

WHAT IS THE CRYING ALL ABOUT?

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1057 – Lashon Kodesh: The Uniqueness of the Hebrew Language. Good Shabbos!

What is the Crying All About?

When Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers, he gives them instructions to go back and tell their father of the great honor he has in Mitzrayim. He requests that *Yaakov* bring down the entire family to live in Mitzrayim and promises that he will provide for them. Next, the *pasuk* says: "Then he fell upon his brother Binyomin's neck and wept; and Binyomin wept upon his neck." [Bereshis 45:14]

As we know, in contrast to all the other brothers who were only half-brothers to Yosef, Binyomin was Yosef's only full sibling. A special kinship existed between them, so when they finally embraced, they fell on each other's necks and they cried.

Rashi quotes an interesting teaching of Chazal that sheds light on the nature of their respective crying: Yosef cried "over the two Batei Mikdash [Temples] that are destined to be in the portion of the Tribe of Binyomin, and whose end is to be destroyed." And Binyomin cried "over the *Mishkan* of Shiloh which is destined to be in the portion of Yosef (e.g. – Ephraim who is descended from Yosef) and whose end is to be destroyed."

This was not merely two long separated brothers crying tears of happiness at being reunited after so many years. The tears were a result of the *Ruach HaKodesh* [Divine Prophetic Spirit] that each one possessed, which led them to cry over the spiritual tragedies that would take place in the future in each other's territory in *Eretz Yisrael*.

A comment on this Medrash cited by Rashi is in order:

Why at this moment in time in particular did both Yosef and Binyomin think about *Churban HaBayis* [the future destruction of the House of G-d]? Neither one even existed yet! Perhaps one of two approaches can be suggested here.

There is a startling comment from the Sefas Emes. Yosef had been putting his brothers through the wringer for the last two *parshios*. Yosef made them jump through hoops – with this condition and that accusation. This was a traumatic, terrible experience for Yosef's brothers. Someone could view

this as revenge. "Yosef is giving back as good as he got. He wants to torture them!" Finally, when the *pasuk* says that Yosef could no longer withhold himself and he broke down to them, and announced "I am Yosef", we say to ourselves – "At long last, this is over. Yosef is no longer torturing his brothers."

The Sefas Emes has an entirely different take on this narrative. He says "Heaven forbid! Yosef was not getting back at his brothers. This was not an issue of revenge." Yosef was trying to provide his brothers with *kaparah* [atonement] for all that they did to him. They needed to atone for what they did to him, the *Sinas Achim* [hatred of brothers], and the extreme form of sibling rivalry. In fact, we still need to atone for it. That is why to this day on Yom Kippur when we talk about the Ten Martyrs (*Asarah Harugei Malchus*), we begin the story with mention that the Roman Emperor began his assault on the Ten Martyrs by telling them "I remember what your ancestors did to their own brother." On Yom Kippur, even now, we still need to atone for the sin of Yosef's brothers.

The Sefas Emes explains that had Yosef been able to hold out longer, not break down, and not reveal himself ("*Ani Yosef*") yet, they could have completed the atonement and we would still have the *Beis HaMikdash*. This is precisely the opposite of the way we usually understand the story. We hear "I am Yosef" and we think "Thank G-d! The ordeal is over!"

The Sefas Emes understands just the opposite: What a tragedy. Had Yosef been able to continue, the *kaparah* for *sinas achim* would be complete, our eternal punishment for the matter would not have been necessary, and the *Beis HaMikdash* would have never been destroyed. Can you imagine that?

Perhaps this is why Yosef suddenly cried over the *Churban Habayis* eventually occurring in Binyomin's portion. Yosef was bemoaning the fact that he was not successful in fully executing his plan. "I could not do it! And because of that the atonement is not yet complete, and they will yet need to pay for this sin with the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash." Unfortunately, because of this, we are still suffering to this very day.

This is one approach to answering the question of why specifically now the thoughts to mourn the future destruction of the Batei Mikdash were triggered.

The other approach, again, presumes that Yosef was trying to undo the damage of the *sinas achim* [brotherly hatred]. We always talk about the fact that there are two opposite concepts: "*sinas chinam*" [undeserved hatred] and "*ahavas chinam*" [undeserved love]. "*Ahavas chinam*" implies thinking about the situation of the other person rather than thinking about oneself. Here, Yosef, when he looks at Binyomin says "Do you know what bothers me? I am bothered by your loss – the destruction of the *Kodesh Kadashim* in your portion!" Similarly, when Binyomin sees Yosef, he too says, "I am bothered by your loss – the destruction of the *Mishkan* in the portion of Ephraim." This is the path to repairing the problem and the sin of sibling rivalry and hatred between brothers – to stop focusing on oneself and to look upon the problems of the other person.

As to the last comment in Rashi – that Binyomin cried over the *Mishkan* in Shilo that was in Yosef's

portion and was destined to be destroyed – I wish to share the following thought I saw in a sefer called *Milchamos Yehudah*:

After the *Mishkan* in Shilo was destroyed, it was again resurrected, and first put in Nov and later in Giveon. So even after the *Mishkan* ceased to exist in Shilo, it had a rebirth in two other locations. If that is the case, how can we compare the "destruction of *Mishkan* Shilo" to the two destructions of the *Beis HaMikdash*? After the destruction of the second *Beis HaMikdash*, we still do not have a *Beis HaMikdash* two thousand years later! It is a loss that has been irreplaceable for two millennia. *Mishkan* Shilo, on the other hand, was a temporary loss that was eventually restored in Nov and Giveon. What is the comparison?

