

A PARASHA THOUGHT

The Ends and the Means

RABBI
EPHRAIM
SKOLNIK

This week's *parasha* describes the culmination of the story of Yosef and his brothers. Yosef reveals himself to his brothers and says "I am Yosef; is my father still alive?" The Torah tells us that the brothers could physically not respond to him out of sheer embarrassment. The *Midrash* explains this as follows: we see from here "how terrifying is the day of judgment and admonition." The question is, how do we see from here any judgment or admonishing? All Yosef said was "I am Yosef your brother." Additionally, what was this embarrassment the brothers had when Yosef didn't say anything to make them feel bad?

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, the great Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, answers this question. He explains that real reproof is very misunderstood it does not require rebuke or criticism. In truth, it is when a person on his own realizes the fault in his actions. The brothers realized that this was their little brother who they tried to sell as a slave and banish forever, for fear that his dreams may come true and he would rule over them. He was now the ruler of the most powerful civilization of the time and, despite their best efforts, he was now in fact ruling over them. They saw that through their actions, and not despite their actions, this all came about. They were deeply ashamed, because it was at this moment that they realized their mistake. All along, they had based their action off the

thought of "the end justifies the means." At this moment it became clear to them that, in truth, their logic was flawed all along.

Rabbi Shmulevitz explains that the lesson learnt from this parsha applies to us all. Many times in life we may want to take an action that veers a bit off the "straight path" in order to reach a "holy" goal, convincing ourselves that the "end justifies the means." Since we can feel a strong desire to accomplish and to attain the end result, we can easily convince ourselves that any action along the way is appropriate. The story of Yosef and his brothers teaches us that the results are completely out of our hands; only G-d is in charge of the end result. With this in mind, our job is to ensure that all of our actions are appropriate and proper. As the saying goes "a Jew's job is not to accomplish, but to do." The results are all in G-d's hands. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us all to make sure that every step we take is in line with the Torah since will be held responsible strictly for our actions, as the results are way beyond us. 🕒

THE RABBI WAS ASKED
ON THE PARASHATHIS WEEK WITH
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Q) Did Yaakov know or not that Yosef was sold down to Egypt by the brothers? If he did know, why did he never reprove the brothers for it? If he did not, wouldn't the brothers want to ask for forgiveness for the pain they caused him?

A) Ramban (45:27) says that according to the simple understanding, neither the brothers nor Yosef ever shared with their father that they had sold Yosef. Rather, Yaakov assumed that Yosef had gotten lost and was kidnapped by slave traders. The brothers were afraid to share the real story because of their fear that Yaakov might curse them. Yosef, in deference to his brothers' wishes also did not tell his father.

Q) Rashi quotes the *Midrash* that Yaakov's seeing the *agalos* (wagons) was recognition of a sign from Yosef identifying himself with information that only Yosef and Yaakov could know, that is, that the last Torah they studied together was *Egla Arufa* (the calf that is beheaded when a murder victim is found and no murderer is found). This is alluded to by the similarity between the words *agala* (wagon) and *egla* (calf). What sort of sign is this? How was Yaakov supposed to make such a far-fetched connection?

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

A) Rashi does not mean to say that Yaakov made the connection. The brothers explicitly told him that Yosef said to tell their father that *Egla Arufa* was the last thing they studied and that served as a sign that he was indeed Yosef. This is why Rashi makes this comment on the words “all the words of Yosef” and not on the words “and he saw the wagons.” What Rashi is telling us is that the words “and he saw the wagons” has a scriptural allusion to the sign. Mizrachi explains that “and he saw” is the equivalent of “and he heard.” 🤖

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing 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 Efraim Shapiro relates that he once was attending a wedding made by one of the member families of his shul, and as such, there many other members of the shul in attendance as well. When the dessert course was served, he noticed something strange. He knew Frank loved ice cream, and here they were at a wedding where the dessert included a nice helping of ice cream, and Frank had not taken any. “You must be on pretty serious diet if you can pass up ice cream, Frank,” Rabbi Shapiro could not help but to remark. At the table full of people, Frank only smiled but did not say anything in return. A little while later, Frank caught Rabbi Shapiro away from the table. “Remember what you said, Rabbi, when rockets started falling again in Israel? That we need to try to feel together with our brothers and sisters in Israel? Well, I’m trying to take what you said to heart. I’m not eating ice cream until the situation in Israel improves. I want, in some small way, to feel like life is not okay as long as it is not for others.” 🤖

A BA’AL HATURIM FOR YOU

The beginning words of our *parasha* are “*Vayigash Eilav Yehudah*,” meaning “and Yehudah brought himself close” to speak with Yosef. The last letters of the phrase are *shin, vav, hay*, which spells the word *shava*, meaning equal. Says Ba’al Haturim, this hints to a subtlety in Yehudah’s message to Yosef. “We are equals; we are both kings.” This is as well the meaning of the words in *Tehillim*, “*Ki hinei ham’lachim noadu*,” meaning “the Kings [Yehudah and Yosef] have assembled” 🤖



CHDS Masmidim taking advantage of the early dismissal due to power outage and learning in the Kollel

THE MYSTERY OF THE FAST OF THE NINTH OF TEVES (PART III)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Some other attempts to solve the mystery of the 9th of Teves are as follows: 1. The Rema, in his commentary to *Megillas Esther*, writes that Esther was taken to the palace of King Achashveirosh in Shushan on the Ninth of Teves and *Megillas Ta’anis* is referencing this incident. 2. *Magen Avraham*, *Taz*, and other *Achronim* quote the *Selichos* of *Asarah B’Teves* which mention that Ezra Ha-sofer died on the Ninth of Teves. 3. The Spanish astronomer, Rabbi Avraham bar Chiya (author of the astronomical work *Sefer ha-Ibur*, calculates that Yeishu ha-notzrei was born on the Ninth of Teves and the Rabbis of *Megillas Ta’anis* decreed a fast day on his birthday.

The issue with the first two suggestions is clear: what motivated the Sages to conceal such reasons? The 3rd reason is strange, since when do Jews fast on the birthdays of such individuals.

Several centuries later two European rabbis revealed a clue about the Fast of the 9th of Teves. Rabbi Baruch Frankel-Teomim (died 1828) in his glosses to the *Shulchan Aruch* writes the following ambiguous passage: “I have found in a manuscript that on the Ninth of Teves Shimon ha-Kalpus passed away who saved the Jewish nation from a great crisis in the times of the *preitzim*. The day of his death was set as a day of fasting in Jerusalem.” The same reference is found in *Meorei Ohr*, by Rabbi Ahron Worms, chief rabbi of Metz (died 1836).

Who was Shimon ha-Kalpus, and which crisis did he save his fellow Jews from?

To be continued... 🤖