

Parashat Va Yehi

Yaakov does not allow himself “to be gathered unto his people” until he ascertains that the braid of human perfection is being plaited by his children, thereby bridging the gap between the theory represented by the more spiritual ones, and the capacity for confronting the hard facts of reality represented by the more practical ones.

Yaakov is aware of the dangers of spirituality severed from tagible reality. A detached spiritual world is the captive of the imagination, which is impressionable, lacks direction, lacks roots, and has no spine. Such spirituality also suffers from an absence of solid logical consistency. It is clay in the hands of every hair-splitting philosophizer, who amuses himself with it according to the caprice and whim of self-interest, distorting it in whatever direction the wind is blowing.

It is predictable and inevitable that theory alone will find itself entangled and confused. Confusion characterizes the theoretical “Sciences”, which have declared their own Sabbath, and detached themselves from the dictates of tangible reality; detached themselves from the common sense insight that arises out of a merger between theory and tangibility; detached themselves from the measure of reason that arises from the senses, from the environment, and from the principles of quality that these absorb.

It is needless to describe the extreme absurdities that characterize the opposite error: Pure tangibility detached from thinking man, detached from the dimension of height of all Godly qualities. Every attempt to explain the phenomena of reality by methods and techniques based on existential reality itself, as the social “sciences” attempt to do, necessarily fails and becomes entangled in itself.

Whoever walks the path of "only empirical is real" eventually finds himself overwhelmed by fears and pursued by real and imaginary dangers. He is unable to find his place in an autonomous reality severed from man and deprived of the dimension of height, not to mention the harassing conflict between the dimension of height, the human dimension, and physical reality, which would challenge even a well-balanced person. This conflict

between opposites in principle which assault one from every possible direction, can cause a detached person to fall into a depression to the point that he will despise his own life.

Yaakov cannot leave the world as long as he has not revealed the unifying formula for the secret of balance to his children. “‘Gather, and I will tell you what shall befall you at the end of days.’ He sought to reveal the ultimate end, but then his prophecy was blocked.” The hour had not yet come for perfect balance, the purpose of creation. The present is the essence. As long as there no balancing process being applied the present, there is no future. The perfect ultimate end had not yet arrived. Neither had the time come to reveal the Halacha. Yaakov and Yosef alone knew the secret of the Halacha, soon to be given to “all who were hungry” at Mount Sinai, just as Yosef alone knew Yaakov’s secret about the end of days, as the Ba’al Ha Turim explains, bringing the midrash: “He made them swear that they would not force the ultimate end,” for Yosef knew the ultimate end, for Yaakov had revealed it to him.

When the brothers came humbly to Yosef after the death of their father and begged his forgiveness, Yosef answered them in gentle tones, and reminded them of the three tracks. Suddenly Yosef alters his gentle approach and reminds them of their evil intention: “You intended it as evil for me!” “God intended it as good.” What causes Yosef to mingle a harsh accusatory tone into his pacifying words? The Rashbam interprets this according to the higher track of the Godly plan: “God caused you to do it. You did not sin against me, because God intended it for your good.”

The sacred Ohr HaHaim emphasizes precisely the Halachic track: “After all, this is comparable to someone who intends to give his friend a cup of deadly poison to drink, and instead gives him a cup of wine – that he incurs no penalty. In fact [the brothers] are exempt and innocent even by Heavenly law.” For it is Halacha that decides reality, and not vice versa.

The truth of the matter is that the Ohr HaHaim is not disputing the views of the Rashbam and the Sforno, but rather explaining them. This is because Halacha transfers the act

from personal intention to the macrocosmic dimension. It endows it with a new meaning that moves the emphasis from personal intention to macrocosmic dimensions. From the macro perspective, the brothers' evil intention softens to become a mistaken intention.

However, the macro dimension creates a problem, for after all, its influence eliminates the track of free choice/personalized Providence as the axis around which events revolve, for after all the macro dimension cancels the decisive influence of the present moment in favor of the final result of the Godly plan, thus weakening and perhaps even effacing personal intention, including all of the meanings of choice and Providence which occupy such a central place in the present moment.

