



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Two Brothers and Two Ways

ויגש אליו יהודה. (בראשית מד, יח)

Yehudah approached Yosef. (*Bereishis* 44:18)

The beginning of the *parshah* depicts the struggle that took place between Yehudah and Yosef. This struggle alludes to a deep and fundamental difference in nature between Yehudah and Yosef. It is about different ways of serving *Hashem*.

Chazal say that when Yehudah approached Yosef to speak to him, an epic struggle unfolded between them. The sparks were flying. The other brothers were trembling from the fearsome sight of these two kings in conflict.¹

The division between Yehudah and Yosef expressed itself even hundreds of years later, when Yerovam ben Nevat, from Yosef, broke away and established a kingdom separate from that of Yehudah which was ruled by the descendants of *David Hamelech*. And in the future, there will be a *Mashiach ben Yosef* and a *Mashiach ben David*.

Only in the time of the *Geulah Sheleimah* will this division come to an end. So prophesized Yechezkel:

קח לך עץ אחד וכתב עליו ליהודה וגו' ולקח
עץ אחד וכתוב עליו ליוסף עץ אפרים וגו' וקרר
אתם אחד אל אחד לך לעץ אחד והיו לאחדים
בִּידֶךָ – Take a piece of wood and write on
it, “For Yehudah... and take another piece
of wood and write on it, “For Yosef, the
tree of Efrayim... and bring them close to
yourself, one to the other, like one piece
of wood, and they will be united in your
hand.”²

The kingdoms of Yehudah and Yosef are destined to reunite, in the end of time.

And this reunion carries an important message

¹ *Bereishis Rabbah* 93:2.

² *Yechezkel* 37:16-17.

for us, as will be explained.

Early Torah sources say that this division reflects a basic difference that affects all of us. For every Jew, there are two approaches to *avodas Hashem*: that of Yosef and that of Yehudah.

Chazal describe Yosef as “*Yosef Hatzaddik*.” The divine service of a *tzaddik* is mainly in keeping Torah and *mitzvos*. The Torah tells us about the *nisyonos* that Yosef went through, and his exalted activities.

There is a common denominator between Yosef and another *tzaddik* known to us: נח איש צדיק – “Noach was a righteous man.”³ They both fed and supported the whole world in a time of great trouble and were thus considered יסוד עולם – “The *tzaddik* is the foundation of the world.”⁴ The *tzaddik* keeps the whole world going.

Noach was a smaller *tzaddik*, so he fed and supported only a small world, those inside the *Teivah*, when everything around them was destroyed. He worked hard day and night to feed and support the world.

By contrast, Yosef fed and supported the world at large.

So far, we have described Yosef. What about Yehudah? Yehudah represents the essence of a Jew. (The word יהודי, “Jew,” derives from יהודה, “Yehudah.”) Yehudah does not always withstand *nisyonos*. He does not feed and support the world. He rather represents the essential nature and being of a Jew.

This point is more about what a Jew is than what

a Jew does. Whereas Yosef's character is expressed mainly by his deeds and achievements and *mitzvah* performance, Yehudah's character is expressed primarily by his inner nature, by what he essentially is.

There is an allusion to this in the Torah, in the *pasuk* of ויגש אליו יהודה ויאמר בי אדוני – “Yehudah approached him and said, ‘My Master is within me.’” [This verse was translated homiletically, to bring out the point.] Yehudah declares that *Hashem* is within him. The essential nature of a Jew is that he has *kedushas Hashem* within him.

The essence of a Jew, of “Yehudah,” is his inner *kedushah*.

Yehudah was not sold to *Mitzrayim*. He did not face external *nisyonos* the way that Yosef did. And when he went down to Egypt with his father and all his family members, the first thing he did was build a *beis midrash*.

וַאֲתַתְּ יְהוּדָה שְׁלַח לְפָנָיו וְגו' לְהוֹרֹת – “Yaakov sent Yehudah before him, to instruct”⁵ – to set up for him a house of study.⁶

The first thing Yehudah did when he got to Egypt was shut himself up in the *beis midrash*. He entrenched himself in the place of the Jew, disconnected from all outside influences.