The *Milchamos Yehudah* writes that there is more here than merely the loss of one *Mishkan* and the replacement with another one. *Mishkan* Shilo had a sanctity that no other *Mishkan* or *Beis HaMikdash* ever had. Any person who could see the *Mishkan* in Shilo – no matter where he was – could eat *kodshim kalim* [sacred meat of 'lighter' sanctity]. People could otherwise only eat *kodshim kalim* in the confines of the *Beis HaMikdash*. However, *Mishkan* Shilo had an amazing quality to it. Even if I lived fifteen miles away from Shilo but up on a hill, if I could see the *Mishkan*, I could eat *kodshim kalim*. This was not true in any of the other Batei Mikdash.

Why was this so? It was because Shilo was in the portion of the Tribe of Yosef, and Yosef has a special merit regarding the eyes. What does that mean? When Yosef was tempted by the wife of Potiphar, he turned the other way and did not succumb. This is why – in *Yaakov's* deathbed blessing to Yosef – he says, "A son of grace is Yosef, a son of grace to the **eye**..." [Bereshis 49:22] Yosef guarded his eyes and as a result of that he did not succumb to the enticements of Potiphar's wife." That is why, as long as *Mishkan* Shilo could be seen with someone's eyes, the person was allowed to eat sanctified meat. This is through the merit of the *tzadik* Yosef.

So not only is this something that applied only to the *Mishkan* in Shilo, but as long as the *Mishkan* stood in Shilo the merit of Yosef was still present, and *Klal Yisrael* did not have a problem with their wandering eyes that we all suffer from today. This was the *zechus* of Yosef. When *Mishkan* Shilo was destroyed, this ability to control our wandering eyes was lost with it. Yes, the *Mishkan* was rebuilt in Nov and Giveon, but they were not located in the portion of Yosef, and that *zechus* of Yosef to help us guard our eyes, never returned.

The Egyptians Hated Shepherds, but...

There is an old French expression which translates "The more things change, the more they stay the same." The following is an example of that.

The Torah teaches "And it shall be, when Pharaoh summons you, and says, 'What is your occupation?' Then you shall say, 'Your servants have been cattlemen from our youth till now, both we and our forefathers,' so that you may settle in the land of Goshen, because every shepherd is an abomination to Egypt." [Bereshis 46:33-34]. The brothers were shepherds and Yosef instructed them

that when Pharaoh asks them what they do for a living, they should respond that they have been cattlemen from the time of their youth onwards. There was a plan behind this – so that they could live in the Land of Goshen. Yosef wanted the children of *Yaakov* to be separate from the Egyptians.

The Egyptians abhorred the whole profession of shepherding because they looked at sheep as their gods. This is why there was such self-sacrifice involved in the Israelites openly taking lambs and slaughtering them for the Korbon Pesach. The fact that shepherds would slaughter and eat sheep was an abomination to the Egyptians. Therefore, the plan was for the Egyptians to isolate the Israelites in *Eretz Goshen*, so they would have nothing to do with them.

The brothers did what Yosef instructed, and when they came before Pharaoh and he asked them about their livelihood, they told him that they are shepherds. They explained that they came to Egypt because due to the famine, there was no longer grazing grounds for their cattle and they requested to settle in the Land of Goshen. "We understand the sensitivity here. We are shepherds. Sheep are your gods. You cannot stand this profession. Let us all move to Goshen where we will be out of sight, out of mind, and not offend anyone."

Pharaoh acquiesces to their request. "The land of Egypt is before you—in the best of the land, settle your father and your brothers; let them settle in the land of Goshen, and if you know that there are capable men among them, appoint them as managers of the livestock that which is mine." [Bereshis 47:6].

Pharaoh has sheep? What happened to the fact that these are the gods of the Egyptians? What happened to the idea that the Egyptians abhor shepherds? All of a sudden, Pharaoh is asking Yosef to provide him top notch shepherding talent for his own set of cattle?

This is the story of all dictators. There is one type of practice and set of rules for the masses, for the plebeians, the proletariat, and there is another type of behavior for the rulers. This is what we saw when the Communists were in power. The people cannot have cars, they cannot have this and they cannot have that. However, do you think the rulers of Russia lived with that deprivation? We see today that the people in North Korea are starving. They literally have nothing to eat. Do you think that Kim Jung Un is suffering? He has a taste for good Scotch. The people are starving while he sits there having a L'Chaim with schnaps!

So how do we explain that? The people are suffering! The answer is that even when "the people" are suffering, the rulers know how to take care of themselves. This goes all the way back to Biblical times. Pharaoh says "Oh yes, stay in *Eretz Goshen*. The people cannot stand cattlemen. Sheep are their gods! However, by the way, I have a personal flock and I am looking for a few good men. Give me your best shepherds!"

This is an example of "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Vayigash is provided below:

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