



Parashat Vayigash - #262

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On the Haftarah... A United Nation

[Yechezkel 37:15-28]

We are a Nation who loves unity and hates dispute. To our great distress, we have been torn apart by dissention for a long time. In our Haftarah, the prophet Yechezkel comes to comfort us: "Harmony will return. The word of Hashem came to me, saying: Now you, son of man, take for yourself one piece of wood and write upon it 'For Yehudah and for the Children of Israel, his comrades,' and take one piece of wood and write upon it 'For Yosef, the Tribe of Ephraim and all the House of Israel, his comrades.' Bring them close to you, one to the other, like one piece of wood, and they will become united in your hand. When the children of your people say to you, saying: 'Will you not tell us what these things are to you,' say to them, 'Thus said Hashem G-d: Behold, I am taking the wood of Yosef which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel, his comrades, and I am placing them and him together with the wood of Yehudah; and I will make them into one piece of wood, and they will become one in My hand'" (Yechezkel 37:15-19).

The terrible divide between Yosef and his brothers ended after numerous evils. The father's beloved son, a young genius who absorbed only theoretical wisdom, inherited his brothers' criticism for himself: "Yosef brought a bad report to their father" (Bereshit 37:2). Fearing that they would be pushed out, as happened to Yishmael and Esav, the brothers make the horrible decision to assassinate Yosef, but before doing so engage in the lesser evil of selling him into slavery. We have to admit that love and understanding did not reign in Yaakov's house.

As is known, there were continuing disputes during the course of our history between the descendant of Yehudah and the descendant of Ephraim. After King Shaul's death,

the war of inheritance continued to rage between David, a descendant of Yehudah, and the inheritors of Shaul, the descendants of Binyamin. After King Shlomo's reign, the kingdom split into two Jewish States: the Kingdom of Yehudah and the Kingdom of Israel.

The civil wars between these two groups were numerous, and their fundamental fraternity did not prevent blood from flowing. The Nation of Israel paid dearly for war between Achaz, King of Yehudah, and Pekach ben Remalyahu, King of Israel, in which one hundred and twenty thousand soldiers from Yehudah fell on the cursed battlefield (Divrei Ha-Yamim 2 28:6). In the end, both kingdoms were exiled, one after the other.

There is room to believe that all of the suffering of the joint exile would bring them closer together, but this is only partially true. And there is certainly room to expect that the return to Israel would be accompanied by reconciliation, but things are not so simple. A new dispute appeared between the Secular Zionists and the Ultra-Orthodox, or in the terminology of 120 years ago – the new settlement and the old settlement. The Zionists worked for the sake of the national revival of the Jewish Nation in its Land, while the Ultra-Orthodox were interested solely in faithful observance to the laws of the Torah. Intense mutual enmity reigned between the two camps and no less severe was their separation due to of lacking of caring and a big dose of misunderstanding.

In his eulogy for Dr. Theodore Herzl, Maran Ha-Rav Kook explained that these two streams are spiritual descendants of Yosef – a man of standing, statesmanship and economic wisdom – and Yehudah – a holy person responsible for the inner treasures of the Nation of Israel. According to his opinion, a spark of Mashiach ben David (Messiah, descendant of David, who is from the line of Yehudah) is hidden within the Ultra-Orthodox and a spark of Mashiach ben Yosef (Messiah, descendant of Yosef) is hidden within the Zionists (see Sukkah 52a-b for a discussion of the two Messiahs). The premature death of Theodore Herzl, the great leader of Zionism, contains to some extent the death of Mashiach ben Yosef following his severance from Mashiach ben David. Maran Ha-Rav Kook emphasized that this dichotomy is a disaster for both camps, and it is essential that everyone work for the sake of national unity. Detached from religion, the Zionist movement will find itself as a body without a soul. And Faith without a base in historical reality will turn into a virtual floating in air (Ma'amrei Ha-Re'eyah, pp. 94-99). Today we can rejoice because we have progressed in the right direction of bring these ideals together - but much work still remains to be done

We now find ourselves in the final battle and we are not so distant from a joyous tomorrow: "And speak to them: Thus said Hashem G-d: Behold, I am taking the Children of Israel from among the nations to which they have gone, and I will gather them from all around and bring them to their soil. I will make them into a single

nation in the Land in the mountains of Israel's hills, and a single king will be king for them all; and they shall no longer be two nations, no longer divided into two kingdoms again" (Yechezkel 37:21-22).

Rav Aviner on... Disciples of Moshe

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Miketz 5773 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: What is the right way to learn Torah? Should I try to understand the words of our Sages and the commentaries, or should I clarify what I, myself, have to say and what seems right to me?

