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## פרשת ויחי

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### פרק נ פסוק טז

וַיִּצְווּ אֶל-יֹסֵף לְאמֹר אָבִיךָ צִוָּה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר.

### רש"י

אָבִיךָ צִוָּה. שָׁנוּ בַדְבָר מִפְּנֵי הַשְּׁלוֹם, כִּי לֹא צִוָּה יַעֲקֹב כֵּן, שְׁלֵא נִחַשְׁד יוֹסֵף בְּעֵינָיו.

### מושג

שָׁנוּ בַדְבָר מִפְּנֵי הַשְּׁלוֹם.

### Translation:

They changed the truth for the sake of peace.

### Explanation:

Yosef's brothers feared that Yosef would seek revenge after the death of Yaakov<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, they lied and sent a messenger to Yosef telling him that Yaakov had commanded Yosef not to take revenge.<sup>2</sup> We learn from this that even though the truth is extremely precious in Hashem's eyes, keeping the peace is even more important<sup>3</sup>.

### Looking in the Pasuk:

This Musag is based on the fact that Yosef's brothers were lying. We assume this due to the fact that the brothers sent a messenger (Bilha or her sons) to Yosef instead of confronting him directly. We infer this from several peculiarities in the Pasuk. If the brothers had spoken to Yosef, the Pasuk would have read: ויאמרו אל יוסף אבינו צוה וכו'. The fact that the Pasuk reads: וַיִּצְווּ אֶל יוֹסֵף לְאמֹר אָבִיךָ צוה, leads to conclude that they instructed - ויצו - someone else who was not Yaakov's son - אביו - to say - לאמר - to Yosef.

### Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: The Torah considers the value of peace to be greater than the value of truth.

Understand: Even though both truth and peace are known as 'names' of Hashem, when there is a conflict between the two values, Hashem prefers peace. It is therefore preferable, or possibly even obligatory, to lie in order to keep the peace. This is best illustrated by the waters of the Sotah where Hashem commands for His name to be erased in order create peace between a husband and wife. The 'lie' told by Yosef's brothers, which was said in the interest of peace, takes on a holy dimension, and became the opening words of the כהן גדול when he began the service of יום כפור in the בית המקדש.

Think: Careful reading of the text led us to infer that the brothers were indeed lying.

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1 See note #1

2 See note #1

3 See note #3

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## NOTES

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1. The Midrash is bothered by the question of why the brothers feared that Yosef had revenge on his mind. After all, did he not support and feed them for the past 17 years? In fact the entire incident here seems to almost be an exact repetition of the Pesukim we read earlier when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers.

**פרק מה:** ה ועתה אל-תעצבו ואל-יחר בעיניכם כי-מכרתם אתי הגנה פי למחיה שלחני א-להים לפניכם: ז וישלחני א-להים לפניכם לשום לכם שארית בארץ ולהחיות לכם לפליטה גדלה: ח ועתה לא-אתם שלחתם אתי הגנה פי הא-להים וישלחני לאב לפרעה ולאדון לכל-ביתו ומשל בכל-ארץ מצרים:

**פרק נ:** יט ויאמר אלהם יוסף אל-תיראו כי התחת א-להים אני: כ ואתם חשבתם עלי רעה א-להים חשבה לטובה למען עשה פיום הגנה להחית עם-רב: כא ועתה אל-תיראו אנכי אכלל אתכם ואת-טפכם וינחם אותם וינבך עלי-לכם:

Why do they regress to their old suspicions?

Rashi, on מדרש רבה, פסוק טו, partially quotes the

(טו) ויראו אחי יוסף כי מת אביהם. מהו "ויראו", הפירו במיתתו אצל יוסף, שהיו רגילים לסעוד על שלחנו של יוסף והיה מקרבן בשביל כבוד אביו, ומשמת יעקב לא קרבן.

According to the מדרש רבה, after the death of his father Yosef no longer invited his brothers to eat at his table. Rashi does not explain why Yosef would act thus. However, Rav Tanchumah explains that Yosef actually acted out of sensitivity to the honor of Yehudah and Reuven.

וישב יוסף מצרימה וגו': ר' לוי אמר שלא זמנן לסעודה. א"ר תנחומא הוא לא נתכוון אלא לשם שמים אמר לשעבר אבא מושיב לי למעלה מיהודה שהוא מלך ולמעלה מראובן שהוא בכור, ועכשיו אינו בדין שאשב למעלה מהן<sup>4</sup>.

There is an additional opinion in the same Midrash which states that the brothers suspected Yosef because on his way back from Yaakov's funeral Yosef had returned to look into the pit in which he was thrown.

רבי יצחק אמר הלך והציץ באותו הבור א"ר תנחומא הוא לא נתכוון אלא לשם שמים, והם לא אמרו כן אלא לו ישמנו יוסף.

