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Shabbat ends in London at 4.52 pm
The Fast of 10 Tevet is on Thursday,
beginning at 6.17am and ending at 4.50pm

**Journeys with
the Prophets:
Part 11**

The Book of Shoftim (Judges) Chapter 1

by Rabbi Dr Moshe Freedman, Northwood United Synagogue

Summary: After Yehoshua's death, the tribe of Yehudah was appointed by G-d as the leader of the Jewish people to continue the military conquest of Cana'an. The tribe of Shimon joined him and they completed a number of successful battles, including the capture of Jerusalem and Hebron. Nevertheless, the last part of the chapter (verses 21-36) describes several occasions where individual tribes failed to drive out their enemies from the Land completely.

A Deeper Look: The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 27:8) explains that the father-in-law of Moshe had seven names. These included Yitro, for a section of Torah was added (*yeter*) in his merit, and Keni, from whom the Kenite nation were descended (see Shoftim 1:16). The Midrash adds that the name Keni implies that he was a zealot (*kanai*) for heaven and for Torah, which is why he abandoned idol worship and embraced monotheism.

Rabbi David Kimche ('the Radak' d. 1235) explained that the Jewish people remembered the good that Yitro had done. They therefore took care of his descendants the Kenites by settling them away from battle in pastures around the city of Jericho. They thus fulfilled

the promise made by Moshe to Chovav (Bemidbar 10:29).

Rabbi Moshe David Valle (d. 1777) added that there is a deeper, earlier connection in the name Keni, originating with Kain, the brother of Chevel (Abel) and son of Adam and Eve. When Bilam blessed the Jewish people (Bemidbar 24:21-22), he perceived the greatness of the Kenites, saying "How firm is your dwelling place... For if Kain is laid waste, how far will Assyria take you captive?" Rashi (d. 1105) comments that the Kenites were



City of Hebron

fortunate to be settled – even though they were destined to be exiled with the Ten Tribes of Israel (see Melachim/Kings 1 11:31); unlike their ancestor Kain they would never be banished completely (Rashi to Bemidbar 24:22, Bereishit 4:12).

While the Kenites were righteous, they had had no direct connection with the Jewish people. This changed after the Jewish people settled in the Land of Israel. Once the Kenites were also granted land, having been spiritual wanderers for so long, they were advanced spiritually through their own inheritance.

The Truth will Emerge

by Rabbi Dr Julian Shindler
Office of the Chief Rabbi

The opening passage of our sidrah records one of the most emotionally charged episodes in the entire Bible. Yehuda is pleading for the life of his brother, Binyamin, who is being held captive at the will of one of the most powerful men of Egypt. What Yehuda doesn't know is that this Egyptian prince is none other than his younger brother, Yosef. Central to Yehuda's impassioned plea is the claim that holding Binyamin captive will 'kill' his elderly father, Ya'akov, who resides in Canaan.

As Yosef prepares to reveal his true identity to his brothers, the Torah describes how, overcome with emotion, he orders all of his servants to leave him alone with his brothers. Then, sobbing uncontrollably, he declares: "I am Yosef; is my father still alive?" (Bereishit 45:3)

This is followed by... silence. Yosef's brothers were speechless and afraid.

On this verse, the Midrash comments: 'Woe to us on the Day of Judgement; Woe to us on the Day of Rebuke'. At first this comment is startling. Where was the rebuke in these few words uttered by Yosef? moreover, what does this have to do with the 'Day of Judgement'?

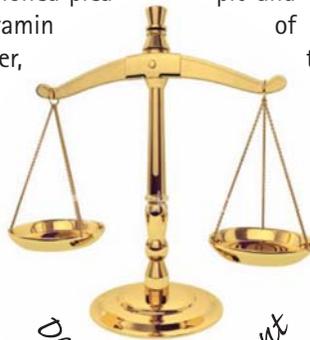
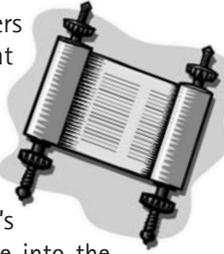
The *Beit Halevi* explains that in the previous chapters, Yosef had repeatedly enquired about the welfare of their father, Ya'akov. He had been told by his brothers that Ya'akov was alive and well. So the question 'Is my father still alive?' could not have been a call for information. It was a rhetorical question, a penetrating castigation. Having heard Yehuda's moving plea for Binyamin's life,

Yosef confronts his brothers with their inconsistent behaviour and with their guilt. The force of his question was, in effect: 'Where was your consideration for our father's feelings when you cast me into the

pit and brought my blood-stained coat of colours back to him, creating the impression that I had been killed by wild animals?' This was a question which rendered them speechless, unable to respond and afraid of the consequences as they stood there, totally at Yosef's mercy.

