



*“I am Yosef
Is my father
still alive?”*

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The Dream Indeed is Realized and A People Will Emerge

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And Yosef's Children Were "Secondary" to Him

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*“I am Yosef
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The Ultimate Display of Statesmanship

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1. Binyamin is accused of stealing the silver goblet of the viceroy.
2. Yehuda's response: Whoever took the goblet shall die.
3. How could he say that?
4. Lavan accused Yaakov of taking his fetishes, said whoever took the fetishes should die, understanding it was an impossibility.
5. Yaakov raised his family with exceptional level of integrity and holiness; that would be impossible.
6. Rachel took the fetishes to separate her father from idolatry.
7. Rachel, our Matriarch, passed away due to Yaakov's statement.
8. Yehuda, and his brothers, being raised by them, knew that this could not be.
9. Torah: "Yaakov was left all by himself."
10. Midrash: As it says, "G-d is exalted unto Himself," Yaakov is also unto himself.
11. Yehuda to the viceroy: "He (Binyamin) is left by himself to his mother."
12. Binyamin was the antagonist of Edom because he was the son of Rachel.

Dissipating The Trauma To Perpetuate A People

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1. Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and they were overwhelmed with shame.
2. He consoled them to not be saddened as G-d had sent him as their provider.
3. Yosef as Viceroy provided food for Egypt and all of the surrounding countries.
4. Yosef knew he was sold specifically for this purpose and prepared his family for the Egyptian exile.
5. Yosef names his first-born Menashe. G-d caused him to forget his family and strife he experienced.
6. The trauma and suffering his brothers caused was beyond repair and forgiveness.
7. If so emotionally scarred, it would have been impossible for Yosef to be a proper provider.
8. He wouldn't be selflessly dedicated without a trace of negativity towards them.
9. Yosef realized a miraculous transition began to occur: memories of his brothers' abuse faded as if it never happened.
10. To commemorate this miracle, Yosef named his son Menashe.
11. This was the basis for Yosef knowing beyond any doubt that he was sent to Egypt for this mission.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayigash



The Double Edged Sword of Conscience

Torah: *Yehudah* approached the Viceroy to vindicate his brother *Binyamin* and prove his innocence. *Yehudah* said, “And now, if I come to your servant my father and the youth is not with us – since his soul is so bound up with his soul – it will happen that when he sees the youth is missing he will die...” He was conveying to the Viceroy that to detain *Binyamin* and not allow him to return to his father, who loved him dearly, would cause *Yaakov* an untimely death. *Yehudah* was presenting his case in a way that depicted the Viceroy of Egypt as a person who was insensitive and cruel without any degree of compassion. *Yosef* asked all those present to vacate the room and only he and his brothers remained. He said, “I am *Yosef*, Is my father alive?”

Torah: “But his brothers could not answer him because they were left disconcerted before him.” When they heard that the Viceroy of Egypt was in fact their brother, they were speechless.

Rashi: The reason *Yosef*’s brothers were overwhelmed and could not utter a word was because they were embarrassed. The level of guilt and shame they felt caused them to remain mute. They realized at that moment how unjustly they had treated their brother when despite his pleas for mercy, they sold him into slavery.

Midrash: “Woe to us on the Day of Judgment. Woe to us on the day that we will all be rebuked. *Yosef* who was the youngest evoked such a degree of guilt in his brothers when they realized what they had done to him. Thus, causing them not to be able to respond. At the end of one’s passing when *Hashem* will admonish us for our failings, how much more will we be embarrassed and speechless in the presence of G-d?”

The *Midrash* is telling us that whenever one transgresses there is always a degree of justification. *Yosef*’s brothers had justified their cruel and insensitive actions towards their brother. However, when they were forced to recognize that they had acted wrongfully

they were overwhelmed with embarrassment. So too, when standing before the Heavenly Court to be judged, one will be embarrassed when he recognizes that all his justifications were baseless and he will be overwhelmed with guilt and shame.

