

# IT'S ALL IN THE DELIVERY

*by Shlomo Katz*

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Today's Learning:

Bava Batra 7:3-4

Orach Chaim 554:15-17

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Metzia 30

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Kilayim 42

As the parashah opens, Yehuda addresses Yosef: "If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger flare up at your servant - for you are like Pharaoh."

Rashi comments: "The simple meaning [of 'you are like Pharaoh'] is, 'You are as important in my eyes as Pharaoh is.' The deeper meaning is, 'You will suffer from tzara'at because you have taken Binyamin, just as Pharaoh did when he took my ancestor Sarah.' Alternatively, 'Just as Pharaoh does not keep his promises, so you do not'."

R' Zvi Yechezkel Michelsohn z"l (Poland; 1863-1943) suggests that Yehuda's words and Rashi's comments can be understood as follows: Until this point, Yosef's brothers addressed the Egyptian viceroy (Yosef) through an interpreter, as described in last week's parashah. Yehuda thought that perhaps the problems that they were experiencing resulted from the translator's not translating correctly, and he therefore said, "May your servant speak a word in my lord's ears." He explained (as

Rashi writes), "If I were to say the words, 'For you are like Pharaoh,' your translator could render that in several different ways. He might say, 'You are as important in my eyes as Pharaoh is.' Or he might say, 'You are destined to suffer from tzara'at because you have taken Binyamin, just as Pharaoh did when he took my ancestor Sarah.' Alternatively, the translator might interpret: 'Just as Pharaoh does not keep his promises, so you do not.' For this reason, I must speak to you directly so that your anger will not flare up at your servant."

R' Michelsohn observes: There is an important lesson here for those who relate, and those who hear, lashon hara. A small change in inflection or tone can change a phrase's meaning, even if the words themselves have not changed. [Thus, even a story whose words are completely true can be told in a way that makes it a lie.] (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

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*"Therefore, tell my father about all my kavod / glory in Egypt and all that you saw; but you must hurry, and bring my father down here." (45:13)*

R' Chaim Meir Braun z"l (rabbi in Brooklyn in the 1950's) asks: Generally, the Torah uses the verb "to tell" ("le'hagid") to connote speaking in strong terms or delivering bad news, while the verb to "say" ("laimor") is used to describe a gentler message. If so, why did Yosef instruct his brothers to "tell" their father of Yosef's glory? Also, why did Yosef use the expression, "bring my father down here," rather than, "bring my father to me"?

R' Braun explains: Yosef knew that his father would be reluctant to leave Eretz Yisrael and move to Egypt. Although G-d had decreed that Avraham's "offspring [would] be aliens in a land not their own . . . for four hundred years," Yaakov hoped that this decree would be fulfilled in Eretz Yisrael, which, at that time, was not their own. But Yosef knew that Yaakov's wish was not to be fulfilled; his father and his family would have to come "down here" to Egypt to finish out the 400 years. [This answers the second question above.] Therefore Yosef said, "Tell my father" - give him the harsh news.

R' Braun adds: The pshat / simple meaning of "kavod" is "glory," as we have translated above. However, the root "kvd" also can mean "heavy," and it can refer to a "heavy heart." Yosef said, "Tell my father of all my kavod / glory," but tell him that I have a heavy heart because of it, for I know that G-d gave me this wealth and power in order to cause my family to join me in this exile. (Toldot Chaim)

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*"He said, 'I am the God -- God of your father. Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up; and Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes.'" (46:4)*

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) explains: In these verses, G-d revealed to Yaakov the secret of the Jewish people's exile: Only in Egypt would Yaakov's descendants grow into a "great nation."

Do not worry that the teachings of your grandfather Avraham and the hopes of your father Yitzchak will be forgotten in Egypt, Hashem told Yaakov. To the contrary, your great-grandson Moshe will develop in Egypt into the greatest prophet the world has ever known.

Hashem further told Yaakov: Perhaps you are skeptical about the future that I foretell. How can a person such as Moshe develop in Egypt? Do not be skeptical. "Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes" - Yosef, who left your house as a child and who became a full-fledged tzaddik in Egypt, is proof that your descendants can grow into a great nation there. (Yemei Zikaron p.98)

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*"[Yosef] appeared before him, fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck excessively." (46:29)*

Rashi comments: Yaakov, however, did not fall upon Yosef's neck, nor did he kiss him. Our Rabbis say that the reason was that Yaakov was reciting the Shema.

