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 TO FOLLOW**

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**THE HOLINESS OF JOSEPH PROTECTED JACOB AND ALL THE CHILDREN
 OF ISRAEL** (by *Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita*)

It is written, “Do kindness and truth with me – please do not bury me in Egypt” (Genesis 47:29). Such was the request of Jacob to his son Joseph.

The following questions may be raised:

1. Why did Jacob ask Joseph not to bury him in Egypt? Instead, why did he not ask another of his sons, for they were just as courageous and upright as Joseph was (Shemot Rabba 1:1)? They too could have removed his coffin from Egypt. Since Jacob had to ask such permission from Joseph, the governor of the country, was it forbidden to remove a dead man from Egypt in order to bury him elsewhere?

2. We must also understand why, before he died, Joseph “adjured the Children of Israel, saying: ‘When G-d will indeed remember you, then you must bring my bones up out of here’ ” (Genesis 50:25). This oath would prevent them from leaving Egypt without bringing Joseph’s remains with them. In fact, the Sages say that they also took the remains of the other tribal heads, who themselves had requested the same thing (Bereshith Rabba 100:12). Why is only Joseph’s request recorded in the Torah, not the request of the other brothers?

Concerning the verse that states, “Hurry – go up to my father and say to him, ‘...G-d has made me master of all Egypt’ ” (Genesis 45:9), the Darkei Mussar relates the question posed by the Rabbi of Rozhin: “Does such a position hold any value in the eyes of Jacob?” He replies by stating, “His intention in saying this was to convey the idea that he, Joseph, was the divinely-appointed leader of Egypt.” In other words, Joseph wanted his father to know that he had instilled the fear and knowledge of G-d into Egypt and proclaimed G-d’s sovereignty over its entire empire. Such news was certainly comforting for Jacob, and he would be happy to know that the Egyptians had attained, thanks to Joseph, a knowledge of G-d. The greatness and holiness of Joseph is that he was able to influence the Egyptians to the point that they accepted him as their divinely-appointed ruler. His

righteousness was in direct opposition to all the defilement of Egyptian society, and wherever he went he rid the land of impurity to such a degree that the Egyptians easily managed to have faith in G-d.

This is what Joseph told his father: “G-d has made me master of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not delay.” In other words: “Do not fear coming down to Egypt, for I have already prepared the groundwork for the Children of Israel. We have already constructed yeshivot, and the Children of Israel can continue to study here.” Joseph did not go to the land of Canaan himself to get his father, for in that case Jacob would not have allowed his son to return to Egypt, and “Jacob our forefather should by rights have been taken to Egypt in iron chains, but his merit saved him” (Shabbat 89b). Yet at least Joseph consoled his father by telling him that he proclaimed G-d’s Name throughout Egypt, and that there was nothing to fear from the land’s immorality and impurity.

Even though Jacob was convinced of the truth of that message, he sent Judah ahead to prepare a house of study for him (Bereshith Rabba 95:3). This is quite surprising. Joseph had already established places of study, since Manasseh and Ephraim studied Torah. We must therefore ask ourselves why Jacob wanted to set up another place for Torah, and why he was not content with the ones that Joseph had established.

We learn a fundamental principle from this: A man should not be content with the strength that he possesses, but rather he should aspire to increase and improve his service of G-d. In that which concerns Torah, one must not be satisfied with what he has acquired; he must try to deepen his Torah knowledge. That is why, even though Jacob was aware of the existence of Joseph’s yeshivot, he wanted to personally insure that he would be able to study Torah while in Egypt. Joseph had already been there for several years, but Jacob’s other children were only now going down to Egypt with the Torah and fear of G-d that they had acquired in the land of Canaan. They needed a place that responded to their needs.