Chazal compare the embarrassment that Yosef's brothers felt to what one will feel on that day of ultimate Judgment. It is evident from *Chazal* that just as Yosef's brothers justified their decision to kill their brother regardless of its ramifications, when a person sins he must justify his decision to transgress regardless of its seriousness. Therefore, on the Day of Judgment when he is confronted with Truth and is no longer able to delude himself, he will be overwhelmed with guilt and embarrassment.

Bais HaLevi: There is another understanding of the verse - "I am Yosef, Is my father alive?" The brothers had already informed Yosef that their father was alive when they returned to Egypt. Why was it necessary for Yosef to ask his brothers - "is my father alive?" In fact, the question is rhetorical and not to be answered. When *Yehudah* recounted all the events that had transpired from the time they had arrived in Egypt to the present moment, he described *Binyamin*'s special relationship with his father and pleaded with the Viceroy not to take him. *Yaakov* had a special love for his young son and because of his advanced age, this might jeopardize his life. Nevertheless, the Viceroy demanded that *Binyamin* remain in Egypt. As a result, *Yehudah* was characterizing the Viceroy as compassionless and insensitive towards them. If the Viceroy withheld *Binyamin*, it would be an unjustified act of cruelty. Therefore, it was imperative for him to release *Binyamin* so he could return to his father.

When Yosef revealed his identity and stated, "is my father alive," he meant to communicate to his brothers, "You just portrayed me as a person who has no concern for an aged father and who is without conscience because of my lack of compassion. However, when you sold me into slavery, despite the extreme consequences to our father, there was not even a moment's consideration of how your actions would affect him although his love for me was even greater than his love for *Binyamin*." Yosef was saying to his brothers that they were painting him as a cruel person but were not reflecting on their own behavior, which had been no less cruel and insensitive to their father.

Bais HaLevi: The embarrassment to Yosef's brothers came about when they realized their own behavior towards their father was no less inhumane than their accusation against the Viceroy. Therefore, this caused them to be overcome with shame. Accordingly, their overwhelming embarrassment was not from having sold Yosef but rather from the cruelty and insensitivity they demonstrated towards their father.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: One is not permitted to deprecate anything except for idolatry. How do we understand this? If one behaves this way, it implies that he thinks it has no relevance to him. However, it is likely that if he introspects and honestly reflects on himself, he will realize that he may have relevance to the negativity that he is ridiculing. If one would focus on his own values and behavior and recognize his failings, he would not have the interest in denigrating anything outside of himself. When he does this, it is an indication that his own sense of self is beyond reproach.

With this explanation of *Bais HaLevi*, we can now understand the *Midrash*, "Woe to us on the Day of Judgment. Woe to us on the day that we will all be rebuked..." It means that because we looked outside rather than within ourselves, we were not able to recognize our own failings. Consequently, we will be judged and rebuked for this on the Day of Judgment.

The End Does not Justify the Means

Torah: After Yosef revealed himself to his brothers they were overwhelmed with shame. In an effort to console them, Yosef said, "...do not be distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you. For this has been two of the hunger years in the midst of the land and there are yet five years in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest."

It would seem that this statement by Yosef would have been enough. However, Yosef continues, "Thus G-d has sent me ahead of you...And now it was not you who sent me here but G-d..." This concluding statement seems superfluous and redundant. Yosef had already explained to his brothers that they did not cause him to be in Egypt, but rather, it was the Will of *Hashem*. Why does Yosef repeat, "Thus G-d has sent me ahead of you...And now it was not you who sent me here but G-d..." ?

It was preordained by *Hashem* that *Yaakov* and his family should go to Egypt to begin the bondage. *Avraham*, our Patriarch, was told by *Hashem*, in the Covenant Between the Parts, that his children will be strangers in a land that was not their own. They would be enslaved and afflicted and ultimately they would go out with great riches. The beginning of this decree of bondage began with *Yaakov* and his family's descent to Egypt. If *Yosef* had not been in Egypt, then *Yaakov* would not have had any interest or desire to leave Canaan to go there; and thus would have been taken in iron shackles. However, because of *Yaakov's* special love for his son *Yosef*, he said, "I must go and see my son before I die." Thus, the bondage began.