Here too, Yosef's intentions, says Rav Tanchumah, were pure. He does not explain why. However, in the מדרש תנחומא (פרשת ויחי סימן יז) he adds the following:

ויראו אחי יוסף כי מת אביהם: ומה ראו עתה שפחדו? אלא שראו בעת שחזרו מקבורת אביהם ראו שהלך יוסף לברך על אותו הבור שהשליכוהו אחיו בתוכו וברך עליו כמו שחייב אדם לברך על מקום שנעשה לו נס: ברוך המקום שעשה לי נס במקום הזה וכיון שראו כן אמרו עכשיו שמת אבינו לו ישמנו יוסף והשב ישיב לנו את כל הרעה אשר גמלנו אותו.

Thus Yosef aroused the suspicion of his brothers either because he returned to look into the pit, or because he no longer invited his brothers to eat at his table out of sensitivity to the seating order.

One must wonder what Yosef was thinking. Didn't he realize that his brothers might misunderstand his intentions? According to the opinion that he returned to the pit, we might be able to explain that he felt compelled to do so in order to fulfill his obligation to bless Hashem at the place of a miracle from which he benefited. However, according to the first opinion, that he no longer invited them to eat with him because he did not want to offend Yehudah or Reuven by seating them below him, it would seem that this would be a small price to pay given the obvious suspicions that would be raised in his brother's minds! It may be possible to answer that Yosef was such a Tzaddik, that it simply did not occur to him that his brothers would harbor such suspicions. It was so clear to Yosef that his sale to Egypt was all part of the Divine plan, and that it had all led to his being able to save his entire family, that he could not begin to fathom that his brothers did not see it the same way. This is why Yosef again tells his brothers:

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4 Why Yosef did not simply have Yehudah and Reuven sit above him is not clear. Perhaps as Viceroy of Egypt this would be taken by the Egyptians as an affront to their culture.

ואתם השבתם עלי רעה א-להים השבה לטובה למען עשה פיוס הנה להחית עם-רב:

He is telling his brothers that he does not have to forgive them for harming him, as no harm was done. In fact, they had done him a great favor, and he should actually thank them for being the catalyst which provided him the opportunity to achieve greatness.

We can now understand that which the Torah tells us: וינחם אותם וידבר על-לבם

The words וינחם אותם, and he consoled them, seem out of place. However, the Shoresh מ.ח.מ really means to reconsider. A person in mourning is comforted by being urged to reconsider, to rethink, the nature of his or her loss. We urge the mourner to look at all the accomplishments of the deceased and the eternal nature of their נשמה. So too, Yosef urges his brothers to reconsider the way they look at the episode of his sale. וידבר על-לבם, only when they realize that they were all simply players in Hashem's master plan will they be able to remove all suspicion of Yosef from their hearts.

2. The Musag that Rashi brings is found in a number of sources, although not with the exact words Rashi uses. The first possible source is the Gemoroh in (סה:): מסכת יבמות which teaches:

וא"ר אילעא משום רבי אלעזר בר' שמעון: מותר לו לאדם לשנות בדבר השלום, שנאמר: אביך צוה... כה תאמרו ליוסף אנא שא נא וגו'. ר' נתן אומר: מצוה, שנאמר: (שמואל א' ט"ז) ויאמר שמואל איך אלך ושמע שאול והרגני וגו'. דבי רבי ישמעאל תנא: גדול השלום, שאף הקדוש ברוך הוא שינה בו, דמעיקרא כתיב: (בראשית י"ח) ואדוני זקן, ולבסוף כתיב: ואני זקנתי.

The Gemoroh uses our Pasuk to teach that one is permitted to lie for the sake of peace. The Gemoroh does not add, however, the fact that Yaakov Avinu did not suspect Yosef (which Rashi does mention). This is found in the (פרשת תולדות סימן א) (ורשא) which teaches:

ואמר רשב"י<sup>5</sup> גדול הוא השלום שדברה התורה דברי בדאי בשביל שלום. ואי זה? כה תאמרו ליוסף אנא שא נא פשע אחיך והטאתם, ואין אנו מוצאים שצוה כלום מכל הדברים האלה! אלא לפי שהיה יודע חסידותו של יוסף ולא היה חושדו ומחזיק אותו כשופכי דמים.

The major issue that the commentators have with learning the Musag from Yosef's brothers is that there does not seem to be conclusive proof from the Pesukim that the brothers were indeed lying. While it is true, as the Tanchumah claims, that we do not find Yaakov making such a statement, that does not conclusively prove that it was never made! There are, however, two inferences that may be made from the text which strongly point to the fact that the brothers were lying.

a. The first is that the Torah prefaces the brother's words to Yosef with the following introduction:

יד וישב יוסף מצרמה הוא ואחיו וכל-העללים אתו לקבר את-אביו אחרי קברו את-אביו: טו ויבאו אחי-יוסף פיימת אביהם ויאמרו לו ישטמנו יוסף והשב ישיב לנו את כל-הרעה אשר גמלנו אתו:

Now, if Yaakov had instructed his sons to tell Yosef not to take revenge, then פסוק טו becomes unnecessary. The Torah could have simply written that the brothers returned from burying Yaakov, and approached Yosef with their father's message. Why do we need to know that the brothers suspected Yosef's intentions towards them? From this extra Pasuk ל"ל inferred that it was only the brothers who suspected Yosef, not Yaakov.