These are the two approaches to *avodas Hashem*. The way of Yosef and the way of Yehudah. And, as the *Navi* said, “They will be united in your hand” – they are meant to be practiced together. ●

3 Bereishis 6:9.

4 Mishlei 10:25.

5 Bereishis 46:28.

6 Midrash Tanchuma, Vayigash 14.

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורגר זצ"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

נדבת נדידהם ~ עטרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנים אבותם

How Much Should I Give?

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל הָעָם הֵן קָנִיתִי אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם וְאֶת אֲדָמַתְכֶם לְפָרְעָה וְגוֹי' וְהָיָה בְּתַבּוּאוֹת וּנְתַתֶּם חֲמִישִׁית לְפָרְעָה וְאַרְבַּע הַיָּדֹת יִהְיֶה לָכֶם לְזֶרַע הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאֲכֹלְכֶם וְגוֹי' וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֶחֱיִיתָנוּ נִמְצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנֵי וְהִיָּינוּ עֲבָדִים לְפָרְעָה: (בראשית מז, כג-כה)

Yosef said to the people, "I have hereby acquired you and your land today on behalf of Pharaoh.... When you bring in the harvests, you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be for you, to sow the fields and to eat...." They replied, "You kept us alive. May we find favor in the eyes of my master, and we will be servants to Pharaoh." (*Bereishis* 47:23-25)

How much *tzedakah* should a person give? There is an obligation to give *maaser*, which is a tenth. This is learned from the *pasuk* that says עֶשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂר – "You shall surely give a tenth."¹ But since it is mentioned twice in the verse, עֶשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂר, this indicates that if a person wants to enhance his performance of the *mitzvah*, he should give two tenths, which is a fifth.

Chazal say that if a person gives *maaser*, a tenth, there is a Divine promise that he will not lack. And if he gives a fifth, there is a Divine promise that he will become wealthy: "Give *maaser* (מעשר) so you will become wealthy (תתעשר)."²

Where do these two measurements come from?

Yosef enacted a property law in Egypt. It was not a Jewish law, but nevertheless, it was a law of *Yosef Hatzaddik*. He said to the destitute people of Egypt, during the seven-year famine, that he will provide them with seed to sow their fields, and they must give Pharaoh a fifth of what grows, and may keep the other four fifths for their own use.

Why a fifth to Pharaoh? How did Yosef come to this percentage?

The Chofetz Chayim explains as follows. The way of the world is that when a person has a field, he invests money and effort in it. He buys seed, ploughs the field, plants it, irrigates it, etc etc. Usually, he will see a 20% profit after all his expenses and efforts are deducted. A fifth. This is how the world works.

And the general law is that the king receives a tenth of the produce. This is stated clearly in *Tanach*:

זֶה יִהְיֶה מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיכֶם וְגוֹי' וְזָרְעֵיכֶם וְכִרְמֵיכֶם יַעֲשֶׂר וְנָתַן לְסָרִיסָיו וְלַעֲבָדָיו – This shall be the law of the king who shall rule over you... and he will take a tenth from your seed fields and your vineyards, and give it to his attendants and servants.³

This is for a simple reason. Since the average profit is a fifth, half goes to the king and half to the field's owner.

Thus Yosef said to them, "I have hereby acquired you and your land today on behalf of Pharaoh," because this will entitle Pharaoh to a fifth, and the people of the land to four fifths. And the people accepted this arrangement, saying, "You kept us alive... we will be servants to Pharaoh." Since they will belong to Pharaoh, as servants, and thus no longer be independent landowners, all the profit – which is one fifth of the gross product – rightly goes to Pharaoh.

This explains the giving of a tenth or a fifth as *tzedakah*.

Hashem is the "king." He says to a person: You need to share your profits with Me. So you must give Me a tenth, which is a half of the fifth, and the other tenth will be for you. If you make this partnership with Me, you will never lack.

¹ *Devarim* 14:22.

² *Taanis* 9a.

³ *I Shmuel* 8:11-15.

And if you decide to give Me a full fifth as *tzedakah*, which means you are giving Me everything, I will promise you wealth. Because if you give Me everything, then I, too, will give you everything.

This applies not just to wheat and barley. A person should view all his money as being a partnership with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. And, as we explained, there are two kinds of partnerships. There is the

kind where a person says: Half for me and half for *Hashem*. This is a good thing. The person will not lose anything this way.

