



Parashat Vayeshev 5771 - #165

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On the Parashah... The Clash Between Yosef and His Brothers

[Tal Chermon]

There was continual and mutual antagonism between Yosef and his brothers. Yosef brought "bad reports" about them (Bereshit 37:2). His dream revealed his criticism of his brothers. "We were binding sheaves in the field when my sheaf suddenly stood up and remained erect. Your sheaves formed a circle around my sheaf and bowed down to it" (ibid. v. 7). My sheaf stood upright ready for action while yours stooped sluggishly. He accused them of inaction and ignorance of the practical world. They also have complaints against him. Yehudah charged him: "You are just like Pharaoh" (ibid. 44:8), i.e. "you are just another Pharaoh and are only involved in the material side of life!" They suspected that his only concern was the physical arrangement of the world, which is the task of the non-Jews, not of the Jews; while he was neglecting our special Jewish mission of building the inner spirituality of the world. The brothers sensed that Yosef was starting something new. He had the coat of many colors, showing that he incorporated all the different talents and he therefore outstripped them. This man slandered them to their father and was causing a rift in the Jewish Nation. He was dangerous and destructive to the unity of the "House of Israel." They remembered full well the refining process that the family had undergone in which Yishmael was rejected while Yitzchak remained and Esav was rejected while Yitzchak remained. They reflected: "Is this processing continuing? Will someone be weeded out now? Yosef called them and said: "Listen to the dream that I had (ibid. 37:6), I want you to know who I am." They knew exactly who he was but wanted to clarify the point. "Do you want to be our king? Do you intend to rule over us?" (ibid. v. 8). "Do you mean to consult with us or is your plan to dominate us as a dictator?" "If you intend to consult with us okay, but if you intend to lord over us – it's a no go!" The issue was through whom the Jewish People would continue. They were at loggerheads; it was either the brothers or Yosef. It could not be both. Sibling rivalry and clashes did not commence with this dispute. It had been preceded by strife between Kayin and Hevel, Yitzchak and Yishmael and Esav and Yaakov. It is true that there are numerous explanations of these interpersonal clashes and of national conflicts. Some are based on economic considerations, others on class tensions, and still others on psycho-sexual problems, etc... Our Sages were fully aware of all these interpretations, and in fact the

Midrash brings a dispute concerning the cause of Kayin and Hevel's quarrel. One view is that both of them claimed the right to have the second female twin that was born with Hevel (a psycho-sexual interpretation). Another view is that the dispute was over the division of the earth's resources between them (an economic interpretation - These views and others are brought in Bereshit Rabbah 22:7). However, the deep-rooted reason that caused the quarrel over these issues was their fundamental difference in nature, a clash at the deepest point of their inner essence. Their diverse qualities suited them for entirely different tasks in the world. The visible reasons for the quarrel were only superficial manifestations of a far deeper dispute. This is also true of the jealousy over the coat of many colors. The brothers were not kindergarten children who wanted a beautiful piece of colored silk. Yosef's talent made him competent to arrange and order the world but this clashed with the character of his brothers who were better suited to correct and improve the inner forces of the world. Yaakov, by giving Yosef the coat of many colors, had indicated that of all the brothers, Yosef had been chosen to lead the clan.

Rav Aviner on... Whose Country Is this, Your Eminence?

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Vayihslach 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

We heard some very interesting tidings from the Bishops' Council for Middle East Affairs: Eretz Yisrael does not belong to the Jewish People. The necessary conclusion is that we are responsible for all the suffering of Christians and Moslems in our region, as well as of Jews. We are guilty for everything, and why is that, according to the Vatican? -- Because we conquered a land not ours. It's all because of the Israeli conquest.

In their view, the solution is to establish two states, one for us and one for the Arabs. True, the Arabs already have twenty-two states, with a combined territory 500 times that of Israel, but they still want half our country. Yet even our receiving half the territory is not assured, because if this Land is not ours, but occupied, how can we sit on half of it, or a tenth of it? How can we build our existence on theft, suffering and injustice?