It would appear that this was the reason Yaakov decided to conceal the ultimate end from them, to conceal the future, to hide the fact that the Godly plan in the macro dimension had occupied a central position in the selling of Yosef, for it is not desirable to accustom people to casting their spiritual burden upon the macro dimension and neglecting the present, which is the only condition under human jurisdiction and given to direct human influence.

Yaakov therefore chose to describe each and every one of the brother's personal characters, and the best way to merge these separate qualities into one solid block of unity – in the present. Focusing on the present would promise them the coveted ultimate end much more effectively than any knowledge of it.

Nor does happiness promise it. Yaakov had the privilege of seeing Yosef. His reaction: "I shall die this time..." His life had begun anew. He should have rejoiced, and yearned not for a perfect dying but for a perfect living. "And you will find that that fortunate species [Yisrael] despises the aspect of anxiety and melancholy and degradation...and you can therefore go certainly toward an understanding of the reason that every time the name Yaakov is used, it is because something has happened containing some aspect of melancholy or anguish..." (Ohr HaHaim)

According to Ohr HaHaim's commentary, our forefather Yaakov was prince of anguish, until he was privileged to receive a "added soul" as in the concept implied in Shabat rest. As long as Yaakov was his name, he never merited happiness, which is the sensation of existence's quality, meaning the sense that quality is in control of the restrictive mechanism of existence.

Happiness as a sense of the quality of existence is born in God's servant's experience of a sense of control and ownership of the universe. This happiness accompanies the creative act, the revelation of one's ability to create a new dimension of quality that liberates from the oppression of an existence limited by space and time.

A dance for joy expresses an ability to rise above physical matter and its restrictions. Yaakov's worship of God compelled him to relate to physical matter against his will, and therefore he found happiness difficult. Yaakov's power was expressed in a profound delving into and penetrating into the innermost space, uncovering the Godly presence buried deep within creation, exposing the quality covered up by the dimensions of physical matter and mechanical laws.

Yaakov was the first to serve God by penetrating into the depths of the concealed Godly Being. Yaakov is associated with a home. [as Avraham is associated with a mountain, and Yitzchak with a field.] A home is an innermost space.

Happiness is the fruit of the revelation of Divine quality. This latter does not rise from its depths as long as the world is immersed in conflict. Yaakov reveals the secret of unity to his sons. From this point onward, the individual will be incapable of attaining perfection as our forefathers attained it. For Yisrael's children, "God's tribes," as well as for their continuing dynasties, the worship of God has changed its face, descending to a level that is within hand's reach for every Jew "as he is wherever he is." Attainments henceforth shall be the product of a cooperative effort between different individuals with different characteristic abilities: When they join together, they create the perfect whole. Yaakov

bequeaths to his sons a directive regarding the coordination and cooperation that are yet to be born out of the unique character traits of each and every one of them.

The unity that is necessary for redemption is – Yosef, who will be split into Ephraim and Menashe, who shall unite together “into one tree.” For this reason, Yaakov crosses his hands when blessing Ephraim and Menashe, to direct and to warn them against marching on parallel tracks. The encounter of perfection is the encounter between the tracks.

A Jewish anecdote expressing this principle tells of a resident of *Gan Eden* who paid a visit to *Gehinom*. To his surprise, he found the people there suffering severe hunger, while seated around tables laden with every good food. It was just like in Gan Eden. Why do you not eat to your hearts’ content? he wondered. Suddenly he discovered that they were unable to bend their elbows to bring the food into their mouths. They were able to take of the food, but not to enter it into their mouths. The guest from Gan Eden advised that each one should put the food into the mouth of the person sitting at his side.

Not to begrudge his neighbor? Never. “Let my life die with the Philistines.” “Neither shall I have, nor shall you have.” And this is how the visitor from Gan Eden was apprised of the wickedness of the dwellers of Gehinom.

Yaakov establishes the principle of mutual association and cooperation. Without mutuality, without reciprocity, the world cannot continue to exist. Let every individual contribute his uniquely original quality to – the other. “Let a world of generous kindness be built.” “The son of David cannot come until the souls will be done with the body,” until the spirit will be liberated from its enslavement to physical matter.

This is Yosef’s secret and his ultimate purpose. The Mashiah who will descend from Yosef ultimately dies: He will leave this world after he has achieved his goal. From then on, the Mashiah who will descend from David will come and will reign in a world that has already achieved its ultimate repair.