Answer: The main point is to acknowledge and believe that G-d's intellect is infinitely above our own humble human intellect. That is the necessary approach for our Torah learning to be real. How can my impoverished intellect be exalted enough to have any contact with the Divine intellect? It is through humbly and reverently understanding my own limitations. Yet, if I do not relate reverently to absolute divine truth, if I try a bit to address it on its own level, then I am not learning the truth of Torah, but only studying my own thoughts and feelings...

That is the question -- am I thinking, speaking and innovating, or am I listening?

Moshe's greatness was not so much that he came up with his own innovative ideas, but that he listened to the word of G-d. Once and for all, Moshe constructed the foundation of listening to G-d. As Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook wrote: "Man's greatness, what makes him rise above all that is exalted, is his opening himself up to hear G-d's voice, to accept G-d's word, not to innovate with his own ideas, not to set forth a vision, not to become entrenched in the limited resources possessed by man and by every other creature, but to accept. Moshe, the greatest prophet, the most humble man on earth, achieved this exaltedness entirely by listening to G-d, and that listening was not tainted at all by the darkness of man's limitations. The way he listened to G-d established forever how man should do that" (Olat Re'eiyah 2, 159).

What most epitomized Moshe greatness was his listening to the word of G-d, devoid of any influences from without that could deplete that greatness. He was free of all the pettiness of man's individuality and temporality, thus enabling him to exalt himself totally to the eternal, infinite Divine truth. If I am humble, I learn Torah in order to try to exalt my intellect to that of the Torah. Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook would explain that one must strive to bring one's intellect closer to that of the explanation by the Tosafot commentary, and not to try to bring the Tosafot commentary closer to one's own intellect. After all, the words of the Tosafot are G-dly. They constitute Divine intuition.

But if I try to clarify what I say and not what our Sages said, then I must first define who "I" am. After all, I am just the product of a certain education and environment. If it is I who determines the Torah's meaning, then I transform it from holy to profane. Then it is no longer G-d's word. It is I. Then I no longer have Torah.

It all depends on my humbly believing that Torah is divine, far loftier than all of man's thoughts.

We certainly have nothing against secular knowledge. But the secular must be informed and illuminated by the sacred. If, however, I arrogantly raise myself up above the Torah, engaging in intellectual inquiry or merely trying to satisfy my emotions, and I turn the holy into the profane, then I am spiritually dead. The purity of my faith has then been robbed from my soul.

When this approach gains sway, the result is spiritual destruction.

In contrast to paganism, which involves man's listening to himself, Moshe opened the gate for the entire human race to heed G-d's word.

The primary condition for achieving any contact with the Torah is absolute humility, as Maharal explains at the beginning of Netiv Ha-Torah. Otherwise, I don't see the Torah. I only see myself. "Moshe was pleased with the gift bestowed on him, for You did call him a faithful servant. A glorious crown did You place on his head as he stood before You on Mount Sinai. He brought down in his hand the two tablets of stone" (Shabbat Morning Shemoneh Esreh) "The word of G-d – 'Behold, the day is coming when I will send a famine in the Land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of Hashem.'" (Amos 8:11)

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Shut Rabbenu Tam Tefillin

Blessing

Q: Should one recite the blessing for putting on Tefillin when putting on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin?

A: Some say that one should recite the blessing just as one does when putting on Rashi Tefillin (Sha'arei Teshuvah 25:1), but the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 34:2) rules that one only recites the blessing on Rashi Tefillin since the basic halachah follows Rashi, and therefore no blessing is recited for Rabbenu Tam Tefillin (Maharil brought in the Beit Yosef ibid.). One should have both pairs of Tefillin in mind when reciting the blessing over Rashi Tefillin (Ashel Avraham Mi-Botshatsh #34).

Accidentally Reciting Blessing on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin

Q: If someone accidentally says the blessing for Tefillin and puts on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin instead of Rashi Tefillin, does he have to say another blessing when putting on the Rashi Tefillin?

A: There is a dispute. Some say that one must recite a blessing, since one does NOT have intention for both pairs of Tefillin during his blessing (Shut Chaim She'al #1). And some say he need not recite another blessing since he DID have intention for both (Shut Divrei Chaim, Yoreh Deah 2:82 in the name of the Chozeh of Lyblin. The Shamash of the Belzer Rebbe – Ha-Rav Aharon Rokeach – once accidentally gave the Rebbe Rabbenu Tam Tefillin instead of Rashi Tefillin. When it was discovered, the Shamash was greatly distressed. The Rebbe comforted him and said: Rabbenu Tam acts so that every Jew will also put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin and will once in his life accidentally recite the blessing over his Tefillin. Kedushato Shel Aharon, vol. 1 p. 579).

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