

***Yad Avraham Institute***  
**Weekly Torah Commentaries Series**  
**Portion of Vayigash**

December 24, 2009

**Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita***

<b><i>Inside This Week's Edition</i></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
<b><i>1. Insensitivity in Essence is Synonymous with Cruelty</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>2. Meriting the Key Element for Leadership</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>3. Weeping, an Outgrowth of Realization</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>4. Guaranteeing the State of Existence</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>5. Yosef, Qualified Provider for the Jewish People</i></b>	<b>5</b>

**About the Yad Avraham Institute**

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

If you would like to receive this Weekly Torah Commentary Series by email

Please call 212-371-9555 or email:

[info@yadavraham.org](mailto:info@yadavraham.org)

**TUNE IN TO OUR LIVE VIDEO BROADCAST OF CLASSES**

**And over**

60,000 online classes 24 hours a day

Yad Avraham Institute  
New York  
December 24, 2009

B"H

## Vayigash

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

### ***1. Insensitivity in Essence is Synonymous with Cruelty***

The Torah states, **“Yosef said to them (his brothers) on the third day, ‘...let one of your brothers be imprisoned in your place of confinement...Then bring your youngest brother to me so your words will be verified...’** Yosef, the Viceroy of Egypt, imprisoned one of his brothers while the others went back to Canaan and return with Binyamin. At that moment, they reflected upon their tenuous predicament and said, **“Indeed we are guilty concerning our brother (Yosef) inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed; that is why this anguish has come upon us.”**

Sforno in his commentary explains that Yosef's brothers realized at that moment that their insensitivity towards their brother's heartfelt supplications was in essence was cruelty. Although they believed that they had rendered a proper judgment concerning their brother, that he was a pursuer (*rodeif*) and deserved to be killed. He would ultimately cause their demise through his tale bearing to their father Yaakov. Nevertheless, they should have had mercy on him when he pleaded not to be sold into slavery. Because they had acted cruelly towards their brother Yosef, G'd (measure for measure) brought upon them in kind a heathen who was acting cruelly towards them by accusing them of being spies and demanding that they must bring before him Binyamin.

If in fact their evaluation of their brother's behavior was correct and indeed he was a pursuer and consequently putting their lives in jeopardy, why are they considered to be cruel. They did not see sufficient reason to heed his supplications? Their understanding of Yosef as a “pursuer” was not that he would actually attempt to physically bring harm upon them. But rather, they were concerned that his negative tale bearing would discredit them to their father Yaakov, who would ultimately curse them, which is the equivalent of death. However, if they

had shown mercy to their brother Yosef and had been sensitive to his pleas, they would have merited Divine Protection that their father should always see them for what they truly were.

Rambam writes in the Laws of Teshuvah, “If one approaches you for forgiveness with heartfelt remorse, you should forgive him. One should not be cruel towards his fellow and should be easily appeased to forgive. When one asks for forgiveness you should forgive him wholeheartedly and willingly, even if you were pained and victimized by him many times. You should not seek revenge or harbor ill feelings against him. Because this is the way of the children of Israel. One should not be cruel, but rather forgiving. However, the gentiles who are referred to by the verse as having a covering over their hearts (*arlei leiv*) they do not act in this manner. Their claim and anger remains forever...Because they are not willing to forgive, their seed is not permitted to intermingle with that of the Jew.”

Rambam writes in the Laws of Fasting, “When one cries out to G'd for the sake of repentance and the shofar is blown, it will cause His Mercy to come upon the Jew and remove him from his state of difficulty and suffering. However, if one does not cry out to G'd and believes that his predicament is due to happenstance, then he is considered to be cruel. Because the individual does not have the sensitivity to understand that his suffering is from G'd, he is classified as ‘cruel.’ He will continue to do evil deeds which will bring upon him further suffering because he is unable to repent.”

The Midrash tells us that there is no nation in the world that has been able to withstand G'd's punishments and not be destroyed, other than the Jewish people. Despite the degree of punishment and suffering the Jewish people have remained intact. This is because when G'd's wrath comes upon the nations of the world, rather than recognize that their punishment is a consequence of their failings and evil ways, they choose to defy and rebel against Him rather than submitting to His Will. They are therefore destroyed. In contrast, when the Jewish people

are faced with suffering, they become introspective and recognize that the cause of their predicament is due to their own failing. They are thus motivated to repent and correct their ways. This is because the Jew possesses the characteristic of not being cruel and hard-hearted.