And there is a kind of partnership where a person says: *Hashem*, everything is Yours! Then *Hashem* returns the favor, so to speak, and says: If everything is Mine, then you, too will receive everything. *Bezras Hashem*, You will become wealthy. ●

PARSHA TOPIC

When Jews Cry

וְלֹא יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנֹּצְבִים עָלָיו וּגְו' וַיִּתֵּן אֶת קְלוֹ בִּבְכִי (בראשית מה, א-ב)

Yosef could not restrain himself due to all the people present... he raised his voice and cried (*Bereishis* 45:1-2)

Yosef Cries Again and Again

Yosef's tears that flowed when he revealed his identity to his brothers after so many years is a natural reaction and is quite understandable. However, we see from these *parshiyos* that the Torah emphasizes how Yosef cried again and again. It wasn't just once.

When Yosef's brothers came to Egypt the first time, he heard them speaking among themselves about him. Some of them expressed regret over having sold him, and he started to cry. When they came the second time, he cried when he saw Binyamin. And here, where he told his brothers that he is Yosef, he cried yet another time. And it didn't stop with this:

וַיִּפֹּל עַל צִוְּאָרֵי בְנִימִן אָחִיו וַיִּבְכֶּה וּבְנִימִן בָּכָה
עַל צִוְּאָרֵי – He fell on the shoulder of his brother Binyamin and cried, and Binyamin cried on his shoulder.¹

Later he reunited with his father Yaakov. What happened there? Yaakov recited *Shema*, and Yosef “cried on his shoulder”.² He cried again. At the end of the *parshah*, when his brothers offer themselves to him as slaves, what was his reaction?

וַיִּבְכֶּה יוֹסֵף בְּדִבְרָם אֵלָיו – Yosef cried when they spoke to him.³

The *Torah* recounts that Yosef did not just happen to cry; he could not hold himself back from crying. He was a real crier.

And this was true not just of Yosef. His mother Rachel, too, was known for her crying. She cried all the time, to the point that *Hashem* needed to say to her:

מִנְעֵי קוֹלֶךָ מִבְּכִי וְעֵינֶיךָ מִדְּמָעָה – Stop your voice from crying and your eyes from shedding tears.⁴

² *Ibid* 46:29.

³ *Ibid* 50:17.

⁴ *Yirmeyahu* 31:15.

¹ *Bereishis* 45:14.

Yosef was not just an individual. He represents the Jewish people as a whole. Yosef is every Jew. For it is written:

הֵבֵן יָקִיר לִי אֶפְרַיִם – Efraim is My dear son.⁵

שְׂאֵרִית יוֹסֵף – The remnant of Yosef.⁶

Rashi comments on the above-quoted *pasuk* that “Yosef” signifies *Am Yisrael* in general. So if the *Torah* tells us that Yosef constantly cried, it shows that crying is a Jewish trait.

I always thought that Jews cry because they have a lot of troubles. But we see that Yosef cried no matter what happened. He cried from the beginning to the end, even when nothing troublesome took place. When he saw that his brothers regretted having sold him, he should have been happy. So why did he cry? When he sees his brother Binyamin, and later his beloved father Yaakov, what’s so terrible? Why is he crying again?

The answer is that Jews by nature cry a lot.

In our times, we have other ways of describing a *bachur* who went off the *derech*, but they used to say, “He doesn’t cry in *Vehu rachum*.” If a Jew doesn’t cry in this part of the *tefilah* it is a sign that something is off with him. However, in our modern world, men don’t cry at all. Even at funerals, only the women cry. In previous times, Jews would cry at all sorts of times.

What is so great about crying, that it is a characteristic of Jews in general and of *Yosef Hatzaddik* in particular?

Plato Doesn’t Understand Tears

It says in the introduction to *Sefer Toras Ha’olah*, written by the Rema, that when the prophet Yirmeyahu saw the destruction of *Beis Hamikdash*, he fell down on the sticks and stones and cried. The renowned Greek philosopher Plato asked him about this: “You are the sage of the Jews. Why are you crying over sticks and stones?” He also asked

him, “Why should you cry over the past? Whatever happened, happened. A wise man does not cry over the past, he rather builds the future.”