When *Yosef* calmed his brothers with his first statement, which expressed that it was G-d's Will that caused him to be in Egypt and not their choice, he effectively relieved them of their guilt. He was concerned that his consoling words would also have the effect of relieving them of any culpability, since in essence their decision to sell him brought about the proper result. *Yosef* therefore had to clarify this point – that his being in Egypt was unrelated to their choice and he was only there because it was the Will of *Hashem*.

The fact is that the actions of *Yosef's* brothers were unconscionable because they should have been sensitive to his pleas and not have sold him into slavery. However, if they were made to believe that the result of their actions was for the good, then this would have justified the means to a greater end. Therefore, *Yosef* said to them, "Thus G-d has sent me ahead of you...And now it was not you who sent me here but G-d..." in order to make it clear that the result was unrelated to their decision and therefore they would have to do *teshuvah* (repent) and correct the wrong that they had done.

One cannot justify unacceptable behavior for the sake of a positive outcome. If something is ultimately meant to be, it will happen regardless of one's involvement. It was the responsibility of *Yosef's* brothers to be compassionate and sensitive to his pleas.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: When *Yeshayah HaNavi* visited *Chizkeyahu HaMelech* on his sickbed, he said to him, "you will never leave your sick-bed alive. You will not recover because you have sinned." The claim against *Chizkeyahu* was that he did not procreate. *Chizkeyahu* said to the prophet that the reason he did not engage in procreation was that he saw through

Divine Inspiration that he would father an evil son. The prophet responded, "Why are you getting involved in the hidden agenda of *Hashem*?" Meaning, that one must fulfill his obligation regardless of its consequences. It is irrelevant if the offspring were meant to be good or evil. We must function and behave within the context of *Torah* regardless of our belief that the end should justify the means or the means should justify the end. These positions are totally unacceptable. This is what *Yosef* was communicating to his brothers – "I am here because G-d wanted me to be here – unrelated to your unconscionable actions."

Yosef's Qualification as the Provider for Torah

Torah: When *Yosef* revealed himself to his brothers, they initially did not believe him. *Yosef* then said to them, "Come close to me..."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: This verse can mean that *Yosef* had spoken to his brothers in a gentle and beseeching manner and he showed them he was circumcised. By making this fact known to them it was a confirmation that it was indeed *Yosef*. When the famine began in Egypt, the only way one could purchase grain was through *Yosef* himself. The Egyptian people came to complain to Pharaoh that *Yosef* was being too demanding of them. One would think that the basis for the complaint was that *Yosef* was overcharging them for the grain. However, *Chazal* tell us differently.

Pharaoh asked his subjects, "Why is it necessary for you to purchase grain from *Yosef* if you knew that the years of famine were coming? You should have stored away grain during the years of plenty in preparation for the seven years of famine." To this, the Egyptians responded by saying, "We did store way grain; however it rotted." Pharaoh immediately understood that the reason their grain had rotted and *Yosef's* did not was because *Yosef* had decreed it. After becoming aware of this reality, Pharaoh said to his subjects, "Just as *Yosef* decreed that your grain should rot, he could decree that we should all die! Therefore, it is imperative that you heed the dictates of *Yosef*."

Midrash: *Yosef* had set a precondition to be eligible for the purchase of grain. One needed to have himself first circumcised in order to purchase grain. As a result, of this demand, all Egyptian men in the land became

circumcised. How do we understand Yosef's demand that all Egyptians must have themselves circumcised?

Arizal, based on *Rambam's work Guide for the Perplexed (Moreh Nevuchim)*: The value of circumcision is that when the foreskin (*orlah*) is removed it curbs the sexual drive of the male. Yosef understood that the Jewish people would be spending an extended period in Egypt, a spiritually depraved society, and this would ultimately have a serious impact upon the spiritual state of the Jewish people. Therefore, Yosef tried to elevate the Egyptian population to a higher level through circumcision so that the effect of the exile would be less damaging on the Jewish people. If all the Egyptians were circumcised, how did Yosef prove his identity to his brothers?