Yosef's brothers understood that they were being treated in an unreasonable and cruel manner because they had acted similarly towards their brother Yosef. Had they shown him mercy by heeding his heartfelt pleas they would have not fallen into the clutches of the Viceroy. Thus, the issue of needing to bring their youngest brother Binyamin before the Viceroy would not have come about.

## ***2. Meriting the Key Element for Leadership***

The Torah tells us that Yosef had instructed his servant to fill his brothers' saddlebags with grain and provisions for their return to Canaan. However, Yosef instructed that his personal silver goblet should be hidden within the sack of Binyamin. After they had departed from Egypt, Yosef had them pursued. He had accused them of stealing his goblet. After their belongings were searched, Yosef's goblet was found in the saddlebag of Binyamin. The Torah states regarding Yosef's brothers, **"They rent their garments. Each one reloaded his donkey and they returned to the city."** Renting one's garment is an expression of deep grieving and mourning. Why did Yosef's brothers rent their garments? What was the source of their grieving?

The Midrash explains that when they had rent their garments they had done so because of the fate of Binyamin. They believed that since the goblet was discovered in his sack, he would not be returned to their father. The irretrievable loss of Binyamin would destroy their father Yaakov, as he had said, "It is as if I lost all three on one day." The Midrash states, "After they had rent their garments, G'd had said, 'Initially when you had sold your brother Yosef into slavery and brought your father his blood-soaked tunic you caused Yaakov to rent his clothing unnecessarily (because Yosef was alive), identically you shall rent your garments without proper cause (because their predicament was only a charade that was staged by Yosef.) Rav Yitzchak says, because the brothers rent their garments for the sake of Binyamin, Mordechai will rent his garments (in the future) for the sake of the Jewish people. As it states, 'When he became aware of the decree (to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child), he rent his garments and wore sackcloth and ash.'" Why did Binyamin merit a descendant who would demonstrate his

grief on behalf of the Jewish people, when it was actually the brothers who had rent their garments?

Yaakov had been bereaved by the loss of Yosef for many years. When his sons returned from Egypt and explained that they needed to bring Binyamin before the Viceroy in order to prove that they were not spies, Yaakov had said to them, **"May Almighty G'd grant you mercy...that he (the Viceroy) may release to you your brother as well as Binyamin. As for me, as I have been bereaved so I am bereaved."** It was imperative that Yosef's brothers return with Binyamin safely. However, after the goblet had been discovered in his sack, they had believed that they would not be able to bring about the safe return of Binyamin. The pain that was going to come upon their father Yaakov was something that he would not be able to survive. When Yaakov's children rent their garments because of Binyamin's predicament, it was the first time that they had truly internalized the grief and suffering of their father that he had endured during all the years of Yosef's absence. Since Binyamin was the catalyst through which Yosef's brothers were able to have a sense of their father's pain, his descendant Mordechai would have the sensitivity to internalize the calamity that had befallen the Jewish people. What was the value of being granted the ability to fully grasp and internalize the predicament of the Jewish people?

Mordechai was the leading Torah sage of the generation who had galvanized the Jewish people and united them in repentance. It was because of the depth of his understanding of the events that he was able to overturn the decree through his leadership and prevent the annihilation of his people and he brought about the destruction of their enemy, Amalek. Had Mordechai not been able to internalize the severity of their situation, he would have not been as effective to impact upon the masses as he had done. The verse in the Megillah of Esther tells us that he sat at the gate of the king wearing sackcloth and ash when he became aware of the decree to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child. Although it was inappropriate to present oneself in this state at the gate of the palace, because Mordechai so consumed with the impending tragedy he was oblivious to this. His only focus at that moment was the future existence of the Jewish people. Just as Yosef's brothers fully internalized the meaning of Binyamin not returning to their father Yaakov and thus experiencing their father's all-consuming pain, Mordechai, the grandson of Binyamin merited a similar capacity.

### 3. Weeping, an Outgrowth of Realization

The Torah tells us that after Yosef had revealed himself to his brothers they were overwhelmed. The Midrash states, "When Yosef saw that they were greatly embarrassed, he said to his brothers, '**Come close to me... and they came close.**' Each of his brothers then kissed Yosef and cried upon him. Just as Yosef's brothers were appeased through weeping, so too G'd will ultimately redeem the Jewish people when they will be in a state of crying. As the verse states, 'They will come with tears and with great beseeching I (G'd) will lead them...'" Just as Yosef's brothers were appeased through weeping so too will the Jewish people be ultimately redeemed in a state of crying.