All the same, there's a penetrating question that must be asked. Surely we are dealing with people who believe in the Bible, and the Bible states countless times that Eretz Yisrael belongs to the Jewish People. If so, how can they declare that we can't rely on the Bible to justify the Jews' settling their Land?

The answer is very simple and was provided by them at that council: "There is no Promised Land to the Jewish People, since there is no longer any 'Chosen People.' All men and women in every country are the Chosen People. Hence, one cannot use the idea of a Promised Land to justify the Jews' return to Eretz Yisrael."

The cat is out of the bag. We are not the Chosen People. We are not the People of Israel. And who is? The whole human race. We have been familiar with this claim for a long time. It's even mentioned in Rav Kook's work "Orot": "The call [of the Christians] to all the peoples, sunken in the mire of impurity, in the morass of wickedness and ignorance, in the most frightening depths of darkness: You are all holy. You are all G-d's children. There is no difference between one people and another. There is no one people on earth, holy and chosen. Every man is equally holy" (page 33). This call has been known to us down through the generations.

The Catholics even claimed that they are Israel – not physically the Jewish People, but Israel in the spirit. Still, they claim to be "the true Israel" – in Latin, "Verus Israel." This is the first, time, however, that the Catholics are proclaiming for all to hear that we have no right to Eretz Yisrael since we are not the Jewish People.

At the same time, the Pope worked behind the scenes, trying in every possible way to stymie the State of Israel's establishment. Subsequent Popes have tried, every way they could, to support Arab terror groups who wanted to destroy our country. Above I said, "The cat is out

of the bag". We are no longer the Chosen People. Once we were, but we no longer are. Hence, it's not our land. Obviously, according to the Bishops' decision, Jerusalem is not our capital, but a city holy to three faiths. And that, itself, isn't obvious. Why not make it an "international city"? After all, there is no Chosen People. Rather, all of mankind is a Chosen People.

Let me therefore announce in the name of the Jewish People and in the name of all of the honest part of the human race, and in the name of history, and in the name of G-d: We are the Jewish People, from time immemorial and forever, as long as there has been a heaven and an earth, as long as the sun has shown upon this Land.

Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #19

[adapted for middle-schoolers by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner's three-volume commentary on the siddur "Tefilat Amecha"]

In Baruch She-Amar, we say Hashem has mercy on the earth and on His creatures. Hashem made the whole world with mercy and with love. He made it that there would be enough of everything for everyone. And so when we discuss His mercy for the world, it is about everything. But when we discuss his mercy for his creation, it is about every individual. Here again we see that Hashem cares for each and every one of us. He has mercy on the world and on every creation in it - especially for us.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Giving a tenth during difficult financial times

Question: What should we do if I want to continue to give "Ma'aser Kesafim" (ten percent to tzedakah) as we have done in the past, but my husband is opposed on account of our difficult financial situation?

Answer: The question can be divided into two parts: 1. How does a couple make decisions? It is clear that a couple must make decisions together. This is not always simple since there are differences of opinion. It is natural that there are differences of opinion because people are different, faces are different, opinions are different, but you must reach a joint decision. Even when making a joint decision, one side does not have to change its opinion. Sometimes one side gives in and sometimes the other side gives in and sometimes there can be a compromise. It is not always possible to reach a compromise. For example, one person wants the children to learn at one school and the other wants them to learn at another school, it is not possible to learn in two different schools. It is possible to compromise on monetary issues. If someone wants to give 1000 shekels and another wants to give 200 shekels, there can be a compromise and give 600 shekels. You must therefore sit and discuss the issue until you reach a compromise. 2. Is someone who is having financial difficulties obligated to give "ma'aser kesafim"? See the book "Ahavat Chesed" of the Chafetz Chaim that giving ten percent for "ma'aser kesafim" is for people who have an average income, and someone who is wealthy should give more and someone who is poor should give less. Most halachic authorities point out that the Torah does not mention giving ten percent of one's income; it is only mentioned in connection to giving of one's produce. The practice of giving ten percent of one's income is a holy and supreme custom of Israel. When discussing tzedakah, the Torah says that one should give according to the need and one's ability. Regarding the need, there is obviously great need. The deciding factor is therefore one's ability. It is very difficult to determine one's ability. Our Sages thus fixed ten percent as the average ability. If one's

financial situation is difficult, he should give less. In sum: you and your husband should sit together in love, fraternity, peace, and friendship, and decide your ability together, "without making a vow," since your financial situation may change.