Gemara: Before Sinai, the obligation of circumcision vis-à-vis the Jewish people was only the cutting of the foreskin (*milah*), without peeling back and removing it (*priah*). The commandment of circumcision that was given to Ishmael, the son of *Avraham* (even post Sinai), was only *milah*. However, since Sinai, if a Jew only had *milah* without *priah*, it is considered as if he is not circumcised. The Patriarchs and their family observed the *Torah* in its entirety even before Sinai. Therefore, Yosef's circumcision was not only *milah* but also *priah*, which was unlike the Egyptians. Therefore, Yosef's brothers immediately understood that the Viceroy was indeed their brother.

Shelah HaKadosh: The only reason the Arabs are able to remain in the Land of Israel is that they are circumcised.

Torah: The prerequisite for inhabiting the Land is that one must be circumcised. As one can see, there has never been a people who have occupied the Land for an extended period other than the Jews and the Arabs.

Shelah: Because the Arabs are only partially circumcised, their stay in the Land is only temporary. The Jew who is fully circumcised has a permanent relevance to the Land. Thus, in order for one to be connected to the location of holiness, *Eretz Yisroel*, one must be fully circumcised. After Yosef had proven to his brothers who he was, he said to them, "You have seen with your own eyes...Therefore tell my father all my glory in Egypt and all that you saw..."

Rashi: What Yosef is saying to his brothers is, "You have seen with your eyes my glory, that I am circumcised as you are, and I speak Hebrew as you do." Since Yosef

had already sufficiently proven himself to his brothers through the fact that he was circumcised as they were, then what is he adding by saying, "You have seen with your eyes my glory, that I am circumcised as you are, and I speak Hebrew as you do"?

Yosef was communicating that they must tell their father *Yaakov* that he was now the Viceroy of Egypt and therefore in a position to properly prepare Egypt for the Jewish exile. This was demonstrated through his glory, which was his circumcision. His ability to speak Hebrew demonstrated that he also had the capacity to create an environment of holiness in Egypt despite the depravity of the society.

Yosef rose to be the position of Viceroy of Egypt. He was the sole provider of sustenance for the entire world. When Yosef said, "you see my glory" he was referring to the power that he possessed as Viceroy in Egypt. When Yosef mentioned that he was circumcised like his brothers (*milah* with *priah*), he was indicating that his spirituality was no less than that of his brothers.

Although Yosef was in the depraved environment of Egypt for many years without any spiritual support, he was not diminished in any way. In addition, Yosef said that he spoke the Holy Tongue – Hebrew. Since he had all of these qualities, he was able to create an insular environment for the Jewish people in Egypt. Yosef wished to communicate to them the level of appreciation and understanding of spirituality that he possessed, despite his involvement in the material world as Viceroy. Every aspect of Yosef's accomplishments was linked to his own spirituality and this is why he succeeded.

Mishnah: "Im Ein kemach, Ein Torah – if there is no flour there is no Torah." Meaning, if one does not have material, he is not able to attain the spiritual – Torah. *Yaakov*, our Patriarch, created a partnership between his two children *Yissachar* and *Zevulun*. *Yissachar's* function was to be fully immersed in Torah and *Zevulun's* responsibility was to be the seafaring merchant. He spent months traveling to achieve financial success in order to support the endeavors of *Yissachar*.

Torah at the end of *Sefer Devarim*: "Moshe had blessed the tribe of *Zevulun* by saying, "Zevulun rejoice in your going out and *Yissachar* in his tent of Torah." What is the basis for *Zevulun's* rejoicing? Was he only rejoicing over the potential material success that was at hand?

Rashi citing *Chazal*: *Moshe* was saying that *Zevulun* should rejoice in his endeavor to achieve financial success because it would support the *Torah* of *Yissachar*. His rejoicing was not because of the material success in and of itself. The level of *Zevulun*'s appreciation of *Torah* was unique. He understood that his responsibility to succeed in the material was an imperative because without it *Torah* could not flourish.

