

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

### Revenge Is A Dish Best Not Served at All

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR  
RABBI BINYOMIN YUDIN

The Torah in *Parshas Kedoshim* has some very clear things to say about revenge and bearing a grudge. “*Lo sikom v’lo sitor es b’nei am’cha v’ahavta l’re’acha kamocho ani Hashem.*”

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD. (Vayikra 19:18)

Rashi explains what it means to bear a grudge. Based on *Toras Kohanim* he explains, “If one says to another, ‘Lend me your hatchet,’ and he replies ‘No!’ and on the next day he says to him ‘Lend me your sickle,’ and he replies: ‘Here it is; I am not like you, because you would not lend me’ – this is called ‘bearing a grudge (נִסְרִיהַ) because he retains (נוֹטֵר) enmity in his heart although he does not actually avenge himself.” It seems that pointing out someone else’s shortcomings and contrasting it with your own righteousness is a core element of this prohibition. Bearing this in mind, let’s look at an interaction between the Royal Yosef and his brothers in this week’s Torah portion.

The brothers become fearful after the death of their father. After 17 years of living under Yosef in Egypt, the brothers felt that Yosef would finally take his revenge on them for their persecution of him 39 years before. They therefore approach him with a message from their father.

“So shall you say to Yosef, ‘Forgive, I urge you, the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly.’ Therefore, please forgive the offense of the servants of the G-d of your father.” And Yosef was in tears as they spoke to him. (Bereishis 50:17)

Yosef hears their plea and responds as follows.

“Have no fear! Am I a substitute for G-d? Besides, although you intended me harm, G-d intended it for good, so as to bring about the

present result—the survival of many people” (Bereishis 19-20). In light of the way the Torah talks about how we should speak to those that hurt or neglect us, this response seems curious. Yosef seems to be telling them “You all were bad, but I am better.” How does this fit with what we know Yosef to be, a *tzaddik* par excellence?

However, when we look closer we can see that Yosef is teaching his brothers the error both of their original decision, as well as their thought that he would seek revenge on them.

He does not say to them, “I fear Hashem, whereas you do not.” He reminds them that Hashem runs the world. Fear, jealousy, and revenge, while very human reactions, really take Hashem out of the picture. If we believe Hashem runs the world, we can assume the implicit justice in all that happens. Not that we understand events, not that we shouldn’t protect ourselves from injury, but that we should realize that all happens for a reason.

The brothers were envious, on their level, of Yosef. They made that mistake again by assuming that Yosef would operate on the level of worldly justice. Yosef responds to them by explaining that the fear is not a fear, because true justice only happens from Hashem, and Yosef is not G-d. All that he had experienced had shown him that everything is orchestrated from above. He brings this home with a promise to his brothers.

“And so, fear not. I will sustain you and your children” (Bereishis 50:21). Thus he reassured them, speaking kindly to them. Yosef says, I will continue my role as provider, because that is why I am here. Truthfully, this is true of all of us. Hashem gives us a role through all we experience. That role is all we have to be concerned with. 🙏

## THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH  
RABBI YITZCHOK PREIS

Q) This question is actually relevant to this week – and last week – and the week before.

Is there any rhyme or reason as to when the Torah uses “Yaakov” and when it uses “Yisroel”?

A) Regarding rhyme I’ll demur, but reasons there are, for sure!

And the very first Ohr Hachayim Hakodosh in this week’s *parasha* shares an approach as follows:

Yaakov was “upgraded” to Yisroel, indicating that he was granted a more sublime element. This name will be used whenever he is in a state of elevation, joy, or calm. But this aspect of Yisroel abandons Yaakov whenever he is in a downtrodden, sad state. At such times he can only be called Yaakov.

One exception to this rule is when the name is not addressing Yaakov himself but his family. “*B’nei Yaakov*” is utilized even at a time when Yisroel, the individual, is experiencing calm, if the sons themselves are acting less than “Yisroel-like.”

Another exception is when Yaakov is technically in a downtrodden state but he wields authority (*Seroroh*) in Yisroel-like mode. An example of this is when Yaakov admonishes his sons for causing him to have to send Binyomin along with them to Egypt.

A third exception is the one time the Torah describes Yaakov in the presence of his father Yitzchok. In the awesome presence of his father, Yaakov is not portrayed as being of elevated Yisroel status.

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## THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

Last week's *parasha*.

Q) Upon hearing that Yosef is alive, Yaakov indicates that he's planning to go to Egypt to see him. But a few verses later it seems that Hashem has to convince him to go. Why?

A) The Malbim answers this question with some more questions. Why didn't Yaakov immediately utilize the wagons that Yosef sent for him? [The text only mentions their use after Hashem appears to Yaakov in Be'er Sheva.] And why no mention of bringing along the flocks and other belongings until after the stop in Be'er Sheva?