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

Dependence

A baby develops with a dependence towards his mother. At this age, it is positive. As one matures, it is negative. An adult should not be a burden on another. He must be independent. Even a marital relationship should be one of mutuality. Otherwise, it is unhealthy. But a baby's dependence is healthy. He feels like a part of his mother. In the womb, he literally was a part of her, but even after his birth, he is still dependent of her, and feels a part of his mother's existence. He overcomes nightmares, the dark and loneliness when he is held in his mother's arms. The pleasure is being in his mother's arms is indescribable.

The mother must also education herself that this dependence should also be pleasant for her and not a burden. The dependence is obviously a huge responsibility - the baby cries, is up all night, etc. – but often times she is the only one who can help, and this feeling should provide her with tremendous pleasure.

Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample:

Siyum

Q: Is one obligated to have a Siyum when completing a Massechet of the Gemara?

A: It is possible to do so on your own with a modest meal.

Prayer

Q: Why don't prayers ever help - as in healing someone who is ill?

A: They always help, but not like the magic of idol worship.

Geniza or Recycling

Q: Is it permissible to place Divrei Torah without Hashem's Name in the recycling?

A: They are all considered commentaries on the Torah and it is forbidden to treat them disrespectfully. They must be placed in the Geniza (Mishnah Berurah 154:24).

Taxes on Pidyon Ha-Ben

Q: Does a Cohain have to pay taxes on the money he receives for performing a Pidyon Ha-Ben?

A: No. It is a gift and happens rarely (Similarly, Ha-Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky would pay taxes in America on the Mishloach Manot he received - Shut Revivot Efraim 6:389, but this was a pious act, since the amount was negligent).

Disk in a Geniza

Q: Does a disk with Divrei Torah require being placed in a Geniza?

A: No. This is not the type of writing the Torah prohibits destroying (Shut Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 1:173).

Solar Eclipse

Q: Does one recite a blessing on a Solar Eclipse?

A: No.

Smoking

Q: Is it forbidden to smoke?

A: Yes. In Israel, 10,000 die a year from smoking. And thousands are sick with cancer from it (Shut Aseh Lecha Rav, beginning of vol. 2).

Non-Jewish Date on Tombstone

Q: Is it permissible to put the non-Jewish date on a tombstone?

A: No. Gesher Ha-Chaim (vol. 2 #25).

Shidduch

Q: Is it true that if someone makes 3 Shidduchim (marital matches) he is ensured a place in Gan Eden?

A: Every mitzvah gives a person a certain place of Gan Eden, and all the more so a Shidduch which is a greater mitzvah.

Dating

Q: I am going out with a young woman and she eats Glatt Kosher and I eat regular Kosher. If we get married, how should we act?

A: Decide together.

"We will not forget"

Q: Is there a problem with the saying: "We will not forget and we will not forgive" (created after the expulsion from Gush Katif)?

A: No, but don't make it the essence.

The Temple

Q: Is there a Mitzvah nowadays to build the Temple or will it descend from the Heavens?

A: It is a Mitzvah to build it after appointing a King and eradicating Amalek (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 1:1-2).

Perfume in a store

Q: Is it permissible to try on perfume in a store when I do not plan to buy it?

A: It is forbidden. Not only is it deceptive but theft.

Second Hole

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to get a second ear piercing?

A: Yes. Obviously, the earring must be modest, not eye-fetching, and this is true even for one hole.

Gun for a Woman

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to carry a gun?

A: If it is necessary to protect herself, her students, or her family (Shut Yechaveh Daat 5:55 and Shut Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 4:75 #3).

Tzedakah

Q: I give Tzedakah to an organization and I just read that the executive director earns a yearly salary of 375,000 shekels. This infuriates me. I have limited means and donate for the poor and not for him!

A: If this is true, it is truly a serious problem. To our distress, there are many such cases. One must check carefully.

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