We learn from *Yosef* and *Zevulun* that the only way one can assume the role of a provider for *Torah* will be determined by one's understanding of the value of the *Torah* that is being studied. It was only because of *Yosef*'s own level of spirituality that he was able to create an insular society that would guarantee the spiritual survival of the Jewish people.

The Role of Yosef and Yehudah Vis-à-vis the Klal Yisroel

Torah: "He (*Yaakov*) sent *Yehudah* ahead of him to *Yosef*, to prepare ahead of him in *Goshen*..."

Rashi: There are two explanations of this verse. The first, based on the *Targum*, is that *Yaakov* simply wanted *Yehudah* to go ahead of him to establish the community of *Goshen* and settle it according to *Yaakov*'s wishes. Another explanation offered by the *Midrash* is that *Yaakov* wanted *Yehudah* to go to *Goshen* ahead of him in order to establish a *Bais Talmud* (a *Yeshivah*). This is a location designated for rendering *halachic* (legal) rulings and the study of *Torah*.

Since *Yaakov* chose *Yehudah* to establish the *Bais Talmud*, he must have been the most qualified person. It was not that he wanted *Yehudah* to choose a piece of real estate and oversee the construction, but rather, he wanted *Yehudah* to consecrate the location and infuse it with spirituality. Why was *Yehudah* best suited for this task? Evidently, he was the most qualified to establish the *Bais Talmud* because of his dimension of *Torah* knowledge and spirituality. However, this is difficult to understand. Before his brothers sold *Yosef* into slavery, the *Torah* tells us that *Yisroel* (*Yaakov*) loved *Yosef* more than all of his children because he was his "*Ben Zikunim* – (literally a child of his old age)".

Targum Unkelos: This can mean that *Yosef* was the wisest of *Yaakov*'s children. Because of his intellectual capability, *Yaakov* had transmitted all the *Torah* that he had studied in the *Yeshivah* of *Shem V'Aver*. Clearly,

Yosef was a *Torah* giant. If this is the case, then why did *Yaakov* chose *Yehudah* to establish the *Bais Talmud*?

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra*: "The descendants of *Esav* (and *Amalek*) could only fall in the hands of descendants of *Rochel*." Whenever the Jews were engaged in battle with *Amalek*, the descendants of *Rochel* were involved. *Esav* himself personified physicality and materialism. The *Gemara* is teaching us that the only ones who are qualified to dominate and subordinate physicality (*Esav*) are the descendants of *Rochel*. Although she is known to be one of the most beautiful women ever to live, she consecrated her existence to serve *Hashem*. Her spirituality dominated her physicality.

Yosef, being a person of unequalled beauty and ability, consecrated his life to serve *Hashem* as his mother had done. Therefore, there is nothing in the physical existence that *Yosef* does not dominate. As Viceroy, *Yosef* was the master of Egypt and therefore was the provider for the Jewish people. He sustained them by providing every material amenity that was needed.

The function of the progeny of *Rochel* was to dominate and utilize the physical for a spiritual end. The function of the progeny of *Leah* was to deal directly with the spirituality of the Jewish people. *Yehudah*, the son of *Leah*, who represents the royalty and leadership of the Jewish people was the one to consecrate and infuse the location with spirituality. *Yosef*, in fact, was greater than his brother *Yehudah*. *Yaakov* loved him more than any of his other children because he was the wisest. However, his ability does not determine what role he will play vis-à-vis the destiny of the *Klal Yisroel*.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: There is a story about a non-Jew who was interested in converting on the condition that he should be able to officiate as the High Priest. *Hillel HaZakain* (*Hillel* the Elder) began teaching him the law that a non-Kohen who officiates in the Temple is liable for spiritual excision. *Hillel* told the non-Jew that this law would even apply to *Dovid HaMelech* if he were to officiate. The non-Jew was taken aback. He therefore concluded, "If King David is not qualified to officiate in the Temple then I definitely am not." *Hillel* explained that if one is not the descendent of *Aaron HaKohen*, regardless of his greatness, he is not qualified.