Yirmeyahu replied, “You are a great philosopher. You must have questions in philosophy.

Plato answered, “I have questions but I don’t think there is anyone who can answer them.”

Yirmeyahu said, “Ask me your questions and I will answer them.”

Plato asked, and Yirmeyahu resolved all his difficulties, to the point that Plato was not sure if Yirmeyahu was a man, or an angel with heavenly wisdom.

Yirmeyahu then said to him, “I want you to know that all my wisdom is from these sticks and stones. And regarding your question about why I cry over the past, I will not answer you, because it is a very deep matter, and you won’t be able to understand it. Only a Jew can understand the profundity of crying over the past.”

When Yirmeyahu told Plato that he can’t understand it, he didn’t mean that Plato is stupid. Plato was a noted philosopher and had a very high IQ. Yirmeyahu rather meant that Plato is a non-Jew, and that is why he is incapable of understanding the matter, because even the simplest Jew is greater than the greatest of non-Jewish philosophers.

The *Alter* of Kelm wrote a letter, published in *Sefer Chochmah uMussar*, in which he quotes a piece of philosophy from Aristotle (about whom the Rambam writes that his level of understanding was the greatest that human intellect can attain without prophecy). Then the *Alter* writes, “And I, despite my poverty of understanding, am wiser than him, because I am a Jew and he is a non-Jew.”

Plato the non-Jew could not understand, but we can understand why Jews cry so much. As mentioned, it is a Jewish trait to cry, and we need to understand why.

Yosef is a Connector

Yosef is highlighted as someone who cries, so let us understand Yosef and what he represents.

There is a *pasuk* that we say every day in *tefilah*:

⁵ Yirmeyahu 31:19.

⁶ Amos 5:15.

לָךְ ה' הַגְדֵּלָה וְהַגְבוּרָה וְהַתְפָּאֶרֶת וְהַנִּצָּח
וְהַהוּד כִּי כָל בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ לָךְ ה' הַמְּמֻלָּה
וְהַמְתַּנְשָׂא לְכָל לְרֹאשׁ:

This verse expresses *Hashem's* traits of *chesed*, *gevurah*, *tiferes* and so forth. Included in these are the *midos* of the *Avos*, and Yosef's *midah* is the sixth, which is called *Yesod*.

In the above-quoted verse, the sixth *midah* is expressed in the words *בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ* – “For all that is in heaven and on earth.” The *Zohar* explains this *midah*:

It unifies that which is in heaven and on earth. (*Zohar* 3:257a)

This means that the *tzaddik*, represented by the *midah* of Yosef, unifies and connects heaven and earth.

There is a vast gap between heaven and earth, as we know. Yet, the *midah* of Yosef connects and unifies them.

An evil person disconnects the Kingdom of Heaven from the earth. Although he admits that G-d created the world, which is a known and recognized fact, he claims that G-d is high up there in the heavens, sitting on His lofty Throne of Glory. The *tzaddik* proclaims a different message: *מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ* – “The whole earth is full of His glory.” We are always in the presence of the King. *Hashem* is here, with us, involved in every detail of our lives. A *tzaddik* is someone who lives his life in perfect closeness to *Hashem*.

This attitude ties heaven to earth. This is the unique *midah* of *Yosef Hatzaddik*.

A *tzaddik* is someone who lives in such a way that all his wishes, desires and longings are based on the sense that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is here with him all the time. This is why Yosef is called *Yosef Hatzaddik*. There was no one who connected heaven and earth like he did.

Just as the Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth geographically, so ancient Egypt was the lowliest place on earth spiritually. It is the only place that the Torah expressly commands us not to go back there,

because of its terrible lowliness. In Egypt itself there were all kinds of places, and Yosef was in the lowest place of all Egypt. He was in the same house with the wickedest woman to be found.

On the other hand, *lehavdil*, the highest place we can speak of is the heavenly Throne of Glory.

