brothers. I know that you are not ignoring my painful experience. I understand that you care about me and my pain, but you need to see what happened as a Heavenly decree." There are times when children expect and even demand a reaction from parents to support their claims. When they receive no such reaction, they are hurt, feeling that their parents do not care enough about them. Unfortunately, they are so involved in their own little worlds that they are unable to see the larger picture – as the parents see it. This engenders anger and strains relationships. Yosef intimated to Yaakov that he knew; he understood; there were no *taanos*, complaints. He accepted his father's decision, because, in fact, he agreed with it.

ואת יהודה שלה לפניו אל יוסף להורות לפניו גשנה He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

Yaakov *Avinu* sent Yehudah ahead of the family to make the proper arrangements for their arrival. The *Midrash* focuses on the word *l'horos*, to prepare, which also means to teach. This implies that Yaakov sent Yehudah to Goshen to establish a *yeshivah*, a house of study. This set the priority for every Jewish community to first and foremost have a *makom* Torah, a place where Torah will be studied. A community that does not revolve around Torah is missing its soul. I think the word *l'horos*, to teach, imparts a lesson concerning the type of *yeshivah* that Yaakov wanted to establish. It had to be a place of Torah that taught, that reached out and illuminated the community via its teachings and students. Torah is ours to be learned and disseminated. It must be *l'horos*.

Why did Yaakov specifically send Yehudah ahead, rather than Levi or Yissachar, two sons who represented the Torah ideal? Why not any of the other brothers? Simply because it was Yehudah who took *achrayos*, responsibility, for Benjamin. One who builds Torah must take responsibility for everything he does. As a *Rosh Yeshivah*, he is revered and held in the greatest esteem. His *talmidim*, students, look to him for guidance and inspiration. Every aspect of his institution rests upon him. This is the meaning of *achrayos*.

Yehudah also represents the epitome of gratitude. Leah *Imeinu* named her fourth son Yehudah, because *hapaam odeh es Hashem*, "This time let me gratefully praise Hashem" (*Bereishis* 29:35). Why this time? She was especially grateful now, because as a mother of four sons, she was the mother of one-third of Yaakov *Avinu's* twelve sons. She had been granted more than her rightful share. Her gratitude in recognizing that she had received more than she possibly deserved set the tone for all of Jewish gratitude. We acknowledge and affirm that whatever we have is more than we deserve. This is why, explains the *Chiddushei HaRim*, we are called *Yehudim*, after Yehudah. Gratitude, in the sense that one recognizes that he has been granted more than his rightful share, is a Jewish characteristic.

It takes much effort, blood, sweat and tears to build a *yeshivah*. It also requires support, both emotional and material. One who builds a *yeshivah* must never lose sight of the *tamchin d'Oraisa*, the supporters of Torah, who often give not only their wherewithal, but also of their time and strength. It is a partnership in which the *Rosh Yeshivah* remains totally independent, but never loses sight of his partners. Gratitude is a vital part of building a *makom* Torah.

In the history of Torah building, many partnerships stand out. Every Jewish community which has a day school, *cheder*, *yeshivah*, Bais Yaakov, is acutely aware of this phenomenon. While often more than one supporter was responsible, usually one primary partner became the advisor of the *Rosh Yeshivah/menahel*, and this relationship continued on as long as they walked the face of the earth. One such unique relationship which spread over to every organization in which the *Rosh Yeshivah* was involved was that of *Horav Aharon Kotler, zl*, and *Reb Yitzchok/Irving Bunim, zl*. *Rav Aharon* was the architect of Torah in America following World War II. He started with a group of students which set the stage for the largest *makom* Torah in America,

Beth Medrash Govohah. His efforts on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* spread to *Vaad Hatzalah*, *Torah Umesorah*, and *Chinuch Atzmai* and infused true Torah values in this country. He left his indelible mark on Orthodoxy in the United States. Throughout all of this, Irving Bunim stood by his side as his staunchest supporter, student and partner. *Beth Medrash Govohah's* New York office was right around the corner from Irving Bunim's business. For fifteen years the *Rosh Yeshivah* would stop by almost daily to confer or seek assistance.

Rav Aharon maintained a strong sense of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude, for those who supported Torah, feeling that they had a unique *z'chus*, merit. Indeed, he genuinely grieved for those who lacked the insight and foresight to support Torah endeavors. After visiting a wealthy man and being refused a contribution, *Rav Aharon* said, "The privilege of supporting Torah requires special merit – and it appears that Heaven did not deem some men worthy of it."

His *hakoras hatov* was legend. One sweltering, summer day, the *Rosh Yeshivah* announced that he was about to take a two-hour taxi ride to Long Island to attend a wedding. The immediate responses of his close *talmidim* were: "It is far too hot"; "Think of the time the *Rosh Yeshivah* will waste"; "Certainly some guests will be immodestly dressed." The *Rosh Yeshivah's* response was simple, but definitive: "You do not seem to understand. The father of the *kallah*, bride, supports Torah. He must be accorded all due recognition."