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5 Interestingly, the Gemoroh quotes this Musag in the name of ר' אלעזר בן ר' שמעון, while the Midrash Tanchumah teaches it in the name of his father רשב"י. Another point worth noting is that the Gemoroh brings an additional opinion, that of ר' נתן, who teaches that not only is it *permitted* to lie for the sake of peace, but rather one is *obligated* to do so! The Gemoroh learns this from the story in Sefer Shmuel where Shmuel is commanded by Hashem to lie to Shaul in order to be able to anoint Dovid. It is, however, possible to posit that not all agree with ר' נתן's opinion. We could deflect his proof due to the fact that Shmuel feared for his life, as the Pasuk concludes ושמע שאול והרגני Being commanded to lie to save one's life is quite different than lying for the sake of peace. See note #3.

b. The second proof that this was a fabrication is found in the difficult wording found in the beginning of the Pasuk. The words ויצונו אל יוסף לאמר - instead of ויאמרו אל יוסף - and the words אביך צוה - instead of אבינו צוה - strongly hint to the interpretation that the brothers did not speak to Yosef but rather relayed this message through someone else (hence the word ויצונו, commanding someone else), who was not their brother (hence the word אביך and not אבינו). The Midrash, as well as the various Targumim, pick up on this wording and tell us that indeed the brothers did command someone else to relay the message to Yosef: בלהה<sup>6</sup>. We find this in the following sources:

מדרש תנחומא (בובר - פרשת צו סימן י): מה עשו הלכו אצל בלהה ואמרו לה הכנסי אצל יוסף ואמרי לו, אביך צוה לפני מותו

תרגום יונתן: ופקידו ית בלהה למימר ליוסף אבוך פקיד קדם מותיה למימר לך:

תרגום ירושלמי: ופקידו שבטיא ית בלהה אמתא דרחל למימר אבוך פקיד קדם עד לא יתכניש למימר:

If the brothers were simply relaying the command of their father, why not relay the message in person? Why use a messenger? Therefore, conclude "הז"ל, the message never came from their father, but rather was a fabrication of the brothers who suspected that Yosef was about to exact revenge. They lacked the courage to lie to his face and therefore sent someone else.

3. One might wonder if this Musag is not rather obvious. If a friend said something negative about Ploni, and Ploni asked, "Did they say something bad about me?", would it not be obvious that one should deny ever hearing the לשון הרע?

The Gemoroh in (סט:) teaches us that הותמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא אמת, the seal of Hashem is Truth. Telling a lie is thus tantamount to breaking the seal of Hashem. I might have therefore thought that perhaps even at the risk of causing a loss of peace one might be obligated to tell the truth.

However, there is also a Gemoroh (שבת י:) that teaches us that Hashem's name is also שלום, peace.

אסור לאדם שיתן שלום לחבירו בבית המרחץ, משום שנאמר (שופטים ו) ויקרא לו ה' שלום.

What does one do when Peace, one name of G-d, conflicts with Truth, the seal of Hashem? Our Musag comes to teach us which is more important: Peace.

This idea is illustrated clearly in the laws pertaining to a Sotah. The water which is given to the Sotah is prepared by dissolving the פרשת סוטה in water (with dirt from the floor of the בית המקדש). The Torah thus allows the name of Hashem to be erased in order to achieve peace between a man and his wife<sup>7</sup>. So too, Truth, a name of Hashem, may be 'erased' by lying, for the sake of peace. This helps us understand an amazing ישן תנחומא.

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6 Rashi, in seeking to explain the word ויצונו, also explains that the brothers sent a messenger. However, Rashi comments that they sent the sons of בלהה, who they knew were close to Yosef. I have not found any source for this. Also, if Rashi is correct we would still not understand why the sons of בלהה would say אביך and not אבינו. Perhaps Rashi had a different text than that which is found in our Midrash. It is possible that Rashi was bothered by the fact that at the end of the Pasuk it says בדברים, which is in the plural, inferring that it was not only בלהה who brought the message.

The Targum Yerushalmi, quoted below, explains that they used בלהה because she was אמתא דרחל, the maidservant of his mother רחל.

7 If we were to think deeper we would realize that the Torah set up the laws of the Sotah waters to include erasing Hashem's name. Why did G-d create a process which required His name to be erased? Perhaps Hashem is teaching us the importance of peace by commanding us to erase His name in order to achieve שלום בית.

אנא שא נא: אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אתם אמרתם בלשון אנא עתיד כהן גדול ליכנס לבית קודש הקדשים ומלמד סניגוריא על בניכם בלשון הזה אנא השם.

The holiest prayer of the year, the תפילה of the גדול כהן on כפור יום, begins with the words of Yosef's brothers, אנא. When we realize that their words were a lie, this Midrash becomes difficult to understand. Why would the גדול כהן use these words? However, when we fully comprehend that Hashem's greatest wish is for שלום and that even the sanctity of His name should be sacrificed for the sake of peace, the fabricated words of Yosef's brothers take on a holy dimension.

#### **4. Questions for further discussion:**

- a. Do you think the brothers ever really believed that Yosef harbored no resentment towards them?
- b. Can a person do other עבירות to keep the peace? Why would it be different?