Yosef bridged the immense gap between the heavenly Throne of Glory and the impurity of Egypt. He was placed in the most difficult *nisayon* that could be imagined, in the most awfully lowly place on earth. And, so to speak, he brought *Yaakov Avinu* there, together with the *Shechinah Hakadoshah*, for the likeness of *Yaakov Avinu* is engraved on the heavenly Throne of Glory. [When Yosef's *nisayon* was at its height, the image of *Yaakov* appeared to him, and this gave him the strength to resist temptation.]

This is the most awesome connection that could possibly be made. He connected himself to Heaven, and he connected Heaven to himself. Since then, he is called *Yosef Hatzaddik*.

Getting Emotional

Now we can understand why Jews cry, and why non-Jews fail to understand it.

The strongest force to connect between two very distant points, for instance between two people, one in *Eretz Yisrael* and the other in America, is love.

Love is the bridge that transcends time and space. For instance, imagine a Torah giant such as the Chasam Sofer speaking to his little son, trying patiently to teach him to say the verse *תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה*. What connects them? What bridges the gap? Love.

The height of love is a heart-to-heart connection, and this connection is expressed by getting emotional. This is the opposite of being cold and unmoved.

Hashem is so far from us that we can't even conceive of His nature. If so, it would seem quite impossible to create a connection between us and *Hashem*. This is why Plato could not understand why Yirmeyahu is crying, because crying results

from connection and relationship.

Sefer Mesilas Yesharim explains the trait of *Chasidus*, of going beyond the call of duty, by way of allegory: a father asks his son to do a small thing for him. The son understands what his father desires, and fulfills the request in a much more complete way. So it is in the relationship between a Jew and *Hashem*, because this, too, is a relationship of love. Just as a person loves his father, so a Jew loves *Hashem*.

Philosophy maintains that everything needs to be grasped by cold intellect and logic. This is the source of all evil, of everything that is the opposite of the Jewish people. Greece is the cradle of philosophy and abstract thought, and the *Torah* describes Greece as "darkness." The opposite of darkness is light. They are diametrically different.

It is obvious that if Yirmeyahu would cry over his father's death, Plato would not ask him why he is crying. In such a case it would be clear what the crying is all about, because a feeling of relationship engenders crying. But it was beyond the comprehension of Plato, as a philosopher, that one could feel emotion for and personal relationship with G-d, so he mistakenly assumed that Yirmeyahu was crying over sticks and stones.

Yirmeyahu said to him: You see the destruction of *Beis Hamikdash* and you ask why I am crying? If my only child was drowning in the ocean, you would not ask me that, because you would understand that I can't hold back. I want you to know that also now, I am crying because I can't hold back. I am crying because my emotions are all worked up. I long for my Creator. You are a philosopher. You work only with your mind. You don't utilize emotions. For you, G-d is a concept, that's why you think that G-d is in heaven and you are on earth, and there is no connection between the two.

But when I think of *Hashem*, I think of a beloved father. I get emotional and I cry. This is why He is here with me. The power of crying, the power of feeling emotion, is the force that unifies and connects heaven and earth. This is why Jews constantly cry and get worked up about things.

Our problem nowadays is we hardly cry. If we would cry more, everything would be different. I think this is biggest decline in our generation. We do everything we should, *baruch Hashem*. We perform *mitzvos* very meticulously. Our *tefillin* and *arba minim* are very *mehudar*. The same goes with our Torah learning. This is all very good. But we do it all in such a cool, unemotional way. Our faces don't show emotion and excitement when we do a *mitzvah*.

If we don't get emotional about *tefilah*, about Torah learning, about all matters of *kedushah*, this is a sign that our connection with *Hashem* is not as it should be. Emotion is the foundation of everything.

We cannot connect with *Hashem* by intellect alone. We need to add emotion. The whole liturgy of our *tefilah* is worded in a way that arouses emotion, for instance, *למען שמו באהבה*. The very word *tefilah*, *נתפולי אלקים*, derives from the same root as *נפתלי* (*Bereishis* 30:8), which Rashi explains to mean connection. *Tefilah* is connection. *Chazal* teach us⁷ that *tefilah* is service to *Hashem* that we perform with the heart. *Tefilah* is performed mainly with the heart, not with the mind. We need to pray with feeling.

This is why Yosef cried so much. Since his *midah* was connecting heaven and earth, he was full of emotion. He cried all the time. Crying is a Jewish trait. ●

7 *Taanis* 2a.