The Torah states in the Portion of Bereishis, "**And the Spirit of G'd hovered upon the surface of the waters...**" The Midrash explains, "What is the '**the Spirit of G'd**? It is the spirit of Moshiach. Moshiach will come when the Jewish people are in a state of repentance. As the verse states, 'Your hearts will gush forth with water...'" Why is repentance synonymous with weeping?

After Yosef had revealed himself to his brothers, they were overwhelmed with shame and embarrassment. They realized and understood that their hatred for him was unjust. His dreams were truly prophetic and they had seen with their own eyes that they had come to fruition. They were especially embarrassed and pained by the untold suffering that they had brought upon their brother when they had sold him into slavery. As a result of being confronted with the truth, they did not have the emotional capacity to deal with the issue at hand. They thus began to weep. When one is overwhelmed beyond his capacity (in the positive or in the negative) it expresses itself through crying. At the end of time when truth will become obvious, the Jewish people will become overwhelmed with shame. Understanding, in retrospect, how many of their perspectives and beliefs were distortions of truth, due to their own conflicts of interest, they will be brought to a state of weeping. In addition, realizing that their behavior had been inappropriate will also cause them to cry. The state of crying will be a confirmation that the Jewish people have come upon the profundity of truth; thus realizing their failing. That realization will cause them to repent. In fact, this is foretold by the opening verses in the Torah, when it is stated, "**And the Spirit of G'd hovered upon the surface of the waters...**"

### 4. Guaranteeing the State of Existence

The Torah tells us that because the Land of Canaan was stricken with a famine, Yaakov, our Patriarch sent ten of his sons to purchase grain in Egypt. Yosef, their brother, had become the Viceroy of Egypt, who oversaw the sale of grain. No one was able to purchase grain unless they would first meet with the Viceroy. Yosef's brothers did not recognize him because of the many years that had passed since they had seen him last. When they had come before him, Yosef accused them of being spies. They had claimed their innocence by saying that they were all the children of one elderly father who had remained in the Land of Canaan with their youngest brother. Yosef told them that the only way their innocence was to be returned to Egypt with their younger brother. He had taken Shimon as a hostage to guarantee their return. Initially Yaakov resisted from sending Binyamin, as the verse states, "**But not Binyamin...Yaakov did not want to send him along...lest disaster befall him.**"

When Yaakov's sons returned without Shimon, they shared with their father all that had transpired in Egypt and explained to him that they could not return to Egypt to purchase more grain unless they could take their youngest brother Binyamin. Yaakov initially rejected their request. Yehudah said to his brothers that they should wait until they no longer had any food and then again make the request of their father to take Binyamin back to Egypt. When that time had come, Yehudah again, requested that Yaakov release Binyamin into his care so that the family could survive the famine. Reuvain, the eldest son of Yaakov interjected by telling his father that he would assume responsibility for Binyamin. He guaranteed to do his best to return Binyamin safely by stating, "**You may slay my two sons if I fail to bring him back to you...**" Yaakov rejected Reuvain's offer. Rashi cites the Midrash which states, "Yaakov said to Reuvain, 'You are a foolish first born! Are they your children and not mine?'" The Torah tells us that after Yaakov rejected Reuvain's guarantee, Yehudah approached his father with another offer to guarantee the safe return of Binyamin. He said, "**Send the lad with me...If I do not bring him back...then I will have sinned to you for all time.**" Meaning, Yehudah was willing to forfeit not only his life in this world but also his share in the world to come, if he was not able to return Binyamin to his father. Why were Reuvain and Yehudah the only two brothers to assume the responsibility for the safe return of Binyamin?

On a simple level, one could say that it was understood that Reuvain should be the one to approach Yaakov first since he was the first-born. Having that special status, he had the responsibility for his brother's safety and thus made an offer that had value. After Reuvain was rejected, Yehudah, being the one who represented kingship/leadership also had the status to step forward and guarantee his brother's safety. It was his responsibility as a leader to be the one to offer a guarantee. However, we can understand why Reuvain and Yehudah were the one's to guarantee Binyamin's safety on a more profound level.

The Torah tells us that it was Reuvain who interceded when the brothers wanted to kill Yosef. He told them, **"Shed no blood! Throw him into this pit..."** Rashi cites the Midrash which states, "Reuvain had said, 'If Yosef is killed, to where should I flee? I will not be able to tolerate the grieving of my father, Yaakov.'" All the brothers knew that Yosef was still alive; however, Reuvain, having understood the importance of returning him to his father, had an interest in going back to Egypt and returning both Binyamin and Yosef. He had seen his father grieve for over twenty years and could no longer tolerate it.