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We can now answer all the questions that we previously raised. It is written, "When the Children of Israel descended into Egypt, the exile had already begun and there was no way to escape from it" (Zohar II:8b). Jacob knew that he could not move his own remains out of Egypt, and that only Joseph – the one who had succeeded to crush impurity under his feet and proclaim the Name of G-d in Egypt – would have the power to remove his body so that the Egyptians would not try to benefit from it in any way. Jacob's other children did not have the power that Joseph possessed, since his conduct was upright in that defiled place. This is why Jacob asked Joseph to bury him in the land of Canaan "so that the Egyptians do not make an idol of my remains after I die" (Bereshith Rabba 95:6), which would have caused Joseph to lose everything that he had worked for up to that point.

To this we must add that if Jacob had been buried in Egypt, the exodus of the Children of Israel would have been delayed, for after having made Jacob's body into an idol, the Egyptians would have also mistreated his children and worsened their situation. In that case they would have been unable to purify the sparks of holiness in Egypt (see Ohr HaChayim on Genesis 49:9). For those who understand, it is not necessary to elaborate on this subject.

G-d said to Jacob, "I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up, and Joseph shall place his hand on your eyes" (Genesis 46:4). G-d promised Jacob that he would be buried in Israel (Yerushalmi Sotah 1:10), and Jacob understood that "Joseph shall place his hand on your eyes" meant that only Joseph would bury him in Israel.

Joseph also asked his brothers to take his body out of Egypt. It is written, "The righteous become greater after their death" (Chullin 7b). Just as during his lifetime Joseph (and nobody else) had the power to subjugate the forces of evil, so too after his death, when the Children of Israel departed from Egypt after having repaired the sparks of holiness, did Joseph have a beneficial influence on them. When the Children of Israel were by the Sea of Reeds, the accusing angels protested, "These here [the Egyptians] are idolaters, and these here [the Jews] are idolaters. Why judge them differently?" (Zohar II:170b). Because of the argument presented by Egypt's ministering angel, the attribute of justice hung over their heads. Already while he was alive, Joseph knew that the sea would not part before the Children of Israel, and that only he could shut the mouth of that accuser and make the sea split, as it is written: "The sea saw and fled" (Psalms 114:3). "What did it see? It saw the coffin of Joseph, who had fled from before Potiphar's wife" (Shochar Tov ad loc.). Joseph therefore asked his brothers to remove his body from Egypt in order for the sea to split by his merit and so that the Children of Israel could receive the Torah and enter the land of Israel. It is not without reason that the Sages said, "The body of Joseph and the Tabernacle, where the

Tablets of the Law were kept, traveled side by side in the desert, for the former practiced what was written on the latter" (Sotah 13a,b). In other words, Joseph had the power to protect the Children of Israel and watch over them because of his holiness.

Only Joseph had the power to silence the accusers that arose by the Sea of Reeds. This is because he left his garment in the hand of Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:12), even though this garment would be used as evidence against him. By the Sea of Reeds, it became obvious that his children were capable of the same holiness as he was. The accusation of Egypt's ministering angel ("these here are idolaters") only applied to those who were forced into practicing idolatry (Shemot Rabba 16:2).

Despite the fact that Joseph had not committed any transgressions, he was thrown into prison and suffered greatly as a result. Nevertheless, his conduct gave the Children of Israel the merit to witness great miracles when they crossed the Sea of Reeds, such that "what the plainest maidservant saw, Ezekiel ben Buzi did not see" (Mechilta ad loc.). There they succeeded in attaining complete faith in G-d and in Moses (Exodus 14:31), to the point of receiving the manna and the Torah, conquering the land of Israel, and later building the Temple. This shows just how the performance of each commandment is a powerful weapon, since in performing a certain commandment at a given time, a person and all his descendants are protected, even after 400 years. This is because G-d knows all that has been and all that will be, and everything is taken into account. He knows the results of every action, good or bad.