A wealthy supporter of the *yeshivah* died during *Chanukah*, which is a time when *hespedim*, eulogies, are not delivered, unless it is for a Torah scholar. *Rav Aharon* felt that while the *niftar*, deceased, was not a Torah scholar, as a layman who supported Torah, he had achieved an exalted level of sharing in the *z'chus*, merit, of that of the Torah scholar, whom he supports. *Rav Aharon* delivered the eulogy for this *baal ha'bayis*, layman.

Rav Aharon's attitude toward supporters of Torah extended beyond those who supported *Beth Medrash Govohah*. Mr. Harry Herskowitz was a prominent supporter of both *Mesifita Torah Vodaath* and Lakewood. When he passed away, *Rav Aharon* gave a *hesped*. He remembered that at one point, *Torah Vodaath* was in such arrears, that they simply could not pay the salaries of their *rebbeim* and general studies staff. Mr. Herskowitz did something that (by today's standards) is unimaginable. As Director of Internal Revenue for the Southern District of Manhattan, he had invited many dignitaries from both Washington and New York to his daughter's wedding. Some of the invited guests were not Jewish, and those who were Jewish were secular in their religious orientation. Unembarrassed, Mr. Herskowitz halted the festivities in the middle of the wedding and made a heartfelt appeal on behalf of *Torah Vodaath*! He reminded his fellow co-religionists that they had an obligation to support Torah. He did not permit the affair to continue until he had raised sufficient funds for the *yeshivah* to remain open. He succeeded. One might think that what he had done had offended his guests. The love they had for this special man superseded any ill will. They saw in him a person whose enthusiasm for his beliefs knew no bounds. This is why *Rav Aharon* was *maspid*, eulogized, him: *Hakoras hatov* on behalf of the Torah.

Why is Torah so much more important than any other religious endeavor – *mikveh*, *shul*, *gemillas chesed*, *bikur cholim*? Could Yaakov and his family not wait until they

all arrived together, unpacked, and then set about preparing a *makom* Torah? Obviously the supremacy of Torah-study for a Jew demands that it precede every endeavor. Without Torah-study, we simply are not *Am Yisrael*! Jews without Judaism are void of the very ingredient which defines it. Judaism without Torah is just another culture. It is not Judaism! Just ask a secular Jew who does not believe in the Torah exactly what it is about his lifestyle that is inherently Jewish.

Horav Yehudah Tzedakah, zl, substantiates the concept of Torah's supremacy from an interesting *halachah*. The *Talmud* (beginning of *Meseches Megillah*) teaches that heralding back to the days of Yehoshua bin Nun, people within a walled city read the *Megillah* on the fifteenth of *Adar*, unlike people in other cities which are not *mukefes chomah*, surrounded by a wall, who read it on the fourteenth. [The battles fought between the Jews and their enemies took place on *Adar* 13; thus, the victory celebration took place on the next day, *Adar* 14. Shushan had a larger number of anti-Semites, thus requiring an added day of fighting to expunge this poison. They celebrated on the fifteenth of *Adar*. Hence, *Shushan Purim* is on the fifteenth. In solidarity with the city of Shushan, all cities that were walled from the time of Yehoshua's conquering *Eretz Yisrael* observe *Purim* on *Adar* 15.] The *Talmud* adds that a walled city whose wall was erected after people had already inhabited the city does not maintain walled status. The wall must precede inhabitation.

Why is this? The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that if a city was inhabited prior to its having a wall, the wall is not vital to the city's security. The people can survive without a wall. Only a city whose wall is a critical part of its existence is considered to be a *mukefes chomah*, a walled city.

Our nation has a "wall" for protection. It is called the Torah. It is our wall. We cannot have a city or any place of inhabitation which is without the Torah. It is our life, our essence, our security. Without Torah, there is no *kiyum*, permanence, survival, for *Klal Yisrael*. *Rav Saadiah Gaon* said, "Our nation is a nation only because of the Torah." It is the key to our survival.

וילקט יוסף את כל הכסף הנמצא בארץ מצרים. ויבא יוסף את הכסף ביתה פרעה

Yosef gathered all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt...And Yosef brought the money into Pharaoh's palace. (47:14)

The *Talmud Pesachim* 119A teaches that Yosef *HaTzadik* hid three treasures in Egypt. One was revealed to Korach; the second to Antoninus; and the third is waiting for its revelation to the righteous in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. Obviously, *Chazal* are not talking about material treasures, since Yosef did not have the right to hide treasures for himself. All of the funds that were deposited in the country in return for grain belonged to Pharaoh. Yosef was not a thief. Every penny that came in went through a strict accounting process. Second, the third treasure, which was saved for the righteous in the World to Come, certainly was not of a material nature. What would the righteous do with money in Heaven?

Horav Shalom Yosef Elyashiv, zl, suggests that