Yehudah, was the one who had suggested to sell Yosef as a slave and thus perpetuated the belief that he was dead. He was the direct cause of Yaakov's suffering. As a result of this, Yehudah was no longer in the good graces of his brothers. They understood that he was the cause of Yaakov's intense grief. He needed to correct the grave sin and travesty that he had caused. He was therefore willing to forfeit everything if Binyamin was not returned because he understood the consequences of his actions. If Binyamin, Shimon, and Yosef, were not returned there would be no Jewish people. If that were to be, then the entire future of existence would be in jeopardy. He thus needed to guarantee the safe return of Binyamin by being willing to sacrifice his physical and spiritual future because nothing else would be satisfactory to Yaakov. If he would not succeed in his mission, the world would revert to a state of pre-existence because there would be no Jewish people to accept the Torah. Yehudah understood that he would have been the cause of this.

## ***5. Yosef, Qualified Provider for the Jewish People***

The Torah states in the Portion of Vayeishev regarding the dream of Yosef, **"Yosef dreamt a dream which he told his brothers...Behold – we were binding**

**sheaves in the middle of the field, when behold! – my sheaf arose and remained standing; then behold!- your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf."** Ramban explains that sheaves of wheat indicated that ultimately Yosef's brothers would need to come to him to purchase grain and they would bow to him. The Torah tells us that Yosef's brothers went down to Egypt to purchase grain because the land of Canaan was stricken with a famine. They came to Yosef, who was the Viceroy and bowed down to him. Yosef immediately understood that his dreams were coming to fruition.

The Torah states, **"And to Yosef were born two sons – when the year of famine had not yet set in...Yosef called the name of the firstborn Manasheh for, 'G'd has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household.'** Yosef was thanking G'd for causing him to forget the hardships and anguish he endured that were brought about by his brothers. Why was Yosef so appreciative by the fact that G'd caused him to forget? Was it merely because he felt a sense of relief that he no longer experienced the trauma and pain of the passed? However, Yosef rejoiced for a more profound reason.

Yosef understood that his mission as the son of Yaakov, was to prepare for the Jewish exile and to create an insular environment to guarantee the spiritual and material survival of his family in Egypt. In order for Yosef to fulfill his role, as the sustainer, he had to feel selflessly positive about his family, He could not be hindered by his feelings about past hardships. He would not succeed as the provider for his family if he felt any negativity towards his family. Since Yosef's mindset was an imperative for the future of the Jewish people, G'd made him forget what would have interfered with his mission and objective. Yosef acknowledged and expressed his thankfulness to G'd for bringing about this miracle by naming his firstborn Manasheh.

Yosef merited being the provider and sustainer for the Jewish people not only because of his own capability but also in the honor of his father Yaakov. The Gemara tells us that based on the decree that G'd had issued at the covenant between the parts to Avraham, that his offspring would be strangers in a land that was not their own, it was destined that Yaakov would be brought to Egypt in shackles against his will. This would have been a disgrace for someone of Yaakov's dimension of person. However, when Yaakov became aware that Yosef was alive and had risen to become the Viceroy of Egypt, he willingly went to Egypt.

The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah tells us that there is a time period every day that G'd provides sustenance to all creatures- from the largest of His creations to the smallest insect. When Yosef assumed the role of the provider for the Jewish people and the world at large, he in essence was in a position to be able to actualize G'd's Posture as Provider to all existence. Ramak explains in his work Tomer Devorah that when man acts within the thirteen attributes of Mercy, he causes G'd to respond to existence in a similar context. This is an additional reason Yosef rejoiced when he understood that G'd had caused him to forget, which allowed him to act as the true sustainer and provider. He was able to assume a role that would allow him to emulate the Almighty.

### YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

#### **Monday Through Friday**

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Chulin –Gid Hanasheh
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

#### **Special Weekday Classes**

##### ***Monday***

11:30 – 12:30pm	<b>Talmud: Megilah</b> Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL.) Enter on 54 <sup>th</sup> Street
1:00-2:00 pm	<b>Ramchal: Derech Hashem</b> Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza ( 45 <sup>th</sup> FL. )

##### ***Tuesday***

12:10 - 1:10pm	<b>Torah Insight Based on the Parsha</b> Location: Yad Avraham
----------------	---

##### ***Wednesday***

11:30 – 12:30 pm	<b>Talmud: Megilah</b> Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL.) Enter on 54 <sup>th</sup> Street
1:00—2:00 pm	<b>Daas Tevunos</b> Location: Yad Avraham

##### ***Thursday***

11:00 –12:00pm	<b>Duties of The Heart</b> Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	<b>Talmud: Megilah</b> Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL)