



Parashat Vayeshev - #260

Ask Rav Aviner: mororly@bezeqint.net

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

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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... We are not "Modern Orthodox"

Question: It is argued that the religious are not modern, do not keep up with the times, and take hold of something old-fashioned and are unwilling to give it up. Is this so?

Answer: We are certainly modern, but not "Modern Orthodox." We are modern. We love science and technology. We know that they are vital for the building of our State. We are happy about every advance that takes place in society. We give thanks to G-d day and night for all of the innovations that the times bring: a state and an army, the return to Zion and the building up of the Land, agriculture and industry. We know that in all of these, G-d's hand is at work.

Yet when it comes to faith and Mitzvot, we feel no need to be among the innovators. Quite the contrary, we view with pride our taking the old path paved by Avraham and Moshe, our imbibing the ancient wine, carefully preserved. We have no pretenses or ambitions about reaching higher than Avraham. We see no need for any additions to the blessing received by Avraham's seed, in which they were called "G-d's beloved" (Yeshayahu 41:8). Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook writes, "The essence of Jewish life is summed up entirely in G-d's loving Israel. This trait is an accepted fact, without any need for further investigation or argument" (Igrot Ha-Re'eiya, vol. 1 p. 43).

We learn from elderly rabbis, who themselves learned from elderly rabbis, going all the way back to Moshe. We fill ourselves with the old, and out of the great quantity of old that we learn, we attain solutions for the new as well. Rashi comments on Devarim 11:13, "If you hearken to the old, you will [more easily find answers] to the new." In religious matters, every new thing arouses suspicion and requires precise examination. If it passes the test, it will be accepted with love. And what is the test? Clarification that the new thing is really old, and perhaps something old that has been forgotten. We undertake the yoke of Heaven to fulfill the

Mitzvah of settling the Land, of building up and consolidating the State. All of these are old things which have been postponed throughout our Exile, and now they are being reawaken, thanks to G-d's kindness.

In his speech at the Inauguration of Hebrew University, Maran Ha-Rav Kook made a fundamental distinction, saying that we may accept science from the Western World, but not its spirit. Quite the contrary, the spiritual must spread from here towards the west (Ma'amarei Ha-Re'eiya, p. 306). G-d's word which comes to us from the Torah and the prophets, by far transcends all the thoughts of western man. Obviously, we can probably find sparks of goodness in the west which we would be able to accept. As our Sages said, we have to learn from the reputable practices of the nations (Sanhedrin 39b). Yet under what conditions is this so? We must not add to the Torah what it does not contain, G-d forbid. Rather, we may avail ourselves of the style of the Western World in order to be able to explain rationally to those who need such explanations, a minuscule bit of the great light that has come down to us through prophecy (Agadot Ha-Re'eiya, ibid.).

Yet we are not students of western culture, and we must not force the Torah to disguise itself in western garb in order to receive a western stamp of approval. We certainly must not strive to make Jewish law fit the spirit of western thought. We are modern, but not "Modern Orthodox." We are faithful students of Moshe.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Shut Rabbenu Tam Tefillin

Tefillin according to Other Opinions

Q: Why do some people put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin along with Rashi Tefillin and not Tefillin according to other opinions?

A: Since some Geonim hold like Rabbenu Tam, which is not the case with other types of Tefillin (Only in extremely rare cases do some holy individuals put on other types of Tefillin. The Lubavitcher Rebbe put on four types of Tefillin: Rashi, Rabbenu Tam, Ra'avad [same order as Rabbenu Tam but placed the opposite way] and Shimusha Rabba [same as Rashi but opposite]. The Lubavitcher Rebbe was in doubt about this practice until the previous Rebbe, his father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz, told him to put on the four types of Tefillin and he would take the responsible for his practice "on his shoulders". Sha'arei Halachah U-Minhag vol. 1, pp. 73-77. See the correct order of putting them on in Ha-Yom Yom... 19 Menachem Av).

When Does One Begin

Q: One who puts on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin, when does he begin?

A: Some have the custom to begin to put them on immediately upon Bar Mitzvah just as Rashi Tefillin (Shut Divrei Yetziv 1:44). Some have the custom to put them on upon getting married (Piskei Teshuvot, Chapter 34 note #11). And some have the custom to begin upon the end of the first year of marriage (Piskei Teshuvot ibid.).

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