

## D'var Torah by Rabbi M. Jaroslawicz for Parshas Vayeishev 5775 (2014)

This week's Parshas Vayeishev deals with a tremendous amount of emotions that passed between Yosef and his siblings. We see terms such as "hate" and "jealousy" being used to describe the feelings that existed amongst the brothers.

Growing up, I remember being taught by many of my Rebbayim that I was not to take these stories literally. I was told that the holy sons of Jacob were above these basic human emotions, that there were very deep kabbalistic meanings to all of these terminologies, and that I may one day understand them. In the meantime, I was not to accept these meanings at face value. The 12 sons of Jacob were practically saints, beyond the level of comprehension, and could never stoop to such improper feelings such as "hate" and "jealousy."

Yet, as I grew older, I have studied many commentators of the Torah who actually give reasons for some of these emotions, and derive life lessons from them as well. So, I am confused. Am I supposed to perceive of the Shevatim, the sons of Jacob, as super beings incapable of and beyond the scope of negative human emotions? Or may I assume that even the most spiritually accomplished of humans are susceptible to possible occasional human emotional challenges? Therein lies the dilemma.

The Torah tells us, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons since he was a child of his old age, and he made him a fine woolen tunic. His brothers saw that it was he whom their father loved most of all his brothers so they hated him; and they were not able to speak to him peaceably." (Bereishis 37: 3-4)

Rabbi Yonason Eybeschutz explains this last sentence to mean that the biggest problem here was the fact that the brothers were unable to talk to Yosef in peace. Had they momentarily ignored their hatred and engaged Yosef in conversation, they would have found an avenue by which to overcome their negative feelings towards him and the encounter could have ended with a totally positive resolve.

This, says Rabbi Eybeschutz, is the biggest blockage that stands in the way of resolving most arguments, "lack of communication." Stubbornness! Arrogance! "What, ME? I should talk to that "so and so" after what he did? You expect me to lower myself to his level to make peace?"

The answer is YES! You should. You should do everything in your power to communicate. The majority of most ill feelings, perceived wrongdoings and bruised egos could most likely be resolved by momentarily setting aside the anger, lowering the stone wall, and engaging in a forum of mutual talks. And when all is said and done, BOTH parties would be so much happier with the final result. Peace and friendship reestablished.

This past summer I heard the following story. A boy learning in Yeshiva asked his Rebbi a question on this week's Parsha.

"Rebbi, why did the brothers hate Yosef for the coat that their father gave him? Yosef was just the recipient of the gift. The brothers' anger should have been addressed towards Jacob, their father, who singled out Yosef in the first place and gave him the coat?"

The Rebbi, thinking that this was an excellent question, began to search many volumes for an answer. Unable to find a single Sefer that discussed this question, he turned to "his" Rebbi looking for a hopeful solution. The researcher's inability to find an answer caused this question to ascend from Rebbi to Rebbi until it made its way to the desk of Harav Hagaon Reb Chaim Kanievsky, who replied: "This is a very modern-day question that could only be asked in the twenty-first century. Only in today's society and immersed in the lifestyle in which we currently live would a child have the audacity to think that he could challenge his Father's choices or talk back to a parent. The thought of Jacob's sons feeling hatred towards their father for choosing to give Yosef a coat is inconceivable." I go back to the original dilemma that I posed: Is it because we should be thinking of the 12 tribes of Jacob as super humans that we could not fathom their doing anything wrong and that we must make lofty excuses for their actions? I think not. They were just humans like you and me. The difference is that their standards were far superior to ours.

The distractions of their surroundings were much less than ours are today and, therefore, more is expected of them as well. Their G-dliness, their righteousness and the moral values that were engraved into their souls by their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents increases the expectancy of the way they would handle physicality and human emotions, and therefore holds them more accountable for slighter transgressions.

They had their battle and we have ours. We need to learn from their struggles and apply the wisdom that the Torah is sharing with us to our daily lives. We can start by engaging one another in conversation, especially when we are upset with the other person. This will break down many a barrier between us and allow us to operate in peace with one another and then, G-d willing, help spread that peace throughout all of K'lal Yisroel, and help bring Moshiach in our immediate future.

Have a GREAT Shabbos.