The function of the offspring of *Rochel* was to accommodate the physical aspects of the *Klal Yisroel*. Regardless of *Yosef*'s qualifications as a *Talmid*

Chacham, his function was not to engage in the spirituality of the *Klal Yisroel*. It was *Yehudah*, the son of Leah, who was to go to *Goshen* and infuse that location with spirituality.

Chazal: There will be *Moshiach Ben Yosef* (The *Moshiach* who descends from *Yosef*) and *Moshiach Ben Dovid* (of the Davidic line). The function of *Moshiach Ben Yosef* will be to lead the battle against *Gog and Magog* at the end of time. His role is to defeat the enemy of the Jewish people through physical confrontation. After the victory will be achieved, *Moshiach Ben Dovid* will proclaim the Name of *Hashem* and disseminate spirituality throughout the world. He will be responsible for the spiritual elevation of the *Klal Yisroel*, which can only follow after the physical battle has been won.

Similarly, *Yosef* prepared the community with all that was needed to sustain the Jewish people in Egypt. He set aside *Goshen*; he managed the grain supplies, etc. All of *Yosef's* endeavors vis-à-vis the *Klal Yisroel* involved engaging the physical for the sake of a spiritual consequence. For example, as the Viceroy *Yosef* required that all Egyptian males should be circumcised as a prerequisite for receiving grain. The act of circumcision is a physical act, which has spiritual ramifications. Without *Yosef's* involvement, there could be no *Klal Yisroel*.

Yaakov established a relationship between *Yissachar* and *Zevulun*. *Yissachar's* life was only dedicated to *Torah* and spirituality with no material responsibility. *Zevulun* was the seafaring merchant and responsible for the total material support of *Yissachar*. The spirituality achieved by *Yissachar* was not possible without *Zevulun's* support. *Yosef* was the *Zevulun* of *Klal Yisroel*, and *Yehudah*, vis-à-vis establishing the *Bais Talmud*, represented *Yissachar* – the spiritual.

How does One Get the World to Understand Something that is Intrinsically Special

Torah: When *Yaakov* arrived in Egypt, *Yosef* went to meet him. “*Yosef* harnessed his chariot and went up to meet *Yisroel* his father in *Goshen*.” *Yosef* was the Viceroy of Egypt, the most revered and powerful man in Egypt. He determined life and death through the distribution of grain during the years of famine. The aura of *Yosef* was greater than life. When *Yosef* became aware that his father was in Egypt he chose to harness his own chariot rather than delegating it to one of his

many servants. One would think that this would be beneath a man of *Yosef's* stature, who was feared and awed by the world, to engage in such a menial task. How do we understand this?

Torah: Regarding *Avraham*, that he harnessed his own donkey when he was told to perform the *Akeidah* (The Binding of *Yitzchak*).

Chazal: Although *Avraham* was 137 years old at the time and he could have had one of his servants hitch his donkey, he did it himself because “Love supersedes all protocol.” *Avraham's* love for *Hashem* was to such a degree that at that moment all that existed was doing the Will of G-d. His sense of self did not exist at that moment. We also find that when *Bilaam* (the prophet for the nations of the world) embarked on his journey to curse the Jewish people he hitched his own donkey.

Chazal: The reason for this is, “Hate supersedes all protocol.” *Bilaam's* intense and all consuming hate for the Jewish people caused him to be singularly focused on his mission to destroy the Jewish people. His own existence at that moment had no relevance. One would think that regarding *Yosef* harnessing his own chariot, despite being the Viceroy of Egypt, *Chazal* would have said that this is another example of, “Love supersedes all protocol.” *Yosef's* special love for his father *Yaakov* would have caused him to be blinded to his own status. However, *Chazal* do not say this.

Rashi citing *Chazal*: *Yosef* harnessed his own chariot to “give honor to his father”. It was not because of his love that he lost sight of who he was, as *Avraham* lost sight of himself in serving *Hashem*. *Yosef's* intent was to honor his father. The difficulty is – if this was an act of respect for his father, how was this communicated to *Yaakov*? Evidently, this is not the correct understanding.