When Moses asked G-d, "Why have You done evil to this people?" (Exodus 5:22), i.e., why must they suffer so much, G-d answered him: "Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh" (ibid. 6:1). In other words, precisely because they suffered so much, they will return to Me. The word ??? ("now") is understood as meaning repentance (Bereshith Rabba 21:6; 38:14). By their repentance, Pharaoh would be punished and Egypt's ministering angel would no longer be able to protest against the plagues that struck the Egyptians, whereas the Children of Israel (who had breached the 49 gates of impurity – Zohar Chadash, Yitro 39a) would be saved. The daily suffering of the Jews had the goal of enabling them to be saved. It was precisely through their suffering that the Children of Israel would acquire the strength to resist, and this suffering would deliver them. G-d, blessed be He, directs the world according to His will, and He weighs "the loss [incurred by the performance] of a mitzvah against the reward [earned by its observance], and the gain [derived] from a sin against the loss [that will follow]" (Perkei Avoth 2:1). In fact, the holiness of Joseph protected all the Children of Israel.

IN MEMORY OF THE TSADIKIM

RABBI MOSHE BEN MACHIR

Rabbi Moshe ben Machir was among the great men of Sefat who lived some 400 years ago. He was a good friend of Rabbi Shemuel de Uceda, the author of Midrash Shemuel on Perkei Avot. He is best known for his work Seder HaYom, printed for the first time in Venice in 5359 (1599). He also founded a yeshiva in the village of Ein Zeitoun, near Sefat.

For many years, Ein Zeitoun had been known as a place of Torah and holiness. The Tanna Rabbi Yehudah (the son of Rabbi Ilai), Rabbi Kruspedai, and Rabbi Yossef Sargossi (known as HaTzaddik HaLavan [“The White Tzaddik”]) are buried there. In his book Chachmei HaSefaradim B’Eretz Israel (Sephardic Sages in the Land of Israel), Rav Shraga Weiss recounts that the Arizal was particularly fond of Ein Zeitoun, and he would normally go there to pray by the gravesite of the Tanna Rabbi Yehudah. He also directed his disciples to go there and recite special kabbalistic prayers that he had taught them. Rabbi Eliezer Ezekri, the author of Sefer HaChareidim, would normally travel to Ein Zeitoun on the eve of Rosh Hashanah to shed tears over the exile of the Shechinah and to pray for the salvation of body and soul. In Sefer HaChareidim, in the chapter that deals with mitzvot connected to the land of Israel, he writes that the people of Ein Zeitoun had the custom of reciting Rabbi Yehudah Halevi’s Shir Yedidot, which begins with the words: “The Holy Land will be called favored ... in beseeching G-d not to chase them out” from this holy place that was filled with ancient glory, where Jews had poured themselves out in prayer for hundreds of years. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir built a yeshiva there, which very quickly earned a great reputation throughout the Diaspora. There he also wrote his very specific work Seder HaYom. Written on the first edition’s flyleaf, we read: “A work entitled Seder HaYom: An exquisite explanation of the

prayers according to the four types of wisdom known by the acronym PARDES. Written by a man of G-d, entirely wise and pious, Rav Moshe ben Machir of Sefat.”

The book was truly well named. It shows every Jew how to organize his day according to the ways of Torah and the fear of G-d. It is designed for every segment of the population, and it deals in particular with the course of the day, from morning till night, during the week and on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and the holidays. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir wrote in his introduction: “This is why every man should push himself, day and night, at all times and at every instant, not to lose even a single moment of time with the vanities and charms of this world. From the time he arises in the morning until he goes to bed at night, a man should manage his time in such a way that he seeks only to accomplish G-d’s will. As for his own desires, they should be the same as Heaven’s: Correct and pure.”

“This is why I felt the need – I, Moshe the son of Yehudah from the family of Machir – to write this book that I have named Seder HaYom [literally ‘Order of the Day’], because in it I deal with how a man should manage his days and nights, his Shabbats and holidays, during the entire year – be it at home or away – when going to bed and when arising.”