Malbim explains that Yaakov initially planned a quick visit and was avoiding any indication that he was considering relocating to Egypt. No need for moving trucks – just some hand luggage. Only after Hashem appeared to him and gave him the license/obligation to settle in Egypt did that change. Now he gathers the flocks and utilizes the transport wagons for the long-term relocation. 📖

*Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to [parasha@cincykollel.org](mailto:parasha@cincykollel.org). Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.*

## A SHINING EXAMPLE

Rabbi Shlomo of Chelema is most well known for his lengthy work on Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, *Merkeves Hamishneh*, but another work of his is titled *Chug Ha'aretz*, in which he delineates the borders of biblical Eretz Yisrael. Rabbi Shlomo was not able to print the work in his lifetime, much less even visit Eretz Yisrael. His manuscript, on the other hand, had quite the adventure in reaching the holy land. 160 years after Rabbi Shlomo had written *Chug Ha'aretz*, it was being passed down from one community member to the next in the hope that someone would one day be able to bring it to print. It seemed like that might never happen when the Germans invaded the Polish town where it was being kept. As the Jews were being rounded up, its safekeeper, R' Leibush, wrote a note explaining what these papers were and that if someone would bring these papers to Eretz Yisrael and have them published, the person would be rewarded by Hashem for performing the will of the holy man whose words these were. Stuffing all the papers into oilskins and hiding it under his shirt, R' Leibush entered the cattle car and at a turn in the track he threw the papers through the bars of the train window onto the ground below. There they would sit until a recently freed inmate of the concentration camps, Avraham Ungar, was aimlessly following the railroad tracks, not sure of where he should go and what he should do. As he walked, he noticed the strange package lying near the

## A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

In the blessings of Yaakov this week, Yaakov groups Shimon and Levi together in one blessing, using the words "*Shimon V'Levi Achim*," meaning, Shimon and Levi who are brothers, Yaakov proceeds to tell them "*Afitzeim B'Yisrael*," which classically means that for the good of the Jewish people the tribes of Shimon and Levi will not have a portion in the land of Israel as their own. This understanding, says *Ba'al Haturim*, is hinted to in the words "*Shimon V'Levi Achim*," which has the same numerical value as the words, "*Ain lahem chelek ba'aretz*," that to them there is no portion in the land. 📖

Yaakov ben Asher, known as the *Ba'al Haturim*, was a scholar and biblical commentator who lived most of his life in Spain from approximately 1275 to approximately 1340. His classic commentary is printed in many editions of the *Chumash*.

railroad tracks. Overcome by his curiosity, he stooped down to see what it was. Opening it up he read the note that R' Leibush had left. Realizing what he had in his hands, Avraham Ungar now had a purpose for which to live and rebuild his life! He would go to Eretz Yisrael and see to it that this manuscript would be published! R' Avraham, together with another man, Rabbi Shabsi Rosenthal, would indeed bring the work that had been waiting since 1781 to print. 📖

## THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

### SHABBTAI TZVI (PART II)

Recap: Despite marital discord and clear signs of mental dysfunction, Shabbtai Tzvi's affable persona and Talmudic and kabbalistic proficiency drew him a sizable and enthusiastic following.

After drawing a substantial following of Jews in Izmir, Shabbtai Tzvi unexpectedly departed from his hometown, and in complete solitude headed for Solaniki, Greece, a prominent and thriving center of Torah study. Unaware of his peculiar customs and mental illness, the rabbis of Solaniki warmly received Shabbtai Tzvi and bestowed him with great honor. Shabbtai Tzvi lived an uneventful few months in Solaniki until he was expelled from town after the following incident. Shabbtai Tzvi invited the leading rabbinic figures of Solaniki to a festive party in his home. As the guests were all seated and enjoying their food, Shabbtai Tzvi stood up and proceeded to construct a wedding canopy in the room. He then took a Sefer Torah and performed a wedding ceremony between himself and the Torah. The astonished guests were enraged at Shabbtai Tzvi and accused him of desecrating the Torah. Shabbtai Tzvi responded that anyone who truly loves the Torah becomes its husband. The rabbis wasted no time trying to deal with Shabbtai Tzvi – whom they deemed a great threat to their community, and simply threw him out of town.

Overwhelmed with feelings of depression and rejection, Shabbtai Tzvi began to roam aimlessly around Greece and eventually made his way to Constantinople, Turkey. There, too, he attempted to live in peace, but again drew himself too much attention. Shabbtai Tzvi bought a gigantic fish from the market and proceeded to dress the fish in ornate clothing. He caringly placed his prized possession in an infant's cradle, and cared for it like his own child. When the rabbis of Constantinople found out about Shabbtai Tzvi's erratic behavior they deemed him a lunatic and kindly escorted him out of the city.

Shabbtai Tzvi's desire for the Holy Land burned within him, so he set out for Eretz Yisrael via Alexandria, Egypt. In Alexandria, Shabbtai Tzvi became acquainted with the imperial treasurer – Rafael Joseph. Joseph, a well-connected and prominent leader of the Jewish community, suggested a match for Shabbtai Tzvi. In his third marriage, Shabbtai Tzvi married an eastern European woman named Sarah, known for her delusional proclamations that she was destined to marry the Messiah of the Jewish nation. The new couple arrived in Jerusalem, where Shabbtai Tzvi was destined to meet the man who would set the stage for Shabbtai Tzvi's notorious Messianic movement. 📖