When *Yaakov* arrived in Egypt at the age of 130 years, he was aged and appeared frail. His advanced level of aging was obvious, as we see from Pharaoh's comment upon meeting *Yaakov*, “I have never seen such an aged person.” Clearly, *Yaakov's* appearance did not allow any one to appreciate or understand who he was. *Yaakov* in essence was more than a living angel who radiated holiness. When *Yaakov* arrived in Egypt, the famine ceased. His blessing to Pharaoh caused the Nile to rise in the presence of the Egyptian monarch. However, initially how was one able to have understanding of who *Yaakov* actually was?

Yosef knew the misconception that people would have about his father. So he made the decision as the Viceroy of Egypt (the most powerful, feared and revered person in the world), to harness his own chariot for the sake of greeting him. Through his actions Yosef communicated that despite who he was, his father Yaakov was far superior. Thus, Yosef honored him by harnessing his own chariot so that the Egyptians would have a semblance of understanding and an appreciation of the dimension of Yaakov. In this way, they would have a minimal understanding that Yaakov was greater than the Viceroy of Egypt.

When the Holy Ark was brought back to Yerushalyim after being in captivity, Dovid HaMelech (the conqueror of all Israel) danced with great intensity before the Holy Ark. This was done in full public view in the presence of the entire Jewish people. Michal his wife (the daughter of King Shaul) witnessed him dancing in public before the Holy Ark and rebuked him for displaying such unfitting behavior for the King of Israel. Dovid responded by saying, "It is irrelevant... I am honoring Hashem." Not only did Dovid not see this as a belittlement, but what he wanted to convey to the Jewish people was that there was nothing greater than Hashem. He, in the presence of Hashem, was nothing.

Shlomo HaMelech in Mishlei (Proverbs): "There is neither wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Hashem."

Talmud: If there is an issue of *Chilul Hashem* (desecrating G-d's Name) one does not acknowledge the *Torah Sage*. Hashem's honor supercedes everyone's honor, regardless of his or her status. A king is not permitted to waive his honor. If a person transgresses the wishes of the king, he can be put to death.

Gemara at the end of Tractate *Makkos*: When *Yehoshaphat*, the King of *Yehudah*, would see a *Talmid Chacham* he would rise from his throne, go over to embrace and kiss him, saying, "*Rebbe! Rebbe! Mori! Mori!* – My *Rebbe*, My Teacher!" *Yehoshaphat* demonstrated through his behavior that regardless of his status, the honor of the *Torah* superceded his own. He was teaching the people that nothing is comparable to the importance of *Torah*, which is represented by the *Torah Sage*.

Gemara (in *Makkos*): "The foolish Babylonians who stand in the presence of a *Sefer Torah* (*Torah Scroll*) but do not give honor to the living *Torah Sage*." The *Talmid Chacham* is an embodiment of living *Torah* while the *Torah* scroll itself is only a holy object. When a person of prestigious status, who is revered, honors a *Torah Sage* while foregoing his own honor, he is demonstrating to all that the honor of *Torah* is paramount. This example allows others to appreciate the value of a *Talmid Chacham*.

Gemara: The world stands in the merit of thirty-six hidden *tzaddikim* (devoutly righteous people). Someone once said to *Reb Chaim of Volozhin*, the primary disciple of the *Vilna Gaon*, that it was obvious that the *Vilna Gaon* was one of the thirty-six *tzaddikim*. He asked how is it possible that the 36 *tzaddikim* are unknown if the *Vilna Gaon* can be identified as such? *Reb Chaim of Volozhin* responded that the greatness and the devoutness of the *Vilna Gaon* that is known to the world is insignificant compared to what is actually hidden. The world has only an inkling of who what the *Vilna Gaon* truly was. Thus, he was one of the "hidden" *tzaddikim* whose merit sustains the world. This was also said by *Reb Shlomo Zalman Ohrbach z'tl* regarding *Reb Shach z'tl*.



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