Sometimes we may delude ourselves and others into thinking that our improper actions can somehow be excused. We reinterpret, we revise history, we supply illusory, 'legitimate' justification for doing things. We are economical with the truth. But when we stand before G-d on the 'Day of Judgement', we will be confronted with the truth of our actions; all the excuses will melt away and we will be speechless to answer the charges against us, as was the case with Yosef's brothers.

Though this passage ends with Yosef's reconciliation with his brothers, the stunning force of this encounter, and of these five incisive words of Yosef, is a powerful metaphor for our own accountability. Only if our motives are pure and our actions honourable will we be able to give account of ourselves on the future Day of Judgement.



Day of Judgement

Time is perhaps the most precious commodity we have. How to make the most of it is a constant challenge, and one which thoughtful people spend a considerable amount of time contemplating. It is comforting to know, therefore, that this issue is the subject of a fascinating and somewhat unusual dialogue in this week's sidrah.

After the emotional reunion of Yosef with his father Ya'akov, Yosef took him to see Pharaoh.

The very first question that Pharaoh asked Ya'akov seems surprising: "How many are the days of the years of your life?" (Bereshit 47:8)

Firstly, this seems like an odd way for Pharaoh to greet a person that he had never met before. Secondly, the choice of language is unusual. Clearly there was something more profound going on in this brief encounter.

The commentators suggest that Pharaoh realised that the man standing in front of him was no ordinary person. There was a special aura about Ya'akov, something about his life experience that told Pharaoh that this was not a regular meeting.

If so, Pharaoh's question to Ya'akov was very specific. He was not interested merely in finding out how old Ya'akov was. His true question was: "How have you been able to attain such wisdom – to achieve what you have been able to achieve in life?"

Pharaoh realised that such wisdom could only have been attained through living life to the

full. He therefore wanted to know how many days there were that Ya'akov had actually **lived** – how many were the '**days** of the years' of his life.

Probing further into the question, Pharaoh was really asking just how many **days** it was that Ya'akov was able to fight off an urge to put off working toward goals and aspirations and actually live each day with these aims in his sights.

Ya'akov's insightful answer was that "the days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years" (ibid 47:9). In other words, every single day of his life was lived to the full. Ya'akov was able to measure his lifespan by looking back at every day and knowing what he had achieved that day.

A secret to achieving is to make every single day count. To use every day and the fresh opportunities that it brings to build on the successes and achievements of the previous day. Each day is a fresh opportunity to do mitzvot, to say a kind word to someone else, to build a damaged relationship.

Every day is the right time to reflect on those critical life goals and aspirations that we set for ourselves. Have we used today to do something – however small – in order to achieve what we know we are ultimately capable of?

Yaakov's answer to Pharaoh is as powerful now as it was then. It is only when we start making every day count that we can really begin to count the years.

DAYS OF THE YEARS

In Torah study, one can use inference to understand the intent of the text, based on the precise choice of words used. This is called *diyuk*. *Diyukim* (plural) are used to uncover the meaning of the text. Additionally, this method can be used to examine how an innocuous-looking line might have practical halachic ramifications.

A prime examples can be found in parashat Mishpatim, the first time the Torah mentions the prohibition of mixing milk and (red) meat (Shemot 23:19). The Torah actually mentions this prohibition three times (also in Shemot 36:24 and Devarim 14:21), to teach us that there are three separate prohibitions: cooking, eating and deriving benefit from this mixture.

According to Rabbinic law, even eating chicken and milk together is prohibited. Due to the potential for mix-ups, several other restrictions were also enacted to avoid mixing meat and milk, including avoiding two people eating both meat and milk at the same time at the same table as well as the waiting period mandated after eating meat before consuming dairy products.

The Mishnah (Chullin 8:1) begins: "All meat is forbidden to cook **in milk**... and it is forbidden to place (meat) **with cheese** on the table" (*Kol HaBassar Assur Le'vashel Be'Chalav...V'assur L'ha'alot Im HaGvina al HaShulchan*).

The Rashash (Rabbi Shmuel Schtrashoun d.1777) notes that when it comes to the prohibition of *cooking* milk and meat, the Mishnah used the same words as the Torah, 'meat' and 'milk'. Yet when stating the Rabbinic injunction of not placing them both on the same table, the Mishnah switched to the word 'cheese'. To explain the Mishnah's choice of words, the Rashash uses the method of *diyuk* (mentioned above). In this case, from this one line of Mishnah, he makes three halachic *diyukim* about three separate aspects of this law! This week we will look at the first of the three:

Halacha mandates that one who has eaten milk products must do a three step process before eating a meat meal: *kinuach* – palate cleansing by eating a hard food item (for example a cracker), *rechitza* – hand washing, and *hadacha* – rinsing out one's mouth. The Rashash infers from our Mishnah switching to the word 'cheese' that this 3-step *halacha* **only applies to eating actual cheese**, since it is likely to leave some residue in the mouth. However, drinking (liquid) milk only requires a mouth rinsing (*hadacha*). Most authorities follow the Rashash's *diyuk* and rule this way as well.

To be continued...