Numerous commentaries ask: Why was Yaakov reciting the Shema? If it was the time to recite the Shema, why did Yosef not do so? If, on the other hand, it was not the time for Shema, why did Yaakov recite it? R' Moshe Shick z"l ("Maharam Shick"; Hungary; 1805-1879) answers that it was not the time for reciting the Shema, and Yaakov recited it for a different reason. He explains:

One of the basic lessons of the verse Shema Yisrael is that "Hashem is Elokeinu." By saying Shema, we acknowledge that there is only One G-d, despite the fact that we see various manifestations of Him, sometimes merciful and sometimes strict. (The Name "Hashem" represents G-d's Attribute of Mercy, while the Name "Elokim" represents G-d's Attribute of Justice.) Although we rarely understand how this is so, what we perceive as G-d's strictness is ultimately for our own good; in the long-run, it is merciful.

For twenty-two years, the number of years that Yosef was missing, Yaakov saw only the strict side of G-d's actions. But when he saw Yosef's royal entourage, he understood that Yosef's disappearance was part of Hashem's plan for saving Yaakov and his family from famine. Ultimately, everything that had happened was for the best; "Hashem is Elokeinu."

Realizing this, Yaakov recited the Shema. Yosef, however, had already learned this lesson when he was freed from jail and appointed viceroy. He had no reason to recite the Shema at this moment. (Maharam Shick Al Ha'Torah)

R' Asher Zelig Schwartz z"l (Romania; 1920's) offers another answer to the above question:

In verse 28, immediately preceding Yaakov's reunion with Yosef, we read, "[Yaakov] sent Yehuda ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen." (Rashi explains that Yaakov sent Yehuda to establish a yeshiva for the arriving immigrants.) In verse 30, immediately preceding Yaakov's reunion with Yosef, we read, "Then Yisrael said to Yosef, 'Now I can die, after my having seen your face'." The connection between verses 28 (establishing a yeshiva), 29 (reciting the Shema), and 30

(being willing to die) is as follows:

The gemara states: "If someone meets the yetzer hara and cannot prevail against it, he should drag it to the bet midrash [where he should study Torah]. If he thus defeats the yetzer hara, good! If not, he should recite the Shema. If he thus defeats the yetzer hara, good! If not, he should imagine the day of death." Says R' Schwartz: Yaakov was afraid that seeing Yosef in all his glory would make him (Yaakov) feel pride, or would bring out some other improper feeling. Yaakov therefore took all of the steps suggested by the gemara: he established a bet midrash, he recited the Shema, and he imagined the day of death.

R' Schwartz adds: If imagining the day of death is an effective means of conquering the yetzer hara, why is it only the fall-back strategy? Why does the gemara suggest first learning Torah and reciting Shema? The answer is that we are expected to serve Hashem with joy, something to which the third strategy does not lend itself. (Bet Asher)

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## **R' Isser Yehuda Unterman z"l**

### **Part II**

In 1923, R' Unterman was chosen to be rabbi of Liverpool, England. He immediately learned fluent English, an unusual achievement for an Eastern European rabbi of that generation, and quickly became acclimated to his position. He reached out successfully to the youth of his community, another rare accomplishment, and he united all of Liverpool's congregations under an umbrella organization that represented the interests of the community at large. Also, he strengthened the local yeshiva by bringing new students from Germany and elsewhere, and he established a Talmud Torah in Liverpool.

During the German air raids of World War II, when large numbers of city residents sought the safety of the countryside, R' Unterman refused to abandon his post. He did, however, pay regular visits to his congregants who were dispersed among various villages and to Jews who were interned in camps for foreign nationals, and he also established a home for refugee children in one of the small towns outside Liverpool. On top of all these activities, he earned a name as one of the foremost poskim / halachic authorities in England.

In 1946, R' Unterman was elected rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yaffo, succeeding R' Avigdor Moshe Amiel. (Like his successor, R' Amiel was a student of R' Shimon Shkop.) In Tel Aviv, as in Liverpool, R' Unterman worked to strengthen Torah institutions and public services, including batei din / rabbinical courts. He also established a kollel by the name of "Shevet Yehuda." And, R' Unterman served as a member of Israel's Chief Rabbinate Council, so that his influence was felt outside of Tel Aviv as well.

In 1959, R' Unterman was elected Israel's Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi, succeeding R' Yitzchak Isaac Halevi Herzog. As Chief Rabbi, R' Unterman took full advantage of his new position to advocate for

various issues, especially for understanding between Israel's religious and non-religious populations. He also wrote many teshuvot / responsa addressing contemporary halachic problems such as conversion, illegitimacy, heart transplants, the definition of death, abortion, Shabbat observance and shemittah. (Many of these responsa are printed in R' Unterman's work, Shevet Yehuda.)

R' Unterman died in Yerushalayim on 24 Shevat 5736 / 1976.

*Sponsored by: The Rutstein family, in memory of father and grandfather,  
Nachman ben Asher Halevi a"h (Nathan Rutstein)*

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