Seder HaYom spread throughout the entire Diaspora, and it has been cited by all the Poskim of previous generations that dealt with laws concerning daily life. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir made substantial promises to whomever studied his book and followed its advice in their daily life: “I am certain that by adopting this daily regimen, one will be loved by G-d and man. He will succeed in everything he undertakes, he will conduct himself faultlessly, he will attain an advanced age, he will see children and grandchildren, and he will succeed in accomplishing G-d’s will. This is the right path for all to follow.”

THE STORY OF THE WEEK

THE ONE WHO SPEAKS THE TRUTH FROM HIS HEART

One day a Jewish merchant appeared in the shop of Rabbi Shraga Feivel Frank (the father-in-law of the Gaon Rabbi Mordechai Epstein Zatzal, the Rosh Yeshiva of Slabodka). The merchant was from out of town, and he wanted to purchase a large quantity of leather.

Since the merchant was purchasing so much, he asked Rabbi Shraga Feivel what discount he could give him, that being the norm in such situations.

The Rav responded that the price was fixed: "I have a principle," he said. "I sell items at a price that gives me a certain reasonable profit, in return for which I neither lower prices nor bargain. A person for whom my prices are not suitable can go shop elsewhere." Furthermore, the Rav immediately supplied him with the addresses of other leather salesmen.

The merchant left the shop and went elsewhere to buy his leather. After having gone from one place to another, he realized that Rabbi Shraga Feivel's price was the lowest of all, so he returned and told him that he had decided to buy the leather from him at the price that he had originally asked.

"I will sell you the leather, but not at the price that I mentioned earlier. I will give you a reduction appropriate for the amount that you are buying," Rabbi Shraga Feivel told him.

The merchant was a bit shocked. "A little earlier you absolutely refused to give me a discount, even when you realized that I wasn't going to buy anything from you if you didn't lower your price. Yet now, when I want to buy leather at the price you asked for, you lower the price even though I haven't asked!"

Rabbi Shraga Feivel replied, "After you left, I realized that you had, in fact, asked for an amount of goods that was far greater than what my clients normally buy. Furthermore, even by giving you the discount that you had asked for, I realized that I would still make the profit I aimed for with this sale, and in such a case there was no reason for

me to stubbornly stick to my first request. Now that you've returned to buy your leather from me, I should act in accordance with my realization."

King David teaches us the following in his prayer: "L-RD, who may sojourn in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your Holy Mountain? One who walks in perfect innocence, and does what is right, and speaks the truth from his heart" (Psalms 15:1-2). Furthermore, in the morning prayers we recite, "A man should forever be G-d-fearing in the innermost recesses of his heart, acknowledge the truth, and speak the truth in his heart."

THE MORAL OF THE STORY FROM THE MAGGID OF DUBNO

It is written, "Do kindness and truth with me – please do not bury me in Egypt" (Genesis 47:29).

The following parable will allow us to understand the teaching of the Sages on this subject:

A person wanted to give his friend a nice gift on a certain day. Since he was afraid that his wife would be against the idea, he thought of writing an IOU for the sum of the gift that he wanted to give his friend. The IOU stated that he undertook to pay his friend back a given amount on a certain date, and he had it signed by "witnesses" so that it would appear completely legitimate. Consequently, his wife would not be able to find anything to object to.

In such a case, the repayment of the "debt" is called "kindness and truth." At the due date, it is called "truth": It is a duty to repay everything stated in an IOU. Yet its very existence constitutes an act of generosity. If Joseph had not sworn to Jacob to bury him in the land of Canaan, it would have been solely through kindness that he would have done so. However Jacob asked him to swear to it, hence from that point on it would have been the aspect of truth that obliged him to keep his oath. He knew, in fact, that Pharaoh would not have allowed him to leave for the land of Canaan if he had not been so forcefully obligated by having given his word. When Joseph went to Pharaoh and said, "My father had adjured me" (Genesis 50:5), he could only reply: "Go up and bury your father as he adjured you" (v.6).