

FORGIVE AND FORGET

by Rabbi Berel Wein

Reunions are often times painful and disappointing. People change, become older and are rarely the same as we remember. The reunion of Yosef and his brothers as described in this week's parsha is an especially difficult and painful one. Yosef's brothers are deeply mortified at seeing him as the viceroy of Egypt, the man to whom they have bowed numerous times. Yosef's dreams have been fulfilled and the brothers find themselves guilty of a great wrongdoing - of having wrongly sold a brother into slavery and possible death. Yosef is also disappointed in the reunion. He now realizes that the gulf between his brothers and him will never quite be completely bridged. He occupies himself mainly with his father's needs while his relationship with his brothers is not discussed in the Torah. Later, after the death of Yaakov, the scars of mistrust between Yosef and his brothers are reopened when the brothers, afraid that Yosef will yet exact revenge upon them, tell him an obvious untruth about their father's instructions not to harm them.

In fact, Yosef's demeanor throughout the entire process of reunion with his brothers is one of weeping and sadness. His reunion with the brothers is perhaps a vindication of his dreams and his true dominant stature within the family but he is hardly in a triumphant mood. Too many memories and events cross his mind and the past can be forgiven but it is never completely forgotten or can its events be undone.

The great Chasidic masters, among other commentators and Torah scholars, state that the rift between Yosef and his brothers is implanted within the DNA of Israel and that every dispute thereafter in the long history of disputes within the Jewish world stems from this original bitter disagreement about the place of Yosef in the founding family of Israel. This being the case, even after reunions, reconciliations and changed circumstances that alter the basis for the original dispute, the residue of that dispute still remains within the Jewish community. The Jewish people and its body politic have a long memory and even when history and events seemingly settle the matter, the scar caused by the original dispute is still quite recognizable.

Much of the division and strife that is visible in our current Jewish world reflects dispute that are centuries old. And now that the Jewish people, so to speak, have had a fateful reunion here with one another in the Land of Israel with its great mix of different Jews thrust together rather suddenly into one small society, the reunion is not without pain, recrimination and unpleasant memories. We pray that we will forgive each other our past wrongs and errors of judgment and behavior. It would be a great accomplishment if we not only forgave but also forgot a lot of the past events of the Jewish

exile that gave rise to great friction and enmity within the Jewish world. Yosef and his brothers are finally fully reconciled on the great breastplate of Aharon, the Kohein Gadol/High Priest of Israel. Aharon is the symbol of peace and love for all Jews. We should attempt to fashion that breastplate once again for our society and for its eternal well-being.

Shabat shalom. Text Copyright © 2006 by [Rabbi Berel Wein](#) and **[Torah.org](#)**